

*With a Little Help from My Friends*

Sphex Club

October 4, 2018

Julius Sigler

Abstract

Member Sigler began his talk by observing that, over the past years, the Sphex Club has been treated to many outstanding biographical papers. From John Warwick Daniel to Senator Thomas, many of these have highlighted the contributions of local citizens. He noted that he had particularly enjoyed Member Stinnette's paper on the history of Lynchburg newspapers and the mini biographies he provided of editors and publishers. He went on to say that he planned to introduce the members to some other folks who have been important to Lynchburg and especially to him. While he never had the opportunity to meet some of these folks, but he knows them well and each in some way has been important to his life and career. With that he set out to introduce some of his friends, most of whom had also been important in the history of Lynchburg College.

Our speaker began his talk by introducing Josephus Hopwood, the founder of Lynchburg College. After a brief discussion of Hopwood's early life, he described the founding of Virginia Christian College and its early struggles. Following Hopwood, he moved on to the presidency of Dr. J. T. T. Hundley who changed the name of the institution to Lynchburg College and who guided the College through the depression years. In quick succession, he introduced T. Gibson Hobbs, a 1904 graduate of the College, who played a major role in its survival, Professors Ruskin Freer and Richard Sommerville, Presidents Riley Montgomery, Orville Wake, and others, ending with the presidency of Carey Brewer. He pointed out how Brewer had grown the institution and had increased its visibility in the local area and across the Commonwealth. He ended his talk by noting his own indebtedness to each of these individuals and so many more.

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**Julius Sigler**

Over the past years, the Sphex Club has been treated to many outstanding biographical papers. From John Warwick Daniel to Senator Thomas, many of these have highlighted the contributions of local citizens. I particularly enjoyed Member Stinnette's paper on the history of Lynchburg newspapers and the mini biographies he provided of editors and publishers. So tonight I'm going to introduce you to some other people who have been important to Lynchburg and especially to me. I never had the opportunity to meet some of these folks, but I know them well and each in some way has been important to my being where I am today. So let me introduce you to some of my friends. Oh, and by the way, all but one of them have also been important in the history of Lynchburg College. With apologies to Ken and Sally, I will refer to the institution as LC because all of the people were associated with that phase in the history of the institution.

Josephus Hopwood was born in 1843 in rural Kentucky. Although he died before I was born, I've had the pleasure of knowing a classmate and a colleague who called him "Uncle Joe." His father died when he was six and eventually his mother and siblings settled in western Illinois, where they carved out a living on the virgin prairie. Well into his teen years, any schooling he had was at home. In 1858, he had the opportunity to hear Lincoln and Douglas in one of their famous debates and actually met Douglas subsequently. For three years he attended school and continued to work on the family farm.

He enlisted in the Illinois Cavalry when hostilities broke out. Fighting in the Shiloh area of Tennessee, he was twice captured and paroled. During the second imprisonment, he spent a long winter at Bell Island in Virginia. Following the war, he began to teach, studying at Abingdon College (Eureka) and eventually graduating from Kentucky University (Transylvania). He also studied at the College of the Bible. All of these institutions were founded in the tradition of the Disciples of Christ. He concluded that while he could certainly make money following a career such as real estate, he could not understand the point of amassing money. He decided that he would become an educator and, particularly, bring his education to the South, where he had observed deplorable conditions for education.

As an educator, Hopwood was clearly in the mainstream of the educational philosophy of those who followed the teachings of Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Disciples of Christ. Hopwood believed, as did Campbell that education

should prepare both women and men to be leaders, in the home, in the community, and in the church. Education should be well grounded in Christian principles, but not narrowly sectarian.

In 1875, he and his new wife, Sarah Eleanor Larue Hopwood, moved to Johnson City, TN, where he became principal of the Buffalo Institute. In essence, he leased the property from its Board of Trustees, agreeing to pay off their debt on the property for the privilege of running the school. He was successful, and three years later signed a 22-year lease on the property. In 1881 he renamed the institution Milligan College in honor of Robert Milligan, a professor at the College of the Bible. He taught, preached, and administered the affairs of the College. The school prospered.

In 1902, Hopwood had attended a Holiness meeting to hear a friend preach. When a member of the Milligan Board heard that not only had he attended, he had participated, there was great consternation within the Milligan Board. At about the same time, Frank Bullard, a Lynchburg minister and Milligan graduate, met with a group of ministers and Lynchburg businessmen to discuss founding a college in the Hill City. The bankrupt Intermont Hotel and surrounding property were available for purchase. Bullard invited Hopwood to come to Lynchburg for the purpose of visiting the property and considering the founding of a new college.

So, in April of 1903, Josephus Hopwood met with Bullard and others at the hotel. Hopwood's autobiography records that "It was ideal. We found the best wooden building I had ever known with one hundred and twenty rooms. The great native forest trees so near and a part of the grounds, added to the impression. After some days spent in examination of title, and conditions surrounding the property, F.F. Bullard, Charles Givens, J. W. Giles and I were looking the grounds over. I said, "Boys, we will take it." "Where will you get the money?" one said. The answer was, "I will give a hundred, you a hundred, you an hundred and you a hundred. That will be \$400. We will phone Ervin Miller at Radford and he will send us a hundred and that will pay the option." With that leap of faith, Virginia Christian College was born.

Hopwood leased the property from the Board of Trustees and set about putting things in order for the new school. They bought the hotel furniture and installed a modern steam heating system. The hotel, renamed Westover, would house male and female students, classrooms, offices, dining facilities, a chapel--everything the fledgling institution needed. Both of the Hopwoods taught and served as various arms of the college administration.

Hopwood brought a few students along from Milligan, and others were recruited,

largely from Christian Church congregations in Virginia. Classes were offered at a high school level and at the college level. Within a relatively short time, the College was looking to expand its physical facilities. By 1910, the Administration Building (now Hopwood Hall) and Carnegie Hall, a men's dormitory, had been completed and arranged around a campus oval as originally planned by Hopwood. The classroom building was completed at a cost of \$30000 and the dormitory cost less than \$20000.

Dr. Hopwood taught the required senior course in moral philosophy, a standard course in church-related colleges of the day. Dr. Richard Thornton, a 1907 graduate of the College, told me that the course met early in the morning and ended whenever Hopwood decided it would end—regardless of class schedules. Dr. John Tate said that “The most distinct memory for me is the wonderment that Dr. Hopwood created in me. He was a dreamer and philosopher, insensitive to passing time, always late for his classes. . . .frequently extending his talks, regardless of class schedules, for two or three hours. He shared his ideals with the students imperatively to the extent that he became a part of every one in the school.”

Hopwood resigned unexpectedly in 1911 and the young college experienced administrative chaos as three presidents came and went in rapid succession. In 1914 the college had invited Dr. J. T. T. Hundley to leave a ministry in Fredricksburg and become the financial manager of the college. A year later he was named President, serving for 21 years. Hundley had to have been a confident person. The College he inherited was nearly bankrupt, with little prospect of meeting its financial obligations. Its very identity was uncertain. Was it to be a prep school, a Bible College, a standard college, or perhaps a seminary? At a Board meeting just prior to his taking over, the Board had actually discussed the possibility of closing the College and disposing of its assets. According to the minutes of that meeting, a young alumnus of the College had been invited to that meeting for some reason and he asked to address the Board. He gave an impassioned plea to keep the College open and rallied the Board to action. His name was Thomas Gibson Hobbs, a member of the graduating class of 1904.

President Hundley apparently did not back away from controversial ideas. At a Board member's suggestion, he appointed a committee to study the feasibility of a name change and in the summer of 1919, Virginia Christian College became Lynchburg College. The Fighting Parsons of VCC became the Hornets of Lynchburg College. In 1918, the College fielded its first football team. Hundley began to solidify the academic direction of the College, pointing it squarely in the direction of liberal arts and gaining accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1927. He recruited T. Gibson Hobbs to the Board of Trustees and Hobbs remained on the Board until his untimely death in 1942,

serving as Board Chair for most of his tenure. Hundley steered the College through the Great Depression, and I am convinced that Mr. Hobbs was hugely responsible for the patience with which local lenders treated the College and its debt. His portrait was positioned in the hall near my office in Hobbs Hall and I looked at his face every class day for 40 years, wondering how the College might have been different if he had not died prematurely.

President Hundley recognized the need for a gymnasium and set about developing a plan to solicit the citizens of Lynchburg for support. In 1923, Memorial Gymnasium, built largely with local support, opened its doors. It was dedicated to those local soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War.

In the early 1920s, he hired a young biologist to teach and serve as College Registrar. Within a few years, pamphlets were being circulated among the Christian Churches in the Commonwealth charging the College of employing a “rank modernist” who was teaching evolution. I don't know what a “rank modernist” is, but I do know that Professor Ruskin Freer was teaching biology as it should be taught. At least some of the perpetrators of the pamphlets were still angry over the name change which had removed the word Christian from the name. The faculty and the Board stood behind Professor Freer and eventually this storm subsided.

According to member Elson's fine research, Freer was the first person from LC to become a member of the Sphex Club. He was a most remarkable man. He founded the Virginia Academy of Science, the Virginia Ornithological Society, the local Appalachian Trail Club, and began the Freer Ramsey Herbarium Collection, one of the most significant collections of plant materials in the South. He taught at least five courses, most with laboratory classes, every semester until the very end of his career. He wrote a Sunday column for the News for more than 50 years. His books on the flora and fauna of the Blue Ridge are still regarded as definitive. Many of my dorm friends were both biology majors and track athletes, some cross country runners. Freer, in his mid sixties, would take them out into the mountains for field trips and walk them to death. They would drag themselves in late in the afternoon aching and sore—and amazed at the agility and stamina Freer exhibited.

Richard Clarke Sommerville came to the college in 1928, at the ripe, young age of fifty-two. He had already enjoyed careers as a teacher of science, mathematics, and Latin, as a writer of fiction and travel literature, as a sheriff's bookkeeper and jailor, as the president of the Lewisburg (West Virginia) Female Institute and Seminary, and as a professor of ethics, mental philosophy, and French. He arrived at Lynchburg College after short careers at Arkansas College and the University of the South—and after having completed the Doctorate in Psychology at Columbia

University. Professor Sommerville was a visible multi-disciplinarian, and Lynchburg College allowed him the freedom to teach in the three fields he knew and loved the most—psychology, education, and philosophy. He had an even wider influence as he performed as artist and actor within the local fine arts community.

Throughout the 1920s, President Hundley had expressed interest in creating a lake on the campus. When the Virginia Department of Highways announced plans for the development of US 460 along what is now the Lakeside Drive corridor, he deeded the land for a combination dam and causeway, resulting in the creation of College Lake shortly before his tenure as president ended.

Despite the continuing struggle with financial problems, President Hundley managed to maintain the campus facilities, to maintain excellent faculty, and at least in the thirties, to bring significant cultural resources to the college community. As he neared the end of his presidency, Hundley invited another distinguished alumnus, Dr. Riley B. Montgomery, to become his assistant. He served in that role for two years and was named President in 1936,

Montgomery graduated from Lynchburg College in 1919 and subsequently earned divinity degrees from Vanderbilt and the Ph.D. from Yale University. He was, at the time of his appointment to the presidency, one of the most respected scholars in the Disciples Church. Montgomery immediately set about to retire the ongoing and ever increasing college debt. Through aggressive fund raising efforts, with leadership from Fred McWane, Blake Isley, and former president Hundley, and Mr. Hobbs until his death in 1942, among others, the goal was reached and the debt was officially retired in January of 1947. Dr. Montgomery led the College through the years of WWII and into the sudden expansion created by millions of returning soldiers and the GI Bill. He led the Board in developing a pension plan for faculty and staff and the adoption of the 1940 AAUP Statement on Tenure. The only construction project on campus during his tenure was the addition of three Quonset huts, which provided space for an expanded library, faculty offices, classrooms a student lounge, post office and bookstore.

Upon Montgomery's resignation to accept the presidency of the College of the Bible, the church's primary seminary, Dr. Orville W. Wake became president in 1949. He was a graduate of the College, held a master's from Duke, and earned the doctorate from UVA. Wake was an experienced educator, as a teacher and a school administrator. He had previously served as Dean of the College and was also highly regarded within the church. Although he had paid his way to college by playing in a jazz band on weekends, Dr. Wake was a quiet and dignified individual. He recognized the need to expand the campus and during his 14-year tenure, the campus saw the addition of a library, a women's dormitory, a science building and

two men's dormitories. The library, financed by a generous bequest from Floyd Knight, the science building and the women's dormitory were all located on the campus oval as envisioned by Josephus Hopwood.

On a personal note, in January of my first year, just as the second semester was beginning, I received a hand written note from President Wake, asking me to make an appointment to see him. As you might guess, this was unusual and a bit upsetting to me. I did so and a few days later found myself in the president's office. Dr. Wake greeted me and asked me to sit down. He asked me how I thought I had done first semester. I thought for a few seconds—I had earned a solid B average academically, I was working 40 + hours a week in the dining hall, I was on the swim team and I was a long way from home—I replied that I thought I had done reasonably well. He looked at me and said, “I think you can do much better.” I was pretty much taken aback, but I managed to thank him and wander out of his office. And, upon reflection, I decided that he was absolutely right—I was on the dean's list every semester thereafter. Years later, when he had returned to the College as a member of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Wake would always stop by my office whenever he was on campus just to see how I was doing and to chat a bit. He became the third LC member of the Sphex Club in 1952.

I came to LC because of Rex Tillotson, who directed the Admissions Office for many years. An alumnus, Rex was concerned about people; he was forthright in his dealings with them, he was always positive and possessed boundless energy. As I approached the fall after my graduation from high school, I had decided that I could not afford college, and would attend a local junior college. Rex was a regular visitor to the Christian churches in Florida and I knew him well. In mid August, He called me to ask if I were planning to come to LC. I had been accepted, but as I explained to him, I simply did not see how I could. He asked me if a campus job would make the difference. I told him it would certainly help. So I became a waiter, which paid for my room and board and somehow managed to scrape together what I needed for tuition. Many others came to Lynchburg College because of Rex, including my wife Jan. For several years, he coached the golf team (very successfully). Of course, he traveled with the team, and the group often stopped to eat in small-town restaurants. Since the team got hungry when everyone else did, and since Rex knew where to eat, the restaurants were usually crowded, and service was often very slow. Rex would get up and pitch right in. Before anyone knew what had happened, he would have an order pad in hand, and would be waiting tables along with the (usually) harried waitress. He could walk right into the kitchen and make himself at home; they probably remembered him from the last time.

My years at LC were shaped by a remarkable group of faculty members. Shirley

Rosser was a Lynchburg native, a 1940 graduate of LC, who had served in the Navy during WWII. He returned to teach physics following the war. He earned a masters at UVA and the doctorate from Illinois Institute of Technology. His summer duty in the Navy Reserve during the fifties took him to New Mexico where he participated in various nuclear tests. LC was chosen in the late fifties to be the site for training the crew of the nuclear merchant ship Savannah. Babcock and Wilcox was the contractor for the nuclear propulsion component of the vessel. Shirley Rosser was quite simply the best teacher I ever encountered and he was one of the finest people I've ever been privileged to know. Students lined up outside his office for academic help, or just to talk with him. More than one student, including this one, found a check from Dr. Rosser in his or her mailbox with a note that might say that he had heard that you were having a tough time financially and he wanted to help. Or it might say that he was aware that you had an upcoming job interview and perhaps you needed some new clothes. Such instances were neither unusual nor infrequent.

John Mills Turner Jr. was the Dean of the College during my student years. He was a 1929 graduate of the College and the holder of a Harvard Ph.D., who had returned to teach English in 1933. As a student, he set the College record in the 2-mile run, a record that endured into the 1970s. He was the fifth LC person elected to Sphex membership and provided some of the most memorable Sphex talks in my time as a member. Soft spoken, highly intelligent, and possessing a subtle wit, Dean Turner was an outstanding classroom teacher. As was the case with Dr. Rosser, Dean Turner commanded respect simply by his presence. On a Saturday night, male students in Westover Hall had become a bit rowdy with shaving crème. At some point, they became aware that Dean Turner was standing in the background just watching with a slightly bemused expression on his face. As the commotion ceased, he said "I know you men will clean up this mess when you have finished," and he walked away. Of course the mess was immediately cleaned up and quiet was restored. My father died unexpectedly during my sophomore year and I vividly remember Dean Turner coming to my room as I was packing to go home, not knowing if I would be able to return. I remember my concern for him as he struggled to find words for comfort that was not there and as he assured me that when I returned we would find a way for me to continue. He was a great man by any measure.

Dr. Joseph Nelson taught New Testament religion courses. A veteran of WWII, he had studied engineering, taught mathematics, and history while pursuing his graduate degrees in theology. Dr. Nelson also possessed a quick wit and a broad understanding of history in addition to his professional preparation. Although basically conservative, he has a strong sense of social justice and was a frequent contributor to the letters section of the editorial page of the News and the Advance-

one of those who merited editorial comment pointing out that he was one of those left-leaning professors and possibly worse. I took a course in the life of the Apostle Paul from him—a course that required me to use my newly minted and limited knowledge of French in order to do my homework. As a faculty colleague during my teaching career at the College, Joe was a keeper of the flame for the liberal arts.

In 1952, the College found itself with an immediate need for a coach and physical education teacher. Bill Shellenberger, who had served in the Marine Corps during WWII, had recently graduated and was hired to fill that vacancy. A quiet, thoughtful and highly intelligent man, he was to change LC athletics in ways that were not dreamed of. He had played soccer while at Penn State and in `1954 the College fielded its first intercollegiate soccer team. A couple of years later, a young German who was living in Forest drove through the campus as so many did then and saw the team at practice. Helmut Werner was to lead the nation in scoring a couple of years later and would become the College's first All American in any sport. Within five years, the College had won its first Mason-Dixon soccer championship and one of the few sports championships in its history. It would not be the last. Over a career that spanned more than three decades and more than 300 collegiate wins, Coach Shellenberger did more than any other individual to popularize soccer in Virginia. But the measure of a man is far more than his athletic accomplishments. But he was much more than a coach. He was a leader, a friend and a mentor. He possessed great humility. After a soccer win, he would look at you with an almost shy grin and a twinkle in his eye—as though he was the most surprised person around. He was a man of absolute integrity; he would not have considered himself an academic, but he valued academics and there was never a question in his mind of which came first at Lynchburg College. He was respected by the entire college community for his coaching success, for his integrity and for his sense of the proper role of intercollegiate athletics. He was absolutely dedicated to the NCAA Division III philosophy of student athletes. On more than one occasion he told me that he would have been forced to leave had the College ever chosen to subsidize its student athletes.

I remember Dr. James C. Fox as a man who managed to combine coaching competitiveness with genuine Christian concern for his fellow men. The autobiographical stories which he told when traveling with his athletic teams were legendary, as was his stamina in telling them. Where else could forget a coach in uniform on the baseball field, with son Milton under one arm, trudging out to the mound to encourage a pitcher or running down the first-base line to protest (mildly) a close call.

No mention of the sciences at LC in the 50s would be complete without reference to Dr. Harold H. Garretson. Dr. Garretson was a native of Washington state, where he

attended Whitman College and earned the doctorate in physical chemistry at the University of Washington. His first job after finishing his degree was with Hughes Aircraft, where he reported directly to Howard Hughes. In those days, Hughes was a brilliant engineer and pioneer in the aircraft industry. As WWII began, Garretson was recruited from Hughes to work on a top secret project which required him to move to an unknown location in Tennessee. Following the war, he joined the LC faculty in 1945 and retired in 1976, following a brilliant teaching career. He continued to be invited back to Oak Ridge to conduct research in the summers throughout the fifties and sixties. Harold Garretson might have been the most brilliant person I ever knew. Not only did he have an extraordinary understanding of the latest developments in chemistry and physics, he also subscribed to a dozen or more New Testament journals, some published in other languages. He was a person who would have greatly enjoyed the Sphex Club as it existed then, because he had the unique ability to find the weakest point in any talk and probe that point with questions that got to the heart of the argument.

President Wake resigned in 1963, accepting a call to direct the publishing arm of the Christian Church. Dr. Carey Brewer became president of the college in January of 1964. Brewer, a native of Lynchburg, graduated from the College in 1949. After earning the Ph.D. in Public Policy from Harvard, where McGeorge Bundy was one of his favorite professors, Carey joined the staff of the Library of Congress, then became a staff member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. He served as Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness in the Kennedy Administration. Dr. Brewer literally hit the ground running. In the first few months of his presidency, he began the process of changing the College Charter to include students of all races, he launched an ambitious plan to expand the College enrollment, he reduced the official teaching load from five courses to four courses per semester, and he began to seek funding for additional campus buildings.

Perhaps more importantly in the long run, he set in motion a series of initiatives designed to make Lynchburg College Lynchburg's College. As late as the early 1960s, LC was not highly regarded locally. When people spoke of "the college," they were referring to Randolph-Macon Women's College. While out of town students from R-MWC and Sweet Briar College were allowed to open charge accounts at local department stores, that courtesy was not extended to LC students. For Dr. Brewer, increasing the visibility and prestige of the College was personal and important. So LC began to create academic programs tailored specifically to local interests. He began by building on a strong tradition of teacher preparation programs at LC by creating a Master of Arts in Teaching program. He recruited a young LC alum who was finishing his doctorate at the Darden School to build an MBA program, and he worked with Babcock and Wilcox and GE to create a master's program in physics to accommodate the needs of both industries. Both

industries used these programs as recruiting enticements so long as they were engaged in research and development.

Carey was invited to join Sphex shortly after becoming president, as by that time the custom of inviting area college presidents had apparently been established. My first knowledge of the Sphex Club came from being invited to join the Brewers at several annual meetings of the Club. I specifically remember hearing Dr. Vannevar Bush and the great naval historian, Professor Samuel Eliott Morrison.

The 19 years of the Brewer presidency were among the most dynamic years of the College's history, matched only by the years of the Garren presidency. Three residence halls, the Courts, an addition to the library, a gymnasium, a field house, a chapel, and a theatre/fine arts building were added to the campus. Dr. Brewer loved college athletics and also recognized the publicity value of successful teams. He worked to improve athletic facilities,; he hired well-known local coaches such as Wayne Proffit and Gerald Thomas, and he became their most ardent supporter. So far as I know, he is the only college president to have been tossed out of basketball games on two different occasions.

When I returned to the College to teach, one of the first to welcome me was Dr. Tom Tiller, who was then Dean of Students. Tom was the track and basketball coach during most of my student days, and I knew him primarily through friends who were on his teams. But as a colleague, he became friend and mentor. I watched him work with students during the height of the days of student unrest in the late sixties and I admired his patience, his understanding and his skill during those difficult times. As he later moved from the administrative side of the College to the faculty as a professor of counseling, so many of us turned to him as a mentor and leader. When alumni gather, Tom Tiller is one of those they most want to see. He has created an indelible legacy of friendship to so many students and faculty colleagues.

I'm almost finished, but I have three more friends to talk about. The first, and most important in my life is my wife Jan, shown here at her graduation from LC in June of 1965. We were married a few days later and she has been the wind in my sails for more than 53 years. She is not only beautiful, she is also highly intelligent and very strong. She paid the price of being a stay at home mom for our three sons until the youngest was in high school. Since then she has been an integral part of the LC family working in the Alumni and Advancement offices doing what she does best—making people feel comfortable and welcome. I owe everything to her.

You might not think of a building as a friend, but I lived in Westover Hall for four years and would not trade that experience for anything. It was a remarkable

structure, with its own set of sounds and smells. It was much larger than you might think and, despite its age, very solid. It had no insulation and the wind could literally whip through the siding in certain parts of the building. But the ancient steam heating system functioned well and the building was relatively comfortable. Fourteen foot ceilings and large windows made it comfortable in the late spring and early fall. Along with all the others who had enjoyed the building, I grieved when it was demolished. Even today, nearly a half century after its demise, when the conditions on campus are right, I find myself looking to that vacant part of the campus circle fully expecting to see that great grey lady and I am momentarily surprised when I don't. .

Finally, a friend who was not part of the Lynchburg College Family. Professor Doris Wilsdorf was my doctoral adviser and life-long friend. Born in Germany between the wars, she and her husband had emigrated to the US in the late 1950s. When the University of Virginia hired her husband to come to Charlottesville to create a new interdisciplinary department of materials science, Doris left her teaching position at Penn to join the UVA physics faculty. She was the first woman faculty member at the University who was not a nursing or education faculty member. She was kind and generous and at the same time sufficiently tough to withstand the sometimes meanness of an all male environment. Although an outstanding researcher, she also was an excellent teacher—a rare graduate faculty member who actually thought about and valued teaching. I was one of two students among the 130 graduate students in physics who planned to teach and both of us were relegated to second class status by the faculty. Doris Wilsdorf not only encouraged me to pursue a teaching career, she also went to bat for me to gain permission for me to take extra courses that were not required for graduation because I wanted a broad preparation in physics. Through the years, she kept up with me and always invited Jan and me to any reunions of her students. She took pride in my career. When the physics faculty voted not to grant her tenure, the president of the University, Dr. Edgar Shannon, reviewed her credentials and named her a University Professor, with the privilege of teaching in any department of the University she chose. During the last several months of my doctoral research, I often left home before Jan woke up and returned after she had gone to bed. Dr. Wilsdorf would call her and tell her that it would all be over soon.

When our youngest son was a senior at the University, I was asking him about his classes during the Thanksgiving break. He was taking several environmental science classes, and as was often the case, an art history class. But he told me he was taking a course in the History of Materials in the Materials Science Department. When I asked who was teaching, he said that it was taught by committee, but there was one woman who lit up the classroom when it was her turn to lecture. That woman was Doris Wilsdorf and he had no idea that I knew her.

**At the age of 65, she decided to switch research fields and within a few years she and her students had reshaped the understanding of the field of friction. She used the research to invent two new kinds of electric motors, which are manufactured at the University's Research Park. At the age of 75 she was named Virginia Inventor of the Year. When she finally retired at the age of 80, she decided to take sailplane lessons, enjoying the peace and quiet of unpowered flight over her beloved Albemarle County.**

**I could go on and on—there are so many others at Lynchburg College and beyond who have helped me along the way. But you already know many of the more recent ones. Jim Huston was my dean, my colleague and friend. He changed the academic atmosphere at Lynchburg College and has been a significant factor in my adult life. Ken West, through his parent study groups, changed our family life in significant ways. Ellen Nygaard's passion for educating children, her sense of humor and her consistent preparation sustained me through our eight years of shared school board experience. Sally Selden's unflagging energy, her grasp of how organizations work, her enthusiasm and her friendship allowed me to retire with absolute certainty that the academic side of life at the College would be in good hands. And, of course, there is Ken Garren, who provided me with opportunity and who made every day at the College a good one—but you already know these folks and you will be hearing much about Ken and his presidency over the coming months.**

**Friends are indeed to be treasured. My life has been shaped by friends seen and unseen and the older I grow, the more aware I become of the ways in which they have shaped my life. I certainly have had more than a little help from my friends, and I am eternally grateful for that.**

Julius Sigler

Graduated from LC in 1962 with a B.S. Degree in physics.  
Earned M.S., Ph.D. in physics from the University of Virginia

Joined LC physics faculty in August, 1967

Retired in June, 2015.

Married to Jan Sigler. We have three sons, Jon, a computer security engineer, James and Jeffrey. James and Jeff are Environmental Scientists.