WH: My name is Wendy Hopkins, Class of 1972 and I’m here with Bob Volz, the fifth Custodian of the Chapin Library. And the topic today is Williams’ Four Founding Documents.

Bob I thought we would start to talk about how each was acquired. An overview, in other words, historically how each was acquired.

BV: The four Founding Documents are Declaration of Independence of July 4th, 1776, and then the Articles of Confederation of November 1777, and the Constitution of September, 1787, and the Bill of Rights of September of 1789. There is a few variations on these dates. The Constitution, of course, was written . . . the Convention began on May 20th, 1787 and it concludes on September 15th when the final vote was taken. And the Articles of Confederation was well I think of the date as September 14th – September 11th or 14th, 1777, although it had already been basically written by the end of July 1776. And the Bill of Rights proceeded throughout the summer of 1789 at the House of Representatives, acting as a committee in the whole, with James Madison taking the chair whenever they were to discuss amendments to the Constitution. So that went on through the summer and was finally approved by the House in August of 1787 and sent to the
Senate. And then there was the House Senate Conference that changed it from 17 articles of amendment to 12. That was then sent to the State Senate on September 20th by the Congress of the United States and was finally ratified in July 1791 when you had enough states of the United States to ratify it.

WH: What was the final state to ratify? What was the state that tipped it?

BV: I’m not sure. For the Constitution it was New Hampshire. It was the 9th state. I’m not sure what it was for the Bill of Rights.

WH: I can’t remember either.

Each of these documents has come to Williams to the Chapin Library. And it seems to me the first question is to determine when each came to us.

BV: Well the first shall be last.

WH: O.K.

BV: The first one, the Declaration, is the last acquired.

In Mr. Chapin’s lifetime there was no copy of the Declaration that came on the market, so he didn’t have an opportunity to publicly buy one, and he didn’t find one through private ownership either. But he had bought the Constitution, the George Mason copy of the Constitution. One of a number of George Mason’s personal papers were put up for sale by his great granddaughter in 1917 and of all the items in that sale, that was the one piece that he had his agent bid on and acquire.

WH: Mm hm.
BV: And then the Articles of Confederation and the Bill of Rights both versions. We have both the House version and the Senate House compromised version. Those three pieces were bought from private booksellers. I think A.S.W. Rosenbach in Philadelphia.

WH: Mm hm.

They were purchased individually?

BV: Yes.

WH: Yes.

And again, while Mr. Chapin was Custodian?

BV: No, he was never Custodian. He was the

WH: He was the benefactor.

BV: He was the benefactor. He was a trustee. I think he was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1917. So he began the library in 1915, in the spring of 1915, and his active collection was his retirement project. Of course he had already built Chapin Hall which has the 1910 cornerstone and then collaborated later with Mr. Stetson for this building that we’re sitting in right now

WH: Mm hm.

BV: which the cornerstone is 1920, but in 1915, as his retirement project from the law and from his legal work as the New York Railroad Commissioner, he instituted the pledge to build the library that would document the ideas, the events, and the people of civilization. And one of his special sections was material related to America, starting with the Columbus discovery of 1493 and going forward.

WH: Mm hm, mm hm.
Then the Articles of Confederation and the two versions of the Bill of Rights, do you know in what year each was acquired?

BV: I think they were 1917 or 1918. All three of those were acquired within a one-year period. If you want specifics we can look that up. There are files.

WH: No. We know we have those records, so that’s fine.

And then of course the final, the *coup de grace*, the Declaration.

BV: It was in April of 1983.

WH: Right. And that made . . . we’ll talk about that acquisition process.

BV: On the acquisition and my proposal to President Chandler was that if we could get that, the Declaration, and considering the others that we have, we would be the only place outside of the National Archive, and if we put them on display, that would be the showing of the Four Founding Documents of America. And so John Chandler liked the idea and then there was to raise the money for it. The auction house had an estimate of $200,000 to $300,000, and I am a strong believer that you never go into an auction without being willing to double the minimum price. It’s not necessarily the opening price but it’s the house’s estimate. The opening price on this was $100,000. The auction catalogue had $200,000 to $300,000 was their estimate for what it would go for.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: So I said we need at least $400,000. It would be nice if we even had more. I was right on that. But I also said if we didn’t get this copy we’d never get one.

WH: Because?
BV: That was very important in our decision because it would be great to have it considering what else we already had, because the next copy that existed was in private hands. The man was in his 80’s already.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: We had no idea. He had not tipped his hand as to whether he was going to offer it for sale or was going to institutionalize it.

WH: Right.

BV: If he institutionalized it then it would not be for sale. And if he did offer it for sale, being the last available copy, it would go for many, many more times than this Wood family copy that we were able to acquire.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: So again, I was quite right on that because when he died four years later and it came up for sale he did not institutionalize his rare book collection. His sons inherited it and they immediately arranged five major sales, one of which was his copy of the Declaration of Independence, and that went for $1.8 million.

WH: Wow.

BV: So the difference is between $412,500 and $1.8 million in a matter of five years.

WH: Wow.

BV: As it turned out supposedly we had $425,000 on hand with which to execute the bids.

You want the whole story you see.

WH: I do. I’ve got two questions.
One of course is who are all the benefactors? Who the donors were in those stories? But also I’d love to hear your experience of the day this all happened. It must’ve been a very tense day for you.

BV: Well there still are a few pieces of homework. Maddox would have to be involved. We actually were $10,000 short on that. But because of the way the money was coming in on the last day, it looked like one person, who was a member of a class, was giving some money, was giving $10,000 and that he had also put it . . . because three different classes each put in $50,000 each, and he also had put $10,000 into his classes’ contribution. In fact he had only made one $10,000 contribution.

WH: And we were trying to count it twice.

BV: We counted it twice.

WH: And subsequently did he give additional money?

BV: No.

WH: No, O.K.

BV: But I was told this was the good old days when the Development Office was Bill Dickerson, and Howland Swift, and John Prichard, and Russ Carpenter. They had four people and one secretary.

WH: Exactly.

BV: They ran the whole caboodle and raised great amounts of money successfully.

WH: Yes, they did very, very well.

Do you want to talk about who all the donors were and that whole process?
BV: I was trying to find the list. Usually we have it in the case out there with the documents. It’s not there now and I couldn’t put my finger on it. I’ll make it supplementary.

WH: Sure.

BV: There were altogether, as I way, about three classes and about 30 different individuals. All but one were alumni.

WH: O.K.

BV: There was one non-alumnus townsperson who put in $50,000. And he was the first contributor.

WH: Are you willing to share his name?

BV: That’s the name that I want that list for.

WH: O.K.

BV: We never had any further contact with him. He moved out of town the next year. He had just moved in from Texas I believe. John Chandler had gotten acquainted with him and asked him if he could see him about this matter, and he agreed to meet him at O’Hare out in Chicago, and wrote John a $50,000 check out in O’Hare.

WH: Wow, wow.

BV: So that was the start of it.

The other important person that inspired us all the time was Reese Harris from the Class of ’40, who had given $100,000 several years earlier to the college for a Conservative lectureship. And the college was willing to accept that. But then when Reese wanted to have a say in who was going to be the lecturers, John Chandler sent him
his $100,000 back, saying that we will honor your request and get good conservative
speakers but we want to reserve the right to do the selecting ourselves.

WH:  Sure, yes.

BV:  So I had gotten wind of that fact, because I knew a couple of other members of the
Class of 40, and they had known Reese’s disappointment.  So I told John, There’s no
reason why we can’t ask Reese again because certainly, I don’t care what you’re political
leaning is, the Declaration fits them all.  Whether you’re Conservative or an arch-Liberal
the Declaration fits them all.  They all constantly refer to it.

       It’s like in the Civil War everybody referred to George Washington.  The South
appeared to the memory of the Virginian George Washington quite as much as the North
did for the Father of their country and we have to preserve what Washington had created.

WH:  Yes, as you say, it’s certainly true today.

       Who approached Reese Harris and what was his initial reaction, do you remember?

BV:  I don’t know if I wrote the letter or John did.  I’m not sure.

WH:  And you think it was by mail?  It wasn’t a phone call or a personal visit?

BV:  If John did it it probably was a phone call.  If it was me I would’ve written a letter.

I don’t remember off hand.  Subsequently I know I dealt with all the dealings with Reese
Harris.  H put in $50,000 as a start.

WH:  Yes.

BV:  And it came to me.  So I may have been the one that instituted it.

WH:  Yeah, sure.

BV:  Because he said if you need more let me know.
WH: O.K. We’ll come back to that.

BV: Right.

WH: So he was Class of 1940?

BV: ’40.

WH: And that class raised an additional $100,000 or their $100,000 was . . .

BV: No they put in $50,000.

WH: They put in $50,000.

BV: They put in $50,000 as a class too.

WH: O.K., O.K. Were there any other major individual donors?

BV: I think most of the other donors were for the most part $5,000 or $10,000 donations.

WH: Yep, yep. And they were in addition to these other two classes?

BV: The three classes that each put in $50,000. So that was $115,000. Reese put in $50,000. So that’s $200,000. And the other gentleman, whose name I’ll supply to you, was . . . so we’re up to close to $300,000.

However, when we went to the auction we hadn’t had the final report on two of those classes – what amount they were actually going to . . . . Their class secretary or their class president said, I know our class will be able to do it and will be only too happy to do it. However they hadn’t

WH: Yes.

BV: called enough people and got them away from their dinner table that night to actually have the money in hand. So it wasn’t till after breakfast that we got . . . and we
were already on our way to the auction house that we were able to confirm that these two classes had come through . . .

WH: And do you remember which two classes they were?

BV: I think one was ’43 and I’m not sure of the other one. Again, I’ll check on that.

WH: O.K.

O.K., so now you’re on your way to the auction house.

BV: Well we still didn’t know where we were going to go because we were $100,000 short from those two classes, plus other money wasn’t in yet. We only had three weeks to be raising this money. This wasn’t like a capital campaign or anything where we coached people along and worked things over months and months, and I know, for instance (maybe I shouldn’t be saying anything negative), but it’s not exactly . . . the poor man can’t be giving to everything, but Arthur Houghton was approached.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: Well Arthur Houghton is of course the big benefactor of Harvard; both the museums and the Houghton Library at Harvard, their rare book library. He built the whole bloody building and everything like that and his major collections, book collections is all there too. The Houghtons also have affiliation with Berkshire County, Northern Berkshire County in North Adams. And I think one or two had gone to Williams.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: So we just thought that Arthur Houghton would feel that his family roots would let him give $50,000 or something.

WH: Who was it that came up with this idea?
BV: John Chandler did that.

WH: Yeah.

BV: But John made the approach to Arthur Houghton and that was turned down. So . . .

WH: Yeah.

BV: I might’ve gotten further myself because I had known Arthur Houghton previously. Not so well as two of his other . . . 1933 . . . he was Harvard ’33, but I knew two other people – one at Vassar ’33 and one at Rochester ’33, graduates. The three of them were as thick as molasses together.

WH: So it was our loss that you weren’t involved directly it sounds like.

BV: Well it may not have remembered me that well.

WH: We’re going to pause right here and welcome Bob Stegeman.

RS: Hello.

WH: I hope everything’s fine.

RS: Yes.

WH: Class of 1960.

And I, as I often do forgot at the beginning of the tape, to say that today’s date is March 25th, 2015 and we are

BV: On a Tuesday.

WH: Wednesday!

RS: (Laughter)

WH: And this is Tape 1, Side A. In the middle now.

RS: Oh I got you!
WH:  Here we are.

BV:  We’re in the fundraising process.

       We had hopes of getting at least $300,00 or maybe as much as $400,000 but we’re missing two classes, whose secretary said, I know, the President said I know we can get $50,000 from my members, but we didn’t know yet.  This is Swifty who was working on it – Howland Swift.  They both wanted me to call them back at breakfast.

RS:  At the same time? (Laughter)

BV:  The same day as the auction.

WH:  Now he’s literally getting ready to go to the auction.

BV:  We’re down in New York and have breakfast at the Williams Club with Larry Whitten, Class of ’48

WH:  Yes

BV:  who was past president to the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America.  So he had agreed to act as our agent without a fee.

WH:  Wonderful.

BV:  Well we would not have gotten the Declaration if he had not agreed to that because the fee is usually five to as much as ten percent as an agent fee, of the hammer price.

WH:  That was a generous gift on his part.

BV:  And he had called John Chandler that morning and said, Give me $30,000 to play with, and John said no.

WH:  Really!
BV: Even what I just told you about John being actively participating, he said, This has to be money we raise for this purpose. I have other things in the developing line, including the new museum, and if I am promising money out of the general kitty in any way I’ll be in trouble, but I’ll keep working and you keep working. You have my full blessing but I can’t give you $30,000 play money just for one final raise or something of that sort.

WH: Right, right, right.

BV: So Larry said, We’ll do our best.

Now as I said, he was the past president of the Antiquarian Book Sellers Association, so he was well known. So he told me to stay away from him

WH: O.K. (Laughter)

RS: (Laughter)

BV: and not go into the auction room.

WH: Not even to enter the room?

BV: No, he said, because some people will know you and will know that you represent Williams and therefore you represent deep pockets. If they see you there ahead of time then they might recalculate what they plan on doing.

WH: Wow. This is like . . .

BV: My companion Scott was there with me and so he acted as a runner for me and the lobby of Christie’s. I was in a telephone booth.

WH: I was going to say, were you able to listen at least to what was going on?

BV: No. I was in the telephone booth with the Development Office.

WH: Oh!
BV: I had Steve Fix’s telephone credit card

WH: Mm hm.

BV: so I could just swipe it and have immediate contact and everything like that. And Scott kept running back and forth for me. If we got any new money he would go and whisper something to Larry Whitten.

Now the Declaration was the last item in the sale. Whitten is known for . . . he had been an antiquarian bookseller in the field of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts and early printed books.

WH: O.K.

BV: He never bothered about Americana unless it was the Columbus letter of 1493 or the Vineland map of the Norsemen, you know.

RS: (Laughter)

BV: It was the only thing he ever had to do with Americana. So the question was what was Whitten doing there with somebody going up to him and whispering something? Well Whitten had to be calculating at all times.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: The money that he now had

WH: Right.

BV: versus what it was going to be when you added the buyer’s premium on to it. So if you have $100,000, the house wants an additional $20,000 (twenty percent buyer’s premium). So Whitten had to be calculating $100,000 plus $20,000 – I need $120,000. I can only bid $100,000 if you have told me I have $120,000. So he had to be doing this
kind of thing because Chandler down in Williamstown won’t give him any slush money to play with.

WH: I think that’s fascinating, absolutely fascinating.

BV: I was there when that phone call was made down in that old lobby in the old Williams Club.

RS: (Laughter) Oh yeah.

WH: Oh yes, I remember it well.

BV: Larry didn’t close the door on the phone booth so we could hear

RS: (Laughter)

BV: everything he was arguing with John. He even said, I’ll put in $20,000 of my own and John wouldn’t do it.

RS: Wow.

BV: And Larry’s deceased now too.

You remember I mentioned Reese Harris who put in $50,000 and then told me, But if you need more let me know.

WH: Mm hm. a

BV: So we called him the day before and he said, Call me when you’re ready to bid and tell me how you stand. So I called him and said, We’re very tight. We didn’t have the $400,000 like I said we should not enter the bidding unless we had. We didn’t have that.

So he said, Put in another $25,000 and see what you . . .

WH: You said to him, Please put in another $25,000

BV: No, he said
WH: He said, he offered up $25,000

BV: $25,000. So, O.K. Scott ran down to Larry Whitten with another $25,000.

Then the Class of ’43 came through, so O.K. $50,000 is good.

WH: Well somebody got to somebody at breakfast

RS: Amazing!

WH: you see in the Class of ’43, or whatever.

BV: I’ll get the precise dates on those and we can correct on the edited version.

So then it was a small sale of prime Americana, only 76 lots, and this was done on purpose to get the 1776 be Lot 76.

WH: Oh (Laughter)

RS: (Laughter)

WH: That was the auction house.

BV: Auction houses are very shrewd on how they do things like that.

WH: And we haven’t identified the auction house, should we?

BV: Christie’s. Christie’s in New York.

WH: Christies, O.K.

BV: And John Gillingham Wood of Edenton, North Carolina was the consigner. And John Gillingham Wood, this is important on this, the copy belonged to Joseph Hughes, one of the three signers from North Carolina, three members of the Continental Congress from North Carolina. Hughes was to marry the sister of the Governor – Governor Johnson of North Carolina. She died three days before their wedding.

WH: Wow.
BV: So he died four years later and left his entire estate and papers and everything, and his money and plantation and what have you, to his intended brother-in-law, Governor Johnson. Governor Johnson had a son who died in 1865, but without a son, but with three daughters. So his estate and property and inheritance laws in those days went to his eldest daughter, who married a man by the name of Woods down there in Edenton and went through five generations of the Woods family. Then John Gillingham Woods wanted to do some restoration work on the plantation, which is always expensive, and he also was very interested in conservation causes. And he had gathered together all of the papers of the Hughes family, of the Johnson family and Woods family, and then presented them all to the UNC, Chapel Hill.

WH: Oh, O.K.

BV: Except he held out the Declaration of Independence and the letters between Joseph Hughes and Governor Johnson for 1776, and he wanted money for those.

WH: Mm hm, mm hm.

BV: And no one in North Carolina or at the University had enough ambition or imagination to try to raise what was then only $200,000 that he wanted for these documents.

WH: Right.

BV: Now the economy of North Carolina in 1981 was booming. The textile industry hadn’t failed yet or anything like that. Somebody there should’ve been able to snap their finger and got a single wealthy North Carolinian to put up the money just like that, or a little group of alumni to do it or something, because there are no other copies you see at the
time of the Declaration south of the University of Virginia, and so certainly a North Carolinian would’ve loved that.

WH: But the word didn’t get out.

BV: The word didn’t get out. So he wanted his money though, so they had gotten the bulk of these very important different family papers all ready, and so he put it up for sale at Christie’s along with a couple of the letters that were earlier, the lots in the sale. And we got wind of that and went through the regime that I told you about earlier, trying to locate donors, and that was with John Chandler’s cooperation and with Howland Swift’s cooperation and expertise, and I’m sure he consulted with Bill and John Pritchard and Russ Carpenter too, along the way

WH: Sure, sure.

BV: because that was a wonderful forehand and troika that was

WH: Bill? Bill Dickerson?

BV: Bill Dickerson that was operating . . .

Yeah, when you consider, if you equated what they were getting with four people in today’s money they were doing better than we’re doing with 40 people over there.

RS: (Laughter)

WH: Legions.

BV: They could raise up to $10, $15 million a year.

WH: That’s a conversation for another day.

RS: (Laughter)

WH: We can do that!
But we’re still in the middle of the auction.

BV: We haven’t . . . I was still a smoker.

RS: Yeah.

BV: So every time . . . there was No Smoking signs in the lobby of Christie’s in those days, and so every time I would open the door to the telephone booth this cloud of smoke would go out into the lobby and I would get a breath of fresh air in there.

WH: Oh man, what an image.

BV: So I never had seen the Declaration of Independence. If you remember, I was to stay away from the bidder.

WH: That’s right.

BV: So I didn’t go into the room to see where it had been mounted in the corner there. It had been properly framed in a walnut frame so both sides were visible and everything like that – a two-faced frame. It was nicely done. And we finally, at Lot 72, I called Reese Harris again and he said, I’ll put in another $25,000, so that was $100,000 for him.

WH: Wow.

BV: So that message got transmitted to Whitten in about the time Lot 74 out of 76 lots was up for sale, and he was able to calculate, O.K., Lot 76 came up and it opened as I told you at $100,000 and quickly so Whitten doesn’t do anything of course. He waits to see and he detected something slowing down at about 2:20. And so he put a bid in and then immediately two other bids came in, so he put in a second bid. He just pulled back again until something slowed, and then he went, and I should have gotten the exact figures, because the total figure was $375,000. So it was up to $360,000. The part that he bit when
he stepped in . . . he stepped in I think at $320,000. It went to $340 and then he bid $360,000. His competition on the phone asked for a split.

RS: What’s that?
BV: A split is one half of the raise. The raise was $20,000.
WH: Oh, O.K.
RS: Oh, O.K.
BV: The auctioneer has the authority to do what he wants as far as raises go. So he agreed to it. Steven Massey was the auctioneer, an Englishman who was head of the book department at Christie’s in New York. He agreed to the split to $370.00. Whitten had done his calculations and knew he did not have another $10,000, so he asked for a split to $5,000, and the auctioneer agreed to it because he had already broken the price record for a piece of American paper,
WH: Oh!
BV: so as far as the prestige of the auction house that had been achieved already.
WH: Right, right.
BV: The competition was Bonams and with Sotheby’s and things like that. We already have sold the most expensive piece of Americana O.K., and there was no response from the other party. They had blown their wad with their $10,000 split.
WH: Do you have any idea who that competing party was?
BV: No, no. At first it was said well it was against the Japanese because there were several Japanese people in the auction room. The only reason they were in the auction room, the next auction . . . you know these auction houses go one after another.
WH: Sure.

BV: The next auction after ours was done was going to be an auction of Japanese art and pottery and things of that sort, so they were there for that, not for the Declaration.

WH: Oh my gosh, innuendoes though and the lack of information.

RV: No, it was on the phone so you never know who the phone was. I mean some people say it could’ve been our friend Malcolm Forbes, who doesn’t own a Declaration and who is known to have had . . . he might even have been an early bidder from the floor. He often uses several bidders. One bidder that will take up to a certain price, and then another bidder that will only go above that price and just to confuse the issues. But anyway, we don’t know who our competition was and the house of course is not free, according to their policy, not legally, but according to their policy, not to disclose that, and no one else came forward saying, Are you sure you don’t want to sell that? I was your under bidder.

WH: Yeah, right.

BV: So all of a sudden Scott came, I had no idea . . .

WH: Tell me Scott who?

BV: Scott Van Hensbergen, he was my companion.

WH: Of course.

BV: So all of a sudden he came running . . . “We got it, we got it, we got it.”

(All Laughter)

WH: I can’t even imagine what that would feel like after this intense of an experience.
BV: I opened the door and Larry Whitten came out of the auction room with Scott and
“Congratulations, we got it all. I’ll go take care of the paperwork for you. Steve wants to
talk with you and a couple of people up in the book room.”

WH: Mm hm.

BV: So we were immediately taken on the elevator up to the third or fourth floor of
Christie’s auction room there and talked with Steve after he popped a bottle of champagne
though. (Laughter)

WH: Oh wonderful. Massey did that.

BV: Massey did it and had the secretary bring nice fluted glasses. All done up properly.

WH: Lovely.

BV: I think they probably do that for special occasions regularly.

WH: This really was a special occasion.

BV: But auction houses know how to do things up right.

WH: Right.

BV: It was good champagne too. A sort of sharp taste.

(All Laughter)

In the meantime Larry Whitten went and took care of the paperwork. Well this was
very important in the long run, but we’ll get to that.

While I was there Rita Reif called who was the Antiques Editor of the New York
Times, and she wanted an interview with me.

WH: Oh wow.

BV: So I gave her a little interview.
WH: A phone interview.

BV: Yeah.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: And then we hardly got talking again when the antiques person for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called, and she wanted an interview.

WH: It was big news.

BV: We did this and she reminded that really this wasn’t a record price if you recalculate the dollar with the Chew family copy that had been sold in Philadelphia in 1969, if you calculated it, it would be a little bit higher than what we paid. (Laughter)

WH: This was important to her.

BV: To her that Philadelphia held the record, but they didn’t in raw dollars and cents.

But somehow or other it got out on the wire services too. This was important. The acquisition of the Declaration had more news stories in more newspapers than any other event in Williams’s history.

WH: No kidding!

BV: We have two boxes of material concerning the acquisition.

WH: Where are those boxes?

BV: I think they’re out in the storage facility.

WH: O.K.

BV: But including tons of newspaper articles. But the very best one was in the *Times of London*.

WH: Mm hm.
BV: The daily one.

WH: O.K.

BV: *Price of Freedom*, £235,000, something like that. (Laughter)

WH: But what a remarkable day for you. Have you had many days like that?

BV: Oh that’s sort of routine when you’re Custodian of the Chapin Library.

(All laughter)

No, but it’s not done yet. I still hadn’t seen the Declaration of Independence.

WH: O.K., all right, fair enough.

BV: Larry Whitten he knows how these things go. He went and claimed it from the auctioneer and took it to the bursar or the treasurer’s office and he made arrangements. We didn’t know; he didn’t say in advance he was going to do it, but if you had to reach a certain figure you could make arrangements with the auction house on the agreement of the consignor, and Woods was delighted, so he agreed when the auction house called him to make payments in three monthly installments, so the college liked that, because they had 90 days to pay instead of immediate payment and things of that sort.

WH: Right, right.

BV: And also it was useful because they told us we had $10,000 more than we actually had. So we were I think $7500 ultimately short, and Bill Dickerson said, Don’t worry, there’s always, (and you know Wendy how it works), there’s always an alumnus that says, Do you have a special purpose you’d like a check for? And he said we’ll find that with no problem.

WH: Yes.
BV: Especially for this.

RS: Oh yeah.

BV: So I never heard more about that. Except that person is part of our list of names, which I’ll get to you.

So then Woods said, I think you and Scott should go and get yourselves something to eat. So we went. The auction house is on 57th I think and Madison, and we went up to 59th or 60th (I not sure what street) and found a rather nice Italian restaurant and went in there and had lunch, a late lunch. It was probably about 1:00 o’clock and it sort of cleared out of the heavy New York lunchtime traffic. So that was the first time I ever had Fettuccini Alfredo in my life.

(All laughter)

WH: For lunch! Which is actually smarter than having it for dinner. Walk it off.

BV: I just even remember that lunch. So then we did that and walked back to the auction house. We had stayed overnight at the Williams Inn.

WH: Williams Club.

BV: Williams Club rather. And parked in that parking garage immediately to the west of it.

WH: Yes.

BV: But we walked back to the auction house and got the Declaration of Independence and all the paper work. It was all wrapped up in brown paper.

WH: So you still haven’t seen it!
BV: I still haven’t seen it. So I asked would they please reopen the package. They said
they would and they did, so held it. I actually cried.

(All laughter)

WH: I believe it, my goodness. Yes, Mr. Suave over here that says it’s all in a day’s
work.

BV: But as they rewrapped it I dried my tears and we were happy. So they gave it to us.
All the paperwork was paid for.

RS: You just carried it out to the car?

BV: Well the car was on 39th street and the auction house was up on 57th or so and
Madison, you know, so it’s just a strait shot down there in a cab. So we took the
Declaration of Independence out of the auction house onto Madison Avenue there, and
hailed a cab and got in and took it down to 39th Street.

WH: I love it. That’s fabulous.

BV: Yes, but this goes against all the . . .

WH: Of course it does but it’s after the fact.

BV: . . . all the procedures. It worked. We can follow the rule of Dr. Rosenbach, the
greatest rare book dealer we’ve ever had in this country, who carried the Elsenberg
Chaucer, the earliest and most important extant manuscript of Chaucer all across country to
the Huntington Library in a brown paper bag. He always went unnoticed with things of
that sort. He never dressed fancy himself and never with fancy packing so as not to call
attention to himself. So we didn’t call . . . this was just brown butcher paper that it was
wrapped in and it didn’t say anything on the outside. I stood by a lamp-post there on 39th
Street while Scott went and got the ticket for the car and had them bring the car down and pull out. But the package was there on the curb on a street in New York with me standing right next to it, so nothing was going to . . . . totally innocuous. And he came around and we put it in the back seat of the car. It was a Pontiac with a sun roof. This was April 22nd, and it was a fairly warm day. We actually opened the top of the car and drove out up (I don’t know which road we drove up a little bit, but headed over to the FDR Drive because that was the easiest way to get out and over to the Taconic eventually out of New York, and as we were going cross town, you’re always being stopped in traffic. By that time it was close to 4:00 in the afternoon, so traffic was really slow and jumbled. And people kept trying to sell you newspapers. They run in the middle of the street, at the intersection, with the newspapers, O.K.? What was the headline at the newspaper that day?

WH: No way!

BV: What was it?

WH: I don’t know. You tell us.

BV: Hitler Diaries Discovered.

WH: Oh my goodness.

BV: Of course those have turned out to be false.

WH: 1983. I don’t even remember that.

BV: That was a big thing.

RS: Rather than the Declaration?

BV: Well yeah, but the important thing . . . It was absolutely overwhelming to me to think of Hitler’s diaries being pushed in my face here and behind me on the back seat was
sort of the antithesis of Adolf Hitler with the Declaration, the American Declaration of Independence.

RS: Oh my God. Oh that’s wonderful.

WH: Yeah.

BV: It was a contrast that wasn’t lost on me. So we drove up to Williamstown and brought it up to the library here and called John Chandler.

WH: I was just going to say, You’ve got to stop at John’s house or something.

BV: No, we called him and he came over and we unwrapped it and showed it to him.

WH: It’s here! Oh my God!

BV: He said, Congratulations, I think, and something very warm as John always says. That was it and we put it in the vault over there and went home.

WH: Wow.

BV: So that was the simple way of the acquisition.

RS: Remind me what year it was.

BV: ’83, April of ’83.

WH: 1983 and there were three classes involved. One was ’40, one was Class of ’43, and we’ll get the other class.

BV: The other class too. And then, as I say . . . .

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

WH: Tape 1, Side B interview with Bob Volz on Wednesday, March 25, 2015.
BV: But there were other little things like as I mentioned earlier, that we went down to the Williams Club in New York the night before, but as we were driving out (I lived down on Water Street then), as we were driving out on Main Street here, and we had to go by the Williams Inn, and at that time SUV’s were not so common as they are only present today, and so we notice Howland Swift’s SUV there, and so we thought we’d just go in and say hello and that we’re on our way. Well he was in the bar there in the bar room at the Williams Inn. The gentlemen went in and he said, Bob, meet Larry Pomerantz, he’s Class of ’55 or something like that.

WH: Oh sure.

BV: We can check on that.

WH: Sure.

BV: And he said, Why don’t you tell him what you’re doing? And so I knelt down on the floor in the Williams Inn Pub next to Larry’s chair, and told him that we were going to acquire the Declaration of Independence hopefully, and of course Howland was never afraid to mention that we need money, because that was his job, and he said, And they’re still trying to raise money I know because everybody that said they were interested hasn’t come through yet. And so Larry took out his checkbook and wrote a $5,000 check and handled it to Howland and said, Put this towards it.

WH: I love these stories. That’s a great story.

RS: (Laughter)

BV: He’s been a generous donor to the college in other ways too. So that sort of gave you a positive attitude to leave Williamstown.
WH: It certainly did. And the fact that you said we’re on our way to acquire the Declaration. It wasn’t like we hope to, it was that’s what we’re going to do.

BV: So the fundraising wasn’t quite done yet because I had made a proposal and even did a sketch on want it, very similar to what we . . . not the details on the side of architecture, but I wanted the Declaration here and the Constitution there, and other things as part of it. We had to build a case.

WH: Exactly, I remember that.

BV: Temporarily we took an old glass and brass case that was down in the lower corridor of the building here that for a long time housed Colonel Wolsey’s military regalia that was no longer in it, that had been taken down and stored elsewhere. But he of course is the hero of the Lost Battalion from the First World War and Williams’ first Congressional Medal of Honor winner.

WH: Right.

BV: And then of course suicided himself in 1920 I think. So we brought that case up here with B&G, reassembled it up here and we put the four Founding Documents in that, just on pedestals we borrowed from the College Museum. But then the Class of ’40 was having their 45th reunion, and Brooks Hoffman was a member of the Class of ’40 and Reese Harris was, and Dusty Griffin’s dad down in St. Louis, and so forth. He was a contributor too, and so forth. So they had asked if we could host one of their mini-reunion cocktail parties up here, and put out some good Americana for them in the case. So I did that and then I gave a little spiel. I have this three-step stool with fold-down steps and put it on there, and then I would stand on – you’ve seen me do that when we do the
Declaration of Independence. And I told them we needed a case and all of that and briefly with my hands outlining what it would look like, and it would be the only place outside National Archives where you could see all four of these documents. So lo and behold I get out down off the thing, and who comes up to me but Reese Harris.

WH: No way.

BV: How much do you think the case will cost Bob?

RS: (Laughter)

BV: We hadn’t had an architect for it yet or anything, and I said, I don’t know, probably about $25,000. He said, O.K., and that was it. He didn’t say one way or another, but by the end of the week stock certificates were in the Development Office that came when they were cashed in that night to $24,900 and some dollars!

RS: (Laughter)

WH: (Laughter): Do you call it the Class of ’40 case?

BV: No.

WH: No. That’s wonderful.

BV: So Reese ended up for . . . he put in the $100,000 to start with for the conservative lecture fund and getting that sent back to him. He ended up paying $125,000 for it to get the price of freedom – the Declaration of Independence.

WH: That’s a remarkable counterpoint – point counterpoint. And heart-warming frankly to hear that people of if not extreme at least strongly held views . . .

BV: Strongly held. But of course I think he was a strong John Bircher. He certainly was a good friend of the fellow that was the founder Welch
RS: Robert Welch, the Concord grape man. Is that right?

BV: and that. He of course eventually set up an endowed professorship, the Schuman Professorship is Reese Harris.

WH: Oh is Reese Harris? Oh my gosh!

BV: You know he won’t say is the antithesis

WH: But yes.

BV: But Bob, he said, look Reese made us read Karl Marx and Mein Kampf . . .

RS: Fred did.

BV: Fred did, rather, and several other things. And he made us discuss and talk about them and think about them. And I formed my opinions on things and whatnot, but it’s because of him. He taught us how to think about political things and so that’s why he wanted the professorship.

WH: Wow.

BV: It’s not the Reese Harris Professorship. I seriously doubt whether the incumbents in that position know the

WH: History

BV: heart that’s behind that.

RS: I’ll be darned, huh.

Now is that . . . I wonder if it’s true still today in any way that occasions like that to happen so informally – he just walks up and says I gave you the $25,000. It was just such an informal process. I wonder if Development . . . I bet it happens still today.
BV: They can except I had the news since yesterday. Two days ago a lady called me from (603), so it’s up in southeastern New Hampshire. And she introduced herself. It’s a name that her husband is deceased. He’s an alumnus of the college. She didn’t say what class or what his name was. We looked him up and all of that. We got the whole story on him now. But her first question was, What does it cost? I was just looking at your website and I was impressed. And the website (I’ll get my licks in one way or another), the website that they want us to change to make it consistent with the college’s image of a website, when it’s been worked out with great detail and care and everything like that. It’s unbelievable what communications can come up with at times over there with 15 people that have nothing to do but to talk to each other. You don’t have to say anything, but you’re not employed by the college anymore, so . . .

RS: (Laughter)

WH: I don’t know those people. It’s easy not to comment.

BV: I know that’s the problem. They don’t know anything about Williams. They’re all newcomers. And I said, Well I can only tell you what the going price is from the Development Office and that’s $250,000. And she said Ouch! And she said, Well the Hood only wants $50,000 and they’re going to be raising it to $75,000. And she said, You know that little institution in the woods in New Hampshire? And I said I know the Hood up in Dartmouth, yeah.

WH: Absolutely.

BV: And she’s much into art and silver, 18th century silver and so forth. She had something she wanted to offer to us which I now have an image of that she emailed me. I
said, All I can do is ask if they have any other consideration. I know we have one fund that was set up more recently because of a promise that had been made to a donor if they would give us a bequest, and that was for just $91,000, and it was very restricted purpose too, so it will work fine. So I said I’ll try to find out on that. But anyway, she’s going to be down here in May and do some things, so I’ll talk with her and see her then and I’ll find out by that time from John Malcom if we can do something that’s more refined. I mean you look at the man’s career and all of his activities, and her and his careers together and the foundation together, certainly in the field of law, law and legislation and so forth, would be totally appropriate and it would be fitting considering New Hampshire’s son was also Massachusetts’ second or perhaps most famous senator, Daniel Webster. And of course his whole career, or early career was out of New Hampshire and Dartmouth and then came to Massachusetts and became our senator. The other senator is Charles Sumner.

WH: Right. They were concurrent.

BV: No. Webster died in ’53 and Sumner I don’t think came into the Senate until about ’52 or ’56.

WH: O.K.

BV: So we got Andy Burr, who of course is an alumnus, and he and Ann McCallum had set up their shop here in town by that time, and so we got them to come in and design the exhibition case for us. Well he came up with a thing that just looked too pompous.

WH: Mm hm, mm hm.

BV: It didn’t quite fit the period style of the room.

WH: Right.
BV: They were working on this post-modernism type of design

RS: Mm hm.

BV: and their buildings sort of had that kind of thing. So I said, Annie we have the Philadelphia carpenter’s company manual, the only complete one in the country, of 1786.

RS: (Laughter)

BV: And that’s 40 engraved plates of architectural designs for doorways, arches, pillars, things of that sort. It’s not for building houses but for the portions of houses, especially interiors and so forth. Why don’t you take a look at that and you can find the kinds of pillars, the kinds of little ornaments, all of that. So we did, and that’s how we came up with that case. All of those designs (not the mahogany base part), but all the pillars and the inside and everything is all out of the Philadelphia Carpenter’s Country Manual, 1786.

WH: Wow, that’s brilliant.

BV: So all that design is Philadelphia at the time of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution you see.

RS: (Laughter)

WH: That’s fantastic.

    And this is maybe a very naive question but the glass is probably some sort of protective glass as well?

BV: No, the glass part is regular plate glass, which has a very good ultraviolet filtering rate, but it’s not especially strong, it’s not reinforced plate glass like you might have in a car windshield or something like that.

WH: But for lighting purposes, for protecting the document . . .
BV: However, behind the plate glass that piece up there is about 2, 2-1/2 inches wide the brass, O.K.?

WH: Mm hm.

BV: There’s plate glass, then there’s a little ridge cut out where the plate glass goes into a little ridge. Make believe this is a little ridge; plate glass goes into it. Then there’s a little bit of copper there, and then another ridge. And in that ridge goes a sheet of Luxan, WH: Oh, O.K.

BV: and then there’s another ridge and another sheet of Luxan which has been cut out for the documents to be suspended in – the Declaration and the four sheets of the Constitution. And then that’s repeated on the other side of the sheet of Luxan: a ridge and a sheet of plate glass. So Luxan has a very high ultraviolet filtering capacity. So we’re probably filtering out about 96 % of ultraviolet light which is the harmful light.

RS: Yeah.

BV: O.K. The other thing is Luxan is impermeable.

WH: Mm hm.

BV: It’s now protecting the Pietà after the Pietà was smashed by the crazy man. It also protects the cab drivers if they keep their door shut: that divider between them and the passenger in the back of New York City cabs and things of that sort. If you shoot a bullet in it the bullet will get wedged in it.

WH: Oh, O.K.

BV: If you take a hammer at it you’d shatter the glass but you’d hit the Luxan and then it would probably come back and hit you in the head.
WH: Yeah, it’s strong stuff.

BV: Yeah, it’s General Electric.

Now Will Reed, who was vice president and treasurer of the college, knew several officials down at General Electric Plastic Works when they were still headquartered and hadn’t sold that process and all of that down in Pittsfield, and so we proposed that if we could get them to contribute it and cut it out (because it’s very hard to cut Luxan, but they know how to cut it and each sheet is slightly different in dimension, whether it’s the Declaration or each sheet of the Constitution). So we gave them exact measurements down to a 16th of an inch, and they cut the pieces out exactly. And then Anna was working on the conservation, and very carefully with cellulose and a piece of tape, has them affixed on the little top of the Lexan. You don’t see the hinge at all there, so they’re actually suspended in there. So that’s how that case was made.

And we had the dedication ceremony and we asked Gary Jacobsohn to give a little talk as our chief at that time before he moved on to Texas now, as our chief political scientist, who was a good speaker and would have something to say. So he, on his own, decided to say how the Declaration of Independence had its fulfillment in the Gettysburg Address.

WH: Oh wow.

BV: It was a brilliant presentation.

WH: Do we have that documented anywhere?

BV: I think we have his speech. Reese Harris was there for it.

WH: Oh wow.
BV: He was a strong believer that this was always the case and went up and hugged Gary Jacobson for his dedicatory speech.

(All laughter)

There was no conservative lecture that could’ve pleased him more than Gary saying how the Declaration of Independence had been fulfilled in the words of the Gettysburg Address. Gary isn’t alone in saying that but he just presented it so nice in his 20-minute appropriate length speech.

WH: Was it at Reunion Weekend or was it at a different time?

BV: It may have been. I don’t remember the exact date. I think it was it was at a different time though.

WH: Mm hm.

So it was at the dedication.

BV: Right.

WH: I’ll see if I can find it. I’d like to read that.

BV: And then the Alumni Review, Tom Bleezarde was editor then, they did the cover with a full-color photograph, showing the white shrine and the Declaration of Independence, a very striking photo. Almost as striking as the one that we got with the Marine standing by, the one he did that caused the controversy.

WH: That was very striking.

RS: What controversy?

BV: That we were becoming a militaristic college.

RS: When was that?
BV: The first group of Marines, the first two we’ve had inducted in front of it. We’ve had two other occasions, and also one Army induction. That was . . .

WH: That was in the early ‘90s maybe?

BV: I was going to say early ‘90s or late ‘80s.

WH: I’m guessing, I’m not sure, but I remember it very well. It’s either one or the other.

RS: Are there other acquisitions that are as dramatic in the story?

BV: For the Chapin Library?

RS: Yes.

BV: Well yes. There is one that is partly related, but more related to the Constitution. I mean it doesn’t have a long story like I just told on this one.

RS: Well let’s hear that one.

WH: I’d love to hear it.

BV: That was the year when I told about the press coverage that we got on this. There was more coverage than any other news story that Williams has ever had. More newspapers picked up the story. And I told Wendy the best one was the *Times* of London, however much $412,500 comes above £260,000. The price of freedom £260,000.

RS: (Laughter)

WH: £260,000.

BV: £60,000.

WH: Isn’t that wonderful. What a dry sense of humor.

RS: How about the Constitution?

BV: Well Mr. Chapin bought that. I mean that’s a story in its own right. $750 in 1917.
RS: Have you guys been over this already?

BV: No, I don’t think . . .

WH: No, I’m confident that we . . . I asked for the four Founding Documents. The source of . . .

BV: I haven’t told you the price yet: $150 for the case to put them in.

WH: $150 dollars. O.K.

BV: I’m not going to put it into writing but the appraised value of the Constitution when it went over to the Clark was eight figures plus.

RS: (Laughter)

WH: Wow.

BV: It’s the most important copy extant of the 13 surviving copies.

WH: Is that right?

BV: The other one that’s more important is James Madison’s which is all a manuscript.

WH: Right, right. Wow!

RS: Now what qualifies this to be the most important one.

BV: Because there are George Mason’s revisions on the front side. Only this and the Pierce Butler copy at the Chicago Historical Society have the changes from the last two days of the Convention.

RS: Oh wow.

BV: of September 13th and 14th, and they adjourned on the 15th and take the vote on the 17th. So between the 15th and 17th Mason took his copy and wrote on the back of leaf 4. And on leaf 1 are his famous objections to this Constitution with government, which
begins “There is no Declaration of Rights.” That’s what I was trying to go and get George Mason’s original,

WH: Right.

BV: wrote the Preamble to the Virginia Constitution of 1776, which is the Declaration of Individual Rights. So this was on his mind. He was not going to sign the Declaration of the Constitution until there was a Declaration of Rights, unlike fellow Virginia, the young upstart James Madison, Mason was a senior member of the Virginia delegation, James Madison was going to trust the amendment clause of the Constitution and get it, and as I said earlier that Madison then served as chairman of the House when it acted as a committee of the whole to draft amendments to the Constitution. But Mason there outlined what would be either directly or indirectly 13 future amendments to the Constitution, plus has some other salient points to make, such as there’s one against in his notes on the front that was rejected – his opposed amendment that the President of the United States has the unrestrained power to grant pardons in cases of treason, which may be sometimes exercised to screen from punishment those who he had secretly instigated to commit the crime.

WH: To do it, yeah. Wow.

RS: (Laughter)

BV: I’m quoting directly.

WH: Oh my gosh.

BV: So we mounted this shrine at the same week that Ronald Reagan pardoned Colonel Oliver North. Now that was not a case of treason, but it was a case that get it quiet and it
won’t pursue that Mr. Reagan is the one who had instigated to commit these arm sales to Nicaragua or to Iran or whatever it was. So the thought was the same thing, and also the caution that the Founding Fathers had about their own selves, that any of us could do this kind of thing.

WH: Mm hm, mm hm.

BV: And of course Mason had a serious objection to the appointment by the state legislatures of senators. That wasn’t changed by amendment until 1903.

RS: I think it was 1913.

BV: Was it that late?

RS: Yeah.

BV: O.K.

WH: Really? 1913?

RS: Yes. The same year they instituted a federal income tax

WH: I didn’t know that.

RS: for the first time.

BV: And he also has a comment in there: “two economic systems can’t survive together.”

RS: Now that’s interesting. You’re in cotton and what was it worth? (Laughter)

BV: Cotton and cotton candy. (Laughter)

RS: (Laughter)

BV: So it’s a brilliant piece,

WH: Yeah.
BV: and that’s why when we had the Constitution Centennial in 1786 it was for the ratification. New Hampshire ratifies in July of ‘88. So in 1786 I think they started to inquire of us for ’87. The CIA has a whole exhibition facility in Langley and they wanted to borrow Mason’s copy of the Constitution. So somebody was smart down there. We couldn’t lend it to them because Mr. Chapin’s gifts says that nothing shall leave the library.

WH: That was brilliant.

BV: It meant very clearly that it was in the same building. The college library was a circulating. This was not to be a circulating

WH: I think that was very appropriate.

BV: but for a proper occasion you might want to lend something. So we sent them our negative photographs that we had the conservation make when they were doing a little clean-up of the pieces before we mounted them. And so they made them and we gave them the exact dimensions. These were colored so they made exact facsimiles.

WH: Oh exact, did they?

BV: For their exhibition of the Mason thing.

WH: That was a good compromise.

BV: But one of the big issues on the Constitution, when you have the signers for it, George Mason voted “no.” George Mason had convinced George Washington to come out of retirement to preside over the Constitutional Convention. He was the only person who would’ve had enough authority to keep everybody in order.

WH: Mm hm, mm hm.

BV: When it comes to take the vote, Mason votes against it.
RS: (Laughter)

BV: It’s made a slit that never got healed between the two.

WH: Yeah.

BV: Mt. Vernon and the Mason estate are contingent to each other.

RS: I didn’t know that.

WH: I didn’t know that either.

BV: Yeah.

WH: And the Mason estate is still extant?

BV: Yeah, Gunston Hall.

But anyway he voted “no” as did Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts for the same reasons as Mason did. Not for what was in the Constitution but for what wasn’t in the Constitution.

Richard Henry Lee of Virginia was the third one who voted “no.” He voted “no” for the reason that it gave too much power to a Federal government and didn’t protect the absolute rights of individual states. So already the states’ rights was cast in the vote for the Constitution.

WH: Absolutely.

BV: And when you come to then the ratification debates we have the complete set of three volumes. That’s what I was looking for before, but it’s in the vault. Our copy is the copy that belonged to Isaac Cohen who was the man who rented the hall for the Virginia convention in Williamsburg to have their debates. There are three volumes of debates set in small type and it’s everybody: Patrick Henry and James Madison, James Monroe, John
Marshall, George Wythe, George Mason, Jefferson was over in Europe, but Pendleton represented him. They’re going back and forth. The very first speech that Patrick Henry says they print in italics his conclusion: “How dare they say we the people,

WH: We the people?

BV: it is we the States.” (Laughter)

RS: I love it.

BV: Well they were getting nowhere, and so they finally agreed that they would go through the Constitution article by article, just like the writers of the Federalist Papers did.

WH: Mm hm, mm hm. And we have those books as well.

BV: Well the point that I want to make is another exciting acquisition though.

WH: O.K.

BV: The Federalist Papers is exciting, very exciting. That comes in a different way. But to buy something, I got a catalogue from this books dealer down in North Carolina, and I saw that the Virginia Resolves were in there. Well there’s two famous things from 1798: the Kentucky Resolves and the Virginia Resolves. James Madison wrote the Virginia Resolves and Thomas Jefferson wrote the Kentucky resolves on behalf of a friend of his who was in the Kentucky Legislature. And we have . . . Mr. Chapin bought the big broadside printing of the Kentucky Resolves. O.K., we have that, but we didn’t have a copy of the Virginia Resolves, an old helix copy there for $20,000. And the Class of ’40 fund had come into effect (this was I think in July) and so I had most of my budget there and was able to call them on the phone and say “You know you’re going to use, just leave
me with a few dollars left, but I still need this.” He said, “You got it. And I’ll tell you
what – I’ll give you 10 percent discount.”

WH: Wow
RS: (laughter)
BV: So we got it for $18,000.
WH: That’s great. Why would he have done that?
BV: Booksellers often give a 10 percent discount to institutions and . . .
WH: I must’ve sounded awfully pathetic: “You’re taking all my money.”
RS: (laughter)
WH: Hardly pathetic – very appreciative I’m sure.
BV: And so he called me the next day. He said, “I just sent it out Fedex, registered,”
hand-delivery thing when you sign it at each stage along the way. He said, “But you ought
to know that the University of Virginia, William and Mary, and the Virginia Historical
Society have all contacted me for it.”
WH: This was after you did?
BV: (Nod???)
WH: Wow.
BV: So they don’t have the first printings of the Virginia Resolves.
WH: No, no.
So it seems like that leads us into a whole other discussion which is how you stay
on top of what’s out there in the world? How long ago did you pick up the Virginia
Resolves?
BV: The Class of ’40 Fund came in 1990. In fact it took a year before it generated any . . . it would be about 1992 or ’93. So twenty years ago I suppose. And it was one of the first years of it generating income.

WH: Yes, yes.

BV: But then the other one of course was Herb Allen’s gift of the George Washington’s copy of the Federalist Papers that had been given to him by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton.

WH: Clarify that. Had been given to whom?

BV: To George Washington.

WH: George Washington’s copy is from them.

BV: Yeah.

WH: O.K.

BV: They’re the authors of it along with John Jay who wrote five of the

WH: And I saw it, his name in one of the books. Maybe it’s in both of them.

BV: It’s on both of them. And his bookplate is in both of them. But all of a sudden Herb Allen one evening called Frank Oakley, who was President at the time, and it’s 1990. I’ve got my file on it. And said, “I just bought a copy of the Federalist Papers. Will you have a place for it?” And Frank didn’t know. So he called me at home at 9:00 o’clock at night and he said “I just got off the phone with Herb Allen. And he has this important piece of Americana. George Washington’s copy of the Federalist Papers. He wants to know if you have a place for it. And I said, “We don’t have a place for it, but I’ll make one.”
WH: Absolutely.
RS: (Laughter)
BV: Because we had always said we’re going to keep the Founding Documents pure
WH: Right.
BV: with just the Founding Documents. Well by that time we had already added the
earliest British reply, and immediately on that phone call it came to mind of the Federalist
Papers which were written in defense or for people to vote “yes” for the Constitution at the
New York Ratification Convention here, and 13 inches away, George Mason’s famous
objections to this Constitution of government. It just flashed right across my mind exactly
how it would be shown. So I told him “yes,” and so a couple of weeks later Herb came
along. He came via Montana to O’Hare and then switched planes to Albany and his car
was ready for him in Albany, and he drove right over here with a little brown bag with two
paper handles on it, and no writing. It didn’t come from any boutique candy shop or
anything like that. Just a brown paper bad. The tiniest of shopping bags. We had the big
reading tables and he put it on there and reached in and pulled out a piece of crumpled
tissue paper, put that down, and said, “Here, this is yours.” Then he pulled out the box. It
was in a nice leather box made for it. That was it. He didn’t donate it right then. He
didn’t donate it until ’96. But he had a piece of paper that we signed eventually. That was
a loan with the right to take it back any time that he wanted, which he never even
suggested that he would do. So then he told Frank later on the phone again, he said, “I
want the letter to come from Bob Volz because he knows what he’s talking about. You
don’t.”
RS: Oh, he told Frank that?

BV: Yeah, and Frank told me. That’s exactly what he said. “You don’t.”

(All laughter)

BV: You Irish foreigner.

RS: Sounds like Herb.

WH: Oh dear.

BV: Then in ’96 he officially donated it to us.

WH: Yeah, yeah. That’s a great story too. Honestly. We’ll have to pick your brain on these. This is really very fascinating.

RS: Now what are some of the other really important documents that you have? Do you have the Seneca Falls Resolution?

BV: No. That’s 1848. The Seneca Falls is ’48, the Women’s Conference at Seneca Falls.

RS: What was the one that . . .

BV: The one at the Clark was the Declaration of Women’s Rights of July 4th, 1876.

RS: Oh 1876 later.

BV: That one I acquired through the University of Rochester that I knew had 2-1/2 copies or 2 copies and then a sort of a battered up copy that could be used. It was intact but not a good copy. And I knew that we were in the market to buy some Susan B. Anthony letters and so forth. So I offered them $5,000 for it because there’s only 5 copies I guess in existence of the piece. But it’s a very dramatic piece textually, but the story behind it is even more. Susan B. Anthony’s brother ran a small newspaper, so he had a
press pass to the opening ceremonies of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia on the 4th of July, which was to be opened by the Vice President of the United States, so the press could be close to the stage. You didn’t have recording machines. You had to take stenographic notes of what you were hearing. And they all knew how to take shorthand and things of that sort. So he gave his press pass to his sister, who managed . . . you know how stages have steps on either side of them?

WH: Yeah.

BV: She managed to walk up the steps on one side as the Vice President was there with this thing in her hand and demanded that he read it. He of course did not read it, and she was probably ushered off. But they also had hundreds of thousands of them and ladies in the aisles of the whole massive convention group of people meeting for the opening of the national celebration on the 4th of July in Philadelphia, and they quickly passed these out to the crowd. Well most of them, over time, have gotten destroyed. Probably most of them were destroyed that day for that matter, or thrown away like hand-outs are.

RS: Yeah, oh sure.

BV: Anyway, so everybody that reads it is sort of amazed by the sheer brashness of it and things of that sort. It even goes to wanting to impeach various government officers.

WH: I have to go back and reread that. I read it at the Clark.

BV: But you can only read part of it there at the Clark because it’s a three-pager, you see.

So that was a fun piece to get.

WH: Which that reads to a question about
BV: And it relates directly to the Declaration of Independence

WH: Yes.

BV: so I’ve tried since then to watch for letters of what we call “little people,” but where they mention something of significance or write something in a very interesting way about an event, whether it’s a crop failure or an Indian raid, or that they’re digging a ditch that’s going to be the biggest ditch in the west, or what have you. So if I can find anybody that’s written something about a 4\textsuperscript{th} of July celebration in their town, I try to buy the letter. We have a number of those. I’ve also tried to buy, whenever possible, the 4\textsuperscript{th} of July orations that were given regularly around the country, and by all kinds of people: politicians, clergymen, and other public figures, and they’re published in all kinds of small towns and big cities and just to get sort of the continuing influence of the Declaration. I even bought the famous Winslow Homer woodcut that was in \textit{Harper’s Weekly}, the double page one about the 4\textsuperscript{th} of July celebration. And it shows all kinds of firecrackers falling down on people’s heads. The men all with Bowler hats and so forth, and this whole crowd. Homer could do a crowd so wonderfully. The rockets coming down on their heads.

WH: Well, this is a lot of information. A lot of really fascinating information actually. I wanted to ask in terms of your acquisition funds, are all of them restricted funds or are they . . . it sounds like you have some discretion in what you can buy but you must also have . . .
BV: No, they’re restricted except for two. Mary Richmond, who was the second Custodian of Chapin Library, she and her husband, Don Richmond, who I don’t think was teaching when you were here

WH: No.

BV: but certainly was teaching mathematics when Stegeman was here. Her first husband had been Peyton Hurt who was College Librarian, and he committed suicide. But she remarried and married Don Richmond. As they got on in age, after both had retired from active things that they were engaged in, they pooled their resources and agreed that one half of the estate would go to the science department for a lectureship, a Richmond Lectureship, which we still have. It’s big enough they can get people who have a fancy fee. And the other half would go towards libraries of the college. One half would go towards the college library and one half would go to the Chapin Library. So the Richmond Fund was set up. I tried to get her . . . I said Mary . . . she was sitting . . . my desk was here. At the time we had a settee there that she liked to sit in every time she came to visit. A she sat there and I said, “Mary, I would like to have it for 16th century books because that’s where you can get the most value for the dollar right now and probably a long time in the future. Fifteenth century books are too expensive just because you say they’re 15th century. Go one year later and the price is in half.” And she said, “No, no, no, no. I want it to be for whatever Mr. Chapin would have liked to buy,” which left you wide open of course. In that way it’s an acquisition fund but it’s without defined purses.

WH: Restriction.
BV: I still tend, because Mr. Chapin tended to buy earlier printed books knowing that 19th and 20th century books would come our way more likely from other people. He bought 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th century materials. He would pretty much buy that with the Richmond Fund.

Then one other fund. My predecessor H. Richard Archer’s uncle. Archer died at age 66. He had a heart attack after he retired and died in January of the next year, which is ’78. But his uncle was very fond of him and fond of Archer’s widow. And so he left 1/3 of his estate down in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to the Chapin Library in memory of his nephew.

WH: How marvelous.

BV: It was ¼ of his estate. Marvel saw that ¼ was also for Oral Roberts University, and she convinced him to change his mind on that and just split his bequest into three sections. And so that’s our second largest fund. The Class of ’40 Fund is the largest. And then the H. Richard Archer, and the William Edward Archer, and then the Mary Richmond. There’s also a H. Richard Archer Fund that was set up in honor of Archer when he retired. He was a good friend of Fred Rudolph and Dottie Rudolph. Fred got a number of Archer’s other friends together and they set up an endowment fund in his honor. So that was just for fine printing and artist books and things of that sort. And then shortly . . .

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A


BV: What I just wanted to say was besides the Federalist Papers coming as a companion to the Constitution, a very, very important piece was the acquisition of the earliest British
reply, official British reply to the Declaration of Independence. That has its own long story of how it came, but was the gift of J. Brooks Hoffman, Class of ’40. Now Dr. Hoffman had been giving us material every year since 1979. A group of usually 10 to 20 documents, manuscript and printed, especially broadsides, and he liked to cache letters and broadsides and pieces of that sort that just seemed to capture a moment in time. So he saw this for sale after we had acquired the Declaration, and he bid on it at auction, and was the successful bidder. And it’s one of six copies that are extant of the text of the first British reply, and it’s one of only two copies of this printing. Now there are four different printings, and altogether they come to six copies. Two copies of ours, two copies of another one, and one copy each of the other two printings. None of them have an imprint date on it. So we just can guess that at least one of these was printed in New York, and very possibly ours because of the format, because it was issued from New York. But the Howe Brothers were Admiral Viscount Howe, Richard Howe, and he was the senior member of that family, and his brother, General William Howe. General Howe had led the British forces across Long Island and had come through Brooklyn and down into lower Manhattan. Washington fled across the Hudson over to the other side. So they had military control of Long Island and Lower Manhattan, and Brooklyn being the end of Long Island, of course. Then his brother had taken the British fleet up Long Island Sound, and so they had complete control over the Connecticut coast as well, as well as the entrance to the Hudson River, which gives you the shot up through the Hudson to Lake George and Lake Champlain and up into Canada and to Montreal. So the British were in a commanding military position.
Ben Franklin and the committee of three went to see the Howe brothers in New York on the 17th of September to see if some kind of negotiation and some kind of peace effort could be achieved after the Declaration. The Howe brothers . . . their official title is the King’s Commissioners for the Restoration of Peace Amongst His Majesties’ Colonies in North America. They had power that superseded that of any colonial governor if there was a question of differences. The Howe brothers would only receive Franklin and company as individual citizens not as representatives of the American Congress. Franklin would have none of that. So he turned with his group on their heel and left. The Howe brothers said there is no valid American Congress. O.K. We’ve heard this argument in our own days.

Then on the 19th, the Howes had written their response. The Americans showed good bad will and so forth, to appeal directly to the American people and disregard the voice of your Congress. And so that was issued. So Brooks was happy to get that and we were absolutely delighted to get it. We’ve always had it on display in one of the flat cases with the Declaration.

Much more recently though . . . we got it in ’83, I think it was in ’86 that Brooks found this piece and got it to us. So it’s been around here a long time. More recently, about a dozen years ago, we had an opportunity to buy the King’s Reply to the Joint Session of Parliament of Commons and Lords of October 31st, 1776. This would be a speech that was written by Lord North for the king. He was the Minister for Foreign Affairs and so forth. We read that now, along with the Howe Brothers at the reading of the Declaration of Independence. It’s somewhat longer with a little bit more bombast but also
a little more practical, because he starts out staying that this war in North America is at full
steam now as far as he knew, if he’s writing in October 31st, 1776, he would’ve had news
as late as mid-August perhaps, but nothing later, but he would’ve had the evacuation of
Boston, the British troops, so things weren’t all going well.

WH: Right.

BV: So that there’s military expenses that they were going to have to put money up for.
Things of that sort.

So that came along, and you know you look around for it and you see who else has
copies. The University of Virginia, that’s it.

RS: That’s it?

BV: Yeah.

WH: Wow.

BV: In America. You know I’m sure you’d find a half dozen copies in Britain. So
that’s why we right now, both of them are outside. It’s a very, very scarce . . .

WH: Did Brooks Hoffman help with that more recent acquisition?

BV: No, but I think I used the Class of ’40 Fund for that.

WH: Got’cha, got’cha.

BV: It was $10,000, and the funny thing about it is it came up locally.

RS: Really?

WH: Really?

RS: I’m curious. Where did it go?

WH: How local?
BV: There was a collector of militaria here in the area a dozen years ago. And he wanted to confine himself to some more recent militaria, and was willing to sell some Revolutionary things.

WH: And how did you hear about it?

RS: Well he knows . . .

WH: Did he advertise.

RS: No, he knows of our interest

WH: O.K.

RS: and he approached us. He wanted to know . . . of course that’s the kind of thing that you have to quickly learn not to small too quickly.

WH: Oh, we MIGHT be interested!!

RS: (Laughter)

BV: Until he gives you the price you don’t want to show your enthusiasm for it or anything like that.

WH: Yeah.

BV: Because the price hadn’t been disclosed yet.

WH: Did you (just out of curiosity now) did you dicker on the price, or did you feel whatever he was asking was appropriate.

BV: The pricing was eminently fair.

WH: Yeah, yeah. You must get into situations where you may counter the price.

BV: I don’t like to dicker much. You develop a reputation. There’s a very famous book collector and librarian who’s now deceased, Philip Holford, who was co-founder of the
Holton Library with Bill Jackson, who’s Williams Class of ’27. And Philip Holford came from Pennsylvania oil money. He was a great book buyer, great taste in books, especially illustrated and artist’s books and things. But from earlier days as well. And he totally built up single-handedly the Graphic Arts Department of the Holton Library. But he had a reputation of always dickering, and he also had a reputation that he was always charged 10 or 20 percent more to begin with.

RS: (Laughter)

WH: Interesting.

So you knew clearly what you didn’t want to do.

RS: I mean the stuff is either worth it or it isn’t. These guys have to make a living too. There are some dealers I wouldn’t touch with a ten-foot pole as far as their price goes. They’re dilettantes to begin with. They really don’t know the material. You can tell from their descriptions they’re quoting somebody else and things of that sort, or they’re taking it out of an encyclopedia. Well we all do that but I mean there’s just nothing there even the way some things are just not quite described right. You just sort of know it.

WH: Right, like that don’t really understand.

BV: It’s like these people that write certificates of authenticity. I’m a great skeptic of the people of the manuscript I’ve gotten, my picture, whatever it is, I got this letter of authenticity. Well, there’s tons of those out there from people that aren’t at all qualified to write a letter of authenticity that has any meaning or any guts with it.

WH: They’re happy to write them now aren’t they?

BV: Yeah.
WH:  Well Bob this has been absolutely fascinating.

RS:  Thank you sir.

WH:  And we appreciate the amount of time you’ve spent of that.

       Any final comments you’d like to make?

BV:  No, I have to make a quick call to the Swan Galleries in New York because they’ve
       got a big sale tomorrow on some things. I’ve got to find out how they want me to bid on
       them. Unfortunately the sale starts at 10:00 a.m. I think 10:00 a.m. will be too late to get a
       bid in. I’ve got to find out though . . . I have to get it in or fax it to them tonight or whether
       I can do it early in the morning. But I’ve got to figure out what price I want to pay for
       some of these things.

WH:  Yeah, yeah, yeah. He’s not retiring yet.

RS:  Not yet.

       Well thank you.

BV:  You’ve got to sign the retirement agreement. In one part of a clause it says that
       you will continue your duties unabated or something like that.

WH:  I’m going to close.

RS:  O.K.

WH:  Thank you Bob.

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

END OF INTERVIEW