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N.3: Undergraduate Internship Program: Fall 2013

Interview N-0019

Donald Arthur Boulton

31 October 2013

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ABSTRACT – DONALD BOULTON

Donald Boulton provides an overview of his 26 years serving as Dean and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at UNC. He discusses his childhood growing up as the principal's son in a small town and later studying religion abroad and meeting gay students kicked out of their homes while completing his doctorate at Columbia. He recounts accepting the position of Dean of students at UNC as well as enacting the Sports Medicine program with his undergraduate background studying medicine. Boulton discusses the formation of the Carolina Gay Association and his approval to recognize the group as well as the opposition from alumni, Board of Trustee members, and parents. Additionally, he discusses the acceptance of women into the freshmen class at UNC as well as the formation of the Black cultural center. Boulton goes on to describe retirement and the overall environment of UNC and the state now.

FIELD NOTES – DONALD BOULTON

Interviewee: Donald Boulton
Interviewer Layla Quran
Interview date: October 31, 2013
Location: 100 Friday Center Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27517
Length: 63:00

THE INTERVIEWEE. Donald Boulton was the Vice Chancellor and Dean of Student Affairs at UNC from 1972 through 1995. In September of 1974 he began receiving letters from concerned alumni and NC citizens regarding the official recognition of the Carolina Gay Association by the Office of Student Affairs. The Dean stood by the decision to recognize the student organization despite mass pressure on him and UNC President Bill Friday. Boulton enacted massive changes to food service, housing, and student affairs in general throughout his tenure at UNC, and is still actively involved in the Carolina community as an advisor to the Office of Student Affairs.

THE INTERVIEWER. Layla Quran is a junior student in Global Studies and an intern at the Southern Oral History Program in the Fall semester of the 2013-1014 academic year. This interview is a part of the SOHP intern Fall project on the Carolina Gay Association and the sexual revolution at UNC.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. The interview was conducted at the University of North Carolina Friday Center. Donald Boulton discussed his role as the Dean of Student Affairs, entering a “time warp” as Dean in the 1970s when UNC first admitted women into its freshmen class. Boulton discusses recognizing the Carolina Gay Association in the mid-1970s, and the opposition he received from doing so from alumni, parents, and some Board of Trustees members. He describes the past and present culture of the university, and how his position gave him a responsibility to monitor “the biggest classroom on campus”.

TAPE LOG – DONALD BOULTON

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Note: Only text in quotation marks is verbatim; all other text is paraphrased, including the interviewer's questions.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>
[Digital Recording, Starts at Beginning]	
0:01	Introduction: "It is Thursday, October 31 st , it is 3:30pm, I am at the Friday Center with Don Boulton..."
0:42	Grew up in a small, poor town of "maybe a thousand people" near Saratoga. Boulton's father was the principal of the local school
1:45	All the teachers at his father's school were fired and no teachers had tenure; payroll ended in June and teachers were re-hired in the fall.
2:15	"As a child, you didn't want to be the principal's son..." Boulton describes throwing rock in window of the school because he wanted to be punished.
2:45	Town Boulton grew up in was close-minded, "culturally a very narrow type of place"
3:02	Moved to another city far more diverse in 7 th grade, city divided into sections based on nationality (Polish, Italian, etc).
3:24	Went to Alfred University in western New York state. Wanted to go to a smaller university "because I needed to find myself".
3:50	Briefly touches upon Korean war. "Either you went to college or you went to Korea". Did not do well in college and father said Boulton could either work for him or go to Korea. Grades consequently improved the following semesters. Majored in Biology but was not accepted into any medical school.
4:50	Shifted his focus to the religion; was accepted in the seminary in order to learn how to teach religion. His Old Testament professor recommended him for a World Council of Churches Fellowship. Boulton was accepted into the fellowship program and went to Germany to study ten years after the war.
6:00	While in Germany, Boulton learned German thoroughly and spent 2 weeks translating Dead Sea scrolls in the Middle East. "I got to see culture in many different forms."
7:00	"I saw the world in many different cultures." After time abroad, returned to the US and did youth work at a church until he began his doctorate at Columbia.
7:20	Boulton was a counselor at Columbia and met with students from all over the country who were thrown out of their homes because of their sexual orientation.
7:50	Studying religion and values led him to study different types of love: sexual love, "the spiritual love of all people", physical love.
8:20	Talks about value system and asks what value system individuals operate under. Boulton describes love as a value he grew up with for all people, asks "Do you have a basic love of all human kind?" Boulton says this idea comes from both his

- studies in the seminary, his travels abroad, and his time at Columbia meeting students who had been kicked out of their families for being gay.
- 9:50 First job after graduation was to become the dean of admissions at the medical school at an upstate medical school in Syracuse, which originally rejected his application for medical school.
- 10:50 Boulton's name was put in by two friends at UNC for the Dean of Student Affairs. Came down to UNC for an all-day interview and after the end of the day he said "Absolutely no. I'm not going." According to Boulton, "they only asked me 'are you of here or from here?'. Boulton describes being "the first Yankee on the staff to be hired".
- 11:25 UNC had just begun to admit women into the freshmen class when Boulton arrived, which bothered him because he thought this should have been done earlier like in northern schools. "I think I am in a time warp". There was also a strike at UNC and there was no food service.
- 12:25 Boulton receives call from new chancellor who was visiting New York and wanted to have breakfast with Boulton. Boulton came down to UNC again and was convinced to take the position of Dean of Student Affairs at the school. Describes that UNC had just lost a football player to heat exhaustion and chancellor wanted him because of his medical training. Boulton enacted Sports medicine program at UNC. Boulton's wife was dying of cancer at the time and he also choose UNC because of its close proximity to Duke hospital.
- 13:40 Boulton's job also included recognizing student organizations. Carolina Gay Association came to Boulton in 1974 to be recognized and Boulton said yes. Boulton was called in to the chancellor's office, and chancellor said, "Don, do you know what you just did?...This is Bible country"
- 14:18 Boulton replied by saying him knew the Bible already from his studies. "Don't give me this stuff about what's in the bible about homosexuality. I know it." Boulton says to chancellor he was only following the federal law (UVA denied their gay association and federal court said they must accept them); used many court cases to justify his decision.
- 15:30 Boulton's son went to Carolina and guy on his son's hall was gay; people on the hall ripped gay student's door down and threw his mattress outside. "You're going to love that guy and you're going to make him feel welcome", Boulton replied when his son asked him what to do. Boulton moved many of the students on the hall to other dorms.
- 17:05 Boulton says where he was working was "the most active classroom on campus", the things that students are doing outside of the classroom".
- 17:35 Boulton says there was a lot of progress made over the years as he watched the Carolina Gay Association grow. Boulton says, "Yet you go through cycles, and you see the conservative cycle coming back now politically". Boulton describes history as repeating itself, but tending to move forward.
- 20:00 Opposition to the decision to recognize the Carolina Gay Association; Student affairs staff were accepting of Boulton's decision. Some of the Board of Trustees alumni, and parents were very upset by the decision and wrote letters to Boulton. Boulton felt strongly about decision and was not willing to change it.

- 21:15 Boulton describes a quiet acceptance of the CGA but there were “behind-the-scenes” incidents. “This was not a revolution; this was an evolution”. Boulton describes growth of CGA as more students felt comfortable coming out, and says there was not a huge uproar to recognition of CGA among students.
- 22:40 Boulton not surprised by opposition because he knew the environment he was working in. Had a BTO member say to him once “Well I think we’ve admitted enough women [to the university].” Had another person say “Well I think we have too many Italians too”. This surprised Boulton because of his time in Chicago and New York.
- 24:00 With role in student affairs Boulton saw that “this was a classroom that needed a lot of attention”. Began visiting small towns with alumni to recruit students and began to understand how rural North Carolina was when people would confront him upset with decisions he made in student affairs.
- 25:10 Boulton describes in-local parentus at the time, where parents expected student affairs and the university to continue on campus the values the child was taught at home.
- 26:30 Boulton describes CGA as very mature in handling any opposition. CGA came to Boulton for advice on planning events and for money, which student affairs did not have as much of at the time. Boulton set up fund by asking alumni to donate money to help student organizations develop. Boulton describes helping Daily Tar Heel when they ran out of money and were down to one sheet of paper.
- 30:00 Boulton says his biggest problem was an occasional alumnus or organization who opposed the recognition of the Carolina Gay Association.
- 30:40 Asked about if there was any opposition from the state. Boulton says he did not get any threats to be fired and for the most part BOT were supportive as they were not politically appointed at the time as they are now. Chancellor was also very supportive as well. President Bill Friday, former Dean of students, was also very supportive.
- 33:00 “We did a lot of growing, a lot of changing”, Boulton describes in terms of residence halls, food service. Boulton describes adapting programs of student health because of growth in population of women at UNC. Boulton moved women into a residence hall that was originally for men and got “hung in effigy” off of a tree for it.
- 35:00 Boulton says there was no such case of expulsions of students because of their sexual orientation as was the case at other area universities. Boulton received pressure but would say “this is the law of the land” and would not go against it.
- 36:40 Boulton says he knows he would receive criticism from the state if he were dean now and recognized the CGA. Boulton describes backwardness of state, saying “in this day and age, they have gone back 30 years”.
- 37:00 Asked why Fred Schroeder did not support sexuality being included in the anti-discrimination policy. Boulton says Fred Schroeder was supportive of his decision to recognize CGA but he did not include sexuality in anti-discrimination policy because he did not like the wording because it was not inclusive.
- 39:00 Boulton originally had a Dean of women upon entering UNC and she had four drawers of files filled with actions against the women, things such as women

kissing their boyfriends and being outdoors beyond curfew. Boulton threw all of the files away. Boulton created deans of students.

40:15 Boulton says he got a lot of resistance from students because they thought he was going to kick them out of UNC, because in highschool that is what the dean would do.

41:00 Boulton met with Deans at universities across the state and at a national levels; reactions to his decision differed based on the location of the universities. Boulton had monthly luncheons with deans at Duke and NC State. Duke and state students would go to UNC to drink on Franklin after drinking age went from 18-21.

43:00 There were protests in the pit not just against CGA but protest of Jewish students against 'Jews for Christ'. Hewish students wanted Dean to stop the organization to stop going in the pit and trying to convert Jews to Christians; took deand office over. Dean said he did not see a problem with it and said "this is a free country."

44:45 Student congress veto of CGA; Dean said he accepted change to not happen overnight but it was an educational process and it was part of the growing process.

46:00 Barry Nakel was advisor for CGA. Boulton says Nakel would come to him to discuss plans of CGA and gave student affairs the continuity they needed as he was a committed advisor for approximately 10 years.

47:20 Boulton talks about how religions have been killing each other in the Near East for many years though they are living under one God. "We have a long way to go".

48:00 Boulton's reaction to 'tea rooms' where men would meet on campus for sexual interactions. Boulton was not willing to lock the doors to the tea rooms.

49:00 Boulton describes his visit to Stanford last summer where each organization has their own "headquarters" and "the student union is empty", and he wanted organizations to interact with each other all in the student union.

50:55 "They went from being defensive to feeling more comfortable about themselves", Boulton describes the gay culture at Carolina.

51:15 Boulton talks about how the topic/arena changed. It was no longer CGA but the establishment of the Black cultural center; describes his difficulties and progress with that. Creation of African American studies department. Was very difficult time for Boulton; "eight years of pure hell".

54:40 Boulton's retirement in 2000; is a consultant now for student affairs. "He cares" was title of editorial when he retired. Changes in the student body, learning from the students and making mistakes along the way. Boulton did not want to quit when he retired and is still involved in Interfaith council, student affairs.

56:50 Boulton says it never dawned on him to leave, even with difficulties with the Black cultural center. He felt there was a solution to everything, and it would be possible to move on. Boulton is very pleased with the growth in number of student organizations and how students are going in many different directions. "I am just excited that I was a part of that walk". Boulton says current chancellor Folt had good statement in saying "You do wonderful things here. But you are awfully quiet about them". Says we must become more vocal about positive things being done at UNC so state residents know what UNC does as an

institution. “We have to let the country and our own state know what it is we are doing”.