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Interviewee C. Vernon Spratley

Date of interview October 3, 1975

Place 816 Park Place, Hampton, Virginia

Interviewer Emily Williams

Session number 1

Length of tape 65 mins.

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C. Vernon Spratley

At ninety-three Judge C. Vernon Spratley's recollections of William and Mary go back to 1898, when he entered as a second-year student. He finished the teacher training course and graduated in 1901. A few years later he received his law degree at the University of Virginia. He became a circuit court judge and justice of the state supreme court. In 1936 the college conferred an honorary degree upon Judge Spratley.

For this interview Judge Spratley spoke off-the-cuff of his years as a student at William and Mary. He approved the transcript.

C. Vernon Spratley

October 3, 1975

Hampton, Virginia

Williams: From my calculations, if you ^{were} ~~are~~ class of 1901, you would have come to William and Mary about the fall of 1897. -- Is that right?

Spratley: 1898.

Williams: And you said, quite literally, there were cows on the campus.

Spratley: There were cows on the campus when I was there! There were only about 180 boys; no girls were there. There was no pavement on the streets or sidewalks, and there were a lot of old rundown houses at the entrance to the college from Duke of Gloucester Street. ^{(Of} Course, Duke of Gloucester Street has retained its name all these years.) An old colored woman had a little shack on the right-hand corner where your flag pole used to be; ^[she] sold peanuts and cakes and pies and things like that. She'd go to sleep (like a lot of old people do) early in the day, so she'd put a sling attached to a ~~building~~ bell to ring to come in.

Williams: So you could wake her up to come in?

Spratley: Yes. But she sold things from two cents up -- up to ten cents, probably.

Williams: Did the boys keep her in business, I assume?

Spratley: As long as I was there she ~~was~~ still ^{ran} around the place. I don't know how she made her living because her collections were mostly in pennies. She didn't do any too great ^{of} business. None of the students at William and Mary College had much

money; I didn't either. I was a state student. I got room and board for ^{\$10} ~~ten dollars~~ a month -- you can imagine how much you'd get.

Williams: In those days -- and I guess it's been true pretty much through the years -- ^{UVA} has been known as the rich boys' school. Was this true when you were ^o choosing a college?

Spratley: I wouldn't say that there many rich boys at the university. As a matter of fact, the university loaned me money to finish my last year course in law there. I belonged to a fraternity ~~at~~ (which I joined at William and Mary) ~~and~~ and lived in a fraternity house ^{at} in Virginia. But there were no rich boys in my class. There ^e were some sons of some rich men from the north who came on down here, but they were few and far between.

Williams: Why was it you had chosen William and Mary to go to college?

Spratley: I went to William and Mary because I didn't have much money, and it was close to home. And I was glad I did because I was there during the period of the "seven wise men". I took courses under each one of them.

Williams: Yes, let me ask you about some of them. Dr. Tyler has been portrayed as a brilliant but absent-minded professor.

Would you say this ^{was} ~~is~~ true?

Spratley: That ^{was} ~~is~~ true. I've known him to come to class without his necktie ^[with] or his ~~necktie~~ all awry. On one occasion ~~he~~ had an examination ^{set} for us in constitutional law, but he went to Richmond; he forgot his date ^o so we held the examination and

asked questions which all of us could answer and turned it in to him when he came back.

Williams: What did he do?

Spratley: Passed us all. We told him what we'd done. We'd frame^d these questions. "Does everybody know the answer?" And they'd say, "Yes." ^{Then} And ¹put it down." We thought it would teach him a lesson for being absent-minded. ~~but he was~~ He was a very fine man. I took history and constitutional law under him. ^I Took math under Dr. Stubbs, Biology and natural science under Van Garrett, pedagogy under Bird, Latin under ^{Wharton} ¹Horton, And German under Bishop.

Williams: You had almost all the "seven wise men."

Spratley: Yes, and they were all fine, devoted, ^{consecrated} ~~concentrated~~ men. I forgot to mention the most important ^{of all:} ~~was~~ Dr. Hall in English. I majored in English and math because I knew then I was going to study law.

Williams: Now Dr. Hall is often praised as a fine English teacher. One man said if he couldn't make you understand English literature, nobody else could. But there also seemed to be a number of stories about Dr. Hall. Do you remember any?

Spratley: I can remember when he came ^{late} ~~over~~ one morning ^{to} ~~when he came~~ his class ^{and said,} ~~that~~ "I'm late this morning because I have a crying chimney and a smoking baby." He got his words a little mixed there. I can remember yet, he'd ask his class, ~~when he~~ said, "You think you're all so smart, what makes more noise than one pig under a fence?" Some smart boy said, "Two pigs." He said, "Bright boy." He'd have flashes -- that was his type

Williamsburg?

Spratley: Yes. They were very well respected ^{by} everybody in town, and they took an interest in all the things that went on there. President Tyler had two daughters, which was very interesting to the boys because there were 180 boys ^{there} and about 15 girls in town. Dr. ^{Barrett} ~~Guy~~ had ~~one~~ ^s daughter. I don't recall that Bishop and Wharton had any children; if so, they were not there. Bird had a small family. Stubbs had ^a family with boys and girls.

Williams: Williamsburg was small enough then that you knew almost every body in town, did you not?

Spratley: I knew every man and woman in town, white or black.

Williams: According to Parke Rouse's book, Cows on the Campus, ~~book~~, one gets the impression of a very, very sleepy town of, say, the turn-of-the-century era. Was this so?

Spratley: ~~The town~~ was sound asleep. There was nothing modern about the town. ^{The} People didn't want to be ^[modern], and they were fairly satisfied with it. They lived in the past. I knew the Henleys, the Geddys, the Peachys, the Christians, the Lanes, the Mercers, and especially the men ^{Maneures?} who were the head of Eastern State Hospital. He frequently had some interesting young women ~~here~~ visit him, which was ^{of} much ~~the~~ ^{to} concern of the young men of the school. One of the social events was on Friday evenings, once or twice [#] a month, when students were permitted to come to Eastern State Hospital ~~—~~ (it was for the mentally deranged) ^[and the] female patients were allowed to

come down and dance with us.

Williams: Did many of the boys go to these dances?

Spratley: Oh, yes. They'd have a comfortable amount of boys there.

Williams: This was in Cameron Hall?

Spratley: That's where I think it was. It's ^{been} torn down now.

Williams: Would they have a band, maybe of ~~to~~ other inmates?

Spratley: Usually they'd have a piano player and sometimes two or three youths with stringed instruments.

Williams: But ^e these wouldn't likely be inmates from Eastern State?

Spratley: They didn't play. The inmates from Eastern State were almost all together female, ~~I mean the visitors, the attendants.~~

Williams: What other social events would there have been for the men at William and Mary?

Spratley: The college had ² German clubs, ~~to~~ which I belonged, and we would have dances once or twice during the year. ~~The~~ ³ finals ~~was~~ the biggest time in Williamsburg -- for five or six days. The German Club would have a final ball to which all members of the club and ^{numbers} ~~members~~ of the people in Williamsburg would come. Young women would come from all over the state ~~there~~ and stay there to go to that dance. There were three fraternities, and each fraternity had a night to have a dance, and each had one. And they, of course, invited each other and some few personal friends.

Williams: Now, these would have been in the fraternity houses?

Spratley: No, they were held in the college gymnasium. That was the first

gym they had. That first gymnasium they had was built when
 I was there in 1901, I think, ^{or 1900} ~~or 1899~~. * It was on the
 campus ^{old} ~~therennext~~ to where Phi Beta Kappa Hall is now,
 near the Brafferton. I roomed in the Taliaferro build-
 ing.

Williams: This was the ~~Old~~ Taliaferro Hall?

Spratley: Yes.

Williams: What kind of living conditions did you have? You said you
 had room ~~and board~~ ^{\$10} for ~~ten dollars~~ a month.

Spratley: Primitive. You brought your own furniture. We didn't have
 any running water in the rooms, no bathtubs in there, no
 electric lights when I went there, no telephone, and ~~they~~
~~had~~ ⁿ an outhouse took the place of a bathroom. Was ~~just a~~
~~bath room~~. In my second year, I think they put in a heating
 system and put radiators in there. I can remember one of
 the boys ~~in a prank~~ on the floor in which I lived in Taliaferro
 threw an empty bottle of Coca-Cola at one of his fellow stu-
 dents and hit one of those radiators and broke it. ~~water~~
 flooded the whole place for a while.

Williams: During your first year, how had it been heated? You said
 they put in heating the second year, with fire places, maybe?

Spratley: No, they didn't have any fireplaces. They must have had that
 when I went there first, because they didn't have any fire-
 places. I remember ~~in the hall there, the~~ Admiral Cary
 T. Grayson room ^{ed} there, ~~the~~ Foreman, who founded the school
 at Norfolk, lived on that hall, and ^{Shields McCandlish,} who after ~~ward~~ ^s became

secretary to ~~the~~ First District Congressman William Jones ^①
~~living down there.~~ ^{on} And a man named Bonneville ^[lived there.] A man
 named Slater roomed with me my
 senior year. ^{Talisterro as bare} It was about ^{as} West Range was when I went
 to University of Virginia in 1904-'05, '05-'06. I graduated
 from ^{the} university law school in 1906.

Williams: I had ^{ve} talked to some people who boarded with townspeople.
 Was this ^{true} ~~the~~ case in your case?

Spratley: That's true. I got in trouble with the faculty my senior
 year ^{with} ~~when~~ five or six other boys on account of a raid we
 made on the college pantry. And they banished us from
 the grounds (except to attend classes) for a month
 or two months. I then ~~moved down and~~ lived a block from
 the college with a man named Person (his son runs a busi-
 ness up there now). ^I ^{for a month or two} Roomed with a man named Newcombe, who
 after ^{wards} ~~it~~ became the president of the University of Virginia,
 for ~~a month or two~~ and got my meals across the street at a
 place ^{run} ~~right~~ by a Negro man named Galt, who had been a cook
 on a United States warship. I was more ^{comfortable than any} ~~many times~~ I
 was at the college, both in my room and in my meals. And
 the other members of my raiding party, ~~they~~ got rooms in
 town with friends or relatives.

Williams: You're talking about ~~this~~ discipline [?] Was Dr. Tyler in
 charge of the discipline? Would he have been the one
 who would have told you you couldn't stay on campus?

Spratley: No, the board itself did it. I don't think he was any [#] more

interested than the ~~rest of them~~ were. They had an investigation, and they couldn't find out who had raided the pantry. We got some cakes and canned peaches, some ^{little} other things like that. Finally, ^{they got hold of} one student whom the rest of us thought was rather simpleminded [#] ~~they got hold of him and and he~~ all the students knew who it was but didn't let anybody else know, and he gave the name^s of the crowd I was with.

Williams: You say ~~the~~ board. Did you mean the Board of Visitors?

Spratley: The Board of Visitors, yes. There was quite a meeting about it, and ^{they} wrote to our families that we'd been guilty of a very serious crime, ~~and so forth~~ and we had to be punished for it, and they'd take the cost out of our contingent fees. I ~~think~~ ^{always thought} they took out more than ~~they~~ ^{it} cost.

Williams: ~~Did you have~~ ^{was} the honor system in force at the time?

Spratley: Yes -- and strictly enforced. One student was caught cheating, and we had a meeting of the student body, and we decided that we'd ask that he be expelled, but he left overnight, and we never heard from him any more. The honor system was strictly obeyed. I never saw a man cheat ~~all my life up there~~, in all my three years at the college. (I was there only three years; I entered the sophomore class. I did that because I was in high school here ^[in Hampton] and the last year in high school ^{I had} only half a day, so I felt like I was losing time, so I went to William and Mary and entered the sophomore class) ~~on my nerve.~~

Williams: What about social rules? Were there, say, curfews for the boys?

~~For the boys, to be in~~

Spratley: No.

Williams: Nothing of that nature?

Spratley: No. They were left on their honor as gentlemen to obey the ethics of the times and the rules that decent people observed.

Williams: With some of the boys living in town and some of them living near campus, it would have been hard to enforce.

Spratley: We didn't have any accommodations for students in the college except in the Ewell, which was next to the Brafferton which was next to the Taliaferro. The Brafferton was supposed to have been for some Indian students who had been there. It had only four rooms^s, though, I think, and it accommodated eight or ten students -- some of them^{rooms} had three students to a room. There were two to a room over in Taliaferro, and Ewell had an attic to it.

Williams: I've heard Dr. Kimbrough say that when she lived in Tyler -- which was much later than you're talking about -- that when she lived there that the college power plant turned the lights off at a certain hour. Was this true after they put in lights in the boys' dorms back when you were there?

Spratley: ^{The college} Probably didn't have any power plant.

Williams: No power. What was it, gas?

Spratley: I had a student's lamp in my room. I had to buy it myself and replenish it with kerosene.

Williams: What about freshman rules? Were there strict rules for freshmen to obey?

Spratley: No. I can't remember the second or third night when I ~~was~~ began as a student there. I went with an older man and a small group to haze a newcomer. His name was Chichester (afterwards he became attorney for the State Corporation Commission and a very able lawyer). They would make him get up and whistle or sing or try to stand on his head, and if he didn't do it, they'd paddle him a little bit, and I thought I was getting along famously until someone discovered ^{me,} and they took me up and paddled me, too.

Williams: Did you have to bow to Lord Botetourt?

Spratley: We were supposed to *kowtow* or to bow as we came into here.

Williams: I've also heard that, while there was a good bit of freshman hazing, there was even more hazing in relation to the fraternities. Did you find this to be so?

Spratley: No. When I was initiated into the fraternity, it was rather a dignified proceeding. After the first, second, or third night there wasn't any hazing. There were two Cooley brothers who came down from the western part of the state. They were much older than the average student, and some of this crowd I was with went down to haze them. One of the Cooleys got out a revolver and the crowd scattered! So they didn't haze the Cooleys. (They were 21 or 22 years old. They didn't want any ^{'s} kid stuff around them.)

Williams: You've been talking about where the men were housed. Were all classes in the old main building, or were there classes elsewhere? Do you remember that?

Spratley: All the classes were held in the Wren Building. ^{They} Didn't have any other place there. ^{They} Didn't have any gymnasium the first year; ^{they} built that my second year. After they built the gymnasium ~~it~~ they put in hot water and shower baths, and we used to go over there and take our weekly bath. What bothered me was that ~~on my floor,~~ the captain of the football team had a room next door to me. He'd go play football all day and wouldn't take a bath afterwards. He was a good, healthy sort of boy. He was a very fine man; he's now dead and gone. [#] I was the manager of the baseball team in my last year, which was a rather a fruitless job. I took them away from college to play Randolph-Macon; we got beat; ^{de} went to Hampton-Sidney and got beat; and we had a game scheduled at Blackstone ^{at} (a boys' school), and ~~one of my best batters~~ broke his arm ~~on the trip,~~ and my best pitcher went home, ~~with~~ so we didn't play that game.

Williams: Was there a coach as well as a manager, or were you, in effect, the coach, too?

Spratley: We didn't have any coaches. The only thing the manager ^{did} ~~does~~ was to arrange [#] for the uniforms and the sweaters and the transportation ^{the} and bats and balls.

Williams: You would have gone by train or by bus?

Spratley: We went by train. Didn't have ~~many~~ buses in those days. We played Richmond and Randolph-Macon and ^{de} Hampton-Sidney generally. We didn't have any ball park, as a matter of

fact. They built the first ball park while I was there. The students went and cleared off the [#]place right near where the sunken garden is now. And we played down the street near the Colonial Hotel, right next to the court-house downtown, on that lot there. There was no fencing and no way to collect tickets or anything else.

Williams: Did students come out to watch?

Spratley: Oh, yes. ^{With} ~~There was~~ ^[student] a small body of 180 men, they took very much interest in what we did in an athletic way, but we didn't have much to work on. I remember the faculty voted to give me \$50 to ^b ~~obtain~~ ^{and} players, uniforms and equipment, and the rest we had to raise ourselves. I think each student paid a nominal physical ^{education} ~~administration~~ fee, you know.

We had two literary societies -- the Philomathean and the Phoenix. I belonged to the Philomathean. They were rather popular. I worked ^{right} very hard in them my first two years, ^[bot] ~~all~~ the only ^{were} ~~the~~ medals I got ~~was~~ for improvement.

Williams: These were debate societies, right? They met often, I assume?

Spratley: Yes. I would say they met once every two weeks.

Williams: In the Wren Building?

Spratley: Yes, in the Wren Building on the top floor.

Williams: And then would you debate other schools or just among yourselves?

Spratley: While we were there ~~we~~ we did not debate other schools, just among ourselves. There'd be a debate between the Philomatheans and the Phoenixes.

Williams: At the final^s, did the Philomathean and the Phoenix have a debate

then, ⁵ at Commencement final?

Spratley: No, we usually had it in the spring. ~~The~~ ^{Those} finals ~~was~~ ^{we were} a big time at William and Mary. ~~They were~~ five or six days, glorious days with no classes, ~~and so forth~~ and there was a social event each evening, you know. Usually, ^{we were} ~~to~~ provided better food in the dining room -- that was awfully poor. (Some fellow threw a slab, ~~a cut~~ of butter at another in the dining room when I was there and hit the wall, and when the chef came in there, he said, "What's that doing on the wall?" He said, "You go over and smell it." ~~He walked over~~ it was so strong!)

Williams: So there was a college dining hall, though?

Spratley: On the first floor of the Taliaferro building there was a dining room.

Williams: But all of the boys couldn't or didn't eat there?

Spratley: All who had rooms at the college ate there -- except those that roomed downtown. The steward lived in a house right behind Ewell. He had a very interesting family -- two or three charming daughters. I liked one of them very much, and I managed to get better bread than the rest of them -- the waiter would come to me first and bring me stuff from the steward's table.

Williams: ~~When~~ ⁵⁻⁻ you were talking about the athletic team, ¹ what about the football team?

Spratley: We didn't have over twenty men to come out for football.

Williams: Did they play on that same field that you were talking about in the sunken garden?

Spratley: We played on the same field. We played on a field ^{that} we scraped off ourselves in back of the college there. But we didn't have any fence nor seats nor anything else, ~~don't you know?~~

Williams: I have heard that actually the baseball team was better than the football team and better supported by the students.

Spratley: The baseball team was better supported, I think, than the football team. ~~well,~~ they paid ~~generally~~ more attention in those days to baseball than football. There was no revenue that came to the athletic association from either of them, ~~to amount to anything~~ because ~~we~~ had to depend on passing around the hat in the audience and getting what ^{we} you could. The boys didn't have much to start with, and if they put in five cents, ~~they~~ thought they'd done pretty well. But five cents ~~then~~ would buy a little bit more than it will now.

Williams: You talked about transporting the equipment for the baseball team. Did you have formal uniforms for baseball and for football?

Spratley: We had a great big trunk and put all the uniforms ~~in that trunk~~ and the bats and the balls ^{in that trunk, and we} ~~and we travelled with it,~~ carried it as baggage.

Williams: And for football -- were you manager of the football team, as well?

Spratley: No, I managed the baseball team. I was scrub ^{quarterback} on the football team and didn't play very good, ~~was a scrub quarterback but~~ I didn't go off on any trips with them. My football prowess was very limited.

Williams: They didn't have the padding or the helmets that they would have now, did they?

Spratley: We didn't have any helmets at all. We had some padding in the uniforms, [^] cotton stuffed in around the shoulders and knees.

Williams: Then I also saw that you were on the tennis team at one time when you were at William and Mary. Where did the tennis team practice?

Spratley: That was right in back of the gymnasium, [^] right where the girls' dormitories are.

Williams: Jefferson?

Spratley: Yes, right along ⁱⁿ there. We scraped it off ourselves and played there.

Williams: Did you have matches [#] with other schools?

Spratley: No. I think the reason I got into tennis was that I got a tennis racket. I managed ^{the} a college magazine ^[and someone] ~~paid~~ [^] for its advertising by sending me a racket.

Williams: When you say the college magazine, are you talking about the Colonial Echo, the yearbook?

Spratley: We called it -- I think that's the William and Mary Magazine.

Williams: You also worked on one of the early Colonial Echos, didn't you?

Spratley: I was a member of the editorial board of the first Colonial Echo ever gotten out, I think in my second year (1900). They made ^{me} [^] art editor ~~me on it~~ -- I don't know why because I have no artistic sense, but I got a man named Harry R. Houston ~~^~~ (who was afterwards

Speaker of the Virginia house ^[of Delegates] to draw the captions and the figures for the fraternities and organizations and so forth. The next year I was the business manager, I've got a copy of those old annuals now.

~~Williams: Had it been the students who wanted to have an annual?~~

~~Was it a student idea to put out a yearbook? Do you know?~~

Spratley: ^{In} The William and Mary ^{Magazine} ~~monthly~~ we depended on the ads to help pay for getting it out. They had no advertising in the annual.

Williams: Was it an idea of the students, though, to start the Colonial Echo? You said you were on the first one. Was it a student idea to start it?

Spratley: It started with a group of us on the second floor of Taliaferro Hall. We had two, three boys in there who were right good at literature, and they wanted to perpetuate their work. ~~I had two of those annuals here and my children came on up. There were pictures of those of us on the board and they took those and cut out every photograph in which my picture appeared.~~

Williams: What had given you the idea to start the annual?

Spratley: We saw that other schools were doing it. I think somebody circulated a copy of the Kalidoscope from Hampton-Sidney, and that gave the idea to the boys.

Williams: Did the students have to buy it separate and did most of them want one?

Spratley: It was arranged so that a certain sum was taken out of their fees to the college, like they paid the athletic fees.

Williams: They didn't buy it just like going to the bookstore and buying a book?

Spratley: No, ^{to it. If} they subscribed ¹ There were 180 students, there were 180 ^{or} ^{of} ~~copies.~~ 200 copies. ¹ Course, some of us got 2 ¹ or 3 copies.

Williams: Was there any faculty help? Did you have faculty help working on it?

Spratley: Some of the faculty would help us out, especially on the literary efforts. I think they probably passed on all the reading matter in there. ^{Have you ever seen a copy?} ~~(Discussion about having ever~~ ¹ ~~seen a yearbook.)~~ They're very unique, aren't they?

Williams: Yes, they are. They're a very good record of the year since there was no student newspaper to look at. How did the students get news then? There was no newspaper in town, either, ^{don't} I believe, ¹ was there?

Spratley: Yes, there was a Williamsburg Gazette. ~~But there were no newspapers in any of the buildings I've~~ ~~on.~~

Williams: I had heard that Mr. Cole's store was a good source of news.

Spratley: Well, Cole lived across from Bruton Parish Church, ~~the street~~ ^{ever} ~~there.~~ I often wondered how he made a living. He was a right ¹ good-sized, bald-headed man, sitting out there in front. He got the Richmond, Washington, and Norfolk papers and maybe the evening newspaper. (He evidently inherited some money or got it from some other source because he had a limited number of papers there.) He probably had a half a dozen of each kind come in every day. ^{That} ¹ There was a circulating point. The Armistead family lived across the street from him, and that's where

they'd go and sit ¹ on the bench in front of his house.

Williams: This was a gathering spot, I know, for the townspeople.

The boys from the school, as well?

Spratley: Not many of the boys in school; Mostly the townspeople.

It was a gossip point for the townspeople. Those who were engaged in politics or business ^{or the church} would meet there ¹ or at ~~church~~ ^{three} There were ¹ two big controlling factors in Williamsburg when I was at William and Mary College: ~~the college~~ itself, Eastern State Hospital, and Bruton Parish Church. ⁵ Those were ~~That's~~ about the only thing ¹ the group of students with whom I was associated had any contact ~~with~~ ¹ ~~And~~ we thought that people of Williamsburg made their living out of the college and Eastern State -- 'twas the only industries there.

Williams: You have talked about the gym facilities and the classroom facilities. Was the library in the main building, as well?

Spratley: Well, the library was rather limited ^{took} but it ~~would take~~ ¹ care of our needs.

Williams: And it was located in the Main Building?

Spratley: In the Main Building, yes. Wasn't much of a library; wasn't very big at that time.

Williams: There wasn't a librarian, was there?

Spratley: No, there was no librarian. You just went in and hunted for things yourself. And when the students would ~~get them out~~ ^{back} ~~and~~ bring the books ¹ -- and sometimes they didn't -- they wouldn't always put them back in the places they were supposed to be.

Williams: Then was there a chapel in the old Main building?

Spratley: A whole long wing that extended to the west was ~~of~~ the chapel and we met there every morning. The bell rang at ^{8:00} ~~eight o'clock~~ and we were supposed to get breakfast at that time ^{9:00} and at ~~nine o'clock~~ ^{≡ 1} chapel was held, and every student was supposed to attend the chapel. That's when we were told what we were expected to do. I remember that old chapel very well because at the opening of the college my second year ~~of~~ there was a debate between ^{the} Philomatheans and the Phoenixes, and I was one of the debaters on the Philomathean side. Afterwards, when I became circuit judge, I'd go to ~~Williamsburg~~ and I'd stay in Williamsburg a week holding court up there ^{It} wasn't always easy to get to Williamsburg, you know. It was thirty-odd miles, and some of the boys would walk the distance, but I didn't. I'd take a train up there and ~~I'd~~ stay up there. I'd get up in the morning and go up to the college for the morning meeting. All students were expected to attend opening services ^{in the morning}.

Williams: Were these religious services, or was it more of an announcement of the days' work?

Spratley: It was more for announcement of work. They mixed in a little Episcopal ceremony once in a while.

Williams: Would Dr. Tyler have been the one who conducted the service?

Spratley: Yes, the president of the college presided. He'd come in and say a small prayer ~~like grace~~ or something like that.

Williams: I had a few more things I wanted to ask you. One about classes.

Do you remember anything special about registration for classes? How would you register for your classes?

Spratley: When I went up there in the beginning, I had gone over the catalog closely, and so I went to the registrar ~~for the~~ ~~faculty~~ and told him what classes I wanted to take. I had to adjust them, of course, in accordance to the time I could go because (they had fix^{ed} hours for the professor to have ~~this~~ classes, and I didn't want any of my hours to conflict). ~~And~~ I had no trouble about it. He took what I asked him for, and I accepted his advice about what would be best and it worked out all right. I was planning on getting my degree in three years, and I worked it that way. ~~You see, I added a sophomore class in each one of the departments except perhaps math. I took three years of math -- that was the last three years I was there and I entered the sophomore class in English. As I have already told you, I was taking those classes and constitutional law because I had expected all along -- my father had brought me up with the expectation I would become a lawyer. There was no trouble about doing that. The faculty was certainly cooperating.~~

Williams: And they gave you advice on what courses to take?

Spratley: That's right.

Williams: You took what was then called the "normal course," the teacher training course.

Spratley: I took that because I was a state student; pledged to teach two years. I got the benefit of ^{\$2} two dollars a month; instead of paying

^{\$12}
~~twelve dollars~~ a month board, I ^{\$10} paid ~~ten dollars~~ a month
 board. I went to William and Mary College three years on
 \$900. My daughters ^{cost} were \$2500 each year.

Williams: And that was in the ^{130's} thirties, so think what it is now.

Spratley: Yes, both of them were there at the same time.

Williams: Did most of the boys there take the normal course? Were they
 mostly state students that you've spoken of?

Spratley: When I was there I would say half of them, at least, were
 state students, pledged to teach. And nearly every one of
 them ^[was outstanding] for instance, Harry Hunt, who afterwards became school
 superintendent in Portsmouth, had a very distinguished record,
 and Foreman ^{McCandlish} and they taught. ^{once} Mechanics didn't teach
 because he went to work for the college, ^{once} but he told me [that]
 afterwards he paid the college the difference from what he
 would have paid if he hadn't taken that place.

Williams: If you didn't go on and teach you paid it back with a loan?

Spratley: That's right. I taught three years. I came out and came
 to Hampton and taught math, English, and Latin in the high
 school one year. I was then elected principal of a graded
 school in Newport News (eight-room school, eight grades) and
 I was there for two years. ^I Got the magnificent summer in
 Hampton, ^{of \$30} thirty dollars a month for eight months of the year.
 The next year I got ^{\$90} ninety dollars a month for twelve
 months there in Newport News, and the third year I got \$100
 a month for twelve months and I didn't have any money saved
 up, so I thought I better ~~start low~~ study law!

Williams: Was there a real shortage of teachers? Was that the reason William^d and Mary was in the business of teacher training?

Spratley: There was a shortage of teachers in Virginia. Most of the school boards employed local citizens, and they didn't always require a degree of a teacher to be able to teach. They got somebody they could get as cheap^{ly} as they could. (When I was making \$30 a month, eight months of the year, I gave my mother \$20 and I had \$10 I was supposed to keep myself on.)

Williams: Now^y you would have taught in the practice school in Williamsburg, is that right?

Spratley: I did teach in the practice school there. The father^{of} Vernon Geddy was a pupil of mine; he sat on my^k knee. Peachy Spencer^{was} another little boy.

Williams: Did the college run the practice school or did the City of Williamsburg run it? Do you know?

Spratley: The city of Williamsburg ran it, but the college had some say^{about} it. They sort of worked it together.

Williams; Were all the teachers students or not?

Spratley: All of us who were state students would go down there and get some experience in teaching the classes.

Williams: But did they have a regular staff of teachers in addition to that?

Spratley: Oh, yes. ~~It has~~ Yes, Matthew Whaley, that's it. I only did that my last year.

Williams: This was for elementary grades only?

Spratley: The only ones that I had any connection with were the primary grades, ^{the} children in the first, second, and third grades. It ^{was really only a} didn't have kindergarten then.

Williams: It wasn't any sort of a one-room school ^{idea}.

Spratley: ^{No,} It ^{was} in its beginning. I don't think ^{they} had any children there any older than fourth grade. That's my recollection.

Williams: But they were graded. They weren't all in the same --

Spratley: No, they weren't in the same class.

Williams: Now, I ^{had} ^{ask} you about some of the customs. ~~When you were talking about hazing,~~ someone ^{has} told me about having to pay an "Egypt fee" when they came their freshman year. Did you have to pay an "Egypt fee?" That was later than you?

Spratley: I have no recollection of any such fee. In my time, ^{the} only "Egypt" I knew there ^{was} the outhouse, ^{the} toilet arrangement outdoors.

Williams: Apparently ^{that} was what it was named after. ^{One} legendary character ^{we} didn't discuss when we were talking about the "seven wisemen ^{and} ^{that} ^{was} Henry Billups. Did you know Henry Billups?

Spratley: Very well. I rather liked Billups considerably. ^{He was} Quite a character. He could make himself friendly and cooperated ^{with} with all the students; we all liked him. Some of us were accused of stealing ^{the} turkeys and chickens in the neighborhood and cooking them ^{for a while}. I accused Billups of creating that impression because I thought he was getting them ^{himself}. Billups was a typical, good-natured, intelligent, friendly Negro, liked and admired ^{and} he was always obedient to white folks, and he

lived to please them. The Negroes that were in the college there were good Negroes, too, ~~--- the waitresses~~. And I think they were largely due to his training because he was supposed to be the head of all of them. He was the one who rang the bell.

Williams: He rang the bell and ^{he} supervised the maintenance personnel, too?

Spratley: The colored crowd, I think. And we called him the "Professor of Boozology." Did you ever hear that?

Williams: I've heard that. I've heard that if you wanted something to drink that Henry Billups could get it for you.

Spratley: ^{He was the one who could get it.} I don't think I drank a pint of liquor the whole three years I was at William and Mary College. But liquor could be gotten down the street. There was a Negro merchant down at the far end of Duke of Gloucester Street, near where the old capitol is; he could get some liquor for you if you wanted it, ~~on the side door~~. It wasn't boot^{ged}leg liquor; He had a bar attached to his general merchandise store. He was a rather prosperous Negro at that time. ^{In} ~~And~~ all these communities around here since the Civil War -- ten or fifteen or ~~at~~ twenty years afterwards -- some Negroes became prominent and did very well, but they never kept it up. Harmon, I think, was the man's name.

Williams: Would that have been the only place where the boys could have gotten liquor?

Spratley: That ^{was} the only place I knew where they could get any liquor. There was a bar downtown, right opposite the court house in

the ^{old} Jamestown Hotel, or something like that. There was a bar there, you could go and get it. But ⁹⁰ ~~ninety~~ per cent of the men in my class were under twenty-one, and they weren't supposed to sell liquor to anyone under twenty-one, you know. I never bought any; [#] I never drank any ^{to amount to anything} ~~until~~. I don't think I drank a pint in three years.

Williams: Was this average, would you say?

Spratley: There wasn't a heavy drinker in the college -- that I knew. We got a little wine sometime, but very rarely.

Williams: What about smoking? How was that looked upon at the time?

Spratley: Well, I didn't smoke until I was twenty-one, which I think ^{helped} to create my old age. I got to smoking so much when I was at the University of Virginia that I went out of my room one morning on West Range and snow was on the ground and I felt faint, and I fell facedown in the snow. When I came to, I got up. Then I went to a hospital to see a doctor, and I told him I was a chain smoker, ^{three or four} ~~two or three~~ packs a day. He said, "Cut it out." I cut it out for ten years and wanted a cigarette every day during that time and then when I went back, I began smoking cigars, and I've smoked cigars ever since.

Williams: What about college boys of the day? Was smoking --

Spratley: Very little bit. I don't remember seeing a whole pack of cigarettes on the second floor of Taliaferro.

Williams: When you were in college in Williamsburg, were there celebrations to commemorate the Jamestown founding? Do you remem-

ber those?

Spratley: Oh, yes. Every May we went down there. I went down there in a farm wagon one May. I'd just bought a brand new straw hat. ~~The farm wagon had boards across the bottom and there were about twelve in there and half way to Jamestown a cloud came up, and said we'll drop ourselves off and everybody got soaking wet, and I lost my good hat. We got terribly wet. That was quite a day. Students were let off to go down there that day. May 14th-- somewhere along in there.~~ My first trip to Jamestown was as a student from William and Mary, and I believe I went there ~~everyone~~[#] of the three years.

~~Much more so than Yorktown, somehow or other. That was closer than Yorktown.~~

Williams: Did you also go to Yorktown for the Yorktown celebrations?

Spratley: No. I never went to Yorktown until after I became a lawyer, and I went down ~~there~~^{to} practicing cases.

Williams: So that not so many of the boys would have gone to ~~the~~ Yorktown celebrations?

Spratley: Not that ~~I~~[#] know of.

Williams: You spoke of being in a fraternity, ~~but~~^{that} there were three at the time. While I was looking through the annual I found there was also an organization called the "Loyal Knights" who were non-fraternity men.

Spratley: After ~~it~~^{wards} it became Sigma Phi Epsilon. It was mother and father of Sigma Phi Epsilon. They were ~~an acting~~^{anti} fraternity. They weren't

in one, so they just formed an organization of their own,
but they were good boys.

Williams: Was there an ^{real} anti-fraternity feeling on the campus?

Spratley: I don't think there was much. I didn't belong to a frater-
[at first] nity. I was only sixteen years old when I went there
the first year; I was just a school boy. I didn't get in-
vited to join that year. The next year I got an invitation
to all three of them. ~~So I picked out the one I wanted; it~~
~~was~~ Kappa Alpha, Kappa Sigma, and Pi Kappa Alpha. Kappa ~~Alpha~~ ^{Sigma}
had members in town. Pi Kappa Alpha didn't have but one or
two that I knew, and Kappa Alpha had some disgrace ^{of} influence of
some boy ^{who} ~~was~~ ^{saw} accused of being homosexual ^s which had a much
worse name in that day than it does today. So I didn't join
the Kappa Alphas. I started on my way to join the Kappa
Sigmas but got mad, ~~at~~ and I ^{quit and} ~~quick~~ went back
to my room and next day joined Pi Kappa Alpha.

Williams: This problem of ^{the} Kappa Alpha ^s would have been in the time of the
James Branch Cabell affair, wouldn't it?

Spratley: Yes, that's right. He was Kappa Alpha.

Williams: What was the feeling among the men on the campus during this
furor?

Spratley: The student body generally viewed it with disgust and horror.
There was a great deal of criticism of the boys who were there
at that time. But this man, James Branch Cabell, turned out to
be a great novelist, and he was a bright boy then, too. I didn't
know him. This was the year before I began there; he was a year

ahead of me.

Williams: Did the fraternities then have houses in town?

Spratley: No. We met most anywhere we could find a place to go. I was initiated in the upstairs of the Peninsula Bank and Trust Company, which was a building right opposite the ~~present court house,~~ the old ~~court house,~~ on Duke of Gloucester Street. My fraternity brothers were friends of a man named Phillips, who was ^{the} president and cashier of that bank, and he let us have a room ^{for it.}

Williams: Then would you meet there as well?

Spratley: No, ~~We'd meet~~ in one of the rooms of one of the boys.

Williams: In the dormitory?

Spratley: Yes. Didn't have ^{any} ~~enough~~ fraternity room, hall, chapel, or lodge.

Williams: As you've been talking ~~you've~~ you've often mentioned a man who was a prominent lawyer or a judge or superintendent of schools -- really prominent people. To what would you attribute so many outstanding young men coming from William and Mary right around the turn of the century?

Spratley: To the ^{the} ~~seven wisemen.~~ ~~That annual that you looked at,~~ they featured loyalty to the traditions of the past, ~~of~~ high civic virtues, ~~of~~ love of country, and attention to duty. I was instrumental in getting Gordon Bohannon, who was a benefactor of the college, to join my fraternity. ^[Others were] Oscar Shewmake, who was afterwards commissioner and a lawyer, and a man named Jones, who became a judge out in the state of Washington. Cary

Grayson was an admiral; he lived on the same floor I lived on ^o but he had a habit of going to sleep with his mouth open. So one day I came in ^{and} he was sound asleep in his chair ^{with} ~~had~~ his mouth wide open. I went in ^{another} ~~the other~~ room and got a little packet of quinine and put it on his tongue, and when it dissolved he came to. We played all kinds of pranks on each other.)

Williams: But you would attribute the influence of the seven wisemen [#] "as ~~to~~ being a great one?"

Spratley: Yes, I would. Definitely. They lived in the tradition and glory of the past and the high ideals of the founders. Dr. Tyler was a rabid southerner. He didn't like anything that came ^{out of} ~~from~~ the north, from Lincoln down. I was very fond of Tyler. He had three children -- two girls and a boy. (Discussion about Tyler's children.)

When I went to the University of Virginia, the head of the department of law was from William and Mary, the head of the department of English was from William and Mary, the athletic coach was from William and Mary, and Newcombe, a fellow student of mine ~~(he graduated a year ahead of me)~~ ^{It was} he was president of the university. Strongly influenced up there.

(Discussion about the University of Virginia.)