

**Interview of Dr. James A. Butler**  
**By Nyomi M. Gonzalez**  
**Philadelphia, PA**  
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Audio File 2:

Gonzalez: You know, you obviously love English and you do have a very extensive career, in terms of you know English, with – being involved with the Wordsworth volumes and everything. How did you get turned on to the Wisters and the Belfield Estate and Peale and all that La Salle History?

Butler: I guess I was always interested in local history. I – there was – I can't put a date here, but there was a – I remember one Sunday, when I was down. I felt depressed and sort of eh, you know, just blah. The reasons are irrelevant to the story. But I said I gotta do something different. And I looked in the, in the paper and there was a house – a historic home I'd never been too, called Grumblethorpe. And I thought, that's the exact mood I am in. I went to visit a place called Grumblethorpe you know, that's – so when I got there – and I – yeah you kind of periodically wonder, well there's a Wister Street and there's a Wister Hall and Wister Woods, I wonder what the connection of that is to the novelist Owen Wister. But I never actually figured it out or thought it worth doing. But when I get over to Grumblethorpe then that was the Wister Family and I began to think about that more. And there was a man here, a print maker named Jim Lang, who has – the studio is still there, it's on Clarkson Street over by Germantown Hospital, although it's not being used as a studio now. And he came to me at one stage, and said "They're thinking of tearing my building down. You gotta do something to save it!" I said, "I don't really think I can do that. I mean I don't know much about it." And he said, "Well, people said you know, you're interested, you know, in all these Wister things." I said, "Well, I – you know, I don't know much about it." So, he said, "Well, you gotta help me here." So I really liked the guy, so I applied for a grant to go to the Library of Congress because all the Wister Papers are there. So I wanted to find out something about the house so they wouldn't tear it down. So, I get the grant, I go off down there. And I was actually looking – so I found that – the thing I needed within a day or so. I was down there for four, five days working with the paper – papers. So – and I found out that Owen Wister, the novelist, met his wife as a first time in that house; Wister was nine years old and she was three weeks old. So you know, skip that part of the story. But – [be]cause it wasn't love at first burp or something there. But they met there. So I said, we will name it after the wife and we'll slap a plaque up on there and they won't be able to tear the building down. And that's pretty much the way it played itself out. But I'm sitting down there in Washington, at the Library of Congress and – I found what I wanted after two days and I had another four or five days there, so I said well, I guess I must go through all the other papers. And there were 26,100 boxes.

Gonzalez: Wow.

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Butler: And I'm not sure I got through them all, but I got through a lot of them. And in one of them I found an unpublished novel written by Owen Wister. And there's more to the explaining how that would've worked but – how I found that. But I looked up at the scholarly gods in the air and said, "Thank You! Thank You! You've centered my way!" So I published that. I met lots of Wisters because I needed permission for some of this stuff. The book came out; I – some of these Wisters said – began giving things to me for the library. So we started a Wister Collection in the Library. The one woman – I hope she never hears this tape or this story but – we really get on very well. She gave me a great big chest of Wister Family Papers, and – but she was a little teary about this, and she – you know, [be]cause this whole – all her family papers, and I took her up in the library, to the third floor and we looked out and I said, "Here's where your great-grandparents were born, your grandparents bought that house up there that you can see," and I would – this was dynamite theater, and she looked at me, tears in her eyes, and said "These papers and all the other Wister Papers belong here." And I said, "They sure do." [laughs] And lots of other Wisters have given things too, so we have a – we now have a wonderful and incredible collection of Wister materials. And I think it grew out of this depressed Sunday, looking in the *Inquirer* for a place to go. So, a couple times I've – I was on television being interviewed on – for about the Wister Family book, that was – I read some of it on the air – a couple good friends say, "I was in for a colonoscopy and I looked up and you were on the television!" I said, "Thanks, thanks for the thought." [laughs] But, this TV show the – I was on – there was – the guy in front of me had a talking parrot so – and I was going to be interviewed for the Wister book. So the guy goes out and I'm looking you know, so you're sitting there watching him perform, you know for the interview. And the parrot wouldn't talk, so this incredible parrot – with, I don't know, knew a thousand words, but the parrot wouldn't talk. So the guy comes off heartbroken, and said, "I can't help it, the parrot came from a broken nest!" [laughs] So, by the time I got out there, they were so happy to have somebody who actually talked, they let me read from the book and all those things. So, the book sold well and the other thing that helped here is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wister's book *The Virginian*, which was the first Western Novel, was coming up so I – the Wister family asked me to give a talk at Saunderstown in Rhode Island and there was a very nice party. And – so I met lots of people there. So, we're still getting donations from Wister Family papers. And the collection is, at this stage not used, not just by people interested in Wister but as a kind of cross section of upper crust Philadelphians at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So, it can be used for all kinds of research. And the people using the collection now for projects, I had no idea they'd be interested in, but the collection is wide enough that it can be used for many kinds of things. So, it's been a kind of second career in a way. And then – what followed from that in some ways is I began to give tours of the house. So, I've learned a lot about Charles Wilson Peale. We gave an honorary – and La Salle has been very supportive, we gave an Honorary Degree to a Peale scholar at one stage. So, then I've learned a lot about the house. And, I enjoy talking to La Salle students about the house. So it's a kind of late – I mean I can't say it's quite a career change, but it's a little jolt at the end of my career to be a tour guide. And I can be a closet actor – doing these tours is kind of a very dramatic thing. I have lots of stories to tell. And they're great fun to do. So, that part has been quite fun.

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Gonzalez: Were the tours – after doing the tours and learning so much about Peale, is that how you kind of got interested in his time at Belfield? And eventually published your Peale book a few years ago?

Butler: Well, as I say I've always kind of been interested in local history. And it seemed – at the back of the book – when I was – I tell this as in the author's note, it was – when I was a student here the property was so bizarre. I would hang out the windows of Wister Hall and look at it and think about this because we're in the middle of, whatever was then the fourth largest city in the U.S., and pretty much right in the middle of it and you look across there – and when I was a student in the [19]60s there were – there was a cow, there were horses, there were ducks and chickens, they were growing crops – there was this farm right, you know within sight of row houses in the middle of a city. And they – you know, they have delivery trucks come in with hay for the cow, and – bizarre, just a bizarre thing. Because I'm associated actually with the Farm, I get the mail sometimes from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. And I had a letter, maybe three or four years ago informing me that our cows, our herd of cows – of cattle, had not – their inoculations were not on file and up to date and I should remedy this immediately and this was forwarded to me. So I gently wrote back and said, that the herd had been much reduced in recent years, in fact we didn't have anymore. Besides I didn't own the property. But – so, as I say I was interested in the property as a student. And – when I came back I just wanted to learn some more about it. And it was absolutely forbidden to go there. The people had – they had signs up about, it said, "Beware of Snakes" and things; anything to keep students away from the property. And it – there were fences around, more of it than now, it wasn't as open. So, it just seemed, it seemed like a Faulkner novel, having this farm right in the middle of the city. So the – and – so, it's very interesting when we bought the property, and was over there pretty quickly to walk all through the things. So, I like doing the – as I say, I like doing the tours.

Gonzalez: Have you incorporated any of the Wister/Peale history in to any of the – your courses?

Butler: Yes, I do some of it. The – in the freshman Honors course I'm doing now there's – I'm having them read the first – the Peale part of the book I did on the Wister Estate – on Charles Wilson Peale at Belfield. And then we go over there and we have that class over there and I talk about various sites over there. That's the answer to the universal cry, "Can we meet outside?" And I say, "Yes!" We just get a good nice day, toward the end of class and go over and sit down out there and talk about the landscape and talk about the house. I teach a Philadelphia Literature course. I did it as a graduate course last year. And in that I talk about Peale and I talk about some Owen Wister novel. I didn't do the novel itself; I did some other things in that class. I did the novel *Romney*, which was the one I found at the Library of Congress. The – I gave them – the student[s] the book by the way. I always – I think its borderline immoral to make students buy your book [laughs]. So, when I teach a book that I've done, I tend to give them the book, which is why I don't do the Wordsworth ones, [be]cause they cost too much [laughs] or whatever there. But – yeah, its – and I teach a play by Tom Stoppard called "Arcadia," which is also about landscape gardening. So there's lots of connections with that, over there on the property. And I think, generally in my experience, students are fascinated by the property too. They just – even

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without the cows, and the chickens and the goats and the horses that they – and it's a very old building. The – parts of it probably might go back to 1708. So and – it may be the second oldest college building in use in the country – the back part of Belfield. So, I sometimes think – students think there's not much heritage around, and you know, there's – we've got chunks of it. So, I've also done tours for the [cough] Wingohocking Watershed people, who are interested in flooding and water and the stream that used to be underneath Belfield Avenue. I've done a number of tours for Historical Societies. So – and some of these tours are, I mean for people who are not interested in the Wisters or Peale or – and they're interested in lots of things. So, fun to do.

Gonzalez: That's good, that you're enjoying this kind of burst at the end of your career.

Butler: Yeah, something different.

Gonzalez: Yeah, it's always good to have some change.

Butler: Right. And it's a – yeah it's a – and I belong to a number of local Historical Societies. I belong to the Old York Road Historical Society and something called the Jenkinstown, because it's older than Jenkintown, Jenkinstown Lyceum, which is, as far as I can tell, the only thing the Jenkinstown Lyceum does is have a lecture and a dinner twice a year. So you sit down, you eat salmon, listen to somebody give a lecture and do it again six months later, and that's the entire purpose of the group. But its nice, nice group of people, and interesting to hear the talks. And there's – again it introduces you to a whole new batch of people. So the – I've done some talks at some local places – local historical houses. I've turned down a few because I'd been asked to talk on something and sometimes I've said, "Oh, let me think about it," and then I realize I don't know a damn thing about that. I don't think I can really talk about it, I know absolutely nothing about the subject matter. So, I turned one down for that purpose, about a couple of weeks ago. But sometimes I do know things about it and they're fun to do. Again, they're completely outside my training and my field, and they're at the level of hobby and so it's nice to have an encompassing hobby. So, I [cough] I'm probably – I would like to be doing maybe somewhat fewer number of these tours. I might do 10, 15, 20 a year, something like that. So – I used to be able to do two or three of them a day but the dramatic performance is getting harder to sustain through that. When I do the tour it's like a – I have a script of maybe, I don't know, I probably have eight ten hours of stories to tell but of course it's only a fifty minute an hour tour. And I just reach in to the bag of tricks and pull out these seven or eight stories to tell. But I've [got] a lot more of them. So if you take the tour, you don't get the same one each time. And I don't give the same one each time.

Gonzalez: Now is the Belfield property – is that on the National Register for Historic Landmarks?

Butler: It is. It was one of the first. It was put on in 1966 and back then there were only a couple hundred that were – now there's many, many ones. But when it was put on, there were only a few

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hundred in the country on – so it was very early – put on very early and put on at a time when there were very few National Historic Landmarks.

Gonzalez: That's really awesome.

Butler: It is awesome. Yes, right.

Gonzalez: Yeah, I like that. Now, are any of your students interested in maybe, taking over with the tours or helping with that?

Butler: Well, I told you my secret plan to get Lisa Jarvinen involved with this *[laughs]*.

Gonzalez: I think she'd be great.

Butler: Yeah, I think she'd be very good at it too. There's a group of people who are, I think they're forming some sort of Belfield Club to clean up over there. And involvement that I kind of wish I did not have, is two of my students found a underground piping cavern system, and they crawled a hundred feet in to that – it was exposed by recent rain, so they climbed under the – under Belfield, under the property, on their hands and feet through about a hundred feet of an old tunnel that was probably dug by Peale. And they then managed to back themselves out. They came to see me, and I – they were both Bio Majors, I asked if methane gas had any meaning to them. *[laughs]* And I said, "Did you tell anybody you were going in? Because it would nice when you don't make it out, we'd know where to drive the cross in to the ground to commemorate your passing." *[laughs]* But – so I guess I admire their initiative but it was a stupid thing to do. But – yeah, its – I think that when people get over there and they find out all the history of this particular property that's right across the street – plus in some – certain times of the year it's beautiful, when the Wisteria comes out in May it's really a sight to behold. So its – I'm not tired of the property yet. And it has remnants of Peale that are in – there's a cave over there built by Peale. There are the remains of a pond that he put in and – which had a fountain in which balanced a crystal ball. With it he lit a candle in and the candle might burn for maybe forty seconds before it went out from lack of oxygen. So, - again not Cinerama or television but you know, but pretty impressive to people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And the property is associated with Thomas Jefferson who wrote to Peale regularly about the property and vice – versa. So, lots of – and – lots of interesting things going on. Bill Clinton was entertained in the parlor of the property when we owned it. So, lots of good vibes coming from the house.

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* Are there any Peale descendants? I know there are a ton of Wisters.

Butler: Thousands *[laughs]* Yeah, I think [he had] seventeen kids.

Gonzalez: Wow.

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Butler: So, for a while – when there was a Belfield – or a Peale exhibit at the Art Museum almost every tour I took had a Belfield descendant on [it]. We made a movie and there was a Belfield descendant on the faculty in the English department, she did the narration of the film. They're all over the place. I guess when you have seventeen kids, you know, it tends to build up as you go down to the generations.

Gonzalez: Yeah, that's a really large family.

Butler: Right.

Gonzalez: Now, I know you're the Curator for the Wister Special Collections.

Butler: Right.

Gonzalez: Do any of the students outside of your classes or just you know, La Salle students in general, do they use that for any research? Or even just to take a look and see what it's about?

Butler: Yeah. The – I've taught – one of the Honors classes I taught was in a local history course, the [cough] – they all did papers on some aspect of the – historic aspects of La Salle's campus. Actually that's all on a webpage so that, that's generally accessible. It's from off the homepage for the Wister Collection. As I say, the collection gets used for things that I wouldn't expect. There's a woman who just wrote a book on the first kidnapping for money in the U.S. and she used the collection extensively. It took place in Germantown and we have lots of letters about what it's like to live in Germantown in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So she used that a lot for her book. Some local historians – I have – we have a lot of photographs of the area so it gets used for that purpose. We get a number of requests to reproduce photographs in books. There's a course underway at the moment called *Museum Studies* and that class is using that collection as well. I gave a introduction to that collection earlier for that grad class. I guess that's in the one wing of the History M.A. Program. And it generally I can – I think both in English and in History there's several projects that would be possible to do with that collection. So if people were working on dissertations in either the M.A. in English or in History there's primary source material there. So the – I have a number of projects in mind that people could work on over there. We have a number of the papers of a woman who is the first museum keeper in the U.S., connected with the University Museum at Pennsylvania, first Egyptologist, certainly woman Egyptologist in the U.S. There's a couple books about her but they haven't used any of the material we have, which was again one of those things that comes to you in a chest. So, that one came to us because – I had a call out of the blue from somebody that said, "Are you the Wister guy?" and that was in a house that actually some of the people who also – who were born in the Peale house lived in, in Center City. I climbed up on a ladder there and found – there was this big chest full of papers there. It was in the house – they bought – they were selling the house and this was in the house when the house was bought fifty years ago. [cough] So, I said with lust in my heart, "I want this chest!" [laughs] And they gave it to me. [laughs] And they gave it to me for free. So.

Gonzalez: That's even better.

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Butler: Yeah, that was even better. When I was, I may have told you this, when I was reaching in to this and pulling things out, I pulled a mouse out at one stage. Then I decided I probably should use gloves *[laughs]* to reach in to this chest. So.

Gonzalez: Yeah, definitely use gloves the next chest you happen to...

Butler: Next one that comes along, whatever.

Gonzalez: Yeah.

Butler: Ok. I will do that.

Gonzalez: *[laughs]*

Butler: The downside to this is when you get one of these chests and you have to work on cataloguing it. It takes months, years sometimes. I still have some stuff I'm working on from – but not from that, that chest I think is completely done. But – and again the cataloguing is pretty important because you – with all archival material the cataloguing has to be pretty specific because people don't always know what they're looking for. They're looking for something that tells you about life in Germantown in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the cataloguing has to reflect pretty clearly what the letters are about in order to be useful for people – for students to use – students or scholars to use.

Gonzalez: Is any of the Wister Collection digitized?

Butler: Yes, there's a good bit of it. We have maybe 60, 70 Owen Wister letters, and they're all digitized. So that is the intent with the collection. We have many, many things that are art work items and we've – and we're trying to get it all the photographs digitized as well. So – and I mean, ideally down the line it'd be good to get it all digitized, but there's probably tens of thousands of sheets of paper and whether we'll get to doing that or not... not in my lifetime.

Gonzalez: Yeah, that's quite a large endeavor.

Butler: But the people who [are] involved now in Special Collections and our new Digital Arts Library are very anxious to get everything up on the web. So, the more – yes that's the future, to get it all on the web.

Gonzalez: Have you recently acquired any new pieces? Or any new letters for the collection?

Butler: Well, we're always acquiring things. The last thing I bought was about, probably 600 books that had been in Owen Wister's library. And a number of them – and that's in a house

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called Butler Place, which is now torn down; near Ogontz – the park at the corner of Ogontz and Olney is called Kemble park, and that's one of the entrance ways up to this big mansion from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. So, it's a nice collection. The actress Fanny Kemble, the most famous American actress of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lived in the house. And – books with her signature in [them] and Owen Wister's signature in [them] so it gives the – in some cases the books are interesting for themselves, but in other cases they're interesting because they're association copies, the – owned by Wister, owned by his – in some cases by his children, there's some Howard Pyle, P-Y-L-E. Illustrated books and – they're beautiful books but they're interesting but they're – because the grandmother who lived over here, gave it to her grandchildren on our property, gave it to her grandchildren who lived there. So, some of the things, some of those books are important, because you can use them in exhibits. There was a famous divorce case in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Fanny Kemble, who was against slavery and her husband who had owned slaves in Georgia, many, many slaves in Georgia. And – so there are a couple of – there's – one of the books that I bought is a book ranking the races by the shapes of their heads, you know, that kind of racism. And there's also a legal book on, about what husbands owe their wives legally. And the answer pretty much is nothing! [*laughs*] So, if you were doing an exhibit they would be – and they're his copies of those books. So, that would be – there would be good things to use in exhibits. So, partly what – in our Special Collections we're not only collecting for things to be used, but we're collecting for things to be put in exhibits in the library. And I've done maybe, not just with Wisters, with some other things, I've probably put together maybe 20, 25 exhibits in the library over the last fifteen or twenty years. They're small exhibits, we have five or six cases. But its – but you know its – there's a lot of traffic on the first floor; and, you know, people walk over, they look at things. Hard to know where influence starts and stops. Something that went in somebody had never thought of, and you see something new. And it's a – and some of these are – some of the exhibits are just there because the books are – be beautiful, or their prints that go with them, and some make historical points. I want to do an exhibit, I'll probably get this done in the next year or two, I wanna do an exhibit on slavery in this neighborhood. And I think – I don't think we think about that; slavery happens in far off places. And on the ground where we are sitting now, there were slaves; people owned slaves. The – one of the largest slave holders in the South lived at Butler Place over there on the – and was frequently on this property. So. His one granddaughter married Owen Wister, so. I'm sorry, his granddaughter is – he is an ancestor of Owen Wister. So, the – and just you know, get students thinking in a somewhat different way about slavery. When you think there were slaves on this property, I think that changes the game a little bit. And you think, oh it's not something that happens far away in the South, it happens here too.

Gonzalez: Yeah, I know through my classes and you know, history classes and things like that many people do forget that slavery did exist, you know up North, especially in Philadelphia. So that would be, I think a really interesting exhibit to have on you know, slave holding property.

Butler: Right. Yeah. Yeah. [*cough*] The one – the man who had slaves was a man named Richardson, who was the first Alderman of Philadelphia, a Quaker. And again that's [*cough*] it's hard to sort out, with Quakers and slavery, we don't tend to think that way very much. On the



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other hand the first protest against slavery in the U.S. took place in Germantown too with a group of Quakers. So, there's some stories to tell.

Gonzalez: A lot of interesting history. I think a lot of students would really benefit from that.

Butler: As I may have said to you last week, I'm accused sometimes of being a closet historian. But, I'm out of the closet now.

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* Welcome to the club! *[laughs]*

Butler: *[laughs]* Thank you very much.

Gonzalez: If you need any help on your exhibit...

Butler: That's right. Yes, right, yes. So. But, I mean – I mean, I guess its back in a way to what we were talking about, majors and things. Disciplines always seemed to me irrelevant. There's things that are worth knowing and fun to know, sometimes they're the same things and I don't particularly care what field it's in. Its – what I'm reading now is a book about Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Stowe – and the Beecher family. The next book I'm going to read is a book by, written by a former student. It's a teen book, a young adult book. And I read lots of science books. So. And I – I mean I don't draw – and I don't really think about drawing distinctions that they're fields, I mean its all – its all things worth, you know, all interesting things worth knowing about. So.

Gonzalez: I think it's probably all relevant in the end. I mean there are some English connections with the Wister, having Owen Wister be a novelist.

Butler: Right. Yeah. I think that's, that's an excuse in a way. I think it's the history in the – I like – I just – I like the local aspect. The study of American History, which I love, but it's kind of hard for students to grasp. And I've given several talks to students about this property. And when you say to a student – I say, "Are you interested in History?" and they say, "No, it's terrible. I hate it." I said, "Would you be interested to know that the residence hall that you are living in is where General Howe's troops camped during the Revolutionary War? That his troops camped on the exact same site where you eat dinner at Tree Tops." They say, "Wow!" *[laughs]* So at that stage, they're hooked! They said, "How can I find out more about that?" I said, "Well, I have a short reading list here that's about the Revolutionary War, that you might have a look at." So.

Gonzalez: Yeah, History has a very well known bad rap among students. So you do have to find that little something to get them hooked, or you know, they're lost.

Butler: I – I mean I don't know I – when a student says to me, you know, when I'm going through helping them put rosters together, when somebody says, "I have no interest in history," I – I mean I'm polite, but I just can't – I can't fathom that. *[laughs]* I really can't quite get it. I

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mean how can you not have any interest in you know, how you came to be and how your country came to be. And wherever the hell we're going.

Gonzalez: Yeah, there's so many different facets of History. I think students are interested in things and don't really make that connection to History. You know like family history, or things like that, they don't kind of make that connection. But we're all related.

Butler: Yeah.

Gonzalez: It's all interesting.

Butler: I'm working now on an ancestor who was in the Civil War, on Sherman's March to the Sea. So – I mean I – I guess, I'm kind of generally interested in Sherman's March to the Sea and its importance, both in ending the war and the brutality with which it took place. But I'm now interested in little battles, like Bentonville, North Carolina when I see he fought in that battle, you know, something I would never pay any attention to if I didn't have an ancestor who fought in the battle. So, everyday is busy, doing lots of things.

Gonzalez: Never boring, that's always good.

Butler: No and I – and retirement is good for that because the – I certainly don't have a sense that I have less to do, I just have a sense that what I'm doing is more what I want to do in some cases. I love students dearly, but I like them a little less as I grade their freshman compositions.

*[laughs]*

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* Do you have a year that you hope to be you know, fully retired by?

Butler: The way it's set up at La Salle you can be partially retired for five years. And – so that's when you *[phone rings]* kind of run out.

[Pause in the recording to allow Dr. Butler to take a phone call]

Butler: That call was about a Belfield tour. *[laughs]* So. Two of them on the second of May. So.

Gonzalez: Oh, wow.

Butler: Two of the twenty a year or so. Or something like that.

Gonzalez: You have to call to make an appointment for those?

Butler: Because it's a President's House, not that he lives there, but he – that's – his offices are there, that, we have to work around his schedule. Occasionally he might be meeting with – they might have a meeting of five or six trustees about something and he would be you know, in the –

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in some area of the house. But he's generally been extremely supportive. So it's not – not been a problem.

Gonzalez: That's good. Especially since you know it is still a working building. So.

Butler: Right. Yeah. And I don't have a key, I don't want a key. But the – I work pretty closely with security getting the thing opened and locked up. And it has a very good security system. Anybody listening to this, it has a very good security system! *[laughs]* Vaporizes you on contact!

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* Oh, my goodness.

Butler: *[laughs]*

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* Now, you mentioned earlier that you put together exhibits in Connelly Library.

Butler: Yes.

Gonzalez: Have you ever been asked to use any of the Wister stuff in bigger exhibits, at you know historic sites or museums?

Butler: I was also Co-Curator, or whatever the title is, for the – we had a very nice Peale exhibition in the Art Museum. And I was not involved with the – I made some suggestions of things to borrow but the kind of mechanics of borrowing from people was done by the Library staff. But I and some other – the three of us wrote the labels and the descriptive materials for that. So that was probably the biggest exhibit I was involved with, with that. And that one we borrowed things from several different museums and libraries. Oh, I did something at Swarthmore once. I did an exhibition there on English Lake District landscape, both in art and in books. And [I] did a little catalogue for that. *[glances at shelves behind me]* No, it's not behind you; I don't know where it is. But – so that was fun to do. That used a lot of their books and some of my – some of the things I own. And a number of prints that I own of the English Lake District, 18<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century prints.

Gonzalez: Do you hope to do more exhibits? Is that something that you've become really interested in?

Butler: I like doing that, yes. Its – yeah I have three or four in mind in the – for the library. I don't know when I will get to them. The – it probably depends on what else the director has in mind for – he has up an exhibit now in the library. So – generally they're looking for ideas for exhibits because they don't want to have empty display cases. Its – an empty display case is a bad exhibit; it's a minimalist exhibit. *[laughs]*

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* Does the library staff help you put these together? Or do you have...

40:07

Butler: They have. Its – I've gotten a little more professional at it before – than I did before. So its – occasionally I – I think in one case I had a grant from [the] Pennsylvania Humanities Council to do one of these exhibits. One of the ones on – I think for the hundredth anniversary of publication of Wister's *Virginian* – which again – we had a – some outside people come to that, and we had a couple of receptions for Wisters – for Wister family members. So, yeah but the library has been very helpful with that.

Gonzalez: So, we've been talking a lot about History and things like that. And I know you've left quite a mark here at La Salle. You just have a really, very long and very interesting life and career here. What do you think your legacy will be?

Butler: *[laughs]*

Gonzalez: *[laughs]* I know it's one of those questions. But...

Butler: Yeah, that's one for other people to answer rather than for me to answer. The – I think wherever one teaches the waters tend to close over you as you go down *[laughs]* so maybe the answer to that is nothing *[laughs]* in some ways. I think the – I hope the Wister Collection – the Wister Collection has reached a critical mass now, I think it – if it's a smaller collection, I think it could be said, oh we got rid of Butler, let's get rid of the collection now too. But I think it has reached a state of things where it's probably – the Vietnam Collection is the most important one over there and maybe the Bible one – the Collection of Bibles and the Vietnam and things, but the Wister Collection is probably the third most important collection there. And it's something we can continue to add too and build on because it has neighborhood connections and Philadelphia connections. So I think that's some legacy. I think the other legacy that one produces is in students. So that's not tangible in terms of you – they're sort of hanging around La Salle all the time but I think they're – for better or worse, there [are] a bunch of students out there who I hope to have said interesting things to in classes and who've certainly said interesting things to me in classes, who I have learned from and I hope they've learned something from me too. So, I think that's enough of a legacy. As I quoted before, it's all about the students.

Gonzalez: Ok, well thank you again for sitting down with me. I really appreciate your time.

Butler: Ok, thank you.

End of Audio File 2:

43:00