

John B. Bentley

Bishop Bentley did not attend William and Mary for long--one year before World War I (1915 to 1916) and for a short while afterward. However, he has maintained a lively interest in the college, and the college has seen fit to honor him with its Alumni Medallion. After serving as an assistant to Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin at Bruton Parish Church in the 1920s, he went to Alaska as a missionary, becoming suffragan bishop, then bishop of Alaska. His memories of his early days and the people he encountered at William and Mary are rich in detail for those interested in a student's recollections from this era.

Bishop Bentley approved the following transcript without changes.

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Interviewee John B. BentleyDate of interview June 19, 1975Place Swann LibraryInterviewer Emily WilliamsSession number 1Length of tape app. 75 mins.

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visit of Woodrow Wilson	2 mins.
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service at Bruton Parish, W.A.R. Goodwin, and work for Restoration restoration of college chapel	25 mins.
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June 19, 1975

Bentley: I first came to Williamsburg September 11, 1915, when I came up from Hampton to enter college. I came up on the C & O train in the morning, and at that time the railroad station was down below the hill, below where the restored palace now stands, and from there you walked from the railroad station up to the college, passing the Williamsburg Female Institute and Mathew Whaley School and crossing ^{Palace} College Green and so on up to ^{by} the college ~~where~~ Duke of Gloucester Street. At that time Colonel Lane was the treasurer of the college, and I was taken to Colonel Lane to register, and I can't be sure, but I think the registration fee was ^{\$10} ten dollars, and I know that we paid ^{\$20} twenty dollars a month for room, board, and laundry.

Let me speak of Colonel Lane for a moment. He was a large man, a very large man, overweight, jolly, friendly, good-natured, and in the years to come I came to know him and his family and to admire him. . But then Mr. Bridges took me in hand. Mr. Bridges, I think, was registrar, maybe superintendent of grounds, I don't know what his title was but he took care of everything that no one else took care of. A rather remarkable man. And he took me to my room, which was on the third floor of Brafferton (The southwest corner room) and I learned that I was to have a roommate, a boy from Hampton, of all places. I'd known him in school in Hampton, and I couldn't have been more fortunate than I was in

drawing Overdo^f Cunningham as my roommate that year. As I remember, the rooms were rather small --one dormer window, a wash basin with running water, a chest of drawers, a table and two chairs, and a bed. "A" bed because in those days those rooms were equipped with double beds, and your roommate was also your bunkmate. Today people would be

horrified at such a thought, but that was the custom at the time, ^{and no one thought anything about it.} though unfortunately or not. The lights blinked at

11:50 at night, ~~The engineer at the powerplant blinked the lights at ten minutes of twelve~~ ^{and then at twelve o'clock} the lights went out and they were out again until 10:00 ^{in the} morning.

I think every room was equipped with ^(not by the college but by the men who roomed in them) with a kerosene lamp. We all had lamps that could be used when we had to study overtime or were up to any foolishness that required us to stay up beyond lights-

out. At that time, the enrollment at the college was something ^{two hundred} under 200 students. I don't remember just how many, but surely no more than ^{two hundred,} 200 so that you came to know every student on

campus. Dr. Lyon G. Tyler was then president. Dr. Tyler was a slender, rather gaunt man. My picture of him is ^{of} seeing President Tyler and Mrs. Tyler walking across the campus from the

president's house to the dining room for their meals (they took their meals in the dining room with the students), And Dr.

Tyler was so often preoccupied with matters other than things that concerned Mrs. Tyler ^{the things that needed to be remedied and with} and the things that needed to be

~~remedied~~ that he walked with long strides across campus

(tapping his glasses on his thumb) and Mrs. Tyler three or four paces behind trying to keep up. I have^d one occasion -- and I can't remember what it was -- to go to Dr. Tyler's office in his home. It was the room on the first floor, just to the left of the main entrance as you come in, and his desk was covered with books and manuscripts and letters, and papers and books were piled and lay on the floor all around the desk so that he had to step over them and around them to get to the desk, ~~and~~ I think this must have been his syste^m; I'm sure it was. But as we know, he was a remarkable scholar[^] student, particularly^y of Virginia history, an authority on Virginia history. I had no classes under Dr. Tyler; I didn't stay in college long enough. ~~Dr. Garrett~~ Dr. Garrett was the head of the science department. Dr. Garrett was a Confederate veteran; He had been a student at V.M.I. when General Butler invaded that part of the country and ^[Dr. Garrett] took part in the Battle of Newmarket with the V.M.I. cadets. He was the personification of ^a Southern, Christian gentleman -- ^{quiet and} courteous always. He was the senior warden at Bruton Parish Church when I returned to Williamsburg some years later to be the assistant to Dr. Goodwin. And I remember Sunday mornings, just before the ^{8:00} eight o'clock Communion service, Dr. Garrett and Mrs. Garrett would arrive. Dr. Garrett carried a small wicker basket with a linen napkin in it, ⁱⁿ which Mrs. Garrett, I'm sure, had cut a loaf of fresh bread into little cubes and brought ^{for} to the Communion. And there was a bottle of

wine because as senior warden ~~it~~ it was customary for Dr. Garrett to supply the bread and wine for the Communion service (and that tradition carried on). ~~Dr.~~ Dr. John Lesslie Hall was the head of the English department and was a recognized authority on Anglo-Saxon ^[literature] and ^d was, if I may use the work, perhaps "the character" on the faculty at that time. He had stories and jokes that he told to us ^{that} and had been told to our fathers and grandfathers, I suppose. But he was a great scholar, and we all knew that it was a privilege just to be able to say, ~~years later~~ that we sat under Dr. Hall. I think maybe two of the ^{bravest} ~~greatest~~ acts of my life were connected with Dr. Hall. Dr. Hall had sons, but he also had a very dear daughter named Emily, and in that first year I was enrolled at the college ~~I~~ I wanted to call on Emily ^{and} take her to a party somewhere, but I didn't know ~~whether~~ I had the courage to ring Dr. Hall's doorbell knowing ^{that} he would answer the door. ~~but~~ I finally managed to do it. The other thing was that years later when I came back to Bruton Parish Church and for the first time climbed up into that tall pulpit and looked down and saw Dr. Hall sitting there in the congregation, along with Dr. Walter Montgomery, Dr. Garrett, and others, it took a bit of courage to say the modest things I'd come to say. ~~Dr.~~ Dr. Stubbs ^{ed} head of the department of mathematics, and he, too, was a Confederate veteran and reminded me of General Lee because of his statue ^{and full} and full grey hair, grey beard. Dr. Stubbs always sat at his desk in class.

Can you
remember any
specific ones?

His chair was a revolving chair; ~~It~~ stood just behind the desk, between it and the blackboard, and if he wanted to illustrate something on the blackboard, he simply turned a bit in his chair and with his left hand took the chalk and drew what he wanted to draw right on the blackboard. ~~And~~ we boys stood in awe of him, of course, because of his venerable appearance and age and the fact that he was a Confederate veteran. We had two Johnson brothers in that class (I think they came from Deep Creek, down south of Portsmouth). The younger of the two was sent to the blackboard one day, and Dr. Stubbs said, "Mr. Johnson, draw a railroad track on the blackboard." And of course, he was a bit flabbergasted ~~to~~ know just what to do, but finally he had the wit to draw two parallel lines and put cross ties on them. Dr. Stubbs said, "Now, put a mile post on the railroad track." So he drew what might be recognized as a mile post. And Dr. Stubbs said, "Now, draw another mile post." And he moved along a bit with the chalk back and forth, and he said, "How far apart should I put them?" And Dr. Stubbs said, "How far apart are mile posts?" Dr. Stubbs died my first year, sometime in midwinter, and of course, ^{the} college was closed the day of his funeral, and the entire faculty and student body went down to the funeral. Dr. Stubbs had lived in what is now known, I think, as the Ludwell-Paradise House on the north side of Duke of Gloucester Street. He had a son, Thomas Jefferson Stubbs, who

later became a member of the faculty of the college, and he had a very attractive daughter, Miss Mab Stubbs. At that time we had a student in the academy (There was an academy connected with the college at that time). The academy building ^{stood} ~~this was~~ on the campus, approximately half way, I think, between the north end of the Wren Building and Richmond Road, a small brick building. Among the students there was a big chap, I think he was an Englishman by birth, but he paid Miss Stubbs a great deal of attention, and later on they were married and he went into the ministry of the Episcopal church and served for many years in the diocese of Maryland. Dr. Calhoun, head of the department of modern languages, was one of the older men on the faculty because I took no modern language, other than English, I never had the opportunity to sit under Dr. Calhoun. I knew him. There was a custom in that time that all freshman -- "ducks" as we were called at the college -- were required to wear a "duck cap." It was a small, brimless cap that stuck somehow on the back of your head and made of the college colors, and we were required to tip these hats to the faculty wherever we met them -- on the campus, downtown, anywhere. And one thing that sticks in my memory is coming ^{upon} to Dr. Calhoun and some other gentlemen standing at the entrance to the college and tipping my hat to Dr. Calhoun, as we did to all faculty. Dr. Clarke had Latin and Greek. A man beginning to grey, a rather grim and stern man, and yet I found him sympathetic and helpful.

I took freshman Greek under him, and I'm sure I must have taxed his patience many times. There were only three of us in that class. The other two men were far better students than I. One day as I struggled along trying to read ^{and} Dr. Clarke said, "Put some expression in it, Bentley!" And I thought I was doing fairly well just saying one word after another. Later, Dr. Clarke went to the University of Montana at Missoula, and I remember that when I went to Alaska and came home on furlough on one occasion, we stopped off between trains in Missoula. I had written to Dr. Clarke to tell him that I would, and he met us at the railroad station and we had a visit with him there. Dr. Bennett ~~was~~ headed the department of education, I had one class under Dr. Bennett, and the thing I remember was that some boy misspelled "separate," and Dr. Bennett went to the black board and wrote S-E-P -- and then he wrote a gigantic A, and spelled the rest of the word, and I've never forgotten how to spell "separate;" it's photographed on my memory. His daughter, Gladys, ~~who~~ later married Bill Guy, who was a member of the faculty, and we were neighbors on Francis Street when I came back here to live some years later. Dr. James Southall Wilson had some history and a bit of English, and I think I may have counted him the best teacher I had, maybe because I made better grades in his classes, but he was a remarkable teacher. He was married to Miss Tyler, one of Dr. Tyler's daughters, and later on left to go to the University of Virginia. As I look back, I recall ^{that} not only did

[So did]

Dr. Wilson go to the university but Dr. George Oscar Ferguson, who became dean I think up there, and two men who were students in the college -- George Baskerville Zehmer and Dean Ribble. Dean Ribble was taking his masters' at William and Mary when I was a freshman. I think he was 19 when he took his masters. He came to college in short pants; a remarkable student. He went on to take law and became the dean of the law school at the University of Virginia. And years later when I visited the university on one occasion, I looked him up; we reminisced a bit and he said one of the regrets of his career was that he had never practiced law, that he had never been out in the world, that he had always been on a college campus as a student and a professor and teacher and so he had never ^{to struggle as} had the troubles other lawyers had to make their way in the world. ~~but~~ but he was a wonderful fellow -- quiet and gentle and scholarly, a student and man. I mentioned Dr. Ferguson: George Oscar Ferguson was a bachelor, handsome and attractive, dynamic (as they would say today) in every way. He had psychology and philosophy. I had freshman psychology under him. And we boys heard tales of Dr. Ferguson as a student how he got into one trouble after another, including turning a hose on the faculty once, I believe, when they were meeting to decide what to do with him. Dr. Crawford had art and mechanical drawing. At one time I took a surveying course under him. Dr. Draper was a medical doctor and the

school physician, college physician, and also the athletic coach. He was a big man, physically, had been an All-American on the University of Pennsylvania football team, I think, and we boys regarded him as a kind of blood-and-thunder coach. He liked to see us scrimmage. He wanted to see some wounds before we got through the game.

Williams: Did you play? Were you an athlete?

Bentley: I was a substitute on the college football team that fall as a freshman. I mentioned Mr. Bridges. He had two sons and a daughter, whom I came to know later on. And then John Tyler, the son of President Lyon Tyler, was a young instructor in math, and when Dr. Stubbs died that winter John Tyler took over his classes, and the next year, I think it was, he went up to Annapolis to the naval academy as a civilian instructor and stayed there for nearly forty years until he retired. Just before he died I spent a night in Annapolis. I hadn't seen him since the spring of 1916, but I looked him up; I went to call on him, and I'm so glad ^{that} I did. I'm sure that he didn't remember me, but I remembered him very well. But he enjoyed showing me a gadget of some sort that he had invented and was used by the navy on shipboard on the bridge in navigation. Naturally, he was pleased and proud of this and glad to show it to one of his old students. Miss Emily Christian was the librarian. At that time, the library was housed in ^{the} very small and modest brick building that stood behind the Wren Building, and as far as I can remember Miss Emily was the library staff, but she

was a dear soul ^{She} and lived with her brother and his family in the old Christian house, as we called it, at the extreme eastern end of the Duke of Gloucester Street, on the right-hand ^{side} as you go down, the south side. (I don't know what it's called today ~~but her brother and his family and Miss Emily made her home with them.~~) And finally, I mustn't forget [#] "Dr." Billups. "Dr." Billups rang the bells for classes, went to the post office for the mail, did other errands for Dr. Tyler and the faculty, but was in some sense [#] the father confessor to the students. He could tell you where to go for all sorts of things, and he could tell you places not to go, too. He was an invaluable member of the staff of the college at that time. [#] There were daily chapel services in the chapel [#] ten minutes before the first bell rang for the first class. And we had a pretty good chapel attendance.

Williams: It was not required?

Bentley: It was not required but there were a good many boys who attended ^{and} a member of the faculty conducted the chapel services, which consisted simply of the reading of a passage from the Bible and prayers, but no homily (sermon), and then the bells of the first class rang, and we went to the first class. The chapel served also as an assembly hall. It was the only place that would take care of the whole student body at the time, and so whenever we had ^a the convocation -- as it is now known -- or assembly of any sort, [#] we gathered in

the chapel. The seats all faced toward the west with an aisle up the middle and there was a raised platform at the extreme ^{west} ~~left~~ end of the chapel with a podium and lectern and seats for the faculty. I remember one occasion that winter. We had a visit from Sir Auckland Geddes. He was then the British ambassador to Washington. I don't remember a thing that Sir Auckland said, but I remember him very well; he made a deep impression on me. His British accent as he spoke, and his diplomatic address-- cutaway coat and collar and cravat. ~~And~~ then in the spring of 1916 we were surprised on a Sunday afternoon to see a ^{car} ~~carriage~~ drive up ^{the} Jamestown Road from Jamestown. We boys were sitting, some of us, on the rail fence that enclosed the campus on the Jamestown Road side, sitting there in the shade, nothing better to do -- when up the road came a ^{car} ~~carriage~~ in which President and Mrs. Wilson were riding, and they went to President Tyler's home to call. I'm sure that they had sent word, ^{to} The Tylers, ^{who} greeted them at the door, and ~~we~~ boys who were on the campus at the time -- maybe ^{fifty} 50 or ^{sixty} 60 of us -- gathered in front of President Tyler's home, waiting for the two presidents to come out. When they did, we gave three cheers for President Wilson, and he took off his top hat and smiled, and ~~he said~~ we cried, "Speech! Speech!" And he said, "I am the son of a Presbyterian parson, and I was taught as a child never to work on ~~the~~ Sabbath." And he put his top hat on and got in his ^{car} ~~carriage~~ and drove off

to Jamestown. I remember that; had he made a ^{speech} I would have forgotten, I'm afraid, everything he said. ^{of} I took one class in the academy ~~under~~ in Latin. I had neglected to take Latin in high school; it was an elective, and I elected to neglect it, but when I came to college ~~I~~ I came as a ministerial student ^{and} ~~as~~ would be required to take Latin and Greek ^{and} ~~so~~ I had to take freshman Latin in the academy under Sam Hubbard, who was a boy's ideal of a teacher. And when the first World War came ~~the~~ the next year, a year later, Sam went in the army and was killed in action in France. He was related to the Hubbards and the Colemans here in Williamsburg ~~and~~ ^{and} a wonderful young man, teacher.

Williams: You mentioned that you hadn't taken this course in high school. Had you planned to come to college and taken certain courses to prepare yourself for ~~this~~ college or was ^{this} ~~this~~ unknown then?

Bentley: No. When I went to high school in Hampton ~~I~~ I had no idea what I would do. I gave it very little thought because I was born and reared on Hampton Creek and grew up on ^{the} water ~~I~~ I had in mind that maybe I would like to be a steamboat captain or something like that. And just after Christmas ~~I~~ I dropped out of high school ~~my~~ my final year, senior year; I didn't return after the Christmas holidays. I got a job on a gas boat as engineer running up the James and York Rivers and Mobjack Bay delivering gasoline and oil ^{for} to the Texas Company. And I worked on that boat all that spring ^{Then} ~~and~~ in the fall ~~I~~ I went to work at the shipyard in Newport News and worked there all

winter for \$9.00 a week, ^{ten} 10 hours a day, six days a week. And it was while at the shipyard I decided to study for the ministry of the church, which meant, of course, that I had to go to college and so I looked around and William and Mary was nearby and was ^{as} reasonable financially as any school I knew. There were other reasons. So I went to ~~my employer~~ my boss, the chief engineer of the shipyard, and told him that I should tell him that I would be leaving ⁱⁿ early September to go to college, and he, assuming that I would go to study engineering, gave his warm approval. He said, "I think that's fine. When you ^{'ve} finished school, come back to us." I said, "Well, Mr. Smith, I think I should tell you that I'm going to William and Mary --" and he interrupted me by saying, "Well, they have no engineering school." And I said, "No, sir, but I plan to go ^{into the} as minister ^{into} of the Episcopal church." And he said, "You're a fool." (I won't tell you what particular kind of fool he told me I was.) I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but that's what I've decided ^{to do}." So when I came up to college I had to enter as a special student; I wasn't a high school graduate, and I had to do two things: I had to make up my freshman Latin in the academy, which would then permit me to go on with more Latin in college and at the same time would give me credits enough to qualify as a graduate from high school. And so that's why I went to the academy. So I'm sorry you compelled me to tell you that I was a drop²out from high school.

Williams: When you got here ^{where} were you aided in any way? Were you given any guidance in course selection? You started to speak about registration at one time.

Bentley: No, you took what you wanted so far as it was permitted, of course. It was every man for himself. We went to faculty members for counsel and guidance, I'm sure, but as far as I can recall, there was no desk or office where you ~~were meant~~ ^{went} to get help of that sort, ask ["]what courses should I take["] and that sort of thing.

Williams: Someone else had said to me that the one thing he remembered vividly was the lack of guidance when he got here, ^{so} ^I wondered if that had been true when you were here, too.

Bentley: Yes, it was certainly true. I think there are only two things more I want to say connected with the college, and they ^{don't} have to do with the academic year 1915-1916, but with my return to Williamsburg in 1926 to serve as the assistant at Bruton Parish Church. Dr. Goodwin was then rector of Bruton and, as we learned later, had the imagination and dream of restoring Williamsburg to its colonial appearance. He ^{had} shared this dream with no one at the time, ^{but} he was a member of the faculty of the college; ^{he} taught religion and he headed the endowment fund campaign and felt that he needed assistance at Bruton ^{and} ^{he} shared his needs with the vestry of the parish, of course, and among the vestrymen at that time was Dr. Walter Montgomery, head of the department of ancient languages here at the college, ^a ^[Johns] wonderful man, graduate of Hopkins, native son

of North Carolina. I had known him at the college -- not my first year, but when I came back after the first world war, and he wrote to me. I was teaching school -- it was 1925 and '26 in Maryland -- and he wrote and told me that I should get in touch with Dr. Goodwin if I wanted to come here as the assistant at Bruton, and ~~so~~ so I came to see Dr. Goodwin, and out of that conference came the decision on his part to invite me to come as his assistant and the decision on my part to come. ~~And~~ ^{so} the first of August 1926, I took up my duties and stayed for four years until we went back to Alaska in the summer of 1930. They were very rich and very happy years, and I owe to Dr. Goodwin and to Bruton and to the congregation and the town and the college a debt I can never repay. But there are two things about that stay of four years that I want to ^{make now} ~~write down as~~ a matter of record. When the restoration began and the architects and engineers arrived in Williamsburg, ~~they were~~ happy to find, they were delighted to find that in the library of the college ^{hung} ~~on~~ what came to be known as the "Frenchman's Map". A map of Williamsburg made by a French army engineer in 1781. We don't know his name -- ~~For~~ some reason he didn't put his name on the map, ~~but~~ but a remarkably accurate map in the sense that it had been made by pacing, not by a chain or a ^{rod,} ~~wad,~~ but simply by pacing. From long practice and discipline, ~~he~~ he had learned just exactly the length of his stride, and so he measured the distance of Duke of

Gloucester Street -- its length and width: 99 feet --
 and the distance between buildings and the size of build-
 ings themselves ~~and~~ ^{is} it says on that map that it^s measured
 by pacing. But ~~of~~ ^{of} course, many of those buildings had
 disappeared in 1928, but they appeared on the map, and so
 all the archeologists and researchers had to do was go
 there and dig in the ground and they'd find foundations
 of those buildings. Now ~~Dr.~~ Dr. Swem was then the librarian.
 He was not enthusiastic, shall I say, ab^out the proposed
 restoration of Williamsburg. He was not in complete sym-
 pathy with what was proposed, and he was reluctant, ^{indeed},
 he was adamant ^{insaying} that he wouldn't permit that map
 to be taken out of the library, and he wouldn't permit the
 engineers and architects to copy it, and so they were stalled.
 And ~~they~~ ^{they} shared their troubles with Dr. Goodwin and Dr.
 Goodwin sent for me ~~and~~ ^{and} he knew that while serving in the
 army, I had had some training in reconnaissance (which meant
 the making and reading of maps), ~~and~~ ^{and} he knew also ~~knew~~ that
 Dr. Swem and I were on tolerably good terms, and so he
 asked me to go and see Dr. Swem to see if Dr. Swem might per-
 mit me to copy that map. I went to see Dr. Swem and he re-
 ceived me ~~courteously~~ ^{courteously} -- I can't say warmly -- but he
 frowned and scowled and hesitated, but as time went on, he
 relented. Finally, he said that I might copy the map if I
 did it in the library in the stack room in the basement, ~~and~~ ^{and}
 provided I didn't put a pencil or tool of any sort on the map

~~on the map~~ itself and would assure him that the map would suffer no harm. Happily I could give him this assurance, and so I got the necessary materials, which consisted of the proper paper and pencils, and I simply copied what the Frenchman had done the hard way, and then I traced my copy on tracing paper in India ink on paper from which blueprints could be made and gave this to the engineers of the Restoration, and they had, I suppose, several hundred blueprints of that map run off so that everybody could have one, and those maps served for the research in the Restoration. Dr. Swenm^u was thanked, of course, for his help and cooperation. Not long after this when I decided I would return to Alaska and the announcement had to be made public, Colonel Woods, who was at that time Mr. Rockefeller's right-hand man, came to Williamsburg, and he came to see me and he said that Dr. Goodwin had told him of my help and assistance in securing the map that had been of such help to the engineers and that Mr. Rockefeller wanted to show his appreciation in some tangible way, and I said, "Well, if you're thinking of financial grant or such assistance, I'm sorry but you can't do it because I'm on salary from Bruton Parish Church. Any time I gave to the making of that map was time taken from Bruton Parish's, and so it wouldn't be quite fair to accept anything." "Well," he said, "I'll find some way." And so we parted. And just a day or two before I left to go back to Alaska I went to the bank to wind up my modest affairs there, and the cashier told me

that Mr. Rockefeller -- ^{of} Colonel Woods ^{acting} for him -- had deposited \$2,000 to my credit in the bank, and I said, "Well, before I go, I must transfer that from my personal account to a special account -- a discretionary fund -- which I did. Of course, I wrote to Colonel Woods thanking him, and then when I arrived in Alaska I found ^{numerous} ways to spend that money as any young missionary would, and when it was gone, I wrote to Colonel Woods to thank him again, ^{try} tell him how much help it had been, ^{hoping} hoping this might spark some more, but it didn't. He simply wrote and said he was glad that it had been a real help. So that's the map episode. Now there was one other thing.

Williams: Let me ask you before you move on to that, was there any particular reason why Dr. Swem was less than enthusiastic about the Restoration?

Bentley: I don't know really. Now of course, there were people in Williamsburg who were not.

Williams: I'm sure they must have been ^{wondering} wondering what this was going to do to their town.

Bentley: And I'm sure that ^{if} Dr. Swem were alive today -- well, I'm not sure, I can't be sure -- I'd assume he'd look around and say, "You see, it's just as I told you. The old town is gone. Williamsburg will never be again like it once was." -- which is true, of course.

¶ The other thing had to do with the restoration of the chapel when the Wren Building was restored. The engineers discovered that the foundations of the chapel needed some strengthening,

and to do this they had to tear the floor out of the chapel and make diggings all along the foundation, ^{land} the walls and as we know, there are several tombs, ~~burials~~ under the chapel ^[in] the vault, and so when they got to those tombs, Dr. Goodwin sent for me again and said, "John, they're going to have to move those tombs or whatever's left of them -- there won't be much left -- but whatever is done, we want done decently and in order, and I want you to go up there and as those tombs are ^{unearthed} unwrapped and ^{uncovered} and ~~undone~~, I want you to do what you can, take every precaution to collect and save very carefully any remnant that may be found. Small boxes have been prepared and marked as receptacles for anything that you may find." And so for several days I worked there with the men down in the foundations, and we uncovered all those tombs and in some we found absolutely nothing. The only way you could tell that there'd been a grave was that the clay soil would have the outlines of a coffin in it, a dark outline -- the decayed remnants of the wooden coffin, probably hard wood coffin, but nothing in the coffin itself that we could find. [#] But several did have bones (not much, but some), buttons, nails, pieces of brass hinge, and things of that sort, and these were all very carefully collected and brushed up with a ^h wisk broom and dust pan and placed in the appropriate boxes and then when the restoration had been completed or when the foundations had been restored and the earth was returned under the floor of the chapel, these little cas-

kets were put back in the appropriate places and so I used to boast -- not too publicly -- that I was the only living man who had shaken hands with Sir John Randolph and all the distinguished citizens of colonial Virginia.

Williams: Did Dr. Chandler take an active interest in the restoring of the Wren Building? You spoke of Dr. Goodwin giving you instructions.

Bentley: As far as I know, Dr. Chandler was completely sympathetic to the whole idea. Had he not been, it would have been public knowledge, of course. But so far as I know, he must have been because he cooperated completely in everything that was done here at the college, ~~connected with the college.~~

Williams: You had spoken of Dr. Goodwin's relationship as endowment fund²raiser for the college. Now, you worked with him fairly closely. To what would you attribute his ability to raise funds? I'm asking this in the sense ^{of} for the college -- if ¹ you can separate that from the Restoration.

Bentley: As you know, Dr. Goodwin was an amazing fund-raiser. And I talked to Dr. Goodwin about it on one occasion, and he laughed and he said when he finished ~~the~~ seminary, he had two "hang-ups," as we'd say today. One was that he couldn't teach. He found it very difficult to stand up before people and say anything. He could prepare the sermon and struggle through it, but he couldn't teach day after day. And he couldn't ask people for money. As a student at the seminary, there had been some need of a little chapel where

he had served, and he had found it very difficult to get people to do what had to be done. ~~And~~ when he graduated from seminary, his bishop sent for him and said, "Goodwin, I'm going to send you down to Petersburg to teach at the Bishop Payne Divinity School. ~~At~~ At that time it was an Negro seminary for the Episcopal church] ~~And~~ And I don't have any money to pay your salary so you'll have to go raise your own salary." And so that's the way he began his active ministry. ~~And then~~ he said, "I'll tell you this. I have never asked anyone for a dime." And I said, "But how'd you get all the money you've collected?" He said, "I have told a story and let the story get the money. I learned very early that if I had a story to tell that was worth telling and I told ~~told~~ it as though I believed it ~~and~~ and it was on my heart ~~and~~ and I'd do anything honest to do what had to be done; I would just tell that story. A man would invite me to have dinner with him and I'd tell him the story. Or I would be invited to speak somewhere, to a society or group, and I'd tell the story, and I'd go away, and if it happened to be a good story and if I'd done a good job in telling it, that would take care of the situation." And, of course, they told all kinds of stories about him, -- about the business man in Richmond. The secretary came in and said, "Dr. Goodwin is out here. He has no appointment, but he said he just wanted to stop by and see you." And the man said, "I won't see him. I know what he wants. He wants

money for William and Mary, and I've given what I can give,
 and I'm not going to see him." And the secretary said,
 "But Mr. So-and-so, you can't tell Dr. Goodwin that you're
 not going to see him. You have no other appointments."
 "Well, all right," he said, "Bring him in, but I'm not
 going to give him anything, and I'll tell him so." And
 half a hour later, the man came out with Dr. Goodwin, and
 he had his arm around Dr. Goodwin's shoulder and his
 handkerchief in his other hand drying [#] a tear on his cheek, and
 telling Dr. Goodwin how sorry he was ^{that} that was all he could
 give him just now. I think this is apocryphal. ~~But~~
[#] they say that Mr. Rockefeller said -- I didn't hear him
[≡] say this -- but after the Restoration was well under way,
 Mr. Rockefeller came down on one occasion when there was a
 dinner, and Mr. Rockefeller told of the spring night, moonlight
 night, after a meeting ^{of} in Phi Beta Kappa when he had first
 come to Williamsburg, and Dr. Goodwin had introduced himself
 and asked if he might walk down Duke of Gloucester Street
 with him and point out some of the historic homes. ~~That~~ [≡] they
 walked down one side and up the other, and Mr. Rockefeller
 said it was the most expensive ^{moon} late night walk he ever took. ^{of}
 Course, he never forgot it. Sometime after that, Dr. Goodwin
 told me, ~~sometime after that~~ [?] he was in New York and had no
 appointment with Mr. Rockefeller but went by his office, ~~to see~~
~~him~~ and his secretary arranged for him to see Mr. Rockefeller.
 They talked for a few minutes, and Mr. Rockefeller said, "Mr.

Goodwin, do you ever think of that dream you shared with me a year or two ago about ~~the~~ possibly ^e restoration of ~~Williams-~~[#]burg?" And Dr. Goodwin said, "I looked right at him and said, 'I've thought of little else.'" So that, I think, was the secret -- his own conviction that this is something that just has to be done, and he could make you believe that.

Williams: He obviously [#]made people believe it.

Bentley: He made me believe it in connection with -- well, he didn't have to make me believe in connection with coming to Williamsburg because I was eager to come, but when they were thinking of setting up the national monument at Yorktown -- if that's what it's called; I don't mean the statue ⁵ there but they set apart the battle area as a national park. A small committee of Congress came down to look the whole thing over, and Dr. Goodwin came to me and he said, "John, I want you to prepare maps -- do anything you want to do but I want you to brief these people here at the Wythe House ^{on the seige of Yorktown} which was then the Parish House ⁷ before we go to Yorktown ~~on the seige of Yorktown.~~" He knew that my army experience would be of help and he knew that I had studied the Yorktown campaign a little bit (I'm no authority at all) ⁸ anyway, why have a young fellow around if you don't use him? I remember smiling and saying, "Dr. Goodwin, is this a proposal to confiscate private property?" And he nodded, "Yes, it is." And I said, "I don't want anything to do with it." ~~And~~ I laughed -- I wanted to keep it on that basis -- but I said,

"I'm not a convert to confiscation of private property to make public parks. In wartime, if it's life and death, that's one thing, but to take a man's farm and his home so that you can have --" He said, "I don't care what you think about that. All I want you to do is tell these people about the seige of Yorktown." And he took his pipe and shook it at me, as he would. I said, "All right. Can do." ~~And~~ so we had a session at the Wythe House, and I went with them to Yorktown, and some weeks later, I was a little amused to have a telegram from the chairman of that committee saying the bill had passed Congress, so I took it to Dr. Goodwin, and I said, "You've made me a party to all of this business." But Dr. Goodwin could convince you to do almost anything. He was convinced should be done. I loved him dearly; he was like a father to me.

Williams: Going back to when you were a student, one thing you didn't mention was discipline. Who would have taken care of discipline at the college? ~~Would it have been Dr. Tyler?~~ had there been any behavior problems with the boys? *Would it have been Dr. Tyler?*

Bentley: As I look back on my first year (1915-'16) I confess that I can't recall ~~we~~ ever had a problem. I think had there been a problem, that the faculty member immediately concerned would have handled it. I can't imagine anything being so grave or so great as having to be taken to President Tyler. The boys in those days -- they weren't angels, but we didn't *tear up* property and do things. There was no drunkenness on the campus,

rioting, or carrying on. When I came back after the First World War, we had a student council, and there was the honor system. And I remember that first fall a group of boys did something -- I don't remember what they did -- but they violated the rules, and they were brought before the student council, ~~and~~ the student council had no power to discipline; it could only recommend to Dr. Chandler, ^{Chandler} and the faculty. ^{Tyler?} But the student council recommended that those boys be shipped, ^{et} and they were shipped.

Williams: Was Dr. Tyler generally liked by the students or you referred to him as being a scholar -- was he not really --

Bentley: I don't think Dr. Tyler was liked or disliked. I think he was admired because of his office and his stature as a scholar, but there wasn't anything about him that would endear him to boys, as there would be about some teachers, ^{but} that's all I can say about him.

Williams: You referred to the day ^{you were} sitting around with little else to do when President Wilson drove up. What was there, beside your schoolwork, to do as a student here in Williamsburg?

Bentley: There wasn't very much. Sundays were pretty lonely ^{days} for freshmen. For boys who were going to be homesick, Sunday was a tough weekend to pass. After breakfast Sunday morning, normally, you went to church and probably Sunday school. There were four churches in town: there was a Baptist church, a Methodist church, Presbyterian church, ^{and} Bruton Parish. ^{and} And most of us went to church. Then we came back, ^{and} we had dinner.

Then in the afternoon, if the day happened to be pleasant, we might walk to Jamestown or down ^{to} the York River and back. We might call on some friends in town -- most of us knew a few people in town, -- or you could sleep on your bunk or read or do anything you had to do. In pleasant weather, you'd sit on that fence [#] in the shade and talk, ~~shoot~~ chew straws, and wait for suppertime to come.

Williams: Now, let's see, -- 1915 -- World War I was going on, but the United States was not in it. Was there any awareness on the part of the students? I know in talking to people who were here in, say 1939 and 1940 and '41, they say, "we were very conscious of what was going on in Europe, and there was sort of a pall over [#] many of the male students knowing that it was very possible we might go into war." Did you find that true in World War I?

Bentley: No, I think not. I think the students who were here immediately prior to the ~~Second World War~~ were influenced by the fact that they or their fathers had had the experience of the ~~First World War~~, but when the ~~First World War~~ came, it came as a blow. After all, Mr. Wilson had been elected because he was going to keep us out of ~~the~~ world war, but all over the country there was a feeling that we just might not be able to avoid it, and because of that, national guard units were organized in towns all over the country.

Williams: Was there one here?

Bentley: No, but there was one organized in Hampton, and I went home and

several students who were here from Hampton went home in December 1915 to enlist in that National Guard Unit, which was then called up in June 1916, the next spring, to go to Mexico to catch Villa, who had raided the Mexican border. And as I look back, I'm sure that Mr. Wilson didn't send all the National Guardsmen in the United States to catch Villa. In fact, we didn't get to the Mexican border. We spent the winter in the hills ^{out of} ~~over~~ San Antonio. I think what Mr. Wilson knew was that almost inevitably we would get in the war and that our army was pitifully weak numerically, and so far as training was concerned, and somebody had advised him that he better train a great ^{corps} of non-commissioned officers who could train the draftees if we did get in the war, but that's what happened. For those of us who spend a year in the army in Texas before we got in in the spring of 1917 were immediately available to train the draftees as they came in ^{but} not in 1915, there was no pall hanging over the college at that time.

Williams: You mentioned the town, that you would often have a few friends in town. Did you find that the town and the college social life were somewhat the same?

Bentley: Oh, yes. The town was very small at that time. I didn't get acquainted with too many people in town that first winter. I was too busy with my studies, and I had to work, I'm not a student, but I had to work. That kerosene lamp burned many nights after lights-out, but I got to know Dr. Ruffin Jones,

who was the rector of Bruton Parish, and he knew that I was a ministerial student and a lay reader, and he took me up to Hickory Neck Church in Toano and introduced me up there and then several times -- not too often, but several times that winter -- I went up there on Sundays to take service, ~~to take~~

never dreaming that later on when I came back here I'd go up there every Sunday for four years. But you did meet a few people in town, and the faculty lived in town, of course -- all except President Tyler -- and they all made friends, and I think there wasn't too much of a town-gown division at that time. The town depended too largely on the college to survive. There were only two institutions in town of where people could find employment, ^{the} the college and the hospital on Francis Street.

Williams: ^[Hefflinger] Thelma Brown was telling about Cameron Hall ~~that there was no place~~ -- you talked about the college chapel being the only place big enough for Convocation -- she said that there was no place big enough for a dance, so that when there was a dance, it would be held there at Cameron Hall. That led me to believe about this integration between the two.

Bentley: I think there was a ~~warm~~ warm feeling between the townspeople and some of the students, particularly the older students who roomed in town and took their meals in town, and some of the ladies made a living taking care of students. At that time (this comes to mind) the dining room was run by Mrs. Moncure. I think Mrs. Moncure had ~~a~~ not a license, not a

permit, ~~and~~ but she was authorized to run the dining hall on a basis of so much a month and anything she could make on it, ~~it~~ was hers. Now what do you call that arrangement?

Williams: Commission?

Bentley: Not a commission. There's a legal term for it. It doesn't matter, but she did. ~~And~~ the students for the most part ate in the dining hall, which was just across Jamestown Road, in front of Brafferton. ~~And~~ the Tylers ate there, but I think they were the only members of the staff or faculty that ate there. Mrs. Moncure's eldest daughter, Billie, helped her mother, and we all knew Billie. She was a delightful, charming girl and couldn't escape the eyes -- she being the only girl in the dining room -- of the boys. But she stayed in the dining room and saw to it that we didn't tear up the tables and that sort of thing too much. She later married Fred Goodwin, who had been a student here the year before I entered. Fred went into the Episcopal ministry and became bishop of Virginia, and I loved him dearly, as so many people did, ~~but~~ he married Billie Moncure. And her brother, Henry, I knew as a student here and Mary ^{Carry} ~~Carrie~~, her younger sister.

Williams: Had I interrupted something else you had on your list?

Hazing I wanted to ask about. Did you -- were you aware of hazing?

Bentley: Oh, yes. Coming up from Hampton and being a small-town boy and having been born and bred not in the deep country, but

across Hampton Creek from the town and having grown up in that way, I wasn't quite as sophisticated and used to other boys ^{as} some others might have been. And there was hazing. But there was [^] nothing brutal or vicious or severe. They'd come up and bang on your door and say, "Come out, Duck," and you'd go out. I remember one night they took some of us down under the Wren Building. We had to crawl on our hands and knees with a candle in the dark, all through the dirt and dust of the basement of the Wren Building, but that was all. When we got through, you were just dirty and filthy, a bit scratched up but there were no ^{beatings} ~~feedings~~ and that sort of thing.

Williams: Someone else had said to me that it was not severe.

Bentley: No, no. All of the boys knew each other by first names, really, and all of the teachers addressed us by last names -- Mr. Brown, Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith -- and there were all the courtesies rendered on both sides. As I look back, it was another world from the world in which we live today.

Williams: Which is a marvelous argument for getting people like you to tell about it because people like me will never know it otherwise.

Bentley: And as I look back, I couldn't be more grateful than I am for the privilege and opportunity of having come here when I did and having known the teachers I knew. I can't remember, I'm afraid, anything ^{any} of them taught me, but I remember them very well and what they stood for in life. I remember the boys.

Bob Newton wasst a senior, president of the student body,
 He was later superintendent of schools in Hampton. Paul
 Dearing was a blind boy from Norfolk, totally blind, both
 eyes shut^o out as a little boy. He was a senior my freshman
 year. He roomed in Brafferton and I had one class in
 (Dr. Wilson's history with him) and so three times a week
 I'd go down to Paul's room and read out a lesson to him
 and then question him, with the result that I made better
 grades in that class than any other class. And I remember
 Paul standing in front of the mirror above the wash basin
 in his room to comb his hair and tie his tie. He had a
 stick or cane, not a white one, just an old club cane, but
 he knew the way around this campus so well that he would
 leave his room on the run. He'd come out of his room and
 run through the hall at Brafferton and down the steps and
 along the walk between Brafferton and the Wren Building,
 and he'd tap that first step and run up the steps to the
 Wren Building and then the hallway into his classroom and
 go in and take his seat just as quickly as you would. We
 had two literary societies; Philomathean and Phoenix, ~~And~~
 and Paul was a Philomathean, as I was, so I saw him there. And
 he would debate with the other boys. In fact, I think he
 was president of Philomathean Society. He went on to Vander-
 bilt, took his Masters, went in Y.M.C.A. service and became
 Y.M.C.A. secretary ^{at} of Blacksburg and must have been there for
 forty years. He got to be an institution at V.P.I. For two

generations, you^d_^ ask a man from V.P.I. "Did you know Paul Dearing?" and he'd smile and say, "Everybody knows Paul Dearing." ~~And I mentioned Dean Ribble.~~

These are men who stood out on the campus. There were others, of course, but they come to my mind. But the feeling was good and friendly; we had no feuds. Oh, we had foolishness. The men who lived in Brafferton were Indians and the men who lived in Tyler would threaten to come over and tear the roof off, but they never did. It was all just fun. I think the worse thing that every happened was that some wag -- we called him a wag, a scalawag -- would stand in the second floor of Tyler when we were lined up to go in the dining room and throw a paper bag full of water out on the crowd. And somebody would get wet, but just simple foolishness, kid^s_^ stuff.