

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
JAMES BRANCH CABELL LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: TWENTIETH CENTURY RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

NARRATOR: EDMUND ADDISON RENNOLDS, JR.

INTERVIEWER: KATHRYN E. COLWELL

Place:	6410 Three Chopt Road	No. of tapes: 2
	Richmond, Virginia	No. of sides: 3
		Length of tape #1 – 57:37 minutes (side A)
		Length of tape #2 – 44:22 minutes (side A)
		24:09 minutes (side B)
Date:	June 18, 2004	Interview: 1 of 4

Counter Index Topic of Discussion

[Cassette tape 1 of 2, Side A, Preliminary Interview 6/18/04]

0:00:06.0 Library archives and Richmond Symphony co-founder Emma Gray Trigg

(Note: The audiotaping begins in the middle of a conversation about library archives and fellow Richmond Symphony founder Emma Gray Trigg. Also present in the room at the time of the interview are Mr. Rennolds' son Edmund A. Rennolds, III, his daughter Bucci Rennolds Zuegner, his live-in attendant, Emile Zaffa, and the head of James Branch Cabell Library, Special Collections, Curtis A. Lyons.)

0:05:12.0 The impact of Revolutionary War on Mr. Rennolds' ancestors opportunities

0:10:25.6 Branch family history

0:13:00.0 Rennolds family history

0:21:27.1 Addison family history

0:22:25.0 Rennolds' homes in Essex County

0:24:45.0 Branch family history, *Branchiana*

0:26:16.4 (Bucci Zuegner enters and announces that it has started to rain. Short discussion between Mr. Rennolds and interviewer regarding cars, which is not transcribed.)

0:27:53.0 Interest in genealogy and early Virginia history

0:31:40.1 Branch family history

0:34:50.0 (General discussion of the intensifying storm.)

0:35:06.0 Rennolds family during the Civil War

0:37:30.0 End of tape 1, side A

[Cassette tape 2 of 2, Side A, Preliminary Interview 6/18/04]

0:01:20.0 Branch firm membership on the New York Stock Exchange

0:03:34.4 (Discussion of the storm and the advisability of moving to an interior room.)

0:04:11.5 Early married life and purchase of homes

0:08:25.0 Interest in the architect Andrea Palladio

0:15:48.0 Grandparents John Kerr and Beulah Gould Branch

0:20:19.3 Great-grandfather James Patteson Branch's trip to Europe

0:27:33.7 The effect of the Civil War on family businesses

0:31:31.0 The founding of the Richmond Symphony

0:44:17.0 End of tape 2, side A

[Cassette tape 2 of 2, Side B, Preliminary Interview 6/18/04]

0:00:00.0 The Richmond Symphony (continued)

0:06:35.6 The Richmond Symphony's relationship with VCU and University of Richmond

0:10:45.0 Mary Anne Rennolds Concerts at VCU

0:12:01.4 John Powell, musician and composer

0:21:15.0 Involvement with the VCU Library

0:24:09.4 End of tape 2, side B

End of Interview

Transcription Notes:

This interview was conceived as a time for all parties to become familiar with, and comfortable with, each other. The original intention was that the interview would not be transcribed. The decision was made to transcribe this preliminary interview due to the breadth of subject matter. The tape recorder was not initially turned on and thus some of the early comments were not taped. Also, as the quality of the original tape (cassette 1) is poor, this transcription contains frequent notations of "unintelligible." Edmund Rennolds, III videotaped a major portion of the

interview. His videotape was converted to audio (cassette 2) and is the source for much of the transcription.

Edmund Addison Rennolds, Jr.

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

Tape 1 of 2 (A) - 0:00:06.0 Taping begins in the middle of a conversation generally about library archives and Richmond Symphony co-founder Emma Gray Trigg

Edmund Addison Rennolds, Jr.: —and the lady, Emma Gray Trigg, they asked me to write about her musical life. I think Mary Tyler McClenahan wrote about her and there was a second person, we each wrote something about her for that little magazine [*The Richmond Quarterly*. Winter 1981]. I was astonished at the information that is located at the library. They put Mrs. Trigg's papers— They are all there and it really made writing that thing very much easier. I had no idea that they had that kind of record. (unintelligible)—because it disappears if somebody doesn't do something with it.

Curtis A. Lyons: Exactly, and the most fragile are the things that never make it down on paper, are things that people have in attics.

EAR: In our office we had some records that go back before the Civil War. When we shut down, we gave them to the Historical Society. I don't know whether you people do business records or not, but they do and business records are very, very scarce. They went through these things, they got them all arranged so that you can go and find out something. Things like (unintelligible). I don't know if you are interested in things like that.

Kathryn E. Colwell: It often is putting things in context.

EAR: Yes, otherwise it is so hard to find that kind of thing [referencing the Branch & Company business records].

KEC: That is at the Historical Society—

CAL: We are very pleased that we are going to be able to do these interviews. There are quite a number of topics, that we know of, that we are interested in hearing from you and I am quite sure that there are quite a few things about your life that we are not familiar with that will be very interesting. Kathy here has a lot of experience in doing these kinds of interviews and we think that, between the two of you, we will be able to get the information.

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EAR: It is quite wonderful, really.

KEC: I was thinking more about my role in this interview and it appears as if it is going to be very much broader than Curtis and I initially visualized. After the meeting with your children, we want to take it [the interview] further. And so, my role is often to ask the questions that will help your personality come out on tape. You have the memories and I know that you will just start talking and continue with them. I will interject trying to get more to the emotional side of how you felt about something or what the broader perspective of the community might have been at that time. But, the topics in many ways are yours to dictate because you have lived the life.

EAR: Yes, it's been only eighty-eight years.

KEC: I read something interesting today on memories. When one is at an older age, that often it is the subsequent events that have altered your memory of the previous experience because it just takes on a different light—

EAR: That's right.

KEC: —in view of what you have experienced.

EAR: Yes. And often, it is interesting, the things that bring something to memory have more of — Can I offer you all a glass of water?

KEC: That would be lovely, thank you. At some point, you might give this a little thought, are there artifacts or maybe photographs that spark memories for you. We could start there if it was helpful or encourage you on.

(Emile, at the side of the room, attempts to pour water into glasses but ice blocks the pitcher's spout.)

EAR: It is nothing but ice Emile. (laughter) Is it going to melt?

(Emile finishes pouring water for everyone.)

EAR: We are lucky to have ice these days, aren't we?

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:05:12.0 Impact of the Revolutionary War on his ancestor's opportunities

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KEC: As I glanced through—I've been to the Richmond Public Library, the newspaper files; the Library of Virginia, looking up a couple of things; and then the Internet and it seems as though there is a fair amount published about the Branch family but I had difficulty learning very much about the Rennolds family with the first quick peruse.

EAR: They weren't as newspaper, ah—what is the word?

Edmund Addison Rennolds, III: "Mediagenic"

EAR: Yes (laughter)

KEC: "Mediagenic", that is a good word. But that might be one aspect that you could focus on. Your mother, no, it would have been your father's mother, was an Addison?

EAR: Yes.

KEC: Okay. So that again—I haven't pulled together where the Addisons and Rennoldses—(Edmund Rennolds III states that a family tree can be provided) —okay. It is a job.

EAR: Have you run across a book about Saint George Tucker?

KEC: No.

EAR: He was a man whose family lived in Bermuda and he moved to Virginia just about the time of the Revolutionary War. The widow of the Randolph family—they were big landowners in this part of the country, all up and down the James River as far as Tuckahoe—I think that is as far as they went. One of the things that Saint George Tucker picked up was John Randolph of Roanoke as a stepson. Do you know anything about him?

KEC: Very little, the name is familiar.

EAR: Well, he and Saint George Tucker, who was his stepfather, had a terrible row over the future. And Saint George Tucker said that the land in Virginia didn't have much of a future. That it really had been ruined by too much tobacco being grown. And the second point is that the English had given subsidies to Virginia tobacco and after the Revolution, of course, that was gone. Well the Randolphs had a lot of land and Saint George Tucker said, "Look, get the children doing something else. Let them be lawyers, or doctors, or get their own living because

they're not going to be able to make anything off this land; in the style that their ancestors have.” And all you have to do is look at some of the houses like Westover, which the family lost after the Revolution. In fact two of their children were in, one in the British Army and one was in the British Navy, which didn't make them very popular after the Revolution was over. But there were other big handsome properties like Monticello; the family couldn't hold on to that—Tuckahoe. It went to show that Saint George Tucker was on the right track. His family—his children, one of them ended up the presiding bishop of the Episcopal church. They were very prominent, but not through land holdings, through their education and all. And John Randolph of Roanoke never spoke to Saint George Tucker again. He had six- or seven-thousand acres, which is a good-sized plantation. The plantation was called “Roanoke,” which is why he was called John Randolph of Roanoke. But he had a bitter tongue. He was elected to Congress. He was always having duels and doing all kind of things. (unintelligible) I didn't know anything about what had happened after the Revolutionary War. It turned the Branch family and the Rennolds family completely over.

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:10:25.6 Branch family history

KEC: And when you say that, the Branch family and the Rennolds family had land provided by the King, by charter?

EAR: They weren't big time. They had moderate properties. Now the Branch family came over 16—?

EARIII: —wasn't it about 1620?

EAR: Yes, 1619.

EARIII: Because they were in Henrico by about 1620, weren't they?

EAR: But for six or seven generations they didn't amount to very much. They had moderated size farms and grew some tobacco. They gradually expanded westward and finally ended up in Chesterfield County. Then the Revolution came along. Thomas Branch was alive at

that time and—they [Thomas and his father] were both twenty miles from Petersburg—he moved down to Petersburg and became a merchant.

EARIII: This is Thomas Branch's father?

EAR: This is Thomas Branch himself.

EARIII: The guy that later came back from Petersburg to Richmond?

EAR: No. You are getting ahead of me now; we are still in Petersburg. He became one of the most prominent merchants in Petersburg and dealt in all kinds of things. There was a lot of trade from Petersburg. It was just as big as Richmond at that time. The point is that fifty years before he couldn't have done that. The Revolution turned things around and the Randolphs no longer ran things. It produced a lot of opportunities for small landowners to forge ahead.

EARIII: You are saying after the Revolution things opened up?

Tape #1 of 2 (A) – 0:13:00.0 Rennolds family history

EAR: Yes, because the people that were in control disappeared. There was a small group that was under the governor, who ran everything. And in order to be that, they had to be big landowners—probably in Tidewater—to do that. You know all of those names: Carter and Fitzhugh and whatnot. They—the same thing happened to the Rennolds family. They came over later, but still 1675.

KEC: Still very early.

EAR: But they made the big mistake of starting out in Gloucester and all the Gloucester records were destroyed in a fire. But around 1700 they moved to the frontier, which Essex County was at that time. (laughter) For four or five generations they had moderate size farms, in Essex County. The records—you can go see how many acres, wheels and things like that. But, it was a moderate situation. So then the Revolution came along. The Rennolds who was around—he was the fifth generation—was called Sthreshley. That happened to be his mother's maiden name. I don't know why, but he was called Sthreshley. He was a moderate success. He became the sheriff and he was captain of the militia. And he also—now this is the big deal—he married

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into one of the old families that wouldn't even admit before, Beale. And then he had a pile of children. In those days a farm, of say eight- or nine-hundred acres, could not support but one family. (addressing Emile) Do you want to do an errand for me? There is a book in my room on Essex County.

Bucci Rennolds Zuegner: Next to your bed?

EAR: It's a bound book. I want to show them something there. Anyway, out of eight or ten children, one or two children might stay there but the other children would have to get out. The one that we are descended from was sent up to the University of Pennsylvania to go to medical school. This was about 1835 or 1840, some time like that. We always heard that had happened. This man turned up that was the archivist of the University of Pennsylvania. So I said, "See if Robert Beale Rennolds was a graduate of the Medical School." He found that he was. And it only took two years to become a doctor. Can you imagine that? You didn't need to go somewhere before either. And his brother went there too, and several cousins. He had a record of all of them in the archives of the University of Pennsylvania. So Robert Beale Rennolds also broke out of the pattern by marrying a girl called Caroline [Fitzhugh] Gordon. They owned Kenmore, which was a prominent house in the [Fredericksburg] neighborhood. I am saying that he broke into a strata that would not have happened if it hadn't been for the American Revolution. His son [Robert Gordon Rennolds] went up to [Ashland]—went on the train from—they lived in Fredericksburg— went from Fredericksburg to Randolph Macon. He went to college there. Then he came on into Richmond and ran a stove company, which was Richmond Stove Company. It did fairly well for a while but then it disappeared because coal stoves changed and they weren't coal or wood burning anymore. They were, you know, electric and gas, and all that—

KEC: I was searching on the Internet for Robert Gordon Rennolds—

EAR: My grandfather

KEC: —that would be your grandfather?

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EAR: Yes.

KEC: And, of course, Richmond Stoveworks [Stove Company] comes up.

EAR: What's that?

KEC: Richmond Stoveworks [Stove Company] comes up on the Internet and takes you to VCU Special Collections, where they have one of the catalogues.

EAR: Yes, I have one too. They told me that they had one. But ah, he [Robert Gordon Rennolds] was also on city council, when they had two groups then—two bodies. He died fairly young. I think sixty years old. But he was reasonably prominent. Richmond was full of businessmen you know. A lot of them were wholesalers, mostly, and some manufacturers. The Branches went into banking. You can tell by looking at Richmond, particularly the Fan District, how extensive it is. That was all based on industry and commercial.

KEC: I read before that Richmond's—at the time of the Civil War—Richmond's head was in the North but her heart remained in the South, due to the industrial influence and businesses.

EAR: Of course Tredegar Company was doing very well. They made locomotives, ammunition, all kinds of stuff. That really kept the—it kept the Civil War going for the South—what they were doing. I ended up as a director of Tredegar.

KEC: I noticed in one of the articles about you, it said Tredegar Timber.

EAR: Yes, well that was a separate—

KEC: That was a separate—

EAR: (calling to the other room) Bucci, did you find that?

BRZ: No, I did not.

EAR: Wasn't there a book on—. I'll tell you where it is. (chuckles) It's in that new bookshelf; on the bottom in the Rennolds—

BRZ: In your, in this bedroom?

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EAR: No, it's in the hall. There's a box of Rennolds stuff. It is right in the top of that box. Awful to go for something and not be able to find it. But ah— (laughter)

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:21:27.1 Addison family history

My Grandfather was married to an Addison. That is where Addison comes in. They were in the fertilizer business, Allison and Addison. Imagine going into a partnership with somebody called Allison.

KEC: Allison as in a-l-l or e-l

EAR: A-l-l-i-s-o-n. The Addisons were from Maryland. They were very prominent in Maryland but they did an extremely stupid thing. They joined the wrong side in the Revolution (chuckles). That ruined everything.

KEC: Change of fortune, definitely.

(Bucci Zuegner enters with a book on the history of Essex County)

EAR: What's that?

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:22:25.0 Rennolds homes in Essex County

This—somebody has discovered where the first Rennolds lived. The house is still there. See, look at this house and you can see why a big family couldn't live there. That's it there (pointing to a photograph on page 30)

KEC: My goodness.

EAR: (pointing to the photograph) The original house is, is this!

KEC: Just the small part—

EAR: (pointing to the photograph) Somebody added this in the 1800s—that went with it. Another generation married into the Sthreshley family and the, the— (EAR turns pages in book) Let's see, I wanted to show you one more thing about that. (unintelligible) One of the ones that was in that house had to move. He married a Sthreshley that owned this house. The family are still in there. It is amazing that both of those houses are still around. So many things that were built an earlier century have disappeared.

KEC: What I was wondering, if these houses are on the Virginia Landmarks Record?

EAR: They probably are, but they aren't very prominent houses.

KEC: But just their age, alone. There are so few properties that survived, as you said.

This says that the original section is actually around 1690?

EAR: Yes.

KEC: Which is a cared for property.

EAR: The thing about that name, Sthreshley, there is one of them in Westminster Canterbury. I've often wanted to ask her where she came from. There is nothing—it is not a name that you see much.

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:24:45.0 Branch family history, *Branchiana*

KEC: No. We're talking here about children needing a vocation and a residence; that was forced on them. I'm wondering did that change at all over time. Now in the Branch family the two sons went in business with their father Thomas, when he moved to—. I guess they were in business with him in Petersburg and definitely in Richmond. Many of you have chosen to stay in—

EAR: You see at that kind of business will handle more than one person and a farm wouldn't.

KEC: So it was strictly necessity.

EAR: Yes. Well, not necessarily. They were partners, three or four together. They ran the business.

KEC: I was thinking of those that had left earlier to find other vocations. That was more out of necessity. Here it was a choice.

EAR: Yes. Have you ever seen that book *Branchiana*?

KEC: I have seen it. I looked at it briefly yesterday at the library.

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EAR: It was written by James Branch Cabell, who was my mother's second cousin. He did a lot of research into the Chesapeake records and whatnot. What were we talking about? Something else before— That you brought up.

KEC: I was talking about the aspects of —

EAR: Oh, the aspects of the children having moved. Thomas Branch was one of about thirteen or fourteen children, I don't know what happened to them they disappeared. There is only one that really made a good success. I don't know what happened to the others. And it is right funny, the Branch places, the houses are all gone from that period. There was one on the James River between Richmond and Petersburg, a place called Kingsland.

Tape #1 of 3 - 0:26:16.4 (Bucci Zuegner enters and announces that it has started to rain. She offers to put up the top on Kathy's car. Short discussion between Mr. Rennolds and Kathy regarding cars.)

KEC: In these interviews, where would you like to put the focus? We don't know how many interviewing sessions we are going to have. What are the areas you would like to start with; the areas you would like to cover?

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:27:53.0 Interests in genealogy and early Virginia history

EAR: I, of course, am interested in, you might say, genealogy. It is kind of interesting to me that many of the people that became prominent in Virginia, nobody knows anything about them before they got here. Particularly people like Madison, and Jefferson, and Monroe. You know that somebody has tried to find them. But we don't know what county they came from or—a whole lot of stuff like that. So many people came over as—there is a word for it—

KEC: immigrate?

EAR: No. It's not remittance it's— They came over agreeing to work for somebody for so many years.

KEC: Yes, indentured.

EAR: Indentured. They came over— If you could bring somebody over you got fifty acres of land for doing that. In Williamsburg, one of these indentured people who had been a teacher in Scotland— He came over—left a family back in Scotland—and was on a ship full of them. They came to Fredericksburg in 1770-something. The owner was auctioning them off to various people. Somebody came in and said he'd like to have a schoolteacher. He bought the man's indenture; he had so many years left that he had to work for. Well the man kept a diary, which was published. It is absolutely fascinating; giving the details of life in that household. They let him off—they lived seven miles from Fredericksburg—and they let him off occasionally on Sunday and gave him a horse so that he could go into Fredericksburg and go to church, or do whatever he wanted to do. Since he had been a teacher, some of the neighbors sent their children over to be taught by him and paid him. He'd accumulated some money that way. Unfortunately he died while still there having never got back to his family in Scotland; children and wife and everything. We wouldn't even know this much about him if he hadn't left a diary, which somebody found. But the diary was fascinating, about what they ate, what they did. It was one of the finer houses on the Rappahannock that he came to. I think it was a [Davgerfield] Carter house. They were big landholders. The whole thing of these people, who had to work for someone for a while, with no money—

KEC: It sounds as though you are interested in, and supportive of then, the expansion of our understanding of history. We're looking at vernacular architecture, and the lives of the servants, and sometimes the lives of the women of the household—

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:31:40.1 Branch family history

EAR: Well I think—both of my cases—my people were not indentured. The Branches really came before that. The first Branch brought a wife and a child. He had a—there is some record of who they were in England, which was unusual—he had a distant cousin who was mayor of London and—I don't know—they were of a little bit higher stature. When they came over, which I don't have many records of, accumulated land and slaves fairly quickly. I don't know

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why, but he did. I don't think that it mattered if you were indentured to begin with, but that usually delayed them, and then where would you get the money to get going?

KEC: People that came over as indentured, that were Caucasian, we don't read a lot about those. We are becoming more and more familiar with the slave histories and those lives. But there were also a number at least of, of course they had their freedom guaranteed at a point in time, which made it different. But still they still experienced—

EAR: But it was a very structured society. These high muck-a-mucks all married among themselves. You can just, just look at that situation.

KEC: The genealogy aspect that you said you would like to, to talk about some. At what point shall we really start focusing though? Shall we start maybe around the Civil War time, or were you thinking more of developing some of these personalities, that many of—

EAR: Quite a lot, you really don't know much about them, unless they were writers, or in government, or something like that. There really isn't much information.

KEC: I was thinking some of what you might relate are the stories and personalities that have developed for you by listening to your father and grandfather. That oral history that has been passed to you that has gone no further.

(Edmund Rennolds III enters the room having left the house for a brief time.)

EAR: Where has Edmund been?

EARIII: I got a video tape.

EAR: What?

EARIII: I'm going to video tape this.

EAR: Is it worth it?

EARIII: Probably not. Probably not, it cost me eight dollars for two tapes. (laughter)

EAR: Thomas Branch's son was at Appomattox with Lee's army.

Tape #1 of 2 (A) - 0:34:50.0 (Edmund cautions that there is a severe storm moving closer, it has begun to rain heavily and trees are swaying due to the high winds. There is general discussion

about the wisdom of moving further away from the windows. We decide to stay in the living room.)

Tape #1 of 2 (A) – 0:35:06.0 Rennolds family during the Civil War

EAR: But on the Rennolds side they were in the middle of a battle at Fredericksburg and they had to leave. About six or seven miles away from Fredericksburg. But they had relatives in Fredericksburg itself. They ended up there. And then they found in a box books and other things that one of the Northern soldiers had collected and was sending home up to New England.

KEC: Doesn't sit well, does it?

EAR: And then the family bible, was in—they had those big bibles you know—was in, they found it in the front yard. And he put his mother's name in it, he was sending it home to her.

EARIII: Do you know much about that battle?

KEC: I'm not much of a Civil War—

EARIII: It was almost a pure slaughter.

EAR: It was what?

EARIII: I said that battle was almost a pure slaughter. I think the worst—

EAR: Edmund, this was a different part of Fredericksburg—

EARIII: But I mean the Union troops were demoralized and lost all their discipline as a result.

EAR: Yes. But anyway, there was something that I was going to say. This fellow who was a doctor revived pretty quickly after the war. Because I think he went into Fredericksburg and became a doctor. It didn't matter whether he had any land or not. That is an example of somebody that came from the land situation, but by being a doctor.

KEC: The Branch's—I understand at the end of the war—changed the focus of the business—is that correct—having gone from commission merchants and changing over to a

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brokerage house or into banking. That shows good foresight on the part of Thomas Branch and his sons.

0:37:30.0

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

Tape #2 of 2 (A) - 0:01:20.0 Branch firm's membership on the New York Stock Exchange

EAR: Yes, his son became a member of the New York Stock Exchange. And then one son became a member who was my grandfather, and then I became a member. Somebody in between who was not a member but it came down that way. In Richmond, when I was young, if you wanted to do any business on the New York Stock Exchange you had to be a member or be the partner of a member.

KEC: Did individuals— Were brokers members of both the Richmond Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange?

EAR: The Richmond Stock Exchange wasn't anything.

KEC: It had a brief glory is that what you're indicating?

EAR: Well it only had a dozen stocks on it. We met at twelve o'clock on every day.

All the brokers met and exchanged prices. (unintelligible)

KEC: When it was founded though, it must have had a purpose beyond—

EAR: Well it just had a few more members probably, but that was all there was. There wasn't anything in New York back then.

KEC: Explain to me what exactly, what the purpose was. It was for—

EAR: Just like any exchange you bought and sold stock.

KEC: To raise funds for the company.

EAR: Yes.

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KEC: Do you have any idea whose, who came up with that concept, or who instigated—

EAR: All towns had one.

KEC: They did? Okay, I didn't realize that.

EAR: You had them in Charleston. You had them in Boston. You had them in Philadelphia. —all the towns where somebody was doing business.

KEC: Were there laws that governed those?

EAR: What?

KEC: Were there state laws that governed the Exchange?

EAR: Probably not.

KEC: It was word of honor.

EAR: Yes.

(Tape #2 of 3 0:03:34.4 Discussion of storm and advisability of moving to an interior room.
The interview continues in the living room.)

Tape #2 of 2 (A) - 0:04:11.5 Early married life and purchase of homes

KEC: Your parents purchased this home, is that correct?

EAR: No, I bought it.

KEC: You bought the home when you married—

EAR: Twenty-nine thousand dollars, how about that?

KEC: Oh my. (laughter) Okay. Was this immediately after your marriage?

EAR: Yes, well when we started to have children.

CAL: What year was that? Do you remember?

EAR: Well we bought it in 1951. I've been here fifty-some years.

KEC: Okay. And where was your home prior to that?

EAR: Well we just had an apartment downtown on— What's that street over there by

VCU?

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EARIII: Harrison.

EAR: Harrison Street.

CAL: Where on Harrison Street? Do you remember?

EAR: Well the apartment is gone now, its— There is a building put up in the art section, I think, at VCU.

CAL: So near Park Avenue?

EAR: It is between Park Avenue and Franklin.

CAL: Oh, Okay.

EAR: Nice location. I could walk to work at that time.

KEC: Your office has moved several times, hasn't it?

EAR: Yes.

KEC: —from the Branch/Cabell building.

EAR: It is amazing to me how live able this house has been. It expanded up to where there were six children and now it is just me. It's comfortable for both sets of people.

KEC: For the size of the rooms, this is very comfortable. It is intimate and still there is plenty of room to display some of your collections.

EAR: You know an interesting thing about this. I took one year of architecture, so I have a degree of interest in that. It has four rooms that are exactly the same. This is one of them. It has a fireplace, two windows, one window—(lights flicker)—Oh, Lord. We had better find a flashlight; hadn't we? Because I fear we are going to loose electricity.

EARIII: The camera is on a battery so you don't need to worry about that. (laughter)

EAR: Where is the battery? Let's get something. Get something else because that is not enough. But anyway. This house was designed by an architect as his own. He had four identical rooms. He had this one and the dining room is exactly the same. And then up above, there were two rooms, over, which were exactly the same. And he did not have any children, but he had a mother-in-law who lived with them and so the room like this was their, was their room.

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And then the other room like this was for the mother-in-law. So it showed the design of the house. However there was only one bath. I don't know how they worked it, but they did. Somebody bought the house later, who had children. He cut off a piece of the room for a bath. And so there was another bath.

KEC: It is interesting that— what year would have this house been built?

EAR: 1910

KEC: 1910, but even then, the pattern, the floor plan, it is very similar to the plantation houses where you had the very large hall.

Tape #2 of 2 (A) - 0:08:25.0 Interest in the architect Andrea Palladio

EAR: That is right. I studied the architect [Andrea] Palladio a lot. One year we rented one of the Palladian villas for a week and it was very much like this house. It had a center hall. It had two biggish rooms and then two smaller rooms behind, which is exactly what this house has. Also the plantations had, would not have had the smaller room, if any room at all it would have been a big room. And of course Palladio didn't like staircases so it wouldn't have had a staircase.

KEC: Was Jefferson following—

EAR: Yes he was, very strongly. Edmund reach over and get the little (unintelligible) up there. Would you? (Edmund brings a white ceramic sugar dish/cookie jar that is shaped like a building) This is a, that is a—Edmund please find a candle or something.

EARIII: We'll do it in a second.

EAR: What?

EARIII: We'll find it.

EAR: (referring to ceramic building model) That is a the most prominent house that Palladio designed.

KEC: And it is in Italy?

EAR: In Vicenza. It is called the Villa Rotonda. He built it on a hill with a view in four different directions so it has four porches and steps.

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KEC: It is entirely symmetrical.

(There has been a repetitive thumping sound in the background for some time.)

EAR: What is that sound?

EARIII: Dripping. The rain is dripping in.

EAR: Where?

EARIII: In the hall.

EAR: Hadn't we put something to catch it?

EARIII: We've got something there.

EAR: Oh. Where is it dripping from?

EARIII: I don't know. It is one of the worst storms I've ever seen. I told you when I came in here that it looked like a tornado.

EAR: Well anyway, I am the president of the Center for Palladian Studies in America, imagine that.

KEC: That is wonderful. I assume that you enjoy the associations and the discussions.

EAR: Oh Yes, right now we are looking at a Palladian house in Petersburg that is in very poor shape. We're helping them publicize it. Some years ago Tiffany had models of five Palladian buildings in their shop windows, just before Christmas. I bought one of them, which is in the hall.

EARIII: Do you want me to get it?

EAR: Well that's too, too big to move. My niece bought another one and so we had two. Then, I got the man who had done those things for Tiffany to do this house, which is over there.

KEC: (looking at model of Rennolds home) That is just marvelous.

EAR: It is just cardboard.

KEC: It is only cardboard?

EAR: We had the architect's plans and he worked from there.

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KEC: His attention to detail.

EAR: What's that?

KEC: His attention to detail, with the rail—

EAR: Yes, it really is amazing and it's just paper. He has a career of doing those things. A lot of them are used by period movies. They photograph something and make it look like, like a house.

KEC: Did your interest in architecture influence your purchase of this house?

EAR: What's that?

KEC: Did it influence your purchase of this house? Were you looking for something—

EAR: I don't know, probably. I didn't imagine though how, what a strong Palladian feeling this house was, until I actually was in one.

KEC: Maybe you intrinsically knew that this would be home. It felt right.

EAR: I've been over to look at Palladian villas three or four different times. We've run tours. Of course there were a lot of famous architects then, but Palladio wrote a famous book and the book has been published in three or four different languages. Jefferson had five copies of it, imagine. There was a fellow in England, of the same period, who—an English lord who had them—built some houses in the same period.

KEC: Was Palladio one of the few who did pattern books like that? Am I using the correct term for those books?

EAR: Yes, I think he was and for that reason he is better known. He operated in a very small area in the part of Italy called the Veneto, which was the area around Venice. There were architects in other places, which you've never heard of because they didn't leave a book. It just shows how important books are for a librarian.

EARIII: Was the English guy Indigo Jones?

EAR: What?

EARIII: Was that Indigo Jones?

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EAR: Indigo Jones was later. He was in England. He was influenced by Palladio. They all were influenced by him.

KEC: We continue to see architects that are influenced by him but the end result isn't always very pleasing.

EAR: You know somebody built a copy of that recently. That one (points to a model of Villa Rotonda), in England, except he didn't have four porches. He only had two. He didn't have enough views for that. My niece started doing tours to other countries that Palladio had an strong influence in Central Europe. We went on one last year—of Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and Germany, and— all that was Palladian houses. They came from the same book. Italian architects were around various places. St. Petersburg is largely built by Italian architects, many in Palladian styles.

KEC: Did you spend time as you were growing up in your grandparent's villa?

EAR: Yes. I went twice, when I was eleven and thirteen. I got bitten by an Italian bug.

Tape #2 of 2 (A) - 0:15.48.0 Grandparents John Kerr and Beulah Gould Branch

You know my grandparents met in Germany. Did you know that, in the Black Forest? So they—

KEC: Were each of them studying abroad or were they traveling, separately?

EAR: You know, she came from an interesting family. They were Quakers. The Quakers were in very bad shape in Massachusetts. They didn't believe in fighting and that was not very popular, particularly during the American Revolution. My ancestors started out in Massachusetts. It became so uncomfortable for them that they immigrated west into what is now New York state. It was a piece of land sixty miles long and three miles wide called the "Oblong." It was between New York and Connecticut and nobody knew which one it was. It was just no-man's-land. These thirty families of these Quakers settled in this no-man's-land, which is now in part of New York State, Pawling, New York. My grandmother, she was about the fifth generation to be up there. She had an aunt who had married somebody that had been out at the gold rush in California. He died and she had some money; so she used to go to Europe every

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year. This was in 1880-something. She took her niece with her several times, who was my grandmother. That was when she met my grandfather in the Black Forest. This aunt had taken her with her.

KEC: Your grandfather, why was he in the Black Forest that day?

EAR: I'm not really sure. (unintelligible) He was not in very good health, though. I don't know why he was over there, but he was.

CAL: There are some spas in that area.

EAR: What?

CAL: There are some spas in that area.

EAR: What is that?

CAL: Some spas that people go to when they are in ill health.

EAR: Well, his mother had cancer and she went to Munich because the doctors were supposed to be better there and she died actually in Munich. But they had this strong connection to Europe. I really don't know why. You know in the case of my grandfather, his brother married a French woman and his sister married Arthur Glasgow, who was living in London. So they were quite European minded.

KEC: Exactly. Did your father continue that same interest of the continent?

EAR: My grandfather

KEC: I was thinking your father.

EAR: No my father, of course, didn't have that background, the Rennolds.

KEC: And didn't have a lot of— It wasn't a strong interest for him

EAR: Well, it was of some interest but not the prevailing interest.

KEC: Probably his travels might have been more because of your mother's interest and her connections.

EAR: Yes.

KEC: Because it sounds as though you from a very young age, that—

EAR: Well I was. My great-grandfather went to Europe in 1856, from Petersburg. They were Methodists at the time. The rector of the church, Centenary Methodist, took three young men with him, one from Petersburg, one from Lynchburg, and one from Richmond. It took them about six months. And then wrote about it and it was published. Imagine, in 1857—.

KEC: What was the purpose of the trip; just to expose them?

EAR: Just a book about the trip. My great-grandfather also kept a diary on the trip. The young people used to be sent on a— I don't know what you call them. There is a coming-of-age—I don't know what it was. This diary, which I've got, tells a lot of detail about Europe in 1856, which I think is interesting. One is how hard it was to get around.

KEC: There would have only been horse drawn vehicles?

EAR: Yes.

KEC: And evidently they weren't readily available.

EAR: Well in Italy, Italy was then five different countries. It was Venice, and Milan, and Rome, and Naples. What is the fifth one? But to go from one to the other you had to go through customs, just like you were going to a foreign country. Florence, I guess it was. He's got an account of how they got from Florence to Venice. There is a very high mountain in between them. If you go up to the top of that mountain you see both oceans. You can see the Adriatic and the—the other one. (chuckles) So they started out from Florence with six horses. There were two horses, one man on one of them, and of the three men, each one was riding a horse, and then the fourth man was on the carriage, which was called a diligence. His main function was to put the break on when they were going down hill. (laughter) So, they got to this mountain and hired two oxen to go in front of the six hoses and finally got up to the top of that hill. The one you could see both oceans from. I've driven the same thing. What you usually do is go from Florence. There is a tunnel, or something, through this mountain. Then you get to Bologna, have lunch there, and then you go on to Venice. Well they got to Bologna to spend the

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night, which is right remarkable with six horses and oxen and everything. I don't know, it just kind of brought it home to me this was the way of getting from one place to another. Then they had to go through customs. When they got to the Venice part of the (unintelligible), they said that the customs people were so—always searched everything and all that. I guess it was a very difficult problem. Then when they were in Milan, they went by boat to Rome. This was the port of Rome. What's it called Edmund? Do you remember? It was a port about twenty or thirty miles from Rome.

EARIII: Ostia.

EAR: Maybe it is. That is the way you got around that way. They did all of the things people do. They went up the— What is the name of the volcano?

EARIII: Vesuvius.

EAR: They went up Vesuvius as far as they could. One of the things that you could go to was the studios of sculptors.

KEC: Wouldn't that have been fascinating.

EAR: The Methodist clergyman didn't think much of— (chuckles)

EARIII: Roman stuff? The Roman ruins?

EAR: No, of the one in Florence that did the room in Venice. I mean in Rome.

EARIII: Michelangelo?

EAR: Yes. He didn't like Michelangelo's work. Apparently done the (unintelligible) Whether (unintelligible) He said that that was so much better than anything Michelangelo had done. (chuckles)

EARIII: He was right of course.

KEC: It wasn't that he was offended by—

EAR: No. (unintelligible) I asked if anyone could find out anything about this man. I think he came from somewhere in Virginia. He had done some sculptural work. It is an interesting thing to have the reaction of somebody in 1850-something.

KEC: You can be glad that your grandfather wrote about it. Did your grandfather state what his opinion was?

EAR: No, it was the man who wrote the book, who was a clergyman.

KEC: Oh, clergyman and not your grandfather.

EARIII: Your grandfather did a diary

EAR: What is that?

EARIII: Your grandfather did a diary, which was not published.

EAR: Great-grandfather. Just think four years later the Civil War came along. Wrecked everything.

Tape #2 of 2 (A) - 0:27:33.7 The effect of the Civil War on family businesses

KEC: I have read that your— Let's see Thomas is your great-great-great-grandfather, isn't he?

EAR: Great-great.

KEC: Great-great Grandfather Thomas Branch. That he initially was not in favor of succession.

EAR: No he wasn't. But I think a lot of businessmen weren't. They were doing business in New England, New York, and Albany and had balances in New York banks.

KEC: So he did lose a lot financially—I would assume—as the result of the war.

EAR: Oh yes. Since they weren't landowners, they could recover fairly quickly and just go on with the same thing that had done before.

KEC: Cabell [Edgar MacDonald] writes that your great-great-grandmother had gone down to one of the warehouses and gotten bolts of cloth or something. Later they were able to sell that after the war.

EAR: There are a lot of legends. Another is that they had five-thousand dollars in gold.

KEC: That number creeps into this text also.

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EAR: I think they started making money fairly quickly and that annoyed the poor Confederates around. I don't think that you had to do anything unusual to do it, to make the money, if you had the knowledge. It came along.

EARIII: Didn't someone have some cotton that they sent to West Virginia?

EAR: That was the Rennolds that did that. It wasn't West Virginia then. It was part of Virginia.

EARIII: I mean part of the state that was not confiscated.

EAR: There was some other reason why it happened. My great-grandfather, who was a doctor, had a couple of bales of cotton in Charleston [West Virginia], which he sold. Probably enough to buy a house in Fredericksburg. I've often wondered where that money came from.

KEC: Because that house was purchased after the war, the Kenmore [Fredericksburg] house.

EAR: Yes. They moved in from the one that had been looted, which was outside of the town.

KEC: Sir, are you feeling tired at all. You have been talking almost non-stop for an hour.

EAR: No.

KEC: Okay.

EAR: I am perfectly happy, as long as we are producing anything; if it is any good.

KEC: I am going to get back to our agenda for future interviews. We are going to deal with genealogy some more. Something that we feel is important for the community to know more about is the founding of the Richmond Symphony. If you wanted to expound on that—

EAR: Yes. My wife was very musical.

EARIII: Did you want to go into it right now? She's just getting an over-view of the topics she's interested in. She's not necessarily wanting you to go into it.

EAR: Oh, you don't want to talk about it now.

KEC: Well, we can (chuckles) but I was thinking if we could kind-of identify some of the areas that—

EARIII: She's trying to get sort of a global overview of the things that she should focus on and what you might feel are important to talk about.

Tape #2 of 2 (A) - 0:31:31.0 Founding of the Richmond Symphony

EAR: Of course my wife pushed music. The children all had lessons. There was a fellow called John White who was a professor at the University of Richmond. He and Mary Anne talked a good deal. He said, "Look Richmond has got to have a symphony. Why don't you get a group together to talk about it."

EARIII: Do you want to go into this now?

KEC: If he would like to.

EARIII: Do you have something else you'd like to do?

KEC: No. I think this—

EAR: What is that?

BRZ: The time is right.

KEC: Edmund is asking whether I wanted to go into this right now and that is just fine. It appears as though we will just kind of wander where the path takes us with our conversation. If that is okay? I'll kind of push down the planner in me.

EAR: Richmond had had two or three disastrous attempts to have a symphony. The same thing is true of libraries, you know. We were offered a library by Carnegie and they refused it. Carnegie said they had to keep it up.

KEC: Oh, and they wouldn't commit to—

EARIII: Just books.

EAR: Yes, the gentlemen had a library at home. Why do you have to have a public library? But anyway—

EARIII: When was that?

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EAR: Oh, I don't know; whenever Carnegie was, probably 1850, in there somewhere. They're scattered all through New England. Every little town has a Carnegie library.

KEC: And the Midwest.

EAR: Yes, but not Virginia. Anyway, it was difficult to do anything because there'd been several failures. I had a great-uncle Branch who was in one of the failures.

KEC: As an organizer or as a musician?

EAR: As an organizer.

EARIII: He was president.

EAR: —of the Symphony at that time. He also was the second president of the Virginia Museum. He was the one that married the French woman. We had some meetings several different times and discussed various things. Our big influence was Mrs. Trigg, whose material is over at the— Emma Gray Trigg. She was a knockout.

KEC: You were quoted in the newspapers as saying that you feel—this was in 1957, I believe, when the [Richmond] Symphony was founded—you felt that this time it would be successful because the impetus was coming from the local level. Whereas in the past—

EAR: Actually, what White did was— Norfolk had a symphony with a man called Schenkman. He suggested having Schenkman come up and run the Richmond one as well as Norfolk. Schenkman said he would come if we could raise ten-thousand dollars. (chuckles) Imagine. We had a season of three concerts at the Mosque, which was the theater that we were using. The thing just jumped into action right away a big crowd came over there. I think the second concert was sold-out, four- or five-thousand seats. People were just curious.

KEC: The musicians, were they primarily from Norfolk?

EAR: We had as many as we could from here. I think we would bring about twenty up from Norfolk and maybe ten from Washington. Mrs. Trigg, she actually raised that ten-thousand dollars by getting a hold of people. They were giving five-hundred dollars, or a thousand, or something like that. Anyway, we got it going. Then her job was to get musicians here. She

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knew quite a lot about that from the stuff in the trade paper. She would get somebody to come down. She'd find them an apartment. She would find them another job if they weren't earning enough money; took care of them in all different ways. The toughest thing was the bass fiddle. We didn't have anywhere near enough of them. We always had to bring them from nowhere.

KEC: After the first season, you had raised the ten-thousand. Was it ten-thousand to get Mr. Schenkman?

EAR: He wouldn't come if you didn't have ten-thousand.

KEC: Ok. So that just saw you through the first season.

EAR: Yes. And then there was some other money raised too. Finally Richmond was doing so well that he moved here and gave up Norfolk. (laughter)

KEC: No doubt Norfolk didn't thank you for that.

EAR: It was really quite remarkable that Norfolk had had this thing for ten or fifteen years before.

KEC: Was Schenkman the first—he was the conductor or director?

EAR: I guess he was both. He ran the thing.

EARIII: He was the conductor.

EAR: We had a civilian that was kind of running the office. It is interesting that in those days there were really very few symphonies around. The job of running a symphony didn't exist. You had to create it. Now if you needed one there would be ten applicants that would apply that had past experience doing it. We had some terrible experiences with the first few. (laughing) We didn't know what they were supposed to do anyway. We went along, added some concerts, and added some children's concerts. Mr. Schenkman came up here. I was president at the time. We had a terrible row. Schenkman, about once a year he would threaten to resign if something wasn't his way. The man who was president after me, when he threatened to resign said "go ahead and go." The board was mistreating him. Horrible experience. There was a long interview with me in the paper. I don't know whether you have seen that or not.

KEC: Regarding that situation?

EAR: Yes.

KEC: That one I did not—

EARIII: Labor buster.

KEC: Labor buster?

EAR: What's that?

EARIII: Enemy of labor.

EAR: What?

EARIII: Enemy of labor.

EAR: Oh. I don't know it was a very bad situation. So then we had to hire a conductor and ended up with a Frenchman, Houtmann. Who was really quite good. What they did—they don't do it that way now—they had three people and each one had to conduct the same piece on the same day. Finally Houtmann was considered the best one so he was chosen. He ran the symphony for probably ten years.

KEC: You say, "They don't do it that way now."

EAR: Now what you do is you have a committee. You usually have fifty or sixty people that want the job, curiously enough. What you usually do is you end up with the ones you particularly like. You have them do a whole concert the next year.

EAR: Do you travel to them to hear them conduct?

EAR: No, they come down here to do it, with our orchestra.

KEC: I was thinking that as you started narrowing the field.

EAR: I think maybe some of that was that way, depending on where they were coming from. Also, there is quite a problem getting new musicians, too.

KEC: Why is that?

EAR: What you do is—you've got the violin section—they have to perform behind a screen where the committee can't see them. They'll get, I don't know, fifteen or twenty people at

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a time, curiously enough. But there are a lot of musicians being graduated now from the music schools, of course there are no jobs. You can get them. You can get a very good one. But that created a situation where what do you do with our old players that had been with us forever and are not as good. And that was a terrible row too.

KEC: How was it resolved?

EAR: Somebody gave us some money to pension them. I think that worked very well. We've got a lot of young people now that I think are very good.

KEC: Did another musical body form with some of these pensioned individuals? I think some people play out of the love of playing

EAR: There is a something called the philharmonic, which plays. My daughter Anne, a cellist, plays in there. But I think most of them were really ready for retirement by then. A lot of them were teachers and various things like that.

TAPE #2 of 2 (A) – 0:44:17.0 END OF SIDE A

TAPE #2 of 2 (B) – 0:00:00.0 BEGINNING OF SIDE B

KEC: At the time that the symphony was founded, I would think that you became close friends with many of the musicians

EAR: Yes, I was, naturally. We talked their language.

KEC: From the very beginning did they have the conductor talk prior to the actual event?

EAR: I think they would have been after, because we had to educate people. They had never been to anything good before. (unintelligible) He would go methodically through all of the things: the piano concertos, the violin concertos, symphonies, the basic things that the normal educated person would know. —the Beethoven symphonies, the Mozart ones, the Brahms ones and so on. He was doing that. He got us off to a very good start.

KEC: Did you have subscription at that time, for the symphony series?

EAR: Did I have a what?

KEC: I'm probably not using the right word.

CAL: A season ticket.

KEC: A season ticket or a season subscription.

EAR: Yes.

KEC: Did you have that from the very beginning?

EAR: Oh no.

KEC: Do you recall how the number of ticket holders increased. In other words, the people that were committing themselves right up front.

EAR: I don't have those figures. I'm sorry.

EARIII: Were there a lot of people at the beginning or did they gradually increase.

EAR: Well, it has increased. I am sorry to say that I think a lot of it is dependent on who your soloists are. Getting a name that people would want to hear. We have not been able to afford them now. We have good people but they are not famous.

KEC: You have several groups that have formed since the symphony, the symphonia. I am not saying that correctly, the symphonia.

EAR: The symphonia is not a type of group.

KEC: It is a group of musicians from—

EAR: It is part of the symphony. You see the way the economics of it is you have to hire people for so many performances in a year, two hundred performances, say. You can use them anyway you want. You've got to provide something, some reason to do it.

KEC: How do you feel about the— I heard the symphony recently at the train station. I don't remember what they called it. It was more of a pop symphony though.

EAR: Yes we do that too.

KEC: You are a great music lover, your wife was. Do you find that to be a diluting of—

EAR: No, I don't think so. You have a different type of people that go to it. We've planned something different next year. We're going to have to give up the use of the Carpenter Center for two or three years, until 2007, providing they raise the money. The main series is going to be in three different places: St. Michael's Catholic Church, which is about here; the First Baptist Church, which is at Boulevard and Monument; and the Second Baptist Church, which is way out on River Road. There are people now that are afraid to go downtown, or park, or something. This affects almost everybody. The First Baptist Church—it will be the Fan people that go there. The ones in this area can go to St. Michael's Church, and then the other one is way out on River Road. But toward the river there is a group. It will be very interesting to see how that works out.

KEC: Then you are feeling optimistic. That you could actually increase—

EAR: We have the people too. The Catholic Church one is fascinating. It is in the round, you know.

KEC: I'm not familiar with St. Michael's.

EAR: There is no reason you should be. It's brand new. I think we'll have a very good sound; it's very nice. There was a real achievement that they did at the last concert this year. They did Mahler, which has about thirty more musicians than the whole symphony and a great big hall. To put that in the round where you are practically touching them, was quite an experience. But it is a special one.

KEC: I can see where that will build some. I know the symphony they would call names of people that would come up and sit with the symphony. People were just elated.

EAR: It is an interesting thing to do particularly because We've tried a lot of things like that. We have to do everything we can think of.

Tape #2 of 2 (B) – 0:06:35.6 The Richmond Symphony's relationship with VCU

KEC: Does the Symphony have any kind of a formal relationship with VCU or with U of R [University of Richmond]? Are there programs that have been established?

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EAR: Not really a formal relationship. I was very critical of VCU in the early days. We had a music department that was practically non-existent. We wanted to get a quartet going, which is first violin, second violin, cello, and viola. It seemed to make sense that we would use people from VCU because it would provide some income for them that couldn't get from us. VCU was not all that cooperative. Our concerts were at the Mosque, which is right at VCU, and students could go for a dollar, the teachers didn't make them go, which was incredible to me. These students came from small towns in Virginia and they were going back to the small towns afterward. But for this four-year period, they had never seen a symphony before and they could go to one for a dollar. I never did understand why the teachers didn't make them, as part of the deal.

KEC: It is most unfortunate that the teacher's didn't make them—

EAR: Then this man came along who was a Czech refugee in trouble with the Russian authorities. His name was Smetana. Do you know that name?

KEC: No, I do not.

EAR: Smetana was a very famous musician who had written a lot of music, who was his great-grandfather. This one had a quartet in Prague. A first rate quartet that he was in. Somehow he got out of Czechoslovakia, he had been in prison for a while (unintelligible) Russian and ended up in Richmond. Fabulous career and VCU wouldn't take him because he—I don't know—the State of Virginia he didn't go through there.

CAL: Do you remember about what year that was?

EAR: No, it was about twenty-five years ago. They latter did take him on and he was there for ten years. I was at a private party when he left and I was talking to the head of music and I said, "Look, you wouldn't even hire this man." And he said, "Well, we made some mistakes." It is just incredible to have had a career. He had a cello that had been given him by the president of Czechoslovakia. He had a terrible time getting it out of the country, because you

weren't supposed to leave with anything of value. He just was a really top-grade performer. But VCU is quite different now.

KEC: What was it? Did the symphony influence, did you influence—

Tape 2 of 2 (B) - 0:10:45.0 Mary Anne Rennolds Concerts at VCU

EAR: Have you heard of the Mary Anne Rennolds Concerts?

KEC: No.

EAR: They give chamber music. I believe VCU was glad to get it, because VCU doesn't have much of a background of graduates or people that produce money or anything. They are really starting from scratch. I think to have a first rate series of really good music is a good publicity thing for them. There are seven concerts I think, six concerts. They are very well attended. You know they started out doing the same ones that were played in Washington at the Kennedy place. We would find out whom they were having and then ask them to come here the day before or the day after. We knew they must be reasonably good because somebody had picked them out as being something that you would want. For some reason we broke off from that. We do it now ourselves, picking the things. VCU has been very helpful on that.

CAL: When did that series start?

EAR: I don't know.

EARIII: She died in 1989. It was probably five years after she died.

EAR: It was running for long while with the people from—. I think it was four or five years before she died that it was going.

KEC: She took lessons at VCU, did she not, viola lessons? It was a VCU professor that came to the home and taught—

EAR: That was Neumann, Fritz [Frederick] Neumann. He was the first chair of the—

EARIII: Concertmaster.

EAR: Concertmaster of the Symphony for ten years. Another example of a foreigner who had to leave his country, Czechoslovakia. His parents ended up in an awful—

EARIII: Concentration camp.

EAR: My wife was a very good friend of his and he taught some of our children violin, but not in school. He did it individually.

KEC: There was no pressure on you to learn a stringed instrument?

EAR: No. I used to play the piano a little bit. I really wasn't very good.

EARIII: You played the recorder too.

EAR: What's that?

EARIII: You played the recorder also.

Tape 2 of 2 (B) - 0:12:01.4 John Powell, musician and composer

EAR: Well— Did you ever hear of a man named John Powell?

KEC: No.

EAR: Well this was a musician in Richmond, who gave concerts all around everywhere, very successfully. When the New York Philharmonic went abroad for the first time after the First World War, they took John Powell along to play a piano concerto. And they took a violinist along to do a violin concerto. They alternated every-other concert, the violin and the piano. John Powell was quite well known. He just gave up his career. I really don't know why.

EARIII: He became a composer.

EAR: Yes. He composed a symphony, with the various parts. He did something called *Rhapsodie Negre*, which has been done quite a bit. I was treasurer of the John Powell Foundation. Every now and again you get a little money from the AF— Who is it?

EARIII: AFTIA.

EAR: It is not AFTIA, but it is something like that. Every time his things are played a fee comes in. They got about fourteen-hundred dollars last year for that. Which is a (unintelligible). He ended up in a little house on Plum Street. My wife wanted to have a good Steinway piano and John Powell knew Mr. Steinway very well. He gave us a letter and we went up to New York. We looked at the Steinways. They sell them on 57th Street. We got the one that

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is down in the room [Rennolds' music room]; it is the in-between one. The one they use in concerts is nine feet; this is seven feet. The parlor one is five feet. It used to be in this room before we put that room on. What we did was we bought a made-over one, which was rebuilt and of course is cheaper. But still it is a Steinway and all. It was very interesting going up there. In the basement was a whole pile of nine-foot ones, looked like a bunch of elephants. When people come to New York, to give a performance, they go down to pick out the one that they are going to play on. There is one that Paderewski always used, and Rachmaninoff always used. They are all down there in that basement.

KEC: When a musician is selecting a piano, is it tone? Is it touch?

EAR: I don't know if it's the— The interesting this is that Steinway also had a room where they had portraits of these people. One of the portraits was of John Powell. A few years ago they sent word that they needed that space for somebody else; better known of course, now.

KEC: What happened to that portrait?

EAR: We didn't know what in the world to do with it. We used to give concerts at the Women's Club, once a month, here in Richmond. So we asked the Women's Club if they would take it and they have it. It is a stunning portrait.

KEC: Is he still alive?

EAR: No, he has been dead probably twenty years. My wife studied under him too; went down to Plum Street and all to do it. But he—I don't know if Emile is in the room or not—he was very anti-black, curiously enough. He was trying to get a law passed—this is incredible—trying to get a law passed at the—

EARIII: In the Legislator.

EAR: —the Legislature, to say that there was a certain percentage

EARIII: One-eighth.

EAR: (unintelligible, several people talking at once) He was trying to get one-sixteenth or something like that. It was really incredibly awful.

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KEC: I think most of us have been surprised to hear so much about the eugenics movement.

EAR: It just an aberration, what they were doing. It kind of ruined his career though; everything was badly damaged.

KEC: On Plum Street, do you know where the house was?

EAR: It was 104.

KEC: It was this side of Main Street, the Downtown Expressway, the north side.

EAR: Yes, it was fairly near Grove Avenue actually. It was north of Main Street. There is a block, and then the second block would be in the one hundreds.

KEC: I always associate Plum [Street] with Oregon Hill, but it does extend up on the other side of Harrison, or in that area.

EAR: There were a lot of interesting people, in the old days that lived in there. They were small houses, but they were nice, nice brick houses. Then Mr. Powell also had a place near Charlottesville. He would spend his summers up there.

Tape 2 of 2 (B) – 0:21:15.0 Involvement with the VCU Library

KEC: When approximately did you become involved with the VCU Library, with the Cabell Foundation?

EAR: Mrs. Cabell, in her will, left some money to the library. She started out being very friendly to the University of Virginia and she gave them a lot of Cabell stuff. But then something happened, something went wrong and she shifted to the University, to VCU. It got probably about three-hundred thousand dollars now. We use it, hopefully, to help the library. Once or twice, or maybe more than that, they've bought some things, book the library couldn't afford. We have an annual talk by an author, hopefully a Virginia author. The last one was called Cary Brown. She is a teacher at a woman's college.

EARIII: Sweet Briar.

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EAR: Sweet Briar. —there's the connection with VCU. Of course VCU named their library after him. They were trying to build up a reputation with old Richmond, you might say.

KEC: It sounds as if he was worthy to have a library named after him.

EAR: What?

KEC: He was very prolific. At the height of his career, very respected.

EAR: (addressing the family members who are standing in the hall) What are all of you doing out there? Is the water still coming down? No? (addressing interviewer) I think we've about had enough, haven't we?

KEC: Oh, it is fascinating.

EAR: Bored you enough, haven't I? (laughter)

KEC: No, never that. But you have to promise me that you will always tell me when you get fatigued. Otherwise I will—

EARIII: Are you getting tired Dad?

EAR: Yes.

Tape 2 of 3 (B) - 0:24:09.4

END OF INTERVIEW

NOTE: Tape #2 was created by transferring the audio from a video tape filmed by Edmund A. Rennolds, III during the June 18th interview. The conversation that followed the formal interview was video taped and was subsequently transferred to audio tape. These conversations are included on tape 2, side B, and on tape 3, side A. As the interview had officially ended, as noted above, these conversations have not been transcribed. Kathryn E. Colwell