

ALFRED R. ARMSTRONG

William and Mary already was a family tradition when Alfred Armstrong entered in 1928. After a distinguished career as a student he stayed in the chemistry department, filling in for a professor on leave; he has been a faculty member since 1933 and will retire this year (1976). Mr. Armstrong has an uncanny ability to recall a story (or better yet, stories) illustrating the character of a person, an ability he exhibited in these interviews. The order of the stories was shuffled slightly in the transcription phase at Mr. Armstrong's request.

INDEX SHEET

Interviewee Alfred Armstrong  
 Date of interview February 11, 1976  
 Place Rogers Hall, W&M  
 Interviewer Emily Williams  
 Session number 1  
 Length of tape 60 mins.

Contents:	Approximate time:
early life	3 mins.
as student at W&M professors, Chandler	8 mins.
appointment to chemistry dept.	8 mins.
J. S. Bryan as president entertaining	5 mins.
Norfolk grade scandal	2 mins.
Armstrong's appointments under	3 mins.
Pointet as president, athletic scandal	5 mins.
selection of J.D. Chandler as president	2 mins.
working with AD Chandler	4 mins.
tenure of presidents, J.A.C. Chandler to Graves	5 mins.
Review of deans	10 mins.

Alfred Armstrong

February 11, 1976

Williamsburg, Virginia

Williams: Dr. Armstrong, the first thing I wanted you to discuss this morning was your previous contact with the College of William and Mary. I know that you were at the time living in Texas, and how was it you were associated with the college?

Armstrong: Well, my father died when I was four; this was 1915. <sup>[He]</sup> Left my mother with four youngsters way before social security -- no way to take care of them. I had a great-uncle who had been living in Texas for some years *visiting* back in Virginia. He took a liking to me, and at the end of his weeks' visit carted me off to Texas. He had been a student at William and Mary back in the early '90s. He had a certificate in surveying; I'm not sure that it came from William and Mary. He had studied Latin and Greek here. He had letters from Dr. Lesslie Hall of the English department, <sup>and</sup> Dr. T. J. Stubbs who was in mathematics. These letters began: "To whom it may concern: Edward Ashby Armstrong is a young man of high moral character and understanding <sup>of</sup> both Latin and Greek" -- or such words to that effect -- "He would be a good teacher in any school where he might be employed." I got hold of those letters in the '30s and several years ago gave them to *the* college for the archives. (Soon after I went to Texas my Uncle Ed developed arthritis and was bedridden, a wheelchair patient.) The first books I remember were <sup>in</sup> Latin

*He spent much time translating Latin and Greek.*

and Greek, including Gildersleeve's Grammar. We had a farmer neighbor named "Prickly Pear" Smith who used to come over Sunday afternoons, and he <sup>and</sup> ~~help~~ Uncle Ed read Latin and Greek <sup>poetry</sup> to each other. ¶ When my uncle in Texas died in 1927 I came back to Virginia and lived with an aunt in Rappahannock County. That was my last year of high school. During my last year of high school someone asked, "Well, what are you going to do next year?" I said, "I haven't any idea." My aunt said, "You're going to William and Mary where your Uncle Ed was and your Uncle Will and his son Billy." So the day I graduated, at the end of graduation exercises at Sperryville, I had my application to William and Mary, and it was signed by G. Tyler Miller, who was superintendent of public instruction in the Warren-Rappahannock schools, <sup>he</sup> later went to Charlottesville in a similar position. He was state superintendent of public instruction and then spent many years at Madison <sup>College</sup> as president. ¶ I came to William and Mary in September 1928. My plans were to have freshman English under Dr. J. Lesslie Hall -- ~~thus~~ make the third generation--but Dr. Hall had died in February. As a freshman I had chemistry under Dr. Guy, math under Dr. Stetson, and freshman English under Dean Grace Warren Landrum. Dean Landrum, as I found out later, insisted on teaching nine hours every semester in addition to her duties as dean, which kept her eligible for membership in the A.A.U.P. ¶ English 101 in those days was

divided into three sections: A, B, and C. A was the dumb-bell section-- that didn't fool anybody. B was the average, and C was the star section. John Baldwin, who majored in Latin and English and ended up as head of the biology department at William and Mary, Charlie Shreeves who has just retired as director of the curriculum in the New-  
 part News public schools, [and] Lee Chewning who's from Richmond were among the thirty students in the section C under Dean Landrum. We finished the usual freshman English course before Thanksgiving, and then Dean Landrum had the rest of the time to do as she wished with the class. Each student picked an author and read in depth. I remember that John Baldwin picked Gandhi, and my author was Thomas Hardy. At the beginning of the second semester the schedule carried Dean Landrum as the continuing teacher, and someone else showed up. So after about the second class we got a committee together and went over and waited on the administration and asked where our teacher was. The next class Dean Landrum was back with us, and she always thought highly of that class (kept up with most of them) as the class that sent for her. When I came here Dr. J.A.C. Chandler was president. He had come to the college in about 1918 when it was a small mens' school, and he'd made it coeducational and started the college growing. He understood that the legislature believed in numbers, and he got as many students into the dormitories as double-deckers would hold. By increasing the

numbers he got the state to increase the funds, and indeed when  
~~by the time~~ I was here he was up to 1000 students from some 200 at the  
 beginning of the ten-year period. The quality of the students  
 was far more variable then than now. It is only with the  
 large number of applicants that we have become selective.  
 In those days we took everybody and flunked about half of  
 them out; indeed my guess is that for some years the  
 attrition of the freshman class was 50 percent within a  
 year. <sup>[rate]</sup> Dr. Chandler was an autocratic president. I remem-  
 ber one time following a hazing incident that he called  
 four youngsters who <sup>had</sup> required treatment at the infirmary into  
 his office and after a five-minute hearing dismissed them  
 from the college and ordered them to get out of town in  
 twenty-four hours. Unfortunately he <sup>had a</sup> trip to meet with  
 some of the alumni groups. The student  
 body reacted with a strike; the men struck but not the  
 women. Cartoons <sup>were</sup> in the Richmond paper of the Indian hold-  
 ing his hand up telling the squaw this was not for her. The  
 students really didn't know much about what was going on.  
 One of the students with a car <sup>and</sup> there were few -- went to  
 Richmond and bought several hundred papers that had a long  
 article <sup>on the</sup> strike and brought them back down and hawked them  
 for five cents a piece so they could find out what was go-  
<sup>the students</sup>  
 ing on. Dean Hoke did not handle the student representa-  
 tives to their satisfaction, and finally Dr. Chandler cut his  
 trip short and came back to the college, called a meeting of

the mens' student body in the old Blow Gym. His first words were, "students <sup>are</sup> ~~were~~ people who go to class and study their <sup>assignments</sup> ~~science~~. You people for several days have not met that qualification, and if you don't begin meeting it tomorrow it's up to you to explain to your parents why the president of the College of William and Mary can't run it according to the rules." The men went back to class ~~the~~ next day. Dr. Chandler in his last days became rather irascible; firing <sup>people</sup> was always the order of the day. Fortunately, if a faculty <sup>member</sup> ~~was~~ fired at 9:00 ~~am~~ in the morning he'd be re<sup>h</sup>ired by noon -- but not always. In the last few months of his stay as president, he was even known to go through the administration building and fire everyone, all except perhaps Vernon Nunn. - I don't think Vernon ever got fired. But the secretaries enjoyed getting fired after 11:00 A.M. because then they had a long lunch <sup>[and]</sup> returned to work at 1:00. <sup>PM</sup> This was really nothing new because I had an aunt, Sadie Armstrong, who had worked for Dr. Chandler when he was in the public school system of Richmond <sup>and</sup> I told her about it, and she said while she was working for him that she had been fired once, <sup>that</sup> ~~that~~ there had been a great deal of tardiness, and Dr. Chandler came through the office one day and said, "The next person who's late is fired." It turned out the next morning she was late, so he fired her. She went ~~out one room~~ and ~~back~~ into his office and said, "Dr. Chandler, I've worked

for you for over three years. This is the first time I've been tardy, and I have no intention of being fired," and went back to work . So firing by Dr. Chandler could be either real or blowing off steam. ~~Then~~ I graduated in 1932, and before graduation I had made application for graduate work at the University of Virginia and had a \$1,000 a year fellowship. The problem was that about April I got a letter from the University of Virginia -- this was '32 in the middle of the depression -- that their income had decreased and that the scholarship was cut to \$500. Well, one could live on \$500 a year in those days, but a month later I got another letter that the stipend was cut to \$250, and that was a blow. There was a position as lab assistant open in the chemistry department here at the college. I had been a student undergraduate assistant for three years (since the start of my sophomore year). Indeed I'd been a waiter in the dining hall as a freshman, had come back early to wait in the dining hall as a sophomore. The head of the dining hall was Mr. Cooke, and one night thirty or forty of us waiters were eating. He came out and yelled, "Armstrong." I stood up and identified myself. He says, "Take off your white coat." I thought, "My goodness, I'm fired . ." His next words were, "Report to the chemistry department in the morning." So I went over and reported to Dr. Guy, and he said, "We need another lab assistant. We normally take juniors

~~It sounds like~~ "we'll have to put up with you. ~~Would that be characteristic?~~  
 and seniors. We don't like to take sophomores, but this is

the best we can do this year so ~~to you.~~" Of course,

I've been in the chemistry department ever since. ~~#~~ Well,

back to 1932 graduation. Dr. Chandler didn't have much

money, but he was always willing to give a place in the

dormitory. and ~~give the person~~ a meal ticket in the

dining hall, ~~and~~ these didn't really show up in his cash

accounts. He didn't have to pay out much, and certainly

during the depression any time that he could get help

cheap he did. After one year as a lab assistant, Dr. A.W.

Dearing, who was a member of the department, asked for

leave, ~~and~~ Dr. Chandler called Dr. Dearing and me into his

office. ~~At~~ Lake Triplett, a member of the state legisla-

ture and friend of Dr. Dearing's, was in town, and the three

were in Dr. Chandler's office, ~~and~~ Dr. Chandler made it clear

to the three of us that Dr. Dearing was going on leave for

one year, ~~and~~ that I was to take Dr. Dearing's classes for one

year, and at the end of that year Dr. Dearing would be back

and that I would be out. Dr. Chandler made it very clear

that the position he was appointing me to was only temporary.

Near the end of that year Dr. Chandler died, and Dean Hoke

~~was~~ <sup>because</sup> acting president. Dean Hoke called me in and asked me

if I would continue in the same position for another year.

I asked him if Dr. Dearing was coming back, ~~and~~ <sup>#</sup> he said no,

that the records contained no letter stating that Dr. Dear-

ing was on leave, and so therefore from the point of view of

the college that Dr. Dearing had simply left the services of the college, and he had no claim to the position. I told him about the conversation approximately <sup>a</sup> the year before in the same room with a witness (a member of the state legislature), and Dean Hoke told me it was none of my business. My answer was that if you would give Dr. Dearing the shaft this year, I didn't know what I might expect the next. You can imagine my relationship with the then acting president and later ~~was~~ <sup>continuing</sup> dean never at the best; indeed my anti-administrative bias down through the years probably started with that incident. Dr. Dearing stayed on at Hunter College, retired a couple years ago to Rappahannock County, and has never been back to Williamsburg. I have never discussed this with him, but I'm sure there was a bitterness over that. I ~~doubt that~~ <sup>had</sup> Chandler lived there'd <sup>have been</sup> no question about his having the position back if he <sup>had</sup> wanted it. Dr. Guy told me one time that when he ~~(Dr. Guy)~~ met Dr. Chandler for the first time, and Dr. Chandler told him what his pay would be, what the raise would be the next year, when he would get promotions. Nothing was ever in writing, but every statement that Dr. Chandler had made to him was carried out to the letter to the exact time. He [Chandler] had a remarkable memory. He carried everything in his mind rather than writing <sup>it</sup> them down, but it did result in unpleasantness, of course, after his death because of the problems of which of these

should be honored and which should not. ~~Dean~~ Dean Hoke was acting president for awhile; I don't recall just how long, but then John Stewart Bryan was brought in. John Stewart Bryan was <sup>one of the</sup> overseers<sup>#</sup> at Harvard, owner of the Richmond newspapers. I would think of Bryan's years at William and

Mary about <sup>#</sup>like the John F. Kennedy years of "Camelot."

We had big Christmas parties; <sup>old Phi Beta Kappa</sup> we had big dances both inside, and in the Sunken Garden, and once a year President Bryan had a faculty party. The first one was in

the smaller dining hall at Trinkle Hall soon after prohibition was repealed. The faculty was not used to certain fluids, and some of them, in the presence of student waiters, showed effects of their imbibing, so the next year Dr. Bryan -- Mr. Bryan -- he didn't like to be

called "doctor" -- Mr. Bryan moved the party to "Laburnum," his estate up in Richmond. ~~After a year or two up there I remember one year -- well, let me go back to one other~~

~~thing~~ <sup>#</sup> This story is no good without something that went before. Mr. Bryan was on the Board of Overseers at Harvard, and so all our young faculty came from Harvard: Fowler, Neiman, Jim Miller in philosophy, and several who didn't stay on. When we got ready for this party in Richmond, we had a student lab assistant-storeroom keeper, F. Ashton Carmines, down here from Poquoson, who came to me <sup>(as</sup> and ~~said~~ I wasn't much older than he was) and said, "Look, I've got an invitation this party in Richmond. What should I do about it?" I said,

"I don't know. Let's go to Dr. Robb; he's head of the department." So Dr. Robb looked at it and said, "I would advise you to go. You'll probably never get another one. Furthermore you can go with me." So Ashton went up to the party with the Robbs and the Armstrongs, and rather late in the party <sup>For this?</sup> (the kind of party that it was you can get from this aside) I got thirsty from the Smithfield ham, and I asked one waiter passing the champagne if I could get a glass of water ~~and~~

His answer was, "Water, sir? I don't serve water." Well, Ashton Carmines was introduced to one of these 180-pound, big bosomed ladies with her little glasses that she would swing around in the air, ~~and Ashton Carmines was introduced to her~~ and she said, "I dare say you're from Harvard, too." And Carmines, who had probably never been farther from Poquoson than he was there in Richmond, <sup>said,</sup> says, "Fresh out, madam, fresh out." (Now Carmines is an osteopathic surgeon down in Newport News, and he doesn't like that story - says it isn't true.) The only person who ran off the road coming back from Richmond <sup>one of these parties in</sup> ~~one of those parties~~ was a complete teetotaler. Luckily nobody was hurt. ~~The~~ Bryan period - during the depression - the student body, I believe, shrank a bit. Dr. Bryan was sort of a gadfly everywhere, and the bursar, Charlie Duke, essentially ran the college. We got into trouble over some happenings down in Norfolk. <sup>[I.A.C.]</sup> ~~Now~~ Mr. Chandler was a public school man, and when he hit William and Mary he started extensions and had the faculty teaching all over the peninsula,

~~and~~ in 1930 he started a two-year college in Norfolk and  
 a two-year college in Richmond. The two-year college in  
 Norfolk has grown into Old Dominion University and the  
 two-year college in Richmond into V.C.U. Down at Nor-  
 folk one of the deans I believe it was altered records,  
 and a student with an altered record got into the naval  
 academy ~~and~~ when it was found out that he didn't have  
 physics ~~or~~ did have physics on his record, William and  
 Mary was in trouble. ~~But~~ William and Mary was put on  
 probation, I believe about 1942, by the Southern Associa-  
 tion, and one of their recommendations was that William and  
 Mary get a fulltime president. Just about this time or  
 a little bit before, Dr. R.C. Young, who was in the physics  
 department -- I had had just about every course he taught -- had  
 a heart attack (around 1935) and he was asked who  
 should teach his classes, and Dr. Young asked for me to  
 teach one of the senior physics classes, electron theory, and  
 Dr. Bryan is supposed to have said, "Who is this squirt of  
 a chemistry instructor who's being asked to teach a senior  
 physics class?" And when he found out what the college was  
 paying me -- I guess it was '35 -- he paid me an extra \$600  
 or \$700 to teach this one course, which almost doubled my  
 semester's pay. Not only that he got one of his friends from  
 the General Education Board, a subsidiary of the Rockefeller  
 Foundation, to come see me, and after an interview I got a  
 letter from the General Education Board for a full fellowship

to the University of Michigan the following year, so I profitted great from Dr. Young's illness. ~~(By the way, that's Dr. Young's old house, I believe, no it's just beyond the flag pole. You can't see it. He sold it to Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown Road.)~~

Well, my first year off in graduate school then came as a result of Dr. Bryan's handing me a scholarship on a plaque. I came back a year later and was promoted to assistant professor from instructor.

Williams: Now this was your doctorate?

Armstrong: No, this was just a year of graduate work at Michigan ~~and~~ I stayed on <sup>here</sup> until 1942, then I went back to the University of Virginia where I got my doctorate in '45. Well, there are a lot of strands mixed up here but basically Mr. Bryan came in about '34. He got me a scholarship <sup>at</sup> Michigan from '35 to '36. I came back as assistant professor in '36, taught the same classes I had before I went away, and then in '42 I got another fellowship from the General Education Board. I was supposed to go to the University of Washington to study oceanography but the oceanography laboratory was closed up the spring of '42 because of World War II and the threat of the Japanese <sup>navy to the</sup> Pacific Ocean. <sup>coastal cities.</sup> And since analytical chemistry on a micro <sup>scale</sup> was being taught at the University of Virginia the scholarship was transferred to <sup>that</sup> the University of Virginia, where I worked under Dr. John H. Yoe for three years, <sup>I</sup> and came back to William and Mary

in 1945 with a Ph.D. and an associate professorship. In  
 the meantime Dr. Pomfret had come in as president. He  
 was a historian, had been dean at Vanderbilt -- probably  
 dean of the graduate school. He was a very popular  
 president with the faculty, and I felt that the period from  
 about 1945, right after the war, to 1951, when he left, there  
 was a <sup>better</sup> intellectual atmosphere at William and Mary per-  
 haps than <sup>at</sup> any other time. His downfall was football.  
 Dr. Pomfret was a Quaker; <sup>he believed</sup> everybody was honest. There were  
 pressures from certain members of the Board of Visitors and  
 other alumni for the football program. One was launched.  
 Indeed, it's my understanding that the agreement was  
 that the board committee on athletics would deal directly  
 with our coaches, essentially by <sup>passing</sup> Mr. Pomfret. Un-  
 fortunately, some of the recruiting coaches appeared to  
 have altered records that they brought back from high  
 schools. My understanding is that there were five records,  
 all of <sup>which</sup> ~~them~~ had the same broken typewriter "e" and that  
 typewriter was found in Blow Gym. The dean of the faculty  
 at that time was Nelson Marshall. I knew him rather well  
 because he had been <sup>director of</sup> in the Fisheries Laboratory where I  
 had been working summers. He talked to me about the ir-  
 regularities in these records. I suggested that he pur-  
 sue them quietly and try to get the changes made without  
 bringing the problems out into the open: <sup>which could result</sup>  
 in a big scandal for William and Mary. He said that he

had been trying for a full year to get these changes made - to  
 (correct the abuses) without any luck, and that the president  
 had given him the go-ahead to fight it publicly. These  
 charges all got in the papers. President Pomfret resigned [in]  
 late August <sup>or</sup> early September. President Pomfret was at  
 Cape May in New Jersey at his cottage at the time that  
 he resigned, I believe. I was at a seminar at the fisheries  
 laboratory over at Gloucester. In the middle of this semi-  
 nar several newspaper men broke in and told us about Presi-  
 dent Pomfret resigning and wanting <sup>ed</sup> a statement, of course, from the  
 dean. Naturally he said nothing. It was my belief that  
 Nelson Marshall felt that being a white knight, <sup>having</sup> broken all  
 this scandal, that they were going to make him president .  
 Of course, having shown up some people in high places, all  
 they wanted to do was get rid of him. When President Pom-  
 fret resigned, Jim Miller, who had been dean in the '40s, was  
 made acting president and stayed on in that position for  
 some <sup>weeks</sup> ~~months~~ while the board was selecting a new president.  
 There was a good deal of unrest and uncertainty <sup>like</sup> on the  
 faculty ~~for several months~~, as I recall. The faculty  
 had a committee that we had hoped could work with the board.  
 Dr. Guy was on that committee <sup>with</sup> Dr. Morton. The committee  
 did finally meet with the board for a matter of minutes, I un-  
 derstand, after having been kept waiting for hours. (My  
 source for that was Dr. Morton.) The committee felt that their  
 opinions were not really desired, and they found out why a day

\* actually weeks

or two later. I believe it was a Tuesday; the faculty met at 4:00 in the afternoon and got home about 5:30. The 6:00 news on the radio from Richmond carried the announcement that Alvin Chandler -- Admiral Chandler -- had been appointed president. The faculty had not been told this at all, even though they'd had a meeting at 4:00 that <sup>same</sup> after-noon; They found out about the appointment of Admiral Chandler as president from <sup>the</sup> 6:00 newscast <sup>on</sup> WRVA. The faculty met the next morning protesting the selection of the president without faculty consultation, ~~while~~ making it plain that ~~we~~ not questioning the appropriateness of Mr. Chandler being president. The board set Friday, I believe, for Mr. Chandler to come in as president, and then after getting this letter of protest from <sup>faculty of the</sup> the college, the rector of the board brought Mr. Chandler down on Thursday afternoon and swore him in -- <sup>he wouldn't even</sup> wait until Friday. Indeed at least one member of the Board of Visitors came down here Friday expecting to be present for the swearing-in of Admiral Chandler. The faculty got together a number of these papers and published them, <sup>and</sup> this member of the board who had come on Friday and found that the inauguration had been twenty-four hours earlier gave a substantial sum, I understand, to help publish the faculty's side of it. ~~Mr. Chandler~~ came in as president at a time when I was chairman of the educational policy committee. (In those days it was called the curriculum committee.) ~~I was chairman of the curriculum com-~~

~~mittee~~. I worked with him for two years most pleasantly. Later, people in that position said he imposed his will on the committee, but he certainly never did with me. He did raise questions; I gave him the best answers I could. I found him reasonable and attentive <sup>on</sup> ~~where~~ the history of whatever <sup>proposal</sup> he was interested in passing. Often we had tried it and found <sup>it didn't work,</sup> and he seemed to be satisfied with those answers <sup>so</sup> my relations with President Chandler were always good. He did study his father's writings in educational matters, and he did take the college back to many of the practices that his father had introduced. (I don't mean firing people.) He believed in taking education to the people; <sup>it</sup> was under him that William and Mary started Richard Bland and Christopher Newport <sup>in</sup> which you see a parallel to the 1930 beginnings of V.C.U. and Old Dominion.

<sup>#</sup> It's hard to describe the Chandler years. They were years of growth. There was some faculty dissatisfaction. Indeed one time he called me in -- as he did a number of others -- and said, "What's the matter? Why does the faculty dislike me so?" And I told him that I didn't think there was anything personal about it. I thought that maybe it was the way he was selected. <sup>The</sup> fact that he was brought down here at least a day early and inaugurated as president, <sup>that</sup> we felt like the Nicaraguans after the marines had been sent in, and that while it was no fault of the marines, the Nicaraguans certainly didn't have any love for them for years

afterwards, and that he was a victim of the same type of circumstances. I think it was the conditions under which he was brought in and not anything he had done. Certainly salaries for the faculty moved up more rapidly than they ever had before. He was in general a good president; I don't think there's any question about that. There are faculty members who disagree, but that's always ~~a matter~~ the case when you have a strong personality. Following Admiral Chandler, Mr. Paschall, of course, came in as president. Mr. Paschall had connections up in Richmond. He had lived in Richmond for years and had been associated with many of the legislators. He came at a time when higher education was expanding very rapidly, and he took advantage of his connections in Richmond to build essentially <sup>a</sup> new campus <sup>^</sup> here to the west of the old campus.

Mr. Paschall was notable in at least two ways; one was his ability to get money for new buildings, and the second was that he continued Admiral Chandler's work in raising faculty salaries. Salaries at William and Mary up until the middle '50s had been quite poor, and over ~~the~~ fifteen years the salaries at William and Mary were raised considerably. I don't think there was a year in there that I didn't get a raise, and I'm sure that this was true across the board for most members of the faculty.

To review the presidents, then: like Mr. Lambert, the two of us have worked under one-fourth of all the presidents

of William and Mary, and each one of them has made a real contribution to the college, though different. <sup>The idea of</sup> President Chandler -- Dr. J.A.C., the first Chandler -- was to take education to the people. He expanded the college. He came as near as anyone <sup>to</sup> starting the community college system as part of the college. Mr. Bryan introduced style. This was our "Camelot" period. Mr. Pomfret was a scholar, and he seemed to me to enjoy a feeling of comradeship among the faculty, and toward the last years of his stay I felt that William and Mary was taking off intellectually in a way that it had not done in my previous time here. When Admiral Chandler came in as president there was a swing away from the liberal arts back to the practical, back to the type of thing that his father would have approved of. Mr. Paschall did not, so far as I could see, get involved much with the academic work, though he liked to keep the admissions close. He had his office and the admissions very close together to where he could keep a finger on admissions. I think Mr. Graves and Mrs. Graves together have done more with the president's house than any other president. Mrs. Pomfret was gracious and entertained. Mrs. Chandler didn't like the president's house. Indeed they soon got a place away from the president's house so they could retreat from there. Mr. Paschall and Mrs. Paschall didn't like to live in the president's house; it was too much of a museum. And of course,

Dr. Chandler back in the '30s was a widower, and there was relatively little entertaining in the president's house. Dr. Bryan, of course, did a great deal of entertaining, though he was just here a few nights a week. The Pomfrets entertained rather well, and how the Graves maintain the schedule that they do, I will never understand. It seems to me that they are the most indetigable two people I've ever run across and as gracious as I have ever encountered.

Now then, <sup>I've been</sup> ~~in~~ talking about the presidents, let's have a word about the deans. Dean Hoke worked for Dr. Chandler in Richmond and was brought down in 1918, as I recall. Dean Hoke was extremely faithful. He was almost a servant to Dr. Chandler as well as a dean. Now <sup>replaced</sup> ~~he~~ was fired, I believe, under Dr. Bryan by Jim Miller. The thing ~~is~~ I remember about Jim Miller was that every time I went to his office and any commitment was made, within twenty-four hours it was in writing on my desk. This I'm sure saved a great many misunderstandings. When Jim Miller decided to leave the dean's office, Dr. W. G. Guy was offered the position. Dr. Guy talked to me about it and finally turned it down. He said he was doing something that he enjoyed and did well, that he was sure that he would develop an ulcer in the dean's office just as Jim Miller had done, and so he turned the position down. It was given to Sharvy Umbeck. Sharvy Umbeck was a professor of sociology and tennis coach. Indeed Sharvy was a professional

tennis coach and had built at William and Mary an outstanding team. We had two members of the Canadian Davis Cup team here, and they were on the second string. The two Canadians were delightful youngsters, <sup>but</sup> and some of these tennis players or tennis bums were, I think, worse than anything we ever imported here in football. The arrogance of a couple of those young tennis players was almost beyond comprehension. Sharvy Umbeck moved on to Knox College as president, ~~of Knox~~ and I have heard that he was very successful there in getting industry to support faculty salaries and that the faculty salaries at Knox were among the highest in the country. He had a number of cooperative programs between business and <sup>Knox</sup> the college which, of course, helped to get this money, and some years ago, I believe Sharvy died of a heart attack. ~~Sharvy~~ <sup>Sharvy</sup> was followed by Nelson Marshall, who was a professor of biology and director of the old Virginia Fisheries Laboratory, which is now <sup>the</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Marshall was the white knight who broke the football scandal and left the college, resigning just a few minutes before Admiral Chandler was sworn in as president. He was replaced by Chuck Marsh, who after a number of years in that position went to Wofford as president. Following Chuck came Mel Jones. Mel Jones had been a member of the English department, not prominent in any <sup>other</sup> way around the campus. Indeed I think he had gotten his Ph.D. quite late in life (as had I). He and his talents came to be known

\* Jomestown  
35th  
anniversary

to President Chandler during the 1957 centennial year.\* John Baldwin and Mel Jones had assignments under Chandler to entertain visiting dignitaries, and Mr. Jones was so good at that and handled that so much to the president's satisfaction that when Marsh went to Wofford, Jones became dean. ~~Now~~ there was a rumor at the time -- those of you who know Chuck Marsh know he's pretty stubborn when he feels he's right -- that Mr. Chandler said that now ~~that~~ Marsh was gone, he was going to get himself a dean who would do as he wanted. I ~~think~~ <sup>believe</sup> he was probably ~~even~~ disappointed with that because I think he found that Mel had some backbone, too. If Jones had a weakness as dean, it was trying to make up his mind. It was very difficult to get a decision

out of him \* . Indeed, John Baldwin was chairman of the department of biology -- some members would like to see him out. There was a meeting in Jones's office in which some members expressed this view, and Jones asked Baldwin to resign. Baldwin -- and this a direct quote from Baldwin -- told him that he had no intention of resigning, That if Jones wanted him out he could fire him. So Jones blurted out "You're fired!" And Baldwin says he reached over and shook hands with him and said, "Thank God, after three years I've finally got a decision out of you!" # And when Mel Jones re-

tired <sup>one of the faculty</sup> Fowler, who was in history, came in. I feel that Fowler was certainly one of the strongest deans we've had. Every time we have a new dean,

\* see Baldwin  
section,  
p. 45e

I go in and tell him that he and I are going to feud ~~as~~  
~~deans.~~ There's nothing personal about it; ~~It's~~ just that  
 I don't like deans. You can take any perfectly good faculty  
 member and make a dean out of him, and he starts acting like  
 a dean. For Fowler I must say that any time <sup>a</sup> that faculty  
 member had something to say to the dean, ~~the dean~~ <sup>he</sup> listened,  
~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> when he made decisions he made decisions based on infor-  
 mation on both sides, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> of course there's always someone  
 who ~~didn't~~ <sup>doesn't</sup> like it, but I don't feel that anyone had a right  
 to complain that he had not been heard, and since Fowler  
 decided cases at least 90 percent of the time the way I thought  
 they should be, I naturally thought he was a good dean.

¶ He was succeeded by Jack Edwards. Jack Edwards likes for  
 people to call him "Jack"; I like to call the dean "dean" be-  
 cause when a dean makes decisions I want the decisions  
 made as dean, not as a friend, and the informality does not  
 appear to me to be particularly in place with the position.  
 I have been pleased on the few occasions that I have had  
 contact with Mr. Edwards, ~~and~~ I think he is going to  
 turn out to be a very good dean. I was a little bit disap-  
 pointed when he first went into office that some of the  
 things that were coming out of there implied that he had  
 found the dean's office a mess, that Dean Fowler had been  
 unkind to women and had not taken care of everybody's civil  
 rights like they should be, which I thought ought not to  
 leak . ~~But~~ I don't even know they're true, but

of course, anyone coming in is going to have different ideas, and you need to expect a change as they come in.

I might go back and give just one story on the difference <sup>in</sup> of deans. There was a chemistry student along in the '50s who came up from Norfolk. He had been at Old Dominion before World War II; he had gone into the service, and he had come back. He had a total of two years at Old Dominion and transferred to William and Mary, and his grades in chemistry did not warrant the granting of degree. The degrees committee had turned down the degree *application*.

*with Dean Marshall as chairman*

When we started night school, this student met me on the campus and asked *if we offered any course* we have anything in night school that he might take because if he had one B to counter a D he could have his degree in chemistry. And then this ex-student proceeded to tell me that he was a little bit bitter about this anyhow because if the grade in freshman chemistry at Old Dominion that he had after the war was accepted, he would have this degree ~~and that~~ he had been advised down at Old Dominion -- it was William and Mary at Norfolk then -- to take this course over. ~~He had taken the course and made a C before the war.~~ He had been out three years, and they had advised him at Norfolk to take the course over, and he made a B. If he were allowed the second grade (the B) instead of the first grade (the C), he would have enough quality points for the degree; *it was that close.* ~~And~~ I said,

"Well, you claim you were advised to take that course over. ~~Now~~ that's against William and Mary rules, You're not allowed to repeat a course that you've passed." He said, "Yes, I was advised by" and he named <sup>the</sup> a person. And I said, "Is that person still at William and Mary in Norfolk?" He said, "Yes, that person is ~~is~~ still there," and he's dean or registrar -- I've forgotten which. I said, "We have changed deans, and Marshall is no longer chairman of the degrees committee; Marsh is. Marsh is a much more sympathetic person, and I think you have enough of a case that if you were to get a letter from the official of the William and Mary in Norfolk that you were advised of that, you will have a chance." The letter came; under Chuck Marsh the degrees committee reversed itself, and this young chemist, who was working for the government immediately *got* two G.S.s and \$1000 raise, which I felt a great deal better about since I had given him the D that had prevented him from getting the degree in the first place! So everytime we change presidents there is a change

in policy, and yet there has not been a president since I have been here who has not made a real positive contribution to the college.

Let's  
leave *JK*  
this out  
here since  
you pursue  
it later.

INDEX SHEET

Interviewee Alfred Armstrong

Date of interview February 12, 1976

Place Rogers Hall, W&M

Interviewer Emily Williams

Session number 2

Length of tape 90 mins.

Contents:

Approximate time:

notable professors - English  
                                  physics  
                                  chemistry

33 mins.

growth of chemistry dept., 1930-1970s

15 mins.

J.G. Pollard

3 mins.

grading systems

12 mins.

democracy at W&M

4 mins.

honor system

2 mins.

John T. Baldwin

14 mins.

Session 2

February 12, 1976

Williamsburg, Virginia

Armstrong:

Perhaps the<sup>#</sup> professor that I admired most at the College of William and Mary was Dr. Grace Warren Landrum in the department of English. She did not let the fact that she was dean of women interfere with her teaching in the least. I've already told the story how after one semester with her *as instructor* that we sent for her. At the beginning of my sophomore year my roommate persuaded me to sign up for a class with Dr. J.R.L. Johnson. When we got to that class there were about sixty students in a room that would hold thirty. Dr. Johnson asked who would volunteer to go to another section, the other section being taught by Dean Landrum. By the time he got to this question I was tired of his class, and so I volunteered. Not another soul did. Dr. Johnson sternly said, "I see you," Then he asked for more volunteers. No one else volunteered, so he turned to me and smiled as if to say, "See, everybody appreciates me but you." So finally after much begging and little success the students were required to draw, and half of us did go over to Dean Landrum.

*OK*  
# The other two instructors that I remember in the department of English were Dr. Gwathmey, who I had for American literature, and Jess Jackson. Dr. Gwathmey spent the whole of the session to the last day on the first half of the book. then he assigned us the last half of the book for the last day and proceeded to talk for forty minutes about the honor system. It was still a wonderful

course in English because we didn't rush. For English literature I had Dr. Jess Jackson. He was entertaining. He differed in that he was determined to cover that whole book, and in so doing it was a citation of "he was born, he wrote, and he died. He was born, he wrote, and he died." Dr. Jackson had a habit of picking up any short pencil that he happened to see on the floor, so everyday the students would bring in three or four short pencils and place them at different levels in the large lecture room in Washington Hall so that Dr. Jackson, who was sitting on the biology demonstration table, would spot them sometime during the hour, and sure enough, he would go up and pick one up. And there would be another one placed just enough above that to where he would see that. So it was always a question of what time of day Dr. Jackson would spot the pencils and proceed to walk up the aisle, picking them up. There was one tall blond who kept ~~walking to the door,~~ leaving in the <sup>#</sup>middle of the class, Miss Edwards, I believe, an army brat, ~~and~~ after this had happened three or four days Dr. Jackson positioned himself in front of the door and said to Miss Edwards, "Just why do you have to leave in the middle of class everyday?" Her answer, "Bored," Dr. Jackson, simply bored." <sup>opened it and</sup>

← He reached for the handle of the door, ~~he~~ stepped <sup>and</sup> back, <sup>^</sup> out she went. Dr. Jackson is supposed to have said just a few days before he died, "If I knew where I were going

to die, I would not go there." He died between his office door and the classroom door as he was delivering the final examinations.

Williams: Now, do you want to tell your ~~of~~ Pollard story at this point?

Armstrong: Yes. In talking about the professors I overlooked Professor John Garland Pollard of the government department. All students at William and Mary had to take a course in Virginia government, and this was taught in the Phi Beta Kappa auditorium, which is now Ewell Hall. It was taught by Dr. Pollard as a single, large lecture course. Dr. Pollard had his eccentricities well before becoming governor. For example, every time that Dr. Pollard mentioned something about his age the class was to holler in unison, "Oh, Dr. Pollard, you're not old." There was in our class a Mr. Parlapiano from New York, and Dr. Pollard always called him "Mr. Playerpiano" and left Parlapiano so mad ~~leaving~~ that ~~those~~ he debated whether he would ever go back to Dr. Pollard's classes. I was around at the time that Pollard was elected governor, and indeed several hundred of us -- I believe at least a hundred -- went over to the "governor's mansion," which was 131 Chandler Court, and gave a few good William and Mary calls and some of Dr. Pollard's sayings: "Oh, Dr. Pollard, you're not old," and "It isn't what you know but what you do with what you know that counts," and whatever else we had been taught in the name of Virginia government and got a speech out of Governor Pollard the very night of his election. The next class after his election <sup>as</sup> to governor he told the class that anyone who would

appear at the governor's door and recite the preamble to

the constitution could come in and see the governor. I

never took advantage of that offer, but I understand that

there were several members of the class who did, and in-

deed, they went in and had a pleasant hour with the governor

in the governor's mansion. <sup>Dr Pollard's home in Williamsburg,</sup> 131 Chandler Court, the

"governor's mansion," was sold to Dr. A.W. Dearing, <sup>who in turn sold</sup> and

~~after he left, the Pollards rented it for several years,~~ <sup>college</sup>

~~and then it was sold~~ to Thomas Jefferson Stubbs, Jr., of

the department of history. Mrs. Stubbs lives in 131

Chandler Court now. (1976).

to die, I would not go there." He died between his office door and the classroom door as he was delivering the final examinations. ~~In the physics~~ <sup>department</sup> we had Dr. R.C. Young and Dr. Merrymon. Dr. Young had, I believe, been a student at William and Mary, and his first position here was as an instructor in Latin. He went to the University of Chicago in the heyday of physics out there with Michaelson and Milliken and did his Ph.D. research under Dr. Michaelson. His job was to calibrate the motor that was used in the determination of the velocity of light. He came back then as head of the department of physics and spent the rest of his life here. Indeed he died at his desk on the first floor of Rogers Hall somewhere between 1942 and 1945 while I was away. Dr. Young took a liking to me because I was the best plumber on the second floor of the building. The troughs to the chemistry desks sprung leaks. The water went through on <sup>to</sup> Dr. Young's physics equipment, something that he didn't appreciate. Since I was student assistant upstairs and taking classes downstairs -- and he gave me a rough time about the water coming down -- I developed some techniques with hot tar and a brush to where I could at least stop the water from flowing until we could get a plumber. I remember him saying that if he ever built another building in which he had to share it with the chemists that he was going to put the <sup>h</sup> physics on the top floor so that the chemists couldn't run water through on him.

1944

I called attention to the fact that the roof of Rogers leaked. It had leaked since the building was built, and so it was not a question of whether you got water, but whether it came directly from the Lord or indirectly from the chemists. One time Dr. Young came up and complained that there was water coming into the shop, which was right under the chemistry storeroom. One of the people in the storeroom said, "Oh no, Dr. Young, that isn't water, that's acid." What happened was that one of the storeroom keepers had climbed up on a ladder, had fallen off of the ladder, had hit his rump on a <sup>fifteen-</sup>15-gallon bottle of acid of moderate strength (had fortunately not hurt himself), but he spread some ten gallons of acid all over the floor, and that was running down. Dr. Young disappeared quickly to get <sup>his</sup> tools out of the acid. Dr. Young had small advanced classes. Indeed, he said there was no point in anyone majoring in physics who wasn't good enough to go to the National Bureau of Standards or to get a job teaching in college physics; there were no other jobs available. He always had a small number of majors, and in the advanced classes he had the students do the teaching. He assigned topics and then he sat back and refereed. Whoever was doing the talking ~~was~~ before the class at the blackboard was fair game for any question that any student could ask him. I remember that he gave me the Einstein's specific theory of relativity. That required several hours

of background, and I put a equation on the board, and some-  
 one asked me to derive it. I didn't know how. Dr. Young  
 ruled that I could continue with my presentation providing  
 that at the beginning of the next hour I would derive the  
 equation. It took a full hour to derive it.

Indeed <sup>one</sup> that presentation required nine hours of class  
 time. Word of this long presentation got around, Then  
 the math club invited me to talk on relativity. I  
 shortened that to two hours, got over to the lecture room  
 early, and covered every board there with differential  
 equations. The math club never revived; it took seven  
 years before they ever had another meeting. (Dr. Young

~~used to say to me, "Alfred, you're a good man.~~

~~The best thing you ever did was to marry Martha <sup>Benker</sup> Berker."~~

~~Martha and I used to go out and spend weekends when Dr.~~

~~and Mrs. Young would go away, we would babysit their~~

~~two youngsters.) The friendly mood among us can~~

be judged some by this story. when we had the strike and

all men were not to go to class (well the class in physics

was composed of about four men and no women) so the four

of us sat around with Dr. Young in his office and discussed

the strike instead of going three doors down <sup>to</sup> and have class.

He agreed; We didn't think the strike was necessary <sup>but</sup> that

as members of the student body we should honor it. ~~One~~

~~time my roommate, who was Thad King, and indeed the youngster~~

~~who was being hazed when the boys got clipped with a stick.~~

~~and when Dr. Chandler shipped them because of the strike.~~ <sup>and caused</sup> <sup>One time my roommate,</sup> Thad

King got hold of 2500 sticks of chewing gum just before final examination. The representative of the Wrigley Company had given him these with the idea that he would distribute them as best he could to the student body for free. So when I had a physics final examination, I got right behind Dr. Young, and everytime that he put a test down in front of somebody I'd put a stick of chewing gum down on top of it. Then when everyone else in the class had their test, he turned to hand one to me, and I handed him a stick of chewing gum. He said, "No thank you, I have a cigar." ~~The other professor of physics was Dr. Walter Merrymon. He was a character. I had class under him about the time of the Pense<sup>?</sup> incident in China,~~ <sup>Paras</sup> and he spent more time talking about the relative merits and character of the Chinese<sup>s</sup> as compared to the Japanese than he did on physics. He would spend at least five minutes a day on physics, and he could say more in five minutes than most people could in an hour, <sup>u</sup> he could assign us so much that we spent plenty of time working out the physics for ourselves. These were the days before the xerox machine or the <sup>mimeograph</sup> machine, so most of the tests and examinations we took were written on the board. Dr. Merrymon's tests were <sup>notable(?)</sup> noted. The first test I took under him he put eight questions on the board, and the ~~first one~~ <sup>person</sup> who got the farthest along.

finished four questions. His grading was always relative so that it didn't make any real difference that you answered only four. <sup>[On]</sup> The second test he said he saw that nobody got past <sup>1/</sup> four questions, so this time <sup>he had</sup> ~~have~~ only four questions. But he put so many a, b, c's, and d's down that nobody got past two questions. Dr. Merrymon is reputed -- I never saw this act -- to have demonstrated the eclipse to some of the classes. <sup>o</sup> In the laboratory-lecture room that he was using there was a stone table around two sides of the room. ~~They~~ <sup>and he</sup> claimed that he would run up and down one side and be ~~in~~ the sun and up and down the other side and be ~~in~~ the moon at the time of the eclipse and <sup>that</sup> he turned a flip in the corner, landing on the table at right angles to the one he had been running on. (I'm certain he didn't quite turn a flip, but he certainly almost was <sup>that</sup> active.)

Now for the chemists. The chemistry department at the time I came there in <sup>28</sup> '27 had three teachers: Dr. R.G. Robb, who was chairman of the department, Dr. W. G. Guy, and Dr. A.W. Dearing. Dr. Guy was my teacher in freshman chemistry in <sup>1928-29</sup> 1927-28. That was <sup>the</sup> ~~his~~ second year <sup>of classes</sup> in Rogers Hall.

Before then chemistry had been taught in something that was called the "tin building." It <sup>was</sup> <sup>at</sup> about the center of the Sunken Garden before the garden was sunken (after <sup>in</sup> 1935-36). The "tin building" I understand, was a World War I quonset hut that had been moved in there. There were

no hoods. There weren't enough desks to go around so that each section had to use the same chemical glassware as the last ~~and~~ where the experiments had chemicals that had to be used for more than one period, there was no security in the chemistry building) ~~and so there~~ a hundred students would march out carrying test tubes and flasks with them and then return to continue the experiment a week later. Even the big lecture room in there had a partition up to just about eight feet, so that the fumes from the nonvented labs covered the lecture room, and when a lecturer with a loud voice, such as Dr. Warren in biology, spoke, every person in every lab had full benefit of his lecture.

Dr. Robb <sup>was</sup> is a native Virginian, came from Gaymont, right around Fredericksburg. I'm not sure whether he was at William and Mary as a student or not. I know that he got a masters' degree at the University of Virginia in astronomy. He taught at Miller School in the mountains up above Charlottesville. He claims he was hired <sup>at Miller School</sup> because he was a good short-stop and the students and faculty played on the same teams. Then he went to St. Stephens up in New York, I believe. In the summer somewhere around 1917 or '18 when he was back at Gaymont he heard that there was an opening in chemistry at William and Mary. He got in his Model-T Ford and drove down. He asked to see Dr. Tyler, who was then president, and was told that Dr. Tyler was fishing, <sup>but</sup> that he had just left and that his boat was docked down at College Creek in Henry

Street, and that if Dr. Robb would hurry he could probably catch up with Dr. Tyler before he got out in the boat. And that's exactly what happened <sup>^</sup> except that Dr. Tyler couldn't get the motor started ~~and so~~ Dr. Tyler had told him, "I'm busy. Getting ready to fish. If you want to go fishing with me and they're not biting we can talk about this job."

Well, if there's anything Dr. Robb'd rather do than hunt it was fish, so he agreed that they would go fishing. After

Dr. Tyler had pulled on that motor until he had gotten tired, Dr. Robb <sup>said,</sup> says, "Why don't you let me try it?" And Dr. Robb <sup>later said,</sup> says, "If there's anything that I knew better than a Model-T motor it was an outboard." ~~So he said,~~ "I adjusted a few screws and gave one pull and off it went, and I got the job." ~~I assisted Dr. Robb several years,~~ *after few weeks,*

*As Dr. Robb told it,*  
~~later,~~ On a pretty fall day, an emissary came over from Dr. Tyler and said, "Come on, let's go fishing." Dr. Robb sent back word, "I have a laboratory scheduled." Dr. Tyler sent back word, "Get somebody else to do it. Let's go fishing." Dr. Robb said he really didn't know whether to do it or not. He didn't know whether Dr. Tyler was tempting him, testing him. But his love for fishing got the better of him, and so he and Dr. Tyler started out. The same thing happened with the motor. Dr. Tyler couldn't start it; Dr. Robb adjusted and pulled, and off it went, and a couple of weeks he got an invitation to join Phi Beta Kappa.

One or two more Robb stories: During World War II

while I was up in Charlottesville, Dr. Robb had a heart attack. I wrote Jim Miller and asked if it would be necessary for me to come back and help in the chemistry department and Jim said no, that they <sup>were</sup> making out all right. And as Dr. Robb was recovering ~~(sometime on his way to recovery)~~ I got a letter from him. Dr. Robb in this letter noted that the doctor had told him not to walk. But in the meantime, Lake Matoaka had frozen over, and the doctor had told him nothing about ice skating, and so that he, Dr. Robb, had gone ice skating on Lake Matoaka. While Dr. Robb was skating, Ed Kendrew fell through the ice. Dr. Robb wrote me he felt no moral obligation to attempt to rescue him.

Dr. Robb retired from the chemistry department somewhere around 1947 and lived on for four or five years and used to go fishing with him. Every time we went fishing ~~it seemed to me that it was so dark we couldn't see the~~ <sup>we continued until too</sup> cork before we left the pond; it was just as if, with his heart condition, he was afraid he was never going to get back. But I can't remember a single afternoon that we went out to Tutter Neck Pond that he didn't catch more fish than I did. When Dr. Robb died <sup>he served was in</sup> ~~he was buried from~~ Bruton Parish Church, at Gaymont. It was a miserable, cold, wet spring day. Johnny Hocutt, Dr. Guy, and I've forgotten who the other pallbearers <sup>were</sup> ~~are~~. <sup>he was buried</sup> *shove to Gaymont together.*

One more Robb story that I should have told earlier.

There was a group that came to Bruton Parish Church preaching something called "moral rearmament," and since Dr. Robb had some sort of lay position down there he felt that it was his duty to go down and find out what the moral rearmament was all about. I asked him the next morning, and he said, "Well, it's good for some people, but it would never work for me. The moral rearmament requires that one closet himself with the Lord for fifteen minutes first thing in the morning, and let the Lord tell him what to do all day. The Lord and I wouldn't be closeted together more than five minutes, and he'd tell me to go fishing."

Now some of the others in chemistry. There's so much to be said about Dr. Guy I wouldn't even be able to start ~~him~~. He asked for me at the beginning of my sophomore year to come in as an assistant in the chemistry department. I was a student assistant for my sophomore year, and then in my junior and senior years I was an assistant in analytical chemistry and I guess again my first year in graduate work and then when Dr. Dearing left I took over the analytical chemistry. I had had <sup>little</sup> ~~no~~ graduate work -- that only at William and Mary -- but I had <sup>had</sup> ~~to have~~ at least three years of experience in the laboratory in analytical, and of course, I continued that analytical for a lifetime. Dr. Guy was probably the best lecturer that I ever had. The material was so beautifully organized. He used the board better than anyone else. He started in the upper left hand corner with the main topic of

the day, Then right under that the secondary topics, and he would erase back to one of the major headings each time, and then at the end of the hour the main outline of the lecture was left on the board. The lectures were just as perfect as if they had been written, though he never had notes in front of him. His tests were equally good. It was seldom a student ever came up and asked a question because the wording was not ambiguous. He, like the other professors, wrote the tests on the board for the first few years I was here, but as soon as the college could support a mimeograph machine he had me type his tests, and I suppose for twenty or twenty-five years I typed better than half of his tests and examinations. When he got embarrassed at asking me he would ask Ed Katz. There were two things he didn't like: One was a telephone and the other one was a secretary. I made that statement at the dedication of this new Rogers Hall, and Mrs. Guy came up and said she was well aware of it, that she typed hundreds of letters down through the years because he was avoiding secretaries at the college.

We didn't have any telephones in the department until well into the '50s, and then we got one in the storeroom; and we had one telephone for the whole department, ~~over~~ ~~(two floors)~~. Whoever answered the telephone would have to wander around and find whoever was needed, ~~on the two floors~~ so you can see that they were quite a nuisance. We finally

got three telephones in the whole building, and that was either an improvement or worse, depending upon your attitude toward the telephone. Dr. Guy taught the large class in freshman chemistry from 1926 or '27 on for forty years, through '67 or '68, and he taught it most of the summers. He taught the same class, and no one else ever taught a section of it. Before he took it over he had one section, and Dr. Dearing had the other; there were two lecture sections of about 150. The problem was that 100 of the people in Dr. Dearing's section thought they would have done better in Dr. Guy's, and 50 in Dr. Guy's thought they would have done better in Dr. Dearing's, and so they solved that the next year by putting Dr. Guy in charge of both lectures, and then if people didn't like it at 9:00 they could have it at 10:00 (the same lecture). Dr. Guy also taught the physical chemistry, so he taught the first course and the last course. He taught that well down into the '50s, but one fall when he wasn't too well Jack McQueen took over the lecture for ~~that~~ the first two weeks, and it was going so well that Dr. Guy went back to his freshmen, but he never went back to teaching the physical again. Dr. Guy ~~said that the first year that he was at William and Mary and he had been at the University of Chicago for his Ph.D. at the same time that Dr. Young was working there. Dr. Chandler needed a chemist. He called Dr. Young; Dr. Young recommended Dr. Guy and Dr.~~

Guy was going with Gladys Bennett at the time ~~and~~ (Gladys Bennett had been raised in Williamsburg, and her father had been a professor of education here) and so Dr. Guy came ~~back~~ to Williamsburg, married the Williamsburg girl, and spent a lifetime at William and Mary.

In 1961 I taught at the University of Alberta at Edmonton. Before I left, Dr. Guy said look up Dr. Sandin. Dr. Sandin told me that at the University of Chicago he and Dr. Guy were looking for teaching positions at the same time and that there were two positions available: one at William and Mary and one at the University of Alberta at Edmonton. ~~The~~ Dr. Guy took the Williamsburg position, and he, Sandin, took the Edmonton position, and neither one of them ever left the first job that ~~they~~ took.

Dr. Trevor B. Hill, who is in the chemistry <sup>department</sup> here at William and Mary, had Dr. Sandin for his elementary organic chemistry at the University of Alberta and said that outside of the fact that his grading was about ten points higher than anybody else's, he was one of the best professors and best-loved professors there. So which ever one we had gotten -- Dr. Guy or Dr. Sandin -- apparently we would have been well off.

~~Dr. Dearing was here for a shorter time. He went to Hunter College for several summers, and then about September 1934 he had a one year appointment at Duke College and took~~

already  
included

what he thought was leave from William and Mary, in as much as it had been granted verbally by President Chandler, and since President Chandler died while he was in New York and there was no record of it, Dr. Dearing did not return to William and Mary. Dr. Dearing stayed on at Hunter, became chairman of the department in the 1950s, was elected chairman for six terms -- they have a three-year term there. Dr. Dearing is now retired to the family farm in Rappahannock County, Virginia, and to the best of my knowledge has never been back to William and Mary. I have not discussed the loss of his position here, but I believe that his failure to come back was the consequence of the bitterness.

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Now for the growth of the chemistry department.

← In '32, '33, and '34 the freshman chemistry class at William and Mary numbered close to 350 out of a student body of about 1,000. With a student body of 4,000 now the freshman chemistry class is not quite as large as it was then. Of course, a science was required, and it was either chemistry, biology, or physics, and physics had almost no students taking it for a degree requirement, so the students were about evenly divided between biology and chemistry. (There wasn't any geology here until much later.) The number of courses that were taught in chemistry at that time were at least as many as there are now, and so the load on the professor -- three professors instead of the present eleven -- was considerable. Dr. Guy said

that the first year that he came here he taught every day from 9:00 in the morning until 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon. (The classes went from 9:00 to 1:00 and then started again at 2:00, and the two-hour labs went 2:00 to 4:00 and the three-hour labs 2:00 to 5:00) ~~and that~~ five days a week he went from 9:00 to 1:00 and either two or three hours in the afternoon, plus two hours on Saturday morning, and he taught one class at night. I don't know how many contact hours that is, but it is close to thirty. Of course, one was not only not expected to do research here at that time, but anyone who attempted it was looked on with suspect. There was a rumor that Dr. Chandler fired Dr. Donald Davis at least once a year for doing research on the basis that if he had time to do research he had time to teach another class. ¶ The chemistry department increased from three to four somewhere around 1950. Dr. Robb retired; Ken Gordon came in as the organic chemist in 1947, and that left Dr. Guy in physical, Ken Gordon in organic, and I was in analytical. By 1956 -- and I have a picture here that shows the department over 3:00 tea -- we had added a fourth person, and that fourth person was Dr. George Sands, who is now on the Board of Visitors. Mr. Katz made tea in the storeroom at 3:00 every afternoon, and about 1956 some of the students gave us large cups with the William and Mary seal and each one with <sup>our</sup> a name on it. This tea went on for many, many years and of course <sup>the</sup> takes place

of the present coffee break. <sup>4</sup> The idea that research could be carried out at William and Mary grew in the 1960s. Indeed, it was Mr. Paschall's dream that the chemistry department at William and Mary would give Ph.D.s. A 1966 or '67 plan for a new chemistry building included twenty-four offices and sufficient research space for a full Ph.D. program. Neither Dr. Guy nor I believed that William and Mary should undertake such a program. Indeed by that time Old Dominion was talking <sup>[about]</sup> the Ph.D. program; V.C.U. was talking a Ph.D. program. There were already Ph.D. programs in Charlottesville and Blacksburg, and that would put five Ph.D. programs in chemistry right along the C & O Railroad, many of them just fifty miles apart. It was economically unfeasible, and furthermore there were just not enough students to go around. The University of Virginia had trouble getting enough students to fill all the slots they had available; V.P.I. was having trouble getting students, and how could we support five Ph.D. programs in Virginia when there weren't enough students to man two? Well, when we finally built the new Rogers Hall it had been decreased from over 70,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet. Indeed, when the Shaner Report came out a couple of springs ago a chemistry laboratory and half a storeroom had been taken away from us and converted into the area that's now occupied by philosophy. The American Chemical Society has a committee on graduate education

in the '70s, and its suggestion was that there were far too many small Ph.D. programs started in the '60s; ~~and that~~ essentially all of them should fold, and ~~that~~ the state should concentrate its Ph.D. programs in a relatively small number of schools because they're too far too expensive to support at small schools. So the position that Dr. Guy and I both believed in has become the official stance of the American Chemical Society in the '70s ~~and~~ <sup>we</sup> are fortunate that we did not get the building built then; The college would not know any more what to do with it than it knows what to do with the physics building, or as far as that goes with William and Mary Hall.

Williams: Did the growth of the physics department have any effect <sup>#</sup> on the growth of the chemistry department?

Armstrong: The growth of the physics department was triggered by Sputnik. As I said earlier, there were very few physicists needed up until the time of World War II. The growth of physics and the use of physicists was astronomical in World War II. So the physics department did grow some at William and Mary after World War II, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> then about the time of Sputnik the growth of physics at NASA really got the physics department started here at William and Mary because there were several thousand bachelor<sup>s</sup>-level physicists -- I say several thousand, perhaps fewer than that, <sup>but</sup> there was a large group of bachelor<sup>s</sup>-level

physicists at NASA. The director of NASA/Langley felt that every scientist should be doing something educationally toward upgrading himself, and so NASA/Langley gave these young physicists Tuesday/Thursday afternoons off to come up to William and Mary to take physics classes. About the time this large group of physics students became available (under conditions that their bosses wanted them to take extra work and gave raises for masters' degrees) <sup>for</sup> we got ~~out~~ <sup>of</sup> the head of the physics department <sup>[Melvin]</sup> Dr. Pittman. Dr. Pittman came from Madison College; <sup>he</sup> had done his doctoral work at Johns Hopkins, but for twenty-five years had been ~~head of research~~ <sup>teaching</sup> at Madison. Some months after Dr. Pittman came to William and Mary I was talking to the president, <sup>(Tyler Miller)</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>up</sup> <sup>at</sup> <sup>Madison</sup>, and <sup>Dr. Miller</sup> <sup>said,</sup> "We were not alarmed at losing Dr. Pittman; <sup>however,</sup> but we wouldn't have wished him off on William and Mary--but nobody asked us." Apparently Dr. Pittman had run for chairman of the science division and had lost up there, and so he was ready to get out; ~~and~~ we needed someone, and Mr. Chandler picked him up and brought him down here. Now Dr. Pittman may not have been the best physicist in the world, but he was an expert in talking NASA and the National Science Foundation out of money, and so he was the right man in the right place <sup>st</sup> and the right time to build a big physics department, which he did. The problem was that he got some high-energy physicists ~~out~~ <sup>there</sup>, and in a power play, as best I can figure it,

some of these high energy physicists wanted control of the department, and they came in to President Paschall and threatened to resign, and President Paschall dumped Pittman in the middle of the term and put someone else in as chairman of the department, who was in a rival faction. A couple of years later Dr. Pittman went to Old Dominion as dean of science. (Now ~~down~~ here we have a dean of the faculty of arts and sciences; down there they have a dean of arts and a dean of science.) And the plans down there were just as big as the plans here. They were going to bring in six research chemists at one time. Well, the legislature squelched that, and so he got there just at the wrong time; he got there just at the time when funds were <sup>running out,</sup> ~~burning~~ down. He has since retired, I think.

*reorder*

Williams: Did the growth of the physics department, though, mean greater demands on the chemistry department in the 1960s?

Armstrong: No. It looks like it should ~~of have~~, and had the growth been in the chemistry department it would have put more demands on the physics department. I would say the growth of the physics put more demands on math, but not on chemistry. The hierarchy in science has math as the queen of the sciences, and all the sciences require math. Second in the peck<sup>ing</sup> order is physics because physics is beholden only to math. Third down comes chemistry because chemistry is beholden to both math and physics. Any chemistry major should have as much physics as he can get, but whether a physics major

gets chemistry or not doesn't make that much difference.

Now when it comes to biology, biology is the application of chemistry to living systems, and geology is the application of chemistry to rocks and soils, and so there's a very definite peck<sup>ing</sup> order among the sciences going from math to physics to chemistry to biology ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> geology.

Williams: And that's not just at William and Mary. ~~You're~~ talking about generally.

Armstrong: This is generally ~~and~~ I saw no effect on the chemistry department or ~~on the requirements for its~~ <sup>any increase in demand for its</sup> advanced courses as a result of the graduate work in physics.

Speaking of faculty, I left out one of our characters:

Dr. John T. Baldwin. Dr. Baldwin and I landed at William and Mary in September 1928. He was from <sup>the</sup> a small town of Keysville, a country boy; I was from Texas <sup>and</sup> Woodville, <sup>Virginia,</sup> another country boy. We were in the same dormitory. We both waited on tables. We were both in Dean Landrum's C section <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ English. He was the roughest Saturday afternoon basketball player on the court. One had to keep his elbows up all the time to keep from being run over in our two-hour pick-up basketball games every Saturday afternoon in Blow Gym. His fields of interest were English and Latin; I've forgotten which one was his major. He took enough education to teach in the Virginia high schools. He wasn't the slightest bit interested in science. He took freshman biology well after his freshman year to satisfy the science requirement, <sup>[but]</sup> He liked Dr. Donald Davis and vice versa, so after two semesters of freshman biology Davis asked John Baldwin to serve as instructor in the biology 101-102 laboratory the next year. John Baldwin was flattered and felt that he should take an additional course in biology to show his interest, ~~and because of his involvement in the freshman.~~ He was eligible for Dr. Davis's course in genetics, took it, became interested in genetics, and went to graduate school at the University of Virginia under Dr. O.E. White, a friend of Dr. Davis's. John Baldwin went to graduate school in biology with the English-Latin back ground

at William and Mary, and three courses in biology, and none in chemistry. He had to go back and pick up the chemistry at the University<sup>#</sup> of Virginia, fill in all the undergraduate [courses] in addition to the graduate work in biology. He did his *chromosomes of the* graduate research on genus *KALANCHOE* over at the Blandy Experimental Farm near Winchester. After he got his Ph.D. -- well, I think perhaps right afterwards he went to Cornell and spent a year of postdoc with L.H. Bailey of Cornell. Then he came back to William and Mary for a couple of years in the late '30s, early '40s, and he and Dr. Bryan -- President Bryan -- had some sort of an agreement where Baldwin <sup>would</sup> be used to pick the plants and landscape the campus. That didn't work out, and upset Dr. Baldwin so that he wrote back to the University of Michigan and asked if he could have a position there that he had turned down just a few months before. (~~He had this offer from the University of Michigan, he turned it down;~~ ~~He had a feud with President Bryan and got that position back.~~) He left here and went to<sup>#</sup> the University<sup>#</sup> of Michigan, ~~He~~ stayed there about a year or two, <sup>≡</sup> the war came along and the department of agriculture ~~picked him up and sent up the Amazon.~~ He went farther up the Amazon (looking for rubber) than any other white man had at that time. He didn't find much rubber, but he got more parasites than any other white man, <sup>≡</sup> too, and he came out of the Amazon weighing roughly 100 pounds. Anyone who saw him at the

KALANCHOE

time that he was bragging that he was "half a century old and weighed an eighth of a ton," would not have recognized him right after he came back from the Amazon. After the war he went back to Blandy Farm as manager of Blandy Farm and it was his job to hire people to do the work on the farm. ~~and~~ one time he found himself with a cow that needed to be taken to a neighborhood bull. He then got a pick-up and got the cow into the pick-up, got a little ways down the road, and was stopped by a policeman. He had dead tags on the car. He tried to explain to the policeman that the tags for that year were over in Charlottesville, they hadn't been brought <sup>to Blandy</sup> back. The policeman wouldn't listen, so he got a ticket, had to go before the judge, and the judge wouldn't listen. John Baldwin went home and wrote the judge that he had gone seeking a bull and had ended up before a jackass. It was probably the only letter he tore up without sending. ~~After a couple of years of that, of work~~

*Several years later,* Dr. Donald Davis here at the college needed a botanist. I believe R.L. Taylor had resigned to become a member of the staff of the AAAS, and Dr. Davis asked Baldwin if he knew where William and Mary could get a botanist and Baldwin <sup>said</sup> says, "Yes. I'm tired of this job. I'd love to come back." So he came back to William and Mary. He was working on the rubber plants that he had sent back from South America <sup>Eschschol</sup> and Dr. Speese, who had been in our class of '32 also and who in the late '30s or early

'40s had been at William and Mary taking some summer work in biology under Dr. Baldwin (Dr. Baldwin had persuaded her to <sup>apply for graduate work at</sup> go to the University of Virginia ~~in the '40s~~) ~~she~~ landed at the University of Virginia in 1942, the same time I did, and she went on and got a Ph.D. over at Blandy Farm under Dr. O.E. White <sup>who was Dr. Baldwin's major professor.</sup> also. Well, Dr. Speese was

doing the microscopic work on the rubber plants, and so she <sup>said to Dr. Baldwin:</sup> says, "Well, you don't need two botanists down at William and Mary, do you?" And he said, "I'll go back and see." And sure enough, he hired Dr. Speese to come

gen's name

down and help work on the <sup>Hevea</sup>. I met Dr. Speese <sup>in</sup> down front of the Williamsburg Theater, and said, "Speesie! what are you doing here?" She said, "I've just been hired at William and Mary." So I said, "Where are you staying?" <sup>She said,</sup> "I just landed <sup>in</sup> ~~intown~~ so I don't know." I said, "Come on by the house and stay until you find a place you like better." Well, she stayed over a year. ~~Well~~ Dr. Baldwin was brought back to the biology department by Dr. Davis as heir-apparent to take over as head of the biology department. He was something of a bull in the china shop. He was a very able person; <sup>it</sup> didn't pay to get <sup>on</sup> the wrong side of him because he could tell you off in either English or Latin -- and very beautifully. He and Nelson Marshall didn't get along very well, and this feud was well known around the

state, at a Virginia Academy of Science meeting at a cocktail party, Sid <sup>e</sup> Nagus, a chemist up at M.C.V.

knew of the feud, saw Dr. Baldwin in one group and Dr. Marshall in the other group (they were sort of back-to-back) — so Dr. Nagus tapped each one of them on the shoulder, and as they turned around he <sup>said</sup> says, "Dr. Baldwin, do you know Dean Marshall?" And Dr. Baldwin <sup>said</sup> says said, without changing his voice, "Yes, I know the sonofabitch" and turned around and continued his conversation. Dr. Baldwin was probably a little too autocratic over in the biology department, and soon had the wrath of some of the other members of the department worked up, and the dean -- ~~I guess~~ it was Dean Jones ~~at that time~~ -- called Dr. Baldwin and the other members of the department over for a discussion. at the end of this discussion Dean Jones suggested that Baldwin resign. Baldwin said he didn't have the slightest intention of resigning but that if Dean Jones wanted him out he could fire him. Dean Jones blurted out, "You're <sup>#</sup>refired!" Baldwin reached over and shook hands with him and <sup>said</sup> says, "Thank you; after three years I've gotten a decision out of you." The next morning Dr. Baldwin appeared at the door of the mailroom, greeted <sup>ing</sup> all of his friends <sup>by</sup> telling them, "I'm delighted. I've never felt better in my life. It's such a relief. I've just been fired as chairman of the biology department."

# Dr. Baldwin, of course, was internationally known. He was a member of the Cosmos Club in Washington. He was sent to Africa twice: once by the state department and

once by the department of agriculture. Well, the first time he was introducing plants, seeing what American plants could be introduced economically into Liberia and what Liberian plants over here. One of

the plants he saw in Liberia was this ~~strophanthus~~ and *Strophanthus* within the year it turned out that this ~~strophanthus~~ was a good source of cortisone which had just been discovered, ~~and he was sent back after he had been on the campus less than a year to collect strophanthus seed~~ *after less than a year here he was sent back to Africa to collect Strophanthus seed for cortisone*

for cortisone. He brought a number of very important people to the campus. One of them was ~~Dudley Bronck~~ who at the time was head of the Rockefeller Institute of

*Belle Bronck  
DETLEV*

Medicine, which is now Rockefeller University. ~~Dudley Bronck~~ I believe spoke to the Phi Beta Kappa, and ~~the Phi Beta Kappa~~ over bourbon, Dr. Baldwin says to

*Belle Bronck  
recall at the anniversary meeting of  
after that meeting,*

~~Dudley Bronck~~, "I have a student here that I think ought to be admitted to Rockefeller Institute of Medicine." (They had something like 75 students and 300 faculty.) And so ~~Dudley Bronck~~ says, "What's his name?" He wrote it down on a little slip of paper and stuck it in his pocketbook, and Dr. Baldwin says, "Well, I will have his transcript and letters forwarded." And ~~Dudley Bronck~~ says,

*(avoid using student name)*

"That's not necessary. I have all I need." And in a few days ~~the student~~ got a letter of appointment: \$3000 for a scholarship plus \$1000 a year so that he might enjoy cultural activities around New York City. Then there was a *ELVIN STARKMAN* Dr. ~~Starkman~~ (I believe he was from the University of

*reflect*

anniversary letter

Wisconsin  
[who]

the

Missouri) came and gave a lecture to Phi Beta Kappa. Dr.

Baldwin required all of his freshman biology students to go to that lecture. It's usually a tragedy when several hundred students are required to go hear a visiting speaker.

Dr. Stakeman spoke on use of grains for food beginning with from the biblical times, <sup>mostly</sup> and I guess he talked on wheat rust, <sup>he</sup> and showed how the Jews prayed about it; The Greeks moved their grain up to higher land; The French cut down the barbery, which was the secondary host. The statement Stakeman quoted in half a dozen different languages, and the <sup>minute he</sup> ~~state Stakeman~~ ~~ment~~ finished, the applause was like a clap of thunder from ~~a~~ close lightning <sup>and</sup> after the talk Stakeman and Baldwin and several of us sat over bourbon until about 3:00 <sup>three</sup> in the morning, and to the best of my knowledge <sup>Dr</sup> Stakeman has never turned in a bill or an expense account; he enjoyed the trip too much.

Please add the stories of Baldwin's interest in landscaping the campus.

Dr. Baldwin's greatest contribution is unquestionably in landscaping. His goal was to make the campus both beautiful and of educational value by growing a wide variety of plants from all over the world. His finest collection was boxwood; many of the finest specimen are near Ewell Hall. At other places on campus one finds the cryptomeria, metasequoia, Leland cypress, and hybrid oaks.

(When Dr. Armstrong returned his transcript he added this Baldwin story:)

A few days before <sup>Baldwin's</sup> death in 1974, Jim Kelly, assistant to President Graves, saw Dr. Baldwin walking across campus with a saw(or pruning shears).in hand. When asked what he intended to do, Dr. Baldwin replied, "William and Mary plants are like William and Mary students: when a student doesn't measure up I flunk him. If a plant doesn't measure up I cut it down."

Williams: Now I believe at this point you wanted to talk something about the changes that had been made in the grading system in the years that you've been on the faculty and as a student, I suppose.

Armstrong: ~~Grading at William and Mary has~~ or the systems of reporting grades have changed rather drastically here as in other places. When I came here in 1928 numerical grades were assigned, with 100 at the top and 0 at the bottom; 75 was <sup>s</sup>passing. 75 passing is a rather artificial grade, and it meant that the faculty gave about 50 for trying, and if you got half of it right then you got 75. I taught a summer at Alberta where it was 0 to 100, with 50 passing, and I was more comfortable with that because <sup>one could</sup> ~~when it'd give them~~ a more honest grade. These grades, some of them <sup>were</sup> ~~are~~ right high, and there were so many of them. We got eight report cards a year! We got a report card on the 15th of each month for the first three months of the semester, plus the semester grades. Only the semester grades were recorded in the registrar's office in the permanent record, but there ~~were~~ <sup>was</sup> all of <sup>this</sup> ~~these~~ intermediate grading. Dr. <sup>t</sup>Stepson never assigned any homework. He gave one test about the 10th of the month, and whatever you made on that test, whether it was 0 or whether it was 100, went directly on the report card; <sup>It</sup> was never tempered or altered in any way. One time I got a grade of 98 on a physics course under Dr. Young, and I chided him about that. I said, "Dr. Young, you know I don't <sup>know</sup> ~~do~~ 98"

percent of this material." And he <sup>said,</sup> ~~says,~~ "Of course I know that you don't know 98 percent of it, and you know you don't know 98 percent of it, but ~~the people~~ I have to give 75s to keep from discouraging all of the students from taking physics, the amount <sup>these people</sup> they know at 75 compared to what you know, I ought to give you 500, but the system won't let me, so I give you 98." ~~Along~~ Along in the late '30s there was agitation among some of the faculty to change over to a letter system, and a committee of very able faculty, including Dr. Guy and Jim Miller, as best I recall, brought in a system of A, B, C, D, F, with the A counting six quality points, the B five, and the C four. The requirement for graduation was a quality point average of 2, which meant that a person could graduate from William and Mary with half Cs and half Ds. Along in the middle '40s I believe that the D was probably the most common letter given in grading. ~~After~~ <sup>#</sup> After all, a person could get a D and a C, and the average of the two was sufficient for granting a degree. The idea of making the A, B, and C so nearly the same was that there would be less pressure on the instructor to give As, because you see a B counted five points compared to an A at six. Therefore for purposes of graduation the B was essentially as good as the A. With this system, Dr. Guy felt there would be relatively few As given, <sup>[and]</sup> not too many Bs, since C was a useful and respectable grade. ~~This did ask the faculty.~~ During the debate on the new system of grading, Dr. R.L. Taylor of the

biology department got up and said that he was confused about the merits of the two systems, and there was one man on the faculty whose opinion ~~that~~ he would like to know before he voted on this, and that man was Dr. R.G. Robb. Dr. Robb seldom spoke in faculty meeting. This forced him to his feet. His answer was, "I don't really think it makes much difference which system we adopt. We'll change it in ten years." <sup>[system]</sup> The 6-5-4-0-0 quality point continued until sometime in the late '40s, when the placement bureau requested that that be changed to 3-2-1-0, with a 1 average (or C average) for graduation. The grades at William and Mary were so low, there were so many Ds, that it made it difficult for placement to have <sup>our student</sup> ~~these people~~ compete with <sup>[people from]</sup> other schools that had C average for graduation. I had copies of all of the grades across the board at the college for three or four of those years, and the students who came right after that change were penalized because the faculty required about three or four years to change their feelings toward the D, and indeed the number of Ds did decrease drastically and the number of Cs increased. After all, regardless of what the system is the same people ought to get the degrees under one system as the other. I discussed the A-B-C-D-F system with Dr. Young, and he said it really didn't make any difference to him whether we had numbers or whether we had letters, that if he were giving letters that the A, B, and C would indicate that the student had

enough background in physics to successfully pursue the next advanced course, ~~That~~ a D would mean that the amount he had learned indicated that he would probably have difficulty with the next course, and ~~an~~ an F that he ought to learn more before he took the next advanced course. So the A, B, C was a green<sup>light</sup>, the D was yellow light, and the F was a red light (stop physics) (proceed with caution) ~~and proceed as you see.~~ ~~And that~~ he felt the criterion for passing them was whether one could pursue the next advanced course, and ~~that~~ that could be fit<sup>ted</sup> into any system.

# We continued the A-B-C-D-F with the 3-2-1 quality points until some five years ago, and during the student unrest and the faculty unrest of the late '60s William and Mary, behind the other schools two or three years, as it usually is, followed Stanford and others in getting rid of the D. ~~Now,~~ the naive statements of a number of our young faculty ~~were~~ were hard to put up with. They pointed out that the D was a marginal grade, ~~that~~ that the D was really not passing and really not failing. The implication was that if we did away with the D grade we would do away with the marginal performance. We did away with the D grade, and we had no way of telling the students that their performance was marginal. The result was that most of the students who would have gotten Ds got Cs, ~~then~~ then the people who normally would have gotten Cs were disturbed because they were in the same wide group as the other people, and the net result was a large increase in

the number of Bs. ~~Now~~ <sup>by some</sup> a year or so ago Stanford University put the D back in, and so William and Mary, following as usual, will put the D back in next September. <sup>For several years</sup> There had been agitation <sup>by some</sup> on the faculty to get the D reconsidered by the educational policy committee. There were some members of the educational policy committee who were dragging their feet on it, and when the faculty would ask for <sup>a decision,</sup> it, they would come back and say, "Well, we haven't been able to agree on it." So about a year, <sup>ago</sup> I guess, or a little bit less the thing came up again in <sup>a</sup> faculty meeting, and I made a motion that the faculty instruct the proper committee to bring in a system restoring the D grade <sup>and</sup> one of the members of the committee got up and ~~suggested~~ <sup>asked</sup> what if they could not in good conscience bring in such a system? <sup>and</sup> my answer to that was then I thought they should resign and let somebody get on the committee who would follow the will of the faculty. The committee didn't resign; <sup>it</sup> found that it could bring in such a system <sup>the fall of</sup> in 1975, and the faculty has voted to restore the D grade and ~~has voted to~~ go on an A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1, which is a little different <sup>than</sup> <sup>from</sup> before, but it is the most widely used system in the country, <sup>and therefore</sup> and therefore our transcripts will be easily read by the people who normally have to read transcripts. We are trying to convey some information to the personnel people in both graduate schools and in industry, and it seems to me that we should get that to them in the way that it is the

easiest for them to interpret. That does not mean that I believe that A-B-C-D-F is the ultimate in evaluating students; it just happens to be as good as we can do. Every system of grading is unsatisfactory, so it is solely a matter of getting a system that is the least unsatisfactory one. ~~Of~~ Of course, we had a rash of pass/fail along with this elimination of the D. It was supposed to take the pressure of the student, and the hopes were that the student would go out into other areas, other departments where he would be afraid to take a course on the A-B-C-F. It didn't turn out that way, and in a number of schools the faculty member turned in the letter as usual. The registrar changed the A-B-C over to a pass and anything else under that to a fail. Some studies were made, and they showed that the students who were on pass/fail made lower grades than they would have been expected to make if they were on A-B-C, so that when students went on pass/fail they simply did just enough to get pass. There was a study in a chemistry <sup>journal</sup> not long ago ~~that came out in~~ (The Journal of College Science Teaching) in which a large number of sections taught by different teachers were studied, and <sup>n</sup> a questionnaire was given out at the first <sup>[of the course]</sup> as to the students' interest in pass/fail, whether they believed in <sup>it</sup>, ~~them~~, and a number of other questions <sup>[There were]</sup> and additional <sup>n</sup> questionnaires at the end of the term. The only correlation that could be found between the number of students who elected pass/fail

and the instructors was in terms of the reputation of the instructors: ~~if~~ the instructors had reputations of being fair graders, put down the ground~~rules~~, and the student felt that he could get a grade based on what he had accomplished, there were very few pass/fails. In the sections where the reputation of the instructor was that the grades did not follow performance, that the instructor's tests were vague, and that the grading was not such as the student could understand it, then there was a large proportion of the students that went pass/fail. So ~~that~~ ← it appears to me that pass/fail is a cop-out for the student and a cop-out for the instructor. ~~This~~ This whole business of grading <sup>was</sup> ~~they~~ discussed up at Mt. Holyoke a couple years ago, and one of the chemistry professors from Antioch got up and told how well he knew the students and what good friends of his they were and that he couldn't write down grades for them and that he could not write letters to the medical schools evaluating these students, that the medical schools would have to get along without it. He was about the worst~~est~~ of half a dozen who talked that way, including the statement that he could not play God and give grades to these people. When I had a chance to talk my answer to that was that if he and the rest of us who knew the students well could not help the medical schools make their selections, then the medical schools would have to make their selections on some less valid criteria, including a



down to about here," and brought in the names of the ones  
 that he thought to be elected from the alumni and as  
 honoraries ~~and~~ <sup>o</sup> it became a shadow of Dr. Chandler, too.  
 When he left and Mr. Bryan came in there was a considerable  
 lessening of the autocratic process. With Mr. Pomfret, who  
 was a scholar, I don't think that the faculty felt op-  
 pressed, and indeed <sup>the</sup> intellectual leadership was probably  
 better under him than under anybody else because he was a  
 scholar himself. The whole business of democracy within  
 the faculty didn't come <sup>up</sup> in a serious way until a few years  
 ago during the student revolts, ~~and~~ at the same time that the  
 students decided they wanted to take over the faculty func-  
 tions the faculty decided it wanted to take over the ad-  
 ministrative functions. Everybody wanted to do anything  
 but what he was supposed to do ~~and~~ <sup>o</sup> here at the college  
 now we have democracy in the faculty as a whole. We have  
 democracy down to the departments. Indeed I heard <sup>of</sup> one  
 department that for personnel evaluation has ten members.  
 It has ten committees composed of nine persons, that is,  
 everybody but the one member who is being discussed so  
 nine get together and give their opinion of the tenth <sup>o</sup> <sup>men</sup> ~~man~~,  
 and this goes into his evaluation. Well, I know  
 that anything that's said in a committee of nine is going  
 to get back to the other person. If there was ever a system  
 devised to have every person on the faculty <sup>#</sup> mad at every other  
 person on the faculty, this is it! It used to be we could

mad at the chairman and the president. Now everybody is looking over his shoulder to see who is mad at him and who is going to stop him on his way up. I think democracy has gone too far. I think that it is gone to where it is counterproductive. The president of this college and of other colleges around the country can't lead; the deans can't lead; ~~They're~~ bogged down in democracy. The departments are so bogged down in democracy that the chairman<sup>e</sup> of the department<sup>s</sup> can't get much done. ~~and~~ indeed if we expect to have real progress in the college it must be from a strong president or a strong dean or a strong chairman because ~~as the committees,~~ as the faculty as a whole can't have ideas and can't push ideas; <sup>this</sup> ~~They~~ can only be done by individuals <sup>and</sup> ~~it~~ appears to me that if we expect real progress we've got to get the individuals with the ideas in the proper positions and allow them to lead without <sup>burdening</sup> ~~breaking~~ them down with all of this so-called democracy.

Williams: You didn't say anything about democracy under Chandler or Paschall.

Armstrong: Well, democracy under ~~this would be~~ Admiral Chandler and under Paschall -- I don't think there was too much of it, but on the other hand the autocratic hand was not heavy, either. I think that the administration has lost its capacity to administer -- probably in the last ten years, <sup>just</sup> as the heads of departments are now chairmen of the departments. I think that the

e is  
or a committee  
Same number

department chairman<sup>e</sup> and the administration -- the dean and the president -- are both in a pretty near impossible position to make any real leaps forward.

Now a last word on the honor system. The honor system back in the '30s and early '40s had no civil rights built in at all. The head of the honor council would go to the accused's room at 2:00 in the morning, get him up out of bed, march him ~~in a~~ <sup>over</sup> to a room where he was accused and asked whether he was guilty or not. It was probably as degrading a system as could have been put together and certainly was free from any human rights. It was Dean Woodbridge of the law school and Mr. Lambert, who <sup>had</sup> ~~has in~~ many positions around here, who have civilized the honor system and have insisted on some reasonable rights for the accused. <sup>[as for]</sup> Now the honor system as a whole, I saw more cheating on the first test I took in graduate school at the University of Michigan than I have seen at William and Mary in forty years. So, while the honor system may not work perfectly it has worked rather well for me, and it has worked rather well for the chemistry department. I think that where there are widescale violations of the honor system that it is a question of the professor not making definite assignments, of the students being confused about what they are supposed to study, <sup>of the students going</sup> ~~that they go to~~ the examination with a feeling of frustration that they don't know what they're going to have or what areas they're going to be tested on, and that it is this frustration of not

knowing the ground rules that leads to large amounts of cheating. If the students know the ground rules they'll play the game; if they don't then the frustration will make them go outside the rules.