

IKE SMITH

July 5, 1996

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**Mame Warren,
Interviewer**

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is the 5th of July 1996. I'm in Lexington, Virginia, with Ike Smith, class of 1957 and 1960 law. And I should say Ike Smith IV. Is that what we decided?

Smith: I guess. That's the legal name.

Warren: Well, that is how I would like to start this. When I first met you, you were talking at Alumni Weekend, and I was mightily impressed by your family history. I was mightily impressed by how much family history you have with this place.

Smith: Well, thank you. I guess I did want to emphasize the traditional side of my relationship with Lexington and the Valley of Virginia. My great-uncle lived at Maple Hall, a guy by the name of John Hart Lyle [phonetic]. I started out visiting him in about 1946 and spent six summers at Maple Hall, from I guess it was about my thirteenth birthday till my eighteenth birthday, and I got to know the Valley of Virginia. He was a Washington and Lee graduate, and he told me a lot about Lexington and Timber Ridge and the place where Sam Houston was born and where Liberty Hall moved from Augusta Academy to Timber Ridge and then later into Lexington. So I knew a little bit of that background.

I had two grandfathers. Both grandfathers and both great-grandfathers went to Washington and Lee. Isaac Noy Smith I went to Judge Brockenbrough's Law School, and then my grandfather, Isaac Noy Smith II, went to the business school here in 1890,

and then I went here, of course, in 1957. So that's on the Smith side, I being Isaac Noy Smith IV. And my father went to Princeton and my son went to Princeton. So there were five Isaac Noy Smiths. Three went to Washington and Lee and two went to Princeton, and we've always figured that Washington and Lee was the Princeton of the South. So that's the Smith side.

Then on the McCorkle side, my mother's side, Governor William Alexander McCorkle was given a full scholarship here in 1870 for to 1879, when he went over to Charleston to practice law and became prosecuting attorney and later governor. He was born between Buena Vista and Lexington at a place called Sunrise. He moved to Charleston in 1879, and in 1903 built the home that overlooks Charleston called Sunrise, which many people call the icon of Charleston. It looks over the confluence of the Elk and the Kanawha, and is now an art gallery and children's museum. A lot of his stones came from Rockbridge County, as well as the Tower of London, as well as Lafayette collection. He was quite a collector. The two lamps that are now in the president's home came out of Sunrise. They were Robert E. Lee lamps that he bought from Mrs. Lee in 1913 for \$12.50. The certified papers Jim Whitehead has, the certified papers on those Lee lamps, that I think originally came out of Mount Vernon. Then I gave another lamp that came out of Lee's library the picture substantiates there in the Lee Music Room. Those were lamps that came out of Sunrise, the governor's home, in Charleston, West Virginia, he collected and bought from the Lees in the early 1900s.

Warren: So did you feel sort of destined to come here?

Smith: Yeah. And then my grandfather, his son, came in from Brownsburg every day to law school. My grandfather's name was William Goshorn McCorkle.

Warren: How do you spell that?

Smith: G-O-S-H-O-R-N, Goshorn. And my mother was born at the foot of Acton [phonetic] Mountain in Brownsburg, Eliza Daggett McCorkle. So I had two McCorkles

go to Washington and Lee, grandfather and great-grandfather, on both sides, so I had a natural affinity for this institution way back.

Warren: When you used to come and visit your uncle at Maple Hall, would you come in to Washington and Lee?

Smith: Yeah, occasionally. Then, of course, we had a lot of cows out there. We'd milk the cows and went fishing in Goshen Pass and traveled around Cyrus McCormick's house and Timber Ridge and all that area out there, through Brownsburg. My brother also went to camp for five summers at Briar Hills Camp out at Brownsburg.

Warren: Can you remember the first time you walked on campus?

Smith: Yeah, I think I can. It was probably about 1952. No, 1950 probably. It was beautiful. Mother took me to Lee Chapel and downstairs to the museum. It was fascinating. It was just a very special place in my early teens, and I've never forgotten that. I felt a great affinity because of that to this whole area. It's so beautiful.

Warren: From what Frank was telling me, Frank Parsons, he said that when you were here there was a huge contingent of West Virginia people coming here.

Smith: Yeah, there was a great contingency. Of course, in those days our good friend, Dean Gilliam, if you got Dean Gilliam to like you, and he was his own recruiting office, as you know, and came by the high schools. And we had a trustee named Governor Holt, Governor "Rocky" Holt, who went here and his brother went here, and the Holt family from Lewisburg had a great connection with Washington and Lee. Governor Holt later became governor of West Virginia and then was general counsel for Union Carbide, and was offered the presidency of Union Carbide and decided he wasn't going to live in New York when he could have the quality of life he had in Rockbridge County in West Virginia. So he stayed in the law practice, and we went to interview him. Everybody sent their sons to see Governor Holt and/or Dean Gilliam or both, and that was the process. We probably had, oh, gosh, hundreds of kids that came over here between 1930 and 1960. And then we had some problems with some of them not

making the grade and flunking out on the double F rule. I guess if you got two Fs you were automatically eliminated, but you could go out and go in the service and come back if you busted out. We had a lot of kids that couldn't make it, and I think they strengthened up their admissions policy then and decided they'd rather not take them in the inception and have them flunk out than bring them in and bust them out, because the impact would have been much stronger on their career. So we became much more discriminatory. Not that that's a bad word, but much more selective in the admissions process, and it cut it back to maybe, oh, I think we have sixty kids over here now from West Virginia, clear through the law school, which isn't bad, and a lot of them on scholarships. Governor Holt started a scholarship. Benadim [phonetic] matched Governor Holt's scholarship for West Virginia students. So we have some very nice need quality scholarships in both the law school and the undergraduate school now for West Virginia kids.

At one time, Washington and Lee really ran the state of West Virginia. Come 1950, they had the majority of the governors, they had the majority of the circuit judges. Southern West Virginia particularly was Washington and Lee dominated. The Old Stone Church in Lewisburg when I was a kid and we had a farm in Lewisburg, my father's parents did. The Lyles were on my mother's side over here. But the whole front row was made up off deacons and members of the session, and I guess that front row of that old church in Lewisburg, which is the oldest, I guess, Presbyterian church west of the Alleghenies, or the first one, were made up of Washington and Lee graduates. Prestons and Frank Hardy, all these people went to Washington and Lee, and all of them kin a lot to this Presbyterian group that started this college, the Prestons and the Lewises and the Alexanders, and the same John Thomas Preston started VMI. So that whole group of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians moved into West Virginia.

So Washington and Lee was really the icon college of southern West Virginia from, my gosh, 1830, I guess, until 1950, when West Virginia started getting more

significant and more talented people in their law school, and they got a little bit jealous of Washington and Lee, so I think they started educating their people better and getting their governors from '50 on. From 1950 clear back to 1863, probably half the governors were Washington and Lee graduates, and most of the circuit judges, particularly in southern West Virginia.

Warren: That's an impressive record.

Smith: Very amazing tie-in between Washington and Lee and Charleston, particularly Henry Ruffner, who came over and started our church in 1819, started the Kanawha Presbyterian Church, the fifth president of Washington and Lee through the Lexington presbytery started the first church in Charleston in 1819, Henry Ruffner, the father of public education in Virginia.

Warren: Absolutely.

Smith: And he also started that one up at Malden, which is where the salt was. That was the first salt industry in this part of the country. Kanawha Salt was the name of it. So there is great tie all the way back with Washington and Lee and our Valley, as well as George Washington's grant, all the way to Point Pleasant. There was a tie-in there, too.

I'm kind of getting ahead of myself.

Warren: No, you're not. It's part of what attracted me to want to do an interview with you. I knew you reached way back. So let's get on to your student days. What memories just really stand out for you?

Smith: Well, the whole academic side, the Fitz Flournoy English classes.

Warren: What was your major?

Smith: Eventually, I minored in math and majored in political science, and then, of course, went on to law school after that. But the English experience with Fitz.

Warren: Tell me about him. Tell me about him as a teacher.

Smith: Fitz Flournoy was, of course, a great Shakespearean connoisseur and marvelous, intelligent, humorous man, with great storytelling ability and marvelous memory. He was fascinating.

I wrote some themes about fishing in Rockbridge County with [unclear], and he loved it. He absolutely loved it. And it was my first day. He said, "Write about things that you love and know about." He fascinated me with his storytelling ability, and I became very close to Mr. Flournoy.

And then, of course, the Spanish department. I'd had some Spanish already, and I was in another course with Little Barritt and Big Barrett that I did very well in.

Warren: What's Little Barritt and Big Barrett?

Smith: They taught Spanish. They were Spanish professors.

Warren: Were they related?

Smith: I think so. We called them Little Barritt and Big Barrett. Then I went, of course, and had some Starling courses in biology, which I liked, and very high on the math department, and recollect the president of the Polar Bear Club, and I'm trying to think of his name now, but a very fine math professor. He was terrific.

Warren: What's the Polar Bear Club?

Smith: That was a group of people that took a cold weather dip in Goshen Pass. I'm trying to think of his name right now. I'm sure his name's come up. He was the leading math professor. So I liked the math and I liked Fitz Flournoy and I liked the Spanish. And I remember Mr. Starling in biology, but then went on to law school and had a good freshman year. I made a nice 80 average at that time, and then I started having a little too much fun and I slipped. But I remember the quality of Tucker Hall all the way through.

Warren: Tell me what you mean by that.

Smith: Well, Bob Huntley was, of course, probably the smartest teacher I ever had. He was a natural teacher. I had him in '58, and I would say the most naturally intelligent

man I ever knew, Robert Huntley. Of course, there were McDowell and Light and Williams.

Skinny Williams, the dean of law school, was the brother of my great-uncle, and so that was another tie-in. Tiny Williams was my mother's uncle, and they married Lyles. Tiny Williams was the head of the church and religious department at Hampden-Sydney, and he married Annabelle Lyle, who was Boss Lyle's sister. Then William McCorkle, William Goshorn McCorkle, married Margaret Lyle. So I had a tie-in to the law school with Skinny Williams as dean, Twyman [phonetic], and that's one of the reasons I got a grant. Of course, I hope I had good enough grades to get it, but I got a little grant, a Mink Miller grant, back to the law school to go, and that paid my tuition for two and a half years. So that was a big tie-in there with Twyman, Skinny Williams, and Tiny Williams of the Rockbridge family.

Warren: Tell me more about Bob Huntley as a teacher.

Smith: Bob Huntley probably had as much natural teaching ability and depth of any man I guess I've ever known. He'd bring out the best in you and explain the law and the reasoning behind the law as well as any man I ever heard or listened to. He taught the bar exam preview course, the cram course for the bar exam. He taught damages, he taught conflicts of law, he taught security, not easy courses to teach, and he made them understandable, for not necessarily just the bright students, but the average student. So he could explain it in terms that made the average student comprehend the law, which is not easy to teach because of its numerous complexities. So he made it reasonable and he made it logical.

Warren: So I guess you probably weren't too surprised when he went on to become president.

Smith: I was not at all surprised. I thought it was a magnificent decision. He was the most interesting, outstanding man I have ever known. The true Renaissance man, Bob Huntley. Of course, the board was very close to him and would do anything he asked,

practically. He was a real man's man, he really was. I was very impressed with Bob Huntley, particularly in those formative years as a young man. I think Bob Huntley could have done anything he wanted to do. He would have made a great corporate executive, he would have made a great lawyer. He was a great teacher, obviously, and he was a great administrator.

So that was a fascinating time and helped kick this university off to the marvelous institution it is today. A true Athens of the Shenandoah Valley is right here. This is it. As Bob said and later John Wilson said, it's a very special place, and I guess those two guys, going back to Gaines even, made it happen. Great leadership here for the last fifty years, and maybe great leadership for the last 150 years, really, when you think about it. So it's a special place.

And VMI is special, too, and I hope they work their problems out. My mother used to lead the stag line at VMI. She'd always tell me about her card they'd sign. She was 180 pounds and 13 years old and would get broke in twenty times. "I just kept talking. I just kept talking." So she'd come over, and her sister, Babe McCorkle, they called her "Baby," they had a good time over here. I heard all about those days from Mother, both at Washington and Lee and VMI, and I think she really liked VMI better because they didn't drink as much.

Warren: How about your good times. What kind of fun times did you have here?

Smith: I had lots of fun.

Warren: Let's talk about fun.

Smith: I had lots of fun. I was in a few Sigma societies.

Warren: What does that mean?

Smith: That was a society here that took in about five or six guys, and we had a shack over the hill here where we branded people. It was kind of cold-blooded as far as that was concerned, but it was guys with great rapport that had fun getting together once or

twice a week and trading yarns and old stories and fables and jokes and talking about who they were going to date that weekend and so forth.

Warren: How did you become a member of Sigma Society?

Smith: I don't know. I don't know. I just know I was asked to come on a weekend tour and become a member of Sigma, and I thought it was a big deal and I was very flattered. So I did that. And then I also played football for a couple years and basketball for a couple years, and then ran for vice president of the student body. So I had a lot of fun, and I was very much interested in the extra curricular side, more than just fraternity side, I mean. I wasn't going to be a lounge lizard or I was determined not to be on the flick team and on the liquid lunch team.

Warren: What's the flick team?

Smith: That was the group that would go to the movies every other night. Or the over-the-hill team. That was a group that had to go to Hollins or Sweet Briar during the week. We called that the over-the-hill gang. I was determined I wasn't going to get locked into that.

Warren: And then the liquid lunch, what was that?

Smith: The liquid lunch, that was the beer-drinking team. The liquid lunch, the over-the-hill team, the lounge lizards. Those were the guys who went down and played poker in the lounge at night. So I was determined I was going to stay away from that group. That was fun, but I didn't think I needed that. But I had lots of fun. But I worked hard during the week and played hard during the weekend.

Warren: What was "playing hard on the weekend"?

Smith: Well, have a good-looking date and a fifth of whiskey and a nice band and lots of dancing and singing. That was fun.

Warren: So where did one find a good-looking date?

Smith: Well, either at Hollins or Sweet Briar or Southern Sem, or sometimes you'd have a local situation that would work out very nice. Then you'd bring her back to the

fraternity house, where you'd have a party on the weekends and music. We had a lot of entertainment in the Phi Delta house, like Kelly Young could play the piano.

Warren: Who's Kelly Young?

Smith: Kelly Young was from Fort Worth, Texas, and was a very good pianist. Then in those days we had the minstrel show. We'd participate in the minstrel show. He was an end man, I was an end man.

Warren: Now, wait a minute. What's a minstrel show?

Smith: That was before minstrel shows became, you know, a little bit racial. We had minstrel shows in '54, '55, '56, '57, until Dean Gilliam said, "Enough's enough," after the '54 Supreme Court decision. But we blackfaced and had an interlocutor and we'd sing and tap dance and put on about ten shows every spring.

Warren: Ten shows!

Smith: Yeah.

Warren: Where did you have the shows?

Smith: Right in the Troubadour Theater.

Warren: And you had enough audience to do ten performances?

Smith: Sure did. We maybe had three a weekend for three weeks.

Warren: How amazing.

Smith: We'd keep running them in there.

Warren: Were you in every one?

Smith: Yeah. I was in the last three, and that's when they ended. I was in my sophomore, junior, and senior year.

Warren: What did you do?

Smith: I was an end man.

Warren: What is that?

Smith: You had an interlocutor in the middle in a big high hat, and you had two end men on each side blackfaced, and they told jokes back and forth and danced and sang.

Then you had a chorus behind that. Then we'd get Southern Sem gals to come over and dance and tap dance. We put on a real show. We sang "Old Man River," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "If You Knew Susie," "If You Don't Like Peaches, Quit Shaking My Tree." We had a lot of good – and, of course, it got a little ornery. But that was fun. It was sure enough fun. So we did everything. It was a diversified atmosphere at Lexington. The most fun we ever had, probably, that I ever had.

Warren: So Dean Gilliam cut it off?

Smith: Well, I think, you know, some of the jokes got a little risqué, and I think the Supreme Court decision on integration was coming in at that time, and Mr. Mattingly and Dean Gilliam and I'm sure President Gaines had a certain amount of tolerance for it, but I'm sure that it just wasn't, with the decision of the Court to integrate the schools and to integrate the colleges and with us in blackface, it just became a little bit out of character with the current move in the country away from discriminatory practice. A minstrel show used to be a big thing all over the South, and we just kind of went out – we were probably the last minstrel show to disband. And I think some of the jokes got a little risqué and I think maybe there was a little libation backstage, too.

Warren: Oh, no. Not here.

Smith: Yeah, we had a little bit. We had a little snake bite medicine up there on the second floor.

And the jokes were, "Going to Tampa with her?"

"Yes, sir. It's my honeymoon, isn't it?" A little strong, you know. "Going to Florida?" that kind of thing. It just got a little bit rough.

Farris Hotchkiss was in it, too. Farris was right in there with it. But some of the jokes were a little bit risqué.

Warren: What part did Farris play?

Smith: Ferris, I think Farris was in the chorus. He might have been an end man. Roger Doyle was an end man. Kelly Young was an end man. Bill Reid was an end man, the infamous Gross Reed.

Warren: Who is Gross Reid?

Smith: He was a character in the Phi Kappa house. We had a lot of characters. He's now just retired from NationsBank. He was head of their correspondent banking department, did very well in the business world. Took five years to get out of Washington and Lee, but did very well in business and a very recognized banker in the state of Virginia.

So we had an interesting crew and an interesting year. And we just lost big-time football, so we had to get together and keep football on the campus, and that's one thing I guess we were able to do. I think there was some talk among the faculty, let's go intermural like Emory down in Atlanta. They were so disappointed with that twenty-four cribbing scandal episode in '54.

Warren: So you were here during that.

Smith: Yeah. I was a freshman, and played a little bit of freshman football, not much. I was playing freshman basketball and I played sophomore basketball and decided to stick with football. But we only had four or five guys that survived that, that had scholarships that survived it, and some of it that survived were so disappointed, they transferred to South Carolina or Vanderbilt. We lost about twenty-four athletes. They lost their commission, their degree, and some of them took the option and some of them had a trial. But the point being, I know five were from West Virginia and good friends of mine. It was traumatic to say the least, very traumatic.

So then we went back to small-time football, played out the schedule with Davidson, which was kind of rough. I think we won one football game, beat Sewanee, maybe tied West Virginia Tech, and that was about it. We just barely kept it on campus. But we were glad we did, and that was the one contribution that I think we made by

going out is we kept a competitive program alive, with the faculty looking the way they did at football and this cheating that went on for two or three years. They traced it back to '48, I think.

Warren: Oh, really?

Smith: Yeah. That's all very much QT, because it's honor code situation. I think the faculty was so disenchanted, and the administration was so disenchanted with these guys who couldn't graduate here without cheating, a lot of them said football is a deterrent to education and standards that we want. They almost voted to go to the intermural system on football, but fortunately we were able to keep it going.

Warren: So what was the mood on campus while that was going on?

Smith: Toward big-time football?

Warren: No, about the cheating scandal. Everybody wasn't involved, but it must have had a feeling that went throughout the campus.

Smith: Oh, it was very – I mean, you could see the EC staying up, lights on 'til two and three o'clock at night. That whole month of April and May 1954 was traumatic.

Everybody was very nervous because they were concerned about, if you knew about it, were you going to get kicked out? If you utilized it, were you going to get kicked out? If you just knew about it and didn't turn it in, you were just as guilty. So there were a lot of nervous guys and people on this campus. I, of course, didn't know about it, but once you saw them meeting, you got rumors back that they were meeting about the football team, and a lot of those guys were my friends. It was a serious time. Twenty-four people. That's a lot of people.

I'd say they got everybody involved in it or anybody that used that system at all. And they were in cahoots with the guard, a night watchman, and a janitor. They paid these people to get the exams to them, and then they'd walk in the library at ten o'clock and say, "What's on the exam tomorrow?"

I knew this guy. "See that guy. He's brilliant. He'll get an A or a B on this exam tomorrow, and he's in here at ten o'clock. Did he just walk in?" The next day he was smart enough to get a B. Didn't get an A and make it too obvious. But it was traumatic.

Of course, we were playing VPI and Maryland and Tennessee and West Virginia, and the alumni were very upset because they had the old Generals Club going and they were making contributions. It was a major decision and probably one of the best decisions the university ever made to go from big time into Division III football, one of the great decisions that they made, because it gave the academic side a chance to really show itself. That was a brilliant decision, and an emotional one, too, but very right for the school, no doubt about it. Our quality has been going up ever since.

Warren: Well, you've watched a lot of change, haven't you, in this place?

Smith: Yeah. I went through the basketball, [unclear] basketball didn't have a scandal, but I saw the last five scholarship guys graduate in my class in '57-58. Lee Marshall and another gentleman that made All American were the last two really great Division I players, and I saw that. They played against my brother, which was kind of interesting, who went to VPI, Chris Smith. So I saw that.

Those were great years, great years, those six and a half years I spent here, probably the happiest years of my life. That's why it was traumatic. Every change is a little traumatic. I've seen the girls come, I've seen big-time football, and I've seen a lot happen to VMI, as well.

Warren: What years were you on the board?

Smith: I was on the board from '79 to '91, twelve years. I was two six-year terms. Now it's two five-year terms.

Warren: So you were not on the board during the period, say, when integration happened.

Smith: Oh, yes, I was. I was here in '84.

Warren: Not women. I'm talking about when blacks started –

Smith: Oh, no. Well, actually, I think they'd already been coming. They'd been coming since – well, actually, I don't think there were any blacks here much when I was here, but I think they started coming in the sixties. I don't think we ever had more than – when did we really start getting some black kids here? Seventies?

Warren: '68, '69.

Smith: '68, '69, right, Mame.

Warren: Very first ones.

Smith: So I was not here. That's right, I was not here. I was here '53 through '60.

Warren: Were you aware of any feeling among the alumni when that started happening?

Smith: No, I didn't sense any feeling there at all. I think they felt that was the right way to go, and I didn't sense that. I didn't sense any anti-black feeling at all, if they could do the work. As long as we didn't have to adjust the academic tenacity to allow them to graduate, as long as they took the same course as everybody else. I've never sensed any feeling at all.

Warren: So you were on the board from '79 –

Smith: To '91, right.

Warren: So you were there for the other big decision.

Smith: Right.

Warren: You were there through the whole of it, then.

Smith: Yeah, '79 through '91.

Warren: So take me through the coeducation experience as you experienced it.

Smith: Well, of course, the law school had already experienced coeducation. I think the law school voted in '75 or '74 to go coed, and that was a separate decision, I guess, made by the law school.

When I went on the board, I had no idea that the coeducation was going to come up that quickly. I knew they voted on it in '76 and voted it down. And I really didn't

have any idea that Huntley was going to retire, because I was such a big fan of his. So even though I came on the last of '79, my first meeting was January of '80 in Tampa, so I really didn't get tuned in until I heard Bob say about '82 or '83 that he was going to retire. Then, of course, we had a selection committee and 200 applications for his replacement.

Then very soon after his replacement, John Wilson, came in, the coeducation issue came back up, and I think was very well organized and very well documented. The demographics and all of that was very well done. I was a traditionalist, and I thought Washington and Lee could maintain its quality if the admissions department worked a little harder, you know. I didn't understand all this demographic talk, and I really wasn't in on the background. I think we had one big meeting one year, and then the next year we voted. So I was the old, if-it-isn't-broke, don't-fix-it concept. But, you know, we had 1,500 applications and 400 places. I'd say, "Bill Hartog, you guys just have to work a little harder. There are a lot of big kids over in these hollows you haven't seen and fill those scholarships." But I think I kind of missed the demographic side of it and what they were really trying to do to get that academic quality up.

But at the same time, I felt like 200 years, 225 years, it was worth trying to save a single-sex experience if it was a unique situation. I didn't want to be an extension of the University of Virginia. I thought the uniqueness of an all-male school, like the Sweet Briar, Hollins, Randolph-Macon were single sex, Mary Baldwin. I thought we ought to stay single sex, just because we shouldn't have to conform with Davidson and everybody else, and that was more or less my argument. I mean, here's a school that educated leaders for two hundred years, public servants. They'd gone back to their homes and contributed significantly. Even the gentlemen C-average guys had done well. I just thought with that kind of tradition that it wasn't necessary. I thought we had to pick up our recruiting and the alumni might have to recruit harder.

We had Hollins, Sweet Briar, Randolph-Macon, Mary Baldwin around us educating women, and we'd probably hurt their situation a little bit by the added competition. My mother-in-law was a Hollins graduate, my wife was a Hollins graduate, my grandmother went to Mary Baldwin, and they were all saying, "You don't need women down at Lexington. Just go up there, drive up there and get a good gal from Staunton or Sweet Briar or Roanoke." My mother was very much, very much against it. My mother-in-law was very much against it. A lot of feeling, a lot of it history, a lot of it tradition. Said the girls were being taken very nicely at those schools and the quality of life so great. Let them go to UVA or let them go to the public institutions. You don't need them at Lexington.

I had a lot of mountaineer spirit against change in my background and in my environment, a lot of mountaineer experience just saying, "Boy, that great school. You don't need to touch it." So that was it. And, of course, it went over into VMI. They were against Washington and Lee going, too, my friends at VMI were. My uncle was president of the Board of Visitors over there. A guy named Henry St. George Tucker Carmichael was another uncle, and in 1966 he was chairman of the Board of Visitors at VMI, so I had that part of it.

Warren: This is great. I'm really delighted to be getting this point of view. So what was happening as the vote was coming closer? Were there different camps, and did you talk among yourselves?

Smith: Yeah, we met and discussed and had spokesmen, and it was spontaneous. Some of it research, very careful research about the demographics, the baby boomers and the decrease in good students and we had to compete for those students and it was going to be much harder to get the quality we wanted if we didn't go coed.

That group had really done some homework, and John Wilson had gotten certain members of the board who had been on the board for a long time, who voted in '76 for it and were defeated, they got their ducks in a row, they did their homework, and they

were well prepared. I'm not saying it was set up. I'm just saying that a certain group of very fine men who felt this was unnecessary anymore and was obsolete and not modern thinking did their homework on the demographics, and the schools that had changed, like Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Davidson, other private schools that we competed with and what progress they'd made, and they were older schools than we were and that we needed to do this to compete in the twentieth century. They did a very good job on the homework.

Most of the people that voted against it were either sentimentally against it, traditionally against it, or third- or fourth-generation lovers of this institution, and most of them were in that camp just said, "No, we can do it without change." And the alumni, of course, were two-thirds against it by vote.

The gentlemen that got it through, the seventeen that voted yes, did their homework, no doubt about it.

Warren: Take me into the room the day of the meeting. What was —

Smith: The temperature?

Warren: Yeah. What was it like to be there?

Smith: Well, everybody was very civil. I think Robert E. Lee taught us to be a gentleman. Nobody started pounding on the table. Everybody had an opportunity to speak. Everybody gave their view very deliberately and coherently. Everybody had a chance to talk anywhere from three to five minutes. And then we adjourned and then came back and voted at a later meeting. So we had plenty of time to think about it and deliberate.

But I would say that at that '84 vote, there was more information on the study of coeducation delivered than I've ever seen before. So the gentlemen that were heading up certain committees to research it had really done their homework. Very professionally done. A lot of the other seven were just emotionally traditionally against

it, but they felt that we were a unique institution in the Shenandoah Valley, and why change?

Warren: I'm going to flip the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Smith: I mean, there was no doubt about that. So that's why it was so civil, because everybody that was in that group of twenty-four people, all loved the school, probably equally as much.

Warren: After you went around with the vote, how did your heart feel when you knew?

Smith: Well, you felt maybe a little bit depressed, but it's just sort of like General Lee said, "If you fight the good fight and you get beat, you get up the next morning and go on." Everybody was interested, I think, in getting back together again and going on for the good of the school. We had some lawyers and some very good professional people that joined up and said, "Let's make it happen the best way we can and make it go for the good of the institution." I think the unity of spirit, because of the love for this school, made it much easier than it otherwise would have been. I don't think there was much bitterness at all, or resentment.

Warren: Now, from what I understand, you had quite a bit of media waiting for you when you walked out the door.

Smith: Oh, yeah.

Warren: What was that like?

Smith: We elected a spokesman for our group, and our spokesman was Chris Compton. He was a judge and a very articulate guy, so we elected Chris to represent our group. So I didn't participate in all that.

Warren: Were you there? Did you watch it?

Smith: I don't think I did. I don't think I went to that media part.

Warren: Did your group retire and go and—

Smith: Pout? No, no. We just might have gone somewhere and had a stiff bourbon and water.

Warren: Well, I would expect you probably did.

Smith: Yeah. But I think everybody ate together that night, that evening. I don't think anybody got in their car and drove home early. I think we finished up with a dinner and handshakes.

Warren: Was there a real sense that history had been made that day?

Smith: Oh, no doubt about that. It was a tremendous impact on everybody there. Two hundred and thirty-five years of all male had been changed, and what would happen the next twenty years? Would we keep the same people coming here? Would our sons be able to get in? Would our football go even further down? What would happen to the community? I think all our fears were there, but I think they've proven to the contrary. The quality of life in Lexington has improved immensely. Whether they're going to have the same giving patterns, I don't know about that. That's going to take a while, probably.

Warren: Tell me what your sense is now and over those ten years. How has your opinion evolved over the last ten years?

Smith: The ladies, the women of Washington and Lee have been very, very well selected and picked, and the quality there is probably even greater than we anticipated, I would say, the graduates. Now, whether they're going to go back and run the United Ways and the Community Chest and the funds for the arts, and whether they're going to go back and just make money or whether they're going to get back into the public sector and private sector with service, time will tell. It's too early for that.

I think that was part of the W&L experience was that you not only got a good education, but you felt a commitment to serve when you left this institution, to go back and make life a little better for your children and your grandchildren than it was for

you, and you did that through public service, not just making a living, but making your community a better place in which to live. You learned that over here, that public –

Warren: How did you learn that?

Smith: I think General Lee's influence, yeah, service, service before self. That was the Rotarian motto, too, of course, but you learned over here, that public service was part of your commitment when you graduated.

Yeah, I think the quality of the admissions here and the admissions department, the quality that they've maintained over the last twelve years, has made the coed experience much easier for everybody, and the quality of the graduates and the female graduates. The men, I think, are adjusting to it more and more all the time. I had a son here during that period.

Warren: Did you?

Smith: Yeah. I had a son graduate in '93. He came here in '89. He said, "All I can say, Dad, they sure are smart." But I think it's worked out fine. I think it's worked out fine. I was watching it pretty closely, too.

Warren: I bet you were.

Smith: Very closely, and I can't say anything negative about that experience, and that Washington and Lee is a better institution today than it was twenty years ago. There's no doubt about that. The faculty, and students both. The quality of life here and the quality of the faculty and the student body has been tremendous and has increased substantially.

I'm not going to give in yet, or the jury might still be out on the eleemosynary side, the philanthropic side, but that's natural. It's only ten years. But when you see an endowment of \$300 million, and when I was here the endowment was \$20 million, that's progress, tremendous progress. It beats the heck out of inflation, too. All of that's part of that experience. If there was that much bad feeling, we wouldn't have a \$300 million endowment. We would not.

So I can't say anything about it that's negative, except just keep it going, keep that spirit going, and remember that service is part of the education at Washington and Lee, as well as academic prowess.

Warren: Well, Ike, you haven't disappointed me. I knew you would be a good spokesman for your point of view, your contingent. When I met you that today, I said, "I want that man on tape."

Smith: Well, I'm not as articulate as I should be.

Warren: Oh, yes, you are.

Smith: But I've enjoyed it very much. Thank you.

Warren: Was there anything more you'd like to say?

Smith: No, that's all I've got. Just keep it going, keep that great institution going the way it's going now, and keep it as the Athens of the Shenandoah Valley.

Warren: At least.

Smith: At least, and we can't go wrong.

Warren: Thank you.

Smith: Thank you.

[End of Interview]