

## Virginia Phelps

Virginia Welton Duke Phelps moved to Williamsburg in the early 1930s when her husband, Charles J. Duke, was appointed as bursar of the college. Soon thereafter John Stewart Bryan asked the Dukes to live in the President's House to help him entertain. The social life at William and Mary in the 1930s is the main topic of discussion in the following interview, which was reviewed by Mrs. Phelps.

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 Date of interview May 15, 1975  
 Place 313 Burns Lane, Williamsburg  
 Interviewer Emily Williams  
 Session number 1  
 Length of tape 34 mins.

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Virginia Phelps

May 15, 1975

Williams: You said you felt <sup>you had</sup> been to the funeral of J. A. C. Chandler [in 1934] <sup>that you</sup> and never left.

V. Phelps: That's right. He died in May 1934 ~~and~~ <sup>my</sup> late husband, Charlie Duke, was on the Board of Visitors then, and the Board of Visitors <sup>had</sup> asked him to act as acting president while Dr. Chandler was so ill, ~~and~~ <sup>the</sup> then board met in June of 1934 ~~Dr. Chandler died in May of '34~~ <sup>and</sup> elected Mr. Bryan as president of the college, <sup>It</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>he</sup> was my <sup>understanding</sup> ~~as~~ ~~saying~~ -- I don't know whether it's true or not -- but Mr. Bryan said he would come as president if Charlie Duke came to handle the business, so they recreated the position of bursar, <sup>and</sup> so we just stayed on.

Williams: Did you know or did your husband know Mr. Bryan before hand?

Oh, yes.  
V. Phelps: They were on the Board of Visitors together. <sup>You see,</sup> ~~Charlie's~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~father was on the Board of Visitors.~~ <sup>Course,</sup> Dr. Chandler was Charlie Duke's uncle by marriage; Mrs. Chandler was a Duke. ~~And~~ ~~so~~ Charlie's father was on the Board of Visitors, and when he died, the governor appointed Charlie to take his place as a member of the ~~Board of Visitors~~ ~~and~~ Mr. John Stewart Bryan was on the Board of Visitors with Charlie, and they struck up quite a friendship ~~on the Board of Visitors~~ ~~and~~ then Mr. Bryan came in June of '34. Mr. Bryan's wife was an invalid and could not come down here, so Mr. Bryan asked Charlie and me to <sup>live</sup> ~~be~~ in the President's House with him

and to help him entertain people. At that time, Dr. Chandler had all his furniture in there, so when he died the children (his heirs) took the furniture, and Mr. Bryan didn't want to bring any of his in. <sup>That</sup> <sup>[in]</sup> ~~Then~~ was the beginning of the Restoration, <sup>so</sup> ~~the~~ college and Colonial Williamsburg decided that it would be nice to furnish it in the eighteenth-century ~~line~~ <sup>manner</sup>. ~~So~~ <sup>the</sup> college gave so much money and Colonial Williamsburg <sup>[Colonial]</sup> gave so much money, and then Jim Cogar, the curator of Williamsburg, furnished the house and ~~so~~ <sup>furnishings</sup> the basic furniture in there are the pieces which Mr. Cogar selected. (Charlie and I lived on the third floor and had our own things.)

Williams: Was this the first restoration of the interior? Dr. Chandler had totally his own things?

V. Phelps: That's right. The house was really never restored inside; ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> was what they called repaired. Dr. Chandler had ~~like~~ lace curtains in that eighteenth-century house, and so of course, now you have damask curtains and venetian blinds, and it is furnished more ~~or~~ <sup>the</sup> less in eighteenth-century ~~now~~ manner.

Williams: You had said that you sort of had to take charge or be consultant, didn't you, about this restoration?

V. Phelps: Mr. Cogar was very good. We took trips to Richmond and to Norfolk getting the curtains and decisions <sup>[making]</sup> and <sup>I</sup> ~~even~~ went to New York to select the rugs (the Oriental rugs) and ~~we got them through~~ <sup>able</sup> ~~wholesale because my brother~~

<sup>but</sup> my father let us get things at wholesale -- the curtains

at the same time  
 were made down ~~there~~<sup>^</sup>, and the venetian blinds were bought at wholesale<sup>^</sup>, and the rugs were bought at wholesale, so we got a lot for the little money we had.

Williams: There was no attempt to restore <sup>the</sup> original furnishings, ~~the way~~<sup>^</sup> ~~they~~ reproduce originals the way they did<sup>^</sup>, say<sup>^</sup>, in the Governor's Palace,<sup>?</sup> just<sup>?</sup> to decorate it in the eighteenth-century manner<sup>?</sup>

V. Phelps: That's right. They did get the paintings from over in the library, ~~which the college had~~. I think they're still over there, aren't they? Mr. Cogar selected everything so that it was in eighteenth-century manner.

Williams: Mr. Bryan began, didn't he, by saying that he would live in Richmond and just commute down here<sup>^</sup>, but then pretty soon after ~~he~~ he moved into the president's house. Right?

V. Phelps: He just loved coming down here<sup>^</sup>, ~~he~~ just thoroughly enjoyed it. ~~WE~~ would go horseback riding and go canoeing and walking, ~~and~~ <sup>he</sup> loved his students; ~~he~~ loved to sit on the steps of the President's house and talk with the students as they went by<sup>^</sup>, and they all loved him, ~~and~~ <sup>he</sup> just thoroughly enjoyed coming here.

Williams: He's been described by someone else as a true Virginia gentleman. In what ways would you say this was a <sup>^</sup> apt description?

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. He had beautiful manners, very charming. I used to call him the "King of Palaver," he was always saying such nice things. He was such a wonderful person. If we would have a group of people in the house at a party, for example, if somebody was off to themselves and shy and looked like they

were  
^ not having a good time, he would seek that person out and  
make them feel like a million dollars.

Williams: He was a frequent entertainer<sup>off</sup>

V. Phelps: He loved to have people in. <sup>He'd</sup> Meet them on the street ~~up in New York,~~

"Come <sup>on</sup> down to Williamsburg. I've got a place for you."

So he just loved to entertain, yes, he loved people.

Williams: Now, I've been told by numerous faculty members -- this isn't  
divulging any confidences -- that many was <sup>the</sup> time the phone would  
ring at noon, and it would be Mr. Bryan or Mr. Bryan's secre-  
tary saying, the president wants you to come for lunch. On  
occassions like this, then, were you in charge of going in and  
making sure that everything got ready?

V. Phelps: Yes. That brings me up to the time when he called <sup>one</sup> Monday morn-  
ing, and Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller, ~~Junior~~, were coming out that  
night for dinner, and I was sick in bed, so I called the grocery  
store and ordered the groceries (in those days they delivered),  
and I called the butler ~~upstairs and told him that they had~~  
~~come~~ (William Cumber, who was my right-hand man) to  
come upstairs and told him what the menu was to be, and I or-  
dered some avocado pears. Well, when we sat down to dinner and  
the salad course arrived, Mr. Rockefeller put his fork into the  
avocado pear, and it was so green and so hard that it shot  
across the table, and all I could do was laugh, and then he  
laughed.

Williams: Was Mr. Rockefeller a frequent guest then?

V. Phelps: No, not too frequent.

Williams: This would have been after the Restoration really was --

V. Phelps: In the midst of it?

Williams: Some of the bigger ones had been finished.

V. Phelps: Well, the Wren Building was the first one. That was 1929.

Williams: Now we're talking about '34.

Williams: It was still going on, I know.

V. Phelps: The palace was ~~walled up~~ <sup>w</sup> ~~at that time~~ and the Capitol was walled up. They were doing the capitol at that time. Mr. Rockefeller loved to come down here and ride in an old Ford ~~and~~ (no one would recognize him) and walk among people and hear their reactions. When you say frequently-- whenever Mr. Rockefeller was in town, <sup>#</sup> I think he and Mr. Bryan got together some way. <sup>[For example]</sup> ~~like~~ we went up to Brandon on Mr. Robert Daniels' yacht for tea one Sunday afternoon with the Rockefellers. ~~And~~ <sup>=</sup> then Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller came when I was pregnant with Charles, and I had on a maternity dress at the dinner, ~~(a dinner dress)~~ and Mrs. Rockefeller said, "Oh, that's such a beautiful dress. What kind is it? I'd like to have one just like it." I laughed and said, "this is a maternity dress." Mrs. Rockefeller was so thrilled. <sup>=</sup> When is it going to be and all -- she was just real folksy and real homey -- they were both great people.

Williams: Now, for these surprise<sup>s</sup> ~~--~~ <sup>v</sup> Mr. Rockefeller's coming tonight for dinner<sup>y</sup> -- did you have a staff, a large staff<sup>y</sup>, to help you?

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. I had a cook, a maid, and a butler<sup>y</sup>, but I usually did

the flowers, and I also made <sup>the</sup> desserts, and I used <sup>to</sup> (in the beginning) to set the table to see that everything was correct. But finally I got William trained to be able to set the table. Talking about cooking, that reminds me of when Gertrude Stein came. Mr. Bryan's car broke down on the way from Richmond down here, so he couldn't be there, and Charlie had important business in Washington, so he wasn't [here], so I was left holding the bag more ~~for less~~. And Gertrude came with her secretary, Alice B. Toklas, and Mr. Carl van Vechten ~~was his name~~. So Mr. Bryan had invited the English faculty to have lunch with Gertrude Stein, so when Gertrude arrived with Alice B. Toklas and Carl van Vechten, she was tired and wanted to rest, so she went in the back living room of the president's house, had me shut the doors into the hall, took the cushions off the sofa, and put her feet on the cushions on the floor and rested. Then I went ~~in~~ *in the hall* side and talked to the English faculty until she was rested and we went in to lunch. Now I had made a chocolate layer cake <sup>with ambrosia</sup> ~~for lunch~~ for dessert, ~~with ambrosia~~ and Miss Alice B. Toklas said, "please don't serve Miss Stein any chocolate because she's allergic to it and she doesn't like it." So <sup>when William</sup> the butler passed the chocolate cake around (Miss Stein was on my right) and I looked to see what she was going to do, and she took a piece and I watched. She ate that whole piece, and when the cake came again she took another piece of chocolate cake and ate it again. But she liked to



put on a show, I think, you know, like Virginia was uninhabited. Carl van Venter<sup>ch</sup>, who was there that day, had several bracelets on, and we used to get Ernest Cumber to come help serve. He was the janitor of the administration building at that time (which is now James Blair). The next day, Ernest said to Mr. Duke over at the administration building, "Mr. Duke, what kind of a man was that we had yesterday? He had bracelets on!"

Williams: You had some other notable figures to come. Did Mr. Bryan entertain Mr. Roosevelt when he came for Mr. Bryan's inauguration?

V. Phelps: Mr. Roosevelt came for Mr. Bryan's inauguration, and the ceremony was at <sup>11:00</sup> eleven o'clock in the morning. And no one realized until he arrived that the President was more crippled than anyone ever expected, ~~him~~ and they drove the car right to the Wren Building and had a ramp and carried him up the ramp. Now, Mrs. Roosevelt came over to the president's house, and I think <sup>I showed her</sup> she went through the house, and then afterwards, the front lawn there was roped off for security reasons -- but as I was walking down the walk there with her, she spied some <sup>woman</sup> reporter that she knew and flew over to <sup>er</sup> him and pulled the ropes up and dragged <sup>her</sup> him off. Mrs. Roosevelt was just a charming, delightful person. I sat with her during the service, too (through Mr. Bryan's inauguration) and immediately afterwards they went down to Yorktown, where the presidential yacht was waiting <sup>them</sup> there and they went on, so we did not have any meals with the president. Alexander

<sup>1</sup> Woolcott was another one of our guests, and he arrived before lunch, ~~and before lunch~~ Mr. Bryan asked him if he would like to have a little drink, and Mr. Woolcott said, "No thank you." ~~and~~ after lunch, he said he'd like to go up and take a nap, and he said, "Mr. Bryan, if you don't mind, I'll have that drink now which you offered me before." So Mr. <sup>Bryan</sup> ~~Butler~~ <sup>William</sup> told the butler to take a decanter of <sup>h</sup> whiskey up and a glass for Mr. <sup>1</sup> Woolcott so he could have it while he was taking his nap. Then before dinner, <sup>William</sup> the butler came to Mr. Bryan for the key to the <sup>h</sup> whiskey closet to make up some old-fashioneds before dinner, and Mr. Bryan said, "William, go up to Mr. <sup>1</sup> Woolcott's room and get that decanter of <sup>h</sup> whiskey you took up for his nap and use that up first." So William went up and got the decanter and brought it down to Mr. Bryan -- empty. And at dinner that night, <sup>1</sup> Mr. Woolcott burnt ~~drank~~ holes in the damask table cloth with a W and M monogram on it. <sup>[Phone rings]</sup> ~~And~~ after dinner he <sup>est</sup> ~~said~~ back in the living room ~~and~~ ~~he was~~ smoking, and he would just dump his ashes on the right side, and Charlie would carry an ashtray <sup>over</sup> on that way, then he'd do it on the left side, -- ~~Mr. Woolcott would drop ashes on the over there~~ and Charlie would take an ashtray there. So finally, Charlie just gave up, ~~and~~ then after he finished smoking he ~~put~~ put his cigarette down on the floor and just stomped it out with his foot. Well, Mr. Bryan just couldn't take such rudeness, and he excused himself and had to go to bed, so we were left with Mr. <sup>1</sup> Woolcott ourselves, and I decided that I was tired, too,

and I was going to bed, but Charlie got out a real good bottle of Irish whiskey and do you know that Mr. Woolcott sat and drank that whole bottle! (Charlie had a few drinks of that Irish whiskey) so he's like the man who came to dinner.

Williams: You probably weren't in the president's house when Robert Frost came.

V. Phelps: No, I was not.

Williams: But did Mr. Bryan entertain him, do you remember?

V. Phelps: <sup>You know?</sup> Mr. Bryan was very much interested in the arts and the old administration building was over here on Jamestown Road, and when they moved in to what is now James Blair Mr. Bryan brought Leslie Cheek down here and restored that old administration building to a fine arts building. For the dedication of that Georgia O'Keefe, ~~came down~~ <sup>came down</sup> who ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup> quite a famous artist and lived here in Williamsburg. (Her home has been torn down; it was right there on Henry and Scotland Street; it was an old stone house) which she presented a painting to the college ~~but~~ <sup>ing</sup> talk about entertaining, I expect <sup>ed</sup> about twenty-four for lunch for Georgia O'Keefe and I think forty came. I ran out of silver; someone had to eat <sup>the chicken salad</sup> with oyster forks! ~~the chicken salad~~

Williams: How did you cope with this unexpected -- ~~you just had~~

V. Phelps: ~~Just~~ . Just do the best you can.

Williams: Everyone else knew that he was a spur-of-the-moment person, too, so that made it easier, maybe?

V. Phelps: I guess so. I guess it did. They were always so glad to get

there, so glad that he was so charming and attractive, and what food we had was awfully good. We even used to have oysters on the half-shell. The butler, ~~and~~ William, would drive by right down ~~on Boundary Street,~~ on Prince George Street where Rodgers' Cleaners, <sup>is</sup> and leave a tray -- you see he'd ~~been~~ <sup>go</sup> home in the afternoon to rest -- and then bring the tray back with oysters, and we'd have oysters on the half-shell. Mr. Bryan loved gourmet food and all kinds of good things to eat, and he made everybody feel very, very happy. Then we had Gracie Fields, the comedian <sup>e ne</sup> and singer, ~~the English comedian~~ <sup>enne</sup> and singer, who sent us <sup>the</sup> the greatest aspidistra hanging in our room. She was just so funny and so delightful. She didn't eat until after her performance, and she came over to the president's house and had a scotch old-fashioned, which I'd never heard of until then. Well, most everybody except Gertrude Stein and Alexander Woolcott were very charming and attractive. They were very interesting.

I think you quoted the name of a song, but I can't quite tell from the tape.

Williams: I'm sure there was never a dull moment.

V. Phelps: Oh, no, never a dull moment.

Williams: Now when the college would have these Christmas parties or of course, the June ball, but I assume that Mr. Bryan would get an outside caterer, say, for the Christmas party?

V. Phelps: People would come down. His family would come down and have dinner at the president's house, then the party was ~~like~~ at 8:00 at night, eight o'clock at night and then the college dining hall

I guess <sup>served</sup> ~~moved~~ the punch. We never had a caterer at all  
 when I was there, <sup>at the President's House</sup>. He [Mr. Bryan] ~~did~~  
 He did bring down things from ~~Cowles~~ <sup>Every</sup>  
 in Richmond. <sup>At</sup> Christmas we had an open house -- all

the faculty and all the college staff ~~that wanted to~~ --  
 [Once] Mr. Bryan brought down this smoked turkey; I had never seen  
 a smoked turkey before and neither had William ~~or~~ the but-  
 ler seen a smoked turkey, and he called me in. He said,  
 "Mrs. Duke, this turkey looks like it's all burned. It's  
 black." I looked at that black turkey, and I said, "It cer-  
 tainly does. Don't put that thing on the table, <sup>if we run</sup> ~~give other~~ out of  
 food ~~and~~ then we'll <sup>of</sup> do it." So we gave out ~~the~~ food, so Wil-  
 liam put it on the table and people just went crazy about  
 it -- were picking it up out of the bowls and gnawing on the  
 bones.

Williams: I've never heard of a smoked turkey.

V. Phelps: Oh, they're delicious. ~~And~~ this friend of his, Mr. Jones ~~was~~  
 in Texas, <sup>it</sup> was a specialty of his, and he sent it to Mr. Bryan. --  
 Also sent some smoked salmon. He was always bringing  
 exotic foods in.

Williams: What would you say was his main contribution to the college?

V. Phelps: His great love and friendship and making everybody feel  
 like they were just wonderful -- <sup>he loved the</sup> students and the faculty.  
 He just loved <sup>to be with</sup> a group of people. He was a real Christian.  
 He liked to do kind things to people, and I was very lucky to be  
 associated with him.

Williams: Now, Mr. Duke's title was bursar, but that does not give even an

(it doesn't seem)  
 idea of the range of duties that he was called upon, it  
 doesn't seem to perform here.

V. Phelps: That's right. He was really Mr. Bryan's assistant. I  
 think I told you <sup>[that]</sup> Mr. Charlie Taylor <sup>#</sup> who was the publisher  
 and owner of the Boston Globe, said that Mr. John Stewart Bryan was the  
 greatest college president he'd ever seen because he ran the  
 whole College of William and Mary by using two words, "Hey,  
 Charlie." Mr. Bryan wanted a football team, so "Hey, Charlie,"  
~~so~~ Charlie brought in Carl Voyles. At the dining hall the  
 students were complaining about <sup>the food,</sup> so Mr. Bryan said "Hey,  
 Charlie," ~~so~~ he brought in the Crotty Brothers. ~~and then~~  
~~the sunken lawn~~ <sup>Then</sup> Mr. Gillette had designed the sunken lawn,  
 and Mr. Bryan had the boxwoods up there in his country place  
 near Charlottesville, but there was just very little money, so  
 he said "Hey, Charlie" ~~so~~ Charlie got Jack Saunders and the  
 crew on the college campus, and they went up in trucks and  
 moved all that box in trucks and planted it. No outside  
 nursery man did it, ~~and~~ it was money from this place and that  
 place. ~~And~~ Jack Saunders also planted all those beech trees  
 and the crepe myrtle trees, ~~and~~ that was all done because Mr.  
 Bryan wanted it done, but we just didn't have quite so much  
 money.

Williams: I also found that Mr. Duke used to address the pep rallies,  
 which I thought was an unusual task.

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. He was quite a man. He had a lot of pep.  
 We used to call him "Applesauce Charlie." Oh, you must have

heard about that rally. Well, Mr. Bryan thought that ~~at~~  
 one Thanksgiving it would be real nice to give the students  
 something real different and unusual, so he thought he would  
 give them an Indian figure. (You remember those Indian figures  
 that stand in front of cigar stores.) So he called Mrs. Rocke-  
 feller in <sup>with her primitive art collection</sup> ~~hall~~ to see if he could get one of  
 her Indian figures, and ~~so~~ she called one of the museum <sup>(B)</sup>  
 curators and asked him to send one down. ~~So~~ Mr. Bryan called  
 Charlie and said, "Charlie, I've got the figure. Everything's  
 all fixed for the rally." And Charlie said, "Mr. Bryan, have  
 you looked at that figure?" "Yes," said Mr. Bryan, "I've  
 looked at it." Well the thing had come down in a box, and  
 they opened it up, and it was a female, and Charlie didn't want  
 to give that to the student body so <sup>with that he</sup> they finally gave them  
 a vacation at Thanksgiving. Finally, <sup>he</sup> got the Indian pony  
 and had one of the students write ~~ride~~ it.

~~a poem~~

Williams: Mr. Bryan gave the <sup>pony</sup> ~~poem~~, didn't he?

V. Phelps: I don't know whether Mr. Bryan did or whether it was Bill Hornsby and  
~~Sam Lotz~~ -- I don't know -- but it was given. Tim Hansen used to ride it.

Williams: Then while Mr. Bryan was here there used to be a group that  
 would meet over in the president's kitchen, that I've heard  
 tell of.

V. Phelps: <sup>Oh, the "Kitchen Cabinet"</sup> Well, I think some of the men could tell you <sup>about that</sup> better than I.

I wasn't allowed there.

Williams: Women were <sup>n</sup> 't invited.

V. Phelps: Oh, no, of course not. <sup>Another thing,</sup> Mr. Bryan was on the Board of Overseers at Harvard University <sup>when</sup> and Dr. Conant was president of Harvard, and the Board of Overseers met here at the college in the Wren Chapel for the first time they'd ever met outside of Boston, which I thought was quite a compliment to Mr. Bryan <sup>to</sup> and the college. Mr. Conant was ~~se~~ very unassuming.

Williams: Was Mr. Bryan able to bring sort of <sup>the</sup> national prestige or orientation to the college?

V. Phelps: I think so; I think he did.

Williams: Right near the end of his administration, there was the trouble down in Norfolk, where Mr. Hodges was replaced, and he asked Mr. Duke to go down there. He was there several years, I believe.

V. Phelps: Two years. <sup>We</sup> ~~But he and I~~ had a cottage in Virginia Beach, and we lived <sup>there</sup> in Virginia Beach. ~~We lived there~~ for two years ~~and~~ (Pearl Harbor was bombed in December of '41 and I think war was declared right after that). ~~We were down there those two years.~~ Then ~~and~~ Mr. Bryan resigned and Dr. Pomfret came in, and then Dr. Pomfret brought Charlie back up here.

Williams: So, he was just sort of their caretaker in Norfolk, would you say?

V. Phelps: Oh, no, he was president. He took Dr. Hodges' place and was president <sup>of it</sup> and also kept his job up here as bursar of the college, so that he came up to Williamsburg <sup>about</sup> twice a week.



No, he wasn't any caretaker. He thought the Norfolk division of William and Mary had great possibilities, which it does <sup>and it's</sup> now Old Dominion University.

Williams: It's now realizing them.

V. Phelps: That's right -- especially in the professional fields.

Williams: Both you and Mr. Duke were from that area.

V. Phelps: Yes, I was born and raised in Portsmouth, and he was born in Churchland, Virginia.

Williams: When Dr. Pomfret came, you said that he brought Mr. Duke back here. <sup>Was</sup> there any change in his role? ~~because~~ there had been this close personal relationship with Mr. Bryan.

V. Phelps: Between Charlie and Mr. Bryan?

Williams: Yes.

V. Phelps: Oh, no, they were just devoted friends. Mr. Bryan was just like a father to me. Anything I asked him -- I couldn't even say "I would like <sup>to have</sup> that ashtray or this book" or this anything <sup>without</sup> ~~because~~ Mr. Bryan <sup>giving</sup> ~~gave~~ it to me. I had to be careful what I said because he was that generous and kind. <sup>Anything</sup> anything I expressed a desire for, he would try to give it to me. They were just devoted friends. Never any cross words.

Williams: No, I didn't ask that. I asked was there a change in Mr. Duke's role when Dr. Pomfret came in, <sup>that</sup> was what I meant.

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. He was relieved of a great deal, <sup>except</sup> Dr. Pomfret depended on him, too, to help with visiting people, and we were always entertaining people in our home there on Richmond Road.

I would say Charlie's duties were less, <sup>under Dr. Pomfret;</sup> much less.

Williams: He was, from what I gather, influential with people in Richmond, ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> he able to help the college in this way?

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. His father and Senator Harry Byrd, Sr., <sup>^</sup>were great friends, <sup>^</sup>and his father was a great politician in Norfolk County and helped get Governor Byrd elected, <sup>o</sup> and Charlie continued that friendship with Senator Byrd, <sup>o</sup> and he kept ~~that~~ <sup>close</sup> relationship. He was <sup>close</sup> friends with all the ~~governors~~ <sup>governors</sup> and especially <sup>#</sup>with Governor Tuck, <sup>o</sup> when he became <sup>^</sup>Governor Tuck's reorganization program, <sup>on</sup> ~~trying to~~ consolidation and cutting back <sup>s</sup> program. So he did a great deal for them up in Richmond. Oh, yes, <sup>o</sup>I would say that Charlie was a politician.

Williams: And well <sup>^</sup>suited <sup>^</sup>then <sup>^</sup>for what he was doing.

V. Phelps: Very well <sup>^</sup>suited. He enjoyed <sup>^</sup>people, <sup>^</sup>and he knew the ropes because he'd just been right with it with his own father.

Williams: This is on another subject, <sup>^</sup>but you've lived in Williamsburg now since the earlier days of the Restoration. Some people don't know but what Williamsburg started in the 1930 <sup>s</sup>. How have you watched Williamsburg change over the years since you've lived here?

V. Phelps: Well, that's a very big question. I've seen it change from a very small town. When I lived at the president's house, <sup>we</sup> just walked <sup>down</sup> ~~out~~ onto the first block <sup>of</sup> ~~at~~ the Duke of Gloucester Street, <sup>o</sup> and A & P was where Ricks-Wilson is <sup>^</sup>, and Colonial ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup> where the Toymaker is. The Colonial Store would deliver, <sup>^</sup>and

I would just walk down there and order all the things I wanted, ~~and they would deliver.~~ Mrs. Guy and Mrs. Fowler and Mrs. Cox and all of us would gather at the drug store for a ~~cup of coffee~~ <sup>Coca-Cola</sup> -- now all that's changed. Now you go down Duke of Gloucester Street and you don't know anyone. It's grown. We were

very, very close to Colonial Williamsburg. Mr. Bryan wanted to bring the town <sup>gown</sup> together ~~and the crown~~ and the college together, ~~the town, the crown, and the gown.~~ ~~And~~ we were very close together in those early days when Mr. Bryan was here. Mr. Bryan, as I said, was very close to Mr. Rockefeller. ~~And~~ now, I don't see that closeness -- it can't be, they're too big.

Williams: I was going to ask, would you attribute this to size, the personalities involved . . .

V. Phelps: I think size, and I think also to <sup>a</sup> change in policies. I think that Colonial Williamsburg has changed its policies more now to making money than it is educational. And the college has gotten so large.

Williams: Also, when the Restoration started wasn't there more use of local people in Colonial Williamsburg? I don't mean workers, like hostesses, I mean like the upper echelon.

V. Phelps: No, the only local one in the upper echelon was Vernon Geddy because Ed Kendrew's from Canada and Roy Jones from New York, I think. Vernon was the only local one. John Henderson was one of the architects, but he was under Ed Kendrew. No, Colonial

Williamsburg has always brought in outside people for the higher jobs.

Williams: When the Restoration was going on -- I've <sup>often wondered</sup> from a personal standpoint -- was there any opposition from the people of Williamsburg that no, they didn't want this done to their town?

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. Judge Armistead's house right there now -- they were very opposed to it. And Mr. Coleman in the Tucker house was opposed; then they decided <sup>that</sup> they would sell. Then when they wanted to close Duke of Gloucester Street, Mr. Coleman's grandson, I think, found in the records, <sup>[that]</sup> in the deeds, they cannot close that street.

We thought that anybody opposed to Colonial Williamsburg was just crazy. It was just so wonderful to have it here! We had no idea it was going to become so big and ~~then~~ <sup>we</sup> want Duke of Gloucester Street closed and <sup>it</sup> being a museum. Dr. Goodwin wanted the faculty to live in the restored houses.

Williams: Did you know Dr. Goodwin?

V. Phelps: Oh, yes. ~~It was at the dedication of the Phi Beta Kappa Building~~ Dr. Chandler invited Mr. Rockefeller and his family down for the dedication of the Phi Beta Kappa Building and while Mr. Rockefeller was here, Dr. Chandler said to Dr. Goodwin, <sup>Willy,</sup> "Well, this is a good chance for you to go and sell Mr. Rockefeller on your dream of restoring Williamsburg." So Dr. Goodwin took Mr. Rockefeller on a tour of Williamsburg and sold him his

dream.

Williams: Were there some other things that you made some notes about?

V. Phelps: ~~Lord and~~ Lady Astor visited Mr. Bryan and Lord ~~M~~<sup>Lothian</sup> spent the night there,<sup>^</sup> but you know, I can't remember anything special about that.

They were all very proper and correct ~~and~~<sup>^</sup> also Senator Carter Glass -- he was a newspaper ~~man~~<sup>man</sup>, too, in Lynchburg, ~~^~~<sup>-- He and Mr. Bryan were friends.</sup> You see, Mr. Bryan had wonderful connections not only in the state of Virginia but obviously ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> all over the United States through his newspaper ~~and~~<sup>^</sup> then he was very interested in England. I think ~~^~~<sup>myself that</sup> Mr. Bryan built the college up with prestige ~~myself.~~<sup>^</sup> everything's been so long ago, so much has happened.

Williams: But it's interesting to people ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> like me ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> who will never know an era like that ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> to hear about it.

V. Phelps: Well, Mr. Bryan brought a black cocker spaniel down to me. He said he had the most beautiful dog for me, and so he brought this black cocker spaniel ~~^~~<sup>walk</sup> and I used to ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> him back in the campus and you know, sweet potatoes ~~^~~<sup>and corn</sup> were growing where the sunken lawn is ~~and corn~~ when I first came! ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> And then the C.C.C camp came and fixed the ~~^~~<sup>[and]</sup> bridle paths and foot trails, I used to walk Mike through the foot trails and ride ~~^~~<sup>along</sup> the bridle paths with Mr. Bryan. We had a stable where The Common Glory office now is. We could use all the lake. ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> And there was a boat house; ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> it had a deck, I guess, on top, and they'd have parties up there and dance. ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> And then across the way was Squirrel Point, ~~^~~<sup>^</sup> [where]

we would have oyster roasts. We just had a good time.

Mr. Bryan made everybody feel like a million dollars ~~and~~  
as each member of the faculty got married -- like <sup>Jimmy</sup>~~Jimmy~~  
Fowler, "Cy" Lambert -- he'd have a dinner party for the  
bride and groom. ←

Williams: This is an interesting commentary on the college as it was  
in that period.

V. Phelps: It certainly was. There was no social life when Dr.  
Chandler was here because his wife died soon after they ar-  
rived.

So he just concentrated on his work of building the college.