

12-19-1984

## December 19, 1984 Interview with Edward Lansdale

Cecil B. Currey

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C: the truth and the truth shall make you free". The roof of the building is covered with microwave receiving and sending dishes...

L: ... Valeriana, who was supposed to have who had just gotten in from the Philippines, and...

C: Hasn't come yet, hunh?

L: She might be here. She...what she did last year was when she got back she took a long time to, at home to rest and so on before getting in touch, and that's what she might be doing this time, I don't know.

C: Which way does the jet lag bother worst, when you are coming this way or...

L: No, it's...

C: going west?

L: Both are the same, it is about the same. It finally started getting me and I used to, when I would go in there, I'd...into Viet Nam, the last time I'd head for Hong Kong and get a hotel room and just get in bed and sleep until I got it...I'd take a day out of my trip just to sleep and try to adjust. And that used to help. I'd still get sleepy and tired at the wrong times. And coming back, it used to be Hawaii.

C: You say you'd stop off there? They are great places to stop off. Oh, I also have a confirmed reservation to get out of here now. Piedmont came through. I thought I was going to have to fly first class going down and that was the only confirmed seat I could get, that was an Eastern flight, first class. By going on this Piedmont flight I save over \$250.00. Isn't that amazing?

L: Yeah, yeah. That was a nice flight down we got on, Piedmont, it stopped in Greensboro.

C: Yeah, it doesn't take very long to get down there.

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L: No. I guess Greensboro is their headquarters or something.

C: I think so.

L: This college my granddaughter goes to is very close to there, *Elon (?)*  
(illegible) It's on the outskirts of a little town, I think just northeast  
of there. I don't know, I haven't been down there. I'll have to go down  
and take a look. I was going to make you some chicken soup this morning,  
but I got sort of the wrong chicken to make soup with...

C: You're going to show me what good homemade soup is like, instead of  
that...

L: Yeah, right.

C: ...that stuff at the restaurant. You said three or four times, General,  
how reporters had in the past asked you about Diem ~~(illegible)~~ *in ways*  
in ways they'd hoped you'd confirm their prejudices that he was unreliable  
and so forth?

L: Yeah.

CL And you would categorize him as a gentle guy. Would you tell me how that  
worked, exactly?

L: Oh, no, this is...we went through a spate of journalism on TV, which is a  
...to mock all the symbols of American friendship and Diem was one of them that  
they went after real hard. And I think it was CBS or something, but I don't  
remember the network, but the people would try to degrade him, simply because  
he was a friend. And they knew that I had been close to him <sup>so</sup> ~~and~~ they wanted  
to interview me, and I could tell as they were interviewing me that they wanted  
material that would show him, belittle him in some way or other, his qualities,  
that they would get something that they could work on and I felt certain that  
there would <sup>be</sup> some image projected <sup>behind</sup> ~~by~~ my head on the TV screen that would be

L: degrading in some way; would be the opposite of what I said, so... you have to be very careful in such interviews, but when they would ask me, I would pick out the qualities about him that most Americans didn't know, that he was, first of all he was a human being and all these other descriptions of him were pretty mean caricatures and weren't real sketches of a personality, but were simply caricatures and picked out his worst features. So I would describe his human qualities that were likeable, and one of them was a sense of humor, he had a very gentle and highly developed wit, dry wit, to him that he could do straight faced and you wouldn't be catching on that he was doing... I remember once I, I...it was a picture that he had had taken of himself that I liked very much. It was a picture of him aboard a ship, he was on the bridge of it or something and, so I asked him if he would give me an autographed copy of it. I asked for a copy first, and then he said he would autograph it. And I said, great. So, this was just at the time the French had come out that morning and something, tell him what, that I was turning the Vietnamese against him, and so on. They charged me with being an enemy of France and so on, and so Diem was talking to me as...he said I'll give you this autograph and he wrote on it, he said, to Ed Lansdale, he read aloud as he wrote, a great and true friend of France and the person that has made all Vietnamese love France, and I said, you put that on the photograph, you know? And he was doing it straight faced. <sup>(Laughter)</sup> And I looked at it and of course, it was to my good friend, Ed Lansdale, see; he was actually writing with...that's the sort of thing he would pull. Now, no Americans that I had ever talked to otherwise have ever told me that they got any of that from him. They all said, he is a mandarin, he's autocratic, very removed, sort of a stuffed shirt type of a guy, and he wasn't that way at all up close and talking with us. Joe Redick was the other guy that saw it because he was usually with me, and he was a good friend. He

L: was a...he was actually a very modest sort of a person, I guess a private sort of a person. He...I remember I was trying to get him to get married, because he was a bachelor, and I asked him about his girlfriends when he was growing up, and yes, there was one girl that he had been interested in, very much so. And she had never married and was living up in Hue, so he used to go up to Hue to see his mother who was still alive. So I made him promise me that he would call on this girl, and take her down on the Perfume River for a boat ride, which is the romantic way to at least be with your girl and you can propose in there, be...get close to them, an intimate way of acquaintanceship, and the boatman with you in the boat, so it's not too intimate, see, but it's a romantic interlude. So he said, alright, he would. And he went up and saw his mother and came back, and I said, did you see her? Well, he said, I went by and I looked at her house and he said, I couldn't get up enough nerve to go to her door. Imagine, this man was the President of a country; he was number one. He could have gone up there with armed guards or something and broken his way in if he wanted to. But he was a shy, modest sort of a person with it all. This is the man that I knew, so the others would talk about him and I would look in sort of wonder at them, you know, you can't see that, these other qualities in a man, he's not like that, see.

C: What caused those different perceptions?

L: I don't know. I don't know. Maybe the way I met him, introducing myself when he was right new in office, and then some of the other things that we went through. The funniest scene, though, was very early on. We got Donald Heath, the Ambassador...I got so concerned about the refugees up in the north or the people living up there, and the chance to move south, that I wanted to get up there, a boat lift and an air lift and everything organized and give

L: everybody that wanted to get out of the north a chance to do so. And initially they were thinking of maybe 10,000 people would come; and I was talking two million right from the beginning, which shocked Heath as the Ambassador and it shocked Diem as the leader, the Vietnamese leader. So I wanted the Vietnamese to organize for handling many refugees and I didn't want them to be put in refugee camps the way the Palestinians were in the Middle East, creating tremendous problems, political problems and humanitarian problems of taking care of these people. And I wanted farmers to get farm lands and I wanted fishermen to get in fishing again, and so on. Become very useful citizens in the south...<sup>when they got down</sup> so it would have to be organized to handle that. The American aid people were thinking in terms of canvas for tents and they were thinking about 10,000, too. And I was pointing out, <sup>look</sup> well, this is a, in effect, this is a political trip; it's to give the north with its larger population dominance in any vote on the future of this country... they said at Geneva they wanted to have a vote to decide who would run the whole country after a time, and this was giving them the edge on the thing because we are totally disorganized here in the south, and this is just giving them millions. And I want to at least get a balance of the population in the south so we have a 50-50 chance, and that's why I think we should be talking in terms of millions. And so finally I got Heath to go down with me to see President Diem, and I was telling him he had to organize and get a commissioner to handle the refugee movement and we wanted to settle them on the land and then, in fishing places and so on and get them started off in useful lives again. So I was using Heath as an interpreter and finally ~~Heath~~, and this was a very friendly thing going along until Diem and I got into an argument. He wouldn't, he didn't want to have a commissioner, and I suggested that there

L: were such people. I said pick a southerner, a man from the south. He wanted to pick someone from the center of Vietnam. All administrators come from the center: Ho Chi Mihn, Diem, all the rest of them and so on. I said now a man from the south, they are sort of like westerners, more open hearted and freer spirits than the northerners and there was one out in the hall and I called him in. He was my friend, Manny Ho see. I said, pick him. He's a good man, he was a dentist, see, educated, and so he told Manny to bug off or something, in Vietnamese, I don't know what it was. And all of a sudden Heath looked at me, and he said, Ed, I suddenly realized I am the Ambassador for the United States and I shouldn't be acting as your interpreter here...I said, well, stick around, I said, Diem understands enough English, so I jumped on Diem, I said, you don't want this guy, pick someone else today, this morning, right now. And I said, do you understand what I am saying? He said, yeah, I understand. All right, I will, so he picked somebody, see. And he said, told <sup>Manny</sup> /, you can be my assistant and so... Manny became the assistant refugee commissioner. And so that's how we organized to bring down a million people, and I wanted two million and it always disappointed me that we only got a million. Two million would have balanced out, the north and south populations, and a vote at least would have been even. They could have only controlled half the vote in that way. But they called off the vote anyhow, so...

C: How did you meet Pat?

L: She was with a friend of mine and he was the press secretary for President ...the President of the Philippines, whose name I'll think of in just... Rojas, Rojas ...and this was Johnny Orndine and Johnny was driving Pat, either down to work or something, in the evening and stopped by where I lived

L: out in San Juan, and Johnny had something for me or something. She was sitting in the jeep with him and that's how I met her. And she was, she was full of fun, you know, so I think Johnny was the, my best friend in the Philippines <sup>by far.</sup> Then he finally came over to Viet Nam and he, he helped them form their first Constitution there, he was a Constitutional lawyer. He was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States. He was a journalist and lawyer, and he had gone to school in the U.S. and got his law degree here in the U.S., at Stetson University.

C: That's in Florida.

L: Florida, yeah. And he used to make the best apple pie of anybody, it was just out of this world. And he had worked in part going through school there in the U.S. cooking and baking. He used to bake apple pies. And some American gal had shown him how to make apple pie. And we couldn't get apples. We could just get fresh strawberries up there in Bajio, so he used to make fresh strawberry pies like you would apple pies. They were delicious. And I used to get apples from Australia and so on, get them in, they were still fresh enough, flown in. I'd get them from the Air Attache and I would immediately <sup>them</sup> run over to Johnny, you know, here you are, so he'd make up some apple pies right away. But he had a large family and his kids all called me uncle, very close, and some of them I'm Godfather to. But they were a wonderful family to be around close; happy people, really were.

C: How did it come that you used Pat to show you the back country?

L: She lived up in, up north of Clark Air Force Base, and I had been, I had long been curious about some of the draws up into the mountains that are sort of back country, Clark and up towards where she was, and I wanted to meet them, <sup>Negrito</sup> the ~~breed~~ of people and so on, they were little tribal people <sup>up</sup> in there in the



L: mountains behind Clark. And I would take food up there to give them some food and some cigarettes to smoke and so on; get a chance to go up and talk to them because they were very shy people, and she said she would... she didn't know them, the Negritos at all but she said, well, I'll show you ways of getting back up in there. She said this is where some of the Americans hid after <sup>Bataan</sup>~~Bataan~~ and were finally caught by the Japanese and killed, executed up in there. So she had apparently been up in some of it as a girl. But, I got up very high up in there. I used to drive a jeep, you know, I figured it was a mountain goat and...strange thing, one of my friends commanded the...was G-2 of one of the Philippine scout divisions, and he took his recon platoon up into those same mountains and he said he got way up in there and he figured, gee, you know, I can almost get over these mountains to the other coast and yet there were still mountains up there. And they got to talking to some Negritos who told them that I had gone over to the next mountain, they'd never been able to get across. And he came back and he said, my gosh, I didn't know you had been all through those mountains there; very few people had. But that's where the Huks had their headquarters and so on, and that's where some of the American guerilla leaders hid out during the war.

C: Who?

Zambales

L: Giles, Merrill was one of them who was really Magsaysay's boss, Colonel Merrill. And Magsaysay had some guerillas in San Bolis, which was the other coast down there that I was trying to get across to. But I met the Negritos and talked to them and I was trying to get the Clark Air Force Base commanders to treat them a little better. They used to come down on base and steal things there, so they took a very dim view of these little Pygmies, really they were, short little people, black, wearing G-strings only, and speaking no known dialects

L: ...they had their own language, their own tongue. They fascinated me really. But they used to let me come up and talk with them, and they had ...the head of the tribe was the president of the tribe; yeah, yeah, the president. President was a strange thing, you know. And I don't know whether that was a recent thing or not, you know, because we had a President of the Philippines when it was a commonwealth under the U.S. And there were different tribes over in the other mountains and, on the eastern coast, but, and they were headhunters and so on. They had some really wild mountain fastnesses on Luzon. And here you would get down to Manila and everything and you would see a very metropolitan city and yet there were wilds and you could jump back into ancient history, really with some of these people.

C: What are the mountains like? Are they like our Smoky Mountains or Blue Ridge or higher than that?

L: Higher than that, yeah. They had some real high mountains there.

C: Were they like the Colorado Mountains?

L: Something like that, something like the California Mountains, too. But they go from tropical up to temperate climate type. And you can go from palm trees to very lush palms and palmettos up to just pines and hardwood just on up into the mountains there. And not into snow, but into frost, cold weather.

C: I have in my notes, General, that you made a trip during World War II to China and New Zealand.

L: No.

C: Not New Zealand?

L: No.

C: How about China?

L: No, no. I got a lot of Chinese map materials during the war but that was

L: just through connections I had made in San Francisco. And, I was dealing with an awful lot of problems over on the Asian mainland but all from the Pacific coast. And at the time, World War II taught me that you can, if you look hard enough, you can find Americans who had been every place and very knowledgable, saavy Americans, and I found American explorers, vulcanologists, geologists and so forth who <sup>had</sup> ~~have~~ been all over the far Pacific basin, Kamchatka south through China and so on. And I have talked to them, and they would be from Seattle down to Los Angeles where they lived. It is really strange. And describe almost every inch of the ground and not only that, have connections. You say, well, how can you get some information about this and they will tell you, you know, oh, go over and try so and so. And you get there. Yeah, well, let's see, I was up...he's right on the spot of where you want to find out things. It's amazing to me. So I hung on to that, later when I was in the Pentagon, I put together a list of Americans who knew foreign countries extremely well and when I get to know one of them quite well, I would ask if he would know about anybody who knew other countries well. And they would always <sup>know</sup> ~~tell me~~ one or two people, they would tell me. And you would link them in to individuals in that country that usually <sup>either</sup> ~~they~~ had gone to college in that country or somehow or other had gotten involved in something that brought them very close to the people. And later when I was traveling around, I noticed the same thing. I noticed that native people would have nicknames. I remember I was in a little town in Bolivia, way back in the headwaters of the Amazon and we came in from LePaz, and we flew across the Andes and got in there, and they, the mayor of the town was a second generation Japanese extraction and the economics chief was the guy that ran the grocery store, he was from the Middle East. And they immediately wanted to know if we had brought, they had a nickname for him, and I said,

L: Who the hell is that? And they said, he's the Assistant Air Attache in LaPaz, the American. Now, they thought enough they had given him a nickname and so on. And they said, oh, all the girls will be unhappy about that. Usually when he comes in here we have a dance, it's the only time we have a real dance, and they all love to dance with him. And the whole families loved the guy, see. Now, here we had an ace in the hole and the first secretary of the Embassy was with us, a Foreign Service guy, and I said to him, you've got a priceless person... oh, he's the Assistant Air Attache, the guy said; just dismissed, nothing. I said, no, he's a wonderful representative for our country, you know, you ought to really make use of it. But they...the amazing thing is, most diplomats and everything never see this. Now, I remember, when I went down to Venezuela, I'd had an Air Force Colonel who had served down there telling me about the people and everything and the way he talked, I knew he had gotten in very close to them. He was telling, what women would like, when he would go, <sup>he'd get</sup> ~~to get~~ soap, you know, they loved soap, and he would get washing soap. They made better soap up in the U.S. than they could get down in Caracas...So when they would get out in the "boonies", why, he would take soap with him and he would get in very close to the heads of families that way. So I, I asked him if he would like to go down and accompany me on my trip down to Venezuela. He said, yes, he would go down as an interpreter and companion. So he went down there with me and we got in<sup>to</sup> the airport at Caracas, and I had been invited down by the , the Defense Minister, but the Defense Minister's staff was there. They took one look at this guy and they were standing there with the guy from the Embassy, the First Secretary or something, and he came out to say hello to me, and he said, why did you bring him down here, you know, this Colonel Chavez <sup>was his name.</sup> ~~with you.~~ I said, just take one look and here were all these Venezueleans from the Defense Minister hugging

L: this guy and yelling, look who's here, look who's here, you know, so happy to see him. And I said, that's why. You guys will only let me come down here one week in your country and I got to get off to a running start and keep running all the time, and he will help me do it. And that's the way, all over the country, he knew people and they were very close to his heart. And we've got Americans like that all over the world, so I used to keep a list of them and I never really got a chance to use them other than getting information. I could never...we have trouble in Lebanon, and the U.S. was worrying about it, the general leading the Army and having great troubles and we had to help them out. We finally sent in the Marines, we sent <sup>the</sup> fleet in.. I said, instead of that I have got one guy, I found the roommate of this general who had gone to the American University there in Beirut, was an American, he was in the Air Force, a Lieutenant Colonel. So I asked him...he was in intelligence work, and I went to the E-2 and said, could we borrow that guy. And they said, oh, yeah, for this, sure. And I said, well, I'd like to send him over to Beirut to be with this fellow, and he's having a tough time and give him some advice and encouragement and so forth. And I'll pay a couple of guys to keep this one American alive, and keep the general alive. And at the same time we would...we were very sharp in these situations, and so we'd send a three-man team over there instead of a whole contingent of Marines and fleet, and they were costing millions of dollars to do. So I put the proposal forward just that way, and I got this guy lined up and he had always been writing letters to his roommate at school, was very worried about how he was getting along in the situation. I matched up Bohannon as one of the...I said, we've got to keep this guy alive, Bo, and I want <sup>back channel</sup> communication to me, you know, so that we can keep him alive politically and out of Washington. They went up to the Joint Chiefs for a vote and they voted

L: against it. And I went down...I was so damn mad, you know, I was seeing red and I asked, why? And they said, well, it's silly, it just shows you how shallow you think on that thing. you want...this general over there is an Army General and he is commanding Army troops and it is the Army fighting it, <sup>in</sup> the war, and you want to send an Air Force Lt. Colonel over there. I wanted to send his closest American friend, I don't give a God damn whether the guy was a dentist or a ditch digger in this country, it wouldn't have mattered. He was someone the guy trusted see, and he's bright enough to get along and I'd just send some Americans to give me information through this Army general if need be, it doesn't matter on that thing. But...so they never caught on to the importance of this, the human relationship. And so I think I failed them in trying to do this. And this is practically all my work was in the Philippines and Viet Nam was trying to help the people there solve their own problems by being a friend and getting close to them and wanting them to look good in the way they came out on their own affairs, which is, I think, the ideal way to help. And that's why on these big campaigns and everything, I would send in one guy to be the adviser when, then later on, people would send in hundreds and so on. But, you get close to the head man and make him come out and really learn through doing, and he has to make mistakes on that thing, but you overcome them. You would have to have courage to make mistakes, to know that you are going to make them, and to know that you are going to overcome them. And that's foresight or something, but it does happen. That's the human experience...

SIDE 2

L: Over at his home or at his office?

C: In his office.

L: I hope he's free there to talk to you.

C: Yeah, he said he had a little while he could talk to me.

L: Good. He's supposed to be writing a book, too.

C: Oh, is he. What's...

L: And I wish he would. Memoirs, I guess, or something. He went on later, ... well, Aide was trying to get their service in Viet Nam extended from the cities out into the provinces, and more directly, aiding, reaching the Vietnamese people, when I was in the Pentagon, and came over and talked to me about it. And they wanted to start a provincial program with a Deputy Director of Aide on it in Saigon. And they wanted an unusual person to do it. And I suggested that they pick Ruff for that, and Ruff had come back and was working with his father in this firm where he is now on airport construction and so on. And they picked him, sent Ruff over there to head it up, and he was...it was a very vital program and Ruff worked with the top of the Vietnamese government at the time, he worked very closely with brother Nhu, and this strategic ambulance was under his work and all that type of thing. And he expanded Aide considerably while he was there, in their work, so he has quite a bit to talk about and also he was the one initially I used to send out on these pacification campaigns, so he's gone all through the provinces with the armed forces and was very close to some of the top commanders of the Vietnamese Army from having gone through these campaigns with them. So, so he's a man with very, very unusual background. His father, his father, was, was very angry with me for, evidently for seducing his son away from what he was to do in this life, which was to follow in his father's footsteps and take over this firm. He apparently was setting it up so his son could take over completely <sup>From him</sup> and instead of that, I was getting his son out to this foreign country in some God-forsaken place in the world to work with the people out there. And, it was funny, I had met his Dad, and started talking, you have got a wonderful son and everything and he was gritting his teeth; he could hardly talk to me. At first I didn't...what's

Ruff  
Phillips

L: wrong and everything. And suddenly it started dawning on me what it was on the thing. It was too bad, because Ruff is a wonderful person, and he should have been very proud of his son and what he was doing, because Ruff really grew way beyond his usual capacity because of the opportunities that opened up for him out there. It's strange. He was a paratrooper out of, out of Korea when he came down to Viet Nam, first went to work for me, and he was with a group that came in to work with me. And when I was asking him about Psy War, Ruff was the guy that said, well, he was willing to give it a try, you know, so he was the first volunteer for it, along with me. And so I showed him right into the work right at the beginning and got him in with the Vietnamese, G-5 at that time was the Psy War component of the Vietnamese Army, and we got him in as the adviser to the G-5. When the French were there, and the French were so much against Americans having anything to do with the Vietnamese military or taking over from ~~it~~<sup>them</sup>, but they never caught on to the psychological part of it, and they themselves didn't in the war; they had...their Psy War guy was, had taught Shakespeare at the Sorbonne... that's his background for being ... and he knew just about as much as a guy teaching Shakespeare at the Sorbonne would know about psychological operations. And, which could have been something, but it wasn't. I knew him when I had gone out with O' Daniel originally in '53.

C: Well, now, Shakespeare did write something called "The Tempest" about some little spirit running around an island causing mischief among the people who had been ship wrecked there, so maybe he went back and reread that several times.

L: Well, no, this guy was a stuffed shirt, so, so, I think he was...I think he got as far as "Romeo and Juliet" and no further than that. Who knows?



C: What happened last May, General, when you went to your meeting on El Salvador at the Pentagon? Anything come out of that?

L: Not really. It was a...it was very refreshing to, to...the...to be in with a group of Americans whom I ~~had~~<sup>hadn't</sup> known before discussing operations against guerilla forces, and we were suddenly all talking about the same thing, and agreeing on it. And I told them, I said that it is very gratifying for me to be with you guys. I said, you are of a different generation than I am and some of your experiences are different, but we all agree on these things. And there was an Air Force Brigadier, retired, who was saying ~~farmers~~<sup>bombers</sup> are no God damned good in a guerilla war, see, and they are insane to use them, and don't drop bombs, and I just reached over and shook his hand, and I says, yes, that's wonderful there, you know, and he was a pilot. (Laughter)  
God. I don't know how, but wasn't that wonderful meeting people like that? So, we went over the, what the U.S. aid program was down there and critiqued it... for being a military heavy weapons main war type of an endeavor and how many of the weaponry and ammunition and equipment was for a big war and would be counter-productive in El Salvador, and we recommended that they needed <sup>more</sup> infantry. You know, this is in certain places, which they did, and you could equip, train and recruit and field about twelve ~~battalions~~<sup>battalions</sup> for ...if saving money on this big stuff that you didn't need. And we talked to the people down there in CINCSOUTH and the Ambassador and others, I don't know whether we impressed anybody or not; I suspect we didn't. They probably said, well, why the hell are people like this in there; they are has-beens or something, you know, and we are fighting a live war. But they were Americans who had learned somewhere along the line these very same lessons, so I am all for them. And I told this one guy that was a... had a think tank and these people apparently were connected with that, so

L: I told them that I would be very happy to help them out on this thing, but Lord knows whether it's a right-wing or left-wing or what it is, but these guys were thinking right and I am all for them. Anything to keep this correct thinking alive, I'm all for it.

C: Yesterday I, having never been there, I decided to drive out to CIA headquarters, so I went down 123 to the big blue and white sign that says CIA, and whipped around the traffic circle and came up to the gate. And I thought they would let me in the lobby or something like that. I wanted to see the great seal of the CIA...

L: Yeah.

C: And I said to the guy at the gate, I said, is this CIA headquarters?

And he said, I'm not allowed to answer that.

(Laughter)

L: Oh, really. Did you tell him there was a big sign pointing...

C: Yeah, I did, I did.

L: ...does it point beyond these buildings or something else, there's a hole in the ground back there?

C: I said, can I go in on the tour? And he said, what tour? He said nobody goes in there without a pass. I said, how do you get a pass? He said, well, you have to know somebody inside, a contact inside, and they give your name there at the gate...

L: That's correct.

C: ...and then you get through. I said, well, I don't know anybody inside. It was nice talking to you. What I did see was a piece of a building with a microwave dish sitting on top...

L: Yeah.

C: ...up through the trees.

L: Well, you can go up; they have got a real estate development next to it

L: and I think it's very dangerous, security-wise, for the Agency and I hope they realize it. But it's just...well, it would be south of it, down river from...right next to it...you go in and here are all these big homes there, expensive places.

C: With the wall around it, great big homes?

L: Big homes.

C: Yeah.

L: But, no, you can drive in along there, and they all overlook CIA. Line of sight, and you go along just down side of the fence and you can look in and see all, the whole building and the whole layout. Now, of course, modern surveillance techniques are very sophisticated, line of sight is one of them...

C: Point directions...

L: When...well, yeah, not only microphones but you can get other readings off of typewriters, electrical typewriters, electrical code machines, and so forth, and that's the way CINCPAC *once* was so proud. He was showing me all of this new headquarters up at Camp Smith there, the Marine Headquarters, and this CINCPAC for all the Pacific operations military and we have got this. And I said, who lives in these houses up there, you know, ~~own the~~ <sup>along</sup> ~~the hills?~~ <sup>house?</sup> He said, I don't know. I says, well, if I were the Soviets I'd have a few there, and I'd just come right in and I'd read all their God damned machines here, your teletypes and...be right up on top of you all the time. So I said, I don't know who's approving all this but it's my job in Washington as an Assistant to the Secretary of Defense to say I don't approve of it. You have got to rebuild this whole thing. And we made them do it. I said, in NATO and so on you had to get a floating room inside a very secure place

L: and I said, you guys have got to catch on, you know, the world moves on.

C: I was also amused when I drove around there...the first time I went around the circle, I got on 193 instead of the drive in to the CIA. And I saw a sign along the road, but it looked kind of funny, and so after I went to the CIA entrance and got turned back, I went back up 193 again and I forget exactly what the sign, what the name...

L: The Bureau of Roads is in there.

C: Well, it says something like Turner, Barnham, Experimental Farm, or something...Agricultural Research Station.

L: Well, I don't know that.

C: And it's pointing right smack over to CIA headquarters, and I think maybe it's one of these signs they put up to delude people like me.

L: Well, there used to be the Bureau of Roads had an installation right next to them there, and I thought it was still there. They used to experiment on road building and so on.

C: Well, I thought it would be fun to...you can tell me, is there a great seal of the CIA in the lobby there when you walk in?

L: There might be.

C: I've heard there was.

L: There might be, yeah.

C: It would be kind of fun to walk into the lobby and look up at that.

L: It might be. I have visited over there a number of times, and I'm trying to remember...I probably had an appointment or something...

C: An IBM repairman came up and got right in while I was standing there talking to the guard.

L: My gosh. They showed them a pass or something?

C: Uh, huh. And then the guard checked a clipboard and it had, I suppose, you know, at this hour an IBM repairman is coming through. So he waved him right on in.

L: Yeah.

C: I have really just one question, General.

L: Yeah.

C: Sum up the way you feel about your career for me. Can you do that?

L: I...that's...that would be very hard to do. <sup>(Long pause)</sup> There were...there were phases of my career when I was going all out in effort, putting in effort and thought and time, giving a hundred per cent of myself, and accomplishing things and realizing I was accomplishing it that were very rewarding personally to me. I just felt very fine that I was able to do that. And I was ~~so~~ <sup>also</sup> very grateful for...very grateful <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ our country and its citizens for letting... putting me in position to be where I was to do some of the things. And this was in the Philippines and Viet Nam. Other parts of it were, were nowhere near as exciting or exhilarating and no feeling of accomplishment. It wasn't quite ...just doing time and places or doing anything that was boring, but it wasn't being able to do as much as I wanted to do. I think...I think that when they gave me a chance to go to a foreign place and observe what was going on, I would come alive again for that period, and did very useful things in my reports that I sent back, and apparently what I reported was unusual. The ...there would be too many comments back to me on that, both pro and con. There were people begging the people in the, in a place like an Embassy or something...he couldn't have seen all of that while he was there. He couldn't have...those things aren't true, are they, he couldn't have done that in two or three days of doing that. Please wire back and, you know,

L: we'll shoot him out of the water here in Washington with it, and back would come the reply, we are amazed that he saw as much as he did and he's quite right, and we've checked him out and that's it so...something would happen to me that was way beyond myself and...and some, some talent or ability <sup>coming out</sup> that I liked very much. I, I think...I think the thing that hurt me the most in the long run was the task that Kennedy gave me on Cuba, and I had to use U.S. mechanisms to attempt something in Cuba that Americans didn't understand, and I had hoped to generate a revolution against Castro, and the people that I was dealing with, the agencies and their personnel and our government, didn't understand revolution at all. They kept thinking in terms of commando raids and of this, that and the other; exercises that were sort of jokes to me and way off base on the thing. And I remember thinking at the time, I have to start back in kindergarten with these people and start teaching them, but maybe I don't know enough about it, on this thing, it was, it was a very frustrating sort of an experience to go through. It didn't work...and I'm sorry that it didn't, because the missile crisis came up right at the end to stop that, and we could see it coming up from...I was close enough to it, but... I think we missed a big opportunity, our country did, and I'm sorry that...sorry that it happened. So that part of it, that part of it wasn't good. It fell far short of what it should have been. And that's when I tried to really get out and visit other countries and so on and do something else. I didn't get along with McNamara at all, and we were civil to each other <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ that's about it. He would...he would come back and throw a task at me but that was it...the word of mouth and then I'd write it down on a memo and try to get his signature...imagine, these were things, of millions of dollars attached to it. For example,

L: he came back and said, the President wants to talk to the Cuban people on TV; fix it up and get some means. Well, how the hell does a U.S. President from Washington talk to the people down in Cuba on TV? I had to get the means, which I did. It took me almost a week to do it, but I got scientists from all over the U.S. and others back here with me and...and we...we got some airborne TV equipment, which we later used in Viet Nam, but we got where the President could if he <sup>wanted...</sup> I found a channel he could go to down in Havana and we could intrude on it and get some aircraft in and get tapes and everything and get visual effects and...but not right on TV down there, but by then McNamara and the President had changed their minds. But when I was going... it started running up bills, because this took new equipment and so on, and I tried to see McNamara, and I said, <sup>just</sup> initial the corner of this thing so I have some means of access to a budget on this thing. And he said, I told you to get it done. Bury it. So I went to this Comptroller and I said, help me out. And the guy finally said, I see you are worrying about this, I'm sure it will be paid for. Yeah, but, I said, how? I'm going in, this thing is going to cost some money. So he charged it all to the Navy budget; the Navy never liked me for it, but we got it done on the Navy. Later on when I was in Viet Nam in '65, they were jumping me for poking my nose into other peoples' affairs and one of them was Barry <sup>Swarthian</sup> who was the JUS PAO man, who was the public affairs organization there, which handled psychological operations, and he was telling me that I knew nothing about these things and so forth, and they brought in some aircraft to start TV programs in Saigon, and they used my equipment that I had developed for Havana, see, and the pilots and the other crew members came in and saluted to me and said, well, we meet again, you know. And I was supposed to be the

L: stupid guy that didn't know anything. Things like that would keep happening that were gratifying, but by and large it was a bum experience. I...I learned that you have got to educate people when working with them, but...oh, gosh...

C: What have I forgotten to ask you?

L: No, that last one was a ...dinger. I suppose that, you are supposed to say, I had a wonderful career and I am very proud of it. It didn't quite turn out that way. And probably if I had to live it all over again, I would do the same damn thing, you know. You are human beings and you keep making mistakes. You go through some awful, rotten periods of criticism and wondering if you are on the right road and so forth and having to still persevere. It's very hard. That's when you need a chaplain's shoulders to cry on.

C: Well, chaplains can sometimes perform good services.

L: Yeah.

C: They really can. There is one other thing that comes to mind. Tell me about your health right now, General.

L: My health is all right. I...my only problem was my heart and it <sup>gave</sup> ~~came~~ <sup>out</sup> on me last year. And I get over and see military doctors about every six months and they don't do much checking, and...about once a year they give me an EKG. The other times they listen to my heart and pat me on the back and...once a month they check my pacemaker on the telephone to make sure it's working and it's working, so that checks out. So other than that I feel much the same as usual except I get tired. And now I like to take naps and I never had in my life before. I...all my life I have been able to go to sleep when need be, riding aircraft or...it's an old infantry trick, too, you know,



L: anytime you get a chance to go to sleep, fast. And I have that in me, but now I feel the lack of a nap and everything. That was the first time in my life so...so otherwise, I am very normal, to myself.

C: Did this heart problem come up suddenly or did you have warnings of it?

L: No, it was fairly sudden. Something felt funny and I went over and they, the Air Force docs looked me over and said I had a murmur. So they were checking me in, and they put me on medication, and that went along like that for a couple of years, and then I was...suddenly blacked out. I was standing right there and I...I think I was opening the door outside or something. I was standing right at it. The next thing I knew, I was on the floor. So I just apparently blacked out and had just gone down, And I hit my head on a chair, but it's all cushioned so nothing was...was bad with that. So I went back to these docs, and I said, something...told them what happened and I said, I don't like this; what's wrong? So they had me for observation for a time in the hospital over there at Andrews Air Force Base, and they were figuring out that something or other, the blood was flowing irregularly or something, but there was nothing about it they could do, and they...essentially after a week's testing I was all right, and they sent me home. And a week or so later I collapsed in the hall and went down real hard and bruised my cheek and so forth. I blacked out again. It's an awful feeling, you know, to stand up and be going someplace and next thing find yourself on the floor. So Pat started to talk to me, it was about eleven o'clock at night and <sup>I</sup> said, well, I'll go back to the hospital and get those docs to take another look in the morning. So I went to bed that night and that morning, about 5:30 or something, 5 o'clock, I was getting out of the bed to go to the bathroom...I remember getting out of bed and just standing

L: up, and the next thing I was on the floor. I must have kneeled over again, and I hit everything: the dresser and everything going down. I broke my nose and wrecked my eye and everything...broke the rib...

C: Hunh?

L: And..but anyhow, Pat called the fire department emergency squad, and they responded right away, came...I was...I had fallen down in such a way I, apparently most of my body was under our bed, and Pat couldn't lift the bed off me and I couldn't get out from under it. I said, let me get out from under this...if our neighbor or something comes here, maybe they can lift the bed a little and I can get under...I'll get up and I'll be all right,

And then

~~No~~ we can go out to the Air Force hospital, but the emergency squad came in and lifted it off, and started working on me. And they said, we're taking you over to the hospital right away. And I said, well, I'm an out-patient over at the Air Force hospital. And they said, un hunh, it's going to be the nearest one, and it's going to be the Fairfax County Hospital. So they rushed me over in the ambulance right away, and they were telling Pat that I was a goner, or close to it. And I didn't feel that way, except I suddenly got nauseated on the way and I started vomiting, and...

C: With a broken rib, that must have really hurt.

L: Oh, yeah. So we got over there and it was too bad...the nurses were, a special group of nurses; there was a heart specialist team and the nurses all had their own uniforms, they were different than regular nurses uniforms. They had, I forget, crocheting or something up around the collar. Very pretty girls, all of them. This <sup>doc</sup> ~~guy~~ has an eye for the gals, you know, and so there were four of them lined up to take care of me when I got in there, and I'd never gone through anything like that before. But these girls with their

L: pretty starched dresses, I was ...all of a sudden...watch out, you know, I have to heave. That was too much. And they were pounding to keep my heart going, and hitting me on the chest. And I remember one girl, she was kneeling on me, and I remember getting her fist to hit me in the chest and she had such a determined look on her lips, you know, were all screwed up and she had to hit me just right and just hard enough. And I could see that. I told her, I said, you don't know how you look when you get that real determined look and so forth on your lips. And she said, the only other one that has ever seen that is my husband (illegible comment). <sup>(laughter)</sup> I wonder when her husband saw this; it was real funny. So they were working on me and Pat came over and my sons showed up. One came down from New York and the other one from over here, and the doc told Pat, said that he wasn't sure I was going to make it, and so Pat prayed to God; said I'll go to Church, that's why she is going to Church all the time now, see, being a very good girl, so she made a pact there. Pat, I'm telling him why you go to Church.

Pat: Huhn?

L: I'm telling him about your promise to be a good girl and go to Church.

Pat: That's why I have been doing it.

C: That's what he said.

Pat: Well, I've got my <sup>hold on him</sup> (illegible)...when I get mad, I don't go to Church any more. What's going to happen...

L: That will teach me.

C: That's right. What month, was this '83? or 82?

L: '83.

C: What month, General?

L: I think it was the end of October, maybe, no, the beginning of November.

L: It was a little over a year ago. And Pat said, well, let's get some other place to live and everything while you are recovering. Let's go look at other places, so we went out and looked at San Antone; we needed a place that would be near a military hospital where I could check in if need be and mild weather. We went to San Antone, went out to my brother's in southern California and then over to Hawaii and spent a week there, which was very nice. I liked Hawaii very much, but I don't think Pat would. You get island happy the way a lot of the gals over there did, including friends of ours there.

C: So the lady was beating you on the chest and presumably you made it through the night...

L: Oh yeah.

C: When did they...did they go ahead and put a pacemaker in you right away.

L: Oh, they, they put in one temporarily. The doctor, the specialist, the heart specialist, was just starting his vacation that morning and he had stopped by the hospital just as I came in, and he had his family in the car going down to the beach. And he stuck a pacemaker in, down in my groin, and went...started down to the beach and stopped and telephoned on the way back, and the chief surgeon of the hospital was saying, talking to him, saying, it's not going to work and everything. And he'd try one, put one up near the shoulder, so he did that, and it was done with a local anesthetic and so on. But I was talking to them all the time, and I don't, I don't remember passing out on that at all. I thought I was fully awake because I was talking to them; the first surgeon the one that put in the <sup>first</sup> pacemaker, the guy, I remember, him asking me, your pulse is very slow, very slow. I said, well, it has been all my life, I said, my normal pulse is 60 and, 59--60, and I am quite used to

L: that. And he said, at 19? And I said, oh, you better do something right now. 19. (Laughter)

C: That is slow.

L: Yeah. He said, yeah, <sup>it's</sup> a little slower than 60. He said...so he set the pacemaker at 91 and he insisted keep it at 90; no, 90 it is, 90. So I don't know. Now I've got a faster heartbeat than I ever had before...

C: Oh, yeah, that's a very...Why do they run it quite that fast?

L: I don't know. I don't know. And this is all, <sup>if</sup> your heart stops beating or something, it will keep it beating, see. And why don't they do it the normal. I don't know, because I sure told them what my normal was, and I've told others, other docs that.

C: It probably feels funny to you, to have your heart beat that rapidly after you have been used...

L: I don't notice it, so...you know, it is all such a part of you, you wouldn't notice it. I take my pulse everyday now, and check on <sup>it,</sup> just to make sure it is still...but it is strange taking a pulse, which I had done before just because ~~one of the~~ <sup>when</sup> it was 60, but it's much easier to take at 60. And it doesn't feel as strong as I remember it used to when it was, 60. I guess it's faster and lighter or something now. Well, what it is, they would stick wires down and they'd pulsate and they're in veins going down. So it's just a little electronic battery box with a couple of wires that they activate on the thing, it's a fairly simple mechanism.

C: Don't I see a microwave in your kitchen?

L: Yeah.

C: I didn't know you were supposed to have those around if you wore a pacemaker.

L: Well, they claim this is shielded from that. They said, just be careful on that. And Pat tells me, don't stand in front of the microwave when you are cooking. I go through at the airports, security checks, <sup>I say</sup> that I have a pacemaker so they have to search me by hand instead of going through the machine. But this is supposed to be shielded from that, and they tell me it doesn't matter. Originally they were sensitive to such things. I know it would be terrible taking a pie out of the oven or something and you'd get it...

(Laughter)  
C: You sure would.

L: But there wasn't pain connected with this in my memory. There probably was, but I don't remember it that way.

C: I would think it would be very uncomfortable to have a broken rib and a lady sitting on your chest, beating at it, with...

L: Pat took a picture of me in the hospital. I looked like I had been in a bar room brawl or something...