Degree Awarded 40 Years Later

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A college degree more than forty years in the making has finally become a reality for a Tennessee man who says WKU made him the person he is today.

Amy Bingham has more on his nostalgic return to campus in this week’s View from the Hill.

“I spent more on myself for a pair of boots than I’ve ever spent.

I promise you that shy little country boy that came out of Gallatin Tennessee could not have done the things that I’ve done in my life if I had not had this experience.”

Charlie Hall started his journey on the hill in 1978 when he arrived at Pearce Ford Tower as a freshman.

“I knew the address of Pearce Ford but I didn’t know anything about it. I pull up to that tall building, taller than anything I had ever been in.”

He found out later it was then-university president Dero Downing who he asked where he needed to go.

“He looked at Pearce and I looked up and he said all the way to the top son, all the way to the top and I was on the 26th floor.”

Charlie may have been eight hours shy of graduating when he left the hill in 1983 but he didn’t leave empty handed.

“I met my wife and I will love Western always for that because she was the answer to prayers.”

Now Charlie has had another dream come true, finishing the degree he started all those years ago.

“This is the culmination of four plus decades of attempting to get that degree that I never thought I was gonna get when I graduated from high school in 1978.”

In 1987 Hall made up his remaining classes at a community college but Western had no record of it.

“When I came back to file for the actual degree they said no your degree plan wasn’t filed and I said lets go ask Dr. Brown, well we can’t, Dr. Brown is dead.”

His latest attempt to ask about a foreign language requirement landed him on the phone with registrar Jennifer Hammond.

“So I got to thinking about that and wondering if that was all he needed to finish his degree and if that was really necessary.”

Turns out, Hall had what he needed to finally join his wife and two sons in being college graduates.

“Having supported folks through four bachelors, a masters and a JD, my son’s a law degree graduate, I thought I’m gonna finish up. I’m finishing a little bit later than I thought.”

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

Hall is one of nearly 170 former students who’ve received their degrees since the program was restarted. For more information on Degrees When Due, you can email finish @WKU dot Edu

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