

JACKIE WOOD

July 11, 1996

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**Mame Warren,
Interviewer**

Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is the eleventh of July, 1996. I'm here at Lexington, Virginia, with Jackie Wood, who is here attending the Alumni College. Your connection is not really so much with Washington and Lee as with our nearby college of Sweet Briar. You were just starting to tell me about how extensive your family connection is with this regard. Can you say what you just said again?

Wood: When I entered Sweet Briar, I was the first girl to ever go to Sweet Briar whose mother had attended, and I stayed four years and graduated. Then I was fortunate enough to have two daughters who graduated and a granddaughter who went two years, but we had a little too much family at that time since I was employed by Sweet Briar at that time. She transferred to William and Mary, and I was with Sweet Briar.

I have been a very active alumna because I love the college and its surroundings, and so then I went back out there to live and to work for twenty-one years. I went back out in 1955 and stayed for twenty-one years. I guess I started as the director of the alumnae. Then they made a department of the college that included the alumnae office, the Office of Development of Fund Raising and Public Relations. I guess maybe by that time they didn't know what to do with me, so I became vice president for that department. But there were such good people, such wonderful people in those offices, sometimes I wonder what I did.

Warren: You're very gracious, I'm sure.

Wood: No, but that's true. I lived there on the campus for twenty-one years. So, all told, twenty-five years of my life have been spent on that campus, which comprises 3,500 acres, so there's plenty of room.

Warren: Is it that big?

Wood: Just about. I guess some has been sold. The Virginia Foundation for the Arts, which is on the land of a twin plantation of Sweet Briar, was owned and still owned. I guess they're close to 3,500. You've never been there?

Warren: You know, I went over once years ago. I need to go back. In fact, as part of my research I'm planning to go around to all the different women's colleges and see what everybody's been telling me about.

So let's go back to your student days. Let's kind of work through chronologically. Where did you come from originally?

Wood: From Florence, Alabama, which is in the northern part of Alabama in the Tennessee Valley.

Warren: What attracted you to Sweet Briar?

Wood: Well, in those days, you didn't choose, really, where you wanted to go. I mean, your mother told you. At least, my mother told me where I was going. She had gone to Sweet Briar and loved it. I always knew that I wanted to go away to college and was fortunate enough. Those were the Depression days. The Depression at Sweet Briar in 1930. At that time, there weren't so many girls that could go from that part. It never occurred to me not to go to college and not to go to what I thought was a first-rate college. I liked to study. You know, it was just accepted. My closest, my one close friend was at Hollins, that I grew up with, and one was at Randolph-Macon.

Warren: Oh, that's great.

Wood: And I had thought I'd like to go to one of those, but Mother said no. [Laughter] Needless to say, I'm glad I did.

Warren: So when you arrived, surely it didn't take very long before you heard about this men's college on the other side of the mountain.

Wood: Oh, I knew about Washington and Lee before I came because, you see, there were lots of Alabama boys, young men, at Washington and Lee. I had known a lot of them then. I knew about VMI. I think, of course, that was part of it. But at that time, I don't think it was our main object, but it didn't take long.

Warren: Can you remember the first time you came over and saw Washington and Lee?

Wood: Yes, I came over to a dance at VMI my freshman year. The VMI boys had to be in at certain time. The women from various colleges, most of us stayed at the Robert E. Lee Hotel. Now, when my mother came over here to dances, she stayed in either the faculty homes or places like that, but we all stayed at the Robert E. Lee Hotel.

The boys, the VMI cadets, had to be in at a certain time. So we usually had what was called a late date with a Washington and Lee boy. So it was kind of a combination when you came sometimes. But, there soon, I have to think, I believe after my sophomore year I never did come back to VMI. That was a little too convoluted, I mean, to do both. [Laughter]

Actually, we always had to be chaperoned. A chaperone came from the college with us, and when we went out, we signed out with the chaperone and then were signed back in at the time we were supposed to be in. But then we left again. [Laughter]

Warren: How did you manage that?

Wood: Well, once, I remember once when we came over and visited in the spring, and the person who was the chaperone was the wife of – she was from France. She was the wife of the junior year in France, head of the junior year in French program at Sweet Briar. The French Department didn't have that program at that time. She couldn't speak English very well. So she really never knew what we were doing, but we behaved pretty well, as well as I remember.

Warren: So for people younger, explain the concept of late dating. Someone my age or younger doesn't really know what that means. I know what that means because I have done the interviews, but most people don't.

Wood: Well, it was just too early to go in, and we would go to a fraternity house. The fraternity houses, of course, and now they do again, you know, have housemothers. There would be dancing, and there would be a certain amount of drinking, even then. I don't remember, I honestly don't remember the girls drinking. A great many smoked, not knowing at that time what it did to one, I guess. I guess if somebody was in love with somebody, then I don't what they did. [Laughter] I wasn't privy to it. Anyway, it seems now such good, clean, wholesome fun. Maybe it wasn't. I don't know.

We often moved in groups. Goodness, you're asking me –

Warren: You're doing great.

Wood: I did not meet my husband, who was a Washington and Lee graduate, because he was out of college at the time. He had graduated. But I heard a lot about him, because he had been captain of the football team, and he had led Fancy Dress. He was a member of ODK and others, and I had heard a lot about him. I met him later, and I later married him, the year I was out of college – no, one year. And we kept up. I always came back to the games.

Warren: Describe a fraternity party in your day.

Wood: I guess it was very much the same as it is now. There would be talking, dancing, singing. I'm not being any help, because I don't really think that part of young people maybe have changed as much. I know one thing. Of course, in those days, we had to come over as a group. But I know I've been so astounded in the last few years, and this is showing my – when girls from the colleges, now that they all have cars, come without dates. It would never any more have occurred to come to one of the men's colleges if you weren't invited and if you didn't have a date. Often you came with friends. You didn't have to be really planning to marry somebody or going with one.

One big difference that I remember more, not just fraternity parties, but at the formal dances like Fancy Dress and finals and things like that, there was always lots of extra men, and you didn't just dance with one person. If you didn't get what was called a rush, you know, then you felt very left out. To see these young people go to a party, I saw this with my own girls, going with one and dancing the whole time with him. Suppose he wasn't a good dancer? Suppose you didn't really like him?

One of the funniest things I remember, and I hadn't thought about it in a long time, was a young man from Lynchburg called Peyton Winfrey, speak of the dead, but he was a good friend, actually, of the person I married. Peyton and I were very good friends, but Peyton often had lots of girls, in other words, what you would call somebody, I guess. Once when he finally graduated from Washington and Lee – it took him more than four years – he could not ask at the final dance, you always wore a white dress and carried red roses, and Peyton didn't know which one of these girls to choose from. So I had to be his date. I had to be "in the figure," it was called. I haven't thought that term. Yes, you were "in the figure," you know, the seniors with their dates or girls with the red roses. I remember being in the figure with Peyton because he couldn't choose between his girls. Actually, he was a close friend and eventually godfather of my first daughter, because we were friends for a long time. But there were things like that. Maybe it wasn't more wholesome. I don't know. I think the young people today are great, too. But I don't think they have as much fun as we did.

Warren: I think it would be a lot of fun to be rushed while I was dancing. [Laughter] I'm afraid I grew up going with one person and staying with one person. And you're right, they weren't always good dancers. [Laughter]

Wood: One thing, being lucky in one way, not being tall, you always could count on the small boys, the shorter boys, dancing with you when sometimes they didn't choose the better-looking tall, slender girls.

Warren: You mentioned the figure. I didn't know they did that at the finals dance, too.

Wood: As well as Fancy Dress.

Warren: I've heard about it at Fancy Dress, but no one's ever described it to me. Can you describe it?

Wood: You know, I don't remember. It was probably just parading in your white dress. It's a little like a debutante thing now – white dress and parade. And they played *College Friendships*. Has anybody mentioned that song to you?

Warren: Tell me about it.

Wood: Well, it was a song like "College friendships soon must sever," something about parting and I can't remember the words, and since I can't sing, perhaps if I could sing. But something about the parting day, friendships. I don't know. Some of these alumni could tell you. It always, I'm sure, ended with everyone singing the *Washington and Lee Swing*.

Warren: Was that a popular song?

Wood: Oh, yes.

Warren: Did you dance to the swing?

Wood: Oh, I'm sure we must have. Get somebody to sing it for you.

Warren: Okay. Now the Fancy Dress. Did you come to a Fancy Dress?

Wood: Yes.

Warren: Tell me what that was like.

Wood: I cannot remember the themes, because my last two years I was in love. Oh, one year when we were coming, Sweet Briar was quarantined because there was diphtheria, so we didn't come that year. You could look up in the annuals. They always have a theme for Fancy Dress. Somebody surely told you this. A theme for Fancy Dress. And depending on what your date was, your costume was very much in accordance with him. Look in some of the old annuals, and you'll see a lot of it.

Warren: What was it like to participate in it? It must have been a big deal to get these costumes.

Wood: Oh, it was a big deal. It was fun. I don't mean to be inarticulate. It was exciting. You always wondered, of course, if you would be popular, I guess. Get somebody who's only been out of college twenty-five or thirty years to tell you. [Laughter]

Warren: But, you know, they don't do the costumes anymore.

Wood: No. It would be a medieval theme with maybe Richard the Lionhearted. I'm making that up, because I honestly don't remember, but it was always a theme of a country or an event. Those annuals would tell you. They still have Fancy Dress. Everybody went. That was a big difference then. You went and you stayed 'til it was over. It wasn't coming and going and sitting around.

Warren: Was going out to dinner a part of it? Was having a meal part of Fancy Dress, or was it just the dance itself?

Wood: Oh, no. There would always be a whole group that would go out to dinner together. We did have automobiles. [Laughter]

Warren: What were the restaurants then? Where would you go out to dinner?

Wood: I can't remember the names of any. I saw one that's still in existence as we drove over here the other day coming through Natural Bridge. We often went over to Natural Bridge because that hotel was there. There were several places that would now be called bed and breakfasts, places out in the surrounding country where we went for meals. Nice restaurants. I should have done some research, perhaps.

Warren: Oh, no, that's my job.

Wood: If I had thought about that.

Warren: I just want what you can remember. So your husband went to Washington and Lee, but you didn't date him while he was here.

Wood: No, because he was five years older than I, so he had been out, but he still came back at times. A lot of them who hadn't been out long kept up their affiliation.

Warren: And he was on the football team?

Wood: No, he was captain of the basketball team when he was here. There's a picture

of him in the annual, because he and a Sweet Briar gal, as a matter of fact, with whom he was in love with at that time, he was the assistant leader of Fancy Dress. You know, they always had somebody who led all of the figures, in charge, and Ernest was the assistant. I was going through some things throwing out not long ago and found some annuals. I'm sorry I did that before I knew, but the annuals are here in the library, of course. They would give you a good picture of the social life.

Warren: Yes, but it so much more fun to hear about something, to hear it rather than just reading it. Those are just pictures, and they don't flesh it out like you can. Did you used to come to sporting events?

Wood: Oh, yes. Oh, of course. Well, Alabama was a great football power at that time. University of Alabama always has been. I don't know whether you're a sports fan or not.

Warren: I know about Bear Bryant.

Wood: Well, Bear Bryant wasn't there. Actually, Alabama – well, they used to have the Rose Bowl. The best team in the West, the best team in the East. It wasn't divided as it is now into conferences. Alabama went to the Rose Bowl a couple of times. I was very much interested in sports, had been brought up interested in football.

I remember the first football game I ever saw in Virginia. It was between Hamden-Sydney and Washington and Lee. It was in a stadium near Lynchburg. It was not on either college campus. I was so pleased. I was a freshman. I was so pleased to have a date with a Washington and Lee boy. I don't remember his name. I watched the game, and after about a quarter, I said, "Are you sure this is college football?"

[Laughter]

He turned to me and said, "Of, course it is. It's Washington and Lee and Hamden-Sydney. Why do you ask?"

And having little sense at age sixteen, I said, "Well, down in Alabama, where I come from, the high schools play better ball than this." Needless to say, he never asked

me for another date. [Laughter]

After that, I learned to be just as dumb, but I couldn't help laughing once at a game over here when a girl turned to her date and said, "I'm not ignorant about football as most girls are, because I really do understand it. But the only thing I don't understand is what do they mean when they first say 'first down' and they keep saying 'first down.'" Well, everything's built on that, and I thought, "Well, I'm not even going to pretend to be that dumb. I just won't say anything." [Laughter]

Warren: That's great.

Wood: We came to a lot of basketball games and a lot of the football games that were played around. Of course, Washington and Lee played the University of Virginia at that time and the University of North Carolina. That was the days before football was, when it was really a sport – that's not the right word – when it was really amateur and not on the – I remember the last time Washington and Lee beat Virginia. That was a big celebration. That was about twenty, twenty-five years ago. But sports were different then.

Warren: So what would have happened when Washington and Lee beat UVA?

Wood: I guess they would have celebrated by right much drinking. [Laughter]

Warren: Did you go to that game?

Wood: Oh, yes. We all came over from Lynchburg. A group of alumni from all the colleges, even now, give great support for University of Virginia football team, not so much for Washington and Lee to have sports among their alumni in the sports field. I don't think there is as it was when the colleges and the universities were much more on the same level athletically. But you'd have to talk to some of the men about that. They would know.

Warren: Yes, but it's fun to hear a woman's point of view about these things.

Wood: But I don't think most women enjoy sports as much as I did, I mean.

Warren: Was the concept of tailgating popular then?

Wood: No.

Warren: It's a new thing?

Wood: Yes. Now, you're talking about when I was in college?

Warren: Yes.

Wood: No.

Warren: Did people have cars then?

Wood: Oh, sure, sure. With rumble seats and running boards.

Warren: Are you going to tell me some rumble-seat stories?

Wood: Yes, I can tell you a rumble seat. You're making me think of things I haven't – on Sundays, when Washington and Lee boys would come over to Sweet Briar, and I don't know what happened at Randolph-Macon, but Mr. Beard [phonetic], who was the night watchman at Sweet Briar and the only officer – there was no such thing as the security guards they have everywhere now. I mean, it's a whole other world. But your dates had to be signed up at the gate. Mr. Beard was down at the gate, and your dates had to be signed up to come in. I mean, he would check because they didn't want boys just roaming the campus. They were perfectly welcome if they had a date.

A group of boys from Washington and Lee from Montgomery, Alabama, at that time, they often came over. That particular Sunday, one decided to come without a date. So just before they got to the Sweet Briar gate, they shut Ed Riggs up – I even remember his name – in the rumble seat, you see, just temporarily, so when they checked up their names, they could ride, come right on in. And they forgot Ed. I remember, I looked around and said, "Ed Riggs didn't come over this weekend?"

They said, "Oh, my gosh!" They got him out in time. He didn't suffocate. [Laughter] But he almost did. I guess it isn't funny, but we thought it was hilarious at that time.

Warren: Did he think it was hilarious?

Wood: [Laughter] I don't imagine he thought it was quite so funny. And sometimes

the boys, I remember this, Mr. Beard would stop, he would have the list and the boy would look and say, "Oh, yes. There I am," whether it was his name or not. "I'm going to see Mary Jones." And check it off. It seems so ridiculous now, but it was, I guess, fun.

Warren: I think Washington and Lee boys were clever. If nothing else, they were very clever.

Wood: Girls then did not go just to – you didn't go with just one person. You went to the University of North Carolina and to Virginia and to Washington and Lee to dances, parties a certain number of weekends you were allowed for college until you were a junior or senior. All the women's colleges around here, you had a certain amount of overnight time that you could be off campus.

Warren: So it was limited?

Wood: It was limited, the times that you could be away, but you could usually manage.

Warren: Do you have any memories of Washington and Lee boys truly sneaking on to the campus?

Wood: At Sweet Briar?

Warren: Yes.

Wood: Oh, sure. And it was only on Sunday that they had to be signed up. I don't know why that really was. I don't think that girls would have, I mean – I'm going to have to think a minute. I think until, goodness, maybe your junior year, you couldn't have dates during the week. So I'm sure people did. I know this for a fact, Randolph-Macon was much stricter than Sweet Briar. Their rules were much stricter than Sweet Briar. You see, they were under the Methodists. They were affiliated with the Methodist Church for a while. Maybe that accounted for it.

But until your senior year, you were not allowed to ride in a car back and forth to Lexington without a chaperone. You couldn't ride into Lynchburg without a chaperone with a boy until you were a senior. And, of course, that was absolutely ridiculous. I

mean, here we were going to – so I thought it was perfectly ridiculous. And so my junior year, I just did what they called take senior privileges. I obeyed the rules that I thought was sensible, like, well, I didn't drink and not smoking in your room. You knew you were asked to sign a pledge. If you didn't, you'd be campused. You used to be campused if you broke rules. You've never heard of that?

Warren: No. What does that mean?

Wood: You would have to be confined to the campus for a certain period of time. You couldn't go into town. You couldn't go off the campus. You were restricted if you broke certain rules. One of the girls would insist on doing it. They'd be smoking in their rooms and then word would get out. There wasn't designated smoking areas at that time. There was no designated drinking areas. Do you remember when the women colleges had May courts?

Warren: Tell me.

Wood: Well, it was a May Day celebration, and the prettiest girl on campus would be the May Queen, and there would be a celebration like an English thing. There would be parties and dances connected with the weekend on your campus. I remember once the girl that could not run, you know, be elected May Queen, which would have been her ambition to be at that time, because she had had a late date over at the University of Virginia. It's very interesting that girl that I was chatting with the other day, talking to her the other day, she has just given a million dollars to spend, what she built for them year before last. Miriam's House for Mothers who are working, working mothers or mothers that need housing at Sweet Briar, its called Miriam House. Now she's given two million, I think, to build up the same kind of facilities for children. I was laughing at her the other day about her experience at Sweet Briar when she was confined and not allowed to run to be May Queen because that was her punishment. Doesn't that seem funny? I know I'm not telling you what – because this is really not connected with Washington and Lee.

Warren: Oh, you're doing great.

Wood: My connection with Washington and Lee has been more as an adult, in a way.

Warren: Well, let's shift over to that. I really wanted your perspective as a student, but let's shift over to that.

Wood: It's just been because I always liked Washington and Lee. And then when I was with Sweet Briar and worked with the Alumni Association, there is an organization called the American Alumni Council and College Public Relations Association. So at meetings twice a year, one in a district and one national one where people from the colleges and universities get together to discuss problems, opportunities, better ways to do everything, and that has been so helpful to all of the colleges and universities. I used to come over, I mean, got to know a lot of the professional people at Washington and Lee at that time that came to those meetings.

Then Washington and Lee started these summer programs, which we are attending now, the first one thirteen or fourteen years ago, I came to the one, the Elizabethan program. Then we took a trip. It was the first trip that Washington and Lee did. That was to England in the summer of '85, maybe. What's this? '96. Maybe '84. So I've been coming over every year to the summer program and then taking a trip. It's been a wonderful way to see and travel.

Warren: You probably see a lot of familiar people.

Wood: Oh, yes. I don't know how many are here this week. About eighty, I think. I looked over, and I knew forty-seven of them before. I mean, I had been with forty-seven. Of course, this is the twenty-sixth, you see they put the number on it.

Warren: You have one of the highest numbers of anybody.

Wood: Yeah. Actually, at Sweet Briar, we started the trips before Washington and Lee, but we did not have this summer program before that prepares you. Sweet Briar still has good trips. I went on a lot of those, but then I had to start paying my own way, I preferred the Washington and Lee trips. But as long as I was at Sweet Briar and started

those trips there, it's very different if it cost you \$5,000 to go somewhere or if you go free.

Warren: You want to have the best time you can. I understand you were with the alumni. So were you at all involved once you became the administrator, say, in discipline or anything like that? I was asking a young person today, I was telling him I was going to be talking to you. I said, "What should I ask her?" And he said, "Ask her what the best excuse was she ever heard from a Washington and Lee student for something he was doing wrong." You know, like if he was caught somewhere sometime he shouldn't have been.

Wood: Oh, but he would have to tell the truth. You know, a Washington and Lee guy wouldn't lie. [Laughter] I don't know what it would be in that case. I don't know.

Warren: Tell me what you mean by that. What's your impression of the Honor System?

Wood: I have always thought it probably worked very, very well, and I thought it did at Sweet Briar. Just as I said before, I thought girls – and I smoked at that time, I think, part of the time, and I thought they were so foolish to smoke in their rooms instead of the designated areas because there was always going to be somebody report it, then people would be asked to sign whether they had done it or not. And you certainly didn't want to lie.

I guess the only thing I can think of, when I came back my senior year, Mr. Beard, the watchman, said, "Well, it's nice to see you back, Miss Bond." Because we were always called Miss, even by our professors in class, of course. "Are you back to visit?"

I said, "Mr. Beard, I'm back for my senior year."

He said, "Your senior year? I thought you –" He said, "Well, you sure did take senior privileges all last year, didn't you?" [Laughter]

If I had been asked, you know, I'm sure I would have been campused. I wouldn't have been expelled for that, but I would have been campused for that. I thought it was

silly, those rules, and most girls did.

I don't know what a Washington and Lee guy would have done. I'm sure somebody has told you one of my impressions I remember, one big change.

Washington and Lee gentlemen always wore coats and ties. Has anybody told you that?

Warren: No, tell me about it.

Wood: Well, instead of what they wear now, wore coats and ties to class. When they passed each other on the campus, they said, "Good day, gentlemen." I remember that. That sounds stuffy, but it wasn't.

Warren: They wouldn't just say hello? They would say "Good day, gentlemen"?

Wood: Or they might say, "Hello, gentlemen." But always spoke.

Warren: And if they knew each other's name, would they use the name? Or would they always say "gentlemen"?

Wood: Well, I guess, you would be passing them, they might say, "Good day, Henry." I don't know. I think it was usually "gentlemen."

Warren: That's interesting. I didn't realize that.

Wood: But that was a long time ago.

Warren: Now, can you remember? I mean, you've been a witness to Washington and Lee over many years. Can you remember when that change started to happen in the dress code? And what were the Sweet Briar girls' reaction when the W&L guys stopped wearing coats and ties?

Wood: Well, I don't know what their reaction. They probably came—I couldn't tell you, but I remember that up until not too many years ago, girls would not wear pants on the campuses. They wore skirts. If they had shorts on, they would wear a raincoat on the campus, on the women's colleges. They did until, gosh, in 1950s or sixties, I guess. Or maybe wear pants, except riding clothes. That was always perfectly presentable if you rode.

I think the change in the sloppiness in their dress now is one thing I honestly

deplore, because I think – have you ever noticed how much better people behave when they are dressed nicely? Young and old. I think it's really sloppiness, their appearance. I think it's had a bad effect on the colleges. And I'm always astonished at how homely the wonderful girls at Washington and Lee seem to be, as far as their appearance. They dress just like the boys.

Warren: I need to turn the tape over.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Warren: You mentioned the Washington and Lee girls. Coeducation is a relatively new thing here. What was the reaction at Sweet Briar when it was decided that there would be W&L girls?

Wood: You mean from the administration at Sweet Briar?

Warren: Anybody.

Wood: Oh, well, I would certainly not be telling the truth if we – and I speak, I think, collectively for Virginia colleges and other colleges, I mean, other women's colleges – we knew it was going to affect us. Since Washington and Lee, I'll just take that as an example, restricts its student body to, what is it, two-thirds men and one-thirds women, maybe it's not, but it isn't fifty-fifty. It means the competition for girls to get in Washington and Lee is very difficult.

With the women's movement and so forth, a great many women that we would like to have at the women's colleges preferred the coeducation. For a while, the applications at the women's colleges – and if anybody tells you that this isn't true, they're not telling you the truth, it is true – but the applications were less. I can't speak for other colleges, but even though I'm no longer employed by Sweet Briar or I live there, I am in close contact with it, living in Lynchburg, and they're awfully nice to me. None of the colleges filled or had the same size student body for a while that they did. Of course, that was bad.

I was talking to the Lewises at lunch today. There's a gradual upturn that there

are more women now that are turning back to women's colleges. Sweet Briar never lowered its academic standings to fill its beds, which I think is wise. Some of the students that come to Sweet Briar, Randolph-Macon, and so forth, now, have probably applied to Washington and Lee and been turned down, but that doesn't mean that they aren't very good students because this is one of the most, of men's private colleges – I'm not talking about Harvard – it's very difficult. I mean, the competition for places like Washington and Lee is very great now. I'm sure we were sorry that they did it, but not sorry from the women's point of view, because I really am a feminist, and so I was delighted that if a girl wants to come to a first-rate institution for coeducation, a small liberal arts rather than having to go to a university. But from the point of view of the women's colleges, I was sorry. So it's a dichotomy in the way I feel about it.

I had a granddaughter that did not choose a women's college. I took her around to see the various colleges. It was the first year, actually, that Washington and Lee went coed, and I did not encourage her to apply here. I wasn't sure she was a good enough student to get in. Also, I didn't know what it would be like on the campus the first year. So I was happy when she chose Davidson. Do you know Davidson?

Warren: No, not really.

Wood: It's excellent. It's very much like Washington and Lee. It's about the size of Washington and Lee. It's just out of Charlotte, North Carolina. It became coed about ten years before, or seven years before, Washington and Lee. That's where my granddaughter went and had a very happy, happy time, a good time. I mean, a good educational experience. I was afraid that the girls would be so interested in the boys there that they would not make the same kind of friendships that you make in a women's college. But I was wrong. My granddaughter has just as strong friends. In fact, she was married the first day of June, and fifteen of her closest friends from Davidson were there, and they've been out six years.

No, I think it's a fine thing that women are not discriminated in that way any

longer, but I'm sorry that there are only two liberal arts colleges that I know of for men that don't take women. Of course, I think men ought to have the opportunity if they want to. Well, we won't go into this VMI thing. That's an entirely different proposition.
[Laughter]

Warren: Were you at Sweet Briar when the Washington and Lee decision came down?

Wood: You mean was I still working there? No.

Warren: I just wondered what the mood was on campus when it happened.

Wood: You know, I don't think it affected the girls very much. I think the administration had—I don't think that it was earth-shaking.

Warren: It was probably a much bigger deal here than it was there.

Wood: Yes, I think so. It wasn't going to change the life at Sweet Briar. Get somebody that in more in touch with it. The Washington and Lee boys and the University of Virginia boys and so forth still date the girls at the colleges very much. I don't think it's affected the girls' social life on the campuses. The boys seem to get away, and the girls over there still come here. I don't really think it's affected, but somebody could speak more about that.

Warren: I have never heard the term "road schools" until I came here. What does that mean? What's the women's schools' impression of the term "road school"?

Wood: Do you think it means that on weekends all the girls come here?

Warren: I think that's what they're saying.

Wood: And all the boys go someplace else?

Warren: It's a term that's thrown around here all the time. I've wondered if, from the other side, there's any feeling that it's any kind of a put-down or an insult or anything. It's an odd term. I've never hear the term "road schools."

Wood: You know, I've never heard it called that. What have I heard it called? Meaning that there's an exodus, because we had laughed and said, "Where did they all go? They've got to go somewhere."

Warren: I've heard that some of the girl's schools are called suitcase schools.

Wood: I've heard that, too.

Warren: Is that true? Do all the girls disappear on weekends?

Wood: No, they can't all disappear. There's no place for them to go. In fact, after all, they're there to get an education. A lot of them do, of course. But there's a lot going on on the women's campuses on weekends. I get the calendar every week, and then I'm out there a fair amount. Maybe I'm prejudiced, but there certainly is a difference in the social life. There's no question about that.

All of them have cars, now, you see. I don't know. I'm just amazed. Parking is the biggest problem now on many campuses. Not on Sweet Briar's campus, having 3,500 acres. But the cars parked are everywhere.

Warren: Well, it's a problem here. Let's go back to the beginning as we end up here. You mentioned that when you first came here from Alabama, that one of your friends went to Randolph-Macon and one of them went to Hollins. Did you maintain those friendships? Did the various women's colleges interact?

Wood: Oh, yes. We had friends, and you so often met on weekends. I remember one time at a fraternity party, somebody looked around and asked me where my two friends, "Are they over here this weekend?" You know, it's just, oh yeah, you kept up. But I guess that was more if you knew girls from home who were, you know, in the same area. It just happened that three of my closest friends from Florence were. And then you knew girls from other towns that were in, you knew some. Yes, you kept up.

Warren: Do you think that there's a difference between a Mary Baldwin and a Sweet Briar girl and a Randolph-Macon girl and a Hollins girl and a Southern Sem girl? How would you characterize?

Wood: That's not a fair question to ask me. Are you talking about today or how it used to be?

Warren: Used to be.

Wood: The Randolph-Macon girls were much more restricted than we were, and they laughed at the Sweet Briar girls because they said they could always tell us because when we came to town we always wore a hat and white gloves. [Laughter] Which was true. I think academically, realize I'm speaking from – that Randolph-Macon and Sweet Briar have been on the same academic level. It was difficult as to get in one as it was another.

Hollins looks more like Sweet Briar, seemed more like Sweet Briar. Hollins was a privately owned institution for a long time. Academically, it wasn't as good as the other two. I dare say it is now and has been for quite some time.

I know less about Mary Baldwin than I do the other three. I know they are having a right hard time with the – that's a silly expression – I know that they have not as many applicants as the other colleges have, and I think their endowment is not as much as the others. But I think they're all four fine institutions. I would think a girl, in many ways, it would depend on whether she wanted to be in the country and loved that, partly. I like them all so well, it's hard for me.

I'll tell you, the president – I live next door to the president. When I was at Sweet Briar, I lived in a college house, and it happened to be there. Once somebody asked her how she would – the same question you asked. She said, "There's no competition between lighthouses." I think of that. If you like the town, then Randolph-Macon would be for you. If you love the country, I think I would choose Hollins or Sweet Briar.

Do you know what so much depends upon, and I found this out with my daughters, where a girl chooses from similar colleges, the admissions interview and the girl that takes you around. I mean, the guide that takes you around. I could not imagine how much that helped. I saw that with my children and with my grandchildren. I brought one grandson here to see Washington and Lee that I hoped very much would come. He led his class in an Eastern prep school for four years and on the varsity team of three sports. He wanted to come South, because my daughter's daughter that was at

Davidson and this boy had been best friends always. And she was ahead of him.

We came to Washington and Lee, and the interview was not good. It was during his spring vacation, during Christopher's spring vacation. That's when they're busy, of course, here, as I understand. They don't give any personal interviews, and you have a group interview, and you have a group tour. And though we got a little special attention because of my relationship with Washington and Lee, it was not good. The boy that took us around wasn't a good guide, and I've seen so many of them that are good.

We went to Davidson, and it was just the opposite. And Christopher chose Davidson. I don't know about some of my other grandchildren, but this one could have gone to most any. He was accepted at a good many Eastern schools as well as this.

Warren: It makes a difference.

Wood: It makes a big difference.

Warren: Now, one last question. On those Sunday afternoons when the Washington and Lee students would come over, what did you do? Where at Sweet Briar would you date, and what would you do?

Wood: Well, you could go down to the lake. You could even wander in the boxwoods if you happened to be in love with somebody at that time. The inn was open. You could drink Cokes. You could, you know, ride around. If you were both athletic, you could play tennis. As I said, the boxwoods were very secluded. Actually, sometimes, you know, you played bridge. What do the young people do now?

Warren: Where would you play bridge?

Wood: Well, now, there are rooms. There are recreation rooms, all of them.

Warren: I've heard the expression dating parlors.

Wood: Oh, goodness, yes. There used to be. If you had a date, you would sit and talk. You would sit and talk. And maybe four couples would sit and talk. I don't think anybody read poetry to each other, but they might have. We knew a lot of poetry.

[Laughter] What do they do now in fraternity houses?

Warren: Oh, you don't want to know. [Laughter]

Wood: I do know. But I'm not so sure some of the behavior now – you see, more than many of my contemporaries, I am not terribly opposed to young people living together before they get married. Not, I don't want them to be promiscuous about it. But I'm not so sure that it isn't a good – well, I say I'm stuffy in one way and promiscuous on the other. I mean permissive on the other. But when you graduated from college, what did girls do? Most of them wanted to be married. We didn't have careers. Most girls didn't have careers unless you were going on to graduate school or got a teacher's certificate. It wasn't the thing to do, to have a career. I'm sure I'm right about that.

We even had what was called the ring game at Sweet Briar. And as soon as a girl got engaged to the president of the senior class, and this went on until twenty years ago, all the seniors would gather around in a ring with a string going around. They would pass the ring all around, and they would try to guess who it belonged to. Finally, it would stop on the person, and then we'd celebrate her engagement. Did I make that clear?

Warren: No, tell me. I've never heard of this.

Wood: Well, I don't think many colleges have it.

Warren: Describe it.

Wood: Well, a [unclear] would go out, usually at lunch in the refectory, you'd say, "The ring game is going to be played."

Warren: But nobody knew who was engaged?

Wood: Well, you weren't supposed to, and a lot of the times you didn't. But you would know had been dating and so forth. A lot, I guess, would depend on whether the young man had a job or a career. Then a cord, everyone would hold on to that cord, you see, and the ring would be put on it, and it would pass around, as it went, past you, you see. Each person just passed – a whole ring of people. It would go around twice, and then

the third time, it would stop at the girl who to whom it belonged, and she would so announce. I would say that a lot of girls were engaged. And just look at the rate of divorces now. I'm not sure that this thing of knowing that you were marrying, because that was really not just because it was the thing to do or whether you really were in love.

Warren: So a lot of girls were already engaged by the time they graduated?

Wood: Oh, yes.

Warren: And were there a lot of Sweet Briar and Washington and Lee marriages?

Wood: Oh, yeah, there were a lot. I knew I wanted to marry Ernest about that time, but we were not married for a year and a half. It was Depression time, and you had to think carefully. But I did not honestly know any girls that were, I don't think any – certainly it was not acceptable if anybody had set up housekeeping with the opposite sex at that time.

Warren: You said that back at the beginning, and I didn't pick up on that at all. What influence do you think the Depression had on the time period that we're talking about? Were there things that happened because of the Depression that wouldn't have happened another time?

Wood: Oh, so many people who couldn't "go off to school," who had to go – for instance, in Florence, where I grew up, it was the state teachers college at that time, and most of the girls in Florence who wanted higher education, and most of my friends did, could not afford. The parents could not afford to send them away to school. More and more went of the young men went to the state universities than would come to Washington and Lee.

Warren: Once you got to Sweet Briar, though, were there things that were happening there that you could sense that it was Depression times?

Wood: Of course we read about it. I remember when the banks closed. We didn't run home every – you went home, if you lived close enough, at Thanksgiving and

Christmas. You see, Sweet Briar and Washington and Lee young people didn't suffer from the Depression. That's not true, either. The class that I entered with at Sweet Briar was the largest at that time, the size it is, as the class is now, actually. After my sophomore year when the Depression was really being felt, about a third of my class could not come back because their parents could not – and strangely enough, there were more from the East that could not come back, and Sweet Briar's been as much a Southern school, it's always drawn rather heavily from the Northeast, next to the South – could not come back because so many of their parents had been really wealthy. I said we were always so poor in the South that we didn't know the difference. [Laughter] But that was the way that we felt it the most with the ones who could not come and would have to stay and go closer home or go to the institution in their town. But as far as not doing the same things that we were doing.

Warren: Everybody still wore white gloves?

Wood: Still wore white gloves. But certainly times change. I never expected to have a career. My first career was in investment banking. People change, you know. It's very fortunate. I think perhaps that's what a Washington and Lee education or what a Sweet Briar or any does, it gives you an ability – I hope it does – not to say that things ought to deplore changes, because, I think, the – I remember when I was in the alumnae office at Sweet Briar people and would say to me, particularly in my job, "Goodness, the college –" They'd see the girls walking along and not looking, not having on white gloves, not that they ever wore them on the campus. But I mean, talk about the laxity of the rules and all that. They would say, "Sweet Briar's not the way it was in my day."

And I'd say, "Oh, in your day?" And I'd say, "No, it's not, and I thank God that it isn't. And I say it reverently, because if it were, it wouldn't be in existence today."

So I have fond memories of the way that Washington and Lee used to be and Sweet Briar used to be, but I like the way it is now, and I think there's more – no, I don't think there's more emphasis on academic. I think the opportunities that the young

people have now of travel and all the automatic – not automatic. What am I talking about? Computer, Internet, all of that are wonderful for them. I'm delighted that they're there, but I do wish they'd pay more attention to their appearance. [Laughter]

Warren: Me, too. [Laughter] Well, thank you so much.

Wood: Just look at these young people here that are the helping with student assistants for these programs. You couldn't find a nicer – of course, they're hand-picked, I admit – nicer group of young people. But I think that most of them, they say they're very serious about their education, too, and I hope they appreciate it the way we did, some of us.

Warren: They'll appreciate it more after they're gone. [Laughter] Is there anything more that you'd like to say? I'm just delighted with our interview.

Wood: Well, I feel like a fool.

Warren: Well, I don't know why.

Wood: Because I talk too much. How did you happen in the world to get my name? Because there are so many women here whose husbands have been – my husband has never been a very active alumnus. He loved it and we came back a lot. But he was not like the person – his roommate through college and his best friend and his widow and I have been friends for fifty years with all the things we've gone on all of these trips together. George, her husband, who was not active when they were in college like my husband was, was a very active alumnus and very worthwhile. He was even awarded an honorary degree. He's a doctor. I can just think of so many of these women that are at this –

Warren: Well, we'll talk about them. You can recommend somebody, but Rob Fure recommended you.

Wood: Oh, he did?

[End of interview]

