Frank Parsons

4 September 2009

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Mame Warren,

interviewer

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is September 4, 2009, and I'm in Lexington, Virginia, with my good and dear friend, Frank Parsons. Frank, today we're going to be concentrating on your professional career here at Washington and Lee. Let's skip right over your student years and talk about how you came here as a professional. Who actually hired you?

Parsons: I think I was hired by President [Francis Pendleton] Gaines [president, 1930–59], with a sit-in on part of our conversation by Dr. [James G.] Leyburn [dean of the university, 1947–56].

Warren: Really? Oh! Do you remember that clearly?

Parsons: I remember the call that came and I have to reconstruct, just to set the stage for the call, the fact that I graduated in 1954. One of the saddest days of my life was coming back from Clifton Forge [Virginia] having taken some of my exams early—in those days exam period lasted two weeks—and so I took a number of exams early in the exam period and then absented myself from Lexington and Washington and Lee and went over and put out the Clifton Forge *Daily Review*, the world's smallest daily newspaper, for several days and then came back. I had one more exam to take. I came back on a Sunday afternoon, walked into the fraternity house, and everybody was sitting there, which was unusual, and everybody had glum faces on. What I learned then was that the Executive Committee had been coming and picking up brothers and taking them in for some kind of a conversation about honor violations [in the cheating scandal of 1954, which prompted the end of subsidized football at Washington and Lee]. The result of that ultimately was that five of my fraternity brothers and one young man, who was just taking his meals at our house, all left school abruptly as a result of that. So, I had come back to that and so that put kind of a cloud over graduation for me, but nevertheless I did graduate.

Because I was interested in staying as close as possible to the young woman that I

intended to marry, I took the job in Clifton Forge because I had been asked to do that by a man that owned the paper. He was a sort of a transplant who had come to Clifton Forge from elsewhere and he wanted a local person as his managing editor. He made me a sufficiently attractive offer that I was willing to go and do that until I could find something more in line with my interests. I had gone over there and I was working getting out the Clifton Forge *Daily Review*.

Sometime there in—I don't remember the exact date—it was in August [1954], early August, that the phone rang. It was Albertina Ravenhorst on the phone and she said that President Gaines wanted to talk to me and could I speak with him. I said, "Well, of course I can." The first thing that went through my mind [was] that somewhere along the line, because of my affiliation with five, six people who had left under the Honor System, they were getting ready to recall my diploma. That they'd somehow implicated me, which I was not at all involved in it, and I was going to have my diploma recalled.

Dr. Gaines then came on the phone and you would have thought I was the long-lost prodigal son. "Frank, my boy, how are you?" Well, I had been in Dr. Gaines presence three times before that. I'd been in his presence only three times: at the reception at the Lee House for freshmen, at the reception for seniors, and when he handed me my diploma. So he hardly knew me [laughs], although I have to give him credit that he was pretty good sometimes remembering names and things. But he was trumped in that capacity by [Dean of Students] Frank Gilliam and [University Treasurer] Earl Mattingly. [Have I] ever told you my poem that I came across in the *Southern Collegian* about Mattingly and Gilliam and their propensity for names?

Warren: No, tell me.

Parsons: Would you like to hear it?

Warren: I'd love to.

Parsons: Okay, remembering now that Mattingly's name was Earl *Stansbury* Mattingly.

The Earl of Stansbury knows your name,
Where you come from and when you came.
Frank J. Gilliam, equally knowing,
Knows when you're leaving and why you're going.

As long as I can remember that, I think my memory's reasonably intact.

Warren: That's a good one.

Parsons: Anyway, back to Dr. Gaines's call, he said, "Of course you know Jack has left us." I thought, *Jack, Jack, Jack, who in the heck is Jack?* Then all of a sudden I remembered. "Jack Carper," I said.

Warren: Carper?

Parsons: Yes, Jack Carper. He was the director of publicity. That was his title at the time. What he had done was, he had quit in protest of the aftermath of the Honor System violations and the necessity to cancel the '54 football season. Momentous events in Washington and Lee's history: giving up the grants-in-aid program and going back to what has now become Division III football, except in those days it was referred to as nonsubsidized football. Well, it became totally subsidized football in my mind because the university began to pay all the cost of the intercollegiate programs.

Anyway, I correctly identified Jack Carper for Dr. Gaines and he said, "Yes, he left us in protest over the decision and you've been recommended to take his job." I said, "Oh really?" and he said, "Yes." I said, "Well!" He said, "When could you come over and talk to us?" I said, "I don't know. As you know, I'm working right now. I'll try to come as soon as you would like for me to." He said, "How about this afternoon?" I said, "I can't come this afternoon." Part of my job at the paper as the managing editor of the world's smallest daily, I also had to cover the bundle route. I had to take bundles of papers out to about six outlying regions and left them someplace else where they could pass them on to carriers. That was all part of the job and justified the exorbitant salary they were paying me at the time. I told him I couldn't come that afternoon but I could surely come over the next afternoon, but I would have to plan my day so that I couldn't get over there before I think it was four-thirty in the afternoon and would that be all right? He said, "Oh yes, indeed."

The next afternoon I was in his office talking with him about the events that had brought me over there. He described the fact that they would like to have me come and become the director of publicity. Now keep in mind that the school year's going to start now in about three weeks at most, maybe two weeks, and so they were under great pressure to fill this job. I didn't realize what a desperate choice they'd made in me. [Professor of journalism] Tom Riegel tells the story that he had recommended me from the very start as the person that he thought would be good in this job and that that [I] would be his first choice.

Also, I must insert here I was not officially a journalism major. They treated me like one.

Because of my experience with the army newspaper and in Korea and having worked a year as the managing editor of the *Daily Review* and worked on it in the summers and things there, they gave me credit for knowing a good bit about elementary journalism, so I got to take all the advanced courses without the prerequisites. I think in the annals of the journalism department they carry me as a major but W&L didn't have double majors at that time or majors and minors. I had taken the advice of an AP correspondent in Korea that I should major in something other than journalism. His rationale was that I was already a pretty good journalist. I didn't think of myself that way but I took that as a compliment. He suggested that I major in something else and he finally settled on political science because "political science," he said, "was government, international relations, and politics. Eighty percent of what you read in the paper turned on those matters." And he said something that might have been true then. It's certainly not true now. "The rest of it is sex and violence. You can learn about that on your own." That was what he said. Of course now today we know that sex and violence is also enmeshed with the world of politics.

When I came back to Washington and Lee I had to start late. I set out and one of the first persons I encountered on the campus was Professor Rupert Latture. He was interested in me being back. Later I had occasion to implement the decision to major in political science, not knowing that I was aligning myself with one of the worst departments they had at Washington and Lee. The political science department had three members, two of whom rank among my list of some of the worst teachers I've ever had at any level, and one of them who was a good teacher but he was lazy as hell. It was not a good department to be getting a major in. I made good grades in that department—I graduated Phi Beta Kappa—but it was absolutely a terrible department. Even though I made good grades in it, no one in that department ever suggested that maybe I'd like to go on into graduate study in political science. They just had no interest in the students. It was terrible. It wasn't the only bad department at Washington and Lee I later discovered. There were some others. Well, I'll put it this way. There were some not as strong as some of the stronger departments.

Warren: Which other ones would you say weren't very good?

Parsons: Oh, let me think. I took three years of Spanish and I don't know any Spanish. I had a terrible Spanish teacher. I learned that early in my undergraduate curriculum here that he was a poor teacher, but I didn't foresee, I did not have the understanding of the value of learning a foreign language at the time. All I wanted to do was to get out of Washington and Lee as quickly

as possible and get a job. My wife was getting older. She was five to six years older than I was and I wanted to get on with starting a family and finding a job, and so I stuck with that professor. I had an opportunity when I came back from Korea to study under a different Spanish professor. He was going to make me learn something. So I wasted three years at Washington and Lee studying Spanish, and almost knowingly that I was doing that. I regret that very much. I didn't make necessarily the best grades in that but they were sufficient they didn't keep me from being Phi Beta Kappa. I could satisfy the exams well enough to do well. That led then to when I was asked to come back. I told Dr. Gaines that I would be very glad to come back.

Warren: Tell me about that meeting with him. Who else did you say was there?

Parsons: Dr. Leyburn. At that time their offices didn't adjoin. They were separated by the end of the second-floor hall in Washington Hall, the back of the building. There were doors that connected, one from Dr. Leyburn's office into that hallway and then another door into Dr. Gaines's office.

Warren: Which office was Gaines's office? Was it the one that later became Bob Huntley's office?

Parsons: Yes, and later became John Wilson's [president, 1983–95] office. It was only under President [John William] Elrod [1995–2001] when they moved it up to the front of the building, where I think Ken [President Kenneth Patrick] Ruscio is still holding forth.

We were talking about football and this, that, and the other. I gave him my views on the situation. I even gave him some views on some regrets I had about the university doing away with the grants in aid summarily. I felt that we had made some good decisions during the year before that in bringing in some basketball players. I thought that basketball might have a place at Washington and Lee if football couldn't. The risks were certainly a great deal less in granting grants-in-aid in basketball. You only had to do it with a relatively small number of players over football. I presented it in a way that it didn't come down as a disqualification for me that I had that view.

At some point—I can't recall the conversation—[President Gaines said,] "Let's have Dr. Leyburn come over and sit with us on this." I had not had much opportunity to get to know him at all. Again, another great shortcoming of my education at Washington and Lee, I never took a course from Dr. Leyburn. All those who did remember it as the most marvelous course they ever had. Again, something that I've had to overcome here at Washington and Lee because I would

have learned so much if I'd, as they like to say, sat at his feet.

We continued the conversation. I asked them could I have twenty-four hours to think this over. I don't think there was any—it would be unfair to call it begrudgingly [that] they said yes, okay. No, they said, "That would be fine." "I will do my best to let you know by this time tomorrow." I was able to do that but I had to go home and tell my future wife what I was getting ready to do. She did not come up with any arguments against it. She didn't try to talk me out of it or anything like that. I think she realized that my job at the *Daily Review* was not the best job to be pursuing. She was very supportive that I consider this. She knew that I would be pleased in that position. She certainly agreed to that and so I was able to tell them back the next day that I was happy to say that I would accept, and when should I report for work? They said, "Your position will start September the first."

I then undertook on my own, because the decision to cancel the'54 football season and to give up grants in aid and effectively give up big-time football in which many alumni had great faith—having been to the Gator Bowl on January 1, 1951, they wanted us to be there every year; they were typical college football alumni—I heard of a meeting being held in Roanoke. I think it was at the Ponce de Leon Hotel, which was right across the street from the *Times World* building. They were inviting alumni in the whole region to come and sit with them and hear this litany of complaints against Washington and Lee. I thought I'd go and be a fly on the wall and see what was up. Well, I heard terrible things there. They were unmerciful in what they said about Dr. Gaines.

Warren: Who was having this meeting?

Parsons: This was a group of alumni in Roanoke who were summoning others. I don't recall who the actual leaders of that movement were. I can remember some people who were there. I wasn't surprised to see them at all but they were unmerciful in attacking Dr. Gaines, and attacking Dean Gilliam, and especially attacking Dean Leyburn. They said terrible things about him. He was a bachelor and bachelors sometimes attract all kinds of criticism. I just sat there wondering, what have I got myself into here? But I found it to be a very enlightening meeting and it certainly set in perspective some of the things I felt that I was going to have to do to handle the public relations implications of being the director of publicity for Washington and Lee University.

Washington and Lee had just gotten into what would be taken today as—oh, it's had so

many names. I'll just use the one they currently use. I think Dennis Cross is vice president for university advancement. I think that's his title now. It changes. They all do because they have to stay in touch with the titular times. We had only hired a man by the name of Don Smith I think the year before to come in as a director of development [1956–57]. I did not think of myself working for him. I worked *with* him on a number of things. Don Smith turned out to be very much a pioneer in the field of university development. That was not a title you encountered everywhere in colleges.

Warren: All right, this is a major theme. I'm going to pause and we'll do another take.

[Pause to begin Parsons 2 track]

Warren: Don Smith. I haven't heard that name. Tell me who Don Smith was.

Parsons: Do I have his name right?

Warren: Where did he come from? You may because people had said there was somebody but nobody could remember his name.

Parsons: I'm trying to think where he came from. I want to say from a physician in Texas but I can't be sure of that. He had come in and he had gotten me to get involved with the alumni magazine as part of my publicity work; later on he got me involved in it. He did what was sort of a one-person analysis. He may have had some professional help on this. I don't know. He came up with some goals for Washington and Lee that set forth some target criteria for faculty salaries. Later he went on to become one of the real pioneers. Many years later when Farris Hotchkiss and I took advantage of attending a two-week workshop at Loretta Heights College in Denver, Colorado—I think Loretta was in Littleton, of all places, Colorado—Don Smith was on the faculty for that. I continued to encounter Don over the years from time to time but never in any kind of a professional relationship.

Warren: Was he here for long?

Parsons: Not too long. He came in and was here … Let me think when he left. He left just before Jim Whitehead came, which would have been 1960–1961 [Jim Whitehead arrived in 1958], somewhere about that time. This is where my memory crosses me up, trying to keep the sequence and the dates correct.

Warren: Well, that we can look up. That's not a problem. I'm more interested in the story behind it.

Parsons: We were reluctant to lose Don at the time. I remember that Dr. Gaines expressed—Dr.

Gaines was still here so that puts it then after ’59. I do know that he expressed to me the hope that he would be able to talk Lea Booth [class of 1940, W&L’s first public relations director] to taking the job.

Warren: The job of development director?

Parsons: Yes, at Washington and Lee.

Warren: And that was Dr. Gaines who said that?

Parsons: He told me that he hoped they’d be able to get Lea Booth to come. Well, he was unable to get Lea Booth to come. I don’t know all the details of that since I was not privy to any of the conversations, except that I think Lea Booth had just taken on the position [as director] with the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges and wanted to stick with that. Then Dr. Gaines looked for somebody else and he found in the state of New York, I forget what the name of the group up there was, something like the Empire State Foundation, of which Jim Whitehead was the equivalent of Lea Booth. He was raising money for a select number of colleges in the state of New York just like the Virginia Foundation was raising money for a select number of colleges in Virginia. I don’t recall why Jim Whitehead was attracted here but he came. He and Bill Washburn came about the same time. I remember seeing them at some event at Doremus Gymnasium and they were buddy-buddy, going around together. Bill Washburn had just come to take over the alumni director’s job.

Warren: Let’s go back to the whole idea of development. Are you saying that germ had already taken root? That before you came for [the position as] publicity director there was already a movement toward realizing that the development director was needed?

Parsons: Yes. Don Smith was here when I was hired. He didn’t sit in on any of my interviews. I don’t think he was a party to my being hired. That’s why I never felt that I worked for him. I worked for Dr. Gaines.

Warren: You alluded to that this was a whole new concept in higher education. Talk to me about that.

Parsons: I don’t recall and one reason I don’t recall was I was just not aware of what the administrative hierarchy was in hardly any other college than Washington and Lee. I don’t recall because very soon after that, after I got involved at Washington and Lee, I joined something known as the—oh, what was it? The Society for … It was a long series of letters. Under its umbrella were fundraisers, alumni people, and publicity people. I remember the first meeting I

went to was at this big, old hotel at French Lick, Indiana. I forget the name of the hotel, but French Lick, Indiana, was an interesting place.

That comes into play in something I'll probably find occasion to tell you about. When the time came that Dr. Gaines retired and Fred Cole came from Louisiana, I was able to get in touch with a man that I had met at that French Lick, Indiana, meeting who worked for Tulane [University] who was able to help me out in finding out who in the heck Fred Cole was. I don't think the presidential search committee had any idea who he was—that's my personal opinion—and I don't think Fred Cole knew where he was coming.

Warren: Let's not go to Fred Cole quite yet. I'd like to finish up. How many years were you here while Dr. Gaines was still here?

Parsons: Five years.

Warren: What was it like? Dr. Gaines had been here a *long* time at that point. Talk to me about the school and the ambiance you found.

Parsons: These were not Dr. Gaines best years. I was here for the last five of his twenty-nine years as president. I didn't see that much of him. There were occasions when I had business, when my duties took me into his office. When we, for instance, hired a new football coach and brought in Bill Chipley as our new football coach, I was given that information. Of course, it was already my job to handle that announcement. But there were other times.

There was a chance for a new program with VMI [Virginia Military Institute] that Dr. Gaines was very optimistic that we ought to pursue and would depend on me to see that it got maximum publicity. That was the creation of our cooperative program with VMI in the study of the Russian language. We had a professor at VMI, Dr. Lancaster, and here, Dr. Pusey, both of them were professors of German but they had also, both of them, studied the Russian language. They were going to put together a program that would involve two years of study in Russian, a basic course and then a more advanced course. They would cooperate in team teaching. That would be the right way to describe it.

I talked to my counterpart at VMI, Bob Jeffries at the time, and told him of Dr. Gaines's hope that we'd be able to carry this forward and get some good publicity out of it. Mr. Jeffries suggested that I go ahead and write the story that I thought would be the one that we would want to place in the media. I sent it over and waited for a response. I didn't get any, didn't get any, didn't get any. Gaines had to remind me of it. "Why haven't we done something with this?" He

called me one day. “What is the holdup?” “I haven’t gotten the response back from VMI. I will follow up on that.” I apologized and called Jeffries and he said, “Well, we’ve got a problem.” His boss, the superintendent of VMI, did not want to get much publicity for this joint effort because it meant there would be students sitting in their classrooms without uniforms. Therefore, let’s don’t get our alumni upset over this. It might put the quietus on the whole thing. So w did not come out with a big story on this. I don’t know what kind of publicity we ended up giving it.

Warren: Did the program happen?

Parsons: Yes, the program happened but the context I put it in, and this is what Dr. Gaines wanted to emphasize, was that from 1839—I think is when VMI claims that they had their beginning— that beginning involved a cooperation between the two schools. They were going to teach our students gunnery and arms, and we were going to come over and teach them moral philosophy and all the terms that were in use at that time for collegiate courses. Well, that didn’t work out either. The fact that that didn’t work out, Dr. Gaines wanted us to call attention to that, just that there was a historical precedent. There was the hope that we would cooperate and now here was the chance to put it [in terms of] a modern-day opportunity. It was a good idea but VMI chose not to cooperate. I forget how we did it but we did publicize the fact that we were going to have a joint Russian program, but it was low-key and certainly couched in terms that did not anger any of the VMI alumni.

Going back to my dealings with Dr. Gaines, there were times when I spent time with him but I did not see that much of him. I was once up there—and this gives a suggestion as to how intimately Mr. Mattingly was involved with things under his purview— I was in the president’s outer office with Albertina Ravenhorst. I had been in to see Dr. Gaines. This was the announcement of a major gift from a man that we had great hopes for giving us lots more that was going to support a new scholarship endeavor at Washington and Lee. The check for a quarter of a million dollars had arrived and so I was called up to be given this information and to do something with this information in announcing the gift. Also, Mr. Mattingly was summoned at the same time and given the check to put it to work. We were out in the outer office there. I forget what Mr. Mattingly and I were talking about but he was standing over by the window. He looked out and he saw a member of our buildings and grounds people using a weed killer. He had a tank and he was spraying some dandelions along the way there or something. Mr. Mattingly did not like the way that he was using that and so he went over to the window, threw

up the window, and waved this scrap of paper he had in his hand, a quarter-million-dollar check, and dressed the man down for not using that weed killer properly. Again, a little aside but these are some of the things that I would encounter when I went up to Dr. Gaines's office.

Warren: You're referring to Mr. Mattingly. At this point you're both administrators. Did you still call him Mr. Mattingly?

Parsons: I never called him anything else. I never called President Gaines anything except Dr. Gaines.

Warren: Was that true of everybody?

Parsons: Oh, no. I will inject here something that will explain how I handled this. There were some folks … I never, even in my many years of friendship with this man years later, ever referred to one of my economics professors as anything other than Dr. Griffin. His first name was Claybrook but I never, ever called him Claybrook. There were just some things I could not bring myself [to do]. I never called Mr. Latture, Rupert. I know funny stories about that, but anyhow, in the case of Dr. Gaines, it was always Dr. Gaines. It was always Dr. Leyburn. It was always Dean Gilliam to me. I say that I felt I worked for Dr. Gaines. Well, it wasn't too many months into the job that all these fellows thought I worked for them, too. Actually, I worked for anyone who thought they were my boss.

Warren: Sounds like Washington and Lee.

Parsons: Well, I was making an accommodation that, yes, I wanted to please as many people [as possible] and I wanted everyone to think I was doing a good job and so I was trying. I didn't contradict what I was doing for one person by doing something different for somebody else.

But getting back to the way of the names and things, I never referred to Dr. Cole as Fred Cole. I never called him Fred. It was always Dr. Cole. Later, when Bill Pusey became president, I had already had a relationship with him where I felt comfortable calling him Bill in one-on-one conversations. Later, when Bob Huntley became president, of course I'd known him as Bob for a long time. I adopted a practice that in face-to-face conversations I was comfortable in using first names. If I were in a room of people where everyone else present was comfortable in using first names with this person, I would use the first names. If there was anybody present that was not in that comfort group of first names, I always referred to, even though the others they maybe didn't follow the same policy, but I always referred to President Huntley as President Huntley. When I was appearing before the board of trustees I never referred to him by a first name. In anything I

said before the board of trustees I always said President Huntley. I always addressed the trustees by mister whoever their name was. I didn't call them by their first names except in face-to-face conversations or maybe in a social gathering.

Warren: Tell me why that is, Frank.

Parsons: I just think it's proper. I think it's proper that you don't cause confusion. A perfect example of the confusion was an architect that I worked with here at Washington and Lee, Fred Cox. He was the architect on a number of buildings. Mr. Cox had a strange thing. He liked to be on first names with trustees and presidents and this, that, and the other, but among the people that were working with him most closely on a project, such as his partner, he never referred to Mr. Smith, his partner Eddie Smith, he never called him Eddie. He always referred to him as Mr. Smith. He always referred to me as Mr. Parsons. Yet he was talking here to them as Pat Leggett [a trustee] and all this, which was a little confusing. Why is he doing that? Everybody knew that we worked together and we were on a first-name basis. I always felt it was proper to refer to the president in any public venue by his title. I had my own rules and guidelines for that. I tried to follow them faithfully and it's always worked for me. I don't know if it works for everybody and I don't insist that somebody else change their method, but it worked for me. I thought it was a respect for the office of the presidency and indeed, for all those people that I mentioned, a respect for the offices that they held, Dean Leyburn, Dean Gilliam, and Mr. Mattingly.

Warren: All right, we're at a good point for another pause.

Parsons: Okay.

[Pause. Begin Parsons 3 track]

Warren: Shall we get on to having Francis Pendleton Gaines retire and continue on with talking about his replacement? Tell me what the ambiance was like around here when that era came to an end, and why, and how.

Parsons: I think everyone realized that it was indeed an era coming to an end. The Gaines years were going to be ending. He had been in office—I think I'm correct in this. This fact ought to be checked—as long as Custis Lee had remained in office, twenty-nine years. I think that that's right but I could be a little off.

Warren: That's exactly right.

Parsons: I will offer an opinion: from what I've read about the presidency of Custis Lee, that he stayed in that job too long. I think Dr. Gaines stayed in the job too long. The last five years that I

was permitted to see reasonably up close—they were not his best years.

Warren: Had you seen any of his better years as a student?

Parsons: No. Like I say, as a student I had three encounters with him. I did not see anything he was doing when I was a student except things that would get into the paper as the university was doing during that time. Very often they were attributed as much to Leyburn and to Gilliam and then to others. We talked before about the Leyburn Plan [in an interview dated February 29, 1996].

I was aware because I heard it from others, I did not witness it myself, that Dr. Gaines had a drinking problem, that Mrs. Gaines had a drinking problem. I don't know the origins of this. I can speculate but I don't want to speculate here because I just don't know. I don't want to speculate on things that I absolutely don't know. So I was aware of that.

I was hoping that we were going to get a good president and I think we did. I'll say more about that later if you want to talk about Dr. Cole. But Dr. Gaines, there's one thing that I did when I was told of his impending retirement. I asked him if he could make me acquainted with the trustees who were going to be put in charge of the search for a new president. The reason I would like to know them, I wanted for them to keep me somewhat apprised of the progress they were making. My motivation on that was that just before, within the year before that, the University of Virginia had announced its new president and they did it in such a classy way. I did not want to replicate what they did, but I wanted us to have time to think about a good way to announce our president, to think of something that would be an appropriate way for Washington and Lee to announce a new president.

I didn't see it happen but I had certainly read about it. It certainly did make the press. No one had any idea who the University of Virginia president was going to be. They had all been assembled on the lawn that runs behind the Rotunda [at the University of Virginia]. At a given hour, the bells rang, the doors to the Rotunda opened and out walked the governor of Virginia, the chair of their search committee—I can be a little bit in error about who walked out the door but they were the important people who had been involved in the search—and Edgar Shannon. They had chosen an English professor—a graduate of Washington and Lee and the son of a distinguished professor at Washington and Lee—to be their new president. People were astounded but yet I think people were very much impressed by the choice. I think he was well known and well respected. It was done with such class over there, I said, "Let us try to do that."

I don't feel that I was kept informed by the men that headed up that committee. It was Chris Chenery and Joe Lykes. I don't know. There have been so many Joe Lykeses. I don't know whether he went by Junior or what. Anyway, it was the father of the Joe Lykes who later became a trustee of Washington and Lee on his own. They were shipbuilders and lots of other things.

Warren: Was this your first encounter with trustees and did you get to know them? You're saying maybe you didn't?

Parsons: I don't recall that I had ever attended a meeting of the board of trustees [then]. In those days they met and there were no committees. I do remember that. They might have had an executive committee who, under the bylaws and the charter, had certain responsibilities that they could perform in the absence of the trustees. They met. It seemed like they met for a couple days. We were on a six-day week in those days. My normal workday would normally end at noon or early afternoon on a Saturday. I would always wait for Dr. Gaines to come back. I don't recall whether I had a standing meeting with him at that time but he knew that I was still there, so if there was something coming out of the board meeting that he wanted me to begin to think about how we would publicize it, that I had a chance to talk to him. There were times when that did happen. I would wait for that. That's when I would see him in the board meetings, but I cannot recall having attended a board meeting when Dr. Gaines was president.

Warren: And so during that search you did not know anything?

Parsons: I did not know. I did not know how they were conducting the search. I did not know the mechanics of it. I don't think, as we have done in recent times, [that they] employed professional headhunters. I just don't recall. I don't think that was done.

I do know that they had undertaken to find out a good bit about Dr. Cole. At that time I think he had the title of academic vice president and provost at Tulane University. I think that was his title. I'm a little less certain on the title provost. [Fred Cole was academic vice president at Tulane.]

My information about who the president's going to be and when we were going to announce it occurred in 1959. That would be the five-year anniversary of my graduation. I remember the year I graduated there was an alumni reunion that year. In those days the alumni reunions were not set up on a class basis. You didn't come back every year. You would have a big alumni reunion every five years and it would occur after school was over. We'd gotten through that. '59 was an unusual school year in many ways. I was called by Dr. Gaines and he

told me that they had chosen the new president of Washington and Lee and Mr. [James] Caskie was going to want to announce it at this alumni reunion. That wasn't quite what I had in mind. I didn't have hardly any time to think this through except to ask, "Do we have any biographical information on this man that I can begin to think about how to use it?" Dr. Gaines turned me over to Mr. Caskie and Mr. Caskie had a favorite word: ample. "Oh ample, ample" he said, whereupon he handed me a file on President Cole.

Warren: An ample file?

Parsons: He said, "Ample, ample." Well, when I got it, all I had was the report of a private detective that they'd hired to find out what kind of man Cole was. I learned such things as that they didn't think he'd played around with other women. He did not have any unusual debt. What else? Did not drink to excess. And something that called into question the whole validity of the report was that he walked with a spring in his step. Hell, he dragged his heels! I could hear him coming blocks away here sometimes because he dragged his heels when he walked. Anyhow, there was nothing there I could use—literally. If the trustees found that useful information, well, good for them. My point was there was nothing I could use in the publicity.

Years ago at French Lick I had met a man by the name of Horace Renegar who was the director of public relations—I don't know what his title was at Tulane—but I called him and told him the dilemma I was in. Could he possibly send me [biographical information]? This shows [it was] the dark ages of communication. I had to arrange for him to put that on a Greyhound bus and send it up here—that was the quickest way to get it to me—or that he could send it by Western Union. We had those two things [and] we decided to use both of them for different reasons. I didn't have the information until—Western Union may have come in later that day. I began to get some information on Dr. Cole.

I also wanted to have a picture to put in the paper and so I asked him to forward by AP wire photo, which worked differently then than it does now, to get a photograph up to the Richmond AP bureau. So, I'm beginning to put together the public announcement of all this and I get a call from the AP bureau in Richmond. It was people I knew down there very well. In my five years as publicity director, I had good relations with these folks. I got a call from Ed Young and there was a man working down there who was a Washington and Lee alumnus, Marshall Johnson. They were perplexed. They said, "Frank, you all are looking for a new president, aren't you?" I said, "Yes. Did you get a photograph?" "Yes, we have a photograph here of a man from

Tulane. The caption says that he's the new president of William and Mary [College] and William and Mary's not looking for a new president. Is this your president?" I said, "Oh yes, it is. I guess somebody along the line messed up on that. We are looking for the president and I'm going to have a story here shortly on all this." We agreed as to how I'd get the story to them. I'd probably call it to them. There was that bit of information.

Later, Mr. Caskie was able to announce to the alumni that we picked Fred Cole as our new president. One of the first questions put to him publicly from somebody in the crowd was, "Can he give a good speech?" Everybody knew that Dr. Gaines was capable of giving a wonderful speech. Mr. Caskie replied, "We think he gives a good speech." Well, he was wrong on that. He gave terrible speeches. I became his speechwriter and he gave terrible speeches, partly my fault, partly his. Some in the delivery, some perhaps in the writing, but what I wrote ultimately would please him. That was an interesting episode. Having tried to go into this with some elegant announcement that would attract a lot of attention, we went into it with some doubt as to whether the man who was coming knew where he was going!

Warren: Then there's a follow-on story to that. *Did* he know where he was going?

Parsons: I can make a pretty good case that he did not.

Warren: Do we know whether he went to Williamsburg first?

Parsons: Oh no. He came here first. But it was his first visit to the university. He had not visited here before that.

Warren: Were you part of that? Can you describe that event?

Parsons: What? His first visit to Washington and Lee? I was introduced to him, I think, in the course of that day. I don't think he was here very long but I think I played handball with him on that first visit. I became aware that he was a handball player and he liked to play at noon, of all times. Leaping ahead, that changed my day for all the years he was here because I played handball with Dr. Cole at the university every day that he was on campus, except weekends. We didn't play on weekends, but Mondays through Fridays we would play handball together and with other people on the faculty. There's a handball story behind this too that I don't want to get into right now, too much of a digression.

Dr. Cole came and I got to know him and learned that he had not paid a visit to the campus, so some of what I think I said was to show him just a little bit of what we had here—we didn't have as much then as we have now—and walked around with him and got to know him

fairly well. I thought he was a man I was going to like and that certainly proved to be true. I continued to be the director of publicity at that time and we were involved in almost a sea change—I don't know what that term means. I've heard it used—a major sea change in athletics here. We had a good football coach in and he was turning things around and it looked like we were on the verge of a good season. Dr. Cole knew that I continued to handle the publicity on the football team, so we just came to know each other and it was very pleasant. Then when he did come, I got to know him even better.

I remember attending the first meeting with the faculty that he had back when we used to meet in a room called Newcomb 8. They met there characteristically. In that meeting, he got up and he told them how glad he was to be at William and Mary. A little titter went through the crowd and my reaction was, what a sense of humor this man has! He knows that this is a joke. We are often mistaken for our friends in Williamsburg and he was doing that. Well, many years go by and I'm having what I call my exit interview with Dr. Cole. Toward the end, I screwed up the courage to ask him if he remembered saying that. His eyes could become as steely as any eyes you could have ever looked into. He had a smoking habit where his cigarette went up and down and he twirled it as he did it, reminding you of one these birds that used to dip in the water with its bill, back and forth. It went like that. Well, all of a sudden that motion stopped and his eyes got steely and he said, "I never said that." I said, "You're right. I must be confusing it with something else. Forget I said that." Boy, I nearly fell over myself backing off from that. He didn't want to talk about it. I know damn well he remembered it and wished he'd never said it. I'm sure it got back to him from other sources. I can come up with a fairly good case that he really thought when he accepted the job he was going to William and Mary.

Warren: With that story about the photograph, that certainly seems like a connecting thread. A good story.

Parsons: When I talked to Renegar and thanked him for what he sent me, I didn't go into the fact. I may have alluded to it. He did not take any responsibility for it, that it had moved with the wrong caption on it.

Warren: He probably wouldn't have appreciated the full implications of it either.

Parsons: That's true. That's true.

Warren: Were you involved in planning for his inauguration and was that a big ceremony? Was that a big event?

Parsons: Yes, it was. I was very much involved in it. I hadn't thought about it in some time but it's coming back to me right now. I'm trying to think of the title. I know we ended up I had it printed and we published it and distributed it I think to all the alumni because it was such a good speech. It talked about the—oh gosh. I really am drawing [a blank], but this is subject to being checked by checking the archives in the library. [It was] "Indispensable Tools of Greatness" or something like that. It had to do with colleges that accepted gifts that they should not accept because it would burden them with something that they maybe shouldn't take on. Let's see, what was the second one? I can kick myself because I can't remember these. At one time I could reel them off easily. It was a good speech. I had helped him not so much in the writing of that speech as I was in publicizing what it was he said.

I don't remember at what point Dr. Cole began to think of me in a different way other than being the director of publicity at Washington and Lee. He told me that he had an assistant at Tulane, a former Associated Press reporter who was a wonderful writer, and that he had depended on him for a lot of writing and that he was hoping that he would be able to get him to come up here. I don't remember the man's name. I did meet him at one time, but he decided that he liked New Orleans and did not want to come to Lexington, perhaps cultural shock of some kind. I don't know.

Warren: I can't imagine why. We're going to pause just for a moment.

Parsons: Sure.

[Pause to begin Parsons 4 track]

Warren: I can't imagine why he wouldn't equate New Orleans and Lexington, Virginia. They're about the same, don't you think?

Parsons: Yes. Tell me when you want to start again.

Warren: We're on.

Parsons: Oh, we're on? Well, okay then. When he didn't come, then he [Cole] asked me to come in and he told me that he would like for me to become his assistant. At that time there was a new term, a buzz term, coming into our education and it came in under the term institutional research. I subsequently learned that at that time there were different meanings at different schools as to what institutional research entailed. Dr. Cole wanted us to be one of the first ones to have someone presumably responsible for institutional research.

By that time, Dr. Cole had found out how difficult he was finding it to work with Mr.

Mattingly. Mr. Mattingly—and again I'm speaking of understanding passed on to me by people like President Cole and others—Mr. Mattingly had money and I'll use the term squirreled away in a number of banks up to the minimum [amount] assured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. This was sort of a rainy day thing that he'd put aside, different from the endowment and not earning a whole lot of interest, but I have to say it was probably invested okay. That money was out there and Dr. Cole believed in using as much of your resources to accomplish as much as you could in any given moment. That's a paraphrase of my own, not anybody else's. He then had Mr. Mattingly call in this money, which gave him an opportunity to give some very significant raises the first year he was here as president. People came up and said, "Where'd all that money come from?" I didn't know at the time but later I did learn where it had come from. It was a great boost to morale at Washington and Lee.

At that time, Washington and Lee had given annual—sometimes not necessarily annual but they were always 5 percent, or something like that, increases [to employees]. It was more or less systematic. I had not been here long enough to know that people expected that. There was a sudden deviation from it where the raises were a good bit more and then an understanding, again through Dr. Cole, that henceforth raises would be based somewhat on merit as well as just automatic, across-the-board increases.

Warren: So these were raises to specific people rather than across the board?

Parsons: Yes.

Warren: And it was Fred Cole who made the decision about who got the raises?

Parsons: Ultimately he did, yes. Yes indeed. He had the recommendations from department heads, I guess. I don't know how that mechanism worked. I just wasn't exposed to that.

Warren: Who would have been?

Parsons: The treasurer of the university would have been. That was Mattingly himself at the time. Having found that Mr. Mattingly did not agree with some of the things he was doing—and there might have been other conflicts of which I was unaware, I just don't know.—all I know is that he continued Mr. Mattingly as treasurer but he brought in Jim Whitehead, who had been here now a couple years as director of development. Dr. Cole had his own ideas as to how development was going to work at Washington and Lee.

Warren: What was Whitehead's original job assignment?

Parsons: He came in as director of development.

Warren: Okay. And he'd been there for a couple of years?

Parsons: Yes, he came in '59 when Don Smith left and Lea Booth didn't come and we hired Jim.

Warren: Right.

Parsons: He was then director of development. Dr. Cole informed me that he would like for me to be director of institutional research and then I had other responsibilities that I would work for him. He was also going to use me as a writer for him and I would continue to be responsible for all the things I did as director of publicity. I wasn't losing my affiliation with that but I had all these sort of added responsibilities. I even went off to a meeting in Atlanta. I'm trying to think when I went to that. It was something that had to do with institutional research and I found out how fuzzy that was in people's minds. I did not learn a lot about it. At the same time, he announced that Jim Whitehead was going to become assistant to the president for administration. That wasn't spelled out too clearly, what that was going to involve, but Jim Whitehead was to be a buffer between Mattingly and Cole.

Warren: Interesting.

Parsons: Mr. Mattingly continued in certain areas of his work and Mr. Whitehead began to take over some of those areas. I don't have a clear picture of how that transition occurred. I just saw some of the effects of it.

Warren: Mr. Mattingly was also the secretary of the board.

Parsons: Yes.

Warren: Was he the only person who was both? Was that unusual to have one person be both?

Parsons: I don't know how unusual it was. He was certainly secretary to the board when I came as an employee. He was also the treasurer. He had been the registrar at one time. I learned that.

Warren: Simultaneously with the other two positions or before?

Parsons: No, no. He'd been registrar before and then had become the university treasurer. I don't recall the exact dates that those responsibilities shifted. I don't know at what point Mr. Whitehead became the secretary of the board. That was some time later after I think Mr. Mattingly fully retired. There's documents that I can put my hands on that would make all this [clear], but I just don't remember that in the detail that I once was able to remember it. It wasn't having too much of an impact on me personally.

I remember on occasions, when Jim Whitehead occupied Mr. Mattingly's former office,

that he had little techniques that were very disarming in terms of people coming in and wanting more money in their budgets and this, that, and the other. At will, he could make the arm on his chair fall off. [Laughter] Ask him about that!

Warren: Wait a minute. Tell me [what you mean].

Parsons: If someone came in, making a special appeal for something that they needed to have in their budget or this, that, or the other, when he [Whitehead] wasn't able to or wasn't willing to give them an answer at that time, he could, at will, make the arm on his chair to his desk fall off and then he could make some comment, "Oh, I wish I could afford to have a good chair in here," something to that effect, completely disarming the person.

Warren: Oh my God. Oh, that's wonderful.

Parsons: It seems to me Mr. Mattingly moved across the hall at that time because I remember going into that room to talk to Mr. Mattingly too. Later on, before Mr. Mattingly died, I got involved in a fundraising project for my church. We were selling church bonds, which were very popular at the time as a means of churches raising money, and were written up in the *Wall Street Journal* in describing some of the pitfalls. You've got to be careful who you're dealing with in that. I was trying to market some of these bonds myself and so I went to Mr. Mattingly to see if he wanted to buy any for Washington and Lee. He couldn't do any of that. He was still somehow involved in Washington and Lee's finances at that point. He wasn't about to buy any for Washington and Lee but he would buy some for himself. He ended up buying a lot of bonds, which ultimately went to Washington and Lee. I think Washington and Lee cashed them in. I don't know what happened to them. My point was that he was willing to invest his own money in the Manly Memorial [Baptist] Church bonds but he declined that Washington and Lee would be interested in any of it. So he retained some function but Whitehead also pretty much had taken over a great many, particularly with regard to administering the buildings and grounds department and things like that.

Warren: In your new capacity with Fred Cole, did you then start getting more involved with the board?

Parsons: Yes, ultimately I did. I'm trying to think of how quickly that happened. I'm trying to put this sequence together. Some of it happened after we got involved with the first institutional self study that we carried out in the mid-'60s, starting in the fairly early '60s, not too soon after Dr. Cole came. Dr. Cole had been involved apparently in self studies at Tulane. He was aware of

the nature of these self studies. They want everybody involved in them: faculty, administrative staff, the clerical staff, *everybody* involved in all this. They had certain areas laid out as to what they expected to have this kind of involvement, where it should occur. He had recognized at Tulane that this had the capacity, if they got these people involved in this, to virtually immobilize the university. Teachers forgot to concentrate on their teaching. They were more involved in participating in this self study because they saw great opportunities to make things change. It could have a negative effect on the college and he didn't want that to happen because there were too many others things in his view at that time that we needed to be addressing here.

He asked me to help with that and I was the one that come up with the technique that we pursued, and that was to appoint—we called them analysts, I believe we called them—analysts for all these categories that the self study was supposed to do. Then we assigned to them techniques for involving the areas of the university community that would fall under these major headings.

Warren: Who were these analysts?

Parsons: Bob Huntley was one we picked. We picked a number of them. They were good folks.

Warren: So they were people from within?

Parsons: Yes, they were people within. They were always in. They would bear the heavy burden of doing a lot of work. They could get some help from somebody else in that group if they wanted to, to write a draft of their report. The drafts came in to me. I would read them and I would have some critique of it myself. I didn't always share them with Dr. Cole. Again, he had his agenda that kept up his day pretty full. I would have my time with him and I would tell him about the progress and things. For instance, we got to the area where the university board of trustees was supposed to contemplate their own navels. He knew that wasn't going to work, so we went to a major management consulting firm to come in and do a number of the investigations that should have been done internally but we did it externally. Somehow, in the final analysis, we put together a report which we submitted to the Southern Association [of Colleges and Schools, the accrediting body] and their commission on colleges and they accepted our approach to this. I was much involved in this when the visiting committee came for their three days or something on campus, where they went around and asked questions of people. They were able to say that everyone they talked to felt that they had been involved in the self study, but we did not shut down the university to carry this out. There was, as you probably

know, an analysis that comes back to you with things that you need to correct, [things] you must do, and then you have things that you ought to do, and so on down the whole hierarchy of things to do. We were always able on our follow-up report to give a satisfactory response. That was a major undertaking that I did under Cole and got to know him quite well.

I remember one particular time when we were having a meeting, again in this room Newcomb 8, and it had to do with some questions that had come up about the hours of operation of the library. One of the things that the library study had come up with was that we should operate our library twenty-four hours a day. It ought to be open twenty-four hours a day for students to come in and have access to the reading rooms and the stacks and things of that nature. I remember Dr. Allen Moger, a professor of history, found reason to question this. He found reason to question leaving it open twenty-four hours. In this he challenged Dr. Cole with this assertion. He said, "We already keep the library open longer than any other college I know of." Dr. Cole's answer was, "Well, that's good, isn't it?" to which there was hardly any response. We ought to shut down the library and keep our students out of there?

There was a certain attitude at that time. Henry Coleman was the librarian at the time and I had not been able to turn to him for much help in being the analyst for all this. We knew that he kept students out of there as much as possible.

Warren: Kept students *out* of the library?

Parsons: Yes, access to the stacks and access to certain parts of the stacks and certain collections were very, very vigorously protected. They had two major reading rooms and there was some distinction between those as to ways in which you used them. My point is that Dr. Cole knew a lot about libraries. When he left Washington and Lee, he went to work for the Council on Library Resources, I think it was called. It was operated by a friend of his of long standing. He had also set Bob Huntley and Ed—not Spencer. Ed [Turner], the physics professor. I can think of the first names of all the children and [Turner's wife] Polly's name but—

Warren: It will come to us.

Parsons: It will come to us. I don't think this is onset of Alzheimer's with me. It's just natural aging. You can't remember.

Warren: I just heard his name a few days ago or last week, so I should know it, too.

Parsons: Anyhow, Dr. Cole had set the two of them because they were such bright people. My goodness, any one of them, in terms of my intellectual inclinations, they could run circles around

me. He set them out on a nationwide tour collecting information about new technology affecting library collections. Bob Huntley showed me a little cube one time he had. You could put the Library of Congress in there and still have room left over. We were on the forefront of a major change but the problem was that all this was changing so quickly that no one wanted to go first. That was an interesting dilemma that this council encountered. They did really good work for it and it was in that capacity, and perhaps in others, that Dr. Cole saw in Bob Huntley the man who probably should succeed him

Warren: I'm not quite finished with the self study and I don't want to bring Bob [Huntley] in as the successor quite yet.

Parsons: Okay.

Warren: How about master planning of the facilities here. Was that part of it?

Parsons: In the self study, the master planning, Dr. Cole had turned that chapter over to a crony of his that he had brought in from elsewhere. I don't remember who it was and I can't think of the man's name right now. He was the analyst for the physical things that we had to do. In my later-acquired familiarity with physical planning [later in Parsons' career], there was nothing in there very realistic at all about it.

Warren: About what that person recommended?

Parsons: No, about the study itself. What it resulted in. It didn't make many recommendations. That was one of the problems. We had some very serious shortcomings. I forget how they were covered in it but they were serious shortcomings. That self-study report still exists in various places.

Warren: Yes, I've seen it.

Parsons: It's a huge document.

Warren: Yes, I've seen it. It is quite something.

Parsons: I used to refer to it as a multiple-use document. You could use it for this, that, and the other, and if you needed to reach something on a high place, you could stand on it.

I hadn't thought of that particular thing up until that time. In what we had to use in showing our concerns about the future of the physical plant, we showed a renovated Howe Hall, but still freestanding, and then we were going to show a building—Howe Hall would continue to house the chemistry department. We were going to put biology and geology in a building. Then another little building, freestanding, was going to be physics. In this, this man [the consultant]—

one of the recommendations was that we eliminate the middle one and put all three of them in the new building. It would sit a little closer to Howe Hall but not be connected to Howe Hall.

Warren: That took a while.

Parsons: It didn't really come to pass. Well, it did. We built Parmly Hall and we had people in that building. We also had a walkway or some steps that went down between the buildings that led down to a little—I don't know what the building was to begin with. It wasn't a permanent building and it's no longer there. I'm just drawing some blanks about the layout of things down there. We also had the Sigma [Society] cabin down there, which was a source of embarrassment to the university for many years, but that was off-limits to do anything with that at the time.

Anyhow, we satisfied the self-study report but there were certain parts of it that you really could not expect the university to act upon with any zeal. I was glad to get that self study done. Then there were certain areas of it that I would have some responsibilities to follow up on.

Warren: How long do you think that process took?

Parsons: What? The self-study process?

Warren: Yes.

Parsons: It took us a couple years. They will give you the time to do it. You can start as early on it as you want almost. I think that's correct. But when it comes time for you to submit the report, they want it submitted. Then there comes a time then for them to look at it and to accept it. Then they send the visiting committee. They will have all seen the report and they come in and then they go about their busy work over a three-day period. I spent a lot of time with members of that group, one fellow in particular from Meredith College in North Carolina. I'm trying to think of his name because, ultimately, he became the president of the University of Richmond. But he was president of Meredith College at the time and in the aftermath of his meeting here, he invited me to—I'm trying to think when this was—he invited me to join him at Meredith College and I think in development, in fundraising. I must have impressed him with something I'd said about fundraising. I don't recall at that time that fundraising was part of my responsibility.

Warren: Well, I'm glad you didn't go. We're going to take a pause here.

Parsons: Okay.

[Pause to begin Parsons 5 track]

Warren: From our previous interview we know that Fred Cole did a lot of pretty impressive things while he was here, and there came a time when he decided to move on. Were you privy to

why he decided to move on? Or did he decide?

Parsons: I think he decided. At some point in my conversations with him—I think I'm correct—I remember him saying that eight years would be about as long as a man should expect to be president of a college. That over eight years, you would have had a chance to accomplish goals that you had set for yourself as well as for the institution, but primarily personal things that you wanted to accomplish while you there. In the process of this, you would probably build up a residual sort of a backwash of resentment over this, that, and the other. Your effectiveness beyond, say, the fifth year—or something like that—begins to diminish. In eight years, it would have reached a point where you would be helping yourself in terms of your career as well as helping the institution to move on. I'm very confident I heard him say words to that effect, not exactly those words but to that effect.

Warren: What do you think about that?

Parsons: I don't know. I saw Bob Huntley in position for fifteen years. I saw John Wilson in position for, I think, about thirteen years. I thought they were good presidents throughout the whole time. Again, it depends an awful lot on the personalities of the persons involved.

I'd like to say something about Fred Cole's personality in a moment here, but let me just go on to say that I think, too, in working with the trustees, he had to learn to be very patient in that. We'd brought them around to thinking of themselves and their obligations of trusteeship in a different light. Not quite as different as it later became but making some progress. I think he sensed that he had lost his ability to shape their thinking, to influence it. He knew we were going to have to confront the matter of racial integration and I don't think he was ready to take that on. That was one of the things that he did not want to take on. He had already come under criticism from the board of trustees for some joint programs he set up. One time we had some kind of a joint relationship with Hampton Institute and seems like there were some other things. Oh, he made some *good* things happen down in Prince Edward County where the massive resistance [to public school integration] took shape, where they installed private schools for the great majority of the white students of the county.

Dr. Cole had real good connections when he came here. These connections stemmed from relationships that he had created when he was not at Washington and Lee. Some of them, I think, grew while he was here but he had good connections with the United States Department of Education [sic, it would have been the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare during

Cole's administration; the Department of Education was established in 1980]. He had good connections with a number of foundations. He had good connections with the Ford Foundation at the time. He had good connections with the Ford Motor Company Fund, [which are] often confused, and with other philanthropic foundations. He was unable to take maximum advantage of these connections sometime because, at that time, the whole social order of things was changing [because of] the exclusion of African Americans. More and more institutions were becoming more inclusive and these foundations were getting social consciousness too. They were under pressure to strike out those schools or not to consider those schools who did not have the assurance that they did not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, and fairly recently, sexual orientation, Bob McAhren's great contribution [McAhren joined the history faculty in 1966].

I think he just saw that it was time for a new president at Washington and Lee. I think by that time he had already determined to his own satisfaction that Bob Huntley was the man that had the quick mind and the analytical ability of a president. He may have perceived that a president with a lawyer's background would not be the worst thing to have. My feeling at the time [was] we needed someone who thought like a lawyer because it was becoming more and more important for the college president to think like a lawyer rather than as an academician.

Warren: There had been, or there were in process, a lot of changes happening within the board itself.

Parsons: Well, that came a little later. Yes, I said they were becoming more and more aware of what was going on.

I remember we went over to the Homestead for a special meeting of the board. They had had an earlier meeting of the board. This was when the self study was in process, and it was during one of those early years when I was going to Maine with my family for a month at a time. I had not been able to attend a meeting and I was excused. Dr. Cole was a very thoughtful person. He suggested I not make a trip from Maine just to go to a meeting at the Greenbrier. That one was at the Greenbrier where they did some preliminary work on the self-study report. I was fully informed of everything that went on when I got back.

But we were having this meeting over at the Homestead and there were specific objections being made in there that we not only be prepared to not discriminate on the basis of color but that we would also energetically set out to recruit African Americans. People around

the table wanted that taken out and the easiest thing to do at that time was take it out. Let's don't have a split in the board. We were trying to get this thing approved by the board, as we had to do before we submitted it to the Southern Association. We did a number of adjustments to things in there that sort of revealed that they did not see eye to eye with the president. The racial thing was certainly one of them.

Dr. Cole was very, very thoughtful, sensitive, and very much appalled at what was going on in Prince Edward County. He had Washington and Lee professors go down there, not to teach, not to do anything other than, just by being there sympathetically, encouraging the people that were having to deal with the public school system there. There's more to it than that. [Professor of history] Ted Delaney, I think, has studied this fairly well, but I've never really had a chance to talk with Ted. Ted's a good friend and I see him in a number of relationships, but just never have really sat down with him to find out what his understanding on that was. I had mine.

I went down only on one occasion there and saw the condition of the schools that the black students were going to. They were getting along, getting along better because of Dr. Cole's concern, but it wasn't separate but equal by any stretch of the imagination. I just admired Cole so much for that. Some future historian at Washington and Lee ought to get the inside of that from someone who really knows the inside of it. I wasn't privileged to know it as intimately as I now would have liked. At the time, I knew it was going on but I had so many other things to say grace over that I didn't feel excluded, let me put it that way.

Warren: Who would know more about it other than Ted Delaney? You're saying Ted Delaney but he's looking at it as a historian. Were there other participants that you can think of who would be among the people who went down there with him [Fred Cole]?

Parsons: I recall that were folks [who were] rather senior people. I remember Claybrook Griffin, I think, went down on one occasion. I would guess, too, that the Ed [Turner] I can't remember the name of, the same one that went out with Huntley on the[libraries analysis] thing—it will come to me. I keep wanting to say Polly. What's Polly's last name? All I can do is see these people and they won't come to me. Anyway, that Ed went down. I wouldn't be surprised maybe if [Professor of geology] Edgar Spencer maybe didn't go. He sent some of our best people, let's put it that way. Like I say, I don't know. Edgar Spencer, if he went, he's still around.

Warren: Sure.

Parsons: I don't know whether [professor of psychology] Len Jerrard was here by that time or

not. Len came later. He may not have been available for that, but Ed Spencer is still here.

Warren: What were these faculty members doing when they went?

Parsons: Like I say, I don't think they did anything other than by coming down and just talking to the people and showing an interest in them, a sympathetic interest, and by that alone, giving them some encouragement to hang with it and things might get better eventually.

Warren: I'll definitely talk to Ted and learn more.

Parsons: Ted knows so much more about that than I was aware of.

Warren: I will chat with him. During that period, there must have been evolving relationships starting to happen among—I guess Farris [Hotchkiss] wasn't in development yet. I think it was Bob Huntley who brought him into development.

Parsons: No, Farris came into development when Fred Cole was here.

Warren: Did he?

Parsons: Yes, we both did. What happened out of the self-study report was that we reinstituted the office of director of development. By that time, though, Jim Whitehead was more the treasurer. Jim was appointed to head up—we didn't use the term as loosely as we do now—a national search for a new development director. Now we come to how I got to be temporarily the director of development, how Farris got to be my associate.

I would stick my head in every now and then in Jim Whitehead's office. We were close enough so we had a good relationship. I stuck my head in one day and he said, "Come on in and sit down," and I did. I said, "I won't take up your time but are you making any progress on the search for development director?" "No no. People I've been following up on, they don't want to leave where they are or this, that, and the other." [Jim said,] "I wish you'd apply for the job." "Me? There's one flaw in that thinking," I said. "I don't customarily apply for jobs for which I have no qualifications." "Oh," he said, "you could learn it overnight practically." I said, "Well, don't think of me in those terms." A couple days later I'm in Cole's office and Cole says, "Whitehead tells me that you want to be director of development." I said, "No, that's not what I told him." He said, "He thinks you would be good at it" and I said, "Well, I don't think I would." But to Cole, this was exactly what he wanted. He wanted someone to have the title, someone he could control completely as to what they did, and to do it in a way that did not interfere with where he saw the major funding.

Cole came in the middle, right in the very middle, of a two-year capital campaign whose

lofty goal was to raise like $3 million. He came in in the middle of it. Gaines cut and run in the middle of it. And so he came in and he was immediately thrust out onto the banquet circuit for these area campaigns that we were [doing]. Marks and Lundy was the fundraising consultant to that campaign and they had recommended that we break it down into area campaigns. We would have a very formalized organization. We would have committees in each place and they would have a certain number of workers. Each of the workers were assigned so many prospects and they would have to go out. Then there was a great follow up. I got involved in that, again at Whitehead's insistence, in following up these meetings on a weekly basis for about five weeks. I'd go back every week for five weeks. The purpose of my going back was to keep those people knowing that they had to report to somebody on how many calls they'd made and how many pledges they'd gotten. That was like pulling teeth. We weren't getting pledges and it was hard raising the money.

Each one of these area campaigns was opened with a banquet and they expected the president of the university to go to these banquets. To President Cole's perception, he never really did warm to our alumni. Now, I will get to a point here where I will comment on an aspect of his personality that is my interpretation of what I perceived it to be. But he would go to these and he'd come back horrified at what had happened there. [There was] one in Birmingham, in particular, where the chairman I think had too much to drink, fell over, and nearly drowned in his soup. That's probably an exaggeration but that's pretty close to what I was told. So he did not see our alumni as a dependable source of support. We had suspended the annual fund for the course of that very small capital campaign.

Warren: Was this the first campaign?

Parsons: This was the first campaign since the bicentennial campaign back in the late '40s, and that one didn't succeed either in terms of reaching its announced goals and things. We were not very good at fundraising. There was a perception among alumni that Dr. Gaines and his silver tongue could spellbind any donor into giving us some money. He was especially good with ladies like Mrs. Alfred I. duPont and Mrs. [Letitia] Evans, for whom Evans Hall is named. He was successful with these folks, but they were not going to be sufficiently the measure of wealth that we needed to accomplish all the things that we were going to have to do in terms of faculty salaries to compete with other schools that were also into the development business and were raising money for faculty salaries and financial aid and, from time to time, capital campaigns for

physical facilities and library development, just what was happening in higher education at the time. Dr. Cole saw in me as the director of development [that] we could have one in name and then he would be the one who called the shots as to how much really fundraising I'd get around into.

At that time, Farris had given up a very, and I don't know how Farris would describe this but I would say, a very promising position with a company in Atlanta called Foote & Davies. I think that was the name of it. It was a printing company. Farris was the director of sales for Foote and Davies printing. He was very successful at it but he did not like the job. I think Farris probably would find some reason not to agree with this fully, but Foote & Davies was run I think by Judy's [Hotchkiss] parents. They were the major owner of Foot & Davies and he felt that his job was there because he was married to Judy. That's my gut feeling about that. So he left Foote & Davies and he came up here.

His first work at Washington and Lee was in the dean of students' area where I think he became the administrator of our financial aid at the time and also was an assistant dean of students. I'm trying to think what his responsibility was in that. He might have been dealing with the freshman year or something on that order. I think he ultimately felt he would be a good fundraiser. It had come to a point where he was having to make a decision of whether he wanted to stay in student services or to move over into fundraising. Cole knew about this and, again, because I had the longer experience at Washington and Lee, I would be the director and Farris would become the assistant director or my associate director.

We found two women to be our secretaries and we took up location in that little hyphen that separates Washington Hall from Payne Hall. It once had been the registrar's office. (When I was a student that was the registrar's office, a very tight-fisted registrar. I made a special trip back from Clifton Forge to find out what my final grades were at Washington and Lee and they wouldn't give them to me because they hadn't posted them yet or something like that. I hadn't gotten my final report on the grades. I knew I passed everything but I didn't know what the final grade was going to be.) So we set up shop there.

Meanwhile, we recognized that we were novices in this. We read about this two-week workshop going to take place at Loretta Heights College in—

Warren: You and Farris?

Parsons: Yes, Farris and I—in suburban Denver. Having committed to this, it was then that Fred

Cole announced that he was going to be leaving, and so we were left kind of high and dry. That made the urgency of our trip to Loretta Heights even greater. We took the time to go out there for two weeks and we became students in this workshop. It was good. Farris learned a lot. I learned a lot. We saw Don Smith again and he was surprised to see us there. I think he was surprised. We didn't turn to Don for as much counsel as you might think we would. We fell into the influence of another fellow that we thought had the most on the ball of any of them, and these were top-drawer people from all around. I think maybe about ten of the top collegiate fundraisers were there as faculty and available to us for individual consultations and everything.

We decided we wanted to talk to this fellow named Bob Nelson. He had been very, very good in the sessions that he had presided over. I can't tell you all the things you covered in this two weeks but you covered an awful lot. One of the things that we wanted to talk to him about was the dilemma that we found ourselves in, facing a new president coming in. What could we do in the interim before we were accepted as his development officers? What should we do in the interim to get ready for this? We had some ideas and we ran them by Nelson in the course of this, but one of the first responses to what should we do, he said, "You might consider looking for another job somewhere else. The new man might want to bring his own development people in." He explained it was a very logical thing to do. It happens all the time. We took that under advisement. Then we talked about that we needed to get the annual fund going again as quickly as we could. We had some ideas on how to go about that. He said, "You can certainly do that as rapidly as you can. You're going to need that kind of help."

He just had such good, sound advice to give us at that time, that when we did come back and Bob Huntley had been selected as the president, one of our first recommendations to Bob was hire Bob Nelson as a consultant. He came in and over a very short period of time, several days in talking to me, talking to Farris, talking to Bob Huntley, perceptions he'd made on his own from earlier conversations he had with Farris and me at Loretta Heights and everything, he was able to tell Bob, "I think you got it backwards. I think Farris is going to be the better fundraiser and Frank's going to be the better inside man." I can't tell you how relieved I was to know that that had been recommended. I was not looking forward to having to acquire the knowledge that I was going to have to acquire about so many topics under fundraising that I had an introduction to at Loretta Heights, but only an introduction to, of things that I would have to know. I was suddenly relieved of all that. Farris was chomping at the bit to get into that and lost

no time in making the wisdom of that decision apparent not only to Bob Huntley but to many, many others.

Warren: Indeed.

Parsons: Today, Farris is still much in demand by people who want consultation on fundraising and things. I try to protect him a little bit. I say, "He's very busy. I don't know how much help he can give you and I don't know whether he will actually expect to be compensated for it. I just can't tell you that. You'll have to seek this out on your own." I don't give them automatic encouragement. All I tell them is, "If you can get him to help you, you'll have really good help."

Warren: We're going to pause.

[Pause to begin Parsons 6 track]

Parsons: That change came about and Farris, to coin a phrase, hit the ground running.

Warren: But now that's happening under Bob Huntley and I don't want to quite go there yet. I want to talk about once Fred Cole left, did he continue having connections to Washington and Lee? Did he remain interested?

Parsons: I think he had connections of an informal kind.

Warren: Did he stay in touch with you?

Parsons: I'm inclined to say yes, he did, but I can't think of specific examples. I think I had some communications with him after he had retired and was living in Chapel Hill. I went down to a funeral and we had a chance to talk at that down there. I remember also going to another funeral at the Episcopal Church and he came up for that. These weren't where he felt that he had to stay in touch with me or I with him, but I was always really glad to see him. He and I became really good friends.

Warren: Okay. In the interim, Bill Pusey was named the acting president. His name has hardly come up this morning at all, so explain: why Bill Pusey and what happened in that very relatively short period of time?

Parsons: Bill was—I don't mean this in a bad way, a pejorative way—a caretaker president. I think he may have had some intimation that Bob Huntley was going to be Cole's favorite in this. During the time, the fall that Bill Pusey was the acting president, Farris and I set out upon going to meetings of alumni chapters. We were there as the development team. We were telling them of Washington and Lee's need to reestablish the development office and to get involved in the various fundraising techniques and methodology that were currently being followed with great

success elsewhere, and that they could expect us to be back in touch with them sometime in the future but that we weren't prepared to say when that future was going to occur. We had a lot of work to do and that this was the right thing for Washington and Lee to be doing. We had fallen somewhat into arrears in our fundraising capacity.

We were on our way down to Martinsville, [Virginia,] and these always started out with a little social hour before the dinner and we were talking to—okay, it'll come to me in a minute. It's a name I'm sure you've heard before. What is his name? He was a lawyer. I'm sorry.

Warren: It's okay.

Parsons: Anyway, he comes up to Farris and me. This fellow had two sons that came to Washington and Lee and I can see them but I can't think of the last name. He comes up to Farris and me and asks us, "What kind of a president is this guy Huntley going to make?" That took Farris aback because I don't think Farris had thought of that at that time. You'd have to ask Farris that. I don't know whether that took him as aback as he appeared to be. I just said, "I think he's gong to make a very good one myself. That's my private opinion." That's all I said.

Then later we talked about it as we made our way on down to the Norfolk area for another meeting. Maybe we stopped off at someplace in between, along that long Route 58 across the bottom of Virginia. I told him, "I really think that given the way that this presidential search has been conducted, I don't see it as having been conducted with a whole lot of vigor. I'm not aware of any of it going on." I forget who was the head of it. I said, "I'm going to be very surprised if it's not Bob Huntley. He's been positioned by Cole, by being made secretary of the board, as someone that would be very well known to the board." The fact is, in getting the board to back off of the racial thing—that was done under Cole—he had sent Bob Huntley out to talk to individual trustees and to adjust, if at all possible—and in some instances he was successful, some he was not—to adjust their opposition to racial integration at Washington and Lee. Cole had seen Bob and his ability to work with the trustees. It was so apparent to me that Bob ought to be the president so when he [the alumnus lawyer] said that, it didn't take me aback at all. Of course, we didn't tell these other places we went that that was the likelihood. We just simply said that the presidential search is under way and when the new president comes in, we'll get a better focus on our fundraising activities. We didn't make any promises we couldn't hold up in the meanwhile.

Bob Nelson came down and Bob did find him a very helpful person to advise him on how

to approach the fundraising thing and how to get the trustees to get involved in acknowledging that being a trustee of Washington and Lee involved the old three Gs: give, get, or get off the board. Either give it yourself, get it from somebody else, or get off the board. It didn't come down quite to that but they knew the task was set out. The board had been given its blueprint for reorganization by the McKinsey study done as part of our self study, and that was that the board should undertake to do a number of things that they ought to do.

That involved my being involved, again, in something that I look back upon as probably one of the more important things that I ever did for Washington and Lee. [It] was to put together, largely by my own design—but of course I ran it by Bob Huntley before it ever went to the board—[draft text] that spelled out just what the impact [would be] of implementing mandatory retirement [from the board of trustees] at age seventy, terms of office rather than lifetime appointments. I did it in a way that had to accomplish that objective but [did] it in a way so each one could see and see to what degree they felt threatened by all this. I don't carry the details of this thing in my head but it was set up [so] they could look ahead and see at what point they could be expected to step down, how much longer; whether they were eligible for reelection after their term expired; conditions under which you could have your term but if you still had time to serve as a trustee, that there was mandatory, a period of being laid off from the board, being an inactive trustee, and then you could be elected back if you had more time remaining. But the seventy retirement age was the critical thing. I had seen with my own eyes some of the meetings with the older board and how many of them fell asleep in the middle of the meetings.

Going back to Cole again, I have this one memory of Dr. Cole. I've never seen him more discouraged, apparently discouraged. I'm sure he was discouraged many times and he managed to internalize it, but this time I could tell he was just discouraged. Usually when I'd go in, we'd go into the back office there and sit down and talk. That time when I got down to his office—and he had his own way of summoning me on these days and I had the same procedure with him. If I wasn't involved in the trustee meeting, I was available to him after the trustee meeting for anything that I needed to be attending to in the area of publicity or whatever else he wanted me to do. I didn't know much about institutional research, but I was a general-purpose assistant to him and wrote for him and did a lot of things.

On this occasion he was in the outer office, standing up, still chain smoking. He didn't invite me into the [back] office; he said, "Sit down." I sat down on a sofa there and he continued

to walk around. There's no light on in this room and it was a rainy, I think, an overcast day. It was a gloomy day. I had two such meetings in that room that the gloominess was characteristic of it. I'll tell you about the other one some time. It's a funny story, I think. On that particular day he obviously was distressed about something. He told me that Mr. Caskie had resigned as rector of the board. I think his age at the time was eighty-two. He was one of the dozers and sleepers frequently. I think my reaction was, "Well, that's good, isn't it?" He said, "They elected Dr. [James Morrison] Hutcheson as his successor." Dr. Hutcheson was *eighty-four* years old. That was why he was distressed.

Warren: Doom and gloom indeed.

Parsons: Doom and gloom there in the twilight zone of that [outer office]. I used to refer to that room, that outer room, when Cole invited me down it was like being in the twilight zone.

Warren: It *was* dim in there. I remember that.

Parsons: Even if you turned all the lights on it was kind of dim. Anyway, we had that conversation. I was then to go out and to prepare an announcement that Mr. Caskie was retiring and that Dr. Hutcheson was going to be his replacement. I don't think we prolonged the doom and the gloom there. I went on about my business. He may have had some other things to tell me, I don't remember that, but always that was done in that outer office. We didn't go back to the inner office.

There was another time when I was called down. He had a friend with the Ford Foundation whose last name was Lowry [phonetic]. I cannot think of his first name. He was hoping Mr. Lowry was going to come down on this weekend. I think it was after the board. I think he wanted him to meet some of the trustees. I'm not sure what the purpose of Mr. Lowry's [visit was] but he was unable to come because of the weather. The weather was really nasty. The Roanoke airport was shut down and so he couldn't make connections. This was the time when I really felt like I was in the twilight zone. Again we sat in the outer office and Dr. Cole was pacing back and forth. He said, "What do you think about Washington and Lee having its own helicopter?" I said, "Well, I can think of a lot of things we need worse than a helicopter. Why do you ask?" He went on to tell me about the problem that they'd had. He said, "If we'd had our own helicopter, we could have flown him in here." I said, "Look outside. I don't think I'd want to fly in on a helicopter today." You couldn't see the mountains. You couldn't see anything. It was not a good idea and I told him. He said, "Well, okay," and to my knowledge he never

brought it up again. That was when I wasn't sure what was shadow and what was fact, you know?

Warren: I'm thinking back on your description of that room. Of course, I only knew it during Bob Huntley's time. It was a dim room, but then when I knew it as Farris's office, it was bright and sunny. Am I right about my memory? Was it dark in there or was it that I would come in and visit you late in the afternoon?

Parsons: I'm trying to think whether you're thinking about the right room or not.

Warren: I'm talking about the room that Mr. Latture was normally in. Is that what you mean by the outer office?

Parsons: Yes, that's the outer office. That's the room. Mr. Latture ultimately took up desk space there.

Warren: Yes.

Parsons: This was before Latture was in there.

Warren: Then the room that connected to your office into Bob's office, I have this image of both of them being kind of dark.

Parsons: Both the president's office, where Bob held forth and Wilson held forth as president, that could be a dark room. You had to turn on all the lights for it to take on any sense of being well illuminated.

Warren: But I don't remember it that way when Farris was there. It seemed like it was bright and sunny.

Parsons: Farris did some things in there. I'm trying to think what he did. I think he had his stand-up desk there by one of the windows.

Warren: I don't know. I hadn't thought about it until right now. I had a completely different impression of that room. Maybe it was just Farris's sunny disposition.

Parsons: I think it was mainly that. Farris was more inclined to be upbeat on things. We were talking about pulling teeth; it's hard to get Farris to say anything negative about anybody.

Warren: It's true.

Parsons: He will find ways to compliment them even in saying something bad about them.

Anyhow, Dr. Cole, I've never seen him so discouraged as he was that day about Dr. Hutcheson and also to be doing some really wrong thinking, in my view, about a helicopter being the solution of our visitors' technique.

Warren: I think it's just as well that one didn't happen.

Parsons: Before I forget, I may not remember this. I was called to Dr. Cole's office once again and this took place in the outer office. Who was giving us these things? I'm trying to think who they were. Somebody associated with the Mason Dixon trucking company. They were having a meeting over at the Homestead. The Mason Dixon people, as part of their logo, the symbols that they put on their trucks and things, they would show what they thought [was] the ultimate of conciliation and getting together and everything: a statue of General Grant and a statue of General Lee, Grant in his Union uniform and Lee in his Confederate uniform. They were going to put these little statues on their Mason Dixon depots up and down the highways, wherever they ran these things. They actually had depots for their own trucks, not like the big, multipurpose truck stops you have now. It occurred to them that we would like to have a set of the statues. They had brought a set to the Homestead and they brought them over.

I was called to come over and be part of the reception group that came in. They brought in these two, somewhat grotesque, little statues. They were about this tall. Dr. Cole accepted them very graciously, all the right things were said, and when it was over and the visitors from the Homestead had left, he turned to me and said, "Get these damn things out of here." [Laughs raucously.] So I took them up to my office and, for a long time when Sue Stewart was my secretary up there, we kept them there in the office. They were made of metal and they'd been made in Italy. They'd been hand painted and all kinds of things that made them maybe works of some kind of art. People would come in and they found it soothing to put their hands on the tops of their heads! It got to be a joke there.

Warren: Where was your office then?

Parsons: This was when I had the office up in what was once the balcony of the Washington chapel, which is where the president's office is now. There's still an office up there and the remnants of the balcony are still there, but I was literally up in the balcony at that time. The outer office, where you go into after you go up all the steps and go inside of the room, that was Sue Stewart. She was out there. We had another person in the office who was a part-time secretary to the history department but also was there to help Sue when she was taking on a lot of tasks. Particularly during the self study, she needed to have this other person helping her.

Sue had such a quick wit. The funniest story I tell about her was that she brought in a little monkey. It was very pliable. You could make it do all kinds of things. You could make it sit

on things. You could make it stand up and lean on things, all like that. I remember one of our student leaders came in one day and he was talking to her about this. He had some business to be there. He had that monkey up in his hands and he was just twisting it around, doing terrible things with its legs, like this, and Sue said, "It's a girl." Well, he dropped it like a hot potato. The next day, she brought in a little tiny skirt that she had made for the monkey.

Warren: That's great. All right, we're going to stop.

[Pause for lunch break. Begin Parsons track 7]

Warren: All right, we're back after a good lunch. The brilliant man, Mr. Nelson, said he fingered you as the inside man. If ever there was an inside man, that's Frank Parsons. Tell me a little bit about your career as an inside man.

Parsons: Bob Huntley did not use me in exactly the way as an assistant as Fred Cole had used me, which was fine. Bob told me early on that he would like for me to get involved with the architects and planners. We had four major needs at that time. We needed to get started on them and we hardly knew which was the chicken and which was the egg. We had to make a decision there somewhere along the line. We also didn't quite know where to start first. We had undertaken that we would probably start first with the gymnasium, which seemed to be the most urgent need. It was the most visible one that was in bad shape.

Warren: Why was that the most urgent need?

Parsons: It was a lousy gymnasium. The basketball court where we played intercollegiate basketball with some of the best teams in the country, we only seated several hundred people and you sat right by the court. There were bleachers at the ends and things but they were just bleachers. You had an indoor track up above and you could put some people up there, but it was a lousy place to play basketball. I think the court was normal size but it took up most of the space in the whole gymnasium, so it was bad. Then downstairs we had bad conditions. If they did the—what was the one they used to do? The dance at the dances? The bunny hop? You know, bump, bump, bump. If they did that [and] you'd go down below, you'd see the damn floor going like this [gestures movement]. It had a lot of shortcomings. It still had a lot of use in it but don't use it for that and don't use it for—

Warren: The bunny hop.

Parsons: The bunny hop and a number of other things. We used to have the Mock Convention there. So that was one of the most obvious things. It was easier to get a handle on what we

needed to do there, and that was to build a big addition to it and put most of the activities in the new addition, which is what we proceeded to do. It was the first project I worked on and I had to cut my teeth on that one. I had not worked with architects and engineers before so I had to learn to work. As I gained some experience in that, if we had that building to do over, I'm sure it could have been done better had I been more experienced. We were dealing with some architects that had taken on sort of the title of university architects, out of Lynchburg.

Warren: Meaning architects to various universities or Washington and Lee's university?

Parsons: We referred to them as the university architect. They did work for other colleges, too: Lynchburg College and Sweet Briar [College] and places like that. They had a fairly broad-based practice and so they were the architects on the gymnasium.

We had to make a lot of trade-offs in that. We didn't have the money for it. We ended up borrowing the money for it at a time when the interest rates were way high and so we were in a bad, bad situation there. Fortunately, the State of Virginia came along with a source of funding that we were able to convert it to, but it was still borrowed money and we were paying through the nose on interest and things. We finally got out from under all that. It was the first project but it was necessary to get things rolling. Then as we went through other projects, I became more experienced and got to working with different architects. [I] found that they came about solving problems in different ways and learned to work with them. That was the beginning, when Bob Huntley just said, "I want you to take the responsibility for coordinating this planning." And so that's what I did, but it was very much a work in progress for me to acquire these understandings.

Warren: I presume that Bob Huntley was a very different kind of president from Fred Cole.

Parsons: Oh yes.

Warren: How important was it that he was an alumnus?

Parsons: I think it was very important at the time because I told you in our conversation earlier that Fred Cole did not like to go out on the alumni banquet circuit. He did not like to. I think he found a lot of our alumni unpleasant to be around for one reason or another. He met people who were coming back wanting him to go back to the grants-in-aid for football and basketball and then later lacrosse. He just got an earful wherever he went and people didn't find him a warm and engaging person like Dr. Gaines was. We were very much in need of someone who was going to be an alumnus at that time and Bob Huntley fit the bill in any way you can figure it. He

was just the perfect man for the job in my opinion.

Warren: Tell me more about what he brought to the table.

Parsons: Extreme intelligence. A lawyer's way of looking at things. Energy. He was a young man. He became president when he was thirty-eight years old.

Warren: Was there any resistance among the older alumni to his youth?

Parsons: If there was, I never was aware of it.

This man's name down in Martinsville [referenced above] was Stone as I recall now. What was his first name? Bill Stone, yes. He was older and the question he put to me when I met him at that alumni dinner, what kind of a president is this guy Huntley going to make? I think he already knew Bob Huntley. Being a lawyer himself, he knew who he was and what he taught and all of that. He was probably aware that Bob had just been made dean of the law school. Maybe he was concerned about losing him as a good dean of the law school.

I cannot go much further than that in commenting on how he was received. Everywhere he went he was given a most generous welcome by the alumni who would meet him for the first time. He just came across so strong.

We started having these things called special alumni conferences. We tried to bring back to attend these people that we thought could be useful to us in the future as prospective members of the Alumni Board, prospective donors, [and] prospective alumni contacts for student recruiting in their areas. It was a mixed bag. Among those we brought back to one of those—and we started this I think before Bob became president. I think Farris and I started in that first year [that] we ought to get people back and begin to acquaint them with the needs of the university. One of the first persons to come back was Jack Warner, Tuscaloosa [Alabama] Jack. I ventured the opinion that we had a lot of alumni that were capable of—I was speaking to this alumni group—that we had a lot of people among our alumni and among our parents capable of making significant gifts to us, but in recent years they had not been properly asked. Warner jumps up and says, "I've never been properly asked." I said, "We'll see about that." Of course, among some of the very first that Bob Huntley approached was Jack Warner and that's why the Warner Center is named the Warner Center. He came up with a substantial funding of that.

Warren: Were you part of those asks?

Parsons: Those asks?

Warren: Yes.

Parsons: No, I didn't go. Farris is the fundraiser now, remember. I'm the planner. Occasionally I would be involved in a situation where I could speak for the facility or play some role in it. So that was one of the differences. I think Bob Huntley very quickly became recognized as a good choice for president.

Warren: He ran the whole place quite differently. One of the things that I became aware of when I first came [to Lexington] several years later [in 1977] is the famous Monday lunch bunch. Tell me about that.

Parsons: I think he just thought it was a good idea if the people who reported directly to him would get together every Monday. The dining hall was there and Jerry Darrow [head of dining services] was willing accommodate us in everything, any way we wanted to be accommodated. We would go over and we would meet in that back room there and have lunch together. Some days Bob would come in [and] there would be no agenda. We didn't go around the room and everybody had to say something. Some people sat there sometimes and didn't utter a word. I think that was my case sometimes. After we'd had our lunch, maybe over dessert but we'd finished our meal—and at the meal we just talked about whatever's on anyone's mind, football, basketball, sports, whatever—Bob would say, "Does anyone have anything of pith or moment they want to talk about?" That was one of his favorite expressions. I don't know whether it turned up in any of your interviews.

Warren: Of pith or moment?

Parsons: Of pith or moment.

Warren: I love that.

Parsons: I can go home right now and Google it and I'd come to the origin of it. I could find what the origin was. But anyway, he said that. Sometime there would be some people with things on their mind and they would bring it up. If no one had something of that kind to bring up, he would then sometime, "Well, I have," he'd say. "I've got a couple things I want to talk about here." He would toss out the thoughts mainly to get reaction from people. This led ultimately to a compliment from Bob that he could always depend on me for a frank answer. Sometimes my frank answer would be more frank than he was looking for, but he said he couldn't hold it against me; he'd asked for it. I would tell him what I thought and he had come to rely on me to ask the tough question and be the devil's advocate and things. He expected me to play that role ultimately at lunch because, hell, there was Ed Atwood over there trying to figure out what can I

say that Bob wants me to say and he was prepared to say it. There were others around the table the same way. Bill Washburn was always trying to second-guess what Bob wanted to do and to be one of those that came right out and endorsed it. Well, that wasn't at all what he wanted. He wanted to hear what people really thought about it and so I was the one that had to come up with the challenging questions. Sometimes somebody would. Roy Steinheimer [dean of the School of Law, 1968–87] was pretty good. He was such a close friend of Bob's and he was very comfortable in asking Bob tough questions. Sometimes he was the only one that could give voice to the tough questions if it involved anything regarding legal matter and things.

That was an interesting thing and it was right funny. We developed certain days when the menu would be to our liking and some days it wasn't. You could go through the [cafeteria] line and get what you wanted and I remember one of the things that we took to favoring.: we liked chicken livers with gravy. That was a favorite of most of us, not all of us. It was just a very informal thing. When John Wilson became president, I told him about the Monday lunch bunch and that I would suggest, if it didn't clash with any of his administrative procedures and things, that he ought to continue it and he did. The difference was that he did go around the room. He wanted everybody at the table to have something to say. Some people had to say, what can I say today? and not be embarrassed if they didn't have anything to say. In my work with the projects and things I always had progress reports on the projects and there were other things.

One of the funniest Monday lunches under John Wilson was once we were supposed to be doing—when somebody was leaving, stepping down so they wouldn't be a part of the lunch group again, we would have kind of a little roast for them. The deal was we were going to roast Lew John who was stepping down as being dean of students. I had been having some experiences. At that time we were right in the middle of, or actually nearing the end of, the Fraternity Renaissance thing. I put together a story that I made up out of the air about a concern that I had come across out at the Lambda Chi house. I'd been out there with the architects and we were talking with them about it. The Lambda Chi house in many ways would need relatively few renovations to conform to the specifications or the guidelines for the physical rehabilitation of the houses. But there was an area down there that seemed to be a room that I didn't know what it was there. When I asked to see it, they came up with all kinds of reasons why they didn't want to show it to us. I insisted on seeing it. We had to see it. The architects had to see it. When we went in there, we found something unexpected. It had all the trappings of a room in a brothel, with red

drapes and mirror on the ceiling and all this, that, and the other. Everybody's sitting there at the table and they're soaking this thing up. The next thing I know, Wilson is putting questions to Lew if he knew anything about this; why don't you know something about it? I'd sold everybody there!

Warren: Oh Frank, you'd taken the spirit of the thing a little extreme.

Parsons: Well, I did. I carried it too far. I had to break in and say, "Wait, wait a minute. Hold it. This is a roast, remember? I'm roasting this guy over here. There is no such room at the Lambda Chi house."

There was another time when I got my licks in at Randy Bezanson who was the law dean [1988–93]. He had come to us from the University of Iowa or someplace out in Iowa. We had the Iowa mafia here in those days. Randy announced his decision to leave Washington and Lee and so we were roasting him. Part of my roast there was to say, quite honestly, that there had never been anything brought up at that table on any subject that Randy wasn't able to come up with additional information or somehow to know all about it, and that I had become convinced that he was a damn know-it-all.

As I explained to the group, I said, "The other day I had a call from Deep Springs College in Nevada, just over the borderline from California. What they were asking was to get advice. They were considering becoming coeducational and they'd been referred to me as having been involved in the coeducational study at Washington and Lee. Could I share with them some insights that they might expect to encounter, such as alumni reactions?" And so I did. I was telling them. They wanted to know how the trustees went about it. It seemed like a bona fide thing until I asked, "How many students do you have at Deep Springs?" "Oh, we have about thirty I think now." I said, "Thirty?" Then he went on to say it was a far-out college that required everyone who went to college there, they had a work curriculum there. You had to put in a lot of labor there in the course of the day, not unlike Berea College in Kentucky, where you do a lot of that involvement as part of your education. It sounded to me like this was a little place out in the middle of nowhere in the desert. It was in the desert and they called it Deep Springs because it took a deep spring to get them any water. Somewhere along the line I had had occasion to bring up Deep Springs, or to ask Randy about it, and he knew all about Deep Springs. I said, "When he came forward with the information about Deep Springs, I was convinced then that he did, indeed, know it all."

The reason he knew about it was that he had a very talented son who he felt would flower best in a college out of the ordinary. Among those he looked at was St. John's [College] in Annapolis. He looked at Antioch [College], which at that time was more involved in this. He looked at several other places and he looked at Deep Springs, so he knew.

Warren: He did know it.

Parsons: He did know it.

Warren: Meanwhile … That was a diversion.

Parsons: That was a diversion.

Warren: I'm yanking you back.

Parsons: Okay.

Warren: I have memories of when I was here with you, having the office next to you [in Hill House, 1995–99], that when the trustees would meet you were always in the thick of it. Was that true during the Huntley administration?

Parsons: Yes. Bob Huntley was the first president that took me along to board meetings. I was invited to sit in on the board, both in terms of their committee meetings and at their sessions, except when they went into executive session. I was one of the first other than [Treasurer and Secretary of the University Jim] Whitehead. I think maybe I was invited to come before even Farris was sitting with the board. He was there for the development committee.

Warren: Are you saying that prior to Huntley, when the board met with the president, there weren't administrators there?

Parsons: No.

Warren: Oh.

Parsons: Well, I have to back up and say I'm not sure. I was never involved in their meetings. I was at one time—I'm trying to think when this occurred. We were having a meeting and I remember we were meeting in the alumni house. I'm trying to think whether Bob Huntley had become president or whether it was in the very last stages of Fred Cole's administration. At that time we were being approached by VMI. VMI wanted to widen Letcher Avenue, our street. [It] passes right through our campus and it's our street, but they were dependent upon it as one of the major accesses into the [VMI] post. What they wanted to do was to expand the width of that and they were going to do it probably a little bit on both sides. They were probably going to build out on the downhill side and cut in on the uphill side. This was to be brought before a committee. If

it was the development committee that meant [John] Stemmons was the chairman, because he was the chairman of the development committee at that time, or it might have been before the full board.

As a matter of fact, VMI had had the unfortunate foresight, and I say unfortunate because it was fortunate they had this foresight to come and to tie yellow ribbons around all the trees that were going to have to come down. When John Stemmons saw this, he said, "Over my dead body, cousin. You ain't goin' to cut down those trees." So we never got anywhere with VMI with widening Letcher Avenue. What we did agree finally was to take the parking off of it we were using when we were building the library. I'm sure this was when Bob was president because he was president when we built the library.

We had a concern over trees and gotten a lot of flak from local residents that we had to cut down trees to build the library. Well, there were a lot of trees there where the library was. Yes, we had to take down some trees and that happens all the time here. At the endorsement of our landscape architects that we worked with, they put together a program for us to replace trees. We actually had studies done about the health of our trees and ones that would have to come down at some time for the safety of the people who had to walk near them or the buildings that were located near them. We were very sensitive to trees and I don't think anybody involved in that meeting was very happy about having to take down trees to accommodate VMI widening the street.

Warren: We'll pause for a minute.

[Pause to begin Parsons 8 track]

Warren: You mention local residents having opinions. That's one thing I'd like to hear about because I sense that you know a lot about the subject of Washington and Lee as a citizen of Lexington and Rockbridge County. Talk to me about that.

Parsons: Now let me think. I'm going to give you an opinion. We were not, as an entity that consisted of both faculty and students and administrators and other people that worked here at Washington and Lee and just the fact that the university itself sitting right in the middle of town in close proximity to so many other enterprises downtown, businesses and residential areas, that we were not perceived as a very good citizen. I have to be honest. I think that we did not recognize that we had as important a role as a good citizen of Lexington as we see today. I think Washington and Lee has never been as interested in the city itself than it is today.

Warren: What's the difference?

Parsons: One of the differences, Washington and Lee has sufficient wealth that we can be a participant in this. I mentioned to Jimmy [Farrar, secretary of the university] today, maybe before you came, that I saw his picture in the paper. Washington and Lee had come up with money to help the Rockbridge Area Transportation Service—RATS, as they proclaim on their vehicles—[acquire] a new vehicle that was going to aid in getting elderly people, who have no other means of transportation, to doctors and to downtown for shopping and this, that, and the other, a wonderful thing to make available to them.

They have also set up something that I did have a role to play in from the other side, coming to Washington and Lee and saying, "Look, give some money to Boxerwood [Education Association, where Parsons served on the board after retiring from Washington and Lee]. We've got all kinds of Washington and Lee students coming out there, working as volunteers, and some of them are actually coming out there as part of their environmental studies. Give us some money out there." The same thing was true for the Lime Kiln [Theater, ditto]. We [Lime Kiln] were providing a very valuable lab out there in terms of drama. When I would bring this to the attention of the university from the outside, I was told, "We need to come up with a policy on this." They were going to study it, and they would never get back to me. This is [Steven] McAllister I'm talking about. I had to keep fussing at him and he kept saying, "We're just about done with this. We're going to come out with it." Well, they've come out with that program now and they make a substantial amount of money that's shared among a number of enterprises here locally of a charitable kind. They're good in that respect.

Warren: Who makes those decisions, do you know?

Parsons: I don't know exactly who's involved in it. There may be a committee of the board that ultimately has to act on it. I just don't know how to track that now. But it certainly involves the chief financial officer [and] probably involves the chief advancement man, who's concerned about overall public relations impact. I just don't know.

Warren: There were numerous things, I think, that I've been aware of through the years. Certainly for years and years and years, people in the community were frustrated by the parking situation in Lexington, and student cars.

Parsons: I can say this with certainty: [people were] concerned with parking to such an extent that no matter what I went in to the [Lexington] planning commission or to the city council [to

address], no matter what the planning element I was there to speak to, it would be a matter of not a half hour or a maybe a matter of minutes before the big issue on the table was parking—the P word as I came to call it. The parking thing was sometimes vigorous and not really friendly.

The need for additional parking was that we carved out parking wherever we could around here. We used certain surfaces that weren't set up to bear the weight of cars and that began the great slump over here. The [site for the] building we're in right now [Elrod Commons] used to be sliding down the hill. They had to put down *lots* of reinforcement here to get to solid rock so that this building is not going to slide down the hill, but it took a lot of excavations. What had been done before, they put fill from the Warner Center over the bank there. It hadn't been compacted properly and it began to slide down the hill, slowly at first but then big drops. So some of the places we tried to make parking occur, it just didn't work out.

When we were building back here on the back campus, we had to take over some space there in front of the gymnasium almost totally for parking. That turned out to be a kind of parking that was the most efficient parking that we'd ever had here because there were no spaces. It was gravel and you couldn't line off the gravel, so people would jam their cars in in little spaces and so the space was used very efficiently. Sometimes somebody would park too far apart you couldn't get another car in, and somebody would ride a motorbike or a motorcycle in [and] they'd park it there. It was used pretty well. I learned at that time that you could get very efficient use of the space if you didn't decide how wide everybody's car was and make every space equal width. That made us sometimes vary in parking lots, where there would be parking for compact cars in one area and larger vehicles in other places. We simply got them up there and said, "Use this space between these areas," and they began to use that with the same efficiency that we'd had in that other gravel lot, even though it was blacktop. We learned some lessons there and I convinced the people from Pittsburgh, our planning consultants there, that that was a more efficient way to do parking on our campus. It might not be the same for another college but for our purposes, that was a good way to do it and we continued to do it that way.

Bob Murray was our proctor at the time and we resisted painting yellow lines as best we could and putting up no-parking signs as best we could. But when Bob stepped down as proctor and Mr. [Michael] Young came in as the new security chief, he had a different view on that and I have to say it's turned out all right. They do have yellow lines a lot of places and it's very clearly defined where you aren't supposed to park. We tried to avoid that and we had signs, but the

yellow lines are a constant reminder that you aren't supposed to park there.

Warren: I guess we're jumping way ahead in years, but the whole issue seems to be much less of an issue now that the "parkthenon" got built. I still regret that they didn't take their idea and call it the parkethenon.

Parsons: That building [the parking garage, opened in 1999, behind the Warner Center], we could not have done a lot of other things unless we addressed that issue first. I recognized that and I went to Larry Broomall and said, "Larry, we've got the parking garage in our thinking among our needs, but we're not going to be able to accommodate—the parking regulations of the city are already in place and are not going to be changed in our favor to accommodate—parking for the sorority houses. We can't find parking up there on that hilltop sufficient to provide the parking that the women will need there. We've got to do something on a parking garage." I told him where I thought it ought to go. In fact, it actually showed on our longer projections as to where it was going to go. He asked me what the cost was likely to be and I said, "The conventional wisdom right now is, on a national average, ten thousand dollars a parking space." He did some figuring there and for whatever reason, I don't know, he said, "I think we can up with a financial plan to cover that." I said, "Really? Okay." I had brought it up to the attention of John Elrod, the president, that we were going to have to do that and he said, "Oh, I couldn't agree with you more, Frank, but we just don't have the money."

Let me give you the sequence of that. I asked Larry Broomall, "Who should tell John Elrod this?" Larry said, "Why don't you tell him?" I was always the messenger, you know, who got shot. I would come in with ways to spend more money, other people would come in with ways to save more money, and I was always the one that got bullet-ridden, being the messenger getting killed for bringing bad news. Well, I went in. That's when Elrod said, "I couldn't agree with you more but we just don't have the money." I said, "Have you spoken to your chief financial officer? He says he thinks we can do it." And so then there did follow the proper conversations and things.

I had more disposable income at that time than at any time in my career before. I had taken my early retirement to make room for you [Mame Warren] to come here, and had been hired back at a sufficient fraction of what I made before, which left enough money to get you here [to produce *Come Cheer for Washington and Lee*]. I had my full TIAA-CREF income. I was then eligible, I think, for Social Security and what else? Then I was working for a specific

amount for Washington and Lee. In terms of actually becoming eligible for my TIAA-CREF, they had to hire me back as a consultant. That, in itself, was the main reason they were able then to get rid of me when they chose to get rid of me. I had lost my status as a full-time employee.

Warren: That was a pretty fancy "getting rid of," Frank. I wouldn't call that getting rid of you.

Parsons: Well, I wanted to stay working until we finished the sororities and I was not permitted to do that. But that was all right. It all turned out for the best. Let me quickly add that in there. Whatever resulted in my being replaced by a Harvard architect, it all worked out for the best.

Warren: Okay, we're going to pause.

[Pause to begin Parsons 9 track]

Parsons: Let me just wrap up the parking. I don't know whether you remember or not, but when this was before the board, I promised that to get them thinking in the right direction that the average price of a space was ten thousand dollars, that I, there in front of everybody at the board, that I was in a position where I could promise one space in that building. And I did.

Warren: I'll think of you every time I park in the garage, Frank.

Parsons: I don't have my name on a space over there but there's a space there that my contribution paid for.

Warren: We're all grateful because it's a real asset.

Parsons: I don't know how much the spaces actually came in for, but they only got ten thousand dollars out of me.

Warren: Let's get back to talking about the board. One of the things that I witnessed a little bit of is the importance of the role that the rector plays, and there have been quite a few different kinds of personalities.

Parsons: Yes indeed, there have been.

Warren: Talk to me about the rector and the role the rector plays.

Parsons: Let me just think back what the succession of rectors has been. The first one that I worked with—I didn't work with Dr. Hutcheson [rector, 1964–64]. I hardly got to know the man at all. I knew who he was. I'm sure I was introduced to him at some point but I can't say that I knew him. He was succeeded by Huston St. Clair [rector, 1965–70], as I recall. Huston was the rector that Bob Huntley first dealt with. He was the rector when Bob was selected as the president because I remember that Farris and I were—I was called to come to the president's office between Christmas and New Year's in 1967, I guess it was. Bill Pusey called me at home.

That was in the days when you went home at Christmas and you didn't come back to Washington and Lee until after New Year's. I mean you got a long vacation there. They don't get that kind of vacation anymore and that's probably all right too, because so much has changed that you have to be more structured in the way in which Washington and Lee was run than at that time. But I got the call to come up to the president's office. He had something important to talk to me about.

When I went in there, I went in there thinking it had something to do with the presidency. As I told you before, I wasn't at all surprised to see Bob Huntley sitting there and I was introduced to the new president of Washington and Lee. We had to get out a notice.

Warren: So the board had approved him at that point.

Parsons: Yes. I think the board had been notified. I don't know how they were notified of the selection and how they actually voted on it or when they voted. My guess was they didn't have a special meeting or anything. It just happened. I got the call to come and there was Bob. We decided that we needed to get word out to the faculty and staff so they wouldn't be taken by surprise by the announcement in the newspaper. I remember in the great sense of confidentiality of running off the letters that went out to everybody, I remember that I became very skilled at signing Huston St. Clair's name. I signed all of them. We got them out to everybody and so it didn't take anybody by surprise. Again, I think some people who learned of him, particularly the local people who knew him, they were delighted with the choice. Everyone realized that we were going to be better off with an alumnus who was president at this time. It was just that special time that we needed an alumnus and there was Bob Huntley. Also, he met all the other qualifications.

Very much then, Huston St. Clair felt very close to Bob Huntley and exhibited absolutely no tendency to want to, as rector, run the university. He had complete faith in Bob Huntley. You had some other members of the board that had great faith in Bob Huntley. Rocky [Homer] Holt from West Virginia, he was on the board at that time and he knew Bob Huntley. In fact, Bob was one of the ones that had talked with Holt about integration and other things that we had had to deal with under Cole. Many members of the board already knew Bob so it was an easy choice for them to make. We got off to a good start with Bob Huntley. He had fifteen wonderful years as the head of this university and put in place a great many things that facilitated the situation that John Wilson had to inherit.

Warren: Let's continue talking about the rectors.

Parsons: I'm getting to that. The reason I'm saying that is, is that when he came on, Steve Miles became the rector of the board.

Warren: When was Jim Ballengee [rector, 1981–90] in there though?

Parsons: No, wait a minute. I remember Ballengee showing Wilson around. Okay. All right. Ballengee came in. Ballengee came in.

Warren: He followed St. Clair.

Parsons: Yes, he followed St. Clair.

Warren: How was he as rector in your opinion?

Parsons: He was a good bit more aggressive in terms of feeling that he wanted to be consulted frequently by the president. He was more forthcoming with advice. He didn't try to run things though.

Warren: Did he and Bob Huntley get along?

Parsons: Oh yes. Oh hell, yes, they got along great. Everybody got along with Bob. I remember being in the McCormick Library at the time and happened to bump into Jim Ballengee and John Wilson. That was the first time I met John Wilson and he was obviously there as one of the candidates for the presidency. I did not know that he was going to get the job but I knew why he was there. It didn't take a lot of explaining. I just recognized what the situation was.

When he was succeeded by Steve Miles [rector, 1990–97], Miles had been a very active—and I don't know with certainty whether he was the chairman of the board or the president, [but it] seemed like he was a banker, and so he felt that his job qualified him to take, on his own, some initiatives. Now let me see if I don't need to precede this by—I haven't given thought to these things for a long time.

Seems to me that somewhere in Bob Huntley's presidency there had been some initiatives within the board to do some things that he didn't agree with, or that they were going to want to make something happen and that it would look like they were kind of bypassing him as the president. I can't quote it exactly and I'm even hesitant to try to summarize it, but he made a speech to the board on that occasion. I remember where it was. It was in Classroom F over in the law school because we sat around sort of in tiers in that thing—T-I-E-R-S. He essentially said that I'm the president and if you want to initiate things on your own, that—what he said was, in effect, it undermines his responsibility as the president. If they didn't like what he was doing as

president, the thing to do was meet with him about why they didn't like it, convince him that what they wanted to do ought to be done, and then expect him to implement it. He expected all these things to be done. But when the trustees go off on their own trying to make things happen, he would either have to be consulted on that very much throughout all the stages of it, or asked to step down as the president because he wasn't doing the job that they wanted him to do. He didn't have to go very far in getting all those words out till they understood exactly that they were overstepping their bounds. Therefore, there was no propensity on the part of the board to intercede in that regard.

He had to put John Warner, Senator Warner—he wasn't senator then; he was still involved with a number of other things—sort of in his place one time when he wanted to put together a blue-ribbon panel of some kind, a star committee of our leading jurists to codify the Honor System. Well, Huntley came out and just flat out said that was the worst idea that he'd ever come across. But he did it in a way that didn't particularly offend John Warner so that he took umbrage about it. He did it very diplomatically but that was what he said, that the worst thing they could do was try to put the Honor System into a book. Of course, the students have done that on their own now. The *White Book*, in my opinion, has hurt the Honor System more than it's ever helped it.

Warren: Tell me what you mean.

Parsons: They've codified it. Have you ever seen the *White Book*?

Warren: Yes.

Parsons: Well, that wasn't written down that way before. It wasn't codified like that. It was pretty much based upon the records and the precedents that were set in the EC [Executive Committee, the student organization as opposed to the executive committee of the board of trustees] itself. Now, I've never served on the EC but I've talked to some who had, and it was pretty much lying, cheating, and stealing, and not tolerating those who do that, and not tolerating people who wouldn't report it. If it had come to light that you didn't report an honor violation, that was as much an honor violation as the violation itself.

We went along a long time when there wasn't any record of a public hearing and then, all of a sudden, we got there in the late '60s, early '70s, where public hearings became the normal course. That's what led to the *White Book* getting developed and the procedures about what was the structure for bringing in representatives to represent in a public hearing the interests of the

accused and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee, I think, was prepared to argue their own case on their own, but the accused had the opportunity of bringing in fellow students or they could even go outside. Each time this thing took a little incremental step further, a new line or two appeared in the *White Book*. It's evolved over time and I have not tracked this. Never having been on the EC, I don't know to what degree they keep the records and everything, but I know there are some. It's just evolved over time and I don't think that the Honor System is as strong today, in my opinion, as it was when I was a student.

I remember sitting in biology class afraid to let my eyes wander to the frog being cut up next to me. You didn't want to run the risk, you know, of inadvertently looking somewhere, maybe just staring in space, and it looked like you were looking at someone to see how they're doing and then you go back to cut up your frog. Then I went through that bad experience as a student of having the Honor System collapse that spring of '54.

Warren: You're reminding me of the first month I was here working on *Come Cheer*. I came into the office one day and said, "Frank, I just saw a dollar bill over on the sidewalk over by the gym." You said, "Well, you picked it up, didn't you?" I said, "Oh no, it's the Honor System. You don't do that here." And you said, "It doesn't apply to *you*. Go get the dollar!" I think you thought I was the biggest fool in the world, but I thought it was a trick or something to test me.

Parsons: No, no.

Warren: It was very funny, I thought.

Parsons: Even under the Honor System, if someone finds a dollar lying there, what are you going to do? Leave it there for the rightful owner to come back and realize he'd dropped a dollar somewhere?

Warren: Well, there was that famous picture of the fellow who had left the coat hanging in Washington Hall for two years, then goes back and his silver dollar's still in the pocket. I'm sure someone had that picture posed, now that I think about it; probably the person I'm looking at.

Parsons: No, I never posed any Honor System [pictures]. I posed some other photographs but I did not pose anything on the Honor System.

Warren: I can't remember whether I put that in the book or not, but I always thought it was very funny.

Parsons: The toughest decision I had to make with regard to the Honor System was my senior year. I was taking Rupert Latture's course. He was such a bad teacher that 50 percent of your

final exam were true/false questions and they were usually very easy true/false questions.

Warren: Good old Rupert.

Parsons: I'm taking my senior exam, my last semester here, and I hit the true/false section first, get it out of the way. I was going through it and all of a sudden I said, hey, some of these things are tricky. This is true in ninety-nine times but there was that hundredth time when it's not true. So I put that down as false. Instead of being a true statement, I put it down as false. There were several like that where it was ambiguous. It wasn't a black-and-white true/false.

I get up and I go to the bathroom in Newcomb Hall. I come out and Mr. Latture's coming down the hall and he says, "How you getting along?" I said, "Oh, I don't know. You've got some tricky ones in there in the true/false this time." "Oh? I didn't intend for them to be tricky." I said, "Well, sorry I mentioned it." So I go back in and I sat down. Okay, what am I going to do? I know that these are tricky things. What's going to happen if I change them? I'm going to be violating the Honor System. Can I stand those wrong answers and still do well on this exam? I decided I'm not going to take a chance. I'm going to leave those the way I answered them the first time. I wasn't going to change a thing and I still got an A in the course. I don't think he ever graded my papers to begin with. That was the closest time I ever had to making a decision on the Honor System.

I examined my conduct with regard to the Honor System on some times leading to the discovery of the boys who had access to quizzes and access to help on exams and things.

Warren: In 1954.

Parsons: '54, in that year. We had a very fine young man from Wheeling, West Virginia. We had a number of people from Wheeling, West Virginia, who had come down because of their friendship with Jay Hannan who had been here many years before. This young man his name was Tom Shively and he was going to be the quarterback on the football team the next year. He had had great difficulty in passing math and so that was one area where he sought some help. Also he was having some difficulty in sophomore economics and so he asked me if I would tutor him. He said, "Can you help me? Did you make good grades in this?" I said, "I made sufficiently good that I might be able to help you. What's your problem?" "I'm just having trouble grasping some of these economic principles." So I sat down with him and I tutored him. I didn't help him answer any exam questions or anything like that. I just simply tutored him but that didn't count. I also at one occasion had sought a clarification from a member of the EC and I think he even had

to go to the EC to get the clarification later.

I put myself through college. My parents gave me a used car. That was the extent of their paying anything. I put myself through college on the GI Bill and from my earnings of the summer work that I would do and money that I could pick up in the course of the school year. I could type. If I had had the right kind of typewriter—[an] electric typewriter—and a copy machine, I could have made a lot of money. But what I had to do, I was limited with a portable Royal typewriter. I was limited by the number of good copies I could get out using carbon paper. What I would do is, the minute a class was over that I was taking that was dependent on notes, I would go as quick as I could to the journalism workroom and sit down and transcribe not only what I'd written down but what I remembered had been said with regard to this. I had a very complete set of notes there. Then I came to the realization that I had a highly marketable thing there. We still had subsidized athletes here at the time and they were having to go off on trips and miss class and they would like to buy copies of my notes.

I found out. I went first, before I sold any of them, and asked if I was violating the Honor System by selling copies of my notes. They thought they were not in answer to any specific question. I gave them the circumstances. I was doing it for people who had a legitimate [reason]. I just wasn't selling them to everybody. I was selling them to people who, because of the demands of their athletic scholarships and their participation in football, needed that kind of help. I was given a green light to sell them at a very modest price but, nevertheless, if you make six copies of it at twenty-five cents a page, that was a few dollars. Dollars went further than they do now, obviously. So I've had some experience with the Honor System but it's always been in a tangential way like that.

Warren: You tested the system and came out okay.

Parsons: Yes. Now, let's go back to rectors or what?

Warren: Yes. You were talking about Steve Miles.

Parsons: Miles came on and he started this and John Wilson did not know what to do about it. John told me, "What am I going to do about this? Steve wants to do some things here and my view on this wasn't even consulted." I told him about how Bob Huntley had faced a similar problem and how he had dealt with it. I said, "I think what you ought to do is go talk to Bob." He did and Bob told him to—I think this is what he told him. I'm pretty sure he did because John took his advice and met with Steve and said, "Look, this isn't right." [He] explained to him using

the same logic that Huntley had used and Steve bought in. He said, "Okay, I didn't realize that I was doing this," and from that point on he was not a problem. So there was an example there.

Steve Miles is succeeded by—he was going to be succeeded by Ross Malone, I believe. This can be checked. I can't think we left out anybody there. Ross Malone never got really to sit as rector because he died unexpectedly. That resulted in Marshall Nuckols [rector, 1974–81] then becoming the rector. Marshall was a good rector in my opinion. He had come on the board through the alumni selection process. Out of that study about revising the Alumni Board, we set in place where every two years the alumni would recommend somebody to be considered for the board [of trustees]. Just a consideration but, in practice, they always accepted their nominees. I don't know of anyone that was turned down. Marshall Nuckols had come on the board in that way and so he was the first alumnus elected to the board of trustees who had not been chosen exclusively by the board itself in its self-perpetuating format. The whole board had bought into this staggered [approach], having three members of the board that had come in through the alumni nominating process.

Warren: Did you think that was a good idea?

Parsons: Oh yes. I thought that was an excellent idea.

Warren: The board got bigger through the years.

Parsons: Oh, it's gotten huge.

Warren: Do you think that's a good idea?

Parsons: I have to reserve judgment on that because I've not met with the huge board. It was getting bigger when I was—

Warren: How big is it now?

Parsons: I think there's about thirty people on it. I think there's a plan to reduce it in number now. I hesitate to say that with any certainty, but it seems to me that I've read or heard of someone talking about a plan to cut back the size of the board a little bit. It's gotten to be almost unwieldy. Again, I don't know this.

Warren: There are more than sixty on the Johns Hopkins board. I don't know how they function.

Parsons: Well, it has to be by committees and then relegated to an action committee of some kind. I can't see, again, how it works.

Warren: Let's talk about that committee structure. How did that get started?

Parsons: That was a recommendation out of the McKinsey analysis that we ought to do more with committees. Get them involved at that level and let the committee do a lot of the work so that things were brought to the full board as a committee recommendation. I think maybe that the board has grown in size because they want to have not too much overlap among the committees. I would guess that. I don't know that for certain.

Sometimes when we'd bring in a committee report, there would be questions from somebody that wasn't on that committee and they would disagree with the recommendation. Ultimately it would come down to a vote and sometimes there would be dissenters to a vote. It all depended upon the importance of the vote as to whether, once something had been decided by a real vote, then one of the naysayers would make the motion that it be amended to show unanimous consent. It's a little gesture of politeness and very reminiscent of the interview we had in what's now Huntley Hall on the day that we had the final vote on coeducation. Chris Compton came over as a member of the loyal opposition. I know that they took that vote that made it unanimous but it also shows in the record what really happened. In the aftermath of the decision, the board then voted again and everyone cast their votes in favor. Chris was very kind.

Jeff Hanna [then head of communications office] was here then and Jeff and I were working hand in glove to make that day [of the coeducation vote, July 14, 1984] a success in every way. We'd arranged for this press conference and Chris agreed to come over and sit with Edgar Shannon and with Ballengee and with John Wilson, of course, and present a united front to the press. That turned out fine.

Warren: Yes, we've got a good record of that. I'm going to stop for a moment.

[Pause to begin Parsons 11 track; note: there is no track 10]

Warren: We've talked a little bit about buildings and capital projects. One of the things that Bob Huntley mentioned was that when he took over, just the basic infrastructure of the place was not in good shape.

Parsons: That's true.

Warren: Tell me about that from your perspective.

Parsons: We had central heating from the central heating plant. I'm trying to think who had the first air conditioner. I think Dean Gilliam probably had the first air conditioner, a window air conditioner. We had not become as addicted to being cool as we have now. We didn't have a central cooling plant but we did have a central heating plant and the heating was—I'm trying to

think. The lines came in and they fed through certain parts of the campus, but they were subject to leaks and breakdowns. I don't think we had any kind of a tunnel system at that time that made it easy to get in to repair these things like we substantially do now. We were having more and more problems. We would have transformers that were sometimes in the ground burn out or something like that, causing power interruptions.

The buildings themselves were beginning to show some wear and tear. We didn't have the means to paint as often as we should. Of course, ivy will cover everything if you let it go long enough, so we had ivy growing on things that should have been cut back. We had trees that needed to be pruned and get the dead wood out of them. It wasn't the fault of anybody. It was just simply that we didn't have the resources to do things like that.

We had some men in charge of various things like electrical services and other trade-oriented things. They didn't know as much about the job as they ought to as technology began to evolve, and so sometimes we weren't getting good service out of these people. They worked for a man who, if ever a man deserved sainthood in my book, it was Pat Brady. He was the superintendent of buildings and grounds. He couldn't bring himself to relieve anybody of their job if they weren't doing it quite up to his standards, so there'd been a little bit of a forgiving attitude toward a number of people here. That was true in a number of areas, [such as] the clerical staff. We weren't as hard-hearted as it has become necessary to be in order to run an efficient ship. I'm probably mixing my metaphors there but you know what I mean. It was more of a family situation. That's, I guess, maybe the best analogy I could give.

I go back to when I was hired. I was told by Dr. Gaines when I was hired that I was being appointed on an eleven-month basis. That was different from the faculty who were considered nine-month employees. They would get their annual salary spread over twelve months if they wanted it that way, or they could get it on nine and they could go out and find another job for the summer. Gradually we put in things that would keep more of them here and involve them. We could provide them with certain support through the Robert E. Lee research funds. I think it was that first $250,000 check I saw waving out the window that day.

It was possible to do things and accommodations could be made that didn't violate a hard and fast vacation rule. Everyone understood how many weeks of vacation they got. I was told I was going to be hired on an eleven-month basis and that meant I had a month off. I could take that month probably at different times in the year or I could split it up at different times. That

was in addition to the long periods of vacation we got at Christmas time and in spring break and things like that. Well, spring break was a little different. We still came to work during spring break, but Christmas was really, truly a holiday. Washington and Lee was a very comfortable place to work at in that respect.

When I wanted to go off to Maine for—it was such in moving my family and two small children to Maine that you didn't want to go up there for the weekend. You wanted to go up and stay a while to make that trip and all you had to take along, the diapers and all, so that it was a worthwhile trip. So I had no qualms about taking my full month's vacation. Not every year. I couldn't do it every year. There were times when I didn't get any vacation because we were in a self study or something like that and I had to be here. I had things that had to be done—that always was on my list. But I had these other times when I could be with the family. It wasn't that I was giving up the precious thing it is if you have to give up your vacation now. You're giving up something that's more precious.

One year I thought it would be good if we went up a little bit before July first and spend five weeks in Maine. I let Bob or Fred Cole know about this and there was no problem. They were happy for me to take five weeks. They knew I hadn't gotten a vacation the year before so, a little adjustment there. I didn't have to clear it with everybody. We didn't have a personnel department at that time. We don't have one of them today. You've got a human resources department. Things like that were done.

I remember backing up other people when they were away. Something would come up that they were away and I would be sufficiently qualified to know what to do so I didn't have to call them back from their vacation. I would usually let them know that something had come up, that I'd suggested we do this, and we'd done it or something like that. It was much more relaxed, and I'm the first to say that you can't run this enterprise you see around us today that way any longer. That changed while I was here. I was a party to a lot of these changes.

Warren: It seems self-evident but, for the record, what's your perception of why those changes had to happen?

Parsons: Changes in governmental expectations. We went a long time, you know, not wanting to accept federal assistance because members of the board felt if we did that then we would have to lower the barriers. We'd have to take African Americans. We'd have to take this, that, and the other. We'd have to take *women,* for God's sake!

In this first statement of institutional philosophy, there is verbiage in the beginning of that that I wrote. It became sort of a capsulization of a statement of institutional philosophy supported by these considerations below. Then we put into those considerations below a lot of the things it was very hard to work into a full statement of philosophy. I got the university to buy into that and I got the Southern Association to buy into it. In that it said, "With the possible exception of the admission of women, there should be no other impediment to adjusting to change at Washington and Lee." [Laughs] I had to do it that way. Otherwise, the ability to move with necessary change wasn't going to get in there. Of course, that had to be redone.

Warren: But the federal money made things different?

Parsons: The federal money was the thing. The people who had that view, it was difficult to reason with them on it. In some of these instances I was engaged in a conversation with a trustee or somebody about this, that we already were accepting federal money through our ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] participation here. We had an ROTC program. Well, that was federal money. They could have come at us from that direction, in my opinion. There wasn't any impetus from that end at the time but the threat was there just as much as accepting money for bricks and mortar. They didn't want to accept any money for bricks or mortar because that would really give them a say-so about who could sit in that building.

There was a genuine concern. I have to say, just as you have different views as to what's going on in government today, there were different views then. In the main, though, when our trustees disagreed, they disagreed in a very gentlemanly fashion. I never saw people creating conditions under which they could not sit down at the dinner table with their opponent in a given situation and have a pleasant dinner. That's the way things ought to work, of course, but sometime don't. The trustees were very much concerned about not giving away unnecessarily any of the control that they, as trustees, were expected to [assume].

I remember hearing Dr. Gaines talk about this, and perhaps Fred Cole and Bob Huntley and others as well, the term trusteeship, what it means. You hold in trust this larger entity. You are responsible, in that role as a trustee, for making sure that the best things possible happen for that entity. I think our trustees today take that *very* seriously. It's just a marvel to me to see the kind of support that they get out of the board financially and in terms of their involvement in the meetings and all of that. I think it's great that it's come about that way.

I go back to that document that I laid out there that kind of spelled out the impact of this

as one of the probably more important things that I've done at Washington and Lee. I don't know that anyone even knows enough about that transition to agree or disagree whether it's an important document, but I think it was and I think Bob Huntley agrees that it was very helpful.

Warren: And this is the 1966 self study?

Parsons: Yes, in the aftermath of that and the way we implemented early in the'70s the change in the charter that made them establish their terms and their mandatory retirement at age seventy.

Warren: One of the other things that Bob talked about that I didn't know anything about—and I thought I knew lots about old Frank Parsons and what a difference he'd made around here—but he said there was a time you became a whiz kid about borrowing money though public bonds. You learned all about bonds and how to make that happen. Tell me about that.

Parsons: I'm embarrassed that he thinks that I became an expert. Well, I was an expert at the time. The state of Virginia set up a source of funds that private institutions, if they made the right proposals and did the right things, could have available sums of money from the state of Virginia for building purposes. The law made it possible for us to enter into joint agreements with our neighbors next door, VMI. Of course, that's always complicated by the fact that our calendars do not match, so we haven't gone very far down that street.

But this other, we began to get sources of funding for buildings and things. I came to know how to go about all this and it was through some of that—I have to think about this because I dealt with a number of people in Richmond on this. It was through meetings with these men in Richmond that I got my ultimate notoriety by being quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* about the squirrels. They had sent along a tongue-in-cheek thing that I had written in response to an environmental questionnaire. You remember the story?

Warren: I do. I remember the story.

Parsons: I won't repeat it again but that's why the squirrels are my favorite little varmints, and they ought to be thankful that they've got those bushy tails or they'd be perceived as rats and would be the target of everybody.

Warren: Tell me about these public bonds.

Parsons: What he said is accurate. I came to know as much as needed to be known about those things but, I swear, I can't think of precisely how it worked.

Warren: All right. Well good, then you're not the expert because I thought, now how can I know *nothing* about this? It's because you've forgotten too. That's all right. Bob remembers and

gives you credit for it.

Parsons: I remember being involved in it but I cannot remember the actual mechanics of it.

Warren: There were a bunch of things accomplished during the Huntley era. We got a new law school. We got a new library.

Parsons: Let me tell you why I had to get involved with the bonds.

Warren: Oh, please do.

Parsons: Mr. Whitehead didn't want anything to do with it. It was pushed off on me from down below, and Bob was more comfortable working with me than he was with Jim on such a thing.

Warren: Jim Whitehead didn't want to have anything to do with it?

Parsons: Just because it was an area in which he didn't have any interest. A number of things in the treasurer's office were sort of edged over into my area.

Warren: Tell me more.

Parsons: I'm trying to think what some were. Virginia Higher Education Facilities Committee, or something like that, was one of the ones where these bonds came into play. Oh, let me think. Some of them were of virtually no consequence at all. I had to be responsible for creating the hospitality room at the Keydet General [the motel where the trustees stayed] for the trustee meetings. Bob Keefe [public relations director from 1970 to 1980] did it for a time and did it splendidly well. Then Jim [Whitehead] didn't want to do that and I had to do all that for Jim.

Warren: And Jim would be responsible for that because he was secretary of the board?

Parsons: Secretary of the board. He was very good at delegating things that were the responsibility of the secretary of the board to me and to others. Again, in the spirit of let's all pitch in together and have a good, successful trustee meeting, I pitched in. I would go shopping for the particular tastes of certain trustees. Ballengee liked blonde Dubonnet and so I had to have that. We knew all these things. I tried to make the best of it. But there were some other things in regard to finances that I would have expected Jim to be more interested in and somehow it ended up falling in my responsibility.

Warren: Did you think that he was an effective treasurer for the university?

Parsons: No, for these very reasons, that he didn't seem to—I don't know how to evaluate his [effectiveness]. All I know is that when he stepped down as treasurer and Stew Epley [W&L class of 1949, treasurer, 1979–86] came in, Stew brought a much more businesslike approach to things. Jim would get on my case sometimes about getting certain information in to him on time

on this, that, and the other, and I could usually borrow a little time. But when I told Stew Epley that, for good reason, I had not had time to finish that, he just simply said, "Not good enough. I've got to have it tomorrow." So I would come back to work at night and he would have it tomorrow. It was a different situation. Stew didn't have a chair where you could make the arm fall off [as Jim Whitehead had feigned]. I guess Jim performed acceptably well in that, but in my heart of hearts, he was not a really active—I don't think he was as good as a treasurer ought to be in handling Washington and Lee's finances.

Warren: How about as a secretary to the board?

Parsons: He would pass that off to others too. I had to be responsible for setting up the microphones. We taped everything. I worked in getting up the first draft of the minutes done from the tapes and then turned over to him. They were then edited and eventually sorted out and put into the book.

Warren: Who would transcribe the minutes?

Parsons: I'm trying to think who did that. It wasn't Albertina [Ravenhorst]. I think it was Mary [Hartless] Woodson. She used to do some of that for us. I'm trying to think if there was anybody else involved in that. I don't remember whether Sue Stewart did some of it. Sue Stewart was the fastest typist I've ever known. She could type faster than machines.

Warren: Faster than Albertina?

Parsons: Oh, much faster. Albertina never migrated to an IBM typewriter. She still used the old Royal. Albertina had a Royal typewriter that had its own rhythm. Literally, you could sit there and the first thing you knew, you were kind of dancing to the rhythm of it. It was repetitive.

In the main, Jim was a good secretary of the board. They certainly gave him all kinds of great respect. At one time I think Bob had suggested to me that he wanted me to become the secretary of the board. I forget what took him in another direction. I don't think it was anything I did to indicate that I wasn't interested or that I was not capable or whatever. He's on record, maybe not in your interview with him but in things that he has said in the company of many others, maybe at my retirement thing, that he'd never asked me to do anything that I hadn't figured out a way to get it done. Well, I know one time there when Stew Epley was the treasurer—

What's so tragic about this misunderstanding that came up between Bob Huntley and Stew Epley was it was over a matter that we do now as a matter of course. It was perhaps the

right thing to do then but we couldn't afford to do it, and that was to extend some of the privileges that went to faculty and senior administrators to the buildings and grounds people and some of the clerical staff. That was the tuition subsidy for kids going off to college. That was the main one.

Warren: That was only available to faculty and administrators but not everyone?

Parsons: That's right.

Warren: Who wanted to extend it and who said no?

Parsons: Stew Epley wanted to extend it and Bob said, "We can't afford to do it. Yes, it might be the right thing, but we can't afford to do it."

Warren: When are we talking about? What time period?

Parsons: Let me think. It was toward the end of Bob's administration and Stew had come in. He was a field representative in the first campaign that was conducted under Bob Huntley.

Warren: I don't know much about Stew Epley. Tell me about him.

Parsons: I can't remember what his profession was. It was in finance so he came in well-grounded in financial matters. He lived in upstate New York, up in the Lebanon area, just over the border from Massachusetts. He was enlisted by Farris [Hotchkiss] during that campaign that [was] Farris's first big major campaign. Because we were having less than total success in getting the participation of the trustees than we hoped to have as getters, going out to get money, we got ourselves a group of about maybe four to six—I don't know how many actually the number was—people who agreed to be field representatives for us. They were put on salary. They would come in for meetings here, either private meetings with Farris or sometimes together as a group or something to be rejuvenated and all that. Epley had performed, I think, very well.

Warren: Was he an alumnus?

Parsons: Oh yes. Yes, he was an alumnus and he had performed very well in that role up there. When we needed a treasurer, he was one of the ones that came to mind. He accepted the position and came down for it.

I remember at that time Bob was so out of sorts with him that he sent me to talk to Stew. It was one of the most difficult and, for me and for Stew too, really unpleasant [conversations]. Not that we were unpleasant to each other. We were just dealing with an unpleasant subject there. [It was] one of these things where I think Stew felt that, in his heart of hearts, he had proposed the right thing and that we'd had to turn it down and he was having to take the fall for

it in the regard of the president. Well, I don't know what else was said between Stew and Bob. But anyway, I was sent out to talk to Stew to get some further information on this. I had also been told by Bob Huntley that if Stew should suddenly resign, I had to be prepared to become treasurer of the university. Literally, I was ready to cut and run at that point. I could not have handled that. I'll just be frank and say [it]. I don't know with what seriousness he said it, but all I know is he said it and it nearly created a panic [in me]. Talk about your heart racing, I think my heart raced then faster than any time since.

Warren: Let's stop for just a moment.

[Pause to begin Parsons 12 track]

Warren: Wow. So all of that was on the issue of benefits, extending benefits?

Parsons: Yes.

Warren: Where did that conversation take place?

Parsons: Took place out at Stew's house. I don't know who lives in that house now, but it's that rather modern house that he and his wife built out on Providence Hill.

Warren: How long was he treasurer?

Parsons: I don't know. I'd have to look that up.

Warren: Did Larry Broomall succeed him?

Parsons: Yes.

Warren: He was in the period [when] I really wasn't engaged [with W&L]. At that point, I'd gone back to Maryland so I never really crossed paths with him.

Parsons: Larry Broomall and I, in time, became very good friends. He lost favor with the board about the same time that I lost favor with some members of the board, but we were friends before that.

John Wilson and I had a falling out one day. If you read the [alumni] magazine [issue from 1999, at the time of Frank Parsons' retirement, with a feature article about his long career at W&L], he talks about that. He remembers us slamming a door or something like that, but he said that he couldn't stay mad with me. Actually, I went in and apologized to him. I apologized for having provoked that reaction from him. We had heart-to-heart talks and things. Out of that, with my full agreement and John's agreement, and with John's agreement and friendship that followed me, I agreed that since he literally was not using me in ways that Bob Huntley had used me as an assistant, that I was almost giving all of my time to working with the planning aspects,

and we were looking for someone to take over the—we'd agreed some other time that I just couldn't do all of that and take on the Fraternity Renaissance too, and we were looking for somebody else to come in and just do Fraternity Renaissance. He suggested that [since] they hadn't found anybody that suited their guidelines, why didn't I cease to be his assistant and move upstairs and expand my planning activities under Stew Epley? It seemed that buildings and grounds, which was under not Stew Epley but Larry Broomall, that the planning process shouldn't be sitting off here to the side just under the president. It made more sense to have it [under Larry Broomall]. I had to agree with that and so I went up.

From Larry's position, he first wanted to treat that as that I had been pushed off on him from down below. I don't know whether he understood why John and I had had a falling out or what, but somehow he—it may have been something John said. I just don't know, but he didn't accept me up there.

Warren: What do you mean by up there?

Parsons: Up on the next floor up.

Warren: On the third floor of Washington Hall?

Parsons: On the third floor of Washington Hall, where the treasurer's office was located at that time. I don't know where Steve McAllister is now, but it was up there.

I just had a hard time. Hell, how can I put this? I had a hard time convincing Larry Broomall that I knew what I was doing. But over time I did win that degree of respect that I felt I needed.

Warren: Where did Larry Broomall come from?

Parsons: He came from William and Mary, and if we'd known all the circumstances of his leaving William and Mary at the time, I don't think he would have gotten the job.

Warren: Tell me what you mean.

Parsons: He'd been involved in something down there that we didn't know about and that would have probably—I don't know the circumstances down there, but very soon it manifested itself up here where he wanted to replace all the furniture in his office with a very modern kind of furniture that was going to cost far more than anybody else's furniture in the whole place. Something along that order, he'd done something down there that didn't quite comport with their procedures. That's why he was interested in coming to Washington and Lee. I think he was on the verge of getting fired down there. I don't know that to be certain. I really shouldn't say that

but I would be surprised if that wasn't the circumstance.

Having said that, I came to like Larry Broomall even though, like you said, he sent me to be the messenger to be shot at. Well, I was used to that role. Over time, he came to respect my opinions on things. Later, I was in a position where we were looking for new members of the Lime Kiln board and I asked him to serve on the Lime Kiln board. He did and he did real good service on there. This is after we got into our problems, our fiscal problems there. I thought having a man that understood some finance would come in to help sort things out there. He did a lot of good work in that regard, so I have nothing but regard for Larry and his wife. But we had to learn how to like each other.

Warren: I remember that process. I was here for that. I remember that process. Oh, let's see. Let's talk about some of those buildings that you were involved in making happen there. You pick the building because I know you were involved in everything. There's the library. There's Lewis Hall. There's the Science Center, Gaines Hall, and Lenfest Center. Frank, you had your hands and fingers in all kinds of things. We can't go into a lot of detail on all of them, but talk to me about what that role has been.

Parsons: It was a role that involved me learning how to function in that area of responsibility. In some cases I was a quick study; in other places it took me a little longer to understand other aspects of it. In the end, I take considerable pride in having different people at different levels of this thing—architects, engineers, master planners, landscape people, interior decorators—all said that they—and I'm perfectly candid in saying it is possible to say that they found me easier to fool than anybody else they ever worked with—but they would say that I made it easier for them to serve the university than any owner's representative that they had worked with, words to that effect, or were currently working with. I didn't ask them, "How far are you going back?" I just took it as a compliment and tried to live up to that in working with them.

That came to a recognition that I was given about five or six years ago by the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects. They were celebrating I think it was a fiftieth anniversary of their particular society. In that year they were going to do something that they did only rarely. They were going to involve three people at that time who were going to be accorded what they call society honors. The way they define society honors is someone who is not an architect, not a member of AIA, but who has shown the capacity to work effectively with those who are in the AIA. They liked to give recognition to individuals who had met those standards

and they went out of the way to impress you that they had high standards. Well, that was nice of them, and so I was one of those taken into that some years ago. I went down to a special dinner and things at Richmond.

Warren: That's a very big honor.

Parsons: I felt very pleased that so many of the architects, various architects, had been a party to the endorsements that had come in to the Virginia AIA on this. It was nice.

Warren: I would think so. I didn't know about that. Good for them and good for you. I'm glad you got that recognition.

Parsons: That was nice.

Warren: I remember you used to talk about going down to the Whiting-Turner trailer a lot. Did you get involved in the construction end of it or just the architecture end of it?

Parsons: A little bit of both. A little bit of both. In the beginning, when Pat Brady was working here and we were getting into this area where we were going to have multiple projects under way as we did, I did not have the expertise that Pat Brady had. He was an engineer. He got an engineering degree from Washington and Lee back when we used to give engineering degrees. He was acting as buildings and grounds superintendent and so it was decided—and this would have been decided by Bob Huntley; I'm pretty sure of that—that Pat would become sort of a super clerk of the works for us. He would become plant projects manager; that was his title.

I would be—I was just the assistant to the president. I didn't even have a title that proclaimed me as coordinator of planning or anything like that. It was just a function assigned to me by the president. My responsibility would be the programmatic planning with the faculty and then learning to work with the architects and how we would select the architects and how we'd get the right people involved from the professions we needed to have. Then once we were under contract—and of course I involved Pat in various phases of that. We were able to move Pat over to that and leave in the charge of Jim Arthur the job of buildings and grounds superintendent. We brought on—let's see. What was he doing before that? I don't know what Scott Beebe was doing but it turned out that Pat Brady needed to have someone in his office to help with the work that he was doing. There were times when he couldn't be two places at once, to quote Joe Lyles [soccer coach from 1946 to 1975], without a university car. He needed some help and so Scott Beebe came on board as an assistant plant projects manager. Depending on who was available, I worked with both of them.

What I didn't do in the beginning, boy, I learned quickly. Don't go too far down the road without this man on your side, too. It involved buildings and grounds in planning some of the buildings. They were going to be the people that had to maintain them. My first inclination was to take the engineers' recommendations about things without running it by over there. I found that the engineers sometimes would have standard answers, but it would be a standard that you ought to permit some variance here at Washington and Lee for a multitude of different reasons. I learned to involve Jim Arthur in all of this, so I've had nothing but good relationships with Jim Arthur. As things were getting a little tighter there toward the end under [John] Elrod [president, 1995–2001], Jim and I would bump into each other or come out of a meeting and he would pull me over and say, "Getting time, Frank," meaning it's about time for us to get out of this business. Things under Elrod were different. I could never depend on Elrod to hold to a view on any building project very long. He had the tendency to agree with the last person to talk to him. Well, we won't get into that in this one.

Warren: We haven't talked much about John Elrod. Tell me where he came from and how he came and how your relationship was with him.

Parsons: He was originally a southerner, as was his wife, but they had migrated to Iowa. We had all these Iowans come in: Larry Peppers [dean of the Williams School of Commerce from 1986 to the present], Elrod, [dean of the School of Law Randall P.] Bezanson [from 1988 to 1994], and it seems like there was somebody else in that group. Privately we referred to them as the Iowa mafia. John Elrod came from, and I never carry the proper separation in my head as to whether he came from Iowa or Iowa State. He had been head of the philosophy department there and it seems to me that he'd been a dean of some kind. I just don't remember exactly what his credentials said. He came in as the dean of the college [at Washington and Lee].

I have to say this about Elrod and I want to say this very rapidly. I've never known a more decent person in his heart than he was. Of all the deans that I've worked with, I've never known a dean who stood up for his faculty and was willing to take things across the hall to the president's office, or to what once was my office up there, but literally over to John Wilson to argue for things in support of his faculty's needs and what we were able to give them and what we weren't able to do for them and that sort of thing. I've never known a better dean.

We had a standing arrangement when he was in the dean's office. He had as his associate dean Tom Williams from the physics department and it seems he had others. Lad Sessions, I

think, was an associate dean at that time. He's a philosopher. One of the last things, when I would have my planning sessions with the architects on the Science Center in particular—this was the major project that was carried over from John Wilson to John Elrod—I would come up and have a meeting with John Elrod and the associate dean and we would review then what we talked about: the faculty in the various departments we were trying to accommodate as the plans were evolving down there. If we needed something that was going to be a tough sell with John Wilson, I could always depend on John Elrod to want to back up the faculty for what they needed. Sometimes we had to go to the mat with John [Wilson]. But almost always, because I could depend on John Elrod for support, we would come out maybe if not totally satisfied, substantially satisfied with what we were able to do. He was a good dean.

You've heard of the Peter Principle [made famous in an eponymous book written by Laurence J. Peter and published in 1969]? Well, classic example when he [Elrod] was promoted to the presidency. I'd seen enough of him to consider writing a letter at that time to the search committee for the new president when I was aware that he was among those being considered, just to say that, for what my opinion is worth, that this man is capable of being a college president, but not here.

Warren: Tell me why.

Parsons: I think I detected somewhere, and I'm not sure I can pin it down, but I detected this wishy-washy nature of his and that he somehow didn't quite grasp or have the understanding of Washington and Lee that the president should have. Now, why did I say that? I don't know. I really don't know why I say that. But I never wrote that letter. I never wrote that letter. I said that would be out of keeping with me. I just didn't want to insert my opinion into it. If they went ahead and picked him, well, they disregarded my opinion. I might have taken umbrage at that. They didn't listen to me. On the other hand, if they listened to me and we ended up with a bad president nevertheless, well, I would have felt bad. Maybe John would have been good. As it turned out, though, he was not a good choice as president and I think that the trustees themselves came to realize that early on.

I remember one time having been excused from the executive committee of the board. That meant that the president and the secretary of the board—at that time that was Farris—they remained there. I came back over and took care of some things in my office and was planning to go back over. When they broke out of the executive session, we all had lunch together over there

in the downstairs of the library. I came down and going in at the back door I ran into John and Farris and I said, “Is the executive committee meeting over?” He said, “No.” Pretty much just like that, “No.” I said, “What could they possibly be talking about that they wouldn’t want you and Farris there?” He said, “Well, they’re talking about me,” and in that tone. I didn’t know why they were talking about him. He didn’t offer any more than that and I just felt like it wasn’t the time for me to try to be nosy and find out, Why are they talking about you, John? Farris had gone on. He had to get to his office, too. I think I told him, “I won’t ask you any details but I’m sorry to hear that.”

Well, something happened. Again, John wanted so badly to be a good president of Washington and Lee. I mean he wanted that badly. That came across very strong because he, and he used the term, hit the ground running. To do that he took everybody up to Skylark to a retreat up there and came down with a sort of set of guidelines that was going to govern our approach to everything. Somewhere along the line, those guidelines didn’t quite sit as well with some of the trustees as he thought they were going to.

Warren: Who went to Skylark?

Parsons: The Monday lunch group. The people who reported directly to John. I don’t think there was anybody else involved in it.

Warren: Were you in that?

Parsons: I was there, yes. We went up there. I was no longer his assistant. Let me think about that now.

Warren: Were you ever Elrod’s assistant?

Parsons: No, I never had the title of assistant to him. This was after I’d gone upstairs to work for Larry Broomall.

Warren: Yes.

Parsons: So I’m raising the question as to whether or not I went to that meeting. All I know is that they came down and that there was a clear sense of marching orders. One of the first things, and I was glad not to be involved with John in this capacity, he changed Monday lunch to Monday breakfast. I just couldn’t get up early and look after Henny [Parsons, Frank’s wife, who had dementia by this time] as I was having to do at that time and get to the Monday breakfast. Anyway, I don’t know chapter and verse about what that program was, but somewhere along the line it didn’t find favor with all the board.

We had been to a [board] meeting up in Washington, DC, or across the street from the Pentagon. When you say across the street from the Pentagon, God knows how many streets are between you and the Pentagon. We were over in Crystal City or Pentagon City, one of those places on that slip of land running down there. Who was it that had the airplane that flew us up there? Glen Thornhill was on the board at that time and he was very, very helpful in providing transportation for us to places. He would lease a plane and a pilot. He was in the ladies apparel business in Salem, Virginia, and a very generous trustee.

We'd gone up there to talk about the design of the garage, among other things. Somewhere along the line in the course of the talk up there, Frank Surface, who was then becoming the rector of the board at that time, he had come up with great criticism of the design of the garage and the process that we had come by that design. I had come up there with the concept of the design to get some encouragement from them, and Frank starts speaking up. He didn't want to go with that. He had a next-door neighbor—he didn't say it was a next-door neighbor—he knew a man in Jacksonville that was in the forefront of design/build projects. He was known as the design/build contractor of America and he wanted to give him a shot at this. I forget how we left that meeting, whether they agreed to that at the time. I remember flying back. I said to John Elrod, "Frank Surface is a dangerous man." "What do you mean by that?" "What he said. He's jumping in here as rector now and he wants to take what's evolving into *exactly* the garage design that you, John Elrod, told me to pursue, and he wants to do this other. If he goes ahead with this and involves friends from Florida that we're willing to take on, well, that's going to be a problem." Pretty soon we were in that mode. We had people from the Haskell Company in Florida and it turned out to be Frank Surface's next-door neighbor. Mr. Haskell turned out to be a fine man. I never met him personally. I only met with his associates. I came to have a high regard for some and a not-so-high regard for others, but in the main they were not bad people.

Things that were said in quotations about Mr. Haskell led me to believe that somewhere something didn't sound right. It caused me to put in a phone call to Princeton University. Haskell was quoted by Elrod and I think maybe at that time by Broomall, but maybe not Broomall, as having said, "We built an arts building at Princeton and it was certainly a great success." Okay, then, is Princeton into design/build with the Haskell Company? Do you know what design/build is?

Warren: Please explain.

Parsons: It means that whoever does this, they bring in their own architects. They both design the building and they build it. Done properly, it is a way to fast-track a building and can be done successfully. I have worked on design/build projects here that have turned out to be remarkable. The baseball field, for instance. The tennis pavilion. They were design/build and if you work with the right people, they work wonderfully.

I just did not see Princeton, I couldn't *imagine* Princeton going that route, even though Haskell— I do some research and find out who my counterpart is at Princeton and I call him up. I say, "I'm in the process with exploring approaches to a building project we have here. It's a very vague building. It's a garage, not like what I understand has been done at Princeton. I understand that Mr. Haskell, he said that 'we did a building at Princeton.' I wanted to corroborate that and find out how it turned out." There was a pause and then kind of a chuckle. He said, "I can explain to you why Mr. Haskell said that, but I can quickly tell you though, that no, we've never done a design/build here." Turns out Mr. Haskell is on the board of trustees at Princeton.

Warren: That's how *we* did it?

Parsons: Yes, that's how *we* did it. He was the counterpart at Princeton of the head of our plant projects committee here on the trustees, which at that time was either Pat Leggett or Gerry Lenfest or somebody. The fellow explained. "Yes," he said, "we have a very fine arts building here. We used a Spanish architect." [There was] a worldwide search for their architect for that building, the building turned out wonderfully well, and Preston Haskell was a superb member of their board of trustees.

Warren: Yes. People often get irritated with me when I ask them to define their pronouns, but sometimes it's very important to define who *we* are and *they* are.

Parsons: Absolutely.

Warren: We're going to pause here.

Parsons: Okay.

[Pause to begin Parsons 13 track]

Parsons: When Henny was ill, he and Mimi [Elrod] both were such good friends to me and I can never forget those gestures of gratitude and things. I will go back again, though. I did make claim to him [John Elrod] that I felt that Frank Surface was going to cause problems. I think it was Frank that caused the problems for John. I don't know that to be true but something—

Warren: For John?

Parsons: For John Elrod as president. I don't know what would have happened. Now I'm really getting into deep personal opinion here. I don't know what would have happened to John's presidency here had he not developed his illness. [John Elrod revealed he had a diagnosis of cancer circa 1999] I think the board became very tolerant of him in his illness. I would suspect that some of them wanted him to succeed as president. Others realized that they needed a much more, from their viewpoint, effective president. From my viewpoint, we needed a more effective president.

I got so tired there when we were trying to come up with some decisions related to the sororities and things. He [Elrod] would be listening to the last person he talked to. Then we got around to how we were going to air condition those buildings and had to bring in help. I finally convinced him that what I wanted to do, and to accomplish another longer-range planning problem, was to go back to the central plant and bring air conditioning from the central plant where we had the capacity to provide the equipment that would enable us to air condition whatever we put over there, to air condition whatever we might do to the stadium accommodation, [and] ultimately, to take the line on down toward the Lenfest Center. The Lenfest Center was getting its air conditioning from a line coming down the hill, from having come up in front of the library and going across and down that way.

Here's an example of something I had to learn because I don't know all the principles of engineering that engineers bring to the table. They kept talking about "closing the loop"; we ought to close that loop. What they meant was, you have a feed of your essential engineering services, mechanical services: hot water, steam, chilled water. Not so much electricity but I guess electricity could come into it if you're creating these things. What you want to be able to do is to feed your steam and your hot water and your chilled water in a loop. Under normal conditions, it will only travel in one direction. They would say that makes it possible to feed from both directions. I had a vision in my naivety of somewhere down the line where these two directions came together there would be a manhole that would blow off every so often because they would collide. Boom! Well, that's not the way it works. What they meant by that was, if you have an interruption anywhere along the line, then the only thing that is affected is where that interruption occurs. That everybody else can take their feed from the other direction. They can get service from two directions.

When I had to bring in things like that before John Elrod, fortunately I happened to have on hand—there's a reference in this [alumni] magazine article, in fact—that I happened to have on hand some old planning documents from when we were looking at the overall campus infrastructure in terms of heating and cooling and steam and chilled water. They [the documents] showed over there where the sororities are, they showed something—[represented by] just a block [for] future student housing, proposed student housing, something like that. [Back in the 1980s] we saw more of the Woods Creek Apartments buildings going up there. We didn't think we'd satisfied the need for on-campus housing because there was still a residual demand. We had met it on the low side with the Woods Creek Apartments. They were met on a shoestring of funding and what we were able to do there. Also down below [on the plans], in the handwriting of Charles "Dub" Whitescarver, he had a note under that in his handwriting "Frank says these might be sororities." This is back in 1985. We just had our first women in and we were faced with the dilemma of, Now, what are we going to do about the women when they suddenly realize they don't have what the men have? They do not have a fraternity. They will want to have sororities.

That came to the forefront rapidly but we were able to hold at bay that decision about how to respond to the sororities because, within the five chapters that we started out with and within the Panhellenic discussion of all this, they couldn't agree as to what kind [of housing] they wanted. Some would have been satisfied and we had a plan that tried to make better use of Gaines Hall by turning all of it, except one wing of it, into sorority sections. That would have satisfied many of the young women's desires. Others wanted to have sort of lodges for certain activities. They could use them for entertaining but we didn't have to provide meal services there on a regular basis. They ought to be able to do catered things there for parents' weekend and things like that. They didn't have to have a lot of people living there. Maybe just have their officers live in the lodge. Or, full-blown sorority houses. As it turned out, the choice was full-blown sorority houses.

That's why, at that time, we were trying to decide. We're going to put the houses over there. We didn't provide central air conditioning for the men's houses. We couldn't afford it. Now, are we going to go over here? Are we going to imbalance the parity that we were seeking? (Too bad I'm not on TV. You could see all these gestures!) Over there, every time we would make a presentation on parents' weekend or anytime that there were parents of the daughters

here, air conditioning had become such an essential part of most people's lives, they said, "They're going to be air conditioned, aren't they? Well, why aren't you?" We don't have the money." "Why don't you get the money?" You know, a very firm voice being heard that we ought to air condition those houses.

Then other voices were heard on the matter. "If we can air condition them"—this is Rob Fure's office [of Special Programs] now talking—"if we air condition them, we can make use of those for Summer Programs." All right, we can roll with that punch. That resulted in us modifying the design of bathroom facilities on the third floor where the women live. We made it possible, once the undergraduates had cleared out, we could a wall across and we could have a women's section and a men's section up there in the bathroom facilities. We tried to anticipate that. Well, I don't think Summer Programs have ever done anything over there in that regard.

The solution that we were moving to, which was going to be the most affordable thing we could do, or the least expensive—let's put it that way, the least expensive thing we could do would be to put a big air conditioning—I want to be careful and use the right word here—I'm going to say a condenser unit back there that would provide the chilling, all the things needed to make the chilled water or air. (I'm trying to think now which it was, but it would be back there.) Then we would also have to put in circulating equipment in the houses themselves that would take this chilled water or air and then circulate it in among the houses themselves to give them air conditioning.

This thing back there had a certain size to it and when Lewis Tyree, who lived at Mulberry Hill, got wind of all this— We made some presentations. We *had to* make presentations to the authorities there to get the conditional use permits and things. We were dealing with conditional use permits over there because we were within two hundred yards of property lines and city streets. All kinds of things came into play with this. This was seen by Lewis Tyree—Mr. Tyree turns out to be a real expert on air conditioning and what is the science of things that are chilled and frozen? Ted Williams [1918–2002, the Boston Red Sox baseball player], for instance, he's been chilled and frozen hoping to recover sometime. There's a term for it. I can't think of what it is. Anyhow, Mr. Tyree came and started fussing at me about [how] we were doing the wrong thing over there. He had several alternatives there, all of which tended to be very expensive. Certainly not the least expensive was that we really ought to go back to the central plant, bring it down there, run it over, and then you could do all this. He understood the

loops and all that and he said, “You can accomplish so much with just this one thing.” I took his advice to heart. I had been given lots of reasons, for some reason, not to like Mr. Tyree, but all of a sudden I realized that this is a nice man; I like him. He became one of my really good friends and I miss him.

Warren: That’s another example. I remember so often when we shared [offices in] Hill House that you were going before the city council for this or that. I asked a long time ago about Washington and Lee as a citizen of Lexington, but it seemed to me that you were the A-number-one representative for a long time of Washington and Lee at city hall.

Parsons: That’s because we were dealing with so many things under some of the changes in the city ordinances and the city code that happened in the early ’80s or mid-’80s.

Warren: Tell me about that.

Parsons: Washington and Lee before that—and I was involved in projects before—we never gave a thought to going before any planning commission or anything. We did what we wanted to do. From Washington and Lee’s point of view, that was the route of least resistance. There was no pressure from the city that we do that until we began to get over here on the edges of the campus and we wanted to build Gaines Hall. We didn’t have the name for it at that time but we wanted to build an upperclass dormitory.

That was one of the first things that John Wilson wanted to put up. He just thought that having so many people live off the W&L campus had so many negative effects. Now, he was wrong in some of this but he was also right in some of it. [Wilson thought] that students lived so far off-campus that they were discouraged from coming back on campus to attend the musical events that John Wilson loved. Remember, he played music in his office all the time. You had to learn to talk over it. You had to learn—just like you say [during this interview] “We’ve got to pause here”—while you sat with John Wilson, he’s listening to you at the same time he’s listening to the music, and he gets to a favorite passage in the music, and you’d have to wait. He would but up his hand, you wait, then he put his hand down and we go on talking. I’m not making this up; this happened.

I was the point man. Again, in that magazine article, [former Lexington mayor] Buddy Derrick goes to great length to say that I was good to work because they could depend on what I said. I never said anything in there—let me put it this way. I never said anything before that that I hadn’t already had the full understanding of people that I work for back here, be it Larry

Broomall or John Wilson, or both, or the trustees for that matter. On a couple occasions, I found myself saying something that put me a little bit out on the limb, but I said it with the confidence that it made so much sense that I would not have any trouble when I got back over here to convince them that I'd done the right thing. That held up. Both the [Lexington] planning commission and the city council, and then later the architectural review board, they came to know that when I came in they could—this is the wrong cliché—they could go to the bank on that.

When John Wilson came back from his leave that he took to go to England and Ireland, in 1988 I believe it was, and I had to tell him that we were having problems in getting the necessary conditional use permit processes to work for us on the Fraternity Renaissance thing, boy, he jumped up and immediately came to my rescue there. We were being jerked around by the city manager. I believe his name was Joseph King. His nose was out of joint because he wanted to use our need for these conditional use permits as leverage to make us turn over to the city all of our automobile information on students with cars. VMI, trying to hold down the number of student cars, had turned all their information over to them. They wanted the same thing [from W&L].

The Buckley Amendment [the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, administered by the U.S. Department of Education]. Have you ever heard of the Buckley Amendment? Buckley, you know the fellow, the *National Review* man, was his brother.

Warren: Bill Buckley?

Parsons: I think it was his brother that was in Congress or something.

Warren: Yes, he did have a brother [Senator James L. Buckley of New York].

Parsons: There was an amendment that you couldn't share certain information with everybody about your students. That translated roughly, I think, into what you put in your directory. You could share directory information but you didn't have to share your automobile information. Particularly, we couldn't get a clear understanding as to whether these cars were here or where they belonged at home. Where do they pay the taxes on them? The city also at that time decided that they would like to have the tax money on all this. So we were faced with all that. We came to kind of a position of loggerheads over that.

When I explained it to John Wilson, he insisted on going with me to the next meeting of I think it was the planning commission. He simply said that it was apparent—he described the

situation as I had described it to him—he said, "Apparently there is opposition to what Washington and Lee wants to do with these derelict houses. If there is that opposition, perhaps the city doesn't want us to fix these houses up. We have no other recourse then but to let them remain as they are. As of now, I am shutting down the Fraternity Renaissance effort." [Chuckles.] All of a sudden, you saw all of these people up there turning frantic looks over to Mr. King, the city manager. Mr. King himself, I have some doubt as to whether he was doing this expecting us to give in and give all this information on the cars to them, or whether he had other machinations that he was behind, because he immediately then had a plan B that he brought forward and the plan B did not require us to turn over that information to get the planning commission [approval]. We could go ahead with Fraternity Renaissance and we would work out some of these things in due course. John Wilson was a steadfast support to me on that.
Warren: Did you see John Wilson as a strong personality that you could count on?
Parsons: Oh yes, oh yes. I would have a tough time—you're not asking this question but let me say it—I would have a tough time deciding between Bob Huntley and John Wilson as to which man meant the most to Washington and Lee. I think both of them deserve equal credit for it. In my mind, they were the right men in the right place at the right time and, up until Ken Ruscio, we've had the wrong men in the wrong place at the wrong time. Again, [this is] Frank Parsons' personal opinion having worked with all of them.

John turned out to be wonderful. He came to value my opinions at times when he was a little reluctant. John had a great ability to read me. I can't refute this but I think he probably was seeing something I was unaware of. If he said something that I disagreed with outrageously, my lip would quiver. Sometimes he would call me on it. "I can tell Frank's not agreeing with me. I see his lip moving on there." In many ways that came to be the thing.

Let me just say another thing about John Wilson and my relationship with him. Early in our [relationship], he very quickly asked me to become his assistant. In that year, the first year we worked together, he found occasion to tell me how much fun he was having working with me. Early in that thing, I told him that Bob Huntley had once told me that he wanted [me] to come up with the tough questions, to be the devil's advocate sometimes, because that helped him sort through his thinking on things. It was a tough job because he was always so far ahead of me in his thinking, but he still needed to bounce this off of people and that sometimes, that if he would find that useful—and it was a big if, if you would find that useful—I would be willing to

try to play the same role with you. Well, every now and then, John forgot that he ever said that yes, he would like that. So sometimes when I would be in a position of raising a tough question, something like that, he looked on that as a form of disloyalty. I think that it was a situation somewhat similar to that that led to our having a disagreement that resulted in him slamming the door.

Warren: What happened?

Parsons: It had to do with responses to questions from the Southern Association. I'd come up with a series of responses. What was his criticism of them? He came in. I think his words to me were, "Looks like you're just trying to get somebody's attention on this." I said, "Well, you could say that." That's what prompted him to slam the door in my face. Then later he invited me to come in. As I recall, I jumped ahead and said, "I want to apologize for causing you to leave me so abruptly there. It was entirely my fault. I should not have responded as I did." Very quickly, he was apologizing to me. That led then to a very frank discussion about how he was using me and that maybe it would be better if I could take over the Fraternity Renaissance project in addition to my other work. I would be relieved of any other thing that he would call on me for. So that's what happened.

He assured me that I would have a secretarial position assigned to me up there, but then I very quickly discovered there wasn't any place to put a secretary up there. I wasn't going to be able to get the person I wanted anyway, or I'd have to take whatever was there. I'd have to take the lowest-paid secretary in the university to come work for me. So I got by. For the last ten years I worked at Washington and Lee, I had no clerical assistance. You know what my office looked like. I didn't have any secretary. You didn't see my secretary anywhere, did you?

Warren: No, but that's something I want to bring up. Let's pause for just a moment.

[Pause to open Parsons 15 track]

Warren: One of the things that I remember about you, Frank, among the gazillion other things, I think you were the first person to ever show me a personal computer. Nobody has secretaries much anymore because now we all are our own secretaries with personal computers.

Parsons: That's true. Because of the computer, I was able to stay. I could cope. I have never been and will never be a good file clerk. I'm a pretty good *pile* clerk.

Warren: Oh, you are an excellent pile clerk. You are the grand master, Frank.

Parsons: The problem with a pile is that piles tend to grow and that means you have to go

through the pile to find what you're looking for. You know it's in the pile but you don't know where. Sometimes you can make a guess. How long has that pile been there? I can go to the bottom of it and find something that ought to be there. I can go to the middle. It would take me longer than it should. Now, you know, you can look up things very quickly on your computers. I just get astounded at how quickly you can get the information using all the search engines and things.

Warren: Let's go back to in the early days, though. You really were among the first to have a computer, weren't you?

Parsons: Yes. I wasn't the first to have a computer terminal on my desk. I had somehow gotten [into] making the first step into the computer age when we were making do, having had one of President Cole's people from Tulane to come up and sort of give us a glimpse of the future in the computer world of things. We had brought in an IBM computer, which was a dinosaur by today's standard. I forget what it was called. It had a numerical designation. One of the ways that they would sell this thing is that you could play certain games on it. One of the things they demonstrated once was having an imaginary baseball game where you would pick a team to play against this other team. I don't know who picked the pitcher, but the pitcher, just by the luck of the computer, struck out Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and some other great hitter all in succession on straight pitches.

That computer then became quickly inadequate to work on so we had to move up. We were bringing in academic computing and the computer center had moved over to where the old law library used to be.

Warren: In Tucker Hall.

Parsons: In Tucker Hall. Somewhere along there, Tom Imeson was very much in the forefront of understanding computers. He was also a professor of chemistry. He became sort of the computer center director. It became apparent that we were going to have to have—we were unable to overload the academic computer that we were very happy with, with too much administrative work. We needed a separate administrative computer and we were going to have to choose that kind of a new technology. When somewhere along the line it came to his attention that I had never logged on, punched in, or any of the things one does with a computer, that I would make a good, honest broker for this study of the academic computer and what we needed there.

We went down to Hampden-Sydney, I believe it was. No, we went to Longwood College. We saw demonstrated there this particular kind of computer and the programmatic material, the very flexible programmatic material, that was available—it was called software; I learned what the difference between hardware and software was very quickly—and that this might serve us well. I came back thinking that it certainly sounded that way. So I became [convinced] without too much prodding from Tom Imeson that it looked to me like this Prime System, as they called it, was what we needed.

We undertook then to investigate other places that had the Prime Systems. I remember that we had to put together a group of us. I'm trying to think who else besides Imeson [was in it]. I'm certain it was myself. Who else was it went up there with us? Maybe Stew Epley went. About four or five of us. We had to fly to Syracuse. No, not Syracuse. We had to fly to Buffalo and then drive down narrow roads between great banks of snow all the way to Olean, New York, where St. Bonaventure College was located. St. Bonaventure was the Jesuits or something. They had a lot of guys walking around in robes who had top positions there. We talked to the people at St. Bonaventure and, sure enough, it looked like it was going to be. We had a hard time getting to Olean, New York. We got down to Roanoke one day, having had a very hazardous trip down to Roanoke, and nobody was taking off from Roanoke that day, so we had to make another hazardous trip back to Lexington. [We] finally went down again when it was iffy but we got out of there, got to Buffalo, rented a station wagon, went on down to Olean, had a visit there, and came back pretty much decided we were going to buy this equipment.

Warren: What is the Prime System? Does that stand for something in all caps?

Parsons: No, it was just P-r-i-m-e. I don't know whether they're still in business or not.

Warren: I've never heard of them.

Parsons: Tom Imeson ultimately went to work for them when he left Washington and Lee, after his marriage broke up. He ultimately went to work for Prime but I don't know what he's doing now. I haven't seen him in a long, long time. Prime built computers and they also had somewhere acquired this software that made them so flexible. They really were flexible. I even had the notion I could learn to come up with the type of questions and the software language and everything that I could make it do certain things.

Warren: Let's talk about computers.

Parsons: Let me just quickly say I ended up with a terminal that connected me with that Prime

System, but my connection was very rudimentary and I did not learn how to make good use of it like I thought I was.

Warren: I remember your having an Apple very early on.

Parsons: Oh yes, I had the first Apple at Washington and Lee.

Warren: I just remember having a sense of you being a real pioneer with personal computers—not a terminal but a personal computer—so I'm interested not so much necessarily in your personal experience but your witnessing the personal computer revolution on the campus and what a difference it has made on this campus.

Parsons: There were a number, not too large a number, but there were a number of computers vying for that role. I got involved in having some of those brought down and put over in what was then the journalism library.

Warren: Some of what?

Parsons: These personal computers that you had the option of getting.

I forget what we ultimately decided but it wasn't the Macintosh. Macintosh came along in that 1984 commercial at the halftime of the Super Bowl where somebody comes down and throws something at the screen and they come out with this announcement of the Macintosh, the computer for the rest of us. Well, they were talking about me because I had not found great comfort in working with the Prime System or the way that the connections I had [functioned for me]. I had control over my budget at the time, so I had the wherewithal to buy one of the first Macintoshes and put it in place. That was the machine I worked on when John Wilson came to Washington and Lee. I did learn how to use it.

There is a story about how we were having problems with fitting the proposed performing arts [later called the Lenfest Center] building on the site down there. I used the technology I had available with my Macintosh computer to get in an image so I could take the site and turn it around and shift it into its present configuration so that the railroad becomes part of the feeding into that. I'm not giving a very coherent answer to this, but I did have the very first Macintosh and then upgraded as upgrades became possible. At some point, then, they came out with not only an upgrade to the original Macintosh but the advanced heirs to that, the successors. Again, thanks to Washington and Lee—and part of it was because I would make the point, "I don't have a secretary, remember…"—they would let me have the upgrades and things. I used it very effectively, I think.

For instance, when I was up there on the third floor of Washington Hall and Larry Broomall was down the hall from me. As part of my job as being the parking czar at Washington and Lee, I tried to find out who had the cars. I had to work with the computer center to do this. They were able to provide me with information that I could quickly feed into my Macintosh computers that gave me the same information about cars that they had in the computer center. Then using the programs that were not available on anything but a Macintosh, I was able to make use of that automobile information. If I wanted to find all the students who had Saabs or all the ones that had BMWs, I could. It would take me awhile. I wasn't very good at automating it to the extent it could be automated, but I could find that information out.

It was using that kind of information that I got from the central computing office on my Macintosh that I finally was able, to my own satisfaction, to know where every student lived. I learned early in trying to do housing studies that led to Woods Creek [Apartments] and then later to other housing we were doing—Gaines Hall, for instance—that the students sometimes did not know where they lived. One of the greatest centers of controversy was something out on Thorn Hill Road called the Country Club Apartments, where you turn to go down to the current country club out there, the Lexington Country Club. There were these brick buildings there. Some of them said we live in the Country Club Apartments and others said that they lived at such-and-such Thorn Hill Road. Some of them said we live on Airport Road. Some of them said this, that, and the other. They didn't know where they lived. But I was able, using my own devices with the Macintosh, to reach a point where I was comfortable in saying I knew where everybody lived.

I did this by questionnaire that I would give to them every year. In it, I would ask them where they lived, how many miles from the campus. There was some disagreement about that, [about] how far from the campus. Some would give it in blocks. Some would give it in miles. Some would say walking time. I had to standardize all this. What I used to do with regard to the student addresses and things, I would ask them: I need to know this information in order to reconcile some disagreements on addresses. Would you please list the people you share the apartment with? By that I could mix them up. Okay, all five of these guys think they live somewhere else from what they put down the first time, but I know now that they all live together. I would settle on an address for them for my purposes. I did all that and, like I say, I got to the point where I finally said to myself one day, I know where everybody lives.

That became apparent because in some of the things when we were talking about building

on-campus housing, the planning commission and the city council would want to know if we were planning additional upperclass housing and I'd say, "No, but we try to keep track of that through frequent surveys as to levels of dissatisfaction among those living out in private accommodations." Then we got into this rigmarole with the city, and it continues to this very day, about the number of unrelated individuals [that] can live together in a house. That requires an annual conditional use permit that the owners of those houses have to come in [with]. I think they're only granting that privilege to people who are already grandfathered in already now.

I don't know how I got into that thing about the parking. Oh, it came about through parking. We always had to talk about parking in relation to where students lived and why we didn't have more parking. I was once tempted to confront the mayor of Lexington, Mr. Buddy Derrick. He was one of the ones that would always bring in the parking, about where are we going to park these cars? I was tempted but I didn't say this; the temptation was to say, "Mr. Derrick, you sell cars locally," and he would have to say yes. "Do you sell them sometimes to Washington and Lee students?" and he would have had to say yes. "Before you sell them that car, do you insist on knowing where they're able to park it legally?" Of course, the answer to that was *no*. But I didn't say that. All I said to him was—

Warren: That doesn't sound like a good conversation to have with the mayor.

Parsons: No. I'm glad I didn't do that because he would not have said the nice thing about me that he did say [in the alumni magazine article].

Warren: One of the things that I think is becoming very clear as you're talking about your many years, your long career here: things got more and more complicated as the years went by. One of the things that happened somewhere along the line, and I honestly don't know exactly what the answer is, suddenly the university decided it needed a university counsel. What would have precipitated the need for the university to have a new administrative position?

Parsons: Because of Title IX that said that you had to do the same things for the women as you were doing for the men. That's essentially what I think Title IX said. It applied to athletics. It applied to a lot of things. Right now, we have two lawyers here. We have Leanne Shank, who is the university counsel, and we have Jennifer Kirkland, who is a compliance specialist. She is responsible for tracking all the things we have to comply with in order to exist as a corporate entity.

Warren: Jennifer …

Parsons: Kirkland. K-I-R-K-L-A–N-D. Boy, can she sing. She's a wonderful singer, beautiful singer. Nice-looking lady too, but she's a lovely singer.

It was just the changing requirements. It sometimes involved court decisions. The Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], for instance, is one of the toughest things to keep up with because it's based upon not only guidelines—again, I'm speaking now as to what my familiarity was ten years ago—but a lot of it was based on case law and when case law changed, then you had to be prepared to conform to what that case law dictated. Sometimes we were getting a little bit of forgiveness on that, from having to come in and have handicapped accessibility to all our buildings.

Bob Huntley took the view that we—we actually had some money given to us a long time ago that took [that] into account. It came from parents of a student who was physically handicapped and they had to actually hire someone to help him get around. To help assure that somebody who came in who was handicapped physically and would require help and their parents were unable to give it, there would be a fund that we could tap to hire the assistance. With that beginning we took the view that our buildings, particularly the old buildings where case law would sometimes give you some forgiveness about what you could do there, such as coming in and putting up fire escapes on the outside and elevators on the inside in the National Historic Landmarks like the Colonnade is, we could get away from that by assuring when we had to make these assurances, which were quite often, that we were program accessible. If we were offering something here and we had a student who was mobility-impaired—that was another term they used—that we would cause that course to be taken out of its normal place where we were having it, or the section that he was assigned to, and have it meet somewhere else that was accessible to that. We got by with that for a long time. Meanwhile, we had, I think, some other funds given to us that would help us meet that requirement.

Warren: What would happen with something, an event, that was happening in Lee Chapel? That's certainly not easily wheelchair accessible.

Parsons: It is coming in the front door.

Warren: There's no step there?

Parsons: It's now built up. It's a ramp effect there. It's been made to configure with the kind of rock in the chapel foundation and the fact that it meets brick. It's done very nicely there.

I remember one time when we had reburied the bones of Traveller [Robert E. Lee's

horse] down there and we were taking the UDC [United Daughters of the Confederacy] ladies up from that. They were getting ready to walk in the front door and one of the UDC ladies—we did not have the ramp then and there was a slight elevation—she stubbed her toe and nearly fell. We were very attentive to her. She did not get hurt. She nearly fell; she didn't fall. Later on, I was reflecting with somebody that I could say such a thing to. I said, "I bet that lady would have been happy to die on the steps of Lee Chapel." That would have been one of her preferred ways to go, she was so in tune with the UDC.

Now it's handicapped accessible on two levels. To get from one level to the other, you have to leave down below and come out the door you went in and follow a path that is handicapped accessible to get up to the front door, and then you can come in. Then the upper level is accessible to you so that you can see everything but we can't get you up on the stage there.

Warren: I remember Reynolds Price [the novelist, who was in a wheelchair] giving a talk one time and he had to be lifted up onto the stage. It was quite a challenge.

Parsons: Yes, there isn't much of a way. I think we do have certain exclusion with that regard, particularly when we show the length we've gone to elsewhere to conform.

One of the worst handicapped accessibility [efforts] we had to do was one time to get our alumnus—again, I cannot remember this man's name to save me, but if my memory serves correctly, he was the top man in some agency up in Washington that was riding herd on how we were conforming with ADA and all that. He came down to be inducted into ODK [Omicron Delta Kappa, the leadership society] and it was one of the coldest days we've ever had here in Lexington. It didn't get above zero all day long. We had to get him into the Lee House, so we had to build special ramps and things to get him in there. Then we had to get him out and get him down to Lee Chapel. The only way to do that was to wheel him down there in a wheelchair, and he didn't want us to wrap him up too well. We had the dilemma of here was a man that might be seriously hurt by being out in that weather for as long as it was going to take to get him down there, and convincing him that we were going to wrap him up whether he wanted it or not. That's what we did. We gave him plenty of protection. But Lee Chapel, you just can't make all of it accessible.

Warren: I'm going to pause again.

Parsons: Sure.

[Pause to discuss how late in the day it is and to begin Parsons 15 track]

Parsons: I didn't tell you [about] many of the buildings that I had anything to do with.

Warren: I know, Frank. We've got so many things that we haven't talked about. I'll let you pick the last couple of subjects we should talk about.

Parsons: Well, I'll pick. I'll give you some ones that, quite frankly, I was never happy with. I was never happy with the way the [University, later the Leyburn] Library [opened in January 1979] turned out.

Warren: Tell me.

Parsons: It was not so much the design of the building; it was the engineering that went into it. We were dealing with a very, very fine engineering firm, had great credentials and everything, but they didn't give us the best advice that we had. We ended up with poor lighting in the lobby area. I have not been in the library since they made major modifications in there, but what I've seen on the Internet and things that showed all this, I just wanted to stand up and cheer I liked it so much better than what we had been able to provide there. There were some shortcomings in the library. We had to deal with such things as have places where you could smoke, places where you couldn't smoke. The fact that Philip Morris gave us some money for some smoking lounges and things, we had to honor that a little bit.

Overall, I was less satisfied with it, and also because we got into an energy conservation mode there under President [Jimmy] Carter. If you recall, we had to cut back on our energy consumptions. There were days when you could buy gas, odd days and even days and all of that. We had all kinds of experts coming in, proclaiming they were specialists in helping us save energy, and they all wanted a handsome fee for this. Bob Huntley says to Jim Arthur, "Can't you think of some ways we can save energy?" "Oh yes, don't worry. How much you want to save?" Well, we never operated the library the way it was designed to be operated. Mr. Arthur, with the best of intentions, he screwed up the whole system that had been designed for making that building work.

Warren: Tell me what you mean.

Parsons: Getting the right kind of fresh air, or getting the right kind of chilled air, or evacuating smoke from the smoking lounges. All that had to be done by equipment that Jim decided to shut down. Like I say, he shut down parts of it, other parts of it were kept going, but he made some arbitrary decisions, not realizing the consequences of what that was going to do. Some of it

wasn't immediately apparent but became apparent over a period of time. Some areas of it were just not as pleasant to work in as they had been before. As I say, it was done with the best of intentions because Jim Arthur would not have done that had he realized that it was going to have that impact. But Jim did not have a degree in engineering and so some of the engineering principles—it probably had an effect. It was probably my fault. Maybe this was about the time I was realizing, well, we better work with Jim Arthur on these things because this isn't good, that we don't turn in the planning process as much to the operating process that we have here. I had to learn that. I make no apologies, other than that was an area that I did not realize as fast as I should, and when I did realize it, I was sorry that I had not recognized it sooner. That was one place where I had not performed up to my own desire to be able to see these things.

The library also was built to be adaptable. I think it was built on twenty-seven-foot squares so we could have built on to the back of the library and taken it all the way across the ravine in an expansion if we had chosen to do that. It turns out the use of libraries itself has changed dramatically.

Warren: What do you mean, twenty-seven-foot squares?

Parsons: Those columns in the building, when you go down into the stack areas, there's twenty-seven feet from each column to the other column.

Warren: I see.

Parsons: The building, you added on sort of in components of that as you wanted to expand in any direction. There was some good thinking that went into it and there was some less-than-good thinking. Again, I'm learning on the building. When we came to build the library, we had taken a hard lesson over at Lewis Hall about some things over there that we had designed into the building. That system over there had never fully worked the same way and some of it, again, you could trace it back to the fact that it had been a little bit screwed up by the way in which the building was operated.

Warren: Not the way it was designed but the way it was operated?

Parsons: That's right. All the temperatures in that building and things were supposed to shift as the sun moved around. When the sun failed to shine as brightly here, the heat went up if necessary, or if the sun began to shine here, the air conditioning would cut in and would bring the temperature down. You're supposed to keep constant temperature throughout the building. That proved difficult to manage, too.

Warren: And it was because of decisions Jim Arthur made that it was difficult?

Parsons: Some of it I think was also that if the engineers had it to do over, they might have done it differently themselves.

Oh Lord, we went through something over there called the law school disease that I don't want to get into. That would take almost all day to explain just that one. We had people over there coming down with illnesses that they attributed to something in the carpets or something in the air. We tried. We hunted and hunted and hunted for that. We took them elsewhere in the building and the malady would follow them to some places, but to other places it wouldn't follow them.

One day we had a meeting there and we brought [the women] into what had been a safe area that had not caused any problems at one time and we undertook to interview all the women who worked in what was then called the word processing center. That was the secretarial pool for the law school. Not every law professor had as many secretaries as they do now over there. They had to share a lot. We brought these young women in. In one case, one of the most severely affected by all this, she began to show all the symptoms right there in front of us. We brought in another young woman and we asked her to describe—the question we put to them was always, "Describe how this problem manifests itself. What happens when you begin to show these symptoms?" Some of the stories kind of meshed, but this one girl showed the symptoms right in front of us in an area where she'd never had the symptoms before. Okay [we thought], keep that in mind. Then we interviewed this other woman and we asked her to describe it and she said, "I don't know why this is but they never, ever happened when I was there." Okay; we took that into account.

Warren: Never happened when I was …?

Parsons: When *she* was there.

Warren: In that place?

Parsons: Yes, when she was there. Finally in our critique of all this, after we all heard that, it became apparent that when she was there the work flowed more freely and they didn't feel under any stress. It turns out that his young woman who was showing those first symptoms, she had a severe allergy problem. If you've got serious allergies, sometimes it takes very little to upset those allergies. Some of the allergies result in runny eyes and—oh, what else did she show? Her complexion changed.

What would happen, when Darlene didn't show up, they had to make up for the work she wasn't doing. She had some health problems that occasionally caused her to miss a day's work. That was all worked out that permitted her to do that on another basis. I had nothing to do with that. When she wasn't there, these other women, including the woman who was in charge overall, they would show these symptoms very rapidly. It was all a psychosomatic—is that the right word?—reaction to each other, but the trigger was always the gal with the allergies. If Darlene showed up, then the workload did not put pressure on anybody and so they never came about.

Eddie Smith, then the architect who was involved in all this along with Fred Cox, he had an allergy problem. He was talking one day with his allergist and, without betraying any confidentialities, he mentioned this; he didn't even tell where it was occurring. The allergist agreed. He said, "That certainly is plausible. Here's what you have to do." So the allergist came up with the thing. He said, "Announce to them you have found the reason for the problem. As soon as they vacate the office in the afternoon, we go in and you shampoo all the rugs. You let them know that you've got the shampoo equipment, that we've traced it to the rugs, and we're going to shampoo all the rugs. Then the next morning, before they come in, go in with some air freshener and spread it around so it smells fresh and bright when they go in. You do this every day for a week or two and then you announce that this has worked." In the meantime, what really made it work was that this young woman with all the allergies, she quit and went to work somewhere else. She ceased to work for us and the whole thing went away overnight. I can't tell you all of the steps we went through trying to pin it down.

Warren: The law school disease.

Parsons: The law school disease: LSD.

Warren: That always was a problem.

Parsons: So that was a building that was a problem.

The most successful building that I like to look back as the most successful was the Science Center. Really, there were many times in that that I think that my role was critical in it. The nice part about it was, that was acknowledged when we had the dedication of the Science Center and I got this tremendous round of applause from everybody there, contractors and everybody. We got to the end of that building, instead of the usual sitting around of everybody having been in finger-pointing situations over a thirty-month period in building a building, you

go to the final meeting where you reconcile retainages and this, that, and the other, usually they can't wait to get out of there. Our meeting? We all sat there. No one wanted to leave. Finally Dub Whitescarver, again the man I mentioned earlier, he spoke up. He said, "I don't know about you folks, but this was the most trouble-free project that I've ever worked on. We never got to finger-pointing at each other. I just think it was remarkable that we got all this done."

It required meeting very narrow windows of opportunity to make moves take place, moving from one department, moving into a new building. We also came up with a method so we only had to make a move once. That was in contrast to a very highly paid consultant [who] came in and showed us all these multiple moves going back and forth.

Warren: Who figured that out?

Parsons: Bob Huntley and I did a lot to figure it out.

Warren: Bob Huntley?

Parsons: No, John Wilson. John Wilson and others.

Warren: You were working on the Science Center when I was here and John Elrod was president.

Parsons: Yes, that's right. That would have been John Elrod, you're right. It was John Elrod that made that announcement at that dedication and got me that round of applause.

I'm trying to think who did decide about the moves. I think it came from the architects and everybody just looking at this and saying, "Okay now, we can make this work without these multiple moves. What do we have to do to do that?" All of a sudden, it became clear as the nose on your face what you had to do.

[Pause to insert a new memory card and begin Parsons 16 track]

Warren: This is Mame Warren and today is September 4, 2009. I'm with Frank Parsons in Lexington, Virginia, and we're on the second flash drive or [memory] card or whatever this thing is.

Parsons: If you don't know what it is, I don't know what it is.

Warren: Yes. We were just talking about who figures out the choreography of moving around from building to building and departments. Explain to me who figures all that out when a new building is happening.

Parsons: It can involve professional architects [and] engineers. In each of these professions there are certain things that can come into play at certain times. You want to make certain that when

you do make your move, the building is ready to go. Sometimes an engineering decision must wait upon something else, so it gets fairly complicated but it's not rocket science or all these other comparisons that you make of that nature. It would be our professional people, the architects and engineers, and would also involve people here. What would be the impact of trying to get this done [with] teaching going on? In other words, can we accelerate the schedule here and the fact that we're going to be chipping out rock instead of blasting it out, is that going to disturb the people in the classes here? What are the tradeoffs there? We worked those things out, not always to everybody's complete satisfaction but sufficiently so that we said, "Okay, put up with a little noise for a relatively short period of time, or put up with maybe a little less disruption but it would go on for a long, long time, and time is money and we can't afford to take the long route." So we would come to these accommodations but it would be a mutual decision. It wouldn't be one person's. Occasionally one person would recognize what we can do to make something work.

Warren: So there was no overall efficiency expert whose job that was to figure out.

Parsons: We'd brought in a man before, like I say, and he came up with a very "efficient" plan. I don't know whether he's still in the business or not, but the last I heard of him he was still getting big fees for passing out information. If it's the same kind of information he gave to us, well, they weren't getting their money's worth. We didn't get our money's worth from here. Some of the things he gave to us, they held up, but not in this move about [of various science departments].

We took advantage. We were able to take advantage of this. To me the most remarkable thing about the science building was, when we finally got the board's approval to move ahead with it, we were coming in way over the budget that John Wilson had set out for us to meet. I had tried to go back and to calculate what that amount was. The board put the question to John Wilson in a morning session. Recognize we had to increase the total expectation of spending on the building, the complex of buildings. What would be his figure that he would be comfortable with? He pulled a figure out of the air and right now I'm having difficulty remembering how much it was. I don't carry the total costs of these buildings in my head. I have to look them up. Anyway, the number that he pulled out of the air struck me as *possibly* being enough. It wasn't the overall thing but I thought that, in my burning the midnight oil getting ready for this meeting, I had determined some places myself I thought we could cut out. I went back and spent the

whole lunch hour—I missed lunch that day—I went back and I worked feverishly and computed that so I could go back and in the afternoon we could say that we'd reexamined it. John said that he'd been assured that we could probably do it for that, recognizing that there were some things in that we didn't have control over. We never knew for certain how much rock we were going to encounter. This *is* called Rockbridge County.

Warren: For good reason.

Parsons: For good reason. You knew there was something down there. Sometimes you would encounter mud seams where we thought there might be rock. There were cavities there where mud had flowed through at various times. You had to be careful there. You could encounter undue expense there if you had a kind of a blowout, [which] we did have, when we were doing the library I think it was, that threw rocks and things way over there to the far, far campus and rained things down on the ROTC building that had all kinds of consequences. Ended up with Jim Whitehead moving all kinds of porcelain [in the Reeves Collection, which had been stored in the ROTC building] and stuff out of places to safer storage on the other side of the campus.

We knew there were going to be change orders and my task was to keep the change orders to a minimum. That was always my task. We tried to do that and we worked hard at it. We ended up having to increase the budget for the Science Center, but they were wise decisions we made. You go into the Science Center today, you move seamlessly from one building—no matter the age of the building—from one to the other. Inside, you don't know that you aren't in one big building. From the outside, you're looking at three distinctively different buildings. That was a necessary thing to do and I have to give John Elrod credit on that. Some of that decision was made, particularly in what we were going to do to Parmly Hall, after he became president. It made convincing him that we ought to spend that extra money when I was able to say, "It's going to be all the same throughout. We shouldn't leave these walls like this, having changed them over in Howe Hall." Of course, in the new building, both of the renovations conform to the new building. It is a good building.

The nice thing about it, I still check the people there, the faculty that remain that I know. I don't know a lot of the new ones but the ones that I know the best, like Edgar Spencer. Some of the people in the beginning were very critical of what we were doing for them. It turned out to be their criticisms evaporated. I go back and I say, "How are you getting along in the building? Is it still meeting your needs?" They say, "Oh, remarkably so." They're very pleased. The users are

happy and when the users are happy, then no matter what other problems I might have encountered along the way, all of a sudden my happiness level goes up with that.

Warren: It certainly should. Speaking of happy, I'm going to wrap this up with something that I'm curious about that I hope you may, or may not, know the answer to. One of the *big* things that was happening when I was here from 1995 to 1999 was the renovation of Lee Chapel. Lo and behold, I come in here a year or two ago and it's being redone. What was *that* about? I thought it was pretty wonderful the first time.

Parsons: It was. It was. Bottom line, I don't know where this comes from. You didn't bring this up with Bob Huntley, did you? He feels even more strongly about this than I do.

Warren: No, I didn't because I didn't know. I think of you.

Parsons: Okay, but Bob was the one, when he heard what they'd done down there, he just was very harsh in his criticism of what we'd done. It stems from the fact that we try to represent Robert E. Lee as an educator. Let's forget he was ever a traitor to his country [and] that he fought for the Confederacy. Let's forget he was a soldier. Political correctness is manifest down there now and some of it traces back to—hell, she isn't even in charge down there, but a gal that Tom Litzenburg brought here when he was over at the Reeves Center, Pat Hobbs, she is one of the culprits in this and there may be some others. Peter Grover, for instance, he bought into all this nonsense.

I haven't been down there to see it. I have not been in the Lee Chapel museum. The centerpiece now is the thing that used to be in the physics library in the Science Center. That's the big orrery they call it, that you turn the crank and the planets go around. It's a remarkable piece of machinery. It's now the centerpiece down in the chapel. The lighting is much brighter than it was before. That was my complaint.

Litzenburg knew a lot about all this stuff. He was very useful in this but he also became a real difficult man to deal with. His marriage broke down and his wife ended up marrying Brian Shaw [then director of Communications and Public Affairs at W&L]. Tom would get up at ungodly early hours. Like four o'clock, four-thirty, he would come into the Reeve Center to begin his work. This was somehow therapy for his emotional needs. When I would get down to my office—by this time now I was tending to Henny, both helping take care of [her] myself and then I had people coming. In the last year or so there, I had certified nursing assistants and LPNs coming in to help me there, but I had to get ready for them and pass the responsibility on to

them. That meant that I would come in to work down at the Hill House—I'd get there nine-thirty or something like that.—by that time, my phone would be filled up with at least five to six messages from Litzenburg that started coming in at four-thirty in the morning, and then another one at five-thirty, and so on, all the things that he was concerned about going on down there that I ought to help take care of. I was having to balance him and Captain [Robert] Peniston and all of the people there, including architects.

We'd had a falling out on the Lee Chapel project with the architectural consultant, or the museum consultant, that had been recommended to us by, among others, Bo [Beverly] DuBose down in Atlanta, who knows a good bit about museums and things. He had some reason to think that this man was very good. The man's name was, of all things, Dan Murphy, which caused a lot of problems here because we had another Dan Murphy here [in admissions]. But Mr. Murphy, he was going to go about this in a way that bothered me. I quite frankly said, "Look, I'm used to working with an architect who, by virtue of my contract with him, bears all the responsibility for having brought in all the other consultants we need. In my experience, I would much prefer to have an AIA contract with him than having"—I forget what the kind of contract was with him, but he was going to engage an architect to do all this, and I wanted the protection of the AIA documents behind that project, so we changed it around that way.

We picked a good architect and he worked very effectively with Mr. Murphy up to certain points, and then Litzenburg gets more and more involved. I'm putting my confidence into Tom Litzenburg, I won't say more than I should. I agreed with Tom Litzenburg in everything we did down there with the exception of the level of lighting, which was always too low. Tom has a built-in light meter or something in his head because he could tell when we inched it up a little bit. I even coaxed the women down there to inch it up a little bit. Well, he would always turn it right back.

Anyhow, Dan Murphy finally just sort of withdrew from the project. I don't recall whether he billed us for the last money we owed him. I tried to make certain that everybody got paid on time and everything. He was sort of phased out of it. Well, somehow he got back into it. What you see down there is Dan Murphy's Lee Chapel museum. They've changed Lee's office around so you get even better access into it than you had before. That's fine. Some of these things I don't quarrel with at all, but I haven't been back to see the new configuration in there.
Warren: Well, it's very nice, too, but it just seemed to me it "wasn't broke."

Parsons: That was true but this political correctness came in. Political correctness was very much rampant here when John Elrod was president. For instance, only on very special occasions were the big steel doors to the Lee reclining statue opened so that people could look in there because, in looking in, their eyes might fall on a Confederate flag or a replica of a Confederate flag hanging in there. What we do is when we open it up on special occasions—you've got to have that thing open. It would be a sacrilege to close off with steel doors any visibility of what was going on behind the podium—we open them up. We have the wrought iron gates [that] we position across the front, breaking up the view somewhat, and we keep the lighting subdued in there so you don't see the statue really spotlighted like it once was. You see these flags and the flags consist of the United States flag, the flag of the Society of the Cincinnati—oh, I forget what all. They're all related to Washington and Lee so there's a reason for them being there. This was an idea of Tom Litzenburg's, which I think works very well. But the Elrods, boy, they were adamant about when we were having the memorial services upon his death [that] those metal doors were closed.

Warren: The Elrods were from Georgia.

Parsons: Yes.

Warren: I guess they didn't have any southern sympathies.

Parsons: I don't know how to track that. Mimi very much is, as was John Elrod, both into being politically correct before it was even called that.

I have no idea where it is anymore. I haven't been to a program in Lee Chapel. Most of the musical programs occur in the Lenfest Center, as they should. Occasionally there will be something of a musical nature there. I think that this thing exists and can be brought out. There was a screen woven to respond to a Boston restoration architect by the name of Perry [phonetic]. I can't remember his first name. Mr. Perry was one of the leading consultants in historical restoration. We engaged him to consult on the physical renovations to the whole chapel done under auspices that President Cole had brought to bear on the chapel from the Ford Motor Company Fund, differentiated from the Ford Foundation. At that time, you could stand down at the bottom and look up and see nothing but blue sky overhead, that's how radical that renovation was.

Mr. Perry, turns out he likes the color orange. If you go down to Lee Chapel now and go from the statue chamber down the steps, you'll notice that the balustrades are painted bridge-

primer orange. You know that orange they paint on metal bridges before they put the final coat of paint on? Well, he liked that, so he designed a screen of red and gold. If you mix red and gold together, what do you get? Orange. That's the impression that the eye adjusts to. He thought the statue itself was so overwhelmingly dominant to anyone coming into that auditorium that your attention was drawn to that white marble statue like a magnet. You never had a chance to appreciate the charm of the rest of the chapel you were in. Now whether that was a valid view or not—I'm prepared to accept that. What he wanted to have was this screen that would be in place to screen off the overwhelming visual nature of the statue. You would only see it later after you went around the screen. The screen would be in place except on certain occasions when you would want to remove it and then be able to see the statue.

Dr. Leyburn, ever attentive to such things, noted that in the scroll, *Non icautus future* [the Washington and Lee motto], that in the creation of that scroll, in the creation of the screen, they had separated to make *icautus* look like two different words. It's one word. He brought that to our attention. I was directed then to send the screen back to the manufacturers and have them correct the Latin, which they were able to do appropriately somehow. I don't know how they did it. I never really made the eye-to-eye comparison of the two. It came back. It was gone quite some time and so we made do without it. When it came back, I was called by buildings and grounds. They said, "We've got this screen over here that belongs in Lee Chapel. What are we supposed to do with it?" I said, "For heaven's sake, put it up because it's supposed to be there except on special occasions when we'll take it down. It's supposed to be there routinely."

What I had failed to take into account in all this was that the night we had the open house for the local townspeople to come to Lee Chapel and see this the day before the dedication of the chapel itself—the formal dedication of the redone chapel—we had them come and the screen was there. Apparently, some words got back to Fred Cole that made it sound like we'd made a big mistake in putting that orange screen up there. This was not conveyed to me at the time, but later on I did learn that certain people had tittered and it got back to him. When the screen comes back and is put in place, then all of a sudden, somehow he becomes aware of it. I don't know whether he went down and saw it himself or what, but I was called. My office was upstairs and he would always summon me to come down. He would say, "You got a minute?" This time he says, "You got a minute?" so I went down. Again, he didn't invite me to sit down this time. He said, "What's this about the screen?" I said, "Well, it's back. I'm happy to say the Latin has been

corrected and because it's supposed to be in place except on special occasions when we want to take it away, it's now back in place." He says, "You got it backwards." "Oh?" "It's only to be in place on special occasions." "Okay." So that screen is in place on special occasions when you've got someone performing musically there and they have some place from which to take a curtain call.

Warren: I've never seen this thing. I have no idea what you're talking about, Frank.

Parsons: Like I say, you're finding out things today that you didn't know about, but they belong here somewhere in all of this, I think.

Warren: Well, we started with Fred Cole and we're wrapping up—no, we started with Francis Pendleton Gaines but I think that's a good way to end our day.

Parsons: I'm prepared to end if you are. If you feel you've gotten enough from me to make it worthwhile to put my little gadgets in with the others, then I will [close].

Warren: Your little gadgets are just great. Thank you, Frank. Thank you very much.

Parsons: It's been a pleasure. Again, I have great confidence in you as an oral historian and I sing your praises every chance I get.

Warren: Thank you, sir.