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Interviewee Francis P. O'Keefe Miller

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Interviewer Emily Williams

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Length of tape 90 mins.

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FRANCIS PICKENS MILLER

Francis Pickens Miller's long and distinguished career in Virginia included service on the William and Mary Board of Visitors from 1941 to 1946. He was prominent in the discussions surrounding the retirement of John Stewart Bryan as president and was on the committee that nominated John Pomfret as Bryan's successor. In this interview, taped in his Georgetown home, he described the climate on the board and in Virginia in the early 1940s. At age eighty-one he is the only surviving board member from that era.

Colonel Miller made a few stylistic changes in the transcript. For more information on his life, see his autobiography, Man From the Valley.

Francis Pickens Miller

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Washington, D.C.

Williams: Well, Colonel Miller, first I did want to ask you about why it was that Governor Price appointed you to the Board of Visitors at William and Mary back many, many years ago?

Miller: Well, he was a particular friend of mine. He came from the valley of Virginia, as I come from. He was a Presbyterian, as I am. He knew about me; he knew that I was a supporter of the New Deal, as he was. He knew about my educational record, that I had been a Rhodes scholar and so forth and was interested in education. So for various reasons it was just natural for him to appoint me. I was a newly elected member of the House of Delegates. I occupied the seat -- and I'm very proud of this -- that George Mason of Gunston Hall occupied at the time of the Revolution. In those days I was the only member of the House of Delegates from Fairfax County. (There were only about 30,000 people in the county then; there're now over 600,000. It was an entirely different county; it was a rural county.) He just wanted to appoint friends of his.

When I became a member of the board I found that Gordon Bohannon was the rector, and among the more influential members was Judge Shewmake. I didn't know much about the

college before I joined the board, but I soon found out a bit from members who had served for some years on it. One of my first impressions was that there was no one really in effective charge of the college. It had a very distinguished president, John Stewart Bryan, who was also editor of the News Leader in Richmond. He lived in the famous Wren house (the President's House at the college) and lived like a Virginia country gentleman of the eighteenth century. Because he had to spend some of his time in Richmond attending to the affairs of his newspaper (and for other reasons), he had appointed an assistant to the president named Charlie Duke, and Charlie Duke was the effective man in charge. But Duke was not extremely well educated; he was not by any standards a man qualified to be the president of a great college, but he was the administrator, and actually he performed most of the functions of president. He was the person who dealt with people who had business with the college of various kinds, whether it was educational or plain administrative. We realized that the leadership of the college wasn't worthy of it. In spite of Mr. Bryan's culture and distinguished family and great wealth, he didn't provide the leadership that William and Mary deserved to have; he didn't provide the scholastic or administrative leadership that it deserved. And some of the members of the board prior to my appointment to it had become increasingly restive. They felt they ought to

have a younger president and a more effective president who would command the respect of the educational community of the south and of the nation and who would represent the best traditions of William and Mary. So we began to talk among ourselves.

Williams: Was this a general feeling over all the board members?

Miller: Yes, quite general. There was a general feeling, but some felt it more strongly than others, naturally, and all of us were aware that we had to proceed very carefully, very cautiously. We didn't want to offend Mr. Bryan. We didn't want to disrupt the college by any internecine warfare of any kind, and it all ought to be done in such a way, if possible as to carry Mr. Bryan with us. So we talked it over with him, and he agreed that the college needed a younger man and was prepared to encourage our search. So the board appointed a committee -- I remember Gordon Bohannon was the chairman of our committee, and Judge Shewmake, myself -- I think there was one other person, but I've forgotten.

Williams: Could I interrupt you here to ask you how did you approach Mr. Bryan and tell him, "Mr. Bryan, we need a younger man."

Miller: Well, he was a very generous person (I'll talk more about that later). If you know what you want to do and have a certain amount of courtesy it's not very painful to approach a man even like Mr. Bryan. We didn't find it too difficult to talk to him about that. We knew the whole situation was

difficult, but it wasn't difficult to talk to him.

So the committee was appointed and we began our search. I don't believe any committee ever made a more thorough search for a president of a college, and this makes me feel very humble because as I look back on it, as thorough as our search was it didn't end as I wish it had ended. We were advised by some of the principal educators in the United States; we traveled to various places and interviewed people, and we finally, after weeks of inquiry, prepared a list of about fifty people to be considered. We went down that list and narrowed it and narrowed it and in the end decided the man named John Pomfret was the best of the people that we had been advised to consider and who had been seen and interviewed. He was then at Vanderbilt. We found that he was available, so in the end we did two things: we invited him to come and be president of the college; then we made John Stewart Bryan a gift of the robes worn by the bishop of London in the eighteenth century when he was head of the college. They were marvelous! We sent to London and had them copied, and we were sure that John Stewart Bryan would be very pleased with those. When we made him the -- now I have forgotten exactly -- what did we make John Stewart Bryan?

Williams: The chancellor.

Miller: Chancellor -- which was, I think, the title used by the bishop when he was sort of nominal head of the college. So

with John Stewart Bryan as chancellor, wearing the robes of the bishop of London, we felt we had sort of pulled off a peaceful coup. Bryan himself seemed very pleased. He said he agreed with our choice, that he felt Pomfret would be the best man to succeed him, and everything ended on a very happy note -- until the last day, when the full board finally met to confirm the decision about Pomfret. And at the end of that meeting -- I've forgotten the date -- Mr. Bryan, as had been his custom at formal board meetings, invited the members of the board to have lunch with him.

Now lunch at the Wren house was quite an event. I don't think meals like that are served any longer in Virginia. It was sort of the final, waning days of the eighteenth century -- not nineteenth century, eighteenth century. We were given oysters and Smithfield ham. Smithfield ham tasted different in those days from the way ham tastes now -- very finely cut, dry -- and the oysters served with it. And then as a drink vintage wines from the wonderful cellar of wines of Mr. Bryan -- it was just everything that an eighteenth century host could have thought of or desired. And when we went into the dining room something happened which I shall remember all the rest of my life, which made an indelible impression on me and profoundly influenced my later career in Virginia. You know, sometimes serendipity good or bad happens; sometimes the good happens and sometimes the bad. Well, I was quite unprepared for what hap-

pened that day. When we entered the dining room, Mr. Bryan, who had been very kind to me for a number of years both personally and in his paper said, "Pickens" -- he called me by my middle name -- "Pickens, come here and sit at my right." Well, I was surprised because he ought to have asked the rector to sit at his right, but he told me to sit at his right, so I went to his right. We all sat down, and Mr. Bryan said to the board, "I want to propose a toast to Francis Pickens. I want to propose a toast to the only man I can think of who would be capable of driving a poignard, a dagger into my heart in such a way that as I expired, I looked up into his face with love and gratitude. To Francis Pickens." "Well! What in heavens name?" I thought. "He holds me responsible. He hates me, and this is his way of getting his revenge: to drink a toast to a man who drove a dagger through his heart." No, I always remembered that. (But in years later when I was running for governor and the senate, the implacable hatred of his paper toward me was quite evident. It lost no occasion to deride me and play me down and on one occasion libeled me; I had to threaten to take action against them. And it all started because he held me responsible for his no longer being president of William and Mary. As I say, that trivial event of a toast in the Wren house is something I'll remember as long as I live, because his son, Tennant, inherited a negative attitude toward me which his father had obviously transmitted to him.)

Williams: Did you feel that you had been one of the leaders in persuading him?

Miller: Oh, yes. I was one of the more influential members of the board, and they looked to me to do their dirty work for them. During all my life I have been assigned jobs like that, and I've gotten sort of used to it. It's work that has to be done. Somebody has to do it, and people feel that I have sufficient intelligence and courtesy to do it in the right way, as I did. I didn't mess the play at all.

Williams: So it was not assigning responsibility that surprised you; it was Mr. Bryan's reaction to the entire matter? I see.

Miller: Oh, yes. I didn't connive as a plotter to do him in at all; I was just the voice of the majority of the board. We knew what we had to do; we wanted to do it in the best possible way, and we did.

Well now, everything worked out as we had planned at the time. Pomfret came and was then installed as president, and we were so confident. There were no questions, having even received John Stewart Bryan's own blessing for the man that we had chosen.

Williams: Excuse me, I wanted to ask you a question on that. Now I know that at the meeting where Dr. Pomfret was selected finally that the board divided very bitterly on that choice. Well, if Mr. Bryan said that Dr. Pomfret was his own selection, doesn't that mean that the publisher of the Richmond

newspaper was going against the Byrd candidate? Is that a correct statement to make?

Miller: No. I've forgotten who the Byrd candidate was.

Williams: Mr. Combs. Mr. Morgan Combs.

Miller: Combs, yes. No, it was very close, but the majority of the board was for Pomfret. There're always divisions on the board. We didn't take it too seriously at the time. And I'm sure John Stewart Bryan would not have wanted Combs. Combs was a man personally -- let's just say not a cultivated gentleman in the Virginia sense. No, that never occurred to me, and I'm sure -- oh, later on, people in retrospect might read that into it, but I don't think it was a politically motivated decision. The minority of the board were politically motivated. They wanted a pure Byrd henchman as president of the college. You know, they wanted one of their own buddies to be president. But I don't think Mr. Bryan would have been for all that. His son, Tennant, became a Byrd henchman, but John Stewart himself was an old-fashioned gentleman. He wasn't a cheap conniver. He may not have been a great president, but he had many amiable and attractive qualities. Oh no, he wasn't a partisan. He preferred Pomfret to Combs; I'll put it that way. I'm absolutely sure of that.

So the Pomfret administration got under way. Now the war had come, and from 1940 on I had been wholly preoccupied with the war and its affairs. I've forgotten when the date

of Pomfret's inauguration took place.

Williams: Let's see. Well, it would have been '43, the winter. He came in the fall of that term, the '42 term. He was inaugurated that winter.

Miller: Well, by the time of his inauguration I was getting prepared to go overseas. I'd been once for a brief period overseas in the autumn of '42, and then I went for good in the summer of '43. So I lost track of the college for several years. I have forgotten what year Colgate Darden became governor of Virginia. I think it must have been in '43.

Williams: I guess it was '42 to '46 he was governor.

Miller: Then he would have been elected in the autumn of '41. Colgate has since become a very warm friend of mine. I love him and admire him. He's a great joker. He said to me once, "Pickens, you know what appointment cost me most in my administration as governor?" I said, "No, Colgate, I don't know." He said, "My appointment of you to a second term on the board of William and Mary. That cost me more than anything else I did."

Williams: Why did he say that, do you think?

Miller: Probably because by that time, as a result of all my experiences in the state legislature, I had become convinced that the Byrd machine had to be broken up. Its influence had become increasingly pernicious in the state, and I had by that time become an avowed anti-Byrd man, yet Colgate appointed me to the board, you see. Of course, he was just joking when he said, "Pickens, that cost me more than any

appointment I ever made."

But I was overseas for some years, and when I came back things had changed. I was still a member of the board (because the board appointment was for four years, and I think my appointment ended in '45 or '46).

Williams: '46, I think.

Miller: I came back in '46. Before Pomfret left -- I was aware while I was still a member of the board of the difficulties with the athletic department, but I was not back long enough to go into them fully or to be aware of all the implications. Then one day -- it must have been in '50 or '51 -- in the intervening years I had been preoccupied entirely with politics, with running for governor, and then getting ready to run for the U.S. Senate against Byrd -- and I heard that Pomfret was going to leave, so I got the president's office at William and Mary on the phone and asked to speak to Mr. Pomfret. And his secretary said, "I'm sorry, Colonel, he's not here." "Well," I said, "When will he be there?" And she said something like, "We don't expect to see him again." I said, "What do you mean 'you don't expect'?" She said, "He's gone. He's left the state. He's not coming back." And she gave me an address -- I think it was in New Jersey or Pennsylvania or something -- and I never saw him again. In retrospect I have less confidence in human judgment than I had fifty years ago. It is so difficult to choose the right man. In retrospect I think we ought to have chosen Robert (Bobby) Gooch at

the University of Virginia. He was a William and Mary man. He had been at Oxford with me, and I knew him well. As a matter of fact my own personal inclinations were to have Robert Gooch be the next president of William and Mary. But the fact that we got the advice of the wisest educators in the United States that Pomfret was the man overrode my natural, instinctive tendency to favor Gooch. I've always bitterly regretted it, but you have to make decisions. You make the decisions on the basis of the best advice you can get, and the best advice we could get said that Pomfret was our man. I've never understood and I've never tried to understand what happened to him in those years while I was away. Apparently he was not involved directly in the scandal, whatever it was; it just got the best of him. He couldn't handle it; he didn't handle it. And I suppose the people who objected to his appointment were laying for him all the time. I've often wondered what Charlie Duke's part in this was. Being an old intelligence officer I would instinctively point my finger at Charlie Duke for making it more difficult -- I'll just put it that way -- for Pomfret, but I know nothing about that. I haven't seen the correspondence, and I never talked to anyone. I bowed out. When I found that Pomfret had left the state and was going to Huntington Library and would never be back again I just felt very sad and felt that my judgment had misled me. I've never really known. (Discussion of attempts to interview Dr. Pomfret.)

Oh, a man that would leave a state without saying a word -- just leave! I've felt it always reflected on him because he wasn't man enough to stand and take it; he didn't have courage enough to face it. And it reflected on me: the fact that I would connive -- not connive -- but I would participate in the appointment of a man who was that kind of a -- I won't say a disaster but -- I don't know what word to use because I don't feel that he was -- he wasn't morally at fault, was he?

Williams: No. He had had nothing to do with it.

Miller: It was just a situation that arose. What was it? A scholarship scandal?

Williams: Grade-fixing and pay for athletes who were there. Grade-fixing before they got there (to get into William and Mary) and grades after they got there as well, so it was a big mess. It wasn't just one isolated incident.

Miller: And he felt he was responsible, I suppose -- all this was going on under his nose --

Williams: And hadn't known it. I wonder -- you knew many of the people who were still on the board by '51. With that board do you think that Dr. Pomfret --

Miller: Was Gordon Bohannon still --

Williams: Gordon Bohannon was dead by this time; Judge Shewmake was the rector. With that board do you think Dr. Pomfret could have said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this will not go on"? Some people have said this Board of Visitors was absolutely foot-

ball crazy, athletics crazy.

Miller: Yes, I think that would be true -- with Gordon Bohannon's death.

Williams: Because Gordon Bohannon had died just about the same time you went off the board, so that influence was gone.

Miller: What is the name of the man who is from Roanoke? It's an old Virginia name. I've been trying to think of it all morning, and it's eluded me.

Williams: Well, I don't remember where they were from. I'll ask you about someone else who was on the board at the time, and that was Judge Shewmake. Do you think Judge Shewmake was against Dr. Pomfret from the beginning, from the minute he was elected?

Miller: Oh, no.

Williams: Because some people have told me they think he was.

Miller: Well, if he was he was just posing to appease the Byrd machine. No, no, he was one of the three people who decided to nominate him. Oh no, it's incredible. I didn't control that committee; we all discussed and then finally agreed what to do -- and agreed with Stewart Bryan's blessing, apparently -- until this luncheon where I "ran a dagger through his heart."

Williams: I've also been told that Gordon Bohannon was very much of a leveling influence, that as long as he was rector of the board Mr. Pomfret and the board got along, but this very same person made the statement, "You just go back and look.

After Gordon Bohannon dies things start falling apart for John Pomfret on the board."

Miller: Not being present when this happened I would be inclined to agree. He was that kind of a man, Gordon Bohannon. He was another Price man.* He was a good man -- from Petersburg, as I recall.

Williams: When Mr. Bryan had been eased out -- maybe persuaded, maybe that's a nicer way to put it; I don't want to sound too diabolical here -- persuaded that it was best to retire, this was not done with the idea of any particular candidate coming?

Miller: No, no.

Williams: No, I thought you would want to clear that up.

Miller: No, no, no. The field was wide open. The man in my mind was Bobby Gooch, who was a very loyal William and Mary alumnus, distinguished professor at the University of Virginia. Bobby had all the social background and graces that would have made him a lovely president. The reason I didn't fight for him was this overwhelming recommendation from these people that were supposed to know: the heads of national educational foundations and so forth -- recommendations for Pomfret. Gooch wouldn't have been a strong president. He wouldn't have been a moneyraiser, but he had all the social graces and intellectual assets that a president should have. Now I don't think he would have been a good administrator at all. He was far too amiable, and I men-

* Jim Price was governor of Virginia from 1938 to 1942.

tioned this athletic (business) -- of course, Gooch himself had been a great athlete and football player, so I don't know how he would have handled that situation. He probably wouldn't have handled it.

Williams: Had you met Mr. Pomfret before he was recommended to the board?

Miller: Oh, no, no.

Williams: I was going to ask you what kind of an impression he had made on you.

Miller: Well, he made a very favorable impression on me when we finally met him. It's one more instance -- so many times in my life I've completely misread a character on the basis of an interview. You can so easily be deceived, and I felt that all of us -- and don't you let anybody tell you that Shewmake was against this appointment. We would have acted only if we were unanimous -- I mean the nominating committee. The board, of course, wasn't. You see, Shewmake was essentially a politician.

Williams: Right. State Corporation Commission man.

Miller: State Corporation Commission, and he would -- in retrospect -- recall positions which he never occupied at the time. He was a kindly, nice man, relatively weak. Gordon Bohannon and I were the -- do you happen to have a list with you of the members of the board at that time?

Williams: No, I haven't. I should have thought to have brought it. Let's see. You, Gordon Bohannon, Judge Shewmake, there

was a Mrs. McManaway who was on the board at the time, Channing Hall of Williamsburg. That's five. A Mr. Shackelford.

Miller: Shackelford was the man from Roanoke. He was another man who agreed with me very warmly on everything.

Williams: I'm not sure; was Miss Metz on the board when you were on?

Miller: No.

Williams: I guess Dr. (Dabney) Lancaster was on there ex-officio.

Miller: Oh, he certainly was. He was a dear friend of mine. I'm so glad you remembered him. Of course, he wasn't on the committee, but he was one of those who voted -- I think the final vote for Pomfret was something like 11 to 10 -- I don't know if it was that close -- or perhaps 9 to 8 or 8 to 7 -- something like that. And I shall always remember: we were taking the vote -- it was to be an audible, vocal vote, and each man's vote was recorded. It started with Gordon Bohannon, who voted for Pomfret, and then went around the table toward the right. Lancaster was the last man. What was his first name?

Williams: Dabney.

Miller: Dabney, that's right. The vote came right around to him. Everybody else had voted, and it was a tie. And Lancaster won the undying enmity of the Byrd machine right there because he had to vote, and he voted for Pomfret. And that elected Pomfret. This was a very dramatic moment. He was a very brave man when publicly he had to state his honest convictions, you see. He was state superintendent of education at that time, I think. He was for me

in my candidacy for the governor's post. I've always thought of his vote as one of the bravest things I ever saw an educator do because he was putting his own career and everything on the line; he was saying that he knew that Pomfret on the record was infinitely a better man than Combs. He said so, and that settled it.

Williams: Was it expected that the vote would be that close?

Miller: No, that was one of the closest Byrd/anti-Byrd divisions that took place in my time -- but it didn't happen that way. It wasn't that we were voting for or against Byrd.

Williams: You couldn't line up the Byrd/anti-Byrd in the vote?

Miller: No, no. In that way. All we said was, "Who is the best man? Who do you favor?" And it just happened that all those who thought Pomfret was the best man were anti-Byrd. I'm glad you asked me something about that and made me recall that vote; I hadn't thought about it for years.

Williams: Yes, I had wanted to know about it. I also wondered if Mr. Pomfret's brother-in-law, John Dana Wise of Richmond, had any influence on his coming?

Miller: I would like to know that myself. John Dana was in some respects the most reactionary man in Virginia in my time. He was the only man I ever knew who would have preferred to have lived in 1850 with slaves, with a society in which there was a small group of aristocrats of which he was a member run-

ning things. He was the last man of any influence in Virginia who was completely committed to the Confederacy. You know, I don't mean in the actual sense: he wasn't a rebel against the Union; he wasn't a traitor, but he detested everything that the federal government did for the country. When I was a member of the legislature -- and I've forgotten where this fits in to our discussion of William and Mary -- but we had started as being rather good friends. His newspaper had been good to me. (Discussion of labor dispute involving Tennant Bryan's paper.) But he represented the evil spirit that dominated Virginia during those days. An evil spirit -- it grew out of a sense of a belief in the superiority of a small governing body, an aristocracy as in England. His attitude toward life was very much the attitude of an English lord of the upper classes in the eighteenth century. He wanted as small a number of people to vote as possible. He wanted, you know, to keep them down and so forth. That was the spirit of the times, and John Dana Wise was the incarnation of that spirit. I regard him as the man who kept Virginia back. He was a South Carolinian -- Columbia, South Carolina -- and I am myself a South Carolinian, so we understood each other. But he had no -- there's a theological expression, "the grace of God." It doesn't mean grace in the sense of beauty of form, but something else, something deeper in the soul. He had no grace of God in him, none whatever.

Williams: We were talking about his attitudes. What was his attitude toward his brother-in-law coming to William and Mary?

Miller: Oh, I don't think he knew much about him at first. They weren't close.

Williams: You don't think he would have tried to have persuaded him? This is what I've wondered, that maybe he would have said, "Jack, yes, come." (Did he perhaps) persuade him to come (I'll ask that first and then I'll ask) persuade him to go?

Miller: You know, I never thought of that as having any significant relationship to it at all. I remember that he was Pomfret's brother-in-law, but -- and that raises some very interesting speculations in my mind. I suppose that was one reason: since John Dana Wise was Bryan's man, just his man Friday -- he controlled him, I suppose that's one reason why John Stewart Bryan connived with us, in a sense. I think his strange toast, his murderer's toast to me was -- I understand Virginians well enough to know -- I think it had been a blow to his pride. I think he really did want Pomfret, but he was a very proud man. He'd been a member of the Board of Overseers of Harvard (John Stewart Bryan). He was an old-fashioned aristocrat, very proud, and he'd never had anybody deprive him of anything all his life, and here was Francis Pickens Miller and Gordon Bohannon -- and despite what you say, Shewmake was right with us -- saying that in effect -- we didn't say this, of course-- but in effect, "You've served your useful purpose, and now we want to change." (Discussion of Times - Dispatch policies.)

Williams: Well, I'll bring you back to William and Mary and to something that happened while you were on the board which you may not

remember because it didn't have the import of selecting a new president -- and that was the problem with the Norfolk division, gradefixing down at Norfolk. Dean Hodges down there -- Mr. Bryan found that he was changing grades for young men to get into Annapolis, and I found that at this time a committee was appointed to study severing the tie with the Norfolk division. Well, I know you've been on a lot of committees, so I'm not going to ask you your memories. You weren't on that committee. Later you were on one for separating R.P.I. What I do want to ask you is: was there sentiment on the board for separating these divisions at the time? Do you recall that?

Miller: I don't recall how the vote turned out. No, I don't remember, but I do remember that generally the mood of the board was, "We ought to separate these things; they're just stones around our necks. They're only getting us in trouble." That was the mood. I remember the mood, but I don't remember how the vote came out.

Williams: No, as I say it would be unfair to ask you thirty years later: "Please remember the vote." Why do you think, though, it wasn't done (that neither of these were separated) if this was the mood? Could you account for it?

Miller: Now I'm just speculating. Don't attach any importance to what I am saying here; as I say I'm just speculating. I think it wasn't done because the government of Virginia felt it would be a reflection on it, to an extent, and that there was going to be growth there. In due course they'd live through the

troubles of the time and emerge -- as they have. That was probably the reasoning.

Williams: One man, it's occurred to me, who was on the board at the time that I'm talking about right now (and) who was also on it later, and that was Mr. Foreman down at Norfolk. Did he have an enormous amount of influence for keeping the Norfolk division, because I know he was a real supporter of it?

Miller: Yes, he had influence, but not enormous. He wasn't an impressive or influential man.

Williams: It just occurred to me that he was another person whom I should have mentioned as a board member when I was going through them.

Did you ever have many dealings with Charlie Duke?[?] He's an enigmatic character, as I've heard from other people. He was an important man, but he's very much one in the shadows.

Miller: Well, he should have been. Charlie was an operator. Is he still living?

Williams: No, no. He died twenty years ago.

Miller: Well, it's a bit unfair to talk about a dead man, but I think of Charlie as being a slick operator. I think of him in that respect being like a car salesman-type. I wouldn't regard him as having very much intelligence, but as being a very faithful man Friday for John Stewart Bryan. I mean he would do whatever John Stewart wanted him to do. He's the type that always amuses me and intrigues me. He had a very good front; he was rather impressive physically. He had a very shallow brain -- I started to say he had no brain at all, but that

would be somewhat unfair, except he knew nothing about education or about educational problems. He really had the mentality of a used-car salesman. He would do what Bryan wanted him to do, but he was the last person in the world you would have chosen to speak for a great educational institution. When I think of Charlie I'd think of him as a "rah, rah" alumnus of the college; you know, the type who leads parades and yells for the college; the college means nothing but a nostalgia for something out of the past. I don't know why John Stewart Bryan tolerated him. I've often wondered why a man of John Stewart's cultivation -- he was a cultivated gentleman, John Stewart Bryan -- with background and Harvard connections -- I just don't see how in the world he tolerated Charlie Duke. I would have fired him overnight; I wouldn't have kept him around me because you wouldn't know what Charlie was up to, in athletics or anything else -- fixing things. That's the way I felt about him; I'm not saying it's true. It may not be true at all, but that was my feeling about Charlie Duke, and Charlie Duke was one of the main reasons we wanted a new president because we knew that as long as John Stewart remained the president, Charlie Duke was going to be around, and we had to get rid of Charlie Duke for the welfare of the college. But maybe if Charlie Duke had been around the athletic scandals would have been handled better -- I don't know. I just don't have the slightest idea, but I know that we intensely mistrusted Charlie Duke: his shallowness, his lack of knowledge of educational affairs, his

lack of concern for education.

Williams: I gather that he either was or wanted to be "in" on politics in Richmond.

Miller: Oh, yes. Pure political type. Did he ever get into politics?

Williams: Not in an elected form, no.

Miller: What did he do after left William and Mary?

Williams: Well, I think he was on leave of absence for a time with Governor Tuck.

Miller: He and Governor Tuck would have been a marvelous team.

Williams: I don't remember what -- reorganizing state government strikes me as what it was he did. But then he came back to William and Mary. He was on leave from William and Mary.

Miller: He came back while Pomfret was there?

Williams: Yes, yes.

Miller: You don't mean it!

Williams: But I know that your connection with the college had sort of dropped off after that point, and there were more important things in your life in those years than William and Mary.

Miller: I didn't realize that he came back.

Williams: Yes, but then he died shortly after all this -- the athletics and Pomfret's resignation.

Miller: But don't forget the main story I'm telling -- the lovely story is the story of Dabney Lancaster's vote. When it came right down to him and he had to make the decision, he was a man of integrity and a man of truth, and he knew for whom he had to vote. He wouldn't have voted for Combs if it was the last thing

he did in this world..

I appreciate the opportunity to recall some of these things. That speech of John Stewart Bryan about me had a profound effect on my political career. The longer you live you'll discover that the most trivial things can be absolutely decisive things in years to come. You see, when I alienated John Stewart Bryan I alienated his papers and his son, most of all -- Tennant, a vicious little man; John Stewart wasn't. He was a much bigger man than his son. And when something like this occurs it can be the decisive factor in determining how lines are going to be drawn. When the Richmond paper turned against me -- you know, in '49 I won the Democratic nomination (for governor) by about 25,000 as far as Democrats were concerned. I was only beaten (if you read my memoirs) by about 50,000 or 60,000 Republicans who came into the Democratic primary, and that settled it. But I've often thought that that luncheon at the Wren house was really one of the most decisive turning points in my life. I've had a marvelous life, in spite of the fact that I've usually been beaten, but I don't regret a thing. I don't regret my battles and my fights, and of course it's an enormous satisfaction to me that Andrew (Miller) has done so well; he may be -- and I hope he will be -- the next governor of Virginia. This has absolutely nothing to do with this (interview) except as an illustration of the kind of man I've tried to be. Once I was in the middle west speaking at the University of Iowa. A public relations man there introduced me who had known me for

some years; Bob Blakely was his name. Bob in introducing me gave me the most perfect introduction I've ever had in my life, and I always think of him with great appreciation because of it. He said, "I'm going to introduce to you a man who knew what had to be done, where he was, and then did it." And if I could choose an epitaph I would choose that: here lies a man who knew what had to be done, where he was -- not dreaming about somewhere else, but where he was -- and did it. I knew what had to be done on the board of William and Mary and did it. But I feel that Pomfret let me down terribly. I don't know what he did that contributed to his downfall. All I know is that he had the backing of the best people on the board. He had the backing for the time being of John Stewart Bryan, and why in the world he let that -- I really feel a little bitterly about John Pomfret -- why he let that mess develop when he had that opportunity. We told him he had the greatest opportunity in America. This was the college that was the second oldest. It had great tradition; it had fallen on rather evil days; it hadn't been prospering, but he could take over and really make something out of it, and that's what we wanted him to do. And he muffed the ball completely in some ways -- which I don't understand and you don't understand. And you would think the man would want to talk about it.

Williams: I wish he would.

Miller: Well, you would think just as a matter of his own integrity he would like to explain to people now what happened. I shall never

forget that time when he had just gone, whenever it was (in '51 or '50) when I called his office inquiring about him, and his secretary said, "Why, Mr. Pomfret isn't here." And she said it in sort of the tone of voice of a person to whom something's happened. And then I said, "Where is he?" And she said, "Well, he's out of the state." And I said, "When will he be back?" And she said, "Never. He's gone." I felt quite empty. It was a strange feeling I had. This man to whom we'd attached such hopes and for whom we made such a (search) -- I don't think any committee ever searched for a man more thoroughly than we did. We started with no presuppositions, no prejudices. We were just looking for the best man, and we were told this was the best man. And then he walked out on us. A strange feeling.

Williams: Well, if hope springs eternal, perhaps Dr. Pomfret will still talk with me. I certainly hope so.

Miller: I do, too.

Williams: But I'm so glad that you would -- very glad.

Miller: I'm glad I was still alive!