

John Reynolds

Side 1:

[I/1/1] His father, who died in 1941, was a minister and John was born in Pea Ridge, Buncombe County, moving to Asheville in 1936. He attended Wofford College in Spartanburg. His father and his father's brother A.C. were involved in prohibition. For one year John taught High School at Haw Creek and coached basketball for \$96 a month. Later he worked in a shipyard for \$106 a week. [Rev. Joseph Reynolds, Susan Mackey Reynolds (mother), A.C. Reynolds (Alonzo Carlton Reynolds)]

[I/1/37] After nearly 4 years in the Navy he came home for 30 days and decided to stay. [Admiral Chester Nimitz, General Douglas MacArthur]

[I/1/62] His father had been very popular and, when asked to run a campaign [manager?] for Governor, John went to parishioners for support and won 5-1. [Horace Scott, Dale Thrash]

[I/1/88] He went into business for himself. Having been so successful as campaign manager, other groups asked for his assistance. He decided to either work on highways or schools. He worked with schools in 1946 and was elected to a committee to study city and county consolidation. [Jamie Clark, George M. Stephens]

[I/1/98] In 1956 he was asked by the chairman of the County Commissioners to go on board of Asheville-Biltmore College. [Coke Candler]

[I/1/109] He gives history. Founded by several people but mostly by his uncle A. C. Reynolds. His idea was to organize a free Junior College at the county seat. [His wife Nancy offers us coffee - wouldn't stay.] The "little school should have died 100 times" but had talented teachers in local retirees and well-grounded students (in math and English) who could transfer any place. People contributed financially and in dedication. The superintendents of city and county schools assisted. [W. H. Jones, A. C. Reynolds, Tom Robertson, J. W. Byers]

[I/1/159] The school couldn't find a president so A.C. took over. The students wanted to have a dance, he wouldn't allow it and they had a strike, called sheriff, put Hughes in jail but bailed him out. [A.C. Reynolds, Steve Hughes]

[I/1/172] When he joined the college the mountain property had just been purchased. Had 200-300 students in Seely's Castle. Snack bar almost bankrupt institution - (lost \$4,000-\$5,000) but Harris from newspaper bailed them out. Board represented community. [Glenn Bushey, Randall Harris, Mrs. M. A. James]

[I/1/193] A bill was introduced to help colleges (Charlotte, Wilmington, Elizabeth City and Asheville). Funds given on participating basis (\$3.00 per student hour). First time State had participated. [Roy Taylor]

[I/1/209] He attended a meeting in Charlotte for Board of Higher Education. Bushey said he was going to ask for \$4.00 [per student hour], but John said to ask for \$5.00 - which they got. [Glenn Bushey]

[I/1/233] State took over appointment for part of Board of Trustees. Asheville to get \$500,000 on a matching basis. Named new Board of Trustees. Some were carried over - some eliminated. [Robert F. Phillips, Roy A. Taylor, John Reynolds, J.W. Byers]

[I/1/250] After last board meeting he and Jack talked for 2 hours. They decided the chairman was not aggressive enough - that the college should: 1. move off the mountain. 2. Be totally supported by the state. 3. Be a 4 year institution. 4. Obtain a younger, more aggressive leader. [Jack Barfield, Robert F. Phillips, Glenn Bushey]

[I/1/275] The campaign leader for the new \$500,000 bond issue had to be out of town on business (see file) and he and Virginia worked out a plan. The school was closed for a day and students went out to get votes. He gave his best speech ever and they won 4 or 5 to 1. [Morris L. McGough, Virginia (Mrs. Charles E.) Dameron, Miss Highslip, J. W. Byers, Manley Wright, Roy Taylor, Louis Lipinsky, Glenn Bushey]

[I/1/354] The sheriff, who was running for office, said he would help if given \$3,500. John was asked to go to Lipinsky to raise money. Lipinsky furious and Weir told John to pick up 2 notes at First Union Bank and get signatures at \$100 each. The money was given to Brown. Merchant, a contractor, just gave the cash for one \$100 bond. When John told the board about the \$3,500 after the election was won, Lipinsky was furious and an electrical engineer for Enka said he would "take care of it." [Weldon Weir, Louis Lipinsky, Fleming Talman, Lawrence Brown, Lawrence Merchant, Ted Ford]

[I/1/455] With the 1 million, Six Associates were hired to create models for an expanded college on the mountain. John said the site not suitable. It was decided that another study should be made. John was not included. Various places, including the city hall, were suggested. There was no road leading to the Roberts property [now campus - thanks to Rhoades]. [Lawrence C. Merchant, Louis Lipinsky, Roy Taylor, Manley Wright, Landon Roberts]

[I/1/515] After a golf game John and Miller planned strategy - to take one board member at a time by jeep to the Robert's property and when a quorum agreed there would be another vote, and the present location would be chosen. Seven agreed to stand [a most amusing story - do listen]. [J. W. Byers, Roy Taylor, Alfred Miller, Ted Ford, Johnny Baines, Virginia Dameron, Gertrude Ramsey]

Side 2:

[I/2/21] Three more people were taken up and told that the vote was set [this is not like the story of Lipinsky's Jeep ride on the Jewish study tape]. [Glenn Bushey, Robert Phillips, Louis Lipinsky]

[I/2/34] Another meeting was called and they agreed - 90 acres at \$90,000; 15 more (where gym is) for \$15,000. Wachovia Bank pressured the sale of 130-140 acres to the university. This is now Forest Service land. [Robert Phillips]

[I/2/54] It was necessary to raise money (\$750,000 on matching basis) to put up two buildings. It was felt that going back to the public for a new bond issue was too soon. John was the last speaker and said that the public wanted a 4-year institution. The city was very cooperative. [Fleming Talman, Weldon Weir]

[I/2/93] They now needed a new, energetic leader for the college. John, who was on the state Board of Education, was asked to head up the search committee. He describes his contacts. [Glenn Bushey, Terry Sanford, Robert Phillips, William Friday, Guy Phillips, Charlie Jordan, Virginia Dameron, Virginia Lathrop, Hal Tribble, Don Dale, Otis Singleterry, Brainard Rawson]

[I/2/120] A little program was set up whereby the candidates were picked up at the airport, shown the campus, met the search committee for dinner and briefed on college aspirations.

[I/2/220] He describes the Highsmiths and said that within 30 minutes John was ready to offer him the job of Chancellor. John said he was the best salesman he has ever seen, had a fast and sharp mind and could charm the birds off the trees [listen - you will enjoy it]. [William and Allene Highsmith]

[I/2/251] John believed that trustees usually wanted a nice, good college, but that this college couldn't grow unless it had something superior. It would have to have character so that children would want to attend. Highsmith never deviated. And so it became "Little Harvard on the Hill." [Otis Singleterry]

[I/2/294] Friday wanted to expand the university. [Friday the president of the Consolidated University of N. C.] [William Friday]

[I/2/314] Scott running for Governor and John was asked to manage his campaign. He agreed to do so if he would: 1. support a 4-year college. 2. support its being a branch of the University. 3. not separate the college from the state Board of Education. Scott knew how to wield power. He told chairman of the Board of Higher Education that, as governor, he would support the college (as he had agreed). [Robert Scott, Cameron West]

[I/2/368] He wasn't on the board when Western Carolina offered graduate courses to teachers in old building at Oteen. There was conflict also regarding a nursing program. Mission Hospital and A-B Tech give associate degrees. Highsmith was on the Hospital board. John chairman on Hospital board. [William Highsmith]

[I/2/464] As chairman of Building and Grounds Committee he asked Weir to put in streets on campus which would be dedicated to the city. Weir told him to go to the governor to have them paved. [Weldon Weir, Robert Scott]

[I/2/499] Yates, a highway commissioner, said he would pave if the whole commission agreed. While attending a meeting for the state Board of Education he saw Yates in a hotel. He was invited up to a room where he told the group about the need (\$26,000). It was agreed that it would be put on the agenda the next day. He was asked to join the group for dinner and drinks were served. They were all as "high as a Georgia Pine" and at the table voted in the request twice! [Do listen] [Yates Bennett]

Tape 2, Side 1:

[II/1/1] While the school was still a junior college, a neighbor asked whether her black maid's daughter could be admitted. She was willing to pay the tuition. After much discussion the board, fearing rural opposition which could kill the college, denied the request. Members always regretted the decision. [Robert Phillips]

[II/1/28] He describes Manley and said he presided well. [Manley Wright]

[II/1/40] He always wanted to be chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee and was determined the school would not look like a "project." He describes concepts and decisions. [Nancy Reynolds, Bill McGee]

[II/1/57] The dormitories were built around sitting rooms but, because of budget restrictions (\$3,000 per student) all too small. [David Brown, William Highsmith, Allene Highsmith]

[II/1/86] The placement of the roads and buildings on campus is described. [Tom Thrash, Baxter Taylor]

[II/1/154] He discusses people who worked together and mentions their contributions. [Bruce Elmore, Liston Ramsey, Virginia Dameron, Carolyn Frady, David Brown, William Highsmith, Joseph Parsons, Lutrelle Wishart, Mrs. Virginia Wutschel, John Stevens, Sprinza Weizenblatt, Ray Taylor]

[II/1/217] He considers the library one of the 3 prettiest buildings in the area - (Biltmore House and Warren Wilson Chapel are the other 2).

[II/1/255] The roof on the Highsmith building is on same level as the street. A poor design. [Bert King, David Brown]

[II/1/288] The library cost \$750,000 to build and 1 million to remove asbestos. [Ainsley Whitman, Tony Lord]

[II/1/308] He was a food broker, having taken over his wife's father's business and ran it for 25 years. He sold out in 1971 and managed real estate. Interest rates went up to 20% so hasn't done anything since. [Nancy Reynolds]

[II/1/370] He is just back from Florida in their Airstream trailer and, despite the fact that a falling limb caused damage, is glad he was here for the famous 1993 blizzard [-amazing!]

Tape 2, Side 2:

[II/2/1] Champion Fiber donated and planted white pines and silver spruce on the campus. People cut some for Christmas and his family took their balled Christmas tree to campus every New Year's day, when no one was around, and planted it in the middle of the entrance circle. Periodically a tree would be moved to a new location - so they would add another. [John Barnes, Col. Strain]

[II/2/57] His wife graduated from Sweet Briar and he from Wofford. Neither of his sons have graduated from college (though they have attended) and are in the construction business. Becky graduated from East Tennessee and married Ben Lewis (store on Merrimon). There are 5 grandchildren - all getting straight A's. [Nancy Davis Reynolds, Joe Reynolds, Rusty Reynolds, Becky Reynolds Lewis] [From old Buncombe Heritage Vol. I, #542 (as of 1980) - children and grandchildren: John Davis Reynolds married Mary Butcher, Becky Sue Reynolds married Ben Lewis - children Susan and Amy Lewis, Joseph Richard Reynolds married Christine Kendrick - child Joseph Kendrick Reynolds]

[II/2/100] His father went to George Peabody (now a graduate school and part of Vanderbilt). [Rev. Joseph Reynolds, A.C. Reynolds]

[II/2/109] His first cousin taught at Duke (see his tape). His grandfather was a doctor and built in Sandy Mush and married into the Ferguson family. [Thomas Davies Reynolds, Ferguson]

[II/2/125] I said I had seen a bumper sticker just before the interview saying, "I love the Rockets - A.C. Reynolds" and he told me about the Reynolds High School (Rockets are the basketball team) and describes A.C. Said he was a great fighter but never fell out with people. [A.C. Reynolds]

[II/2/157] While there is talk of consolidating the county and city schools, because of integration and the county's concern about having blacks attend their schools, this has been delayed for a number of years.

[II/2/184] There has been a surge of activity in the city following the Depression (1932-1940). He discusses prices and the scarcity of jobs. Labor unions grew up in the period and child labor laws were passed. [Ray Kisiah]

[II/2/246] The city did not get benefits from the TVA. [Horace Scott]

[II/2/268] It cost \$50 to put up an electrical post. Electricity changed the character of the country.

[II/2/290] Transportation, industry, employment, farming, lumbering and mining are briefly reviewed.

[II/2/320] He was born in Ashe County in 1917. His father, a minister, moved the family several times. [Rev. Joseph Reynolds]