Edwin C. Landis Interview on Robert B. Meyner

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Interviewee: Edwin C. Landis, Jr., partner in Meyner and Landis LLP, Newark, New Jersey.

Site of Interview: The Robert B. & Helen S. Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania.

JOHN KINCAID (JK): We are here with Mr. Edwin C. Landis, Jr., of the law firm of Meyner and Landis, founded in 1962 and headquartered in Newark, New Jersey. Among his other accolades, Mr. Landis was selected as a super-lawyer in 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Today is March 24, 2015, Tuesday, at 2:35 p.m. Also present are Diane Shaw (DS), Director of Special Collections at Lafayette College's Skillman Library, and Danielle Moran, Lafayette College class of 2015, who is majoring in government and law and history. My name is John Kincaid, Director of the Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government. So welcome, Ed, we're very happy that you were able and willing to come over and do this interview with us. Why don't we start off just by you telling us about yourself? Can you give us a brief biography of when and where you were born and what your education and career background has been?

EDWIN C. LANDIS (ECL): Sure. I was born January 7th, 1935, in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, the fifth of five brothers. I was 11 1/2 years younger than the next oldest one. I was to be my mother's daughter but it didn't work out. I also was the fifth of five brothers to go to Lafayette College. I was the only one who had a choice because at that time the Depression was long over and my father said I could go anywhere I wanted. But I was discouraged by the alumnus who came to interview me, to convince me to accept a scholarship to Yale; so I came to Lafayette because it was home. I lived at home for two years; then I lived in a fraternity house for two years.

My connection with Bob Meyner started from the fact that I, having four brothers in the war effort during World War II, became--now a habit that I can't break--used to following the news in the newspapers and reading newspapers regularly. I also learned geography because if you wanted to follow World War II, you had to understand the geography of World War II.

So I was aware of who Bob Meyner was, but we had never met. During my freshman year at Lafayette, I think it was in January of 1953, I read in the local paper that he had announced that he was running for governor and he was a Democrat. I had always thought of myself as a Democrat, not knowing that both my parents were Republicans (laughter) because my father, having survived –

JK: Go ahead, sorry.

ECL: My father, having survived the Great Depression, always thought very highly of FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt], so it didn't occur to me that they were Republicans. So, going to Lafayette, having made a decision in advance that I was going to go to law school, I knew from my reading that probably the majority of people in various political offices were lawyers. I was interested in politics, and I had followed it. I remember talking to my young friends in 1944 when FDR ran against [Thomas E.] Dewey and thinking that clearly he was the choice and then again in '48 when Truman ran for his own full term in office. So, it seemed logical to me and here's a hometown guy; so I said, "Gee, I'd like to, I'd like to get involved in politics and perhaps I ought to stop and volunteer to help." So one day on my way home from school in the afternoon -- I was commuting, as I said before. I had my very first car, which cost me $100.

I didn't have to walk like my brothers did. I simply went into Meyner's office and spoke to his secretary, who had been his secretary since he bought the practice in the Depression. Her name was Dorothy Smith, and she said, "I'll tell him you're here." Well, unbeknownst to me, he, having been similarly interested in public affairs and local affairs and Lafayette affairs, immediately knew who I was without asking me because my oldest two brothers were valedictorians at Phillipsburg High School and valedictorians at Lafayette College. So I was given a grand welcome. My father was famous for having put all these guys through college.

My father grew up in Berks County, Pennsylvania. He never learned English until he was in first grade. So my father was pretty fluent in a German dialect, and Bob Meyner's father traveled in German circles; so it was interesting to me because it didn't occur to me that he would know who I was. I thought I was just a Lafayette undergrad who lived in Phillipsburg who came in; so he welcomed me with open arms and we talked and I told him how interested I was. I didn't know much about state government. But he spent probably 45 minutes with me, which he probably at the time thought, well, it might be wasted. But we agreed that I would organize Lafayette for Meyner. That was my job. He said, "Well, you'll have some expenses," and handed me a $50 bill. I put an announcement in the college newspaper. I didn't know at the time what his fraternity was, but I got a turnout for an initial meeting and he had in mind what we would do. It was totally compatible with my interests. Meyner thought that we would perform two main functions. One was to travel with him to campaign events, as he felt it would be useful to him. The other was to send letters to Lafayette alumni in New Jersey even though there weren't that many registered Democrats among Lafayette alumni. He thought it would be useful because there would be some carryover if he won the nomination. We could send another letter in the fall, so we did that.

And basically we did some travel. If I couldn't go, I'd find somebody else, but through that I met his fraternity brothers because a part of the turnout to that first meeting was men from his fraternity. They ended up adopting me, and that's the fraternity I joined; so I became his fraternity brother, although that's –

DS: And that was Alpha Chi Ro.

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ECL: Alpha Chi Ro, which has two houses that are now filled with sorority girls. They were on campus. One is right here at the corner. In any event, that was pretty much it. I remember that a handful of us, after he was elected in November, went over to Phillipsburg where there was a big parade. I forget whether we were in the parade or just observed it. I know they came down Route 22. The police closed it off, and it was very exciting. I had made prearranged plans with a high school friend who went to Rutgers to spend that summer in Alaska, so I did not do anything in the summer of 1953. It was only during the spring semester and then in the fall semester that the Lafayette Meyner for Governor group worked to help his campaign. After the '53 election, I was focused on things at the campus, and I didn't think any more of Meyner.

DS: And that was '58, right?

ECL: No, I'm talking about '53 and '54.

DS: You're in '53, OK.

ECL: I'm talking about '53, when Meyner won in 1953. After he was elected and took office in January of '54, you know, I paid some attention to what was going on. I was probably reading the *New York Time*s; there wasn't too much in that, but I would always read the Easton paper, which I still do. So I was aware of what was happening, and I saw names that I knew from Phillipsburg whom he took with him, and I found out, you know, I could see what had happened to the law practice that Tom Swick had taken over, who had been his associate in the law practice; but I didn't really think too much about it. In the summer of '54, one of the rising seniors in the fraternity house was the head waiter at a resort in the Poconos. He came around and said, "Who wants to go work as a waiter in the Poconos?" So, I had taken that job. It started with Memorial Day Weekend and then resumed later, you know, in the middle of June or something like that. I forget exactly when.

I had worked the three days of the Memorial Day Weekend in the Poconos, and one of the traditions at the time, I think at almost all the fraternities, was that alumni weekend was the same week as graduation weekend. In other words, graduation would be on a Thursday and the seniors would clear out. Most of the students would have gone home before because they went home after exams, and then the alumni weekend would start on Friday and go through Sunday. Well, there was a tradition that the fraternities would have banquets for the alumni. They'd have to find waiters among the local undergraduates. So I said, sure. I didn't want to be a waiter; I was the pot washer, dishwasher.

It turned out that Lafayette honored Meyner, having been newly elected governor of New Jersey. Meyner happened in the parade to somehow meet my brother John, class of '39, the oldest of my family. And I'm happily dipping my hands in boiling water. (I can still put my hands in boiling water.) The cook wouldn't have it any other way. In the big sink in the kitchen and out, in he comes, with a shout (he had a booming voice when he

wanted to use it). Meyner said, "Landis! I hear you're working in the Poconos this summer. You can't do that. You want to be a lawyer. You've got to come work in my office," he said. "I saw your brother John in the parade. He said you can live with them." Well, that was never an issue because my brother John used me as his principal babysitter from the time he moved to Princeton in '47. I was the gardener and the babysitter. I would spend a lot of time down there; so it was a logical arrangement. It was fine, and his executive assistant, Ray Male, lived in Princeton; so I would commute with him as often as I would drive myself. I had a great time that summer and met all the key people right from the start—Brendan Byrne, Dave Satz, and Milton Conford, who was the first "Counsel to the Governor."

JK: Milton who?

ECL: Milton Conford. He was the first Counsel to the Governor. He was the guy who did not have good people skills; so Meyner put him on the bench. I suspect that he took the job because he wanted to be on the bench. Meyner didn't know him well. He had been mayor of Hillside at that time, a white suburb of Newark, now one of the black suburbs of Newark. But in any event, Milton was a very bright guy, and it was a great experience to meet and know him.

I probably learned more about writing than I did anywhere else in my life because Meyner, and John Farley and Ray Male, demanded that letters be written crisply, to the point, not a lot of extra persiflage, if you will. The job mostly was rewriting letters that had come out of the departments. Somebody would write in, and Meyner insisted that everybody's letter be answered intelligently. What happened would be that we didn't have all the detailed information; so if somebody wrote in and complained about something in the motor vehicle department, which was very common, it would get bucked down through the attorney general to the motor vehicle director and bucked back up. By the time it got to the governor's office, about three-quarters of them still were not in a form that Meyner would sign and had to be rewritten. This was an overwhelming job for John Farley and Ray Male; so they were delighted to have me. They taught me how to correct these letters, and I would rewrite the letters so that Meyner would sign them. That was the job, and it was fun because I learned a lot about state government and I, you know, incidentally learned how to write with clarity.

DS: And was that the summer of '54?

ECL: That was the summer of 1954. When I was invited to come back the next summer, my duties expanded in that Meyner occasionally would send me off on fairly confidential investigations. "Go talk to somebody." One I'll never forget. I had no idea that my relatives had founded Vineland. He sent me down to talk to the editor of the Vineland newspaper. I didn't know, but his name was Landis. I mean, he sent me to various things. I remember several trips; he was trying to develop a statewide Democratic Party. Meyner worked hard to develop the Democratic Party in the Republican sections of the state. So he sent me down once to talk to different people in Atlantic County. I ended up finishing

early, and I'd never been to a racetrack, so I went to the Atlantic City racetrack and who did I see there but my classmate, Don King, who years later became a judge, as it turned out, in Newark.

But it was a lot of fun. I got to see a lot of the state that I had never seen. The shore was not as mobbed then; you could drive. Even on a weekday, the shore today, you go down and there are cars everywhere; it's hard to move around. So I enjoyed that immensely. I saw things and met people. Years later, when I came back to be the governor's Executive Secretary, I was starting to become fairly well known, so that, you know, somebody, maybe Dave Wilentz, would come in and say hello, and later part of my job was to oversee the office greeter. That was my full-time job from 1960 to 1962, as the Executive Secretary to the Governor.

My Executive Secretary's office then was right behind that reception desk, in the governor's reception area. He had a desk in the corner and the desk was also manned by a state trooper. He was the only state trooper around. Today, I guess, there's probably a dozen; they're scattered around the very extensive governor's office. Then the governor's office was relatively small. There was, on the governor's side, it was just the executive secretary off the big main hallway, the executive assistants and the governor's secretarial pool on the hall, on the hallway out to the main hallway on one side and John Farley (the Press Secretary) and Ray Male on the other side, where I sat those college summers, and down across the main hallway were the Counsels' office and then, the number varied during Meyner's term from three to six attorneys. But that was the whole governor's office. Now, I think they have the whole first floor of the State House; but in any event, it was kind of cozy in a way. You got to meet everybody.

DS: Ed, did you have a title during this time period?

ECL: No, we were called summer clerks. This, like many things under Meyner, came out of his legal background. Law clerks were ubiquitous. You had to be a law clerk for nine months to take the bar exam; so we were called summer clerks. Later I think it got modified because there were people like Ronnie Zweig; I'm trying to find out if he's still alive. But Ronnie came in there soon after I did, and he had that same capacity. He may not have liked to be called a clerk; he was called an assistant. He had a graduate degree in public affairs from the University of Pennsylvania's Public Administration School, as I recall. He was a Pennsylvania kid from Shenandoah, PA.

JK: And his name again?

ECL: Zweig. He later became Bergen County Administrator. He stayed in New Jersey. I will ask one of my pals in Bergen County, who was actually in the Byrne administration, to ask him what happened to Zweig, whether he's still alive. But he was probably a year older than me, and there were other young people who came through there. Joel Sterns came through there. I was not alone. And I did this the summers of '54, '55, '56, and the summer of '57. In the summer of '57, I brought my classmate, who was the valedictorian

of my class, Rick Kuder, after his first year at Harvard Law. He worked in the governor's office, too. It had expanded somewhat even then. The role of governor has grown immensely over the years. Despite Meyner's conservatism, it grew even in Meyner's eight years. So that was the last summer, because at the end of that summer, I was married, and then in '58, I stayed in Ann Arbor. I did not come back.

But I did work in the Governor's office in '57. The reason I didn't do a legal clerkship that summer of '57 after my first year in law school, because most of the people would, the young New Jersey lawyers to be would do the clerkship in three summers, so that they weren't delayed a year in getting admitted to the bar. But I had never planned to practice law. I was kind of living my brother John's dream. My brother John was a corporate executive before corporate executives were treated like entrepreneurs financially. My brother John wished he had been an entrepreneur because, having suffered the most pains of poverty while growing up, he always had the biggest ambition for wealth. So he decided that I should go to business school and find myself some management training at some big corporation; then he would be happy to set me up in something entrepreneurial.

I had followed that right to the very end. I had arranged with my constitutional law professor to do research for him, and I was accepted at the University of Michigan business school where I would get an MBA in a year and two summers, by giving me some credit for law school courses.

DS: At Michigan?

ECL: Yes, the business school. It's still there. It's not quite as close to the law school as it used to be, but it was then across the street. So I just walked in one day and filled out the form and applied and was accepted. And in March of my third year, I said, "I don't think I want to do that. I don't think I want to have a yacht; I don't need a mansion." I didn't know what I'd do if I had a lot of money, and I could see what my brother was doing when he started to have extra money. He was giving it to Lafayette College, so I said –

DS: A noble thing.

ECL: I think this is not what I want to do. I said, "I think I would like to practice law." I'm going to try it. So I sent out all my applications for the required 9-month clerkship. Instead of staying out there for the spring break week at the law school in early March, I think it was, I came east where I had set up many interviews. I had appellate division judges, a Supreme Court justice, the biggest law firms. They all were just curious about this guy who had spent four summers working in the governor's office and now he thinks he'd like to practice law.

After the interview, I was usually told, "Well, we've done our hiring for this year already." The best was the Supreme Court justice who was a Lafayette alumnus who said,

"Well, I alternate." (He went to Yale Law School). He said, "One year I hire a Yale law alumnus and the next year I hire a Lafayette alumnus."

DS: Who was that?

ECL: He was from Monmouth County. It was Haydn Proctor '26. He had already hired his clerk, as had almost all the others who interviewed me. But, so going back to Ann Arbor, I realized that I had only one interesting offer, from Lenny Garth's firm. He is now a senior Third Circuit Court of Appeals judge. I was very impressed with him, and I liked the law firm, but it was in Paterson. I didn't want to work in Paterson. I didn't want to work in Phillipsburg. I wanted to work in Newark. So what happened then was that I thought of lawyers I knew from my summers in Trenton. Brendan Byrne was no longer there. He was in Newark, the prosecutor. I didn't want to call Brendan because he would offer me a clerkship in the prosecutor's office. I had very little interest in criminal law. I'm only interested to the extent as you know we all should be. I thought of the other guys that I thought were good lawyers. At this point, David Furman was the attorney general and Dave Satz was the first assistant attorney general. I knew Satz better.

So I called Dave Satz for his advice as to finding a clerkship. He said, "Oh, you've got to come here. Stop looking. Don't give it another thought." I only called him for advice as to what I should do. But he said, "You're going to come here, you're going to be my clerk."

The original Supreme Court rule was that you couldn't clerk in anything but a private law office, but he said, "I got Chief Justice Vanderbilt to agree to let us have three clerks. I'll go back to let us have a fourth clerk here."

There's a backstory to that in that Vanderbilt [Arthur T. Vanderbilt, Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, 1948-1957] was a very, very independent Republican leader and first Chief Justice under the 1947 Constitution. He was unhappy that Driscoll [Alfred E. Driscoll, governor of New Jersey, 1947-1954] wasn't succeeded by a Republican. While Chief Justice, Vanderbilt kept running the Essex County Republican organization. Meyner had some evidence of that and called him on it. So Meyner had a little edge over Vanderbilt, and Vanderbilt couldn't be as independent as he wanted to be because Meyner, as he did with a number of things, did not pursue it publicly, did not openly criticize Vanderbilt. Meyner had great respect for Vanderbilt. He was a brilliant man.

A similar thing happened with Neil Gallagher, who was the congressman from Hudson County [Cornelius Edward "Neil" Gallagher represented New Jersey's 13th congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1959-1973]. Meyner had given him an honorific position. He was a member of the Turnpike Authority. But Meyner found that Neil had his finger in the pot somehow, to make a little extra money from the Authority. (That happened in the year and a half while I was the Executive Secretary. That's why I was familiar with it, but I'm sure similar problems happened other times with people in the state government.) But Meyner sent the word out that if

Neil resigned from the Authority, he would not take it any further. Politics was more of a gentleman's game then than it is today.

So there I went to work for Dave Satz. I was making, because I wasn't an admitted lawyer, I think I originally was paid $3,000 a year. When I showed up and reported to him, Dave said, "Well, Ed, 90% of what I do is administrative, so I'm going to turn you over to the second assistant attorney general, Ted Botter (who is still alive). I said, "OK." So I reported to Ted Botter, and Ted Botter said (obviously I had been given great recommendations from Dave), "I'm going to teach you how to write appellate briefs for the state." His role was the state's attorney on appeals, whether to the Appellate Division or the Supreme Court. So that's what I did.

I did that from about June until probably (actually I think I showed up for work before the end of May because we graduated fairly early at Michigan). I did that until December. What happened then was that the Supreme Court had changed the rule so that you could get limited admission just by passing the bar, and I found out in December that I had passed the bar. I took the exam in July. I was admitted to practice law on a limited basis (meaning in the office of a fully admitted attorney); so I was promoted to a legal assistant. I was given a raise to $4,000 a year -- and I then started working as a lawyer. I finished off whatever assignments I had for Ted Botter and then started representing state agencies. I was first given the assignment to represent the health department, which was most interesting because everything that today we consider part of environmental law was part of the health department. So I was enforcing rules for clean water and clean air, and that was a heady experience because I'd go into court and the bigger polluters were often represented by the senior partners of the biggest law firms. So all of a sudden, I mean, nothing unique about my experience, all the young lawyers in the attorney general's office had similar experiences. (Today they have hundreds and hundreds of lawyers. Back then there were 45 total and a few of them were part-timers.) So I was a practicing lawyer (fully licensed in April, 1960 after finishing my 9 months) doing important work beyond my years. That was my experience.

I really, during all that time after 1957, had no contact with Meyner. But he was aware, you know; nobody did anything around the State House that didn't somehow filter back to Meyner. He didn’t need to have indirect knowledge about me, though. I was commuting from Phillipsburg with his secretary, Dorothy Smith. So he was aware of my presence in Trenton. And in the summer of 1960, two things had happened.

Meyner had an interesting approach to finding lawyers for state government and other slots he had to fill. He used Joe Weintraub when he was Chief Justice [Joseph Weintraub, Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, 1957-1973] as a talent scout. Joe succeeded Milton Conford as Counsel to the Governor. Meyner then appointed him to succeed Vanderbilt as Chief Justice.

In almost every way, Counsel to the Governor was the most important position in the Governor’s office. Joe Weintraub was followed by Harold Kolovsky and then it was

Vince Biunno, and then when Vince wanted to go back to his Newark practice, Meyner brought in somebody that Weintraub had recommended, Steve Wiley, as the counsel. So at the time, I think it was 1960, Wiley had come on board.

But first, some background information. Meyner had, in 1959, when Brendan Byrne left the position of Executive Secretary to the Governor to be Essex County prosecutor, appointed Curt Meanor to follow Brendan.

I had not met him because I wasn't working in the governor's office. While I was in the Attorney General's office, I had no contact with the governor's office. I don't think there was anybody in between, but Meyner had made Brendan the Essex County prosecutor, which was a job that Brendan really wanted. (The heavy lifting in Byrne's office was always done by another guy that came out of Meyner's administration, who's now dead, named Joe Lordi. Joe was a classic; not super ambitious, but a guy who just was a great lawyer and was the best lead deputy, probably, that Brendan could have ever had for the prosecutor's office.)

So my work kept going on and I was happy. It was 1960. I would run into lawyers who would ask me if I wanted to leave. These were all senior partners I was dealing with in litigation. I would often be asked, and the one guy who persisted was a guy named Bernie Hellring (I think Bernie was Lafayette, Class of '35). Bernie had a small Newark law firm from an earlier time when, during the 1930s, Jews were not accepted everywhere in the older firms. The old established firms in Newark were just then, in the late '50s, starting to hire Jews. His was one of several Jewish firms that would mostly represent the Jewish community. In the '60s, thus Newark still had a number of firms known as Jewish law firms. Bernie had a small one but was well connected.

He had one fantastic client, Wakefern, which is the co-op that's the parent of the ShopRite supermarket chain. The firm was Hellring, Lindeman and Lieberman. So Bernie said, "Oh Ed, you've got to come with us. After a few years it will be Hellring, Lindeman, Lieberman and Landis." He was a nice guy, and I had nothing against that. But I was just doing my work in Trenton in 1960 and enjoying it immensely (with a job offer in the background), and in the summer of 1960, Meyner intervened. Well, first a little background on Curt Meanor. Curt was another Joe Weintraub recommendation. Curt was a young lawyer in the Jersey City firm then known as Crummy, Del Deo (now called Gibbons). In any event, Jersey City was home to the defense law firms in New Jersey because the defense practice originated with railroads, and Jersey City was the railroad hub much more than Newark. So the biggest defense firms, almost to this day, were originally Jersey City firms. Curt was in one of those firms. I remember Curt telling me once that when Meyner asked him if he would be interested in coming down to Trenton, Curt told me, "Well, I couldn't say no to the governor, so I went down to talk to him," but Curt wasn't anxious to do it because Curt didn't have a lot of interest in politics, which is what the executive secretary was always, you know, a political assistant to the governor.

Curt said, "I thought I could put him off." "When he interviewed me," Curt said, "Well, Governor, I'm a Republican." The governor said, "I don't care." So Curt took the job and promised to stay to the end of Meyner's term, but he was very antsy. He did not like the job; he did not like the political part of the job; and he didn't like being away from the law. He was too dedicated to the law. When Curt asked Meyner if he could leave early, Meyner said, "Well, stay at least until the Democratic Convention" because Meyner was the state's favorite-son candidate. Curt, having had some sense of Hudson County, which was key because the county Democratic boss, John V. Kenny, had signed on with Joe Kennedy's son. Joe had bought him early in Jack's campaign; so he had signed on.

Meyner knew that Kenny couldn't be totally disloyal because all his patronage from Trenton would go away. But Meyner was concerned about him; so Curt had promised to stay until August. I think he left just after the convention; I forget exactly when it was. Meyner got his thinking cap on as to replacing Curt. I don't know how many candidates he went through in his mind, but I guess he thought, "Oh, Landis is over there in the attorney general's office."

He called Dave Satz and said, "I want Landis to come over and be the executive secretary. Curt Meanor's going back to practice law." So Dave called me in and said, "I told Meyner, Landis can't say no, he's got to do that." He said, "And I negotiated your salary. I was making $6,000 a year; Meyner wanted to pay me $6,500. Dave said, "I got you a salary of $8,000." Meyner was always careful with money, whether his own, or the taxpayers'.

So I showed up, and having worked there in the summer, I knew what the job entailed. I knew the secretary to the executive secretary, Dorothy Seltzer, lovely woman, who had signed on at the start in 1953. She was from Morrisville, across the river. She had been Bob Burkhardt's secretary, so that when the 1953 campaign was over, Burkhardt took her with him. [Robert James Burkhardt was Meyner's 1953 campaign manager and after being the first Executive Secretary to Governor Meyner, served as Secretary of State of New Jersey and Chairman of New Jersey's Democratic State Committee.] I mean, she was a great gal. She actually was a female athlete before her time. She was a great athlete, interestingly enough. She was fine.

Nominally, my position entailed managing the Governor's office staff. Dottie knew all the little nuts and bolts of running the office. She would take care of details, and I enjoyed myself in the political work. I tried to keep my hand in the law. I wrote a couple of briefs while I was there, but I didn't really have that much time because the job was somewhat demanding.

DS: Did you go to Los Angeles for the 1960 convention?

ECL: No, no. I came after the convention.

DS: Oh, after the convention.

ECL: I came after the convention and my, the first thing I worked with Meyner on was (he was very conscious of the need) finding the right campaign manager for the 1960 Democratic campaign in New Jersey. He came up with a great solution. I'm trying to think of the Democratic governor of New Jersey back at the beginning of the Depression [A. Harry Moore]; he was a Jersey City lawyer. I can't think of his name offhand. But he had, you know, because he had been a former governor and was practicing law in Journal Square, Meyner knew that he had a position that J. V. Kenny, no matter how much power he had in the county, couldn't challenge. So Meyner brought him in and asked him for a name. He said, "Well, I've got a young partner there, a guy named Gene Lora." So Meyner brought Lora in. I remember enjoying talking with him because he was much older than me. Gene said, "Well, I'm really not all that interested in politics," but he had been in my office as Executive Secretary with Governor Moore, so he wasn't unknowing. He lived in Hudson County. He agreed to be the campaign manager, and the quid pro quo was he said, "Well, I'd really like to go on the bench." So Meyner later made him a judge, and he was a fine judge.

I worked with Gene Lora coordinating Meyner's role in the New Jersey campaign for the Kennedy ticket until November. I was back and forth with him because Gene was, I mean, his job was to, you know, cover Meyner's back and not let him get embarrassed by either the Kennedys or J. V. Kenny in the campaign.

It all went well. From there on, my principal job in the governor's office was vetting and working through the details of appointments, whether as judges or other appointments that Meyner had to make. There were literally, literally hundreds and hundreds of appointments to boards. Every state college had a board appointed by the governor; so there were a lot of those that were processed. It was mostly nonpolitical; it was mostly apolitical. But it was interesting in that I would get a sense of what the different boards were doing, as well as the people involved. It just made my knowledge of state government better.

The other thing I would do is interface at certain levels, not at the governor's level, but mostly at the next level below. However, I would interface with department heads occasionally. Some of these guys were very interesting. An example was a guy named Dwight R. G. Palmer, who was the head of the Department of Highways. He had been the president and principal owner of General Cable, a factory just outside of New Brunswick, probably in North Brunswick Township. In any event, it was very interesting. I was exposed to a lot of people, and one of the more unusual tasks was to have lunch with the governor every day because the governor didn't like to waste time at lunch. He would get invited by all kinds of people to the hotels and clubs. There were still a couple of lunch clubs in Trenton. They wanted to take him out to lunch. He would do that maybe twice a month at most because he would feel compelled in certain circumstances to do it, but for the most part, he didn't want to waste time at lunch; so I learned to eat fast. He would finish before I did, and if he didn't start taking calls or go back to his private office

or otherwise, (there was a small conference room behind my office, that's where it was), and I mean it would accommodate four people at most. The food was ordered from the State House cafeteria, nothing fancy.

One day he said, "Landis, what are you going to do when you leave here?" I replied, "Well, I want to go practice law in Newark." I said, "I'm inclined to go with Bernie Hellring." He said, "Landis, you're going with me. I'm going to open a law office in Newark and you're going with me." So that was how my history in private practice started.

DS: So that's how Meyner and Landis began?

ECL: Well, the funny thing was that he said at the time, "Steve Wiley and you and I are going to open a law office."

DS: Yeah, I think we could go ahead and flip this [tape]. We're just about out. Two seconds. Back in business.

ECL: So that was that. I went home and told my wife. I said, "That's how we're going to Newark." That was 1960 already and you know, we had a year and some months still to go.

DS: Did you stay in the governor's office until the end?

ECL: I stayed till the end. He had asked me when I started if I was willing. He didn't want to change. I said, "Sure," you know, I was a kid. I didn't have big plans for myself other than to somehow practice law, and he soon took the guesswork out of the picture by saying, "You're coming with me." Working in the Governor's office was a great experience. I mean, once in a while my now ex-wife and I would get invited to his parties. I remember going to one where he had the entire Supreme Court and their spouses. We kind of felt a little out of place, but he loved living in Morven, and to the extent that Helen was happy to do it, he loved entertaining. I'm sure that I was not invited to more than two percent of all the parties he had, but he liked doing that. One of the things I did was start playing tennis because Dorothy Seltzer had a tennis group with a couple of reporters, and somebody had dropped out of the group, I forget who, so I was invited to play with Dorothy and I was living out near the park where the tennis courts were. I would play on Saturday mornings with Dorothy Seltzer's group. One of the reporters was Frank Thompson's brother Dawes--Frank Thompson having been the ABSCAM guy. [Frank Thompson, Jr. represented New Jersey's 4th congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1955-1980. He was convicted of bribery and conspiracy in 1981 and sentenced to three years in prison.]

Dawes was as inept as I was. When I said to Dorothy, "I don't know how to play tennis," she said, "That's all right, Dawes doesn't either," but the other guy was as good as Dorothy, I forget his name [Ed Meara]. I don't know if he's still alive, but in any event,

he was a reporter, as I recall, for the *Trentonian,* not the *Trenton Times,* but the *Trentonian.*

DS: The playing of tennis was so that you could play with Meyner or?

ECL: No, no, no. Dorothy wanted me to play. I said, "Sure, why not?" I had never played tennis with Meyner at that point. That came much, much later. But it was a great experience for me. One of my high school classmates lived nearby. We were out in West Trenton near the river. We rented a house from the just retired superintendent of Buildings & Grounds of the State House. They weren't sure they wanted to live in Florida, so they rented the house to us. Actually, they moved back once they decided they didn't want to stay in Florida, but I can't think of the name anymore [Harry Walsh]. But we had a nice house and very convenient. Atterbury Avenue is where we lived.

I enjoyed myself immensely and wasn't particularly worried about my future at that point. I wasn't looking for another job. Meyner had been very good to me, and maybe it wouldn't have worked out, but I wasn't going to just say, "No, I'm not going with you" and look for something better. I mean, I was not a "grass is greener on the other side of the fence" person ever in my life, so then –

DS: Then you were one of the main constants for him throughout both his governorship [overlapping dialogue; inaudible] –

ECL: But I didn't think of it that way at the time because Steve Wiley, albeit a Democrat, had been recruited the same way by Joe Weintraub, and Steve had come down from the biggest firm in Morristown, Schenck, Price, Smith & King. [Ed Ahart, '69, was, until recently, the Managing Partner.] Once, Steve Wiley, the bright young associate all of a sudden became counsel to the governor, they said, "Well, you have to come back and be a partner." So Steve, when Meyner wanted him to come to Newark as his associate, Steve said, "No, I've got a partnership offer." So Meyner had to make him a partner, which was fine with me. I think Meyner's sense of how to run an office, a law office, never really fit in Newark. Steve was five years older than me. It was better to have Steve running it than to have me running it, and Meyner kind of gradually backed away from managing a law firm.

DS: Did Meyner take a lot of cases?

ECL: Meyner took cases but didn't work on them for the most part. He was the business getter from the start. It was funny because people sent us retainers, but we didn't have a lot of work at the start. Even when the fourth lawyer came in . . ., (Meyner's biggest continuing interest as he was leaving the State House was keeping Channel 13 in New Jersey, (laughs) right?) As he was leaving. So that carried over, and he spent a lot of time on that and the state. You know, under Dick Hughes, the state was very involved in the litigation, and they kept in touch with Meyner -- that was another incident that I probably told Diane at some point, but I should remember here, where Dick Hughes gets elected, so he

comes in and Meyner invites me and I'm sitting there with Governor Hughes and Governor Meyner, and Dick Hughes, who of course, I had known, said, "Oh, Landis, you're going to stay, aren't you?" Meyner said, "No way, he's going with me to practice law, he needs to make some money," (as though Meyner was going to pay me a huge salary).

DS: Ed, when did he take over as administrator of the Cigarette Advertising Code? Was that about that time? Or was that later in the '60s?

ECL: That was within the first two years of the practice. It may have been three or four. In any event, I talked about the Channel 13 battle because the young lawyer who was carrying the burden of the work, from the AG's office, was a guy who came into the AG's office before me. I didn't know him well. I was there, as I said before, only very briefly, for 14 months is what it amounted to, June 1959 to August 1960. His name was Doug Hofe. [G. Douglas Hofe Jr., was Deputy Attorney General of New Jersey, 1958-1962. During 1962-1967, he was with the law firm of Meyner & Wiley in Newark.] I knew him only casually in Trenton. Doug was a Republican from South Orange, but Meyner, you know, wasn't fussy about the politics of people. I mean, over the years, we've had a lot more Democrats in our firm than Republicans only because they were people that were interested in and attracted to being aligned with Meyner.

But when Meyner came in one day and said, "We're hiring Doug Hofe to be the fourth," we barely had enough work for Wiley and myself, let alone Hofe. But Meyner didn't want him to get away; Meyner had such respect for him. Doug was a good lawyer, but it would be funny because Doug and I would go out to lunch and we'd talk about what we were going to do this afternoon, neither of us would have anything to do in the afternoon. Once we said, "Oh, let's go to the movies," because there were still movie theaters in downtown Newark. The other thing is that Meyner was such a workaholic. It was funny because he would come in on Saturdays, and Wiley came in too, because he was expected to come in on Saturdays, when there was nothing to do. I mean, there was still mail to be picked up. But he would then pick up the mail and find that there's nothing in the mail to do. They'd have nothing to do. I had a young family. I had two children under three and I was not going to run down to Newark.

DS: To open mail.

ECL: My ex and I had positioned ourselves to be equidistant from her family in Middlesex County, my family in Phillipsburg, and the office. So we lived in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, if you have an idea of where that is. It's just north of Route 78. But still, highways were not as good as they are today and not as direct; so it was a fair commute. I was a train commuter, but the train didn't run very often on Saturday, so I was not anxious to come in on Saturday. So Meyner would dream up things that we needed to do on Saturday. Of course, I knew that ploy; so I would say, "Oh, I've got a commitment on Saturday, governor, but how about Sunday?" He played tennis on Sunday; I knew that.

It all worked out and the practice grew. Steve Wiley got Morristown area clients to help grow it. Steve Wiley was managing the office, I mean after Doug Hofe came in, Doug came in late in '61 and then left in '67 to work on Nixon's campaign. The work picked up and Meyner hired another newly minted lawyer, Dom Vetri. (I'm trying to think who Dom clerked for.) A judge who Meyner had appointed and respected greatly, had recommended him. Dom had started out as an engineer and then decided he wanted to be a lawyer. Dom was from, I think, Passaic County; so we had five of us, and then Meyner at the Cigarette Advertising Code in New York City, had hired a lawyer named Tom Hogan. Meyner later brought him into the firm. I think Tom had grown up in Kearny, as I recall. So there were six, and the firm kept growing since Steve was able to develop a lot of business in Morristown. Steve's father, [Joseph (I think) Lafayette '03], had been the superintendent of schools and an alderman, which is the name in Morristown for a councilman. Well, you're a Jersey guy, John, so you're aware that we have a lot of different names –

JK: I lived in Jersey City, actually.

ECL: A lot of different names for municipal officials. Well, in Morristown, I think to this day they're aldermen. So Steve had good contacts. He had practiced there for four years before going to Trenton. Steve opened a Morristown office for the firm, actually in Morris Township, and that grew. Then Steve took a shot at elective politics in 1973. He picked a good time and got elected as a Democrat to the State Senate from Morris County in 1973, which is almost an impossible thing to accomplish, but he realized that it would probably be only one term.

Brendan offered Steve the opportunity to take an appointment to the Supreme Court.

JK: Yeah, Brendan was '74 to '82.

ECL: So it was probably '78 or '79 because Steve got elected in 1973. Oh, now I remember what happened. Steve got elected in '73 and we, at that time, were still representing a fair number of clients who were opposing the state in one way, shape or form; so Steve and Meyner and I sat down, and Meyner didn't want to give up those clients. I was kind of a mediator. An agreement was arrived at to divide the firm. Steve would take the Morristown office, the Morristown practice, I think there were five lawyers there and there were, at that point in '73, that would have been the end of '73, early '74, the -- trying to think how, I think we had a total of about 15 in Newark at this point, because the work had grown over the years. It was only at the very beginning that there wasn't that much to do. The work had grown and Steve, you know, of the firm clients that had been Meyner's clients, there were very few that went with Steve. The Morristown office was basically the Morristown practice that Steve had developed, and Steve had hired a young man who was a year behind him in high school and at Princeton, a guy named Don Malehorn. (It's time for me to get together with Don. I try to get together with him about once a year to have lunch.) In any event, it was later then that Steve was disappointed in becoming a

Supreme Court justice because the Supreme Court invoked a clause that said you can't take any office where the emolument was increased during your term in the legislature.

So he was rejected for that and stayed with the law practice until he retired. Steve was probably Princeton Class of '51, somewhere in there. He's up in Grand Isle, outside of Burlington, Vermont, and from what Don says, I don't think he's really fit to be interviewed. [He died late in 2015.] Don said he's had, you know, a lot of health setbacks. He and his wife had actually retired to Key West. Then as his health deteriorated, they moved up there because at one time he had owned a farm on Grand Isle and he had given it to his daughter, so they, from what Don said, they bought a place near his daughter. But Steve obviously had a wealth of stories. It's too bad; we lost a lot of people over the years, yeah. But the –

DS: Ed, can you comment at all about, the reason I'm asking about the Cigarette Advertising Code is because we do have several boxes relating to that in the papers at Skillman Library. I just wondered, did Meyner talk much about his role as administrator? It was kind of an interesting position to be put in. He was the first, probably the only administrator of that code, which was very short-lived. Did he talk much about it?

ECL: No. Very little. He made sure we were all aware of it. And the guy he hired to do the legal work, I think they're both, well, I'm not sure if they're alive or dead, but in any event, I can think of -- he hired two successive young lawyers to be his presence there, because Meyner was not going to be present in the office in New York all the time. In each case, he hired them with the thought of bringing them into the firm. The first one he brought in didn't work out [Joe Hoffman]. I don't recall why he didn't work out. Joe then settled in Hunterdon County, and I've lost track of him.

The second guy was Hogan, as I mentioned before, Tom Hogan, whom I got to know well because he did come into the firm. He stayed until his wife murdered her lover, and all of a sudden, Tom thought it would be best to leave. Tom came, not only came in, but stayed quite a long time. Tom was a quiet, interesting intellectual guy who to me was not cut out to be in private practice or a corporate lawyer; but the last I heard of him, he was in-house at a corporation.

The Code was somewhat of an embarrassment always to Meyner. But the money was so good that he couldn't turn it down. Of course, I think he did finally quit smoking himself. But during all the years he was in Trenton and the years prior to that, smoking was not considered as vulgar, if you will, as it is today.

DS: Or as dangerous, perhaps, yeah.

ECL: Doug Hofe, by the way, died of tongue cancer from smoking. I'll never forget, when we moved the office in '74 to Gateway, and took down the pictures in his old office, and found the walls around them were all stained yellow where the pictures were. I forget who had taken Doug's office. Doug left late in '67 to work in [Richard M.] Nixon's

campaign. He was the one who went around the country. He was single. He went around the country setting up campaign offices in the 50 states for the Nixon campaign. Then he was rewarded with the job of -- Director of the [U.S. Department of the Interior's] Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in Washington, D.C. I remember he had all the national parks under his aegis, and he loved it. He was an outdoorsman, and he loved it. I stayed in touch with Doug until he died [in 1990].

But Doug, when he came back, didn't want to practice law. He resigned the week before the Watergate break-in, just by coincidence. His father, who was very wealthy, was failing, and he came back to take care of him. I think he actually got the family business sold. The family had a lot of land, and they owned a private school. His father had his finger in a lot of things and -- but the -- I'm trying to think –

DS: Well Ed, we're coming into time-wise close to the 1969 campaign. Can you talk a little about (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) –

ECL: Yeah, the '69 campaign, well –

DS: Can you talk a little bit about why?

ECL: I'll give you a little backstory to that, too. Meyner had hired a young lawyer. I guess Steve actually hired him because Steve was doing the hiring almost from the beginning. I think Meyner only hired Hofe, Hogan and Vetri; after that, I think it was Steve who made those decisions. But Meyner had hired in '66, I think it was, a guy coming off a federal clerkship who was a Hudson County Irishman, Bill Verdon. Bill's father was from a Hoboken family, and his grandfather Verdon, had been the guy who sank the candidacy of the Republican senator who wanted the vice-presidential nomination in 1920, oh, who was it? [Walter Edge]. His grandfather had been the Republican chairman of Hudson Count. I think, it was 1920, so it's a great story but I don't remember much of it. His father was a physician who died young. His mother remarried the Hudson County administrator, J. V. Kenny's top guy Jackie Deegan, in the county administration. Can't think of his stepfather's name, but Bill was a very, very bright lawyer and Bill had come in and Meyner, you know, I mean he impressed everybody, but Meyner, of course, loved the fact that he was a young Irishman. He was and is a guy with Brenden Byrne-like, Irish charisma.

When Steve left at the end of 1973, the firm name then changed from Meyner & Wiley to Meyner, Landis and Verdon. Verdon joined us in '65 or '66. His wife died recently, and I had a conflict. The funeral service was in Suffolk County, Westhampton. I didn't go. Her mother was still living there in her late 90s. In any event, Bill joined us in '66 and liked doing major litigation. He represented in a trial one of our biggest clients at that time--Malcolm McLean, the founder of Sea-Land Industries. Bill had a personal relationship with Malcolm because Malcolm was his key witness in this trial.

The trial involved litigation arising out of the fact that McLean, who had come out of North Carolina, had sold Sea-Land to Reynolds Tobacco, which was diversifying. It was at the beginning of, you know, from 1965 on, tobacco all of a sudden became anathema to health. Bill had represented him, and Bill was coming to the realization -- he used our brightest young associate, a guy who's now a judge, as his helper on this litigation, arising out of a business Malcolm purchased with the proceeds of the sale of Sea-Land, which was actually a trial in Wilmington, Delaware, and he realized, he came back from that saying, "Ed, you know, I want to do litigation, but I don't want to do petty litigation. I want to do major litigation, but I want to do everything myself." You can't do major litigation without delegating; so he said, "I don't know what I'm going to do. Malcolm said he'd set me up in any business I wanted. So I told him, how about a ski lodge in Vermont?" Malcolm said, "Sure." After thinking about it, Bill said, "No, I don't really want to do that." So he wasn't sure what he wanted to do; he was fumbling a little.

Well, Malcolm's agreement not to compete eventually ran out; so Malcolm bought United States Lines and Bill, as a kid, had been a summer steward for U.S. Lines. Bill had wanderlust. He had been a summer steward on a passenger liner from New York, or wherever they sailed from to Southampton. Bill thought that was great. Malcolm offered him the job of general counsel, which he took. That's how I found out that when a company goes bankrupt, the last guy off the ship is the general counsel because Bill was the last employee. The same thing happened to my only lawyer nephew. He was the last guy off the ship when the company that had become AT&T Wireless, McCaw Cellular Communications, was being liquidated after the business had been sold by AT&T.

In any event, in 1969 it was a situation where Bill was with us. Bill had grown up in politics. I had been in politics, through Meyner, so we were the two lawyers in the firm who didn't practice much law during Meyner's campaign in '69. I worked the fundraising side with a guy named John Kervick, who was in charge of all the fundraising. Bill worked the pure political side of the campaign. The two of us probably spent about 75% of our time for four or five months on the campaign in 1969. We had to kind of keep our hand in the office, we couldn't ignore it, but we worked mostly on the campaign.

JK: Were you glad he was running? Were you happy with that decision? What do you think motivated him to want to run?

ECL: He loved being governor. If he could have run in 1961 under the New Jersey Constitution, he would have sought a third term. If he could have served a fourth, he would have; he would have run, run, run, run. Brendan's right, you know, when he says that it was past his time; that was basically it. Meyner had not spent a lot of time building some kind of personality cult. He didn't have the native charm or superb charisma. Meyner couldn't be Jack Kennedy, you know, no matter how hard he tried. He –

DS: It's interesting, it looked like he aged quite a bit between '62 and '69, when you look at the photographs, you know.

ECL: Yeah, I would say only normally. I mean, I wouldn't say he aged –

DS: Extraordinarily, right.

ECL: It was interesting, you see people that serve as president, and they age amazingly so much in eight years. I didn't think Meyner aged that much in his eight years in Trenton. When he came out of Trenton, I wouldn't say he was abnormally aged.

DS: It may have just been his hair grew white.

ECL: I think his style was off in 1969. There were a lot of things that were working against him in '69--his style, the fact that there had been Democratic governors for four terms at that point. Cahill had some native Irish charm to him. Probably far from our best governor, he may have been the worst since the new constitution. But his problem again was something that Meyner tried to avoid, although because Bob Burkhardt never disappointed while Meyner was governor, that was under Hughes, when Burkhardt went astray. Meyner, you know, had certain standards. I don't think Bill Cahill, as nice a guy as he was, ever really had that same sense.

DS: Was Meyner terribly disappointed? How did he react?

ECL: I don't think he was. I was there at the house; they bought a house in Princeton, where they lived.

DS: Yes, the Olden Lane house.

ECL: Yeah, on Olden Lane. I was there election night. I'm trying to think whether Bill Verdon was there, but Charlie Engelhard was there, and Meyner's other close friends were there. There were probably 20 people. I don't think Meyner took it that bad. I think in the course of campaigning, he was a realist. In the course of that campaign, I think he realized he was past his time. I don't think any of that really surprised him. So, I think he took it pretty well, yeah. And at that time, you know, Helen, Bill and, I forget her nickname, Helen's mother's nickname.

DS: Bumpy.

ECL: Bill and Bumpy had attracted them to come down to –

DS: Sanibel and Captiva, right, yeah.

ECL: Captiva. I have been down there when they were there. When was I down there? I don't remember. I went back this winter. Funny, you know, it's totally changed. The hurricane, more than anything else. But I think he took it well. He took it as probably a confirmation that what he had set out to do, which was to make a good living for himself, spend time with friends. I mean, as much as he wouldn't go to lunch when he was governor, he

would accept almost every lunch invitation later. But when we ate as co-workers, you know, when we went to lunch at 24 Commerce Street, there was a chain cafeteria in the basement of our building called Colonnade. I think somebody told me later that it was a chain based in Cleveland. In any event, the food was excellent, and you know, he'd go down. If he wasn't going to lunch as a guest of a client, he'd go down with us and we'd sit down there with the other lawyers in the office. We didn't bring our food back to the office as so many people do today.

We'd sit down there and have lunch, and if there were outings to play tennis or if we had a firm outing, he would play tennis with us. I think he was comfortable in his life. He and Helen had that rent-controlled apartment in Manhattan. He liked Manhattan, and there were times in her life when Helen loved Manhattan. It was her relative, I think it was an aunt, that they got that apartment from.

DS: Did she have her radio show or her television show at that time?

ECL: Yeah, she did that but we didn't see a lot of her. She first had a newspaper column. If there was a dinner or something or if there was an outing or if we had a picnic, we would see her. From the early '70s on, I had the house with grounds and a pool; so we had the office picnic at my house for many, many years. She would always come. Sometimes we would host the Christmas party. There's a funny story about that. I probably told Diane, but once Fran and I were at home on a Saturday afternoon or whenever it was, or a Sunday, I forget, whether it was a picnic or what. I think it was winter, a Christmas party. We heard a knock on the door, and there were the Meyners. We said, "Oh, come in." They said, "Oh, where's the party?" We replied, "That's next week." "Oh."

So we entertained them, and Fran started complaining about her back. Helen said, "Oh, I've had back problems." Helen was pretty large at this point. Helen got down on the floor and showed Fran her exercises, her fetal curls, all those things. Bob Meyner and I were watching this and smiling broadly. In any event, yeah, she was; Helen could be a character.

DS: Well, soon thereafter or around that time, of course, she launched her political career.

ECL: Yeah, and Meyner gave her every encouragement. He thought it was great for her to do that. He helped without trying to make it appear that he was running, and she got elected. Of course, northwest Jersey had a lot more Democrats then than it does today. So it wasn't that difficult, but I don't think she was crazy about the job. I don't think it bothered her that much to lose four years later. However, it's hard for me to tell. Some of her aides are still around. Have you touched base with the one who is in Somerville? There's one in Harrisburg who I met. The one that died I was closest to. I brought him up, didn't I once?

DS: I believe you did, you did.

ECL: And the one from Harrisburg, did I get him to come in?

DS: Was that the former lieutenant governor? Not him. [overlapping dialogue; inaudible]

ECL: No, no, this is a guy who's, oh, I can't think of his name, but I can track him down. But Helen, I think that to some extent she enjoyed it. I remember Meyner coming back from a congressional jaunt to China saying, "Oh, I spent all my time with Harold Abzug," Bella Abzug's husband.

DS: Bella's husband!

ECL: He said, "We were the only two male spouses on the trip." I think Meyner enjoyed his life for the most part. He liked coming over to New Jersey on the train in the morning. He usually left the car in New York or in the garage at our office in Newark. He'd come on the train; he'd read the *New York Times.* One of his great avocations was reading the *New York Times* cover-to-cover. I remember he'd call me in, he'd say, "Landis, look at this on page 53." It would be some story about three inches long. He had kind of, you know, omniscient knowledge. I guess to some extent we all pursue general knowledge, but I think he enjoyed his life, and when the Cigarette Advertising Code came to an end, I believe he was –

DS: He was relieved probably.

JK: Was he active in government and politics after he left the governorship and before '69?

ECL: The biggest activity he had was the riots of 1967. Governor Hughes had asked him to serve on the committee [the Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder, which issued a "Report for Action" in 1968]. New Jersey's preeminent black lawyer, who was a Jersey City guy, Ray Brown, also was on it. Meyner always loved Ray Brown. There were several other people he liked on it, though I forget who. I think Dick Hughes must have asked Meyner, who he wanted on it. Meyner didn't want to chair it. But he enjoyed that aspect of it. He basically stayed away from taking appointments. I'm sure there were some, but they don't jump out at me. There were things that he didn't want to do. He was constantly asked to be involved with our fraternity. Our national fraternity's one of the few based here in New Jersey, while they were in New York City and then in New Jersey. The people who ran the fraternity and its foundation constantly were after him to serve as a trustee. He said, "Oh Landis, I can't go to those meetings. I gave them your name."

I said, "Well, do you want me to do it?" He said, "Yeah, if you want to. You don't have to if you don't want to." So I did it. But, he'd come back from Captiva and he'd have Captiva stories. He liked that. I know he treated Bill and Bumpy, you know, more as quasi-parents than I think he ever did his own, that he had great love and respect for them. Bill was an excellent attorney before he was a college president and –

DS: And he was an Olympian.

ECL: What?

DS: He was also an Olympian.

ECL: Yes, if I knew that, I have forgotten it. And Meyner, he enjoyed living in Princeton. He was an honorary member of Bill's class; I forget which class it was. The P-Rade was always something he was happy to go to. He created the relationship with Bill Bradley, and he enjoyed that. There were a lot of things that –

DS: That was the Princeton P-Rade, not the Lafayette –

ECL: The Princeton P-Rade.

DS: They had one, that's right.

ECL: P-Rade is unique to Princeton.

DS: OK, but we have a P-Rade.

ECL: Well, we never called it "P-Rade". We'd call it the "parade." If we called it "P-Rade," we were mimicking Princeton.

DS: We called it that during the turn of the century.

ECL: Could be. Maybe Princeton copied us. In any event, it could be that they were all P-Rades back then.

DS: Pajama parades.

ECL: No, the Pajama Parade was something else. That was for the freshmen.

DS: But that got called the P-Rade sometimes. Anyway –

ECL: Not when I was here. It was called the Pajama Parade when I was here. It was about at the end of its life. What happened with a lot of the traditions was that the return of so many veterans from World War II and then from the war in Korea kind of made us look at things more maturely on the campus.

DS: You didn't want to put up with a lot of that nonsense, I think, too, so.

ECL: But yeah, it's hard for me to find where he was a truly unhappy person. If he was, he certainly didn't show it. The stroke left him so totally frustrated; it was painful, that he would have –

DS: Do you remember what year that –

ECL: Eighty-six was his stroke.

DS: Eighty-six.

JK: Well, returning to his governorship, what would you describe as being his most important accomplishments?

ECL: The biggest accomplishment, and you get out of the details, I mean, he did a good job of continuing the job of trying to get more professional administration. Driscoll had started that and tried to consolidate government. He got rid of a lot of the little fringe jobs that state government was attempting to do. But the biggest accomplishment actually is one that I don't think a lot of people give him credit for; namely, Meyner added so much open space to the state's larder of open space. He was amazing. I never talked with him about it; so I'm not sure what drove him in that direction. Perhaps he just was a good futurist and realized that this was something that was very important.

Island Beach was a marvelous acquisition, the Water Gap area too. He started so many things. Of course, Brendan followed through on that. Brendan was a true heir of that by trying to secure the Pinelands. But Meyner had a sense. I'm not sure where it came from, that these were important things to do. We represented a client for whom I did most of the work, a guy named Fred Ferber. Ferber had not invented the ballpoint pen, but Fred Ferber was basically an Austrian Holocaust survivor from Vienna who had the skill to set up a factory. I'm trying to think whether it was in Weehawken or where it was, but it was somewhere on the Jersey side of the river. He set up a factory to make ballpoint pens inexpensively, and all of a sudden, instead of being this great, charming thing -- gee, I've got my $15 ballpoint pen made in Wisconsin by somebody -- a ballpoint pen could be acquired for 20 cents or something like that.

Fred had made a fortune, and Fred and Hedy had no children. She was also from Vienna. Having had no children, they decided that they were going to use the fortune he had built to preserve land. Because Meyner had this background, Fred was very attracted to get Meyner's support because what he bought, at one time, you know, back in colonial days perhaps, there was more zinc mined in New Jersey than anywhere else and one company dominated called New Jersey Zinc and they had like 5,000 acres of land up near Greenwood Lake, west of Greenwood Lake on the Jersey side of the New York border. They may have had land in New York, I was never, if I knew that I've forgotten it, but in any event, Fred Ferber had contracted to buy it all from New Jersey Zinc with the intention of preserving it. By doing this, he scared the people in Trenton who were in charge of the state parks; so Dick Hughes got involved in condemning it.

Well, what happened was that Fred, I think Meyner was involved as I recall, and I was not involved in the details, even though later I did all the work for Fred Ferber, but I think Meyner was involved in helping Fred negotiate a deal with the state where the state would use half of it for a park and Fred would take the other half and preserve it as best

he could. The number of things Meyner got involved in was often at a level that those of us like myself, 25 years junior, were not involved in. We were not involved in the formation of these relationships but learned of them by actually being involved in the working part of it. I think Meyner enjoyed that. It was interesting. He did try a land-use case many, many years later. It was so funny because somehow he had developed a relationship with the man who owned the larger of the two big truck stops on the –

DS: Stop this here. Sorry about that.

ECL: That's all right. Shall I, you know where Jugtown Mountain is at the point. That's why we're about to talk about it.

JK: OK.

DS: OK.

ECL: There are two large truck stops on the west side of Jugtown Mountain. The larger one was somebody who Meyner had known because Meyner stayed with the Phillipsburg National Bank. He went to bank meetings all through his governorship. He went to bank meetings every Friday. We had a Phillipsburg office where he would visit people, with old friends mostly, not so many clients. But one person he knew was a banker who had left banking, not in Phillipsburg, I think he had been a banker somewhere in Pennsylvania, to buy the truck stop, the larger of the two truck stops and he operated that truck stop, and on the east side of Jugtown Mountain there's a truck stop. Different community, different township, as it were, most of those are townships. Meyner was asked to represent the man, I'm trying to think of his name, on the west side, to somehow stop the truck stop on the east side from expanding, by opposing it in the local planning board or zoning board. So Meyner took this on, with Geralyn Boccher, the associate to do legal research and help him with the preparation. She was probably the third of our women associates, a very bright woman. She came with us because she went to a trial that I had where her father was a witness and she decided, she was at Emory Law School, to transfer back and finish at Seton Hall. Later she joined our firm. She was from Plainfield, and she was a fine lawyer. I mean she could try a case.

She could do anything. I had a trial with her in Jersey City once, soon after she had joined us. She had worked up the case for me, and we were supposed to start the trial at 10:00 a.m. but I think my train had been delayed or something, and 10:00 came and I wasn't there. So Judge Wefing, a great judge, her husband was a friend of mine who taught at -- I think Seton Hall Law School, but in any event, she said to Geralyn, "Well, Miss Boccher, we're not going to wait here for Landis. You're here. You start the case." So I came in while she was interrogating the first of our witnesses, I forget which one, but I came in and I sat there. She wasn't even aware I was there, and I see she's doing a great job. So when she finished with the witness and there was a break, I said, "Geralyn, you're doing fine. You just keep going. I'll just take the guy that we were mostly

responsible to, the senior executive of our client, I'll just do him." He was the major witness. "You take the other witnesses," I said, and she did a wonderful job.

Meyner heard from me or others how good she was. In any event, Meyner didn't have her try the land-use case. I forget whether this was before I had seen her in action, when he used her on the Hunterdon County truck stop matter, or after; but in any event, he felt he had to go himself. I think because it was more political than legal. He went to those hearings. I think it's the only time I can remember that he actually went to hearings, except there was a case where we represented the Port Authority bond holders who were, who were suing over the -- the takeover of the Hudson and Manhattan Transit, which had to be subsidized and the bond holders said, "No, you can't do that because you're hurting our credit." In any event, that case I tried and I tried it against the dean of Columbia Law School. But in any event, I tried the case before a New Jersey Superior Court judge and we lost. Then we took the appeal. Our co-counsel was a New York law firm, and we took the appeal and we lost again in the New Jersey Supreme Court and then it was appealed, I forget exactly how it lined up, but it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. It was so funny because there was a lawyer in the law firm in New York who was probably -- I was maybe 40 something -- in his late 30s. He was a couple of years younger than me, and we really had done the whole case ourselves. Well, when it came to the Supreme Court, his senior partner and Meyner decided they would do the oral argument at the New Jersey and United States Supreme Courts.

DS: How about that?

ECL: That's all right. We thought it was a loser, and it was in New Jersey. But it was funny because Meyner, despite the fact that he thought of himself as a courtroom lawyer, always let the New York senior guy handle the case. He did the oral argument in the Supreme Court. But Meyner, at that planning board or zoning board, whatever it was, felt comfortable, you know. He didn't have to dig into any great legal principles and stay up all night preparing. I mean, this came natural to him. You know, speaking in this kind of a rural forum. But Meyner was a great, he was a fine lawyer. He had good instincts, and he was a good coach all those years that he was actively involved. Where I would be representing somebody where he had an interest in it, he would always have good advice, and he was not somebody who you would ever have anything but respect for. He always handled himself like a gentleman, and he was good to have as a senior partner in the law firm and he set good standards of work and partnership. If you talk to the three guys still there, Bill Fiore, John Malyska, and Tony Siliato, the three guys that go back to before '86, or somebody like Bill Verdon, who's still alive, if you talk to them, you'll pretty much hear the same thing.

Everybody has more little war stories to tell about his idiosyncrasies, but anybody can tell war stories about anybody's idiosyncrasies if you spend enough time with them and –

DS: What do you think that he was proudest of? The emphasis on the environmental things he did is probably something that we're looking back at and seeing as that being [overlapping dialogue; inaudible] –

ECL: Oh, I think he was very proud of that.

DS: But were there other things that he would say to you, that you were asked?

ECL: He liked the fact that he adopted the chemical treatment for psychotics that tended to change the way that mental hospitals approached psychosis. I think he was proud of that. There were a lot of people who were into that, but I think he was the guy who said yes to all those things and let that go ahead. You know, the turnpike and the Garden State Parkway were pretty much *fait accompli* in 1954, when he went down to Trenton. I think he was proud of keeping the state on an even keel financially. He had a great political bent in his personality, and he was very proud of the work he did to try to create a statewide Democratic Party. He spent a lot of time statewide encouraging the development of the Democratic Party in Republican areas. I was familiar with that because I settled in Somerset County. I was familiar with what he tried to do there. He certainly encouraged Steve Wiley when Steve was active in Morris County, another staunch Republican county. I think if he came back today, he'd be very disappointed in what has happened in Warren County, his home county, and how Republican it's become. He was very conscious of South Jersey. That trip I made to Vineland that time, there was some political angle to that because that was often a part of my summer experiences. I was occasionally scouting for judges or scouting for qualified candidates for lesser appointed offices, political suggestions for appointments or comments on proposed appointees.

JK: How about an issue like civil rights?

ECL: He had very little at the Jersey level to do with civil rights. Have you ever heard of the Bordentown Manual Training School? It was kind of a statewide prep school for black males from segregated schools in New Jersey to have college preparation. It was run by the state. I forget where I read it, but there's a history of it that's critical of him in connection with that school.

I forget exactly what the context was. There just wasn't that much involvement at the time he was governor. Sixty-seven, I think the riots and the study of the roots of the riots, I think that opened his eyes. He was liberal, but he was not without somewhat the same built-in prejudices that my father had. You know, he was a person of his time to some extent. He had an interesting relationship with the Catholic Church because he was a fallen-away Catholic; yet his mother maintained her religion to her death, and he had respect for the Catholic Church. But he could be, you know, to some extent very practical about it. When he was setting up the campaign in '53, he knew that he would lose Catholic votes because it would become known that he had left the church. On the other

hand, the church was very anxious to be permitted to run bingo games. Diane, you should move over here. You've got the sun in your eyes.

JK: Here, I'll pull the chair.

DS: If we can pull the shade, I'll be OK. It is –

ECL: I'm sorry, I should have said something a long time ago, but it keeps getting worse. I keep thinking it would stop.

DS: It's nice to have the sun.

ECL: Yes, it is. So –

DS: Much better, John, thank you so much.

ECL: It was not in his nature to want to see gambling. I remember on more than one occasion he would talk about Tocqueville and that gambling had no good end and that ultimately you'd have gambling on which fly could climb the window faster, you know. But, he wanted to be elected. I mean, he could be politically correct, as necessary. I realized a long, long time ago that I couldn't be politically correct; so I never ran for office. I thought of myself as running for office when I was in my 20's, but as time went on, I said, "I can't do that."

JK: Did he ever tell you whether he dated Grace Kelly?

ECL: No, but I think it's true and I don't remember. I don't think –

DS: Brendan Byrne says it's true.

JK: Brendan Byrne said he thought it was true.

ECL: I don't think I heard it from him, though. I may have. I mean, things like that didn't often come up.

DS: But he definitely dated Margaret Truman, didn't he?

ECL: I'm less sure of that than Grace Kelly. I mean, don't forget, Grace Kelly was an Ocean City girl. She's the one with the –

DS: Jersey connection.

ECL: Yeah. I worked my first construction job at age 17. It was helping to build the Morrisville, Pennsylvania, U.S. Steel plant. Her father's company was a subcontractor of that operation. It was a combine. There weren't any contractors big enough to do the

whole job; so the company I worked for was Walsh, Perini, Groves and Slattery. It was four different contractors that put together a joint venture. When they tore the plant down about six years ago, I was very unhappy. Makes you realize how old you are. But yeah, that was the summer I was 17. You had to be 18, but they let you lie about your age.

DS: Was there anything about Meyner that you haven't gotten a chance to tell us that you would want to?

ECL: I'm sure that things will occur to me; so don't hesitate to ask questions. Obviously I can go on and on about it without addressing what your real interests are, and I don't want to do that.

DS: Well, you have such a good command of it, you knew him probably better than anyone.

ECL: As I said before, if you develop a whole lot more questions, I'm happy to come back.

JK: He must have had a good deal of appreciation for Lafayette, given his willingness to establish the center. What were his feelings about Lafayette --?

ECL: I think he had pretty much the same sense that the average of my five brothers had. Not overly, not like my brother John, who was overly committed, or me, overly committed, but ones in the middle are less committed and he didn't establish it, you know, but his testamentary give showed his love for Lafayette. This was the idea of –

DS: Richard Hunt and Priscilla Hunt? Or?

ECL: Basically what happened was that Bob Rotberg initiated it. I was on the board of trustees at the time that Bob was here, or perhaps just off. Bob said, "I've been talking," and he explained to me that he knew Richard Hunt well and that Helen was not sure, Helen was failing and that there was more money there from Bob and more to come from Helen. I forget exactly how all the money came down and that they weren't sure what to do with the money. I said, "One of Meyner's hang-ups was that he used to argue with Joe McLean '33 [head of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton] about it." He said, "There's much too much time spent in colleges and universities teaching about our federal government, and very few people get to understand, in the process of their education, how state government works. Meyner, as he looked around the world, thought that one of the magic factors of the United States' success was the federal system, to balance local interests with national interests.

So, when Rotberg asked me about that, I suggested it, and he went back to Helen and the Hunts, to the extent that Helen and Priscilla could involve themselves, talked to them and, and that's what the money was applied to, to create a center at Lafayette, and John would know, I don't know how many small colleges have such programs.

JK: There's only one other, Claremont McKenna in California (inaudible).

DS: I've never heard this. Have you, John? I've not heard that you know –

JK: No, I'm not familiar with –

DS: That you had that direct situation –

JK: I came after the center had already been –

ECL: Yeah, I know. After a search.

DS: But that memory, Meyner had said those things about the lack of –

ECL: Yeah, well, that's what came to my mind. How would Bob Meyner want the money used? And that's what came to mind. That I'm sure –

DS: That's great to have that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible), yeah.

ECL: And I'm confident to this day, of course, we're all confident about things we've done. That's the case, that he would have, if he had something to say in it, he would have said the same thing. But I think, you know, and I believe in it, too. I don't think I would have been so much a salesman to Bob Rotberg if I hadn't believed in it, too.

DS: Right, exactly. But I had not remembered that genesis of it. I'm really happy that we have that on tape.

ECL: I thought I had told you, I'm sorry.

DS: No, no. But that might be a good place for us to end today. I realize that I'm about to have to flip this tape, and we have time, about a half an hour left. So we would have another half hour with both devices. But –

ECL: As I say, I think I've probably not elided much from my memories, but obviously questions provoke more memories; so whether you have questions now or later, to the extent that my mind still works, I'm happy to help.

JK: Well, we may have more questions after we go through the transcript. Work that up and –

ECL: No, I was surprised. But I would like to talk about it. I don't know how many people will come here, but I think, you know, we're running out of lives. It's a problem.

DS: Shall we end the official tape recording? (Overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

JK: You can do that because I think we've covered pretty much everything.

DS: Do you have other things to ask right now?

JK: Yeah, at the moment.

DS: OK. Why don't I shut this off and –

ECL: I spoke with you -- about Ted Botter. He's still alive –

END OF AUDIO FILE