

*Mr. Finney discusses the circumstances which led him to return to Gilman to teach and coach in 1954. Conducting the interview is one of his former students, alumnus Mac Barrett '67.*

**Barrett:** At what point did the thought of a career in education cross your mind and how did you find yourself leaning toward education and a possible return to Gilman?

**Finney:** Okay, right. I tried to speak about some of that in here, but I like to-I mean, to write about it. I like to speak about it because-actually, Mac, when I-I was in the religion department at Princeton and I like to say I was in the religion department because that was my burning desire to be-at the outset, I'm talking about. I had taken a religion course and the prerequisites before you majored at the end of your sophomore year and I really liked it. There was a wonderful guy named Leland Jameson, who was a teacher in the department. I also had taken some courses in other departments, and I was a struggling student at Princeton. I had my most success in the religion department, so I sat down with this fellow and he eventually became my advisor in junior and senior year. He laid out a program and also talked about options. He said-Look, there are only eight people in my class, including me eventually-I was one of the last ones who elected the religion department as a major. Others took courses from the department, but they weren't majors. And most of those guys were on their way to being PhDs in philosophy and religion or religion, or being members of the cloth, being ministers. And I took it because it was almost what I thought I was interested in and had my greatest success, but hadn't thought about where to collar or anything like that. I also was in the NROTC [phonetic] and so when I graduated...Fifty-one, right. The Korean War was going and I had orders to go to amphibious school in San Diego. When that was finished, we went right to Korea. While I was in Korea, I was in the amphibious corps and we were doing various things. I won't go into that in detail, but I ended up having an annual physical after I had been there for a year, and had a spot on my lung. They took that very seriously and said, "Hey, you might have TB." I said, "Look, I feel fine and my ship is about to go home. I want to get back to the States." They said no. And so they took some more tests and threw me in the Acuska [phonetic] hospital, Japan.

At any rate, I ended up at Fitzsimons' Army Hospital, which was a specialist place for dealing with suspected TB. And I did test positive to it, but a lot of people do. You probably would test positive for it.

Anyway, to make a long story short, Dr. Guthrie Spears, who was a minister at Brownwell Presbyterian Church [phonetic], which was our church-we engaged in letter-writing and he sent me a lot of interesting things to read. And so did Leland Jameson, my old advisor. And I got really involved in reading portions of the Bible, particularly the prophets and the wisdom literature and the parables. And also some of the commentaries that these guys sent me. I was

involved in that hospital for ten months, for gosh sakes, and my two-year [unclear], but I stayed another half year until I was released from the hospital.

To make a long story short, I thought: Okay, this is a sign that all that's happened, daggone it, I probably ought to think seriously about going to divinity school. And so I started corresponding with Union Theological Seminary, which Dr. Spears suggested, and eventually they said, Yeah, we'd like to accept you and we'll do it in the fall of 1954. And I got out of the service effective January 1, '54 and came home and Mr. Callard called me up and asked me to come in and talk. He said, "Look, would you like to do some tutoring and some coaching and I have some religion classes I'd like you to join and take over." Do you remember the 9th. grade religion class?

**Barrett:** Yes.

**Finney:** Yeah. Anyway, so I did that.

**Barrett:** Once a week, as I recall.

**Finney:** It was actually-I think there were three or four sections and it was once a week. That's exactly right. Then it became twice a week, subsequently. At any rate, I really enjoyed the kids, the experience. And Mr. Callard was such a magnificent guy. I knew that because he had been headmaster and there were many years I was at Gilman from '43 on.

**Barrett:** But you weren't- if I'm understanding correctly-you weren't thinking of Gilman prior to his phone call.

**Finney:** No, I wasn't. I wasn't thinking about it. Actually, I think he called me on the second day I was home and I don't know why he did, but at any rate, it was daggone nice of him.

**Barrett:** Very fortuitous that he made the phone call.

**Finney:** Yeah. And then at the end of that year, I had-he called me in. He said, "Now, look. We have an opening and I want you to pick up history and continue with religion and coach." And I said, "Mr. Callard, I'm signed up to go to Union Theological Seminary later this summer." I said, "I really have loved it here and loved the atmosphere and the kids and all and I'll think about it." He said, "Sure. Take all the time you want." I said, "Mr. Callard, I'm not going to take all the time I want."

At any rate, then my grandmother got wind of it. We had lived with my grandmother all during the war years because Dad was away and eventually my other brother was away and we rented

our house and moved in with her. She was a magnificent lady: Katherine Stewart [phonetic], my mother's mother. She would always ask me any kind of question.

**Barrett:** Anything was fair game.

**Finney:** That's exactly right. And she said-she heard me talking to Mom about this issue and she said, "Well, I'll tell you exactly what you should do." And I said, "Well, what's that, KK?" And she said, "Do you want to work with old people like me who are set in their ways and work with us for all the rest of your life or do you want to work with young people who are developing and you can help them and support them." And I said, "Okay." That was quite a good question.

**Barrett:** That helped crystallize your decision.

**Finney:** That's exactly right. It did. And so I went back to Mr. Callard. I said, "Mr. Callard, I really appreciate the opportunity and I'd like to enthusiastically accept. The only thing I'm worried about is whether I'm qualified for the classroom teaching." And he said, "I'll take care of that." He said, "You and I will work together as we have in the religion." And actually he ended up really not doing-he said, "You're doing fine. You just go ahead and teach it." Then he said, "And you can be with Mr. Pine [phonetic] and I'm going to put you in his office and you can attend his history class before yours every day."

**Barrett:** And that was the end of divinity school.