

W. Brooks George

Brooks George is one of the depression-era graduates of William and Mary (1932) who maintained a strong interest in the college and later served it in several capacities, including president of the Society of the Alumni, head of the Board of Sponsors of the School of Business Administration, member of the Board of Visitors (1958-1968), and rector of the board (1966-1968). At the time of this interview he was on several advisory committees at the college and chairman of the board of House of Edgeworth of Richmond.

Mr. George's secretary retyped the transcript, adding a few lines, but leaving it essentially as it was when sent him. The editorial style (capitalization, punctuation) is his.

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Interviewee W. Brooks George

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Place Tucker - Clemon Room, Swann Library

Interviewer Emily Williams

Session number 1

Length of tape 60 mins.

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W. Brooks George

February 6, 1976

Williamsburg, Virginia

Williams: Mr. George, let me begin by asking you why it was -- I guess it was in 1928 because you were the class of '32 -- why it was you chose to come to the College of William and Mary?

George: I graduated from Stuart High School in Stuart, Virginia, in 1928, and at that time I was seriously considering going to Washington and Lee and studying law. In August, 1928, Dr. William Hodges, who was Dean here at the College of William and Mary, came up to see me, and he talked with my father and me and left me a catalog, and I became very interested in William and Mary, mainly on account of him and the many fine things that he told me about the college. Dr. Hodges was one of the greatest and most outstanding men we've ever had here at the college because he took an interest in boys, and he was always so much help, especially as a consultant on almost any problem -- and that meant a great deal.

I came to William and Mary and very soon I was pledged to Kappa Sigma fraternity, and elected treasurer. The fraternity was broke, and it so happened that the district manager of Kappa Sigma was Vernon Geddy, Sr. He was a lawyer here in Williamsburg, who negotiated to obtain options for most of the property when Mr. Rockefeller began the Restoration here in Williamsburg in 1926. Mr. Geddy was a very outstanding man and a loyal friend. He required

me as treasurer of Kappa Sigma to report to him once a month. I would go to see him, and regardless of how busy he was he would always see me and try to help us. And he did help us. It's been very interesting over the years for me to follow the Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. I knew that Vernon Geddy with his legal ability in particular really had so much to do with the entire Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg.

I was very much impressed with the college from the beginning; it was small (1200 to 1300 students), and you knew everybody on the campus, and everyone was so anxious to assist. I was impressed with the professors who were here at the college and the ones that took such a keen interest in trying to assist you in every way possible. I wouldn't attempt to enumerate all of them who meant so much to me, but I was particularly impressed with the ability and keenness of Dr. William Guy (in chemistry) and Mr. Wayne Gibbs in the business school. There were several others that I could mention, but those two in particular meant a great deal to me.

Throughout my stay here at the college I became interested in quite a few things. I was manager of the basketball team, and then I really got a great deal of satisfaction out of the work on the Flat Hat. I later became business manager, and that required a great deal of time and work.

I was vice-president of the senior class. I have always been most grateful for having been tapped by O.D.K., a very outstanding fraternity. In my senior year I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, along with Duncan Cocke, who is now senior vice-president of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. O.D.K. was a greater honor for me than Phi Beta Kappa. When I was in college I always enjoyed my association with "Pat" Paschall, who was here the entire four years I was in college.

Williams: Were you a waiter as well?

George: No, I spent so much time on the Flat Hat and in other activities that I didn't do that.

I graduated in 1932. It was very, very difficult to get a job, but Dr. J. A. C. Chandler was president of the college, and he was a man who really tried to help me in every way that he could. He tried to get me a job, I remember, with the Federal Loan Bank down in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, but that did not materialize. With the assistance of my father and Senator Harry Byrd, Sr., I came to Richmond in 1934 and started to work with the Internal Revenue Service. I came down to William and Mary one night to an accounting society meeting with T. Coleman Andrews, and when we returned to Richmond that night I told Mr. Andrews if he had any vacancies I would like for him to consider me for a position. He called me in about two weeks, and I went with T. Coleman

Andrews & Company, which is a certified public accounting firm. I continued to study while I was with him for two years. I was qualified then to take the C.P.A. exam, and I passed that.

Williams: Had you taken the accounting courses here at the college? How well did you feel they prepared you for your business?

George: I thought that the training we received here at the college with Mr. Gibbs and Dr. Southworth and Mr. Corey and Dr. Taylor and many others was very, very outstanding because the classes were not too large and the personal interest they took in the students was really most encouraging.

I worked for Coleman Andrews for two years; he did the accounting work for Larus & Brother Company, Inc., tobacco manufacturers, Richmond, Virginia. This was a family-owned company, one of Richmond's most outstanding companies. He took me with him down to Larus & Brother Company, Inc. to do the auditing and tax work. After I'd gone down there two years they offered me a job as an assistant auditor and I went to work for them in 1937. In 1968 the company was sold to Rothmans of Canada. I am still with them to date as Chairman of the Board.

To back up a little; I've always felt that Dr. J. A. C. Chandler was largely responsible for a great deal of the Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg for this reason:

In the early '20s when they held the Phi Beta Kappa meeting here at William and Mary, he was the one who learned that Mr. Rockefeller was going to visit in either Hampton or Norfolk, and so he invited Mr. Rockefeller to the College of William and Mary to attend the Phi Beta Kappa meeting, at which place he met Dr. Goodwin. This is a very important event in the history of this community.

Williams: How did the students feel about Dr. Chandler? He seemed to have been a person that you could respect and fear.

George: He worked very hard -- I'm discussing Dr. J. A. C. Chandler, who was president when I was in college -- he spent a great deal of time in Richmond working with the legislature. The students did not realize this. The college grew a great deal under his leadership and guidance. He certainly did lay the groundwork to make William and Mary the college it is today. I've always felt very much indebted to the college, and when I moved to Richmond I took an interest in alumni work there and was president of the William and Mary Alumni Chapter in Richmond. Then I became interested in alumni work here at the college and served on the board and was later president of the Society of the Alumni. In 1958 Governor Lindsay Almond appointed me to the Board of Visitors. At that time Dr. Alvin Chandler was president of the college. He was a man who devoted

many years to the betterment of this college, and I know of his many accomplishments, especially to assist with salaries and upgrading of the entire faculty of the college. On numerous occasions I have been with him to see Governor of Virginia and others to try to increase or improve the salary levels of all of the faculty here at the college. He was very strong in his feelings on this subject and I'm sure that people here at the college never realized just how hard he worked to try to improve the entire salary set-up. He worked very well with the Board of Visitors, and the meetings were very businesslike.

In 1958 a survey was made by the U.S. Department of Education and by the State Council of Higher Education. The State Council of Higher Education had employed a Dr. McFarlane. In 1959, Dr. McFarlane came before the Board of Visitors and recommended to us very firmly that the college change its entire set-up to include and become the Colleges of William and Mary, including the branches at Norfolk and Richmond.

Williams: This was not something that Admiral Chandler then set up himself and then took it to the board, but it was on a state level?

George: Dr. Chandler had discussed the entire situation with Dr. McFarlane, and when they came before the board I remember mentioning to Dr. McFarlane that I did not

think that his plan would work at all. I felt that the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg was most important in my book and that we should try to keep it that way. I didn't see how from a political point of view that this new system would work. The Norfolk area had too much political power in the legislature. Dr. McFarlane's position was that this is something that would save the taxpayers of Virginia a great deal of money and that it would take care of the educational needs of eastern Virginia, including the cities of Norfolk and Richmond. The board after much discussion and debate over the problem went ahead, and within two years Dr. McFarlane was working to break up the system that he had recommended. It resulted in the development of Old Dominion in Norfolk and V.C.U. in Richmond.

In 1968 when I was on the board and working with Dr. Paschall and others I was very happy for us to establish the School of Business Administration.

Williams: Before you talk about that, can I back you up to talk some more about the colleges? The board wasn't all that much in favor of setting them up, but when the report came out requesting separation, the board, I know, was very bitterly divided over that. Was there a hope that something could be done at that point to save them?

George: It was so crossed up politically that there wasn't any way to maintain the new system. The people in Norfolk wanted their independence, and when this was reconsidered by the legislature in 1962, following Dr. McFarlane's new recommendations, the legislature reversed itself. I was very much in favor of saving the taxpayers' money, especially since you could consolidate it, but from a practical point of view it just wouldn't work.

Williams: Was Admiral Chandler willing to become the chancellor when this was set up? I got the feeling that maybe he would have rather just stayed the president of William and Mary rather than have this "super" position.

George: As I recall it, he wanted it that way. He wanted to be chancellor, and then Dr. Paschall was made president. But it was just entirely unwieldy; it was just too much to try to manage with the political implications involved. Dr. Paschall was made president of the college, and then in 1962 the Colleges of William and Mary were dissolved, and then Alvin Chandler became honorary chancellor, and Dr. Paschall continued as president.

The college really grew under the leadership of Dr. Paschall as evidenced in the booklet we published, the Highlights of Progress, 1960-1970 -- it's a report on the decade and a look ahead to the 1970s and 1980s. This is an excellent publication that really gives full and complete information for the major events that took place during that period. We had many discussions at board meetings concerning these

developments. The big problem was always to establish priorities, and I was always very much in favor of establishing a priority to build Swem Library as our number one item. There were some members of the board who felt that we should build William and Mary Hall first, but we made the decision to establish a priority list and to build a Swem Library and then the William and Mary Hall. William and Mary Hall cost approximately \$5,500,000 and seats 10,000 to 12,000 people and was really an excellent investment. I know all of us have always been very proud of the fact that the college did go ahead and build Swem Library first.

Williams: As I read the board minutes it seems that the board took really an amazing amount of time to pay attention to the details of the building program.

George: Well, what the people in Williamsburg and even some of the students and faculty and people throughout the state do not understand is that every building that is built here at the college has to have so many approvals they almost wear the building out before it's completed. After you get the money and after you get the approval from the Governor's Office and the Board of Visitors then you have to have your drawings not only approved by the Engineering Department of the state but the State Art Commission. Many people have been critical of those of us who were on the board during the '60s because of

some of the architecture of the new college campus. That architecture was forced on us by the State Art Commission because of the fact that they didn't have enough money to enable us to build buildings that would duplicate the Sir Christopher Wren Building, and that fact is not known to many people. But if we had not gone and worked with the State Art Commission we would not have developed a new campus, and Dr. Paschall's ten-year program would not ever have developed to the extent that it did.

Williams: One of the things on the new campus that I know you were instrumental in, and that's the new campus gates project down here near Crim Dell. How did that come about?

George: Well, Dr. Paschall and I were in the class of 1932; this has always been a very active class, and we felt that one important contribution that the class of 1932 could make would be to assist in the development of Crim Dell.

Williams: And so how did you go about it?

George: Well, I've forgotten all the details on that. I remember the board took some action on some of it, but a part of the money was contributed by the class of 1932. The other thing that I would like to mention is that for many years in talking with Dr. Alvin Chandler and Dr. Paschall I had always felt that one of the greatest weaknesses here at the college was a lack of a central place that alumni could meet when they came to Williamsburg. So a few years ago I was asked by the Alumni Board and

Dr. Graves to head up a drive to try to raise \$300,000 to renovate the old KA fraternity house. William and Mary in its long history had never raised \$300,000. (In fact, when we were raising money for the Swem Library I don't think we raised as much as \$200,000 through private donations.) Buy anyway we went to work on this project of raising money for the Alumni House, and I was so pleased at the assistance and help we received from so many alumni across the country. We received gifts all the way from \$5.00 to \$15,000. The project was a success, and we dedicated the Alumni House in the fall of 1975.

Williams: I interrupted you a minute ago when you were going to talk about setting up the Business School. Just before you came on the board there had been a proposal in front of the board to set up a Business School, but it was turned down. I guess it was while you were Rector this went through. How would you account for the change in the eleven years?

George: I don't know how to account for that except after I graduated in 1932 and then when Dr. J. A. C. Chandler died in 1934 there was a long period there that the Business School seemed almost to evaporate. It wasn't until the '50s, when Dr. Alvin Chandler and Dr. Paschall came in that we were able to really increase the subjects taught in the Business School. In the late '60s I would

think the big event that took place was when Dow Chemical was moving to Williamsburg and with the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock continuing to expand and with Anheuser-Busch coming to Williamsburg -- all of these events contributed a great deal to the need for an expansion of the Business School at the College of William and Mary. I was asked to set up the Board of Sponsors of the Business School, and we have twenty-two very outstanding business leaders on the Board who have really contributed financially to the School. They take a very keen interest in working in an advisory capacity. The Business School had evaporated after 1934 on account of the lack of interest by two presidents of the college.

I have always been very interested in the Law School at William and Mary. When I was a student here I took ten or twelve subjects in the Law School, in addition to the subjects I took in the Business School. I have felt for years that the Business School and the Law School have a wonderful future here at the college, and I believe that they are moving in the right direction today. Many years ago, too, there was quite an issue concerning the undergraduate training before students studied law or business. I feel that the college has made the right decision in insisting and demanding and requiring that students get a liberal artstraining before they get into the specialty fields.

Williams: Some of the liberal arts people I know were not in favor of the School of Business. Did you have to as Rector do much lobbying, say, within the board or in other capacities?

George: No, we didn't have as many problems as you would think because there are so many students, especially in my generation, who had realized the importance of Business School training in the world in which we live today. The opposition -- it wasn't as much as I thought it was going to be because the need was at the college for the Business School and it was very difficult to defeat it.

Williams: Did you encounter any of the feeling -- I'm thinking in relation to northern Virginia wanting a Law School and the feeling, as we know, "There are already three law schools in Virginia; we don't need another." Was this ever a consideration in the Business School: "No, there is a good business school at U.Va. Why put one down at William and Mary too?"

George: I'm glad you raised that point. I contributed a little money to the University of Virginia Business School. One of my sons, Henry H. George, who graduated from William and Mary, received his M.B.A. at the University of Virginia because at that time William and Mary did not have the M.B.A. program. My other son, William B. George, Jr., received his B.A. at William and Mary. When I was called by several people to assist with the establishment of the Business School and the M.B.A. program here at the College

of William and Mary, I told them that I didn't see any necessity for doing it because we had a Business School at the University of Virginia and that was enough. And several of them said, "Well, the University of Virginia is very anxious to assist the College of William and Mary in the development of the school." I contacted some of my friends at the University of Virginia, and ascertained the above was true. They have certainly worked with William and Mary to assist us, not only in the Business School, but also in the Law School. This is quite a change from what it was years ago when they did try to close the Law School, and without Dr. J. A. C. Chandler it would have been closed. The demand for business and law training had increased a great deal.

Williams: So there's been cooperation rather than competition. That's rather surprising.

George: Yes. Well, it's changed in the last ten or fifteen years. A great deal of that is due to the fact there is such a tremendous demand for business and law trained students. When students go out to get a job many of them realize that they really need some special training, and students seem to be concentrating more and more on law and business.

Williams: What would you say was Dr. Paschall's role in setting up the Business School? Now I know you probably think, "Well, you can ask Dr. Paschall," but you yourself know sometimes people will not tell you exactly what they did.

George: Well, we would not have made the progress at all with the Business School without the leadership and hard work of Dr. Paschall. He was very much in favor of it, but he had a few problems with the arts and sciences people because they didn't understand some of the ramifications of the project. After he explained it to them in detail (the plans that he had in mind for the Business School) -- a decision was made to set up the School of Business Administration. The Business School would not have progressed without the work and leadership of Dr. Charles Quittmeyer `.

Williams: Another issue that faced the board while you were on it and that is VARC. Was there anything that related the building of the cyclotron down at VARC to the separation?

George: No. I remember one of the important events was that I went with Dr. Alvin Chandler to see the Governor when he explained to the Governor that we had a ceiling on the salaries that we could pay at William and Mary, but he was bringing in -- I believe his name was Dr. Siegel -- to work on this project and that he wanted the Governor to know he was going to pay him more than the limit permitted. The VARC project has changed so much over the years that I just really haven't kept up with it.

Williams: It did bog down a good bit, though, in the '60s.

George: Yes.

Williams: I guess it was while you were Rector it was reorganized with William and Mary as the main operator. Was there any difficulty in convincing the Governor that this was the best mode of operation?

George: There's always a lot of opposition to projects of that kind. William and Mary had to fight over the years for everything we've ever received; somebody's always after us, so I don't worry too much about that. I don't recall all the details of it, but I know that I was happy that they put it under William and Mary's direction.

Williams: Another thing that William and Mary has had under its direction has been a set of two branch colleges, Christopher Newport and Richard Bland. I have the feeling that when these were put under William and Mary originally (back in 1960), which would have been while you were on the board, this was not something that William and Mary had exactly envisioned. Perhaps this was part of Dr. McFarlane's plan.

George: Yes, it was part of his plan and some of it was involved in the political set-up here in Virginia, too. But you know there's a bill in the legislature now to separate Christopher Newport and to make it an independent college. As far as I'm concerned I'd let them do it. I would do the same thing with Richard Bland.

Williams: As I read the board minutes I sensed some sort of uneasiness among board members about giving these two their independence. Is that an accurate impression?

George: Well, it might have been in those days but I'm talking about now.

Williams: Yes, you're talking about now.

George: There were a lot of problems, but things have changed so much over the years that when you go back and read some of the minutes you have to also take into account the political climate and a lot of other things that were happening at that moment in history.

Williams: Who would you recommend that could help shed light on the political climate?

George: Well, Dr. Paschall knows more about it than anybody because he was working a great deal with the legislature. You see, one important aspect of the branch college in Petersburg was the fact that Delegate Roy Smith from Petersburg was one of the most important men in the legislature, so that had to be taken into consideration. (Mr. Smith is now no longer in the legislature; he's one of the officials of the A. H. Robins Company in Richmond, but he's also a very active member now on the State Council of Higher Education.)

Williams: As we've been talking about political climate and various things that you saw were necessary to help in -- how

important is it to have a Board of Visitors member who is living in Richmond, and what can he do to help?

George: It is most important and that is why -- you see, the greatest weakness of William and Mary is the fact that we have been very weak in the state legislature. V.P.I. and the University of Virginia -- V.P.I. with its agriculture and Virginia with its law school -- have had so many representatives in the legislature that William and Mary has always had to really fight hard for every appropriated dollar. The reason that it's so important when you analyze the situation that in ten or fifteen years from now as our young men graduate from Law School and practice in Virginia and become members of the legislature, this will be another new day for the College of William and Mary.

Williams: So it is a help to have.

George: It's a must. There are so many people, especially members of the faculty, who don't seem to have an understanding of the importance of our having representatives at the ground level who can assist the college and see to it that we receive the appropriations to which I feel that we are entitled. I think that the college is most fortunate now to have Dr. Thomas Graves as President; he is spending a great deal of time in Richmond and working with the members of the legislature, and I'm sure in the long run it will mean so much to the college. I also feel that the appointment of Senator William Spong

as Dean of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law will mean so much to the college for years to come because I'm sure that he is an outstanding man in many, many respects. Over a period of years he will continue to improve all of the work of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law.

Williams: And having a member of the Board of Visitors who's living in Richmond -- can he help?

George: Oh yes. I think that is just another contact that the college has with the state government and the legislature, and I think it's very important.

Williams: Are out-of-state members of the Board of Visitors handicapped, do you think, in any way by not having inside knowledge of how things are going in Richmond?

George: No. I think the out-of-state members understand the situation. I think they realize that William and Mary is a state institution and depends a great deal on the state for a large share of its budget. I think they're appointed really to give William and Mary much more of a national image.

Williams: When you came onto the board, at that time the state superintendent of public instruction (who was then Dr. Paschall) was still a member of the board.

George: An ex-officio member of the board.

Williams: Ex-officio member -- but no longer is. Has that been a loss do think in any way?

George: No, I don't think it's been a loss at all. I think it was very good when Dr. Paschall had that position, but as a basic fundamental idea I don't think it was necessary.

Williams: Does the State Council of Higher Education take over what may have been the thought of putting the state superintendent on all of the boards, that he could more or less oversee and understand the workings of all the state schools, and having the state council maybe takes away the need to have him on the boards. Do you think that's true?

George: I just don't know. I think each of the leading colleges in Virginia will always need a very strong Board of Visitors. You have overlapping of authority now, and it's very complicated and very difficult for a president to run a college today because he has so many bosses. I admire Dr. Graves for his ability to live with it and seem to understand it.

Williams: How would you feel about students being on the board? You know, some schools do have students on their boards. Do you think this maybe would have helped back in the late '60s, early '70s?

George: I don't know. My term on the board expired in '68. I was off before they really started having so much unrest on the part of the students. I've always felt that any problem can be solved or at least approached if you improve communications, and I think that the more

communications you have with the students and the faculty and all the others concerned, the better will be your solution to the problem. I admire Dr. Graves because I do think that he has an open mind, and I also know that he can disagree with you without being disagreeable. To me this is so important in this day in 1976.

Williams: You served on the board for a number of years before you became Rector, so you had a good bit of experience. As Rector, was your view of your role as leader of the board or as moderator of the board?

George: I think it was both.

Williams: In what ways?

George: Well, I think that under the law he has a tremendous responsibility. The responsibility never did weigh too much on me, I feel that the Rector is looked upon by other members of the board to keep them informed on all of the important matters that come before the board.

Williams: And similarly sometimes doesn't he have to even act informally -- say, between meetings maybe as advisor to the president.

George: Oh yes. All the members of the board have always -- at least the majority of them -- always worked a great deal with the president. The one thing that I've always

believed board members should not do and that is to try to run the day-to-day operations of the college because that is the job of the president, and the board should only be involved in the major policy decisions. I think in the last few years the various committees of the board have been strengthened a great deal, and they have devoted much time to problems here at the college. The various committees come back to the Board of Visitors with their recommendations, and I think much of this has been most constructive. The board can then make a better decision.

Williams: There's been an increased role for the committees?

George: Yes.

Williams: Would you say this is partly -- is there an increase of work and therefore more has to be done in committees?

George: Yes, I would think so.

Williams: Similarly it seems the president in the past few years -- and when I say that I mean say as far back as twenty or twenty-five -- that he's had an increased role in the board.

George: The president of the college has a tremendous role. And you see, in addition to trying to operate the college, the other most important function of the president is to assist with the raising of private funds for endowment as well as

for the various building projects of the college, and this is an endless task. There are so many people who are anxious to assist the college and they feel that they must see the president. Dr. Graves has done a great deal since he's been president in establishing the office of development under Warren Heemann -- that seems to be progressing a great deal.

Williams: You think that will be a definite help in the fund raising?

George: Oh, you couldn't do without it. You must have it.

Williams: I'll ask you this question in the context of the years that you were on the board: What in those years would you say -- you may want to take a moment to consider -- what would you say was the most important issue that came before the board in those years?

George: I would say that the most important issue that we had in the '60s was the tremendous cooperation and assistance we had from all members of the board under the guidance of Dr. Paschall when we finalized this ten-year period of expansion of the college. We spent much time trying to develop the physical facilities of the college. We made improvements in the quality of education at the college. The William and Mary building program had been at a standstill for a period of about thirty years.

Williams: And that, you would say, was the most important --

George: Yes -- Miss Williams I thank you very much for your assistance. I will close by saying how much I am indebted to my wife Elizabeth for her understanding and willingness for me to devote so much time to The College of William and Mary in Virginia. *

* Added after transcription.