

10-19-1993

## Interview no. 800

Tom Lea

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Tom Lea

INTERVIEWER: Adair Margo

PROJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF INTERVIEW: May, 1993- July, 1994

TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO: 800

TRANSCRIPT NO: 800

TRANSCRIBER: Kevin Rowan

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Artist-author; native El Pasoan; born July 11, 1907; father Tom Lea, Sr. was mayor of El Paso, 1915-1917; attended Lamar School and graduated from El Paso High School in 1924; attended Chicago Art Institute where he studied and worked under John Norton; muralist and illustrator; war correspondent for Life magazine during World War II; author of The Brave Bulls (1949), The Wonderful Country (1952), The King Ranch (1957), The Primal Yoke (1960), Knight in the Sun (1961), The Hand of Cantu (1964), and A Picture Gallery (1968); studio painter, 1970s-1990s.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Interview covers his life and his literary and artistic careers in detail. Topics include: El Paso history, particularly time of Mexican Revolution when his father, Tom Lea, Sr. was mayor of El Paso, 1915-1917; his formative years in El Paso; discussion of major influences on his art; his years in Chicago at Chicago Art Institute as student and employee of John Norton, 1924-1933; mural competitions sponsored by WPA during the Depression; experiences as a war correspondent, 1941-1945, for Life magazine; description of research, writing, and illustrating his books, 1949-1968; reflections on his work as a studio painter, 1960-1994. A complete outline of interview accompanies transcript.

Length of Interview: 15 Hours      Length of Transcript 483 Pages

## Outline of Tom Lea Interview

### Tape 1

#### Side A

Transcript pages 1-16

Family background, parents' courtship, Tom's birth on July 11, 1907, his boyhood, remembrances of his father as mayor of El Paso 1915-1917, early memories of Mexican revolution.

#### Side B

Transcript pages 16-34

Activities at the YMCA and visits to El Paso Public Library as a child, trips to Arizona and Santa Fe as teenager, Fremont Ellis, El Paso High School 1920-24, art club called the Chacmool Society, influences of Gertrude Evans and Maud Sullivan, how he came to attend Chicago Art Institute.

### Tape 2

#### Side A

Transcript pages 34-48

Childhood accounts, stories of the Mexican revolution, in particular his Dad's involvement with Victoriano Huerta, Felipe Angeles, Pancho Villa. Mentions A.B. Fall and Luis Terrazas.

#### Side B

Transcript pages 48-67

Discusses family members, his cousin Homer Lea, who was General Sun Yat-sen's military advisor and his uncle Calvin Lea; experiences at Chicago Art Institute, influence of John Norton and other instructors, 1924-1933.

### Tape 3

#### Side A

Transcript pages 67-83

Mural projects in Chicago, Nancy Taylor, marriage to her in 1927, their move to Santa Fe, her illness and death in 1936, mentions beginning of work with J. Frank Dobie and Carl Hertzog.

#### Side B

Transcript pages 83-98

Friends in Chicago, in particular Bill and Josephine Meade, more murals in Chicago, first trip to Europe (1930) with Nancy: Paris, Florence, Arezzo, Orvieto, Rome, and Capri, his first face-to-face encounters with the art of Delacroix and Piero della Francesca and their impact on Lea's work; comments on art of Michelangelo.

### Tape 4

#### Side A

Transcript pages 98-114

Europe trip continues: Capri and purchase of gun souvenir for Dad, John Norton's death, move to Santa Fe with Nancy in 1933, the heartbreak of her illness and death in 1936, his reestablishing himself in El Paso.

Side B

Transcript pages 114-130

First studio in El Paso, W.P.A. mural competitions: The Nesters in Washington, D.C., and Pass of the North for Federal Courthouse in El Paso, courtship of Sarah Dighton, their marriage in 1938 and honeymoon, Civil War mural for post office in Pleasant Hill, Mo., summer 1939 in Monticello, Illinois, establishing home with Sarah in El Paso, trip with J. Frank Dobie to research The Longhorns.

Tape 5

Side A

Transcript pages 130-144

World War II: war correspondent for Life magazine, first assignment with North Atlantic fleet, first voyage to Argentina, Pearl Harbor, assignment to Hornet in Pacific, assignment to North Africa, anecdotes about Major Gen. C.R. Smith, experiences in Marrakech, Algiers, Tunis, portraits of Barndt Bulchen and Jimmy Doolittle.

Side B

Transcript pages 144-158

World War II: Abadan, Karachi and over the Hump, assignment in China, meetings with Gen. Joseph Stilwell and Theodore H. White, drawings for A Grizzly from the Coral Sea, portraits of Generalissimo and Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek, Chinese Minister of Finance H.H. Kung, and Maj. Gen. Claire Chennault, Pacific assignment, on board James O'Hara, drawings for Peleliu Landing.

Tape 6

Side A

Transcript pages 158-172

Peleliu paintings, portraits of friends: Dr. Robert Homan and Carl Hertzog, Homan's scrapbooks on Lea; death of father Tom Lea, Sr. in 1945, return from World War II; second portrait of Sarah, interest in bull fighting, visit with Ray Bell, Jr. on ranch in Mexico, comments about the matador Manolete, the development of his character Luis Bello for The Brave Bulls.

Side B

Transcript pages 172-187

Observations of war correspondents including Edward Steichen, studies of beef cattle, more on Ray Bell's ranch, meeting Manolete, the Manolete portrait, Life magazine work on fighting bulls and beef cattle, leaves the staff of Life in 1946.

Tape 7

Side A

Transcript pages 187-204

The Brave Bulls: research for book, film industry buys rights to book, Lea's screenplay rejected, the filming process, film editor Bob Parrish, movie premiere 1951, The Wonderful Country: work on film with actor Robert Mitchum.



Side B

Transcript pages 204-219

The Wonderful Country: writing the book, basis for characters, film version, discusses the painting "Everybody's Gone to the Wedding," comments on other artist/writers Frederic Remington and Andrew Wyeth; The King Ranch: inquiry from Klebergs, inclusion of Carl Hertzog in project, Bruce Cheeseman, trip to ranch for research.

Tape 8

Side A

Transcript pages 220-234

The King Ranch: roles of Holland McCombs and Francis Fugate in development of book, anecdotes about Carl Hertzog, comments on life at the King ranch and the Kleberg family, completion of book after five years, Saddle Blanket and Ranch editions of book; The Primal Yoke: inspired by a trip to Wyoming with Shirley and Charles Leavell, reviews of the book; The Hands of Cantu: study of horses.

Side B

Transcript pages 234-252

The Hands of Cantu: trip to Malta to research horses, assistance of Al Fleming, publication by Little, Brown, and Co., illustrations and design; comments on art work for his first 3 books, discussion of portraits and choosing subjects, origins of A Picture Gallery and In the Crucible of the Sun: research, Klebergs' involvement in project, death of Bob Kleberg in 1974, Lea paintings and illustrations at the ranchhouse.

Tape 9

Side A

Transcript pages 253-269

El Paso Public Library built in 1950s, furniture design and Lea's mural in Southwest Room, comments about Rex Smith, friendship with Carl Hertzog, additional projects with Hertzog and with J. Frank Dobie.

Side B

Transcript pages 269-285

Carl Hertzog: his genius, talent for design and his personality; Leavells as friends, trips with Leavells, friendship with John Connolly, Texas Academy.

Tape 10

Side A

Transcript pages 285-297

Recalls good friends Holland McCombs, who influenced Klebergs to commission Lea to write history of King Ranch, Rex Smith, and Fergus Meade, the theme of mentor in his books, discusses his portraits of: Fergus Meade, Rex Smith, Tom Lea, Sr., Dick Kleberg, G.W. (Bill) Burroughs, Al Fleming, Claire Chennault, Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek.

Side B

Transcript pages 297-313

Discusses his portraits of: Ellex Stevens, brothers Dick and Joe Lea, Frank Farrell, Manolete, Urbici Soler, and matador.

Tape 11

Side A (partially blank)

Transcript pages 314-319

Continues discussion of portraits, anecdote about declining request to do an official presidential portrait of LBJ and Peter Hurd eventually getting the commission.

Side B

Transcript pages 320-333

Discusses how his work is integrated in his life, research for Hands of Cantu, influence of John Constable on his art, how his writing is self-taught, A Picture Gallery, relationship to editors, his unwritten novel on the Mexican Revolution, the recurring theme in his paintings of a lone horseman.

Tape 12

Side A

Transcript pages 333-353

Discusses similarities in writing and painting, comments on Frederic Remington and Charlie Russell, the All-Texas Exhibition in 1946, talks about his paintings "The Shining Plain" and "Unto the Hills", commissions for paintings from friends, reveals his feelings about oil and watercolor, talks about his paintings of Illinois.

Side B

Transcript pages 353-372

Musings about the lives of artists, the trouble with Hollywood, the trouble with having too much money, and the adventure of living; his philosophy of life, discusses one of his favorite books Arabia Deserta, the story of a man on a quest.

Tape 13

Side A

Transcript pages 372-386

Reviews and expands recollections of early El Paso, childhood experiences, games and activities 1910-1925.

Side B

Transcript pages 386-399

Early El Paso and childhood experiences continue.

Tape 14

Side A

Transcript pages 399-402

Discusses class of 1924 at El Paso High School, experience as editor of yearbook The Spur, and work on College of Mines yearbook.

Side B  
Blank

Tape 15  
Side A

Transcript pages 403-424

Recollects early years spent in Santa Fe; friendship with Dr. and Mrs. Harry P. Mera, Dick Kaune, Fremont Ellis, and Fergus and Josephine Meades; employment at Laboratory of Anthropology in Santa Fe as staff artist; WPA paintings executed and left at New Mexico Fine Arts Museum, including "Los Musicos"; illustrating *The "Rain Bird," A Study in Pueblo Design*; describes origins of "Lonely Town"; designing murals for San Antonio and Washington D.C. Post Offices, Brannigan Library, Las Cruces, New Mexico, State of Texas building, Dallas, and State of Texas Centennial mural, El Paso; loss of wife, Nancy, grandmother, "Granny," Artemesia Gregory Utt, and mother, Zola May Utt Lea, in same year; marriage of father, Thomas Calloway Lea, Jr., to Rosario Partida Archer; death of father; design and execution of "Back Home" mural for Pleasant Hill, Missouri Post Office; recalls meeting J. Frank Dobie; illustrating Dobie's works, *The Longhorns* and *Apache Gold and Silver*.

Side B

Transcript pages 424-441

Recalls courtship of Sarah Lea; execution of "Paso del Norte" mural federal courthouse, El Paso; "Stampede" mural, Odessa, Texas; mentions painting "Haycox Country"; construction of studio in El Paso; stint as war correspondent aboard U.S. aircraft carriers the *Wasp* and the *Hornet*; authoring *A Picture Gallery* and *Peleliu Landing*; portraits of Berndt Balden, General James Harold "Jimmy" Doolittle, and Major General Claire Lee Chennault; reflects on heroism of U.S. servicemen.

Tape 16  
Side A

Transcript pages 441-464

Continues reflecting on valor of U.S. servicemen; recollects father's patriotism during war; nervous breakdown of brother, Joe Lea; friendship with Bill Chickering; weekly gathering of lawyers and judges at father's home; death of father; recalls stinging review of *The King Ranch* written by J. Frank Dobie; termination and subsequent reconciliation of friendship with Dobie; Stan Stoeffen's design and execution of furniture to match El Paso Public Library mural; reminisces about holiday spent with Al and Mack Fleming in Malta while writing *The Hands of Cantú*.

Side B

Transcript pages 461-473

Continues discussion of friendship with Al and Mack Fleming; visits to Castel Sant'Angelo and Museo Stibbert to gather material for *The Hands of Cantú*; sketches story line of *The Hands of Cantú*; utilization of new illustrative method for *The Hands of Cantú*; recollects painting Sam Rayburn portrait; includes humorous account

of shipment of portrait to Washington, D.C.; dedication of portrait at dinner hosted by L.B.J. at White House; role played in appointment of C.R. Smith as U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

Tape 17

Side A

Transcript pages 474-483

Recalls efforts made to paint from memory in lieu of making notations of position of form and color; changes made in perception; success and failure encountered during professional career as painter; sentiments on "talent"; respect for other craftsmen; attempts to become honest practitioner; discovery of Adair Margo as representative; reflects on how he would like to be remembered.

Side B

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Interview with Tom Lea  
May - October 1993  
By Adair Margo

This is an interview of Tom Lea by Adair Margo in El Paso, Texas, on May 8, 1993.

M: Okay. Tom, if you'll just tell me a little bit about when you were born and where you were born, specifically the address even?

L: Well, I was born on the 11th of July, 1907, here in El Paso. It was, as I understand it - I don't recall it exactly - but (chuckles), as I understand it, it was a very hot night in summertime. And I was born, my father said, at 4:44 in the morning on the seventh month and the eleventh day, and making up the 7-11-4-44 I should be lucky as hell at craps. (laughter) So, they lived in a little house on they used to call it "Rye-oh Grand" [Rio Grande] Street, right across from the not-so-old Hotel Dieu, that had been built a few years before. And so mother didn't have a very long journey to get to the hospital when she felt that I was going to arrive. And, it was sort of funny because her doctor, Dr. [J.A.] Rawlings, was up in his summer home in High Rolls, New Mexico, and when Mother and Dad came walking into the hospital after midnight, why, there was no one there except the Sisters and so they frantically called the doctor and the only doctor available was Dr. [John W.] Cathcart who was a radiologist. But he came through, I guess, in a pretty good fashion,

because I arrived safely and everything was fine. At the time, Dad was the Police Court judge; I think they call it Corporation Court now. There was just one. And my dad was pretty pepped up about this having a son and so he went on down to the court, and of course, in those days, mostly it was bums and drunks and things like that. Anyway, he had all the prisoners brought in and announced the birth of his first son and said, "You're all turned loose. Beat it!" (laughter) So, the cops had a hard time, rounding them all up the next day. But anyway, they celebrated my birth. Let's see. Dad was...he had met mother... This [my birth] happened in 1907. And he had met Mother, I believe, in 1901 when he had first arrived in El Paso. How he arrived is kind of interesting. Did you know about that?

M: No.

L: He had some cousins that he thought a great deal of that had a big ranch - in those days it was a big ranch - and actually it adjoined what later became Fall's, Albert Fall's [Three Rivers] Ranch. This one was called the Eye-Bar X, and you got off the train at Oscuro, New Mexico. That was the next stop from Tularosa and then Oscuro and before you got to Carrizozo. And Dad came out. He had gotten his license to practice law in Missouri. Let's see, it was the Kansas City School of Law. It's still in operation. And he had read law also in the

office of his father's great friend, Albert Ott, who was a... Incidentally, all those people are mentioned in that grand biography of Harry Truman. My grandfather, for instance, when he died, Harry Truman's father-in-law was one of my grandpa's pallbearers. There was that connection there in Independence, Missouri. Anyway, Dad came out and stayed on the ranch awhile, and, oh, [that] he had gone West was great for him. His original intention was to go to Grand Junction, Colorado, where he heard from another uncle who lived in Steamboat Springs at the time, that Grand Junction was a good place for a young lawyer there, see? Lots of work there. Anyway, time came for him to go, I guess. The bacon started getting burned or something (chuckles) after he'd hunted and played like he was a cowboy and all of that. He kind of enjoyed himself. He took the stage then from Carrizozo down to Alamogordo; that was before there was a railroad working. And on the way on the stage they made a little stop for the passengers to get out and kind of stretch themselves and everything before they got to Alamogordo. And Dad excused himself and got behind a bush and got back in the stage and they went on in to Alamogordo, and Dad reached in his pocket and his wallet was gone. He had lost it apparently when he had gotten out at the rest stop. So he had two or three silver dollars in his pocket and he got a horse at the livery stable and rode back up there. And he couldn't find (chuckles) the bush or anything. So he came back, owed the man at the livery station

for the rental of the horse, and in pretty bad shape. He had, I think, one dollar, one silver dollar, left in his pocket and no way to get any cash any other way; he was on his own. A freight train came in, through, stopped in the yards there at Alamogordo and he wanted on. He talked to the engineer and he [the engineer] said, "Well, go on back and see the brakeman or the conductor." And Dad went back and got in the caboose. And the old guy was a pretty good fellow; he said, "I'll share it. I'll give you a ride. The next stop we're going to El Paso." Dad said, "Oh, that's fine." It was on the way to Grand Junction, Colorado. He got to El Paso then and he had one dollar and he didn't know of a soul or anything. It was a little bittie town in those days. So he went around and he saw this sign "Eats," a restaurant. And he went in and he said, "You sell meal tickets?" [They] said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I have a dollar and I'd like to buy a dollar's worth of meal tickets." And this owner and cook and everything was Al Eulig's dad. (chuckles) It's one of those little restaurants. And when Dad's meal ticket ran out, he [was] looking for a job, why, he came back in and said, "I'll wash dishes for you." And Mr. Eulig said, "No, you don't have to do that." He said, "I'll stake you until you get a job." So Dad found a job at the...what was it? It was a fuel and wood yard, and I can't think of the name of it. [Stackhouse Fuel and Lumber Co.] But it was on the corner of, well, it's where the drive-in bank of the State National Bank is now [Campbell



and Mills streets]. And there was the [Central] school where all the kids in El Paso went. [It] was down on, let's see, I guess it would be on the corner of Kansas and Myrtle. And Dad got a job. Oh I wish I could remember the man's name; he was very kind to Dad. And Dad's job was to ride a horse and go around collecting for deliveries of wood and coal, as a bill collector. And he'd check in there at the... Is this too detailed?

M: No! This is fabulous.

L: He would check in. Just a minute. I think the name was...it was a name that was very characteristic or a very good name for a man who owned a woodyard. It was something like Woodhouse or something like that. [Powell Stackhouse, Jr.]

M: Something with house.

L: Anyway, Dad saw this girl go by on Kansas Street apparently on her way home, and he said he remembered she had on a little red jacket with gold buttons. And he thought she was very nice. And as she went by, he tipped his hat, and she very, very coldly acknowledged. Dad went in to Mr. - we'll call him Mr. Woodhouse -, and said, "Who is that young lady that just went by from school?" And I think Mother was a freshman in high school. He said, "Oh, that's Zola Mae Utt. Her dad has

just built a house up on El Paso Street." And Dad said, "Well, how would I meet her?" And Mr. Woodhouse looked at Dad and said, "Well, I suggest the best way to do it is to go and see if you can meet her at the Sunday School class at the First Baptist Church," which is down here on Myrtle Avenue. So Dad went and he met Mother. And, I think, you know, he kind of courted her. And old Clarence North, one of the friends of many years later, said, "You know your dad ran me off. I was wanting to go see Zola Utt, and he came up on horseback one day when I had come up to see her, and he said, "'Look. That's my girl. Get the hell out!'" (laughter) And he said, "Your dad was kind of a tough young fellow. So I left."

Anyway, Dad, I think it was in his mind all his life that, even that early, he wanted to find a mine. And his idea in going West was to, of course, find a great discovery mine. Well, he heard about all the things that were happening in Mexico. He made friends with the son of one of the rurales captains. And Dad went down. By that time, why of course the railroad was running - the Mexican Central Railroad was running - and Dad went down on the railroad to Chihuahua with his friend. And then they went to the Babícora ranch, and from there they got on horseback and they rode from Babícora all the way down to Colima. That's to hell and gone down there in Mexico, looking for mines and having a good time. I know they got thrown in jail for some kind of, I don't know

what, in Guadalajara. Dad said, "Guadalajara is the most beautiful place I ever saw. Most beautiful girls, too." This was when Dad was old and remembered stuff. Anyway, they had quite a time in Mexico and they never found a mine. And Dad had given Mother an engagement ring before he left, and Mother very patiently was waiting. She had graduated from high school, I think that was in 1904. She taught piano lessons. Dad got back from Mexico and the courtship was reestablished, and they were married in June 1906. So that's how I happened to come into this world.

M: Interesting.

L: My first memories...I can remember we lived on a house around the corner from this little house where Dad and Mother started their married life. It was on...I think it was around the corner on Kansas Street. And that old fire station that's still on Rio Grande had horses. And the fire engine they had to fire up with wood and, you know, it was a great thing. And my first memory is the horses clattering down Rio Grande Street and my being in the front yard, and there was a picket fence and I was looking through the picket fence and here came the fire wagon. I can't remember anything else about it.

M: Is that the fire house that's near...?

L: That's across, from the back of the YMCA [at 701 Montana].

M: The YMCA, right there, right. And by the [First] Baptist Church.

L: Yeah, yeah. That was really... You see, the horses were black, and the smoke was all coming out of the fire wagon, you know. And the firemen had on these big hats. It was something that a little, tiny child could remember.

M: Is the house still there on Rio Grande?

L: No, it's all gone. And that little house that Dad and Mother lived in is now a little kind of a cul-de-sac, a little kind of parking place in back of another house, so that all traces of it are gone. Anyway, I can't remember when I didn't like to draw pictures. Dad had a picture in his office, a letter that my mother guided my hand to say Dad was back in Kansas City seeing his dad and I don't know what all. And it said, "Dear Daddy, I miss you and something or other. Love you, Tom." And then Mother let me draw a picture of a little man down on the side with a suitcase, and that was Dad, see? (laughter) I had that thing; I don't know what happened to it.

M: You don't know what happened to it? But, how old would you have been then? Very, very young?

L: I was about, I guess, 4. Something like that. There's a photograph of me. See, and then we moved out on Nevada Street and the address was 1316. It was a small kind of a bungalow house. And there's a photograph of me with one of Dad's neckties on and it came clear down to below my knees, and one of his hats that came and put it down over, and his suitcase. (chuckles) I was still trying to imitate him and his travels even in those days. Anyway, in 1915 they started building that house a half a block away on the corner of Newman and Nevada, which was the house that I remember most in my boyhood and stayed in. My stepsister still owns the house. It was finished in time for us to move in at Christmas time in 1915. And Dad was already mayor. Dad had been elected mayor of the town in the spring of 1915.

M: And by that time I guess you had siblings.

L: Oh, yes. Little brother Joe was born at the 1316 Nevada house. He was born at the home. And I remember I stayed next door during all the excitement. I spent the night at the McBrooms', you know, Margie McBroom, or, you know, she later became, you know, I had known her all my life, she died a few years ago, but - she was a little girl about my age and it was

a great thing to stay at the McBrooms' overnight and then I came home. They let me go and see my new brother the next day. Then my other brother wasn't born until 20 years later. I remembered very distinctly the night that the election returns came in. Mother, and little Joe was very small and I was pretty small, too. This was in 1915. We all stayed at home and had gone to bed. In those days, you know, the only communication would be on the telephone to find out how the election was going. Of course... Am I taking too fast?

M: No, no, no. I just wanted to make sure there was still enough tape. Go ahead.

L: I remember how a man came and knocked on the door and we were, Joe and I, were in our pajamas, if I can remember, but I think Mother was staying dressed and was terribly nervous trying to find out if her husband was defeated or had won the election. And a man came and knocked on the door and said that Dad had won. All the precincts were in and Dad had won. Pretty soon Dad came in a Buick. And that's the time, why, Joe and I were allowed to get dressed. Dad came home and very shortly after he came home Rayo Reyes, I think that was his name, who had the "Tipica" orchestra of the town in those days. This was in the days before they called them mariachis and all of that. They had a flat-bed truck, excuse me, (coughs) with a piano and a bass violin, all the rest, and they gave the mañanitas

to Dad, just about dawn. And it was the most thrilling thing for little kids.

M: There in front of your house.

L: Yeah. So that was how Dad became mayor. Then we moved into this other house after, oh we were held up because I caught scarlet fever at Lamar School, I guess, and my mother caught it from me and she was quite ill. And my brother Joe stayed next door at the Thumb house, Aunt Belle and Uncle Gus Thumb. They were great people. Uncle Gus was an engineer on the Southern Pacific and he died just like Casey Jones did with his hand on the throttle in the 1920s. He was a great old guy from Pennsylvania, Gustav Alolphus Thumb. (chuckles) And Aunt Belle was the daughter of Captain [James H.] Tevis, the guy at Fort Bowie, you know, one of the tough pioneers of Arizona. So it was a very interesting bunch of neighbors. In those days they quarantined the house; they put a big red thing on there "Scarlet Fever" on the doorknob. Everybody stayed away. Dad stayed next door, too.

Well, that reminds me, while he was mayor there was a typhus, you know, in all those refugees from Mexico were pouring into El Paso. There was a typhus kind of epidemic, you know, in El Paso and the health officer of El Paso, I think his name was Doctor [Charles T.] Race, died of typhus. Of course, they were trying to find out and do all the things

possible to keep from catching the typhus, and one of the things that they told Dad was that the typhus louse didn't like silk, that the cotton and linen was the place where they'd lodge and the doctor suggested that it would be helpful if he had silk underwear. Well, this really (chuckles) did it. Dad came home and said, "Mrs. Olea, can you make me some silk underwear?" And she made him silk B.V.D.'s (chuckles) and I mean he was really...talking about his silk underwear for some time. He never caught typhus. Anyway, those were days.

When we moved into the house at 1400 Nevada, of course, Joe was in kindergarten and I was in the, oh I guess, the third grade or something like that, the tough times down in Mexico with Pancho Villa and Carranza, Pascual Orozco and all of that stuff going on. And Dad and Villa had some words when Villa crossed over into El Paso one time. Dad ordered him back across the river, and Dad had his chief of police and a couple of officers with him when he told Villa to get across the river. Well, Villa never forgave him and then Dad put [his wife] Luz Villa, Luz Corral Villa, in jail when she came over. And she apparently was helping Villa get some arms and ammunition from sources on this side of the river. Anyway, Villa couldn't like the presidente municipal de El Paso worth a damn and he sent a - he didn't sign it but one of his dorados had signed it - threat to kidnap Joe and me. So for about 6 months Joe and I one year, I think this was about in



1916, we went to school with a police escort and came home with a police escort. And there was always a policeman stationed all night at our house. And, of course, this was big adventure stuff, sure. (chuckles)

M: Oh, sure.

L: It was really great.

M: Not many kids have a policeman stationed outside their house.

L: (laughter) No, no, not at all. The only thing is, it was a little bit tough for a little guy, because, "Nya-nya, the mayor's son", you know, "you're getting special treatment." And everything. So, you know, there had to be a few fights and stuff; the mayor's son had to show that he was okay. (chuckles) Joe was too little, really, to get into that. He was in kindergarten, the first grade or something like that. Anyway, I can't remember exactly when I started to draw pictures, you know, like really interested in it. I remember that there was a teacher in the fifth grade named Eula Strain, and she later married [John Harlacker]. Of course, in those days, you know, teachers couldn't be married in the public schools; they had to be spinsters or widows.

M: Is that right?

L: Yeah. There was [a law]: you couldn't be married and teach school. I think that didn't hold for men teachers, but there weren't any men teachers except in high school, and then only just a few.

M: Why was that, do you know?

L: I don't know. I guess they thought...

M: They'd be too preoccupied with other things.

L: With home things, and that they should devote their lives to their teaching, I guess. But Miss Strain was also a Baptist, and knew Mother at the Baptist church, and she had told Mother that I really showed some interest and maybe talent. Of course I could draw pictures, and she said, "It's funny to watch that little left hand." I don't know, but that always burned me up. Mother had gone to the principal of Lamar school and said, "This boy is left-handed and I want him to stay left-handed. Don't try to teach him [otherwise]; I want him to stay left-handed so that there won't be any nervous thing." And in those days they kind of thought that was a way to make a child get nervous and unbalanced a little bit. To this day, though, I couldn't ever square dance because they say, you know, "Go to the right," and I'd go to the left. (laughter) I got real left-handed. And then when I....

M: And this was Lamar school?

L: At Lamar school.

M: Which was, where was Lamar then?

L: It was down, you know on Montana Street, you know where that Methodist church is and where now [the] administrative offices of the housing projects there.

M: Oh, yes, right. That big building, right.

L: The 1600 block, that great big grey...

M: Grey building, [yes].

L: That was Lamar school. We'd play up in the what's now Pill Hill, up there on Golden Hill, they call it. Mr. Park Pitman had a son who was kind of a tough guy and was a little older than we. And we never did get along too well, but his daddy was always nice, and we played up there sometimes. And I don't remember Mrs. Pitman at all, but I do remember that in one of the battles for Juárez, this would be, I guess, maybe 1919 or the one in, I think it would have to be 1919, why Mr. Pitman let us look through his telescope. He had a little telescope that he'd look at the moon and see Saturn's rings

and all that kind of stuff. And he let us look through the telescope at part of the battle down at the racetrack in Juárez. And I saw for the first time a guy get shot and drop over and another fellow ran out and grabbed his gun and took off with it. I'll never forget that first idea of what war [was]. And I remember one night the cavalry men...

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

M: There, I think. There, now the tape's starting.

L: So, we opened the windows and they had a battery, I think; there were 3 French 75 [millimeter guns] up on, right in front, on Golden Hill Terrace right in front of old Park Pitman's house. And they were shooting over the town into Juarez. It was real exciting stuff, you know, and the windows all rattled. And I remember Dad, who always had to be in the middle of things. One of the commander's staff got a motorcycle with a sidecar. In those days the military used a motorcycle with a sidecar, and came by the house. And Dad got his rifle and a whole belt of ammunition and he went down and enjoyed the shooting with the Army. (laughter)

He was a great friend of Pershing's and several of the commanders at Fort Bliss. He had to work with them during the time he was mayor, you know. They had all those crib houses

down on Ninth Street and all that stuff, and they had to police the area with all these young soldiers pretty thoroughly, so he had quite a connection with the post. As a matter of fact, I think he was one of two people that went out the night the word came in Western Union telegraph that Pershing's wife and two of his children were burned to death at the Presidio in San Francisco. And, it just wrecked [him]... No one ever called him "Black Jack." That was an insult. And he was General Pershing in those days, and everybody, and I suppose his colleagues called him "Jack," but "Black Jack" is something that they started calling him after his death, I'm quite certain. They might have called him that when he had that Negro troop in the early, the very early days, when he was a lieutenant or something. I think he did have a platoon of Blacks.

Anyway, there were thousands of troops, you know, at Fort Bliss, and they had a thing called Camp Cotton. And that was down - let's see, I don't know exactly where - Camp Cotton was down somewhere there below, well not too far from Momsen, Dunnegan and Ryan, you know where that used to be, down on Olive Street and down further down San Antonio Street, somewhere down there near the railroad yards. And I remember that Lieutenant McCalis was one of the general's aides and he was not in Mexico; he was here on some kind of duty at the post. And he had a tent down at Camp Cotton and Dad got into letting me spend the night with the soldiers down there at

Camp Cotton. Oh, man, that was fantastic!

M: How old were you then?

L: Let's see, that would be in 1916, I'd be 9. I got a lot of perks from Dad being the mayor. Like I once rode in a fire wagon. I spent the night with the firemen and slid down the pole and rode on the fire wagon. My mother was very much against it. (chuckles) But, boy, that was great. Also, my dad, he took me to a bullfight when I was a young kid. And he prepared me very well for what I was going to encounter later, you know. What else can I say about...Oh! So, when I went to high school I was exceedingly fortunate in finding the art teacher there. She taught nothing but art, Miss Gertrude Evans, who was from Wisconsin and had come down here to teach. And she really encouraged me and, well, gave me a very great deal of background about painting and so on. I truly owe lots to her. And one of her friends, good friends, was Maud Durlin Sullivan, who was the librarian. She was also, I believe, from Wisconsin, and they had known each other for years. And Mrs. Sullivan, of course, had created this very nice library on the arts there in the El Paso Public Library; [they] used to call it the Carnegie Library.

M: Where was it?

L: It was right in back of where the present Oregon Street public library is now.

M: Kind of like where the Golden Age Center is? Is that where?

L: Exactly. Exactly. And the YMCA was right across the street from the library. And the Arizona streetcar, which we always took, was just one block from our house. I would go to the "Y" and swim and do all of that and then go across the street. This is when I was pretty small, you know, like, I guess I was about Boy Scout age, 12 or something like that. And I'd go to the "Y" and go to a class there, and then I'd go across the street. And Mrs. Sullivan would let me browse in all the art books, and I'd look at all the pictures. So that was a way that gave me a kind of background that I later found most of the students at the art institute didn't have. Of course, then, too, the first time I was at Santa Fe and got to see the Museum of Fine Arts was just - [it] had just been built and opened. That was a whole new world to me, you know. I enjoyed that so much.

But you know, I've thought of it often: Mother and Dad and Joe and I made a trip in our Buick automobile one time up to - I guess I was about 12 or 13 - to the Grand Canyon. And on the south rim of the Grand Canyon there was a thing called Hopi House. Have you ever visited there? Anyway, they were selling, you know, Indian curios and all that and every

afternoon at four o'clock, why, these Hopis would put on a little dance, kind of an eagle dance or something like that, and beat the tom-tom. And inside the Hopi House were all of these beautiful Hopi ceramics on an altar they had created, one of their altars out of the kiva. I don't know how it ever got to the Grand Canyon, but it was there. And, you know, that fascinated me more than the Grand Canyon. (laughter) I spent all my time there looking at the...

M: The ceramics and the...

L: And maybe I was prepared for it a little bit because Dad had begun to collect Casas Grandes pottery, bowls and vases and also Mimbres stuff. We'd go to Mimbres Hot Springs every summer for a little while, our family would. And I remember, we went down to a little place called Dwyer - an old fellow named Dwyer had this thing and you could just go in there and, jeez, it was all: dig up, just get what you wanted. But later, why, they got very tough about anybody entering these things, which they should have done in the first place. But people really didn't know. They thought it was great to find this stuff and to have it and admire it, you know. And the idea that it would be in violating history and so on wasn't thought of at that time. Or, if it was, it was only the archaeologists and they were sort of few in those days. So that interest in ceramic designs, I think, gave me a tendency



to think in terms of geometric design. I really think it was a basis for my work. I hope this thing is recording the...

M: The birds.

L: The mockingbirds.

M: The birds singing. [laughter]

L: Anyway...

M: You talked, too, about when you were young that you were part of an art club, weren't you? Didn't you have the Chacmool Society?

L: Oh, yes. That was when I was in high school.

M: That was high school. And, this was, you were at El Paso High?

L: El Paso High. That was the only high school. There wasn't even Bowie. I believe that they offered courses in high school at Douglass School for the Blacks, but I think that was all. And a couple of years after I graduated - I graduated from high school in May of 1924 - why, I think Austin High came along and Bowie High at the same time or shortly thereafter. But, uh, what were you...

M: Yeah, the Chacmool Society. Were you a member?

L: Oh, well, well, let's see there were, I guess there were 10 of us. Just kids there in high school that were interested in art. Two of them wanted to be cartoonists. And the others were just sort of there for the ride and enjoying. We had this little club and we'd have meetings and show these drawings we made. And...

M: Where was the club?

L: Hum?

M: Where was the club?

L: The club was on the top of the Rio Grande Apartments. No, I don't know, not the Rio Grande, I forget the name of it, but it's where the John Williams Insurance Company has the whole building there [400 block of East Yandell] and this was on the top. Frankie Hadlock's dad owned the building and he let us have a kind of a little penthouse thing on the roof, which we fixed up. And we had a little sort of a bum carving of the Aztec god Chacmool and so that he became our sort of logo and symbol. And I think that club lasted for, oh, a couple of years. And I did several portraits of my friends up there; it was a good light. We had fun; we'd sit up there and at

that time I was all - the only real biography of an artist that I thought was great was that Pinnel biography of Whistler and James Abbott McNeill Whistler that was the big thing. Also, even at that time I was very, very fascinated with the work of Rockwell Kent, his black-and-white stuff. You see there was that kind of Indian design stuff in the background. The other thing was that I enjoyed doing likenesses of my friends, and I did several. And, of course, when I would try to spark some girl like Ethel Irene Howe, why, I'd invite her up there and her mother didn't quite know if that the right thing to do, to go to the Chacmool studio. But, I did some real bum drawings of these girls, because [laughter]. Anyway, we did that. And I remember I did one of Tuffy Von Briesen, my pal, and one of Ed Ware and one of, what was his name, Preston Oliver, and Speedy Adams (chuckles). All these guys. They're all dead now.

M: But, even back then you were doing portraits.

L: Trying to do likenesses. And how I happened to go to Chicago was very interesting. Gertrude Evans had a sister named Alice Fields, who had a friend named Norma van Swearingen, who was an illustrator - she had done illustrations for Cosmopolitan and Saturday Evening Post, I believe, some of those magazines of that time. And she came to see her friend Alice Fields and Alice told her about me. And she wanted to see what I was

doing, so Miss Evans got some ... I had just done a drawing of, let's see, he would be, he'd be the son of Troppie Lowenfield and Helen Moore, you know. Oh, what do you call him, Punko and what's his brother that has Casa Ford?

M: Wally.

L: Wally. His mother. I remember I did her in a checkered sweater and with all the checks in it in charcoal, and Mrs. Swearingen liked it. And she said, "You know, I studied with him a little while and I think for you, personally, if you want to go to art school, I think you ought to go to the Chicago Art Institute. And if you can, get into a class of John Norton." And that's kind of how I got the idea that I would not only go to Chicago, but that John Norton was an entity that, you know, I had never heard of or anything like that. So I finally made it up there.

M: So it was Gertrude Evans' sister, it was...

L: Her sister who was a friend of Norma van Swearingen - V-A-N S-W-E-A-R-I-N-G-E-N - I think it was her name. She was a very nice lady and was very nice to me, took my work seriously and that was always a great... Fremont Ellis was the only guy that really took my work seriously in Santa Fe and almost made me feel like an adult. I wrote a little thing for [his daughter]

Bambi about her father. I can show it to you if you'd like to see it sometime.

M: I would like to.

L: About meeting Fremont and about how good he was to me as just a kid. And he was a young painter, one of the Cinco Pintores. And he didn't have anything at all except the desire to paint. And I never knew a man that had such a love for just pigment. He had a reverence for what he spread out on his pallet. He loved it and he tried to use it with a kind of almost reverence, you know. I never knew any painter like him. But he was good to me and I'd go up in the summertime at Santa Fe. I think I made...while I was in high school I did three trips. Dad, old friend Judge Colin Neblett, the federal judge up there in Santa Fe, was a great friend of Dad's and he was an old bachelor and he had this big house up on Palace Avenue. So, he'd let me stay there and he had a housekeeper that would make my meals, and I just had a great time for, oh, my folks would let me stay up there a week or ten days. And I'd go from Palace Avenue, oh, down, of course, into the museum every day, and then I'd walk up Canyon Road to where the Camino [del] Monte Sol turned off to the right, and up the hill, and Fremont Ellis' house was the last one up there. And next to him was, I believe, Will Shuster's, then Joe Bakos, and then Walter Mruk. He wasn't around. I never did meet him, but he

had a little house up there. Who else was there? Willard Nash. Willard Nash was kind of snooty. He was pretty artistic and I did never get to meet him very much.

M: Were you up there with your family then or did your family...?

L: No, he just let me go and I'd go on the Santa Fe Railroad, you know, and then take the...there was a tourist bus that left from Lamy that took you up to the town of Santa Fe.

M: And this was when you were in high school.

L: Yeah, uh huh. One summer Miss Evans was up there and it was the summer that Willa Cather was staying with Alice Corbin Henderson. But I never got to meet her. I'd see her and Mrs. Henderson walking up there. They would walk up to the top of the Camino [del] Monte Sol and back every evening. It was kind of a sight, you know, to see Willa Cather. I wrote a letter to her when I lived in Chicago up there, when I was very young, and she answered it. I wrote it to in care of her publisher, Knopf, and she answered it from up in New Brunswick. And it's a very nice letter.

M: You still have it?

L: I thought she was...yeah [to the question]. I thought she...

Yeah, it's [the letter] in my copy of Death Comes for the Archbishop. Will you turn this off for a minute and let me go and take care of my medicine?

M: Sure.

(PAUSE)

L: Santa Fe had the first museum I was ever in in my life. That Museum of Fine Arts.

M: It's still in the same location where it's always been.

L: Yeah. It's across the street from the old governor's palace, you know, and, of course, I guess that was a kind of a museum, and I saw it before the museum up there was open. But I loved Santa Fe and it meant a great deal to me. The Indians were there and in the depth of the depression I got a job at the Laboratory of Anthropology because I was interested in the ceramic designs that I had studied in Dad's collection. When I lived in Chicago, it was interesting: I couldn't get out of my mind my home country. For instance, I made a map of every one of the towns that were mentioned in Castañeda's account of Coronado's expedition. And I made a star map, thinking the way the stars were at home. And I got to thinking so much about the summers in Santa Fe and about the corn dance at Santo Domingo and the pueblo over at Walapai in Arizona, the Hopis. And Dad's law partner, Ewing Thomason, had just been

elected to Congress and was in Washington. And I was fascinated. I'd go over to the Newberry Library and study the Bureau of Ethnology reports, the Smithsonian reports, you know those big old green volumes? And there was one that had a wonderful collection of kachina doll drawings by Hopi, and an article by J. Walter Fewkes, called "The Influence of Environment on Aboriginal Cults." And I think that I was a conniver even in those days. I thought, gee, if I could only get those books for myself. I wonder if Mr. Thomason could get them for me in Washington. So I wrote Dad and Dad wrote Ewing and, first thing you know, here came these...

M: Volumes.

L: Volumes.

M: To you in Chicago.

L: Uh huh. So I had those and I made acquaintance with the bookbinder that lived up on Clark Street and he bound the Hopi kachinas separately and another one of the Hopi ceramics that I felt very strongly about. So that gave me some kind of a connection with this thing that was, I knew it was going to have to come out later some way. There it was. It was very different from Clark Street and those two lions out in front of our institution. (chuckles)



M: Sure. But in your early upbringing too, then, in reading you said when you went to Chicago how you were, you know, thinking about your homeland and the whole history of that - was that history, of course, you studied it yourself growing up, or your parents read you lot of stories about it?

L: Oh, yes. I had read a lot about it because of my interest in Santa Fe. You know, I really shouldn't... I guess I'm really not a Texan. I'm a New Mexican because of my youth, the ranches and Santa Fe and our summer vacations and the Mimbres Hot Springs and all of those things were in New Mexico. I was only on one Texas ranch as a boy. I spent six weeks with Graves Evans, that's Joe Evans youngest brother, Joe Evans' family and I'm not on the George Evans ranch called the "E. V." Ranch down near Valentine. I was with them...

M: They were related to the Cowdens somehow, weren't they?

L: Yes, and the Means. They were related to the Means and through the Means to the Cowdens. I think that's the way it worked. Or maybe one of the Evans girls married a Cowden, I'm not sure, something like that. They're kinfolks.

M: Because I know we have Mary Anne Carameros's mother, Mrs. Evans, was my great-great grandmother Lillie Cowden's cousin, I mean they were cousins.

L: Well, that's it. Yeah. So, it was through the Evans and not the Means family. They were very much like this, you know, and the ranches would join each other and the whole...

M: But that was only...

L: Old Johns Zack Means, you know, (chuckles) and George Evans, God, they had a long patriarchal beard, was truly an object of reverence as a pioneer.

M: But when did you go to the Means', like the Texas ranch.

L: That was in 1923.

M: Did you ever go to Bloys Cowboy Camp Meeting?

L: No. Mother always wanted to go and Dad never did take her.  
(laughter)

M: He wasn't as interested in church as she was.

L: No, he wasn't. But, we did go to, I remember one camp meeting we went to up near Silver City, that one of the Evans boys had. And it was near, not too far from Mimbres Hot Springs, and Mother took Joe and I over to, I think, one of the Means came by in their car and took us over to the camp meeting. We

didn't stay overnight, I remember. But we stayed, oh, we got there in the morning and didn't leave until after the night's sermon. Drove back to Mimbres Hot Springs at night. That hitting the sawdust trail was, we, of course attended a number of those evangelistic meetings that were held in a tent down in... Somewhere. Campbell Street is in my mind, but I don't know where on Campbell Street. There was a vacant lot and Chautauqua would come every summer, and then whenever there was an evangelist that wasn't using the church, why, they'd pitch this same great big tent. And they'd have the religious meetings in this tent. But those things were never holy-roller stuff, but damn near it, you know? (laughter)

M: But your mother was very attracted to that, and...

L: Oh, yes.

M: Very much involved in...

L: Yes, she was. She taught Sunday school to your grandfather for many years.

M: He needed it, I think. (laughter)

L: Well, he said Mother helped him straighten out.

M: And that was down on Magoffin Street when it was Myrtle Street?

L: Magoffin. Magoffin and Virginia, I believe, the corner of Virginia and Magoffin.

M: Isn't that still there?

L: Yes. It's still there. I don't know what it is; I don't think it's a church anymore, do you?

M: I don't know. I'm not sure what it is.

L: Some kind of a building.

M: But a two-story building.

L: Yeah, with a kind of a rounded belfry top, something like the same one down into the Ysleta Mission, you know, that rounded thing, instead of a steeple. The old Baptist church, the one that was older than that did have a...it was red brick, and did have a steeple, a very pointed high one. It was on Myrtle Avenue, just two blocks from where the Magoffin Avenue was.

M: Is that where the Toltec Building is now?

L: Yeah.

M: It was right there at that corner?

L: Right there at that intersection.

M: Intersection.

L: Yeah.

M: Did you have to go every Sunday?

L: Oh, my gosh, yes.

M: And Sunday night, too?

L: Lots of times, twice.

M: Every Wednesday, too?

L: Some Wednesdays. When I could beg off for - had to do my lessons - why, Mother wouldn't make us go. But, I had to go to the BYPU [Baptist Young People's Union] a lot and all of that. (chuckles)

M: And your brother, too.

L: Oh, yes. One time we were at a, it was some kind of a, it was in the daytime. It was about...

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

L: Baptist, you ought to hear this one.

M: Okay.

L: So, Joe and I were coming out of the basement, where the Sunday school and where the young people's meetings were and all of that, and we got out and it was raining like the dickens. And we started to go back in and we got out - there was a little parking, the grass, about 3 feet wide in front of the church steps. And we were standing there and the bolt of lightning struck; they used to have, uh, they called them mushrooms in the center of an intersection so that people would drive around and wouldn't cut corners, one of the early traffic helps. Well, this bolt of lightning hit that metal mushroom about 25 feet from where we were standing and scared the living heck out of us. We thought the Lord had really got us. (laughter) Kind of, you know, nearly knocked us down. It was a real blast. And, boy, were we glad when Mother came by (chuckles) with the car and took us home.

M: Took you home.

L: But, that was a very close call that the Lord gave us at that time.

M: Did your dad go to church, too, or he let your mom take care of that?

L: He never went to church much. He said he was afraid the steeple would fall. (laughter) Incidentally, speaking of that, I was up at [Dick] Miller's house [on Crazy Cat] one evening, up there on Crazy Cat, and there was a big electrical storm. And I was looking out south and I saw the lightning hit the steeple of Saint Patrick's [Cathedral].

M: Is that right? From the...

L: And knocked the...and the fire started.

M: That's when the...and you saw that.

L: Actually, [I] was looking at it when it happened.

M: Is that right?

L: The darndest thing.

M: I remember when that happened.

L: Yeah. (chuckles) It's like seeing the explosion at the Wasp.  
(laughter)

M: Well, we'll talk about that in a future...

L: Oh, yes. Sure.

M: A future time.

L: Now, what else? What, uh...

M: Anything else you want to talk about your just growing up in El Paso and stories you remember or what the city was like.

L: It was an entirely different kind of city than what you know. So many people knew each other. And everything was so much quieter and slower because there weren't as many automobiles and the streetcars were the main way that most people got around. And I can remember very early, you know, when I was six and seven and eight, Mother didn't like it for us to walk around town. We'd take the streetcar and we'd get off at Dad's - he was in the First National Bank Building, it's now the First Mortgage Building - and then we'd get off the streetcar at the Plaza and walk a block down to his office.



And Mother didn't like for us to be on El Paso Street or San Antonio Street because of all the saloons. And I can remember vividly the smell on San Antonio Street and it was a kind of a mixture of wet sawdust and beer, and it must have been the smell of raw bourbon, something, that would come out of these swinging doors. And it suggested sin like everything else. It really did. And also during the time when there were so many soldiers here, that parking lot where the old Blumenthal Building was, you know, across the street from what's now the Del Norte, that's all parking space. Well, there was a little further down almost to San Antonio Street, there was a vaudeville house. Well, I don't know what else was up in back of it, but it was a real rough joint. And sometimes they'd leave the door open, and when we'd go to the Unique Theatre across the street, we could look in there and, boy, you'd see these girls kicking high and... (laughter) It smelled like hamburgers. Now, why is that? I can still smell the hamburgers.

M: Is that right?

L: Maybe it was because there was a restaurant around the corner.

M: Really.

L: But the old Wigwam Saloon, the Coney Island Saloon, and then,

of course, we walked by the Coney Island when we went from the Plaza to Dad's office. And Dad had lots of stories about the early days and the kind of confrontations that were in the old Coney Island.

M: Where exactly was your dad's office?

L: Well, do you know, you know where the new Central Cafe is, well, it's in that building. First Mortgage Company built onto it. It was first a five story building called the First National Bank Building and it had the First National Bank around on San Antonio Street. And the ground floor was in the front just a little, I believe, one of the furniture companies, I'm not sure, maybe not. Anyway, it was the First National Bank; was the five-story building and was, next to the Mills building, the highest building. That Caples, the old Caples Building, I think was also five stories. And the roof of the First National Bank was a great vantage point for people with binoculars to watch the [Mexican] revolution. There was always a bunch up there whenever there was any trouble. And they'd take their armchairs (chuckles) and...

M: And watch the revolution.

L: And watch the revolution.

M: So, your dad was really right down there in the middle of everything.

L: Ah, yes.

M: What years was he mayor then?

L: [From 19]15 into [19]17. And he never ran again. He said, "I want to get in the army." I had a letter that - I don't know what has happened to it - that he wrote Pershing and that when Pershing was in the expeditionary force in France, telling him how he wanted to get into the service. And in those days it was kind of different, you know. And he got in, but he got in too late in 1918, so he didn't get overseas. He went to Officer Training School and everything, but he didn't get in. He was in the Spanish-American War and never saw any action, too. So that really irritated him that he never had seen any angry shooting except (chuckles) across the river.

M: Across the river.

L: And that's why he was so interested in what I was doing during the war. He lived until three days before they let loose the big bomb. So he lived through the whole war. And when I'd get back from one of these trips, why, he'd just, you know, listen, listen...

M: Listen to you tell your stories.

L: He had a stroke while I was away one year and he was sort of laid up, but, God, he was all ears about it, wanted to know all about it and how I felt. He was very proud; well, I was too. But you know, I didn't have to do this. (chuckles) He thought that was pretty great. I could have stayed back at headquarters, you know, and done my work. (chuckles)

This is a continuation of an interview with Tom Lea by Adair Margo in El Paso, Texas, on May 15, 1993.

M: Tom, last time we had talked about your childhood in El Paso and I know that while your father was mayor that many interesting things happened. And I would like to go back a little bit to your childhood and some of the occurrences that happened during those years.

L: I don't know, I wish I could remember accurately the many things that preoccupied my father during his term as mayor. The Mexican revolution was in full swing and Dad, he sort of had to keep the peace on the El Paso side of the river. And it was very difficult because there were literally thousands of refugees coming up from Mexico. And they even had a big refugee camp out in Fort Bliss. And I think that that was one of the main preoccupations Dad had during his whole tour,

which was only two years. He was only mayor for one term. But one of the things I - I don't remember it exactly, but I remember its effect on my father and my mother. Some of the people that had come over were smugglers and arms smugglers. They were caught and put in jail, and they all were unwashed and in pretty poor shape from the troubles they had had in Mexico. They were lousy and full of fleas and there was a typhus thing going on in Juárez. And they were trying to keep it from crossing the river. And the police down at the police station took one of the cells and were using gasoline to delouse some of the prisoners. The prisoners were quite willing to get something about it. It wasn't done by force or anything by any means. And somebody - they never discovered just who - either through a spark from a cigar or a cigarette or lighting a match to a pipe or something got the gasoline to just flare like that. And [it was] terrible. The gasoline was on some of these poor devils and they burned to death. I don't know how many there were. But I know that, you know, it was one of the things that just really devastated my father and he thought about it an awful lot and thought that somehow or other he took the blame for it, you know, as he would. I remember that vividly.

I think another time he came home very excited after having been away all night. It was at the time of that Santa Ysabel Massacre, [January 10, 1915] when the American mining men were on a train in Chihuahua and Villa's henchmen stopped

the train and took the Americans off and shot them all, killed them. And this caused some feeling so hot in El Paso that a mob formed. And they formed, as I understand it, thinking back [about] what my dad told me, somewhere on Overland Street this big crowd collected and they had guns and they were going down to the Segundo Barrio [Second Ward] and clean out the Mexicans for what they'd done to American mining men. Well Dad, I think his chief, the fire, what do they call them, the fireman, the captain of the fire department?

M: Fire chief.

L: [The] fire chief was a man named Wray - W-R-A-Y - I remember him. And he and a policeman, who I think it was either a captain or a lieutenant in the police, named Joe Stowe, he was kind of famous - S-T-O-W-E - they stood down there on the other side of Overland Street and faced the mob. And Wray had the firehose trained on the crowd and they started to advance and started waving their guns. And so Wray let them have it and it stopped the riot. I mean they fell back and didn't go around there. And this was another real crisis. And it happened the night that the bodies were brought back to El Paso. And the feeling was really that we should go in, they had a term for it: intervene, in Mexico. At that time, why, Senator Albert Fall was in Congress, in the Senate, and he was publicly advocating to Woodrow Wilson the desirability of

intervention into Mexico, that is to just go down and stop all this stuff, which Wilson paid no attention to. Anyway, the feeling at that time was intense and hot. I don't suppose it was any hotter anywhere along the border, down near Brownsville, Matamoros, no place felt it as strongly as this because the people of Chihuahua, you know, old man Terrazas had 34 people living in Albert Fall's house (chuckles) up there on [1725] Arizona Street, you know. And he had come out of Mexico from Chihuahua City with all his relations and servants. They'd come by buggy and wagon, and that's quite a little trip from Chihuahua City, especially when Villa is chasing you. (coughs) I'm sorry. Cut this off and...

M: Here we go. But Albert Fall's house...which house is Albert Fall's?

L: It's that great big, two-story house with the white columns in front of it.

M: Up by Pill Hill, is that where it is?

L: It's on - right by Pill Hill, on Arizona Street, you know, at the top. It's called Golden Hill Terrace, I think. It goes along in back of it and Arizona Street just continues over Golden Hill and it's kind of at the top.

M: And how did Terrazas end up in Albert Fall's home?

L: He rented it. Fall and his family were all in Washington, and I think Fall was very sympathetic to the old regime and very unsympathetic with the revolucionarios. And then in those days it wasn't so much Villistas or Carranzistas or what-not. It was the revolucionarios; they were all the same as far as the people on this side were concerned, and all raising Cain. I know that people like my father finally came to prefer [Venustiano] Carranza because he was a little more for the idea of law and order in Mexico and had set himself up in Mexico City, the capital, as president, you know, after the terrible assassination of Madero. And they were running [Victoriano] Huerta out of Mexico; he went to Europe and then he came back and was in El Paso with Pascual Orozco - I think I'm right on that. And they were planning some kind of a reentry into Mexico against Villa and I believe against Carranza, too, when Huerta fell ill. He died in a rather short time of cancer. And he rented a house up by Major Bridger's house up there on West Yandell. And I remember that Dad was gone the night Huerta died. Dad then was asked by the family to be the executor of what small things that Huerta had on this side. And so Dad had that stance as an attorney for Huerta, who was probably the most despised man in Mexico at that time.



M: How long had Huerta been here?

L: I can't say. Some. I think it must have been two or three months, something like that. And you know, then...

M: Had your father known him prior or they just...?

L: No. When he came to El Paso, why, Dad was mayor and he met him that way, I think, and then the family considered having an American lawyer help them after Huerta's death. See, I'm so vague on that is the reason I haven't ever wanted to write about it and I guess I'm just...I've got some kind of a block against going back to all the newspapers and doing it that way. Anyway, there was much involvement with the revolution and other things, but [historian] Leon Metz spoke to you. I don't remember...

M: Let me ask you - I'm curious - one question. When you were talking about this mob and how the feelings were so hot at the time, was it primarily with, say, the Mexican-Americans living in the Segundo Barrio or it was kind of just a general feeling...

L: It was just against Mexico.

M: Against Mexico in general.

L: Because, you know, there were...

M: Even with all these wealthy refugees, really, what it's basically what they were, uh, living in the, taking over homes and...

L: Oh, yeah. Well, now, the people like Terrazas, you know how he was, I guess he was one of the richest men in Mexico. And his son, or son-in-law, named [Enrique] Creel, and those kind of people, of course, they lived entirely different from those sad, forlorn refugees out there living in tents at Fort Bliss, you know, on government rations. They had nothing, just stuff they carried on their backs. And the feeling wasn't for them; there was a great feeling of sympathy for them. It was the people that were causing all the suffering. And they were seen as the revolucionarios, the people that were causing this terrible trouble in Mexico. And it became, you know, I guess most revolutions do that unless they have a Stalin hidden in the background - it became a kind of a duel between various leaders. They forgot their large revolutionary dream of making Mexico a better place by having a better government and they all got to fighting amongst themselves as to who was the one that was going to reap the reward. Carranza and Villa and [Emiliano] Zapata were the three that kind of... and then here came Obregón from the State of Sonora. And Obregón was the one that really, he whipped Villa at the Battle of Celaya, and

Villa was never the same again. And then Obregón gradually... he of course, he was staying with the Presidente, Carranza, and then when Carranza was assassinated this was Obregón's chance and he came back from Sonora and became the leader. That whole thing is just nothing that I can remember myself. It's just things that I have read and things that my dad and mother told me. So it's a very foggy thing and I'm not a trustworthy witness to any of that. (laughter)

M: But if you do remember...

L: I know the emotion was very strong and the feeling for our troops, especially when they went into Mexico and General Pershing was leading them, you know, we were extremely patriotic (chuckles).

M: You know Leon [Metz] had asked me the other night about some of the other incidents that happened, the things that you might remember your dad talking about like the strike with the streetcars and...

L: You know, I don't remember much about that. I know he had a lot of trouble the whole time he was mayor.

M: It's always something.

L: There was always something.

M: Well what about, you know, I was curious, too, about your visits to Juárez, if it was too dangerous at the time for you to really know Mexico well as a youth?

L: At that time even Dad, because he had had a price on his head, the Villistas did, Dad wouldn't go to Juárez there for a space of, oh I guess it was from 1913 to 1919, when they finally ran Villa off, you know, after that 1919 capture of Juárez. Oh, and another person that sat in the chair you're sitting in was General Felipe Angeles, who lived in El Paso for a while. And of course, in 1918 or [19]19 he went down into Mexico and joined the Carranzistas. [They] caught him and executed him, I guess in Chihuahua City.

M: Tell me about him, Felipe Angeles.

L: He was the, I guess, the greatest soldier that Mexico has ever produced. He was the director of the Chapultepec Academy, where the Mexican cadets...like corresponding to our West Point. And he also was a fine mathematician and he had been sent by the Porfirista government to Saint Cyr, the academy, the French academy. And I understand Dad always said that Felipe Angeles was a part designer of the French 75 millimeter artillery piece, the light artillery piece. He was a fine

technical man, a very brave and very admirable man. Dad admired him very much. And also had the duty of telling Angeles that he was causing troubles in south El Paso and that he should leave and so on.

M: Your dad told him that?

L: Yeah. And he didn't [leave], and there was that...

M: What kind of troubles was he causing?

L: Plotting to capture Juárez and have another battle and all of that kind of stuff. Also, there was always this demand by the revolucionarios for arms and ammunition. And there were plenty of smugglers both Mexican and American that were working on that. (chuckles)

M: You have some of those in your book, The Wonderful Country.

L: Started early.

M: Well, you said that Luz Villa was over here one time, when your dad put her in jail for running guns.

L: Yeah, this made a very bad impression on Pancho.

M: But people made their living smuggling arms back and forth?

L: [Yes]. I don't know...that's one of the reasons I have never wanted to write too much about Dad, because I didn't know the real facts, you know. I sort of worshiped Dad and always did all his life, and I never...only when he felt called upon to tell me stuff - which was pretty late in his life - did I ever get to know things about him. For instance, in that trip to Mexico when he was a young man, he rode from Babícora [Chihuahua] all the way to Colima horseback and...

M: Looking for a mine?

L: Yeah. He had great adventures; he was down there a couple of years. He found a hacienda down in one of the barrancas and he really loved the life. And there was some, uh, haunting question in his mind whether he should go back and marry the girl he was engaged to or whether he should stay.

M: Stay!

L: Stay in Mexico. He told me that when he was, oh, about two years before he died. And there was one time when I came back from one of my trips up during the war and Dad was sitting on the front porch and reminiscing about his youth, when he was having fun.

M: Well, we're glad he came back. Otherwise, we wouldn't have you. (laughter)

L: Well, I'm sort of glad he did, too.

M: He did the right thing.

L: Yeah, he always maintained that.

M: He did the right thing. Well, why don't you tell me, too, I've read interesting things about your cousin, Homer Lea, and some of the stories about him.

L: Well, Homer Lea was a sort of an icon in Dad's den, which was full of all kinds of Indian ceramics, and bows and arrows, and a big buffalo head, and books, and quite a gun collection of old pieces and some good modern rifles and small arms. Anyway, there was this picture of Homer Lea in a Chinese robe. Dad told a good deal about Homer, how he'd gone to Stanford and learned Chinese there from Chinese friends, and had gone to China.

M: How was he related to you? He's your cousin?

L: He was my dad's first cousin. His uncle, Dad's Uncle Alfred's son, and he had been born as a fine, lusty, young boy.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

M: But, now it's started, Okay. So Alfred lived in Denver?

L: Yeah. And they had a male Indian as a nurse, I don't know how that came about, who dropped the infant, Homer, on the flagstone fireplace hearth. And it injured his back to where he was a hunchback the rest of his life. That's how it happened. He was apparently a brilliant mind and a real soldier at heart. He went to China then; the Chinese tong in San Francisco paid his way to go over to China to help "knock the," [as] Dad used to say, "the Manchu emperors off the throne" or something like that. Homer was pretty successful, but he had an army that had been organized, and with his military studies and everything he began to put them in practice and he actually did some good work in that rebellion. But they cornered him and at this time, why, he had met a young fellow named Sun Yat Sen, who really was a promising revolutionary. And he and Dr. Sun went to Japan to escape the Chinese that were after them. And they were in Japan a little while and then Homer came on back. This was when, he came back and he wrote a novel called The Vermilion Pencil, which has got a lot of information in it, but it's kind of a crummy, romantic thing. It wasn't Homer's metier.



Anyway, when Dad and Mother were married, that was in 1906, Homer was back in California, entertaining various Chinese visitors, et cetera, and his dad and mother, Homer's dad and mother, lived in Los Angeles. And Dad and Mother had their honeymoon in Long Beach and they went by, of course, to see Uncle Alf and I can't remember what aunt, what they called Alf's wife [Hersa]. Anyway, old Homer was there and Dad said, "Homer had absolutely no time for me." But his [Homer's] father explained all the, you know, made explanations for him a lot. His father was very much, apparently, very sympathetic to all that Homer did. And years later, you know, Dad always made Homer as a hero, because he finally went back, you know, with Sun Yat Sen and was Sun-Yat-Sen's chief of staff and had the rank of lieutenant general in the Chinese Army that actually put Sun Yat Sen up into, made him the president, you know. And, of course, while Homer was in Japan, he saw what Japan's plan was and he wrote The Valor of Ignorance, which pretty accurately foretold what the Japs were going to do in World War II. After it all had happened early in 1942, why, they began to read [it], the people in charge began to read it and see how close Homer had come to what the Japanese were going to do. Anyway, Homer then, when he got back, he was invited, after The Valor of Ignorance, he wrote a book, and I believe this is chronologically right, he wrote a book called The Day of the Saxon, in which he prophesied that Russia was going to take over and it was going to come through a

conquering of England's Indian Empire. Karachi was one of the strategic points in his thought and so on. Well, the emperor of [Germany], the Kaiser Wilhelm, invited him to come and see their spring military maneuvers, this was about 1912, to come as his guest and discuss military matters as a sort of an advisory expert. And the - I can't remember his name - the marshal of the British Army at Sandhurst or wherever, I guess it was in London, then heard about this and he asked Homer to come over and see him, (chuckles) which Homer did.

M: And your dad related all this to you.

L: Yeah, this was a big deal, see? And when Dad was old and I had been around some, I remember he told me, he said, "Well, son," he said, "Homer was a genius, but I never met a man that was more conceited and that had less time for his kinfolks than Homer Lea." (laughter)

M: Well, tell me a little bit, too, about your dad's brother because he loved art and I'm interested in his influence on you.

L: The only thing I can remember about Uncle Cal, his name was Calvin Lea, was he came to visit us one time. I think it was about - we still lived at 1316 Nevada - and it must have been about 1914 when I would be only seven years old. And I

remember how he was so delightful to me and to my brother Joe who was a little tiny boy then. And he would, he had some clay and he carried it in his suitcase. This [clay] was kind of dry, and he would wet it up and left it overnight. I remember he could model a little horse and an Indian and all kinds of things just with, in his hands. And he wanted to be a sculptor but he never became one. But he (chuckles) he had a - even at that time - he was very strong on having a little copita and, of course, my mother was a very strong temperence lady and Cal would go across the river for his little daily drink and he came home (chuckles) one night - I guess he must have been very, very plastered - and the folks were in bed and Cal came in and wanted something to, oh, I don't know, see what there was to eat or something. He opened the icebox door, and in those days there was a, just a, you know, a refrigerator was what it was, and he pulled too hard on the handle and the whole damn icebox came over. (laughter) Dad and Mother got up, they got the icebox back and it didn't hurt Cal. Dad said, "It never hurt a drunk ever." But my mother thought it was time for Uncle Cal to go back to Missouri. (chuckles) And I think the bacon was burnt shortly after that. So he left. And I often think, you know, that - they told me later, years later - that my grandfather, who was the surveyor in Jackson County, Missouri, often left little, very nice little topographical drawings of trees and the hills on the edges of his survey papers. And there possibly was some,

some feeling there that was transmitted to Cal and one of the reasons that I think I had it so easy about getting to go to art school was that Dad had seen his brother completely frustrated by orders not to leave the farm. He didn't want to see that happen to anybody. He was always very fond of saying that he'd rather to have his son be a good blacksmith than a poor preacher. (chuckles) So, I think he said that several times.

M: So your parents, they were supportive of your [endeavors], very supportive?

L: Oh, yeah.

M: Well, you know, I was curious, you talked last time about Norma van Swearingen and how she talked about John Norton, I guess, to you, and that piqued your interest, I guess, in going to Chicago.

L: That's right. She said that he was the most vigorous Western type that was teaching at the [Chicago] Art Institute, that he had been a Rough Rider in the Spanish-American War and when Dad heard that he said, "Well, that's pretty good. (laughter) I want to see my son study with a man like that."

M: He could do other things besides draw pictures.

L: Yeah. So, that was the only, the only real definite thing that was said about the Chicago Art Institute was that there was a man there whose name was John Norton, and that I would like him and that he would like me. And that was...I was always grateful to... I never saw that Mrs. Van Swearingen but that one time, that day she had me come over and bring some drawings that I'd made. I told you about the checkered sweater, you know, and Helen Moore. These are some of the drawings I made and it's Chacmool. (chuckles)

M: Your Chacmool Society.

L: Yeah.

M: But just that one meeting, that one meeting changed...

L: [Yes]. And, of course, she was a friend not only of my art teacher in high school, Gertrude Evans, but a friend of her sister's, and they were very, you know, they were very well respected people. And my mother thought that if they would indorse such a thing, then the Chicago Art Institute would be pretty good. And so I wrote and got the information about going. And then there was a question about where I would live. There's no, you know, there was nothing about a, any kind of a campus or any control whatsoever on anybody that went to the Art Institute. It was a place where you went to

learn to paint. And I think a few people went there to learn to be teachers, you know. After you'd been there a few years, you got a diploma or something. But us guys that really wanted to be artists looked down on these people that got diplomas, you know. The hell with a diploma. What you want to do is learn. So this was a pretty tough thing about what I was going to do. Mother didn't want me to just go up there and not have any friends and Dad was feeling the same way. And Mother happened to think of her friend, Mrs. Carpenter, whose father was a physician living on the North Side in Chicago. And Mother loved her friend Nita Carpenter and asked her about this, her father. And Mrs. Carpenter wrote her father and he said that he and his wife would be delighted to help me and find a place for me to live that would be, as Mother said, "All right." (chuckles)

So I - first time I'd ever been anywhere by myself except to Santa Fe, you know - went to Chicago on the Golden State Limited. Why, what was his name, Doctor Some-other-thing, anyway he met me at the Lasalle Street Station. And [he] made arrangements for this. In those days, you know, you traveled with a trunk and the express company delivered the trunk to the address, and he said, "I've gotten a room for you at the YMCA on Wilson Avenue." This is quite a ways, about 40 minutes from the Loop by elevated train. So we went up there and there was a very nice set-up. Nobody bothered me. I could swim and I could use the gymnasium, which I did, you know, to

sort of, in those days you sort of wanted to keep in shape and all that. And I lived there the whole, at the Wilson Avenue YMCA, for the first year I was in Chicago.

I would take the elevated, the "el", at Wilson Avenue and go to the Loop every day. That included Saturdays, when there weren't regular classes at the institute, and on Sunday, why, I would go and meet my friend, Enrique Alf  rez, who had come to Chicago. I think the Kiwanis Club paid his fare, the El Paso Kiwanis Club paid his fare to Chicago. And one of the wives, Mrs. William Wuehrmann, one of the wives of a Kiwanian, had known Lorado Taft or studied with him or something. Anyway, she wrote and sent samples of Enrique's sculpture in. Taft said yes he could, "here's a very promising young man." He could come and live there in this barn in back of the big studio he had down at 60th and Ellis Avenue. So Enrique and I would usually spend, on Saturdays, why, we'd come down and read in the Ryerson Library, look at pictures in the books and go to a movie or something. And then on Sundays, why, uh, Enrique's had to be there on Sunday. Lorado Taft always had an open house tea. And there were eight young men that were studying there and lived in the barn and...

M: He just, he taught on his own. He didn't teach at the Institute ? He just had his own students?

L: No, no. These people, uh, just were there and were allowed to

watch him and hear him and sometimes help him a little bit with some of the sort of peon work there in this great big studio. Anyway, you know...

M: And he was strictly a sculptor.

L: Yes. So Enrique and I were very close.

M: Did you know him in school back here?

L: No. He was a refugee. He came up to El Paso with a [person] named Arévalo. Have you ever seen any pictures around here by a man named Arévalo? He came up as a refugee from the revolution, and Enrique was kind of his, you know, his go-fer, little helper. And Enrique could speak no English at all. And the person that sort of held the fort as far as art is concerned here in El Paso in those days was a man named Harry Waggoner. And he had a, called it The Fine Arts Shop. And it was in the Roberts-Banner Building on the ground floor. Right now I guess it's about where, you know, where that McDonald's is there, next to Kress's.

M: Downtown, uh huh. Downtown, [yes.]

L: And Dad bought a Audley Dean Nicols from Harry Waggoner and they became friends. And Enrique went there to see if he



could do any work for him and Harry sort of took him on. Mr. Waggoner took him on and that's where I met Enrique. Enrique lived in a little tiny hotel room up on the third floor of one of those hotels on El Paso Street, you know. He was very, very poor and a wonderful guy, and...

M: And so he really, basically, received a scholarship from Kiwanis to go up and study.

L: Yeah. Uh huh. They didn't, uh, I think they gave him a little extra money besides buying him a ticket up there, but no return ticket or anything like that. They just sent him up there.

M: One way.

L: And he had to make his way. And he did, you know. He got a job at the Art Institute almost at the time. He borrowed a big Mexican sombrero that Dad had given me and I took up there as a kind of a, you know, a stunt that I could, that was still kind of a revolutionary times, 1924. Anyway, Enrique got a job posing as a Mexican caballero with the hat. Dad had Victoriano Huerta's beautiful silk sash that he wore and I had that and that big hat. And Enrique, somewhere he found a short chaqueta and he sewed some coins on it, I think they were Chinese coins (chuckles) or something, and he would pose,

you know, with his serape, which I had there at the Art Institute. He did that and, you know, models in those days you'd get a dollar an hour. And they worked damned hard for their money. Twenty-five minutes and then five-minute rest, then twenty-five minutes and they did that for three hours at a stretch. Anyway, the second year I was there in Chicago, why, oh, the first year, you see, I didn't...I never even got to meet John Norton. I had to do all of these things that I thought were kind of ridiculous, like we had to go over to the Field Museum once a week and look at various periods of artifacts made by the Maoris and the Vikings and I don't know what all. And I had to take some things, like, I studied perspective for a half a day a week and design two mornings a week. That was just my dish because I'd just use ceramic designs that I knew from the Indian stuff. Had lots of fun with that. And what else? Oh, the Life class was utterly miserable so, you know, it was a system where they did - it was invented by the guy there named Mr. Forsberg. He was a big, fat, blond guy. And the nude model, why, you'd make ovals and the ovals, uh, and finally if you made enough ovals, why, it would, kind of made the figure...just...

M: Yeah, I've seen some of those reproduced. That is his system.

L: Jesus. So I didn't do that. And I didn't, you know, they even graded papers, and I never got a grade at all. I'd draw

the figure, you know?

M: [Yes.]

L: And I saw some of the work that Norton's people were doing, of course, and I would wait. But Norton was, his class wouldn't allow any first-year students. So second year, anyway, was a lot better.

M: Did you take art history the first year?

L: Yeah, yeah. That was...did you ever run across a book by Helen Gardner, The History of Art?

M: Yes.

L: Well, Helen Gardner was the instructor.

M: Is that right?

L: And I took a class, let's see what else?

M: Was she good?

L: She was excellent.

M: She was? She was interesting...?

L: I remember her as a very, very nice lady. And, what else?

M: Were you homesick the first year?

L: Sure. You know, I never did get over being homesick. I loved this country. It was where I belonged, you know, but I had to learn all I could. I felt that more strongly than I did going back home. Anyway, second year Enrique said, "If you don't mind, you can come and live in my place. Mr. Taft won't care." So Enrique and I shared a room in the barn across the alley from the Taft studio for my second year there at that institute. And during that time, of course, then I got to take a painting class. And, uh, in the evenings, I forgot to say, even when I was there the first year, I would take evening classes there at the Art Institute in life drawing. There was a man there who was the illustrator of all the early Tarzan books. His name was Allan Saint John. And he was a pretty dad-gum good draftsman and he taught me a lot about how to draw the human figure. We worked in charcoal; each pose lasted a week. And we worked from 6:30 to 9:30 five days a week, so that it was 15 hours and you were supposed to have your pretty complete drawing. And I got a lot from that. And the second year I did the same, but the second year, why, I was allowed to compete with a painting for the European

Traveling Scholarship. And I think I was the only second-year person that was allowed that; I say that with some hesitancy, but I don't... I remember then when John Norton came by from his painting class and saw what I was doing, which was pretty modern, I guess you'd call it, and he stopped and said, "That's very interesting." He went on and I said, "Who is that?" And the man said, "That's John Norton." (chuckles)

M: The man you had come to meet.

L: Yeah. So, not long after that, why, I introduced myself and he said, "Well, you come and study in my class next fall," which I did. I was only in his class three months when I quit in order to do a mural. I had a chance to do a mural for a decorating firm that was doing this big old mansion out in River Forest. That was way out on the West Side of Chicago, out past Oak Park and all that. And so I quit Norton's class, and you know about that, uh, I think I mentioned it in that little pamphlet that I gave you.

M: But tell me about it.

L: Oh well, I saw Norton in the Art Institute hallway about three months after I had quit his class. And the painting was done and I was supporting myself by that time with doing little odd jobs. For instance, every Saturday I'd do a portrait of...

there was the Jewish Relief Fund and they always had a meeting every Saturday noon at the, in the Strauss Tower. And they published a little weekly magazine thing, news of the Relief Fund. And they always had a picture of the speaker - a drawing rather than a photograph - which was interesting. So, I made drawings for these guys and that was one of my sources of income. The other thing was...

M: Did you start that, what year when were you there?

L: The second year.

M: Second year.

L: And another thing I did was: there was a drug store down near Taft's studio and I went in and said I thought I could letter their window cards. And so I did a sample and the guy gave me this job. Every week, why, he'd put different stuff in the drugstore window, you know, and I'd write "Talcum Powder at 59 Cents" or whatever, you know, and I got pretty good at that because I was taking a course in lettering. Oh, this was interesting and had a real effect on me: Eugene Detter, I think his name was Eugene, was...all these calligraphers know about him, he was a great guy there in Chicago. And he had just returned from Europe, where he had taken rubbings of the Trojan column lettering, the beautiful, classical Roman

uppercase letters. And he had a disciple named Mr. Cowen. I can't remember, maybe he was, no... Anyway, Mr. Cowen was very close to Detter and I got to take a lettering class with him. And sometimes Detter would come in and give us all a fine sort of encouragement thing.

And I always had trouble because I was so very left-handed and all the pens and everything; I had to learn to cut my pens, we used quills then to...because they insisted on you knowing how to do everything and not use a speedball, you know. (chuckles) And I had trouble there just like I did later in China, being left-handed. Anyway, the second year was a transition from sort of primary stuff that I did in the first year and then the third year I really got to what I wanted to do, and then [I] quit because I had a job. And then Norton came by one day in the hallway. I was waiting. It was at noon and I was waiting for Nancy [Taylor] to finish her classwork and I was going to take her to lunch. And Norton came in and said, "Where the hell have you been?" And I said, "Well, I had a job. I've done a mural." And he, uh, he nearly knocked me over, he says, "Where is it?" And I told him, "River Forest." And he said, "Can I see it?" So...

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 3, SIDE A

M: So John Norton went and saw your mural?

L: And on the way back he just abruptly asked me if I'd like to work for him. He said he had a new commission and so it was for a library out in, I forget the man's name. It was the decoration sort of landscape in this library. And I remember one of the things (chuckles) that really did get John. We had a thing called - he let me do, you know, peon work, you know - Lea doing everything from his drawing, from his scale design. And when we got all through - I wasn't there - Norton went to get his pay and this old bird that had wanted the work done, he said, "Well, I can't pay you what you asked because I've counted the leaves on that oak tree and you haven't got as many as you had in your sketch." (laughter) That was the kind of thing you had to deal with.

M: Oh, gosh!

L: Then, not too long later, of course, we would have started work and Norton got another studio that was big enough. It was up an old loft, a terribly gloomy place, right over the "el" on Lake Street and fourth floor, and it was about 150 feet long and 50 feet wide. A huge old place. And that's where we did the ceiling for the Daily News concourse that was being built. And when we had just gotten started real well, there was a very loud knock on the door and a fellow came in



carrying a violin case and with another man with him. And the other man said, "Are you Professor Norton?" And he said, "Yes," and he said, "You know what you're doing here? You're doing scab work." He said, "You got to join up." Oh, just as rough as hell. So he said, "We can call everybody off, that whole damn construction, if you don't go along with us." John looked at the violin case and so on. (chuckles) He said, "Well, I'll let you know tomorrow." He said, "You be sure and do that." Well, after John, of course, we went down to Oliver and Root, Architects, who had given him the job and they - I didn't go - they had a discussion in there. And so the next day when the man came back, why, Norton took out a membership in the, let's see, it was Scenic Artists Local Union 350, 14th District Council, Painters, Decorators and - something - of America [Union of Scenic Painters and Decorators]. And it cost a hundred dollars a quarter to belong. And he took a membership for me and for himself. And they had two of the gals from the Art Institute helping him, too. They were temporary, you might say, and so John said, "Well, now this entitles me...what is a journeyman? And what is this thing about an apprentice?" And this old boy from the union, he said, "I'll tell you what." He said, "See that girl over there in the corner? You're going to lunch, see? And you say, 'Sis, paint up to that line. Here's the color.' That's an apprentice." And the guy pointed at me and he said, "See that kid over there? Well, if you're going out to lunch, same

way, and you say, 'Son, throw a little warmth in them greens,' that's a journeyman." (chuckles) So Professor Norton learned a lot from the labor union. He paid his dues for the rest of his life.

M: Well, tell me, you said you didn't start, you didn't meet him until your second year. Can you tell me a little bit more about how your relationship grew, how you met him and your relationship grew?

L: Yeah. After I told him I had done this mural, he said, "Well, come by the studio." This was when he had his studio there on...the Tree Studio. It was on the corner of...it was right close to the Loop. State, uh, like Erie or one of those. Nah, that wasn't it. Anyway, I came over to his studio and we looked over the sketch. He told me about what he was going to do and what I'd have to do and so on. And he had bought a lithograph press to make lithographs. He had gotten interested...George Bellows sold him on the idea of making lithographs. Bellows had been out there the year before to Chicago, as a visiting artist. Anyway, we made a lithograph together and then we'd go out and get a sandwich or something; those were in prohibition days and everything. Sometimes Norton would have a bottle of, a pint bottle of gin and we'd have a gin and water, and have a sandwich. And we got to talking about our early life and everything. He always

treated me like I was a contemporary and it was really wonderful. We got to be very, very good friends.

M: But, this was prior, because I wasn't clear earlier, this was prior to your taking his class for three months, then?

L: No!

M: This was afterward?

L: This was after. Yeah. He had given about three critiques to my work. That's why I think he hired me, because of my work in his class. He saw it. And, it was strictly from life, painting from life. And, I think he liked what he saw.

TAPE IS PAUSED, THEN RESUMES

M: Okay. Now you can start talking about John Norton. That's [the tape] on.

L: One of the things about John was his family. I think he thought, first thing about...in his life, was to take care of them, and do the best he could. He was having a hard time at it, trying to make a living as a teacher. And when he started getting these commissions as a muralist, things got better and it made a lot of difference, I think, in his attitude toward

life and also the comfort of his family. He never was where he could, you know, be feeling any way independent up to the time of his death, but he was always thinking about doing right by his family. He had this fine wife and then he had a son, who was called Bud, and he was a great big old boy. At the time I was there with the Nortons, why, Bud was working for, uh, the Chicago Dredge and - something - Company on these big old dredges that were dredging out the rivers. And he had a stunning daughter, named Margaret, who married, first married a Chicago theater critic, named Ashton Stevens. He was a much older man and that didn't work. Then she married a great guy named Jack Guyen, (chuckles) who was absolutely no good as a husband but the most entertaining guy. He was one of the first real radio men in Chicago. And of course that [marriage] didn't last and so then Marg married a man named Garrett, who was a stock broker and very solid. That helped a lot. (chuckles) She never married again. But they were delightful. Incidentally, her son, a little guy, had a little drawing in that The Art of Tom Lea of a little boy with his, on the beach, with a sand-pail and a little spade and a black woman, who was a nursemaid, you know, kind of hugging. And I had this phone call and he said, "I'm Jack Garrett." Yeah, I think that's what his name was. No, "I'm John Norton Garrett. I'm the little boy that you have in that picture with \_\_\_\_" and he named her. I remember I'd done the drawing over in Saugatuck [Michigan]. One summer I spent some time over in

Saugatuck with the family; that was where they went every summer across the lake.

M: After the book came out he called you? Was it after the book...?

L: Yeah. And I didn't know he was in existence. And he had been adopted by Garrett, but he was actually Jack Guyen's son. Later Jim and I had dinner with him in Houston. He's really a very nice, wonderful guy to represent John Norton, you know. He had a bunch of his pictures that he had saved and so on. Grandpa was quite a guy for him. He's a retired oil geophysicist. So he and Jim have a lot in common.

M: But you began doing, then, work with John Norton and so really didn't complete your...

L: The first work I did for him was in, I guess, the spring of 1927. And I worked for him then, see, at that, let's see, we worked in three studios. No, four: the Tree Studio Building was first, that's where the lithograph press was; and then the big old loft on Lake Street; and then somebody left and went to Europe for a while and we had a studio up on Carl Street - it was a kind of an artist's roost up there on the near North Side near Division Street or somewhere up there; and then we got the studio that really was the great stuff,

was on North Clark Street. That was huge. The ceiling was 40 feet high, and it was, oh, 100 feet long, and darned near as wide. They'd have these great windows all in the... It was supposed to have been an early movie studio, where they did two reelers. Somebody said that it was where Gloria Swanson got her start, but I doubt that. (chuckles) At the time we were using the studio, I was working for John, [and] it was depression time. And, oh, right around the corner from this place on Clark Street was one of the county buildings and a soup kitchen. And sometimes you'd see three abreast, two blocks long of these poor bums. It would just, you know, tear your heart out.

M: Was that one of the reasons you were kind of anxious to earn money and carry your own weight?

L: You see, Norton was so good to me that he would pay me, you know, in depression times he'd pay me a hundred dollars a week. And in those days a hundred dollars a week was pretty good. And then he got me this mural job of my own down at the Sherman Hotel, painting this cabaret, where they had this nightclub. His friend, Ernie Byfield, owned the hotel or managed it or something and he asked John if he'd do it and John said, "No, I don't want to do that but I've got a man that can do it." So I did that and he gave us enough money for Nancy and me to go to Europe. That's how I got to Europe.

M: That's right. Now, tell me about meeting Nancy, when you met her.

L: She was a beautiful girl in another...I saw her the first year I was there but she was in another, oh, class thing. I think she was kind of...her mother had, uh, was living there in Chicago. Her father was a kind of a reprobate. They'd been separated for years but never divorced. And Nancy had spent one year at the University of Indiana and had dates with Hoagy Carmichael. (chuckles) This is...I'm going back in history.

M: Yeah.

L: And she came to the Art Institute at the same time that I did but she was in a different set of classes. So I never did have an opportunity to, you know. I had admired lots of pretty girls and that was it. But the second year we were in a class together. I've forgotten what it was; I think it was, uh, still life, uh, painting or something like that. And I was very much impressed with her and we had, let's see, she knew a lot of poetry and I thought I did. I was reading Shelly and Keats, you know, it was kind of romantic stuff, but... (chuckles) Anyway, I invited her out to one of the teas at Lorado Taft's. That was clear out on the South Side. And we had a very pleasant time. I took her to dinner, then, down on Cottage Grove Avenue after the tea. And, I don't know, we

really got interested in each other, but I didn't, we didn't get married until, in February of 1927. We went up to Waukeegan and, I guess you'd call it, eloped. Her mother didn't like it worth a damn and her father didn't care. Her mother had Nancy's older sister, named Rose, living with her. So it wasn't too bad when Nancy and I, with my work for John Norton and everything, we had got a room in a rooming house over on Cass Street. And we lived there until, oh, maybe a year. No, not a year. And then I had a chance to get into an apartment house up on Fullerton Parkway, which is right by one of the sides of Lincoln Park, a beautiful place. We got a one-room apartment on the tenth floor. It was kind of cramped. We lived there for two or three years.

M: Did your parents meet Nancy before you married her, or...?

L: Yeah. After I...no, oh, not before I married her.

M: Not before.

L: After we were married, it was after one of the jobs where I had a little money extra and Dad sent some money for our fare. He and Mother, of course, were very anxious to meet Nancy, and they sent some money to help out. And I brought Nancy down to El Paso.



M: What year would that have been?

L: That would be late in 1927, I think.

M: Nineteen twenty-seven was a busy year.

L: And my uncle, Dale, my mother's brother, got us a rented car; it was a little Ford Roadster, Model T for the Roadster. And we had a suitcase between us and we rode up to Santa Fe. You know that was a great deal in those days. It took us three days to get there.

M: So that was Nancy's first introduction to...

L: To the West. She was from Terre Haute, Indiana. She was born in Terre Haute, Indiana. Anyway...

M: So you visited here but then returned and you continued to work for John Norton then?

L: Yes. Yes. Until 1933. And early in 1933 when John knew he had a cancer and they had operated on him. They told him that he could live a while but it was cancer in the stomach. And that was why I finished a couple of...that would be in December and early January of 1933. I was up in St. Paul, Minnesota, doing a finishing and installing murals that Norton

had designed and had partly painted and which I had finished and taken to St. Paul and installed and came back, why, Norton paid me and told me that it was time for me to row my own boat. He sat down and he didn't ever say, you know, "I'm going to die" or anything, but he just was a wonderful guy and he told me that he thought, he said, "Ah, hell," he said, "You'll hear from me and I'll hear from you how things are going. You ought to get down there where you love the country." He said, "I wish I could go with you but I'll stay here." So he did and he did some murals for the Chicago World's Fair in 1933 before he died. I think he died... he died the next year in 1934 in January, when Nancy and I had moved to Santa Fe.

M: I'm somewhat curious, I've just got bits and pieces of it, on this very first mural that you did all by yourself, when you'd been taking classes, but I'm just kind of curious about the experience, you know, when you began taking things up to the scale, you know, scale.

L: Oh, I made a regular one-inch scale drawing on brown paper and a very limited color sketch. What I did was kind of a steal; this was in a swimming pool, indoor swimming pool. And I took designs from the Egyptian Book of the Dead of the Beautiful Lotus all the way around, and then the figures of the Egyptian men and women in this setting. And all the figures, I guess,

were six feet high and everything. I painted it directly on the plaster, which had been...no, they had put paper hangers' muslin on the walls in preparation for murals so that it wouldn't crack. I don't know, I never went back after that time I took Norton out there, I don't know how it lasted.

But the thing that I remember also the director of the Art Institute was a man named Robert B. Harshe. Have you ever heard of that - H-A-R-S-H-E? A wonderful man. And it was against the law for a student to smoke out there by those lions out on the steps in front of the Art Institute. It was supposed to give away that it didn't look well for students to lounge there and smoke. And I came out of the Art Institute one time and got a cigarette in my mouth and this rather, I would say, sturdy looking man, burly almost, said, "You want a light?" and pulled a lighter out. And it was Robert Harshe, who was directing the thing. And I asked who it was and found out it was Harshe. And John then said, "Well, I think you ought to know him better." And he took me in the office one day and they had planned it. Harshe said, "Would you like to do some murals for the South Park Commission in one of the south parks," and I said, "I'd sure like to do murals anywhere, sir." And so I did murals for the, I can't think of the name of that first park. Then I did another mural a year or so later for Gage Park. They're all, you know, way down in the South Side in gymnasiums and they had these what they called field houses in these parks, public parks. And it was

a way to make some money.

And of course, my friendship with Fergus Meade was one of the great friendships of my life. He was a copywriter and sort of a vice president in an advertising firm, the Buchen Company. And his wife, Josephine, was a marvelous person, and they lived in a fine house out in Kennilworth. That's on the North Side up toward River Forest, I mean toward Lake Forest. Anyway, he gave me work. I did some advertisements for the Reading Pipe Company, I remember, that were even done in The Saturday Evening Post and all that. And I had a portfolio and used to haul it around under my arm to go to these various advertising agencies. This was between murals, (chuckles) you know. I made a living.

M: Made a living.

L: I was very proud of that and I think my folks were very proud of that. But when John told me that it was time to leave, of course, I felt that it was. (chuckles) And I knew exactly where I wanted to go. And we came back to El Paso and I bought a Dodge sedan for seventy-five dollars. (chuckles) And one of the back windows of this sedan, you know - they were a big box - it got broken and never was replaced. That was a two-day journey to Santa Fe in that old Dodge and, of course, I had seen my friend, Fremont Ellis, up there and he didn't live on Camino del Monte Sol anymore. He lived out

south of town in this place that he had bought and traded, called the Rancho San Sebastian. So we got a deal going there where he let me have a four acres and, in escrow, you know, and I didn't have to pay anything. And I had enough money to build this one-room adobe house. We had a fine time there for about a year. Then Nancy got this pain in her side and I got her into town in the old Dodge at night and took her to the hospital. And they operated on her the next morning. I didn't know the doctor or anything else.

M: There in Santa Fe?

L: In Santa Fe. And the antiseptic equipment was no good and the wound became infected. [It] never healed. And I've chosen to blank that part out of my life. I went back after her death - she died here in El Paso [April 1, 1936] - after her death, and I went up with a friend in a pick-up truck up to the hill and this little house and picked out some stuff that I wanted to take. The rest I just left there, left the key in the door and never went back. I've never been back since. And I ... the only way I could handle it was to just ... That was something. I think this is the first time I've ever... I've never talked to Sarah about this. But this is something I don't like to think about.

And I started over and it was lucky because the government had this section of fine arts where they were

having competitions for murals. And of course, I was trained as a muralist, and I won some of the competitions and that sent me on my way then. Dad one day brought this friend of his to the studio, introduced him as "This is my old friend Frank Dobie." And by that night, why, Dobie had said, "Well, I'm writing a book now and I don't know the title but, Tom, I think you could do the illustrations, if you will." So that was how ... Of course, Carl [Hertzog] and I had been working a little before that and I had always been interested in books and typography and so on and calligraphy that Earnest Detter and Mr. Cowen had imbued me with. So it was just, it just worked together. I think that with my illustrations for The Longhorns, which were done in 19..., I guess 1940, we're seeing a fellow that I didn't know. His name was Holland McCombs. He was a staff man on Time and Life, and he had taken a fancy to this book, The Longhorns, that Holland had. And he showed it to the managing editor of Life, named Daniel Longwell, a man originally from Nebraska and understood the West. And that's how I got - I found out later - that's how Life sent this telegram, asking me if I'd do a trooper here at Fort Bliss; they had two of their staff people out here working. That's how I got started with that; [it] was through the Dobie illustrations. (chuckles) So everything has worked out very well. When I came back here to El Paso, why, I just forgot Santa Fe. I never saw Fremont Ellis again or anything. And I met Sarah and my whole life changed.

M: After Sarah. Well, maybe we'll talk about that. I think this tape is about to end on this side and maybe we'll talk about that next week. One thing we missed, too, that I'd like to...

L: What have we missed?

M: Huh? Well, one thing that I was interested in, too, was your trip to Europe, which I think...

L: Oh, yes. Sure.

M: And I don't know if you want to do that today or if you'd like to wait until next week?

L: Well, sure. I mean...

M: I don't want to keep you too long. This side of the tape is about, I think it will end in just a few minutes, but why don't you tell me about that when you were working on your commissions in Chicago and the money that provided you with the...

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 3, SIDE B

This is a continuation of an interview of Tom Lea by Adair Margo in El Paso, Texas, on May 20, 1993.

M: And we'll go back to Chicago in some of your recollections of there.

L: There were two people that - more than that, but there were two influences, I think, that gave me lots of pleasure and some direction. There was a fellow student, he was older than I was, named Wallace Purcell, at the Art Institute and he was a student of Polaczecz, the sculptor. Wally was a very good, very good sculptor. And he had just done a portrait of a child of some friends of his that lived up in Kennilworth. And he said, "I think you ought to meet them." And he said, "They're, they're just great people." So I went up there with Wally one Saturday afternoon. And I met Fergus and Josephine Meade. And that was an interesting thing. Bill was a veteran of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. He had had people fire at him in a serious manner. And he was very much like this Hemingway "lost generation" thing. When he went off to war, he volunteered in a Wisconsin outfit. I forget the name of the division, but he fought all through the World War I in France and he was all this time engaged to a girl named, I believe her last name was Parker, I'm not sure. Her family owned...what's the other fountain pen company? Not Waterman's, but... Isn't it Parker pens?



M: Parker, [yes.]

L: They're down, up, somewhere in Wisconsin. Anyhow, Josephine was a member of that family and Bill was a very bright student at the University of Wisconsin, where he had met Josephine. Well, he came back from the war and was discharged. He didn't ever even get a scratch on him. (chuckles) He was a very lucky guy. And they married and Bill wanted to go to Paris to write. So they went. And they were there for two years. Their first child was born there in Paris. And they lived that life around Montparnasse and all that stuff that you read about. And Bill was an honest, wonderful man and a most informed man. He told me...one day I was sitting there in this little rented apartment in the midst of all this happy life in Paris. He did not ever meet Ernest Hemingway or any of the Gertrude Stein group or any of that. But he and his Josephine, you know, the Rotonde and the, what was the other one? The Rotonde and the Selecte and the...there were three cafes there over on the Left Bank that everyone went to. Anyway, he said, "I was looking at this play that I had written," and he said, "I knew it was never going to work and I knew I had no business fooling around." And he said, "That day I made arrangements for us to get little Bill and Josephine back to Chicago, where," he said, "I thought I could get a job." And so he got a job. He became, uh, one of the managing vice presidents of a firm called the Buchen Company -

B-U-C-H-E-N. And the Buchen Company did advertisements mostly for capital goods. The firms that they advertised for were mostly, uh, not retailers.

Anyway, Bill had a wonderful library and we hit it off just perfectly. And after I married Nancy, I took Nancy up there and she hit it off perfectly with Josephine. So we almost every weekend, why, we would be up there. Bill had a boat. It wasn't star class; it was a more of a family, little sailboat for having fun rather than racing. I remember the name was the Aiduna; that was one of Fergus' obscure goddesses (chuckles) that he had picked up somewhere and named his boat for. Anyway, we learned to sail on Lake Michigan and had wonderful weekends up there with them. And Bill had a library, which he made available to me, anything I wanted to borrow. And I became aware of people like Hemingway. I knew something about Scott Fitzgerald because he had done so many things in The Saturday Evening Post and all that, but Hemingway and Gertrude Stein and, uh, oh, what was the guy that didn't ever use capital letters? Cummings, the poet, e.e. cummings. Uh, a bunch of those people. Utterly foreign.

Oh, and I made the acquaintance through Bill of the books of Aldous Huxley. And the first thing I read of Aldous Huxley's was Point Counterpoint. And I went from there to sort of collecting Aldous Huxley's books as they came out. And his essays on the various things in Europe that he liked made a great impression on me. Later, when I went to Europe

I tried to see a lot of the things that he talked about. The other influence was a gal that Nancy had met somewhere and her name was Edna Mandel and she was married to Leon Mandel II, who owned the Mandel's big department store on State Street there. They were very wealthy people. And Edna had sort of ideas of being an artist, but not serious enough to do anything about. But she commissioned me to do her portrait, which was a lousy thing and which I was able to destroy before she got too mad at me. And they used to invite, on Saturday nights they used to have parties at their big apartment up on, it was about two blocks from where we lived up overlooking Lincoln Park. And they'd have people like Earl "Fatha" Hines and Tiny Parham come up and play the piano in their apartment and all these guys and it was the days of Al Capone's gin and it was quite an interesting thing. And [it] gave me, a country boy, some kind of an idea about how some other types of people lived (chuckles) with a lot of dough, just to do anything. So Bill and Leon and Edna were people that were also an influence of a different kind than the great influence that John Norton had on me. But I thought I'd mention it because it was a part of our life. Every weekend we had lots of fun and fun that we could not possibly have afforded. (chuckles)

M: Otherwise. Who was Leon?

L: Leon Mandel. He was, he is the big merchant.

M: Edna's father?

L: Edna was his wife. I often wonder. I read somewhere where Leon died not too many years ago, but I don't know whatever happened to Edna. They probably were divorced before... Anyway, that's beyond the thing.

One of John Norton's friends was a man named Ernie Byfield and he was the manager and I think owned a great amount of the stock of Chicago's Hotel Sherman, which at that time was one of the good hotels. And there was a nightclub in the basement of Hotel Sherman called College Inn. And, I don't know if you ever heard Ben Bernie. He was quite a jazz man in those days. Ben Bernie played every night in College Inn and it was the old pocket-flask set-up deal, you know, and Ruth Etting, who was a great torch singer, as I remember the star there. Anyway, Ernie thought that when the lights went off and there was dancing in the moonlight in the basement (chuckles) that there should be some kind of murals that would give his people some kind of ambiente. And he asked John Norton about it. And John said, "Well, I don't...give anything about a nightclub." (chuckles) I think John felt that that was a little beneath him. But he says, "I've got a

young man that can probably do it all right for you. I'll oversee the work," he said. So Byfield and I got together and what Byfield wanted: some fellow had just come in and sold him the idea of phosphorescent paint. And you could put it on a brush and paint contours with it and you could fill in the contours. There wasn't any question about modeling or anything of that kind, but it was shape and it was luminous; it would absorb light when the lights were on and then you'd turn the lights off and it would glow in the dark. And so I said, "Sure, I'll take a whack at that." And I did a thing as if the walls of the cabaret were an aquarium glass thing and painted these fish with the luminescent paint as shapes, different shapes of fish - lots of fun with the tropical colors and so on - and then a few figures of gawking people looking through the glass, as if they were looking through the glass at the aquarium. I remember that I got somebody - he was a Mexican fellow who belonged to the Scenic Artists Union that I belonged to - to help and to put on a lot of the peon work of the paint. And as I recall it, I worked about three weeks on the thing and it was well enough done, far enough done, to get pay for the thing. And for my designing and overseeing the job I think I was paid nine hundred dollars. I'm not sure. It was either nine hundred or eleven hundred, something like that. A fortune! (chuckles) So I got it all in one check.

And John said, "You know what you ought to do?" John

Norton said, "You ought to go to Europe. It's time for you to see some of that stuff over there." So I prodded around and we went to Europe at third class on the Isle de France. And we were the only people that - this was in steerage. We were the only people that spoke any English at all. They were Poles and Italians and all kinds of people going back to see their people, but apparently they hadn't had much success in the U.S. because they were not going back in any style. And we got to Le Havre and took the train up to Paris. And John Norton said that there was a little hotel there that he thought was pretty good and that it was reasonable and it would be a good place for us to get started in Paris. And it was called the Hotel Paris New York. And I remember the address because [it was with] such disdain as the taxicab drivers looked at me when I tried to say "cent quarante-huit Rue de Vaugirard." (chuckles) "You mean 148 Rue de Vaugirard?" Anyway, the side street of this hotel - and I remember this almost better than the hotel - was named L'Impasse de l'Enfant Jesus, the Alley of Jesus Christ, the Infant Christ. Anyway this was over in Montparnasse on the Left Bank.

And we saw the Rotonde and the Selecte and sat there very uncomfortably, not knowing a soul, and going around seeing Paris stuff, you know. And after we were there maybe four or five days of just prowling around the city - we were too proud to ask for any kind of directions. There wasn't much tourism,

organized tourism. Oh, this was about in August, the end of the season, August of 1930, when everybody stayed home. There was no money, you see? (chuckles) And so we almost had, you know, tourism to ourselves if we were going to do that. But I found out that there was going to be a great exhibition in the Louvre, celebrating I think it was the centennial or something - I don't know exactly what the date they had fixed - of the romantic movement. And it was featuring Eugène Delacroix's great wonderful works. Well, all the time that I was a student at the Art Institute I was crazy about reading in the Ryerson Library there under the roof of the Institute. There were three volumes, all in French, so I didn't get the text, but wonderful pictures of Delacroix's work. And, for some reason it just...Delacroix was my favorite. I thought highly of Matisse and I don't know why but Delacroix and then John Norton's influence came in to that serenity of Pierot [della Francesca]. But I found out that there was going to be a great exhibition of Delacroix, so Nancy and I spent two or three days in the Louvre, looking at this stuff and being absolutely awed by the wonderful paint quality this man had. This was years before I ever understood that part of that paint quality that I admired had come from a fellow over in England named John Constable, you know. But we never did get to London until, oh, I didn't get there till many years later. Anyway, then I found out that the Church of St. Sulpice was still open and there were two great murals, huge murals of the

biggest murals that Delacroix ever did, and one of them was Jacob wrestling an angel. And I had studied that in the Ryerson Library.

And we took a taxi to get there. And we spent the day in the sacrista or whatever. There were a few people in there praying, the doors were open. But there was this great tree over Jacob wrestling with the angel and it was the most magnificent piece of painting, just ... It thrilled, thrilled me. And that was one of the highlights of the thing rather than the great exhibition in the Louvre. And we went to other places in Paris where there were great things going on. And [we] went over and it was completely out of our class to get across the Seine and go to the [Hôtel de] Crillon or any of those places, but we walked and we walked all through Paris. And I bought a book on Delacroix and one on Piero and I said, "Let's get out of this town." It just didn't, see, we weren't bohemian enough to enjoy it and we didn't have much money and so mostly Paris to us was walking with a map.

And I said, "Let's go to Italy." That's what we really wanted to do. So we took the train south and we arrived in Florence. This would be, I guess, in September, early September. And God, Florence was a wonderful place. We tried to...we went to a hotel there and it cost the equivalent of something like ten dollars a night and that was way, you know, we were just burning our money up. So we asked about pensiones and there was the Pensione Picciolli, I remember,



and it was right on the Arno. On the Arno there's a paved thing that goes along the river, and overlooking the bridge of Santa Trinità. That's one bridge down from the Ponte Vecchio, you know, which you remember that has all the little goldsmith shops on it and so on. We were on the fourth floor, [with] four flights to climb. And on the fourth floor we could look down and it was supposed to be the exact spot where Dante had encountered Beatrice. (laughter) And we looked out across the river and there was a spire of Santa Trinità and God, it was glorious! Well, we stayed there till I said, "Well, we've got to go and see, got to go to Arezzo, and we got to go to Orvieto." When we found out about trying to make arrangements to go, we'd travel third class with all the chickens.

One of the things that I'll never forget was on our way over to Arezzo - why, no, it was past Arezzo, when we were going on our way south, I guess to Perugia or somewhere - they had in the railroad stations, they had little box lunches they'd call gestini and it had a piece of bread and it had some cheese and it had a piece of bologna and then it had a little bottle of red wine. Good. Well, we were sitting there having our gestini and a great big fat priest came in and sat down on the opposite bench where we were. Our baggage was all overhead and I was sitting there like this, and he finished his gestini and he had a pocket in this long gown that he was wearing and he pulled out a little, I guess it was his prayer book, and a pocketknife. He opened the pocketknife and

proceeded to pick his teeth with a pocketknife, and I've never forgotten that. (laughter) Anyway, we went down to Arezzo and I remember we felt like we were such holiday people. We hired a carrozza drawn by two mules and the harness had red yarn on it, little yarn tassels, red tassels and jingle bells on the shaft. And we went up to the Church of San Francesco before we even went to the hotel. And, God darn, there it was. (chuckles) Well, we got a room in the hotel, which cost more than we felt it should have, but we stayed in Arezzo a few days. And I found that I could buy and I had found in Florence that I could buy 8x10 black and white prints called Ali Nari. Did you ever hear of them, Ala Nari prints? They had them all over Europe of all the masterpieces, and all the art works in Europe were done, Ala Nari prints. So we bought a whole set of these of the decorations there in the Church of San Francesco that Piero had done. And [we] used those, we didn't have to sketch because we had the photographs and they were good photographs. And we'd go over there and the old Sacrestain we gave him a tip, the second day I was there, and he let me climb up on the choir stalls so I could touch the bottom of Piero's work, and it was lovely.

Anyway, then we went on to Orvieto. I think the reason why we went there was because we were so anxious to see what one of Piero's best students could do, Luca Signorelli. So we went over there and there's this great transept. On one side are people rising into heaven with the angels carrying them

and on the other side (chuckles), why, the devil's carrying people to hell. But the main thing was the splendid, first Renaissance anatomical display. Signorelli really had studied human anatomy, you know. Of course, Leonardo had, but he was kind of a one track, you know. Nobody could imitate him. But we loved the mural front plain austerity of Signorelli's just as much as we did the serenity and the true mural concept of Piero's stuff in the Church of San Francesco. So we were there and at Orvieto, I remember, we had lots of fun. We discovered the "Est-Est-Est" wine. Did you ever have any?

M: I don't think so.

L: It was a red wine. I don't think it was ever a specially good one, but there was a wonderful tale about this guy at the hotel who could speak a little English. His brother had been in America for some time and he could speak a little English and he had been to Columbus, Ohio. And he told us about this old priest in the Middle Ages that had gotten word that the pope wanted to see him and had to make...you know, he was a bishop. And he made this trip, riding his mule all the way down from northern Europe and he got to Orvieto and was very thirsty and ordered up a great cask of wine for his company. And he tasted it himself and he said, "I think I'll stay here a while." And he never showed up in Rome and the pope sent word, "Why aren't you here?" He was still in Orvieto. And he

was so far gone that all he ever got to really answer the pope is "Vino Orvietani est, est, est..." and expired. Anyway, that was (laughter) the kind of stuff that we loved.

We went on south to Rome. We couldn't afford to go to Ravenna or to Borgo San Sepolcro. You've been there, I guess, to see that great resurrection of Christ coming out of the tomb. That's why I painted the thing for the Baptist Church with Christ's torso exposed was because of my worship of that great painting of Piero's. But, anyway, we did not get to go over there. That's because it was over kind of east of where we were. We went on south to Rome and, of course, Rome was a whole new world, too. And in those days that we were there - I guess we were in Rome a month - you could go over there and get in [the] Sistine Chapel. I think we paid five lire and that was twenty-five cents or something. And you could rent a mirror for ten lire or something from the old sacristano, who was a kind of gatekeeper, and there wouldn't be anybody in there but you. Then maybe five or ten tourists would come in and gawk a while. But you could sit on the pews and with the Ala Nari prints and with the mirror you could study the Delphic Oracle or whatever figure, see how Eve was beseeching Adam there and how the Lord was in the whirlwind creating Adam and all these things, and you could look in and not kill your neck. It was...and quiet, nice. Then you'd look up over the altar and it was all blackened with candle smoke and everything. I never understood why Michelangelo

made that figure of Christ so fat and so wide. Do you understand that?

M: Where? On the Last Judgment?

L: Yeah. It's a very strange figure of a male.

M: It is, isn't it?

L: It is. It may have something to do with Michelangelo being old, or I don't know what. Anyway, that and I remember... Oh, another thing that I want to tell you about Florence was - that we loved so much, - was the little Church of the Carmine where Masaccio's murals are. That was the one, that's the one I made drawings of. Then, also, the Church of Santa Croce, which is a big church, had all the Yilandaiyo mural portraits over the choir stalls. All of the historians and some of the great ladies and so on there beautifully done in this marvelous mural; sense of the wall plane in the steps back from the wall plane, it was so beautifully done. I wanted to mention that because that was another thing that was wonderful.

And then in Rome after seeing so much, the stanze of Rafael, and all of that stuff, we were suddenly up to here with art. So, I said, "Let's go to Naples." And we got to Naples and we found out that we could get a ticket on the boat that went to Capri for, oh, I think it was twenty lire or

something, you know, a dollar or something. This little boat... We went over there and found a pensione and it was called the Hotel Eden Paradiso. They named it twice. (laughter) It was clear up from top of the island of Anacapri, up by Monte Solardi, the highest part. And it was like being in paradise for kids. We had our feet washed with lye soap and a scrub brush and then we helped to trample out the grapes of the 1930 harvest at Capri. And we'd see old Norman Douglas and Doctor, the guy that wrote the San Mechilian, Axel Munthe, and their little boyfriends around walking in the vineyards and so on. And we would go down some days and rent a funny old cotton bathing suit [that] came down to here like this and sit on this little beach, marina piccola and spend the day down there with a little gestini. Then we'd go to the Blua da Gratta [Blue Grotto]. (chuckles)

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 4, SIDE A

M: There we go.

L: Anyway, the money ran out. (laughter) And we had figured we had enough to get back to Le Havre. And we had a round-trip passage, third class again, on the Isle de France; it was making a return [trip]. This was in December.

M: You were there a long time.

L: We were only over there from August until, oh, about mid-December. And see, we had that wonderful thing during the whole October grape harvest, all of that in Capri. And we really felt like, you know, we'd go down with the old Tiberius's, the ruins of his palace down there, and look out over the Mediterranean and across was Vesuvius. At night we could just see a faint glimmer of the fire from Vesuvius. It never erupted or anything but there'd be a little smoke, like a kind of shadowy light. And so before we, well we went back to Rome and I said, "My god, we can't go north until we've seen Pompeii." So we got on a bus and rode down to Pompeii and spent a day down there and were somewhat disappointed. We thought Herculaneum was more interesting. And [we] came on back late that night, then went north on the train back to Paris. We didn't stop in any other places that we loved so much. But it was a trip that really ... it came at just the right time. See, we were children, really, Nancy and I, and we had never been anywhere or set foot on any kind of foreign soil.

And one of the things, I don't know how to explain it, but Jim Lea in Houston has a drawing I made on Capri of an old beggar woman with her hand out like this asking me for alms and I was very emotionally impressed by this old woman. It was up on the path that led to the top of

Monte Solaro, where there was a little shrine up there. And this old woman appeared out of nowhere and she had a stick that helped her walk, a crooked stick, and she held out her hand and mumbled something in Italian, which I did not understand. And I didn't pay her any ... it was, it frankly frightened me. I didn't, I couldn't, acknowledge her. I came back, I was by myself, and came back to the pensione and I told Nancy about it, "I don't know about that, but I'm going to make a drawing of it." And I made the drawing and it has the little background of the different kinds of pine trees that grew there on the island and this steep hillside. And many years later, when I gave the picture to Jim, I found it in a portfolio that had survived Santa Fe and everywhere and I gave it to Jim. And I had an idea what it was, what I had seen. And this probably is very sentimental and trashy thought, but it seemed to do something for me. I was this kid, an ignorant youth from a new world, encountering the past and the past was asking for something. So I wrote it on the back of this thing that Jim has.

We came back to Paris and guess what we found at the American Express? A check from Dad. (laughter) So we could go back second class instead of steerage, and there was something left over. And I asked the clerk at the Hotel Paris-New York how we could get to the flea market.



He said, "I'll take you. You can't speak French and I'll help you." He was a very nice young man. So the three of us went to the flea market in Clignancourt and there was exactly the kind of Arab/Moorish rifle - musket not rifle at all, something, it was an old flintlock - that looked like it was right out of one of Delacroix's pictures of the wars. And I could afford it. I forget exactly [what the price was]; it was very reasonable. And it was kind of dirty and had been thrown around some. And some of the...the whole barrel was wrapped with this beautiful brass wire, and it had pieces of ivory and some kind of a vermilion thing embedded in the stock and design. It was quite a nice piece. So I bought the darn thing and we got back to the hotel and the clerk helped me wrap it in Le Matin or some newspapers (chuckles) from Paris there. And we got on the boat/train and got up to Le Havre in time and got on the....We were only on the second deck now (chuckles); we were not the third deck and it was pretty much better.

And I carried this rifle, this gun back and we got back to Chicago and Dad said, "Well, we've got hear all about it." And he sent the money for us to come to El Paso. And I presented the gun to him, but I had had time to write a little thing I call "Memoir of a Gun." It was one of the things that my stepsister Bertha [Schaer] found in the old house on 1400 [Nevada] about two or three years ago. And it's a bound book;

I knew a bookbinder up on North Clark Street, and it's in my handwriting and it has a few little drawings of this rifle. It's telling about being in Delacroix's studio. (chuckles) And Dad, of course, he was delighted with it: he didn't have a gun of that kind. He had quite a gun collection. And when Dad died, why, of course, my brother Joe took the guns and that gun was over his fireplace up there on Montoya for awhile until just last year, when his son Joe took it to Austin and he has it very nicely [displayed].... But that was the souvenir we brought back to Dad from our trip to Europe. And it was, it fulfilled something that we needed right at that time. Norton had a lot of work when we got back, and I started right in to work. But one of the curious things of handling our...we had one big suitcase, Nancy and I did, and putting it overhead in these third class carriages where, the first Italian we learned was "Non sputare nella carrozza!" "Don't spit in the carriage!" (laughter) And everybody did! (laughter) Anyway, we got to - I don't know what I was going to say about, I got carried away with the "non sputare."

M: About the suitcase?

L: The suitcase. That was it. I got it down. I think we had to change trains in Marseilles. And I could feel it pop. I had a rupture, and I worked about a year in Chicago and John wrote Mother and Dad and said, "Yeah, I can't afford it." See, this

was 1931, when he said, "If you possibly can, I don't think Tom ought to work now until he gets this hernia fixed up." Well, that scared Mother and Dad very much and they, I don't know how they scrounged up the money, and Nancy and I went down there. And I was operated [on] by old P.H. Brown, the surgeon that did most of the work in El Paso in those days at Hotel Dieu. So in those days, when you had a hernia operation, you had to stay in bed a month afterwards. And you got weak and puny and didn't do any good. And that's when I was in bed there and that's when I would take those Casas Grandes bowls and pots in Dad's collection and make drawings and analyze these decorations that went around them. So I was, you know, occupied when I was having to stay in bed. Anyway, I went back to Chicago then in good shape and I didn't have to have another hernia operation until about five years ago (laughter).

M: So old P.H. Brown did well?

L: He did well and Joe Moats, you know, the physician here, he said, "I never saw such a twisted-up hernia operation in my life." And he said, "It worked." Anyway, that ought to be sufficient for our European thing until many years later when Sarah and I went under much better circumstances. In fact, we went first class (laughter) and stayed at the, well, stayed at the admiral's quarters in Malta, and then went on up to

Germany and stayed with the commander of the Berlin garrison by the name of Jimmy Polk (chuckles) [and his wife] Joey. We had a pretty good time and that was the trip [to] London, when we went over to the Victoria and Albert [Museum] and I discovered all of those oil sketches of John Constable, which have been quite an influence on, I think, my work for the last 15, 10 or 15 years. I've adored some of the things that Constable [did], not his great machines that he painted for the Royal Academy, but the little sketches, the studies, that he made for some of these big paintings and some of his studies of skies, which I think are absolutely remarkable, which he did directly from observation, as the clouds changed. I think they're remarkable and [it's] wonderful that a man could have eyes to not only see it but eyes to chronicle it. And then on the back he would write the velocity of the wind and the time right down to the minute, the time of day or evening. And, I don't know, it just, it was something that I knew I loved and hadn't known anybody to have ever done, you know. So Europe has meant a great deal to me. That was in 1931. I worked hard for Norton then until January of 1933 and that's when Nancy and I went to Santa Fe. Then in 1936 I came to El Paso and reestablished myself here with my friends. It was a strange year: Nancy died in April; my grandmother, who was living at our house - we called her Granny - Granny died in June; and my mother died in December of that year. All three of the women in the family died that year.

M: Nineteen thirty...?

L: Nineteen thirty-six. Joe and Margie were living up in Las Cruces. Joe was working for the [International] Boundary [and Water] Commission and they'd come down every weekend and sort of help us out. There was a nice Mexican woman named Pomposas, Pomposa Macias, who had been the, more than a maid, she [was a] washwoman, assistant cook and everything for my mother for years. She stayed on and took care of my little Dick in the house and Dick was, let's see, he was nine years old when Mother died, so he had a hard row to hoe. Dad tried to perform the functions of both mother and father and I think he did fairly well. I was living in the house then at that time.

M: Which house? Was that the...

L: On 1400 Nevada.

M: 1400 Nevada.

L: The government projects then came along to, for the murals, and kept me occupied as [did] the centennial celebration of Texas, also. [I] got to do a mural down there in the State of Texas Building, a Hall of Texas or whatever they call it down there on the fairgrounds in Dallas. And the mural in the

Washington, I think we discussed that, and several others.

M: But we didn't talk about that.

L: Hum?

M: We didn't talk about that.

L: Well, it was a national competition of painters all over and a lot of the painters had great reputations up in New York. And there were eight spaces and I suppose there were a hundred entries for the eight spaces and I got one of them. It was the first real recognition, I think, that I had ever received. And I later became good friends with, uh, his name was Ned. Gosh, I can't think; he was the friend of FDR's and he put him in charge of doing the art work for the new federal buildings and a thing they organized as the Section of Fine Arts, Treasury Department. And I did several murals for them.

M: How did that process work? Did you, you submitted your ideas from El Paso?

L: Yeah. They sent out a flyer notifying all painters that wished to compete in a competition for murals in the following spaces and it showed the spaces. And I did, I used a space that was on one of the upper floors, two panels in the

elevator hall, and just a little fragment of it they chose for me to enlarge and put on the ground floor in the Benjamin Franklin Post Office, they called this there on Pennsylvania Avenue; it was in this Postal Department Building. And you sent your work in by a certain deadline and then they had a committee, a jury, that judged them and that was it.

M: So, you'd develop your full idea from the drawings that they, or that they sent later on, the layout.

L: They set the architectural space and you designed in full color, you designed and in scale your intention for the thing, so that it was, you know, very comprehensive what you had to submit, something quite finished, in order to really get anything looked at. I think I worked as hard on that as anything I ever worked [on] in my life and it was sure nice when it...

M: Came through.

L: Came through. Then, of course, I was doing illustrations for Frank Dobie. Dad had brought Frank Dobie, I think I mentioned that before.

M: Very briefly.

L: To my studio. And I began to do illustrations and the illustrations I did for Dobie's book. I had done some illustrations for the New Mexico Magazine earlier. The illustrations that I did for Dobie he got around the country, and the art editor at Saturday Evening Post let me do some. I did one story by Stephen Vincent Benet and another one from H.L. Davis, and I think another one from [Ernest] Haycox or somebody like that. So I was not only a muralist but I was doing illustrations and took that trip with Frank to do the research for The Longhorns and then along came World War [II], that's when I got to see another part of the world (chuckles) another kind of humanity. I had written, you know, above the doorway that cuts in the middle of the mural in the Federal Building here, "Oh, Pass of the North, now the old giants are gone, we little men live where heroes once walked the untrammelled earth." It wasn't but five years and I was seeing the heroes walking the trammelled earth and real heroes, and they weren't so little either.

M: Well, when you did your commission in Washington then, was that before you met Sarah?

L: Yeah. Uh huh.

M: Did you travel there to do it?



L: No. I did it here on canvas and then went up there to install it.

M: Can you tell me about that, about working out at where you worked on it here, where your studio was? What the images [were].

L: Oh yeah. It was, uh, I thought I mentioned that. The studio was, when you weren't born yet, I guess, listen to that [bird singing outside the window]. Norton Brothers and the Guarantee Shoe Company had stores adjoining each other on the first block of Texas Street. And it was the Hills Building was the name of it. It was a two-story kind of office building and it had no elevator; you had to get up on the second floor by stairs. And it was called the Hills Building, H I L L, and it, I remember, it was owned by the Coles brothers, Billy Coles's Dad, but, Billy was my friend in high school and his daddy and his uncle were the ones that let this artist have this studio at, I think, a very modest rate. It had been a bookie's joint. And it had fine, big windows northside and drapes so that you could, the bookie wanted to hide that, but I wanted to control the light and it worked out beautifully. And I had a scaffold, a kind that I had learned from Norton, I had it built. It was on wheels and I could work up, the ceilings were high, I could work up to about eleven feet with a canvas. So that it was a very, very

satisfactory place to work. I had a tape like that and that table there was, also, had been, uh, John Norton's easel. And that was about it. And I did the murals for the State of Texas of Building in Dallas there on canvas and installed those. And I did The Nesters that was the one in Washington at the Post Office Department.

And then I did all the full-size studies in charcoal for the Pass of the North mural. I went out, for instance, to get, I went to Hollywood to get a morion and cuirass and the doublet and hose and all of that that the Spaniards wore at that time. [I] found a guy who had been in the rodeo at Roswell that had a beard trimmed nicely and I got him to pose for me. Bill Waterhouse took photographs. We went out in the desert and...to see how wearing this metal on your head and on your chest would work. It was terribly hot. I don't think the Spaniards really used it unless they had to (chuckles), you know, they didn't ride around in that stuff. It was so hot that off of the point of the beard of this very nice young man the sweat dripped and it hit the cuirass and went "sst!" just like your finger on a hot iron. (laughter) So we had quite a time. I remember the old prospector's pants were my grandfather's buckskin pants that he used when he was a surveyor up in northern Minnesota back in the 1870s and Dad had still kept them, the old suspenders and everything. And he used my brand that my cousin Mae had given him up at the I-Bar-X Ranch on the horse.

And Doctor Stovall, he gave me photographs, that was Dad's great hunting pal and doctor, [who] lived up at Mimbres Hot Springs, he gave me all those Fly photographs taken by a man named [C.X.] Fly of the Apaches and the capture of Geronimo and all of that. And I had that for first hand information. Doc Stovall had been present at one of these terrible, they had ridden out to see what happened when the Apaches had burned a wagon and killed the oxen and murdered the people and mutilated them and so on. So he was rather strong against the Indians. I think of him often when I think of all these people who make the Indians the heroes. There were two sides to that question. Anyway, then I used a buckskin jacket that I brought back from Hollywood for that, the plainsman, one of the figures. And I got a charro from Juárez to pose for the Mexican. And I got, I went out to Saint Anthony's, it was then Saint Anthony's Seminary, it was the old [James G.] McNary home, out there in Austin Terrace, and asked the main padre out there if I could have one of the men pose for me to be the Franciscan friar in the mural. And they were very cooperative and very, very nice. So I had a very serious, aesthetic-looking man pose in the cowl and the whole thing with his rope and his rosary and so on. So I tried to make it as authentic as I possibly could and had great, great pleasure in doing that.

That was a competition that was held for painters, I believe, in eight states, all the states adjoining around

Texas: Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico, Arizona, I don't recall that California was in it, but anyway ...anyway, as I recall it, it was for eight states. And I was tickled to death to get that one because I didn't have to leave town or anything. I painted that, I was painting it, I believe I mentioned that previously, I was painting it in the courthouse after I had made all these full-size studies when I met Sarah. So that's when she came into the picture.

M: Let me ask you... I want to talk about Sarah, but the space in Washington, you never actually saw the building, then, did you, you didn't travel there to see the building?

L: Oh, sure. Oh, no, not...yes I did. They asked me to come up. And they were very nice. There was a guy named Ed [Ned], oh, who was kind of a, the assistant in charge of the whole thing. I can't think of Ned's name. Anyway, they asked me to come up and see the space because it was a different thing entirely from what they had shown me. They paid my way. And they paid a decent price for, per foot, per square foot, was the way the Treasury Department paid you. And it wasn't bad, I've forgotten exactly what it was, but for this mural down here in the courthouse I think it was just a little under four thousand dollars, well, gosh darn, that's how I got married. (chuckles)

Went up to Monticello and that's how I got to come back

and rent an apartment here on North Stanton Street and do illustrations and everything. It really got me started, that one mural. I think I'm right, I think it was something like thirty-seven hundred or something like that. But then the whole, I got a Rosenwald Fellowship. Frank Dobie wrote a very good letter and I was going to do a, did you ever see that notebook that I was doing in preparation for the, turn it off and then I'll bring it.

M: Beautiful.

L: The war, of course, like it did millions, really disrupted what I was thinking about doing with this fellowship. And I never, ever regretted that I did exactly what I did. I think, perhaps, that the war was certainly the most vivid and maybe one of the most meaningful things that I did with myself in my life because I really tried to be a voice for a lot of people. And I knew they were with me and I was with them. That's the kind of thing that few artists ever feel. And I think it was a point of some egoism and pride that I did go where people were getting shot at. I didn't stay in a headquarters or sit on my butt in a battleship and make up like what I was seeing, but I went out and took a look at it.

M: I hope to spend the whole time next time talking about that.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 4, SIDE B

M: Your second date (laughter). I want to hear you tell us about when, how Sarah came here and how you met.

L: Yeah. Well, is it [the tape recorder] going?

M: It's going now. It's ready.

L: Sarah had a dear friend, a schoolmate, and playmate all of the years of her childhood up in Monticello, Illinois. Her name was Katherine Haubacker [?] and Katherine went to the University of Arizona for college and met a schoolmate and friend of mine named Percy Pogson. And after a suitable courtship, I think after they both finished school, why, they were married and they were married, of course, up in Monticello at Katherine's home. And when they came back, Percy worked for his father's Pogson Peloubet [and Co.], which were accountants, CPAs who did mostly mining books. They were Phelps Dodge and AS&R and God knows what all. They'd go down to mines in Mexico and the mine over in Sonora and... So Percy was stationed here, so was his father, I became very good friends, oh, dear friends of his father. His mother had died, Percy's mother had died, and old P.W. had married a gal much

younger than he, she's still living, Agnes Pogson.

Anyway, Sarah was sort of, she was working as a clerk in the farm and loan thing for the government in Piatt County. Monticello was the county seat of Piatt County. And Katherine thought that Sarah ought to get out and see some other places. Sarah had gone to Monticello Seminary near Godfrey, Illinois, where her mother and her grandmother had all been to school there. It was two years of university. Then she went to the University of Illinois and quit when she married a guy, that's all of...we don't need to go in, much into that, and divorced him. I met her after, of course, after she had a divorce and had a child. And Katherine invited her down to spend a week or so, just on vacation. And I was sort of floating around, a widower at the time, and...

M: How long had Nancy been dead then?

L: She had been dead about fifteen months when I met Sarah. And Sarah came down and the first evening she was here in El Paso, Katherine had a dinner and invited Percy's dad and his wife and, of course, Sarah was there, and invited me to be kind of, to make six, you know. (chuckles) And it was, I looked at her, I knew damn well I was all set. The first time I saw her I says, "Well, the main thing in life for me." So when I went to leave the Pogsons' house after dinner, far too short a time to sit in the living room and look at Sarah, (chuckles)

I asked her if she would have dinner with me the next night. And, you know how girls are, she was sorry that she had other engagements. But I said, "Well, would you like to see what I'm doing? It's down in the courthouse. I'm a painter and a muralist." "Oh, I certainly would." And so, I don't know exactly how it turned out.

I think it was...the next night I didn't see her, then the next night we had dinner together at the old, Silvero González had a place on this side called La Posta. And we had dinner there and then I took her down to the courthouse. I had a Nash coupe, a grey coupe, and parked the thing down there in front of the courthouse and took her in. I said, "Well, you have to get up on the scaffolding to see it." Well, I turned on the lights, a very hot light, 500 watts. I had been working there every night, so that I could get some work done. There were people who'd like to talk to you when you're upon on the scaffolding and make sort of silly remarks, and so it was much easier just to work. I'd work sometimes till three and four in the morning and after the thing was closed, the courthouse was closed, and practically everyone had gone by six o'clock.

And, anyway, Sarah got up there in the heat and there was very ... I think she was very interested, she'd never seen anything like this before. And I showed her how I painted and I was showing off, you know, like I'm crazy. Then all of a sudden she felt bad and she said, "I'm so warm. I think I'm



going to faint." (chuckles) So she fainted and I sat her down on this old painting, scaffolding, and this is not a scaffolding with two ladders. This is a great big thing that went clear to the ceiling and you could raise the platform on pulleys up and down. She sat there and I said, "Well, I'll go and get you a drink of water." When she came to, you know, she wasn't unconscious but a very few moments. And she said, "Oh, I'd like to get down." And so I very handsomely helped her down the ladder. And there wasn't any place for her to sit down, so she sat down on the, as I recall it, there was a brace at the bottom of my scaffolding, but the rollers were like this.

She sat on that scaffolding and I ran and got the janitor and he brought some water and a towel, a wet towel. And she was, by the time that had happened, why, she was embarrassed but all right. So I said, "Well, let's knock this off. I'm sorry it happened." I apologized and everything. And I said, "Let's go for a little ride in the car and get some fresh air and you'll be all right." That was great for her. And I remember we drove up to McKelligon's Canyon and I asked her if she'd marry me. (laughter)

M: Second night you'd met her, you'd been with her?

L: And she allowed as how she'd like that, but, you know, she had parents and things and... So I said, "Well, let's, let's

discuss it tomorrow night." So we went down to Zaragosa [Mexico]. It was on the other side of the bridge, that little old wooden bridge down below Ysleta. There was a nice nightclub down there in those days, I forget what it was called. We had a dinner and everything and on the way back, I remember, the Pogsons lived up on the Robinson Boulevard. I said, "Will you please?" She said, "Well, yes. I want to, but I think before we do anything we ought to know each other a little longer and also I want you to," she stated it nicely, "I want you to meet my father and my mother."

And so I finished the mural. That was in, I think I finished the mural about the sixth of July. And I went to Monticello about the tenth and drove in the car and the Dightons turned out to be absolutely wonderful. And Sarah's mother had heard I had lost my mother and Sarah's mother was just like I was already the family; they were wonderful. So we got married and came back to El Paso.

Let's see, we were married in July and we went up off a honeymoon. We went up to Chicago and we stayed at the Palmer House. And the night we were married, or after we were married, we went to the nightclub there in the Palmer House and the maitre d' gave us a table. And we ordered, I think we ordered scotch and soda or something like that. And he came over and said, "We don't serve minors." (chuckles) I was 29 years old and Sarah was 22. So we were kids. (laughter) And we spent our honeymoon with the Fergus Meades. It was great.

And [we] came back to El Paso and stayed with Dad for, oh, just, less than a week and then hunted around and we found an apartment up there at the, right at the top of the hill, as they're still there, those double apartments on [1715 North] Stanton Street, has a kind of a horseshoe shape facing Stanton Street.

M: What's the cross street?

L: It must be Schuster now. No, not Schuster, it's up very close to the top.

M: Rim, like Rim [Road] ?

L: Somewhere.

M: Brown brick? Kind of a brown brick?

L: No, it's kind of greyish. Oh, I should remember the number of it. Would it be eleven something? I don't remember...North Stanton. Anyway, we walked all over that whole Kern Place when we were first married in the evening when I'd get through work. We'd walk and the fall came on. That was when [we] first began to get the things about Hitler. And I remember in that apartment, why, we'd turn on The March of Time. It was a radio program and they would have the footsteps of the

Wehrmacht and Hitler yelling and hollering "Sieg heil!" and all of that stuff on the radio.

And while I was there, I got another commission. I had lost the competition for the St. Louis murals and the St. Louis Post Office and as a sort of a booby prize, why, my friends up at the section of Fine Arts gave me a commission to do a mural in the Post Office and in a sheer accident, Pleasant Hill, Missouri, which is about ten miles from Lee's Summit, which my great-grandfather had established and where he was killed by Kansas soldiers. And so it was just great. I knew exactly, you know, I had heard all the stories from Dad and everything. So I did this story instead of just the way Bingham painted it, where he had the Union soldiers ordering everybody else out, it was Order No. 16 or something like that out of Jackson County. Why, I painted After the War [Back Home, April 1865], about four figures: the old grandmother; the woman with the pregnant, or, no, with holding the child; and the vet[eran]; and the old grandpa; and the horse and the wagon; and the charred chimney that was all that was left of their house there in Jackson County. And we, Sarah and I, went back. This was in the summer of, I guess, [19]39, that was the year after we were married. We went back and installed the things. Sarah helped me. The postmaster was a heck of a nice guy and he had sent for the editor of The Pleasantview Times or something. And he helped us get a scaffold and two ladders and an extension board and Sarah and

I got up there and put the mural in, installed the mural. I had brought along in the car not only the mural rolled up but Venice turpentine, spar varnish and white lead, and that was our adhesive mixture, which John Norton had taught me. And it was very good.

And we did that and then we went over and spent the summer. It was very well received. And twenty-five years later I got a Pleasantview Times and they had had a twenty-fifth anniversary issue with my picture, with the mural in the center of the first page as a kind of memorial thing. See, those people really felt that Civil War much more than the people that had no contact with the thing.

M: Is it still there?

L: The mural is still there and I guess it's in good shape. I think it must be because I painted, well, I painted it in the living room of the [Highland Court] apartment, owned and operated by Miss Ambrose and her friend, Miss somebody. And I painted it...I built this big panel with beaverboard and one-by-four planks and installed it in front of the sofa in the living room as the only room big enough for it. And I told Miss Ambrose that I was going to do that, and that I would be very, very careful about getting paint on the carpet or anything. So we put down some old, I think, gunnysacks and stuff. And when Sarah and I, we'd go out almost every night.

Why, we'd come home and we'd see that Miss Ambrose had come to check us to see (chuckles) if we were doing any damage to their living room. Well, we didn't.

We parted very happily when we left with the mural to go to Monticello, why, uh, to Pleasant Hill [sic], why, we paid her off and never saw her again. She was a nice woman, old maid. I don't know, that summer that I spent working on the designs for the St. Louis murals were, that was a wonderful summer of quietness. They gave me a bedroom in Sarah's grandmother's house to make a studio and it had windows at the front. It was one of these big, old, two-story, typical Middle Western houses. It was brick rather than frame. And right next was the garden patch for the kitchen garden that Sarah's dad had kept and his father-in-law had had it next to his house. And when his father-in-law died, why, Sarah's dad kept that going as the source for table vegetables. Oh, they had berries and strawberries and all kinds of things in this garden. And on past that, why, there was a house and then there was a cornfield. And I could look out and you could almost hear the corn growing in this quietness in the shade of this great big elm tree and everything, so different from the Southwest and the open space and the lack of...this was all a green world. So it was another, quite different experience for me that whole summer we were up there and I lost that competition, too, and I'm damn glad. I wouldn't have been able to do the war stuff, if I'd have won it.

So we came back and I got the word that I had lost it and we came back through Houston, and the previous winter, I had painted a portrait of Sarah. That's the one that's down in the museum now, holding a book. And I painted that, I think, in, that was in Miss Ambrose's apartment. The back, it had kind of a sleeping porch, good light back there and I did quite a bit of work. I did Ellex Stevens' portrait there, too. Ellex was my great buddy in those days and he and [Delphin] Tuffy von Briesen, who was Dr. Von Briesenn, were always at the apartment, you know, they sort of taught Sarah how to cook and everything else. (laughter). We had a wonderful time, the four of us. It was a great place, a great time.

And all the time, why, there was this, I think that's why I put the...I got a certain feeling into this painting. I called it [Back Home] April 1865; it was, you know, April 9th, 1865, was the end of the Civil War and this was that same month, the return. I got some very strong feeling out of thinking of the Europeans. This was at the time when Hitler had gone into Poland and, you know, it was, it was soon to go into France.

So I was then mostly concerned with, when we came back we didn't have a place to stay. We found an apartment, a one-room apartment, temporarily and looked for a place to stay. I had gotten some money from the Saturday Evening Post illustrations and for a painting I did for Little, Brown &

Company called Haycox Country and they used it as a poster. I have one, sometime I'll show it to you. Have you ever seen one?

M: No, I don't think so.

L: Of a cowboy sitting up on high ground on a horse. And we took this apartment and then started looking for a little house, and we found a house out on Raynolds Boulevard that was just what we were looking for. Only it didn't have any studio, of course.

M: Is it still there?

L: And so I went in to debt with, uh, one of those government loans, mortgage on the house, and built that wonderful studio in the backyard. I think the studio cost me... I remember there was a contractor named Mr. Phillips and I think that studio, it's still standing and looks pretty...and the whole north side is all one big glass. It's really nifty.

M: What's the address on Raynolds?

L: Fifteen-twenty Raynolds Boulevard.

M: I'm going to go drive by.



L: Well, it's still maintained very nicely. It's a little house and the only thing we can see that's any different is that they've built a sort of a thing in the driveway for more than one automobile, you know, a little kind of a canopy. And you can't see the studio very well except just the west wall, which is the short side. The studio was 50 feet long, 25 feet wide and I think it was 14'6" high, so we had a real ceiling. And I did the Stampede mural, which I'm going to see tomorrow. (chuckles)

M: In Odessa?

L: In Odessa there. [Post Office] And, what other one? The one for Seymour, Texas, of the Comanches I did there before the...what else? I had already done the... No! That was in 1940, that's when I did, also, the longhorn illustrations for Frank Dobie's book.

Frank and I took that wonderful trip down all through the brush country and camped out, just moved along where these ranches that had a few examples of longhorns...you know and since then they've sort of made the longhorns quite a little cattle business thing for lean meat. (chuckles) But, it won't work. All they do is sell cattle to each other, you know, just like this Charolais and all of those different breeds that were imported, why, they all were terribly enthusiastic and get great prices because they're selling them

to each other. Then they all go broke (laughter) and get rid of them. Bob Kleberg had the greatest disdain for that stuff. I don't tell Charles or Shirley that because Mary Lee was a heavy investor in longhorns. (chuckles)

M: How long were you gone on that trip with Dobie?

L: About, I guess, three weeks. I went on a train to San Antonio and old Frank met me there in his - I can't remember the make of the car; it was a pretty good car like a maybe a Buick or something. And he had two bedrolls, regular old sugans, not one of these things that the kids carry around now, and, you know, it had a quilt in it and a tarp and two blankets. And the quilt was the mattress. And we had a cooking pot, a dutch oven for making biscuits - old Frank was pretty good at making biscuits - and we had a couple of watermelons for dessert in the car. And we just started out from San Antonio and went down into the brush. Our first host was [J.] Evetts Haley - this was before Evetts and Frank came apart - on a wonderful old ranch down there on the river, I forget the name of it. We were down there two or three days and sleeping out in the front yard, you know, under the stars. It was lovely.

Then we went on south to the Tom East ranch, that was in the brush country. Tom East was a son-in-law of Mrs. Henrietta King. He married Alice King, Tom East did. And he was a great guy, a great friend of Frank Dobie's. He had a

ranch called the Santonio del Viejo, San Antonio Viejo, I guess there was no "del" in it. And he had been sort of financed or mortgaged by his mother-in-law, Mrs. King, and he had not only raised cattle, but he had raised the only real Spanish-blooded horses in that, maybe in the US, I don't know, horses that came originally from Randado, you know, that ranch I wrote about after being there with Frank and Tom East. These horses were all duns and grullos in color.

And there was still some wild stuff about, you know, wild steers and bulls in the brush. And we stayed around with the Easts long enough to where they had one caught and tied up. And I was able to make a very nice drawing of the real thing. That's, I think, not a chapter head, it's a full page in The Longhorns, where they're trying to get rid of the old stock that was wild and made other cattle wild in this almost impenetrable brush down there in Jim Hogg County.

But then we went over to the King Ranch, only we were not received there except just at the, you know, where everybody goes, has a free cup of coffee. And I didn't know any more about the ranch except that we went there in order to see some examples of longhorns that the Klebergs had kept. We did not see them there. Then we went on up through Fort Worth to old Amon Carter's place, where he had a few longhorns. And then on up to, where we really saw what was left of the longhorns was at Cash, Oklahoma, at the Ouachita Wildlife Refuge. They had a big herd of buffalo and a big herd of

longhorn cattle. And it was just like living in the old days. Frank and I camped out there for several days and just, oh, it was wonderful to go out and just sit and watch the cattle graze and the light on their big horns and how they moved and when they moved and what it took to scare them. And then over on the other side of this big hill here was this shaggy dark, dark mass of buffalo, you know, grazing in there. It was like being somewhere a hundred years before, the quiet and everything. And Frank and I, we ran out of food. We didn't have anything but water and two quarts of whiskey and a watermelon. (laughter)

M: What kind of condition were you in?

L: We were in great condition. Oh, Dobie was such a wonderful guy in those days. Let's see. And you know, I didn't ever know the reason that...uh, I did know that the Klebergs were very much against Frank. I'm not sure what the origin of the trouble was, except for Frank's great liberal politics. But I remember that I read somewhere where in an interview old Dick Kleberg, that was Bob's older brother, Dick's father, had said, had referred to Dobie as, uh, "that academic clown acting like a cowboy." (chuckles) And that really fixed him up. So, that's why I got the job. (chuckles)

M: But he, Dobie, then, was your first introduction to the King

Ranch, then, through him...?

L: Well, I didn't meet any of the Klebergs.

M: You didn't meet them but you saw the ranch.

L: We just went into the headquarters there at the Santa Gertrudis headquarters and saw the old stables, but we didn't get out into any of the pastures at all. That was later, much later. But that was a wonderful...

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 5, SIDE A

This is an interview of Tom Lea by Adair Margo in El Paso, Texas, on May 29, 1993.

M: Last session we were talking about your time in El Paso before the war and after you married Sarah. So, I'm just going to turn it over to you and if you remember anything else about, you know, that period of time, then I'd like to get into your war, your war experience.

L: Well, the first intimation I had that I might be involved with something like that was while I was still planning Rosenwald

Fellowship year. I wrote a notebook and I had my schedule pretty well made out and I wanted to pursue it as something that was very close and dear to me, when I got this unexpected telegram from the staff of Life magazine. It had no actual name, it said, "the staff," wanted to know if I would do a painting of a trooper out here at Fort Bliss. They had two of their writers and a photographer out there. And Dan Longwell, the managing editor, I found out later, had seen some of my work in Frank Dobie's Longhorns and a mural that was in Washington. So he said, "Well let's try him on a drawing to go along in this story of the First Cavalry Division." And that was just great for me. I knew my dad was a great friend of General [Innis P.] Swift. I was a good friend of Roy Lassetter, his aide. So I did that for Life, got it in quickly, on time before they were even through out there, the writers and the photographers. And it was never printed, but it must have had some good effect because about a month later I got another wire, asking me if I would go to San Antonio and do young soldiers at Fort Sam [Houston] and young student pilots at Randolph Field. And I went down there and did four portraits, and I did one of an old master sergeant that they liked so well that they got Joe Kastner, who was one of their best writers, to do a whole piece about him and put my portrait full page in Life, my portrait of this old sergeant. So I felt very good about that and they paid me a little money and it was summertime by that time.

So Sarah and I and Jim and my old pal, Ellex Stevens and his girlfriend, we all got in Ellex's car and went to the Grand Canyon. And we were in Flagstaff when I got a telephone call from my dad. In those days, you know, telephone calls were really something (chuckles) and he said, "Son, a telegram has come for you, which I think you ought to answer. It's from San Antonio and the man says that he wants to get your background in case he wants a security background for you, in case you would like to go to North Atlantic Fleet for Life magazine." (chuckles) At Flagstaff, Arizona, this was a kind of an exotic thing, but wonderful, you know. So I got a telegram off to Dad and got back.

And that was how I made arrangements and I went up to Washington and met all these people and got very happy to know them. Some of them were really great and interesting people, the kind of people I had never met before there on the staff. And Dan Longwell, himself, took me down to Washington and introduced me to Admiral Hepburn, I can't remember his initials, but he was the Chief PRO [Public Relations Officer] for the whole damn [U.S.] Navy. And Admiral Hepburn, I think, was amused because I was such a callow youth, you know. And I had had this one trip to Europe in steerage and second class and that was the extent of my sea knowledge. But he said, "That's fine, Mr. Longwell, we'll tend to this." Well, it was quite a while.

I stayed in Washington and then I stayed in New York and

then they sent me up to Boston. I stayed there until finally I got a letter and it was forwarded through Dan Longwell to me there in Boston and it was from Ernest J. King, who was at that time the admiral of the Atlantic fleet, the commanding officer of the Atlantic fleet, and saying that I would have free gangway. And the ships in the Atlantic at that time, of course, I didn't know anything at all where I was going or the ships or anything. But there were 26 U.S. destroyers helping deliver the goods to Britain in the terrible time when the German wolf-packs - they were submarines - were just playing hell with all the shipping in the Atlantic.

And I went up to Newport which at that time was a base of Admiral King and he had - I don't know the name of the ship so well and I can't remember it - anyway, he actually sent his barge in for me and had me piped aboard. And I had never been, I didn't know which end of the ship was the starboard or the larboard or the hospipe or anything else. And the boatswains piped me and then the marines aboard gave me a "Present arms!" and I didn't know how to salute the fantail or (chuckles) nothing. But Admiral King was very nice and he got me a...so a few days later I left on a little converted yacht, which was, at that time, it was classed as a gunboat, but it had nothing but depth charges, antisubmarine stuff. And it was equipped with sonar but not with radar; he hadn't gotten any radar from England yet. Well, all this stuff was highly secret and everything and so on.



I made this, my first voyage was in the rough weather and I think it was in October out to Argentina. It's all in this A Picture Gallery about my time there and I was, I came in one night from a trip up to what they call M-O-M-P, which is where we met the British destroyers off the coast of Greenland. And they took over the convoy duty and we came back to get another convoy and so on. And we were on our way back to Boston, we put in at Argentina and it was just at sunset, and the executive officer and myself went in to the beach in a little lighter...to there was one place that had any cheer in it on the beach. The snowy, oh, place and it was a little quonset hut with a bar rigged for the officers. So we were walking towards it and a fellow came out looking kind of...and he said, "Hey, Eddie!" to the man I was with, he says, "Have you heard?" And my friend said, "No." He said, "The Japs have hit Pearl Harbor." And so my friend said, "Um, well, what's the rest of the joke?" He says, "That's it." (chuckles) He said, "Well, you'd better come back with us and have a drink." He said, "I've already had one and I'm going out to the Prairie," that was the name of the support ship, "and see what they say on the radio." And, sure enough, that was how I found out about Pearl Harbor there and then we went in and had several drinks against the Japs, and nobody believed it, you know. These guys [were saying], "Well, what's this? What's the rest of the joke?"

And the next morning, why, goddamn, the ships had all

gone. The Wasp was in there before and the next morning it was gone. I was doing a portrait of Admiral Bristol and I went in and instead of his map there on the bulkhead that he had of all the destroyers and their positions up to MOMP and Greenland and so on, hum, all gone. And the admiral had a great big map of the world and they weren't saying a thing. The Navy weren't saying a thing. The only thing that we found out at all was using the commercial radio wavelengths in the wardroom of the old Prairie. And, you know, the whole world was different. So I had a wild ride from Argentia in an old four-pipe destroyer down to Boston and we hit a great storm and it knocked us around very badly. There was a big list to port and one of the bulkheads caved in and how a wave took the whole forward gun platform clear off the ship. And we were wounded coming in. And, of course, then the Navy had heavy security before Pearl Harbor, but (chuckles) when Pearl Harbor hit, boy, you were a captive as far as any civilian in the.... But they let me through the gate there in Boston.

And I went on down and reported to Dan Longwell in Life and he took me down, then, to Hepburn and the censors. They hadn't had anybody that had seen any of this stuff. I didn't see the sinking of the Reuben James or the torpedoing of that other destroyer, whose name I can't remember. Anyway, I had done quite a number of sketches of the way they were trying to fight the submarines and I got all the stuff, or the stuff that I needed, passed from the censor. Then I came home to El

Paso and did my first big story for Life, which they printed the whole...it was several pages in color and, you know, enough to make you feel awful good. (chuckles) So that's how, that's how I got started.

Then when I took those paintings back to New York, why, they said, "Well, would you like to be on the staff and just work for us." And I said, "Hell, yes." Because, I thought, you see, my brother had joined the Army and three of my best friends here in El Paso had all joined up. And I thought, "Hell, I'm seeing a lot more than they can see." (chuckles) So I went to the draft board and told them what I was going to do and they gave me an exemption for as long as I was a war correspondent in foreign theatres. Anyway, that's how I got started in the business of going around, trying to record what I saw.

M: You would take sketchbooks and just sketch what you saw?

L: And I had...oh shucks, this was the exact cigar box I had with all my materials.

M: With all your materials.

L: And I took three blocks of arts paper and, well, here for instance is one of them. This is the one that was on the Hornet. Now a lot of them have been torn out, but that's the

kind of thing I did.

M: And then you kept a notebook with all your... . [Noticing evidence] Yeah: "Passed by Naval Censor." So they went through everything.

L: Oh, God! I got arrested in Pearl Harbor. I wouldn't let the customs officer see... See, I was a civilian and it was perfectly all right with the Army and the Navy, but the customs officer wanted to see what I was smuggling, you know. And at the provost's office I said, "Would you please call..." I tell all about it in the [Picture Gallery.] It was very dramatic. I thought it was dramatic the way I learned that the Hornet had been sunk. This is the kind of thing I did aboard.

M: Tell me about, you know, your feelings and everything during the war. In your past interview you talked about how you really, you saw real heroes during the war.

L: I don't think he's in here. I think, yeah, Life got that drawing. But Gus Widhelm, I think was, he had two Navy Crosses and he was a skipper of a Bombing Eight in SBDs aboard. And here, here's another one. That was [A.C.] Suhler Emerson. He was a fighter pilot. These guys risked their lives every day, you know, and when they could find the enemy,

God, they were, they were really rabid, you know, (chuckles) as the bullfighters say. Anyway, I came back from the Pacific with all this information about the death of the Wasp and the death of the Hornet. And the Life people, you see, I couldn't tell them anything because of the naval security. And they thought I had been aboard the Hornet when it was sunk. And the March of Time and everybody else was trying to dig at me to get some little thing that somehow or other those people would always hear what was confidential. And I didn't say anything at all and they got pretty sore at me, but it made me some points with the Navy, you know? (chuckles)

But, anyway, I decided I didn't want to go back to the Pacific because there were so many things that were happening by that time in North Africa. The North African campaign was going on, and we were going to go into the southern part of Europe and all of that and Sicily and up through Italy. So I got an accreditation through my old friend, C. R. Smith, who had become a major general in the Air Force. You know he was the founder of American Airlines and my first patron. He bought some of my Western stuff very early. And he wrote me a wonderful ticket anywhere I wanted to go in the world, I guess, because anywhere the ATC flew, why, I was to be received as a correspondent for Life magazine and given every courtesy. (chuckles) This was marvelous. They had, about a year and a half later they took that free ticket away from me and said it no longer belonged to me and "to hell with you!"

Anyway, I went, that was a real trip.

M: How did you meet C. R. Smith?

L: Hum?

M: How did you meet C. R. Smith?

L: He wrote me. He said he had seen the drawings I had made in Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver and in The Longhorns and he wanted some of my work. (chuckles) He wrote me from, I think he was still in Chicago at that time. You know, Chicago was kind of the American Airlines there when they moved from Texas they went to Chicago before they got to New York. And we got a correspondence about it. I had never met him then until the war. But he had bought my pictures and paid for them and so on. (chuckles) He was a wonderful man.

M: And he was a general during the war.

L: Yeah. They made him a general because he knew so much about the handling of freight and passenger stuff and that's what the ATC was, Allied Transport Command. And it was to haul people and supplies all over the world where there was war. And I started in an ATC....Oh, this isn't...I don't know whether to take up the time on this thing,

M: Go ahead.

L: But I stayed in Georgetown. C. R. Smith had a big house and he would invite people in his command that had received commissions from civilian life to come and stay over there in that big house whenever they happened to be passing through Washington on orders. And one of these guys, who later became a dear friend of mine, named Rex Smith - he was a bullfighter, an aficionado of the bulls and so on - but one night we all got pretty tight there at C. R.'s house, including C. R. And Rex Smith said, "Hey, C. R., what about all those beautiful sculptures you have of Frederick Remington and Charlie Russell?" And C.R. said, "Yeah, I got them." He said, "Well, where are they?" He says, "They're out there in the rafters of my garage in safekeeping." (chuckles) He said, "Well, let's go get them." We were all tight and we got some ladders and we got up and we put them all out in the driveway. And there must have been fifteen bronzes. A bunch of drunks standing around, yeah. (laughter) So it was great times during the war. Those later C. R. gave to the University of Texas [at Austin] and I don't know what all. But he was very interested in getting a pictorial record of what the ATC did.

Of course, that was one of the reasons he wrote the nice ticket for me, the orders that took me everywhere. So I went starting out in Goose Bay, Labrador, and up to Baffin Island to Greenland across to Iceland down to the

bad weather into the Isle of Louis and the Hebrides and to London. And I passed out on one of the trains when we were going out to see somebody in a little town near London. And I passed out and I came to and some stranger was fanning my face and so I got off and they put me in a taxi. I told them I was with Time-Life and it was at 8 Audley Street where the office of Time and Life was. It was quite an establishment because they had a big deal going in the European Theatre. And they said, "Well, the only thing for you to do is to go and rest up." Now that, what was the name, Penn? Penn was the name of this little town. They had a country house out there rented and I went out there a couple of days and I felt like hell. So they sent me back in to London and made an appointment. I'll never forget his name, it was Sir Cedric Shaw, I believe. And he was, oh God, the King's own heart man or something. And Harley Street you read about, where all the physicians in London were. Well, I went there in the morning and I was in his offices and his lab and everything all day into the evening. He couldn't find anything wrong with me. It was, I was hyperventilating. I guess it was from nervousness or something. And he said, "You're fine. Just take it easy for a little while."

So I went back out to Penn and then went in to get started on my assignment and that led me from London down to



Morocco, to Marrakech, Morocco. And we were on this flight on the way down to Morocco from London and an electrical storm - and it's the only time I ever had seen St. Elmo's fire on the propellers. We were really all electrified. (chuckles) And there weren't any seats. I was in a freight, DC-3, and you know, I'm trying to think, yeah, it was a DC-3. There were three passengers and all this gear; there were a couple of aircraft engines and stuff like that. And we had to sit on this cold deck and we had no oxygen. And, of course, we couldn't fly in those DC-3s; they weren't pressurized or anything. And it was kind of a wobbly trip. And it was the night that Leslie Howard, I think it was, was killed flying to Portugal, same storm we were in. Now we got down to Marrakech and guess who was there? Otis Coles. (chuckles) But we never saw each other. I went and then I hooked a ride. I had to thumb a ride, actually I was just thumbing rides. I hooked a ride to Algiers because that was Allied headquarters in Africa. And they didn't know I was coming or anything. I finally got a billet in the press, photographers' villa they called it. And it was taken over from some rich Frenchman there overlooking the bay there in Algiers, a beautiful place, but it had fleas and (chuckles) we were all pretty busy with fleas there. And we had a, what we called an Arab; he had a red fez on. And he would go out and get us food in the black market. And then we had a cook. There were about fifteen photographers and one artist in this thing. And we had lots

of fun.

M: So you did hook up together with other people. You weren't alone all the time.

L: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And every day I'd go to get my orders to get on and get to the war. You see, the war had moved over to Tunis and then north to Sicily. Well, I didn't have any priorities and I'd go over there every day and every day I'd draw a blank with the kind of snooty majors and captains that were in charge of kicking people around in the headquarters base. Anyway, I finally got - I had done in Iceland, I had done a good portrait of Berndt Balchen, who was the great arctic flyer, aviator. He had just come down from Scoresby Sound behind the, he landed up there on the east coast of Greenland and knocked out a weather station by hand, you know, with dog teams and riflemen. And that weather station, of course, was one of the main things to forecast weather in northern Europe, so it was very important from a military standpoint. Anyway, then when I got to Algiers I got me a priority to go to Tunis and there I met one of the most interesting and genial men I had met during the war, it was Jimmy Doolittle. And he lived in a...he had a villa in a little town north of Tunis, called La Marsa. It was a little Arab town and right on the beach and it was very pretty. And he invited me up there until he could get me. He was a friend

of C.R.'s, naturally, and that's how I got in. He invited me up to his place and he said sure he'd pose for me. And we spent one whole, oh, it was until nearly three o'clock in the morning, my doing his head, portrait head. And in those days, you know, whiskey was very hard to get, especially overseas. We drank a fifth of scotch. (chuckles)

M: Just the two of you.

L: And then he said, "And now you're in the Air Force and now you're going tomorrow morning with General [Charles F.] Born up to Italy." (chuckles) So I flew with him up to Italy the next day and I made a drawing up there in a place outside of Bari that had just been taken over. They had bombed the hell out of it and then they had cleared the debris out and our planes had just landed. And General Born wanted to see how it was going, so he gave me a ride. And I came back to Tunis and from there got a ride to Cairo. And there were two wonderful Life magazine guys, one was a reporter and one was a photographer, there in Cairo, and they were staying at the Shepherd's Hotel. At that time that was one of the great international hotels. Of course, it was taken over by the British military forces all during the war and it was not available to anyone but the military. But these two guys, one was Johnny Phillips - he later made a name for himself parachuting into Yugoslavia with Tito's forces - and Harry

Zender, who was the correspondent that went all through that stuff in Palestine when they were having all that trouble. And they got me deloused, and defleaed. (chuckles) They had a regular place for it, the Air Force did. And we had a wonderful time in Shepherd's Hotel, booze and everything. And I hated to leave Cairo, kind of. One night we, uh, there was a major in the, no, he was a lieutenant commander...

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 5, SIDE B

L: Are we ready?

M: Here we go. We're ready.

L: Anyway, we got over to Cairo and really enjoyed the Shepherd's Hotel. And I finally got me a ride. Let's see, I was headed for China. That was my aim. I even had a civilian passport and everything in case they wouldn't let me in out there, visas and all the rest of it. And we flew out of Cairo and went over and had engine trouble in Abadan [Iran] right on the Persian Gulf, right where the Gulf War was happening years later. And I remember that in Abadan it was so dad-gum hot, this was like in September, but they stayed in these air-conditioned huts, quonset huts in the daytime and did all

their work at night. And a bunch of dissolute bastards [was] what they were, these guys. They were receiving fighter planes from the U.S. and turning them over to the Russians there. And those, they'd take them out of the crates sometimes, our people would, and assemble them and see that the engine worked and everything. And these, I saw this one bunch of Russian pilots were shipped in, came in in an old Russian plane. And they were to take these, let's see, they were, I believe they were P-38s, anyway, these Russians climbed in, told the guy to turn the prop, gunned it a little bit and took off without ever seeing the plane or without ever testing out anything. The craziest bunch of guys you ever saw fly an aircraft. I imagine three fourths of them were wrecked before they ever got to Russia. (chuckles) Anyway, that was the war.

And finally I got to Karachi out in India. And about all I remember about Karachi was that I got a billet in a British establishment and there were so many insects and bad ants and things. You had a big mosquito net and then all four legs of your cot were put in a, they had iron cots, not the regular old army cots that we had, were in a little pan of water and in the morning you'd see all kinds of animals that had drowned in the water, that hadn't gotten up to bite you, you know. (chuckles) And strangely enough there weren't any lice or fleas. I guess the British had taken care of that pretty good. Anyway, I thumbed a ride then from there, from Karachi,

oh, it was tough there about getting a ride. I made friends with a B-26 pilot. I'll never forget him. He was a captain named Brewster from Massachusetts. And we met in the officers' bar there in Karachi and he said, "Sure, I'll give you a ride if you don't mind flying without a manifest. Your folks will never know what happened to you if anything happens to us." I said, "Sure." So, I flew with him all the way up to a place called... No, we went to Agra then, first. And we stayed in Agra for, oh, until they got further orders, several days. I stayed in a tent, a beautiful tent with a Texan named Tex something. He was a real hard-bitten guy. He had a musla, a servant, one of these poor Hindus that emptied your potty and (chuckles) did everything else for you, you know. And I felt so guilty, he would want to help me and everything and I didn't like it.

But, anyway, I finally got in the B-26 and got up to...it was called Polo Field, and it was in Upper Assam. And Upper Assam is now in, oh, that place that has all the trouble, it's... See, my mind has gone to pot. Anyway, I was around there for a while until these guys got their orders to report to this airport, airfield, right, oh, it was about 40 or 50 miles north of Chungking. So I flew over the Hump with them and that was quite an experience. I flew without any oxygen and I lay in the nose of this, with the gunner, and we had some excitement there with a Jap. They never turned in toward us and we were wanting to go on to Chungking. But I was

pretty excited there in the nose when the gunner cleared the magazine in the machine gun there and in the plane's nose and I thought we were going to get to see something, but I didn't. I had checked out in a SPD as a rear-seat gunner with Gus Widhelm and flown off the Hornet, so that I knew something about what was, might happen and I got a big kick out of that. We landed in this rain on this drizzly, sorrowful October day in Szechuan Province. And we got a truck ride on an open truck, flatbed truck in the rain down to Chungking. And the guys said, the truck driver, as I remember, said, "Where do you want to go?" And I said, "Well, wherever there's a headquarters."

And so these aviators, they had checked at in at some field, a little strip there, and I went in and introduced myself with, to a guy named Rankin, a major at the headquarters. And he turned out to be a great friend and he took me in to [Joseph W.] Stilwell. (chuckles) Stilwell said, "What the hell are you doing here? We haven't any word that you're supposed to be here." And I handed him this letter from C. R. Smith and Stilwell said, "Well, we'll take you on anyway. Welcome!" (chuckles) And he got me a place in the old press hostel there in Chungking, which is a real funny old walled compound, and we had a mess hall there and I guess there were, oh, maybe two dozen, altogether, correspondents from everywhere, including Russia, you know. And I remember one, well, I wrote about it in that little

thing called A Grizzly from the Coral Sea of about one day we spent in drizzly Chungking. And I was making drawings. I met there for the first time Teddy White, Theodore H. White, who became a very famous writer and correspondent. He was a delightful fellow. And he got a telegram from Henry Luce saying, "If Lea is in Chungking, have him do some paintings of China unrelated to war with some of the character and appearance of China." Well, that suited me fine. And I did quite a number of things there.

And also, it said, "See if you can get a sitting from the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek." This was from Luce to White. And White went to Dr. Hollington Tong, who was a minister of information for the Chinese Central Government. And he said, "Allow make application." He says, "Something that has not been done." And I had given up, it was two weeks or something afterwards, and all of a sudden there was this call for me at the press hostel and Dr. Tong said, "The Generalissimo and Madame will receive you at four o'clock this afternoon. Be sure and wear your uniform and see that you're well policed. The Generalissimo likes to see smart military turnout." (chuckles) So I polished up my little war correspondent thing and put the wire back in my hat. I was all raunchy from the Air Force. And here came Dr. Tong in his official car and we went up the hill to the residence.

It was really quite impressive for a country boy. And we went in and we didn't wait for five minutes in this rather



sinister office till the Generalissimo came in with a Big Ben alarm clock, tick-tick-tick-tick. And he set it right in front of him as he sat at the desk and then...(chuckles) He wouldn't speak any English. Tong did all the interpreting and asked him to sit in a certain way for Mr. Lea and I sat on the other side of his desk. I got a what I thought was a pretty good drawing. And I had to get something, I forget, I was having trouble with placing the ear or something and I asked him for ten more minutes. And he grumpily took out a little notebook, I guess "The Orders to the Day" or something, and granted the ten minutes, looking at the alarm clock and worked on his book, and then got up. We both got up, Tong and myself got up and he left.

And Dr. Tong said, "Now you will wait and Madame will receive us in her apartments upstairs." And so we went upstairs after a little while and were met by this very charming woman, who was ill disposed and was on a white chaise longue with a pale lilac-colored satin coverlet and a white sort of a gown and great big gold earrings and a perfect American accent. And she was delightful. Asked me all about my hometown and then I found out that they knew, they had investigated me and I'll tell you something funny about that when I get through. They had investigated me and found out that I was a relative of Homer Lea and that was the reason they received me. And she asked me about, if I had known Homer and I told her what little I knew about him, and that I

had prepared a piece for Mr. Luce, the Life magazine editor, but it had never been published about Homer Lea. And we got along just fine. She gave me, oh, a couple of hours, more than two hours for the sitting.

M: She didn't have an alarm clock?

L: No, no. And she was charming. She was really trying to be nice. And when I said, "Oh, I can't take any more of your time, Madame Chiang, and I want to thank you." And she said, "Well, stay a moment." And, I forgot to tell you, before, when Hollington Tong and I walked in, we were held at the doorway and we could see through this long hall in this apartment. And here came the Generalissimo in a long gown, not in uniform. And he had come - I found out, Tong explained it later - he had come into the apartment when I entered so that it would be proper and correct that I would see his wife but he was there. Isn't that something? And when he walked out, why, she very casually said, "You know, my husband would be a very handsome man if he'd keep his teeth in." (laughter) He had taken off his uniform and taken out his teeth. Anyway, another reason that they let me do the portrait without a peer there, all by myself... Oh, incidentally, she told Holly, "Get out now. Mr. Lea and I will be busy." And...

M: So it was just the two of you?

L: Just the two of us. And when I got up and thanked her, she said, "Oh, sit down," she said, "I've prepared something for you." And her - I forget what they call them - her maidservant came in with a tray, the most wonderful tea I ever tasted with the colored lid and the old handle on the cup, marvelous, and a whole walnut cake with lemon icing on it. And she said, "It's one of my old recipes." (chuckles) And I had walnut cake and tea with Madame Chiang Kai-Shek in her apartment in Chungking. When I got back to that old press hostel with its one light bulb swinging and all that, God, this couldn't have happened to me! So it was a great thing.

Days later then I got a ride down to Kuming and then that was Stilwell's headquarters and I did the portrait of, not Stilwell, but [Maj. Gen. Claire L.] Chennault. They were great enemies. And [I] did the portrait of Chennault there in Kuming.

M: Which is in the Air and Space Museum.

L: Yeah, I think so. And then he sent me...

M: How was he?

L: Hum?

M: How was he?

L: He was a very formidable gentleman. He treated me with curt, decent respect. But his officers that came in to report to him were, I think, intimidated by him. He was a tough, tough commander. I think they sort of worshiped him, but I drew, I was working. I sat on the floor because you had to look up at the man to do the drawing and he'd ask these, he was just performing business at his desk. And these kids would come in, you know, young lieutenants, "Yes, sir," and they were almost trembling. And of course, outside, why, the old man, you know, when he was talking to them in these hostels that they had, the Chinese ran these hostels for all the personnel of the Air Force, the 14th Air Force, why, he was some pumpkin. (chuckles) And, of course, he had his Chinese lady friend there, and...

M: Was that Anna Chennault?

L: Yeah. That one that's in Washington.

M: Who lives in Washington now.

L: Yeah.

M: He wasn't married at the...

L: No, they weren't married.

M: But he, was he, did he have a wife?

L: Yeah. I think so.

M: Back home.

L: Uh huh. Back home. And there was some quiet talk amongst some of the aviators about what the old man was getting and they weren't getting anything half that good. (laughter) You know how it is. Anyway, I had really been, I guess, frightened; two nights before Hollington Tong called up and said I could see the Madame and the Generalissimo, why, he said, "Would you like to make a drawing of Dr. H. H. Kung?" He was at that time the minister of finance, finance minister of the Central Chinese Government. And I said, "Sure." And he turned out to be a kind of a roly-poly man with very slicked-back hair and pleasant. I had found that to do these kind of people, if I could get them in their office and have them seated behind their desk in a chair that they were, you know, comfortable in, it was much better to do a head when they were in their own surroundings. So I was met there and Tong had arranged it so that I could go right in to Dr. Kung's office. And I went in, and he was across the desk and there were portières, curtains, all in back of his desk and chair and the windows were at the sides. And this was in the evening; it was, oh, I guess, nine o'clock at night. And the

lights were on overhead and it made it kind of an interesting light on this very Chinese mongoloid face, not mongoloid, that isn't right. (chuckles) That's something to do with [the] Mongol face. I finished the drawing and moved my...you know, I thought it was finished, and I was so involved in thinking about it that I moved my chair back like this and stood up abruptly with a pencil in my hand, and there was no carpet on this slick floor. And immediately with that noise of the chair, from behind these curtains came two men with machine guns pointed at me. (laughter) Now this is true!

M: Did you sit back down?

L: I sat down. (laughter) And you know, Dr. Kung looked around at them and did that and then looked at me and smiled. (chuckles) They went back behind the curtains and we finished everything and what he had done is to test me to see if I was some kind of a agent or something by having me do Kung before I could get to the big honcho.

M: Gosh, that's fascinating.

L: (laughter) Then, down in Guilin was the part that I loved the best of China. It's that wonderful landscape. Have you been to China yet?

M: I've never been to China.

L: You've got to go to China. You and Dee would just be enchanted with it. And you know those wonderful landscapes of the Sung masters, around [the year] 1200, at the very height of that Chinese wonderful, wonderful painting. Those sugarloafs, they're true. I couldn't believe it. They're really true. And these people who did all these paintings weren't making it up; there they are to this day and beautiful. And the river Lee, which I liked very much (chuckles), flows right through all of these strange sugarloaf mountains. It's really an enchanted place and the mists almost daily hang part way down on these cone-shaped mountains. It's the old Sung masters, but there it is in real life. I was glad to leave China and yet I knew it made an impression that would never ever die in me. So I came back home.

And the next tour, why, I wanted to get back with the Navy. And that's when, probably I got started I could... I went to San Francisco and checked in with the P.R.O there and he sent me to Pearl Harbor. And he said, "Well, you can make your choice about, do your people in New York, have they given you an assignment?" And I said, "No, I'm to choose what I want to do." And he said, "Well, you better go to Pearl." So I did. And I had just had a big argument with my pal, Bill Chickering, who was a correspondent for Time there in San

Francisco, and he said, "Ah, you 're going with the damn Navy. Why don't you go out with some people that really carry a rifle and spill their guts on the ground?" And I said, "Well, that's all right for you, Bill, but I'm thinking about getting home." So we left, kind of in a huff with each other. And he said, "Well, I'm going to New Guinea with General Eichelberger." And we never saw each other again. I went to Pearl Harbor and chose the First Marine Division landing on an island. I didn't know the name of it or anything. I knew that I had to get first to Guadalcanal as a staging area. And Bill went on and he went out with the army bunch there in New Guinea. And the funny part of it was, not funny, but I went with the Marine Corps and lived through it and Bill was on the bridge of the USS New Mexico and a kamikaze came in and killed him aboard a naval vessel. It was kind of weird, you know. I did a portrait of him for his wife and family and I'm sure they couldn't stand the portrait. It was...there was something about Bill's eyes that I put in my portrait that I think was something about death or something. I, uh, that portrait...I tried...I hope they'll get that one to show. It's in the [University of Texas] Humanities Research Center, portrait of William Chickering. She just a few years ago sent it down without my knowledge or anything, sent it to the Harry Ransom Center to be a part of that collection, which I thought was wonderful of her. She was, Audrey was his wife's name. She later married a guy named Cahzin whose old man was the



?Cahzin Oil. No, I don't think that will work. Anyway, we lost touch. And I think I've told enough about...tell her that we don't need to go into that too much.

We got off the island and got on this, we got on one of these landing crafts, a big landing craft. Would stay right in the harbor, and they had all the ammunition and so on for what they were delivering over to the rocket destroyers and all of that kind of stuff. And [I] started work on these drawings. I couldn't work. Nobody could do any kind of work under the kind of circumstances that I found myself in there on the island itself. And then, this was, they didn't have any kind of facilities except I would just sit on the deck and work, so I got transferred over to the...anyway, it was the Amphibious Command's command ship. And they sent me over to a personnel carrier sort of thing, named the..., the James O'Hara was the name, the USS James O'Hara, that's where I did the drawings offshore of Peleliu, the drawings that were later reproduced in Peleliu Landing. And they would bring some of the navy personnel instead of, of course, instead of leaving them there on the island as they did the marines, under tarpaulins before they could dig graves for them. They sent a number of naval casualties that died aboard O'Hara and every day, why, there would be several ceremonies of committing these bodies to the deep. Most of these, for instance, there would be a marine that would be crawling around on the deck on his hands and knees and he couldn't get up...nuts. People that, you know,

had to be held to keep from damaging themselves and others that had just gone haywire. And they had this ship then went on back to Manus in the Admiralty Islands, where there was some kind of a hospital there to take these poor bastards, you know, it was awful. Anyway, I got back to Manus on this O'Brien and then got me a ride.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 6, SIDE A

L: James O'Hara. I can't say it right. I have to think about that. Anyway, I got back to Pearl and the PRO had gone out to see how the marines were doing in New Guinea and the guy earned himself a Purple Heart. (chuckles) And that was a biggie act to all the guys that were riding in this plane with me. I very seldom, I didn't ever see but Johnny Hersey and I were on the Hornet together and a guy that we parted after I went aboard that amphibious command vessel, a fellow named Pepper Martin - I think his name was Robert Martin - he was a correspondent for Time. We were on Peleli together. And I didn't meet any correspondents ever much, you know, there were some marine-appointed, they were sergeants that were, they were newswriters for Yank or for the Leatherneck, that was the marine publication and also some painters, some artists. I don't think they were given commissions in the Marine Corps;

I think they were given, you know, just a grade of sergeant or something like that to do paintings and so on. I never saw anything that they ever did. I'm sure they did some, but I never did have much contact ever, with the correspondents who were there in the Pacific. Everyone always asks me, you know, who all I knew that...and I got to tell them I didn't know very many.

But Pearl Harbor, I saw it in 1942 when it had just banged up, you know. They were trying to get fixed up after that terrible attack of the Japanese. And then going back in 1944, two years later, and seeing the power and the immensity of our war effort and knowing the steamroller that was absolutely knocking the Japs over. It was a real great contrast and as we grew stronger and greater the Japanese grew more desperate and more fanatical and started all this kamikaze stuff, which was very, very terrible on our casualties, you know. They did a lot of damage that way.

Those were some mean little fighters, those guys. When you're there getting in the middle of stuff, you have - I did, and I have talked to two other guys that had the same thing - a great curiosity about your enemy that you haven't seen, and there he is lying dead and you look at him and you have a very, very different feeling about a dead enemy than you do over one of your guys. And it's not hate; I don't know what it is. When I remember one little guy that his head had been shaven; his hair had grown out to be, oh, maybe a half inch

and it looked just, and it came to me at that time: it looked just like the worn plush on the theatre seat, you know? (chuckles) Things that you want to know what or who the heck he is and then you have the people that come in and search him and pull one of these flags that... They had little bands around their bellies, some of these Japs did, that were called a "belt of a thousand stitches." And before they would leave for battle or leave the home island or their home, why, different ladies would sew little stitches as good luck things in this thing and they called them "belts of the thousand stitches." And there were lots of them out there and, of course, that was a big souvenir item, that and the swords that the Japs had. And there was some sake, if you could ever find any in the mess halls that we found. But the best thing about that souvenir thing is, I think I wrote it in Picture Gallery or in, yeah, Picture Gallery.

This bunch of marines came aboard this naval transport to give, they were leaving Peleliu and going back to ?Plevubu?, which had been their base and this starchy, nice bright-faced gentleman, naval guy, says, "Hey, buddy, have you got any souvenirs you want to trade?" He said, "I got a little money if you got anything good." And this guy looked at him and he said, "Sonny, I brought my ass off of Peleliu and that's the greatest souvenir I ever had." (chuckles) That's the way we felt.

Well, I came back and did the paintings. And this is a

fact that was reported to me by Worthen Paxton, who one of the assistant managing editors there in Life magazine. They brought my paintings into this room where every week the managing editor would decide which pictures went into the layout for that week's magazine. And they lined them up - I had been in the room. They had a sort of a ledge where they could put photographs, large photographs or mounted photographs and then paintings or whatever, lean them against the wall on this ledge. And they put my stuff up. Pax said... and told Dan Longwell that they were ready and he could come in and decide which ones should be used in the issue. And Dan came in the room, they said, and looked at them and he said, "Print every damn one of them in color and I never want to see them again." He felt guilty about sending me there. Anyway, I guess there has never been any emotion in my life quite to surpass that or to equal it.

M: You said one time that you felt there was kind of a natural dividing line of those who had experienced World War II and those who hadn't.

L: Yeah. It seems to me that that was a division of generations. And I think it's - I feel that it's true now - that we had more illusions or we had more ideals, we had more patriotism, we had more optimism than the people that followed us, the generation that followed us. Tough. You know, well, I'm not

going to talk about it but I got damned sore at a fellow that told one of my best friends that had spent 26 months overseas, "You don't even" ...this guy was a "pinko"..."You don't even know what you were fighting for. You didn't even know that you were fighting for Rockefeller's fortune and things of that sort." I'm sure glad that at least that stuff is all gone. They don't talk much about it. They think that Marx is right but they made a big mistake over there in having Stalin and his crew ruin an idealistic utopia, as they thought. (chuckles) I once, when I was up there after the China trip, I made an application to see if I could go to Russia. And my name came up and it came back from the embassy: "Nyet." I don't know why. (chuckles)

M: So you didn't get to go?

L: They let Johnny Hersey go and he was a fine American if there ever was one.

M: But between all these trips you came home and painted your pictures and...

L: Always, always. You bet. And got to see Sarah and Jim. And one of the guys that was very close to me then and we'd see every time we'd come home was old Bob Homan, the doctor.

M: He has one of your or had one of your drawings.

L: Yeah. I did a portrait of him in Chinese ink right after the war about the same time I did the one of Carl Hertzog. And he has one of my good paintings of China, the one of the river with the light shining on the little farm in the foreground and so on. And I think he has a drawing of that branding, a sort of a rhythmical thing of branding a calf that was in that "Western Cattle" series. I think he has the study for that, the actual size study. Oh, listen, and he... I didn't ever know until after his death, how extensive it was, Alice Jane, A. J., you know her, his daughter.

M: Yes. I do.

L: She brought over two huge leatherbound scrapbooks that Bob had kept of all the stuff that I had done. And I have them there in the library in the house. But I took one look. I didn't know what he was doing and I had written a thing, some..."The Scrapbook of Tom Lea," something like that. And, don't you ever tell A. J. this, but I haven't had the guts to look in that thing yet. (chuckles) God damn, there are two of them this thick with all these old yellow newspaper prints. Mainly, it didn't start until wartime, these scrapbooks. And then it's an awful lot about writing because, of course, there was more said about my books than there ever has been about my

painting.

M: But that's something for him to watch everything you had done and to document it.

L: Yeah. Oh, it was something, it really was. He would always look me over and he got rid of the hookworm when I had it from... And also, I got conjunctivitis in my eye. The one eye got so red, like it was going to pop out or something. Old Bob was always right there with the remedy, you know.

M: I guess you shared your war stories with your dad, too, when you had come back.

L: Oh, yeah. But, you see, Dad had, he had a stroke in 1941, as you know. Not a bad one, but it cut down his activity a good deal. And then he had a heart attack in 1943 when I was out in China. And when I got back Dad was getting around, but slow, and he seemed more...He had never seemed vulnerable to me for anything, you know, but he seemed vulnerable then. And then it was almost, I felt bad because he wanted so much to know and to be there fighting and all this ruckus of war, and he was out of it. It was terrible. Sad. And he died two days before they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

M: You were home how many months then in between, like six months



in between your tours?

L: Well, oh, I'd be home for four to six months because I would be painting. On that trip all the way out to China and back I did four separate stories and it took me that kind of time to get all the stuff. When I was through with Peleliu with paintings and everything, why, I had had communication with my old friends Roy Lassiter and General Swift. He had the First Cavalry Division, General Swift did, and we were going to land on, he was going to take me on Honshu. I'm damn glad I missed that (chuckles) because that would have that would have been a rough one. The bomb was at a very opportune time. But all of this stuff is an old man's sort of meandering. I feel that I could do it much better if I had the time to sit down and write it and then rewrite it and then digest it and rewrite it again. Because I feel very confident that some of my writing is okay, but I think my conversation, Adair, is pretty lousy. (chuckles) You're not supposed to comment, you're not supposed to comment.

M: I do remember your telling me about carrying a picture of Sarah during the war.

L: Oh, yes.

M: And kind of how you were...

L: And that picture disappeared. It was a little, uh, you know from a Kodak, not any kind of a real camera but it was from a Kodak. It was taken in the backyard of our little house there at 1520 Raynolds Boulevard. And that was the one that I came back and decided to set it up and have Sarah pose. And that's how the portrait grew; [it] is from mainly that pose and that kind of backlight. And, you know, in our backyard, why, there was the backlight, the sun over Mount Franklin, coming in. So that it was a wonderful thing to be able to recreate it really after this sort of distant worship of this little thing I had carried in my wallet.

Oh, and one of the interesting things about being with the Navy as a war artist, you had to make, you had to make allowance for the fact that you might lose all of this stuff going overboard in the water. So I always made it a point to be friends with the signal bridge and the guys that had the little weather balloons and the balloons that they used for target practice to wrap - they were good rubber, wonderful rubber - to wrap my stuff in, always. And for my pen and pencil and stuff, that I would carry, put those in a condom. (laughter) And it was very good waterproofing.

M: Good waterproofing?

L: Well, it was. The best part of war is getting home. (chuckles) When I got home, why, it was so fine to get back

and to go immediately down into Mexico with my friend Ray Bell, Jr., down to his great ranch, the Atotomilco in Durango, and get my mind on the grass that grows and the men that make their living with animals on the grass and all that; it was very nice. And, of course, then around the edges were... here came the bullfighters, you see, with these black cattle that had first come to the North American continent, brought by the Spaniards and these were still the types - they called them El Prieto. And that led off into a whole new avenue of adventure, really. I guess it was just the right time because "Manolete" [Manuel Rodríguez], one of the greats of the history of bullfighting, was for the first time in Mexico that winter that I was down there. And, of course, I got to see him fight and got this excitement of the ambiente taurino, you know, and it was a great thing. I went up to Boston, when I took my cattle pictures up to New York, old Charlie Everitt, the bookseller, took me up to Little, Brown, and Company. His son and daughter-in-law worked for Little, Brown. And they took me to lunch and I said, "Well, I think I'm going to write a book." "Oh, good, about the war?" And I said, "No, about bullfighting." And they looked so sad. (chuckles) Here's another little squirt of an Ernest Hemingway.

M: I hoped you would talk about that.

L: Incidentally, Hemingway never would consent to meet me. And

my friend ?Lebrecht Smith, that tried to arrange it, he said, "I'm glad you didn't meet. He wouldn't have liked you and you wouldn't have like him." (chuckles) But I certainly admire his work as a writer. I reread The Sun Also Rises recently. Have you read it?

M: I've read it, but I would need to [re]read it, too.

L: Well, it's worth reading again because you must... I think the utter sorrow of these people that have nothing inside of themselves to go with is, it's made into a real Greek tragedy, I think.

M: Well, next week we'll talk about Mexico and the bulls.

L: Well, that will be fun. That will. I'll see what I can do about, you know, now I feel completely out of the bullfight mood. I haven't been to a bullfight in several years and my thoughts about bullfighting now are of some old crotchety guy that is thinking in terms of the days of Manolete and some of the people that fought at the time that he did, Silverio Pérez, Antonio Velásquez, all those guys. People ask me often, who is Luís Bello? I tell them he's a combination of, he's a figment. They say, "Well, you did a portrait of him." And I said, "Yeah, well, I made that up, too." (chuckles)

- M: A hybrid of all these great fighters.
- L: Well, sort of, yeah, a little added to some guys I never saw, you know.
- M: Good. Well, I think, do you want to call it a day then for today?
- L: Well, have we got some more tape?
- M: There's a little bit more tape, you know, maybe ten more minutes.
- L: Ask me something, ask me something that you want, you think I have missed or something. That's a pretty full account of the war. (chuckles)
- M: It's a full, full war. But I do, in getting back, of course, I had shown [at my gallery] that beautiful painting of Sarah and so I've always been fascinated by that painting and during our exhibition you loaned it to us for one night. (chuckles) Remember, we wrapped her up and brought her back the next day? But was that the first painting you did then after the war?
- L: I made a drawing when I got home but, you see, I had this commission from Life and they were still paying me as a staff

member. And so the first work that I actually did as a painter was the painting of the landing of the first cattle in the North American continent. That was a part of that Life series now in the Dallas Museum. But I had made a complete drawing, full-size of Sarah and it was on brown paper and I think it's one of those things that are now in the archives there at, uh, I think I had thinned that out. That and the full-sized drawing of the baptism for the [First] Baptist Church. I think they're down at the Harry Ransom Center.

M: They are there.

L: And then when I would have time, I went to New York - I forget for what - and met an old friend named Cliff Saber, who I met in North Africa. He was in the ambulance Red Cross thing and got badly wounded, was shot in the head and had a plate in his skull. And his mother had, I think, was very comfortably fixed and sort of helped him when he got back. And he was a very good watercolorist. And he had been to an auction. Did I tell you about that?

M: [No.]

L: He had been to an auction and bought some fine linen canvas, already sized, out of the estate of William Merritt Chase, way back, you know, (chuckles) in the early part of the nineteen

hundreds. They were having an auction of some kind down in somewhere in the Village [Greenwich] and he said, "I don't paint in oil and how would you like to have this canvas?" And I said, "I'd love it." And so there was a place called Dell Sims, which was a great place where the artists in the Village and everybody in New York went to buy their materials, paints and stretchers and everything. And I had them make stretchers so that it would be the size of this drawing, this big drawing that I already made. And it even has a, in the middle it has a stretcher, a crossbar in it. And Dell Sims made it for me and I brought it home and put it, I mean I stretched the canvas myself that Cliff Saber had bought all those years. Then, on that, it had a label, a stamp on part of the little linen that wasn't primed or... It said "Whistler." And it was the kind of linen that, apparently [James McNeill] Whistler had used. So that's a very traditional piece of canvas that Sarah is painted on. And I would work on it in between these things I was doing for Life and then I had to do commercial work to, things would come along where I could make some more money and I did. And I didn't finish the painting of Sarah until, oh, about two years after I got home from the war. But I had it started, oh, within six months after my return. It's dated 1947. I think on the back it has - you probably saw on the back - it has Sarah's age and where it was painted and so on.

I've had a lot of pleasure out of doing portraits of

people that I thought a lot of. And there must be 25 or 30 of them, none of them were ever commissions except the one I did of Benito Juárez and the one I did of Sam Rayburn, guys I never did know, of course. But these others are all done in Chinese ink and some of them were done with some charcoal like the one of Frank Dobie and of, the one of Carl Hertzog.

M: There's Sarah.

L: Sarah!

S: Yes!

L: We're still, I'm still meandering.

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 6, SIDE B

This is a continuation of an interview of Tom Lea by Adair Margo in El Paso, Texas, on June 5, 1993.

M: Tom, before we get into your life following the war, I have one just follow-up question since recently we've observed, you know the war, that the United States has just been through. In your experience as a war correspondent I was wondering if you



could comment at all your observation of war correspondents today. You talked about, you know, your service to the government, going through censors and everything else on the way back. And there's kind of an attitude now of being citizens of the world and not even wanting to be debriefed. I don't know if you read about a lot of that. But kind of from your perspective what you think of that.

L: Well, I believe that the Navy and the Army and the Air Force had a great deal more control over anybody that was allowed as a civilian to get into any of the theatres of war. They had us absolutely because there was no way for a correspondent to get out a dispatch except using the local facilities, which would be either the services or a commercial thing, which was very uncommon. In Algiers they could, for instance, but most of the time you were at the absolute command of the PRO in charge of whatever unit you were assigned to. In this particularly the photographers had a heck of a time because they had to have their stuff all censored and then had to find actual transportation for their film back to their editor. That was where I had it over any of these guys that I was with because I could do my own stuff and didn't have to worry about getting it back to Dan Longwell at Life magazine. I worried about it, but it wasn't a thing where you had to get it on the time schedule, watching the clock, which was true of any kind of dispatch or anything. And what I was, I was a feature

writer and so I had time to get everything I wanted together and then come back. I was entirely my own boss once I took an assignment with a certain branch of the service. And I was my own boss as far as where I went and how long I stayed. But nowadays with the television and instant communication around the world, there isn't any...these guys can sidestep anything they want to. The TV correspondents, the correspondents that still use it - the typewriter - they don't even have a typewriter now; they call it in, you know. And I don't see how they did as much censorship on the Gulf War as they did, because these fellows can get around it so. One of the things that I think, I think I mentioned it before, that I think is interesting, is we take color photographs for absolutely granted and there weren't any color photographs in World War II that the correspondents were able to do. I think there was some color film but movie color film that had to be treated by Technicolor that [Edward] Steichen and a few of those famous photographers who got assignments to go out - for instance Steichen was on a carrier for a while - and they got to do that. But now I guess it's an entirely different world, one that I don't know how they work it.

M: You know, I can't remember what the name of the reporter from CNN was, but he refused to be debriefed when he came back from the Gulf War. You know, he felt like he was a citizen of the world, not just of the United States, so any information that

he gathered he wasn't willing to share.

L: Well, you know, that's something that's happened since. Everyone that fought and observed World War II knew why they were fighting, and they had certain objectives and they were on certain sides of the fence. And I don't think any of the great guys even like Edward R. Murrow or any of those people were as patriotic as the soldiers. And that's the way we all felt. Now, why, patriotism is a kind of a corny thing and outdated. Nobody believes in their country any more. It breaks my heart.

M: Do you have any ideas why that is?

L: I don't know. I think that somehow or other standards in every branch of life have sort of withered. And what standards we have are sort of remnants of something that came before and I don't see how we're going to get along till some of those standards are reestablished. I'm very conservative in my views. I've at this point sort of refused to worry too much about the world. This morning we voted.

M: Oh, right. I still need to go vote.

L: That's about all a citizen can do right now is to vote and not spend too much money on these campaign guys that are always

wanting a hundred dollars or something.

M: Well, why don't we move on to after the war, then, when you were still on contract with Time-Life?

L: Yeah, they kept me on. Dan Longwell was such a good friend and such a generous man. He said, "Well, we'll keep you on the payroll until you get straightened around and go back home and do your work down there." And he said, "Do us a story on, well, on cattle, beef cattle in North America." So I thought, well, that's fine. See I had put in a chit to go to watch the occupation of Honshu Island and that was refused me, so that Dan said, "You know, you don't want to go over there anyway. You've been in the war enough and you go back home to Sarah and Jim." And we were at a party, of course, I had started making drawings and studies for the history of beef cattle and I had decided more or less what I wanted to do and I knew that I'd have to find the origin of the cattle that first came to North America. And Frank Dobie's book, Longhorns, was a help to me on that, about this Gregorio Villalobos that brought the first cattle from the islands in the Caribbean to Vera Cruz and hence to the mainland in 1521. Well, I wondered what those cattle looked like and they were referred to as ganal prieto, black cattle. And ??? had found out that those were of the breed of the cattle that were used for bullfighting. There was another that they called, the oxen that they shipped

in were - and this was a little later - were just called ganal corriente, common cattle. And they were the kind that were used in Spain for oxen, to plow and all that sort of thing. Well, I, you know, you can't think about what a certain type of cattle looked like until you've seen the cow and the calf. And it struck me that the only way I could do it would be to go down to Mexico and see some of those, uh, what do you call them, ganaderías de raíces bravas, but I had no idea and no connection about how to get there. Now I was at a party one night, I think it was it was at Charles Leavell's, it was about, oh, it was just before Christmas of 1945 and I met Raymond Bell, Jr. He was the son of the founder of that marvelous great cattle-raising hacienda, called the Hacienda Totalnilco in Yerbanis, Durango, a very big and powerful piece of the economy in that local district of Durango. And I immediately struck it off, well, Ray and I got to be friends in one evening. And he said, "Well, come on down to Mexico. Maybe we can do something about your seeing those ganal prieto. I think I know how to get you there."

And about two or three weeks later, oh, he invited - it was a very social thing - he invited Sarah, and Jimmy Polk was still off in the wars somewhere in Austria or, yeah, I think he was still in the occupation. Anyway, Joey Polk, his wife, was invited, too. So the three of us went down to Yerbanis and got off, well you had to change trains and in those days there weren't any airlines, of course, and you changed trains

at Torreón and then you went west to on the way to Durango and Yerbánis was before you got to Durango. Well, we got there - the train was late as usual - and we got there about eleven o'clock at night and looked out and it was snow. (chuckles) It was the first snow they had had in a hundred years or something. It was very deep snow.

M: What time of the year did you say it was?

L: It was in January.

M: But the ranch had some people there that got all our baggage for us and we rode over to the ranch, which was, as I remember it, maybe fifteen kilometers, maybe a little more, from the Yerba Niz station. And the next morning it was quite beautiful. It was a different kind of life, you know, medieval. Old Ray Bell, Ray's dad, was really quite a character. I don't want to go into that because later Ray and his father came apart and it was very bad. Ray and his mother came up here and lived in El Paso. But we had been down there about ten days just living it up in this beautiful place. He even had this chef, you know, from Mexico City. And, everything was done for you. And like one night Joey came into our, busted into our room and said, "I can't stand it anymore. I just saw him." I said, "Who did you see?" "Maximilian. You know I'm sleeping in his bed and I just

don't like it. (laughter) Can I sleep in here?"

M: I can hear Joey.

L: So, she slept in our room.

M: What, on the floor or on the bed? An extra bed?

L: No, there was another bed in the corner. But the bed that Sarah and I slept in was one of these big canopy jobs, you know, and all this. I guess the other little bed was for a maid or somebody. It was sort of disconcerting because at any hour of the day or night somebody would come in and tend the fire. (chuckles) So the privacy was somewhat limited. Anyway, the girls went back. They had to; both of them had to go back to El Paso and we put them on the train. And Ray said, "Now we're going down into country where a friend of mine can help us, I think." He didn't tell me too much about it. Well, we, in those days you...he had a truck that was all fixed up with...he had bedrolls and a water thing that was attached to the side, and gasoline, even oil, and two guys to change tires or do things like that through the vaqueros there. And we started down to the state of Zacatecas and arrived late at night at this rancho and it wasn't late, it was after dark in the wintertime.

And I discussed it how we were met by this wonderful

gentleman, Don Julian Llaguno, who took us right ... He, Don Julian was a great friend of Ray's father so we were cordially guests there. And the next morning, why, of course, we went out and saw the bulls and I got to, I spent about, oh, I guess, two weeks, and writing notes like I had learned to do in the war on the actual breeding procedure of these cattle, which is a fascinating thing, you know. Toros de lidia, the fighting cattle, they have a greater registry than even the thoroughbred horse. They go way back. And their records are very carefully kept. And they're bred entirely for their spirit there. I wrote all that in a brief way in that little manual for spectators at a bullfight. Have you ever seen that?

M: Yes, I have seen that.

L: Anyway...

M: How did they choose their mothers?

L: Hum?

M: The mother of the fighting bulls?

L: Yeah, well, they're really something. These cows, they act more like deer. They are very light limbed and they jump and



they go and, of course, they have quite as much spirit as the bulls. So you have to be careful. And their calves, they're almost born that way, you know. In just a few days, why, they can get around pretty well with their mothers. And they're put out in these pastures for cows and calves and they're not tended, they're allowed to be wild, you know. So that was great to make these drawings and studies. I think that the drawing that I... Well, anyway, I did all of this work and Don Julian then said, "Oh, you've just missed Manolete. He was here for the tientas. And the whole ambiente taurino of Mexico was all stirred up over what Manolete was doing and how beautifully he had fought in the Plaza México and all of this. And all the Mexican bullfighters were right up there with him, you know, and trying to be as good as he was. So the bullfighting was great. And I got back to Ray Bell. He didn't care much for bullfighting, but when we got back, when I got back to Torreón, Bud and Harriet Lockett lived there, and Bud always handled our transportation, from the different trains, and he had his own baggage man that took care of our baggage. Bud and Harriet were wonderful.

And Bud said, "I want to introduce you to a friend. This is..." So I stayed over in Torreón for twenty-four hours waiting for the train, you know. Those Mexican trains were really something in those days. Anyway, he said, "I want you to meet a friend." And it turned out to be Salvador Cofiño, a young Spaniard, whose old man had a great big ranch and all

kinds of financial interests in the state of Durango. And Salvador, he got a law degree at the University of Salamanca and...a very cultivated man and a great aficionado of the bulls. And old Bud Lockett he asked Cofiño to come over and Cofiño said, "Oh, yeah, yeah," you know, about Life magazine and all of this stuff and he said, "Well, you've got to come and see Manolete." So I came back up to El Paso and, let's see, we made the arrangements to go back to Torreón about a month later when Manolete was there. And we got to meet, and then we began to get in this bullfighting thing instead of just bull breeding and the history of the breed, the toros de lidia.

Anyway, Cofiño was very proud of the fact that he could walk right into Manolete's room in the Hotel Galicia. And he took me in and introduced me. Manolete was kind of dressed in an old sloppy old sweater and it didn't like at all like this elegant figure of the bullring. And he was so nice and he had thought it was so amusing that here's this gringo, you know, that there wasn't a single gringo anywhere around except Bud Lockett. (chuckles) Well, I think there were a few that lived in Torreón, but...

M: What did Bud do down there?

L: He was a cotton factor. He bought cotton for MacFadden, that big Memphis firm, and then, I think, later for Anderson-

Clayton. But Bud was the guy that would lend money to the farmers for them to get their crop and then he'd bring it in. And he was a grader; he could grade the length of the staple and all of that business. And he was quite a guy in that business. Anyway, I asked Manolete in a sort of a half-hearted way if he wouldn't mind if I did a portrait sketch of him there. And he said, "Yeah. When?" (chuckles) So he sat down and I...

M: In his sloppy T-shirt?

L: Yeah. This was about 12:30. See, they don't eat on the day they fight until after the fights. They have some tea and maybe a little piece of toast or something early in the morning and then they don't eat until...no dinner. They'll wait so that if they do get gored there won't be quite so much infection in the abdomen, (chuckles) if they had a lot of food there. Anyway, he posed absolutely great, like a statue, and all these guys, there were, oh, ten or fifteen of them, these aficionados that [would] travel from even Spain to watch him. You know, it was like the world's boxing champion, you know, prizefight, but this was a bunch of very interesting people. And who wouldn't try to crane to see how it was, and Enchimu, Manolete's sword handler and his valet, too. Well, he kind of kept the guy. Then Salvador Cofiño was there smoking a cigarette and holding forth on all the things that he was

looking for that afternoon when there would be a performance by the great man seated there.

M: What age then was Manolete at the time?

L: I used to know, I think he was twenty-eight. I think so because, you know, the next year he was gored to death in Spain in Linares. And he was - no, it was two years after that. Anyway, I made the sketch and, you know, it didn't look...it was a great face, but I wanted it to appear to be a bullfighter. So I had plenty of photographs and sketches of his. He had some trajes [de luces] there in Mexico that were sky blue and gold, beautiful things and that's the way I made the portrait.

Anyway, I brought that back and I prepared then a 7,000-word piece for Life magazine with fourteen paintings and watercolors of all this business of about how a bull was born and raised and sent to the ring and then fought by a bullfighter. And (chuckles) it was absolutely flat up there when I... . There was a great big crate; I sent it and I didn't hear for a long time and I got very nervous. And finally I got this letter. It was an interoffice memo and it said, "We thought you were down there studying beef cattle. What's this all about? What are you doing down there with the bullfights? Nobody's interested in bullfighting here in the United States. Hemingway is way out of date" (chuckles) and

all this stuff, you know. Anyway, it sort of threw me, but I knew I had to do something about it.

And I worked until January of 1947. I worked all through the year 1946 with those sketches of the bulls, those great bulls and all of that in the closet. And me working on the beef cattle. We were really, went around. I even spent a week on the killing floor of Swift and Company in Chicago. That was the final end of the beef animal, quite a different end from the black bull being dragged out by the mules with their jingling harness and all the people giving ovations.

M: Applauding.

L: Yeah. So, anyway, I got that done and I even went to Governor [Roy J.] Turner's, he was the governor of Oklahoma and he had a great fighting, a great bull, a Hereford bull, named Haysford Rupert the seventy-second or something like that. And his progeny had, you know, taken all the prizes and, oh, he sired I don't know how many international stock show winners and all of that. Well, old Haysford Rupert was the nicest old bull you ever saw and he had had so many photographs taken. I don't think he had ever had a painter work at it, but he just would pose nice, you know, (chuckles) and I spent a day out in the pasture with old Haysford Rupert. I have a sketchbook here, if you would like to see it, of some of that stuff that I did during that time.

And we got that whole job done and I took it back to Life and they liked it very much but they never published it. They kept them on file. They published one. They published my portrait of Haysford Rupert, but nothing about how beef...you know, the range and the branding and the sending off to the feedlot and all the rest of it.

I went up to...as a guest of my old friend the bookseller Charlie Everitt and he had already done that book Peleliu Landing. And Charlie sold a number of them up there in New York and he thought it was the finest reporting of a combat witness that he had ever read. He was even saying, "Stephen Crane doesn't bring you what you did." Well, of course, he set me up pretty well. I had done a book jacket, dust jackets and illustrations for Little, Brown and Company. But I had never met them. I had had very cordial correspondence with them and so I went up to meet them. And they took me to lunch at some club up there and the production manager, he was a wonderful guy, a fine typographer, named Arthur Williams. And the editor was a guy named Everitt. He was the son of old Charlie. And he had another son named Tom, who was a picturesque fellow. And, golly, I remember how shocked they were when they thought I was going to do a book about the war, when they asked me at this luncheon. And I said, "No. I'm going to try to do a book about bullfighting in Mexico." And you should have seen their faces. (chuckles) My God, you know, here's another guy barking up the wrong

tree. And they said, "Well, all right, when you have a manuscript." I said, "I'm going to have to teach myself." And I said, "I'm going to write a novel." Well, this was further a terrible thing for them. Anyway, I went back and with severance pay. Oh, Dan Longwell had made, when he severed me from the staff of Life magazine, why, I got the regular severance pay of the Time, Inc. people and I had worked for them for four or five years and so it was substantial and it gave...

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 7, SIDE A

M: There it [the tape recording] goes.

L: Let's see. Where was I?

M: When you came back with severance pay.

L: So then I began to go down...of course, the first thing I did was to go across the river and make myself known to Roberto González, who was the impresario there in the bullring in Juárez. He turned out to be a damn good friend of mine.

M: Had you frequented the bullfights in Juárez before?

L: My dad had taken me, but, you know, and I always wanted to get back at it and I had read Death in the Afternoon, and it was quite a deal. That was back in 1932 that I think I read for the first time, Death in the Afternoon. And so I began to follow the bulls and there's a festival every spring around Easter time in the city of Aguascalientes. It was called the Fiesta de San Marcos and it lasts a week and every day they have bullfights and, oh, it's a great homologation of all the rascals and gamblers and bullfight people and horse racers and everything else. So I went down and spent - this was through Salvador Cofiño patronage - went down and spent a whole fiesta of San Marcos and this really set my mind to, I got to meet some of these young, you know, want-to-be bullfighters and all of this stuff. And it just enchanted me, the whole thing. So I came back and I thought, well, there's no way I can do, I can put what I feel about bullfighting into any kind of an illustrated book about fighting bulls. I'll write a novel. So that was my occupation from, let's see, it was, I started writing, I believe, on this, on Chapter One. I rewrote it fourteen times, I remember. And I believe it was about March of [19]47 and I finished it in the spring of...no, yeah, it was fourteen months that I worked on the thing, I remember. And I remember it was fourteen months because I counted all of the ways I tried to get started on the book and it was fourteen efforts. Anyway, I got the first four chapters up, oh, by fall of that year of [19]47 and I sent them, sent the



chapters to Boston and, by golly, they said, "We want to give you an advance. You stay right with it, we're hanging on, looking at what you're doing." So that...

M: You made believers out of them. Yeah.

L: Yeah. So then I, oh, went to Mexico a lot and old Bud Luckett, he was wonderful and helped me and then Salvador Cofiño. And the next year, that year was the year Manolete came to Juárez. And that was a, quite a...he didn't have good bulls, so it was a disappointment to all the aficionados, but his performance was flawless for the kind of bulls he had to fight. And all of that was the most animating and inspiring thing for me. And I sent then a little outline; I had the chapters all figured out on The Brave Bulls. I knew just like a muralist, then, I knew the first line and the last line, but I didn't...I had to study the design in between. And the trouble that I had in trying to, you know, make people talk. Here I'd only shown their faces and here they were talking and everything. It was a hard thing to learn to do because I knew that if I started to just use words and be carried away it would be like all the rest of writing. The people would say, "I should write a book." And then they would write it and it was no damn good. Anyway, when they encouraged me on those first four chapters, why, I really went at it and finished it and sent it in. They had, by that time, why, they were, I

think they gave me \$6,000 or something like that.

M: A big amount.

L: To finish the book, you know, in advance. And when I got it done, why, I sent it in, the text, and it was very...it was met enthusiastically up there on Beacon Street in Boston. And then I said, "Well, I want to make illustrations." Now Arthur Williams, of course, had been a good friend and a patron for all those book jackets and illustrations that I made for some of Frank Dobie's books and all that stuff. So he said, "Wonderful. Do it any way you want." The editor up there, Ray Everitt, was a little bit puzzled about a novel with illustrations. You know, that just wasn't done. They didn't have novels with illustrations since Victorian times. And I did the illustrations and took great joy in them because I hadn't done any real art work for all that time. And they were very well received and they said, "We think we can really go to town selling this thing and [making it] a best seller and all of that." Which they did. And they got together. I got them a fighting cape and some banderillas with all the fancy paper frills on them and a muleta and I couldn't get them a sword, though. (chuckles) Those guys were pretty tough about giving up a good sword. But they made quite an exhibit in New York in, what is it just there on Fifth Avenue, Scribner's, that bookstore. In those days it was quite a

place, you know, for the best selling and all of that.

Anyway, it turned out to be a great success and I remember I got from the editor a telegram that said, "Count your chickens. We've just sold The Brave Bulls to Hollywood." (chuckles) So that was good. And that, you know, they paid a lump sum in Hollywood for the rights to make a movie. And I said, "Now, I don't want that money. I want you to keep it up here in the bank and I want you to send a monthly stipend for Sarah and me and Jim to live on." Which they did and The Brave Bulls paid our expenses, and I did extra things of course, commercial art and sold a few paintings and so on, but The Brave Bulls financed the three of us, altogether I think it was six or seven years. The Wonderful Country was written, entirely financed by the The Brave Bulls. That's why I have that bull, Don Julian Llaguno's, hanging there in the entrance way to our little house here. But that was a good, great time. That was when they had a party for the author in Dallas. That was about as far west as they could conceive of going in from Beacon Street in Boston. (chuckles) Frank Dobie's book on coyotes had just been published, so they killed two birds with one stone party. And that night we all got stoned too.

M: Where did they have the party in Dallas?

L: In the Baker Hotel. And, oh, it was a big deal. And I

refused to do an autograph party, you know, where you sit there and hope somebody will come by and then you write something nice and then here's another another one, "Oh, how do you do?" Well, I said, "I will autograph all the books that you've got, if you let me do it just sitting there and tending to the business of signing them." And I signed one big bunch for McMurray's Bookstore and that's where I met Liz Anne, who is our dear friend and she later married Bill Johnson, you know. And Bill was my very dear friend.

M: You didn't sign up with Scribner's either, then, when they did that?

L: No, I didn't go up there.

M: You didn't go up there.

L: And I was, let's see, there was a, something came up. Oh, I was down hunting with Frank Dobie down in the brush country when the editor at Little, Brown called and said that I should come up to New York because in those days it was "The Critic Meets the Author" was the name of this. Every year the critics voted for the best fiction and nonfiction and so on. And they gave it to The Brave Bulls and I didn't go. I said, "No. I'd rather be hunting down here." It sort of gave them a different idea of what I was writing about, that I was a

writer and I wasn't wanting...I wanted to write and not be this great figure of a writer.

M: You didn't care about being an art star?

L: No. No. No. No.

M: Hardly.

L: So then I had such a pleasant time and such a profitable time with The Brave Bulls that I wanted to do something that had been in my mind since I was kid about writing about this borderland and about the people on both sides of the river. That's The Wonderful Country.

M: Had the film been completed?

L: The film of The Brave Bulls?

M: The film of The Brave Bulls.

L: Oh, let's see. When was that?

M: When you wrote the... And did you have much interaction there with Hollywood?

L: Oh, on Brave Bulls, yeah, that was part of the... They paid my... . There was a guy named Robert Rossen, who was the producer and director. He had won two Oscars. One was the one about the prizefighter, oh, what was it? And the other one was about that fictionalized thing on Huey Long. He was, at that time he was very prominent in Hollywood and he bought it and he was under contract to Columbia Pictures. Columbia Pictures was run by an old reprobate by the name of Harry Cohn. He was one of the most obscene and absolutely ridiculous guys that I ever...but he sure ran a tight ship at Columbia.

M: He died in the last few years, didn't he?

L: Yeah. Oh, you should have met him. (laughter)

M: What was he like? Do you mind telling me?

L: Oh, he was just a toughie. And he talked in the most vulgar terms and he said what he thought even when there was no necessity to say what he thought, you know. And everybody was scared of him because he wielded it with an iron hand such power. And they paid, Columbia Pictures then paid me to go out and write a script for The Brave Bulls movie. And I guess I was out there a couple of months and it was Christmas time came and Jim and Doris came out and we, I had a very nice set-

up there in a fancy hotel. And then at Christmas time, why, we got a place up, oh, what's the name of it, Malibu, and I'll never forget how Jim made great friends with the Chinese chef, who was great on chess, and so was Jim. Jim was just a little kid, you know. And they'd play chess while Sarah and I would take these long walks along the beach, you know, and about the bird would run along in front of us and everything. It was idyllic, you know.

M: You had your own chef then? Was that unusual?

L: No. This was, uh, they had arranged this...it was in a little kind of an apartment. There were several, I guess you'd call it a duplex, several apartments right on the beach at Malibu, you know, very, very fancy. Anyway, we had, us Leas had quite a time in Hollywood, but utter frustration and disappointment in how my script was received. ... didn't like it at all. And Rossen got another guy in to write another script, but then we all went down to Mexico City. Rossen didn't know a thing about bullfighting and had never seen a live bullfighter. So I went down to introduce him to the ambiente taurino and he took his set designer and his costume woman and a lot of gofers and one of his financial advisers and so on. And he made all these contracts with the bullring and looked around to see somebody that could take the actual bullfighting stuff in the ring itself. [He] got Mel Ferrer as

the main [character], as Luis Bello and so on.

I went down there on that first trip when they were picking out locations and everything. And it, it's not an atmosphere that I care for at all with a nonproductive kind of people that are dependent on; there are so few of them that are really creators. What creation they have depends on several other departments so that I didn't like it. You know, you're almost a prisoner of this system. And the fact that they didn't like my script sort of teed me off. But the funny part of it was, I refused, then, to go back during the filming in Mexico. And that's how I got so fond of Bob Parrish. It was when I was out there in Hollywood, writing the script and he was Rossen's cutter, his film editor.

M: He came out for your event in [19]90.

L: Yeah. Oh, yes. He's...and I just talked to him on the phone the day before yesterday. Anyway, and he was, you know, he was the director of The Wonderful Country then. I gave him the contract and we'd arrange it with United Artists. [I] didn't make any money off of that, but, anyway, I made this great friend.

M: What was it that you liked about, how did he kind of set himself apart?



L: Oh, he was such a...such, I knew he was, even at that time, I knew he was never going to hit the top because he wouldn't kick his grandmother in the teeth, you know, and do anything to get up there. He was a very fine gentleman (chuckles) and knowledgeable. He had grown up...his mother had moved when he was six or seven to California from Georgia, and he was the newsboy in Charlie Chaplin's City Lights. He was that much into the movies. And then John Ford made all of these westerns and so on, you know, and he gave all the members of the Parrish family parts when he could. Bob's mother was a friend of John Ford's and so on. Anyway, that whole Hollywood thing turned me off. I went out then after the - the premiere of The Brave Bulls, incidentally, was held in the Plaza Theatre here in El Paso and I don't remember who all was in the cast. You see, the cast was not chosen for great stars. Rossen could get things done the way he wanted. He chose Mel Ferrer because Mel looked so much like a bullfighter and so on. And he picked a girl named Miroslava who committed suicide later over the love of a bullfighter.

M: Is that right?

L: In Mexico City. She was a Hungarian, I believe. Anyway, I don't think, I don't remember anybody but Parrish coming to the opening here and a couple of the Columbia guys, not Harry Cohn. They came and presented me, Chris

Fox presented Sarah and me with a great big silver platter with an inscription about The Brave Bulls on the stage.

M: What month was that?

L: That was in the Plaza Theatre.

M: What month would that have been?

L: Oh, gosh, I can't remember. The film came out about, I guess it was about 1951, early in 1951. I'm not sure of that. I have a jillion clippings on all of that stuff, but I haven't thought of it.

M: I remember when Bob Parrish was here, though. He talked about when you broke off from the, you know, I guess it was down in Mexico, when you broke off from the director, saying you weren't going to come back. Didn't he make that comment to you, some comment?

L: Yeah. I remember that evening and we were standing in front of the Benito Juárez memorial down there the Avenida Madero, you know. I can't remember what. Anyway, Bob was always witty in everything that he said.

M: Yeah. Excepting dealing with, you know, what if the movie doesn't go well, or the way it did turn out?

L: Oh, I remember what I said. I said, "Well, we just won't go to the movie." (laughter) And this killed him because his heart was in it, you see; he was the cutter for the thing.

M: [Yes].

L: Well, he did such a good job that Harry Cohn, then, gave him a little picture, a "B" picture, to direct. And he was never a film editor again after The Brave Bulls. He went on to direct pictures and by the time The Wonderful Country came up as a possibility for a movie, why, Bob had done two or three successful pictures, not big things but, you know, [they] made money and he was in a position then to ask me if I would let him... I think I volunteered. I said, "If you want to make a movie, I think it'll make a good one." And we had trouble even with that after we...we never did anything but shake hands, Bob and I. But we were dealing with a lot of sharks.

M: You mean as far as a contract goes or anything you just shook hands.

L: All of that stuff. No, no, it's with...

M: Handshake.

L: We were just...handshake. But, uh, then we couldn't get the thing financed. United Artists wouldn't give us any money unless we got one of the first five box office big guys, you know, to lead off to take the main part. And so we immediately thought of, you know that...he's still around, the guy that did To Kill a Mockingbird [Gregory Peck] and the first big thing he did was a Chinese picture, oh...

M: It will come to you.

L: Hum?

M: It will come to you.

L: I'm ashamed that I can't remember. Anyway, he refused. He had just married a beautiful French girl and he didn't want to go to...to do any kind of location work where The Wonderful Country was. So then Bob had known Robert Mitchum and I think he directed Mitchum on some picture called The Purple Plain. I'm not sure of that. No, the guy that we wanted to get first was Gregory Peck.

M: Oh, Gregory Peck. Oh, sure! We're talking about an actor, yeah.

L: And he didn't want to do it. But Bob Mitchum agreed and he had to cartel the rating so that United Artists signed up a contract with a guy named [Chester] Erskine, who was to be the producer. And he was a nice guy but had no real power at all and Bob was the director. And we started then about a script. And I...stayed in there, they had a little guest house there in, not Beverly Hills but one of those colony things out there.

M: Bel Air or?

L: Something like... No, that wasn't it. Anyway, I stayed out there quite a, oh, it must have been six weeks anyway, doing a script on The Wonderful Country. And Bob said, "I don't think it will sell." There wasn't enough, you know, love interest and all that stuff. And he took it to United Artists and, no, they wouldn't do it. So Bob finally got a fellow who had written a lot of scripts, lived in Europe, and he wrote a script that seemed to please the people well enough there in Hollywood. I think we're taking up too much time. Hollywood is a pain in my neck and still is, you know. Anyway, we got it all arranged and I was down there on location with them and I took the part, a very small part. Bob said, "No. I can't get you any money, but there's one way I can do it. I can give you a speaking part if you only say two words and you can get a very nice piece of money." That's all the money I ever

made out of The Wonderful Country - as an actor.

M: What were you in that?

L: The barber.

M: The barber?

L: Peebles, the barber. I gave Bob Mitchum a shave and a bath.  
You remember, in the book?

M: Yes. I do remember.

L: Well, we had old Mitch in the tub and everything and, you know, he was expecting some warm water; we had to pour it in from a bucket. We had this old, beat-up Mexican tub (chuckles) and absolute ice water. And I poured it on him and he jumped out of there. (laughter) He's a bird, tough, too. You know, there's something about Bob that was okay. When Sarah came down to San Miguel de Allende to see some of the filming, why, Bob Mitchum was awful on those sets sometimes. He'd talk bad, very, very obscene. And when Sarah walked in and he was introduced and she sat on the side, Bob was this perfect angel, you know. He had been around those kind of people that are like Sarah so little, that it was, it kind of came in on him that he was doing wrong, you know, at least

that's the way I thought. Anyway, he had a lawyer that was, I guess, in cahoots with United Artists and it was very unfortunate. All the picture was distorted by Mitchum and the script and the financial part of it was very lean, even for Bob. Mitchum and United Artists made all the money. (chuckles) I don't know.

I just had a letter from Bob last week and Bob is in pretty poor shape and he said, "Do you remember," in this letter, "Do you remember a man named Mitchum." I wrote him... I always get a Christmas card from him every year and this year I didn't get one. So I wrote him and I said, "I didn't get a Christmas card from you this year. Are you getting old? Please answer." Something like that. And Mitchum sent him back a picture of Father Time and he has a great big scythe with the blade right over his head and Father Time is pointing to this, like, the sword of Damocles over his head. And it's a terrible drawing. And at the bottom he says, "Does this answer your question?" (laughter) So that's the kind of Hollywood fun they had.

M: Well, since Hollywood is a pain in the neck, you don't mind talking about the writing of The Wonderful Country and how after The Brave Bulls how this was something you really wanted to do?

L: Oh, yeah it was...and there again, you know...

M: It's going to be over in a minute, so we'll have to switch. If you don't mind. Do you mind going for just a little while longer?

L: There again, uh, Ray Bell was a great help to me in Mexico.

END OF TAPE 7, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 7, SIDE B

M: Here we go.

L: Well, Ray Bell was such a good manager that the Green family over at Cananea made him the general manager of the Cananea Cattle Company. You know, there was that great mine, the Cananea copper thing. So Ray moved with his family. That was in northern Sonora, you know, just not too far from the border. And Ray took me down into the Sierras, and Sarah was down there staying with Evelyn Bell, Ray's wife. And Ray and I went down into the south and had a great time in this little town of Arizpe. That painting I did Everybody's Gone to the Wedding, you know, the empty streets in the little adobe town. We went to a great, smashing wedding that lasted three days (chuckles) and got to meet all these kind of guys that are out in the country. My father had told me about some of his experiences as an early... you know he rode from, I think I



told about his riding from the ranch in Chihuahua all the way down to Colima. And he stopped off at Guadalajara, I think, and enjoyed that part of the country very, very much.

And then he found some place in one of the Barrancas [del Cobre] that he described to me one time. So with that information and that sort of something I wanted to do and Ray is keeping it alive and helping me with all the idiomatic sort of Spanish names for plants and all that kind of thing, why, we got The Wonderful Country done and that whole thing was... you know, it was the Literary Guild took it on as one of their books. It was an alternate choice of the month; it wasn't their big choice. And they paid fairly well, but not as much as I had hoped. In those days, you know, if you got \$50,000, that was big and then in Hollywood they'd say it was \$150,000. But you (chuckles) didn't get much finally. Anyway...

M: Did you, like, in your painting, when you'd take notes and then come back to your studio and paint them, did you do that when you were traveling down in Mexico, take notes for The Wonderful Country and jot down some of your ideas and then come back to El Paso and in your studio, write?

L: [Yes.] Sure, sure. But I never carried anything more than a little sketchbook on any of that thing because I was trying to train myself to hear rather than to see, you know. And it was a difficult thing for me to feel confident that I was writing

well. So I sort of left illustrations and paintings in Mexico; it was kind of the icing on the cake. I was trying so hard to be a good writer, you know. Then, you see, after The Wonderful Country wasn't quite over when I got...you know, it had not been published when I got the first inquiry from the King Ranch from the Klebergs about doing a book on the hundred years of history of the ranch. They wanted a little monograph and that then took the next, well, actually, I worked on the... it was five years until the thing was printed and most of that time I was doing some other things, but a good part of five years of my life went to that King Ranch thing.

M: I definitely want to talk about the King Ranch. All these doors just continue to open. You know, in reading I didn't realize the inspiration for a lot of the characters in The Wonderful Country, but just in the course of interviewing you I've recognized people that have been part of your life that are characters in that book.

L: Well, you can hardly avoid that, you know. But, well, I gave a few of them their own names, like Doc Stovall.

M: Right.

L: But, Tod Hogan, of course, is Ben Dowell of the old...well, not really Ben Dowell but my version of it. And there were

some, you know, during the making of The Wonderful Country, why, I can't remember the lawyer's name, the guy that was the promoter for the railroad that came into town, real kind of a southern character, you remember? Anyway, Bob had Jack Oakie do that part and Oakie really, (chuckles) he kept things going on the set down there. He's a funny guy. Sarah's dad came down to meet us in Mexico City after we had just finished the location stuff and Oakie was staying at the same hotel that we were in Mexico. And I introduced him to Sarah's dad, who was very austere, and that afternoon, why, I met Jack and he says, "Hey, how do you do it?" He said, "You know, I'm scared of the colonel." He called (chuckles) Andrew Dighton "the colonel." And to his face then. He said, "He knows too much." But Oakie was a sad guy and, you know, he was on the way down and he'd fix himself up and he was such an old hand at it he could look at himself reflected in the lens of the camera and set himself for the... There's some old timers around that were really something.

M: Did the writing of The Wonderful Country come more easily, then, than The Brave Bulls? You weren't re-writing the first chapter fourteen times?

L: No, I had...it...I had one. You remember the chapter where Martin goes with Joe Wakefield across the river in the springtime after he'd had his haircut and his clean clothes

[on]? That was the hardest chapter in that book. It was a sort of...it was to try to tell how much this fellow felt about both sides of the river. And it was...I remember I struggled and struggled for some way to express springtime and I settled it, I think, saying, "A mockingbird sang on a budded cottonwood" or something like that. I had to watch myself always about using the big word instead of the.... The shortest word was always my choice if it could say exactly what I wanted to say.

M: One time you said to me - I forgot whose instruction it was - but how you should use words or I don't know if it's specifically adjectives as if they were the most expensive things.

L: Yeah. I think I wrote that in The Picture Gallery. They're as hard to get as a ticket in the first row of Plaza México.

M: Just keep it concise, much more concise and clear and to the point.

L: [Yes.] Absolutely. You know, this is, my, I don't know, no, I won't put it on the record, but one of my friends who was a good, very good painter - he's now gone from us - I recommended him to do some writing for a magazine, stuff that I knew he had done and something about his world and his

painting. Oh boy, (chuckles) painters don't often...well, have you ever read any of [Frederic] Remington's stuff?

M: I haven't.

L: He wrote some novels, you know. Well...(chuckles)

M: What are they all about?

L: Well, they're sort of amateurish, you know, not, not...he wasn't a real writer. And I've always tried to be a real writer. And maybe that's why I've only published a few books. I tell people, the young people, that want to write, I said, "You don't want to just write; if that's all you want to do is just write and be a writer, why, forget it. If you find a subject that's eating your guts out and you really have to have this in order to have, uh, peace in your mind, then write about it and you will be a writer."

M: And you had that about every book you wrote.

L: Well, I tried. And that's what got me so damn mad at Frank Dobie, when he said that I had been overly impressed by the Klebergs and their big ranch, you know, and I had become sentimental over things. That's the one thing, the one kind of criticism that I would hate the most and my good friend

made that criticism.

I have never belonged to any group and that's a part of this thing of my...that I have taught myself about writing. It may not be first class but it's the absolute best that I can do after full consideration of every page, every paragraph. I'm not very prolific. I still come back to that, and I like that, what Ned Ranford, the editor up in Boston, when The Picture Gallery came out, did I tell you? It came out at the same time [as] the book on Andrew Wyeth, with all those beautiful things that Wyeth does. And this book didn't get very far and I said, "Damn, we should have published my book sometime when it wasn't so close to Andrew Wyeth's opus." And it was the most cordial thing I ever heard my editor say: he said, "That guy can't write worth a damn." (laughter) So I took some pleasure in the fact that he considered me a writer.

M: But I find it interesting when you said how you had to discipline yourself really to hear, to listen, rather than to just see.

L: Yeah. This is right. I think that's what writing [is] and, of course, you hear it and then to find words that speak what you hear. It's not in any way pictorial. It's speaking, isn't it? Poetry, the greatest kind of writing, is speaking a thing that you have heard here or there. It has nothing to

do with lending a forum. That just comes extra. "Thou still unravished bride of quietness." Well, anyway, it's fun, isn't it? (chuckles)

M: And then, so before The Wonderful Country was even published, that's when you heard from Bob?

L: Well, I heard first...you see, they never worked directly, none of those guys do. I heard from Bob Wells and Holland McCombs [who] had been down at the King Ranch doing a piece for Fortune magazine. He was one of the gofers and researchers and the final work of all that timing stuff was finally turned over to their writers, but Holland was the legman. And he was down there on the ranch and Bob, I guess, told him something about the coming-up centennial of the ranch. And Holland was a friend of mine and was a great advocate of my work before I wrote The Brave Bulls. He thought Randado, that little poem that, Carl read it in - I guess it was 1940 or something - and Peleliu Landing, he was a correspondent, too, but not a combat correspondent. So I think he mentioned it to Bob Kleberg's wife, Helen, Helen Campbell Kleberg. She was a very fine and wonderful person, sort of kept Bob on line. And they had some discussion about The Brave Bulls. So Bob Kleberg told Bob Wells, who was his chief PRO or whatever you call it, Robert C. Wells, to write me and ask me if I would be interested. And I said I'd be

interested only if I could have Holland McCombs to help with the research, that I didn't have time or the knowledge to do all the research that it would take to do the history of South Texas, which it grew to be. And I didn't want to do it unless my friend Carl Hertzog could design and print the volume. So I pulled those two guys in from the very first and Bob Wells, then, came out here to me and Holland came here to meet Carl and me and that was our first sort of tentative agreement. And Wells, then, wrote a King Ranch letter that was sort of a contract. It was a very informal contract. We didn't even know what we were going to do, you know. So that's how that happened. And the minute we met, why, I think everybody concerned knew it was going to be okay, you know; it just jelled. I think they were very interested and maybe dismayed a little bit over the way I wanted to see the ranch. I had just been at headquarters with Frank Dobie once, but I asked them to take me over to the ranch with a map so I could see the topography of it in their airplane, take us down to Brownsville and then after going down the mouth of the river and seeing the Padre Island and all that stuff and the sight of Bagdad where Captain [Richard] King got off the steamboat, came ashore. All of that and then ride by the old ranch trails behind all the fences from the southern end up to the Santa Gertrudis headquarters, taking our time, camping, moving.



M: How long did that take?

L: Ah, I think three days. And old Carl was with us, and we had a great time. You know, funny, one of the I guess you'd call them the superintendent of one of the ranches, the El Sauz Ranch, was a wonderful great, big fellow and Carl said later that evening, "You know they're talking..." That was the ranch where that man had disappeared and there was all of that sort of wondering whether the King Ranch had done away with him for breaking down a fence and entering and all that. There wasn't enough and I went as far as I could in investigating that. There was never any truth in that.

M: But who was the man? I didn't know about that.

L: Well, there was a whole...It took up a lot of time. They called the King Ranch "the walled kingdom." It was all press, you know, to... But, Carl said that, even he said, "Say, isn't that fellow something." He said, "You know if he asked me to leave, I'd hurry." (laughter)

M: He had a great sense of humor.

L: Oh, he was something. And the most...he was tortured with it, you know. Ah, he was, you know,... he was... I don't know if you know it, but Karl was terribly concerned about his

relationship to the Deity. And he would get new ideas all the time and different kinds of ways of thinking that he was getting a little closer to God or something. It, it really took a lot of his time and emotion. Finally, why, he sort of gave up and I think went to the Presbyterian Church and his wife, Vivian, took it up. But Carl used to come by in a great sort of quandary over what is faith, what is the hand of the Lord, what is all of this? And he couldn't... He said, "Now, why is it you get back from an experience, like, with the Marines down there in the South Pacific and so many of them got killed and you didn't. Now why was that?" This used to bother Carl.

M: How would you respond?

L: I'd say, "Oh, hell, Carl, I don't know. Who can say?" And Sarah was usually there, too, and Sarah is very good at, you know, saying, "Well, now, Carl. No one has ever known exactly how to answer that question. There's all kinds of concepts of fate and destiny and all the rest of it. And whether that's the hand of God, what kind of a God do you create in yourself?" you know. Well, Carl, he was very busy creating a God that knew, that he knew could do anything, you know. Funny guy. But the King Ranch, the actual...there's a book, a little pamphlet has recently been published about the printing of the book and about the writing of the book. And

this fellow Bruce Cheeseman, who is the curator of that little museum down there,

M: Yeah. I talked to him.

L: Did you? He wrote this thing about the writing of the book and I think he blows it up in too much of a hard case of quarreling with Carl and with Holland McCombs and all of that kind of stuff and that it was like, nearly drove Carl crazy, and I got mad. And that's a lot of exaggeration. There were some very irritating times and all, like when Carl got drunk and called me up and said, "You dirty son of a bitch, you ruined my life!" He didn't mean it at all. And (chuckles) Vivian called up right after and said, "Now, Carl doesn't mean that. He's just been drinking." (laughter) Oh, me! We had some times. My general feeling is that it was a great experience. I learned an awful lot and especially the part that I could use, you know, that became a part of me was, uh, how those people knew the points of conformation on horses and cattle, you know, so that it gave me confidence when I was drawing and painting animals. All those people had a very great feeling for the breeding along a certain line.

[NOTE: 60 SECONDS OF INTERFERENCE FROM 26:04 TO 27:04 UNK CAUSES]

He didn't have someone that he could trust. He trusted

finally his nephew, Dick, and Dick got sick after Bob's death and couldn't do what he was able to do and the whole thing since Bob's death has been...

M: Is Dick still around, Dick Kleberg?

L: No. He died.

M: He died.

L: Oh, several years ago. Maybe...at least ten.

M: I was wondering, are those stamps from him, when it says, "Love, Dick"?

L: No, that's my brother.

M: That's your brother.

L: And he had...that was when he was blind but...

M: Sorry about...

L: But he, Dad started him collecting stamps when he was about six years old and he...

M: He wanted you to see those. I saw that. Well, when did you meet...you had seen a lot of the ranch, when did you actually meet Bob Kleberg and...?

L: The day I went to Corpus Christi and he had the airplane there and Helen, his wife, and Bob Wells, and he had a map of all these properties and we just flew the thing. And that was the first time I had ever seen Bob. There's a picture of us that Helen took of Bob and me in the stern of this little motorboat where we went down to the mouth of the river [Rio Grande] and all of this stuff. This is the first time that Bob had ever known what his grandfather did, you see?

M: Ah! He was discovering at the same time.

L: Oh, he was, yeah. And, oh, we had a regular picnic, you know. And then, as we traveled north, we traveled in those hunting cars, and we'd go through these pastures where there'd be all of these cattle and this tremendous quiet, you know, and it's a wonderful, wonderful place, the King Ranch. The part that I thought the most of and I think Bob and Helen certainly did was the ranch called the Norias. That's south of the Santa Gertrudis and in between the Santa Gertrudis and the Norias is the Armstrong Ranch. And of course, Tom Armstrong married Henrietta Kleberg and there's all that connection, you know. Old man Kennedy had all of that property and then the

Armstrongs took it over when he died and so on. Anyway, the Norias is a wonderful place and it's kind of like going back, you know, into history. This great sprawling house and the houses of the vaqueros and all that and even a little church for the vaqueros and a school. And Bob and Helen are buried out [there]. The last [time] when Sarah and I, when we were at the funeral, Bob's funeral, and I asked to go back to see Bob's burial place and it's in the most beautiful, isolated part of the Norias Ranch, where there are these big live oak trees and a little lake which Bob had stocked so that Helen could catch bass.

M: Without too much interference.

L: And they're buried there. There's no...the monument is just a flat slab - it doesn't stand up - with their names on it, side by side there in the Norias. And that's where they spent all the, I think, the good times of their life there and they spent their honeymoon there and it's a kind of an experience to go there. I remember that during the funeral services, when they were lowering the casket into the grave, that one of the ropes came loose and darned near spilled the casket.

M: The coffin?

L: Yeah, Bob's casket out. God, that was kind of, you know, it

was hard to keep a straight face, you know. (chuckles)  
That's the same as another time when we were, Lon Tinkle and I were the short guys as the pallbearers for Frank Dobie's casket and the burial place was up in kind of a top of a rise, it's kind of a walk-up, it's in that state cemetery down there in Austin. And that thing got so heavy for Lon and me we nearly dropped (chuckles) the thing on the ground and the undertakers had to come and...

M: Help you.

L: Get it up.

Well, it was great and wonderful to finally get away from all of this checking and rechecking and footnotes and all of that stuff that had to go in. We finally knew that that would be the only way the book...even then the historians said, "Oh, it's not a real history. It doesn't have a real preface" and all the rest of it, you know. Anyway, we created something and I think Carl created one of the most interesting books ever printed in this part of the country as far as design material is concerned. And when it was over, it was just a joy to...all that time, why, those years that I'd worked on the writing of the King Ranch, why every summer we'd been going...

END OF TAPE 7, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 8, SIDE A

This is a continuation of an interview of Tom Lea by Adair Margo in El Paso, Texas, on June 12, 1993.

M: Oops!

L: It's my idea that that little book [about the King Ranch] has a lot more conflict and sweat and irritation and so on than really existed, at least on my part. I do know that Carl and Holland McCombs came apart on certain issues and...

M: Did they ever go back together, though?

L: Oh, they, it's so...

M: Mended fences?

L: They got into a mess because Holland, he dug stuff out but he wouldn't, he'd forget or neglect to cite his source. And, of course, Carl and I both felt that the book should be annotated and every statement made was from a source that was reliable. Well, so Carl hired Fugate, Francis Fugate, who just died a few months ago [December 31, 1992].

M: Uh huh. [He] was at the University?

L: Uh huh. And he acted as annotator and editor. And I managed



to get along all right with him. Fugate never told me how to do anything. He knew I wouldn't pay any attention. But he and Holland really came apart over some of the, you know, the citations and where Holland had written. He used to send two or three bales of stuff to me. He'd had a secretary copy out of all these things and not say where they came from. And the point of this is that both of them really complained, Fugate to Carl and McCombs to Carl because they weren't having much personal contact. And one of the times, one of Carl's stories was that Holland called him on the phone from, I think he was in Kingsville, and he says, "Karl, I know that on this project we need a Fugate but do we need that Fugate?" (laughter) Anyway, you'll find that book interesting. I think Al Lowman has a somewhat exaggerated idea about the greatness of the book and the typography, but it's very pleasing to me what he says.

M: What was the purpose of doing this book, just to...?

L: It was, I think it was, these are the two talks that were made before the Book Club of Texas when the King Ranch offered, I think it was something like 400 copies of the Saddle Blanket Edition to the Book Club of Texas as a gift. I don't know quite how many were sold but they invited the whole Book Club of Texas to Kingsville and they were guests on the ranch and Cheeseman and Lowman made talks. And I think they sold quite

a number of them. My impression was, I never did find out exactly, but my impression was they sold them for 400 or 450 [dollars] apiece. And they'd been bringing in, oh, 1500 [dollars] before...the King Ranch found these in the, oh, I knew, they knew they had them in the storage space in the big house. And so I think it was very generous of them to turn them loose. A lot of people wanted that edition, but Carl and I never called it the..., we just called it the Ranch Edition, but I think Walter Webb, he did a very nice review about the thing when the book came out, and he said, The Saddle Blanket. That was how it was bound - you've seen them, of course.

M: I've seen it.

L: [That] edition would be the one the collectors want. And that was it. And he sort of dubbed it the Saddle Blanket Edition, so that's what it's become known as. But Carl did practically wreck himself. He was a very nervous man, anyway, and he had a hard time getting that thing the way he wanted it. He padded the type on every page and put in all these little, you know, it was set by machine out in San Francisco but not in slugs. It was monotypes of - each letter was separate and they would send these big galleys to Carl, the type itself. And Carl would go through it to space it so that, you know, the "e" was under the, where the "t" came up. Everything was

equally spaced, and he was a magnificent craftsman and everything. So that the production of the book was an affair that I tried to stay out of as much as possible. The King Ranch representative in the thing was a man named Robert Wells, who was a sort of, well I guess he was, the chief PRO of the ranch. He handled the press a good deal for the ranch. And he and Fugate struck up a great and warm friendship. The last part was...

TROUBLE WITH RECORDER

M: I don't know what caused that to happen. There we go.

L: It stopped.

M: Yeah, it just stopped. I'll try it again. Let me back... Now it seems okay. All right, we'll just try it. We'll change tapes if it doesn't, if it acts up again.

L: I never was able to do any actual writing at the King Ranch. There were too many people that were always coming in and telling me stuff and they were... It was enchanting to know a lot of these people. Some of these vaqueros were really great characters and some of the guys like old Ed Durham, who ran the Norias part of the ranch and his brother Bland, who was a great character, those kind of people and Bob Kleberg. He taught me so much about how to look at country, what he saw in country and what he saw in animals. At that time Old

Assault was there and in great shape, the triple crown winner. Monkey had died; that was their seed bull, had really established the Santa Gertrudis breed cattle and, of course, old Dick Kleberg was there, prowling around the ranch, and he had been defeated by LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson]. And there was not any kind feeling between the Klebergs and LBJ ever.

M: Been defeated in what?

L: In Congress.

M: Oh, I didn't notice that.

L: You know, Richard Kleberg took LBJ into his office as his paid assistant up there in Washington and the next time, well, I think, old Dick was elected twice with the kind of aid and goodwill of the vice president, oh, from, you know, the old guy from Uvalde, you know, [John Nance Garner]. Anyway, it just doesn't matter. And LBJ just decided that he could beat his boss and he did. So old Dick had to leave Congress and his assistant became the congressman for that district.

But the main thing that I loved about doing the King Ranch thing was the rides. We used to, Bob and I, would get in one of those hunting cars that didn't require a road, or very little road, and we rode all over that vast acreage very slowly and then he always took along his man, Adán, who always

found a very nice collation and some drinks in the back of the hunting car, so that whenever we felt that we should stop and contemplate something or have a bite to eat, why, he was always handy there. And we'd go out and spend the whole day just riding around and he was telling me about things that had happened in various places in the ranch and how he'd changed this and then changed that and pointing out the cattle and the quarter horses that were there in the big pasture. And it was quite a privilege. So that I felt that I had learned a great deal and that the problems of writing nonfiction were so very different from the creative effort of a novel that I learned a considerable amount about how to handle facts, too, that I hadn't known about. And I had no background or no training for any of this kind of thing. And the only historian that gave it any credit at all was Walter Prescott Webb. All the rest of the historians said, "Oh, this is not real history. It doesn't have a preface by a famous historian, and it doesn't have a foreword by the author explaining why he did this and that. It has an unknown man doing the annotations," and so on. Anyway, we produced the book and it's still a pretty solid piece of work.

And I made friends, Bob and Helen Kleberg; Helen died not too long after the book was published, that was Bob's wife. And Sarah and I had dear friends, young Dick and his wife Mary Lewis. And I wrote the thing that the preacher said at his funeral, at Dick's funeral, but I couldn't deliver it;

the preacher did.

And Mary Lewis is still a dear friend. We had a lot of fun last summer, for instance, up at the Old Baldy in Wyoming. And it's been a lasting thing with me and a good thing for both Sarah and me. For instance, well, we'd be in New York and here came Helen and Bob and they'd say, "Have you seen My Fair Lady?" And we, of course, we were kind of country bumpkins. "No, we haven't seen it." "Well, would you like to see it tonight?" You know, it was in the days when the tickets were sold out eight months in advance or something. (chuckles) They'd say, "Well, let's go! We'll have early supper and let's go!" So we got together and had a little early supper and went over to the theatre and Sarah and I are like this and third row seats in the middle. How it was done God knows. But, anyway, it was just a great thing for, I have never seen a show that was so enchanting as My Fair Lady with Rex Harrison and the original cast. It was really great. Things like that were so appealing to Sarah and me that we really enjoyed our friendship.

M: How did that develop, you know, because you were work for hire, that's the new name?

L: That was it. And the first time we, I think I told you about how we flew over the ranch with a map in hand and we landed in Brownsville and then hired a little boat and went down to Port

Isabel and then the tale of Padre Island and around the mouth of the river, the Rio Grande, and the ruins of old Bagdad - which was the smugglers' joint over on the Mexican side - and then Fort Brown, which was there before Brownsville was established, in order to get the flavor of what old Captain King was. And it was immediate friendship, trust on both sides, you know, you can tell when. So I stayed a hired man but it was kind of a, it became a kind of a friendship where it was none of that, I mean... And, of course, Bob was always a very good businessman and I wrote a contract for one year. My work had turned out five years, my work, but the contract was not changed as far as compensation was concerned, although he did buy the drawings for the book. That came as an extra thing. But we later just, you know, "Come down to the ranch" and "Come down to the sale" or all this and we were always down there and having fun with the whole bunch. It was not any kind of a feeling that I was being paid for doing work. I never did feel that. And that's what got me so, it pained me to, when Frank Dobie made all those remarks in The New York Times about how I had become sentimental and all of this. Anyway...

M: Maybe that stemmed more from his feelings about the Klebergs than about the actual...?

L: Yeah. And it, particularly his political views about people

like Klebergs. Now Frank seemed to think it was an awful thing that the Klebergs would have a senator down there hunting and not invite a professor. Stuff like that. Anyway, Frank was a great old guy and he did plenty for me and so that's okay. But The King Ranch was a kind of - from the standpoint of a creative writer, which I was thinking I might become - it was a kind of a constraint and a prison for the imagination because it was all simply a factual thing that you had to prove every fact.

And I remember that all during this, each summer that I was working on the King Ranch thing, why, we'd take three weeks or a month off with the Leavells, Charles and Shirley, and go up to the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming. We'd start at Pinedale and get up to Boulder Lake and then get on horseback and ride up into the mountains and cross the divide and hunt, fish for goldens and have a wonderful time. And that was so different from what I had been doing and it was in such different country and such beautiful, wonderful inspiring country that I, when I got through with The King Ranch, I already knew what I wanted to do and that was write a novel about those high mountains. And I thought I could combine it or weld it into some experience about the war so that I made the principal character in the book a Marine just home from the Pacific. And the coconuts and the pines were such a contrast that I felt that I was doing something there that needed to be done and I took great pleasure then in



writing the whole story. This was about mountains and about this family up there. They were skiers and mountain climbers and all the rest of it. So Sarah and I went up one winter to Sun Valley and learned to ski so that we could know a little bit about what these characters were doing when they strapped on a pair of skis. We had a great time. Sun Valley was a heck of a nice place. There were some, such interesting kind of people that we all had fun. There was Ann Sothern, the movie actress, and a gal named Clara Spiegel, whose old man owned that big mail order house in Chicago, Spiegel.

M: Spiegel's, hum?

L: And she had a house in Ketchum [Idaho], which was delightful. And, of course, our guides, two of them from this family of Pinedale up in the Wyoming [Idaho] mountains, were ski instructors there in Sun Valley so that I could go in when the, all the ski men were called for a meeting and discussed various things so that I knew what was going on behind the scenes in Sun Valley. And then at night, why, we'd have these parties and Peter Duchin was playing there in those days. It was just a great time.

And when the The Primal Yoke came out, I was on a trip on the carrier Saratoga, and the first book was mailed to me when we were in the Mediterranean. I was on the Saratoga for about six weeks, including a trip we made around the whole western

edge of Europe, from the Mediterranean clear up to Norway and even inside of Spitzbergen, way up in the cold country.

M: What were you doing on it?

L: I just, I was a guest of, this is great...and, incidentally, the portrait I did of him is, I don't know where it is but I did a portrait of him when he was conning the ship. He was the captain of the Saratoga and on the Hornet he was a pal of mine. He was a lieutenant senior grade at that time in charge of radar. And when he, he was stationed here because of the, some kind of a thing at White Sands [Proving Ground] right after the war and, of course, his wife, Mack, and Sarah got together and, oh, we were very dear friends. And...

M: What was his name?

L: His name was Alan Fleming. And he was, he was made a..., after I was on the Saratoga with him, he got permission from the Secretary of the Navy to have me to come along. And I was just there for the ride and for the fun of it. I'd go ashore with him. For instance, the first time I ever put foot on Spain was in a helicopter with Al Fleming off the Hornet, I mean off the Saratoga. We met the Admiral of the Ocean Sea, the present one, there when we put into port at Cadiz, I think it was. Anyway, we had lots, much fun.

M: Who was Secretary of the Navy at the time, do you remember?

L: It was the guy just before Fred Korth. I can't remember. [John Connolly Jr.] Anyway, when I got back from that cruise, why, the book had come out and had gotten very poor reviews. One, it got one favorable review in the, I think it was in the [New York] Herald-Tribune or one of them, not The New York Times. Anyway, it didn't sell very well and sort of it was a thing that I knew I had put my heart in it but people didn't seem to think I had because it was a long way from mesquite. It was up there in the middle of pine and spruce and water and trout, and nothing about sand and desert. So that I think it was outside of what people expected me to write about, although there were some horses and things like that. And it had some romance involved in it. It was about a man that met the wrong girl, is what it amounted to, when he got home from the wars, all beat up from the wars, and the wrong girl got him (chuckles) and the mountains killed him. And I was trying to do a, I had been reading some of the Greek writers about the structure of the drama and I tried to make the mountains like the gods who were handling human destiny. And I thought it was a good book and I still do, the old Primal Yoke.

M: What did it make you feel with those reviews after you had put your heart into it?

L: Oh, I was very sad. You know, it's a bad thing for a writer or a painter to do something from his heart and then to have people not understand or care. You know, there's a wonderful... do you read A. E. Houseman?

M: I haven't.

L: He's a wonderful poet. And he's a poet that uses one-syllable, Anglo-Saxon words more than anyone that ever - just my ideal. But he was feeling sorry for himself; he wrote a poem that I thought about, I confess, sentimentally, when The Primal Yoke came out. It said, "I hoed and trenched and weeded,/ And took the flowers to fair:/ I brought them home unheeded; The hue was not the wear. So up and down I sow them/ For lads like me to find/ When I shall lie below them, A dead man out of mind." Excuse me for...but I'm moved by that and it's very sentimental but I think most artists when they really try, feel like that when they're: take the flowers to fair and no one wants to buy them. So that, in a way, that put me back to painting more than I had been painting. And one winter's day in Cloudcroft, New Mexico, we passed the window of a little funny bookshop and in the window was a copy of Horses of the Conquest by Cunninghame Graham. Sarah!

S: I'm out here, right...

SLIGHT PAUSE

L: Well, I went in and bought the book and I read it with a kind of super interest. I don't know, it just hit me just right, about horses. And the story of those, I think there were nineteen horses or something like that, that Cortés got into the continent. And I began to think about how the fine Mexican horses had originated and I thought, well, I've got to do something about it. So that's how The Hands of Cantú started. And I read all I could read and I had one book that my dad had given me when I lived in Chicago, Obregon's Chronicle. He knew I was interested in all kinds of Southwestern things. And this was mainly an account of the frontier efforts and governorship of Francisco de Ibarra. So he became a central figure to me in this thing I was going to talk about because I wanted to give the horses enough time to have gotten fairly established in Mexico.

And I then began to think about where the Indians first got their horses. You know, all of the experts say that it was from the Coronado expedition, when they let some of the horses loose or traded them to Indians or something. And I sort of thought that maybe the Indians had had something to do with horses before Coronado or at least they had not gotten any horses into the Great Plains area or anything of that kind in the time of Coronado. Anyway, I had great pleasure in first going down to the King Ranch and talking to my friend, Dick Kleberg, about the project and he said, "Well, gosh, I'll translate anything you can find." And I found a book about

horsemanship in the time of Philip I. Horsemanship was a la jinete y la breña, which were the two different, the long stirrup and the short stirrup way for courtiers to ride a horse. Its descendant, all of that, is the great school in Vienna of the horses...

M: The Lippizanners?

L: The Lippizanners. So things began to tie together and not too long after that, why, Bob Kleberg invited me to go with him down to the Argentine and see their beautiful estancia down there, which I did. And when I was there he introduced me to a wonderful man who had a great library about early horsemanship, all in Spanish. And I was able to get more information there about how they rode and how they trained the horses. And...

END OF TAPE 8, SIDE A

BEGINNING OF TAPE 8, SIDE B

M: There it [the tape recorder] is.

L: We had fun, uh, my friend Al Fleming, who had been the skipper of the Saratoga, had made admiral and he was the head of the American part of the Mediterranean fleet with headquarters in

Malta. Well, of course, that was a great place to go and study about horsemanship. And oh, I had a lot of fun there in the old Castel Sant'Angelo and the whole tradition of the Knights of Malta, you know, and their horsemanship was all there. And they had some of their equipment there. And I was very interested especially in the bridles because it was said that the second viceroy of Mexico was the man who invented the jáquima which became the hackamore in English. And so we went up to Florence after we left Malta.

I met another Navy guy whom I had been on a destroyer with in the North Atlantic and he suggested that I go to this little museum, the Museo Stibbert in Florence. I had never known anything at all about it. And it was established by a British brewer who had bought a villa and wanted a place to house his great collection of arms and armor. And we found a place there where they called cabezons the different bridles that were used where in addition to a bit in the mouth there was a considerable attention paid to a tight band around the sensitive tissues of a horse's nose for control and, of course, that was the idea. Now the idea of the jáquima was not to do anything at all about hurting a horse's nose; it was to tie a hairy, prickly knot under this very sensitive part of a horse's chin and pulling up on that immediately, you know, made the horse take action to stop and so on. And that's the origin of the hackamore.

So we actually saw some of these transitions things there

in the Museo Stibbert in Florence. And I came home and I suppose I had just pure fun writing The Hands of Cantú. It all came together. The guy that had annotated and brought out for the University of Oklahoma, Horses of the Conquest sent me the original copy he had used of Cunninghame Graham's work when he annotated it and had it republished in modern guise with illustrations. So it all worked together.

And I was able to, I didn't have to persuade Ned Bradford, the editor of Little, Brown and Company, he wanted to see it, of course, when I had finished it. And he said, "It's unique. I don't think I've ever read anything quite like it." You know, it's a letter at the beginning and then this very courtly kid talking about somebody he worshiped. And then the letter, which was the reply to this boy's whole adventure in the north. So Ned said, "Well, illustrate it any way you want to." And I said, "Well, Harold Hugo at the Meridien Gravure Company does nice work." I said, "Can I do them all in Chinese ink and get them done in that fine screen lithograph?" And he said, "Sure." Well, for a novel that's kind of expensive. And the typographer at Little, Brown and Company was a good friend of mine and he chose the type and we worked the thing out together. I made, instead of having chapters, I just made divisions in the text and separated them by the various kinds of marks that the Ibarras made on their horses, on their textiles, the seal that they used on their letters, all of that.



And then we did the thing and I think it's a book I'm very, very glad I did because it tells... I got letters from old horse people that said, "Oh, I'm glad you wrote the book because I want to have my boy read how a horse should be trained" and all of that, you know. It was very nice. And the people in South America liked it very much. But it was never translated. I think it's very interesting that Mexico - it was about Mexico - Mexico would have no part of it because it was about one of those dirty Spaniards, (chuckles) the conquistadors. That's really what my agent told me; they wouldn't handle that.

M: Maybe it's not too late.

L: (laughter) Say, that reminds me, they're at work now on a most deluxe edition, 250 copies of The Wonderful Country, new, they're going to use all the original plates and a new type, everything, and it's going to be done by that Aryan Press out in California, which is named Hoyan. I just got this letter yesterday, so I'm very happy that The Wonderful Country is going to be in first class typography in a real limited edition.

M: That's great. Who decided to do that?

L: It's two fellows who are professors at Hardin-Simmons

[University]. It's the Four-O imprint. They have done several books, limited editions, and this one, now they're really going to great lengths to get the original drawings out of the Harry Ransom Center and Hoyan is going to do a thing: he suggests 144 pages in the size 10 by 13 [inches] or practically 10 by 13 [inches], which is a great big thing. And it might be very interesting what he does. You know, he's the fellow that bought out the press of the Grabhorns, the great press in San Francisco. So I'm delighted that these guys are handling it.

M: That's great. The [El Paso] Museum [of Art] should know about this, too, don't you think, if they're going to be looking at the originals?

L: Well, I tell you, this is the kind of thing... Oh, yeah, they should have... this is the kind of thing I doubt if I'll ever see the completion of it, you know; it'll take a hell of a long time to get it done.

M: That's great. Doesn't that make you feel good, when people are...

L: Oh, yeah. I'll say so.

M: So maybe all the flowers weren't appreciated at the time...

L: Oh, well, this would never...

M: It continues to live on.

L: A different bouquet. I think nobody's ever been sore at me about The Wonderful Country, except some Mexican políticos. That's never been translated in Mexico; it was translated in Spain, called La Frontera, but in Mexico it's never been translated because there are two rather villainous políticos.

M: The Castros.

L: The Castros. Isn't that funny how they're very sensitive about things of that kind?

M: [Yes.]

L: Even when it's fiction. We're not characterizing the people in the right way.

M: And it's not as if the villains are just on one side, you know.

L: (chuckles) Yeah.

M: I'm trying to... there wasn't a villain on this side, was

there in The Wonderful Country?

L: Well, not really. There was that kind of outlaw fellow that came in and beat up on poor, little Ludwig Sterner, I remember.

M: Oh, that fellow.

L: Frontier types like that. And robbed the stages and the mines and bullying people in saloons and stuff like that.  
(chuckles)

M: He got his just reward.

L: Oh, yes. Leave that up to a man like Martín Brady.

M: That's exciting about The Wonderful Country.

L: Yeah. That'll be fine. Well, that and this thing about you all putting together an exhibition is very, very...makes me very happy.

M: Where are the original illustrations for The Wonderful Country?

L: They're all in the Harry Ransom Research Center.

M: They're all there.

L: Those and all the illustrations for The Primal Yoke and all the illustrations for The Brave Bulls, the originals, are all there. These people, apparently, these two fellows have many friends down there in Austin and I was a little doubtful that they were going to release, that they would release those things to have an engraver work on them, but apparently there's no trouble there with it.

M: Great.

L: Well, they're just starting now. They don't know what a terrible thing they're going to get into. (chuckles)

M: But the general reception of The Hands of Cantú...

L: It was, you know, it didn't have a wide... I think there were only two or three printings of the thing, but, for instance, a little book club in Chicago bought a thousand copies to give to their members and it got very nice, warm response from people who were interested in the subject. You know, to have the, it's as if the whole book was translated from Spanish. Have you read it recently? It's just, it's, I've had people write and one guy called me on the phone to say, "How do you write Spanish and English? You do it so that I feel like I'm

reading Spanish but it's in English." And that was a point of great pride in this book that I was able to convey some of this feeling about how these people not only confronted but communicated with each other in that courtier-like fashion even out on the frontier.

When Don Vito Cantú displays figures that you can see today in Vienna before the Indians and the Indians had never seen a horse, I think it's kind of interesting. But it took a specialized audience. It's no Western. On the dust-jacket they have "This is when North was the West." There was no West but there was a North. And of course, the hacienda there, that old Don Vito established in the state of Durango, of course, I had some background for that because of the Hacienda Totonilco that Ray Bell had had.

Incidentally, I did a portrait of old Ray Bell and Carl Hertzog printed it. He did the best job he could; he didn't have the fine screen lithography, but it's a very, very presentable thing. And I sent all the copies to Mr. Bell, and I understand he passed them out to his...It was kind of interesting that he, one morning, see, I was down as a guest of his son, and one morning he said he wanted to see me. So I went over to this kind of office place in the hacienda. He said, "I want you to do my portrait." (chuckles) I didn't tell him that I'd never had that said to me before in such a strong manner except when I was aboard the USS Pocomo for a night up in Argentinia Bay in December of 1941. Why, after I'd

been aboard about a half and hour when a marine came and knocked on my cabin door and he said, "At your convenience, the Captain would like to see you." That means get the hell up there quick. So I did. And he said, "Welcome aboard, Mr. Lea. Now I can be available any time you wish for a portrait. I would like to sit for a portrait." (chuckles) So I didn't do it.

M: You didn't?

L: No. No, I got transferred to another ship. And thank God; he wasn't much to look at. And he couldn't say anything because I had spent my time up there; what portraits I did I did of the admiral and a boatswain's mate. (laughter)

M: How did, how have you chosen kind of whom you would paint portraits? It's always been out of friendship, generally?

L: Generally. In the war it was kind of what told a story. I really, I tried to be a good journalist in the war. And to have my graphics express something that people should know about what was going on, you know. And you'd see these types that seemed to embody and exemplify what was it like.

M: Microcosms?

L: Yeah! That's it. That Tex Hill you said he had a good smile. Well, he sort of represented the Flying Tigers as one of the actual pilots, just like that portrait I did of Chennault exemplified the command of those kind of people, you know. So that was really the reason I did things. Of course, I was pretty much, I requested it, but that was, when the time came to do the Madame and the Generalissimo, why, that was, I had to, you know? (chuckles) And I was, you know, very, very pleased that such a thing could happen. But then after The Hands of Cantú, I did, well about three or four years later, why, I was up in Boston, they said, "Well, we think you should do a book about your paintings," and that's how The Picture Gallery came about. Since then I have done no work, haven't published anything on a national basis. I did the In the Crucible of the Sun for just private distribution. And I had a lot of fun because old Bob [Kleberg] said, "Do it any way you want to." I said, "Well, I want to try to do a book where the painting is an imbedded part of the writing so that it's all together in one thing. And I think I need color for Australia." He said, "Go ahead." And he did everything that I asked for.

M: How did that project come about?

L: Oh, one night we were talking down at the ranch and Bob had just come back from a flying trip down there and he said, "I



think you ought to see Australia. And I think you ought to see what we're doing down there." And I said, "Well, I'd sure like to." So...

M: Had you been to Australia before?

L: No. So, gosh, he came by for Sarah and me in his own airplane and we flew in it (chuckles) right to Sidney.

M: Is that right? From El Paso?

L: Well, we stopped off to see Cañonero, his race horse that was out at Santa Anita, and then stopped in Hawaii. It took a... then Hawaii and then Fiji and then briefly in New Zealand, and then over to Sidney. And then we went all the way, clear around the outback and into the heart of it and just had a wonderful sort of a picnic the whole time.

M: How long were you gone that first time?

L: I think it was six or seven weeks. We had enough time to really get some idea about the country and to see it with this guy who was enthusiastic just like Captain King was enthusiastic about finding this place where there was grass, you know. His friend, Charles Stillman, said, "Well, I can see there's some point to that: steamboats finally

disintegrate and you have to buy a new one, but," he said, "you get into cattle and they regenerate themselves." (chuckles) Anyway, it was fun to be out there and meet these "Strimes" [?] and... You haven't seen that book?

M: Yes.

L: Oh, yeah. Did I give you a copy?

M: You gave me a copy. Yes.

L: Yeah. But that was the way it happened with just a conversation one evening and then he carried through.

M: He said he wanted you to do a book?

L: Yeah, to see what he was doing out there. Well, we saw it.

M: How long did you work on that project?

L: Let's see, we were out there in [19]72 at Easter time, I know we were: we went to the races. The big time in Sidney is the races at Easter time. And so I know it was in the spring of 1972. And the book was finished a week before Bob died in September of [19]74, I believe it was September of [19]74. So it was two years. He hadn't seen the text yet because I

hadn't finished the text quite. But I had all the paintings done so he came and brought old Tom Armstrong and Helenita, his daughter, and I guess John Cypher, a whole planeload of them just to see the pictures. We took all the pictures in the house down and hung those eleven pictures. They had a kind of a celebration. Hot damn, Bob was really...he had a great big ice chest that two of his airplane people would put where Bob wanted and open it and they'd ask for champagne glasses and they had all of this very good champagne on ice at all times (chuckles) so that you never wanted. He was a character. And also, very interesting, when we were on the South American trip I saw it first and then I saw it in action in Australia at various times. Bob, when he set out from the ranch, he'd go into, I guess, to the Kleberg bank there in Kingsville, and he had a black suitcase, not a big suitcase but fairly big, and he'd fill it with money and put it in the airplane. And, you know, like, we'd spend the night at Fiji and he'd just get the money out and (chuckles)...regular old time stuff. But that suitcase of money really stunned me. (laughter)

M: But he was able to see the paintings and...

L: Oh, yeah. And he was perfectly well. You know he was in Africa when he began to feel bad. He'd taken some of his grandchildren to Africa and they were all out there in the, on

safari when he began to feel bad. This was in early [19]74. He came back and then he had some tests done and the doctors didn't say anything much about it to him. And by the summertime he was real sick and I think he was only terminally ill, you know, and sick in the hospital for maybe a month and that was all.

M: He had cancer?

L: He died in Houston. Yeah, he had cancer all through his insides. But he had led a very hard life. The only thing [was] he never smoked, but he drank a lot and he was extremely active when he....He could still get up on a horse after he was age seventy, you know. He was something. Well, I miss him. (chuckles)

M: How is Ayla related to Bob Kleberg?

L: She's, uh, let's see, Bob's sister's daughter. That would, she'd be...

M: His niece.

L: A niece. Henrietta was a great girl. I liked her very much. She was Bob's sister, older sister. Bob was the baby of the family of the Klebergs. Henrietta, they named that little

museum for Henrietta. She married. Tom Armstrong went to Princeton and he met a fellow there - let's see, my names are slipping. They were roommates and had a great time together and so Tom brought him down to Texas. Who was the man who was the president of Celanese Corporation? That was this friend. And he [John Larkin] came down to Texas and Tom introduced him to his girl, Henrietta Kleberg. By gosh, this guy walked in and stole her, married her (chuckles) and they had a very happy life, many years and had some children. One of them was killed in the war and another one was no damned good. And then Henrietta's husband died and all this time Tom had been a bachelor and hoping, I guess, that sometime he'd see Henrietta again. So when her husband died, why, after a proper interval and all of that, why, Tom came up and they got married and they had about ten or twelve years of a really happy, wonderful life together. They ended their life. That was, see, that, Tom Armstrong became Ayla's stepfather. And he was the uncle of Anne Armstrong, the ambassador to England and all that.

M: I didn't realize that. Those were good years with the Klebergs.

L: Oh, yeah, they were.

M: And they continue through...

L: Yeah. And there's still a warm feeling in all the family. There's no, you know, so often people write books and then they get angry about things. I was able to not make them angry by telling the truth. I don't know exactly how to express that. But there's not a thing in that book that I don't know to be a fact. And, of course, the part about old Captain King was by far the most interesting part of it. He was really a character. And Grandfather was, I did one illustration that's hanging in the, did you see it in the, up in the corner with all those drawings, or, they still have it, don't they, in that one room in the big house?

M: I haven't been there.

L: Oh, I thought you went there.

M: No. At the King Ranch?

L: Up in the corner there...[yes]. At the big house they have a room of my stuff.

M: Right.

L: And this one wall is full of these illustrations. There's a whole bunch of them, maybe fifty of them, maps and all that. And up in the corner is one that Bob and Helen decided it

might be well not to show. It's old Captain King with a jug of whiskey and his fingers crimped in the handle of the jug and he's got a rifle in the other hand. (laughter) They call him El Cojo - he was crippled in an accident aboard a steamboat. And the other thing was that was interesting: he bought a parrot down in Matamoros for his wife. And on the way up to the ranch in the stagecoach the damn parrot bit him in the nose and took a chunk out of this side of his nose. The rest of his life there was a very large nostril compared to the other nostril. That's why he grew a beard to make it less prominent.

Well, now, we've come down to the paintings and I think that one of the greatest and happiest adventures I've had in the last ten or fifteen years painting and not worrying about prose so that this is a good time to look back and say that I really have had a happy time with what I chose to do. There have been very few knots in it.

M: Maybe next time, I think we're almost at the end of the tape. Maybe next time we'll talk about,...pick up there.

L: About the paintings?

M: [Yes.] Would that be okay?

L: Sure. You know, it's not going to be very good when we run

out of stuff.

M: I don't think we'll run out of stuff. (laughter) We'll go back to the beginning and pick up the things you couldn't talk about because it would be fun, I think, to talk about your portraits, maybe talking about, I'd love to go through the...

L: Well, I wish and Sarah wishes that I would talk about El Paso when I was a boy. She's such an El Pasoan now after more than half a century that she resents, like I do, a lot of this stuff that's not true about El Paso, you know. And people do it in the best spirit, they just don't know how things were in those days. Well, I don't know that I'm any kind of authority but I think that the town was so absolutely different in those days that someone should do something about it. I think that Cleofas Calleros was not a good historian. He tended to distort things to fit his own opinions of people and events. And I think that Leon Metz is doing a better job, but Leon wasn't here in those times.

END OF TAPE 8, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 9, SIDE A

This is a continuation of an interview of Tom Lea by Adair Margo on June 19, 1993.



M: But I thought we would, you know, talk about today the library project and then some of your subjects for painting and then personal, you know, friendships. And, if going through that book you showed me with portraits helps, you know, recall some of your, the people you painted and you drew and your admiration for them, I think that would be fun.

L: Well, about the library, that really started with my friendship with Louis Daeuble and that goes back to the times when Louis worked for Percy McGhee, who was the architect of that Centennial Museum building up there on the campus at UTEP, and he was always my strong advocate since I had done a little mural up in the Brannigan Memorial Library up in Las Cruces. And so Percy gave me the first job that came along, which was designing that lintel over the main doorway of the little museum and working in his office was Louis Daeuble, whom I met there, and we struck up a good friendship. I met Ed Carroll, too, but Ed wasn't, he wasn't working for Pop McGhee, we called him. And Pop was also the one that designed the Federal Courthouse, in which I have the Pass of the North mural. And so it was a very friendly atmosphere and when we, I was made a board member in the early [19]50s of the El Paso Public Library. And we got a bond issue through to build a new library: the old Carnegie building was in pretty bad shape and we had outgrown it. So McKee, who was the, Robert McKee

[the contractor] was kind of the papa around here for any architectural improvements in the town or any big jobs. And when the bond issue was passed he said, "Well, I'll see that we build something that the bond issue can take care of. But we'll build it right." And, of course, we knew he would. And Louis was then a partner in Carroll and Daeuble. Their place was out on Yandell Boulevard opposite that Houston Square place.

M: Where's Houston Square?

L: It's right across from your church [First Baptist].

M: Oh.

L: You know, the park there.

M: Oh, the park, sure.

L: And so they had a wonderful kid in there who was a designer, Carroll and Dauble did; his name was Carl Young and he was a marvelously gifted man. And they set Carl and Bill [Ewing] Waterhouse, who was one of the chief designers there in the firm, to work on a good design for the library which old McKee would build. Well, Miss [Maud] Sullivan, of course, had died by that time, and there was a new librarian named Helen

Farrington, and she thought that we would be wrong to go ahead with any local designs without consulting first an architect who had had experience doing libraries for the...how the traffic worked and all the various technical things that a library needed to know. So we hired a man named Githers from New York. He had been the designer of the Brooklyn Public Library, I believe. And I remember that Louisa Wilmarth, who was a darling, she was on the board, too, and she always referred to him as, "Now, Mister Ginthers." And it burned the old boy up (laughter), you know.

M: It was Giffers?

L: It was without the "n": Githers. Well, anyway, he provided us with a sketch suggestion at a certain cost and it looked just like an icebox, a refrigerator, you know, a big square with some places in it that had, that would allow light to come in and a place to come in and out of and that was about it. So we said, "Well, thank you very much and we'll take your advice about traffic patterns and so on in the interior, but we're going to have our local architects do the building and so on." He went off with his fee very happily and Carl Young and Bill [Ewing] Waterhouse and Louis Daeuble then started work on it and I think they did one of the original fine pieces of architecture in our town. It still remains to me one of the good things.

And this: Bill [Ewing] Waterhouse went out to Hueco Tanks and made some copies of some of those pictographs and he said, "How about putting some of those, this is the indigenous design around here, in the ceiling of the library entrance?" And so we cut, Bill, and I was there, we cut little patterns and nailed them down to the concrete forms so that when they poured the concrete, why, here were these incised little figures of Indians and horses and I think we found one with a conquistador and made a Spaniard out of him. They, I think, are a very attractive part of the library to this day.

And Louis said, "Now, we've got to have a mural of yours." And I said, "I'd love to." And he said, "We're going to design it so that it's got a good place." And they showed me the plans and it was right opposite the entrance, and so [it was the] right place for it. And they said, "We're going to make it the Southwest Room. We're going to call it the Southwest Room and we're going to put our fine pieces of Southwestern Americana in this room, but it will in no way conflict with the view of your mural. And we're going to have it so that there's a gate on there and people cannot enter to do anything that might damage the mural, but they can study in there." And there was room for some study tables and, of course, the racks. And everybody kind of pitched in. Joe [José] Cisneros designed the little wood reliefs on the ends of the bookshelves, Southwestern motifs, and I got Stan Stoefen, the framer, to design worktables and chairs and he,

a marvelous man with wood, he got some pecan wood and did a long table and several chairs in a beautiful style of modern stuff that fit in with the style of the room itself. And I don't know what's happened to those things that Stan designed. They were excellent pieces. Then he did this: using this pecan wood, he made a table after, it was a reproduction of a photograph he had of one of the old Spanish monastery tables and I think four chairs to go with it. I don't know, I think that table is still in the library but it's out somewhere.

M: It's not in the Southwestern Room?

L: Hum?

M: It's not in the Southwestern Room anymore?

L: No. And, Farrington took it out...I don't know, but it's no longer the Southwestern Room. It's...that was under the auspices of another librarian that came here. But, anyway, I couldn't do the mural because I was absolutely up to here in the King Ranch. And I said, "As soon as I get the King Ranch done I'll do the mural." Well, I said, "You better prepare the wall, though, so that when I get ready, why, we can do it." So there was a wonderful guy that had installed the canvas in the courthouse for me. His name was Ray Schenk. There were a lot of good craftsmen around our town in those

days and Ray very happily, he had a little Ford truck and he was a great paperhanger and he could also knew to handle a heavy linen canvas as if it were paper on a wall. And I ordered the canvas from my friend up in New York, from Fredericks. Arthur Fredericks had become a friend of mine and he sent the canvas down from ... Belgian linen canvas. And Ray Schenk mounted it there on that back wall there of the Southwest Room. And there it sat and got nice and, you know, mellow and there was the canvas waiting for me, I think, for two years. And every once in a while Ed Carroll and Louis - I'd see them at a party and they'd say, "When are you going to do our mural?" "Well, I'm going to do it soon." So the day came when I could do it and I had already, I had it in my mind exactly how I wanted to do it and what I wanted to do. And so I made the sketch, and the board and the architects were all very pleased with it. And I said, "This is all on me. You provide the wall and I'll do my work as a gift to the library and to the city." So everything went fine. I made the design for it and I needed an assistant and I had one very handy in the name of Sarah Lea. And so we made the, I showed Sarah how to read scale drawing and we would snap lines a foot apart and our design was two inches equals a foot. And I explained all that. And she helped me draw the design, in contour with charcoal, onto the canvas. And then we painted the thing. I think it only took us about three weeks, something like that.

M: Working every day? Did you go every day?

L: Yeah. Uh hum. We went every day. And I would mix up...Now, Sarah's part of the painting was, I would mix up a batch of paint, we'll say, for the mountain over on the right hand side of the painting and then she would paint right up to the line, she was perfect on doing things that, you know, precise things.

M: Exact.

L: Exact. And we got it finished and so I insisted that Sarah also sign it. And we had a lot of fun over that. And it was very well received by the library board and by the people. They had a party at the library one afternoon and asked everybody to come in and see it, and we were all delighted. Carl [Hertzog] had prepared a bibliography of the history of this part of the country and particularly of El Paso, the people that...it was sort of connected with the Twelve Travelers thing but with books there in the Southwest Room. So it was a very nice tie-up there.

And a few, oh, I guess it was a month or so later, my good friend Rex Smith, who was with American Airlines, he was one of the vice presidents of American Airlines, and he was a great bullfight aficionado and that's how we had, well, I had met him during the war, but he was very interested in my doing

The Brave Bulls. And he said, "You'll never do it. It will be a lousy book." And he said, "I've got all kinds of information about the bullfights, if you need it." And I said, "Well, I'm going to try anyway." And when I had finished the book, why, I sent one of the first copies to Rex and he wired back, "Su libro tiene muy buen[a] casta." (chuckles)

M: "Muy buen casta?"

L: "Casta." That means, casta is breeding. It's, you know, when you say it's traditional and it's correct and it's also strong, it has, it's casta; it's a word that is hardly translatable into English. Anyway, that delighted me. He came down, oh, two or three months after the thing was finished and he was also interested in stuff that Carl was doing, Carl Hertzog. Carl took him down to see the mural. And Rex wrote a little piece about it that I think is very interesting. I don't know, Carl printed it up then with a photograph of the mural and I don't know what's happened to that thing. Somewhere I have a copy of what Rex said, but it was, it built me up pretty good. I loved it. And...

M: But that was a gift, your labor and Sarah's labor was a gift to the city.



L: Oh, yeah, to the city. [Yes.] To the library. But that's the story of it.

M: That's beautiful.

L: I take satisfaction in it. The one thing that I think is interesting about it is it has no evidence of people, the human race [is] not in it. And the only connection that you might have is the horizon line is at the same level as the eye of the onlooker or the spectator or the viewer of the painting. He can fit into the level of the horizon and there it is. Also I think it's an interesting development out of my great fascination when I was young of the Indian ceramic designs. The Hopi and the Casas Grandes and some of the Pueblo pottery designs fascinated me, and if you'll look, you'll see in the mesas and in the clouds and over in the the patterns in the sand dune and so on, it's very strongly reminiscent of some of the thoughts that the Indian ceramic people must have had about the natural forms.

M: That was a wonderful gift.

L: It was great fun to do it.

M: Well, you mentioned Carl taking Rex Smith down there. Tell me a little more about Carl Hertzog and how you met him and your

friendship and...

L: Oh that was fun, it was. I think I wrote some place that ten minutes after I had first met Carl that he and I were lifetime friends. We just hit it off. He came up when I had the studio above Norton Brothers bookstore there in the Hill[s] Building. He came up and knocked on the door one day. I had never met him and he introduced himself. And I invited him in because I was working on the, I believe I was working on those murals for the Dallas State of Texas Building there for the Centennial. He came in and he said, "Well, Miss Sullivan said you wouldn't mind if I came by and introduced myself. I'm a printer down here on San Antonio Street and got some work here for, you know Billy Tooley, who's managing the [Hotel] Paso del Norte. He wants some drawings to go with the advertisements I'm doing and would you be interested?" Well, I was interested in any damn thing that would bring in a dollar and I said, "Certainly." So that was the first job we did together was some ads, two or three ads for the Paso del Norte Hotel. And, incidentally, that was one of the first little brushes we had with, I don't know what you'd call it, the proper way to look at the what are known now as Hispanics. I made a...it was one of the characters, I had a real raw-bone cowboy who was obviously from Oklahoma or somewhere and I had a Mexican guitar player who was round and fat and jolly and had a big moustache. And it seemed that some people thought

I was caricaturing the Mexican people, so I said, "Okay, Carl, we'll fix that up." And I, he pasted over the little fat Mexican a real skinny charro guy (chuckles) who looked very serious and glum. And that was better public relations. I think that was one of the early ones. (laughter)

M: That would be an early one.

L: This was in 1937. Anyway, Carl and I would go over... We both had this friend that - he later had his own saloon, Carlos' Place they called it - it was there on Avenida Juárez just across the bridge. But in the days that I'm talking about, why, Carlos was a bartender in the Old Tivoli, which was right at the head of the bridge there, the Santa Fe bridge, and the place where we all gathered and, oh, Sarah and I would go over there at least every Saturday night always. And my father had a table; it was there for luncheon on Saturday noons. My father was always there with his wife Rosita and sometimes Sarah and me as guests and sometimes Bertha Schaer, my stepsister, and her husband. And we all...the old Tivoli was a family stomping ground, really. And Carlos was a very friendly man and he also was an aficionado of toros. And he would fix us - Karl and I would come in in the afternoons, summer afternoons, and we were talking big things about the books we were going to do and everything and Carlos would fix us these fine, very tall, very pink planter's punches. And

Vivian would be sore as hell at me for bringing Carl home a little stiff, you know. (laughter)

M: You were a bad influence.

L: We had a great time. The first book we did together was, my wife Nancy had left some manuscripts and among them was the journal that she had kept, a notebook. And I thought it was a fascinating kind of record of her mind and of something about our life and I showed it to Carl and Carl said, "Let's do it!" And we printed twenty-five numbered copies. That was all. And Carl used what - he had an old press - in those days you could send off to the, I think it was called the Fairbanks Company or something, and get this wonderful handmade European paper. And he got the paper and he used his own press and he had no facilities for, or no type faces that he could hand set, the only thing he could do, he did have a good set of mats for Caslon Old Style, just in one size, I think it was twelve point or ten point. And he used that and he set little titles out in the margin of every page of what it was about and everything. And it was a beautifully done book. And we gave the book, there was never a copy sold; most of the books were given to Nancy's friends up in Chicago. And I gave some away here. And I always felt that in giving them, it was sort of a loan some way...

M: Kind of a what?

L: A loan.

M: A loan.

L: To my friends about something that I didn't want to speak further about. I don't know. This was very.... And I think my friends understood it. Several of them on their death have given the book back to me, which I have thought was wonderful and I could give it to another of my friends. So there was a great bond between Carl Hertzog and me and we went on then.

I met Frank Dobie the next year after I met, no it was the same year that I met Carl, and I did the Patch of Gold and Yaqui Silver drawings, illustrations, and it was kind of mixed up. He got to meet Carl and we had, we were dreaming of a book of Castañeda's account of the Coronado expedition. And we took it to, some proofs Carl made of the wonderful title page, and I had done a drawing and he had set type for the first page. And we took it to Mrs. Sullivan and she said, "Well, you've got to have an introduction by a good historian on this and you probably should have it annotated, too." And she said, "I know just the man: Frederick Hodges, and I'll write him." So she wrote him. And he was at the Southwest Museum, I think it was in San Diego. And he wrote back and he said, "Well, the Grabhorns have just done it." (laughter)

The great Grabhorn press in San Francisco, see. So that took the wind out of our sails on it as far as Coronado was concerned. I think a year or so later, why, when I went down to the brush country with Frank Dobie, why, this Randado, this ranch right next to Frank's friend Tom East's ranch there called the, let's see, it was called the San Antonio Viejo Ranch, I think. Anyway, I had the opportunity to spend a little time all by myself at the ruin of one of the out buildings in the tank, the horse tank of the old Spanish ranch of Randado, they call it "Randao" down there. And I wrote a piece about my feelings about it when I got home and showed it to Frank and he said, "Well, I don't know if it's prose or poetry, but it's pretty damn good." And I showed it to Carl and he said, "Let's print it!" And Carl was the kind of guy, for instance, this so-called poem that I wrote was about horses of two colors, the vallo coyote and the grullo. The vallo coyote was the lineback dun and the grullo was the name for the sandyhook crane. It's that grey, I think the cowboys call it a mouse color. It was a great strain of Spanish horses there that were raised in the old Rancho Randado. And Carl said, "Let's print it in those two colors." And that little thing that he finally came up with, which is now very hard to find.

M: What's it called?

L: I call it Randado. R-A-N-D-A-D-O. And I think it was eight pages with my drawings on practically every page and the drawings and the text done in the grullo color and some of the stuff, with the dun color. The legend was that the old guy that established the ranch had taken the print of his cup as his brand, a round circle of the world, you know, so Carl had the round rim of the world in the color of the vallo coyote and everything and I don't think there was anything that was more...I'll show you a copy, it's unique I think in a way.

M: I'd like to see it.

L: Have you seen a copy?

M: I haven't seen it.

L: We gave them away. Oh, we charged two dollars and I think we sold ten or fifteen. The rest, I think the edition was 110 copies, the rest we gave away.

M: How did you make a living doing projects like that?

L: Oh, we'd save up. (laughter) I was doing some, see, at this time, why, I had done illustrations for Frank Dobie on his first book and the Saturday Evening Post had seen the illustrations and I did some illustrations for stories in the