

**NCSU
Creative Services
Hunt**

A: Jim Hunt

A: Well, I came to NC State because I was a leader in youth agricultural activities. I was the president of the State Future Farmers of America at the time I came here. I'd been active in ___ youth work; I'd been active in 4H clubs, that's where young people off the farms of North Carolina went to. And I came here. I originally enrolled in agriculture in dairy husbandry. The only problem with dairy husbandry was you had to take a lot of organic chemistry, which did not agree with me. So I decided there was a better way than—and I had about decided I wasn't going to be a dairy farmer after all. I'd grown up on a dairy farm and I liked it, and I still have cattle on my farm, but they're all beef cattle.

So I switched into agricultural education to be a vocational agriculture teacher. I remember where I lived. I lived in an old ___ dormitory, which was up at the east side of the campus, right beside the railroad track. If you lived in ___ dormitory you knew you lived beside the railroad track. The doggone train went through every night and woke you up. And you had four students, maybe three students, in the room. And they didn't allow you to have a popcorn popper in your room, couldn't have any electrical appliances.

Well, I had a popcorn popper. I also had a girlfriend in Iowa name Caroline Leonard who lived on a corn and pea farm. She'd send me these beautiful ears of popcorn—I mean, they raised regular corn, but nice popcorn too—so we'd shell that popcorn and put it in this old popcorn popper, and I

remember the guy, he was from Pittsboro, North Carolina and he was the dorm manager. And we'd crank up that popcorn, put some oil in that thing and get it going, and it would start popping and a bunch of guys would come into the room; we'd have like 15 to 20 guys waiting for the popcorn. And the dorm manager, as soon as we got going and smell started going down the hall, he'd come down the hall from his office, and he'd bang on the door—and we fixed it by the way so he couldn't put his master key in the lock—and he said, “Jimmy Hunt, I know what you're doing in there, you're cooking popcorn. That's not allowed. Open this door.”

And we'd say, “Oh, we're taking a nap, don't bother us, go away. We're not doing anything in here.” Well, he never got in the room, but we sure enjoyed a lot of popcorn. And she kept sending it and I was a very popular fella in my dorm.

Another thing in college I think you do is you learn to develop your own value system, your own philosophy. What do you believe? Why do you believe it? You come with what you've learned in your church and your family, about what's right or wrong and how we are to act and live and treat our fellow human beings. But then you get in college and you learn about things that have happened historically and current events and all of that, you have to say, “All right, what does my background say about what we ought to do in this situation?” And I'll give you a very good example.

I came from a traditional rural Southern community where everybody assumed that racial segregation was the right way to do things. I came to NC

State right after the Supreme Court ruled separate but equal public schools were unconstitutional. Now I had thought the ruling was wrong. But while at NC State, in particular because of my involvement in student government, I got to hear a lot of opinions and a lot about the world and a lot of professors who challenged me and made me think about my position. I did a lot of reading about what was right about things. I came to see the evil of racism. I came to see that forced segregation was wrong, inherently wrong; not only unconstitutional but wrong morally, wrong.

And it was here, with those experiences that the students were having everywhere of course across the country, and then that kind of thing was not as much focused on here that same as Carolina or Duke perhaps, but I really came to understand, and ___ from some of my professors that what I had through was right was not right. That experience in student government at NC State really taught me a lot. I worked closely with the chancellor. We had Chancellor Kerry Boston [ph] at the time, a wonderful man. Every week as student body president I would meet with him in his office in Holliday [ph] Hall along with the president of the faculty senate. So we really got to know what the issues were at the university, and as a student leader, I realized what our responsibility was to it. It wasn't just a lark, just something to have done or to make trouble or whatever; we had the responsibility to help make the campus better and to give students an opportunity to get a better education.

You really found out what it was like to be in charge of a big organization and to work with your constituents; in our case the students. Be responsible for

changing things and improving them, and having a team and working with people.

That's where I first got the experiences and developed what I hoped were some talents to lead people and make things better.

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