

Ronald Linden Oral History Interview

Interview Conducted by Dahlia Krutkovitch

Severine Stier

Taylor Drake

Cathy Xu

March 15, 2019

Collection: Davidson College Archives

Title: Ronald Linden oral history interview one, 2019 March 15

Description: Ron Linden describes applying for a professorial job at Davidson College in 1976. He speaks about the interview process and the discussion he had with College President Samuel Reid Spencer about Linden's Jewish faith and how the Davidson bylaws only permitted Christian teachers. Linden recounts his surprise when he received a job offer that was subsequently rescinded and his shock when the incident made national news as "The Linden Affair." He details his experience visiting Davidson as a guest of the college four decades after Davidson discriminated against him on account of his Jewish background.

Biography: Ronald H. Linden retired in 2019 as Professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh. At Pitt he served as Director of the European Studies Center and Director of the Center for Russian and East European Studies. A Princeton Ph.D., Dr. Linden was Director of Research for Radio Free Europe in Munich, Germany during the momentous changes that ended communism and the division of Germany. His recent work explores the impact of growing Chinese trade and investment in Europe.

Interview Date: 2019-03-15

Interview History:

Interviewer: Dahlia Krutkovitch, Severine Stier, Taylor Drake, Cathy Xu

Transcriber: Olivia Harper

Editors: Olivia Harper and Ron Linden

Reviewed by Ron Linden

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Setting Description: Interview with Ron Linden, Dahlia Krutkovitch, Severine Stier, Taylor Drake, and Cathy Xu in Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina.

Transcript Notes: The following transcript has been edited for brevity and clarity.

RL: Ron Linden

DK: Dahlia Krutkovich

SS: Severine Stier

TD: Taylor Drake

CX: Cathy Xu

CX: So, the name of interviewers today are Dahlia Krutkovich, Severine Stier, Taylor Drake, and Cathy Xu, and the name of narrator is Ronald Linden, and the location of the interview is a library conference room in the Davidson College Library. The date is March 15, 2019, and the purpose of the interview is to record the history of Jews and Jewishness at Davidson College. Do you consent to being videotaped, and having this video recording of this oral history in the Davidson College archives?

RL: Yes, I do.

CX: Thank you. So, we have approximately an hour now 45 minutes for this interview. We'll pay attention to the clock and break in at the end when we have a few minutes left. So, first question, tell us a little bit about your relationship with Judaism before you arrived at Davidson.

RL: Well thank you for inviting me to contribute to this oral history. I'm happy to do so. I by definition I am like many people in the United States, an assimilated but proud American Jew, not religiously observant. I was not then; I am not now. But I have a strong identification as an American Jew. I attended synagogue, was Bar Mitzvah'd, all my children were Bar Mitzvah'd, so it means it means a lot to us, but we are not religiously observant in the way that Orthodox members of the faith are. But it was an important part of my identity, it has been still is.

CX: I guess this is where we're going to ask you to kind of recount the story of you at Davidson.

RL: Okay, well I was finishing my PhD at Princeton. I finished my PhD actually in 1976 and was on the job market. Now, it's important to note that all what happened, happened at the time there was no internet, no email, no tweeting, or social media so you got printed versions of job ads, and one of them was for Davidson, which I didn't know much about. I knew that it was a small school with good students. People at Princeton knew more about Davidson and urged me to apply. I thought that was fine. Top-notch students in the small school environment. I didn't know much about North Carolina, was a little bit apprehensive about, about that as a Jew living in North Carolina, but I sent in an application, as I did from many other places, and was invited down for an interview. When I got here I discovered the night before my, my interview process in the college catalog I discovered the clauses about it being a Presbyterian institution, but also that, that meant, as they saw it, that there would be no permanent faculty member part of their vision, no permanent faculty who was not a member of the church, was not a Presbyterian.

So, it didn't say "not Christian." It said a member of the Presbyterian Church. There was a tiny exception, which had apparently been written in that the President might hire in certain circumstances what they called a "reverent seeker." I was not reverent and not a seeker. I was not eligible for that. But I didn't know whether that really was a policy that

was put in place or just something in the college catalog. A lot of catalogs have the sort of church identity, but I didn't know if that way it really meant something, and nobody had told me anything about that as an exclusionary principle, but I did learn when I was here that there were no Jews on the faculty not just tenured there were no Jews on the faculty at all. So that meant that they took this notion of who they were, Davidson took this notion of who they were seriously, and they put it in practice, so I wondered what I was doing here.

Now, I didn't know if the people who brought me down, which was the Political Science department, knew I was Jewish or not, but I assumed it would come up at some point, which it did. In my interview with the President Samuel Spencer, we talked about a lot of different things, and then he asked me what church I attended. With just those words. And I said, "I don't attend church. I'm Jewish" and he said, "Do you do you have any problem with our policy?" Now at that point I knew about the policy had only just learned about the policy, but I suspected that the fact that there weren't any Jews on the faculty, and the fact that he asked me about it meant that they took it seriously, and I said, "Well, it actually isn't my problem. It's really your problem," meaning Davidson's problem, and that was the entirety of our discussion at that time, and I figured that was the end of the story, because why would they offer me the job? He asked me what my faith was. I told him, and they clearly said they were not going to promote someone who was Jewish, and they didn't hire anybody who was Jewish, so I thought that was that was the end. But it wasn't, because some period of time afterwards—I don't remember how much—they sent me a letter an offer for the position to my astonishment, and the President in that letter reiterated the policy.

He not only reiterated the policy, he reiterated that I should—this was almost his exact words—"you should only accept the job if you accept this vision of Davidson and will work to strengthen and build on those beliefs." Okay full stop. That meant that I could be hired; I could be the best teacher Davidson had ever seen; I could publish articles; I could be a top-notch political scientist; but, I would never get tenure, not because of my record, but because I was a Jew, and that struck me as discrimination.

That's saying some descriptive quality about you puts you in the "outbox" no matter how good you are. Now, I had to think a lot about this because at the time I did not have any other job offers. My wife was pregnant. We were about to have start a family, and I had no job. So, it's not a decision I took lightly, and I didn't quite know what to do. I talked to a lot of people, got some advice, and so I wrote a letter in which I accepted the job but rejected the principles and said that I would that I would while I was here I've accepted job while I was here I would do everything I could to change the policy. I rejected it, and I can't see how I could have accepted it, I could have supported it. I sent in the letter and reasonably quickly got a letter back. I don't remember the exact dates, but I got a letter from President Spencer saying that what I had sent in was not an acceptance, it was not an acceptance of the letter under the conditions which were part of the bylaws and which he

spelled out. He was right. I mean he was—the lawyers had advised him of course—and in the law and I had I had not accepted it under those conditions, which was accurate.

And therefore, they withdrew the offer. So that's sort of the build-up to the episode, but then it sort of took on a life of its own. For one thing, someone here who was a stringer for the Raleigh newspaper, and they passed— well, it was in the *Davidsonian*. Then, it got to the Raleigh newspaper, and from the Raleigh newspaper, it got to this famous article front page of the *Washington Post*, which was not exactly the way you want to be famous with your picture and a headline that said “North Carolina College Rebuffs Jew.” So, it took it began to go wild for its time, now what's this again before the Internet, picked up by national media, by media really all over the place, by educational media, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, by some Jewish media, especially around here.

And Davidson then was faced with this sort of explosion of fairly negative publicity, and it was up to them to deal with it, which they did by, because of the pressure of these news articles I think, because of student pressure, boycotts and demonstrations, because the faculty voted to change the policy, ultimately the trustees did, and by about the fall they changed the policy, and it became possible for the for the President to offer a position which included the possibility of tenure to someone who wasn't Presbyterian. That's the short version. It doesn't sound like the short version.

DK: I do have a question about timeline. I don't know if you'll remember these details, but was it in the *Davidsonian* before the *Washington Post*? Do you remember when the *Davidsonian* reached out to you or how students learned about this?

RL: No. You know. You mentioned a couple times this interview I gave with them, and I can't seem to find—

SS: In the *Davidsonian*?

RL: In the *Davidsonian*

DK: We can show it to you—it's in the archives.

RL: Because it was amazing to me how quickly it exploded. It was in the *Charlotte Observer*, partly because you ask yourself does the world really care about what happens to, you know, one Jewish professor at a small college in North Carolina? Well, it was the story was quirky enough, you know, that I think they did, after all do getting turned down for a university job that's pretty unusual not that he got turned down but you wouldn't think that would happen anymore, but it did, so that's what I guess pushed, but I don't remember, you know, this—how it got to the—I was told that it went from the stringer to the Raleigh from the Raleigh paper to the *Washington Post*. But I

don't remember exactly...

DK: How students got involved.

SS: I'm also curious—what did you think of the name "The Linden Affair"? Where did you hear it first?

RL: I heard it when you wrote to me.

SS: Really?

RL: Yeah. Nobody ever called it the “Linden Affair.” I never did certainly and—I'm sorry I'm messing up the mic—I, I, I and you did it, and you have continued to do it without irony.

SS: With a capital "a"!

RL: You know you don't even do air quotes, and so I did—I never thought of it that way. When you do a Google search for “Davidson and Jews” or even just my name, the story will come up, but it won't be called the “Linden Affair”.

DK: It seems like it's crept into the parlance of the town. When I first heard it, I immediately thought it was a reference to the Dreyfus Affair, but I also don't know if people here are really too “up” on their Jewish history to know about that. But nonetheless, that was the thing that struck me.

RL: Yeah, I keep referring to it as, as an episode, you know, which is really what it was.

DK: Is that what you prefer for it to be called?

RL: No. I mean I said that supposedly it would do great things for my reputation to have been associated with that. You know, but, you know, one of the things I want to point out, and I hope my description of it made that clear once I wrote my letter—Sam Spencer wrote his letter, I wrote mine, and he withdrew it— except for the publicity that somehow found me— as to what happened here at Davidson, I was out of it. There were no more letters. There, you know, there were, there was that interview with the Davidson newspaper, but it wasn't like I came back every six weeks to agitate for change. It wasn't up to me, it was up to Davidson, and they did change it, so it was kind of a curious break there.

DK: Was there a moment when you realized this was a big deal.

RL: Yes, and I'll actually I'll tell you I'll tell you a story I haven't part of the episode that I haven't

related yet. When I began to get these phone calls from *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and sought in national outlets. It's that moment when I said, "this is too big." People were asking me, I think I mentioned this yesterday in the panel, they were asking in my opinion what I thought the role of religion was in modern university education. Well, that takes a lot more, a lot better informed person than me. That wasn't what I was doing. I happened into a situation of discrimination, which I recognized and objected to, but I wasn't going to talk about should the Catholic Church have universities or anything like that.

So, I went to a professor at Princeton whom I really respected, and I asked I told him, "I think this is getting out of hand." And he said—it was really some of the best advice I ever got—he said, "You have two choices here: you can ride this and become a spokesman for this and you know use it and play it and or you can shut your mouth."

So, I shut up. So, the Davidson interview was something before that. Because after that, I didn't give any more interviews. I didn't want to be all of a sudden, you know, some sort of a spokesman for this. I stood up for what I thought was right at the time, but I wasn't in the position take on this national challenge, so yes there was a moment, and my strategy at that point... Plus, I was about to have a baby. I was still on the job market, because I didn't have a job.

SS: Did you want to know at the time what Davidson was doing to change, or did you, did you kind of just...?

RL: No. No, I did. I did want to know, because once this happened, I wanted to know how it was resolved. I forget, I have some clippings, I must have collected them, but I don't know how I got them because they were from the *Charlotte Observer* in places like that so, and it was before the internet you couldn't get going, but somehow I did some—believe it or not—I lived in New Jersey at the time, and this was covered in the Trenton Times, so the Trenton Times had an article about it. I and people wrote to me also and to keep me to keep me informed, that helped. Not as easy as it is now.

DK: Did you write them back?

RL: I did, every single one of them. Every single one of them. And almost all the letters I got were supportive.

SS: Almost?

RL: Some were not so supportive. Some, there's a strand of this story...I don't know, people somehow don't want to believe that a person would ever do the right thing, and so they want to find you know some manipulation in it or some other, and so some of these letters I got, occasionally

some of the editorials questioned my motives you know and questioned what I was doing partly as a way of defending Davidson.

You know, "This is what Davidson is," and that sort of thing. It was the attitude of "Who was he to come in and do all those things?" And one editorial said, "Why didn't he know more about the school before he came?" It was not so easy to find out, and I couldn't investigate every school before I went for an interview, and besides, just seeing in the catalog, it would not have been enough, because I didn't know. I wouldn't have known whether this was just boilerplate—that people could say that they don't pay any attention to or whether they really meant it. Of course, at Davidson, they really meant it.

DK: Was it a catalog or was it a copy of the bylaws?

RL: I'm trying to remember. I remember it was a little booklet, which I assume was not exactly a catalogue, but it was like, there used to be these booklets about schools, which told you all about it. Somebody must have also given me a copy of the bylaws, because I did—I remember distinctly reading it the night before and saying the equivalent of "Holy moly! What am I doing here? What is going on here?"

But even so, even then, it could still have been just words in a catalog, and I could have been informally informed that, "Well we don't really mean that." I mean I went to [Boston University] which, was a Methodist institution. Princeton was Presbyterian, but it didn't have any active role on the operation of the University. Here it did. And nobody said it. Nobody said, "We don't really mean it." You know, "wink, wink, nod, nod." They didn't say that. They didn't do that.

TD: Would you mind speaking to your immediate family's reaction to the Linden Affair and seeing that title in the...

RL: Well it wasn't called that at the time. You called it that

DK: It's a Davidson term.

SS: That's not us.

DK: The librarians said, "Do you know about the Linden Affair?"

SS: And the hiring fiasco.

TD: I'm referring to the "Davidson Rebuffs Jew". When they saw that headline, what was their reaction?

RL: Well, it's not the way you want to make the newspaper much less the front page of the *Washington Post*, and that was because of this link to the Raleigh newspaper, so the story I always tell is that at this point where it was blowing up I didn't, I didn't want my folks I hadn't told my folks about it there's no need to get them upset, I didn't know the direction it was going to take, and it was all going to blow over, or if I ended up going here then I would tell them that, but I didn't tell them about it. They lived in Boston. I didn't think they'd know anything about it. A friend of theirs happened to be in Washington, picks up the newspaper and sees my picture on the front with that headline, so I got a tremulous call from my mother. "What's going on?" and they, of course, were horrified. They saw the front, they saw their son on the front page of the newspaper identified as a "troublesome Jew," something they would not want, absolutely not want to be, and now you know sort of publicly part of the scandals or squabble, and they wouldn't want that either. So, I had to then inform them, and they, you know, they were properly horrified.

I suppose any parents would be because you see your kids are caught up in this struggle. But, you know, then I mean from me anyway it, it passed over because my role, I was done, and I then got another job, so it was okay. It remained a part of family lore that you know: "Hello! Your son's on the front page of the newspaper and not in a good way!" So, but of course I mean eventually, not eventually, but as we went along, with of course my wife knew when I told her, so, you know, she stood by me of course, and she recognized it as something that I that I had to do, but that we also had to find another job. We didn't want to spend our life in Cranberry, New Jersey!

SS: No way.

DK: Who would ever want that? How did—What do your kids know about this?

RL: Now they know about it. A couple of years ago, I think one of my kids "googled" me. If you "google" me, it comes up. Boy, I would have liked to come up for the cure for cancer or something like that, but instead this comes up, and so we, we have talked about it and conversations usually lead in this sort of fantastical direction. "Imagine if we wound up, if we had lived in Davidson." If I had just said "yes" in my letter, "thank you very much yes I accept." Bingo! Or if I'd written my letter and the President had not withdrawn the offer but said, "Okay, we understand, we still want you." And we would have lived here, and we think about how our life would have been different, and what we would have experienced, and it's kind of an interesting exercise.

My son as, as I have mentioned, is a rabbi, so he is, in many ways, a "public" Jew and cares a great deal about Jewish life, Jewish life in America, and what it means for one's identity and one's family, so he pays close attention. He called me last night after I was here for a day and wanted to know how it went and what do people think, and he wants to meet you both. I told him all about

you especially that your family is in Riverdale, and he lived in the South. He was a rabbi in New Orleans so he knows a bit about southern Jewry, and so they—and as soon as you both wrote to me—they were so excited, all my kids, and they all said the same thing, “Dad if they invite you, you should go!” None of them said, “Oh it's past history, you know, forget it nobody wants to hear about it.” None of them said that and so maybe some people at Davidson said that but so they've been, they've been kind of excited about that.

SS: I'm curious when you did get the first contact from us, did you have a similar reaction or hesitant at first? What was it like to receive a message from us?

RL: Well there's a funny thing about that, Severine. I retired in January and my department had an event, a retirement event, and as often happens when you retire, people ask, so how did you happen to come to Pitt in the first place? Well that meant that I had to tell the story, and I'm pretty sure almost nobody in the room knew the story. I was standing up in front of a bunch of people who have been standing up and drinking for a while, so I'm not sure how much they understood. So, at that moment I sort of retold the story, and then almost I don't know maybe the next day or so I got your email, so my wife says that's weird. It's like it's like when you say something, and it shows up on your Facebook page, “Who's listening to this?”

DK: Right, which algorithm put us in touch?

RL: Yeah, algorithm, that's right.

DK: Which Jewish mystic?

RL: So, it was, it was strange, and also of course I want to, you know, I didn't know what part of it you were interested in. I hadn't met either of you yet. I didn't know sort of where this fit in your in your picture, and I hadn't really thought much about this whole episode in 40 years.

I mean I knew it was done, and I knew they changed the policy. The only other thing that caused it to pop up was that I was mentoring a young man who's on a postdoc at our department, and he's looking for a job. So, he, among the jobs that he's applied for, is a two-year visiting position here at Davidson. I said, “Let me tell you a story.” So, all of a sudden it was a flurry of Davidson items, but then of course talking to you and hearing from you about Jewish life here and about your interest gave me a really good feeling, and I can't I... I wasn't sure how I would feel, but when I did that your class, I came out I said this is—these are sort of my grandchildren, you know? I felt like, you know, there's a Jewish life here.

Obviously, I didn't create it, but something I did helped make it happen, and I felt really good about that. So I want to thank you for thank you for—I felt good about that until I came here, and

now, you know, I'm not sure because I didn't realize how this episode still stings for some people even though nobody, almost nobody was here at the time, and certainly nobody in the administration or in the department was. I guess I was kind of surprised at that. There, there are people who are still highly defensive about the school and the reputation of President Spencer, even though I didn't then and do not now intend to damage that reputation.

In fact, I've said several times that Davidson has a lot to be proud of. Once this occurred, they did the right thing, and doing the right thing wasn't easy. To have to pass it and get the trustees to approve it in a place which believed that Davidson was a certain kind of place and that this was a challenge. And as I said to Shelly Rigger, they had already done much more difficult things. They integrated the place, allowed women. Compared to that, this should have been a piece of cake! So, I'm a little mystified as to why people are still troubled by it.

CX: Well, we can also talk more about your visit here, and lastly you sat on a panel for "Antisemitism at Davidson Then and Now" along with Dr. Ruth Ault, the first hired Jewish professor at Davidson, Joe Pearlman class of '79, and Caroline Black class of '20. So how has the panel and your visit in general changed or added to your understanding of what happened to you almost 40 years ago?

RL: That's a good question with a lot of dimensions. First, I have to tell you something I told Caroline. When you sent me the note that said, "These are the people on the panel: Caroline Black '20." It said "Joe Pearlman '79" and you said, "Caroline Black '20." I said, "Wow, she must really be old! Oh my God! She'll come out in a wheelchair! Class of twenty?" Of course! Not 1920, 2020.

But um I was, I was very pleased by the structure of the panel because in today's world antisemitism, as anybody who pays attention to the issue knows, is increasing. It's more public, it's encouraged by the internet, it's encouraged by hate speech from the hate speaker-in-chief and others. And antisemitic episodes on campuses have gone up dramatically, so there absolutely should be a panel discussing it. And there was an incident here that the outing of the neo-Nazis or the real Nazis, so I was proud to be part of that of that panel and linked that to life at Davidson.

If someone said to me we're going do an independent course on Jewish life at Davidson, I would say, "Really? is there enough here for a whole course?" but as I look at syllabi and judging from the panel, it's obviously set in an atmosphere of what's happening around the United States and elsewhere, rise of antisemitism in Europe and on campuses, so it's clearly placed in a good context. My one criticism—maybe I missed it of the syllabus—was there didn't seem to be as much as I thought there should be about Southern Jewish life. That's just a quibble.

So, it seemed to be a sensible panel, and it linked what happened here with modern life. It's kind of a definitional issue, that's to some extent semantic and some of it is splitting hairs. I don't

necessarily consider what happened to me to be a case of antisemitism. It had antisemitic consequences. As a Jew, I could not pass the qualifying criteria, but if I were a Catholic I couldn't either. Or Buddhist or Muslim. Nevertheless, it belongs in any discussion about antisemitism because there are policies which I might call passive antisemitism, which have those consequences, and make you feel somehow different and less than human because of your religious faith. So, it was appropriate to be included in that panel, and it was wonderful, by the way, to have the segue to Ruth Ault and her experience to contemporary Jewish life.

DK: I was going to ask you, what was it like interacting with Dr. Ault?

RL: Well, I liked her immediately. I mean she just very, although I would probably have quickly made the same mistake others do which is to call her Ruth Bader Ginsburg, because physically she looks like her, her name is Ruth. And she was you know remarkably expressive and honest about her own experience here and her interactions at the time she was hired and what life was like there. I think if I were to redo the panel, I would have added another person for maybe ten years after that or so to see who was here as part of the community. After all, compared to the time I was here, there's now a congregation in Davidson. I would like to know more about that, you know, like you were just saying where they came from? How active are they? How involved? Do they do anything for the students on the campus? Do they run the Seder? Do they invite them to their homes? That sort of thing. So anyway, that would be would have been my addition, but she was, and I really enjoyed talking with her. And we went on for dinner that night, and she's terrific, very informative.

DK: And to build on something or at least go back to something you said about the panel or even something you said earlier about people being a little defensive about Sam Spencer and exactly what happened. How this still kind of stings for a lot of members in the community. What did you think of what the college chaplain said?

RL: Well remind me what in particular you mean.

DK: Well, he went on—he stood up and said this is more of a comment than a question. And then went on a long spiel, to use some Yiddish, about how the policy of Christian tenure is not written from a place of discrimination, or not intended to be an exclusionary practice, but that is exactly what has happened, and we should recognize that not ahistorically, but instead, we should look upon it... I don't know if he would go so far as to say compassionately but...

RL: As being more benign?

DK: As perhaps being more benign than people are making it out to be.

RL: You know that was 40 years ago. The policy ended 40 years ago. People, the students

demonstrated, the faculty voted against it together. The trustees changed it, so for 40 years that hasn't been the policy. Okay, so first they had to make a broader exception then a broader exception. Now it hasn't gone as far as other faculty, notably Scott, who, I think it was said, we just wanted to say hire a competent academic. Okay, it hasn't gone that far, but Davidson is not alone in having a central vision that informs what it does with students, Duquesne, Notre Dame, BC. They all include that, and I think that's fine. People should have some notion of values. Now, the problem is when it steps over the line into exclusivity. You can't do it because you're not a member of our church, and therefore we can hire you, but only so far. Now, Davidson doesn't do that anymore. The proof is Ruth Ault and those who followed her. So, there's no need to be really defensive about it. Just like schools that, that didn't accept Jews as students or blacks as students or faculty, and now they do.

DK: Is it possible, well, thinking about it now I suppose it's possible that he's also really reacting to the mandate that the President has to be Presbyterian and understanding that these structures really still exist at the school.

RL: Yes, yes, but not my job. I mean, I know that because I met the President, and she told me about that, and at dinner we had a quite extensive discussion about that. But that's gonna be something they'll have to deal with.

DK: So thinking about this visit, do you see this visit as restorative? Something that was... Well I'll leave it at that.

RL: I come away in, you know, enormously impressed by the, especially by the students I met. I mean just fantastically impressed. And just by the way that people like you have, have sunk your teeth into it. It might be... I mean how many people your age would care about something that happened 40 years ago? Obviously and that's not the whole story, you care about it because there are residents now, there are issues now, antisemitism has not gone away. And you care about it, and in that sense, it is restorative. I mean and I'm also proud and impressed that people are not, you know, worried about speaking out. There should be a Jewish presence. There should be a Jewish Studies. The things that other groups have; we should have them too. That's wonderful that, that that's happening in that sense it is restorative. I'm surprised and still a bit troubled by the degree to which, in a way, people seem to still be fighting this battle. Both in terms of what happened to me. What did you say? What did he say? What did he mean by that? Why did you do this? Why did he do that? And of course, I have no way of knowing why President Spencer took the path that he did, or why it happened or why nobody was in touch with me for 40 years. So that means that this, even though it's not even the same people, the people are still remarkably touchy about what happened, and that surprised me. So, partly that's why I've been a bit hesitant and to like release to you to anybody all the letters I got from people because I don't know what would happen. I want you to know about them, and I and it's important that you know that I got the level of support I got, but I

don't want I don't want this to get out of control again.

SS: We don't want that either. I think it's also like this...People haven't been talking about this, I mean until we started this independent study. I was approached by professors that I need to look into this hiring fiasco, and then we wrote this article and now people are like, wait, oh yeah, I remember that, and you know everything is coming back now, but if we hadn't done this I don't think people would be talking about it.

RL: Oh no I'm sure you're right. But who could do it with the perspective of having been there at the time? Anybody? Was there anybody in the panel yesterday who was old enough to?

DK: I mean some of the oldest faculty that are retiring right now were hired in the early 80's and said, oh, when I came to campus people were still talking about it, but we don't have anyone in this moment who was on the staff at that time. We can talk to people at The Pines, a retirement community in Charlotte. We may.

SS: I think Rick Love, the assistant to [President] Spencer is still alive. We're trying to find him, but it's hard.

DK: And same with Larry Dagenhart, who was a lawyer, who advised Spencer.

RL: His name's really Die-Hard?

DK: No, Dagenhart.

RL: Oh, Dagenhart. I was like Bruce Willis? His lawyer is Bruce Willis?

DK: maybe Bruce Willis could play you instead.

TD: Ooh, I can see it! Sorry, keep going.

RL: He can't. He's left-handed. You haven't noticed at all in the movies, he shoots the bad guys with his left hand?

DK: And that would be another type of discrimination.

RL: I'll settle for Sean Connery though! That would be okay.

DK: Ooh a Scottish Jew.

SS: Good. Okay.

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DK: Yeah, to that effect, I mean, well, Ruth Ault retired in 2014, and she was hired two years after you left. So, that was really kind of—there are again, there were people around, but no one really remembers. And at this point, it's kind of a second-hand memory, and for students, it's more of a third-hand memory, if you will.

RL: Oh, of course.

DK: So, I'd say the reaction from students has been very different, and I'd also say that's just kind of true of the college in general. The way the students see the college versus the way some older members of the college community, now, understand Davidson or experienced Davidson at the time they were 18 or 22. And to that effect, there's a generational dissonance between where the college understood itself in the past, and where it understands itself now, and where it could be going.

RL: Well, did you find people who said to you, why are you talking about this? Why are you digging this up again? Well, you know, what happened so far? What's the story here?

DK: We got some creepy emails.

SS: A couple, but again the older generation.

RL: Well, my understanding is it's precisely the older generation that's, shall we say, very concerned about the presidency

SS: Yes, certainly. Definitely.

RL: ...for the same reason. From their point of view, it's being dismantled, but you know, I don't know. I...One of my impressions was surprise at how, how much it seemed to still be, not exactly a hot-button issue, but people still have sharp opinions right? Even though it ended. I mean well, I know it was controversial, and there was a lot of bruja, but Davidson did exactly the right thing. It didn't draw a line in the sand, and said, no, we're not gonna do this. We're gonna keep our Confederate monuments forever! They didn't do that. That's really an issue for the for the community here to decide.

SS: Okay, great so in the interest of time, we'd like to conclude, but before we do, is there anything else you'd like us to add it to the record, anything you'd like to say to future generations?

DK: Your great grandchildren?

RL: Uh yeah, right. I guess they'll...Um, let me say this. I think people saw me coming down, and this whole discussion of this as somehow an attempt, or at least some people saw it—you didn't because that wasn't your purpose—but some people saw this as somehow an attempt to besmirch the memory of a clearly revered and well respected President Sam Spencer, that I was somehow going to say things that you know disparaged him, or what he tried to do. And I have no such purpose. I thought he handled himself in a straightforward, honorable way at the time, but so did I. And then he did what he thought, what he thought was right. Now, if there was some alternative way that the goal might have—some have ascribed an alternative way that the goal might have been achieved, I wasn't aware of it. Nobody informed me before I got there, or while I was here, that we want you to—we want you to be the point of the spear. Take this job, and help us, you know, overturn this. I sort of assumed that was the only purpose I could have for being here, but nobody ever told me that. And so, I feel troubled that someone would, would think that either then or now, that I did this for that reason. It was just, you know, an episode. An episode. When the movie comes out, whoever writes the movie can do it in the way that they want, as long as they paint me in a good light.

SS: I'm left-handed though, so I can't.

RL: I noticed that last night. You know, there's a theory that Jews are more often left-handed than non-Jews.

SS: Really? Well I have a theory that a lot of left-handers are also allergic to Penicillin.

RL: Really?

SS: I've met so many Jews. I've met so many—

DK: So many Jews who are allergic to Penicillin and left-handed?

SS: No, no, not Jews. There's a weird connection, I swear.

RL: Well there's a cockamamie theory about Jews being left-handed, and the evidence they use is completely bogus. But it goes like this, if you watch Jewish baseball teams, like in Jewish neighborhoods, they always put their best outfielder in right-field not left-field. Whereas if you play in a regular baseball team, the best field who can handle fly-balls, because everyone's right-handed, is on leftfield. It's completely crazy.

DK: And you know, it's because left-handed people are evil.

RL: Well, there is that conspiracy that's going around...Secret left-handed—

DK: I mean just connect the dots. I hate to break it to you, but this is ground zero for the global conspiracy. Now that there are enough of us on campus. It's really, I mean in all honesty, like any vitriol that people point towards you is really also pointed towards us. We're these rabble-rousing students who are bringing this back up and embarrassing the college again.

RL: Well I'm sure there are those who feel that way.

DK: Certainly. We're these carpetbaggers from the North here to you know...

RL: Did you see that wonderful TV show about—I forget the name of it. It's about a small crazy law firm, and John Lithgow was in it, and John Krasinski, and he's a Jewish lawyer, but they always say, he's from New York. He's from New York. He he speaks New York. He's from New York. It's very good. I can't remember the name of it. But it's excellent. You know, the othering of us is just not going to stop ever, and we just have to—well of course, as you well know in antisemitism, the very denial of the conspiracy is, itself, part of the conspiracy. So you know, you can't win.

