

Charles Loreaux Quittmeyer

Notes from interview with Emily Williams as part of the
College of William and Mary Oral History Project

July 8, 1976

Interview was not taped at Quittmeyer's request

I. Background

In the fall of 1938, Mr. Quittmeyer entered William and Mary as a transfer student from Wesleyan University in Connecticut. While on a family visit to Williamsburg he had met a former DKE fraternity brother from Wesleyan, Ellis Parry. He decided he would come to William and Mary as well. His interest at the time was not in business, but economics; in fact, he knew very little about the business program.

II. Student career at William and Mary

He describes William and Mary in that era as "a party place," with an informal atmosphere where all the students knew each other. By and large the students were not wealthy (unlike what was often the case at the University of Virginia), but there was something of a country club atmosphere, a sense of social comraderie about the place, as he remembers it. (Mr. Quittmeyer recalled the names of several depression-era students who have since become wealthy.) Fraternity and sorority dances, along with the Christmas and finals balls, were major social events.

He remembers the students as "not real strong" academically, but equal to others at the university then, though perhaps not as high in standing as current William and Mary students. He found the grading "tough" (it should be mentioned that Mr. Quittmeyer made Phi Beta Kappa), but a student could graduate with C's and D's. While the faculty did not contain many scholars who

published widely, it did have a number of fine teachers.

President of the college was John Stewart Bryan, but Bryan was something of an "absentee landlord;" in his stead Charlie Duke ran the school. In charge of the men students was Dean J. Wilfred Lambert, who was "tough"--if he found contraband items in his room searches, he would dispose of them ("he'd pour the liquor down the drain," Quittmeyer chuckles). The girls, hemmed in by rules, were more docile, as he remembers.

One of Bryan's interests was in building up the William and Mary football team; to this end he hired Carl Voyles, a stern taskmaster and former coach at Auburn and Duke. As a student Quittmeyer tutored some of the players in history; even though most were physical education majors they still had to pass distribution courses like "football Greek." In sum, Mr. Quittmeyer's memory of William and Mary in the late 1930's is of a pleasant social place.

III. Postwar era

After World War II the College changed considerably, although it maintained some of the atmosphere of "a good time place." Veterans poured into colleges across the country; there may not be as many students enrolled in business courses at William and Mary now as there were then. Mr. Quittmeyer notes, however, that not all the veterans were the great students they are sometimes made out to be. He himself had returned in 1948 as

a faculty member and taught four different courses, striving to stay one step ahead of the students. The president by that time was John Pomfret, whom he describes as a placid, scholarly fellow who might have stayed longer had it not been for the 1951 football scandal.

IV. Chandler era

Acting president following Pomfret's resignation was Jim Miller, who may have had presidential aspirations of his own, "but there was no way with that board (of visitors)." Instead, Pomfret was followed by Alvin Duke Chandler; his vision was of William and Mary as a state system of colleges. Also, it was Chandler's desire to "develop the professional part of William and Mary." In 1957 he thought he had schools of business and education set, but, partly on recommendation of the dean, the board turned down the proposals. "Maybe we weren't ready," Mr. Quittmeyer says, "I think we were. We'd be ten years ahead of where we are now."

In this respect (and in others) Alvin Chandler was almost "a successor to his father." J.A.C. Chandler had been a developer, a public relations man with drive and a vision of the future, shaking William and Mary out of the somnolence that had set in after the revolution. According to a story told by Dr. Richard L. Morton, Chandler even delayed changing the name of the old Main Building to the Wren Building for a year until President

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Warren Harding could come to William and Mary, so important was this (in Chandler's mind) to enhancing the school's image.

It was Chandler who first created the School of Business and Finance (later the School of Business and Economics), but this was something of a misnomer. For one thing, there were only a few faculty members of the school, at least in those early years. For a short time the B.B.A. degree was offered, although a student would have had to stay five years to earn it. It quickly disappeared from the catalog.

V. William and Mary as a liberal arts college

Where William and Mary did have some influence, however, was in public school education, for many Virginia teachers and superintendents were William and Mary graduates. But somewhere in the mid-1930's there occurred another one of the great changes Mr. Quittmeyer sees in William and Mary's history: the rise of the concept of this as a liberal arts college comparable to some of the country's small, select private colleges. Exactly how this happened he is unsure; he thinks it was "accidental" and "unplanned." At that time there came onto the faculty several younger men, such as [Harold] Fowler, [James] Miller, and [Warner] Moss, who arrived with the understanding that William and Mary was a small liberal arts college, a concept that prevailed until the mid-1960's. They tended to bring "their own types" onto the faculty, perpetuating this idea, this image, but

William and Mary "was a liberal arts college only in the minds of these powerful faculty members," for "there was much at William and Mary that was not liberal arts." "Education and business hung in." Around 1941 Bryan had Charles Marsh (who, along with Albion Taylor, was one of the key people in the business and economics program) set up the business department.

The necessity for a business program had been created by the declining male enrollment; a strong football team and a business program were set up to attract men and counteract the "feminine image" that William and Mary had. But in the 1950's and 1960's neither President Chandler nor Paschall shared this view of the college. This caused "some dislocation," certainly in relation to graduate work, which was vehemently resisted in some quarters (such as history). Mr. Quittmeyer feels the liberal arts ideal has held back William and Mary; what is perpetually the College of William and Mary by statute (part of the image) "will not amount to much" until it acknowledges its university status. "Its greatness lies through the university route," he predicts. Whether or not it will actually come to pass, he feels William and Mary should emerge as a university with a scholarly faculty, perhaps organized with arts and sciences as the college, containing deans of undergraduate and graduate studies, as a part of this, and with the professional schools reporting to the president. "The makings are there, but we must change some minds about what William and Mary is."

VI. School of Business Administration

When Mr. Quittmeyer returned to the faculty in 1962, business was a department (he was the departmental chairman). Against what may have been the wishes of the then dean of the college, he decided "to make something of this program or go down with the ship." He saw to it that the Bureau of Business Research was salvaged, and, with the backing of President Paschall, whom he had become close to, he developed a stronger undergraduate program and a stronger faculty, thus contributing to a larger enrollment. Despite the feelings of other administrators, Paschall helped obtain the new faculty members. (Quittmeyer considers Paschall to have been one of the finest William and Mary presidents.) Finally the M.B.A. degree was approved by the Arts and Sciences faculty. Dean Fowler had the power to stop that, Quittmeyer concedes, but perhaps the thinking was that if the M.B.A. degree was approved, business would stay out of the undergraduate program. Often influenced by the President's recommendation, the Board of Visitors got behind the idea of a school of business administration, and this was organized as of March, 1968. The board remains an ally. Also of help were the business school sponsors, a group of influential business people who serve as a council.

Soon after its establishment the school gained accreditation by the American Association and Council of Schools of Business. Although it was turned down on its first try, the refusal helped

it become autonomous in such matters as degree requirements for the undergraduate curriculum. In terms of enrollment the undergraduate program is ahead of the schedule drawn up for it; the M.B.A. "still has far to go."

Establishment of the school and of its place at William and Mary "has been a fight;" it has been "emotional" and "unpleasant," and "maybe not worth it," as Dean Quittmeyer recounts it. "Nothing has been given to this school; we've fought for it."