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February 15, 1984 Interview with Edward Lansdale - Part 1

Cecil B. Currey

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Tape 1, Side 1. Recorded 15 February 1984, with MG Edward G. Lansdale

. . . but the dog had come up and very gently sort of kissed me not quite licked me but almost. Just sort of nuzzled me and that was thank you for including me on the trip. I couldn't tell whether he wanted to go to the bathroom or was thanking me for the trip. So I'd have to wait and try to figure out the subtle difference. But they're sharp dogs, those poodles.

C: What was his name?

L: ^{Canbo} Conboy (sp?). It's Vietnamese for 'cadre.' Among the songs that I've collected was a group--Nguyen Be's ^{people} ~~group~~ down at Vung Tau training center--they had a choral group and friends of mine were writing songs for them. They gave me a tape recording of all their songs. About half of them were about ^{CANBO} ~~Conboy~~ (sp). My dog would sit there and listen and think they were singing about him. It was great. That was one music he loved.

C: That's a good story. You know the story about this little dog named Spot? He was in the living room during a production of Hamlet. Lady MacBeth was saying "out, damned spot, out." The little dog got up and walked out of the room.

(Laughter)

L: Yeah.

C: Well, I've ^{brought} ~~brought~~ a question or two for you, General. Most of it is just reminiscing on your part.

L: Before we get started I want to say something. I'm a little bit concerned about a biography and I'll tell you what concerns me, and that would be my connections with CIA. I am very sensitive on it. I gave my word years ago. They helped me tremendously. I think highly of what they did and their reasons for doing it and I have no sensitivities

on that at all. But I don't want to say what my connections were. One of the great--most savage--critiques and criticisms of my book when it came out was in the SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE. The guy criticized me that I didn't admit that I was a chief CIA agent out in the Far East. Which I wasn't at all. But he thought that was terrible and the book was no goddamned good because I wouldn't admit such things. It was ^{sort} kind of silly. I was writing about the history that I saw and the hell with what I really was. It didn't matter too much about my position in a way. And I think the U.S. position, more than anything else, just being an American, and being myself, trying to be an American, the rest of the thing was just irrelevant. People have often asked, but that isn't the point. But out in Asia, I'm sure you could talk to someone like Ky and he would think I was head of CIA but the CIA used to tell me the last time I was in Saigon, the station chief out there, "you should tell people that you aren't." I said, "I tell them all the time." And the Ambassador said, "What's this?" The station chief said, "Everybody thinks that Ed is the head of the CIA wearing a white hat and I'm the head of the CIA wearing a black hat. And they aren't behaving as people aren't. That's the way they're thinking." And he said, "Well, you aren't connected with the CIA are you?" And I said, "No, but everybody thinks I am. That's an old rumor out in Asia. So I just go along with it. It keeps the enemy afraid, really, to come up and kill me or do something. They think I've got millions of people in my pay all over, and I'm happy that they do. ^{It's a good} ~~An~~ insurance policy."

C: I was interested as I read your book that you had only bad things to say about the CIA.

L: Well, some of them. Some of the people. But mostly they pitched in and helped and did it very nicely and gave tremendous quiet help to good movements. Way outside of CIA's charter and everything. My wife was saying, "The Operation Brotherhood. Wasn't that financed with American money?" And, well, it was, but that was CIA doing it. But it was a good thing that they did. It was strengthening two Asian nations at the same time--the Philippines and Vietnam--and making them work with their own skills and everything to help each other. And making them feel very good about it, and changing the whole nature of something out there. I thought that was a tremendous big plus. But it's nothing that people who are critical of the Cia and seeing their dirty hands behind things. It isn't at all along those lines, so it's something very constructive.

C: Wouldn't that be important for people to know? Without giving up any secrets?

L: I think it would. Yeah. I think it would.

C: I think you're right that most people see only the bad about the CIA . . .

L: Yeah.

C: . . . and to know that at least occasionally it does something right might be an eye opener.

L: Yeah. In the same way they helped in free elections out in both the Philippines and Vietnam. But that . . . you start getting too damn sensitive. That's really interfering in the political process.

was

in a foreign country, but it's helping the local people be able to go in and police themselves for a free election. But I've never wanted to say how far we went in those things because I think that's a type of American activity that we best not describe because they might catch them next time. It was a plus. It was a plus for democracy. It helped the people there very much. They became very proud of what they had done because they were the guys sticking their necks out doing the work and this is merely making it possible for them to do it. But even so, that smacks of interference in the political life of a foreign country and you're not supposed to do that.

C: Try telling Salvadore Allende that.

L: Yeah. Yeah. Did you get a coaster (for your coffee)?"

C: Yes I do. It's sitting on a coaster.

L: O.K.

C: Say something like "Hi, Cecil."

L: Yeah. Whatever. It would be in it.

(interruption)

C: O.K.

C: I appreciated very much receiving the letter from you, General.

L: Yeah. I don't know. It's just telling who you are and so forth.

He probably thinks I'm CIA, too. When he came to this country, I asked my brother in southern California to go down and see him, see if he was alright sometime. And several ^{other} of the ~~other~~ refugees. My brother went in to see him and he said, "Yeah. What messages does he have for me?" And my brother said "What do you mean, messages? He just wants to make sure you're alright."

C: You're suggesting you had 'connections' with the CIA, but were not part of it. Is that it?

L: Yeah. They were backing me and helping me out ^{on a number of things} (illegible). That's the part that's sensitive to me.

C: Well, I don't think I've read ^{very} many pieces about you that haven't speculated about your . . .

L: Oh, I know. Mostly it's just sounding out that I was head of this that or the other. Which was never true.

C: On the other hand, General. It's difficult for a person like me who has labored through the ranks for years, to think of a lieutenant colonel in the Far East coming back and reporting to John Foster Dulles. I mean, lieutenant colonels just don't do that sort of thing.

L: Well. Yeah. Yeah. I used to! Really. Well, as I told, when I was arguing with my commanding general out there after World War II. We were arguing about something. I was a major, and he was a 3-star general. I told him, I said: "I went into this army for patriotic reasons and I'll leave for the same goddamned reasons. It's up to you." And he says, ^{No,} "I want you to stay." I got used to arguing with the brass right along and it became . . . MacArthur sent his chief of staff down to the Philippines to . . . he was worried about ~~dealing~~ ^{with} the press in the Philippines, which was his press, really. He always thought of the Philippines as home. And it turned very anti-American in the press, he thought, in '46-'47. American GIs were misbehaving. So it was a very free press and it would put the stuff in headlines. And they'd sent us a chief of staff--Sunderall, Summerall--down to check on it. Summerall came in to see me, and he said, "I checked all around with the government people here, with the editors and the newspaper people, ~~and~~ and with my friends among the Filipinos. And the only American military man that most of them know is you. And

Malacañan

you have nothing to do with public relations^{or anything like that.}" None of them knew our or his staff public information officer who was a colonel (illegible) and everybody from Malikalyan palace on down knew you. You've been around there, you've been around with most of the journalists. Yet, he said, you're in intelligence work." And I said, "Well, I'm ~~not~~ keeping tabs on what's going on around here^{among other things.}" But, I said, "I'd like the people and get close^{to them.}" So I didn't know it, but he picked me to be the next public information officer for doing that. I was trying to get the Filipino Army^{'s} intelligence started again for their independent Army^{again} and independent country. Very heavily engaged in that work as well as keeping track of what was going on. I kept getting calls that had something to do with our public relations and I got worried about that. Went in and asked the commanding general. I said, "What is all this?" And he said, "Didn't they tell you? MacArthur wants you to be the public information officer down here." So I was appointed. And I said, "Well, here I am a major and you've gotten . . . some of your chiefs on your staff are generals." And you have to go in and maybe straighten out some things, and they get mad at you. And order you not to do it. And you ought to be able to tell them, well, you do it or else and be backed by the commanding general. So I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write up a contract here between you and me" and I got the commanding general and his chief of staff and another one there to sign this thing, backing me up all the way. Or I'd quit. Resign the army. So, that let me really operate. I go in and the general would yell at me, he wouldn't do something, I'd pick up the phone and get the commanding general, and say, this guy won't pay any attention to me, he thinks I'm lying when

I tell him to do something, please tell him, you know. And he'd back me up on it. And it changed it (the situation) almost overnight. And let me do things ^{that really} ~~we~~ changed the situation. Well, you go through something like this, it's all army, you see? Now I'd gone in the Air Force while ~~all~~ this was going on. The 13th Air Force up at Clark wanted me immediately to report for duty. New Air Force officer now. Instead I'm hanging around the Army. I said, well General MacArthur put me in this spot, and they aren't about to release me. Go and argue with him on the thing. I'll move--whatever. So they had to leave me there. Well, this is pretty heady stuff for a major, you know. It changed the whole relationship of US military. The Air Force sent an officer down to be on my staff, handle the Air Force public relations, from Manila where I was. The Embassy sent a guy over to do the same ~~thing~~ for the U.S. Embassy. So . . . and I moved into an office downtown near the press to be very close to them cause our headquarters were out in the outskirts of town. I taught the . . . the reporters would start an association and call it the School of Walking Association. We used to sit and have coffee in a drug store every morning. The whole gang of us; ~~had~~ editors and writers and so forth. My general would try to get me in the . . . the guy who was serving the coffee would come over and said, "Your general wants you on the phone. " And I said, "Tell him I'll call him back. I'm busy right now." These Philippine editors, they thought that was great fun.

C: The general, on the other hand, did not think it was great fun.

L: Yeah. ^{He went a long way with it.} chuckle. [^] He sort of caught on to what I was doing. He was a very decent guy. He'd commanded Corregidor loss when the Japs

took it over. And he was full of his memories of the past in the Philippines.

C: I'd like it, if, general, to start you with . . .

L: Go ahead. O.K.

C: I want to . . . the things I know about you, of course: ^{like} born in Detroit in 1908, what is your birthday?

L: February 6th.

C: February 6th. I know yesterday you were saying that you had just had your party. O.k. Could you tell me about your father and mother. Their names and antecedents, that sort of thing?

L: My dad was Henry, no middle initial, Lansdale. He was from Washington, here. He was from a large family, many brothers. About 14 kids. Brothers and sisters. He was down in the middle someplace. He was in the automotive industry. He'd been vice president of Packard. He'd run the ^{Denby} ~~Denby~~ Motor Truck Company and ^{had been} ~~was~~ vice president of another manufacturing firm of automobiles. They made cars that are no longer known even, hardly. But I grew up, sort of, in the industry, ^{with him} and ~~the~~ most of his friends were in the industry and competitive positions and everything. My mother was Sarah Philipps Lansdale, from California, and she'd grown up on a ranch north of San Francisco and then come on to Washington to finish her high school phase of education here, where she met my dad and they got married in Washington. She was continuously homesick, so she was always wanting to go back to California and visit there. So we'd spend some time going to school in Detroit or wherever my Dad was in the East at the time and ^{then} go out for summers or whenever ^{she} ~~we~~ could to California. We'd take the train to go back and forth. So we

were always going ~~back-and-forth~~ across the continent, ~~4~~ ~~We'd take the~~ at the time. And she had a sister living in Los Angeles and we'd go out to be with her (meet?) her sister. And I had three brothers-- there were four boys. No sisters. And I was the second among the four boys.

C: What were your brothers names?

L: The oldest was Phil, and he was Henry Philipps Lansdale; and my next younger brother was Benjamin Carroll Lansdale; and then the youngest was David Brooke Lansdale. The next younger man has died, he died a couple of years ago. But he and my youngest brother were electrical engineers. Ben was a very inventive person. He's got a number of inventions to his name. Very much a free thinking, free wheeling type of person, a thinker. And he'd written a number of economic articles and published in all the main economic business journals, analyzing the market and whatnot. As well as being an intellectual and inventor. My brother Phil is still working hard every day. He's a workaholic. He was in advertising also. He is retired twice, and started up this advertising business again, always to follow some personal whim. He's an expert on merchandizing and finally decided that rather than become . . . pick up a client and do the advertising for him, he would go in and take a part of the client's business and help him with his merchandizing as well as advertising. He picked up a partner the last time around and they started doing their own merchandizing. And they picked up a tire business, which is a very common Michelin type of consumer business, and they started Four Day Tire Company; they're open only 4 days a week. They started in California and they made a phenomenal success of it. And with that, they've started a number of other companies

of their own. The tire company, last year, did something like 300 million dollars worth of business. A whopping big success. And they're making money at it. The other businesses and the other tire companies are losing, or barely hanging on by their teeth, while they're quite successful. They're very open on their pricing, on their . . . what good tires are and what bad . . . what you should look for. Their ads are big documentaries on tires all through and he just advertises in the newspapers; he doesn't believe in any other form of media for this. But he . . . where he can tell it all. And they've been very very successful. And they've spread to a number of other states now, from California.

C: If your father and mother met in Washington, DC, were they married here too?

L: Yeah.

C: How soon then did they move to Detroit?

L: Oh. No, my dad had gotten a job with National Cash Register Company. and ran it, see? He was a secretary to the man who owned it, the first of the hard-sell American businessmen. I'll think of his name afterwhile. I can't right off hand. But, he had a very paternalistic attitude running his business and he had . . . he trained his salesmen himself. He ran his business himself, and finally, he said to my dad one day, said: "You've been working for me, how long now, 5 years?" And my dad said, "About that." Whatever it was. And he said, "I suppose you want a raise." And my dad said, "Yes." "I haven't given you a raise?" And my dad said, "No, not recently." "Alright, you're fired." he said. This is how the guy operated. Well, he acted the same way toward salesmen. And all of the original managers of the automotive industry: general motors, Ford, Packard, and so forth; not the Ford himself and so forth,

but most of them

came from this National Cash Register. ~~Oh~~^{So} here were all these other guys fired . . . by this same very opinionated eccentric. Patterson, was his name. They'd gone to Detroit. So my dad went there and they said, "Welcome to the fold." Started him off in business there.

C: When was that, roughly?

L: Oh, 'bout . . . it was before I was born, so I would guess around 1907 or something. I just remember from old family photos and everything. National Cash Register was in Dayton, Ohio, I think, and he went from Dayton to Detroit.

C: What took him from Washington to Dayton? Was it getting a job with National Cash Register?

L: Yeah. Yeah. He . . . my dad apparently went through high school. I don't even think he graduated from high school. He was a tremendously self-educated man. Tremendous reader and interested in a lot of things. But he had taken shorthand and he used to tell us boys, none of us did it, he said, "Learn shorthand. You'll never be without a job," you know, in later life if you get to worrying about it, you can always have something to fall back on.

C: In my case, General, it didn't work out.

L: You learned shorthand, too?

C: Oh, yes sir. I graduated as a real expert in high school in shorthand. I could write about 175 words a minute, and I'd done this . . . and I was a great typer. And I'd done this because I wanted to travel. And I'd been reading in various boys books about these male stenographers hired by the president of National Cash Register . . .

L: Yeah.

C: . . . who traveled with them. But I wanted to work overseas. So in 1950 . . . in June of 1950 when I graduated, I wrote a letter to

Arabian American Oil Company, applying for a job overseas. Six weeks passed. They sent me back this letter saying "Cecil Currey, 1906 15 Avenue, Central City, Nebraska. Dear Miss Currey . . .

L: Heh! Yeah. Ha!

C: We're sorry but at present we're not employing women overseas. And they'd mistaken, I guess, Cecil for Cecile. And I had never been anyway. very fond of my first name! So I said "to hell with this," and went out and got a job on the railroad. And I've never used my shorthand since.

L: That's strange. Strange. Well, some of my dad's philosophy was apparently very common in the US, you know, before . . . he felt that way. But his main loves . . . he loved history, he loved . . . ancient civilizations. And I only discovered this much later in my life when I finally got to talking with my dad, you know, man to man, later on. I was amazed at how well read he was. Really surprised me. I remember him when I was a kid seeing him always with his nose in a book, reading. I was never quite sure what he was reading. And I think he should have been an archaeologist, or something like that. If he'd had his druthers.

C: How was he as a father? Did he spend time with you or was he busy at his work . . .

L: Nah. He was a workaholic. ~~Definitely~~. We didn't see too much . . . same way I was with my sons. And my sons, thank God, are good fahters. They're much better than I ever was. I'm very proud of them . . . and surprised! I didn't teach it too them. I don't know where they picked . . . maybe from their mother. But he wasn't. He would think of it once in awhile, but, he was busy making a living and then he went broke after World War I, really. They had a recession, and he and a couple of other guys had started Hare (~~spelling?~~) Motor

brothers say
dad didn't
only skinned

NAPA (Nat'l Auto — Parts Assoc) !
was dad's idea. Called it NAPA then!

Company and they made the Mercer Simplex Locomobile, carlike that,

but in New Jersey, in Trenton, New Jersey, and we moved back to

. . . outside New York City at the time, Westchester County. He went

. . . during that time incidentally, Edwin Denby, the Secretary of the

Navy, got caught up in that Teapot Dome Scandal, and uh, he had never

understood what they were doing with the papers, and everything. I

think he was completely innocent, but, he was of the Denby family of

Michigan who used to manufacture trucks, the Denby Trucks. And when

the brother who was head of the Denby Truck Company died, they asked

my dad to step in and run the company for them, so he'd run it for

about a year, and so he was . . . he knew the family quite well. So

we were living up in Westchester County, outside of New York, and I

remember the scandal that went on with this Edwin Denby came up and

lived with us for a time; he hid out with us, he'd tell my dad,

"Jesus, it's awful down in Washington," you know, and then he said

These bastards won't tell me what's going on. I apparently signed

some papers I didn't quite know what was . . . this Teapot Dome . . .

they exploited naval oil reserves and he said, "I hadn't realized it,"

so, but I just suddenly remembered that as I was talking.

C: Well, that's the sort of thing I want you to think about as we go along.

L: But. My dad's family is an old one. As American families go.
in

They came/with the original settlers of Maryland. And he said there

were two brothers, and uh, they came in with the first ones . . .

they . . . they were protestants and there were Catholic settlers ^{Came.} there.

I don't know whether they hung around with the others or not. But I

know my dad's family . . . by the time he was a boy, they'd become

Catholic. But they had just done that, very recently, so, when he was

a boy.

C: Were you raised a Catholic too?

L: No. No. He'd left the Church because of my mother and she was a protestant, so we grew up as protestants. But . . . And I say that because there are other Lansdales, uh . . . around . . . and it's such an unusual name that when I see one in the military, or something, I immediately had to . . . I must be related to them somehow. And we tried to dope out what it is, but . . . One Lansdale was head of security in the . . . oh, the . . . outfit that made the atom bomb . . .

C: The Manhattan Project?

L: The Manhattan Project. Yeah. They had . . . they made a movie of the bombing of Japan, or Hiroshima, and so on, when I was in the Philippines they showed it out there. The Enola Gay is going to take off with the first atom bomb heading towards Japan and they turned and on the runway there, on Guam or something, they say, "Permission to take off, Colonel Lansdale," see, and the actor salutes and says "Take off," see.

C: Probably was Van Johnson playing the part.

L: Yeah, so. I was in the Philippines at the time and all the Filipinos were sa-ying "Permission to take off," see. Laugh. Great moment. But that was John Lansdale who was a colonel. And John and I went round and round, and his father was a light colonel in World War II. And I met him. And he said, "Well, my dad always told me that there were two brothers originally, so I think we're related way back, see? I don't know whether we were from the same brother or not and were related. And there arn't too many of them. My brothers and I were, and John and another guy, were the only Lansdales in all the military forces in World War II. So, uh, and I was out in Manila (illegible)

and I picked up a lieutenant who was standing at the curb on a street and I was in a jeep driving along and I stopped and asked him if he ^{I said I was} was going out to the warehouse where the footlockers were. "Do you want a lift?" And he said, "That's where I want to go." So, "come along." He said, "Yeah, I'm trying to locate a footlocker," and I said, "I'm trying to do the same thing." So we went up to this warehouse. The sergeant was sitting back of a plank or something, and he said, "Give your name," and we both said "Lansdale." We did a double take and looked at each other, "My gosh," and trying to find if we were related to each other. But he was a cousin of John Lansdale of the Manhattan Project, who I had known already. Doing much the same thing. For I was in intelligence work and he was in security. And we ran across each other's trails.

C: What can you tell me about your childhood as you grew up, General? What are some of your early memories . . .

L: Hah, hah, hah. Well, I went to school in a number of places. UH, What?

Mrs. L: I'm going out to the bank and then I'll go . . .

L: You got my checks for deposit?

Mrs. L: Yeah.

L: Thank you.

Mrs. L: You bet. You need the car?

~~L:--You-need-the-car?~~

L: No.

Mrs. L: O.K.

~~L: The schools were in Detroit, Los Angeles~~

"YOU ORDERED BEER AS IF IT WERE AN OINTMENT/YOUR DAUGHTER HERE IS SURE A DISSAPPOINTMENT."

L: The schools were in Detroit, Los Angeles, and in Westchester County in Bronxville. And being across the country in those days, ^{this was} long before television or even radio, ^{so the} ~~the~~ customs in different parts of the U.S. were still very different, and unique, and unto themselves. In those ^{at the time} days, boys wore knickers in the East, and I'd go to school in knickers in Los Angeles and promptly get depantsed by the students who thought I was a goddammed sissy. . . .

C: Um Hmm.

L: way to dress so I grew up having to defend myself on that. Earlier on, in the very early grades, I remember I was going to school in Detroit down near a factory. I forget whether . . . I think it was one of the ^{were} Fords . . . Ford assembly plants. But there . . . eastern Europeans emigrées, working in this and their kids in school and uh they weren't a typical American community at all. But, my aunt in California thought it was very nice to dress me out of Little Lord Fauntleroy (clothes). So they would put on velvet jackets on me and velvet pants and send me off to school. So I remember, my going to school consisted of planning each block (chuckle) how to survive each block and so on, and uh, my brothers helped me finally. We used to squabble among ourselves but we'd bandtogether for self-defense once in a while.

C: How many blocks between home and school?

L: Well, there seemed to me to be a million, but you know (chuckle) but there were probably 5 or 6. I remember in . . . one time ^{they} ~~they~~ were chasing me with snowballs. And I got to home and my brother Phil, my ^{older} ~~oldest~~ brother, had just learned how to ice rocks and make them look like snowballs. So I got to the yard and I said "Quick, help me." There was a mob after me, so he said, "Try these." They were good and heavy and I threw it and ^I hit a guy on the forehead and his eyes rolled

Los Angeles
kind
same
of clothes
worn in
Detroit

up and he keeled over, see. (chuckle) And with that, everybody started yelling "No fair," you know and everything and running away. I was cheating somehow.

C: It was alright for 13 of them to chase you but . . .

L: Oh yeah, right. But there'd be things like in recess that uh in those days they wanted to play: Texas Rangers and Mexicans or something; invent a game like that. So who wants to be a Texas Ranger? I said, "I do." I'd be the Texas Ranger. All the rest were Mexicans and trying to come into the Alamo and kill those dirty American rangers, see? So it was that type of stuff going on, all the time. So I learned to survive when I was young. My brothers _____. Then it happened when we got into New York and Westchester County. We had to go to school up past a private boy's school and in the winter they had outdoor gym with wooden walls up, I guess a handball court was in there. But the kids up to this private school would use it as a fort and make snowballs and everything and keep us city kids from using the sidewalks up past there, drive us off. So . . . and we had to pass that way. So . . . again we had to learn the art of making ^{ice} ~~ice~~ rocks, snowballs, and the head of the private school finally said "My kids can't come out and play . . . END OF TAPE SIDE/

Tape 1, Side 2. Recorded 15 February 1984, with MG Edward G. Lansdale.

. . . I think that was all conditioning that made all of us very resourceful. And uh, . . .

C: Now which school was it again where uh, you say there was about 5 blocks to school but it seemed like . . .

L: Oh. In Detroit.

C: Did it have a name?

L: I can't remember what it was. I think it might have been Hobart, but I . . . I don't know. I can't remember. (coughing) I can't remember the name of that school at all.

C: Did . . . do you remember the name of the one in Westchester County? Or Bronxville?

L: Bronxville was . . .

C: ^{That was} The name of the town?

L: Yeah. And I think it was the grammar school in Bronxville.

C: What kind of course work did you like in school? What did you hate?

L: Well, I wasn't too good a student. (cough) in anything. I uh, I ^{loved} ~~liked~~ to read. I read everything in the house. Uh, so I guess I read everything my dad was reading, too. I picked that up very very early on.

C: Did you ever read things like the Zane Grey novels? or Edgar Rice Burroughs novels?

L: Yeah. I did that. My dad was uh, he as a boy (cough) had read this Polish historical writer, Zychowics (sp) (cough) and I remember I read all of those that he had, his boyhood collection ^{I think it was} of Zychowics' novels.

C: How is that spelled? I've never heard of it.

L: Oh, he was a . . . he's famous in Poland. He's / Edgar Rice the Burroughs of Poland, I guess. He wrote FIRE AND SWORD, was one of the titles. There'll all about the great national heroes of Poland. Poland was always fighting either the Soviets ~~in~~ (sic: Russia) or the Germans or . . .

C: Um hmm.

L: . . . someone in the early days and beating up on them. And then getting dismembered afterwards, and so on. Tremendous comings and goings. And uh, I'll look up his name in the dictionary. I think it's Sankie ^{wicz} ~~wies~~ or something like that. Uh, I remember I was just seeing a Polish friend down in Honolulu whose name was Stankiewics, and I said, Gee, you're very much like the author's name. "Oh, yes," you know. "Famous man." He's read them all. He's Polish, too. Great. "He mentions my family in his books," see? But . . . one of the things I remember reading was . . . my dad ^{had} bought a collection of green leather bound books of writings by . . . on the American Revolution. In there were the papers of most of our early revolutionary leaders and so on. And uh, my dad later on . . . I . . . mentioning it to him and talking to him about it, he couldn't remember them at all. Cause I was still trying to get my hands on the collection, cause they're very remarkable things from the newspapers of that day. And whoever put them together was very thoughtful, and perceptive historian. But, that was a very catholic (illegible) reader. I then got to the library. By the time I was in high school, I was hitting the public libraries reading everything in sight and I, I, I started ~~taking~~ ^{picking} favorites and one of them was a short story writer. Civil War. Ambrose Bierce. And he became a columnist out in San Francisco.

C: Disappeared in Mexico.

L: Disappeared in Mexico. But he was the most terrific, realistic writer on the Civil War, ~~But uh,~~ ^{that} that I've ever encountered. But, I read those stories over and over again. I just love that guy's writing.

C: Did you read his Devil's Dictionary?

L: Yeah. Yeah. Later, when I lived in San Francisco, I started picking up his books on em and excerpts and things like the Devil's Dictionary, and uh, some of the printers there would get together some stuff of his from the old ^{magazine...} ~~mag.~~. I'm trying to remember the name of the magazine published in Oakland. They used to have . . . before he went down to Mexico, uh, and he wrote a column for them. But the . . . the printers would do it for the typography and play around and have some fun printing it . . . his things . . . in small limited editions, and I got of those. They went with my library fire. I lost all those books.

C: When did you start working, General? As a school boy, when did you start working?

L: When I was in high school. Junior high, I guess, I don't know. Well, I sold magazines when I was in grammar school. Saturday Evening Post. God! I don't know whether you were . . . or maybe it was out of business by then, but that used to be the thing for kids to do. The damn heavy things. Every week. And I uh, I had a bag that I carried them in. ^{so} Goddam ^{heavy} I walked sideways with them. I had quite a list of people who subscribed to it, ^{that I delivered to.} They paid me for them. And we'd sell them on the street corners ^{even.} And then, all through high school I uh, worked on a bread truck, I worked in a grocery store, uh, I did odd jobs, cleaning and painting and so on around the house . . . but my dad was always encouraging us ^{to do that,} to be independent in your life and stand

on your own . . . I'm happy he did that. I wish they'd make all kids do that. Later on, when I was in the Pentagon, trying to get people for high staff position, I was always looking to see what they'd done as kids, whether they'd worked or not. Somehow, if they did, they were more open to understand problems that were coming up . . . international problems and uh, some were national policy problems, and get some realistic insights into the solutions, if they had worked. And uh, those that had come up with silver spoons in their mouth and/^{the}great scholars who had gone to a lot of colleges and so forth, and gotten degrees, might not have . . . it wasn't laid out for them to work on, you know, in an academic way and they'd be puzzled by it. The others'd take a very practical approach and uh, my . . . my groups I've always worked with, I've tried to promote as many different ideas as I could to the different problems coming up, to get workable solutions. And uh, we've had sort of a . . . free, rolling brawl among us to being with. But uh, which the people who/^{had}worked/^{would}always entered into and enjoy and even to admitting "I don't know a goddamned thing about it, but/^{did you}think of this?" That type of thing. It was great. As I said that, I was remembering, during LBJ's day, he sent one of his staffers down to check on what was going on in Saigon and the guy came by, he wanted to be in on it when I met with one of my teams . . . one of my team meetings. And I said, "I don't like anybody present who's a stranger at all, but if you'll sit back and keep your mouth shut and everything, I'll explain it afterwards." So I said, "You know, we have a lot of dissent at these . . . I've got very strong individuals on my team, and as a matter of fact, the ambassador wonders how they can ever work together, see?"

"And they're all strongly opinionated individuals. So Team meetings
I said.
sound like quarrels."/And this is very healthy and helpful to me,
because I get all sorts of ideas from these guys and it keeps us all
then
sharp, and/I say what we're going to do on a thing, make the decision,
we do it. All together. And we got some teamwork. But, I said, if
you start asking questions, you're gonna get ten guys ^{you're going to get} with ten dif-
ferent answers, and uh, you'll never know which one is the correct
one. So, we started the meeting and right away he says, "Do you
agree with that?" And one of the guys said, "Hell, no!" See (chuckle)
Another guy said, "I don't either," and they started a big . . .
just . . . just . . . and I said, "Meetings over, right now."

C: Ha, ha. (laugh)

L: Told this guy to keep his mouth shut and he wouldn't do it, see?
But we had Dan Ellsberg, Lou Conein, cat and dog, you know, right . . .
very different individuals. Old Dan Ellsberg changed later, but
. . .

C: I didn't realize he worked for you.

L: Yeah. But. He was . . . he could verbalize where, in staff meetings,
I'd put him in to to verbalize in staff meetings with the political staff
of the embassy. And sort of keep them occupied that way. Keep ^{the meeting} them going
about an hour (in a talk). What do you want me to say? Say whatever
comes into your mind. Keep them there. I want them out of the way and
not paying attention to what we're doing here, for about an hour. So
he'd do it. He was very good at that. And later, he made his name from
the press (said sadly), and he loved being a martyr, I'm sure. But he
was very pro-war. He used to want to sneak off all the time and go on
active duty, please(?) and he'd get a rifle and want to go out on the
line with the infantry. "I got to get me some VC." I said, Jeez, no.

C: ILLEGIBLE.[?] *I need an ear necklace?*

L: Yeah. Then he sure changed.

C: You mentioned working on a bread truck.

L: Yeah.

C: Did you have to get up at 3:30 in the morning? And deliver the bread around over town?

L: No. I had to go to school first, so this was always in the afternoon. going and assisting on it.

C: Well, when I was about 13, I was a bread route helper . . .

L: Yeah.

C: 3:30 every morning, ^{except on} Saturday, it was 2:30 on Saturdays.

L: Yeah. (uninterestedly)

C: I saw a lot of suns come up there in about a year and a half.

L: I guess I'd go to work that way but the, if the poor guy who had to do that, the guy running the bread truck, he'd get bushed by the afternoon, so I'd come on and he'd just drive the truck and he'd have me do the delivering, and so on.

C: Bread, you'd stack it in boxes about this long and this wide, one up here and one down here, and you'd run with them.

L: Yeah.

C: I remember those suckers.

L: chuckles.

C: It was cold a lot of the time when I was doing that, too. Yet be able to soooo nice to go into a cafe and give them their donuts and their day's bread supply and ^{my} the boss would say, "Well, let's stop for a cup of coffee."

L: CHUCKLES. Yeah.

C: Any special friends you think of in those grade school or high school

days? General?

L: No. I . . . I heard from one who had a boat out in Hawaii and I went to look him up when I went out there for Christmas or New Years and he'd been in school with me in Bronxville and uh when I got there, oh, just before I went out to ^{Hawaii} ~~him~~, why I got a note from him. He'd had a boat in Hawaii, a fishing boat, and they'd taken people out on it, but he'd retired, he'd had a heart attack and had gone to San Diego, so . . . I've never seen him. I didn't miss him.

C: Well, how about girl friends back there in high school?

L: No. I didn't until I got to college. It was a . . . we were working very hard. My brother and I ran a newspaper route in Los Angeles. LA Times. And we had the largest route in the city. ^{And we} Used to deliver by car. And that was our early morning shift. And uh, it was in the Wilshire district. And we took the whole district. We took about 20 kids newspaper routes, and made them into one. And uh, I remember that and the bread route in the afternoon. But that was the . . . ~~and he~~ and I worked in a grocery store, too. That was uh, that and study when I could do it was about all I could get in on it. on a day's living at that time. It was a sort of a struggle. My dad had . . . had uh, his motor car company went broke and uh, the recession after World War I in the 20s, and uh, early 20s, and we went out to California and he uh, he, they opened a distributorship for shock absorbers in Los Angeles which uh, didn't go too well. Made him very unhappy. And then he . . . he got an invention on an automatic starter for cars and uh, sold that and went back in and got the auto parts industry reorganized and started the, the . . . but he moved to Detroit and left us out in Los Angeles yet ^{while he} ~~he~~ got going again. And I left home then to go to UCLA, which is across town in Los Angeles from . . .

C: What year would this be when you graduated from high school?

L: I was going to say '26 but maybe it ^{is} ~~isn't~~ ^{I'm} just checking to be sure. I think it was the class of '26. I graduated in February, though, and went to college in February. It wasn't the normal time. So it might have been '27. February of '27, or something. It was just after the winter session.

C: Well, I see in '27, you'd be 19. Is that right?

L: It couldn't be. Couldn't be. That would be 19 . . . that isn't right. that isn't right. But I went to college in '27. Maybe so. Maybe so. It was as the class of '31 in college.

C: Um hmm.

L: And uh, I came in ⁱⁿ at '27, yes. So maybe so. Maybe so. Maybe I missed school by going across the country and everything. That could have happened to us.

C: Well, you said you weren't much of a student in grade school or high school.

L: Nah.

C: How did you like your college work?

L: Oh. Somethings I was good at and some I had . . . what I liked I was good at, but uh, uh, I had to have a C average to get into UCLA. It was close to a B average, I wasn't an A student at all. Uh, and in college my . . . my subjects I was good in were English. I was taking a pre-journalism course, see, they didn't have journalism at UCLA in those days. But, English was the . . . an English major was the one for journalism. And uh, they kept insisting I take foreign languages. *Well,* In high school, I had taken Latin and Greek and wasn't a good student in them at all. I didn't like my teachers at all. But they beat on me so that some of it stook, uh, stuck, uh took. And I at least got Cs in them. But then they wanted French and Spanish too, and I . . . well,

I learned to cuss in Spanish. There were Mexican workers around Los Angeles. uh, I'd taken French in kindergarten, I remember.

C: Well . . .

L: . . . again in Los Angeles. UH, a French woman ran ~~the~~ kindergarten and my mother sent us to it and she used to talk to us kids in French and we'd respond. So, which is the way it should be. The only French I've ever learned was the kindergarten words. But the . . . somehow or other . . . me and foreign languages didn't never work out well, and uh, I remember years later I . . . Dulles was explaining in State there, "Oh, Ed speaks all these different languages; stick him up in a ~~different~~ country and he immediately talks with all the people." I can't speak a goddam foreign language at all. Its one of my great regrets and I still can't. I'm a typical American that way. Being unable. I can understand people. I catch on to their feelings and so forth. We communicate, but it's by gestures and understanding each other. Some of my best friends I've never been able to talk to,

C: Welll . . .

L: . . . in Vietnam a guy called me his brother, ^{military leader out there,} A didn't speak French or anything but his own local Vietnamese dialect, and uh . . . which I couldn't speak. And we became very close, understood each other. He was killed over there in '55, and I was advising him on how to fight his troops and he went down and got killed right afterwards. Uh, years later, his wife came to me and her son was going to get married, and she said, "All the men in the family have been killed." And her husband--the boy's father--had always spoken of me as his brother to his family, and would I please act as his . . . for the family in the marriage. So I did. And uh, so this wasn't just my imagination of how close we'd gotten. But I'd watch his face and uh, he watched me

with Filipinos at the time in Vietnam, and I could tell he wanted to be that close cause we were always teasing and getting back we, we were like brothers, and sisters when I was with them in Operation Brotherhood teams. And uh, he used to come by the house when we'd be there, and he'd get such a longing in his eyes that this is what Vietnam should be with Americans, you know, Vietna . . . that we should get that close, and be between nations this way, and the French never let us. This guy was fighting the French, too. And his troops and his people hated the French and I used to go up alone to visit him in the provinces, and they'd throw rocks at me thinking I was French, you know, screaming about me being French. I told him it was very dangerous to come up and say hellow to you.

C: So in college you were an English major?

L: Yeah. Yeah. And I made . . . may not have made very good grades in English. Uh, And in others it was up for grabs ^{really} really. I got into physics, got into . . . I was picking courses I thought might interest me, and they'd keep explaining to me that you don't graduate when you do that.

C: Especially back then, I'm sure the curriculum was very rigid.

L: Oh, yeah. But there was a guy on magnetics, and I wanted to take his course. They said, well you have to have physics in the background. You don't have it. And I said, That's all right, and I went in and was going along fine. About 5 people in the class. And one day I looked back and there were a couple of people auditing, older people auditing the class, and I said to the girl sitting next to me, They look like Milligan and Einstein back there. They couldn't be, could they? That's who it was--Milliken and Einstein--both of them. . . .

C: Albert Einstein?

L: Yeah. Auditing . . .

C: Who's Milliken?

L: Well, he was head of Cal Tech at the time. Very noted physicist. Brilliant man. And Einstein was back there. But this professor at UCLA was from Harvard, but he was backed on a grant by . . . in part by UCLA and Cal Tech who put money into it to help him with his experimenting on magnetics. And uh, these two had come over and this was one of their bright young people and they wanted to listen.

THIS STORY DOES NOT MAKE ANY SENSE/THIS IS BEFORE EINSTEIN CAME TO THIS COUNTRY I BELIEVE AND EVEN THEN IN HIS FIRST YEARS HERE HE CERTAINLY WAS NOT INSTANTLY RECOGNIZEABLE BY COLLEGE STUDENTS.

And they'd come over all the time, so I told the professor, I'm gonna quit your course. You get guys like Einstein in here and it's too much for me. No. Please stay. You're doing fine. So I did. And I'd take advanced philosophy and you were supposed to take a lot of philosophy to qualify but it depended upon what it was and if I got interested I did fine. But it was during the Depression and just too tough to keep on. I quit in my fourth year, finally, and never got my degree.

C: Oh, you did?

L: No, I didn't.

C: You said something just a moment ago, I want to go back to. You said the professor called you Teddy?

L: No, no.

C: I just wondered if you went by the nickname of Ted.

L: No. no. I did in the family, as a youngster., but only when I was very little. My brothers never called me that; they called me Ed. My mother and father used to call me Ted. But uh, well they quit before my 12th birthday. I got a grandson Ted and I've got a son I

call Ted, so . . . and they're both Ed. I gave them a different middle name so they aren't juniors. Be their own people, their own selves.

C: Were there any teachers in college who were especially important to you?

L: Yeah. One of them was. In English, again. He introduced me to humor in writing. He was a . . . he had many, many books of humorous writing and I used to go over and borrow them and read them and he'd . . . he was . . . he loved to cook, he loved to make marmalade, so he was usually making marmalade and I'd go over and sit in his library and take out books and read them, scan them and he introduced me to many of the German humorists and the early humorous writings in English, and whatnot. And uh, it encouraged me. I was doing quite a bit of writing then, early on, I was the editor of the humor magazine at UCLA.

C: What was it called?

L: It was an off-campus publication called The Claw and uh . . . lousy name . . . but uh, it I was also cartooning, so, and also writing jokes, and I had a couple of friends then, and we wrote most of the jokes in the magazine. We uh, we'd do them in conversation style, talking-- the three of us--and we'd take notes as we'd talk and . . . it was just a matter of zany humor, sort of . . . tak/^{ing} ordinary remarks and changing them around a little bit. Ah, I've gone through theater magazines since and I still see some of our old jokes in them.

C: Well.

L: . . . many years later. But we used to get picked up in the national magazines, I forget what they were ^{called} ~~called~~, College Humor was one of them, there'd be reprints in COLLEGE HUMOR magazine.

C: Tell me one of the jokes.

L: Ohh. What do they call passengers who ride on the Wiltshire busses?

for example. And they don't call them--they have to ring for their stops.

C: chuckle. That's all right.

L: Well, you know! This is sophomore humor.

C: uh, huh.

L: Uh, it was so bad I remember (laugh). Uh, but, mostly it was . . . most of mine went into cartoons. I was having fun with them. And I was ^{seriously} ~~curiously~~ thinking of maybe becoming an artist, too. I didn't know whether I wanted to be a journalist or an artist or something like that. And uh, used to paint in my spare time.

C: Water? oils?

L: Water colors, mostly. My mother was quite a painter in oils. on that. And I guess I took after her/ My older brother was an artist as well, the one that has the advertising agency and the 4-day tire stores. And he's never done anything with his art, but when I was ^{editing} ~~head of~~ the humor magazine I used to get my brother to draw cartoons for me, and use them. They were very different than my own. And he went to the University of Arizona and USC, University of Southern California. But he used to contribute as well to his own humor magazine.

C: Well, if you invented the Wiltshire bus joke, you might get a chuckle out of some of the jokes I like to make up. What do you give a dentist for a going away present? A little plaque.

L: chuckle. Yeah.

C: If a dentist performs a root canal on you, could you say you had been unnerved? *You know, things like that.*

L: chuckle. Yeah. Yeah.

C: I like to twist words too.

L: Did you work on the humor publication in school or anything?

C: No. No. I just have a weird sense of humor. chuckle.

L: Oh, I learned something early on, too. At the University of Minnesota, I visited, I went to a ROTC honor society convention there, and I saw and I used the idea when I got back to UCLA and I I'd make up . . . get a sheet of butcher paper and with a black wax crayon, would make cartoons of events around the campus and caption them, and then put it up in a restaurant as a wall decoration and get free meals for that . . .

C: Well.

L: And uh, later a men's clothing store next to the campus wanted them and they became very popular and so I'd sell them to the clothing store, I used to . . . I'd get clothes from it, but, for a week, let em have it there, and then move it over to the restaurant and get my free meals, see, and leave it permanent there.

C: What an interesting way to work your way through college.

L: But I used a sort of a very bare nom de plume to/^{sign}my cartoons.

(Illegible) Japanese house boy, EGL, which are my initials, but I spelled it "Ijiell" like the Japanese house boy would . . . all lower case. And nobody knew who this guy was. So my humor would baffle everybody cause it had the insight, gossip of all sorts of things happening and the girls in the sorority would come up and say, "How'd that guy find out? You're the only one we told." laugh.

C: laugh.

L: And, I'd say, He's very clever, you know, to . . . in getting these things. But as a . . . this one thing/^{that}really got them, they finally investigated to find out who did it, but, the house mother told the girls to . . . they could have boys in at the weekends. They all had to be down in the living room. No boys upstairs at all where the girls

had their beds and all. And she was going away for the weekend, see? She came back on Monday morning and she went into the upstairs and the toilet seats were up and uh, she said Girls. So the girls ^{tipped} took me off see, and I put this in . . . when they came and said, How'd that guy ever find out about this? I'd drawn a cartoon of the toilet, row of toilet seats, . . . but this is what kept everybody coming into the restaurant to see what . . . and then I used . . . I got into campus politics and uh, I used this very very much for the campus politics there of comments on candidates and whatnot. And uh, I got haircuts. I asked my barber who ate in this restaurant, "Would you like to be mentioned in that sometime? I know the artist very well, you know. Can I get free haircuts for it?" So, I got haircuts. It was a great racket. And I'd set scenes in his barbershop, see and

C: He kept looking around for some Japanese to come in.

L: Yeah (laugh)

C: (illegible) or outside his barbershop, huh?

L: And then finally, I pretended I . . . when I got to be a senior . . . my fourth year there, pretended I was going to run for student body president. And it was a fake ^{move} . . . it was for my fraternity. Uh, I wanted to get some of the campus jobs for my fraternity brothers. And I'd get one for myself. But uh, I ran the campaign through this thing, I got the leader of the non-Greeks to join up with me, and I'd pass the loot to him and ^{get} ~~keep~~ ^{for} the rest of my lads. And we . . . he got the . . . them to tell the fraternity people "Oh, we're going to win, ^{were} ~~we'll~~ all back ^{of Lansdale} ~~the alliance~~, solid bloc here, of many thousands and we just outnumber you guys tremendously. So we got the guys who were working real hard on this campaign to come over and start doing business with me. You don't . . . you aren't ^{really} ~~real~~ serious about running, are you? Oh, yeah, and uh, they assured me ^{we} ~~they~~ were going to

win, you know, so I let them gradually talk me out of it, but I wound up with all of the loot, and the poor guys made . . . they got their student body president but they didn't get any of the jobs; they ^{went} ~~were~~ to all, ~~going~~ out to these other people, friends of mine, my fraternity brothers. But you know, things like football manager, baseball manager, cheerleaders, I headed up all the university publications, ~~aboveboard publications???~~ ~~(the board publications???)~~.

C: You had a real lock on . . .

L: Oh yeah. We got all the political gravy on that thing.

C: What was the name of your fraternity?

L: Well, it was a local fraternity, that went Phi Gamma Delta. We'd had an old local fraternity there, but uh, it ^{had gone} ~~went right~~ back to the creative very beginning of UCLA. Uh, And very ~~many~~ people in it, I . . . the . . . they'd written not only all of our songs but most of the university's songs, run the plays, and headed the publications, and so forth. UH, and when they went . . . then I became president of the fraternity, my 4th year, 3rd and 4th years. Then it became too damn much of a load for me. I found that, working all the time, to support myself through college, and the tuition wasn't very much in the state university in those days.

C: When I started out my tuition was 80-some dollars a semester. How would that compare with when you were going?

L: High.

C: Is that right?

L: Well, ours was 35 a semester. And uh, but it was a big state school and in town. Most of us in those days could take a street car to school and then they built a new campus out in Westwood where the . . . it is now. And now they've got a number of universities of California at

different places: San Diego

END OF TAPE