

Hugh H. Sisson

Mr. Sisson was bursar of the College of William and Mary from 1952 to 1960 and comptroller of the Colleges of William and Mary from 1960 to 1962. As chief financial officer he was very close to policy decisions during the administration of A. D. Chandler. He offered insights into that era in this interview at his home in Virginia Beach. (It might be explained that Mr. Sisson frequently refers to an outline of possible interview topics sent him beforehand.)

The transcript was approved with some explanatory matter added by Mr. Sisson.

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 Date of interview February 24, 1975
 Place 4304 Sandy Bay Dr., Virginia Beach, Va.
 Interviewer Emily Williams
 Session number 1
 Length of tape 1 20 mins.

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finances when arrived	2 mins.	
state of facilities (early 1950s) and need for building program	6 mins.	
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- Marshall-Wythe-Blackstone celebration		
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Hugh Sisson

February 24, 1975

Emily: Mr. Sisson, I wondered first of all if you would describe the duties and responsibilities of the job of bursar of the College of William and Mary, a position you held from 1952 to 1960.

Sisson: The job entailed being chief financial and business officer of the College of William and Mary and its branches. I reported to the president of the college, who at that time was A. D. Chandler. From 1960 to 1962 A. D. Chandler was chancellor of the Colleges of William and Mary, and I became the comptroller of the Colleges of William and Mary.

Emily: And then we'll get in later on about how this (your job) had so much to do with the development of the programs and the new building programs that the admiral had while he was at William and Mary. So yes, I just wanted you to briefly describe what it was that you did. Now how was it that you came from R.P.I. down to Williamsburg?

Sisson: The bursar at the time when Admiral Chandler came there (which was in the fall of 1951) resigned in the early part of 1952, so Admiral Chandler asked me to come down and take that position. At the time I was treasurer 

and business manager of R.P.I. which is now Virginia Commonwealth University.

Emily: This statement you made in 1955, ^{but} ~~that it was about~~ you were talking about the time when you came when troubles came up in 1955 the Admiral had the staff write reports which were submitted to the Board of Visitors and you said, When A. D. Chandler was installed as President in October 1951, the college ~~the College~~ was in a sad financial state. What was it that you found when you came to William and Mary?

Sisson: Well, I found that the College was approximately ~~one~~ half a million dollars in debt in the operating funds ^{at the time that I was} As treasurer and business manager of R.P.I. in Richmond we had accumulated a sizable amount of money a surplus and this amount of money ~~was taken and the amount of this accumulation~~ or surplus was taken and used to balance off the debt at William and Mary just on the books there was actually no transfer of these funds to William and Mary but it kept William and Mary from ^{P + deficit} regarding a ~~defosite~~ because ^{it was there's} they said that ~~is~~ so much surplus here and ~~deficit~~ ^{deficit} here. The budgets were separate (the budgets for Norfolk, Richmond and Williamsburg) and I didn't see how we could take the money that had been saved in Richmond and apply it on the William and Mary debt. So Admiral Chandler and I ~~were~~ ^{at} discussing it we went up and ~~informed~~ ^{informed} ~~phoned~~ the governor that we had this ~~defosite~~ ^{deficit} at William and Mary. Apparently no one in the governor's office knew it, either. To continue with ~~that~~ ^{off the deficit} that, we paid ~~part~~ ^{part} of our operating funds ~~at~~ ^{at} William and Mary. We paid off in about three years between 1952 and 1955. Do you want me to go into the other matter ^s now about the . . .

Emily: Yes.

Sisson: All right, the building program, the state of facilities. ^(in the outline) The

state ~~of~~ facilities were in ^{very} poor condition, in my opinion and most everyone else's opinion that knew anything about it. They were very run-down, the physical plant. -- They had no planned maintenance program. They'd paint some places three times without going back to paint another one once. They were responding to pressure, mostly. After I went there as the deputy to President Chandler ^{business and} on the financial side we did set up a priority basis a schedule of maintenance and also a schedule of new capital expenditures for projects we deemed would be necessary in carrying out or developing a master plan. Now the building program we had, I ~~VE~~ just mentioned that ^{red} didn't you say needs?"

Emily: Yes, what were the most critical needs when you came in the early 1950s?

Sisson: Well, I think the most critical one was to get the ⁻⁻⁻ in my area now I'm speaking only ⁻⁻⁻ was to get the finances straightened out because you're not allowed to run a ^{deficit} ~~defosite~~ by state law. We had to get that straightened out. We didn't know ^{most people at} or William and Mary didn't know ^{deficit} that they had a half ^{of} million dollar ~~defosites~~ (the Board ^{didn't}). So we got that straightened out. Then we needed more class ^{rooms} and more housing, ^{very} ~~more~~ definitely ^{the} more housing. So we set up a priority list of what to build ^{there} which included the new library ^{thing} now (that was planned many years ago; the old library ~~was~~ to be renovated and used for the law school) and we built a new power plant ^{there} which is now called an energy plant, I suppose. It was a heating plant ~~then~~.

At that time we built quite a few dormitories, and at the end of my ten years there we had quite a few under construction and in ^{the} planning stages.

At that time the state would give us forty percent funding on the dormitories, and we would float bonds for the sixty percent that was left. Now the state doesn't give you anything on the construction of the dormitories. You have to get the whole hundred percent ~~out of~~ ~~bonds~~, rather than ^{by} floating revenue bonds.

Emily: Was raising the money for these new dorms, for the new buildings in general, was this difficult? I've heard that every building at William and Mary has a story behind how it was put up.

Sisson: No, the big problem was naming the buildings, that was hard. *Why?*

Once we had the financing set up, we went ahead and built the buildings, and very few people knew anything about the innerworkings of accomplishing this building. Of course, the president did because I ^{kept him} ~~think he was~~ in-

informed of it, and he kept the board informed. After we had the financing all arranged for a building we (the president and I) had to be careful in not letting committees composed of college officials delay the construction of the project. In building dormitories we got the advice of the dean of students, but he was just for advice. Of course, he had to live with the students and the housing problem after we had built it, so it was only fair that we brought him into it. On academic buildings the dean of the faculty's advice was gotten. Now the problem--you want to go to "source of funds?"

Emily: Yes, while we're talking about funds.

Sisson: We tried to get the money for the classrooms from the state, and we were fairly successful in doing that if you compare it with what other institutions got at that time. Of course, William and Mary had a backlog, we hadn't asked for enough money from the state, and other institutions went ahead and got state money in the early '50s and late '40s. William and Mary didn't do that because the philosophy was (which I never understood) was not to ask the state for money for these things. ^{In} The source of funds, I explained that the housing ^{funds were provided} was put up ^{to} forty percent by the state and sixty by revenue bonds, and the classroom buildings, they were paid for one hundred percent by the state, except in a few instances like the ¹ We had the old Phi Beta Kappa building to burn, and we built a new one out of the insurance ^{money and other sources}. We got the insurance from the old one, and we put on a campaign throughout the United States for all the Phi Beta Kappas to help fund that building. [#] We weren't very successful. I think we ^{collected} had around ~~25~~ \$35,000 ⁰ thousand from all the Phi Beta Kappas in the United States, except one Phi Beta Kappa who gave us a quarter-million dollars. ~~And that was Mr. John D. Rucker of New York. So he gave us over five times as much as all the rest of them put together.~~ But The fund raising was difficult at that time because William and Mary alumni were basically poor. Most of them were school teachers, and school teachers weren't even as ^{wealthy} lucky as they are today. ^{Then also,} Well, so we didn't have a professional fund raiser with the expertise needed ^{in that end of the college.} We just didn't have the money to ^{work money didn't have} And I said basically because ^{the money} the William and Mary didn't have the money and the

just
 alumni didn't have it, either.

Emily: Where, then, would you get the bond issues, was that how you raised the rest of the money for Phi Beta Kappa Hall?

Sisson: Yes, Phi Beta Kappa Hall, added-on-to-it. See, we charged a fee to the students, and this fee went to a ~~title~~ ^{retire} of the bonds. In other words, we had a special student activities fee. It's been so long ago I don't recall the details, but that fee was what we used to pay the bond holders off because when you ~~state your~~ ^{host} bonds you have to tell them where you get this money from, ^{give them} a schedule, how much it is, and how much you are going to ^{retire} ~~title~~ each year and so forth.

Emily: Now to get state funds, did you and the Admiral have to go the legislature and lobby?

Sisson: Right. We ^{worked} went through the governor's office and his branches, like the budget office and engineering office and so forth. When we needed a new power plant, for instance,

We worked very closely with the state engineer, and he recommended this to the budget office, who in turn recommended it to the governor's office. And that's how we received funds for the power plant.

Emily: Did you ever have the feeling that getting money out of the state was like pulling teeth, that you were ^{being} getting rationed almost?

Sisson: ^{No,} Well, I never had that feeling because I got along with the state officials very well. I understood their problems, and they understood our problems.

I certainly had no difficulty with the state.

Emily: How about Admiral Chandler with the state officials?

Sisson: Admiral Chandler had been raised in the navy environment, and even though he was ^vvery high in the navy, he didn't have the complete control of the navy like he did when he came in as president of William and Mary. And he just didn't understand the functions of the state to a large degree when he first came. So there were minor differences of opinion, but he learned very fast, and by 1962 he and the state officials got along very well.

Emily: I had wondered how his background^d would have had any bearing on this. This is why I asked the question.

Sisson: Well, I think he realized he had to change his image because a college president has to be many things to be successful.

Now you mentioned the master plan.

Emily: Yes.

Sisson: Well, we had quite a few master plans. Every time we would see we couldn't get funding for part of our master plan we would change it. Every time we accomplished some part of that master plan--a building, say--we would change it, also. We were constantly changing the master plan. We put the library--we must have put that in four or five different places on different master plans. We first had it down there by the lake at the end of the Sunken Garden; that's where it was first recommended to go. (You know where it is now^{to} that's just an example of the master plan.) Now I did not get into the academic details of the master plan except to coordinate the details into the total plan. You should have an academic plan first, and then you should have a physical plant plan to carry out the parts of the academic plan, and this is what you try to sell the legisla³ture and/or the donors. Quite often we had a physical plan first. This was brought about because we had time schedules to meet, and the agreement on the academic details were rather slow.

Emily: You mention the library, it was to be a number one part in priority, it was obvious to everyone that there was a crying need for the library, but it wasn't the first building built.

Sisson: The first building built, it's hard to say. The first building we completed under Chandler's regime was the John Stewart Bryan dormitory, which at that time housed the law department (the law school) and the law library. But that building had been started, as I recall, before Admiral Chandler came and was finished afterwards. He started the library that we now have there, he started the planning of that, that was in the master plan. Phi Beta Kappa Hall was built at that time. I don't recall the year it was built. - We had some difficulties....

Emily: It was '57, I think.

Sisson: Yes, you're right because that was when the queen of England came to Williams and Mary. We had some trouble there because the contractor took bankrupt and that extended the completion of it for a while. Then we had quite a few dormitories put up during Admiral Chandler's regime. The women's dormitory, I forget what that was named.

Emily: Landrum.

Sisson: The one that came down... was built down by the lake.

Emily: The one at Crimdell, right, Landrum.

Sisson: Then we had the others across the road back from the fraternity, you know. We also had Ludwell apartments, which housed quite a few students.

Then the men's dormitories.

Emily: Was the ~~arrangement~~ ^{with Ludwell} was that begun under Chandler or had that been before you had come? do you remember?

Sisson: That had been before I came in a very small way. We just had about ^{twenty thirty} 20 or 30 students, as I recall, and they ^{we} only began to put ^{substantial numbers} lots of women students out there ^{in the fifties} and that's what started the bus ^{service} tour, you know ^{back in the '50s.}

Also we planned a new dining hall and a new gymnasium back of Phi

Beta Kappa Hall.

The Campus Center, we had quite a struggle in locating that.

Emily: Yes, I wondered if you'd go into that a little bit. ^{a particular problem} It seems to have been

Sisson: We wanted to locate the building where it would be used, and in order to locate a campus center building that will be used by students who are paying for it, it had to be in ^{the} a line of traffic somewhere. So we planned to put it over and attach it to the dining hall. Colonial Williamsburg objected to this very seriously. I shouldn't say Colonial Williamsburg because I don't know to what extent they were involved, ^[state] but their senior vice-president, who was chairman of the art commission, Ed Kendrew, objected to it because he didn't think that was the place for it. He thought it should be built back in the woods where the library is now. And so we employed a consultant, the best-known one on campus center, ^s a fellow known as Mr. Butts, ^{Mr. Porter Butts} who was a director of ^{the} a campus center ^{at} of the University of Wisconsin ^{considered to be} (at that time was the best campus center in the country), to come down and advise us on it. And he recommended that we put it where we planned to put it by the dining hall. So we were able to persuade the governor's

office ^{to go along with us} on that.

Emily: The governor's office, I think, overruled the art commission on that.

Sisson: Right, ^{on the basis of} and basically what we submitted to them ^{when I said Colonial} Williamsburg I was talking about their representative.

Emily: I think that part of the objection was that the fine arts building was still at that time sitting between what became the campus center and the road, and the College couldn't promise to tear it down because there was no place ^{to put} for fine arts.

Sisson: ^W He wanted ^{to hold onto that to use as leverage} the graduates to get a new fine arts building. And if ^{we} had torn it down first and placed the students in another building, it would've been the same old story: "We don't need it."

Emily: ^{Never} ~~and~~ would have gotten it, probably.

Sisson: Now you mentioned in your outline ^{plans to} expand the academic ^{program}.

I'm not as familiar with that as some people, but I have a general idea because I was there at the time. ^{to expand} ~~to~~ the science program, now the difficulty in my opinion came from V.P.I. and the University of Virginia, which thought that William and Mary should be a small liberal arts college and should not ^{get} ~~give~~ into the scientific field ^{to} in any elaborate degree ^{other than to} complement the small liberal arts program. Now in the ^{field of} history, I think everyone was fairly in agreement on the fact that William and Mary was a natural place to have a strong history program because of its historical connections and background.

The law school at that time was under attack (you might say verbal attack) because ^{it} only had a few students, and the state ^{officials} said they couldn't operate a law school on that few ^{of} students. And the University of Virginia, as I recall, had about ^{six hundred} 600 ~~students~~ law students

at that time ^{and} we had somewhere between ^{thirty five seventy} 35 and 70. I don't recall --
 those two numbers come up. ^{of course} So that's ~~a~~ very small for a law school.
 But there are certain basic things you have to have. If you have one
 law student you have to have a library for him. You've got to have
 other things.

Emily: It was one of Admiral Chandler's interests to build up the law
 school, is this right?

Sisson: Right ^{and} to increase the enrollment. Then also he put in a
 taxation ^{program} course in the law school which was quite successful. Now
 the business school . . .

Emily: There ^{seems to have} certainly been a great deal of disagreement over William
 and Mary setting up a business school.

Sisson: ^{Right} When I say the business school I'm talking about the business
 department. These schools came and went. They set up some as schools
 and some as departments and so forth. ^{some just programs} But the school of business or
 whatever it was called at that time had opposition because again the ^{powers}
^{that be} did not feel that we should strengthen the business side
 of a small liberal arts college. It wasn't necessary. They thought
 you should have a very ^{skinny} program, ^{and} enough to complement a good
 liberal arts degree. That's my opinion on ^{we had} why ^{we had} opposition in that
 direction.

Emily: You said ^{at} powers ^{at} be ^{do} do you mean the general assembly or the
Board of Visitors or the State Council of Education?

Sisson: The State Council was getting started then, ^{they} and didn't have much
 power. I'm saying the powers ^{that -- they} ~~is~~ be, ^{they} came from a lot of directions.

the alumni from the University of Virginia, the alumni from V.P.I. in certain respects, the state officials and the state council. Then we had the businessmen kind of looked upon William and Mary as a strong, small liberal arts college, and they didn't want to see that changed. A lot of alumni at William and Mary didn't want to see that changed, either. They wanted that image kept as a strong liberal arts college. So we had some of our own alumni ^{that} objected.

Emily: This would have been ^{the same} a sound group more or less that was not taken with the expansion of sciences?

Sisson: Right. ^{Of course, I think that} That's the thing ^{op} V.P.I. was leading the position on that.

Now I say V.P.I. It's hard to say whether you mean the administration ^{or} the alumni . . .

Emily: Or the alumni ⁱⁿ and the general assembly, or exactly who you mean, yes.

Sisson: You could not articulate that. Then you mentioned something about special events, ^{for instance} This was the inauguration of President Chandler.

That took place, I think that came about in 1954, as I recall, when he was inaugurated, and Dwight Eisenhower came there as a speaker and main guest. It was the first college or university he had visited since he became President. And of course, this was very interesting to me because I worked with the Secret Service people and met all these people that came there and ^{had} knowledge. I was the college's representative during this inauguration, ^{and was supplied with all the information} I had all the knowledge of who was supposed to be there and who wasn't, where ^{they were} it was supposed to be at certain times. We had to identify the secret Service men so they could move through the college lines to be near the President. It was a very rewarding experience as far as I was concerned.

Emily: Did it all go off smoothly?

Sisson: Yes.

Emily: Had the Admiral known President Eisenhower before?

Sisson: I don't think so.

Emily: I just wondered.

Sisson: You see President ^{Eisenhower} was, as you recall, the top general in the war;

I guess maybe he was number two after General Marshall. But I think Admiral Chandler at that time was younger. He wasn't ^{an admiral} around during the war. ^[celebration] Now the Marshall-Wythe-Blackstone, the main thing I remember

about that is we had a bust made and paid for by one of our loyal alumni, and the ^{state} ~~part~~ commissioners again would not agree to letting the

college accept this bust - the bust of Blackstone. The man who sculpted it was the same man that did the soldiers raising the flag on Iwo Jima. So he was quite well known.

That kind of frustrated us that we couldn't accept this ^{bust of Blackstone} ~~blackstone bust~~.

Emily: What reason did they give for not accepting it?

Sisson: Well, you see, the art commission ^{oes} didn't have to give a reason.

They had ^{ve} to accept ^{ve} under the powers they had then they had to accept all ~~portraits~~ ^{had to accept all the buildings} given to the school; I said had to accept, but had to approve of it; had to approve acceptance of it, all statues or busts and even

portraits. They also had the power (and this is where I had trouble

with the art commission) they also had the power to tell us where we could place our buildings, which we mentioned ^{back here} about the campus center, but they could also tell us whether they approved the aesthetic side of a building.

They had nothing to do, they had no power to approve the inside or

functional part of the building, but they could tell us whether they

approved

of the outside. And this was a constant ^{source of irritation} thing we had to ~~do~~ with the art commission.

Emily: Did you ever have to make any changes in the plans in the buildings ~~that~~ ^{did} you put up?

Sisson: Not many. We ~~went on~~ ^{hung to} with what we started with, and we made a few changes that didn't amount to anything. We never changed our mind, like on the Campus Center.

Emily: Did you feel that they were being a little bit arbitrary, or was this a function, legitimate function, of the art commission?

Perhaps I'm not as familiar with them as I should be.

Sisson: The ~~Art~~ Commission was appointed by the ^{governor} government to report to the government ^{or} on these things and to approve these things for the governor's office. Of course, the governor could override ^{them} any time he wanted to. Every school in the state and every school ~~and~~ agency had to come under the authority of the art commission for these different approvals except the University of Virginia, which was by state statute given the authority to have their school of architecture approve their ^{or} objects of art. I think the art commission has steadily lost its power, but they're still around, and you still have to get things approved. I don't think they take quite as dictatorial ^{as} ~~stand~~ as they had ^{we} in the past. Now you mentioned the ~~Queen's~~ ^{mother} visit.

Emily: Yes, ^{mother} That was a special event.

Sisson: You're talking about the Queen and not the Queen Mother, aren't you?

Emily: Well, they both came, ^{that's right} Would you like to tell about both?

Sisson: I really don't know why the Queen Mother came. The Queen and Prince Philip came in 1957, which was ^{the centennial, wasn't it?}

Emily: the 350th anniversary of Jamestown. . .

Sisson: ^{Right} Again it took a lot of preparation and organization, and I remember

when the Queen came she had to have her water sent down ^{by} ~~from~~ Canada ^{Dry}

I still have a couple of bottles of it. Wherever she went, Canada

Dry, ^{which was her} a bottling company, licensed by the Crown, had the franchise on

furnishing her water. So the President of Canada Dry ~~Dry~~ had a daughter

at the College of William and Mary at that time, and he sent down a

bottle for every student at the College. We gave them out at the dining

hall, and most of the students went out and sold them for a dollar to

tourists.

Emily: Now the Queen stayed at the Inn, ^{didn't she,} while she was in Williamsburg?

The College didn't have to provide her housing?

Sisson: ^{No,} She stayed at the Inn, I think.

Emily: How was it that it came about, ^{she} she announced she was coming for Jamestown and the College got the idea of inviting her, ^{is this how} is this how it happened that she did come to Williamsburg?

Sisson: I don't recall whether she announced that before or whether we invited her first. When the President of Colonial Williamsburg and certain of their trustees went over to give an award to Churchill, they invited Admiral Chandler to go along with them. And so he went as President of William and Mary, and they contacted at that time the Queen and Prince Philip, but I'm not positive about that. The purpose of the trip, ^{as stated} I suppose was to give the award to Churchill.

Emily: Wasn't it on that trip that the Admiral made the contacts to set up the Drapers' exchange?

Sisson: Yes, ~~that's right~~ ^{that's right} ~~that's right~~

Emily: Had any of this been discussed beforehand with the Drapers' Company?

Sisson: I'm not positive. I had my hands full ^{in other things} Let me get down to the Colleges of William and Mary.

Emily: Wait just a minute, ^S Let me ask you a couple more things before you get to that. Now after the war the college had property ~~the~~ the old Eastern State property, ^S and at one time before you came it was talked about that perhaps they would put a women's campus over here, ^S But I think that was pretty quickly dropped. But in the 1950s there was a real ^S hassle that I read about in the Board of Visitors' minutes about sellin ^{some of the} Eastern State property to Colonial Williamsburg, ^{minutes} but the ~~news~~ ^{minutes} never really showed what happened.

Sisson: I can give you ^{the} a story on that because I was intimately involved in it. When Colgate ^{Darden} was Governor of Virginia he needed the property of eastern state to the College of William and Mary. Now he did that because the state had just given them ^[Eastern State] a new place to transfer their buildings and their operations, which is now ~~is now~~ known as Dunbar. And they were moving out there, and the governor did not want them to ^{occupy} operate on two locations, which they were doing ~~when~~ before I went to William and Mary. So we had made plans; I went over there with our college architect, ^{Mr. [unclear]} I forget his name, ^{made} but we ~~took~~ ^{made} a detailed survey of the entire Eastern State property, and they had quite a few buildings there at the time. We ^{wrote that up} looked and showed how we could use ^S all ~~those buildings~~ ^{buildings} and which ones we could use and which ones should be torn down. Then Colonial Williamsburg got into the picture, and they wanted those buildings, which is only natural because it would enhance their historical areas. For instance, they had a "maison des faux," an asylum,

~~maison de food~~

what they called a house of ^{fools} food at that time. Everybody worked from the Frenchman's map. A Frenchman had drawn up this map of the whole city, and that's where we got a lot of this information about Eastern State, this historical data. ^{Colonial Williamsburg} But they wanted this area over there, so

they went to Governor, who was Tom Stanley at that time, and the Governor said, Yes, they should have it. And he wasn't going to give us anything for it. The Governor took the position that it was state's property. It didn't cost us anything, and therefore we shouldn't charge for it, you see. Now the Board and administration of William and Mary took an entirely different viewpoint in disagreeing

with the Governor. And Colgate Darden ^{I believe} himself at that time was at the University of Virginia, and he helped William and Mary by saying ^{that} it was his ^{he} intentionally gave it to them ^{William and Mary} that it was their land, and the State could not take it back and give

it to somebody else. So the pressure was so great that we agreed ~~to~~ ^{to} for ~~of~~ Colonial Williamsburg to ^{appoint a} ~~a part of~~ real estate appraisal, and William and Mary ^{would appoint a} ~~a part of the~~ real estate appraisal, and those two would ^{appoint} ~~on~~ a third and then we would vote (the three would vote) on

how much William and Mary should get for the property. It had all been pretty well decided that they were going to have to buy it. Of course, it was the Board's stance on the issue.

So at that time Colonial Williamsburg appointed a real estate man who was on ^{their} that board, but he was a native of Richmond by the name of ^{Thalheimer} ~~Falheimer~~.

^{Morton G. Thalheimer} We appointed a man by the name of Smith, ^{Gothrie} Dr. Smith. He was a real estate broker in Richmond. Those two men appointed a third man,

*what it
the board +
Colonial Williamsburg
(C.W.) + worked
by it?*

and in my opinion we came off better because we got practically what we ^{had in mind} asked for. I think we did save the College a lot of money on that, or get a lot of money for the college.

Emily: Otherwise, did you find working with Colonial Williamsburg, did you get along with little friction?

Sisson: I got along with them fine. I think ^{Admiral} Admiral Chandler's position with them improved as we went on. We started out, there was a little abrasiveness on both sides. They had the money, and we had more ^{political} prestige at the time because we were ^{not} just another state agency.

Emily: How about getting along with the city, were there any problems there?

Sisson: Not really. We did have a few minor things, like they tried to raise our water rates, you know. We gave up the producing of water out of ^a ^a Metoka Lake in order that the city would have enough customers to justify their building a water plant. But as soon as they built the water plant they jumped the price of water, which was too low for us anyway, we were paying something like six cents ^a ^a one thousand gallons, and they jumped it up to thirty-six cents. This is the type of thing we had with the city, minor things. But the city did not get involved in ^{operations} the college policy. In fact the city of Williamsburg, in my opinion, at that time had less prestige than most cities of ^a ^a that similar type because they were so overshadowed by the College and Colonial Williamsburg that all they did was maintain ^{streets} and sell water and that ^{type} kind of thing. They didn't get into politics.

Emily: Well, ^{now} when you were talking about the master plans, ^{the} Admiral had said at one time ~~that one time~~ (had lamented) that William and Mary hadn't had a ^{definite} plan for ~~definite~~ building, ^{we} were talking about the need when he came, the needs that were on campus, ^{did} you feel a plan, ^(planning) was successful in helping to aid the development of William and Mary?

Sisson: I think you've got to have that today. I don't think it's a case of it's nice to have, ^{I think} you've got to have it to get funds, ^{and} when the Admiral Chandler came to William and Mary back in 1951 they just weren't asking for any capital funds ^{to build} and so forth. They were trying, I think, trying to maintain the status of a good liberal arts college. ^{And this building called for a lot of housing and so forth.} Did I answer your question?

Emily: Yes, yes. How was this building received by the college and the community?

Sisson: The building?

Emily: ^{Building up} the college. There was a ^{corps} of people who really did think William and Mary should remain the small liberal arts college, I know.

Sisson: Well, I think that ~~diehards~~ never changed their opinion.

You still have a lot of people that think William and Mary right today should be a small liberal arts college, and the President, as I read his speech when ~~he went~~ - ~~the~~ William and Mary present President, Dr. Graves, he more or less stated the same thing: That it had reached its maximum number of students and that they, ^{ought} were to consolidate now and strengthen their program ^S rather than expand.

Of course, the problem with that is that you cannot get money returned out of the legislature when you consider they're not going to take your students. They'll use the money for other ^{colleges that will take the students.} students. I think President Graves ^{if he hasn't} already ^{he'll} come to realize that.

Emily: We were talking about the building program, and one question I had was that, to what extent do you feel that Admiral Chandler felt the need to build upon his father's work? the building program was very similar to the building program his father had embarked on.

Sisson: I think he did have that; he had the same philosophy his father had to expand the school. This philosophy was that you could not stand still; you either had to go forward or backward. And so I think he believed that. But I don't know how much, if it had been somebody else besides his father in that position, I don't think President Chandler would ^{have changed his} ~~changed~~ ^{a bit.} ~~tained~~ the opinion. I don't think he was doing it on his father's plan at all. Of course, there were a lot of things said that he thought his father had left him the school, that type of thing. That wasn't true.

Emily: This is leading into the ^{idea of the} colleges of William and Mary. What was it that A. D. Chandler saw as the role of William and Mary?

Sisson: I think he saw that the University of Virginia controlled higher education in the central part of the state, V.P.I. controlled education in the western part of the state, and at the same time they were moving into Tidewater, the Eastern part of the state. They were doing this by offering ^{\$} ~~extention~~ ^{right} courses ^{out} here in Norfolk and in other areas which William and Mary could supply better than they could. They got more money from the ^{\$} let's put it this way. William and Mary got no money for ~~the~~ ^{\$} extention courses. We had to be self-sufficient;

We got no state appropriation; We had to collect it out of tuition. The University of Virginia did get a sizable appropriation for the extension of classes, and they paid their instructors more money to teach these extension courses than we did because they had this state supplement to back them up. So they would come down and employ our teachers to teach their night school (night extension courses) and pay them more money than we could pay them.

Emily: How come U. Va. had this state supplement and William and Mary didn't?

Sisson: Because this was a historical thing they had been getting for years, and William and Mary had not asked for it in previous years, I knew nothing about it. This was very frustrating to me, and the financial part of it.

Emily: Did you try as chief financial officer to get such a supplement for William and Mary?

Sisson: Right. Eventually we got it, but it was many years later. Now the Colleges of William and Mary -- Did you want to go on to that?

Emily: Yes, yes.

Sisson: The Colleges of William and Mary were the result of a study made by consultants, as I recall there were nine consultants experts out of the Office of Education (or HEW now); and the Norfolk Junior Chamber of Commerce put up \$15,000 and they had this study made by these consultants to recommend how William and Mary should handle its branches and take a look at higher education in the state and the Tidewater area.

Emily: The Norfolk people are very much interested in the division there.

Sisson: Right. Well, this consultants these experts from the office of education in Washington said that there were to be, in their opinion, they recommended

that there be three major ^{higher education centers} ~~Academic branches~~ in Virginia. One would be at V.P.I. in the western part of the state. One would be the University of Virginia for the central part of the state. And the ~~other~~ ^{third} would be William and Mary for the eastern part of the state. Now they would have all the colleges ^{one of} would come under those. The ^S ~~extension work~~ ^{one of} would come under those. On the basis of that, William and Mary Board voted to set up the Colleges of William and Mary and to have each one of these institutions, instead of ~~referring~~ ^{reporting} to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, report to the Colleges of William and Mary. Admiral Chandler would become chancellor and I became comptroller. We were the only two officers over the entire system. Everybody else was connected ^{like} by Dean Lambert stayed at William and Mary and ~~he~~ worked under the President, who was Paschall. Chuck Marsh went down to Wofford and became President. George Oliver went up to R.P.I. and became President there.

Emily: Now you said the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce ~~of~~ put up some money for this Junior Chamber of Commerce, excuse me, was the Admiral interested in setting up this colleges system?

Sisson: I think he was, but I think he was disappointed in the way it worked out.

Emily: How so?

Sisson: Well, after they set this up ^{they} ~~and reported to the Colleges of William and Mary~~ the Colleges became very dissatisfied and that led to the breaking up of the system and making each one of these colleges independent, ^{except} Besides Christopher Newport and Richard Bland, ^{Victims of} they were to report to the board of William and Mary. But Norfolk ^{had been} was very much upset at being a branch of the College of William and Mary.

It seems to make better sense to be the bracketed phrase out - o. k. ?

They did not want to be a part of the Colleges of William and Mary either.

They wanted to be a self-governed outfit like the University of Virginia and everybody else. But what we saw at that time ^{(when} and I say we I mean ^{Admiral} Chandler and myself ⁾ we talked about this a great deal ^{and} we saw the formation of a strong state council of higher education. And that's exactly what took place. When they got rid of us ^(the Colleges of Wm & Mary) they took on ^{the Council} the council, see, because the Governor had too many people reporting to him as it was ^{to consolidate some of them}; he had ^{too many} agents. He just couldn't see them all, attend to them all, and he had to ^{block} drop some of these things off and have them report through others which was a strong argument for the Colleges of William and Mary. Now he had ^S them all reporting through the ~~State~~ Council of Higher Education, you see.

Emily: When the Colleges were set up ^{it} there apparently ^{was} something of a rush measure through the assembly because originally there was no money appropriated for the chancellor's office ^{almost} for a year there was not to be money. Do you remember this? This was in 1960.

Sisson: ^{The thing} They went through the Governor's office so fast ^{as} you say (this thing ~~could break up~~ to set up the Colleges of William and Mary) and then the next session of the legislature they ^{dis} resolved the Colleges of William and Mary. And they appropriated ^{the} money for the year they ~~re-~~ ^{dis} solved it. The money was in there.

Emily: Where was the money found ^{then} for the ^{two} years of operation?

Sisson: It was taken out of the Colleges of William and Mary's budget which was in their budget even though we didn't have a budget ourselves for the Colleges of William and Mary ^{we} put money in their

Who are
"they"?
[People pushing
for separation]

budget to pay my salary, Admiral Chandler's salary, the secretary's salary, and so forth. And the board approved it and the governor's office approved it (the Board of Visitors we're talking about approved it). Of course, the money was in William and Mary's budget, and everyone knew about it. It was no secret; it had to be in the William and Mary budget because the Colleges of William and Mary had not been authorized when the budget was submitted in 1960. When the legislature met in 1962 they dissolved the William and Mary system as of June 30, 1962, and by that time both Admiral Chandler and myself were out of the College of William and Mary, or out of its branches, and we were holding forth in our own office up there as the Colleges of William and Mary. And so we had put in a budget for 1962-1964, and they approved every nickel of it (the legislature in 1962), but then they dissolved the thing so we couldn't spend it.

Emily: Had this colleges setup been difficult for you in bookkeeping and in financial operation at all? The state council report spoke of the "burden of operation of the Colleges of William and Mary," and the Board of Visitors denied that it had been a burden for them. Had it been for you?

Sisson: No, it hadn't been for me. The bookkeeping is a small part of this. It was getting the funds you need; there was no problem on that score.

In 1962 the State Council of Higher Education was out to get--it had become kind of a personality battle, I think. I was sitting right there in a position where I was approached by many different people to do this and to do that. One offer was to make me an officer of the Colleges of William and Mary if I would do certain things. I had also been offered the associate directorship of the State Council of Higher Education under Dr. McFarland. They had a

director and assistant director, and they offered me the associate directorship in between those two, if I would come with them, which I didn't do.

These negotiations went on for months.

Emily: In '62 you're talking about?

Sisson: '62. So, ^{what I did was to go where} I went up to New Jersey, and my boys were in a private school, and I went up there, and I became a member of the Board and also financial officer for this school, which was a very fine private school, one of the top in this country. And I came back, this is getting off the track, I came back to Old Dominion in 1965 and worked with Lewis Webb, whom I found to be a very fine person, even though we disagreed at times, ^{the I was at} the College of William and Mary.

Emily: It seemed that Norfolk and Dr. Webb were spearheading this drive to break up. Is this correct?

Sisson: This is a very good question. I have thought about it many times. I think they got the credit for it, but I think the main force was the College of William and Mary itself. They worked undercover more than ^{did} the Norfolk Division. I don't think there's any question about that.

Emily: Do you think that Dr. Paschall had found it a difficult arrangement? — —

The president reporting to the chancellor idea?

Sisson: I think he found it very annoying. ^{George Oliver,} I think, took a ~~mutual~~ ^{mutual} stand in Richmond at R.P.I. ~~Norfolk and Richmond~~

Norfolk very definitely wanted to get out from under the College of William and Mary, which I think was bad for them at that time. They had a lot of prestige as a part of the Colleges of William and Mary. See, that's why they were made separate so they wouldn't be subordinate to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, which they had been ^{part of} in the past.

That's why the Colleges were set up: to make everybody equal. Under the Colleges of William and Mary they weren't supposed to be subordinate to any other branch. I think a mistake was made in that the chancellor's office remained on campus, and I think that was a fatal mistake. I think they should have moved to Yorktown, which I suggested several times, moved to Yorktown or some other place where we had no college. Because there's a tendency if you're living in the household to say how you think things should be. That's the other side, aside from the buildings and educational side--that's the political side.

Emily: You had spoken earlier something about the idea that the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg was lending its prestige to Norfolk and some dissatisfaction in Williamsburg with this.

Sisson: Well, that's right. A lot of the alumni of William and Mary in Williamsburg thought that the Norfolk division of William and Mary (Norfolk College of William and Mary) pulled the college's prestige down because Norfolk was not a well-established college or university; it was just an upstart and recently had been only a two-year college, and so the alumni of William and Mary in Williamsburg wanted to break the system up. Also, the alumni at Norfolk--they thought that they would be served secondhanded after William and Mary, and they thought if they could get out on their own and start to report to the governor alone they could accomplish more. And some of that is justified because they did accomplish quite a bit.

~~It just takes all your funds, and you just can't handle it.~~

Emily: When the Colleges were broken up, they were broken up after a report by the State Council of Higher Education that we talked about. I've gotten the impression that the admiral didn't know about this report until ~~after~~ it had come out. Is this right?

Sisson: He didn't know about the report until-- we had heard things were going on, we had certain information, but his office, which included me, didn't know about the report until it actually came out. I did know a little bit about it ^{because of} this offer that had been made to me. I didn't know the extent of it. He didn't see it-- a copy of it wasn't given to the faculty that he could comment on ^{directly}. . . . It was pretty much under the table. In fact, the report came out, and then the governor spoke-- the governor made his inaugural address, in which he recommended the budget and all in there--and he recommended that ~~they~~ ^{the colleges of William and Mary} be broken up. The first time Admiral Chandler knew of that was when he was on his way to Richmond and heard it in his car (heard the governor's speech). ^{He had no idea the governor was going to make that} Although ^{We knew that} he knew it was a possibility. ~~Things were going~~ ^{there and} on out, in the field that we were not kept informed. ~~of~~.

Emily: He hadn't been consulted before the report was made, in other words?

Sisson: No, because ^{I think} everybody knew how he felt. Why consult a man when you know all he's going to do is oppose it? That's not any justification for what they did, but that's the way it worked.

Emily: Had the system had time to prove itself? Do you think if the colleges had operated longer than eighteen months ~~that~~ the system would have worked out the kinks inherent in a new system?

Sisson: I think it would have worked at that time. Eventually it would have been broken up anyway, because they took Radford away from V.P.I.; the University of Virginia has given up control of Mary Washington ^{it's} a trend all over. The alumni do ^{not} want ^{to} and the faculty do not want ^{to} to be in an institution subordinate to another academic institution. This kind of a thing has swept the nation. ^{So} I think eventually the William and Mary system would have been ^{like} as it is now. It could have been done on a more orderly basis ^{if we had planned on it.}

Emily: You don't feel that in this system ~~the~~ the College of William and Mary was overextending itself?

Sisson: No, I didn't. Now my concern was with financial affairs, and I saw a great advantage in that financially we had been able to hold the college together--the colleges together. We had a college or a branch in ^{four large} the five largest cities ^{and} ~~Williamburg~~ ^{Williamsburg} in ~~Virginia~~. At that time we had one in Norfolk, Richmond, Williamsburg (which was not one--that was the exception),

Newport News, and Petersburg. In this area (the Tide-water area) we had a college in each one of these. And we an overwhelmingly larger number of legislators than either the University of Virginia or V.P.I. that we could call on in these cities, you see. You take some of these legislative representatives who were alumni of the University of Virginia, if they ~~were~~ lived in a place like Petersburg, they had to go along with Richard Bland, too. ~~We got~~ ^{Local} the people ~~to~~ put the pressure on them there. ^{could have} We had a very powerful political organization. I think the whole thing started and we moved before we consolidated our strength. Once we'd ever gotten that done and the people backing the ^{local} colleges in these areas, V.P.I. and the University of Virginia could have never touched us. V.P.I., of course, had their contacts through their farm agents (they control the rural district votes) and the University of Virginia, their alumni are more successful, I'd say, than anybody else's, financially and political-wise. That's what I was striving for was to get this political power behind us.

Emily: Starting with the local support in these towns.

Sisson: Right. We had alot of support, but we didn't have enough. We hadn't had time to gather it. ~~Mr. Sisson~~ here refers to an outline of topics.⁷ In the ^{causes} of the dissolution of the Colleges of William and Mary, the local branches wanted to go to themselves, particularly William and Mary in Norfolk. ^{As I have stated} It hastened the effective control of the State Council of Higher Education by their actions. The University of Virginia was opposed

← What was done toward this end? What could have been done?

to the State Council of Higher Education and has been opposed to it right along on certain ^{issues} they never have consented to be one hundred percent controlled by it. ~~They're fighting them now on something.~~

Emily: What was the position of the U.Va. people on the dissolution? Did they back the state council, or would that have been cutting off their nose to spite their face?

Sisson: The University of Virginia is very sophisticated; they don't get into these lower-level battles, but they certainly didn't back us. I don't think they did anything underhanded because Edgar Shannon's a very fine person. I think one of the top educators in this area ~~or has been until he went back to teaching.~~ He stayed above these. But the University of Virginia ^{has} got so much authority ^{through} ~~in~~ their graduates (alumni who are lawyers) that they can exert an awful lot of pressure and ~~you do~~ not know where it comes from. The lawyers make up the legislature. It's just ^{that} many people wanted William and Mary to become a fine, small liberal arts college, more or less immune from state control, but at the same time to receive large appropriations from the state. Admiral Chandler and I knew this would not work, but William and Mary still had that philosophy. If I read President Graves's remarks correctly, he said that they had reached the optimum ^m size ^{in enrollment}, but he wants more money. He also made a statement about something that he wasn't going to ask for ^{more} money, which ~~lead~~ led to speculation that maybe ~~there~~ was a deal was working between Colonial Williamsburg and

William and Mary to make up the state's appropriation
 from Colonial Williamsburg[^] and ^{then they'd} keep it a small liberal
 arts ^{college} --but that's just speculation. *You hear everything.*

Emily: Well, you know--or maybe you don't--that back in the
 '30s, it was proposed that Rockefeller would totally
 endow ^{it} and take it away from being a state institution.

Sisson: Would they have changed the name?

Emily: I don't know that it ever got that far; maybe it did.

Sisson: Well, that was ~~was~~ Bishop Goodwin and Rockefeller
 and Dr. Chandler.

Emily: Well, it could be that Dr. Chandler was in on it, too.

Sisson: I think I've given you about all I know.