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Interview with Joseph Baker

Cecil B. Currey

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(Beginning conversation about taking his photograph, the coffee, etc.)

C: This is what--the 23rd of June, Sunday the 23rd of June, and I am talking with Mr. Joe Baker, a longtime friend and associate of General Lansdale.

I would like for you, if you would, to give a little background about yourself first of all. You know, where did you come from, what size family did you have, where you went to school, how you got mixed up with CIA; you know, things like that.

B: Well, I was born and raised in _____, Michigan, and I never left there until Adolf Hitler got us started and I was called into the service. And I served in the Army in Africa, Italy, southern France and then _____. I got wounded in southern France and I had a sort of a head injury and hospitals weren't set up in southern France, so they flew me back to Naples. And I got a sort of a 6-month--I don't know what they called it, kind of like a deferment; I couldn't stand the cold weather so I got a rear echelon job in Naples, Italy while I was waiting for the warm weather to come, and by that time the war was over.

C: Tough duty, too.

B: Yes. In Europe. I met my wife so then I just stayed in Italy and worked with the survey section there and came back, married her, and did some university work at the University of Michigan and Michigan State. I remember my wife went to visit her parents and one night I got a call from, my mother said from Washington--I was staying with her--and they said, why don't you come on down here. We can use you.

C: How did they know about you?

B: Well, they had a recruiter come by, I think when I was at Michigan State. I was in the construction business, as a graduate student, in construction. And someone said, why don't you come on; they are recruiting

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B: up there from Washington. I think I had heard of CIA but I really don't know. I went up and got interviewed and we were finishing off cement; I thought that would be a better job than finishing cement. So about 3 or 4 months later they called me.

C: Now what year was this?

B: This was '52.

So I came down here; didn't have any clearance because, I guess by then the Korean War had started and I guess they were trying to beef up the personnel. They were trying to hang onto the people they wanted, so they accepted me without a clearance or anything except a polygraph. I stayed there for about 3 or 4 months until they got clearance because my wife was Italian and my parents were Lithuanians...complicated clearance deal.

C: How did you end up with a name like Baker then?

B: Well, it is a long story. My father was in the Army during World War I and his name was Binikyus (phonetic?). And he was uneducated and couldn't spell it. I think the Sgt. probably had a 2nd grade education and he couldn't spell it, so he just reached up and grabbed a loaf of bread and there was "baker" on there. So he said from now on your name is Baker, and if you ever forget it, every morning you find it in the mess hall on the bread.

C: What a great story.

B: That's what my father always told me, how he got Baker. Now everybody takes me for English. And with this Jewish thing and all that, air highjacks, it might be a good idea to have a good, simple name. They see Binikyus (sp?), they say what nationality is this guy?

So I came with the Embassy and stayed with them.

C: In '52.

B: '52. Stayed with them until '72, 20 years. By that time my daughter got through school, was well set up in Georgetown University, so I thought I might as well retire. Which I did.

C: Well, this is really off the subject, but I just thought of it. Do you get commissary privileges like retired military personnel?

B: Well, I am also retired military. Working with Ed there, I was full active duty. See I spent about 7 years active duty during the war and after the war. Periodically I would go on active duty. I went on active duty in Saigon, 3 weeks, 2 months, different times like that. So I ended up as a retired officer, Lt. Col. But I have never used them. I just figure...

C: Would a CIA person...

B: No, you don't get commissary privileges. That's strictly military. I don't think that reserve officers should have it. I have strictly straight military...

C: Sure save a lot of money.

B: (material omitted--been in commissary once; one in Ft. Myers. Plum trees through his subdivision, wasting when people are starving)

B: So that's...and then I was with the Agency and they were having this trouble in Indochina and no one wanted to go, so I said, yeah, I'll go out there. So I went out there and Ed...

C: Ok, could you dwell on that for awhile? You know, the circumstances of how you met.

B: Well, by golly, he was assigned to the Agency under a military establishment out there. One of the few places in America where they had two--the CIA had two stations there--military station and they had a civilian station. And I was civilian. Of course, Ed was sort of a--never had the

B: military back of him and never had the Agency or State Department.. he was sort of out there on the end of the line. We used to give him support from the State station. And it was always a great rivalry between the civilian CIA and the military CIA. It was sort of good natured, but at times it would become bitter at certain levels. But Ed could always shrug it off. In all the years I have known him, I don't think I have ever heard him say a bad word about anyone. And I have known some guys that really, you know, been very vindictive--that's the way life is. Of course, one of the things about him, he was always very loyal, also to the people he worked with. If they got in trouble, he would bend over backwards...even though they were at fault and should have been cashiered or shanghaied, he would spring in and back them up right to the hilt. And he stayed there. See, I was there, I think, if I recall correctly, he was away, been to the Philippines. He came there when Diem was in power. And Diem was quite aloof _____ Mandarin, thought he should act that way, well, he really acted that way, but I know that Ed was there and in probably 3 weeks Diem asked him to move into the palace. I know this because I heard it from 2 or 3 different sources--Wolf Ladejinski, who was also...you have heard of him?

C: Yes, I have.

B: He was pretty close to President Diem, and he mentioned that. But Ed refused to move into the palace. That was just before...

C: How does he do this?

B: Well, I don't know. A lot of people have very strong dislikes for here him, and it's not professional jealousy. I have known several people that have known him, who have since passed on, who would look at him and sort of laugh at him. But that always happens to great men, big men, men in power

B: there's always someone...but I just don't know how he did it.
I think they realize that he is not really out for himself. I am very surprised that he made 2-star general because he was never out to seek promotions. I know one time there that he sat on the mission council at _____ meeting and J. Lawton Collins (?) I think was our Ambassador then. And Ed just got up and walked out. He said, I am representing the American people but I can't represent them here...

C: General J. Lawton Collins (?) ?

B: Yes.

C: 4-star general.

B: 4-star, and I think Ed was either a Lt. Col. or a full Col. then, and that's just...you know, you just throw your career overboard. Lawton Collins could have said, don't send this guy out here. We don't want him out here any more. And just send him out of the country. But he was that type of guy, and I guess Collins was big enough to figure, well, you have got to admire this guy.

Most Americans...I have noticed it in my studies and travels that, like the British, they will go out with 4 or 5 or 15 guys, where the Americans will come out with 4 guys and pretty soon they will have 1400 there. And Ed always was with a small group, and I think that's one reason he got along with Diem well, because--it has never been published, but I remember seeing a cable once that, and I don't know if it was the State Department or CIA--I think it was the State Department cable--and the two guys that could help me with this would be _____ who is now dead and / _____ also passed away. But they claim that when the French were leaving, the French wanted to get out and sell all their property; who had all the money but the Americans and the American government.

B: And the Americans mushroomed from, say 15 in Saigon to 1500; aides, the military, so the American government started buying houses. And Diem heard about this and put a stop on that. He said, we didn't get rid of one colonial power to be subjected to another colonial power. And Diem, I think that's one reason he liked Ed because of the small profile. And I always said that if we had kept Ed out there, we well might could have avoided American military involvement in there. A lot of people won't agree with that, but I think...because he had the confidence of Diem. Once he got Diem entrenched there, things were rolling along pretty well, and they called Ed back here. Ambassador Durbrow went out there then. I sort of get confused who was just there at the time. There was a banker at one time, was... well, Reinhardt (sp?) was there for a time. He has since passed on. I know the banker of First National or Chase...

C: Well, I probably know his name, but I doubt I would know that he was a banker, and so I can't...

B: He was a great big...I used to see him in Paris now and then...

A lot of people were envious of Ed because he used to sort of have a direct line to Allen Dulles and through Allen Dulles to John Foster Dulles, which made a lot of the State Department people antsy because he did have a lot of pull there. But he never used it.

C: I find very curious that he had that line to Allen Dulles. Because he is still a minor character, very low level in many ways, and with Dulles the head of CIA...why is Dulles paying him any attention?

B: Well, I think Dulles was aware of what he had done in the Philippines. And also he was aware of Ed Lansdale's closeness to Diem. There was a great movement at one time to throw Diem overboard, that he was Catholic, that he

B: was (?) Buddhist, which I don't think meant that much until later on when the Generals started to have those riots, the Buddhists. But Ed was always low key; but Ed, he could always build up peoples's _____. I know once we were talking about giving up _____ or something; I think the American government had it. And some guys came from Washington and I was there at the breakfast meeting, and, God, the way Ed explained it, if we gave up _____ all of Asia would go down the drain. This was just remarkable. We kept _____ then. This was back in '52, '53, something like that.

 He had this ability, very good on small groups. Of course, he was an advertising man, salesman.

C: Now I have seen some people in small groups, Mr. Baker, who are just sort of overpowering. You know, they talk about (material omitted) and the guy gets his way.

B: No, he is very softspoken.

C: I was going to say, this is not how Lansdale...

B: No, no, very softspoken, very quiet, very smooth.

 And you never believe he is starting anything. Sort of makes you want... like he says, I never recruited anybody. I always made them think that they wanted to do it, make them believe that they want to do it. I believe that, too.

C: Ok, let's go back to my earlier question. Tell me how you met him and how you recruited yourself to work with him.

B: Well, I was just assigned to the Advent (?) officer at the time there, who was the Embassy section of the Agency; we were just told to support him, which we did. I did...some people would say we gave him too much support on this and that. I figured he is an American; he is out here. Of course, he was a Lt. Col. at that time; I was just a Captain in the Reserve. I was treated as

B: an equal, you know, and I thought that was pretty nice, and just got along well with them.

C: Did you actually ever serve on his country team or were you a part of his Saigon Military Mission...

B: Not at that time. No, I was sort of attached to him. Later on, in '66, I was part of his team, on the second go around.

C: Yeah that's when he went back with rank of Minister.

B: And then after he left Saigon; I stayed on, and then I would see him...I used to pull all of my reserve active duty in his office, Office of Special Operations, over at the Pentagon. It was good duty. I would go over there at Christmas time (material omitted--interesting assignment to him)

And then I was assigned to Paris, and I got this letter, and he said he was going out to Saigon again--this was in '66. And I wasn't really happy about going because I...first time I had been assigned to Europe and my wife being European...it was nice (material omitted--car, travel). But he called me, and out I went. And then we ran into a lot of obstacles there because we weren't really military or State Department. The Saigon Liaison Mission, I guess you would call it. We really had Lansdale as sort of a one-man team. Charlie Chow (?) and some of the guys used to say that--I don't know what we are doing out here--he is sort of a one man team. Which was true. He had all of the contacts. He would give us different assignments--go out and check on this, go out and check on that. Mike Deutsch--have you talked to Mike?

C: Not like you and I are talking, but I will. I met him at the Christmas party.

B: Mike did a lot of work there in the banking and stuff like that. He and I used to do a little work. Mike was ...really got down and worked

B: ...of course, Dan Ellsburg was with us.

C: Tell me about Dan Ellsburg.

B: Well, I have always liked Dan. Dan used to stop by to see me every time he came to Washington. He hasn't lately. Dan was very intense, very strange person; a tremendous writer. God, he could write something. He wrote something about the walk, used to stay in the Astro Hotel when he first got there, before he got housing. I walked from my hotel to the Embassy was written somewhere. I think he sold that for \$4,000. Some _____ got killed, some enlisted, he had met at a party out there. Got killed in an airplane crash, so Dan just turned the check over to his family. He was a very nice guy. I always liked Dan. I liked his wife, Patricia Parks...you know Lewis Parks the toymaker, who was very right wing. I met him once or twice when he came out to Saigon. He was very close friend of General Monmeyer (sp?), and I understand later on he and Dan had quite a falling out, but Patricia came out there once (material omitted--she sending toys). But Dan has this psy (?) complex that we are going to blow ourselves up, which I began to think he is right. Maybe. I don't think man is that sharp that he is going to realize how dangerous the atomic weapon is (material omitted: Beirut).

C: I have written him on two different occasions (material omitted)

B: (material omitted--Dan moved from New England to California)

C: I heard a very lengthy story about him and I would like to check it with you. When he worked over there in Vietnam, every now and then he felt the need to play the part of an infantryman.

B: Yes, he had that.

C: And he would go and scrounge an M-16 from somebody and go out with the infantry to kill Cong.

B: He would go out. Now, I don't know if he ever killed anybody. He

B: was a Marine officer. I got hit myself during WW II(material omitted)

Dan was trying to emulate ones who had to stay out all the time--you really can't do that, Dan--go back and sleep in your soft bed tomorrow night.

(material omitted--about WWII) You can't say you have seen combat, by just going out for a day. Dan has written this, how he went out and killed Gooks.

(material omitted)

C: Now I hadn't realized either that he was a Marine officer.

B: Yeah, Dan was a Marine Captain, I think.

C: Well, how long did he work with Lansdale's group?

B: Well, he was out there, I think, over a year and a half. He worked in the Pentagon with McNautins's (??) group, one of the real brains, the whiz kids. Which Dan was. Dan was probably one of the sharpest guys I ever ran into.

C: Well, General Lansdale says that whenever he had a group in Saigon that he needed to keep busy, you know some visiting fireman, he would send Ellsburg over, because he said Ellsburg could talk on any given subject and talk intelligently...

B: Yeah.

C: ...keep them occupied.

B: Now Dan was good at that. Really I think he sort of wasted his life and his potential; could have gone a long ways. And now he could never get back with the government or anything.

C: Well, think back to those Saigon days, Mr. Baker. What was the reason Lansdale's role was so circumvented or restricted in that second mission over there?

B: Well, I think everybody else was pretty well established. You know, the

B: Embassy was there, the military was there, and then they were going to send out this Saigon Liaison Mission. See I wasn't around at the birth of it. Lou Conein and some of those boys were./ Have you talked to him?
Joe Redick.

C: Yeah, I have already talked to Joe Redick.

B: I really don't know how it started. Somebody said they went out under the auspices of Hubert Humphrey; whether they did or not, I don't know. We didn't have any budget. We didn't have any money. We were beholden to the State Department for money, but they were very good on that, because I remember... I used to go over and get the funds, and all you had to be was sign that these were being operationally spent and ...they were very good about that.

C: So you could get both equipment and money?

B: Equipment and money and Phil Habib...he was the political officer there and I think he was sort of envious of what Ed was doing out there, getting into the political situation. He was the political officer. Of course the CIA chief then was Jorgenson...Gordon Jorgenson (??), who was in '54, I think, Ed's deputy, the same position I held in '66. So he was very helpful. We could get anything from the State Department we wanted; vehicles, air transportation, we could always get it. Ambassador Lodge was very good. He made his personal plane available to Ed and key members when they wanted to go to Hong Kong, he had a small jet there. I never flew on it, but some of the team members--I think Lou has. But on the surface, everything I saw, both the Agency and the State Department and the military...you know, I was on pretty good terms with General Westmoreland. He always called me "Mr. Baker" and whatever we wanted, I will try to get it and that kind of thing--wanted a plane, he would get us a plane or helicopter. But I think on the personal dealings when Ed would try to deal with some of the political powers, generals, on a political

B: basis, well, I think the Embassy would try to move in there. I see their point--they were responsible for the political action.

C: Then why were you there?

B: That I don't know. He just said, he told me he was sent out there by the U.S. government. I guess they figured he would find some young leader like he did with Magsaysay in the Philippines, find some guy like Diem who was already there, but would follow his lead and guidance. The Generals were changing so rapidly. I think most of the time I was out there General Thieu was in power. T H I E U. Who was a good friend of Lou Conein's.

C: Was that Nguyen/Van Thieu, who later became President?
sp??

B: Later became President. I think he was the President.

Ed would always want to see him, and he would have Lou arrange the meeting through the backdoor, because Lou Conein and Thieu were ...Lou was a big American Lt. or Captain and Thieu was _____ in the French Army...

C: This would be back to World War II then?

B: World War II, yes. Because Lou parachuted up in Hanoi _____
There were a lot of careers made in Vietnam. A lot of these guys ended up Colonels or junior political officers. Phil Habib, I don't know ...had not Vietnam come he might have been a political officer in the State Department.

C: Robert Komer did pretty well.

B: Komer did very well./ And Burt Rawson/Lawson (??)--he ended up a 4-star general. I first ran into him at Angio (sp??). He recognized me when I first came out there; that shows how sharp he was, because there was hundreds of us guys.

C: You actually stayed in Vietnam...Angio...you probably...

B: He remembered me from then...he said, we were at a briefing together.

B: He was out there in '54 as a Lt. Col., but I had never run into him. He got 4-star general and then I think he went to Oxford and got a Ph.d. after he retired. He probably would have ended up as a full colonel because he wasn't a West Pointer. He was from the mid-west somewhere; Iowa or somewhere. I always said if he had made full colonel he would have been satisfied with his career, and then World War II came on. I knew a lot of guys, saw this opportunity and they weren't going to let anything stand in their way. I guess it has its merits; ambitious. Now see Ed wasn't that way. He was never a self-seeker, never interested, I don't think, in getting a promotion. Not interested in living luxuriously or well; just enough to eat. Never had a big villa out there; a lot of the generals had private villas. Ed had a villa, had 4 or 5 guys staying with him. Joe Redick stayed with him, Mike Deutsch stayed with him, Hank Miller, who just passed away, stayed with him.

C: Yeah, I heard...I met Mr. Miller last Christmas...

B: Bigger guy than I, physically.

He had cancer somewhere, and then it got in his esophagus...(material omitted--Miller spent years in Laos, he was USIA)

Ed always had Filipinos staying with him. He always got along very well with the Asians. There again, I think his honesty just showed. He really, really cared for people. To other Americans, it's amazing, say these guys are just gooks. These gooks, as you call them, there's American boys out here dying for them and they are dying for their own country, too. That used to just amaze me--these were guys that were supposed to know better. But Ed never had that; to him everybody was a human being. One thing a couple of guys told me, well, you can get in a hell of an argument with Ed and maybe have a fist fight, and the next day he came to do your rating, your work ability rating,

B: it would be based on the past year, that night there was just one night out of 360. And a lot of guys told me that same thing. Almost have a fist fight, but he could forget those small things.

C: That's very rare.

B: Yeah, it is

C: I'm Army reserve and there's some people I wouldn't want to come to blows with and then rate me the next day, year.

B: Ed was very understanding...guys under pressure, you know how it is. I think that's what makes him the man that he is.

C: Were you ever present when he visited with Ky?

B: No, no, I wasn't.

C: Did you ever see him operate with any of the other national leaders?

B: No, no, he would always take some French speaker with him.

C: Redick.

B: Joe Redick was there. Lou Conein was there a couple of times. And in the early days, back in the '50's, he would take Ogden Williams (sp?). He was a Princeton boy. He is retired and lives out in West Virginia somewhere. But Ogden used to go with him to see Diem all the time.

(material omitted--small talk)

O G D E N

Now the General will know where he is--I don't.

Bachelor, as far as I know is still a bachelor.

Lives in West Virginia...bought a farm...whole mountain top or something.
Lives out there.

You haven't talked to anybody who was non-team members, have you?

C: Non-team member? I don't think so. That's a new phrase.

B: Well, you know, they always used to say "the Lansdale team." Well, what I gather you have been talking to all the team members of Lansdales...somebody that was not on the team.

C: Oh, I see. Yeah, I have.

What I would really like to do is get hold of, Lansdale said it, you kind of said it, Redick said it, a person tended to either much like Lansdale or didn't like him at all...

B: Phil Habib.

C: Yeah, but how do I get hold of him?

B: You are going to see Lou Conein. Tell Lou that, I understand you see Phil. Lou says that Phil is very critical of all the teamers. Mike Deutsch... Mike was a Russian Jew. Lou Conein and Mike Deutsch, Dan Ellsberg, Joe... I used to sort of keep in the background---God, he said, what a team to bring together. Bernie Yoh. I think that would be a good idea. I know what Phil has told Lou, and you know, laughs at the team. When we first came out there, I think I was one of the first ones out there; I might even have gotten out there before Ed did on this last go around. God, everybody treated me like royalty. Phil Habib...here was this mystery group coming out there, coming out at the request of Hubert Humphrey or LBJ--so / really wanted to see who everyone
As soon as we were. /the team started to get out there, God, we were invited out every night, free loading, it was drinks and food all the time. They just wanted to see what we looked like. (material omitted). Bill Depugh (sp?), we used to go out and see him quite often. Bob Schlaflin (sp?), did you ever talk to him?

C: No, I haven't. Robert Schlaflin, the correspondent.

B: The correspondent. He was very close to Ed. He lives up in Princeton now; he might be in Greece on a little vacation. He worked very closely with

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B: Ed all the years. In fact, I am sure Ed has told him things that he would never have told me, because I was working for Ed and the team...

C: Dropping a rock into a pond...

B: Sure, sure. Yeah, I think Bob Schlaflin would be a good one--I might even have his number.

C: Great.

END OF SIDE 1

SIDE 2

C: Robert Schalfin, number.

B: 609, area code. 921-2635. He's at Princeton.

C: Who else do you know that may be skeptical of General Lansdale and might be willing to talk to me?

B: Well, here's a guy that knew him in the Philippines. Don't say I gave you these names.

C: I won't even tell my wife.

B: Mills Brandes. M I L L S B R A N D E S. Now his number is 684-8354. He lives in Arlington.

Mills was in the Philippines before I even knew Ed Lansdale. He would give you a different viewpoint. Of course, you talked to Rufe Phillips, I guess.

C: Not as long as I wanted to, because I came down with the flu.

B: Well, John Dixon (sp?). He knew Ed Lansdale years ago in the Philippines. He is up in Simsbury, Connecticut. He is a lawyer. S I M S B U R Y, Conn. He lives at 44 Sunset ____ Road. Area code is 060-70--his area code is 203-651--

C: Oh, you mean zip code.

B: Zip Code.

C: Ok, I couldn't get the digits to match up. 06070. Area code is

B: Area code is 203-651-8534. Now he was in the Philippines very early with ...Dan Ellsburg, I have Paris and San Francisco...

C: I think he has moved--that doesn't sound right.

C: Robert Komer is the guy I am hoping I can visit with before I get done with this.

B: He would probably give you a different...

Phil Habib would be one.

There are quite a few of the guys we have know together who have passed on. (material omitted: settled in Washington area)

Joe Johnson...have you talked to him?

C: No.

B: MD. I don't know if I have a number, but he lives here in McLean. He is in the phone book, right around the corner from Lou Conein. Joseph Johnson. I gave you Bob Schlaflin. That's about it.

C: Well, can you tell me a human interest story? Something that sticks in your mind from those years that ...

B: Well, I don't know...I know that one time after Ed left Saigon they wanted to give him a very big job at the Agency; assistant DDP (??) or something. But he refused it. There was one time...I don't know if Ed has told you this, he went up to the White House as soon as Kennedy got in...I think that has been written out...

C: Yeah.

B: And then never got another phone call or anything; just shows the power of the State Department.

C: George Ball, I think it was, said, if that man is appointed, I am resigning.

B: Where was that--I read that once...

C: I read it within the last couple of weeks...trying to think what it was in. (material omitted)

B: Well, that's one thing I can say, Ed had great warmth for human beings...it just shows. It really, really shows. And I think it really showed to the Asians because after having their ass kicked for centuries by the white and yet, man, here was a white man who treats them right. Kind of like you and me.

C: Doesn't tell them what to do; just helps them think through their problems.

B: Think through problems, and makes them want to do things. I think that is the key to his success.

You know, he is very loyal to guys that worked for him. He would do anything for them. He got quite a few boys ...well, Ogden Williams was one. Ended up as a GS-18. I think Rufe Phillips did.

C: That's not a bad rank.

B: No. Lou and I always wondered why we weren't taken care of that well. (Laughter). Ask Lou tomorrow: I understand Lansdale had quite a few promoted to GS-18. Were you one of them? I mean, you will enjoy Lou. Or ask him how come he wasn't one of them, and see what he says (Laughter).

You know about Lou's background--Foreign Legion.

C: Yeah, very interesting career. (material omitted)

B: I have enjoyed all the time I spent with Ed. Lansdale...I can say that. I thought you had forgotten us. Met you at the party (material omitted: you had flu; going to Philippines; Dorothy Bohannon has interviews lined up: Frisco San Juan, Joe Banzon)

B: Joe Banzon. He was a military attache. He could give you a lot. He knew Ed back in the Philippines and he was a military attache in Saigon.

Mrs. Valeriano...have you seen her? See, Col. Valeriano was a great

B: buddy of Marcos. And he passed away. In fact he was here one night and he said, God, Joe, I don't feel well. And he had a stroke the next day and died.

She is in the Philippines now. You are going to leave when?

C: I will leave for the Philippines on the 20th of July.

B: 20th of July. She might be back by then.

Joe Johnson knows her quite well; the doctor. Let me give you his number....he knows her very well; has known her for years. 356...

C: This is Johnson?

B: Johnson, Joe Johnson. 356-4292.

She is in the Philippines now, and she has been a friend of Ed's for many years. Valeriano--his father used to be chief of staff to the Philippine Army--and I think Val had fallen in love with Mrs. Valeriano and gave up all that career. He probably could have been the chief of staff now, because he and Marcos were great buddies all the way along. Mrs. Valeriano is a great buddy of Imelda. She could give you a different, a woman's, viewpoint.

And I think Johnson, he's a bachelor, and he sees Emma and sort of squires her around, and they both work together.

C: Imelda did send me a letter on the nicest stationery I think I ever got in my entire life. It was such heavy rag content, Mr. Baker, that you would really have had to have a lot of force to even tear it. I saved that.

B: I think Emma Valeriano and Bob Schalfin could give you a different viewpoint. Phil Habib would be very good. Justin O'Donnell (sp?), he was always nicely critical of Ed, but he has passed away. He was the very senior man over the agency.

C: Well, why was he nicely critical?

B: Well, he was a gentleman.

C: What was he being critical about?

B: Well, I was just trying to think...he was at the Pentagon at the time and I guess he was with the Agency and knew Ed...it was about Ed's methods of operations. No records, you know. Ed was very poor at keeping any records. And Justin was a lawyer, and everything was pretty well documented.

C: Are all those records over at the Lansdale house Pat's doing? His long file drawer of names of people he knows. Gave me a file today; slid back closet door, said, here it is.

B: Well, he has given some of his records to Stanford.

C: Yeah, that's why I am going to California.

B: He has turned a lot of stuff over there. Just between us two, there was a lot of classified stuff in there. Agency people went out and sorted it out. At one time the Department of Justice was thinking...of course, there was grounds for action there. He had classified material, not stored the way it should have been stored. So a couple of the Agency guys went through all that and pulled it out. I used to meet them up to O'Toole's Bar _____ but there was a lot of stuff in there

C: Did it still have its covers on it?

B: Yeah.

I think that is something Justin O'Donnell---Justin would have put that in a safe and put nine locks on it. Here Ed would file it away. He didn't worry about that. The Bureau...how long has this been stored in a garage or First Security Storage or something like that. He wasn't malicious or anything; he just wasn't thinking. I guess the boys at the Hoover Institute...they just threw their hands up when they saw some of that stuff. Whether the Agency sent guys out there or whether they sent all that stuff back, I don't know. I think

B: it was stored here and they sent a man to look at it.

C: It was my understanding that people went out there to the Hoover...
I'm not certain.

B: I think some of them did. And I think they brought some back. And
then the guys at the Bureau, some of the stuff was State Department classified,
so they had the State Department look through it. I don't know if Ed knows
about that, or not. I wouldn't bother him with that...he is getting along in
years, and after his operation...

C: I am sure hoping his health stands up.

B: Oh, I think it will

C: MATERIAL OMITTED: Lansdale pleased you are writing the biography:
wants people to know)

B: Well, I honest believe with Diem's outlook that he didn't want a
big American (president or presence) and had Ed stayed there...you know at one
time there was even talk about Ed being made Ambassador out there, through the
Dulles boys. And had he kept Diem in power...

C: Oh, you mean...

B: Way back in the 50's.

C: Now that I didn't know. That Dulles ever considered...

B: Oh, yes.

C: I thought that first came about with Kennedy.

B: No, it was way back there with Dulles.

See, I understand that Ike and the Dulles boys one night a week would
have martinis, 4 to 6, and they would discuss all of this. And the story that
I had heard was that Ike said, if you think he is the man, we will make him
Ambassador out there, based on his record in the Philippines and based on his
records with Diem. See, at one time they were ready to shove Diem down the

B: river, and Ed was the only guy...I think this might have been the time
tiff
that he and J. Lawton Collins had the / that he walked out on. Ed said, no,
Diem is our man. And when the _____ they had an attack and they thought
the _____ would defeat the Vietnamese Army. It wasn't a very cohesive force,
but the Vietnamese Army prevailed. And then Diem just kept climbing in power
and I think Diem's brother probably got more bad publicity / than President
Diem did.

C: It really makes you wonder what would have happened if Ed Lansdale,
who didn't believe in a lot of troops being put into combat, he didn't believe
in a big American presence...

B: ...he wouldn't have had the troops there to begin with...

C: ...it really makes you wonder what would have happened, if Eisenhower
would have named him as Ambassador.

B: And I think he probably could have reined Lou Conein in. This here
is also just between us two: I don't want to be quoted on it. I have been
to houses, parties where Lou was sitting at the bar...and Lou never thought
much of Diem. He says, we ought to at least call him the eunuch. You ought
to get rid of this bastard (??) and you guys take over. Well, here's Lou,
you know, the big white man, talking to these guys who were Vietnamese
(generals or journalists) but they still had an Asian underling mentality, and
they figure, well, God, maybe we can overthrow this guy and take over ourselves.
Something like Nixon used to say: Jesus Christ, when Admiral Morrier (sp?)
walks into this office, I want to stand up and salute, but I have to sit down
whoops,
and say, / I am the President (Laughter.) And these Vietnamese guys had this.
I know one guy; I don't know which General he was, he said, I don't like Lou.
He said Lou once kicked my ass because I didn't move under fire. That was up

B: in Hanoi (material omitted) Lou had these guys and they would listen to Lou. You know, if he had a steadying influence on Lou...because they looked upon Lou as the father figure. Everybody looked upon Diem as the father figure, but you could soon break down his image if it is pushed in (?) that you are as good as this guy.

You know when you are talking about 60,000 American lives...Lou is still sensitive about this because some guys have told him, you know, you could have prevented a lot of this. I have never told this to Lou; but as long as you are going to talk to him, you might ask him. These journalists, most of whom were uneducated; they had military training, thought they could run a country. See Lou was very close to General Conn (sp?), who was president there twice or premier; I don't know, they used to make him president or premier. And he was president once; he overthrew somebody; I think he overthrew Big Minh. Then Conn came back somewhere along the hierarchy. And I used to go see Conn in Paris. They would say, we are the far east experts here, why is he seeing you? And I said, don't blame me; he just wants to see me. I don't know what Conn is doing now; last I heard he was running a restaurant there. When he was president, Lou was his personal body guard. Lou could have ruled Vietnam. Lou had a lot of power there. I know the General used to want to see President Thieu; go up to his house. He was living in a house then. Who was vice president then; I get sort of mixed up. Ky was president, I think...

C: Ky was president with General Thieu as vice president.

B: That's where we used to go see General Thieu, because he had a private house. Lou would go up there. Mrs. Thieu used to call him Lou--that's about all the English I think she knew. I never went in the house because I didn't want to get involved, but Lou had that access; he could see Thieu at any time.

the States
B: Thieu was here. Now Lou knew that Thieu was in /, he said, but I didn't know that Thieu was here. But I read in the paper that he was here. Lou mentioned it...how Lou knew, maybe Thieu saw him...Lou denies it. But he was very close to Thieu. I think he had done Thieu some favors. Lou was very trustworthy.

That team of Conein and Lansdale--one guy said Lou never uses his brain; he is ruled by his heart and his cock. This is when he was younger. Very aptly put. Those two guys could have done a lot. Lou holding the young general in bay and Ed taking care of Diem, and Diem, the generals. Because Lou is a patriot. If the generals had told him something___ but Lou would tell everything. But the whole thing might have changed, you know.

(material omitted: about what he read; you say you have copy and will send it to him. Long pause on tape as he looks for something downstairs)

B: ...someone else for you to talk to who is critical of Ed. Like you do when you have a background check; everybody lists their friends...

Bob Schalfin can probably steer you onto some people , and Bob has some thoughts.

But Phil Habib...Lou will know where to get hold of him.

C: And Robert Komer...those two I would very much appreciate talking to. There came a time when Robert Komer just couldn't stand Lansdale.

B: See, I never was around at that time. Durbrow is still around. Ambassador Durbrow.

C: I thought he died.

B: Ifs, he did, it is recently and I have missed it then. Elldridge (sp?)--he died, did he?

C: Well, you know, I can'ttswear to it; it is just one of those things

C: that I think I know.

B: Of course, Cabot Lodge is pretty well gone. They tell me he is pretty feeble and old.

C: Yes.

B: Nolte. Frederick Nolte, he was ambassador out there for awhile.

C: Was he the banker you were talking about?

B: Yes, he was the banker. He would have some thoughts. He is up in New York, I think, with Chase, one of the banks. Frederick Nolte. (talking about Lou Conein; wouldn't want him in Embassy all time, but want him on my side in a bar fight)

C: (material omitted: embarrassing situation--Colby. Stanfield Turner's (sp?) book; Baker has not read it)

B: Try to get Doc Johnson and Emma Valeriano and Phil Habib. Those three. Emma will give you entirely different...she is Filipino; she is an American citizen now, but she will give you the Filipino...

Maybe she can tell you why Ed never went back to the Philippines. I have always said, why don't you go out there...space available basis. I don't think he wants to go out there and cause a commotion, which he would.

C: Well, his wife was showing me some clippings she just brought back and whatever political party this was, the Philippine Observer, some newspaper, was running Lansdale down, as recently as, what, I guess it was February she was there.

B: I remember we were in Saigon then and he came to the United States flew Pan Am from Saigon to the Philippines and somehow Magsaysay heard he was there; held the plane up for about three hours, he came out to see Ed at the airport. That's what he thought of Ed. I knew a guy that was on the airplane.

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B: He said, I actually saw it happen. We sat on the runway there. A car came out and got Ed off; we taxied up and they said, there will be a slight delay. Held up the plane 2, or 3, or 4 hours. I supposed Ed doesn't want to go out and cause that commotion. I see at his age now...traveling is hard work.

C: Well, especially right now, it would be for him. For several years, as you have indicated, he could have gone, and didn't...enjoys it...

B: His wife enjoys it.

C: She said this last time she didn't introduce herself as General Lansdale's... Her daughter kept saying, this is just my mother.

Well, these are my two addresses, Mr. Baker. You can get in touch with me at either one.

(material omitted: book you wrote--28th infantry division---Follow Me and Die--you tell Baker you will send him a copy)

END OF TAPE

JOE BAKER ON EGL:

[Indochina was] one of the few places . . . where they had two--the CIA had two stations there--military station and they had a civilian station. I was civilian. . . . Ed was sort of a]loner]. Never had the military back of him and never had the Agency or State Department. He was sort of out there on the end of the line. . . . It was always a great rivalry between the civilian and military CIA. It was . . . good natured, but at times it would become bitter at certain levels. But Ed could always shrug it off.

. . . . I know that Ed was there and in probably 3 weeks Diem asked him to move into the palace. I . . . heard it from 2-3 different sources [including] Wolf Ladejinski But Ed refused

. . . he is not really out for himself. I am very surprised that he made 2-star general because he was never out to seek promotions. . . . One time there [in VN] he sat on the mission council And Ed just got up and walked out [on J. Lawton Collins]. He said, I am representing the American people but I can't represent them here. . . .

. . . . Collins could have said, We don't want him out here anymore, and just send him out of the country. . . . [EGL] was that kind of guy and I guess Collins was big enuf to figure, well, you have got to admire this guy.

. . . if we had kept Ed out there, we well might have avoided American military involvement in there because he had the confidence of Diem. Once he got Diem entrenched there, things were rolling along pretty well, and they called Ed back here. . . . A lot of people were envious of Ed because he used to . . . have a direct line to Allen Dulles and through Allen to John Foster Dulles, which made a lot of the State Dept people antsy because he did have a lot of pull there. But he never used it.

Ed was low key but he could always built up peoples' _____ Some guys came from Washington and I was there at the breakfast meeting and, God, the way Ed explained it. If we gave up, all of Asia would go down the drain. It was just remarkable. He had this ability, very good on small groups. Of course he was an advertising man, salesman. Very soft-spoken, very quiet, very smooth. You never believe he is starting anything. Like he says, I never recruited anybody. I always made them think they wanted to do it.

Some people would say we [in the civilian CIA] gave him too much support. I figured he is an American; he is out here. (I was just a Captain in the Reserve, but I was treated as an equal. I thought that was pretty nice). . . . I was sort of attached to his [SMM].

Ed had great warmth for human beings. It just really, really shows. It showed to Asians after having their ass kicked for centuries by the white man, and yet, here was a white man who treats them right.

Joe Baker, 23 June 1985