Fred Frechette's enrolling in William and Mary in 1942 came from a chance meeting with a work-study recruiter in Massachusetts. After a year in this program he was drafted but returned to campus in 1943 to continue in the work-study project, serving in the first corps of waiters at the Travis House, operated by the Restoration.

Soon after graduating in 1946 he began working on the *Alumni Gazette*, an association that continued over a number of years. After the alumni board voted to bar further articles on the football scandal he resigned as managing editor and became Williamsburg reporter for the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*. Later he moved to Richmond, where he was president of the Richmond alumni chapter. From 1972 to 1975, he was a member of the Society of the Alumni Board of Directors. Working as a reporter and in his public relations business he has remained in constant contact with the college and its officials. His interview covers a variety of subjects mentioned above.
Interviewee: Fred L. Frechette
Date of interview: June 15, 1976
Place: Holly Hill, Jamestown Rd, Williamsburg
Interviewer: Emily Williams
Session number: 
Length of tape: 107 mins.

Contents:
- Work/Study program during WWII
- Male life at W&M during WWII
- "Frat Tat Incident" (1941)
- Campus morale during WWII
- Local fraternities
- Postwar period
- Work on Alumni Gazette
- Involvement in athletic scandal
  - First as president
  - A.D. Chandler - dealing with assessment of problems of
    pastoral as president
  - Miscellaneous
  - Other war memories
  - Henry B. Hopkins
  - Alumni work

Approximate time:
- 40 mins.
- 0 mins.
- 5 mins.
- 3 mins.
- 3 mins.
- 7 mins.
- 6 mins.
- 4 mins.
- 10 mins.
- 3 mins.
- 2 mins.
- 1 min.
- 1 min.
- 20 mins.

See back of sheet for names and places mentioned in interview.
Fred L. Frechette

June 15, 1976

Williamsburg, Va.

Williams: You were telling me of a special program you were in during the war. Is this the reason you came to William and Mary?

Frechette: Absolutely, absolutely. They recruited us. I learned later the background of this was that in the spring of 1942, with the war already having made inroads on the male population of William and Mary, John Stewart Bryan said, "We've got to do something about it. (I don't know if he used those words or not). It was Sharvy Umbeck who suggested the possibility [of a war-work program]. It was patterned after something he had witnessed or had heard of at the University of Chicago, as I recall--the idea of bringing some boys in who might not otherwise be able to afford college, getting them some kind of work and working their way through. John Stewart Bryan bought the idea, and Umbeck started organizing it. But he had a summertime job as a tennis coach somewhere in the Chicago area, so it was dumped in the lap of Hib Corey. Hib, of course, realized that the idea was to go out and find the boys. This was a recruiting job. He did the smart thing: he got ahold of Rube McCray,
who was at that time assistant to "King Carl" Voyles, who was the big man in athletics. Rube McCray and Hib Corey rounded up several members of the faculty, the unlikeliest bunch of recruiters ever put together. Before he even started recruiting Corey had to find the jobs.

Williams: I was going to ask if the college lined up the jobs.

Frechette: Corey did. But he was lucky. He didn't have to go any farther than the Naval Mine Depot, which is now the Naval Weapons Station, down in Yorktown. They said they would hire anybody they could get. They were just absolutely desperate for help, as we found out later. The boys who were recruited gave me these names of people that contacted them: Professor Donald Davis of biology; Raymond Dousé, who was a music professor; Wayne Gibbs of accounting; Harold Phalen of mathematics; "Tom Thorne; Ben Read, who was at the Norfolk division, I think; and "Pop" Werner, who was the freshman football coach. The most frequently mentioned was an assistant professor of biology named Dr. Albert Delisle, and he was the unlikeliest
recruiter you ever saw. He was not quite my height (I guess he was 5'7"), kind of balding, wore thick glasses. He was not fat, but he was not a prepossessing kind of guy. He apparently went everywhere, and boys from Danville, from Frederick, Maryland, and Johnson City, Tennessee, all told me they were recruited by Delisle. But he made his biggest haul in Massachusetts, and that's because he was from Massachusetts. As a matter of fact, he was from South Hadley Falls, and the reason I got lined up was that we used to live next to him when I was very little. He ran into me on the street in Holyoke, where I was working at that time. I was twenty years old, just waiting to be drafted. I was going to night school trying to get an education, and I told him [what I was doing]. He said, "Why don't you go to college?" I said, "I can't afford it." He said, "You can work your way through if you go to William and Mary." I said, "What's William and Mary?" I didn't know! He said, "We can get you a job and you can get your education." I said, "That's great, but with the draft, it won't be long before I go." He said, "We'll get you in the reserve corps. I thought, "Well, I'll give it a whirl." As a matter of fact, he got twelve boys out of that immediate area of Massachusetts. I was among the ones.
I arrived here on a terribly hot evening after a train ride that started at seven o'clock in the morning. I got here about eight o'clock at night. In those days of coal locomotives, when you rode in the coaches you got coal dust all over you. I got off the train, and of course trains were crowded too because it was wartime, and this great big man came shouldering through the crowd, butchering my name (but I'm used to that). I realized he was calling my name. That was my first introduction to Rube McCray. He met me there! He made me feel like "Boy, we're glad to have you, son." He put me in his car, helped carry the bag, and put me in my room in Tyler Hall. They met every boy that came down here, and that was beautiful because if it hadn't been for that, most of us would have headed back.

We were jammed in the rooms -- like in my room in Tyler we had four boys. (It was meant for two.) Then they took us down to register at the Naval Mine Depot as second-class laborers. All that summer we were working there for ten-hour days in that terrible heat, and we were doing what everybody called "nigger work." In World War I there had been a naval air station there. In this great huge field near where the Parkway is now (you can't see it) they had been receiving TNT from the TNT producing firm (Dupont or whoever). It had been coming in faster than their people could handle it; they were just
short-handed. They had laid temporary railroad tracks out on this field, and all these strings of boxcars of TNT waiting to be loaded. (Details of the TNT incident.) That's mostly what we did for the first weeks was unload these boxcars. We got very careless with the TNT because it looked like soap powder.

To get back to the recruiting, I circulated a questionnaire several years ago. The boys said they heard about it in the newspapers or had heard it on the radio. There were at least 360 of us. To work at the Naval Mine Depot you had to be civil service, and it wasn't until after they got the boys on their way down here that they found out that the minimum age for civil service was eighteen. Most of the boys were seventeen; some of them were sixteen because of the eleven-year high schools. What they had to do was that Corey had to hustle up to Washington to the Civil Service Commission, and for the duration of the war, as a result of this program, the civil service lowered its minimum age requirement to seventeen. For the few sixteen-year-olds, he got some work from private employers. There was a pipeline being laid on the Newport News City water system running down old Route 168, which was coming up here and several of the boys worked on that.

As we went out on our buses, we would see them on that. They were already on their job; they even had longer
hours than we had.

Williams: Did special arrangements have to be made with your classes for you to work there?

Frechette: None of us had started classes that summer. When we came down here we thought we were going to have classes, but the idea was that we work during the summer and stash our money away and be able to make a down payment. Well, that was a great theory, but first of all, we didn't make that much money, and secondly, we were always being at Chowning's and always wearing our clothes or needing something, so we didn't save very much. But the college didn't mind -- they let us go on and register.

Williams: Did your job pay your tuition?

Frechette: No, I'll get to that. We were making about $27.50 a week during the summer. Oh yes; I wanted to tell that we sneaked a couple of bombs out of the depot that caused a great commotion. Incidentally, in connection with those bombs, we did it because we were mad at the Marine guards; we wanted to show them they couldn't bully us around. Everybody had TNT in their room; we had bags of it. When these bombs were spit out, and somehow the alarm was sounded that there was going to be search of the dormitory rooms for the bombs. The boys hurriedly got
There used to be a little frog pond right by the Wigwam—a little place just east of the dining hall area, kind of between the old infirmary and Tyler. There was a little frog pond which has now been covered over with a patio. Down there to this day I think you can find twenty-five to fifty pounds of TNT. That's where it was thrown that night when the word came around that they were hunting for it. In September the idea was to break us into two shifts: some of us worked Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and go to classes Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday (of course, in those days there were Saturday classes). The others would work Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday and go to classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We were permitted to carry two-thirds of the regular load; for most of us it was two three-hour classes and a five-hour science, plus they gave us a credit in physical education because of our work we were doing at the Naval Mine Depot. I thought that was very nice of them because we deserved it! We all put on weight that summer and built up muscles we didn't know we had. The theory was that by
going to summer school, we could make up the three hours a semester that we were missing. Some of the boys almost immediately were able to get other jobs, or they came in September and were given better jobs. For example, I know a boy named Dick Duncan; he never went to the Naval Mine Depot; he was selling shoes at Casey's. Fred Flanary here in town was a war worker; he was selling shoes; I think he was on the pipeline job and then he got a job as a shoe salesman. A fellow named Herman Hoffman was a theatre usher and worked at the college library. Tommy Smith and Jimmy Warner shifted over to waiting on tables in the College dining hall. They were also musicians, and they supplemented their incomes by playing in the College dance band. It was a very difficult thing working the way we did; we were getting up before sunrise; it was getting colder and riding often in open trucks, working like... down there. They used to dump us at College Corner at 5:45 or 5:30.

We were dirty, grungy, tired, and all these pretty girls coming down the way to the post office -- the greatest thing in the world. It wasn't for one's ego. We felt a little apart from the campus.
It was pretty hard to feel apart of it when you're away three days a week like that. The financial and monetary needs pulled us all together. When the freshman class elections were held, we put up two war workers as President and Vice President, and we voted for them en masse! It was block voting! Williams: I wonder how the students felt about because you were a distinct group.

Frechette: I found that the girls were particularly sympathetic. Some of the guys looked down on us, and that is natural; None of us had any money or any standing anywhere. Another thing too that scared the heck out of them: we were eager beavers; we wouldn't have been here if we hadn't been. Most of us did fairly well in class because we knew the value of that education. I suppose we upset a lot of applecarts, but war was a big factor that prevented it from becoming too big.

In December all the Air Force reserves were called up and pretty shortly thereafter all the Army reserves. The rest of us were in the navy and we all went out in the spring. What happened during the fall was that there was an impossible situation, particularly for out-of-staters. I couldn't remember what we were
making working three days a week, one of the boys, Jimmy Carpenter, said it was $1.3.93. Dusty Ash said it was $13.65.

Whatever it was, we were falling in debt rapidly. We just couldn't make both ends meet; that's all there was to it. So a lot of the boys dropped out. This became very obvious to Shary Umbeck, who was back by then, and Jack Pomfret, who had succeeded Mr. Bryan as president. They tried as much as they could to shift the boys over. I talked to John Green about this, who was at that time executive vice-president in the Inn, and Lodge and who helped pull this all together. Just before the War, the Restoration operated three restaurants: one at the Lodge, one at the Inn, and the other at the Travis House. In the fall of '42, the Inn had become a rooming house for army and navy wives, and they closed the kitchen and dining room. The labor shortage forced them to close the Travis House. Green said that Kenneth Chorley, who was president of Restoration, said

"We need more places to eat: open the Travis House!" Green said, "I didn't know how -- I didn't have anybody." Green apparently must have mentioned this to Vernon Geddy, who was executive vice-president and sort of resident manager, (because Chorley was generally away).
As I said, the Geddys and the Pomfrets were real close, and they played bridge frequently. Jack Pomfret said there wasn't anything he was afraid to talk about with Vernon Geddy. He said he thinks perhaps over a bridge table in November he said something to Vernon about the trouble the college was having with these boys who were working at the Naval Mine Depot. He said it just wasn't working out. They had these boys down here, and they weren't making enough money. It was too hard on their studies; it was difficult. He said,

"John Green is just desperate for somebody to work in the Travis House. We've got to open it." Pomfret said it was in this casual way that the thing was hammered out. Chorley was enthusiastic about it when Vernon told him about it. John Green said they're going to supply the men you need. A couple of the boys were hired to be dishwashers; the rest of us were hired to be waiters. And then I remember, I think it was in January, must have been sixteen of us were brought down there and given instructions in how to wait on tables. We went through a two-week course. Around the first of February they opened up with us as waiters. That's how the work-study program got started. Of course, it was very successful. It made all the difference in
the world to all of us because we were able to make decent money. The Travis House was only open for dinner. It was closed Mondays and Tuesdays, so it served one dinner on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and on Sundays it served dinner both at noon and in the evening. You would have time to do your studying and still make good money on the tips, because it was good money.

Williams: Was it true what I read somewhere that the boys were getting so prosperous in this job that there was a revival of poker playing on campus?

Frechette: Well, I don't know about others, but I was very fortunate. I was a waiter in the spring of '43, and like everybody else I went into the service; I went into the V-12 program, but I got discharged. I came back the first of February in 1944, but very shortly thereafter the gal who was handling the wines at the Travis House—she was a chief petty officers wife and her husband was transferred and she left. Mrs. Reynolds, the manager, was desperate for a wine steward, and since I was the only boy there over twenty-one, I became the wine steward. I retired because I was making so much money; it was frightening. There were days at the Travis House as a wine steward I walked home with
over \$2.00 \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \text{and in those days a dollar was a dollar. It was incredible!} \notag \notag \notag \notag \notag
\text{Not every day was that good.} \notag \notag \notag \notag \notag
\text{All we served were champagne cocktails and wines, and most of our clientele were army and navy officers.} \notag \notag \notag \notag \notag
\text{We'd play "Old Black Joe" to them about working our way through school, and boy, they tipped, I mean they tipped! What made it great for the wine steward was they didn't take reservations, and it was the only place fifty miles in either direction that was a decent place to eat. You went there when the place opened; they were always lined up waiting when we opened our doors at 6:00. We would fill the place up and then we would take names, and you would have to be there when your name was called, so most people would just go upstairs in the lounge and sit. All we could serve them were champagne cocktails, and they were \$7.50 apiece. Two of them were a \$15.00, and I always got the change from \$2 or more. By the time they had five or six champagne cocktails they were paying as much as for a tip as they were for the champagne cocktails. I was making them as fast as I could. It was fantastic! Literally! And if somebody ordered a bottle of champagne, that would be eight, ten dollars. The tips were pretty good.
I shared the job with my roommate through my senior year. There were six meals a week; I would work three or four, and he would work the other meals, and he would make out very well, too. Two of us were being supported by one job. I put so much money in the bank that along about March in my senior year I retired and turned the job over to another veteran and had plenty left; I had enough left to fly home to California after I graduated. I don't know about the boys working serving the food; they did alright, but that wine steward job was an absolute bonanza. Of course, we were not foolish enough to publicize it; we kept it quiet. But we were working three meals a week, I was making $50 to $100 weeks, $100 a week.

Williams: A little earlier you were telling me a very lovely story about Mr. Pomfret and the war-work boys.

Frechette: This would be the work-study boys. During the fall of 1942, about the time the Travis House started, all of a sudden you didn't hear the words "war-work" anymore; you began to hear "work-study." I never had a chance to talk to Sharvy because he died before but I suspect I could, Sharvy decided that "war-work" was not a dignified title, and he liked "work-study" because that's what they used out at Chicago. When he came back he kind of decided to change it. There were still boys working at the depot--just a handful--but they worked right through. Poor guys; it was terrible.
This would be after I came back from the service. During the holiday periods, of course, the Travis House did not close. It was part of the deal when you took a job there; there would not be vacation time. You couldn't go home or wherever. You would have to stay there half the time and staff the Travis House. Personally it was no problem because I couldn't afford to go home to California; I stayed. For most of the boys it was a hardship; they were a lot younger than I was. What we used to do was to flip coins. For example, Christmas vacation came up in 1945; everybody flipped a coin. About half the boys had to stay through Christmas. Then they would go home and the other boys would come in and work. We either got Christmas or New Year. Well, on Christmas Eve of 1945, I was on my way to check my mail and then go to work about 5:00. At College Corner I ran into John Pomfret. By that time I had gotten to know him. As a student I didn't get to know him well (until later), but he still recognized me. He said, "Frechette, what are you doing here?" And I explained to him that somebody had to be here to keep the Travis House going. He said, "You mean that there are boys here on Christmas Eve?" And I told him unfortunately, yes. "Well, what are you going to do?" I think I was
very fresh with him. I think I said something like, "They're probably going to get some beer or champagne or something, and have a little party." He said, "That's terrible. That's terrible. I tell you what you should do: You get all those boys together, and as soon as you get out of work, bring them to my house, and we'll have a Christmas Eve party." Well, I explained this to the boys. They didn't believe me at first, but I finally convinced them it was true. It was a slow night; we got through about 2:30, and everybody of course ran back to the dormitory to get cleaned up, and we went over there. From a personal standpoint, the interesting thing was that the Geddys and the Pomfrets were having dinner together that night because their sons were in the service. The Geddys also had their daughter, Caroline, with them, who at that time was sixteen. As we came in she was introduced to all the boys, and that's how I met my future wife. Shortly thereafter the Geddys left, and the Pomfrets had just a nice party. I think there were eight of us who had to stay to keep the Travis House open. I think it was a warm and generous thing that he did, because he didn't have to do that. It showed me that he was a very nice man—that's all there is to it.
Williams: Was this program you were in unique in Virginia institutions?

Frechette: I think it was; I don't know. I never heard of it being in effect anywhere else. I understand that a lot of places do that now. I think we had a unique situation; if it had not been for the Restoration and the kind of organization that was it wouldn't have worked. It did work. It has worked. Of course I don't know how it is today because I'm not that close to it, but over the years any number of boys like Jim Kelly—he was at Travis House and King's Arms; I think he did both—the number of young men (I don't know of any women) that have used that program as a means of getting their education, I think, is considerable. I wish somebody would find out sometime. I have always had a great pride having been on the ground floor, breaking the trail for all those that followed. We could have screwed it up badly!

Williams: Apparently you set it on the right track.

Frechette: That was purely accidental, though. I suppose if we hadn't had the kind of boys that stuck it out at the depot and showed that they were willing to work and do well in spite of everything, the college and the Restoration might not have been interested. It was a
great experience; I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Williams: You had said something about that there were so few
men that it made a different situation for you.

Frechette: It really did. Hanging over our heads. My freshman
year, which was '42-'43, Jack Camp was the dining hall
announcer and would occasionally lower the boom and
announce, "All air corps reservists will report in three
days" or something, and of course everyone would go, "Oh!
Some of the girls whose boyfriends were air corps would
get pretty sad. Jack Camp himself reported and he never
came back. By the spring of '43, I think our male
student body had dwindled considerably—only a couple of
hundred of us left, and most of us met on the University
of Richmond on July 1, 1943, for the V-12
program. We left William and Mary after final exams in
June, and two or three weeks later met again up there
at the University of Richmond. Some of us during the fall
flunked out for physical disabilities and what have you.
I was one of them. I went back home to Massachusetts and
had to report back and I was rejected again.

After working for a while (it was too late to get for
the fall semester) I returned to the campus around the
first of February of '44, and things had changed.
The girls pretty much were still there. But a whole new generation of boys were there. All these freshmen boys—the Harvey Chappell's. (Harvey is one of my closest and dearest friends. At that time my roommate was a boy named Tommy Smith as an upstart.) We'd been here before; we were freshman class officers together. All of a sudden there were new officers, honor council; two local fraternities had sprung up in the few months. As a matter of fact, Smith and I and a couple of others counted and there were approximately two hundred boys on the campus, and to the best of our ability, we could count seventeen that were over seventeen years old. (Of course, we were among them.) Only about three of that group of seventeen had been in the service. We both had been in— not for long, but at least had discharges to prove we had been there. Some funny things happened as a result: I remember I was walking on my way to class between what is now the president's office and the law school, and I ran into a girl named Marilyn Kaemmerle, who was the editor of the Flat Hat. I was with Tommy Smith, and she stopped and said, "You know, there are no men on the Flat Hat staff." We said we didn't know that. She said, "Why don't you do something? Come on, join up." Tommy had done
a little sports writing for his high school paper, so he became a sports writer or a sports editor.

She looked over at me and said, "Why don't you come, too". And I said, "I've never done anything like that."

I was joking, but I said, "I've always wanted to write a column." She said, "Alright." And just like that, I became a Flat Hat columnist. That set the pattern;

I remember not too long (afterwards) the same sort of thing happened in the old post office. I ran into Althea Hunt, whom I didn't know very well. She said, "I want you to try out for a play." I said, "Really?"

She said, "Yes. I want you to give it a try. Have you ever done anything?" I said, "Well, not really". I had mentioned I had done something in junior high one time. "Well, you come on. We're going to have tryouts. We've got to try you out!" Because there was no body else. I wound up as the male lead in Quality Street, and me -- I can't act my way out of a paper bag! I remember they wanted cheerleaders, so I did a little cheerleading one time. I absolutely didn't go for it all, but that's the way it was; there was nobody else. So I compiled this fantastic record of undergraduate activities because I happened to be there! I operated under false pretenses; I got O.D.K. president's aide, all this simply during those wartime years there were no
men around to do those sorts of things. If there had been, I don't think I would have quite so active.

I remember being an undergraduate in that period. The boys came back and they began to really pour back in the fall of '43. Poor girls; I'm telling you, they had a terrible time socially. First of all, they were older than most of the boys, and there were not that many boys around. Their blind dates was what kept them going with socially acceptable boys from various naval installations and army installations. It wasn't very easy. As a matter of fact, if I were working at the Travis House (as I did so often) on a Saturday night and there was a dance at school or something, I could get through by 9:15. I would call up about 9:00 or 9:15 and literally have a choice of who I wanted to take. I don't think I made very many friends by doing that sort of thing!

It was not a humbling experience for a man, to put it very honestly. During this period we had in February of 1945 an early issue (of the Flat Hat) after the first semester exams. It was the first or second issue. We used to have an office up in Marshall-Wythe (now James Blair) on the third floor. There would always be two or three of us around, usually Marilyn Kaemmerle, who was the editor, and Nancy Easley, who succeeded her, and two or three others like that.
Kaemmer was having a terrible time; she had to write the editorials. She took it very seriously. She asked me what to write about that day, and I remember _ don't telling her anything. She said, "Well, I'm going to do something appropriate for Lincoln's Birthday," She could type much faster than I could. She finished hers before I could finish mine; I was having trouble writing mine. She said, "What do you think of this?" I looked at it, and I said "I wouldn't print that! No way, Mac." She said, "Well, I don't know. Maybe I will. If I can think of something better, I won't print it." Well, she printed it. Wow! Did it ever get her in trouble! It was absolutely true what she wrote, but it wasn't the time or the place, and a lot of people didn't like what she said. I remember some kids from Toano came down to throw rocks at students. A lot of boys here were Southerners. I remember we had a series of meetings in C-21 Taliferro, which became a command post.

What happened was that James Gordon Bohannon and that crew all said, "We've got to have some kind of control over what these kids do." Of course, students being students, we didn't like that idea. We took the position that we may not agreed with what she wrote, but she had a right to do it. When the pressure got fierce
some of the hotheads (and there were some) wanted a strike. Jack Pomfret called together what he described as the leadership of the campus. We met in old Phi Beta Kappa Hall; there must have been thirty of us, girls and boys. He told us if we persisted and went ahead and had a student strike that he would have no recourse but to resign. That kind of sobered up some of us. Some of us went back and did our best to cool things. And we did; we succeeded. No strike took place. There was some readjustment in the way they cleared Flat Hat stuff; nothing really changed, but it was a big tempest-in-the-teapot for a while. It kind of colored Mac Kaemmerle's life, though; I think she had to give up being editor. Ruthie Wiemer succeeded her. (She became very active in that kind of thing after she graduated.) That was big excitement.

Williams: What could you say of the morale on campus during the war, generally?

Frechette: I think morale was pretty good. There was a little more of "Live today and let tomorrow take care of itself" I think it was normal under the circumstances. Just recently, when I moved down here, I uncovered these old Flat Hats from way back, and I read all my columns. Its amazing; change the dates and print them today --- the same complaints about food, profession grade... same things.
Nothing changes. That's one thing I have learned as I have gotten older is that people don't change; just the dates and the circumstances change.

We were shook up frequently by the deaths of people we knew real well. But like a death in the family you get over it. We put up with a lot of things because we couldn't do anything about them.

Food was terrible because we had ration and I think that might have actually prevented us from raising hell about the kind of food they were serving us.

Many times we had for breakfast apple butter instead of margarine or real butter for our toast, and we'd have fried spam instead of bread. We didn't like it, but I think we were tolerant. And those of us who smoked, finding cigarettes was terrible. I'll never forget it; I became acquainted with Murads: I never knew they existed! You took whatever you could find. Travel was very difficult.

When vacation break came Greyhound just couldn't provide enough buses, and the trains were out of this world. I remember kids actually getting in the baggage compartment underneath the buses to get a ride to Richmond. They weren't supposed to, but the aisles would be jammed; they did the best they could for them. If anything happened, they
would have been lost.

Williams: You mentioned the local fraternities. Were you in one of them?

Frechette: No. They had to run class elections every semester because of the rapid turnover, and Smith and I and one or two others ran for some office right after we came back, and we got defeated. It was the only time we ever got defeated in an election. The reason we got defeated was because of these two local things that engineered the whole thing; there was no chance. So we deliberately organized a club, the Sovereigns Club, for only one reason: to use it as a means of getting even, and we did. We serenaded; we designed a gin. We had a lot of fun with it. We used it as a political weapon!

Williams: So you were a fraternity without a Greek name.

Frechette: Not really. We were both members of fraternities. We just called it a club. We gave it some of the trappings of a fraternity but we carefully avoided it, because Smith was a KA and I was a Phi Tau. We just gave it the aura of one.

Williams: The national fraternities had been suspended for the duration of the war.

Frechette: That's right. When the guys came back they were immediately reactivated.

Williams: There was no thought then to keeping these local ones?
Frechette: We never gave it a thought; I don't know about the others. We automatically disbanded when the fraternities came back. The fraternities all lost their houses while the war was under way. I was not privy to all of that. I pledged a fraternity when I was a freshman. We had a beautiful house, and then all of a sudden we didn't have it. I never really kept up with it; it's all right for a time and place. When they came back, I thought, "Gee, here's a great opportunity to start from scratch and make fraternities have a positive influence." Nobody was interested, so I deactivated myself, and I have been deactivated ever since. I guess I was trying to be a do-gooder, and do-gooders aren't very popular.

Williams: By the time you graduated in 1946, had there begun any of this post-war veteran crush that I know came later?

Frechette: Oh, yes. We began to get veterans back in the fall of '45, in a trickle at first. A lot of guys I knew in my freshman year came back in the fall of '45. They really began to hit us in the spring of '46. They didn't want any part of making a fraternity fun thing. It was a difficult time for the college because you had guys who had been away for three or four years and who were
mature, They had all kinds of experiences not all of them good—liquor and everything else. When they tried to tell these boys not to drink it was ridiculous. There was no way they were going to keep them from doing that. I'm sure an awful lot of girls were brought farther along sexually than they might otherwise have been. You figure that all of a sudden the average age of your male student body jumps to be about three years older than the average age of the girls—those who had to deal with student affairs had no bed of roses. I remember being called in by a man who for a time was dean of students, a man named (George) Armacost—terribly miscast. He became a president of a college in California—Redlands or something. But at that time he was trying to be the dean of students. He was a very straight-laced, Bible-type person; I don't remember him too well. He called me in with Tommy Smith, my roommate. He asked us what could he do to cope with the drinking situation? That kind of broke us up because I did more drinking as a college undergraduate than ever since. It was the thing to do. We really couldn't tell him anything, and I thought
it was kind of ridiculous to ask us for advice.

Even today it's ridiculous to ask students to help run things because you've got to set the course. You couldn't prohibit it. Sharvy Umbeck, who I think was one of the really great men, I was probably right. He came into our room one night. We used to get a bottle of Canadian Club or something and just really have a party. We locked the door and put a blanket up over the transom. We weren't afraid of disturbing anyone; the guys knew we had it, and they were going to drink it on us! We were quietly drinking ourselves into oblivion, and there was a knock at the door, and we said, "Go away." A voice said, "Sharvy Umbeck." We let him in and sat down.

We were just high enough to say, "Hey, have a drink with us," and I think he did. He was asking us about something, and he said, "Well, as long as you do it this way, it's okay." I was twenty-three years old, and how were they going to tell me I couldn't drink? Guys had been over in Italy, France, North Africa, and hitting a couple of those islands; you're not going to tell those guys that are old and hardened and had risked their lives (I'm not talking about myself. Some of these guys had flown over Germany and all)—you're
not going to tell these guys they can't drink! No way!
So it was pretty wild for a while there. I think it took all of four or five years for the last of that group to get through. Some of them stayed around forever. They rode the GI Bill for all it was worth. I think they deserved it. They had given a big hunk of their lives. I was in Williamsburg, although I was no longer a student. I knew they were rough time, but the college survived. It always survives.

Williams: You were by this time working on the Alumni Gazette?
Frechette: No, my first job after I graduated was with the Restoration in their hotel operations. I worked there for almost four years. In the meantime, I had been working, helping Charlie McCurdy with the Alumni Gazette. He offered me a full-time job at peanuts because he didn't have the funds, but it gave me a chance to learn more about journalism. We worked very well together. We made the Alumni Gazette one of the ten best alumni magazines in the country. It was Charlie's doing; he was a very able man. Then we took on Athletics.

Charlie was not very much in favor of athletics, but I was. It's as much a part of college as the ivy on the wall. Athletics should be a healthy thing, provided the boys who play it are bona fide students. Well, we all knew that some weren't.
There were some pretty unsavory characters. We weren't going to attack them; we just wanted to say, "We can have an athletic program, but does it have to be like this?" So I started to do a lot of research on these things to find out, for example, how many boys were they bringing in, and of that, how many stayed in their class very long, failure rate and all these things.

It was very hard information to come by. We blocked out a series of articles. We got our first one written, and KABOOM! A lot of people got mad about it. They told us we couldn't print any more of those, so Charlie and I decided we would just resign, which was a smart thing for me because I fell into this lovely job as a reporter for the Times-Dispatch, and went on to greater things. In retrospect it was understandable.

I think that sort of thing today would not raise as big a fuss. You mean the articles would not raise that big a fuss. Yes. The scandal was what prompted us to do the series. I don't know anything firsthand about the scandal. I was here in town, working for the college, and heard all the rumors; I have my theories about what happened but I can't add anything of an historical nature. I can just comment that Steve McCray was a very fine person. I don't think that he, himself, although he took responsibility for it,
was the kind of person to do the things that were done. He proved the kind of man he was; he went down to North Carolina to take over that boys' school and did a fantastic job. I remember him because he was the man that met me the day I arrived in Williamsburg. I would run into him over the years. I never played football for him or anything like that, but he always impressed me as a gentleman—a rough, country boy, not a tremendously intelligent man, but I don't think he was sneaky and he was man enough to take the responsibility for what happened. I always had a sneaking suspicion that Jack Pomfret on his side—of course had to take responsibility—might have been glad to have it over with and behind him. He would duck. I remember talking to Jack Pomfret; I got to know him pretty well during the late '40s. I remember sitting with him in his study in the president's garage, hearing him just as clear as day—he was sitting with his back to this case of books and typewriter and everything, and said, "This is what I like the most," which is what he spent most of his extra spare time doing; historical research. He loved history, he really did. I think he was terribly miscast as a president of a college. I don't think he wanted it; he didn't want to be
bothered or didn't want to hear about things that kept him from his first love. He was a unique man.

Williams: Why do you think he did it then and became a president?

Frechette: Well, I can't give you a first-hand account; I can give you my theory. His wife, Sarah, who also is a very nice person, was the sister of a man named Jack Wise. Jack Wise ran the Richmond newspapers for John Stewart Bryan. I think the inference is quite obvious. I don't know whether it is true or whether it happened that way, but it would seem to me that Jack Pomfret wound up as president of the College because of that connection. He may never admit it, but I don't think he really wanted it, but he wound up in it.

It was one of those things. He was a dean at Princeton when he was tapped to be president of William and Mary. I think he should have remained a professor of history. I think he might admit to that today. As I recall, somebody told me not too long ago that he has been known to say that. He has been happy as a lark out there in the Huntington Museum doing what he likes to do. It's too bad that he did not do his homework as a president. As much as I respect him and admire him, he did a lousy job as president of this college. He permitted things to go on that should not have gone on. He is responsible.
He looked the other way or didn't look at all.

You can't run an institution that way; you've got to know what's going on. You've got to take the time and the trouble to go after them and clean them up. He didn't. Alvin Chandler, his successor, tried harder; completely opposite from Jack Pomfret in that Jack didn't want to know anything, and Alvin wanted to know everything! He wanted to do it all himself. I remember early in my career as a reporter for the *Times-Dispatch* working here in Williamsburg, doing a long interview with Alvin.

I asked him why,

...after having been an admiral in the Navy...why...he come back to the College...the father was J.A.C. Chandler, and he was a fantastic man. The connection between J.A.C. Chandler and Alvin is very direct: Alvin's motivation was vindication of his father, because J.A.C. Chandler did a financial juggling act here to build up this college. He scratched and really fought to get things built. But in the doing he did so much financial juggling that, although he never made a nickel on it and there was no dishonesty involved, he got things pretty messed up, and there was a cloud over his head when he died in office. It was pretty messy trying to get it
I'm convinced that Alvin's motivation was vindication of his father; he always felt bad about the cloud under which his father died because of this situation. There is no doubt in my mind 1) that he really revered his father and 2) that he loved William and Mary. Which came first I'm not sure. He was determined to straighten this place out, but he was not the man for the job. Alvin was really a mixed-up combination of characteristics. The man loved to fight. As I told you earlier, occasionally when I was covering stories at the college I would get a story from Alvin one evening and would put it in the paper the next morning, then read the afternoon paper or the Daily Press and find out he had said degrees opposite. (I can't think of a for instance.) I was as direct as he was; I would go storming into his office, and Miss Pearl Jones, who was his secretary, never tried to stop me. I remember telling him in one of our heated exchanges that "the best thing he could do for the college is resign." But the son-of-a-gun, I think he liked it; I think he loved it. After one of our worst arguments he turned around and nominated me for the distinguished service award given by the Jaycees here in town, and as result of that I got it. I remember when I told him I was going to leave the Times-Dispatch
and work for Reynolds (Metal Company) he literally had tears in his eyes.

I think maybe if he had had a couple of men around him during the years he was here that would have fought with him that he might have done a better job. I don't think many people fought with him because he was pretty frightening, particularly if you worked for him. He was hell-bent, full-speed-ahead, damn-the-torpedoes, a bull in a china shop. I think if he had an Achilles' heel, other than his bluntness, it was his talent for believing what he was saying at that moment was the absolute truth. He couldn't recognize that he might have changed his mind from yesterday. He told me one thing one day and another thing another day; that's what used to get me so furious about him. He wasn't trying to lie when he said, "I didn't say that;" he really didn't believe he said it. I think the man was one of these people with the sincere ability to think of only what he is saying at that moment.
Of course, that is absolutely hopeless in a college atmosphere; you can't do things like that. I'm not sure he was the right man at the right place at the right time. He was here; we had to live with him. He was in constant turmoil with the faculty and the administration; they just hated him. Poor Alvin Chandler couldn't go down the hall and go to the john without someone calling me up and telling me they were disloyal to him. He had no loyal help; people very close to him were snitching on him all the time. I remember some of the big controversies, when practically every story coming out of William and Mary was a front page item, a headline (I'm not going to name any names). I would say, "Let me quote you." "No. But maybe you can find somebody else." In those days the Times-Dispatch would not print a story without attribution. Absolutely. So I had all this information and I couldn't use it. Russ Carneal, who was in the House of Delegates, told me time and again, "If one of these idiots would stand up and speak and let us have something we can put our teeth into, Alvin Chandler is gone. The governor is ready to fire him." James Wilkinson Miller, who was head of the philosophy department, finally spoke up, but not until he had himself lined up a job
at McGill. This sort of thing went on too often.
I asked Jim Miller a number of times to stand up,
but he wouldn't do it. I'm not saying that he was
one of those that snitched, but Alvin was surrounded
by snitches. He may have been bad, but I don't think
he was as bad as he was painted. In retrospect
he looks pretty good to me because at least he
was his own man. He was a sincere man with some
clay on his feet. He was a miscast, just as Jack Pomfret
was a miscast. We didn't get a really good president
until "Pat" (Paschall) came around. "Pat" did a
helluva job. I think he overstayed his leave; he
was a man who couldn't delegate. In his heyday
when he was really sharp, before he had some
problems, I would help Jim Kelly with the Alumni
Gazette, so I would get involved with "Pat" occasionally.
I talked to him about something, and "Pat" had that
great talent for never seeming to be going in the
direction he was going. I think one of the reasons
he was so successful in state bureaucracy was
because he was a devious man--I don't mean that
in a bad sense--shrewd, but devious. It took me
a while to catch onto him. He wanted to go from here
to there, but you didn't know that when he started
because he started to go about one hundred seventy-five degrees in the other direction, and all of a
sudden, he is attacking you from the rear, where you're
most vulnerable. In other words, that is how he
convinced you that you ought to do it his way; he
wouldn't just come out and say something. But if
he thought you were wrong, he had a way of doing
it and being very smooth about it. When he was
after something, you might know he was coming after
it, but halfway through the conversation, you would
become convinced he wasn't after it. And all of a
sudden, you were giving it to him! He had a talent
for achieving what he wanted to achieve. This campus
we have here today is a testimonial to that. I'm not
familiar with the details of his breakdown or
anything like that because I was not here. no first-
hand knowledge. I suspect a part of it is that he
he was not a great administrator. He'd give a man a job, but
tried to do too much himself. he wanted
to do it himself because he could do it better. He
probably could, but that's what breaks a man down. I think Tom Graves is
a fantastic man, but it's much too early to talk about him in an historical sense.
I remember a few of the people that I've run
[about whom]
into I can make meaningful comments. I think you've
probably heard of Dr. Swem--a fantastic man. An energetic
little man, always bubbling over. He was proud of everything he was doing—and rightfully so.

Williams: Friendly to the students?

Frechette: It was a funny thing; he was always friendly to me, and he didn’t know me from a hole in the ground. You’d say, “Hello” to him, and he would come back with a “Hello” — a bright, cheerful man. We had some characters around here. I remember we had a pair of Spanish professors named Uralde; one particularly was bald, and when he walked, he bounced! He was everybody’s joke when he walked. I was in Jimmy Fowler’s class the day he gave his final lecture before going in the Navy, and we all went. I wasn’t even taking history, but this girl I was dating — everyone was jammed in Washington Hall that morning to hear it. It was the first time I had heard him lecture — and the last as I recall. Everyone came in there because it was his farewell performance. They couldn’t have gotten another human soul in that room. When he finished his lecture there was a standing ovation; it was really something. I didn’t know him, but it made me feel kind of chill running up and down my spine because he was going off to the war. "Cy" Lambert called everybody by their first name. Of course, I saw him when he was commanding the ship for the chaplins.

The proudest little man you ever saw, marching at the
head of all these guys. They marched everywhere— to the
dining hall and all. It was something to see "Cy," the
shortest man out there, leading up there; I think he
loved that. Just a short time after I came
back after I was discharged in February of '44, The
Army Specialized Training Unit marched away to war.
I used to hate them; I used to be in Taliferro and
they would come to breakfast about 8:00 in the morning singing at the top of their lungs!
We had enough of that, and when they marched away Smith
and I were not very unhappy, but a lot of girls were.
Some of those boys came back to William and Mary.

I remember Henry Billups. I talked to him a few times—
that's all. He was a legend in his own time.
All the years I knew him he used to ring the college
bell, and he didn't have to do that. Apparently the old
alumni in those days (and they're all dead now) knew him
because earlier than that he used to be a waiter in the
college dining hall, and in those days he got to be
very intimate with the boys. They would come back to
see Henry, and they would embrace him; they really liked
him. Of course, when I knew him he was a very
old man, and he was beginning to get on his dotage. But he was
very precise about that. He used to have a gold watch he
carried on his belt. There's nothing very memorable there.

Williams: I know you've been since you moved to Richmond, president of the Richmond Alumni chapter. Can that group have a great deal of influence in Richmond in the sense of working with the General Assembly, or is this something that one thinks there in Richmond that they must have influence?

Frechette: Oh, they can have a tremendous amount of influence. Let's put it in perspective: all depends on the situation. I was an officer and a president of a chapter, and we didn't do much of anything as a chapter. As alumni we can do a lot; we have on occasion risen up and done a lot. Generally speaking, it's not through the chapter so much as it is through gathering for the common cause. We may go to the chapter meetings, but the time comes we try to press the buttons we know best how to press.

We used to have a big thing for the members of the House of Delegates, but that's no longer done. I've never been much of a lobbyist, but some of the men in Richmond who are William and Mary people know and can and do. The only thing I ever did was I did my damnedest to get T. Waller on the Board of Visitors recently, and fortunately we got him on there. It's hard for me to put a label on it because we get together and talk to people; how do you define that?
Williams: It's not a lobbying group, in other words.

Frechette: No, definitely not.

Williams: Do other Virginia schools use their Richmond-based alumni this way?

Frechette: I don't think so. You figure that half of the General Assembly are University of Virginia people. Although we've got some good William and Mary people in the assembly. I have been asked to contact people, but I haven't. I don't think it does much good unless you already know a guy. I wouldn't mind talking to Bill Murphy or Jimmy Dillard, who are both in the house, because I know them; I know them real well. Or Johnny Dalton--even Mills Godwin.

I think that's the way it works; in other words, if we want to achieve a certain thing, the way it's done is not to hit Delegate Joe Blow, you say "Hey, Johnny Smith knew Joe real well; they were in school together, or practiced law together, or played golf together. Hey Johnny, how about talking to Joe?" That's the way it's going to work. They're not going to listen to a stranger. They'll be polite to you, but a friend can make points. I think that's the way legislators, legislatures, and even Congress works; I don't think they're going to listen to people putting pressure on them. I think they resent pressure; I would if I were a politician. I'm not saying that you couldn't operate in an organized way through
the Richmond group; we've got a very large group of alumni in Richmond. I think most of us, without ever coming out and saying so, realize that the only way to work is by working through people that know people. Of course, we all rallied on this athletic thing almost two years ago. I think we put a tremendous amount of pressure not on the board (the board didn't need it), but we put a lot of pressure on the college itself.

One thing that I'm proud of and worked very hard to achieve while I was on the alumni board is something I believe in very firmly: the college is made up of many families. You've got an undergraduate family; you've got a faculty family; you've got an administrative family. But they tend not to count the alumni as part of the family, which is a very bad mistake. I believe that we alumni should
be considered a viable part, not only in terms of
going out and asking us for money. We can give
a lot of input there. Over the last couple
of years I helped rewrite the rules (I didn't do it
I was one of the committee members). We set up a new committee organization
in which we actually have a committee meeting regularly
with the president, setting up channels of communication
with the undergraduate faculty, administration, and
with the Board of Visitors, which I think you've
got to do to run an institution properly. One thing I didn't have a chance to follow through on
that I was trying very hard to do when I had to
concentrate on this: go off the board was I believe there is a tendency
in the teaching of college level to operate within
an ivory tower atmosphere, separate from the real world.
And there are a helluva lot of men and women out in
who could
the real world come back and give some input pertinent
to the various disciplines that would be helpful.
For one thing, I think we can show that liberal arts
education is not to be sneezed at. You don't have
to be a specialist; there are a helluva lot
of history, art, English majors doing things today
in business of all kinds and being very successful at
it. They can come back and say, "Look, you don't have to
trade school graduate to make it today." A liberal
education is the best thing you can have for a lot of things, particularly if you want to go into business for yourself. We can tell you how and we can tell you what's good about this, because liberal arts institutions are unfortunately beginning to be on the defense. Kids expect to be chemists or engineers—all these one-dimensional people. I've run into so many over the years as a reporter, a public relations man, and a film maker. They're so shallow! They don't know it. All they know is their speciality. Nothing is worse than to deal with them sometimes. They wouldn't know literature if you threw a book at them! Their whole training has been on some special, narrow track. Of course, there is so much they have to know; that's all the time they've got to do it, so we've got to have specialists, I suppose. It's a shame.

Williams: Do you see this as something that the alumni could do now?

Frechette: I think we could help out in that respect if the faculty people gave us a chance; I think they're a little jealous. I've got a funny attitude about people who tend to be faculty people. I go back to the kind of guy who became a faculty person. He was already off by himself; he was not very competitive, generally (Nothing is universal). But generally speaking the non-competitors went into things like teaching and the ministry. The competitors went into business.
Well, this is too bad, because they tend to downplay competition. The trend is there, and that's not the real world; it's competitive and if you can't compete, you're in tough shape. There should be more of this. Now I'm not talking about Charlie Quitmeyer and his group--they know what the score is.

Liberal arts-type professors are definitely non-competitors, except in a very cerebral level. Unfortunately that's not the level that's going to help a kid a whole lot. All of a sudden they come out and they find out that they've got to get their hands dirty. It's a big shock to them. I think the best thing that can happen to them is to have to work; that's why I think work-study is so great. That kind of negates some of the bad effects of this uncompetitive type that they're listening to who is not in touch with the real world. These kids are smarter than we give them credit for, but I think they can be much smarter if they have to go out and work. Some people say, "It was terrible that you had to work your way through school;" that was the best thing that happened to me! They ought to make every kid who is eighteen support himself for a year before he goes to college--no help. He has to go out and find a job and dig ditches or whatever. That teaches him something about life. He gets his car and $ and then is given his college education; you know, that's not healthy. You find a lot of problems that we've had are because of that very nature. Things
have been too easy for them, and what they have is a guilt feeling. They get so bleeding-heartish about everyone that doesn't have things. They're guilty; we shouldn't have this. They have to go out and work for some of it. They soon find out that some people don't have it because they don't have the initiative to work for it; all people are equally educable; all people aren't equally going to work. There are a lot of sneaky people in this world; there are all kinds, and you have to make allowances for that. But I'm on a soapbox now.

Williams: From your alumni work and having been on the alumni board, what do you see as the greatest challenge facing the William and Mary alumni?

Frechette: I wouldn't call it a great challenge, but there are two things that I think the college needs. One is to bring the alumni into the mainstream of the college.

The other thing is a little more time. You see, we didn't have an alumni body; we're beginning to have one. But for all intents and purposes William and Mary is a new school. We don't have that great, big backlog of alumni behind us. We've got to continue to crank out top-flight kids who can build, if the tax structure will permit it, success in the monetary sense—property, whatever. Because until we build that
big backlog we're not going to be able to raise
the kind of money to do the things this college
needs. They think they can raise $18,000,000.
I think they may be able to, but I think
it's not all going to come from alumni. It's going
to have to come from other sources, which is fine;
we need that, too. What we need now is time, because
you only build an alumni body over a length of time.
You think back that it wasn't until 1939 that we
got selective with our admissions. Before that
anybody could walk in here, and it shows because
we got a zilch alumni body. We know that we get
no response from the classes through the late
'20's and '30's; that were on the surface big in
numbers. One in four would graduate. A lot of people
are on our alumni rolls but a lot of those were here
only a semester; they're lost. When you turn out
seventy-five to eighty percent graduating, then you're
building an alumni body. These kids I went to school
with in war-work, a considerable number of them stayed
here, and they're just now beginning to get a
little of the wealth. They are beginning to be successful.
These guys are in their fifties, and it takes a little
while. We weren't graduating that many. You give this
thing time to build up. That's not a challenge, but
that's the way it's going to go. Alumni are, on the
average, in the first ten, fifteen years out no good
because they are preoccupied with building a home,
building a family, getting ahead in their occupation.
They then begin to get interested; they might pay
a nominal thing every year. Then they begin to turn
back to school, and that's when we begin to get them.
There again, they got to have something to give,
and that takes time to develop. So I wouldn't
call it a great, big challenge; I would just say let's
be realistic about it. We need more time; we're
getting it. The future of William and Mary is magnificent.
It is unique. There is no school anywhere that's like
it. There are a lot of schools that can say that, but
I think we have a lot to be proud of here, and
as long as we are a tough school and we make kids
cry over their grades a little bit... The things you
remember in life are the things that are hardest to
achieve, and kids that go through William and Mary
have a tough time getting through, but they get through.
They are the ones that will look back with the most
pride. The only way you can build pride is to make
somebody
work for something; you can't do it by giving
it to him. The marines used that for years; if you
survive basic training in marines, man, you are always
a marine (ask Jim Kelly). That's what pride is based on; a common experience that wasn't easy; it was hard to come by. That's why you will always find anybody who went through our war-work program would be proud of that. We used to call each other F.E.'s. I wouldn't tell you what that means because it's an obscenity, but we called each other F.E.'s with pride. Anybody who knows what that means knows we went through hell and we were proud of it.

Williams: This manuscript that you were telling about—when is that to come out?

Frechette: Mr. Kelly has been promising to print it for three years! I've offered to pay for it, but he wants the college to pay for it, coming out of the president's discretionary fund.

Williams: I want to thank you for taking the time this morning...

Frechette: I love to talk about William and Mary!