

WILLIAM L. PERSON

Billy Person grew up in Williamsburg, the son of Charles Person, who at first operated a local jewelry store and later opened Williamsburg's first garage. Mr. Person's description of life in Williamsburg in the pre-World War I era is of a very different town than the current one.

From 1921 to 1924 Mr. Person attended William and Mary; he remains an avid supporter of the college and is known particularly as a faithful athletic supporter. Since his graduation he has been head of Person Motor Company, and his comments on the relationship between the Restoration and local businesses are particularly valuable.

INDEX SHEET

Interviewee William L. Person

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Place Person Motor Co., Williamsburg

Interviewer Emily Williams

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Length of tape 83 mins.

Contents:

Approximate time:

description of Williamsburg before WWI early automobiles in Williamsburg	10 mins.
as student at W&M (1921-1924) classes, athletics, social life, Dr. Chandler, professors, employment, coeducation	20 mins.
town affairs	5 mins.
"Rowing '20s" in Williamsburg	3 mins.
Depression in Williamsburg, effect of Restoration	2 mins.
continuing effect of Restoration on local businesses	5 mins.
Restoration officials: Goodwin, Geddy, Charley	5 mins.
Person's career as a clockwinder	2 mins.
Williamsburg in Prohibition	3 mins.
athletics at W&M in last 50 years	15 mins.
fundraising activities	7 mins.

See back of sheet for names and places mentioned in interview

William L. Person

July 9, 1976

Williamsburg, Va.

Williams: I thought I would start out by asking you something about growing up in Williamsburg. If you had to describe Williamsburg before World War I to someone who didn't know it, would you describe it as a sleepy village ?

Person: I would say it was a sleepy town, [but] people were very well satisfied with conditions. You've heard the story of forgetting the date of the public meeting--it didn't disturb people too much. There wasn't any such thing as social status; people were treated more or less equally, regardless of occupation. As far as I know we didn't have any feeling of one person as superior to another; we mixed very well. My father had a jewelry store, as I was telling you, and the leading people in town used to come in his jewelry store around the big pot-bellied stove in the evenings. They'd chew tobacco and spit tobacco juice in the stove--sometimes they hit it and sometimes they didn't. He had a magazine counter and they'd get those and go back and read them. It was a club.

[It was] a small group of people: Judge Armistead's father used to come over; a fellow named John Jones [did too]. The people ^{at the college} were very conscious of what went on in the town. It was a small town then; now it's impossible (because the town has grown) to get this close feeling. The period we're talking about is the teens [before World War I].

I don't know when to tell you the main street was paved. Down the street two blocks below us was Hall's Drugstore-- there was a big mudhole out there where cars would get stuck, and we'd have to pull them out. The inconvenience didn't seem to interfere with people's doing things. The Colonial Inn was where they had the big dances; it was kind of a social center in that respect. Property was very reasonable in price. The Blair house was more or less diagonally across the street from us and had about ^a 100-foot frontage and went ^{back} the entire length of the block. The house was in a bad state of repairs, and they wanted \$2000 for it. We ~~bought it and~~ ^{bought} had another piece ^{instead} (on the other side of the street with the same dimensions) for \$1800. You could have bought the corner (up where the pharmacy is now) for practically nothing-- probably could have bought the whole half a block for \$15,000.

But money wasn't that important. My father, whom I thought was a great man (I still think he was a great man), never made much money. He fixed watches ^{and} bicycles and ran a jewelry store

and thrashed wheat--I think he could do most anything. If he wanted to close his place of business he could close it and go to Florida for two weeks. Things seemed to move just as well.

We had a large family, and when we'd go to the table to eat there might be twelve or fourteen people there. People would drop in on the way uptown, even at dinner time, and sit around. It was just a different way of living. So it was a sleepy old town, but people enjoyed themselves. We never had much trouble, as I remember. Things went along in an even way. No one had much money, but they were happy. [We did things like listen to the radio.]
 My father had the first radio, ^[in town] and people would come hear KDK^A in Pittsburgh and just sit by that radio by the hour just to get the noise and a few words out of it.

Williams: Wasn't he the first one to have a car, too?

Person: Yes, he was the first one to have a car.

Williams: How did Williamsburg receive cars? Did everyone think your father was crazy?

Person: They would look at it. I was real proud of it. But when you'd compare what you and the other fellow had it didn't make much difference.

Williams: Did it take long for cars to catch on in Williamsburg?

Person: No, they caught on pretty well. We had these old model-Ts. As a kid we'd go up to Detroit and drive them back; it would

take two or three days. Later on they sent them in boxcars, four to a boxcar, and then we had to assemble a great portion of them. Of course they were light, and you could handle them easily. You had to improvise a lot of things: if an axle would break my father would make an axle.

I remember Dr. Tyler when I was a kid. There was nothing wrong with him, but he'd see a pretty girl across the street and go to give her a big kiss. My sister said she used to run!

Williams: Did all the townspeople know him?

Person: Yes. I'm not being disrespectful to the old gentleman at all [by telling this story]. There was a close feeling between the college people and the people of Williamsburg.

Going back to my personal experience (and I hope I'm not rambling, but this is the only way I can tell it): I was in high school (we had a four-year high school), and the teacher said, "If you had one more course you could get through in three years." So I went to William and Mary in summer school and had Dr. Hall, who was a great English scholar. The only course he had was a course for fourth-year students on literature from Chaucer to Arnold. Frankly it was too difficult for me, but I took it and got credit for high school, so I got through high school in three years and went on to William and Mary.

I do remember some of the physical properties at the college. They had a little gymnasium that was just like a little box. It would seat two or three hundred. You had to put padding on the walls because the wall was brick, and you would slam into the wall and get bruised. You could stand at one end of the court and shoot for the basket at the other end. But we played a lot of basketball there. I never made the team; I wasn't good enough. So I formed a team, and we got in touch with Old Point College and played them. They advertised that William and Mary College was playing Old Point College, We got beaten 66-6. We were called on the mat by the authorities of the college ; they didn't kick us out of school for it, but they should have probably.

You might wonder why I was interested in William and Mary: that was all I had known. I had followed the athletic teams around (the Geddys have a picture when I was thirteen or fourteen years old and batboy and waterboy for the baseball team). I didn't know there was any other school besides William and Mary!

[On the subject of athletics] we used to have a big to-do on Thanksgiving when we'd go to Richmond to play the University

of Richmond in football. The night before we'd have big bonfires (they've had those in recent years). The coaches would make speeches; we'd run down to the President's House, and he'd give a little talk. We'd go down Duke of Gloucester Street--everybody was pepped up for the game. Then we'd ride to Richmond to see the game.

Williams: Now this was even before you went to college.

Person: Yes, this was even as a kid.

Williams: With the college boys and the townspeople was there a great deal of contact?

Person: I think there was a good bit, for instance with the dances.

Williams: I've often wondered if the town boys suffered socially because the college boys would date the town girls?

Person: There was some slight resentment--nothing too terrific as I remember. I wasn't really in a position to judge at that age.

I remember certain things, like about the Spencer family. The son was a star pitcher for the baseball team, and the father would go out in the carriage to watch his son pitch. If it got rough he'd get out of the carriage and take a stick and go beat on the ballplayers. He was just that intense about William and Mary. In those days the students were most loyal to the college. (Discussion of recent attitudes of college students.)

When I was a student at William and Mary I was a very poor student, at least the first two years. The last two years I did fairly well and finally got a degree. The college president at that time was Dr. J.A.C. Chandler, whom I think was one of the finest presidents William and Mary ever had. He was a doer; he wanted to do it all. If he wanted to have grass he'd go out and plant grass himself on campus. He took an interest in everybody. One day he called me in his office. Because I was a Williamsburg boy he was interested--he was interested in everybody, but probably more so in people he knew. I didn't know what in the world he wanted. He said, "You've got two Es and two Bs. How can we account for this? We just can't have a Williamsburg boy getting Es." As the years went on I appreciated so much his interest in the individual.

Williams: He was not more interested then in building the campus than he was in students?

Person: He was interested in people as well as the business side. He was a doer. He was very well liked. He liked to go fishing; he used to go fishing some with my father and with Dr. King, who was the college physician and town's physician.

(He never charged any money; if you wanted to give him something, fine. He never sent any bills; I don't know how he lived. / He was just a wonderful man.) The community spirit was just real refreshing as I look back at it.

Williams: Being a Williamsburg boy did you live at home or did you live on campus when you went to school?

Person: I lived at home. We were struggling to get by. My father asked me to drive a taxi or limousine to Jamestown or Worktown on these all-day tours. I'd go to school and come back and work a great deal of the time. We had what we wanted, but we all had to work. My father believed in work. You might say that I missed something in college life by not living on campus.

We had some wonderful professors: Dr. Oscar Shewmake was one of the greatest of them all. I got a little stuck on myself and carried a cane up there one day; Dr. Shewmake saw me and asked, "What's the matter: did you hurt your foot, Billy?" I didn't take a cane back anymore.

Then we had a great professor in Dr. Hall, whom I referred to. Dr. Hall was getting quite old then, but he was known as a great professor. He did some unusual things: I used to go in class with a boy named Watkins Booth, who

is a lawyer over here in Petersburg now. We'd walk in, and Dr. Hall would say, "Well, therés old Person, ^{that} ~~and~~ old jackass. How'd you get out of the barn, Person? Boothsie, have you had your booze this morning?" We'd smile; we felt like he was going to pass us then. Then he'd get an eraser and kick it around and say, "You know, I should have been a football coach." Kidding with the students and get^{ting} them in a relaxed mood [was] probably good psychology. I loved him, and I liked him so much that if I was going to be away from classes I'd go tell him, "Dr. Hall, I'd like to take a load of students up to see William and Mary play Navy, make a little money. Will you excuse me?" He'd say, "Well, Billy, I think I'll let you go." The personal touch was very strong in those days.

Williams: You were talking about this taxi service. Did most of the boys work to put themselves through school?

Person: Quite a few of them did. We had quite a few boys to come along and work with my father's business. (Mentions "Froggy" DeBordenave, Bob Quinn.)

Williams: When you were at William and Mary did you still have to agree to teach for two years, or had it gotten away from that?

Person: No, there was no agreement there at all. They were very flexible; they weren't as rigid in those days in the structure of the classes.

For instance, my last year I went to Dr. Chandler, and I said, "Dr. Chandler, I'm supposed to have this law class, but I'm not interested. I'd like to take a political science course. Is that all right with you?" He said, "Sure." So I went over to Dr. Hoke, and he said, "Oh, Billy, you shouldn't do this." I told him, "The president says I can do it." So he said all right if he had said so.

But I think Tom Graves is doing a terrific job. I've gotten to know him pretty well because I'm still fairly close to the college.

Williams: I'll ask you some more about that in a few minutes.

Person: You go from there--I'm just jumping from one period to another.

Williams: When you were a student were there still some veterans from World War I on campus, or had most of them already graduated? You were in the class of '24, so I suspect there might not have been so many.

Person: No, not too many. There were students in the training corps around 1919, The girls came in 1918; there was great opposition to that. The men students didn't like that at all. I don't think they had a football team during the war; I think we had baseball and basketball.

Williams: That was one question I wanted to ask you: what was the effect of World War I on Williamsburg and on William and Mary?

Of course, Penniman was out here; there was reduced enrollment; you mentioned that there wasn't a football team one year.

Person: Of course, I was a kid, and I can't give you a very good opinion on it. There were a lot of people in town who were workers at Penniman. The college was on a restricted basis as far as personnel and whatnot. Then about 1919, it started picking up, as I remember.

I'll go back to skipping around now: we had some unusual things that impressed me. There was a close friend of my family's who was a musician; I think he taught art and music and was a leader at the college and at our church--just dynamic. He had three or four degrees and taught for ten or fifteen years before they found he drew up his degrees himself. So they asked him to resign. He had done a lot of good for William and Mary in the meantime, regardless of his formal education.

Williams: Let me ask you: I know it's something of an anachronism to use this term, but you said you decided to go to William and Mary: what was the admissions process like? How did you get in?

Person: I just went up and signed up for it, as I remember. I can't say that that's accurate, but that's my recollection. It was so different when I came along; anybody who wanted to go

could go to William and Mary.

Williams: I asked you about oncampus housing; I wanted to ask you about eating arrangements. I have heard from some people I've talked to that some townspeople took students in as boarders. Did you know any people in this category?

Person: I knew a couple of people who did. One lady had a place near the Methodist church, and there was a hotel downtown where I think some of the students used to go. Mrs. Nightengale was the lady's name.

Williams: Didn't some of the students used to eat at the Pocahontas Tea Room? I wondered if this used to be a gathering place, as well as Coach Driver's pool place downtown.

Person: Jim Driver had a shop on the corner where the pharmacy is now. Bob Wallace was the man who ran it. Jim Driver just passed away about a year ago. He was quite a character and did a lot of good. He believed particularly in amateur sports. A very fine gentleman.

Williams: Another gathering place I've heard of and wonder if you have any memories of is Mr. Cole's shop. The Pulaski Club used to meet outside.

Person: Yes, he had a little news shop and used to sell a few articles. He was on the corner, right across the street from me on Nassau Street. There were some trees and benches out there, and the people of Williamsburg would go down there and swap stories.

I don't think it was a formal club. That went on for years and years. (Discussion of Cole family, including Mrs. Carrie Cole Lane Geddy Stephens' relationship to family.)

Williams: Was your father a member of the Pulaski Club?

Person: No, he had his own little place up there. The men would come in his place in the evenings and sit around the stove. My father was on the city council; I served on it when I was in my twenties, I believe.

Williams: A city councilman in your twenties? Were you appointed or elected?

Person: Appointed. I had had enough after two years. Dr. Chandler got after me for not running. He said, "I want you on the council." I said, "It's pretty hard to be in business and serve on the council." I would have been glad to do ^{it} for a civic enterprise, but I was scratching for a living. You see, I was in my early twenties; I should have just been getting out of school.

Williams: Why was it that Dr. Chandler wanted you to run?

Person: He thought that it was good for me, and being a local boy-- he'd just like for me to be on the council.

Williams: Still on your student days: you know we hear a lot about the "Roaring '20s." What were the "Roaring '20s" like at William and Mary; what would have been your idea of a really big time?

Person: Well, dances were very popular. We'd drink a lot of corn whiskey. They did have policemen, and if they'd catch you parked outside in the car they'd just say, "No, you can't do that; you get in the building. " They were very strict on this. At the fraternity houses they did no more [drinking] than the average person, but they'd take a drink now and then. Drinking corn whiskey was a very popular thing. It was done. And everyone was doing the "Charleston" We had good shows in those days, too.

Williams: Travelling shows?

Person: Yes, the Chatauqua would come down and put on a seven-day stint on the Courthouse Green in a big tent. They'd get the kids in it; it was a good community enterprise.

(Discussion of delivering a car to New York during 1930s.)

Williams: How did the depression affect Williamsburg?

Person: Williamsburg was affected, but not as much as the rest of the country. The Restoration came along, and frankly selling engineering units to Todd & Brown, which was the engineering company for the Restoration (they bought most of their cars from me), was the reason I could survive [in business]. Without the Restoration I probably wouldn't have made it as a dealer because I was a youngster trying to get along. They bought cars from me; I had to give them the right price. They knew the right price to pay.

They told me, "If you overcharge us we'll never buy another thing from you." They were fine people to work with; really I owe a lot to them. Without them I don't think Person Motor Corporation would have existed through the years.

Williams: What did the Restoration mean to the local businesses--both advantages and disadvantages?

Person: Well, a lot of Williamsburg people were not used to money; some of them invested and lost money. And because they invested and lost it they blamed the Restoration. They said, "We were happy; they bought our property, and now it's gone." They came to us and wanted to know what we'd take for our property: I think we sold the two garages (at Nassau and Duke of Gloucester) for \$71,000 net. This was shortly before my father died (in 1928), and we stayed on there a couple of years before we moved.

Williams: You knew that you were selling to the Restoration? Didn't Dr. Goodwin buy the first parcels of land, and people didn't know what they were being sold for?

Person: That's right.

Williams: You knew when you sold, then.

Person: We didn't know exactly. I don't think they knew how far this things was going. Mr. Rockefeller--he was a delightful old gentleman.

He had a chauffeur named Valentine. He used to bring Mr. John D. into the shop; he'd check the cars and say things like: "Mr. Person, this one costs \$25 more than this one. Explain to me the difference in the value." He and Valentine would measure each one and go over it, and I'd say, "Mr. Rockefeller, you've spent a thousand dollars of your time!" He'd laugh. He'd take a trip sometimes down in North Carolina, and he would drive, and Valentine would be the guest. (This is what Valentine would tell me, and I'm sure it's the truth) just to get away from people. But people loved Mr. Rockefeller; you couldn't help but love him. He was just a delightful gentleman. He did so much for Williamsburg.

The Restoration has meant a lot to Williamsburg. I don't think that as the rest of the country developed that people would have been content to have remained [part of] a sleepy town. I know I'm very happy with what's happened.

Williams: So the Restoration you think was a boon to the local businessmen?

Person: I think so.

Williams: Did the Restoration buy from local businesses in the early days?

Person: They patronized them more then than they do now--definitely.

I can say that. In those days they were very conscious of buying from local people. This is a criticism I have today.

The town has gotten big--and probably they can save some money by buying some place else.

Williams: You had Person Motors on Nassau Street, right?

Person: We had a little garage and repair shop back on Nassau Street.*

Williams: And you didn't move until you moved out here [on Second Street]?

Person: We sold to the Restoration, and they agreed to build a garage for me uptown where the firehouse is. They wanted to put a gasoline station on the corner, and Standard Oil asked me to cooperate to get that location. The city council would not permit that unless I got permission from the college, so I went over to see Dr. Chandler. I said, "Now you probably won't want this gasoline station on the corner because it might be too noisy." He said, "I'm confident you will keep the noise down; I'll call you in on it if it gets too boisterous and keeps the students from studying. That wouldn't look good. But I'm going to give you permission." So they got the permit to build it. It's been there ever since, and that was forty-some years ago. The boys made more noise over in the dormitories than we made selling gas.

Williams: Then when you decided to move out here to Second Street. . . .

Person: Well, the rent wasn't too prohibitive, ^[uptown] but they built the post office and put buildings all around, and the thoroughfare

* Mr. Person wanted this clarified: his property was a corner lot at Nassau and Duke of Gloucester. His house was on the corner, and the garage could be reached from Nassau or Duke of Gloucester streets.

was not easily accessible. In addition to that I wasn't in a position to pay the rent that they wanted ~~_____~~
~~_____~~ If I was going to grow and expand and have room I'd have to find another place. (I did keep the gas station.) It was a mutual agreement. It was a matter of money and also size--I needed space. That was the reason for moving out here: we were just too cramped there.

Williams: Can you remember when you first knew that Mr. Rockefeller was going to restore Williamsburg?

Person: I really can't tell you. There were rumors--and it's hard to tell when you actually knew. I don't think they were trying to steal property as such. Mr. Brooks (G.T. Brooks's father) was the real estate agent. Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin talked to me quite a bit about it. He was a dynamic personality. He had a dream: he wanted Mr. Ford to do it ^{Mr. Ford turned him down.} [restore Williamsburg], but Mr. Rockefeller seized ^{on} it.

Williams: What was your impression of Dr. Goodwin?

Person: Dr. Goodwin was a darn good businessman, a go-getter. I was a Methodist, so I didn't come in contact with him as an Episcopalian, but I know he was a darn good businessman. He had terrific business ability--a wonderful salesman.

Tom Jordan, who is now in New Orleans, used to tell this story:

I think it was J.P. Morgan who was visiting. Tom used to drive a taxi for us and was showing him Yorktown. Then he stopped at Brafferton hall, and Dr. Goodwin took him on a tour; he didn't come right out and ask him for money. ^[Morgan] He had gone to Harvard, and he saw a baseball score where William and Mary had beaten Harvard, and he said, "Well, if William and Mary can beat Harvard I'll give them money."

Williams: Dr. Goodwin evidently was a very persuasive talker.

Person: (Discussion of Rutherford Goodwin.)

Williams: Now for a long while the head of the Restoration was Kenneth Chorley, but Vernon Geddy was the on-site head. I wondered if people who knew Vernon Geddy beforehand felt in any way that he was "selling out" to the outsiders?

Person: No. I worked with him very closely, and he was one of the most delightful men that you'd ever want to meet. Everybody loved Vernon. He did the Restoration a lot of good by being a Williamsburg man and in that position. I believed what he said, and I knew he was a truthful, honest person. He was a person that you felt better by being with, let me put it that way; he was just that kind of a guy. Kenneth Chorley needed somebody like that.

Kenneth Chorley was a very fine person, but he was an outsider coming in. He was a powerful, big man. When he said something he wanted it to happen right then; sometimes he wasn't very diplomatic. He was a good friend, though. He invited me up to see him at Princeton. I was just a local boy downtown; I didn't go. He'd invite me down to play poker some nights. He was kind to me. But when it came to business he wanted it all business. But I'll say this for him:

when my garage burned up and I was getting it repaired, he called me up one day (this was after they bought the garage and before they built the new one) and said, "Billy, if you're having a tough time you don't have to pay any rent if you don't want to." Regardless of what you say about his toughness, that was pretty soft of him. I said, "No, I'm going to pay for it as long as I can; if I can't I'll just quit." I thought that was mighty nice. A lot of people didn't like Kenneth, but he was a driver and he deserved a lot of credit. But it was Vernon who knew ^{the} people and knew how to talk to them: they had confidence in Vernon. He was a great man.

Williams: Now I'm jumping. This is a question I meant to ask you (and I thought of it when you were talking about Dr. Goodwin and Bruton Parish): how was it that you got into your however brief career as a clockwinder at Bruton Parish?

Person: My father did anything honestly to make a dollar. He was a watchmaker. The clock was the town's clock; anytime I went down Duke of Gloucester I'd look to my left to see the time. The church wanted someone to take care of the clock and see that it was repaired, so my father was paid \$52 a year to take care of it. (A dollar then was probably worth \$5 or \$6 now.) I was a kid, and he wanted to

know if I wanted to go up there and wind the clock once a week for \$1 a week. There were long steps going up to the tower. There was a cord wound around a spindle; it would wind down, and you'd have to go up and wind it back up again. My father probably had to fix it once or twice. But it was just something for me to do; I loved to do it, and I loved to make that dollar. (A dollar seemed to be the standard price for anything: you'd ^{drive} ~~take~~ somebody to Yorktown, and they'd give you a dollar.)

Williams: You mentioned something about Williamsburg in Prohibition.

Where did you get the stuff?

Person: We used to have some colored people (I won't mention their names, but everyone knew them) . They had a nice still that was raided every once in awhile.

Williams: Here in town?

Person: No, out about five miles. We'd just go out there and pay \$1, \$2, \$3, \$4 for terrible whiskey. It's a wonder it didn't kill us. Sometimes we'd put charcoal in it and ^{To} age it, leave it six months before we'd drink it; sometimes we drank it right from the still. It was a big time for the students, you know, to ride out and get corn whiskey. We didn't have any automobile wrecks from it; we were pretty well behaved with it.

Williams: Wasn't Henry Billups known to get whiskey for students?

Person: That's what they say (that they'd get Henry to go out and get it for them). I never got any from him.

Williams: Did you know him?

Person: Oh, yes. He was the bellringer. I knew him very well.

The place I got it was run by the Pierce boys out Center-ville Road at Puddin' Bottom. I'm not proud of the fact that we caroused around, but it wasn't that bad, really.

You'd go to a dance, and you'd slip out there and take a drink and come back. We had in those days card dances; for each dance you'd have a different partner.

Williams: While you were here were they still having the finals dances with the lanterns strung up around the front yard?

Person: Yes--they either had it then or they had it when I was a kid, but I remember the lanterns.

Williams: I was wondering if that would have been the big event of the year, or what you would have called the big event of the year?

Person: My big event has always been athletics. I'm not an athlete, but I've always been interested in athletics. Athletic events were the big events in my life. We never have been very successful athletically, except in that period when we had the scandal. I'm surprised you haven't said something about that.

Williams: I was going to get into athletics and ask you about that, but let's start with when you were a student. What would you say the place of athletics was at William and Mary?

Person: Very much the center of interest. I've always believed it has its rightful place under the right auspices. It gives great publicity when handled right; it draws a lot of alumni back to your school. I think it's a splendid thing if they don't professionalize it, if they don't give special consideration. You have to give some consideration to an athlete who has to practice all afternoon; I think he deserves it. But in those days we were very conscious of ^{our} athletic teams. It wasn't done on a big scale; we didn't have very many students. But times change: educational facilities develop and people have other interests. So many people are not interested at all. I think a person misses something if he's not interested in athletics. When they tried to do away with ^{it} a year or two ago I did my best to try to get the Board of Visitors to keep it and give it a chance to be self-supporting. I appeared before the athletic committee and told them what I thought about it.

Williams: What do you see as the effect of that 1974 reassessment of the athletic program? Was it good for the athletic program to take a long hard look at it, or did it just polarize people?

Person: No. This matter brought it to a head: where are we going? Just two years ago there was great unrest among the students at William and Mary (I don't know if you know about this or not): the students didn't think they should have to pay any athletic fee at all (I think it was \$18). I didn't like this attitude myself; it was very small ^{of them} that they didn't want to do it, but that was their opinion, and they had a perfect right to it. Some of the professors were not interested in it. The people who were interested in athletics were not vocal; the people who were not interested did most of the talking. I think if it's run as it's proposed now that it will be a very healthy thing, very healthy. ^{It will keep the} alumni interested in William and Mary and will bring ^{more} money in in the long run. I know people who are giving money now, and the one reason they do it is because they like to come to the games; it's part of their life. You cut it off and they'll give to some other school. (Mention of a specific donor who will not give if William and Mary does away with athletics.) I don't think the alumni should dictate policy to the people up here running the college; they shouldn't interfere too much, but if they are going to give the money they are going to have something to say about it, of course. I think the situation

now is in pretty good shape.

Williams: What about the argument that to recruit athletes lowers the academic reputation? How do you as an athletic supporter answer this? I know you must have had to.

Person: It's always this [way] in all schools. (Discussion of various schools.) I think William and Mary has maintained a higher level of integrity on this than most any school in the country. Whereas they might have lowered [the academic standards] it has been very little; it's also lowered, as you know, for minority groups (and I'm not condemning minority groups at all). I don't think it's fair to keep [out] one individual that can help the college--are we that much better than Virginia or North Carolina? They maintain real good programs, and their degrees mean a great deal. They don't take in athletes just because they are athletes. If you don't believe that, ask Jim Root about getting football or basketball players in here. They say it's almost impossible some times. And other schools are waiting for them. William and Mary is very selective. They want excellence all the way through; I know they do. This is a touchy situation all the way through. The athletes

are probably looked down[upon] by a lot of people, but their averages will probably stand up very well with other schools.

Williams: What did you see as the effect of the 1951 athletic scandal upon the athletic department (you started to talk about this a moment ago). Now to answer this, you'll have to talk about what it was like before and what it was like afterwards.

Person: We went through a series of failures (I'd say) in the 1930s. ^{Where the money came from to get these boys, I don't know, but} Then they got Mr. Voyles in from Duke, [^] he put on a recruiting program and was moving along very well. Carl Voyles was a very good executive and a very good coach. The war came along, and he didn't have anything to do for awhile: there was no football as such. He was a man of untold energy, so he left to go to Auburn. Some of his understudies stayed on here: Rube McCray (he was the head) and Barney Wilson. (Mrs. McCray was a particularly wonderful person; she's still the head of a school for underprivileged children in North Carolina.) ^{# Rube} ~~he~~ took on the program after Voyles left. He was in a circle with people like Peahead Walker of Wake Forest, and they'd sit around and talk about taking a boy to New York and getting him a couple of suits of clothes, and "we paid his transportation" and "we did this." Dr. Pomfret I believe was president, and he was just a fine man and a scholar, and he divorced himself from the athletic picture. He just wouldn't believe anybody would do anything wrong.

Rube never did anything ^{wrong in} ~~to~~ his mind. The thing [scandal] started when one or two of the professors on the athletic committee were dissatisfied and brought the papers in, saying, "William and Mary is doing things they shouldn't do." It was an internal proposition. They couldn't pin it down in this investigation: they never did get anything on Rube. Some of his understudies were doing things. One of the crowning blows was that two boys transferred from Hampton; their transcripts came in, and their grades had been changed. Whether those boys changed them or somebody in the athletic department changed them--but this was all they could put their finger on. (I'm sure that they paid travel expenses, but just because everybody else did was no excuse for William and Mary to do it.) Rube was a close friend of mine; he called me up one day, and I said, "Rube, I'll get 'Beef' Hoffman^{*} to come over here, and you come over here and state the whole thing to him." So he came, and tears just came into his eyes. Rube said, "I haven't done anything." When he got through telling about things he had been accused of, I said, "Rube, regardless of your not having done anything, the only thing for you to do is to resign in the fall."

* now federal judge
Walter Hoffman

We wanted to keep it out of the newspapers and let them correct their own affairs at William and Mary. Barney Wilson, who was one of the chief understudies and basketball coach (he works for an insurance company in Nashville), got out several months before it broke; he knew it was coming to a head. So we fixed ^{on} this.

But the people at the college wouldn't turn it loose. They kept on writing any article that they could in the paper condemning William and Mary, so Rube just had to resign. He didn't wait until fall. (Discussion of McCray's career subsequently as director of a children's home in North Carolina.) It just crushed the McCrays. I think that Rube didn't keep a tight rein on things. He was a great coach, and he won football games. He was doing what schools all over the place were doing, but they didn't have somebody inside trying to get them--that's my opinion. I'm a little biased.

Williams: This was the effect on Mr. McCray; what would you say was the effect on the athletic program at William and Mary?

Person: It demolished it for the time being. But I don't know of anything that's happened in years that William and Mary could be ashamed of. I know Carnevale^{*} wouldn't stand for it.

* W & M athletic director

We don't have very successful teams, but this is not too bad if we can win every once in awhile. I don't think we have to be champions all the time, but a think a little consideration should be shown to the athletic program by a lot of people who don't show any.

Williams: To what would you attribute the recent remarkable increase in giving to the Athletic Educational Foundation?

Person: William and Mary has grown; William and Mary was a small school until just the last five or ten years. So you have more alumni, and more alumni want to know what's going on. The first thing many alumni and friends of the college do is look in the paper and see what the score was at the last game⁷. Otherwise they wouldn't see William and Mary's name. They come back to games in larger numbers, so they give more money. ^{Two hundred fifty thousand dollars} probably is not any more than \$100,000 ^{was} several years ago.

I've been working with the president's council on fundraising. Regardless of the depression or recession or whatever there's still money available for the things people believe in. There are a lot of friends of William and Mary; they'll give money. So I don't think we've done a remarkable job ^{by} of raising \$250,000. (Discussion of Mr.

Person's giving.)

Williams: I know you've been associated with the president's council on fundraising. What will get more support generated for the college?

Person: It depends on your organization. The money is out there. There are people so dedicated to William and Mary--it's very refreshing. (Discussion of specific cases.) Many corporations give matching funds, which they didn't do earlier. There's where a lot of money comes from: it's coming from industry. The effort has to be put together and organized. You go to one person and say, "I want you to give me the names of other people who can give." You have to see a lot of people. And the big money comes not from all these hundreds of people you might see, but from about ten percent of them. I try to take a lowkey approach. Some people can't afford to give much, but I make them recognize their obligation: "if you don't give how can you expect people not connected to the college to give?" A person has to feel they want to do it.

Williams: Well, I have to thank you for wanting to do this today.