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Berkeley, California

BILL LANE
SUNSET PUBLISHER, ENVIRONMENTALIST, AMBASSADOR

Interviews conducted by
Suzanne Riess
in 1993-1994

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Art, Caroline, Arthur & Daniela Gimbel, Sharon Lane, Bob & Keighley Lane, Greg, Riley, Brenda, Bryan, Jessie & Crissy Munks, Joan & Mel, Bill & Jean—Bill's 85th birthday, 2004

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I LANE FAMILY ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF *SUNSET*

[Interview 1: August 20, 1993] ##¹

[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

Iowa Migrations to Southern California

Riess: I want to start with your father's background.

Lane: We are researching the lineage of the Lanes on my father's side, and the Bell side, which also goes back to the McLaughlin families. I don't have as much information as I should, but my father was born in Horton, Kansas. His father died within a year or so of my father's birth.

Riess: Were they farmers?

Lane: No. He was a merchant, I think. I'm not sure of his father, though.

My grandmother, who was a Hill, and my grandmother on my father's side, were related through some cousins back to my mother's father's side, who was Hill M. Bell. The Hill in his name referred to my father's mother. So on both sides through the Hills there was a relationship.

My grandmother Lane, my father's mother, was from a farming family background in Geneseo and Moline, Illinois. After his father's death my father went back with his mother to live with relatives in Moline and Geneseo, and we still have relatives there that we are in close contact with.

Riess: I wonder if those families ever read the early *Sunset* magazine.

Lane: There's certainly no evidence of that, no indication of that. Of course, in the early days *Sunset's* purpose, under the ownership of the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Central Pacific Railroad, was to bring settlers out, including midwesterners. Certainly there were many in Iowa who did come out.

Iowans in southern California, excluding Iowans who may have come out in the Gold Rush and the latter part of the last century, was pretty much a phenomenon of

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

the early part of this century. Land was subdivided and was sold very cheap to get population out here which developed a consumer base for agriculture and commercial activity. The Southern Pacific had a tremendous vested interest in this.

Their incentive for building the railroad, rather than government subsidies or extensive financing, which they also obtained, which was Huntington's great forte and the reason he was headquartered in New York and Washington as one of the Big Four, was to raise money. But they also received huge sections of land. Today in the southern California desert you'll still find alternate sections owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad and in some cases the Santa Fe Railroad. So they were very anxious to build the population and to develop tourism.

Riess: It was mostly a southern California phenomenon?

Lane: Pretty much it was. The "Sunset Limited" was—still is, although I think they're using the name a little more liberally here on the coast now with Amtrak, but the "Sunset Limited" as promoted in the early *Sunsets*, and which *Sunset* magazine was named after—the so-called crack transcontinental train, which actually wasn't transcontinental because it only went from Los Angeles to New Orleans, that was made possible following the Gadsden Purchase from Mexico. Arizona didn't become a state until 1911, I think it was. The Gadsden Purchase opened up the southern part of Arizona for the United States and permitted the Southern Pacific to build that line to New Orleans.

Riess: [laughs] You really know history!

Lane: Well, southern California began, in a sense, in contemporary history, with the expedition of Junipero Serra who came out of what we now think of as Baja California, when California was a part of Mexico, the mission up above Laredo that he started out from, coming up the center of Baja and coming into San Diego in 1769, and founding the first of the missions. Eventually, of course, going up to Sonoma for what was it? Nineteen missions, I guess.

Riess: But to put it in terms of your own father and *Sunset* magazine, it occurs to me to ask why the magazine wasn't published in southern California. When your father came out was San Francisco as much as a center as Los Angeles?

Lane: Well, it was the financial center of the West. Of the entire West. There wasn't anything west of Chicago that even compared. Los Angeles was never a major financial center until recent years, of course, when it has become that. San Francisco was headquarters of Bank of America and Wells Fargo, which both came

out of the Gold Rush and the after-Gold Rush period. It was the headquarters of the Southern Pacific Railroad, and headquarters of the American President Lines. It was the headquarters of Del Monte, and you can look at company after company that had its headquarters in San Francisco.

Also San Francisco was a city. Los Angeles was really not a city as such, it was kind of an overgrown pueblo. And Long Beach and Santa Monica and Riverside and a lot of satellite cities. Los Angeles was kind of an overgrown Mexican-Spanish pueblo. Except for Hollywood. But Hollywood didn't come along until the teens and then the twenties. And Hollywood also was a satellite of Los Angeles.

The weather in Pasadena and Santa Barbara, and the grand old hotels in those cities, and the Coronado in San Diego, that had tremendous appeal to midwesterners, particularly Chicago. The Santa Fe was a major factor in that, as well as the Southern Pacific. It brought families out that would stay for months at the Biltmore in Santa Barbara and some of the other hotels. People rented cottages. And there was the big hotel in Pasadena.

But Los Angeles, while it is today one of the largest cities in the world, was at that time very secondary in importance commercially to San Francisco.

Riess: And your father would know where his readers were, northern or southern California?

Lane: Oh, surely. One of the advantages of magazines over other media is that you know where your clients are. Television really doesn't. They get it by ratings, and that's comparatively very superficial. And newspapers, which are very dependent upon newsstand sales, are very local.

That was the reason in 1932, among other things, that *Sunset* was a pioneer, the first magazine outside of the agricultural farm field to create editorial editions in southern California. That's where the bulk of the population was. There were three editions created in 1932 to cater to these regional differences, particularly in gardening, and to some degree weekend recreation and travel activities.

You didn't have the big freeway systems you have today, so people didn't travel as far. But I remember in the late thirties as a student at Pomona College in what was still the Depression for most of us, with a few of us with a few bits in our pockets to help one guy who owned an old rattle-trap car buy gas, we'd debate whether we'd go up to the mountains, say in the winter, or skiing if we could afford to buy the skis or rent them, or go out to Palm Springs or go down to the beach. And the

highways and the roads were good enough to do that. With the automobile you could do it.

Riess: The essence of the good life, and you knew it.

Laurence W. Lane, and Meredith Publishing Company

Riess: Your father, what were his interests? His organizations, for instance.

Lane: Well, Dad was a Mason in Iowa. He didn't continue it in California. He became president of the San Francisco Kiwanis Club as his service club. He became president of the Advertising Association of the West.

I would say most of his interest—except his background in Illinois with farming where he was raised on these farms of uncles and so forth—was that he was committed to making *Sunset* a success. Of course, in October of 1929 he was obviously absorbed completely with the survival of *Sunset*. Aside from family camping trips and some recreational activities which were very minor, in golf or whatever, he was just totally absorbed in the business.

Riess: As a young man, I wonder where his dreams came from, his ideas of himself. He's obviously someone who thought he could go pretty far. Where do you think that comes from, that good sense of self?

Lane: I know he was very much inspired by Mr. Meredith, the founder of the Meredith Publishing Company, E.T. Meredith.

At that juncture of his career it was coming to a head as to who would take over Meredith Publishing Company. When Mr. Meredith died in 1928, the son-in-law, a very competent man, Fred Bowen, became president, and my father decided to go out on his own. He had had a very fine offer from the Curtis Publishing Company in Philadelphia, which was publishing *Saturday Evening Post*, the leading magazine then of its time and a leader in the industry. But in setting up sales offices for Meredith around the country, including in the West, he became familiar with *Sunset*, which was available for sale for what turned out to be sixty thousand dollars, and he bought *Sunset*.

Riess: Meredith was *Better Homes and Gardens*?

Lane: *Better Homes and Gardens*, but prior to that, *Successful Farming*. *Successful Farming* was the early publication, and I don't know what year it was founded. That was the magazine my father worked for before World War I, before he went into the army.

Mr. Meredith had been Secretary of Agriculture for President Wilson, and then he went back to *Successful Farming*. But they began to do research on a new magazine, and subsequently they bought a title, and I don't think it was in publication, but it was a title in Seattle that I think had been a magazine, I'm not sure, called *Better Homes, Better Fruits, and Better Gardens*. It published under that name for several months at least, and then eventually it was shortened down to *Better Homes and Gardens*.

That, incidentally, is a commentary on a couple of things, how semantics change. "Better fruits," of course, would be taboo today, although I think that word has lost its meaning compared to what it was say ten or fifteen years ago. I think if you said "fruit" today, the average teenager who is very hip on words that have different connotations would not connect it with homosexuality.

[laughs] Another one that was a good advertiser in *Sunset* was a soap company called Fairy. The tag line for the advertisement was, "Do you have a little fairy in your house?" Well, there again, I doubt very much if many teenagers now would connect that word "fairy" with all of the debate today on homosexuality. But it's interesting how words come in and out of fashion like that.

Riess: Maybe double entendre was much more a thing of the past. Now everything is out in the open.

Lane: Well, I think that's a good point. You don't have to call a gay a fairy, you can call him a gay or a homosexual or something else. The word fag, I don't know whether that still continues or not, just staying on that one subject. But it's true in many other fields, it's true in the food field, it's true in the automotive field, it's true in many aspects of social and cultural subjects that we deal with today—words take on different meanings or lose their meanings.

Riess: Marrying Ruth Bell—what importance does that have in terms of motivating your father?

Lane: Oh, it was a big one I think. They were elected something like king and queen in the senior class. He came from a very poor family whose mother had a boarding house that I remember going to as a child still in the early twenties, before we

moved to California in 1928. She took in boarders, she was secretary of her church. He had to work for everything and was on scholarship.

She [Ruth Bell] was the daughter of the president of the university, and Phi Beta Kappa. He had very good grades, but she was more of a student. I think her inspiration and her interest, and her love of gardening and food—she was a home economics graduate—her influence certainly had a good deal to do with his interest in *Better Homes and Gardens*.

Better Homes and Gardens became a major part of Meredith Publishing Company in the early twenties. He then became sales manager of all Meredith publications, and probably if he had stayed he would have become vice president and general manager under Mr. Meredith's son-in-law. But he chose to go into business for himself.

Riess: That would have been characteristic of your father, that he would not want to spend the rest of his life as number two?

Lane: Probably not because of any resentment or, in my opinion, any lack of willingness to take orders—he served in the army and enjoyed the army, and he was just a second lieutenant. Like myself, where I will sometimes get tagged as being in a business environment, where I could call my own shots or give orders or whatever, in the real world you don't make a success of your life, in my opinion, without listening and without arriving at decisions by consultation, and by feeling the mood and the commitment of individuals. And I can later give some examples of that.

Conceiving of *Sunset* Magazine

Lane: But to get back to your point, I think his main drive would have been to create something that he saw an opportunity to develop, and *Sunset* was the clay, so to speak, that he could mold into something quite unique and different, but—and this is what a lot of people overlook—based on a lot of his experience with Meredith.

Successful Farming was a regional magazine. It catered to what, although the subtitle wasn't used, to what was called "The Heartland of the Midwest." And they used the heart to cover Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, so on and so forth, I've forgotten, there were about ten states. *Sunset* he saw as "The Magazine of Western Living," which is not the way that the successors to Southern Pacific and later

years during the twenties and all had developed *Sunset*. It was even called "The National Magazine of the West," but its primary readership was in the West.

He conceived of a magazine like *Successful Farming* that was devoted in a very vertical way to catering to only families—as *Successful Farming* did in the Midwest—to only families in the West, families living in the seven western states. So he used that, and he used the how-to-do-it service-oriented editorial format. He also used, from his time at *Better Homes and Gardens*, nearly six years, 1922 to 1928, food and garden and home. *Sunset* had had some editorial in those fields.

Of course, *Sunset* came with what *Better Homes and Gardens* did not have, and no home service magazine has it to any depth today, a magnificent historical lineage back to its very concept of a travel magazine. Combining travel with home, garden and food as family interests. And exclusively for western families with the opportunities and the problems they have in gardening, or the problems in transportation, we'll say, in travel, or the problems in wood homes in desert climates, or all kinds of problems. *Sunset* dealt with a hell of a lot of problems.

People too often, particularly those who are critical or competitive, sort of slough *Sunset* off as dealing with the frosting of life, with the good things and the expensive things and the non-crucial, non-substantive things of life. Whereas, in fact, it deals with the very heart of family life and the home and family. The first issue of *Sunset* published what Herbert Hoover had used in his campaign of 1928 on the importance of family and home; that was published in the February issue of 1928, excerpts from the radio campaign talks of Herbert Hoover who was then President-elect—that was the last year that the election took place in March, so in the February issue Hoover was not yet President.

Father's Values

Riess: Family and home, and Presbyterian and Republican, all these values.

Lane: Well, my father was never a very religious person, but we had a lot of strong church background. My grandmother was secretary of the church that we went to. Dr. Medberry was the minister of the church when we were active. We went to Sunday school right within a few blocks of where my grandmother lived in Des Moines.

Riess: You remember your minister's name?

Lane: Oh yes, I remember him very well. I was eight then.

Riess: But you wouldn't have been in church, you would have been in Sunday school.

Lane: Well, no. In those days I was in church more than Sunday school. I don't remember Sunday school until we went to the Presbyterian church on Easton Avenue in Burlingame, which was our first home when we moved out. My father had rented a home on Adeline Drive and Broadway Burlingame. And on Easton and El Camino is still one of the biggest Presbyterian churches on the Peninsula.

Riess: But to get back to your father's value system and moral system, you say he was not that religious, yet he felt strongly the tenets of home and family and Americanism?

Lane: Well, he—my grandmother had two brothers who were killed, one on each side, in the Civil War, but my father's roots were more Midwest than probably national. He served in World War I and he served on the War Production Board and the Small Business Advisory Commission in World War II, and his values were certainly very strongly democratic. He voted for Wilson, I think in part because Mr. Meredith was Secretary of Interior to Wilson, but after that he voted Republican.

He was never active in Republican party affairs, nor was he too active in government. In those days, certainly, flying or taking the train back and forth to Washington was not as easy an activity as it has been in my life. Of course, if transportation was the same as it was in his time, or if I was fighting to keep the business alive, I would not be able to participate in Washington as I have.

My father used to say, and I think this is important and I remind people of this, "Keeping a business alive, healthy and growing, is harder than starting a business." You can debate the point, but starting a business is one thing, if you have analyzed the market, or if you're lucky or whatever and find a niche and find a path, but once your business is established, luck plays out pretty fast. You've got to be calculating, you've got to be knowledgeable, you've got to be analytical, you have to be aggressive in the sense of boldness.

[tape interruption, Mrs. Lane is introduced to interviewer.]

Riess: We're talking about your father's moral or value system, and whether he was censorious of what he would have seen as immorality? Was he a judgmental person?

Lane: No. He didn't drink much in his early life, I don't think. But he sure enjoyed martinis and scotch over the rocks, and he sent us away to school on our own. He took us to Mexico right after the war and turned my brother and I loose in Mexico City for a night on the town. He was not a puritan, in other words, in the sense of fanatic views of what made a good Christian.

We never got lectures or preaching on morals or things that, oh, a minister's son might recall, being brought up by a minister, and a reason a lot of minister's sons rebelled. My brother and I never really had anything to rebel against, except I suppose if we had taken umbrage with the example that our family and relatives and friends set for us as we grew up.

Riess: You say you remember Dr. Medberry. What do you remember?

Lane: Oh, I remember talking to him, his walking with me down the street back to my grandmother's home for lunch after church. I have a lot of vivid memories of my childhood in Des Moines. Dr. Medberry later died in the pulpit in that same church.

[End of Side 1, Tape 1] ##

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1]

An Aside on Muybridge and Horses

Lane: I have a book I have looked for and I can't find. In going through and disposing of my parents' library, a flip of the coin, I received that book. I think it's in storage and I can't find it.

But at that time, going through the library, my brother took a book that I just got back from him that he wants me to have now, called *A Horse in Motion*. The introduction is by Senator Stanford—then Governor, because he had been Governor in the fifties, he had been elected Senator in 1851—a wonderful book that you can look at, that leather-bound book there, published in 1881. It depicts the research with Muybridge, the photographer, who came to Stanford's attention because of motion and body studies which were quite revolutionary in those days, and shocking to some people. Stanford wanted to apply it to the muscles and the motions of a horse.

It was conceived by wanting to prove a bet that all four legs are off the ground, which I've never accepted because, growing up with horses, it's very easy to see a

horse running, that at times there are all four feet off the ground. I just can't believe that was the reason for all of that effort and expense. I guess it was because there is a long history of Senator Stanford's concern and interest in documenting the productivity of a horse, because riding was the means of transportation before the railroad, before the car.

Riess: That certainly is a scientific approach, to study where the feet are when you know very well it's doing its job.

Lane: Yes, it's doing its job, but it's like a car that gets from here to there is doing its job. How fast it gets there, how much gas it consumes, how safe it is, how long a pony express rider could ride a horse, how long a Wells Fargo draft horse could pull a heavy load, whether you need four or six, and what grades, there were all kinds of highly, highly scientific analyses of horses that we apply now to cars or airplanes or a bicycle.

There was no railroad in the world to compare with the transcontinental American railroad in the early 1850s or sixties. So that opened up whole new regions for settlement where you drove cattle to railheads, and you had branch railroads going down the Rio Grande, going off of that central railroad. Then you had the Great Northern and Santa Fe coming in later.

But you needed to reach satellite communities—as today we use American Express or United Express—and the only way it was done was by horse. Occasionally, of course, you had rivers, and canals in the early history of our country. The Columbia was navigable. Parts of the other rivers were navigable. You had San Francisco Bay, you had Puget Sound, where huge population centers developed because of water transportation.

Once you came west the horse became a very critical method of transportation. And the productivity of the horse, how it could exist on certain types of feed, certain breeds, Morgans or this or that, that's what Stanford was into in this book, and this book is great on that.

Riess: It is this Muybridge book that your brother took. And the other book? We got into this because I was asking, from the time-line I sent you, whether your father might have heard of Freud at the time of the publication of *An Introduction to Psychoanalysis*.

- Lane: Yes, and I took a book of his on psychological screening of whether soldiers were fit to fight, or whether they should do this or that. I have it but I don't know where it is.
- Riess: He would have been administrating psychological exams?
- Lane: Examinations, right.
- Riess: Was your father sympathetic with the army?
- Lane: Oh, he was very supportive of the military. He encouraged me to go into the ROTC when I was at Pomona College. He was very helpful in my getting into officer training at Stanford when I was at Stanford. He always valued his military training.
- Riess: *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* was a book he might have picked up and read?
- Lane: Oh, very definitely. I think it tied in with what Mr. Meredith and we did to a fare-thee-well, and I'm encouraging in my role as member of the board of Time Inc., and consultant to Time Warner, to continue in budgeting and so forth, and that is, very intensive analysis of our audience.

Meeting the Reader's Needs

- Lane: *Sunset* more than any other magazine—and this is confirmed by national research syndicated organizations, Magazine Research Incorporated, M.R.I., and others—*Sunset* did more research on its audience to understand its audience, to make its audience more knowledgeable about what *Sunset* was about, and to make our editors and our advertisers more knowledgeable of what our readers were about, what they liked, what they didn't like. This was the *modus operandi* of Meredith, and we reflected it at *Sunset* far beyond even Meredith or any other magazine.
- Riess: How did you do that? Did you send out surveys?
- Lane: Oh yes, you bet. And I got into it even heavier than my father did. First of all, I like going out and meeting readers, but I was introduced to the value of it as a young kid in Burlingame selling *Sunset* door-to-door. We had boy sales. We had some newsstand sales, but newsstand sales were primarily done in drugstores and railroad stations. So boy sales—interesting, today you would not say boy sales.

Riess: This is what was called the Hustler Club? I read about that.

Lane: In any event, I met readers early, on Saturdays once a month. I saw men and women—husbands and wives we would have said then—both grabbing for the magazine. "We're planning a vacation with the kids." "I'm having a party tonight and I need a recipe." I saw firsthand, flesh and blood, how *Sunset* was a tool. It wasn't just a leisure pastime, it was a tool that was used to help these people in their lives.

"My lawn's dying," or, "My rosebush is dying." Or, "We had a fire in the garage and we need to remodel." *Sunset* dealt with a lot of problems and it still does. I even seem to recall an earthquake when I was a young boy in Burlingame.

Riess: But it can't anticipate a problem before it arises, can it?

Lane: Oh yes it can, sure it can. It can anticipate that if you build on a hill you're damn well going to have to have very good foundations, you're going to have to have good drainage systems. If you have a septic tank, you want to be very sure that that septic tank is not going to drain into an area which will slip. There are all kinds of things that it can anticipate.

It tries to give the homeowner, or the homebuilder or the homebuyer, some advance warning. If your house butts up against the back of a hill and is not well drained and does not have pest controls, you very likely may have a bad infestation of earwigs, and so you want to be sure to get a pest control—whatever it is—inspection before you buy the house, because these are conditions where earwigs thrive, or whatever.

Riess: Who would identify the likely problems or issues?

Lane: Editors would. Because we're out staff-writing in the field and we know from experience. If you build or buy a home in the Hollywood Hills and you haven't cleared the brush at least a hundred feet below you, and you're upstream from a brushfire, you're really putting your house in danger. If you have a shake roof without some kind of an automatic sprinkler system—which is vulnerable because the power may go off in a bad fire, which doesn't then give you that protection—you're exposing yourself, and you at least should have fire insurance or something else. [laughter]

I would say *Sunset*, one of its great fortes is to anticipate to the extent of letting a homeowner or a family know. I remember another type of anticipation: a story on a

great lake for fishing, the headline was, "The weather will be hot, the road will be terrible"—I'm paraphrasing it, but it did everything to discourage the person—and then colon or dash: "—but the fishing is great." The point was that you'd get good fishing, but you should anticipate mosquitoes, bad roads, hot weather, dusty trails or whatever.

That was the main reaction from readers over the years, that, "We were able to avoid this," or, "We were able to plan for it," or, "We put in a better foundation," or, "We didn't put the roses on the sunny side of the house, we put them on the shady side of the house." Whatever, you just don't plant certain plants on one side of the house. You're in the same micro-environment—Mill Valley or whatever it may be—but depending on which way the wind comes, which way the sun comes up, plant material from one area doesn't do as well as it does in another area.

Riess: That is certainly reader-need anticipation. It's not exactly psychoanalysis though. I mean, you're not looking to see where mental problems are going to arise.

Lane: Oh yes, yes. We used to say that people could avoid the unknown. This is a mental attitude. If the new housewife, new marriage or new family formation or whatever it is today, if they've never had a dinner party for eight, there's a fear of the unknown. And *Sunset* helps overcome that fear. They've never built a deck before and that, psychologically, with a lot of people, is a big hindrance. *Sunset* helps them do that.

Western Magazine Audiences

Lane: Now, another area with regard to *Sunset* versus the rest of the country is that westerners by all research and surveys are more experimental, they're more willing to take a chance, they are much more adventuresome in different ways. A lot of this has to do with just the lifestyle of the West, but it also has to do with the settlement of the West.

A much higher proportion of families have already made a big change in their lives. They have either moved or they are the second or third generation of families who have uprooted themselves from the Midwest, the South or the East. They have found out that they can make that transfer, and usually for the betterment of their lives. Not always.

Today, talking about people leaving California, what people ignore, and even some of our *Sunset* editors ignore, is that people are not leaving the West, they are leaving southern California to go up to northern California, or Oregon. Or they are going to Colorado. Very few of them are going east of that 100th meridian, Denver, or whatever it is. They're moving all around the West, and away from these heavy population centers for reasons of congestion, or lack of jobs, or whatever. They're going up to Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, Texas or somewhere—we've added Texas now.

Riess: Time Warner added Texas?

Lane: Time Warner. I wouldn't have added Texas. First of all I had a verbal agreement with *Southern Living*, when it got started from *Sunset*, that they would take Texas if they wanted it. Except for the Panhandle, which does relate more to Albuquerque and to the West. Texas is part of the West, as is Kansas and Oklahoma by many measurements, but it's not part of some of the subtleties of the West that relates to the West Coast versus Chicago or St. Louis. So I had an agreement with the publishers that they could take Texas. However, Time Warner now owns both *Sunset* and *Southern Living*. But I see it doesn't show on this map, so they may have decided to drop it. [Picks up a recent copy of *Sunset*, looking at regional map.]

Westerners do have a very different attitude and acceptance of their role in life as being more open, more informal. I remember my father-in-law, we gave him an aloha shirt once—we honeymooned in Hawaii in 1956, and we'd go back and forth to Hawaii a lot—we gave him an aloha shirt, and a year or so later he came out here and he wore it and was complimented on it. He said, "Well, this is the first time I've worn it." We said, "Well, why?" He said, "Well, I'd get laughed at if I wore it in Lincoln, Illinois." That isn't quite as true today with non-stop flights from Chicago and St. Louis and people traveling more, but still tradition—.

We've just come back from Lincoln, Illinois, wonderful Midwest farming community, the corn is a mile high, the beans are great, and with the floods they're going to get wonderful prices. In our family we have three farms; my wife has three farms back there that she inherited from her father. They're just going to do great this year. We went out to the farms and saw the pigs and the sheep and the corn, the soy beans.

But out there it's much more conservative. I just got a new Jaguar convertible, but you just don't see many convertibles back there. The weather is part of the reason. Now you get to the East Coast and you can say, well, they're more liberal, they're

more liberated and so forth, but there's a definite difference between the regionalism of the East Coast and regionalism of the South and regionalism of the West.

Westerners, first of all, were born in or were introduced to a north-south economy which you don't have in the Midwest and you don't have on the East Coast. This economy was isolated from the Gold Rush, and then the Oregon territory, so that it developed east-west commerce before it was really a part of the rest of the United States. Part of it was geographic, part of it was transportation, but part of it was just the adventuresome attitude of pioneers who settled the western part of the United States. Particularly the three Pacific Coast states. It's what? The 200th anniversary of the Oregon Trail.

Riess: That adventuresome attitude has always gotten positive reinforcement.

Lane: Well, and research points out that it's not just a cliché, or it's not just a promotional stunt. Westerners definitely on the average—this is taking thousands of families—television viewing is much lower in the West than in the rest of the United States. People just don't look at television as much. They're not nearly as loyal to television programs. There's much more flipping the channels, and a much higher incidence of turning it off. So television ratings are on the average much lower in the West.

During the fifties, when a lot of national magazines were knocking their brains out, and several committing hari-kari, *Life*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and *Post*, chasing numbers of audience versus circulation, I worked in our New York office. I opened our New York office in 1950, and I saw print getting pushed into the corner. I got A.C. Nielsen to give me television ratings and I found these ratings were much lower in the West.

Sunset had some of its greatest growth during the decade of the fifties because we capitalized with national advertisers that their TV ratings were much lower in the West than what they'd get with one ad in *Sunset* for an automobile or a food company or whatever—and we documented this with all kinds of reader information coming back, the research we do continually on readers.

Our readers are the best customers, and they're in every single community in the West. You can merchandise it with every single broker, every salesman, every dealer in western America, because *Sunset* will about proportion its coverage to population. And if it gets out of whack with population it's because it drifts to the better income.

If you find heavier population, say in Los Angeles, but a larger proportion of that total population in low incomes, uneducated, migrants, or whatever, *Sunset* will still keep its proportionate coverage in balance throughout these seven states—and then it was eleven, and then with Hawaii and Alaska it was thirteen—in balance with a certain level of *per capita* income per family. That was what we related it to, plus home ownership, about 80 percent of people living in homes who had collateral, who had credit, who were permanent, and who were largely families. So you had a man-woman audience, and in some 49 percent of the cases you had children under eighteen years of age, and another 11 percent of children from eighteen to thirty living at home.

Riess: That's very solid.

Lane: That's just the tip of the iceberg on the type of information we gave to editors so they could edit the magazine to that audience. In other words, they weren't editing a magazine for a lot of singles, or they weren't editing a magazine for families in their twenties. Family formation was in the mid to late twenties. The first home was in the early thirties. And the biggest buying was in the forties and fifties. And yet there was a residue—and increasingly in the West versus the rest of the country—of very adventuresome, very active, very well-off financially, people in their fifties and sixties and over who we were tracking.

In fact, we used to call these "plateaus of interest." The first plateau is when you got married and suddenly started thinking that maybe this little one-room apartment isn't quite enough. The second one was when you got your home and filled it—and most people had to buy it, or rent it first and then hopefully buy it.

We anticipated that renter who was looking at a home, and we would do a piece. The idea would be to analyze the home you're renting now and see how you like the arrangement of the bathrooms, the kitchen and so on and so forth, whether you want an outdoor patio off the living room or the bedroom. Later, as you track different lifestyles, whether you want your hot tub next to the pool or off your bedroom. "It's kind of nice to jump out of your bedroom in your birthday suit and into the hot tub, rather than walking down to the pool through the garden." And so on.

A lot of those things we, you might say, anticipated, and it was because our researchers would meet a reader who had done that, who had put the hot tub right next to the bedroom. "And you know, after we get through making love, we love to jump in the hot tub." [laughs] We didn't put that in *Sunset*, but that was a lot of the reality that *Sunset*, I think, still has.

I'm meeting next week with Robin Wolaner, the president, to reinforce that again, that *Sunset* just has to stay relevant, it has to keep its finger on the pulse of its audience, and it has to know who the hell its audience is to edit the magazine, and then to use that to sell advertising.

T.V. Competition for Magazine Time

Riess: I'm curious about what you think the low attention or interest in television says about westerners?

Lane: People are outdoors a lot more during the winter. In the summer they're outdoors a lot. You don't have summer rains. The family there in Lincoln, Illinois, they sat in their house most of July because it just rained like hell. Now, we'll have some rain in the Northwest, and television viewing is higher *per capita* in the Northwest than it is in the Central areas or the South. But here there are just too many things to do out of doors.

The television industry will offset that by saying that *per capita* ownership of television is higher. You ask why. Well, first of all, in the early days it was that *per capita* income was higher out here, and the California ranch home didn't lend itself to having everybody having to come to the living room to look at the television. We had one in the living room and one in our bedroom, which is to hell and gone from the living room. You didn't have to go through the living room, as Jean's sister's family does; there when you come in the front door or the back door you've got to go through the living room.

So, the design of the homes, and the *per capita* income. You had the sets, but whether they were turned on or not was the question. Like I used to say, "We could give a million copies of *Sunset* away"—this was before we had a million circulation—"and I could claim a million audience." I said actually I could claim two point something million, because we have proven evidence that we reach both the man and woman in the household in 80 percent of the cases, plus in-laws and children over eighteen years of age, who are "primary readers." What that means is they read six or more copies for twelve months subscription or newsstand.

Then we go to sets turned on. Well, there was a lot of water in that. Again, you have a lot of scientific information. But one of the things that I used to do—I saw an article in the *Chicago Tribune*, the superintendent of the sewers coincided his pumping capacity right to the minute, and this got published, to television

programming. On the hour and on the half-hour the pressure went up for a period of five or ten minutes. And how often do we all go to the bathroom when the commercials come on?

I saw this presented as a factual thing. So I reproduced it and called it a "flushometer," being scientific because everything was metered and so forth, to point out that people who had their sets on weren't necessarily looking.

There was also a lot of research to point out—well, this is obvious—[in television] you don't have the referral back, you don't have what now is such an important thing, and for a long time has been: clip it out, send it to your daughter, fax it, copy it. With television it's on and it's gone.

Television—you say you can tape it. Well, so you tape it. God, I've got more video-cassette tapes from people who have taped programs! There is a wonderful program on Africa that's going on now, and Jean hasn't seen it and I wish I had taped it, but I haven't taped it. But if it's a *National Geographic* article on Africa or something, all I do is clip it. I just read an article in some magazine on how it is safer for young babies to be on their backs than to be on their stomachs, and I sent it to both my daughter and daughter-in-law.

Riess: [laughs] Wow, you cut up a *National Geographic*!

Lane: Well, the same thing with *Sunset*. For all the studies on magazines saved in homes, *Sunset* and the *National Geographic* are one and two in any survey in Western America.

Riess: I can believe it. Does the ordinary user get an index?

Lane: No, but it's the reason we give a very prime position, and I've convinced Time Warner to do the same thing, to put the index—and now most magazines are doing that—right in the first part of the magazine. Time Warner has pushed it a little further back, I think.

[looking at magazine] It's ahead of the masthead. Here we are. And we've gussied it up, you know, over a period of time. I don't think they're charging premium position—a lot of magazines do—but they may be charging more for that premium position opposite the index.

We get very high reading on the index, and we sell thousands of binders. I started this in the Los Angeles Library early on when we started to publish the index. I

took the L.A. Library index system, because *Sunset*, they told me, was the most frequently-asked-for consumer magazine of all the magazines they carried, and so I felt we should publish an index. At that time there were only two or three magazines publishing an index, *National Geographic*, and I think *Scientific American*. No general consumer magazine, although *National Geographic* was consumer.

I went down to the L.A. Library and got permission to use their indexing system, and then we had to do it by three editions, because our three editions had different contents. Then I went to the Portland City Library and I checked it all out with them, and from that we went into this index which now goes back many, many years.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2] ##

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Bill Lane's Des Moines Boyhood, Mentors

Riess: Your father, when he was working for Meredith, was he coming out to California to sell advertising? What were his California connections?

Lane: He was opening offices—they were not full-time Meredith offices, they were representatives—and selling advertising, calling on the Raisin Advisory Board, Del Monte, the Washington Apple Advisory Board. Primarily food companies. *Better Homes and Gardens* didn't have a travel section, so the American President Lines and even Southern Pacific were not considered prime advertising opportunities. Down in Los Angeles there were several accounts, southern California tourism organizations to promote tourism from the Midwest to come to southern California.

Anyway, in the course of that he realized what a difference—you know, he'd leave Iowa in January and come to southern California and realize that it was a dramatic difference in living.

Also, my mother's father got diabetes and retired from Drake University in the late teens or early twenties and moved to southern California, Los Angeles, off of Wilshire Boulevard. We came out from Iowa in the summers, and sometimes Christmas. Virtually every year we took the Rio Grande Railroad out, and we spent a lot of our youth on holidays in southern California.

My mother had four brothers, and they all came West in the twenties, three of them to Los Angeles and one to Seattle. Two of them went to USC. The West was very much a part of our early life as young kids before we moved out. I remember being taken out by an uncle and looking through an orange grove to these snow-covered mountains, and maybe because of that I later was attracted to go to Pomona College, which was in a group of orange fields in 1938.

Riess: Unusual for a boy from Des Moines to have that California connection.

Lane: Yes, there were not many coming out where they would have the wherewithal to do it. Although I imagine there were Iowa families who had grandparents living in the West, so there may have been more than I was aware of. But it certainly helped indoctrinate both my mother and my brother and myself to the West at a very early age.

Riess: You remember your childhood in Des Moines. What are your memories?

Lane: Oh, I suppose the snow storms, and sledding, just a little tiny tot. And I remember our first pony when my brother, who is two years younger than I am, we had to lift him up onto the pony, a little black Pinto pony named Betty. We've got a picture of Betty with my brother on the pony, and I'm holding the pony. And a wonderful dog called Cleta, a German police dog that we later brought out to California. She lived to be very old.

I remember meeting my father at the train, over at the Oakland Mole, because we always met him over there and saw him off from taking the ferry across to the Oakland Mole, the big barn where the trains came in. He said, "Wait a minute," and went back to a baggage car and brought Cleta back. That was a big day because we hated to leave Cleta, but we had left her with the man who took care of our home back in Iowa.

We had Airedales back there too, and I remember throwing a little Airedale puppy off the sofa and my brother catching it. I remember going to school, walking along the railroad tracks—streetcar tracks actually—out of Des Moines. We lived in the suburb of Hillendale out on Hickman Avenue in Des Moines, Iowa.

Riess: What kind of a house did you live in?

Lane: It was a very small, unpretentious house. I was born in another house, an apartment actually, down in the city of Des Moines, but very shortly my parents built this home, way out in the country then—the house is gone now. We were raised and

went to school there. I went up through, what, the sixth or seventh grade in the suburb. I can't think of the name of the grammar school now, but I remember listening to Lindbergh's flight to Paris on a little crystal set.

Riess: Did you make the crystal set?

Lane: There were lots of kits in those days, but I don't recall that we made it. Later, out here in California, I made airplanes out of balsa wood, model airplanes and things, but I don't think I made a crystal set. I'm sure my brother didn't.

Riess: So you were the big brother.

Lane: I don't think of it that way. We were close enough that we did a lot of things together. We went just two years apart to Pomona College and Stanford, both went into the navy, both came into *Sunset* in the same year, 1946. Mel sold magazines door-to-door too. We had different friends in school, close friends, classmates. But being the older brother—I couldn't help that. Perhaps he has more of a differentiation between.

We have shared responsibilities pretty evenly and generally very congenially in business. We both led our own lives in terms of the government activities and various organizations we get deeply involved with. I don't remember ever a fight with my brother. He may remember some. We both went up to Yosemite and worked together. We have had very similar interests. We both have properties now at Lake Tahoe.

Riess: Thinking back, what person would you say you most admired, if you can relate to that question, when you were a boy in Des Moines?

Lane: Between parents?

Riess: No, an individual, maybe a friend, or a teacher who was very influential.

Lane: I remember Mrs. Harris, who was my English teacher in grammar school, Roosevelt Grammar School where I went to school first in Burlingame, Broadway Burlingame, a very wonderful teacher. I remember her making the class close their eyes and envision a mountain stream, and the peace and quiet of a mountain valley, and transforming yourself from your immediate environment to something that stretched your mind. It was after Byrd's exploration in the South Pole. And of course Lindbergh—envision yourself flying across the ocean, or envision yourself in Antarctica. That was in grammar school.

And Mr. Olsen, who was the principal, a wonderful friend who later moved to Menlo Park and became superintendent of the Menlo Park schools. I was put out of a student body meeting because I whistled, I remember. It made me mad. Then in my junior year I was elected student body president of my grammar school. Mr. Olsen and I became very close friends later in life when he moved to Menlo Park—after, of course, I had come down to Palo Alto High School.

We moved to Palo Alto, to Cowper Street, 2025 Cowper Street, in the fall of 1934. I was finishing grammar school. We had moved, and I commuted back and forth on the train, alone. I remember that was quite a deal. My brother went into a grammar school in Palo Alto because he had more time to finish grammar school, two more years, but I commuted alone up to Broadway Burlingame from Palo Alto. Then I went to Palo Alto High School.

Riess: And your father commuted to San Francisco?

Lane: He was commuting from the Mayfield Station, in what we call South Palo Alto today, to San Francisco. Although he frequently commuted with one of his associates, a Mr. Thrash, who was business manager all through those years and very critical to the success of the company, who lived not far from us in Palo Alto. They would drive up together.

The Suburbs, and *Sunset* Subscribers

Riess: Why didn't your family live in San Francisco?

Lane: Oh, he wanted to be in the suburbs, and wanted to be in a residential area. Same reason that Stanford and most of the Big Four, and Ralston, anybody who could afford it, built homes down the Peninsula. The San Francisco weather and the difficulty of living in San Francisco with a family, or whatever.

Riess: San Francisco was really unthinkable?

Lane: Well, they didn't have a lot of money. And the apartments and the row houses did not give the gardening and the flexibility.

Sunset had high penetration in many areas of San Francisco, but it is not where *Sunset* ideas can flourish to the same degree that they can in the suburbs. You can't

so easily knock out a wall and put in a patio out there, even though it's a wonderful lifestyle.

After the war my brother and I had an apartment that my parents had for a period of time, on Jones and Sacramento, and we loved it. Then we got a house over on Hayes Street, off of Leavenworth. I loved San Francisco and I liked living in it. As a single I might live in it today, I don't know. But most San Franciscans who can afford it travel out, and now they stay at very nice resorts up at Napa Valley, or wherever, Tahoe. Or they have a place over at Stinson Beach, or Carmel, or something else.

Riess: Somewhere the sun is shining.

Lane: Right. And you've got to keep in mind, that's a small part of the total population. You have it in mind, but when you talk about it in demographic terms, in terms of lifestyle, that mobility is limited to a small part of the population.

If you take the population that is for one reason or another not in your primary market, then *Sunset* reaches a pretty good proportion of those people who do have summer homes, or do travel, or in some way have some mobility and are not of a mental type that isn't interested in new ideas, new recipes, new places to travel, new things to do with their home, the so-called slouch potatoes, or whatever you call them, who just like a can of beer and television. Or those people who find their lifestyle very rewarding in other ways, museums, volunteer work, all kinds of very worthwhile, commendable lifestyles, that, as I point out, don't require *Sunset* to help them have a good life.

Sunset is just as specialized as that horse magazine there, *Western Horseman*. I've tried to buy *Western Horseman* over the years, and I know that magazine very well. Next to *Sunset* it is my favorite magazine, along with *The Economist* and maybe one other. *Western Horseman* was founded by the Speidel newspaper family here in the West, in Reno, and now is in Colorado Springs. He owned a number of newspapers and I think they've all been sold.

Western Horseman, they get into homes, but they get into homes for people who have horses and are living in that kind of an area. They'll occasionally get into a travel article where you can trailer your horse.

Riess: But it's a finite readership.

Lane: Well, there's a finite readership to *Sunset*. It's just not as finite. When I was flying I read *Pilot* magazine. You can say finite is people who own planes. Well, that's not true, there are a lot of people who read that who don't own planes. And there are a lot of people who don't own horses, who hope to own a horse.

There are students at Stanford right now who are boarding their horses at the Stanford Red Barn who read *Western Horseman* because someday they want to own a little ranch in Oregon, or they want to build a barn of their own. Or they are reading articles on different breeds of horses, or they buy cowboy hats or whatever, even though they don't own a horse. But they rent a horse at the Stanford Barn while they are a student. Same thing with *Pilot*, it gets read by someone who someday wants to fly, or just likes airplanes.

Sunset, the same way. There are a lot of people—they are not the people we are primarily aiming at—there are people who dream of having a home, or perhaps a second home. Or they have a condominium.

Now even some of our retirement homes have had to bend their rules a little bit. In fact, some friends of ours at the Sequoias here [in Portola Valley] have just added a kitchen. They eliminated a third bedroom—they had a big suite—they eliminated one bedroom because they found their grandchildren weren't coming back as often or whatever, and they put in their own kitchen. So now they can cook a few meals, and the Sequoias lets them do it. But when the Sequoias was founded by the Presbyterian Church you could not even touch any renovation of those apartments.

Many of them have little patio gardens. They didn't let you plant, the Sequoia gardeners would take care of it. Now they let you do anything you want out there. You can put your own plants in, you can take out the surfacing, put brick in, put a patio in. We have a lot of readers at the Sequoias. The average age is seventy-five, or something like that. A lot of them are very, very aggressive. I've spoken over there on Australia. I've spoken on the Pacific Rim. They are "up and at 'em" all the time.

Bernice Behrens, who was very active in San Francisco with the State Department, she was Cyril Magnin's assistant, she lives there, and she's just leading a trip to Russia. She wanted me to come over for dinner next week with the Japanese ambassador. She's just full of piss and vinegar, doing things all the time, as a lot of those people in the rest homes are, and *Sunset* will reach those people. They're not going to reach the couple that just walks back and forth and reads the *Reader's Digest* or looks at television. Because we're not relating to them.

Riess: At one time *Sunset* did not encourage subscription on the East Coast. But what about all those people on the East Coast who would like in fact to live a western lifestyle?

Lane: They can buy it. I think maybe now there's not a price discrimination. My father didn't accept subscriptions, and that was probably during the paper rationing when we just didn't have any paper. But after the war when I got involved I said, "Fine, let's accept them, but let's charge more and make a profit." We can market it to the advertisers as a bonus.

Advertisers know that people planning to come West—they don't have a Bank of America branch in Ipswich, or wherever they live, but when they come West and they see this Bank of America advertising they know it. We used to merchandise the hundred or so thousand non-West Coast subscriptions, which was, say, eight or nine percent of our circulation after a million, as a bonus for advertisers. The advertisers pay the premium on the subscription.

I don't know whether today they charge a premium or not outside of the West. *Southern Living* doesn't, so I have a feeling that maybe *Sunset* doesn't, but I don't know that. [looking in magazine] Subscription rate, one year, \$21; Canada, \$33; Mexico, \$32; foreign, \$41. So they don't charge any premium out of the West, whereas we did. I used to market it, and it was a big plus.

The directory advertisers, they [the buyers] don't care where the hell they are, if they like a gadget, or they like a travel agent tour, and they live in Texas or Illinois. These advertisers used to be dumbfounded: "Gee, we got a lot of requests from Connecticut, we got a lot of requests from here or there, why is that?" Well, we have a lot of readers there. Why not?

Riess: It brings up the question of *The New Yorker's* relevance to the West Coast.

Lane: That's right. Well, in New York, to some degree with the Kennedy Center in Washington and just politics in general, big government in Washington, those two cities had a national interest, and of course the theater and the museums of New York, and then the literary style and the fantastic writing of *The New Yorker*.

I remember when I was living in New York in 1951 as a bachelor and I was asked by a gal that I was going with if I would go out and cook and make beds for four gals who wanted to play bridge all weekend on Fire Island. I took a collection of Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us* that I collected from *The New Yorker*. I'd fix their breakfast and make their beds, and fix them sandwiches, and then I'd go out

on the beach—it was in the fall, I think, kind of cold—all alone, and read that whole series of *The Sea Around Us* in 1951.

That article [*The Sea Around Us*] was before she wrote *Silent Spring*, but it had an influence in my whole outlook on the environment, as did very definitely *Silent Spring*. That was on pesticides, and that led me in 1969, when I saw some early research on a whole group of hydrocarbons, but primarily DDT, the big hydrocarbon in garden pesticides that was beginning to show damage to bird's eggs and so forth, I stopped accepting advertising for any products with DDT or the nine other major hydrocarbons that were destructive. "Blowing the Whistle on DDT" was the headline.

I think the Rachel Carson series *The Sea Around Us* had an influence on me in a lot of things I've been involved with in oceanography and population control over the years.

Early Women Editors: Gen Callahan, Lou Richardson, Helga Iverson

Riess: Let me go back and ask, before you came from Des Moines, before the *Sunset* purchase was made, was there talk in the family about it that you remember?

Lane: I'm sure there was, but I was not aware of it.

Riess: The dinner table was not a place for that?

Lane: Not that I can recall, no. But I'm sure there was a lot, because my father took two editors from *Better Homes and Gardens* who were close friends of my mother's. One was the home economics editor, Genevieve Callahan, and another editor was Lou Richardson, who was a general writer. My father brought them out as co-editors, although in the very first issue he showed himself as managing editor, which dropped very quickly.

"The Girls," as we used to call them, became coeditors, but Gen primarily—and later upon her retirement from *Sunset*—wrote a lot of books and did a lot of freelance writing on Western and Californian cooking. Lou was more of a general writer; she looked after gardening and home and so forth.

My mother would have had quite an influence on that key decision. I remind Robin Wolaner and some of the folks at Time Inc. today that the fact that Condé Nast

makes Tina Brown an editor of *The New Yorker*—*Sunset* was way ahead of its time in putting a woman in as a senior editor. I dare say it could have been the first magazine to have a woman editor. I don't know, but I doubt that *Good Housekeeping* had a woman editor.

Riess: Not until an issue in late 1931 where there was a picture of Lou Richardson did I realize Lou Richardson was not male. I don't know that your readers would have known Lou was a woman.

Lane: Very early in the thirties Helga Iverson became travel editor. She got me a job on a freighter from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Also she had taken pack trips with Ike Livermore, who I packed with in Mineral King in Sequoia National Park in 1935 or 1936, before I went on to Yosemite. She knew Ike because she had interviewed the packers and pack stations and so forth in the High Sierras.

We also went on a pack trip in the Wallowas in northeastern Oregon, in the late thirties, I guess it would have been. The Wallowa is a mountain range on the west side of the Snake River in northeastern Oregon. You go out of Pendleton. It's where Chief Joseph and the tribe, the Nez Percé, had most of their major hunting grounds, and they crossed the Snake River over into Utah, or Idaho, where the Nez Percé Forest is now identified.

Riess: Tell me more about Helga?

Lane: Well, she was a major woman editor.

The first great garden editor was—well, Sidney Mitchell was a freelancer, he worked part time. Then there was Elsa Uppman, who is still living in Carmel—Jean and my daughter just had dinner with her and her husband. Elsa had the Stanford gardening school at Stanford University; she had talked Stanford into having this gardening school. We were living then in Palo Alto and my mother knew her through the Palo Alto Garden Club. Dad hired her and she became a fantastic garden editor of *Sunset*.

Riess: What kind of a person was Helga?

Lane: Wonderful lady. She was married later to a man by the name of Wall who I think was in the government, State Department, I'm not sure of that.

Riess: Did she make all the trips that she wrote about?

Lane: She did a lot of things. I mentioned the trip on a freighter. She was going to take the trip but she couldn't at the last minute and asked me. It was a freighter that carried twelve passengers, and it was my first scouting assignment, I guess. I believe I was at Stanford, but I'm not sure what year it was.

Riess: "Scouting" was the term for research?

Lane: Getting notes. Getting experience and seeing for yourself.

Riess: I assumed every recipe was tested, but I didn't realize every trip was taken by an editor.

Lane: Not every trip, but there was every effort made to be sure that *Sunset* stood behind the accuracy and the authenticity of what we were writing about. So press releases and things like that were scrutinized and checked with other than the source. Especially if it was a new area, you'd call banks, you'd call newspapers, you'd call maybe local free-lance writers to check or whatever. There was every intent made to authenticate the accuracy.

Helga was a great editor in the sense that she really believed in the *Sunset* outdoor approach to enjoying the West and visiting different parts of the West. Of course, at that time it was largely by automobile. We did have train articles and bus articles, but there wasn't the jump-in-a-jet-and-fly-to-Aspen kind of travel. Foreign travel was restricted without jet aircraft. The Clipper didn't even go into the Pacific until the mid-1930s, 1937 for air travel. You were dealing with the *Lurline* and the *Matsonia* to Hawaii.

Riess: I saw in the magazine an ad for overnight flights, with stewardesses putting you to sleep behind little curtains and then you would wake up in Honolulu.

Lane: Yes, I took that many times. Northwest had it from Seattle to St. Paul, Minneapolis. United had it to Hawaii. Stratocruiser.

Riess: Another question, going back. What other magazines were an important part of your life, growing up?

[End Tape 2, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2] ##

Lane: I know I sold *Collier's* and *Liberty* magazines when I was selling *Sunset*. I sold *Saturday Evening Post* for a while. *Literary Digest* went out of business because it

mis-called the Calvin Coolidge election with a survey; it was just completely wrong and lost all credibility, and by that time it was not a strong magazine to begin with. That mis-calling of the Calvin Coolidge election—I think it was Coolidge—killed it.

We were exposed to magazines and, of course, at Meredith, *Successful Farming* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. I remember going to Christmas parties down at Meredith with my parents where children were invited and Meredith was giving five-pound boxes of candy—five pounds!—to all employees. I remember this big, thick box of candy.

"Eskimo Pies" and Test Kitchens

Lane: During that period, among other things my father was in charge of personnel. He was personnel manager before he was advertising director. He had the restaurant as part of his bailiwick. A guy came in with an idea about an ice cream bar. Dad thought maybe he had a good idea, and he talked to my mother, who developed a chocolate sauce that would freeze, and they cut up frozen ice cream and put a stick in it. They subsequently put a wrapper on it.

My father then put a little investment group together and got this guy to agree to syndicate what they named the Eskimo Pie. You would sell the wrappers, and of course the franchisee would have to adhere to the recipe and the promotions and advertising and so forth.

That was in the twenties. My mother did the testing in our kitchen where we lived, there in Des Moines. I remember the testing that went on, just as a very small kid. I remember this group sitting around the table tasting these ice cream bars. I've always been interested in ice cream bars, still today.

"It's It"—when we came out here to California "It's It" had a little store out on the beach below the Cliff House, and "It's Its" were sold there. They were much better than they are today. [laughs] I'm probably one of the best Haagen Dazs ice cream bar fans around—in fact, I've got about six of them in the ice box now. But it all started I think in part because of that Eskimo Pie.

They never got any legal documents to hold this entrepreneur whose idea it was, although my mother developed the chocolate and it was my dad's marketing idea to

franchise these wrappers as a way of controlling the distribution and getting a royalty, because you sold the wrappers.

Riess: And you said he was in charge of a restaurant?

Lane: He had the restaurant for the employees. They had a big restaurant at Meredith for the employees.

Riess: Was it an experimental kitchen?

Lane: Yes, they had testing kitchens.

My mother did a lot of the testing for *Sunset* after we came out here, in her home kitchen. And there was another home economics editor, a wonderful lady who lived in the East Bay who did a lot of testing in her home kitchen. We did some testing with Safeway in some kitchens they had, and also Del Monte—they were both very involved in the early days in cooperating. And PG&E had a big home economics department.

All three of those companies were involved in helping testing before we moved to Menlo Park when we put in our own testing kitchens. But through those growth years of the late forties, well through the thirties and the late forties, we didn't have any test kitchens. It was all done in homes, my mother's home and editors' homes.

Riess: That was a tradition with the home magazines?

Lane: Yes, *Better Homes and Gardens* had test kitchens. We had a kitchen at 576 Sacramento, the last building which *Sunset* owned.

The first office was on Sansome Street above the Sunset Press, which was then not owned by Southern Pacific. But it's where the offices were that my dad moved into when he came out here. In 1935 [moved in December 1934] they bought the building at 576 Sacramento, and they had a little employees' kitchen and did a little testing there. But most of it was done in my mother's kitchen, and in Lou and Genevieve's kitchens.

Investors in *Sunset* Magazine, Webb Young

Riess: When you talk about the groups that your father got together to purchase *Sunset*, did that include Lou and Genevieve?

Lane: No. It included several families in Des Moines. George Peak was one. He was with Banker's Life, or one of the big insurance companies. Gregory Brunk, who was an attorney, and several other investors. All of those investors lost their investment, which wasn't by today's standards a very large amount of money, but there were two or three bankruptcies that washed out all of that early investment.

There were a couple of threatened lawsuits from one or two of the investors, but the Peak family and the Brunk family remained very loyal to my dad. We survived through Isadore Zellerbach advancing money on paper, which is critical, of course, to publishing; borrowing with American Trust, and later Bank of America; and new money in 1937 or 1938 from Webb Young [James W. Young].

Webb Young was a wealthy advertising-agency executive, one of the pioneers of J. Walter Thompson Advertising, the Chicago manager, and he was called in by Mr. Zellerbach early in 1934 [according to *A Half-Century of Discovery*] to give his opinion on whether he, Young, thought *Sunset* was a viable publication to continue giving credit to for paper.

Mr. Young became so enthusiastic about it—and he admired Dad and knew Dad from the advertising relationship—that he invested, I've forgotten what it was, not a lot of money, a hundred thousand or something like that, to keep *Sunset* going. His investment must have come in ahead of 1938, because 1938 was the first year *Sunset* made a profit. From 1928 to 1938, a decade there of not making money. Then from 1938 on it began to make money.

It wasn't until the late forties or early fifties that Mr. Young was paid off on a formula for his stock. For a period of time my father did not have the controlling ownership of *Sunset*, but under the agreement he was to be the chief executive officer, and Mr. Young was a very considerate angel and never disputed my dad's leadership.

Webb Young, in fact, helped perfect the regional editions of *Sunset* by doing a lot of testing and advertising using his son's product, who was in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Webb Young Trader, who had Navajo blankets, Navajo woven ties, various Navajo products. They used different headlines and different copy in the three editions to test the advertising response. That, and then also one of Mr.

Young's sons helped perfect the staff writing technique of *Sunset*, where you didn't have individual authors but you worked with groups of editors all double-checking one another.

Riess: Looking at *Sunset* in the year before your father's purchase, at the time of the crash in 1929, there was such a spirit of optimism, even editorial statements against fear.

Lane: That reflects again on what you referred to earlier as a mental attitude. Westerners have always been more optimistic. Now, in the last year or so, with these massive defense layoffs, that has changed a little bit. And the confidence and optimism research studies published by the *Wall Street Journal* and so on and so forth have not shown the West as the leader in every instance.

But I dare say we will adjust, as we did after the war. A lot of what's going on now is almost identical to what was going on after the war [WWII]. The West had this big buildup, particularly because Europe had phased out several months earlier in the Pacific war, so the East was so-called adjusting. The Northeast had not yet started to move to the South, and so the West had all these defense plants, all these Liberty Ships and Kaiser and so forth, and it was going to hell in a basket. It was doom and gloom. It took about four or five years to pull out of that, to get that adjustment.

We'll get that adjustment, I know we will. The West has always been more optimistic. It's gone into depressions later and it's come out earlier. In this case it has not, and there have been cases in the past when it has not. The depression of 1983, several recessions, depending upon different factors, the drought or whatever.

1929 Sunset Magazine Ownership Transition; The Great Depression

Riess: Your thoughts are so interesting. They enlarge the definition of what it is to run a magazine.

When your father bought the magazine, and the transition was taking place, I wonder—I couldn't find a notice in the magazine of the new ownership.

Lane: But there was an ad. There was a full-page spread on the "coming *Sunset*" in the January issue, and it stated the plans for the new *Sunset*. Because, you see, Dad took ownership in October. In fact, he arrived on Columbus Day.

Did I tell you of that arrival when he came in on the ferry, and the bands were all gathered at the Ferry Building? He was to be met by the fellow he had analyzing his circulation, kind of a huckster but a pretty nice guy. (The original *Sunset* had been a founder of the Audit Bureau of Circulation in 1913 when it was founded, but it had subsequently gotten way off the track on the quality of its circulation, so it didn't qualify on the ratio of verified paid subscriptions. My dad was determined to get it back into the Audit Bureau of Circulation, and he had to get the water out of the circulation, the people who had been given it. In the early days at Southern Pacific if you bought a lot you'd get a subscription, just all kinds of gimmicks.)

Anyway, this fellow was down there, unbeknownst to my dad, in a big open Cadillac or Lincoln. In the meantime these bands were all gathering. Columbus Day was not a legal holiday or an event in Des Moines, Iowa, but it was a big deal in San Francisco, of course. So my dad was dumbfounded to see this parade, and this Lincoln or Cadillac waiting for him with its driver, and this guy meeting him! He used to often tell that story. That's the reason our fifteen-year-plus employees today at *Sunset* are called the Columbians. You become a Columbian when you have served the company fifteen years.

But it was the beginning of that period of getting ready for the first issue. Genevieve and Lou came out with Dad, and my mother waited until we finished school and we drove out in a new Packard that Dad had bought. Cecil was our driver—I've forgotten his last name, but he was the guy on the farm—and we drove us out with Dad's mother, Grandma Lane. We drove out with one running board stacked up above the window, the trunk, and a roof-rack.

We came out to Los Angeles during the Christmas holidays and had the Christmas of 1928 in Los Angeles, and then between Christmas and New Year's drove up Highway One, stopping at Santa Maria for one night—I remember the Santa Maria Inn—then coming into the Clift Hotel either on New Year's Day or very shortly thereafter—I don't remember New Year's as an event. But then moving to the rented home down on Adeline in Broadway Burlingame to begin our schooling in January.

But November, December, January—of course then much further ahead than now—then the February issue had to go to press, and I don't know when that was. But they had two months. Some of the articles were holdovers. There was a man by the name of Tod Powell who was a great outdoors writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and he had written an article which was one of the holdovers.

The cover of the February issue—and I have the original painting of Lake Tahoe done for the cover—was commissioned from Maury [Maurice] Logan, who Dad had met earlier on a trip out here. I think that was commissioned because it showed the home and the lake and the mountains, so it combined home and travel to set the new theme.

The covers prior to February were quite different. There were occasionally home and travel, quite often travel covers, but that February cover was commissioned in that period of time. In fact, of course, the negotiations for *Sunset* sale were long before October. Dad had gotten a lot of wheels turning before he actually took ownership in October of 1928.

Riess: Was it a happy transition do you think?

Lane: Oh yes. Charlie Field remained a good friend. I don't know what happened to Woodhead, but Charlie Field went on to have a national radio program. He was one of the great creative gurus of the Bohemian Club, wrote *The Cremation of Care*. Tod Powell and Frank Taylor, who was a correspondent for *Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader's Digest* and wrote for *Sunset*, they were very close friends and lived in Los Altos.

Slowly the idea of departments, garden, home, travel, and food, got established in the early days. There were bylines, there were cigarettes, Lucky Strikes—it was survival. But there was always the idea that in time he would get rid of the tobacco, the beer—there was never any hard liquor.

Riess: That was always an idea of your fathers?

Lane: Yes, that it was a family magazine that wouldn't have liquor or beer except for table wine.

My father was an avid cigar smoker until, oh, well into his years out here. No, it could have been some of my mother's influence, too, I don't know. During the war when you didn't have enough paper to take the advertising you could get, that was when beer and tobacco were stopped, and we never got back into it.

Bill Lane's Thoughts on Longevity and Legacy

Lane: There's something I'd like to say here, if you've got enough tape—if you want to keep it on tape it's all right. My two closest friends—Frank Chambers, who is seventy-five, has just now had his third heart attack and a triple bypass and is coming out of it fine. My other closest friend who lives across the street, in the peak of health, doesn't smoke, doesn't drink much, jogging, skiing in the Bugaboos right up until two or three months ago, and he was my guest at the summer encampment of the Bohemian Grove, had a little groin pain, doctor said therapy, it turned out to be a liver infection which was benign, but in getting everything they could on that, they did cat scans and x-rays and he's just riddled with cancer in the bone.

In fact, the only pain relief he's getting now, or in the most dramatic way, is from acupuncture—I'm driving him up for his treatment next Tuesday. But he's just gone downhill all of a sudden from being in the peak of health. And you know, his wife said last night, when she heard what I'm doing in the next week or two, she said, "Bill, you've got to slow down."

I feel great. I don't go to the fitness center as much as I might, but I run up and down stairs and carry my own baggage at airports and so forth. But between prostate cancer, which my dad died of all of a sudden, and so forth, I am kind of looking at priorities, and certainly one of them is getting this project on a little higher level of priority, putting some materials together and being very interested in a research-oriented, creative type of writer to do it.

I think I told you, I've talked to George Shultz, I've talked to Jim Michener, I've talked to any one of a number of friends who have done various things. A good friend of mine in the cowboy field, Monty Montana, just wrote a book of his life with a ghost, or a co-author, I'm not sure. I would want a book that got much broader than *Sunset*. I give it a working title, *Down Memory Lane*, or something like that—maybe that's too passive a title, maybe it's a sub-title. But I do want to look to the future.

Right now I'm involved in the Pan-Pacific summit meeting with Clinton and all the people, heads of state from the Pacific, that are meeting in November, and I've been asked as an eminent blah-blah-something to be one of the resources for their meeting on the future of the Pacific. I'm dealing in the future in a million things in my life, so I don't want just a reminiscent book, but I'd like to see a format and a person that I thought could catch fire to just an average ordinary person.

I'm not a George Shultz, and I'm not a president of the United States, or a [Colin] Powell or whatever, but I have lived through the evolution of aviation and electronic and space and two wars—three wars or whatever. According to Shultz, "Bill," he says, "You've lived an amazing life!" Well, for him to say that I think is kind of interesting. He says, "You've done a lot of things I haven't done. I haven't been in business that much, and I really didn't run Bechtel when I was president. You've run a business, and you've run it successfully, and you've been a leader in the industry and so forth, and you've done public service." I said, "Nothing compared to you." And he said, "Well, you've been in it longer than I have. You started with the Johnson Administration." You know, he kind of talked me into it.

I don't know whether it has a market or not, whether a moral could come out of the book that would be—well, first of all, unto itself I can't envision it being that interesting, as interesting as it is to a few people who know about it, or maybe as I think it is, or different as it may be from many people who have bridged career and academia. I'm an honorary professor in two universities. I own four or five honorary degrees. I do a lot of lecturing at schools, and I've funded a number of things in different schools, and so on and so forth. So I can wear that academia hat a little bit. The business hat, obviously, the public service hat, the environmental hat, so on and so forth.

Riess: You've been looking at biographies to get ideas.

Lane: Yes, I've gone down to Kepler's, I've gone to the Stanford bookstore—you know, they have whole sections on biographies. Jim Michener sent me his book, *The World I Live In*. Jean and I are just listening to the tapes, twelve tapes, both sides. I read the Jean Harris biography. [tape interruption] But biographies, that classification of books is not my first choice. I'm reading Shultz's, and *The World I Live In*, as I mentioned, by Michener. I've read a lot on Lincoln, I've read a lot on John Muir—I guess maybe what I'm saying isn't quite true. Over my lifetime I've probably read a lot of biographies.

Riess: What makes it interesting is the man in the context of the time.

Lane: Well, I have a lot of theories on the Pacific Rim. I have a lot of theories on diplomacy. Shultz and I were talking about this. I think that this obsession that you come up through the foreign service to be a "diplomat" is just a bunch of baloney. You can be a diplomat and come from any one of a number of circles that are influential.

[End Tape 2, Side 2]

II BILL LANE'S EDUCATION, AND EARLY ROLES AT *SUNSET*

[Interview 2: September 13, 1993] ##

[Begin Tape 3, Side 1]

Mother, Ruth Lane Bell, and Home Economics

[Interviewer and Mr. Lane talk before the interview begins about the performing arts center planned for Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Mr. Lane is a life member of the Cal Poly Round Table.]

It's going to be beautiful because Bill Clark, who used to be with the Reagan Administration and has a big ranch down there and is very close to the Hearst family, obtained out of the Hearst inventory, which is still in storage, three 14th or 15th-century Italian ceilings, and he has given one of the ceilings for the room we've endowed, so we're going to have this beautiful ceiling. You've been in the Hearst Castle so you know, ceiling after ceiling. And they have many more still in storage, just never been unpacked.

Riess: Where will the performing arts center be located?

Lane: It's right as you come onto the campus. You come up to the statue of the mustang. There's that big theater on the left, and then there's a parking area, and it's going into that parking area. They're putting a lot of parking underground, and two stories above, I think.

They gave us a model by the architect, who is a Cal Poly graduate in architecture—oh, these damn flies, must have been a door open—Brazilian, Alberto-something. He was here [at a reception at the Lanes']. We had about eighty guests. It would have been fun if you were here. I wish I'd known that you knew people there.

I wish there was a way I could get preconditioned for these talks. Your letter was helpful, but I really haven't had time to think about it much.

Riess: What I said in my letter was that I wanted to talk more about your parents, specific questions, and about your schooling. Then I want to get the magazine up to the beginning of Walter Doty's editorship. I want us to get to 1939 today.

About your mother, in the time line I sent to you I noted the dates of the suffrage movement. Can you think about your mother in that context? Was she a political person at all? Describe her to me.

Lane: Well, she grew up in an academician's home. She would have been born, I guess, when my grandfather was still at the University of Nebraska. Hill M. Bell. You remember the Hill name was on my father's mother's side. She was a Hill. So, back two or three generations my mother and father were related. Unfortunately we have no family tree, and nobody has come up with it.

Riess: I also want more your sense of her, to prepare us for understanding you and understanding your motivations. Was she a very domestic woman?

Lane: As far as I know she taught home economics only until I was born in 1919. She accompanied my father to Fort Oglethorpe in Georgia where he did psychiatric screening for enlistees as to whether they were capable or qualified for war duty. She came back, and I was born in 1919. I don't recall any reference to her working after she taught home economics in college.

Riess: Did you have household help?

Lane: No. We had a caretaker, Cecil, who was the man who drove us out the Christmas of 1928. I don't know how long he had been with us. There may have been part-time help for the cows and chickens that we had, and the pony. Maybe some domestic help, but I'm not aware of it. When we came to California she had cleaning help, but no permanent help.

That Christmas we spent with my grandmother Bell—my grandfather had passed away by that time—who lived on a street off of Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. Then we drove up between Christmas and New Year's, stayed at the Clift Hotel, and then moved to a home on Adeline Drive in Broadway Burlingame. We rented that home before renting another home on Cabrillo Avenue.

Mel and I enrolled at Roosevelt Grammar School. I was nine. I was born in 1919, we moved out in 1928, so I would have been nine on November 7th before we moved out. My brother was practically two years younger.

Riess: Okay. I think what I want to get at is how much your own home exemplified the *Sunset* magazine reader's home, and how much your mother was the woman that *Sunset* was written for.

Lane: I'm not sure I was aware of it too much, but Genevieve Callahan, who was the home ec person that my father brought from Meredith, and my mother, and also Lou Richardson, the other woman that came out, the other editor, were all close

friends. We used to take day trips and even weekend trips to the wine country or up the Mendocino Coast together.

I mentioned we had this big Packard which I think was new in 1928 perhaps, maybe 1927, but we drove out in it in 1928. We had room for six people, three in the front seat and three in the back seat. Lou and Gen used to go with us—we were very close. So I'm sure my mother was definitely with Genevieve and Lou.

Gen and Lou were spinsters, and they lived together, and they were together when they died—in the last ten years or so.

Riess: Tell me more about them. Is there a story there?

Lane: Probably, but not one that—I mean, I don't know. They were just lovely women. I think it's too bad that two spinsters, or even two men, can't be looked upon today as normal simply because they don't get married. To even put them under some kind of an innuendo of suspicion that they had a relationship is nothing I would even be a party to.

Genevieve Callahan—a relative of hers had been the one we had purchased the pony from, Betty, that I mentioned my brother and I had in Des Moines. We were very close to them.

Riess: The "Sunset Gold" editorials they wrote had a quasi-religious quality. That interested me.

Lane: I think Gen may have been Catholic. Lou I'm quite sure was not.

Riess: The early editorial message was all about courage and fortitude and looking on the bright side of things. It was very much positive thinking—I don't know whether it was because the period was so difficult, the Depression, or whether that was the Lane philosophy.

Lane: Well, I think it was the way our family was raised.

In government service, in any activity I'm in with my children, they say, "Dad, you're always looking at the bright side," because I'm saying out of adversity almost inevitably comes opportunity.

I think I mentioned to you about the oil crisis in 1976, or whatever it was. I immediately told our editors, who were down in the dumps that it was going to cut

car travel and so forth, I said that it was going to increase a lot of other types of travel and activities.

We're not locked into getting into the car. First of all, we have a lot of destinations that can be reached with public transportation, and they're getting greater allocations. Busses are getting greater allocations, trains are getting greater allocations. The big gas-guzzler is the American automobile.

This was what, 1974, 1975? We were already into walking, we were already into hiking, we were already into backpacking, we were already into bicycles, pogo sticks—you name it, *Sunset* has made a forte of that. So we have every opportunity to, not to exploit, but to take advantage. That was just one example.

This gets back, I think, to the way maybe we were raised. [laughing] I always resent the implication that we wouldn't have been anybody if we hadn't been raised by a particular mother and father. And I don't say this without giving my parents a great deal of credit as examples and role models. But take my father as an example—his mother was a very strong woman, but his father died when he was two or three years old. I think if my father had died, or my mother, maybe I wouldn't have inherited *Sunset*, but I think I'd still have pretty much the same philosophy of life that I have today.

I don't feel that it's fair that if a son or a daughter makes a success of life following a successful father that they have done it because they have inherited these good examples and so forth. We've inherited the traits, no question about that, in the genes, but I think I would have still been who I am. Certainly I would have been in the war, and I learned a lot and gained a lot of insights and feelings about people and all during the war.

Bill Lane Looks at the Bright Side

Lane: But to make a long story short on that idea of accentuating the positive, at the time of the oil crisis Hawaii decided to cancel their advertising, and I screamed bloody murder back to our sales people: "Tell them that they've got the opportunity of a lifetime, with public transportation the only way you can get there. Private boating may be cut, but how many people go over in their boat? A little private boat?" In any event, some legislator got hold of it and he reported this to the governor.

The governor called me, Governor Burns, and he said, "Will you come talk to our travel legislative committee?" I did, and of course, many of them were Oriental. This Chinese fellow, legislator, comes up afterwards and says, "Ambassador, do you know we don't have a single way of saying 'crisis'; we say it instead with two characters, danger and opportunity." (I later learned that Kennedy had used this; I was not aware of it at the time, but he had referred to it in some talk in the sixties.)

I said, "Will you scribble that out for me?" So he did. I checked it with the Chinese consulate here—Taiwan at the time, of course—and I got so enthusiastic about this, in the middle of all this doom and gloom, that I took a full page in the *Wall Street Journal* and blew the thing up. I'd still see it in reprints when I was active at *Sunset*, when I'd go to an advertising office. There was even an office at the White House that had it posted.

We had thousands of reprints printed of, "Out of any danger comes an opportunity," and I cited many, many examples of this: during the war, during the Depression, families coming closer together from a death or tragedy. I've cited it many different ways. So that optimism, I would say, certainly was an example set by my dad, who saw an opportunity during the Depression for *Sunset* when a lot of other media were not doing well.

Riess: And it was the editorial message.

Lane: Oh yes, that's what prompted your question, of course. I would say so. My father was never a terribly religious person, but it could have been some of the family orientation, the liquor and tobacco policies and some of the ethics, you might say, of running a business, the moral values that we've tried to set for families.

Ethics, and Advertisers, and Editorial Content

Lane: A lot of this came to the forefront after I was running the business, the Vietnam War and some things when society opened up, and my dad had retired in the early fifties virtually, so I really got hit with most of this, being publisher of the magazine with little more than my brother, although we were always together pretty much on what I was making decisions on. But I'll just give you a couple of examples of ethics.

P.G.& E. had an advertisement that was right down my alley on the environment, but they showed a photograph—I didn't know everything about P.G.& E., but it

didn't look like a western river of a utility plant, which in the copy, by innuendo, was referred to as a plant of P.G.& E.'s, and they cited research that they had done on nuclear power. I called Bob Gross, who's still a neighbor, vice-president for PR, I called Bob and said, "I'd like to know the location of that picture, and also the documentation for this research that began in 1950 or whatever?"

He said, "Well, Bill, you just have to believe that's what it is; the advertising agency checked it out." I said, "They aren't responsible to our readers, we are." So they checked it out, and sure enough the documentation was there over at the University of California; they had done some research and given a grant for research. But the photograph was of another nuclear plant, I don't know where, but not in the P.G.& E. system. So I refused to take the ad.

Riess: Did that cost the magazine anything?

Lane: I think they just canceled the ad, but they probably substituted another ad.

I turned down the American Rifle Association, and that was twelve pages. The American Rifle Association, oh, I'd say in the early 1980s, were broadening their image, so to speak—and my wife was very much in the campaign to eliminate handguns. They came to us with a campaign which our staff had accepted because the executive vice president, who was a hunter, saw no problem with it, and he had children—a wonderful fellow, Jack Henning. But he knew I might be sensitive to it, and anything that was questionable they brought into me.

I said, "Not on your life will we accept that." "Why not?" "I just don't believe in what the American Rifle Association is doing to prevent the control of handguns." And that was at the beginning of the time of these sophisticated automatic repeating weapons.

Riess: What was the nature of the ad?

Lane: It was a series of ads. Unfortunately for me, it involved two very close friends: one was Wally Schirra, who I had served with on the National Park Board in Washington, an astronaut, and his son. The other one was Governor [Victor G.] Atiyeh, the Governor of Oregon. I knew both of them very well.

So the advertising agency threatened to sue us, and I said, "Well, go ahead and sue us." We'd had that threat before. I can give you a number of examples where I told people, "Fine, sue us, we'll get more publicity out of it even if we lose, and I don't think we'll lose."

They came back and they said, "We'd like a survey of your readers." I said, "Fine." And, "We have to have an answer tomorrow," or something like that. I said, "Well, we can't get a quick survey like that," so we got two days. I went to my secretary and my wife, and two or three other people [laughter], and I sent back a letter that we had conducted this survey, and it was unanimous that our readers would object to it.

They came back and said, "Who are the people?" And I told them, "It really wasn't a survey, it was just a survey of my immediate staff and family, and they all would object to it." I said, "I don't have any question that if I put it out to readers they would object to it too—in *Sunset*." I said, "They might be hunters, or smokers, but they expect something from this magazine, and we are the publishers."

That was always the distinction I tried to make to my editors, that what we put in the magazine was what a person might do in public, versus what they might do in private. We were creating an image there, and it had nothing to do with whether we drank or smoked or hunted, the image of the magazine had to reflect what you would expect of your minister, regardless of what his personal habits were. Even though there would come a time when that would get out of hand.

With some people you're dealing with, your garage mechanic who you trust as a mechanic, you really don't care whether he's sleeping around or not. You would be concerned if he shows up drunk or if he's on dope, but you're not too concerned about his morals. It varies by the relationship that we have, and people have a very strong relationship with what they expect from *Sunset*.

We had a woman editor in Los Angeles who was living with a very nice guy—we'd met, we'd had dinner together and so forth—and she sent in a story where in about the third paragraph down she refers to "Jane Smith and Robert Jones who have just remodeled their home."

I knew damn well the minute I saw that draft who had done the story, and the editor was smart enough to send it in to me. It was a good story, a good remodel of the home, but he [the editor] sent it in and I said, "Not on your life. You tell Mary"—or whatever her name was—"to quit trying to use *Sunset* as a springboard for her lifestyle, or whatever she thinks is an acceptable lifestyle." I knew how I felt myself; if we put it out to readers, I think I knew how they would feel.

It's okay to run the house, but don't run the address or the names of the party. In fact, many people didn't want their names associated with a story in the magazine, where it was okay to show their house. But she was making an overt statement; she

was trying to let her buddies on the staff know that she could "get one by Bill Lane," because she knew damn well I was going to object to it. I can give you story after story of that.

It does come back to what you are talking about, to religion or a moral stance. But it was never prudish, nor was it to be a crusade that we expected everybody to live by these standards. I called her up, and I said, "You know, you and your friend, that's great, and if that's what you want, I think that's fine." Since that time I've got a daughter in Santa Barbara who has had several relationships.

Riess: Moralizing isn't the right word, it was that the editorials were more uplifting.

Lane: Some magazines, though, are moralizing. You know, *Forbes* gets that way, Malcolm Forbes particularly, and then you find out his personal lifestyle! That, to me, is phony, moralizing to everybody else and then living an immoral life—well, that's his business.

Riess: Hugh Hefner is more honest?

Lane: Oh, damn right, damn right, damn right. I didn't know him too well, but I've sat next to Christy [Hefner] several times. I always visualize her critiquing a center-spread, or the opening editorials [laughter], this pretty little thing—she always wore pristine little white collars, very feminine and so on.

A Letters Column, and Feedback

Riess: Readers do have expectations of their magazines. I remember *Audubon* readers being enraged when the magazine took on the environment, rather than concentrating on birds. "Letters to the Editor" pages are often the forum for these issues.

Lane: I was often tempted on letters. Now *Sunset* has letters, as you know, and it has been given the title, actually, that I thought up, "Open Door" or whatever it is ["Open House"].

It's a good way to vent certain things that you want to get out in an editorial way without taking it on as an editorial policy. That is very much what the *International Herald Tribune* is doing with that editorial line on the Olympics. They don't want to take a position advocating Australia [for the Olympics, rather than Beijing,

China], but they're perfectly willing to let my editorial [in the opinion section] take a strong position.

But this [letters column] started very shortly after Time Warner came in, and I think it's a good thing. I was talking about it with Bill Marken on Saturday night at a *Sunset* company party—Bill is still editor, and very highly thought of at Time Warner. We had more dummies with letter pages, and we went through dry runs of which letters—because we get hundreds of letters—and how we would respond to them:

"Why don't you do this or that?"

"Why don't you have more minorities?"

"We think the editorial on Palm Springs was unrealistic because it didn't tell us where low income people can spend a vacation."

You know, all kinds of things.

The *National Geographic* has a letters column, and I've talked to Gil Grosvenor a number of times on it. They really just pick love letters. I've got a couple of *National Geographics* around, I think [looking on coffee table], but their letters column is really kind of all flattery. It's all right, they're a great magazine, but it's just not my cup of tea. If we're going to have letters, I thought we should have the humility to have some critiques.

Riess: It would be like *Architectural Digest* being criticized for not publishing low income housing, when obviously that's not their intent. Maybe you avoided taking positions by having no letters?

Lane: Oh, I don't know. It was just one of those things. What I was always pushing for—all the reader research indicated what people wanted was editorial service, help on doing certain things in their home, or garden, or travels. I just didn't want to give up a page or two pages, and take away on how to bake a cake or how to take a trip, or whatever.

There was never any clamor from readers; I never saw a letter—and I kept very close touch with readers and visited their homes—I never have ever had one mention, "Why don't you have a letters page?" Or, "We would like a letters page." But I heard a hell of a lot on, "I wish we had more garden," or "I wish you'd do

more on container gardening," or "I wish you'd do more on low fat foods"—wanting all kinds of information.

Riess: I'm looking at the February 1929 issue, the last page, which was called "Adios."

Lane: Right, and the girls would trade on that I think.

Riess: This issue of the magazine, and in most of the issues I reviewed, they asked for feedback on that "Adios" page.

Lane: We asked for feedback, we asked for a hell of a lot of feedback. "Please let us know, for an upcoming article, about this new tomato which is just now on the market, how you planted it, where you planted it, what the temperature was, what the weather was during the growing season. Let us know."

We had tremendous interchange with readers. Lots of research, surveys, more than any magazine. Editors, and young publishers, including the young publishers at *Sunset*, I think get hung up that communicating is to print a letters page. That's like pricking your skin and saying it's a medical treatment!

In the last year of *Sunset*, I bet I visited over a hundred homes, and talked with the homeowners, the partners, sometimes the same sex, mostly men and women. We had a survey out to about ten thousand readers, an eight-page survey on what they liked, what they didn't like, how they compared it with other magazines, letters back and forth, plus hundreds of letters and phone calls constantly.

And I'm bitching now to the people about this goddamned voice mail system they have there now.

[End Tape 3, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 3, Side 2] ##

Lane: Not only are we a service medium, but we're a communication medium, and we're not practicing good communications. If you're in the family service business, or on a hotline, suicide line, you don't say, "Wait a minute," or, "I'll call you back next week."

People calling up the magazine, they've got a great idea, they've seen a wonderful new home, they just completed their new patio and they want to talk to an editor, they're full of piss and vinegar, "Gee, this would be great!" Maybe it's not. But, "Punch one, punch two," or go through some whole menu and at the end of it, it

may or may not say, "This is the number of the editorial service, spell the person's name." You don't know the person's name because you're not calling anybody you know, you haven't looked on the masthead.

Riess: I'll bet they've gotten plenty of letters about that one!

Lane: I bet they have too, and I bet they won't publish them, and that's what I used to tell the editors: aside from the fact that I don't really like releasing the space for non-service material, we're not entertaining readers. If they want to write to us, we will do exactly what we'll do in print, and probably more.

A reader writes, "Too much advertising." I'd write back, explain that the ratio of advertising to editorial has not changed in twenty-five or thirty years. "We don't accept liquor, tobacco, women's personal products, and thirty-one other categories. We're very sorry, we hope you understand, and so on ...and here's a *Sunset* book in appreciation, and we'll give you a refund."

I'll bet you nine out of ten, or ninety-nine out of a hundred, will come back and say, "We hadn't thought of it that way, we're sorry," or they may not say "We're sorry," but in almost every case they would continue their subscription.

Riess: Remarkable. That is one of many ways one could appreciate how amazing the magazine is, or was.

Lane: I think it still *is*; to a significant degree I think it still is. They're still regionalizing a lot. I think the research is deep. I don't think it has the conscience of the old *Sunset*, because it's a multi—they're not getting into a lot of the nitty-gritty.

When you look at the other Time Inc. magazines, this is pretty rare stuff, these working captions. I have always believed in working captions. Not just, "This is a room in Joe Doakes's house," or "This is a remodeled living room." Get your captions so they really tell a story.

Sunset Magazine Layout, 1993

Lane: From what I know of my background with the magazine, I think they're keeping up a lot of the good design. From the reader's point of view, different layouts, different things, but it's not such a jumble of layouts, like so many magazines, where really you don't get a sense of character.

Those magazines, it's like in an hour's time, which is a long time to sit down and read a magazine, I were to jump up and down, change clothes three or four times, put on different wigs, start talking differently, use different mannerisms.

Hell, you'd be so fouled up, saying, "Who *is* this Bill Lane?" The way I feel about a lot of these magazines, it looks like a bunch of editors and art directors are flipping coins as to what they're going to do, who's going to get the most attention.

I just complained to them down at *Sunset* the other day. I had laid these recent issues of the magazine out for the two parties that we had up here, and suddenly I was reminded of something that I objected to at the time, back in July, that they took the month and the date from up here [top, right-hand corner] and put it down here [lower, left-hand corner].

I knew that wasn't good. For one thing, frequently they'll stack the magazines in the newsstand. Well, maybe it was yellow, and the previous month it might have been white—the editorial department knows it was white last month, so why wouldn't any stupid ass know it's a different issue because it's yellow? But over umpteen times of looking at the newsstand, you can't keep track of that. So you look for the date. What is it? July or August?

They moved the date down here because the art department didn't want to clutter up this area across the top. But you line it out like this on your table, and you want to get the months in sequence, because I usually have three or four *Sunsets*. All of a sudden it jumps from that issue—I think it was July—down to this. Every one of these other magazines, even *Time*, every one of them has the month and the year at the top.

Well, that's a Mickey Mouse little detail, but it relates to editorial service, and what's convenient for the newsstand buyer, to know what issue it is, and to lay it out on the coffee table and know what issue it is. I'm not sure they're paying attention to those kind of details.

And the editorial department, even some of our own editors, decided they don't want the advertising department to be up in the masthead. So they threw the advertising masthead back here. Well, that's the stupidest thing in the world, the reader doesn't mind seeing that advertising masthead up there. Then next they are complaining because they're not selling as much advertising as when the Lanes owned it, and they don't know the reasons.

Well, they are selling a lot of advertising, they're doing better than most Time Inc. magazines. But an advertiser—he may be in a barber shop, he may be in you-don't-know-what—and he's flipping through the magazine and he's thinking, "I'm going to mention that to the ad director. If Suzuki is in there, I'm Mitsubishi, we should be in there. It's good editorial."

He starts to look for—"Where is the advertising office?" He doesn't find it because it is buried back in the "Shopping Center". Well, that's an insult to the advertising people themselves, let alone the convenience.

Clothing Advertising and Do It Yourself

Riess: [looking at the magazine] Is that Pendleton ad something new? Women's clothing?

Lane: No, I sold that many years ago, about 1975. They're not in every issue. One of my last calls actually was on Nike, which I sold as a new advertiser.

Riess: I wonder if this is an opening to more clothing advertising.

Lane: I wish it were, I wish it were. I think we could do a lot more with clothing related to our audience, because they have charge accounts, they have credit—so much of this now is sold by credit over the phone. We rank right at the top on credit cards, and so on and so forth.

An adjunct to our travel, to all of our entertaining, is clothing. All the surveying we do, our readers are definitely into clothing, new fashions. We've had some shoe advertising, and boots. I think clothing is a big category, and we never, in all honesty, could quite develop it.

Riess: Maybe what you were developing was a woman who was staying home making her own clothing.

Lane: No, no, no, no, no. Oh, God no, quite the opposite, and we made quite a point that our readers did not do their own gardening necessarily.

I would take a map of Hillsborough that locates every household on the map, a large map of Hillsborough, and I would go through and show the *Sunset* readers. Well, obviously you're reaching umpteen households where you've got gardeners, you've got butlers, you've got maids. And when you go back to those readers by

name—and I'd frequently take the names, which were confidential in the sense that advertisers couldn't write to them—these were people who were of considerable substance, but still, they told the gardener what they wanted.

Jean has a full-time gardener, but she's gardening all the time, telling them what to do, out there grubbing. She planted a lot for this party. And we have a full-time housekeeper, but she [Jean] does a lot of the cooking.

Riess: But the woman in the house might have a little corner designed to be her sewing corner?

Lane: Or she might not, she might not. As far as clothing is concerned, I'll bet you 90 percent of our women, or 99 percent, do not make their own clothes.

Riess: I've been reviewing the magazine, and I'm only up to post-war, so I'm probably looking at a different group of women.

Lane: Well, maybe during the war. But after the war, and particularly as you've gotten now, and for a long period of time it was kind of on the horizon, we have had working couples.

Hell, we've had evidence of that for a long time, of a significant number of our women readers who might not be working for a paid job, but were very involved in volunteer work, so in effect they're out of their homes. That's the reason we have that easy-to-do cooking, or bake-ahead cooking. All these things that make it more convenient.

We were the first to come on with what was called the radar range. Now it's called a microwave. And we published recipes. Our microwave book—General Electric gave the book out because people didn't know how the hell to use it. We had the first GE microwave, a huge thing they trucked out for a demonstration for dealers. We had it at *Sunset*. It was huge.

I have always pushed for convenience that still enables you to have quality and some degree of personal input. Our book titles are a good example, and most of the book titles came from editorial that was reworked from the magazine. I can give you lots of examples on that: *Gardening*, *Container Gardening*. Tommy Church's gardening was low maintenance gardening. We were well into that for people who were just too busy but wanted a nice garden.

Riess: I've gotten derailed by that Pendleton ad. I just don't remember, reading *Sunset*, ever noticing clothing. I thought about buying ingredients, parts of things so that I could assemble whatever in the world it was.

Lane: I don't remember the exact research figures now, but one of the most responsive lists we had over the years—I would be interested to call the circulation director now—was the McCall's pattern list. The McCall's pattern list would always rank right at the top of the mailing list for new subscriptions. But I've also called on enough clothing people—Pendleton is a classic example, and Land's End or Eddie Bauer or whatever, kind of the sports, outdoor people. Bass moccasins, I remember making calls up there in New England.

Our readers—well, obviously you're not going to sit down and make your own moccasins, or your own outdoor jacket or whatever, but for men's slacks and most men's apparel it was bought at retail. And we did a lot of research with the charge-account customers with department stores. I remember Weinstock Lubin in Sacramento, we matched their charge accounts with our *Sunset* subscriber charge accounts. [tape interruption]

Sunset Subscriptions and "Boy Sales"

Lane: Now, where were we?

Riess: We were talking about this sense that you've always known your readers. You said that you and Mel were selling magazines door-to-door, that's how you got to see who read the magazines. Tell me about the Hustler Club. Was that an idea of your father's?

Lane: There was a man by the name of Al Le Conte, and he was an early salesman with *Sunset*. That didn't last very long, as I recall. I don't really know too much about it.

Riess: The first attempt to enlist Hustler Club sales boys read, "Mothers and fathers, Tell your sons to write to us."

Lane: It wasn't sons and daughters.

Riess: No, no daughters. There were a couple of categories of Hustlers, manager Hustlers and worker Hustlers.

Lane: Well, that could have been Lou and Gen actually, because they came up with all kinds of ideas. I doubt if that—it could have been my parents, but I don't think so.

Riess: I thought maybe it was modeled on you and Mel.

Lane: It could have been. We did a lot of hustling, that's for sure. But I don't know that.

Riess: What part of the readership was getting the magazine door to door?

Lane: I don't know that either. It may be in some old subscription or circulation records. That would have been a third source. There was newsstand, which as I mentioned in one of your earlier visits was primarily drugstores, and in train stations, and as airports came along, then of course airports. Subscriptions, newsstands, and boy sales, as we called them.

How that split up, I don't know. I know we always strived for subscriptions, although I didn't go all the way with my dad, who probably would have been happy with 100 percent, because advertisers go hot and cold on this, depending on which advertising salesman. If it's a *People* salesman who saw them last, and if they liked that *People* salesman and believed what he said, they would think newsstands was the cat's whiskers, because that's where *People* sells.

If they have a new scandal with Princess Di, their newsstand sales will shoot up. In fact, in the [*People*] editorial room they have covers by newsstand volume, and one with Princess Di was number one, way up here—I don't know what the exact subject was. The next six were Princess Di, and the next maybe twelve or fifteen, half of them were royal family. They're always working toward newsstand sales.

Where in our case, while we were tough on subscriptions—no credit, cash in advance, cash in renewals—we wanted that readership, we wanted the person to be very, very committed to reading *Sunset*. It's just like my giving you that paper [*International Herald Tribune*]. You may not read it at all, but if you then read it, maybe see it in a doctor's office, and then you subscribe to it, you send your \$15 for three months or whatever it is, you're going to be a better reader of it.

That was the theory on subscriptions. And we sold—as I'd say the *National Geographic* sells—to our advertisers that we have this committed, dedicated reader and you're going to have continuity for your campaign, because you're always trying to sell more than one ad. It's just like a salesman—I'd try to equate things to something a person could believe in, and walk in his or her shoes—if you have a salesman who's going to call on a customer, and you have some ground rule that

they should call six times a year, every two months, presumably the person he or she is calling on is going to be there and will see your salesman.

Would you think it a very efficient salesman who went in unannounced, and three out of the six appointments, nobody was there? Well, that's exactly what happens with a lot of magazines; nobody is there. They don't read it, because they're not too committed to it, they got it on a deal, they got it on a combination rate with four other magazines, somebody gave it to them as a gift.

We did a lot of gift promotions, but then we monitored those people who renewed on their own, and on the second gift, if the person gave it as a gift again, we sent a long questionnaire, "How thoroughly are you reading this?" to try to determine if that gift business—which was considerable because a lot of people gave *Sunset* as gifts—how many of those gifts are really good readers.

But we always carried such a bonus—which Time Warner doesn't do now—over our advertising rate base, that if somebody complained about that, or that your newsstands are too high or whatever, I'd just say, "Well, you're getting it for free, because everything you complained about is in the bonus."

Riess: What do you mean "in the bonus?"

Lane: If, say, our guarantee is a million-six, we'd always carry a million-eight. So we'd have 200,000 there that was a bonus over what the advertiser was paying on their cost per thousand circulation.

This all goes back—I'm not, I think, getting off the track of ethics and values.

Riess: I'll allow us to get off the track for a moment. It seems to me that contents information on the cover is designed for newsstand sales. Subscribers don't need all this on the cover.

Lane: No they don't, and that's a blend of newsstand and subscription. We've had some complaints from subscribers who don't want all that, they just love to have that pretty cover picture. Well, that [looking at issue at hand] is not the most beautiful travel picture.

Riess: *The New Yorker* now has an overlay of contents for the newsstand.

Lane: We used to do that too. But we give prime advertising position to a table of contents. This space up front in a magazine is prime advertising space. From the

very beginning it used to face the front cover. For years I insisted on the table of contents being the first editorial page. That would help the reader know what's in the magazine. And we updated and modernized the table of contents, and then put the map in so they knew what edition they were getting.

Time Warner kept that. That survived for three years. Now they're putting more advertising in front of the table of contents, because the advertising ahead of the table of contents is premium advertising with no editorial support. There are several premium advertising positions in most magazines. Another one follows main editorial, which was called the Campbell's Soup position. Campbell's Soup for years demanded that their advertisement be the first advertisement following main ed on the right-hand page. I see in this issue they have the first ad on the left-hand page. Which is all right, nothing wrong with that. Those changes are cosmetic.

Bill Lane: Selling, Values, Liking to Win

Riess: Okay, about your readers, and the boy sales. There you were, the Lane kid, getting into homes selling magazines. Was it just Saturday mornings you were sent out, or what?

Lane: Oh yes. I went out and I knocked on a lot of doors. I spent a lot of time developing new customers.

And I sold white rats, I sold apples. My grandmother, who lived with us at Quail Hollow in the middle-1930s, polished apples, and I sold apples in Santa Cruz to grocery stores. We had a Red Bank apple, we called it. It was kind of a maverick apple from this old ranch that we bought, Quail Hollow. I don't know whether I told that story to Susan Collins Lehmann [author of "Quail Hollow Ranch, A History"] or not. I sold a lot of apples and took them down in an old Dodge truck. I'd just gotten my drivers license.

I've always liked selling. I tell people who kind of categorize you as a suede-shoe salesman, or something that, that diplomacy in a way is selling. Or to get your kid to not drink, or your kid to not take drugs or whatever. You have to assume that selling is a broader word for persuasion, for convincing. You have to look in the Thesaurus, one of the books behind me here that I use quite often, for synonyms for selling. But it's getting people to agree with your point of view.

A minister sells, but not many ministers want to be called a salesman—probably because of the Jerry Falwells and so forth who are truly selling and trying to raise money. But a minister who's trying to convince you of some doctrine out of the Bible, which you can't very well believe, that Jesus really rose from that tomb, and he's trying to convince you that he did, he's selling that story.

All kinds of things that are all right are selling. You sold me on the merits of doing this oral history! I use selling in a broad sense.

Riess: When you were selling the magazine door to door, were you going to the homes in Hillsborough?

Lane: Oh, yes, Hillsborough was right next door. I called on a lot of homes in Hillsborough, a lot of them with gates and caretakers.

Riess: How did you get psyched up for it? Did your father give you a pep talk?

Lane: No, no, no. No, I just always—well first of all, I like to win. I wanted the money, I suppose. But I just—I won't say it came natural, but I just liked it. I wouldn't like selling furniture or liquor or tobacco—and I say furniture because I like good furniture, but I wouldn't enjoy going on about how much better this fabric is than somebody else's fabric, or how it won't fade in the sunlight.

I like to sell things that are rewarding, like selling a conservation issue, or selling *Sunset*. I couldn't have sold a lot of magazines, because to me, even selling *The New Yorker*, I don't think it's a socially redeeming medium. I could sell the *National Geographic*, I could sell the *Smithsonian*, I could sell perhaps some other home service magazine that I liked or respected, if they had the same ethics or values. I wouldn't particularly enjoy selling *The Atlantic*, even though it is a good magazine on public opinion.

Riess: There are two kinds of selling you were doing, and you were equally committed to both, selling to the readers and selling to the advertisers.

Lane: I like meeting people. Will Rogers' cliché was, "I never met a person I didn't like," and I really never have met a person I immediately disliked. I just like people, and I like the satisfaction of doing something that I am bent on.

This call I just took from the White House, that was a fellow who was my counsel general in Perth, Will Itoh. He's part Nisei Japanese. He's now one of the top national security advisors at the White House. Well, I'm hosting a dinner for the

new ambassador to Australia who's a black—he's been ambassador to Nigeria and South Africa and the United Nations, a very fine career officer—and his wife, Thursday night in Washington, and the new Australian ambassador to the United States.

Will's up for the peace treaty signing today, and all kinds of things during the week, and I really wanted he and his wife, who are our very good friends, and who gave us this Australian dog when they were in Perth, to come. So I kept coming back at him in different ways, and leaving messages with his secretary—and Jean wasn't going at first, but then I called and said Jean was coming—and finally this morning he called and said, "Bill, we'd love to come." [laughs] And that's on a very Mickey Mouse level.

I wanted to get that long editorial for the op ed printed [in the *International Herald Tribune*], and even though I knew they were going to edit it, it served its purpose for me to write it, and I liked the challenge. I've had calls from all over the world, some from people who didn't even know me, but they connected Lane with Menlo Park, and I guess *Sunset* or something, and tracked me down.

Riess: You have that sense of the game, and winning, in selling. How much is it yourself and how much is it the product?

Lane: Oh, I think the product. I've got to believe in the United States, and if I disagreed with something, as I did as ambassador on a couple of trade issues, I let them know.

I remember [James] Baker and I—I got along with all the cabinet very well, but Baker was advocating a sale of grain to Indonesia, subsidized American grain, at a time just before the Australian prime minister was coming to the United States. I went to the President—well, first to Jim Wright, who was Speaker of the House, who had to recommend it to the President—and got the approval that the prime minister would be invited to speak to a joint session of Congress, which had never happened to an Australian prime minister.

But just before that, the Department of Agriculture decides to sell this wheat to Indonesia, which we needed like a hole in the head. The agriculture department said it was crucial and all this and that.

I flew back to Washington and met with Baker, who was then Secretary of the Treasury—I knew he was close to the President because he'd just left Chief of Staff—and told him I objected to this very much. Baker took offense at that, but

still I went to the White House, to Vice President Bush actually, and stopped the sale. So if I don't like something I do something about it.

On the other hand, I would never repeat that publicly. We get enough bashing as it is in Australia as Big Brother, taking advantage of small countries, and this and that. Actually by a minority of the people, but unfortunately many of the liberals are in the press, and so you get this impression that the whole country's against you, when in fact most of them are very pro-American and either don't know or could care less about whether we sell wheat to Indonesia.

[End Tape 3, Side 2]

[Begin Tape 4, Side 1] ##

Riess: When you were selling from door to door did you talk about the magazine as your father's magazine?

Lane: Oh, no. I don't think I ever identified the family. In the immediate neighborhood they might know, but no, never. Our kids were the same way. My daughter was a hostess down at *Sunset*, and people would say, "Do you go to school?" or "What's your name?" And she'd say, "Brenda." "Brenda what?" And she'd kind of mumble, she never wanted to use her last name. [laughs]

Riess: Was Mel as wed to the fun of selling as you were?

Lane: No, no, he definitely was not. I don't say it as any criticism. He was much more wed to the manufacturing and some of the business side of things. I like to look at the bottom line, and make critical judgments on the bottom line, and I might want to know what the components were, but as a matter of financial preoccupation, no. I want very good printing, and I led us into some of the most advanced printing, some with Time Inc. many years ago on offset printing. But to know how the press worked and to know all the scientific details of it wasn't of all that great interest to me.

We split things up pretty evenly in terms of responsibilities. When he was chairman of the Coastal Commission, or chairman of the Bay Area Conservation Commission, I spent a lot of time on books. In fact, I was the first sales editorial director of books after the war when he and I—we had a manager then of the book department—but he and I took over the book division about 1949, 1948; we had about ten titles, and I was in charge of sales and editorial, and he was in charge of manufacturing and bookkeeping and so forth.

There again, I went out selling rather than working entirely through our reps. We bought an old second-hand Plymouth sedan, and I loaded up the back seat and the trunk, and I sold bookstore to bookstore, and I traveled all over the West. I made some wonderful friends with newsstand wholesalers who sold books on the newsstands, and then the bookstores, Frederick and Nelson, Meyer and Frank . I was a bachelor then, and these people would invite into their homes and feed me and house me sometimes.

In the small communities I usually would go to the Elk's Club, and some guy would feel sorry for me—I wasn't complaining at all, I had an expense account to stay at a motel or buy my dinner. But those were great days. I still go through small towns, Salem, Eugene, places where I called on the college bookstores. Those people are all dead now, or gone, but I made some wonderful friends, and I did it all over the then-seven states where we were primarily involved. Later we added, of course, Alaska and Hawaii, and then the Rocky Mountain states.

Riess: You had something to sell that you felt great about.

Lane: Well, it got me interested in public service, too. *Sunset*, as you went into communities, say we'd have an article on malls, or saving trees, or saving old buildings, you saw that when you got into it it took a lot of volunteerism, and a lot of city council or board of supervisors approval, to take this old house off the tax rolls, to zone it non-commercial or whatever to save it. Businesses had a commitment, private citizens had a commitment, but there needed to be a lot of volunteerism from the ladies' garden club or whatever it might be.

I think it was in that way, among other things. Although serving in the war I was very interested in government, and I've always been interested in history. I don't know, it was a combination of things, but certainly *Sunset* led to my getting involved in this community [Portola Valley] when we moved up here. I ran for the homeowner's association, was elected chairman.

I think I served the longest of any of the chairmen of what is called the architectural supervising committee, but we get involved in trails and a lot of other things. I helped organize the town, was elected the first mayor, and I think *Sunset* was a catalyst to draw my interest. I've always been interested in government and the government process.

Riess: It would be good if reading *Sunset* did that for other people too.

Lane: Oh, it does. All kinds of evidence, as the direct response to reading about the garden club in some city that has helped save a park or trees you get a letter, a request, "Can we have ten extra issues?" or "Can we buy reprints?" *Sunset* has had a fantastic influence on that. Very definitely.

Riess: I wonder, did your family eat dinner together, or was your father on the road a lot of the time?

Lane: He was on the road a lot. I told you that we used to go over to the Oakland Mole and pick him up. Later when the DC-3 came in he started flying and we went to pick him up at Mill's Field, which is located about where the United Airlines cargo hangar is today along the old two-lane Bayshore.

Riess: He was the main advertising salesman?

Lane: Yes, he was. We had two other salesmen. Paul Thompson, who came with *Sunset*, he'd been working for *Sunset* before, selling printing, and Dad put him into selling. He had Matson and some San Francisco accounts, and went up to the Northwest by train, I think once a month for a week, Portland and Seattle primarily.

Then Byron Dawson, who had been with Dad at Meredith in Des Moines—Dad brought him out in the early 1930s, I'm not sure the exact date—he had accounts in San Francisco and sold in the south, southern California.

Dad took on the personal selling in the East, which he was very familiar with from *Better Homes and Gardens*. We had reps, Waldo Fellows in Detroit, and Larry Weaver in Atlanta, and Jay Dorr in Boston and New York and Chicago. When I started selling we still had those reps, and I started opening our own offices. In fact, I went back to New York and opened our first *Sunset* office in 1950. We hired a manager who had been with *The New Yorker* magazine, and I came back; I was only there for a year and a half. That's when we moved to Menlo Park. Subsequently we created our own offices in all those cities.

Riess: Did your father love selling?

Lane: Oh, yes, and he was an outstanding salesman. Though I really can't credit him too much for what I did in grammar school. [laughs] I don't think he had—I was not aware of his selling. Over the years I would say it was my commitment, and I suppose to some degree my skills. I remember he helped me with my first advertising presentation, which was for Chambers gas stoves, ovens. We worked on it together quite a bit, the sequence of making certain points first, and so forth.

Riess: One of the ways he would have influenced you would be in the sense you got of how he felt about the work, how he talked about it, when you met him at the Oakland Mole or Mills Field, whether he had had a good day.

Lane: Well, it may have been a bad day, it may have been disappointing when he didn't get some big account. I remember when he sent me to New York, he had not been able to get Kodak, Pan American, and one other account, and he said, "Bill, I want you to make those accounts your targets." And I got them all in in the year I was back there. I could tell you some things I did to get them in, and it would be of interest if this were a book on selling, but it's more detail than you need now.

The Lane Family Weathers the Depression

Riess: This was the Depression. How did the Depression affect your family?

Lane: I think probably it made it come together more. Mel and I got jobs very early. I started at Mineral King—Dad took Mel and me on a pack trip about 1935, and I think I got my first job as a junior packer in Yosemite. I worked for Ike Livermore as a junior packer. Then I went in 1938 up to Yosemite and worked all summer. I paid for my first radio, I paid for my first car, out of what I earned from the summer.

Or weekends. I used to wash windows, wash cars—in fact, there's a little old lady in Palo Alto that I run into at Palo Alto Historical Club meetings who tells me how I washed cars and windows for her every Saturday. I had forgotten about it. But in any event, I washed a lot of cars and windows, I know that.

Riess: Did you really need to do that? Your family must have been at least as affluent as your neighbors.

Lane: Oh, yes, but we never could afford to buy a home, you know, the down payment, or to build a home. We always rented. We never had a home until they bought Quail Hollow. In the 1930s we were still in a rented home in Palo Alto. There was a fire in it, and then we moved to an apartment on Forest Street, and I finished my senior year of high school, and Mel finished two more years of high school, and I went off to Pomona College and then two years later he came to Pomona College. In the same year I transferred to Stanford, and he also transferred to Stanford two years later. But then I'd gone into the service in the meantime.

The two homes in Burlingame, and the one on 2025 Cowper Street in Palo Alto, were all rented. The apartment was rented. And we had that ranch at Quail Hollow. Then the folks took a due bill for advertising that ran in *Sunset* that Mr. Smith who owned the Mark Hopkins Hotel exchanged for a small apartment in the Mark Hopkins Hotel. That was after my brother graduated from high school.

They lived in the apartment and they commuted by train to Los Gatos and were able to get enough gas through the ranch—agricultural allocation A stamps—to drive a car from Los Gatos over into the Santa Cruz mountains to the ranch. In 1949 or 1950 we moved *Sunset* down here to Menlo Park, and they continued to live at the ranch until about 1955 or 1956, I guess, until after we were married, and we weren't married until 1955 or 1956.

In 1958 they rented a home in Los Altos. Eventually they built their first home, which is just over the valley here in Portola Valley, and that would have been around 1958 or 1959. It was the first home they had owned, from the home they owned on Hickman Boulevard in Des Moines in 1928. Well, they bought the ranch in 1937, so you could say within ten years they owned Quail Hollow, but it was not a family home because Mel and I—we didn't live there, we lived in this rented home in Palo Alto.

Riess: So much for my notion that growing up in a publishing family was the lap of luxury.

Lane: *Sunset* didn't make a profit until 1938, and was very much in debt to the man who kept it from bankruptcy, James Webb Young. I mentioned that Mr. Zellerbach retained him to give him advice and he got so enthusiastic about it, knew Dad, had a lot of confidence in him, loaned him the money on a buy-back, and he got stock on a formula. Dad eventually paid him off in the early 1950s.

But we were never an affluent family at all; we lived comfortably, but not at all high on the hog. It was, I suppose, by some standards a comfortable lifestyle.

Riess: When he was home was he always talking about the magazine? Did you feel immersed in the magazine?

Lane: No. I think there probably was more going on between he and my mother than we were aware of, but with us, no.

All through the Depression we worked every Saturday morning at *Sunset* in the selling. *Sunset* closed at one o'clock Saturdays and it was a big deal when we

would go to Jack's restaurant for lunch. Usually we went across the street to a hamburger place. *Sunset* moved from 1045 Sansome Street to 576 Sacramento Street—that little skinny building is still standing—in 1937.

Prior to that I worked on Sansome Street—I'm not sure Mel did—which was where *Sunset* was located over the Sunset Press when Dad bought *Sunset*. The press had been owned by Southern Pacific, but it had also been sold. I worked there sorting pied type which was dumped out after printing subscription letters, sorting all those dinky little type back into the fonts.

Riess: Did you get paid?

Lane: Oh, yes. I don't know what it was, but it was not much. But we got a good lunch. In 1937 when we moved to 576 Sacramento things were getting a little better, and about once a month we'd eat at Jack's across the street.

Riess: Was your father a familiar of the downtown business men?

Lane: Oh, he gave a lot of time. He was president of the Kiwanis Club and very active in the Advertising Club.

But he was very busy, and there was very little depth in the management. There was a general manager, and that was it. A fellow who lived in Palo Alto right near us on Cowper Street—I mentioned that he and my father commuted together sometimes—by the name of Jesse Thrash was the business manager; he ran the book division, he ran the printing, he ran the purchasing. His widow Marie lived in Sacramento until just a few years ago when she passed away.

It was a very hardy core of very committed people, and in the early Depression sometimes they couldn't even be paid. Al Reasoner, who was the Eastern advertising director that I worked for when I came out of the war, he went in the Red Cross during the war, and I became the first marketing rep under him.

The marketing rep was to work wholesalers and dealers on the West Coast. Automobile dealers, any Eastern advertiser, we would support them in their marketing and merchandising on the West Coast. We called them marketing reps. I was the first one appointed by my dad, who was still in the business right after the war, and Howard Willoughby, who was executive vice-president and eventually became the chief operating officer in effect. But we worked Saturday mornings, and Mel did too.

Riess: Did you ever resist?

Lane: Resist? I don't think so. There wasn't as much activity that I recall in soccer or baseball, Little League. I don't remember any conflicts. Or if there were, the priority to make money—I think as a family we were all committed to making *Sunset* successful. I don't remember any pep talks or some big crusade, lecture or anything; we all knew what side our bread was buttered on in terms of making it successful.

We all got to know Mr. Young very well; he became a very close family friend, and we knew what he was doing to try to help us. We were certainly aware of sacrifices by many of the employees. I would say that we were pretty thoroughly indoctrinated to the urgency of making *Sunset* successful during the Depression and the dire conditions that existed. Of course, when we went away to war, we were pretty absorbed in that.

When we came back from the war *Sunset* was, I would say, gaining acceptance. During the war it had not been able to take a lot of advertising because of paper rationing, but those years right after the war were very heady years, and the magazine was gaining acceptance. People were building homes, and there was that tremendous migration to the West, and *Sunset* began to take off.

Bill Lane at Pomona and Stanford

Riess: How did you decide on Pomona? Is that because the family was in there also?

Lane: I liked southern California. Looking at snow-covered mountains through orange groves when we come out from Iowa in Christmas was, I suppose, a childhood memory. We had a couple of good friends who had gone to Pomona College.

Also, I didn't want to be that close to home, and the recruiter—Howard Pattee I think his name was, he later became head of the California Camping Association, a private school camp association, and when I started the school and camp directory in *Sunset* I hired him as a consultant many years later—he was the admissions director at Pomona and he gave a great pitch at Palo Alto High School.

I loved Pomona. I still have very close ties there and hold an honorary doctorate from it. Mel did too. When we both decided to come to Stanford it was for different reasons; I wanted to get into journalism, and I think he was an economics major.

Riess: Pomona was liberal arts?

Lane: Right. Very strong in music, very strong in thespian. That may have been another reason I chose Pomona, because I was very active in thespian and acting at Palo Alto High School. I was president of the student body in the last year. I don't know, different reasons; I don't know how carefully I thought it out. I don't remember even visiting. Today parents take their kids to visit college campuses. I don't remember even visiting.

The only traumatic thing I remember about it is that I bought this little Model-A Ford between my sophomore and junior year in high school, with money I earned up in the mountains. I loved it. Dark green, black fenders, and a cabriolet roof and a rumble seat, and Pomona didn't permit cars in the first year so I had to sell it!

Now I'm looking at Model-A clubs, and I'd love to buy one just like it. I don't know what I'd do with it, but for nostalgic reasons it would be fun to have it. One of the pictures in that Quail Hollow book is of me in that car with two gals I brought up for Thanksgiving vacation, or something, I forgot what it was.

Riess: What were the demographics at Palo Alto High? Was everyone going off to college?

Lane: Well, a lot were going early into the war. In fact, our graduating class, quite a few went for big money in the Seabees, construction battalion, in the navy, and several of my very close friends were killed on Wake Island where they were with the Seabees. In 1938—we were not in the war for three years, but of course the war had started in Europe, and we were preparing for war. Not realizing it, but Roosevelt certainly was leading our way to prepare for war.

Riess: At Stanford, you wanted to study journalism. You saw the issue as writing rather than as business?

Lane: Oh, I took a lot of economics, and I don't know my other courses, but journalism was my major. Of course, that was largely print journalism at the time—now it's communication with a lot of electronic high tech. Chilton Bush was the dean, and he was a former newspaper editor, so it was a great deal of writing. I took courses in advertising, too.

I became editor of the student magazine in my junior year. That was the first time a junior had taken over the management of the *Chaparral*, which was the college humor magazine. I knew I liked publishing.

Riess: The tools one would get in business school, did you learn by doing?

Lane: Well, I remember once with this college humor magazine it had been kicked off campus for what nowadays we would think very mundane, but at that time rather risqué jokes.

So I took a survey of students—I was Delta Tau Delta—of two or three fraternity houses and sorority houses that were up on the hill. I just went around and talked to the gals about *Chaparral*, and what did they think of it? And I found that not many of them responded to the risqué jokes; they liked the articles and sports and had forgotten the other content.

I told the editor I could sell more copies, and we wouldn't be kicked off campus, if we just dropped some of those risqué jokes—as I say, they wouldn't be called risqué today. So we dropped them, and we were not kicked off campus for the two years, and I was re-elected manager in my senior year. You had to be elected by the board of *Chaparral* or whatever.

That kind of taught me a lesson. We made a profit, too, because I sold more advertising in it. I remember a lot of advertisers never knew the magazine existed, downtown merchants and people like that. I started a contest for queens, kind of old hat now, but at the time the *Chaparral* never had queens. We had a bathing suit issue. [laughs] In any event, it was a very good learning period.

Admiral Wright and VJ Day

Lane: When I left Stanford I became aide to Admiral Carleton Wright, who had several shore-based appointments and then had served temporarily as a liaison with Admiral Nimitz's staff. I requested sea duty, and on the troop transport I started a radio broadcast. We had some entertainers usually in the troops, so we had tryouts, and we had entertainers and singers and little skits, and we had a daily program—I had a name for it, I forget what it was.

The ship was the *Moore McDove*, a Moore McCormick freighter that had been converted to a troop transport. They were named for birds—*Moore McSwan*, *Moore McGull*, *Moore Mcthis*. The Moore McCormick were big freighters, easily converted to troop ships. The Merchant Marine were brought into the navy, and then we had a navy gun and communication crew. So that was the way I spent the last two years of the war.

Then Admiral Wright, whom I had been aide to, flag lieutenant and commandant of the Twelfth Naval District in San Francisco before I went into sea duty, asked me to come back at the end of the war. I was in the Lingayen Gulf waiting with a load of marines to go on an invasion of Japan when the war ended with the atom bomb. (I didn't know it at the time, but my brother had been in the battle of Okinawa in a destroyer, and I knew a lot about that battle because we were waiting until it was over until we went and started bombing Japan.)

Anyway, I flew back and I became his aide again, from October until January or February. Because he was an old battleship admiral, he knew what it was to have leave when he got ashore, and he was the only military commander on V-J Day who gave liberty to the navy—the army and the air force didn't give liberty.

So the navy were all by themselves in tearing the town up, and making every gal they could get their hands on, and breaking windows and turning over streetcars and all kinds of things. He got all hell blasted out of him by the press and business community, and by Admiral King who was commander-in-chief of the military. He had been demoted once because he had made a boner in the battle of the Coral Sea.

[End Tape 4, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 4, Side 2] ##

Lane: In any event, I came back to get Admiral Wright squared away with the press, because the navy had gotten a terribly bad bashing in the press. I had known most of these editors who for one reason or the other couldn't go into the war, had physical handicaps or whatever, and so they were still there at the end of the war. I worked for about four months to get the navy back in the good graces of the local politicians and merchants and the press.

Riess: Like the *Chronicle* editor?

Lane: Oh yes. The *Chronicle* editor, Paul Smith, was a very close friend. He went back and became editor of *Collier's*. Flopped at that, but he was a hell of a good newspaper editor. Then Scott Newhall. Then there was a fellow by the name of Early whom I had been with in public relations in the navy, and he went with the *Call Bulletin*, or the *News* when the *News* was being printed. A Scripps-Howard newspaper.

Riess: You have a formidable network. Did it start with Palo Alto High School, or Pomona?

Lane: Pomona I don't think so much. Mike Armacost, for instance, who became undersecretary—he just retired as ambassador to Japan, the brother of Sam Armacost—he was a Pomona graduate. A lot of foreign diplomats were trained at Pomona, went into the foreign service before and after the war. He became a very close friend, a good friend, both as undersecretary when I was in Australia, and very helpful when I'd get into some donnybrook with George Schultz or some bureaucrat down in the bowels of the State Department.

But Pomona I don't think really led to any network. I didn't keep close touch with any of my classmates, although the reunions I've enjoyed very much. One of the girls in that photograph [taken in the Model-A Ford at Quail Hollow], Vera Meyers—I've forgotten her married name—and I have corresponded, and she and her husband have visited us.

I would think Stanford is where the network really began, I guess, in the sense of local contacts and people that I have been involved with some since.

Bill Lane's Self-Assessment of Abilities

Riess: When you were trying to right Admiral Wright's wrong, when you came to town you got in touch with the local editors. At that time did you know these people?

Lane: No, no, I didn't. But I would say I've always gotten along with older people. I don't say that in a braggadocio way, but I respect older people. I've always related to older people well, like Dr. Cuthbert Hurd, who's probably almost ninety—not quite, but some twenty years older.

I've always gotten along well with older people. Coming up through *Sunset*, a lot of people could have said, "There's the boss's son with a silver spoon in his mouth," but I think I—Mel too, we both did, and he was younger than I was—we both won their respect by just a lot of hard work. I remember my first year as a display salesman, not on those directories but on larger space, I became leading salesman in the first year, and I didn't have any special help.

In fact, my dad probably loaded it against me. I remember Mr. Reasoner, when I became his assistant, said, "Your dad called me up to the office the other day and he said, 'I want you to make it as tough on Bill as possible.'" He didn't mean it unethically, but what he was saying was, "Don't let him get away with anything." I

don't think I would have tried, because I was working my tail off and I wanted to be the best at what I was doing.

Riess: Back to this case of handling the press for Admiral Wright, you came in cold to talk to the editors, but you had a way about you?

Lane: I never tried to rely on personality—if I had any. I always tried to have facts. I remember working up a presentation—this was before I worked with my dad on the presentation for the Chambers gas company, or whatever the hell it was—I made up a presentation on why the decision of one man should not prejudice a communication medium, let alone the owner of the Emporium—I got to know Ned Lippman well, president of the Emporium.

Turned out, I learned later, he said, "Bill Lane? Are you related to Larry Lane?" I said, "Well, yes. I'm his son." I called on Mr. Lippman because all the Emporium windows had been broken. They were raising hell with the navy. I said, "Those kids, a lot of them have gone through all kinds of battles, they won freedom here which you're going to benefit from. And just because you lost a few broken windows"—I'm paraphrasing now, but I remember I developed a presentation—"Most of the damage was covered by insurance, and here is an admiral who had been a fantastic admiral, who made his best decision, but Admiral King for whatever reasons didn't like it, beached him when he wanted to be at sea fighting the enemy endangering his life. And he's sitting here safe and sound and madder than a hornet because he's beached. So you've got to forgive him."

I always liked to put it on the other foot. I remember asking Mr. Lippman, I said, "Can you tell me that in your business career you never made a decision on impulse that you didn't regret afterwards?" This was kind of presumptuous, I realize. He laughed. He said, "That's a pretty uppity question for a young guy like you to be asking me," or something to that effect. We laughed about it afterwards.

I said, "Admiral Wright was thinking of these boys who had earned this peace. None of your merchants earned it, and now they will benefit from it." In any event, we got it turned around.

Well, I was doing this press relations job, but I was anxious to get started in *Sunset*, and I had the points to get out. Admiral Wright, I remember, called me in. He's the most un-*Sunset* person you could imagine, but his wife loved the magazine. When I was with him, before I went to sea they created another command over him, Western Sea Frontier, and they took his quarters on Yerba Buena and gave it to an

Admiral Greenslade who was senior admiral who had been called out of retirement.

Here's this active admiral [Wright] who had had the best home on Angel Island, getting kicked out, and it made him so goddamned mad he nearly resigned, I think, from the service.

I said, "Admiral, why don't we see if we can create a *Sunset* house." Because his wife loved *Sunset*. I convinced him. We got two chief's quarters overlooking Treasure Island, a much better view—the other one looked out over the Oakland shipyard—we got these two chief's quarters and we put them together. I got one of our *Sunset* editors, Walter Doty as a matter of fact, to give some advice, and some architect—not Cliff May—contributed a design for how we'd put these chief's quarters together and put a shake roof over it. The admiral moved in, and his wife was happier than a clam. She had a beautiful garden, and they had a beautiful view of the old World's Fair site on Treasure Island. He [Wright] was impressed that Admiral Nimitz was a great reader of *Sunset*, because he [Nimitz] was a rosarian; even in Hawaii his quarters, and then on Guam, he always had a little rose garden outside of his office. Nimitz became quite a fine gardener. Later he retired and lived on Claremont Avenue in Berkeley and won prizes with his rose gardens. Admiral Wright was an old sourdough dog, and again it's a case, I guess, of an older guy, and here I am a pipsqueak ensign, a lieutenant jg, but he and I just hit it off. He adopted me as his son—he had a daughter—and we became close friends.

In any event, I don't know how I got off on that!

Riess: Well, you got off on that because we were talking about Pomona.

Lane: I'm glad you're keeping track of it.

Riess: You said finally you had enough points to get out.

Lane: I had enough points, actually, at the end of the war, but he had convinced me I should continue to serve my country. He called me in and he said, "Bill, I appreciate what you've done, getting our public relations back on track, and I think it's time for you to go into your family business." By that time he had met my mother and father and he had been over to *Sunset* and visited the offices.

So in February, I guess it was, I went back and became the elevator operator of the seven-story building there at 576 Sacramento.

Riess: Your Stanford years were before the war.

Lane: Yes, I went right straight through four years. It was Mel who got all split up, went to a number of schools. I don't think he spent 50 percent of his time at Stanford, but if you had entered a school and had spent, I don't know what, then you could claim a degree there.

He was admitted to the marine [air] corps, but because he had a punctured ear drum, and it was when I was with Admiral Wright that he got put out of the marine corps, I helped him get into the navy in the supply corps. So he went to the naval training program for supply corps at some girl's school, I've forgotten what it was. Then he was assigned to a destroyer.

His ship was out at sea when he graduated [from Stanford], and I remember my ship was in, and I went with my parents to his graduation. They gave him his degree because he had finished all of his credits from Stanford.

Worldwide Problems and Generational Issues

Riess: Here's a sort of complicated question. Do you have a sense of the place of your generation, that generation? And a sense of your self, a conscience that you were developing? I don't know whether you have ever reflected on these things.

Lane: I have. I have a lot. When I'm talking to college students particularly, I impress upon them that whatever generation it is, you're going to have positive and negative exposures, and opportunities to have a significant influence in your life, and to some degree that's going to be influenced in turn by what you take advantage of and how you relate to it.

I go back to the Industrial Revolution, to our Revolution, the Civil War, the Westward movement, and if I'm in the Northwest I'll cite the Oregon Trail or whatever, the Donner Party, the Gold Rush. World War I, the Great Depression of 1893, whatever. I happened to grow up in a period of the Great Depression and the first great world war, the aftermath of it, and through the second great world war, and those obviously had a great effect on me.

Maybe it would be the first space station and joint venture with the Soviet Union, or whatever, that would drastically change your world. And it's up to you whether you gain a beneficial influence from those changes and participate in them, or some

aspect related to them. As I did, we'll say, to aviation, as I did to radio, as I did to TV.

I paid \$209 for the first Hallicrafter television set that was on the market. They were first because they could turn what they were doing for ships right around into a civilian product. Hallicrafter made a little tiny television right after the war, and I'd had Hallicrafter radio equipment on my ship, and I wanted to follow television and what it was going to do to the industry.

Later we [*Sunset*] competed with television, and I turned it to our advantage that television viewing was less in the West, ratings were lower, all kinds of things. *Sunset* grew right through that television period. I hardly ever watch it now, but I am fascinated with it.

You have to take advantage of whatever the opportunities are. You're not going to grow up, hopefully, with a Great Depression or world war, but you're going to grow up with a lot of other things that are perhaps as equally significant. They may not be as earth-shaking as the atom bomb or nuclear bomb or Pearl Harbor.

Riess: So you could not conceive of why kids drop out of society.

Lane: Oh, God, no. In fact, I told the president of *Sunset* the other day at a luncheon—she'd asked me to come down to consult on some things—I said, "If I were younger and Time Warner came and said, 'Would you like to buy *Sunset* back?' and I could buy it back, I would buy it back and I would be more challenged, more excited about the future for *Sunset*." She was complaining about things being tough, and more competition. I said, "Did you ever compete against television? Did you ever compete against regional editions and national magazines?" I said, "Half of what you say is tough is really an opportunity for you."

They haven't conducted a reader survey in three years, and we were doing it all the time. I said, "How many subscribers have you called on recently?" She said, "Oh, I haven't called on any." "How in the hell are you going to know about it then?" And yet, I think they're doing a pretty good job; they're still reasonably staff-written, so editors are getting out and talking to a lot of people.

As the manager, she's not setting the right example. She's a lovely lady and has her head screwed on, but if an editor suggests something, she doesn't question it. I know exactly what would happen if I told her that I didn't like moving the month and date. She would say, "Well, the art director thought it would be a good idea."

"Well, the art director doesn't know his ass from a hole in the ground. He should know that when it sells in the newsstand the title is all you're going to see. You're not a weekly, and a monthly is going to get behind another magazine. And if you lay it out on the coffee table, you're not going to know the date."

Riess: I hope she paid attention.

Lane: I think she did. She's a good girl.

But picking up on the dropout, I think that is a real serious problem. I see the problems of population growth, and the impact in countries like Somalia, or these African countries with these AIDS-infected kids being born. And in countries where AIDS is not a factor.

Last night I was talking to a lady who is starting a health clinic in an eastern Soviet area someplace up above Vladivostok. She has gotten wonderful cooperation from the governor of the territory. She was saying the average woman in that community, by the time she is fifty has had thirty abortions. Thirty abortions!

I said, "Why in the hell wouldn't they think of condoms or something else?" "Well, they don't like anything artificial, and they'd rather have abortions." And this is a community of about sixty thousand people where she helped found this clinic.

Riess: It is a world in which there are serious problems.

Lane: Well, the problems that I can see for my kids are sort of overwhelming as you think of the world population doubling in the next thirty years. Bosnia, they say, has one of the highest birth rates, even now, of any of the Central European countries. China, which is trying to keep its birth rate down, is still growing. What about feeding these people?

And the pollution problem. Even here with our own attempts we find isolated examples of this or that. We're still cranking out terrible amounts of pollution. We don't know where to bury nuclear waste, we're putting it in salt mines.

If I were a kid and out of a job, and had just gotten told to take a walk by my sweetheart or something, I don't know. And things get magnified. At their stage and their level of perception of the world, things are really not going very well, and they see some of these other things on population and what have you, and the problems that the government is in debt, and medical care.

What's going to happen to their parents, what's going to happen to them when they're old? Forty percent of marriages ending in divorce. Of course, that includes a lot of minorities and others who knock that average way down, but nevertheless it's certainly more than it used to be.

There are a lot of reasons to be discouraged today, but I guess I continue to accentuate the positive. "What is the alternative?" I ask the kids. If they keep coming at me I say, "What the hell are you going to do? Go and jump off a cliff?"

I can tell you there were times in history, for instance in the Dark Ages, prior to the Renaissance in Europe, when a lot of people felt the world was coming to an end. You can document all of this. With my perspective on a lot of these problems, and what the hell the Earth's capacity is, and how much it can take in terms of pollution, which is caused by population, it is discouraging.

And then you start fighting over resources, which is what World War I started over, coal and the Ruhr, Serbia and Austria and all of them. And then Japan wanting oil in Southeast Asia. You read Michener's book, *The Source*, and you realize that tribes fought over a spring or a salt lick for their cattle or whatever it was, and now you get these renegade Quadaffis and others, and China shipping technology to Afghanistan which wants to defend itself against India, and the Russians selling to India.

I don't know, it could be discouraging, but I never let on with students that I'm talking to. On the other hand, you can't slap them down and say, "Look, you're not in the real world." Because, in fact, they are, they've just gotten maybe overly discouraged.

It's nothing new with me. I chaired a talk at that conference in 1969 with UNESCO on my concerns on population growth. We called for an environmental ethic. That was the year Earth Day was founded. It was the year that I was involved in getting legislation for the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA. People forget this, but Earth Day was in the first year or two of the Nixon administration.

Population growth is not a new subject for me, it's only gotten more serious over the years. But I don't think dropping out is the answer. I say to my daughter and son, "You just gave birth to a child, are you going to give up on their future, for Christ's sake?"

I'm not that depressed about it. First of all, there have been predictions that the world would run out of food for the last fifty years or so, that we would not be able

to sustain the level of quality food. We would not be able to sustain the level of water, whatever. There've always been the doomsayers that have predicted the end of the world.

We have overcome that, and today there is a world surplus of food, there's just a lack of distribution. The Bosnian-Serbian conflict prevents the UN train from getting it through, or you get some warlord in Bangladesh, or wherever it is, robbing what was supposed to go to the people who deserve it.

Riess: Now you have the Palestinians and the Israelis shaking hands.

Lane: That's right, and that's a very good point. I've cited the end of the Cold War. When I went to Australia nobody in the world would have bet that during my term as ambassador we would have had the INF agreement, the Washington summit, and the Moscow summit. And virtually the end of the Cold War.

No one two months ago would have predicted the treaty that's being signed virtually this very minute. In fact, I was talking to the White House when the treaty was being signed in the Rose Garden. No, those are very, very valid points. You can point to all kinds of improbabilities, or not improbabilities, just inconceivable actions or changes that have taken place that no one in their right mind could have predicted.

Riess: Talking about how you look back on the world, when I interviewed Scott Newhall he was discouraged by the state of the world, certainly by the state of newspapers, and newspaper ownership.

Lane: I think a lot of my contemporaries, the reason I don't want to go to the Sequoias or the reason I really don't relate to very many people my age is that I think there's tremendous pessimism that is viable now, and you can find examples of it. But I think you can find examples of it, in fact, to the beginning of history.

Riess: And the news media sends the message.

Lane: The media accentuates the negative, so you become enamored with your perception of the world through the analysis of the news which is the unusual. You're not reporting on the thousands of couples that went to bed and made love at night, you only report the two that stabbed each other—and they're usually some migrant family, or some guy that went berserk and shot his kids and so forth.

You never make a big thing about so many positive actions. Occasionally, to make a sort of a positive statement, you have a white paper, like Al Capone going to church. Who was it, one of the woman commentators was pulling a sob story about some town in the Midwest where gals had sexual relationships before they were thirteen, and going on and on and on and on talking with their mothers. One mother was interviewed that I dare say had had intercourse before she was ten, the way she looked and acted and responded. So this kid I don't think had a very good example in her mother. And there was no father around, so I assume it was a separated home, which is neither good or bad, but why they didn't use contraceptives, and so forth—that was the program.

Well, to have heard that half-hour report you'd have thought every teenager had had a sexual relationship before she was thirteen. For teenagers watching it, it was kind of saying, "Well, everybody's doing it." Which teenagers can do. Or, "Mom, gee all my friends do it." Whether it's smoking or taking marijuana or something else. Now the kid gets a condom from a principal who gives it to him and shakes his hand and says "Good luck" or something, you know. All this stuff that's making it easy for kids.

But this gal was just milking these kids, and that's what the press, media does. You look at an evening news story, you got corpses going in and out of a house, and it's usually someplace that is by no means typical. And it doesn't mean that it's good or bad, these people are out of work or they're for whatever reason not able or don't want to work.

[End of Tape 4, Side 2]

III EVOLUTION OF *SUNSET* OWNERS, EDITORS, AND INTERESTS

[Interview 3: October 5, 1993] ##

[Begin Tape 5, Side 1]

A Recent Visit to Washington, and Organizing the Stegner Lectures

Riess: [Interview is being held in Mr. Lane's office] Could we spend a few minutes on current events? You are just back from Washington? What were you doing?

Lane: The first trip to Washington, two weeks ago, was at the request of our State Department and the foreign affairs office of Australia, to bring together—unofficially because it was prior to confirmation by our government—our new ambassador to Australia, who is a Mr. Ed Perkins, a career ambassador, and the new ambassador from Australia to the United States. Our ambassador was not confirmed by the Senate at that time—he has been since—and the Australian ambassador had not made his official calls on the President and the Secretary of State. So this gathering had to be approved by both governments.

Jean and I hosted a dinner at the F Street Club, which is a lovely old home and club with a very warm feeling. We hosted this dinner in their honor, and a number of people from our State Department and Senator [Richard] Lugar and his wife were there.

Riess: A state occasion.

Lane: State occasion, but it was definitely classified unofficial. That was the first of it.

The last visit we just came back from—Jean is on the board of the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, and I had appointments with Senator Simpson, Alan Simpson, and Ambassador Perkins and some other people. But also I was there as a spouse, and I visited the Freer Gallery, and most importantly, I felt, the Holocaust Museum, which I was very interested in.

A lot of people, friends of mine, say they would never go to it, they don't want to be depressed. But now I'm twisting their arm—they have to go to it. Regardless of what you think in a religious way, or what you think of it being overdone or martyrism or whatever, it is just incredible that this mass destruction of the human race could take place with as little attention, awareness by other governments.

Even Eisenhower, coming upon the scene right at the end of the war—he was flown in to one of the camps and here was this huge stack of bodies with a bulldozer pushing it into a big pit because of the risk of infections and so forth—he said, "Never could I have envisioned such a horrible event taking place in this world." Something to that effect, I've forgotten exactly, but there was a big display of his quote.

Here Eisenhower had been there, and presumably been getting all the intelligence in Washington in the early days. He had key positions in Washington, so that in 1936, 1937, 1938 when they were beginning to persecute the Jews we certainly were aware of it. But as they got into the mass killing, for him to be surprised I think is an indication of how little we really knew.

Riess: Did you have that same feeling, that never until you saw this presentation of it at the museum could you imagine?

Lane: Never could have imagined the wholesale elimination of a race. Incredible.

Riess: Do you think a visit to the museum changes people?

Lane: No, but I think it's relevant to the Croats, the Serbs and the Bosnians today. To some degree it happens between African countries against one another, although we don't pay as much attention to it. And in Central America where they have civil wars. Some of my friends who don't want to see it say, "Well, *we* had a civil war." But that, to me, was over a difference of philosophy.

In our case, the issue was slavery. Whereas Germans, from the very beginnings of Hitler's doctrine, *Mein Kampf* and all of his other teachings, the issue was race. It wasn't only Jews, it was Blacks, and gypsies, and some other religious groups.

In any event, that's what I did in Washington.

Riess: The other current event you are involved with is the program about Wallace Stegner?

Lane: Yes, we had decided to have a lecture series called the Stegner Lecture Series with the Peninsula Open Space Trust, of which he was very supportive, and which has done amazing things here on the mid-Peninsula. We had been approached as to our interest, and we said we were very interested.

What put it on the front burner was his dying after the automobile accident, so we became the sponsors for the series. These are the first two lectures tonight. He [Wallace Stegner] was a great admirer of Thomas Jefferson [the subject of the first lecture]. Now, of course, the lecture series is in memory of him. Mary Stegner will be there tonight. I had a long visit with her Monday morning.

Riess: Okay, thank you.

A Packer in the Sierra, 1936, and Norman Livermore

Riess: Now, two ways I want to go today, I want to talk about the magazine and its record and history of involvement with parks and environmental issues. I want to start by talking about your own background, your packer background, influences like Norman Livermore and so on.

I also want to continue a chronological development of the masthead, as it were, and get *Sunset* moved down to Menlo Park.

I looked at the interview we have with Norman Livermore.² I wondered how much it was his influence that got you involved in packing. How important, really, is he in your life?

Lane: Ike is one of a number of people who have had an influence on me. I knew, when we took this pack trip in 1935 or 1936 out of Mineral King, with the Mineral King packing company, that that was something I would like to do.

Riess: It was you and Mel?

Lane: And Dad. Just the three of us were with Ike.

Ike was very active in organizing the packers. He had a motorcycle and traveled up and down—he had to go down, really, to Highway 49, so he'd go up and down on a motorcycle. He worked the east side too. He would work up from Owens Valley into some of those pack stations.

²Norman B. Livermore, Jr., Man in the Middle: High Sierra Packer, Timberman, Conservationist, and California Resources Secretary, Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley, 1983.

In any event, he packed us during that summer. Then I applied for a job with Phil Buckman, who was getting his doctorate degree. The Buckman family owned the Mineral King packing company. He gave me what in Australia you would call a buckaroo job, just a handyman to do whatever. That first summer, when I was in Palo Alto High School, and I must have been about a junior, I shod horses and mules. I'd been around horses a lot.

Riess: Did Livermore proselytize about the mountains?

Lane: I don't recall any bonfire talks that quoted John Muir or were environmentally inspired. There may have been, but I don't recall them.

Riess: I think he was concerned about issues of impact.

Lane: Yes, I think probably Ike was. And certainly I was in the early years of formulating my own thoughts about those things.

At that time Mineral King was in the Sequoia National Forest, it was not a part of the National Park. There was a big fish-breeding operation, a fish farm there for the Forest Service. I was loaned to both of the packers—there was another pack company there. Both of the packers, of course, were anxious to have the lakes they packed people into have fish. So when there was a lull in business they would loan mules and a packer and a horse to take these fish in.

The fish were in what we called milk cans. Some of them actually were milk cans. They were strapped on with the handles, and they had a screened top. If the lake, or the stream—and they were usually lakes where there would be an inlet where these fish could later breed—if it was more than one day, you had to aerate these fish all the way in and keep them aerated.

Well, first of all, during the pack trip, on an incline you had to rest your animals. They usually had eight mules that were head-to-tailed, which means that the lead rope was tied onto the tail of the mule ahead. Whenever you stopped you had to walk up and down and rock these cans, and a lot of times you were on very narrow trails. It was dangerous, and occasionally a mule would slip and you might lose a mule. (I lost a mule once, and it had an influence on me for the rest of my life that I'll explain later.) But the water for these fish, minnows really, had to be aerated all the time.

A good part of my work was planting virgin lakes around Mt. Whitney. You had to go across the Kern-Kaweah basin, the big drainage from the High Sierras to

southern California that comes out at Bakersfield—great river—running down at that lower end—so it was a two or three-day trip.

At night you took these cans off and put them in the stream with the wire mesh facing upstream so that they were getting fresh water at night. Then loading them in the morning, you had to continually rock them as you were loading, go around and rock the rest of them that you had loaded up. When you got on the trail, of course, they aerated themselves, but sometimes there were one or two nights which you had to do that.

As for that one incident where a mule went off, it was a very reliable mule that would follow the string, and I let her go alone at the end of the string, had not head-to-tailed her. She had all of my personal gear and food, and she slipped off and flipped and rolled into a stream and everything. I got my bedroll back, soaked—I put it on top of her later—and my mule was all right, I got her out, but all my food was gone.

All I had in my saddle bag was a couple of boxes of raisins, so I lived on raisins and water for the rest of that trip, only two or three days but it's always given me a bias against raisins. I just don't like raisins. [laughter] I trace it to that. Jean and the kids have heard this story a thousand times.

Riess: Was that all in the same summer?

Lane: No, that was one summer later. I only worked one summer at Mineral King. Then I went up to Yosemite. Dad knew a Mr. Haas, who had been a judge here in Palo Alto, Judge Haas, and he was personnel manager for Yosemite Park and Curry Company.

I can tell you the year I worked there. It was the summer that Will Rogers died [1935]. I remember, I had listened to Will Rogers on the radio. And my dad had liked him, I think maybe had met him. (I now have a Will Rogers lariat, leather riata.) But one of my trips packing, a ranger came through and said, "Will Rogers was killed in Alaska." I remember crying. I had a little campfire there and I was all alone. That was the summer I worked there, so whatever year Will Rogers died.

Judge Haas was personnel director for Yosemite Park and Curry Company. At that time it was owned by the Curry family. Dr. Tresidder was president of the company, and Mother Curry was still living. I went up and worked at that stables up there. I packed supplies into the High Sierra camps. I was the buckaroo on the children's burro picnic. I did that two days a week, and I packed for four. I

remember I didn't have any days off during the two or three months that I worked there that first summer. Occasionally I would take rides out, guided rides into the valley, but I was the junior man at the stable. I did help take care of Dr. Tresidder's horses. He and Mrs. [Mary Curry] Tresidder rode a lot. They subsequently took over the Red Barn here at Stanford when they came down and he became president of Stanford University. He had some beautiful horses. I was not in charge of them, but I helped take care of them, probably shoveling manure. I was the low man on the totem pole, I remember that.

Riess: Ike Livermore said it was hard to get his first job in the mountains. I guess he went up in the beginning of the Depression.

Lane: I remember I got paid thirty-five dollars a month plus room and board. The board was canned baked beans and plain white bread and milk. The room was an open platform with a cot and a bedroll, and that was it. I did all kinds of odd jobs.

Riess: Did you find yourself in conversations about wilderness issues with the people you were taking into the wilderness?

Lane: I see what you're getting at. I probably did.

I remember one of my assignments was to pack mining equipment in to a mine, which was permitted then in the National Forest. It wouldn't be today, because that little pocket in the southern end of Sequoia is now national park, but there was a mine moving in, and we had to figure an ingenious way to take a cable for a bridge.

We figured out we could loop the cable around three or four, I don't know how many mules, and then loop it back on the other side. It was a very precarious way to pack this damn cable in. I finally got it packed in up this canyon, but I remember at the time I was not at all sympathetic with the idea of mining in that beautiful setting. I probably wasn't aware of the pollution aspects in the water, but it just seemed incompatible to me for what was going to be obviously a very marginal mining operation.

Riess: Did you end up helping on any of the Sierra Club trips?

Lane: Not Sierra Club trips, but the Fuller family in those days had big family pack trips. That was where I first met John and Palmer Fuller. The Fuller family had big family pack trips; every summer they went different places. The summer I was there they packed in, and I was an assistant to Ike. Ike was the head packer.

Thoughts on Californians and Mountains

Riess: Looking back in old *Sunsets*, it seems like pack trips, or trips to the mountains, were really being pushed. Maybe because it was cheap to get to the mountains, I'm not sure why.

[tape interruption]

Lane: [showing the interviewer a relief map on the wall behind his desk] This was a map that my father used. It's the mountains that create the climates and create the water reservoirs and lakes, and they make for a different way of life. It's the mountains that trap the weather, that create the recreation, the skiing, the lifestyle, of today's population.

More importantly, in history it was the mountains that were the barrier for migration. I'm reading a Louis Lamour book right now, and it involves a family, and they would love to go further west but they don't want to face the mountains.

Riess: It's not a universally accepted notion that one should spend the summer in the mountains. Yet it was almost universally promoted every year by the magazine. I wondered about that.

Lane: I think it's a recognition of the commitment to the West, that *Sunset* was for the West, because the West was different. And what made the West different? The mountains.

Riess: I was brought up in Pennsylvania. We didn't go to the mountains.

Lane: Well, you could go to the Adirondacks. I have had some wonderful mountain experiences living in New York, or whatever, but you don't have a big city right in the middle of the Adirondacks. It is a wilderness area, or a recreational area. Or there are the Shenandoah Mountains or whatever, to the south. But here you have Denver, Salt Lake City, Boise, Reno, major population centers in those mountain states.

Riess: Of course, the East didn't have anything like *Sunset* magazine. There was no reminder that it was possible to do this, and telling you how to do it. *Sunset* listed the names of the packers and told you how much it would cost and exactly how to do it.

Lane: There is the beach experience, of course, and the desert is unique too, and we've done a lot of desert coverage over the years. We've also treated the Oregon beach, all kinds of beach articles.

Jean and I were back in Nantucket and some of the beaches on the Eastern Seaboard last summer. Beautiful beaches, very historic beaches in terms of not only the history of our country, but the historic port cities, like Mystic, Connecticut, those cities that are along the waterfront, which in some way the West Coast does not have.

San Francisco is not facing the ocean, Los Angeles does not face the ocean, Portland doesn't face the ocean, Seattle doesn't face the ocean. Really we don't have any—well, we've got Morro Bay, and San Diego I guess you could argue perhaps. Half Moon Bay and some of the smaller cities face the ocean, but they are not metropolitan cities.

Riess: You're saying that it's logical for the West to look to the mountains.

Lane: Well, "Bring me men to match my mountains, bring me men to match my plains, men with empires in their vision, and new eras in their brains." That sets the tone of what is the West. I don't think there was any concerted effort that we were going to champion mountains, but they were there and we all loved the mountains.

I would never have a Stinson Beach house—and I love the coast, the Oregon Coast particularly—I would never take a beach recreation second home, or retirement home, over a mountain home. But I don't think we ever tried to sell mountain versus beach versus desert. In fact, we covered them all.

Incidentally, this issue [picks up May 1985 *Sunset*]—I think this ad must have run in *USA Today*—I don't have an actual issue. *Wall Street Journal*, where we usually ran these ads, would not be able to take color. We ran a lot of full-page ads in the *Wall Street Journal* over the years. Really quite a series.

Riess: That May issue is one of what you call the blockbuster issues.

Lane: These were anniversary issues—this was the 90th anniversary, this was the 85th.

This issue [on the Monterey Bay Aquarium, November 1984]—I had worked closely with Dave Packard getting the inside dope early on. They created this scene [pictured on the cover], they put up some whales before they let any other media in. So we really had a scoop on the story.

Riess: When you have what you know is going to be a scoop do you print a larger edition?

Lane: Well, we just market it a little heavier.

[End of Tape 5, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 5, Side 2] ##

Lane: You asked about things that had an influence on my environmental thinking. I think I mentioned to you reading *The Sea Around Us* series in *The New Yorker* out on Fire Island where I was baby-sitting four gals who were playing bridge all weekend.

I referred to those articles in writing, and in many talks over the years. Then when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* came along in 1962 I was very attentive to that. I think it probably had some influence later in my deciding [in 1969] to not accept DDT advertising. My interest just ran along that way, as did Mel's.

My dad, I would say he was an environmentalist, and my mother would have been in today's world. But I think that within our family I was more aggressive and more concerned and more assertive, more than any other member of the family. I had been a thespian major, and I had taken public debate, and in the selling end of the business I was out talking, and I was frequently invited to conferences or business meetings, and talking to classes and business schools or whatever.

Benefits to *Sunset* Magazine of Bill Lane's Public Service

Riess: Did you always talk as *Sunset*?

Lane: Oh yes, in fact even when I was in government service. I've never gone into a government service job where I felt I couldn't improve my role at *Sunset*, or that what *Sunset* had taught me or what I've learned at *Sunset* wouldn't benefit me in my work. Certainly when I was down in Australia, and in all the work in the National Parks. That sounds commercial, and it wasn't that blatant, but with a small family business you just cannot—and this is something that I've heard Palmer Fuller and a couple of the Hills [coffee business] families say, that sometimes they got involved, Palmer got involved too much with Chamber of Commerce and things that just didn't relate to selling paint. I really never have gotten involved with anything that I didn't feel had some benefit later back to *Sunset* and the business.

I like public service. I don't know where I first came across de Tocqueville, but it was during high school, and I remember feeling the country in some significant way was dependent on public service. I enjoy public service.

Riess: Now, about the environment. We're talking about significant influences on you, therefore on the magazine. Ike Livermore. What about some of the other gurus of the wilderness? Dave Brower? Did they all bend your ear?

Lane: Well, they did, definitely, for *Sunset's* role and how we would take on a Sierra Club issue, we'll say. Usually I was somewhat at odds with the militant and, I felt, frequently unbalanced tactics which environmental groups now have become much more sophisticated about.

But Dave Brower was one whom I admired. I have always argued that whether it's in religion or any other cause you need crusaders and zealots who are not too compromising. If you get compromising, if you want agreement by everybody or want to placate your opponents, you frequently don't take the tough decision. So you need the Browsers. He and I were good friends. I've helped him on his new crusade, the Earth Island Institute.

Riess: When did you become good friends? Did he visit you down there?

Lane: I don't recall visits with him. But we were on programs together, occasionally. We were never in any debate, but Martin Litton, who was our travel editor, was at one time very close to Brower, and very active in the Sierra Club during its more militant days. Particularly with the lumber companies. And in many ways, I supported that. When we supported the Redwood National Park we lost a lot of advertising from Georgia Pacific, and from the Redwood Association, which was a marketing group for redwood as a lumber. I knew we would lose that advertising when we endorsed the park.

Riess: Did you and Mel have to think hard about that as a policy issue?

Lane: No, it was an issue that I think he and I were much in agreement on. Some of those things came up when my father was still living, although I was publisher, I guess. I don't remember any huge disagreement on it.

Riess: Did you get that Georgia-Pacific advertising back?

Lane: It eventually came back.

Travel Editors, Martin Litton

Riess: I want to get back to Martin Litton. First you had Helga Iverson as travel editor.

Lane: Then Barney Bates came in. Barney was an outdoorsman and very much a practitioner of outdoor recreation.

Riess: I understand that *Sunset* had asked Brower for names for the travel editor. At least that is what Brower says in introducing the Litton oral history.³

Lane: Could be. I didn't, but my dad may have, or Walter Doty, the editor, may have. At that time Martin and Dave were very close friends. I think they still are. They came at odds over certain issues, although Martin sided with Dave when he was removed from the Sierra Club; as I recall, Martin was one of his supporters. But on some environmental issues they differed, I know.

In [inaudible] we were down in the Grand Canyon; I was one of the first thousand recorded travelers down the Colorado in the Grand Canyon. We were with Martin Litton in a double-ended boat, a dory, and we called it the "Portola." That was before Powell Dam went in, and we were on a lot of muddy water.

Riess: Before Martin Litton came to *Sunset* he had been writing controversial stuff about King's Canyon and Dinosaur National Parks for the *L.A. Times*. I'm surprised that *Sunset* took him on with that kind of a background. Did you worry that you might have some trouble controlling him?

Lane: I hired him. I remember the interview. I was single, so it would have been about 1955. I had an apartment over on Waverly Street in Menlo Park. [laughs] I remember, I never paid attention to trains, although I was only about three blocks from the trains, but he said, "That's a four-wheeler," or "That's a six-wheeler," or something. I said, "What is?" He said, "That engine." He was a real train buff. I was a train buff too, and so we had a good interview.

I liked his free spirit. He was also a pilot. He and I flew around a lot together. He had a Cessna 119, as I recall—I think he still has one. I was learning to fly, and had always loved flying. So we became very close friends.

³Martin Litton, "Sierra Club Director and Uncompromising Preservationist, 1950s-1970s," introduction by David Brower, in *Sierra Club Leaders, 1950s-1970s*, Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley, 1982.

He was at our home just a year ago when we had Wallace Stegner out to launch this new fellowship at Washington State University that my son and daughter-in-law and Jean and I have funded. In fact we're leaving Friday for that. Wally was going to be the first lecturer, but now Bill Reilly is the first lecturer, on Saturday, and we're flying up to Pullman for that.

Riess: Martin was not a difficult person?

Lane: Yes, he was. Very difficult. He would use our stationery for completely unapproved correspondence to members of Congress. I remember he wrote Pat Brown a letter once on our stationery, and Pat called me: "What the hell is going on?"

He'd use my personal plane to fly over, at an illegal level, some forest up in northern California, and I got a call from the FAA that my plane was going to be grounded. I asked why and they said, "Well, you were flying too low." I said, "I wasn't flying. I'd loaned it to a friend."

I finally had to give Martin the opportunity to retire. I never like to fire anybody, and this was one of the few times. It wasn't because I didn't admire him, or disagreed with him. Really, I was sympathetic very much to his shock treatment tactics. I still support some things he does. But we were getting too much ridicule from other members of the staff that he just wasn't playing by the rules.

He was always fighting with the editors on their editing of his copy. We're a staff-written magazine. Sometimes I'd come in and change the headline on him; he would have a blatant arousal type headline that I felt was just too strong and it would editorialize, which was not our purpose. Our purpose was to inform: if there were two sides or three sides, try to give a balanced view of different opinions. Let the reader decide—they're all intelligent, a large percent college graduates.

He also didn't like to do column stories; he always wanted to do big cover stories. Our editors are all required to do a lot of good, solid single-column, with maybe one photograph to capture a reader's attention, and give them a complete service. It's much tougher to do that than to spread photographs and all kind of text over ten or twelve pages.

Martin got to the point where he only wanted to work on mega-articles, and we could only take about one or two a year by him.

Riess: What was his responsibility?

Lane: Well, to manage the travel department. I don't want this in any way to be a condemnation of Martin, because he was a fantastic editor. He was, I would say, one of the outstanding editors in the history of *Sunset*, and he was an outstanding writer. Before I hired him I read all of his articles, all those controversial articles.

I was reaching a point where I really wanted some fire in the belly in some articles that would have a strong environmental protection overtone. I just made a decision. My dad I wouldn't say opposed it, but he didn't lean that way. I was leaning very much that way when I came back from New York and took over the management of the editorial department in 1952.

The announcement of my becoming sales manager was an oddball thing that can only happen in a family business. I took over the supervision of editorial sales and books. I was "sales manager" on the masthead.

Riess: Yes, you're on the publishing company masthead, but not on the editorial masthead.

Lane: I was not editor-in-chief because Walter Doty—well, one of my jobs was to phase Walter Doty out and bring Proctor Mellquist, whom we hired from *Business Week*, in as managing editor.

Riess: But a minute more, I'm interested in how the travel department worked. How did you put together travel in any given issue?

Lane: Well, when you're doing, say, an article supporting Redwood National Park—in fact, we had an article in 1936 or 1938 where we supported the concept of a Redwood National Park.

This was opposed then, as it still is, emotionally, by a lot of the state park officials, and the Save the Redwoods League, who feel that the redwoods were adequately protected by the state parks. Save the Redwoods League had put a lot of money into buying land that was turned over to state parks.

Today they want to commingle the management of the state parks with the federal park, and the state park people are objecting to it very strongly. I'm on the California State Parks Commission. They are appointed by governmental process. In fact, we're meeting on Thursday. Henry Trione is chairman of it.

Lane Policy of Publisher Overseeing Editorial

Lane: You've got to understand that in *Sunset* the Lanes were the editors. Very strong editorial policies. Always an oversight of editorial. A very strong voice in areas that strayed from the basic editorial policies. A publisher in most magazines is a kind of super advertising director, but publisher of *Sunset*, for both my dad and myself, and Mel in my absence, was very definitely a strong editorial position as well as circulation, in fact, all of the operations of that division, whether it was books or magazines.

Editorial was my number one priority. If you don't have the goose that's laying the golden egg, which is the editorial content, and have it on target and have it working in a cohesive way with these four different departments, you're not providing the editorial service to the reader.

A travel article frequently could be tied in with a food article. If we had a travel article on Spain, we might in the food department have Spanish recipes or restaurants that you'd visit in Spain or whatever. In fact, one of our great articles that Martin did was on Baja, California with our home economics editor. We brought in a lot of the unique ethnic Mexican cooking that prevails in Baja, as opposed to the mainland of Mexico.

Riess: There would be editorial meetings to set these pieces up, and you would be in on those?

Lane: Very definitely. In fact, I would get every month a review of issues, articles that were two or three months off, and I would call in the editor. You usually try to work through the editor.

Walter Doty and Regionalizing Magazine's Garden Editorial

Lane: I mentioned that one of my first jobs was phasing Walter Doty out. He was a wonderful editor, but it had gotten to the point where we were debating too many issues with him. We brought in Proctor Mellquist from *Business Week* as managing editor and slowly turned over the management of the editorial department to Proc. Eventually, to keep Walter in the business, I made him director of editorial research when I took over the management of the editorial department in 1952 or 1953, and we did a lot of research work in the editorial field with Walter in charge, and he was very good at it.

Riess: When Walter Doty first came in, he gave *Sunset* a new look.

Lane: That was the reason he was brought in. He was an advertising man out of Foote, Cone and Belding. My father wanted a new look, and the then-owner of the business, James Webb Young, whom I mentioned, had come in—he was the one who wanted to dismiss Lou and Gen.

Walter was a hobbyist, a very fine horticulturist, and gardening was, and continues to be, the most important editorial department in terms of holding the reader month in and month out with a dependency on the information which is in the magazine. You can go in and out of food, go in and out of homes, go in and out of travel. Walter came in with a strong gardening interest in his home in Los Altos.

At about the same time we brought in Elsa Uppman. We were coming out of the Depression and it was time for a new look. Also, we wanted to leave by-line writing and go completely to staff writing, which had been done a little earlier than that. The look of the magazine was very definitely determined by my father, and I would imagine to some degree my mother in terms of cooking. Kitchen Cabinet, which was in the first issue, continued through the whole period and is still there today.

My father was not as interested in writing and practicing the trade of editorial as I was, as a communications major. I loved writing. I wouldn't in any way want to intimate that my role was more important than his in the editorial direction of the magazine, but I did get more involved in the nitty gritty of the editorial.

Walter executed the job within the very strict policies on how to do it, and generally do-it-yourself, within these very tightly restricted fields. There was a policy book that was mandated reading by every editor. It was written by my father, and I rewrote it when I took *Sunset*. That policy book was the bible for the editors.

Every article had to fulfill for a reader an accomplishment of a task.

[End Tape 5, Side 2]

[Begin Tape 6, Side 1] ##

Lane: "How to do it" means how to complete the task. Not just to glamorize and entice or build up curiosity—you know, "For more information read the *Sunset* book," or "Send for this or that." It was unique in that and to a certain degree still is.

Riess: Was there an assumption that readers would go to their workshop and make a bench?

Lane: Nobody assumed they all would. We had comprehensive research that maybe 20 percent had a workshop, or 5 percent or whatever. It was never an assumption. Gardening was the most consistent pastime, obligation, or whatever of any activity that *Sunset* readers had, and I daresay still have. Gardening had a very high profile with the *Western Garden Book*. And, of course, the content of the monthly magazine had such variety.

The inspiration for the regionalization in 1932 was to change the garden editorial, basically. We subsequently changed a little bit of the weekend day travel, because there wasn't as much long-distance travel. Southern California weekend travel was obviously different.

***Sunset* Magazine Advertisers, and Profile of Readers**

Riess: You make those statements based on reader surveys?

Lane: Oh yes, I should say. We did not only mail research but on-site home research. That's one of the ways I used Walter Doty. In Arcadia, for instance, we took every *Sunset* reader and then interviewed the reader next door, in a similar income, similar lifestyle, and we found that the *Sunset* readers were uniquely different from the non-*Sunset* readers when you put hundreds of them together.

Sunset readers entertained more. There was more joint action with the husband and wife involvement in decisions, traveling, decorating. Far more activity in the garden, far more activity in, as I say, entertaining. There was just a very dramatic difference, and I daresay probably still is, but maybe not to the same degree.

Riess: It makes *Sunset* sound like a pill to take to relate better to everyone around you and to your environment.

Lane: Well, it's the chicken or the egg. The person who is curious, they were far more curious and adventuresome. When you'd ask the non-*Sunset* reader family, "If you had a ticket, an opportunity today, to go down the Colorado River," or "If you had a chance to take six lessons on skydiving," the difference between *Sunset* readers and non-*Sunset* readers was just black and white. The *Sunset* readers were far more adventuresome, far more risk-taking, far more interested in learning more.

It isn't a question of good or bad. I'd never portray it as good or bad. I'd cite a neighbor or a friend who wasn't into that, but they were far more scholarly, they were far more this-or-that, they were different. *Sunset* readers, you can say *Sunset* influenced them and attracted them, but on the other hand you have to also give credit to the individual, that the individual was already that way to some degree and was attracted to *Sunset* because of the interest.

I used to cite my own interest in flying and horsemanship. *Western Horseman* and *Flying* didn't make me interested in horses and flying. I was attracted to those magazines because they satisfied my interest. They've given me a lot of new dimensions on flying and horses, and care of horses, and so on and so forth. So it's kind of the chicken or the egg.

There were never any promises that *Sunset* was going to save your marriage, or bring your family back together again, and yet we had countless examples, letters where a family had a wonderful vacation together. One of the researchers we had mentioned how a column article on the Santa Monica mountains had gotten him and his son back together again—he slipped it under his son's door or something. We had examples of where we did have a major influence on that.

When you went into towns where you had opinion leaders, Rotary clubs, service clubs, chamber of commerce, school boards, *Sunset* superiority in circulation and coverage mounted and mounted in every increasing level of influence in the community. In the Western community.

The way that it was reflected in circulation is, first, that we didn't solicit subscribers with anything other than what they were going to get. And secondly, if they were disappointed we didn't entice them with arrears, which is sending an issue after your subscription expires saying we were giving you one free issue to give you this chance.

We discounted very little. In the early days we had premiums, but they were booklets which subsequently became books, garden booklets, so they were selective in the sense that it wasn't "How to keep from getting pregnant," or "How to keep your son from going on drugs," or whatever. They were booklets on the subjects which we were serving in the content of the magazine.

In the advertising department we carried more four-wheel drive vehicle advertising in, I remember, one issue than *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker* carried in the full year, in the early years of four-wheeling. For two reasons. One, the mountains demand more need and more opportunity for four-wheeling. And secondly, we had

more multiple car owners. There were more distances to commute, less public transportation, so you had a much higher percentage of two-car owners. This was back in the late 1950s, 1960s. *Sunset* had an even higher level.

That's what you find in that market almanac when you go from the U.S. to the West to the *Sunset* reader.⁴ Those things that were of concern to us, you increase the frequency of purchase, or the volume of purchase, or the use. Cars were a case in point. In fact, I remember in the late 1980s we even got to where we were showing a significant percentage of three-car owners, which was just off the wall from the national pattern of ownership.

Many very fine homes in the Midwest and East—I remember visiting my wife's family in Lincoln, Illinois—only have one garage and one car. They may have two cars, but they park one outside. But for a number of reasons, out here multiple car ownership was much greater.

Four-wheel vehicles took off faster. Ford Explorer, about 20 percent of all Ford Explorers are sold in California. It's the fifth selling car in the United States. Ford has been a major user of *Sunset* for its advertising. In fact, *Sunset* had been the bedrock medium over the years for Ford in Western America.

Riess: In national advertising they often use a western backdrop, the edge of the Grand Canyon, or the desert.

Lane: Ford has been very pro-West. They've always had strong western managers and been very aggressive in relating to the West. Of course, the Japanese cars also have far more success in the West than the rest of the country. Japanese products generally do better *per capita* in the West than in the rest of country, although that's lessened over the years.

[looking at May 1993 issue of *Sunset*] Now here's a cooking feature, camp cooking. (I will say, I'm not unhappy at all with the way the current *Sunset* is going.) One of the first little cook booklets we had was the *Grub Steak Cookbook* in the early 1930s, exactly this type of cooking. When I was a packer, I used to cook in a reflector oven and a dutch oven and there's a dutch oven there. We'd bury it in hot coals.

⁴*Sunset Western Market Almanac*, 1989-1990, "A report of basic marketing data on the 13 Western states, their current and future marketing potentials." Prepared by the Marketing and Research Departments of *Sunset Magazine*, Menlo Park, California.

Riess: In talking about Walter Doty, we didn't come to a conclusion about what needed changing when you came in in 1952. Where was the magazine going?

Lane: Well, Walter was a very wonderful editor and made a fantastic contribution to *Sunset*. But he began to get away from some of the things that the Lanes wanted in terms of editorial management—in a variety of ways, it's hard to pin anything down, articles that were controversial got too far along before we were brought into it.

Riess: What kind of controversial?

Lane: I don't think of any one article right now, but there were ways that the editorial was being handled more than the subject material. It was not a happy scene.

I don't want to make this a condemnation of Walter Doty because he should go down in the history of one of *Sunset's* great editors. Some people would say he was probably the greatest editor of *Sunset*, although Proctor Mellquist in my opinion was as great or maybe greater. And certainly Lou and Gen in those early days, you can't take away from them.

Riess: Walter Doty gave architects and landscape architects major exposure.

Lane: No question. Doug Baylis, Tommy Church, Cliff May were only a few of the protégés, although Tommy Church was established, but *Sunset* helped, certainly, Doug Baylis, and Tommy to some degree, and definitely put Cliff May on the map. Our Cliff May ranch house book became the standard bible of that type of design, and symbolizing the western architecture.

Riess: Was it Doty who made the connection there?

Lane: Doty very definitely did. No question about that. First of all, he had the horticultural bent, he had a good sense of design, good taste. Then he brought in and made contact and established a mutual respect with architects all over.

The American Institute of Architects *Sunset* Western Home Awards program was something that I was very much involved with. Proctor Mellquist was then editor. Walter was not involved in that.

Behind Sunset's Stand on Environmental Issues

Riess: In the October 1948 issue there was a two-page picture spread and caption about building on the coast, and the detrimental effect on shoreline. It was the first time I felt such a strong environmental opinion coming across.

Lane: My father probably wasn't, and most people weren't at that time, as committed to the problem of degradation of the western landscape by growth. We were very opinionated, but always the opinionation was based on a preference in the article to get the reader to visit the place. For instance, on our support of the Redwood National Park, for us the issue was to get people up there.

A lot of environmental issues are going to get settled the right way, and I mean the right way to benefit mankind and to benefit the environment, if people are fully and adequately informed. Our role was to help people go see these situations for themselves. It could have been the delta you were reading about. We did a fantastic article on the delta years ago when that was a very controversial issue.

Dinosaur National Monument—the Lake Powell Dam was not defeated, but one of the reasons I went down the Colorado that summer with Martin Litton was to try and defeat it. Many of these environmental battles were won by people being better informed.

Where Walter got off, I would guess, say in that article, was that it did not have enough information on how a reader would get to that scene and see it for themselves, versus having an editorial which took a very strong position and expected the reader to make an opinion, a judgment, based on that article.

Sunset's environmental articles for the most part lead the reader to see for himself. Except, maybe, for the special editorial like I wrote for the issue there [May 1990] on Yosemite back country—that was another block-buster issue. That has an editorial on the back which isn't "how to do it," but the article that it is referring to is how to get into back country, where 90 percent of the acreage in Yosemite is wilderness area.

All the focus of attention is what is happening on the floor of Yosemite Valley, and that is greatly exaggerated, far more than people are aware of. There was more commercialization forty, fifty years ago in the valley than there is today. Our role is to get people into Yosemite and see it for themselves.

Riess: And not worry them about something they can't do anything about.

Lane: Right, that's right. Or that many people, frankly, don't want to do anything about. *Sunset* attracts its readers—this goes back to some of our earlier discussion—from people who are anxious to learn, and who are willing to take the trip and enjoy Yosemite and see it for themselves. And to be informed by before and after photographs of meadows that were camped all over before there were restricted areas.

For example, there now is a big meadow in Yosemite where there used to be a campsite. One of the best meadows in Yosemite today used to house the old village, which had fourteen commercial establishments in it. Today, the only thing left is the old church that has been there for a long time.

So our job was to inform and to thoroughly research, and to try and put it into perspective, not necessarily pros and cons, but to put the issue before readers in a way that they would understand it better and actually go see it for themselves. That precluded some of the things that are very, very important environmental issues. Nuclear waste, for instance, a case in point I suppose. We could take action on hydrocarbon pesticides and we did. We could take action on supporting different environmental issues where a reader could go and see it for themselves.

Riess: How about action on picking up litter, for instance?

Lane: We were pioneers on that, community action articles. We had a long series of articles which cited and showed examples of how garden clubs got together with Lions Clubs and did exactly that. Litter was frequently covered in *Sunset*. How a row of old trees was saved, how an old schoolhouse was saved and made into a children's museum. That was—I'm not sure whether it still is, but those were called "community action."

Riess: Where would that appear?

Lane: Oh, it would appear anyplace in the magazine.

I remember an article we did on malls where we took two or three communities—Merced I think was one, and downtown Portland, the old town of Portland. There were thousands of requests for reprints of those articles.

Down at *Sunset*, in the little retail store that was my old office, there must be a dozen articles for sale that are reprints on "How to plant drought resistant plants," "How to plant fire resistant plant material." All kinds of articles that *Sunset* reproduced by the thousands.

- Riess: What do you mean the retail store?
- Lane: Oh, they sell a lot of items. You ought to drop by there sometime.
- Riess: I'd love to. Are there T-shirts?
- Lane: Oh yes, wonderful T-shirts with old *Sunset* covers. We had talked about doing that for a long time, but we didn't quite know where to put it. Yes, T-shirts, coasters using old covers, mugs using old covers. I'll get you a set of that stuff.
- Riess: They continue doing tours?
- Lane: They have two tours a day. They don't have as many tours.
- Riess: Mike McCloskey, a former Sierra Club chairman, has said there are few magazines that covered the environmental issues at all: "*Sunset* has been very useful in the last dozen years in forming public opinion." He's really talking about the mid-1970s.
- Lane: Oh yes, and Wallace Stegner made some statements. Did I show you the video he did for *Sunset*? He made very strong statements on *Sunset*'s role in environmental issues.

"Bloody Thursday"—L.W. Lane Considers Selling the Magazine

- Riess: I read that in 1946 there was a question of whether or not to sell the magazine?
- Lane: I think it was more to just test our commitment. We [Mel and Bill] were kids right out of the military, and we met up at my parents apartment at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. My dad had been approached by Mike Coles with *Look*, and other friends in the business. I don't know if Henry Luce had contacted him or not, but DeWitt Wallace subsequently, I know, evidenced a great deal of interest in *Sunset*.

It's hard to know what they would have done with it, and I don't think there ever was much serious thought to it. But he asked whether we really were planning to stay with the magazine or whether we wanted to change our careers. He and my mother had already semi-retired. They spent a lot of time at the ranch during the war—although my mother was managing editor then and they'd come up frequently during the week—and they had this apartment at the Mark Hopkins Hotel and so.

After the war, well before the war was over actually, Dad hired Howard Willoughby. He may have started as vice president, but he became executive vice president and general manager, in fact he was kind of a chief operating officer.

Riess: Where did he come from?

Lane: He came out of Foster and Kleiser. Wonderful man, wonderful man.

Riess: Your father was ready to have somebody take over.

Lane: Right, but he didn't want to have Howard come in during that interim unless Mel and I were going to take over somewhere at the end of the road. He told me later—and several other people in the business told me—that Mel and I came along a lot faster than he had anticipated. Probably because we were both bachelors.

I had been married during the war, but divorced within months after the war. Very amicable separation, we just never had been much together during the war. I plowed into the business, and it wasn't her cup of tea, and so we—no alimony, no property, we had a little radio or something. In any event, I still think of myself as a bachelor until I married Jean in 1955.

But Mel and I took over an apartment which they had had to move into when the navy took over their floor at the Mark Hopkins for returning flag officers. When the war was over and they went back to their apartment at the Mark Hopkins, Mel and I took over the Jones and Sacramento apartment. And we just both worked our tails off. As I mentioned, I started as an elevator boy and worked in the circulation department.

Riess: Why did your dad want to get out?

Lane: Well, he loved the ranch down in the Santa Cruz mountains [Quail Hollow]. He remained active and very influential, and certainly chief executive officer for some years, but he definitely wanted to phase out.

He had never—he served on the War Production Board for paper rationing during the war, and he was president of the Kiwanis Club and so forth, but I guess maybe the state of the business just did not permit him to do too much in public service in the way that Mel and I have. And we didn't either in our early years.

Riess: That would have been a time when he could have profitably sold the magazine?

Lane: Yes, I think he could have, but I don't really think he ever—I don't know this, but I don't think he ever seriously thought of it. The attorney who was the attorney then, and still is our senior attorney, Morris Doyle of McCutchen, Doyle, Brown and Enersen, he's told us that he didn't think Dad was too serious, but he called it Bloody Thursday, or Bloody Friday, I forget what it was, the day when Dad really put it to us.

Riess: Willoughby was already on board.

Lane: Willoughby was already on board, right. I remember coming in once during the war—my ship came in—and he had been hired and I thought it was great. I had known him. He was very active in Alpha Delta Sigma, which was an advertising fraternity when I was at Stanford—Benjamin Franklin was always portrayed for the initiation ceremony—Howard was always very active in Alpha Delta Sigma.

[End Tape 6, Side 1]

[Begin Tape 6, Side 2] ##

Lane: Howard, and a man by the name of Russ Collier who was president of the Advertising Association of the West, and Dad were all good friends. Howard was certainly recognized as one of the real deans of the advertising industry in the country, and very definitely here in the West.

***Sunset* Moves to Menlo Park; Cliff May**

Riess: What else happened on that Bloody Thursday? Was that also the beginning of thinking about buying the Menlo Park property? When you decided yes, you would stay in the business, then what?

Lane: Yes, I would say that did precipitate starting thinking about new headquarters for *Sunset*. We were in some very strong growth years after the war. Lots of new homes being built, lots of migration. That wasn't predicted. The thought was the West was going to be in a bust with all these war industries going down the tube and so forth. There were a lot of predictions that the West would suffer huge economic reversal after the war because there was so much defense, McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, Kaiser, Hughes Aircraft and so forth.

But in fact, so many service people wanted to come back and live in the West; it was for one reason or another a Mecca for migration growth. *Sunset* was, of course,

right in the forefront of it. So the thought was to move into a more compatible type of structure. We looked at the Alta Mira in Sausalito, I remember, when that hotel was for sale. We looked at the old Pullman house in Hillsborough—the heir wasn't called Pullman, but she was the Pullman railroad car family—Carolands.

Finally, it was decided to buy land in what was originally the old Timothy Hopkins estate, which had been in World War I a big military camp, and then during World War II had been a big hospital which SRI [Stanford Research Institute] subsequently took over. Some of those old buildings were still there. We bought seven acres along San Francisquito Creek.

My brother and I were somewhat influential in that decision in that we had gone to Stanford, and of course, the folks had lived in Palo Alto. I remember a family caucus over the phone—I was traveling someplace—and we all decided on having really a suburban structure, and we'd build it on our own.

By that time we had become very close to Cliff May. Cliff had never done a commercial building before, but through Walter Doty and Elsa Uppman and my folks he said he would tackle it, and he designed the first building. That, of course, led long afterwards to his doing the Mondavi winery. And that came about with a luncheon at *Sunset* when Mondavi split off from Krug.

He [Robert Mondavi] and his first wife [Marjorie]—we were having lunch and I asked him what he was going to do for a winery building and he said he didn't know. I said, "Why don't you build it in contemporary Spanish like this?" He called that night and said, "Could you put me in touch with Cliff May?"

Cliff was a pilot, and Cliff flew up. They subsequently hired the same team, Tommy Church, Cliff, and the interior decorator that we had, Dorrie Kerr. In fact, she was a gal I used to go out with. She was a color stylist, and when Jean came out I got Jean a job with Dorrie working as her assistant.

Meeting and Marrying Jean

Riess: How did you and Jean meet?

Lane: She was a color stylist for the Martin Seymour Paint Company; she was an art major at Northwestern and got this job with Martin Seymour. They were the

forefront of all the paint companies, along with Sherwin Williams, in individual personalized color styling through a system that they patented.

She gave radio and television lectures to women's clubs on how to match paint with fabrics, and so on and so forth, in the Middle West. She came out here on a holiday in 1955, I guess it was, and wanted to visit *Sunset*. A friend, a gal I went out with a couple of times, said, "Look up my friend Bill Lane." She did, and I met her and knew I liked her very much. We got married within a year actually.

Riess: You must have been the Bay Area's most eligible bachelor.

Lane: I wasn't too social. I belonged to the Bachelors and I went out a lot, but I never really fell—I was never in love with any woman for ten years, 1945 to 1955. We were just working our tails off, Mel and I both. As I say, my dad never told us, but he told Howard Willoughby that "the boys" had come along a lot faster than he would have expected.

The Apprenticeship of Bill Lane and Mel Lane

Lane: We, I think, won the respect of a lot of senior people whom we moved over. Although there was nobody really in line for the jobs we subsequently took over. We didn't take over the heads of any department, and there was no head of a department who was expecting to be president of *Sunset*.

The company was small enough that the two of us moved through the business, doing rather menial chores always at the beginning of our tour, but within a year or so, we were doing a lot more. I know in the sales field I felt, and I remember my dad said, "You should work to be the best salesman in the company." In three sales assignments I had I did become the highest volume salesman.

Riess: What was the significance in what he was saying?

Lane: You've got to be the best, in a sense, is what he was saying. He didn't quite hold us to that, I don't think, but, "Don't kid yourself that you're carrying a silver spoon, that you're going to run this company or ever own it."

In fact, Mel and I bought our first stock after we'd moved to Palo Alto in the early 1950s. I remember going to American Trust and borrowing \$15 thousand dollars,

as if it were \$15 million dollars, to buy our first stock. Subsequently, we did get gifts and so forth on stock.

Riess: What was your father's holding at that point?

Lane: By the 1950s he had bought all of that stock. He bought that stock back from Jim [James Webb] Young. Also, Howard Willoughby had some stock on a buy-back agreement, I've forgotten what it was. I think Howard held that stock for a few more years, but after some point it could have been recalled. I think by the early 1950s Dad had probably all the stock back.

Riess: This apprenticeship that you and Mel had, was that directed by Willoughby or by your father?

Lane: Well, I'm sure Dad was directing Willoughby, but Willoughby was the one that we were relating to.

Mel was going through purchasing and manufacturing. He worked in the printing plant down in Los Angeles. I was a marketing rep before I was a salesman, and in editorial, which came after I had been in sales.

Sunset Magazine Layout, and Time Warner Changes

Lane: I came back and I was assistant to a gal who was in charge of making the book up every month, the advertising and the editorial. The maps we called them. We tried to get garden editorial in the garden department, and travel in the travel, and it was always a big job of mapping.

Riess: Layout.

Lane: Layout and mapping we called it. I don't know whether it's still called mapping or not. Now, of course, an awful lot of this is done by computer. It's just amazing the layout work that can be done today by computer. I really don't know whether they still have these big spreadsheets.

If you go into *Sunset* today—and maybe we should plan to do that on your next visit—as you walk through the department you will see an idea that I started: in order that everybody could look at what was coming up in the next issue, the whole issue is pinned up against the wall, the first layouts. As the layouts change, anyone

is welcome to change a headline if it's first penciled in and you think of a better word. But you have to initial it, so if somebody wants to quiz you on it you can respond.

The whole issue is there for the whole department to see. If the garden editor has an opinion on a food article, or vice-versa, they can speak to the head of the department: "You know, I didn't get the connection between this and that. If I didn't get it, maybe readers won't understand it. Maybe you ought to clear that up." That's what we call staff editing and staff writing.

They [*Sunset*] are now doing what *Time* is doing with the senior editor on the article getting a byline. Of course, in *Time* now, or newspapers, you get all kinds of credits at the end of the article. If it's a wrap-up, for instance, on teenage crime, you get individuals from different regional offices.

Riess: I have the idea that newspapers do it to make up for low salaries.

Lane: Oh, that's a lot of it. And they're encouraged to write books and do all kinds of things which *Sunset* editors, under our ownership, were not. That was another area where Martin—he was asked by Brower to do a book, and we just had a policy of no outside activities.

Riess: And didn't he go ahead and do it under the table?

Lane: Yes. That, plus one or two other things, led to our deciding he should retire. But we remained very good friends. He lives out here in Portola Valley and we see him from time to time.

Riess: Layout, the amount of white space, typefaces and things like that, who decides those things?

Lane: I do. I'm a great believer that if you've got a group of readers that want information that they want it attractive and they want it readable.

As to white space, I cite the dictionary and the Bible. Why isn't there more white space in the Bible and in the dictionary? Or in the Encyclopedia Britannica? They do tremendous amounts of research on readership. That kind of devotion, and commitment, or approaching it—that is the reason *Sunset* was, I think, often referred to as the bible of Western living. Or the *Western Garden Book* was referred to as the bible of gardening.

And I never worshipped color. I think it has eye appeal, certainly on the cover or from a distance on the newsstand, but if you're trying to instruct somebody on how to plant a tomato bush, you can do it a hell of a lot quicker with line drawings or black and white photos than you can with a little postage-stamp color illustration. You can get a lot more information on the page.

I started color in 1965. Recently in *Time*, one of the *Time* magazine employees says that when Time Warner took over *Sunset* it had introduced color. Well, hell! In fact, color was introduced the first issue after I was publishing. I saw a lot of value in color for an opening article in the garden department, or food. But I didn't worship it.

I was influenced to a degree by research I was involved with as a gunnery officer on my troop transport. We did research on the quickest way to communicate on a pretty low intelligence level—many kids who weren't even out of high school were on the gunnery crews. The quickest way you could teach those kids about how to assemble or unassemble or repair a gun was by using large type that was illustrated by line drawings. The next was black and white drawings. The last was with four-color. Because color gets in the way of the instructions.

If you want to entice somebody to go to Hawaii, then there's a lot of argument for color. But this all or nothing, bragging about "We're all color," I don't agree with that at all. I think there's a place in a service magazine for black and white, and as a matter of fact, *Sunset* is still using some black and white, even though in a promotional way they refer to all color.

Riess: In an interview with Cliff May he talks about the first ranch book, and how he or you or somebody decided to go back to drawings to illustrate houses because drawings do it better than photographs.

Lane: That's right, exactly right.

I remember when Time Warner first took over they were going to put photographs on Kitchen Cabinet. I said, "Well you better do some research with readers first, because these are quick references. A woman gets the issue and she wants a new idea right now for a dinner she's having or whatever." And they did their research. The illustrations were colored, which is all right; in fact, we started color illustrations with Kitchen Cabinet.

Riess: Chef of the West has changed to women and men together.

Lane: Yes, I know, and I think that's crazy. The study I could show you is that it was the second highest read feature by women. I would dare say that men's readership has fallen off, and women's may have increased, but the men loved the exclusivity of winning that chef's hat. The first recipe they got into the magazine they would get a Chef of the West hat. Then they'd get an apron, and I forget what they got next, books or something.

Jerry DiVecchio, the home economics editor, was always after me to include women in that feature, and she had sold Mellquist and also Bill Markan, the current editor, on the idea. I turned her down. I told her, "Look, there's plenty in there for women." We're close friends, but she would call me a male chauvinistic pig and all that stuff. [laughter]

[looking at May 1993 issue] Now, that's an old home, and they're showing how it was remodeled. Not 100 percent color, but they lean a lot more to color. It's all right, but I still think black and white has a place in "how to do it" instructional type editorial, which comes up more frequently in gardening. And gardening is now in a different position than it was, it's now ahead of food.

I think they're making a mistake; they're watering down gardening, which is too bad. That's what *Better Homes and Gardens* and *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* did, and now *House and Garden* is out of business. *Better Homes* doesn't have any men readership. But what they are doing now, I have to admit I think they've done fairly well.

[End Tape 6, Side 2]

IV ISSUES OF TECHNOLOGY, ADVERTISING, AND AUDIENCE

[Interview 4: February 9, 1994] ##

[Begin Tape 7, Side A]

ATEC, New Technology for Typesetting

Lane: *Sunset* was in the lead with new technology for typesetting with an Atec system, now antiquated, but that system goes back many years. We were the first monthly magazine to use it, and I think we were the second magazine to use it—I think *U.S. News and World Report* was first. Atec was specially developed for publishers. Now the desktop publishing is common practice. But this goes back, I don't know, many years.

Riess: Who introduced you to it?

Lane: I read about it and I went to our printer in Chicago, Donnelly and Sons. They, fortunately, had been doing some work with *U.S. News and World Report*. In fact, I remember being in the research laboratory at their printing plant, and an editor at *U.S. News* in New York—this seems kind of commonplace now—dictated, typed in, a paragraph that went up to a satellite, came to a phone downlink near Springfield, Illinois, and was then transmitted by phone from Springfield up to the printing plant. The point was that it could happen in any place around the world, using a satellite.

That experience got me started. Then I went back to Boston and went to the plant where the Atec equipment was built, and we were able to get the first installation for any monthly magazine. As I say, *U.S. News* had it, but I think they were the only ones that had it before we did.

Riess: Did you see savings right away?

Lane: Well, I saw savings, but I saw what was more critical than savings: money. It was making money for us. Making money was very much influenced—not entirely, obviously the product had to be good—by the closing date of *Sunset* in competing with other media, with radio, television, daily newspapers, and even some faster closing dates of weekly magazines with automotive and travel and some other departments.

Riess: It meant you needed less lead time?

Lane: Well, if we could close that lead time for the editors to get their copy in, we could give the advertiser more time and close that gap between going to press and having copies in the hands of the readers. It made a tremendous difference.

Mapping, Positioning, Advertorials

Riess: Advertising space and editorial space is coordinated.

Lane: Oh, very definitely. The mapping becomes very critical. *Sunset* makeup tried to departmentalize the advertising as closely as possible with the very rigid departmentalizing of the editorial, the travel, and the general section, which of course picked up on a number of subjects, including some that didn't have departments. The general section was somewhat open. For instance, there might be an article that was very heavy on the environment, although that might be tied in with gardening. Or on use or non-use of pesticides, or on more use of non-hydrocarbon types of chemical fertilizers, or even recycling your garbage and so forth in a bin.

Then you went into building, food, and gardening. Now the sequence has changed, but we try to get advertising as closely matched up as possible with editorial.

Riess: If Jeep had an ad showing a vehicle with a background photographed in Monument Valley, would you offer them the idea of doing an article on driving in the Southwest?

Lane: Not to the advertiser. There is no commitment on editorial to the advertiser, absolutely none. Even though, in fact, the salesmen could get advanced information on editorial, and they'd become aware of what was coming up in the magazine, because we didn't have any closed doors, as you will see this afternoon. The magazine is laid out along a wall which the advertising department can see as well as anybody else, for an issue that's coming up, maybe a month or two ahead of time.

No, we never let salesmen sell against editorial, probably for the reason that we might change it, we might yank it. But also, we didn't want any collusion with advertising and editorial. There was absolutely no positioning. In fact if, say, we had an article on the South Pacific, and we had advertising for a cruise ship line on a South Pacific cruise, we would try not to position it with that editorial, so that there wouldn't be any appearance of that [positioning].

There's nothing wrong with that, some magazines do it, and it's called advertorial, or whatever. It was very common in the home furnishing industry. When Elizabeth Gordon was editor of *House Beautiful* she would send an editor and a salesman together down to High Point, into the furniture country, and they would actually sell an advertisement with—I don't know if it was ever a written contract, but it was with the agreement that there would be an article on that kind of furniture, country or Spanish or whatever. And they would even make a commitment that one of the products would be in one of the photographs, and you'd find credits for that particular furniture. You see it a lot in women's fashion magazines today also.

Riess: I see it in *Architectural Digest*.

Lane: And *Architectural Digest*. Again, nothing wrong with that. It's not an issue of good or bad, it's just a different policy, and one that we never got into. I was very much opposed to it, and my father hadn't gotten into it either.

Riess: Your photographers do really stunning work. I think they have influenced the way people see the West. I think they've also influenced the way advertising photography is done, so you have a kind of merging of the look of ad photographs and editorial that might be problematic in laying out the magazine.

Lane: Well, it is, but it's very coordinated.

As the magazine grew bigger with more advertising, and therefore in the formula more editorial, we had more space, and we began to use captions with a lot of substance and text to them. Even today I hate pictures without captions. But not only did we give them the one-line caption, which might be all caps or italics or whatever, but we gave a lot of information in captions, and we also did a lot of text within the photographs.

You see that predominantly when there's a listing of new American roses, or varieties of tomatoes or whatever. There will be a lot of text with that photograph, so it's a working photograph, working in the sense that it's not only conveying the visual impression, but also the textual information regarding whatever it might be. Gardening and food were where it was most predominantly used. Occasionally in building articles. Rarely or much less in travel.

Preserving and Referencing the Whole Magazine

Riess: Do you think of your readers ripping up the magazine to save articles?

Lane: We tried to discourage that, we wanted them to preserve the whole magazine, so we worked very hard on selling the annual indexes and the binders. And of course, we did constant research: the number of readers who save copies, whether they save full copies or did, as you point out, tearing.

[laughs] I tore a page out of a magazine in the doctor's office the other day—I don't know what the hell it was—some article that I wanted. I asked the nurse, "Can I take it?" She said, "Sure." It was about three months old anyway.

But we try to preserve the whole magazine because, among other things, a reader who at this point in time wants that article on, say, cruising in Alaska, a year from now may want to refer back to some fall issue, say September, on what she could plant in the fall, and would turn back to the magazine for that reason.

What got torn out most frequently, we found in research, was recipes. People would cut them out and put them on a card, or they might put them in a loose-leaf folder with chocolate cakes, or whatever. Women had all—well, and some men, a lot of men, and Chefs of the West particularly, had all kinds of ingenious ways of filing, and eventually, in recent years, a lot of them would put it on the computer.

One of the things we were getting into when we merged—we felt that one of Time Warner's advantages was that it could coordinate and prepare publications that would offer those alternative ways of reference storing. In fact, the next edition of the *Western Garden* book—when I was in New York I mentioned to both the president and the chairman of Time, Inc. that they needed to allow enough money in the budget to offer this alternate package of a floppy disk for certain types of information that will be in that book, and that they could be sold in combination. I think they're going to do it. The *Western Garden* book lends itself to that, because it has so much information.

Also, I think a lot of nurseries, upscale nurseries particularly, are putting information like that into electronic media. If we can be identified as a source of that information, as long as they can continue to warrant the leadership role of *Sunset* as being the authority, and people continue to come in and say, "I read it in *Sunset*," or, "What has *Sunset* recommended this month?" or whatever, I don't care whether they turn to the book or turn to the floppy disk.

Riess: It could be beyond the garden book, it could be the whole content of the magazine.

Lane: Well, it could be. I have looked at some other professions where certain things have gotten fairly heavily into an alternative, non-print source of recall or storage, and I don't feel that for us it would diminish the need for print any more than computers did.

Computers generate tons of print, and they help a lot of probably minority and younger people, disadvantaged readers, dyslexia or whatever, to learn to read earlier, because you've got to read what's on the computer. And if they can have fun playing games or whatever, then all the better.

Riess: Just to have the index on line would be great.

Lane: Oh, yes, right.

High Tech, and "Why Not?"

Riess: So I can see you're a convert to computers, but as you're saying, you were an early convert to new technologies. *Sunset* is located here on the cutting edge of the Silicon Valley world of computers and high technology. Was this, do you think, part of it?

Lane: Oh, I suppose there was some of that environment, but I think also it was my traveling, getting around, always being curious. I'm not simply being self-serving, but I've always been curious, in my personal life, about new cameras, new technology. I've just gotten a new music center that's supposed to have the latest technology in it, some things that I still don't know how to work. [laughs]

Riess: This is embodying the *Sunset* attitude, or the Western attitude, of, "Why not?"

Lane: Well, that's right, we make that point in a lot of research. I think I've mentioned the research that we started just kind of in-house, that *Sunset* readers were more inventive in terms of finding different solutions on their own, whether it was building a deck on a hillside or whatever. And that given the information, and given the inspiration, or given the opportunity, for a river running trip, for all kinds of things that aren't that exotic, maybe a new recipe, or trying out a new flower, things that would just be a dud nationally, the *Sunset* reader will use it, try it.

I remember we had a big article on grey plants that were to be used as an accent, or a border plant. And remember when that red and green cabbage, ornamental cabbage, came along? We used to get comments from *Better Homes and Gardens* when we'd introduce this stuff. They just couldn't see that they could ever get any of the Eastern or Midwestern readers to take to it. And they probably couldn't!

Although a lot of what has started in the West has had a considerable influence on the rest of the country. *Sunset* was, and I assume continues to be, very well read in the home service and women's cooking and travel publications, because what they spot out West very frequently will come across to the rest of the country.

Magazine Publishers Association; Subscription and Newsstand Mix

Riess: When you go to your Magazine Publishers Association meetings do people buttonhole you, to see what's cooking out West?

Lane: Well, I suppose. The week before last I was in New York where Mr. [Reginald Kufeld] Brack, who's chairman of Time, Inc. Magazines, was receiving the Henry Johnson Fisher award at a beautiful banquet, black-tie dinner, Waldorf-Astoria and so forth. He was very proud of himself that he had earned this, and someone in the circle that we were visiting with said, "Ambassador Lane, weren't you recipient of this in the past?" I said, "Yes." Then somebody else picked it up and said, "Wasn't it 1974?" I said, "Yes."

Mr. Brack, I could just tell what was going through his mind [laughing], that here's someone from little old *Sunset* magazine out there on the West Coast who received this before any person in his position at *Time* magazine had received it. I don't know who were the judges in 1974, but I think probably one of the reasons that I got it was that *Sunset* was on the cutting edge, and I think it's continued to be.

Riess: That's the Henry Johnson Fisher award?

Lane: Yes. Mr. Luce [Henry Luce] was the second recipient of it, the founder of Time, Inc. Mr. Wallace of *Reader's Digest* was the first.

Riess: My uncle, Gibson McCabe, received it for *Newsweek*.

Lane: Your uncle?

Riess: Yes.

Lane: You're kidding! Gib was a very good friend of mine. He's your uncle? Gib was—I had forgotten when Gib received it.

Riess: He said it was a couple of years before you. [laughs]

Lane: I think it was, yes. Gib was a very good friend. The *Washington Post*, Mrs. [Katherine] Graham tried very hard to buy *Sunset* once, well, several times. She was in my office several times over the years.

Riess: To run it from there?

Lane: She would have, I think, left it out here. I invited her to be a speaker for Stanford's summer publishing course, which I was involved in helping to get started, so she came out and lectured, and we had a reception for her at *Sunset*. Following that reception, she called me back, and I saw her in Washington.

But the *Washington Post* is not my cup of tea, nor Mrs. Graham. I liked her personally, and I had a great admiration for Gib. He was a swell guy. He came to *Sunset* whenever he was in the West. And I would host MPA [Magazine Publishers Association] or Ad Council meetings at one time or another when he was on the board.

Riess: What kind of things do you learn from each other at these meetings?

Lane: I think by and large the MPA meetings that I related to were more sharing ideas about print versus other media, the advantages of print. Of course, postal issues were always a very big subject of conversation, because postage rates affected magazines more than any media. Electronic, obviously. The Direct Mail Association, which was a very powerful group, was I suppose more affected. It depended upon how a magazine handled subscriptions versus newsstand sales.

In our case, we worked very hard to get subscribers because we wanted that repeat readership and the commitment, and the reason for the cash in advance was the commitment that they really wanted it. So we worked to the 90 percent goal all the time, and we were always 89, 91, swinging back and forth depending upon the issue.

Riess: Ninety percent subscribers?

Lane: Right, yes. And there were some who would argue maybe having more. I always liked the newsstand, partly for the visibility and the display value, in grocery stores, and we paid premiums for checkout counters and so forth. And we had it at the airports.

But the other thing was that our subscription mail methods through department store charge accounts and so forth didn't pick up a newcomer to the West as early as newsstands did, a new family formation, somebody who just heard about *Sunset* and saw it at a newsstand and would pick it up.

Every newsstand copy had a subscription order form in it. We got a lot of subscriptions from newsstand buyers. I always wanted to protect that 10 to 12 percent newsstanders. We worked very hard to get good newsstand displays, for instance, working with Safeway to point out that it wasn't just the revenue from sales of magazines, but it was the recipes that would sell meat, sell condiments. And the man-woman readership, and the umpteen percent of their sales.

We had all these figures, and on our own audience, of discretionary buying which was done by men. Unlike most women's magazines, or the Wednesday shopping page in the newspaper, *Sunset* delivered that man reader who might not buy the coffee, but would make a preference to his wife that he liked Folgers, or whatever it was. Or, that he wanted more sausage—I frequently tell Jean when she goes down to do the shopping, "Get me some Swiss sausage," or this or that. We had figures on that man reader as purchaser, from checkout counter surveys, or surveys of our readers.

Riess: But the MPA was a lobbying organization?

Lane: Well, for me it was, from the West. I'm not so sure—if you took the Chicago-Boston-New York axis, maybe throwing Iowa in for *Better Homes*, those people saw each other a lot more than we out here did. Knapp, in Los Angeles, was a medium-active participant. They published *Architectural Digest*, *Bon Appetit*, and they had some of the in-flight magazines. They're now owned by somebody else, I've forgotten who.

Riess: Is that because you really didn't need them?

Lane: Well, I found the time and the money not productive. We had so many things on our plate that I really didn't find national publishers that much of an inspiration and incentive to me.

My dad wouldn't even belong to the Magazine Publishers Association. He didn't think they offered him a damn thing. And they rarely had meetings in the West. I had, and my father too, and Mr. Willoughby, had many a commitment to an ad club that wanted a media day. I would speak on behalf of the value of all media.

"Media mix" was a term that we were using long before it was fashionable. And I truly believed it. I was a very good newspaper reader, and the first thing I ever bought with money I earned at a summer job in '36, working up there in Sequoia National Park, was a little Philco, or Gilfillin or something radio. Wish I still had it, and they actually still make the cabinet, but now with a modern radio inside.

And I think I told you that when I came back from the war with my pay that I got from the navy I bought a little Hallicrafter television, because they had Hallicrafter radio equipment on the ship—I knew that brand name from the little postage stamp black and white. I've always believed in the media mix, but I feel very strongly about magazines' role, or at least our type of magazine.

Ad Council's Pro Bono Advertising

Riess: If you didn't feel that you needed very much from the Magazine Publishers, how about from the Advertising Council.

Lane: Well, the Ad Council I felt a little differently about because, I guess, of my public service, and my dad before me who was, with Don Belding and several others, involved in the founding of the Ad Council as the War Council, which was supporting government recruitment, nurses, war bonds. The Ad Council—I remember early meetings at our ranch down in the Santa Cruz mountains in the late thirties, and then when I was stationed in Monterey and then San Francisco before I went to sea, when the Ad Council was getting started as the War Council.

Riess: It was called the War Council?

Lane: Yes, right, the Ad Council became the Ad Council from the War Council. War Advertising Council maybe—I've forgotten the full name. But it was strictly for that purpose, to help government-sponsored war efforts, bonds, gas savings, any government cause that was put through a screening process, as all campaigns are today, although now they're much more sophisticated and far more complex.

I went up through the Ad Council and was going to be chairman the year after I went to Australia. However, when I came back I didn't want to get back into it that strongly again, so I gave up the opportunity to be chairman.

Riess: On the Ad Council, the magazine subsidized the ad?

Lane: It subsidized the ad to the extent that we ran it free, and all Ad Council ads—the media's participation, to a large extent, is that there's no charge made for that five-minute spot, or that billboard, or whatever. The contribution of advertising agencies and advertising is that they provide staffing pro bono, but they charge for out-of-pocket costs. We didn't even charge out-of-pocket costs for the cost of running the space, or air time for electronic media, or billboard. That is contributed, part of that medium's contribution.

Sunset was the first magazine to give the Ad Council a written contract for placement of an Ad Council advertisement in every issue we published. Every issue of *Sunset* we carried an Ad Council ad. It wasn't always in all editions; because we had variation in advertising content with different editions, sometimes an edition would come up which was heavier on advertising, and it would permit giving a page. And although it was a non-paid page, to the reader they didn't really know the difference, it was an advertisement. So we counted it in our advertising ratio.

[End Tape 7, side A]

[Begin Tape 7, side B] ##

Riess: I hadn't realized what the Advertising Council of America was. I thought it was a trade organization.

Lane: Oh, no, no. Many of its programs are still government-sponsored, the Negro College [Fund] program, which actually is through the Department of Education. But there are programs that are non-government-related today.

Riess: How about environmentalism? Is that a program?

Lane: Environmentalism is taken up in some campaigns; through a lot of urging on my part it was given consideration before I went to Australia. But the last Advertising Council meeting I went to was a couple of years ago. I just called on Ruth Wooden, the president of the Ad Council, when I was in New York last week, and got brought up to speed on some of the things they're doing. Unfortunately, *Sunset* has not continued to keep that commitment that we had.

Riess: There must be AIDS ads and that kind of stuff?

Lane: That's right. But again, those programs are largely coordinated through the government, and one of the reasons for that, among other things, is to maintain the credibility of the Ad Council with the government.

Every year there's a White House conference that is hosted by the President of the United States in the White House. Several cabinet officers will speak. For instance, the secretary of the Department of Agriculture, or the director of the Forest Service, will frequently—I say frequently, every few years—refer to how successful and how much his agency appreciates the support of the Ad Council on fire prevention, through the Smokey the Bear program.

"Take a Bite out of Crime," the Justice Department's program—there are all kinds of famous slogans that people probably wouldn't even associate with the Ad Council, that have been conceived by advertising agencies who have volunteered their time, their creative talent, to create these campaigns.

General Motors or whoever—a number of advertisers form a committee to create a campaign. Drunk driving, for instance, where the two glasses meet, and liquor, wine, or whatever it is goes all over the place. I've forgotten what government agency that was, probably Justice. I've forgotten.

Riess: What about more controversial ads, issues of population control?

Lane: Birth control and things like that. I don't know the current campaigns, but I have a book that I brought back from New York which would have a history of the Ad Council, which I'd be glad to show you. And it would have the current campaigns.

American Advertising Federation, and Standards in Advertising and Film

Riess: Well, that's very interesting. How about the American Advertising Federation? Is that a different kind of a network?

Lane: The AAF is an organization which was a separate—they had another acronym, and represented the advertising industry, all branches of the advertising industry, primarily in the Midwest and East. Here in the West we had an organization called the Advertising Association of the West, the AAW. *Sunset* was very much

involved with that. Mr. Willoughby, who was our longtime executive vice-president, was president of it. I was very much involved in it.

We finally, I've forgotten what year, decided that we needed a national voice in Washington, particularly as we were getting into more regulations and so forth. We merged the two groups, and I was chairman of the first conference committee of the merged organization, which was held in Portland. I remember Governor [Mark] Hatfield was our keynote speaker.

That organization [AAF] today represents the advertising industry. Howard Bell, who I think is still the president, sits on the board of the Ad Council, and he sits on the board of the Magazine Publisher's Association, as do some of the other trade publications, associations. And of course the electronic media, who are not represented on the Magazine Publishers board, they are on the AAF board, and on the Ad Council board, too.

Ad Council has all media, Ad Council prepares public service advertising for all media—direct mail inserts, outdoor advertising, and we're now getting into advertorials, or whatever the hell you call them, even some computer-type programs that are carried as public service.

Riess: Who is most concerned with standards?

Lane: Well, the Advertising Association Federation would definitely deal with the standards in advertising. It isn't a binding organization on any media.

Riess: It's not a censor.

Lane: No. Of course, electronic is regulated, so you have regulations pending now on, for instance, violence, or nudity or sex or whatever, but violence being the most prominent, I guess. Those regulations are working their way through Congress, and the industry is trying to fight it. But I think the time has come when they probably are going to have more regulations on what they can include in their films.

The tragedy of violence—this is off the track—but our worst films are promoted heavily overseas. And when I say our worst films, I remember in Australia slinking out of an American-made film that made Jean and I just embarrassed almost to have anybody recognize us as Americans. But they get shown overseas, and all these African and Asian countries, everywhere except in Scandinavia where violence is not permitted. They're very tough there on any films with violence, but you can have all kinds of sex, complicit sex in Scandinavia.

Riess: The films you are talking about might not run in theaters here?

Lane: Oh, you could see them, but they would be dogs.

Riess: Chainsaw murders.

Lane: Yes, things like that, that's exactly right. And that's really the tragedy of it. It's like the tobacco companies, where they are pushing cigarettes like hell in a lot of the developing countries.

Riess: Bringing culture.

Lane: Well, it's kind of like Al Capone going to church. Standard Oil, for instance, has done a good job in many ways. They have donated a lot of money, and they have an employee outreach program through which their employees are replanting some of the meadows in Yosemite with the native oaks, and removing the introduced plant material that came in with sheep and goats, some of which John Muir tended.

But then they run an ad about how caribou up in the Northwest are surviving because they're sleeping next to the pipeline, or something that keeps them warm—all kinds of screwy things that sort of latch on to being good environmentalists, but at the same time using the environment to rationalize their exploitation of a resource. That isn't a fair judgment on all large companies, on the environmental stance, but it is fairly true.

The lumber companies are a case in point, announcing the number of seedlings that they have planted on the theory that a tree is a tree is a tree, and not making any distinction between virgin timbers and ecosystems. You talk about the spotted owl with them and they argue that we have species that go out by the hundreds every year, and have for centuries. So the spotted owl gets sacrificed.

Fortunately, that Endangered Species Act has given the environmental movement its best latch onto a legal roadblock to put in front of the desecration of virgin timber. Before, the timber industry would save a few little stands and say, "Well, you've got this many in parks," and so on and so forth, but they would decimate the remaining virgin forest.

***Sunset's* Trade Publications, Previews, Brand Names in Editorial Content**

Riess: We got off the track with talking about the movies America exports. Reminds me, the videos that you let me look at made reference to *Sunset* publishing a number of trade journals interpreting the West to advertisers, automotive for instance.

Lane: Well, we had automotive news, grocery news, travel preview. They were little four- or eight-page mailers that were sent to lists that we would build. I remember travel preview we started with a Pan Am travel agent list, and then we'd build on it with Foster's travel service, we got all of their offices, and slowly we built our own list.

Riess: Direct mail.

Lane: Direct mail, right, and what it was primarily intended to do, what they did, was to give a preview of the next issue of *Sunset*, so that they would be prepared. Too often we'd get a call from a grocery store that we had featured in an article some new type of pepper, or we were introducing a gooseberry fruit from New Zealand called a kiwi, and why hadn't we let them know, and so forth. So we spent a lot of time in those publications, a lot of space, to give them advance information of what was coming up.

We eventually took it even further. A new product, in the building field, for instance, we would see whether it was adequately distributed before we would publish anything on it, so that a reader wasn't enticed to try it out, or go to a retailer and ask for it, and not have a reasonable opportunity of finding it. I think we've all been caught in that situation.

Riess: It sounds selfless, but it's a service you're offering your advertisers?

Lane: That's right. It's a subliminal, out-of-sight service, but it was one of the reasons we carried the tremendous volume of advertising we did at very high rates, and you've heard this before, with no frequency, no volume discounts. Much higher cost per thousand. The national advertiser would look at it, or national media, and couldn't believe it. Time Warner has learned since they merged *Sunset* how valuable those extra services were. For instance, in cost-cutting the new *Sunset* eliminated what we called marketing representatives. These were people located in the West, men and women who would work with an advertiser to get the counter cards up, get special promotions, help get the maximum mileage out of the advertisement. Well, they cut them out.

I told them at the time, "This is very short-sighted, because this is one of the advantages *Sunset* has in competing with national media." Time Warner to some extent hears that through two ears. One ear is hearing, "Well, yes, we have this investment in *Sunset* which we want to make successful." The other one is hearing, "Our *Time* and *Fortune* and *People* and *Entertaining Weekly* are selling advertising in the West; we have Western editions, competing with *Sunset*."

And so, in any event, those Western marketing reps were eliminated. Now they're putting them back; they realize it's a service that maybe a national magazine doesn't need, but a regional magazine selling against national media has to provide extra services, and one of them that was one of the most productive is helping advertisers get the extra mileage and the extra value from their advertisements. Particularly if your advertising rates are going to remain relatively high.

Riess: In the display cases, whatever the marketing reps are offering, is the *Sunset* logo there somewhere?

Lane: It may be if the rep is a good rep, who eventually may become a display salesman, who eventually may go on to become publisher [laughs] or president or chairman. I was first a marketing rep, which was created right after the war. We had an Eastern advertising manager and a Western advertising manager.

The Eastern advertising manager was located in San Francisco. We created a system that would help our national advertisers primarily, although we helped the Western ones too, but the Western advertiser had his home office here—Del Monte, we'll say—and he had a lot more field representation because the Western market was his home market, and from there he had branched out, as Del Monte had, or as Dole Pineapple had from Hawaii.

Fuller Paint was a good example, a San Francisco company. Sherwin-Williams didn't have anywhere near the advantage of a Fuller Paint Company with its own stores and all kinds of public awareness and so forth. Sherwin-Williams, or a branch of it, Martin Seymour, which my wife was a color stylist for in Chicago, benefited immensely by using our *Sunset* marketing reps to help them with in-store displays and maybe introducing the Western sales manager to a chain of hardware stores, or whatever it was, to help them in every way to get the benefits of the advertising. Also frequently we did this with companies that weren't even advertising, to show them how effective *Sunset* could be if indeed they did advertise.

It was an outstandingly successful program, and now Time is reinstituting it. Also, it was very good training ground to separate the wheat from the chaff on who would make a good salesman, because at a marketing rep level you didn't have as much at jeopardy in terms of the actual developing of sales lineage as you did with a display salesman. Then we would take the best marketing reps when we came up with a vacancy in the display or in the advertising salesman category.

Riess: This marketing rep job, was this your dad's approach or yours?

Lane: I think it was partly Dad, and partly the Eastern advertising manager, Al Reasoner, who said this would be helpful to him in selling advertising.

My dad had to make the decision, of course. He saw the opportunity to put me into that slot. I had been in the circulation department right after I came out of the service, and writing sales letters, because I had been a journalism major and I liked to write. My first job was under Mr. Grey—I think that was the name—who was circulation manager, and I wrote circulation subscription letters, and did some other odd jobs in the circulation department.

And then I went into that marketing rep job when it was created. I went out every other week, and he went out every other week, Mr. Reasoner. We alternated between going up to the Northwest and going down to Los Angeles, and working with the regional sales managers, and calling on retailers, and so on and so forth.

Riess: And who would you find to do the displays?

Lane: We had a whole merchandising book where we would send out letters to a hundred key dealers announcing a *Sunset* campaign and how—say it's an automotive company—how the Western market has a higher percentage of two-car owners, and how *Sunset* has a higher percentage than the Western average. This got these dealers—maybe it's a local Palo Alto Fuller Paint dealer—supporting why *Sunset* was a good medium for them, in competition with other media.

I remember an account that I worked on called Shopsmith, which is a five-in-one power tool. I called on Menlo Park Hardware when it was located down on the corner of El Camino and Santa Cruz. They had gotten coupon responses from, I've forgotten, *Popular Mechanics*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Sunset*, and we took the coupon responses and measured them against the sales that they made from following up on the coupon responses.

Sunset just led all the other magazines by a long ways, far more conversions, because we had both a woman in the household who maybe thought, "Gee, wouldn't it be nice if my husband could do some of this work with this power tool," and a man in the household who said, "Gee, that might be fun, or might save money," or whatever. "With the five-in-one power tool, instead of five separate ones, we've got room for it in the carport, whatever."

Riess: And then the editorial content in the building section supports it.

Lane: Right, we had a lot of how-to-do-it material, "Make your own bookshelves," and so on.

Riess: And what about picturing someone using the Shopsmith in the article?

Lane: We would never tell the editorial department to; the advertising department would never even think of suggesting that the editorial department feature it in the magazine. Also, there would be a pretty good chance that it might not be visible, because we would mask it—for instance on that Shopsmith—so that you wouldn't identify it with a particular brand unit.

We had, of course, a lot of appliance advertising. For many years we carried more appliance advertising per issue than any magazine, by a long measure. We'd do everything we could to mask the name. There were different devices. We'd come up very close on a frying pan so it didn't show the distinctive burner that was only made by Westinghouse or General Electric or Amana or whoever it was. We tried to keep the editorial pages as free as possible from brand identification.

The Garden Preview

Lane: The garden preview was probably the one that got the greatest priority and attention. Interestingly enough, it was the smallest advertising category. But the gardening industry was very sensitive and critical when we would come out with a new plant material or a new technique, or whatever, that they weren't briefed on, and it would catch them off guard.

A good nursery, like McLellan's—Jean was just at McLellan's getting an orchid and I happened to be with her—they are specialists, they know a hell of a lot about that flower, how to treat it, how to put the soil in, what to do, this and that. They don't like to be caught off guard. We wanted to make allies of the garden trade

industry, that they were our partners and we were their partners, and we were working together to serve the public, and hopefully to help the industry grow.

Most nurseries weren't into container gardening after the war at all. They didn't promote it, they didn't see the future of it, they didn't see the multiple housing condominium development coming along. They saw container gardening as a threat that would eliminate gardening, when in fact many of the people with a little deck or an apartment would need plant material, which many of these nurseries were not even stocking, that would grow inside. [laughs] Just look around this house—five, six, seven indoor living plant materials right in my eyesight.

As decorators came along they began to look at the plant material as a part of the interior decoration, that that would be a nice corner for that plant or tree or whatever. But nurserymen were really old-fashioned, and had their heads in the sand about conventional, outdoor gardening—and it was all-year gardening in the West, so they were pretty cocky that they had it over the Midwest and East, and even some of the South, where you have such sultry weather in the summer. So convincing them otherwise was difficult.

Well, we found out right after the war, when a lot of this got started, although somewhat even during the Depression and during the war, that we would be far better to have them informed and get with us. And indeed in time they did, and they began to carry different containers and promote it. Then Tommy Church came along, and he was one of the gurus, of course, as you know.

Tommy got into this concrete-wood labor-saving garden bent, which of course lent itself to container gardens. And then it eventually took off. But *Sunset* was way ahead of the time, and we had a big influence on Tommy Church, as a matter of fact, on him seeing the responsibility of having a lot of plant material, but having a much easier garden to maintain.

Riess: In the garden preview, if you were going to feature a new variety of camellia that one person in southern California had hybridized, then what did you tell the nurserymen?

Lane: We would also share with the nursery the source of ordering the plant material. We'd work with Armstrong, which actually had a retail facility, too. Or, for instance, the bulb people up in the Northwest, the rose and bulb people up in the Northwest.

When new varieties were coming along we would, in that garden preview, list the sources for ordering new plant material. We would get—and I think they still do—get very good cooperation, because they want *Sunset* to be informed, because it's a conduit to probably on the average the best gardeners in the area here in the West—not all of them, by any means, but very near.

Riess: There must be Eastern advertisers you don't necessarily want, or discourage, like Burpee, or Jackson and Perkins.

Lane: Well, Burpee and Jackson and Perkins, both had huge growing areas in Oregon, so they were very Western, all the time that I have been in business. And they had varieties that were good in the West, partly because we're planting roses in January rather than keeping them under straw. So the roses and the bulbs—daffodils and tulips and things come along much earlier in the West, naturally out of doors. Again, containers changed that field immensely.

Another example, florists didn't catch on to potted plants for years. Here again that really got started in the West, through bulbs, and I remember, for the Christmas plants, the West again showed very different characteristics than the other three—Midwest, Northeast, and South—regions of the country. Whenever it came to plant material or flowers, Westerners were just way out in front, and *Sunset* was usually out in front of the phenomenon, and frequently leading it and pushing it.

Riess: How much advance time were you able to give the nurseries?

Lane: Oh, I suppose it would vary. I don't know. On, say, the All-American roses that did well in the West, we'd have a lot of lead time.

[End Tape 7, Side B]

[Begin Tape 8, Side A ##]

Staffing in the Early 1950s, Walter Doty, and the Arcadia Study

Riess: We keep coming around to the subject of advertising. What are the important names from earlier advertising mastheads? Dick Bristol?

Lane: Dick came in as a salesman in the southern California office and became southern California manager, but that was much later. Howard Willoughby really was advertising manager, as vice-president. We had several people working under him. But I would have been the first advertising manager with the authority to make the final decision on advertising matter, with that responsibility. Although when I

became advertising manager I also was in charge of editorial and books. In a family business we kind of jockey titles around to simply let people know where the authority was.

Jack Henning, who came along as a salesman out of San Francisco, became advertising manager—if you were studying mastheads. Here again, as I mentioned over the phone, chronologically some of these things don't always fit into a neat calendar sequence. But Jack succeeded me as advertising manager, and Dick Bristol succeeded Jack Henning as advertising manager.

Riess: And neither of them shot off in new directions?

Lane: No. As my father did until I came along, I stayed very much on top of editorial policies, circulation policies, and very definitely advertising policies—editorial being sort of the goose that's laying the egg, because you can't have good circulation or good advertising without that editorial. So that's always been a high priority with our family ownership.

But the advertising, from the whole history of our company as Lane Publishing, was first my father, and then there was an interim when Mr. Willoughby had that—my father sort of semi-retired after the war—until that period in the early fifties when I came back from New York. It was at that time, as I mentioned yesterday on the phone, that Dad was having more trouble with [Walter] Doty, although [Proctor] Mellquist had been brought out just about the time I went back to New York in 1950, whenever it was.

Dad wanted me to go into the editorial. Well, first of all, I had already said I wanted to go into the editorial department, and I worked on the map, the mapping of the advertising and the editorial, which is handled in the editorial department. And I did a lot of special projects, research and reader interviews and so forth, for Mellquist, when I was sizing up how I was going to handle the transition of Proctor Mellquist to become editor.

I had to figure out what to do with Walter Doty, who was carrying the title of editor but really did not have the final authority. He was something like chairman, whereas Mellquist was managing editor and CEO, calling the shots. But on the outside Walter was still, with his prestige and credibility, recognized as the editor.

Then I became advertising manager. Actually, I was called sales manager, I think, but I was in charge of editorial and advertising and books, and Mel was called production manager or something, and he was in charge of production and

manufacturing and purchasing and so forth. I had the creative departments is what they were. And my father said, "You know, we've got to make a change with Doty," and I became very convinced that Mellquist was certainly qualified to become editor.

I have forgotten the exact year that happened, but rather than fire Doty, or retire him early, I convinced my father that there was a real opportunity for *Sunset* to take advantage of Doty, and hopefully keep him motivated and very productive, as director of editorial research, which was a good title to show on the masthead. And Walter spent some time, and I worked very closely with him, as did Proctor Mellquist, in researching different areas. One of them that I mentioned to you was the so-called Arcadia Study, where we went into the town and just analyzed it upside down and backwards, did some mail interviews, followed it up with personal interviews, talking to the husband and the wife.

Riess: Was this with the intention of doing an article, or to understand the readers?

Lane: No, just to better understand readers. But it led to a lot of articles.

For instance, one of the things, if you go on a street with similar homes, similar incomes, similar occupations, education and so forth, *Sunset* readers were far more innovative in accepting new ideas. They did a lot more entertaining. They played far less bridge. They played far less golf. They were far more into creative ideas of redecorating a room or adding a deck or closing in a carport for a family room. The investment in their home was much higher per capita, per *Sunset* home.

Having that information gave us, I suppose, encouragement to pursue those things more aggressively. On cruise ships, for instance—we found our readers were much more inclined to take cruises. Those were the early days in cruises, when actually a cruise was taking the *Lurline* from San Francisco to Hawaii; it wasn't a cruise in the sense that you think of cruises today.

We used that study very aggressively with advertising. And, as I was saying, it was also a guide to us. We'd come across a good idea, sliding glass doors, for instance, or built-in appliances, ideas started in southern California by individuals, sometimes with an architect or a decorator, and *Sunset* jumped on the ideas very quickly.

Arcadia, for instance, was the first manufacturer of sliding glass doors. An insurance man saw it in a home; a homeowner had gotten a big piece of sheet glass, a commercial piece of glass at that time, and had built a wood frame around it, and

had built some tracks. This was right after the war. Well, this door lent itself, of course, to the ranch home, and Cliff May jumped on it. Arcadia was the biggest supplier of sliding glass doors for years.

Thermador, which was the pioneer in built-in appliances, Thermador was started by a homeowner who just, against the building codes I'm sure, took a regular free-standing oven and stovetop apart, put the stovetop in a tile surrounding, insulated I hope, and put the oven into a wall, and had a cabinet guy build some cabinets around it. And then General Electric and Westinghouse and Amana and other people came along.

But here again, *Sunset* featured these early ideas and built on those suggestions and how they could be used. And the opportunity here to use them was greater. For instance, that almost level surface from the indoors to the outdoors does not have to anticipate a bank of snow up there three feet against that glass wall.

Longtime Advertisers, Southern Pacific and Bank of America

Riess: You sent me a letter in December, and you referred to longtime advertisers such as Southern Pacific, Bank of America, and Crown Zellerbach. I wondered if there was anything to say about the magazine's relationship with those three California institutions.

Lane: Well, they each had their own backgrounds. Southern Pacific, for instance, was a founder of *Sunset* magazine. It also was, prior to airplanes, the alternative to automobile travel, and the Starlight and the Daylight, the night train and the day train, were the principal trains in the major Western corridor.

Riess: Then it's almost like they didn't need to advertise.

Lane: Well, but they still had automobiles, and after the war you began to have air service. And also, they did it for name recognition.

The passenger sales on all railroads was money-losing, labor-intensive. They had to maintain schedules that were rather rigid. The Lark, for instance, stopped in San Francisco and Palo Alto and San Jose, and you had to maintain those schedules.

A freight train can be sidelined and then catch up time, and so on and so forth, as long as it reaches its destination on a rather strict schedule for delivery to the

customers. And of course, it was competing with trucks, which were subsidized in that they were on taxpayer-supported highways, freeways. So you had railroads competing with trucks, and you had railroads competing for passengers with automobile and air.

Something else that we pushed a lot, in that there were a lot of people who didn't travel much, was that traveling by any manner of means—to the Grand Canyon or wherever—was an opportunity to expand the market. We pushed the idea that *Sunset* readers were the ideal, not only the ones who would accept a vacation to Disneyland by taking the train down to southern California or whatever, but they were the ones who would have influence on other people. All these things meshed together. There was nothing—hardly anything, frankly—that was a stand-alone. The man-woman readership, the way that flowed into purchase of certain products.

One of the things that we pushed hard with *Sunset* magazine readers is that they were opinion leaders in their communities. We would take memberships of all the service clubs, membership of the school boards, membership of the town councils, and the major magazine readership, and then we would do surveys on which medium do you have the most confidence in? Which is the most credible? Which do you rely upon the most? Which do you and your wife, or you and your spouse, read most frequently together? Which helps make more decisions?

Well, *The New Yorker*, you read it, but you didn't make any decisions from it. The *National Geographic*—in those days it wasn't reader-oriented for travel, it had Jacques Cousteau going to the bottom of the ocean, or Lowell Thomas going to a Tibetan wedding—fantastic for readers, but until it became more participatory, as *Sunset* was, you didn't make any decisions from it.

So we also pushed the idea that it wasn't only selling that Cadillac, or selling having the experience on the train, it was that those people then became word-of-mouth supporters of your product, and that *Sunset* readers were the opinion leaders and the people of influence in their communities. And that the higher up you went in education, income, and occupation, the more superior that leadership became. And we had mountains of evidence on that.

Riess: Did they always get the same position in the magazine?

Lane: No, we didn't have any position guarantees. Although I remember for the Southern Pacific for years they wanted the left-hand page, and we tried to do it, somewhere in the travel department we would give them the left-hand page. But never was anything guaranteed.

The most famous position guarantee in the history of the magazine industry was the Campbell's Soup position, which was the first full page following main editorial. We had never carried Campbell's Soup, it was never offered during my father's time, but after the war, when *Sunset* became enough of a factor for national food advertisers, I remember going back to Camden, New Jersey. BBD&O had the account, and they had a lot of other accounts for *Sunset*, and we had a lot of leverage to accept Campbell's Soup, but the only way we could get Campbell's Soup for *Sunset* was to guarantee that first full page following main editorial, and I would not do it. [tape interruption]

Crown Zellerbach, and *Sunset*, and Redwoods

Riess: We were discussing three advertisers. Now, Bank of America and Crown Zellerbach.

Lane: Bank of America was *Sunset's* bank for several years. I'm not sure it was the first bank we used, but it was the bank through the Depression years. And one of the great deans of advertising before, during, and for a few years after the war, was a fellow named Lou Townsend. Lou was a public-spirited person, and very supportive of Alpha Delta Sigma, which was an advertising fraternity in which I was very active, and Dad was, and Howard Willoughby.

For colleges where there were advertising courses taught Lou Townsend was a great supporter. And the Bank of America awarded prizes and supported these advertising courses, and then this honorary fraternity, so I became very good friends with Lou Townsend when I was at Stanford, and he was very supportive of *Sunset* as an advertiser, and when I took over San Francisco territory, I had the Bank of America as an account. Lou was the first ad manager that I dealt with, and then a fellow by the name of Charles Stewart had the advertising agency, and I knew him very well. In any event, Bank of America was a very good account. Of course it had this vast branching service.

Crown Zellerbach—again, when I took over the San Francisco advertising list, I had Crown Zellerbach. But well before that, in the Depression, *Sunset* bought its paper from Crown Zellerbach, and for several years could not always pay the bill. Mr. Zellerbach, Isadore Zellerbach, was very fond of Dad, very supportive, and would advance the credit, but eventually, in the middle thirties or so, it got a little heavy. He and Dad agreed on an individual, this James Webb Young, whom I've

mentioned, who was with J. Walter Thompson in Chicago, to come out and evaluate *Sunset* and its potential future.

Mr. Young not only gave it very good marks, he encouraged Mr. Zellerbach that it hopefully would succeed. And to help it succeed, he [Young] would invest in *Sunset*, which he did, and he took control of *Sunset* in stock ownership. But he left my father in charge, and with an agreement that my father could buy back his interest, because his sole interest was really to help my dad stay in business. In 1938 *Sunset* made a profit, and beginning then, and not ending until the early fifties, my dad paid off all the debt to Mr. Young.

While Mr. Young was there he brought in his son to work at *Sunset*. And he had another son, something-Young, who was a trader of Indian goods, weaving, in Arizona. He [James Webb Young] did copy testing in *Sunset* with the different editions—that appealed to Mr. Young very much—the three editorial editions, which also by then carried advertising differently. He would test different copy with his J. Walter Thompson advertising background. That was an area he was very keenly interested in. He did not participate in management; he left all the managing to my dad.

But in any event, that exposure with Crown Zellerbach created a very close relationship, and at that time they had a very large consumer product line. They competed in toilet tissues, toilet paper, a type of Kleenex—and what was their brand name?

Riess: Zee.

Lane: Zee, right, Zee was one.

The advertising account was handled by an old-time advertising agency in San Francisco and it became one of my accounts. We carried a lot of Crown Zellerbach advertising because we were made to order for them. They dominated the Western market. Some of their products outsold Kleenex or Scott Paper or whatever the competition was. They had a hold on the Western market, as Fuller Paint did in its field, and so on and so forth.

Riess: When you took a stand on lumbering issues, was there some consternation with Crown Zellerbach?

Lane: Surely, yes.

When we endorsed the Redwood National Park, the salesman who had the Redwood Association, which was doing a lot of advertising then for redwood in decks and other uses, he said we were going to lose that advertising, and indeed we did. When we endorsed the Redwood National Park we lost Simpson advertising. It was like when we did that article, "Blowing the whistle on DDT," and I said that we'd probably lose Standard Oil's Ortho advertising, which indeed we did. But we got it all back eventually.

It was never any consideration, that threat. Although I noticed in Joe Williamson's comments regarding the [Thomas] Church interviews, he makes the statement in there that "I warned Bill that this might cause trouble in advertising, and he agreed with me," or something. And that's far from the truth.

Riess: Joe Williamson isn't in the Thomas Church oral history.

Lane: I listened to a tape I thought came out of the Church interviews.

Riess: No, and you would not have listened to tapes, but I did sent you transcripts of Doty and Mellquist's interviews.⁵

Lane: I wonder who did that tape with Joe Williamson. We [*Sunset*] did some history on our own with Ken Cooperrider, and Proc, and it could have been one of those tapes.

Riess: I've never met Joe Williamson.

Lane: Oh, Joe's a very capable guy. In fact, I've got to get back to him. He wants me to help him with the *Pacific Horticulture* magazine—he's president of Pacific Hort, that association. A wonderful British fellow does the magazine, just a great guy, George Waters. They want to increase the circulation, and they want me to come in and talk with them about circulation.

⁵Walter Doty and Proctor Mellquist were interviewed in the two-volume oral history, *Thomas D. Church, Landscape Architect*, 1978, Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley.

More on Advertising and Editorial Policy

Riess: Before I leave advertising, a question: is there an upper limit on circulation for *Sunset*, as far as you're concerned, beyond which it makes sense to say no more.

Lane: No, no.

Riess: The demographics of the readers?

Lane: Oh, hell, yes. But there are so many people with the demographics, whether they have the psychographics—in other words, some of these things, adventuresome, willingness to accept new ideas. We never obviously pushed circulation by credit in advance, and we sent only two notices for renewals. We were obviously very conservative on circulation growth technologies—not technologies but capabilities. But I never assumed for a minute, in talking with the circulation people, that they had some limit to what they sought to achieve.

Where I got the pressure was mainly from the advertising department, because a lot of magazines will carry through a circulation increase and not increase their advertising rates, so in effect their cost per thousand goes down to be more competitive. Like *Time* and *Newsweek*, they were always in a pissing match on circulation, or *House and Garden* and *House Beautiful* or whatever. And in the old days, *Life*, *Look*, *Post*, and *Collier's* killed themselves off chasing figures.

Riess: But you wanted your rates to go up.

Lane: I always put the rates up. And we were always so far ahead of the competition in the cost per thousand that they weren't keen on the circulation growing too fast. During the fifties it grew rapidly, as people were building a lot of new homes and so on and so forth, but I never put a stop on the circulation people. I suppose there may have been times where we let things coast for a year or so before we would take the increase the advertisers would pay, because we had a policy of always carrying a significant bonus.

I always liked to keep about a 10 percent bonus in case we had a serious newsstand situation, which we were less vulnerable to because we didn't have that much newsstand circulation. I was with the *Time* people back in New York several months ago. We were up in the *People* cover editorial selection room, and they were debating between Princess Di, who's the all-time cover girl, and something else. Some gal pops up and says, "We're talking about 100,000 copies, you know."

To the credit of the editor, he said, "Well, that's not what's going to determine the best cover." But the staffer was pushing for this Princess Di cover, because she had interviewed a doctor who said Princess Di had bulimia or whatever, the thing that's for throwing up. She was very mindful of the fact that they had this great exclusive story about Princess Di. It was the opposite with us. We just didn't pay any attention to that.

[End Tape 8, Side A]

[Begin Tape 8, Side B] ##

Lane: I want to repeat how hard we worked at *Sunset* to match advertising to editorial. *Sunset* was the magazine of Western living, and editorial was very specific on these subjects. And it was reader-participatory. We developed that idea over a period of years, that when *Sunset* came out people took action, took the trip, baked the cake, built the deck, or whatever. It was not passive, not just entertaining, not just enlightening and inspiring, although it was a little bit of all those things, really.

We strove to have advertising that really matched up, some of it by exclusion—no cigarettes, tobacco and so forth. No women's personal products, because of the value for this man readership, which we've covered. We made a very, very, very concerted effort to get advertising content that would have credibility and relevancy to the reader's lifestyle.

In fact, a lot of the magazine's service was in advertising. And in surveys we did, versus the publishing industry in their own surveys, "Which do you like the best, advertising or editorial?" we came out always highest on liking both. Our readers did not resent advertising, because it was relevant. That was the reason why we always put the travel directory up front. Time Warner thought that looked kind of junky, and they put the travel directory to the back. The responses fell off, the readers complained.

They've just now brought the travel directory back up to the front of the magazine. And Robin Wolaner, the publisher, told me in New York—she was back for that Magazine Publishers dinner—she said, "Bill, you were right again." Some of these things are kind of coming home to roost, and it's been interesting to see it.

Riess: Have they moved the dates back up to the top right hand?

Lane: No, no, they haven't. And I think it's so stupid. I took another photograph the other day of a newsstand section, and every magazine with one or two exceptions had it up at the top, and sure enough, *Sunset* was in a rack, and the magazine below it

covered up the month. But it's some art director who thinks it's kind of tacky and wants to put all the junk down at the bottom, and just isn't looking at reader service.

Art Directors and Advances in Graphic Arts

Riess: Let's go on to that staff area, art direction.

Lane: All through the later part of the Depression Norm Gordon was a great art director, from before the end of the Depression, through the war up into the fifties. He was a great collaborator with Walter Doty. They were very close personal friends. During the war they both lived in the East Bay, as I recall, and I think they did some experimentation in gardening on the top of the apartment building they lived in—I've forgotten all the details of that. They eventually both moved down the peninsula when they were with *Sunset*. In fact, Walter lived in Los Altos when he was still with Foote, Cone & Belding, and had Associated Oil and some other accounts.

Walter is a great experimenter. He had this Associated Oil account, and he bought an Associated Oil station across from Palo Alto High School that's now where the Town and Country shopping center is. I had a Model A Ford, and I remember I used to buy gas there. His son, Bill Doty, worked there as a kid during the Depression. But here Walter wanted to learn more about operating a gas station so he could do a better job in writing advertising copy. That was the kind of a guy he was.

Riess: What did Associated Oil become?

Lane: Associated Oil got bought out by—I want to say Richfield, but I'm not sure, but you'll find it in some of those early issues of *Sunset*, Associated Oil, and that's the way Dad met him. I think Doty also had the American President or Matson account. Matson, I think, maybe—but a couple of accounts, and that's the way he and Dad met. And then they rode together back and forth on the train after we moved to Palo Alto.

Riess: So Norm Gordon was the first art director you remember.

Lane: Then Dick Dawson became art director, and was a very fine art director.

Riess: Was he brought in to make changes?

Lane: No, no. None of them were brought in to make changes. But they all brought changes. Proc Mellquist—Proc loved to be an art director. Walter Doty didn't like it, and he had tremendous confidence in Norm Gordon. but Proc had a big scratch pad on his desk, and he loved to doodle out layouts. He worked closely with Dick Dawson, and later Bill Cheney, who just retired.

Riess: Looking at the magazine over the years, certainly you see changes. What would those changes reflect?

Lane: Well, one of the first things they'd reflect is the advance in the graphic arts. When I first went into the business, color was on a separate press, and four-color advertising with letter press was very, very expensive. We had no four-color editorial. Two-color could be printed on a black and white press with an attachment, but the four-color process printing with Benday screening, meaning all the little dots had to mesh, just millions of little red, green, blue, and whatever, black, dots, was too expensive. Letter press was a limiting factor in those days.

We didn't find any reader resistance to that, to not having the color. It's kind of like the bible and the dictionary: you don't find a lot of color. Or even today in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Color, frankly, doesn't work in postage-stamp sizes as well as black and white, and so you're devoting more space to pictorial. In the early days we really wanted to get more text, more recipes, more how-to-do-it.

So when color came along, and litho-offset, again we were at the head of the pack, working with Time Warner in an experimental press in Los Angeles, Pacific Press, which Time Warner owned and was testing. They were using it for covers on *Fortune*. I learned about it and got the director of production for Time to let us print, and then we got the printing plant to put in a press similar to it for litho, which let us print four-color run of book. We started four-color printing in editorial in 1964.

So an art director coming along at that time was able, obviously, to do more things. There were all kinds of technologies that came along. When computer capability came along it meant that art directors had a vastly larger number of tools—and now even the makeup is done by computer. It's almost like, say you were investigating sales techniques and sales methods, you'd have to factor in the coming of the jet airplane. My dad used to go back East, and I started going back East for four to eight weeks at a time. We had the big flip-over charts, and we were on the road.

When jets came in, you were back every weekend virtually. Faxes and so on and so forth. So technology was a major factor.

But as we grew larger, we could give more art space. We could give more pictures, more spread photographs, more white space, and not have it as jammed-looking. But at the time, during that evolutionary process, readers were never terribly—there was no chafing at the bit, "Why don't you have more color?" or, "Why don't you have more white space?" What they saw is what they got.

If you were to compare those magazines with today's magazines, you'd say, "How could you ever do it?" But when you put it into a practical sense, it's saying, "How could you have lived with that phone when you can have this one?" or, "How could you have lived with that old clunker when you could drive this one?" So the same thing applies in technology, or in capabilities.

Evolution of the Magazine's Audience, and Writing

Riess: Evolution, as you say, not revolution.

Lane: Absolutely. And your audience changed. Where over half of the adults at one time were non-resident, were not born in the West, and so they had this heritage from Middle West or East, or South, but mostly East and Midwest, that's changed, as you have more baby-boomers and so forth who were born in the West. They haven't experienced in their lifetime living with snow all winter and tend to take for granted maybe more of the things that we think about, excluding the earthquakes and fires and mudslides and catastrophe types of things you adapt to. But normal lifestyle, in homes or in accessibility to ski areas, to get up and go skiing over a weekend on freeways, has changed.

Also education has changed. People have become much better educated. We were the first advertising medium to research this. Magazines do most of this audience research, because they know where their audience is, whereas radio and television, it's very hard to do it, and newspapers can't do very much of it. Magazines have always done a better job of identifying their audience to advertisers, and it's more targeted—now a fashionable word, targeting. Magazines have benefited from it, and it's what cable and other electronic media are trying to do more of.

I remember a revolutionary figure we got from our research, and that was that we had 22 percent of all of the science degrees in the United States living in the state

of California, and I think the state had 9 percent of the population. We had Silicon Valley and Ames Laboratory and all of the facilities down south with NASA and all the other companies and employers here in California. Most magazines measured college attendance and college degrees, those who finished college, they weren't measuring graduate degrees. So we started measuring graduate degrees for *Sunset*, and again, we were ahead of the pack. So that's another difference.

And lifestyles. People living together that weren't necessarily married. Not that we were blatantly trying to identify with them, but we recognized they were in our audience.

But evolution is the word I use, instead of that Time Warner revolution, a drastic change in the makeup, which was also coupled with a drastic reduction in staff, which had a lot of word of mouth, which was also coupled with maybe something else, changing the sequence of the editorial departments, taking the most popular read advertising section in the whole damn magazine, the travel directory, and suddenly bumping it out of the accustomed place, and all of those things coming together.

It would be like for you as an individual, you maybe change your mode of dress or your hair, or makeup or whatever, and do it over a period of time, kind of like watching your kid grow up. But if you suddenly come in all different, in a miniskirt and your hair's all floozy and you're wearing a tight sweater, everything—you're talking different—all those things. Holy smokes!

Riess: Everyone gets very uncomfortable.

Lane: Well, and you lose credibility.

Riess: Right. And in fact, that's I think what people are saying about the *New Yorker* now.

Lane: Yes, and their argument would be the same thing that the Time people would use, that they're attracting a different, more gung-ho, more hip audience, and that they're meeting competition.

The fallacy of that, I think, is that some of the people who are making the decisions are not respectful of what they have to learn at *Sunset*, that you don't just whiplash around the heart of the audience that you're serving, you just don't jerk them around. You have to influence them slowly, and recognize that there are a lot of things that maybe shouldn't be changed.

Riess: How about the level of the text? Do you think that's goes up? How do you think your approach to the language has changed?

Lane: Well, we had a style book. For instance Spanish names, which are very prevalent in the West, had to be proper Spanish spelling. In other words, j instead of h. A lot of Anglicized Spanish names use the pronunciation rather than the j for San Jose. If you're going to go that route, then are you going to start spelling San Jose with H-o-z-e or H-o-s-e or something else, and "No, we're not going to do that." Or San Joaquin, or whatever.

I don't know. We kind of followed the path of *National Geographic*, that you just didn't get too erudite in the language that many of your readers would not have been able to accept, and comprehend. For the average the *National Geographic* wants to reach, they still maintain a language level that a well-educated, smart ten-year-old can read.

Riess: I didn't know that.

Lane: We never had quite that demarcation, but I remember Mel Grosvenor, his uncle told me that once, and I've heard it repeated. We tried to keep the language I won't say simple, but uncomplicated, and we stayed away from words that could be interpreted differently.

Our type of writing some people would say is not too creative. We've always tried to make the case, and we would show this at our annual editorial conferences, that an article that started out with some rather pedantic treatment of a subject could end up as an exciting, inviting, appealing story. It could be how to take an apple crate and make a bookshelf out of it, something very mundane, or an exotic trip, a visit to Tahiti or whatever. We would show the language of the first text that came in, the headline and the sub-heads, captions, photographs and so forth, and how it ended up.

Part of that would be the organization of the article, the sequence, and what you included or didn't include, and a lot of it was the semantics. I remember bringing Sam [Samuel I.] Hayakawa down while he was still at San Francisco State to give a lecture to our editors on his then very famous book on semantics. My mother was very much into that. In fact, her father wrote one of the great books on semantics when he was president of the University of Nebraska, before he became president of Drake University. I just came across a copy of that book the other day, by her father, Dr. Bell.

I've always liked words, I love really working with words. Jean is very good at it, and she's a much better speller than I am. [laughs] I can spot a misspelled word a mile away, but I'm not that good a speller. Of course every article in *Sunset* went through a copy editing department for grammar, for understanding, with a person who was not familiar with the subject, that had not had any preconditioning to the article: could they understand it?

In the recipe department, the recipes and the instructions the editor had prepared for print, they went to the kitchens for testing and were tested by people who had no background with the recipe. And the success of the recipes was in part because of that testing.

Defining Control: Walter Doty and the Guidelines

Riess: Before we run out of tape, there are a couple of quotes from the Walter Doty interview that you might just respond to. He said your dad "...was perfectly willing to turn over the editorship, no criticisms, no direction..."

Lane: Absolutely wrong. Absolutely, 100 percent wrong. That implies a discretion that Doty never had, and no editor of *Sunset* ever had under the Lane ownership.

Riess: He goes on to say—and I think what he was trying to do was talk about the pleasure, the joy, the excitement of it all—"In those days, there was a headiness, an extreme sort of feeling, as if we were on a crusade, a social movement."

Lane: Well, I think to that degree he's right. But I would say that crusade began with Dad's looking at *Sunset* as, you know, a nice magazine in the twenties, and seeing what could be done with it. That crusade really came about by taking two top editors from *Better Homes and Gardens*, Lou and Gen, and moving them out here, two single ladies. And they were close friends of the family, and we'd take weekend vacations and drive up into the wine country, drive up to Lake Tahoe, and there was that excitement.

But I wouldn't want to undermine the excitement that came along when Walter came in, and a lot of his wonderful, creative ideas that Mom and Dad were very much in tune with. They were very cohesive. There was tremendous esprit de corps and a team effort there. I would say Walter Doty was inspired to a significant degree by my father and my mother.

My mother was very innovative in cooking, and Genevieve Callahan was one of the great home economics editors in the publishing industry. Upon retiring from *Sunset* [inaudible] It was a firing almost, it was when Mr. Young owned *Sunset* and really pushed Dad to the wall to let the girls go—we called them "the girls"—let the girls go.

Mr. Young brought in an editor, and his son was doing some editorial work. And then [in 1937] Mr. Young brought in Bill Nichols, who was a fish out of water. A nice guy, lived very close to us in Palo Alto, but never could get New York out of his system, and so Dad terminated him. That's when Walter Doty came in [in 1939]. Bill Nichols went on and became a very famous editor of *This Week* magazine, which was a competitor with the *American Weekly*, the Hearst newspaper insert.

But back to Walter, he was a great experimenter, he had test gardens, he did a lot in his own garden, just as Elsa Knoll, our garden editor, had the Stanford garden school and appealed to my mother, who was a great gardener. And Elsa was a part, and Norm Gordon, and the home economics editor, what was her name—wonderful lady, she lived in the East Bay, very well-to-do family, Kay Hilliard's predecessor. I really don't know just what was the point when Dad turned sour on Walter's direction of the editorial department—but not as an individual.

Riess: Your mother was made managing editor in 1944, and she exited from the masthead in '48. Was this a way of keeping Walter Doty in check?

Lane: Very definitely, very definitely, very definitely.

Riess: But he did stay on as editor after your mother left, until 1954.

Lane: That's right. Well, part of it was that my father retired, and so they went down to the Santa Cruz mountains. My mother—nowadays they might separate and see each other weekends, but she was sort of a traditional wife, and she went with Dad. I think if Dad had stayed in San Francisco at the apartment there at the Mark Hopkins where they lived, she might have stayed on at the magazine.

But Dad wanted to be down at his ranch in the Santa Cruz mountains, and Howard Willoughby had been brought in about 1944 or 1945, whatever it was, as the chief operating officer. On many a weekend Walter Doty and Howard would come down, sometimes with their wives, and stay over the weekend at this Quail Hollow Ranch. I remember sitting in on all kinds of meetings.

- Riess: Here's another Doty quote: "Larry Lane was so firm and so clear in his guidelines...that old magazine is going to go on because it is just set to go. There will always be somebody around that will be `the keeper of the flame.'"
- Lane: Yes. And I'll say for Walter, he accepted me. I remember right after I took over the editorial department he challenged me in an editorial meeting, and I remember a number of editors came up afterwards and complimented me—and maybe didn't even agree with me. It was very hard being much younger, coming in, and here was one of the deans, I would say, of magazine editors, greatly respected. But he and I always called a spade a spade.
- Riess: How about Proctor Mellquist? I think his comments might bother you a little, like saying, "[the] Lanes's view of the magazine was a bit more simplistic then than history has since made it. They felt that the magazine was for helping people take advantage of the western climate, western geography, western opportunities ...a handbook to serve these western differences...They were looking for someone about my age and generation because they wanted to make a change... The man I followed, Walter Doty...I learned a great deal from Walter—more from him than anyone else initially."
- Lane: I think that is accepting a level of existing conditions. It was the magazine of Western living, it was for families living in homes, and that became a given to Proc.

[End Tape 8, Side B]

[End of Session]

V BILL LANE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

[Interview 5: February 23, 1994] ##

[Begin Tape 9, Side A]

Young Bill Lane Brings in New Advertisers—The Kodak Account

Riess: In an earlier interview you said you wanted to get the Kodak account and the Pan Am account and one other account when you went to New York in 1950, and you said there was a story to doing that.

Lane: Best Foods was the other.

Riess: Please tell the story of getting those accounts.

Lane: I think each one of them posed a different sales challenge. For a relatively new salesman on the block for the big league, so to speak, on Madison Avenue, each one was a special challenge.

Riess: Kodak had said no to your dad?

Lane: They had said no, although they had been in *Sunset* many years before. But my father thought that I should take that one on because of my interest in cameras, and also that it was a sales challenge.

I'd be the first to want to mention that timing is critical in any situation. I don't care whether it's marriage, or any relationship. Coming along at the time I did, 1950, three or four years after the end of the war, and the beginning of a population explosion, and an awareness of the growth of the Western market—who's to say that, if my father, or the New York rep which we had prior to my going back to help open up that office, had come in with some good sales arguments, perhaps the timing would have been a factor that would have helped the sale. But I would like to think that some of the things I did were effective.

Riess: Yes, what were some of the things you did?

Lane: One of the main challenges to any national advertiser in those days was to establish that the West was different, and that by using national media alone you were not having equal impact, even if you might have distribution there, and most magazines did have good distribution in the West. We made the point that our readers—and it was well near a million in 1951—our readers were prime

customers for many products, and they looked to *Sunset* first. And that was regardless of other media coming into the home—radio, the beginnings of television, other magazines and newspapers.

It was a prime group of people that turned to *Sunset* first and looked to *Sunset* as an authority. And these were mainly reasonably substantial families in terms of job security, credit, because most of them had homes—we obtained most of the names through charge account lists.

That indeed is what advertisers seek, that aura of authority and credibility that positions their advertising message in the environment of people looking for information. In our case rather than entertainment or just to be amused. And that that information in terms of family, homes, travel, food, and garden, in the case of Kodak—different for Pan American or Best Foods—but in case of Kodak led to countless opportunities, and indeed there was a proven activity in photography. And at that time movies were very much a factor, as well as still photography.

Riess: I remember the Kodak ad in *National Geographic*. Did they ask for any special position in *Sunset*?

Lane: No. Again, most of our selling started with the premise that any section of the magazine was a good section. We didn't jump articles; we didn't start out with main features and then jump you to the back of the book. The garden department was probably one of the best read, and that was in the last section of the magazine.

We had a lot of research, a *lot* of research, that showed the flow of readers going maybe first to food or first to gardening, and it would vary from the time of the year. When they were planning vacations, say, in the early spring, they might go to the travel section first. But eventually they got through the whole magazine. So position was not a factor. I think it was pretty well understood that *Sunset* did not guarantee positions, or in any way try to get advertising by making concessions on positioning.

But on the Kodak account I did a number of things, a couple that I remember. One, I came out at Christmas and took a picture down at my parents' ranch at Quail Hollow, where the grass was green, there were roses in December—my mother had roses in the front of the house, espaliered. It was kind of chilly, as I recall, in the Santa Cruz mountains, although it was a bright, sunny day.

We had a large irrigation tank in front where we swam in the summer when it was warmer, not in the winter [laughing], but I got Mel into the pool, freezing his you-

know-what off, I'm sure, standing there, and I got far enough away so I didn't get any goose pimples.

It was just the early advent of Kodacolor, so I used some Kodacolor film. In the pictures I had Dad wearing an aloha shirt and holding a horse, and my mother was wearing kind of a lei. I went back with several pictures of warm, sunny California in the winter, and fortunately when I got up to Rochester there was a hell of a blizzard going on in January.

This fellow—what was his name?—the great dean of Kodak advertising, said, "Well, Bill, how did your vacation go?" I said, "Fine. Here are some pictures I thought you might enjoy." He looked at them, amazed! Most New Yorkers are used to thinking about Florida in the winter, but they're not used to thinking about California.

Another thing I remember, the Kodak company here has a big developing studio over in the Stanford Industrial Park. I took pictures of this big roll, printing roll of Kodacolor prints coming off of the machine. (They're processed a lot differently than they are now in these one-hour processors.) And it was very obvious that Westerners had a different pattern of photography.

Then we backed up our approach with some sales records and kind of established that Westerners did indeed take a lot more pictures in the winter than the average for the U.S. Even more than in the South; they have maybe less wintry weather but in some parts of the South there wasn't anywhere near the activity in photography.

And with Pan American we could show all kinds of passport figures and departure figures and arrival figures. Again, it was pretty well establishing that *Sunset* was a good medium for them. And we had great rapport there. We used the fact that our travel section had many travel agents who were actually advertising in *Sunset*, with their own money, in the travel directory, and the ASTA members here in the West were some of our best friends. There was no other magazine that could touch *Sunset* for both its editorial content and its advertising support.

"Media Mix"—What it Means

Riess: It's hard for me to picture the difficulty getting the accounts, it seems like such a natural. That's the great difference between 1950 when you were coming in and the magazine you made it.

Lane: Well, it is obvious that *Sunset* was a natural, but it's also a more competitive world for the advertising. So the emphasis to some degree still is that the West is different, because the homogenization of media with fax and conference calls and similar hardware, and CNN and instant news from all over the world, tends to, you might say, neutralize some of the peaks and valleys.

For instance, the weather we enjoy, even with rainy weather, is drastically different in terms of outdoor living compared to the East Coast. We walked around with umbrellas in the rain up on Jasper Ridge with some friends from Oregon over the weekend, and for us that was very inclement weather. But it wasn't restrictive in the sense that you just couldn't get out.

You still have to fight the battle, but I think now probably—and it was true when we merged with Time-Warner—you are spending less time really establishing that the West was different, and spending more time on why *Sunset* was better than other types of media that could be focused regionally into the West. There now are regional editions of virtually every national magazine, which didn't exist in the early 1950s. We were really selling the use of magazines regionally, too, unlike a few years later when most of the national magazines had established Western editions.

I think I've mentioned to you that most of them started with the Western edition. Because *Sunset* was established it was a prospect list for them. [laughs]

Riess: Did you lose circulation with that?

Lane: No, I welcomed it. My dad was scared to death of it, particularly when *Better Homes and Gardens*, where he had started, created a Western edition. My exposure in New York helped, I suppose, to make me very much aware that print was competing with television. I argued that in garnering the big money for budgets that television was requiring, even in those days, that we stood more to gain by banding together to sell the values of print.

In selling Crown Zellerbach and their tissue, Chiffon or something, selling them on using magazines with then-regional editions, which would have included *Farm Journal* and *Family Circle*, both of which had Western editions, we took money out of other media, including radio at that time—they weren't doing any television.

Later on when *Life*, *Look*, *Colliers*, and *Post* were killing each other off chasing their circulation figures with "audience figures" on television, we had some of our greatest growth there in the fifties. And it was based to a significant degree on what

the magazine had to offer, but in terms of the competitive media, on lower ratings that most national programs were getting in the West, that television just didn't have the impact, and it cost a great deal more to get it.

So when you combine television and *Sunset*, and maybe a couple of other Western regional editions, you could use the so-called media mix, which I think we coined. I know I used that term very, very early. It's not wise to claim a first in anything [laughs] but I had never been aware of it before. (I was trying to find a copy of the talk that I gave to the Audit Bureau of Circulation in Chicago in '54, or '55—it was about when we got married—where I used that term "media mix." In any event, I can't find it.)

I was always a great believer that selling other magazines' regional editions was only going to help *Sunset*. I believed that if we sold *Sunset*'s leadership role properly we did a better job of serving the West, and that if those magazines were selling the Western market, then that was helping us with our job. We just had to prove that we were doing, could do, a better job. We would stay around the home longer, we'd reach more combined man-woman audience, we would be read more in schools, we would be referred to more as the authority in those fields which we wanted to be an authority in.

We really benefited by having comparisons. To lay down the Western edition of several of the other magazines, and then compare them with what *Sunset* could do for them in in-store merchandising, surveys that we would make of opinion leaders on, "Which magazines do you read in your home?" And then the next question was, "Which magazines do you read most frequently for food information, garden, travel, or food?" "Which do you feel is most helpful in environment?" or whatever the question was. I like comparisons.

Some Secrets of Success in Selling

Riess: When you hit New York, you were how old?

Lane: I would have been thirty-two.

Riess: Thirty-two is young. How were you credible?

Lane: I'd been through the war, and the war was a pretty maturing experience. On my ship I had been managing about fifty or sixty gunners, and I had about thirty in

communications. And that was not unusual for a person in their mid-twenties or so, if you were an ensign. By the time I got my troop ship I was a lieutenant jg, and then a full lieutenant.

Riess: That made a great difference in dealing with people?

Lane: The war matured you much more quickly. It's kind of a good lesson, I think, in being given responsibilities and being accountable, because the military is very demanding on accountability when it's done right, and for the most part, I feel the military does a fantastic job.

I think I told you that in Canberra, of all the departments, Military, or Defense, or Justice—and I had, I think I told you, thirteen agencies, several of them under Justice, the FBI was under Justice, and one or two other agencies under Justice—but of all of them, the State Department was the worst. Agriculture was good. The CIA was very good, although they're in a little trouble right now. [This morning the American double agent Aldrich Ames was apprehended.]

Generally those agency people were well-trained in management. They were patriotic, and they worked as a team with the ambassador. But the military was so far ahead of any of the other departments. Last night we had some folks for dinner, two former ambassadors, one who'd been in Japan and the United Nations, and Mike Armacost, whose last tour was ambassador to Japan for President Bush, and then ambassador in the Philippines. We all agreed that our defense attaches were the most professional and the best trained for managing and being accountable and being responsible and patriotic, and they were just a joy to have on your team.

Riess: And the training, you're saying, is in the doing, it's not because of the war colleges, necessarily.

Lane: No, I think it's being given the responsibility. This may sound egotistical, and I don't mean it that way, but I think I was inclined—I was president of my grammar school student body, president of my high school student body, and probably if I had stayed on at Pomona would have been president of that student body because I was the first freshman elected president of the fraternity in Pomona. But then I transferred and got right into the war and didn't pursue student politics at Stanford. I got a job and managed the *Chapparal*, the Stanford magazine, and I was the first junior ever to be appointed general manager of the magazine.

Riess: So you were always a leader.

Lane: [laughs] Seeking to be a leader, which is kind of my bent, I guess.

Riess: When you went in to sell the magazine at Kodak, would you allude to military experience as a way of establishing credentials?

Lane: No, no. No.

Riess: You're not saying that it's a kind of fraternity handshake?

Lane: No, no, but I think that, among other things, a lot of young people are either not properly dressed or appropriate in their mannerisms, or they are not punctual on appointments. They're not as well groomed—they're not groomed sometimes. I don't mean all young people, but some. They may call elders by their first name before the elder calls them by their first name, and says, "It's all right to call me Bill," or whatever. They kind of presume it. I didn't call anybody by their first name until they indicated that they preferred that I call them by their first name.

I won't say these were tricks, but some things that I would guess probably the military helped formulate in my manner of dealing with people, that were helpful in gaining respect for a young person coming in to a market that was very competitive. And the best media directors and the best account executives in the industry are generally located in New York.

Riess: When you were in New York you knew you would be coming back to the company.

Lane: Oh, yes.

Riess: Did you refer to that ever? Did you say, "I'm going to—you'll see me in charge in five years?"

Lane: No, God, no. [laughs] I would go a long time before they would know I was Lane Publishing, and they didn't connect—many of them didn't know Lane Publishing; they knew *Sunset* magazine, but Bill Lane was no connection. And I never brought it up by referring to my father, nor that I was part of the owning family. I won't say I avoided it, but I just never made it an issue. If it came up, it was all right. "Are you one of the Lanes?" or something, I would say, "Yes," and go on with it. I never made a big deal of it.

Riess: Did you turn New York over to someone that you had trained?

Lane: Well, actually, I was not the manager. I went back to help hire a manager, went back with my father and Mr. Willoughby, and we went back on the train. We had meetings all the way across the country on the type of person we would like to hire.

We hired Clifford Ensinger, who was Midwest manager for *The New Yorker*. It was a wonderful choice, and he was a very fine professional, and I learned a lot from him. My dad and Mr. Willoughby, of course, hired him. I was his first salesman, and then I helped hire a second salesman and a third salesman. I think at that time we decided to keep it to three—the manager also had a list. But for a small magazine on the West Coast, having three full-time people there was a big commitment.

"Read Most" and Starch Ratings

Riess: It was a big commitment, but "small" magazine? By 1956 you had a 336-page issues! [laughs] Did you have to develop new staples to hold these things together?

Lane: We did. And we had a press limitation, that we had to put a notice out that we were likely to sell out of what the press capacity was, which was the binding capacity.

Part of the reason for that was that the printing was done on two presses: a four-color press, and a two-color press, for black and white and two colors. You had to not only staple it, but you had to assemble it on the bindery. And there were only so many pockets on the bindery that we had available, and once we reached the capacity of those pockets, we couldn't go any larger until they put in new bindery equipment, which they couldn't do for, oh, some time. So there were several issues that reached that capacity.

Riess: Has it ever gotten bigger than 340 pages?

Lane: No, I don't think so. But that doesn't necessarily reflect the health of the business, because we gradually increased our cost per thousand, and our cost per thousand was very high because had only one-time rates. There wasn't any frequency volume discount. But we gave very firm figures on our circulation, our ABC circulation. We had no, as I think I've told you, arrears, which means you send copies after the subscription has lapsed. And we had these very high readership figures, fantastically high readership figures.

So when we measured cost per reader—and there was an organization called Starch, which did other magazines, there were three categories—

Riess: Starch?

Lane: [spells] Daniel Starch. They were kind of the Nielsen Rating of the publishing industry at the time. They would take any ad that had run in some other magazines, and with samples—and like with any research, your samples are always variables in terms of accuracy—we were so far ahead of the same advertisement appearing in, say, *The New Yorker* or *National Geographic*, magazines that we considered to be either our peers or our equals.

For the advertising that was in *Sunset* invariably we would increase our level of penetration as you went from the three categories they measured. The way it worked was the first category was "Noted"—that's where I as reader come in and flip through the magazine. The technique is that you cover up the brand name, of course, and the researcher's question would be, "Do you recall seeing this ad?" "Yes, I remember it."

Then the "Scene Associated" category was, "Do you remember the advertising company?" "Yes, I remember it was Weldwood Panelling." So that is "Scene Associated," which is another degree of readership. If you equated it to a personal interview, we'll say, or a lecture, it would be, "Do you remember going to the lecture?" "Yes, I remember going to the lecture." "Do you remember what the lecture was about?" "Yes, I remember it was on the environment, or it was on sex, or whatever."

Then the next question, if you attended the lecture, "Could you refer to some of the subjects that were discussed?" "Yes, I can. I remember discussion on this or that," and so on. That is "Read Most," that category. "Noted," "Scene Associated," and "Read Most," those are the three categories.

The "Read Most" in the Starch readership was questioning what do you get out of this ad? "Well, I wasn't aware that you could install it yourself, or that you could buy it at the local lumber store, and the advertisement has that in it."

We only measured full pages, but we also, of course, had fantastic direct mail response to the small ads, the two-thirds and the columns. For these we were able to convince advertisers that *Sunset* is the QEII. So we had some very fine advertisers using relatively small space. But we only measured the full pages.

Riess: That measurement technique is called Starch?

Lane: Yes. And it was very prevalent. Whether it still is used in the industry or not, I don't know. But in those days it was a very valuable tool for us, because it was not our research, it was the research of an independent organization. It was like C.E. Hooper, who was early in the radio research, audience research, and then of course Nielsen today in television.

But that "Read Most" category, every time you improved the quality of the readership, from "Noted," "Scene Associated," to "Read Most," *Sunset* increased its lead over all of the competition. The point being that if you were selling Philippine Airlines, what do you want? Somebody who says, "Oh, yes, I remember seeing that." Then do you want them to associate your name with it? Well, of course you do. You've written some copy here of all the places you cover, you go all over hell's half-acre, you want people to have spent a little time in the body of that copy. That was a given. But you sometimes had to explain it, particularly to your new, young, macho gurus that came in.

Riess: Macho gurus on which end? On the ad agency end?

Lane: Yes.

What Coupons Do and Don't Show about Readership

Riess: I notice that magazine advertising now seems to be tied a lot into tearing out pieces of card stock and circling numbers and sending them back to request more information, especially airline magazines.

Lane: There's a lot more of that. When it was first coming in, coupons and heavier stock, we had a limit at *Sunset* of only three or four such non-conforming formats—heavier stock, a card pull-out. If you go through those early issues, you'll find very few.

[End Tape 9, Side A]

[Begin Tape 9, Side B] ##

Lane: I was looking at a *Cosmopolitan* at the newsstand the other night—it's always a very healthy book, they've done a great job with it—but you know, it was hard to find the editorial. They had more flip-outs and double-folds and cards, and it was really difficult to read. I still, I guess, have the same feeling, that I don't like to get too many gimmicks in the way of the flow of readership that goes through a magazine.

I find a magazine easier to read when it doesn't have all those interruptions—to me, that are interruptions. But the advertisers are continually trying to get a measure of response, and so they sometimes seem to worship coupons. We did a lot of research to point out that coupon response was not necessarily indicative of a person's actual desire or intent to buy the product, or to take the trip, or whatever it was.

Riess: How would that serve you, to prove that?

Lane: Well, for instance, I had an account called Shoppsmith—I may have told you this—the five-in-one power tool. These other magazines, *Better Homes and Gardens*, got more coupons back. But when I went to a retail store—I think I told you, one of them was Menlo Hardware store, which is down on the corner of El Camino and Santa Cruz—I've forgotten the exact figures, but we'll say he got ten from *Popular Mechanics*, and six from *Better Homes and Gardens*, and three from *Sunset*.

He said he didn't sell any from the ten from *Popular Mechanics*—and I remember two or three of them came from veterans down at the V.A. Hospital where they were encouraged to fill out coupons so that they could get mail, which is a great psychological healing for these mentally retarded veterans! [laughter] Well, *Sunset's* responses would never be 100 percent.

I remember just that one call as an illustration. But we had countless examples where the responses from *Sunset* were not only more productive, but also many people, because they lived in their homes, they knew where their dealers were, they had a trading relationship in their neighborhood and so forth, they didn't always fill out a coupon.

I'll take an example, actually, in New York, Knox Gelatin. Knox Gelatin offered a recipe book for salads or something, and *Sunset* didn't come up quite as well as some other books. I pointed out to them that here is a magazine that publishes more salad recipes than any magazine, and I would take all the June issues of *Better Homes*, *American Homes*, *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, whatever, and *Sunset* would publish countless more recipes. We published a salad book! So that

we did everything to create the environment to buy gelatin—although gelatin was not as popular in the West as it was in the rest of the country for salads. [laughter]

But if you looked at that market and you wanted to get into the market, you wanted to convince dealers that you were reaching the best prospects, then you certainly wanted to reach those who are making the most salads. And in the environment where, if they're going to buy Jell-O, at least they're thinking of preparing salads, and rather than a Caesar salad, somebody says, "Well, wouldn't it be fun to have apricot Jell-O?" which I can't imagine anybody doing, but—! [laughter]

Riess: Well, that's right. I mean, the bottom line is, do you want them buying Jell-O or sending for coupons?

Lane: That's right. And many of the coupons are done to determine a person's degree of interest. We start out with *Sunset* making it a very, very high priority that they have a high interest in cooking, preparing meals, and then doing the things around your home and so forth, so that an advertiser who's addressing that market is getting a predestined interest that they can capitalize on without having to play a lot of tricks, or to rely upon such things as coupons.

Are There Limits to Bigness?

Riess: Right. Back to our chronology. When you came back in 1952 did you and your dad and Mr. Mellquist sit around and plot the next ten years, or twenty years? This was a major turning point. I look at the magazine, and I can see it getting bigger and bigger.

Lane: I started to speak about the bigness. It's not unlike the theater, or a production that goes on the road. You do have what I felt—it's not substantiated, and we probably shouldn't even talk about it, but a 365-page magazine, you do perhaps get a diminution or some mitigation in readership. A person in their busy lives just doesn't have the time to go through that big a magazine, even though it has a month's exposure and a long life afterwards, and we sell indexes and we prove that it's used in libraries and so forth.

What we began to do—as you would perhaps do with a sellout theater, you begin to charge more for the seats—we started to increase our cost per thousand. So our cost per thousand would, say, be ten dollars for a four-color or a twenty [inaudible]

and the twenties were slow [inaudible] at that time, I think, per thousand readers or whatever. *Better Homes* would be half that price.

What we were getting was more revenue with fewer pages, and it was kind of a heady experience. This is a '77 issue [shows issue], and this is about 300 pages, in '77. So this was not quite—well, this was twenty years later than what you're talking about [the 336-page issue in 1956]. And this was a 300-page issue—296 pages plus the four covers, so that's a 300-page issue.

Riess: Were you working down to something you thought was an ideal size?

Lane: I didn't have any magic figure. Size was not a great concern because we knew we had this long readership.

The direct response from the directory sections would actually be higher in some of those bigger issues, because these people live on key sheet returns.

Riess: Key sheet?

Lane: Key sheet, where they keep tab of how many responses they get from these ads. This type of advertising, we carried more than any consumer magazine.

Riess: So would your price for the directory ads go up?

Lane: No, no, we made direct profit on this because we didn't include it in the editorial formula. This advertising ran solid, it didn't have any editorial support—well, see, we popped in a two-column, but generally it was solid advertising, and it still is.

Riess: What I was getting at was your management approach in the fifties.

Lane: Well, it was very driving, and very committed in terms of editorial quality. That's the holy grail. I used to write very extensive critiques of every issue. I've been trying to find them, I probably have some pile someplace.

When I came in under Mellquist I was a junior in his department really, after I came back from New York. I was an assistant makeup editor, on making the book up, so I was beneath most of the editors, but it was pretty well understood that I was probably going to be managing them, I suppose, eventually.

I jumped from that directly into what was sales manager, and the announcement was that my position was to supervise the magazine department, magazine and

book editorial and advertising and so forth. Mel had printing and purchasing, and I've forgotten what else. When I was in New York he was down at Pacific Press working in the press room in southern California, although at not quite identical times.

The *Sunset*-AIA Western Home Awards

Riess: I should get more specific about your relationship to Proctor Mellquist, what he did, what you did. Under him the *Sunset* AIA award program started. The program was first in 1956 with *House and Home*, was it?

Lane: Right, and Perry Prentice, who was the editor of *House and Home*, which was then a Time, Inc., magazine, he was a very close friend of Cliff May. He published homes that were not homes by AIA members, and Cliff, of course, was a leading designer by that time, and largely through the publicity that he had gotten from *Sunset*.

I've forgotten when the first *Sunset* ranch house book came out [*Sunset Western Ranch House*, by *Sunset* editorial staff, with collaboration of Cliff May, 1946; *Western Ranch Houses*, by Cliff May, 1958], but his homes had been published, and he was a good friend of Perry Prentice.

They had had one or two previous joint ventures, one with *Life*, and I've forgotten whether they had another or not, and they were considering *Better Homes and Gardens* to coincide with the annual meeting of the AIA in Los Angeles. Cliff convinced them on that occasion that being in the West, that *Sunset* would be a good partner for them. And I guess one of the reasons I've kind of kept a warm spot in my heart for Time, Inc., is that there was a lot of pressure on some of the Time executives to go with a national magazine, *Better Homes and Gardens*, or *American Homes* or *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*.

There was an editor of *House Beautiful*, Elizabeth Gordon, who was a real dynamo and very competitive and very jealous of *Sunset*, because we had a lot more circulation in the West than she had nationally, and yet it was a very fine magazine. I never felt it was competitive, but she did, and advertisers referred to the fact that she had less circulation nationally than *Sunset* had in the West, and that used to bug her.

But in any event, Time, Inc., defended Prentice's decision to go with *Sunset*, which meant that, excluding the publicity it would get in *House and Home*, which was largely a trade magazine, from a consumer point of view they would for that year limit their visibility, so to speak, pretty much to Western America. That was a decision which obviously worked to our benefit, and I always felt good towards Time, Inc., and particularly Perry Prentice, for selling that to his management, who weren't quite as enthusiastic about it as he was.

In any event, we did it, and it was very successful, and they had more reaction from that joint effort with *Sunset* than they had from either of the one or two previous AIA programs that they had done with *Life*. And as I recall they may have done it with *Better Homes*, I'm not sure.

Riess: And the reaction was measured how?

Lane: Oh, just architects' enthusiasm, and we had more readers writing in—it just caused a lot of commotion. And, of course, it was an exciting time in architecture. Bill [William Wilson] Wurster, and all kinds of great people—Henrik Bull was just coming onto the scene, and two or three great architects in the Northwest, two or three in the South.

Riess: Did you decide then and there to institutionalize this?

Lane: Well, I decided it was a way of establishing tremendous leadership credibility for *Sunset*, and so we went to the western regional chapters of the AIA who fully supported our doing it on a regular basis. We then teamed up with the western AIA, two or three divisions, because we went back to Salt Lake, to Utah, and so on, two or three regional chapters or whatever they're called of the AIA, and they all said they would like very much to do it, and we decided to do it.

We had a couple of meetings at *Sunset*, and I remember I traveled around with Mellquist and we met with them at their membership meetings. They would have monthly meetings in Seattle or Portland or Tucson, wherever it was. We got them whipped up, because we had to get entries, and we wanted their best entries, which meant that, instead of sending them to *Better Homes and Gardens* or *House Beautiful* or whatever, that they would save what they considered to be their most winnable homes for *Sunset*.

We also put down some definite criteria which some of them didn't like too much. One of them was that we would exert an influence on *how* we published them, and that would be based on what we felt was livability. I'm not sure we used that word,

but it meant how we felt this home could be enjoyed by a family, not by some unique architectural features.

Riess: This was the requirement of the jury, that they look for this, is that what you're saying?

Lane: Well, it was to an extent, but these homes were [looking at October 1977 issue]—award of merit, award of merit, citation, citation, award of merit, honor award—these were the judges. Let's see: Henrik Bull, Lawrence Halprin, Pietro Belluschi.

In any event, it was how we featured them. We remained completely in control with that, which meant that if they wanted to have an award-winner get prominence, they couldn't do it just by what they considered to be unique architecture. It had to also incorporate the livability of that home by virtue of how a family would enjoy it. Frequently, for instance, in those days, and it's still true, a lot of homes will have all kinds of glass. So then you get into the family's concern for privacy, or the family's concern for—nowadays you might even say earthquakes. Storage—we had a list of things.

Or put it the other way: the house might have admirable architectural features, but we were going to be very concerned with how the kitchen worked, how the storage facilities worked. We were largely for families, so we had to relate how the room relationship was to the master bedroom, to the children's rooms, whether there was a family room—criteria for, as I say, what today would be called livability. I'm not sure we used that term, but it's how the family would actually use the home, and find it a livable home.

This was really quite revolutionary. We also put in site orientation, and this was where Tommy [Thomas D.] Church was involved, and I think he was on the first jury—we brought in landscape architects from time to time. So site location, not only to the view but to the wind and the afternoon sun, different considerations on how the home was sited, were also weighed into these considerations, as opposed to just the design of the home itself.

Riess: Other magazines, other competitions, those constraints or issues wouldn't come up, so you must have gotten a rather different selection of homes.

Lane: Well, we also said that we would probably give attention, even if only a citation, to relating to environmental issues. Energy even at that time was a factor. This followed the oil embargo in 1975, '76, so energy was very much in everybody's mind.

Riess: Did you send out *Sunset* photographers to photograph the houses for the magazine?

Lane: We usually would go out and re-shoot, but of course, the architects would use their own photographers to show off their home to the best advantage. I mean, like Julius Shulman was a famous interior architectural photographer. Shulman was one of the very best.

Riess: Are you saying that individuals did not submit, that it was through chapters?

Lane: Oh, no, individuals did. But the chapters were, in a sense, our sponsors. We wanted the support of all the Western chapters, which meant their membership executive board approving it, so that we could use the word AIA. "The AIA-*Sunset* Western Home Awards Program." And to use that AIA identification, it had to have the sponsorship of the AIA, obviously. Proc and I went together back to Washington and got their permission that they would go along with the approval of their Western chapters for this program.

Riess: Okay. So, now, the instructions to the jury, who handled that?

Lane: We did. We would meet with them. I was just looking at this recent issue [October 1993]. We always—I say always, but maybe there was an issue where we didn't, that word "always" is a pretty risky word, or "first"—but I think we made a point to have the photographs of the judges in every award program. I'm not sure they did it here.

Riess: There's an awful lot of advertising in between pages of houses [looking at October 1993 issue].

Lane: Yes. [still looking for pictures of the judges]

They [current publishers] say there's no more advertising now than there has ever been, but it's the way they make it up, and the fact that they make the editorial look like advertising, so you sometimes can't tell them apart. [still looking through magazine] Here we are. See, Dan Gregory is the *Sunset* staff jury member.

Riess: Did the awards bring a tremendous boost in ad sales, too?

Lane: Yes. Well, I wouldn't say that individual issues—we did get additional advertising in those issues, but what it did was to establish *Sunset* as a—particularly in the early days, it set us apart. *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, *Better Homes*,

American Home were all very popular, and they were, you might say, much better known to the advertising community, and the building and design field.

Also, we had another limitation, aside from being regional, in that we didn't go heavily into interior decorating, which *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* did. We made the point, though, when we would go into the High Point country in the Carolinas to get advertising, that *Sunset* readers, and we had all kinds of evidence, were buying a lot of carpets, they were buying a lot of bedspreads, they were buying a lot of sheets, and we carried some of that advertising.

But we didn't have some of the feeling of the glamour, you might say, of a lot of interior decorating types of products, so that was a bit of a limitation. *Sunset* was always regarded as—and probably still is to some degree, and it's something that Time was sensitive to when they bought *Sunset*—it looks a little like a scissors and paste-pot operation by some art directors and some of the people in New York.

In fact, it was a very studied layout, for ease of reading. We would put a lot of captions on top of a beautiful photograph because we knew by reader research that readers liked it, and they got more into that article on different types of garden shears or whatever the hell it was because we made those photographs very hard-working, with both captions in and adjacent to the photograph.

But this was kind of a schlocky way to have a beautiful artistic layout, and again, it didn't lend itself to the image of where the AIA program might have found a little more comfortable setting, environment, originally. But after we got it established and it was so popular with the architects, pretty soon we didn't have to urge the architects to save their best homes. They would just get more response from *Sunset*; when they had a home in *Sunset*, they could feel the response.

Henrik Bull, I just recently saw a testimonial letter from him. There had been a little feeling at *Sunset* on whether or not this was a program worth continuing, and so forth. My guess is that they really haven't marketed it right if they're feeling that way. But architects had an immediate response, and manufacturers did, who advertised in the issue. In the building field it lifted the magazine up to another level of acceptance and credibility.

Riess: Dan Gregory, I know his background, and of course, Walter Doty was very much a personal friend of the architects. But did Proctor Mellquist have that point of view? In other words, in the late fifties and sixties did you have strong architectural people in the building department?

Lane: Well, I liked architects, and I was invited to speak to a lot of their conventions and things of that sort, on trends, on family rooms.

Riess: So you represented the magazine to the AIA?

Lane: Well, not solely. Proc did some leadership articles; "The Changing Western House," I've forgotten which issue that was in, but that was very much Proc's baby. He and I worked together on it, but the inspiration for it and the thinking of it was his, and it was a landmark article.

Proc was into it, but he wasn't as palsy-walsy as Walter was with some of the architects. And Proc and Cliff May didn't see eye to eye. Proc didn't publish too many Cliff May houses during his time, until I finally just said we wanted to get some more Cliff May homes into *Sunset*, and he was fine about it. But Proc and I had a wonderful relationship. In fact, his widow was just up at the house the other night, Alice.

I don't know how much older Proc was than I was, but not a lot. Maybe eight or nine years, ten years. But he had obviously done very well at McGraw-Hill, and he'd been in on the early development of *Look* magazine. He started with Botsford, Constantine & Gardner, an advertising agency here in San Francisco. It was a very fine advertising agency. And then he went to work for *Look*, *Science Illustrated*, and *Business Week*.

[End Tape 9, Side B]

[Begin Tape 10, Side A] ##

Riess: In the February 1979 issue the editor analyzed trends in house design over the decades. It is interesting to see that the A-frame house began in 1957. I wondered if, in looking back, you think that *Sunset* really captured the cutting edge.

Lane: [interruption to ask secretary to make a copy of *Peninsula Magazine*, October 1977, for Riess]

We didn't anticipate the A-frame. But it made sense, when you looked at its economy and its accessibility for families, to have a mountain home, and particularly if they could get at that time access to Forest Service permits to erect a vacation/recreation home. It wasn't quite a do-it-yourself, but for any handy person, with another helper, it was virtually a home you could build yourself, and even do some plumbing or electrical maybe.

Riess: And then the next trend was the pavilions. That was so fabulous to me, the idea of these sort of separate houses.

Lane: Yes. And that was really a home that we parlayed into showing the influence of the Orient, the engawa concept, which that was called, of linking these modules. I got so enthusiastic about it that we built a model home up out of Sacramento, on Highway 50, or 80, I've forgotten, called the Discovery House—a very exciting house. We worked with two architects, and Proc.

Riess: Was it in a development?

Lane: It was in a development. El Dorado Hills, I think it was called. And the *Sunset* Discovery House—that would have been a real benchmark. [tape interruption, while Mr. Lane contacts an editor at *Sunset* to get some information on the Discovery House and date]

Riess: Was the design the breakthrough, or was it a breakthrough to build the model home?

Lane: Well, it was the design. I mean, model homes were nothing new. Dad had a model home in the thirties over in Berkeley, worked with the Berkeley Women's Club or something, and they put their ideas into it. [The story is that *Sunset* and 300 women, members of the Berkeley Women's City Club, got together to design a house. And subsequently *Sunset* asked them to get together and do another house, in Park Hills, Berkeley, with architect Clarence Mayhew, and landscape architect H. L. Vaughan. See March 1939 *Sunset*.]

And other magazines were doing model homes. I've forgotten the architect and the landscape architect we worked with on the El Dorado Hills house. But it was exciting, and we did some entertaining up there, and we bussed advertising people up from the Bay Area, and we had a sales meeting up there, and did a lot of entertaining in the house before it was put up for sale.

It was again measured on what I would say was the somewhat revolutionary concept of trying to maintain the usability of the home. For instance, all of the connecting links were covered, they were not open walkways. There were areas in the home that were more functional than architecturally artistic, I guess you would say.

Riess: The next trend was exemplified by one of Don Olsen's houses, a very open plan with white, simple flat surfaces.

Lane: Yes.

There were two other, I would say, innovations that came along. One was the open kitchen, and incorporating the family room—at that time a lot of our readers had young families—creating a counter separating a family room from where the mother could work in the kitchen and see the children. Today it's fairly common, but it was rather revolutionary at a time when kitchens were separate rooms, and family rooms were maybe thought of as libraries—in those days, a family room became a library, and sort of a recreation room where games were played and so forth.

A lot of homes were also built in a U-shape, and/or had carports. Where the setback permitted, we did a lot of pioneering work. Here again you could separate the West from the rest of the country, because that type of architecture, and the carport, were very unique to the West. You could enclose the carport and make it into a family room, or create a master bedroom, and then take the former master bedroom and make it a family room.

We did a lot more on remodeling than magazines which focused on new construction. Early on in the AIA program we tried to focus on entries for remodeling, taking an existing home and improving it, either enlarging it to accommodate a growing family or modifying it in a way that made it a more livable home. Taking carports, and putting a new carport out towards the property, depending upon what your property setback limitations were. And filling in a patio sometimes, where all those things were viable.

Riess: Reminds me of Eichler homes.

Lane: I knew [Joseph] Eichler very well. He started here in Palo Alto. Eichler—some of our editors lived in Eichler homes, and we, I think probably, were the first to publish Eichler, although Eichler himself was a very aggressive, sharp operator. He did get some very fine national attention with his homes.

Riess: He was the developer.

Lane: He had large subdivisions.

Riess: Anshen and Allen designed Greenmeadow in Palo Alto, one of his early ones. I was reading about Levittown in the East. The Eichler homes were in a class beyond that kind of development weren't they?

Lane: Oh, yes, no question. As opposed to Cliff May, which was you might say Spanish traditional, Eichler was modern futuristic. He used the inverted rooflines that gave you height at the perimeter rather than at the center of the home—there were a lot of interesting concepts in that architecture.

Riess: The atrium homes, too.

Lane: And the atrium, the large open space, head space. Quite a contrast with the conventional tract homes of the day, and they set a standard for sort of an exciting new art form of architecture that was noted nationally, and we published some of them.

We were not as much into Eichler, though, as we were into, I would say, the more traditional homes. As you probably are aware, many homes that were entered in the AIA program did not get awards, and one of the rationales I had for its justification, beyond the credibility of that competition, was that having those entries gave us this wonderful collection of homes. We'd have maybe 300 or 400 entries, and you'd give twenty awards. Well, the other 220 or whatever it was, or 140, depending upon the number of entries, were in many cases homes that we were very interested in, even though the judges might not have been. A home could have a great kitchen, or it might have a great children's bunk facility, for instance.

Sunset's difference was that we rarely published complete homes. We published baths, we published hallways—it was only really in the AIA contest every other year that we would, in a sense, feature a whole house. Although our books frequently had whole homes in them, our forte was again based on research that would have lots of kitchen ideas, island kitchens, window box kitchens.

Riess: So you were able to hang on to those entries?

Lane: Oh, yes. Oh, you bet.

Riess: That was the deal?

Lane: Oh, you bet.

Now, I wanted to mention this [*Peninsula* magazine]. This is a picture of Proc and myself, and Bill Cheney, who just retired—I was going through my closet back there, and this article was done after I came back from Japan, 1977. Interesting things come out in an interview like this sometimes. [laughs] [reading] "Bill Lane defended the rules, 'We do require that employees look presentable when they

come to work.'" Maybe that came out of my military training, I don't know.
[laughing]

Riess: But your comment on Eichler, he was a pushy guy?

Lane: I liked him, we got along fine with him, but he rubbed both Doty and Mellquist the wrong way. It was just a mash of personalities, I think.

Riess: Because he wanted things of the magazine?

Lane: Well, yes. For instance, he didn't want a home to be reported in any way but—and he got it from *House Beautiful* and one or two other magazines—he wanted us to treat a home in a way that was not our decision, and was subservient to what he wanted, and we just didn't want to do it.

Riess: How about other top people in architecture? Bill Wurster. Somewhere I read that the magazine didn't publish much of Wurster's work because his homes were more grand.

Lane: No, we didn't.

Riess: Also probably for the reason you're talking about, that you didn't publish homes, you published an aspect of a home.

Lane: That's right. That was another rationale I had for the AIA, and I think Proctor too. We both felt this would, as I say, get us brownie points with the architectural fraternity who sometimes were not too happy with us because we would come in and cherry-pick their homes. We'd pick a kitchen or we'd pick a deck or we'd pick this or that. Their desire was to have their whole home featured.

Frequently the homeowner, who had a beautiful new home, didn't like our way of reporting, particularly when we didn't do as much color, say, as the architect or the homeowner would have liked. They had beautiful carpeting and beautiful drapes and so on and so forth, and we'd do it black and white. [laughs] The reason in part was that we could just put a lot more information in black and white than if we started doing it with color, and that's been proven in the way *Sunset*'s edited today.

If you look at this '77 issue, versus this 1994 issue, there is a lot more information there in '77, and there are more photographs, because you can print smaller black and whites and communicate the way a stairwell works, or whatever, than if you have to deal with color. And a little postage-stamp color photograph just doesn't

look right. I won't say it's superficial, but it has less depth. Maybe that's called for today—I don't know.

Generalizations, Questionnaires, and Visits to Readers

Riess: People are a little less deep today? [laughs]

Lane: I don't know if they are or not. These statements that equalize people, I guess it just doesn't ring true to me, because people are not equal. For instance, "People don't read as much today." Well, a lot of people read a lot more. There are a lot more young people reading today because, in part, you just don't work on computers without reading.

These flat-out statements about concepts that aren't based on some data—I won't say scientific research, but some research—and then equating it to your individual effort, that kind of transition from, you might say, the big picture to the small picture, that what is true here is also true here, I just don't buy it. It always kind of riles me, gets my dander up.

Riess: All right!

Lane: No, no, I didn't mean with you, dear, I didn't mean with you. But with salesmen or with advertisers who might say, "People don't like this, or that." Well, what's the basis? We find that they do. Or whatever. Our people, they do like it. Or at least a significant number of them do.

Riess: Speaking of the people whose houses win, or get into the magazine, it is remarkable to me that they allow their names into the articles.

Lane: Less so today, I think people aren't quite as keen. And we rarely published a street address or exact locality. Today we have people—and this was true in the seventies or eighties—that do not want even their neighborhood. They might go for "Los Angeles" or something, but to put "Brentwood" or "Santa Monica" or something in, no. And definitely not their names. People are a little more hesitant about that sort of thing nowadays.

Riess: How about being photographed in their homes?

Lane: Well, we didn't photograph many owners in homes. We did sometimes in articles on entertaining.

Riess: But you would have people.

Lane: We would have people, yes. And particularly I always wanted people on the covers. I didn't like static scenes, I wanted people involved in covers. [showing magazine] So over here we have this kid and a dog, and two or three people here, and a couple of people there.

Riess: Martin Litton says that when he would go on a research trip for an article in the magazine he'd take his family, because he needed a family as models of people in the place, enjoying the place.

Lane: Oh, right. A lot of employees are used as models.

I think one thing that should cut through all of this is that while there is a lot of intuition and a lot of just strong gut feeling, probably *Sunset*, more than any magazine, based its decisions on very careful and hopefully minimally biased research, where we weren't committed that we wanted the research to prove a preconceived idea. We conducted research on our market, we did our western market "almanac," we conducted research on our readers. [tape interruption]

Here we are. This was just at the time we had made the decision to sell to Time Warner. I wanted this article in there [March 1990 issue] based on that reader research that I mentioned I did when I came back from Australia, and it went for three full pages. It referred to several studies asking the same questions over a period of time, and how constant those responses were.

Here, you take that [gives the magazine to Riess].

But it's symbolic of extensive research that we always did. I loved doing that, because it just was so important that our feet were on solid ground as much as possible, and many of the commitments that we were making to our editorial direction, or editorial emphasis.

For instance, gardening had very little advertising support—*Better Homes and Gardens* and *American Home* gave gardening up, and *House and Garden* just folded, because they were—with those titles, *Better Homes and Gardens*, there was very little advertising support. So to justify the amount of gardening, the number of

times you featured it on covers, you had to establish that your readers were very, very interested in gardening.

People would say, "What does gardening have to do with my product?" and I'd come right back and say to them—and I had conducted a lot of advertising classes and lectured in advertising clubs and whatever—"What does Bosnia have to do with my taking a trip to Hawaii?" Or what does this great hero worship of this guy that died from the *Chronicle* have to do with what kind of a roof I put on my house?

We'd say, "We capture the reader in part with his interest in gardening, and that person happens to own a home." Or, "He has a garden, so he's obviously different than somebody who's living in a one-room apartment, he probably has some income." And we equate people with gardens with people who have two cars and who do travel.

You parlay that gardening interest so that it's something other than just a person who's interested in gardening. Gardening is certainly as attractive a method of garnering readership as the CIA agent that snitched on his country to the Russians [referring to Aldrich Ames]. That's where that kind of research would come to bear. And you'd come right down to sometimes asking questions like, "Of all the information you receive from magazines, which do you look forward to, or which do you feel is most influential in your lifestyle?" And if you put news in the survey—well, news would come way down at the bottom. Information on food or the environment or gardening would appear right up at the top.

A lot of that research was done with our readers, so to some degree it was pre-selective of the general population, but on the other hand we weren't selling anybody other than our readers, either.

Lifestyles, and *Sunset's* Market

Riess: And you kept doing the research because you had to assume that your readers keep changing.

Lane: Oh, very definitely, and we make a point of that. We conducted surveys on all non-renewals about every three or four months, and I remember once pulling out—and I'd go through these and flip out—I remember one, there were four people who had lost their eyesight. Well, what good is it if we keep trying to pump the magazine

into their home? Lots of times it was, "My husband died and I'm moving in with my daughter, and we gave her a subscription on her wedding which she still gets, so I'll read her copy." And the other side of the coin is, you obviously want to attract new homeowners, or new family formations, and so you can't have it both ways.

Riess: That brings up a quote from Roger Montgomery in *Bay Area Houses* [Oxford University Press, 1976]. He says, "By the end of the sixties...the single detached house seemed a dodo." [p. 252] He was writing about condominiums, the high density ethic and so on. I think one accusation is that *Sunset* maybe was a little late in realizing that lifestyles were changing.

Lane: First of all, a lot of editors who write that are caught up in their own lifestyles. The reason a lot of television shows are so fluky is that the people who are doing those shows are fluky. The divorce rates, the alcoholism, the voyeurism, all the lifestyles that their audiences may be generally more accustomed to, is a far cry. And the same way with a lot of people who write advertising in advertising agencies. [laughs] The fact is, during that period in the sixties there were more single homes per capita going up than ever before in history.

Now, we were not looking for that audience. First of all, those people who were going into those condos or whatever didn't have as many cars per family; many of them were not conventional families, so there was no binding relationship, commitment to them, for insurance, for bank accounts, for making significant expenditures on cruise ships. We weren't looking for that audience.

And there were thousands of new homes going up. Our market was expanding, and still is expanding. The publisher of *Sunset*, Robin Wolaner, lives in an apartment in San Francisco. I said, "Robin, you give me two hours, and I'll take you up in my airplane and I'll fly you over some sections outside of Sacramento where there are probably at least 900 to 1,000 new homes being built right this day. I just flew over them last week."

And so what? "You like to live in an apartment," I said to her, "but that's not our market." That's not our market, we can't serve that. We get a lot of readership, a lot of people who live in these condos or multiple homes. They read *Sunset* for travel, or they may like to cook, they may have a garden patio. We flow into that market, we slop over into it—but I never like to use the word slop [laughs]—we overflow into it.

But the big reservoir that we must constantly strive to fill is the homeowner who has made the commitment, has the financial credibility to finance a home, and who has that as a collateral asset, and who is by every measure the best market for most of the products that we want to find in the advertising pages of the magazine. And who needs the most help.

If they live in a condo, they really—they couldn't remodel even if they wanted to. There's no way they can knock out a wall, put in a patio, put in a skylight, if they live in a common dwelling.

It doesn't mean that that market doesn't exist. *Better Homes and Gardens* got caught up with it and started a magazine on apartment living. And who knows, maybe somebody else could have succeeded with it. Then they called it *Metropolitan Living*, and I don't know whether they're even publishing it now. But those people just don't have a lifestyle that requires a special service for how to get more enjoyment out of your apartment. [laughter]

There's a lot of need for how to get more enjoyment out of your home, but the reason a lot of people go into apartments is for the simplification of a turnkey operation. They love their apartment—I loved living in an apartment in New York City, and I've got lots of friends who live in apartments—but it would be like trying to advertise *Western Horseman* to somebody who didn't like horses, or didn't go into horses. Or a flying magazine.

A family home service magazine is for families by and large living in homes. No prohibition that says we can't be read by somebody who lives in a condo, and we are. You go into the better multiple-housing developments and you'll find a lot of *Sunset* readers. They may buy more on the newsstands by issues that they want. They probably have more *Sunset* books. Many times they'll have a barbecue book because they barbecue on their patio, or a Hawaii book. They're more selective, and they don't want a continuous subscription.

Riess: I will say about *Sunset* that it's one of the few magazines that lives up to its cover. In many magazines you can never even find the article that the cover is depicting.

Lane: That frequently is just a come-on for a newsstand purchase. We wanted to keep that 10 percent or so for newcomers and new family formations, and just for the advertising visibility. But we never were as dependent upon newsstands as most magazines were.

Government Service: Background, Oceans and Atmosphere

Riess: Now let's take a big change of direction, and get into your government service. First, a little background. Was this a Lane family tradition, government service? In fact was your father a friend of Herbert Hoover's?

[End Tape 10, Side A]

[Begin Tape 10, Side B] ##

Lane: In that first issue in February of '29 there was a feature editorial with a picture of President Hoover on family and home. That was based on quotes from his campaign talks during the '28 election. March 10th was still the inauguration date then, and incidentally, that was the last year that it was on March 10th, before it went to January 20th.

Riess: Did your father have government advisory or consultant positions, like you did?

Lane: During World War II he was on the War Production Board, and he was on the small business commission. But he didn't lean toward it quite the way I had. In school I had enjoyed running for election, and politics. I didn't carry that on as far as public office because I enjoyed *Sunset* too much. So except for being elected mayor out there in Portola Valley, I really like these appointed positions.

Riess: Well you have a tremendous list of them, and we have to assume that they're not all equally important.

Lane: Oh, God, yes. Some of them are definitely not.

There was a backdrop for any government appointment I ever accepted, and that was how it would reinforce and make me a better publisher of *Sunset* magazine. We were all "how-to-do-it," and my feeling was that we ought to have maybe one page, which we had in the earlier issues; Gen and Lou had "*Sunset* Gold," two or three columns that were not how-to-do-it, or reader-participatory, but were observations, opinions, interesting things. And then that lapsed for some years, but it wasn't for any decree from Dad, it was just that the editors didn't do it.

Riess: When you were publisher you took the last page? What was it called, "Window on the West?"

Lane: The last page, because—well, first of all, it was a guaranteed position, and secondly, see, we didn't charge more for that third cover, but it was a kind of a

difficult cover to position an advertiser in, because they felt if it was a bunch of directory advertising, it wasn't a very good place.

Riess: By third cover you mean the inside of the back cover?

Lane: You see, the first and the second off the front cover, and then this is third cover, and the back is the fourth, the back cover. The second cover was always easy to sell, and that also didn't have a premium. Only the back cover had a premium. The second cover, people just sort of felt—well, first of all, we always put a table of contents opposite, so that it had always very good readership.

But the back cover was a little more difficult to sell. So I thought by putting in a hopefully popular feature opposite, that it would be a good position. Also, it was a position that readers could turn to and know where it was; they didn't have to fumble through the magazine.

Riess: And you use it for your editorial statement each month.

Lane: Well, yes, or Proc, or another editor. But I always reviewed it, and frequently would suggest it, and that's a case in point.

To go back to my observation about taking appointments, it was a small company, and I just didn't feel comfortable in going to Washington or Sacramento or anyplace if it didn't reinforce what I felt could make me do a better job at *Sunset*. That's a case in point, that editorial [in October 1977]. When I was on the President's National Advisory Committee on Ocean and Atmosphere, many things came out of that appointment in the Department of Commerce in the early seventies. That was in the early Nixon administration.

One of the presentations we had was from a tree ring research facility on weather. The tree ring research people in Flagstaff, Arizona, I think it was, gave this presentation to us in Washington, to the Department of Commerce where we met. They pointed out that tree ring research, which went clear back for hundreds of years, and this was in a period when we were having some shortage of rain, showed that there were many droughts that went for ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty years. The tree ring research went even back to the petrified forests of the period when the Southwest was much more vegetated than it has been in the last thousands of years.

So I sent an editor, Ken Cooperrider, who was our executive editor, sent him down to visit this tree ring research facility, which I learned about when I was in that

government appointment. We did a lot of editorial based on the fact that we just had to get more smart in the way we used our water. This article [October 1977] came out of my getting that information about this research when I was in that government agency.

National Parks—Centennial Commission, 1970

Riess: The National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere, I wonder why that was under the Department of Commerce?

Lane: Well, it's like the Coast Guard is in the Treasury Department. I don't know how NAOA got started in Commerce, but the Coast Guard got started in Treasury because of the taxes on liquor. Illegal liquor coming into the country that was not taxed, the Treasury Department had a concern to stop it. So the Coast Guard was originally not to protect shipping, but to stop illegal transportation of liquor.

Riess: Perhaps it has to do with fishing or something like that.

Lane: That could very well have been. Because they do a lot with fishing.

A lot of the work that we did for the national parks came because I could get to the national parks director, I could get to a superintendent. Right now I just had the director of the Golden Gate Recreational Area, Brian O'Neill, call me. He wanted me to get some information for him. *Sunset* is still benefiting from those contacts. The work that I did in the Pacific, *Sunset* looks to the Pacific, and our contacts with PATA [Pacific Area Travel Association] and the government officials in tourism, and a lot of advertising.

For every one of those jobs—I won't take the time now, but if you were to ask me, and you had the time, or I had the time, I could give you some aspect of what I know went through my mind before I said yes to every one of those jobs.

Riess: Let's just try a few. The first one that you've listed here is the Travel Advisory Board for the National Park Service.

Lane: Well, that's obvious, that anything I could do to reinforce the idea of travel would be good.

Riess: They came to you?

Lane: There's always a personnel director out of the White House. I've forgotten.

There was another job that was offered, I think it was a permanent appointment, in the Johnson administration, because I had served with the United States Travel Service in the Johnson administration, under Secretary [Luther H.] Hodges who was then Secretary of Commerce. Stuart Udall was Secretary of the Interior, and so I reported to him on that.

But obviously, we had a tremendous involvement with national parks here in the West. It is a uniqueness of the West. Whenever you talk about the West—among the differences are the national parks. Virtually, except for Shenandoah and a few of the big parks in the East, some 80 percent of all the acreage of national parks is in the Western part of the United States. And if you take the National Forest Service, under the Department of Agriculture, nearly 96 percent, or something like that, of all of the national parks and national forests that are open to the public are in Western America. So that right off the bat establishes the importance.

And then just look at the topography of the West. You're some little pipsqueak, just got out of Harvard, back in New York, you say what the hell, you don't have your history right if you think that people live the same out there, with all that accessibility to open space, skiing, deserts, a benign climate. You take the latitude of Seattle and go across there, you're freezing your balls off, whereas up here you could be out boating. I just love to get those kind of people and show them.
[laughter]

Riess: If you were going to take on a job like this, did you get yourself to be chairman?

Lane: Usually I did, yes, or I could. I declined a lot of chairmanships; I just declined one this morning for an advisory committee for Yosemite that the new concessionaires appointed. Dave Brower will be on it, and it's going to be kind of a fun committee. They wanted to know if I would consider being chairman, and I said no. First of all, chairmen have to set agendas, they have to set meeting dates, and they have to attend meetings. As a member I don't. I just don't want to get that committed.

But most of the things on that list you are looking at—I like chairing meetings, I like organizing, setting goals and objectives, I like the process of getting people to work together, finding different people to do different assignments. And I just like the organization of the structure of committees and groups working together.

I guess one of the reasons I liked the ambassadorships is that you've got such a challenge with these diverse groups that all have their hierarchies going right into

the Capitol, or right into the Congress—funding, personnel promotions, different policies. Getting that bag of worms to work together in an embassy, I just found a great challenge.

Riess: But if you were offered another one?

Lane: Oh, not now. I don't—no. I am honorary chairman, and it's a working chairmanship, actually, for a fantastic conference on national parks coming up in San Francisco in May, for the National Park and Conservation Association. Citizens committee, or something. We got the director of the National Park Service and Secretary of Interior and a lot of key people, and it's going to be built around the Presidio, and I'm chairman of that committee. But I'm not taking on many chairmanships these days.

Riess: The theme on the first bunch of your government activities is tourist and travel. Then under Nixon, you were chairman of the President's National Park Centennial Commission.

Lane: Now, that was a big job. I moved to Washington for that. I got appointed late—'72 was the centennial of Yellowstone, which was the first national park. I don't think the appointments were made until 1970. Also, we had to get matching money for the congressional fund. I had one of the Mellons on my committee, and I had four senators, two Democrats, two Republicans, and four congressmen.

Riess: It was *your* task to organize the celebration?

Lane: Oh, you bet. We had a number of celebrations. We had a big environmental conference in Yosemite; we had an international conference in Yellowstone; we produced medallions, we did all kinds of things. We had a presidential conference for national park leaders in Washington.

Riess: Was this a turning point in thinking about parks?

Lane: National parks? Oh, yes.

Riess: In what way?

Lane: Well, a lot of things had happened in 1969. You'd had the Environmental Quality Council, you'd had EPA, you'd had Earth Day—a lot of things turned the corner in 1969 for the environment.

The national parks are our most dominant environmental leadership role that the United States has ever taken, probably even until today, because in setting aside a national park in 1872, no other country ever approached that. Granted, a lot of smaller countries just didn't have that much land to play around with that we had in Western America after the Civil War. Powell ran the Colorado, and you had lots of things happening in the West. The Gold Rush had taken place, of course, and the transcontinental railroad, the Great Northern was going through the Northwest.

Yellowstone became a national park in 1872 because there was a hell of a lot of land that belonged to the government. It was easy to create a big national park, as it was later for the second one, which was Sequoia, and then Yosemite in 1890.

But we had seminars where we brought all kinds of park officials in from county parks, city parks. It was a massive program. And it lasted for the full year of 1972.

Riess: Was Walter Hickel Secretary of the Interior then?

Lane: No, Rogers Morton was. Hickel was out by then. That was a time when I could have probably gotten involved. Hickel asked me to be his undersecretary when Russell Train went over to be chairman of the Environmental Quality Council. Hickel—in fact, I just had a letter from Wally Hickel, who's now governor again of Alaska—Hickel asked me to come over, and he and I went to see Nixon on coming in to replace Train as undersecretary.

It was more of a commitment than I wanted. I didn't want to be away that much. We were starting—we had our children, I guess all of our children by then would have been born. In any event, I didn't take it. But I did talk to the President a lot about national parks, and so he asked me to be chairman of this presidential commission [National Parks Centennial Commission].

Actually, we had—one of our children got sick, and there were some things happening at *Sunset*, and I resigned that after we got the show on the road. I resigned that chairmanship in about the middle of 1972, as I recall. But we had to make a report to Congress I think within a year after the completion of the centennial, account for all the funding and the report and what had been accomplished and so forth.

Riess: A very important appointment is the Secretary of the Interior's Advisory Board and Council on National Parks which you were on under Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan. And we will talk about Yosemite, all the detail, gory and whatever. But I want to check off the others, and then maybe we could get that to next time.

Under Reagan, in California, you were chairman of the People and Water Panel of the Governor's conference on "California's Changing Environment."

Lane: Right.

Riess: Again that was 1969. Were environmental issues coming up? Population? Were hard questions being asked?

Lane: Well, at that time there were, yes. You had Dave Brower, the Sierra Club, and people were becoming more concerned. I've forgotten when our decision was to not accept hydrocarbons, you know, that article on "Blowing the Whistle on DDT"—that was '69, that was right in there. [August 1969] There was just, I think, a general awareness.

I had been very much on that bandwagon for a long time before that, and we'd been doing some things at *Sunset* that I felt were at least approaching the subject, and water was one that I have always been interested in. So when the governor asked me to take on that chairmanship I did.

Foreign Trade Commissions, Pacific Area

Riess: Now, under Reagan and under Governor Jerry Brown you were chairman of the Foreign Trade Subcommittee, California Governor's Commission for Economic Development.

Lane: I resigned under Brown. He reappointed me when he came in, but I didn't—I had met him when he was much younger, when I was around his family, when I was working with Pat Brown in the late sixties when Pat Brown was governor

Riess: You had a lot of contact with the governor when you were on those committees?

Lane: Yes, a lot. In fact, I wouldn't take the job on unless I had a commitment that I had access to the governor.

I've had government responsibilities that were not directly the result of a president's or a governor's appointment, but whenever there was a presidential appointment or a gubernatorial appointment I always required a personal meeting with the governor or the President, and an understanding that they would give it their support.

I'll say to Nixon's credit, because he had a lot going on at that time, and if you look back at some of the dates—well, Watergate was 1973. I don't know exactly what was going on in March of 1972—I think it was March first which was the anniversary of Yellowstone—but we had a big meeting in Yellowstone and he was to come, and at the last minute, I don't know what might have kept him in Washington, but he sent Mrs. Nixon. And she did a hell of a good job. But as I say, it was partly the understanding that I had with him that he would definitely give us support.

Riess: What did Pat Nixon do?

Lane: She made a very fine talk. She had spent a lot of time in parks as a young girl, and she just did a very presentable job.

It was an international conference, the Yellowstone conference was the main conference of all the whole year, and we had representatives from most of the hundred or so countries that belonged to the National Park Society—I think that is what it's called, it's headquartered in Paris—of countries who more or less emulate the United States' standard of national parks. We had representatives from virtually all of those countries. Big meeting. Pat Nixon gave a terrific talk, very good talk, a lot of personal feeling to it.

Riess: This Foreign Trade Subcommittee, the California commission, was this in any way a beginning of your internationalism?

Lane: No, I wouldn't say the beginning. But I wouldn't have gotten the appointment unless I had some qualifications for it. I had been, through *Sunset*, working with the trade committee for the Chamber of Commerce in San Francisco—I doubt if I even put it down on that list—and a lot of our trade was with the Pacific. That appointment came about because of some credentials, but on the other hand, that appointment unto itself was, I would say, probably a big stepping stone in my becoming more informed, among other things, more involved. And again, I would always bring it back to what it would do to help me with *Sunset*.

Riess: Economic development meant getting other countries to invest?

Lane: Invest, yes. [tape interruption]

Riess: To get down to cases, were you able to bring in investors?

Lane: Well, we had a lot of trade meetings with Japanese, with Taiwanese.

Riess: Here, or did you go over there?

Lane: Well, I was involved with Japan-California Association I think at the same time, and I was very close to the Republic of China. I went on the—I remember I was on a charter flight for China Airlines to Taipei when I was on that committee.

I couldn't trace all the business, but over the years California has developed a very strong position with companies who have their headquarters here, Japanese manufacturing automobiles in Fremont. It's hard to say where the seed began to sprout, and how long it lay dormant, and who fertilized it ten years later, and so on and so forth.

Riess: But twenty-five years back, that's a pretty significant time, like the beginning of Silicon Valley, almost?

Lane: Well, it certainly had some of its greatest growth come during that period of time.

It was a period when a lot of things were happening, and for a relatively young person, and a person really not in that industry but being from a communication base, it wasn't too common that someone would come out of publishing to be chairman of a foreign trade committee, or something.

And again, I don't mean it to be tooting my own horn, but I just had always wanted to broaden our base at *Sunset*, and it also I guess followed my own interest in foreign affairs and foreign trade and environment, and these things kind of all flowed together, and *Sunset* was a fantastic catalyst to keep—kind of kept it all glued together.

Riess: It sounds like *you* kept it glued together.

Lane: Well, it was the chicken or the egg—it's hard to say. *Sunset* preceded me by a long ways.

Riess: How much time would an appointment like that take?

Lane: It would take a lot of time, but as my driver will tell you now—I didn't have a driver then—or Jean could tell you, I would come home and write reports, or I was on the phone all the time. Any new way of communicating, I was onto it.

And I would stay very close to my business. I would meet with editors on a Saturday morning; if I had been gone during the week, we'd meet on a Saturday or

a Sunday morning. I remember many a meeting with Proc to go over the next issue, sitting out on the patio up there at the house. Or with Martin Litton.

[laughing] Did I tell you that once when we were talking about some story he was thinking about, and we were in my little apartment—that's when I was single—down in Menlo Park, all of a sudden he looked up and said, "There goes the 3:10," or something. He was a great railroad buff and he recognized this steam engine that was about a quarter of a mile away going down the tracks.

Riess: It says here that you were elected chairman of the Foreign Government Committee, Expo '75, by forty-five participating nations, Ford administration?

Lane: When I was Ambassador-at-large and Commissioner General World's First International Ocean Exposition over in Japan at that international exposition, there were forty-five countries that were represented with their pavilions. Most of them were major trading countries—Iran, Iraq. In fact, we were just reminiscing last night about the Iranian ambassador who was there.

Riess: Mike Armacost was there then, too?

Lane: Armacost was at dinner last night, and he had known this ambassador. I don't know how we got onto talking about it.

The congress of exhibitors had to deal with the host government on all kinds of problems—utilities, housing, and air conditioning very definitely on Okinawa. And then you had to coordinate on the visiting dignitaries, and just a mess of problems. Rather than each commissioner general dealing with the host government, the congress selects a chairman who then appoints a committee of the members of the congress who are commissioner generals.

I was elected the chairman of that congress, as they call it, of the forty-four-some countries, many of whom were ambassadors, some were not ambassadors, but they had the title of commissioner general.

My counterpart was a wonderful Japanese, and we became very good friends, Ambassador Hiro Takasi. He was a very—had just been ambassador to Spain, I think, when he was assigned to be the leading Japanese representative for MITI, Ministry of Trade and Industry.

[End Tape 10, Side B]

VI LEADERSHIP ON NATIONAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION

[Interview 6: April 26, 1994] ##
[Begin Tape 11, Side A]

National Parks Centennial Commission

Lane: [talking about managing files] I'm oftentimes amazed at Karen [Karen Hamilton, Lane's secretary]. I'm opening this conference ["Citizens Protecting America's Parks: Joining Forces for the Future"] on national parks for the National Parks and Conservation Association 75th Anniversary Conference coming up on May 18 and she was able to find a statement that I had written back in 1971 that I was interested in.

What brought it to mind was Nixon appointing me chairman of that National Park Centennial Commission. It was rather late in the planning because there had been some politics with the four members of the Senate and the four members of the House—Tom Foley was on from the House, a Democrat, and there was another Democrat, and two Republicans, and I've forgotten who they were—on where the chairmanship should go: should it go to one of them, or should it go to the private sector?

Senator [Clifford P.] Hansen, who was a Republican, and Senator [Alan] Bible, both of whom I knew, who were on the commission, told me later that they had had an agreement between the two of them. In any event, they finally decided, "We'll take the chairman from the private sector." Hansen and Bible knew I had the background in national parks, and Nixon knew me, and Haldeman and Ehrlichman and those people knew me. So they finally agreed on me.

But it was late in the game, late '71 or so, and we had to raise money to get the money appropriated by Congress, because the centennial of Yellowstone was in '72. Richard P. Mellon was on the committee, and he gave a gift, and I gave a gift, and we finally raised I've forgotten how much it was, to qualify for the congressional appropriation to then begin to spend some money on medallions and stamps and all kinds of stuff, and programs for the centennial.

Riess: The money raised by the two of you, did others come in so that you didn't have to absorb all of that?

Lane: Oh, yes, we got wide support. We got wide support. But we gave it the kick-off. I had a theory that Wally Sterling of Stanford gave me early on in fundraising that

you should have a third [of your goal] before you really start to go out and promote it. That should come as much as possible from a board of directors or board of trustees to reflect their commitment. And if you don't get that amount from that core group, then you go elsewhere to get up to about a third before you really start your campaign. That's about what we've done with the Stanford Mansion in Sacramento, of getting about a third. Now we're starting to go out and raise money.

But that whole episode was a big event in my life and is rather historic in some ways, and certainly I think would be interesting.

Riess: In fact, that happened in the middle of your years on the Advisory Board and Council on National Parks. The Centennial Commission was '72, you say?

Lane: There's a book on that whole episode.

Jean had a couple of miscarriages and so forth, and I think there were some pressures so that I didn't want to be too far away from at *Sunset*. So I resigned after we had gotten all the money, and after the whole program had gotten in place and been approved by Secretary [Rogers C. B.] Morton. I resigned, and a fellow by the name of [Edmund B.] Thornton came on as chairman of the Centennial Commission. I was not chairman at the closing of it.

Riess: We'll get back to that. You started talking about filing, saying you're frustrated because here are these issues coming up and you don't have a way of easily putting your hands on the answers, or on the history. And you're thinking that if someone were to really write a biography, that they'd start digging in files.

Lane: Oh, I think you're digging it out as well as anybody. But I'm not giving you some of the dates, some of the accurate names and so on.

Riess: That can be filled in. I am interested in who appointed you, those connections. The question of whether the chairman should be from the private or the public sector was very important.

Lane: I was appointed to the Advisory Board and Council on National Parks by President Nixon. He had asked me actually to consider a cabinet position, and I wasn't at all in a position to do that. [Lane gives Riess some documents that the secretary has brought in]

Riess: [looking at documents] This is on the National Parks Centennial Commission. I'm going to hang onto this and fill in some blanks.

Lane: That's right, you can take it.

Riess: You were an obvious person for the Centennial Commission because you had already been active on the Advisory Board and Council on National Parks, under Nixon?

Lane: And before that I had two appointments under President Johnson. One was the [Travel Advisory Committee to the Department of Commerce's] United State Travel Service under Secretary Luther Hodges, who was the secretary of commerce under Johnson.

Then I served on a board for travel in the park, or tourism in the park, something like that, under Secretary Udall, both in the Johnson administration. [Travel Advisory Board for the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.]

I've forgotten when I went on the Yosemite Park and Curry Company board, but Nixon knew of my background, and Haldeman particularly knew of my background in the national parks. [to secretary] Oh, Karen, would you pull copies of this? This is the Theodore and Conrad Wirth Environmental Award from the National Park Foundation that I'm getting.

What I was reminded of was that because of this late appointment the commission really had not been given a mission or a focus. (I've forgotten the wording, it's probably in there.) But I remember one night staying up virtually all night, and I was visiting with Bill [William J.] Briggie, who was the executive director of the Park Service committee that served the commission. He's now superintendent at Mt. Rainier. He was co-director with one of these fellows you mention in here.

There were two directors, [Gary] Everhardt and Bill Briggie. Bill Briggie is still active, and also held the same job in our recent Vail conference for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the National Park Service, and the so-called Vail Agenda, which is now being implemented by Secretary [Bruce] Babbitt.

[hands Riess some papers] This is yours to keep if you want.

I put this together ["Opening Comments at National Park Service Press Meetings, by L.W. Lane, Jr., Chairman, National Parks Centennial Commission, November/December 1971"], and it has a lot to say about how I feel about national parks. This went to the members of the centennial commission that are mentioned there, to really set a focus and a mission, and it kind of became the Holy Grail of what we were all about, and what I felt our charge should be from the act, which

spelled out in rather brief detail what the commission was to do, which was to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary.

My point from the beginning was that it had to be a lot more than a birthday party; we had to take this as a platform to look ahead and to launch into the next century. Not that that was such a monumental point of view, but nobody had really focused on it. Copies of this document were made, sent to all members of Congress; it went to all the members of the White House, went to all the superintendents from the National Park Service, to get everybody together on it.

While President Nixon personally was not able to relate—he did attend an event in Washington, D.C., but Mrs. Nixon and both daughters participated at various conferences we had around the country—it helped really get him on board in a significant way. Anyway, I refer to that because I looked it up. This is one thing I dug up, and Karen found it, because I'm going to quote from it in the opening remarks that I have to give [on May 18, 1994].

Richard M. Nixon

Riess: You were in the corridors of power at that time.

Lane: Well, I wouldn't want to overstate that. I was involved in a number of ways.

Riess: Do you feel you knew Nixon? Do you have some reflections on him?

Lane: Oh, yes, some, but also—well, first of all, as far as knowing him, I had met him a number of times. My first date with Jean, my wife, I took her to hear Nixon in Chicago, to an Audit Bureau of Circulation, ABC conference. He was then our vice president. That would have been summer of 1954, I guess. Our first date.

I knew him quite well. I had a lot of respect for him.

Riess: Had you known him as a Californian first?

Lane: Yes, I knew him during his gubernatorial efforts. I had served with Pat Brown, as you know. Actually, I served more in the last term, which was the term that he [Brown] won by beating Nixon. So I was not involved in the election that I recall much, except I supported Nixon, I remember that. Pat Brown and I laughed about that over the years.

Riess: Were you comfortable around Nixon?

Lane: Yes.

Riess: I mean, there's been so much emphasis on his kind of—a discomfort that he seemed to have felt with himself.

Lane: Oh, that's a lot of retrospective that is based on some impressions that are very biased, plus our liberal editors who reported on him at the time, in the environment of the Vietnam War. I don't think anybody can fully appreciate the pressures that were coming from all over the country on the presidency and on Congress. Our commission was meeting in '71 and '72, right in the heat of a lot of the pressures of the Vietnam War. I think you would find a lot of people breaking down.

His propensity for being very, very uptight on communism and things of that sort gave him a sort of an outlook on life that was biased to do things that weren't always appreciated in the public eye, and sanctioning certain types of actions that fight fire with fire as far as combating communism. So it spilled over into what he seemingly did not initiate, but which he certainly let go on.

Riess: Nixon and Haldeman, men who have been so important in history and have stood for so much, when they die the retrospective begins. You were a peer of these men and you have a right to an opinion and a judgment. For instance, in the situations in which you found yourself with Nixon, could you disagree? Did he listen to you?

Lane: I would judge Nixon more on what I think he did on the big stage, and the big stage to me was international relations at that time.

His gave full support to this fantastic institution, the National Park Service, that was born in the Civil War: the Yosemite Act in great measure established the concept of open space available to all the people of our country and it was interesting that it would come within a few months after Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Here we were celebrating the centennial of national parks, and Nixon gave tremendous support to that. He gave a great deal of authority to me and to the commission, and the same year, '72, I think was the year that he and Kissinger went to China and opened up China.

Riess: Did you have a chance to talk to him about China, because of your interest in the Pacific Rim?

Lane: We talked about the Pacific. Certainly in the time frame of his asking me to be chairman of our bicentennial commission we talked a lot about the Pacific. When I decided I couldn't do that, because it was a long-term appointment, John Warner subsequently was asked and did a fine job.

When I went to Japan in '75, one of the added responsibilities that I had was to help coordinate, as I think I've mentioned, the activities of our friends and allies in the Pacific who were participating in our bicentennial. That actually came about during the Ford administration, but it was initiated in the Nixon administration. I don't remember any specific dialogue with him, but he and I—and Anne [Legendre] Armstrong [Mrs. Tobin Armstrong], I remember, sat in on the meeting.

Riess: Anne Armstrong?

Lane: She was a great wheel in the Nixon administration, and later in the Ford administration. She came from Texas. She was a very powerful lady, and she had a senior advisory job, counselor in the White House.

Advisory Board and Council on National Parks Under Four Administrations

Riess: The Advisory Board and Council on National Parks work started under Nixon, and you continued on under Ford and Carter and Reagan. I wonder if you would comment on the way it worked with the various secretaries of the interior. And also on the members and the work of the group.

Just what was the Advisory Board and Council on National Parks? Nat [Nathaniel] Owings was on it, and I know it was a very important activity for him. Wally [Walter M., Jr.] Schirra was on it, as I think you even mentioned to me.

Lane: Right.

Riess: Sigurd Olson, a great figure. Describe how meetings were run, what kind of interaction you tended to have with the secretaries of the interior, how it developed over the administrations. You went from Republican administrations to Democratic administrations. And what the issues were. Is this is another example of the public and private mix, or this was all private sector people?

Lane: I don't recall any government members, members of the Congress or Senate. There were obviously government from the Department of the Interior and the Park Service that were very much a part of the advisory board.

Riess: Did they set the agenda?

Lane: No, that was set—with the approval of the secretary—that probably would be set by the assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks, which is the intermediary between the secretary and the director of the National Park Service. That was Nat [Nathaniel P.] Reed, during the Nixon administration. He was a very strong assistant secretary, and was, you'll find, very much involved in that book [*Preserving a Heritage*, the Final Report to the President and Congress of the National Parks Centennial Commission].

Riess: Were you being asked in those meetings to pass judgment on the value of upcoming national parks? What kind of assignments did you have?

Lane: Oh, yes. Well, personnel matters, concessions—there were lots of subcommittees—entrance fees. There was hardly an issue in the national park system that was not put before the secretary's advisory board. It really had no holds barred on where it could initiate on its own, through the chairman, of course, the areas that it wished to study.

I was on I don't know how many subcommittees. I remember one particularly on concessions, because I had been involved with the Yosemite concession. I don't know of any other members of the board who had actually been a part of a concession, except there were a couple of concessionaires who were on the board at one time or another.

It was a board that had, as most advisory boards tend to do, ups and downs depending upon how well the staff of the secretary administered the details and, I would say, the relevancy of the matters that were brought before the board. But Rogers Morton was a very dynamic, very powerful, very supportive secretary of the interior for the value and the use of the advisory board. Then you had different directors. [Ronald H.] Walker was a very weak director, coming after Hartzog. Ron was a nice fellow—in fact, you'll see him in some of these photographs.

When Hartzog, who was fairly outspoken as a Democrat, got us into some trouble politically and was retired early, Ron Walker was brought in. He was nothing more than an advance man. I spent an awful lot of time with him trying to help him, because he was a fait accompli, as far as I was concerned, and it was certainly in

the best interests of the parks to make him as effective and as good as possible. He worked very hard at it, but he didn't have the culture or the ethic, and he didn't have the rapport with the Park Service staff.

Then you had a situation of a Wyoming governor, Stanley Hathaway, who came in and had a mental breakdown compounded with some drinking and so forth, and then [Thomas S.] Kleppe coming in right at the last of the Ford administration. Fortunately, he was followed by a very strong secretary, Cec [Cecil D.] Andrus, who I was very close to and still am. Now he's back as governor. Interesting that both he and [Walter] Hickel were governors, and then went back as governors.

Bill Lane as Catalyst, California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Riess: And when Andrus was secretary of the interior, the Park Service director was Bill Whalen?

Lane: Well, Whalen was part of the time. Briggles and Everhardt were. Bill I had known earlier in Yosemite, because he was assistant superintendent of Yosemite. Then he went with SPUR, San Francisco Parks and Urban Redevelopment, with Bill Roth. I haven't seen Whalen for quite a while.

But they were weak directors. I say weak in the sense that they kind of lived in the shadow of Hartzog, who was very strong, dynamic, in charge, and worked the Hill. And he had secretaries who permitted him to work the Hill, which some secretaries are hesitant about, their bureau chiefs doing too much on the Hill. Or their staffers who have congressional liaisons are uneasy about BLM and Indian Affairs and Parks and all the conglomerate of things that have been tossed into the Interior basket.

Riess: BLM and Indian Affairs were in your bailiwick too?

Lane: I was oftentimes used as a sort of a catalyst, to try and get those bureaus working—it's just been the whole nature of my professional career of trying to get team effort. In many publications, the editorial and the advertising department are at odds. I practiced church and state in terms of advertisers not having an undue influence, but I also had another rule, that if we're going to in any way refer to or benefit some type of commercial product, that our advertisers should obviously get first consideration. We rarely mentioned any brand names in *Sunset*, and so it wasn't a big problem.

But in the case of photographs, we'll say in cars and travel, or buying cars for the company or whatever, we damn well bought cars from a good *Sunset* advertiser. And in photographs, and in films—and subsequently we did major public broadcast films, several, for Chevrolet.

Riess: So who was church and who was state?

Lane: Well, I digressed there.

My point was that during the navy, say, I remember on board ship a hell of a row between the navy gun crew and the communication crew, and the crew that went out were members of the Maritime Union, and were called the armed guard on those ships. But I finally got the two crews together, and subsequently we were all working together. My point in that situation was, we're all out here, and our lives are dependent upon our efficiency. We have to rely on you and you have to rely on us. I would say one of the traits that I could point to in going through my life is getting people together.

Well, in the Interior Department, you just can't believe it, it doesn't get the attention, but it's almost like the Pentagon, with the air force and the navy and the army and so forth, to get together on a similar type of helicopter, with modifications to suit their particular use, is just almost impossible. Or, what I have referred to in the embassy of getting the different agencies to work together. At interior I was used by, I would say, two or three of the secretaries. Certainly Morton and Andrus. That's when Andrus said, "You have this background in national parks, but I need more help with BLM and the new California desert legislation. So I'm going to keep you as chairman." I think I was appointed chairman of the California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Committee by Kleppe—no, I was actually elected. I was elected by the members of the advisory council.

[End Tape 11, Side A]

[Begin Tape 11, Side B] ##

Lane: I've forgotten the timing of that. Ed Hastey, who's back as state director of BLM, would have all the nitty-gritty on the history of that.

I was recently back with Dianne Feinstein laboring for her new legislation [California Desert Protection Act, S.21] which is refining really what we came up with on our committee in the late seventies, the same issues virtually. I was

chairman then of those hearings, and we met all over the desert, and met some of the most interesting people.

[laughs] I remember one fellow, I got to know him, kind of a hermit, interesting old codger. He always came in wearing a black hat. He would sit in the back, and when he wanted to testify he'd wave this black hat, and I'd recognize him. He'd put the hat on and he'd come walking down the aisle. But at one meeting I brought in an old black hat I had at home. He waved his black hat and so on and so forth, and he came down the aisle to talk about mining, or whatever it was—his brim was always so he really couldn't see anything except the floor, and he knew he was on the aisle—and while he was doing that, I put my black hat on. So when he comes up to the table and he looks up, I'm there with this black hat on. [laughter] In any event, I had a lot of fun at those meetings.

We really got it started on the right track for what now looks like is going to be—it's very controversial. There are a lot of areas that frankly I don't think are of national park quality, but it's like many things in life, I think that to get what you want—the Presidio is a case in point—you have to take some other marginal values. In this case, landscape or areas where nothing would grow, nothing could live hardly.

Riess: Didn't the endangered pupfish thing push desert conservation?

Lane: Oh, yes, you bet. And our travel editor, Martin Litton, was very much involved with it.

Riess: So that would represent an extreme point of view that would allow you to find a middle ground?

Lane: Well, it was a little bit like the spotted owl, yes. You could say it's the tail wagging the dog, but on the other hand, it was the, or was one of the, ways that legally you could put a roadblock in front of the other extremes who just wanted to bulldoze, have the whole damn place for off-road vehicles, or farmers who wanted to graze, or ranchers. And, of course, the mining industry felt they had a vested interest because of the grandfather history of mining in the area going back almost to the Gold Rush.

Riess: That would be the guy in the black hat?

Lane: I think he was mining, I'm not sure now, but I don't think he had any cattle, and there certainly wasn't timber in that area. There was virtually no timber issue in the desert bill.

Riess: How about the condor? Was that part of the desert bill?

Lane: No, the condor needs a different habitat, the Los Padres National Forest and areas like that. I don't know whether there are any condors up in the mountains in back of Palm Springs. They primarily eat rats, mice, small rodents and things. I don't know whether there's enough for them up there or not. But the condor was not a desert issue.

Riess: Were flora a big issue?

Lane: Oh, god, yes. And a lot of them are so little you can hardly see them.

Riess: So you had the California Native Plant Society?

Lane: There were a lot of the horticulturalists, and the Native Plant Society, and Mrs. [Margedant] Hayakawa, Sam's wife. She later—I'm not sure she was then—she later became president of the Native Plant Society.

My wife Jean's very much into native plants. Most people will not even see them, but they jump out like tulips to these people, their eye is so trained. And they know the habitats where these little things will grow. Those things were all very, very much a part of it, and there was a lady here in Palo Alto who was on my committee who was really gung-ho. [tape interruption]

An Aside on Tall Poppies and Australia

Lane: [to Karen] You pulled that out of the hat. Is there anything in our files here on the California Desert Committee or on the Secretary of Interior's Advisory Board?
[secretary leaves]

[to Riess] Here's one for you [looking at document on his desk]. It is out of context, but it is "San Francisco's One Hundred Leaders of Tomorrow. November 7, 1953." This was sponsored by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and *Time* magazine. There was a committee that picked the group, and it was a pretty heady group.

Riess: "Committee for San Francisco's Future, under the sponsorship of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with *Time*, the weekly news magazine." And you're one of them?

Lane: That's right. Those names at the time were kind of the tall poppies, as the Aussies would say, in San Francisco business.

Riess: The tall poppies?

Lane: Very successful people, they call them tall poppies. They like to cut down tall poppies, because they're very egalitarian down there, not like the British. Except for musicians and sports people. But in business and in politics, they like to cut down tall poppies.

But what I was wondering, and obviously it's not a challenge for you, but tracking all those hundred people, I wonder just what has happened to some of them. Some of them I know quite well, and they're still—well, a lot of them have passed on.

Riess: I would like a copy of this. [Lane laughs] Seriously, I would.

Lane: Well, it would be an interesting document for your office.

I laugh because my situation, as Karen knows—I was reminded of it today—Mel and I kept in print a group of books on the Pacific for years simply to demonstrate our presence there, and it helped sell advertising and so on and so forth. The Pacific area books—and the Australia book was one that I had a lot to do with getting started many years ago.

I was pretty sure Time Warner would look at the bottom line on those books and say, "Well, that's not making a profit," and they would cut it, which they have done. I've got about half a dozen here. But I give them away. We have a big trade group coming in and I'm thinking I have to give more away.

The Australia book is still quite relevant. It was re-edited in '88 while I was down there; I helped the editor get into some areas where there had been some change for the bicentennial in '88. There's not been much change since, really. Someday they'll have a new airport in Sydney, and so forth, and the skyline will change a little bit, but it's still a hell of a good guidebook.

Well, a fellow from Hoover wanted it the other day, he's going down. And Bill [William R.] Hewlett wanted it for a couple of Hewlett-Packard people. I suddenly

realized I've only got about six copies left and it's out of print. So I asked Karen to check. If they had anything up to a hundred copies, I'd buy a hundred copies, because I only had six left.

They called back and they said, "Not only do we have a hundred, we have 1,400 copies, and they're all reserved for Bill Lane." [laughter] I've got copies, obviously, to go for the rest of my life. Unless I give it away to some big convention or something. The point being I could come across ten of those things ["One Hundred Leaders of Tomorrow"] you want. But in the meantime, I'll make you a copy.

The Visionaries, Urban and Gateway Parks, and Bicoastal Networking

Lane: Now, where were we?

Yes, 1972 was kind of an interesting year, the centennial. We also dedicated the gateway parks; I was very much involved back in the Johnson administration in creating more urban parks. So we had a gateway park in New York that took some government land and so forth, military land, and now it's a fantastic park for inner-city people, and not just kids.

Riess: That's down at the battery end of things?

Lane: Yes. Well, it goes around, it's on the New Jersey side. I've been to it once, went into it by helicopter. You can see the Statue of Liberty right out there, but I don't think the Statue of Liberty is part of the New York Gateway Park.

But the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was very much an area that I worked in on the advisory board, and then later as chairman, and we dedicated it with Secretary Morton and Bill [William Penn] Mott, and I've got a great picture of Governor Reagan taking a picture of me and Bill Mott on a boat that we went around on during the dedication of the Golden Gate Recreation Area.

I've been very much involved in the Presidio, and will open the National Parks and Conservation Association conference which they have asked me to open because of my history of being visionary and seeing into the future. I'm now reading a wonderful book on [Frederick Law] Olmsted. He said some remarkable things about Yosemite, which at that time no one could get into, but why it needed to be broadened beyond the Lincoln Act of 1864 for just the valley and the Mariposa Grove.

And Bill Mott was visionary in the East Bay Regional Parks, and even McLaren in Golden Gate Park, taking some other examples, and Phil [Philip] Burton, obviously, for the Presidio, who's buried in the Presidio. I looked at his gravesite just this last Sunday. I was involved in this "March for the Parks" on Sunday as a sponsor, and when I left I went up to the cemetery there. And I think one of my roles at *Sunset*, and with everything I'm involved with, is very visionary. [tape interruption]

I've spent a hell of a lot of time working with others who had positions of authority or influence. This was a letter in '79 to the chairman [Carl P. Burke] of the Advisory Board and Council on National Parks regarding the Yosemite Master Plan. I was chairman of the ad-hoc overview committee to review the General Management Plan.

Riess: This was with Edgar Wayburn and Nat Owings?

Lane: Right. [reading] "The original has been delivered to Dr. Wayburn, who will present the report at your meeting next week in Bill's [Bill Lane's] absence. Forty copies have also been delivered to Dr. Wayburn for distribution to members of the board and council. As you will note, copies have also been sent to Bill Whalen, Howard Chapman"—he was regional director—"Bob [Robert] Binnewies"—who I think at that time maybe was superintendent—"and Nat Owings." That's the cover letter. I sent that report to all the members of the committee.

Riess: Compared to Wayburn and Owings, your skill was pulling it together, and they brought more specific expertise?

Lane: Oh, I think that would be one of the roles. They were both wonderful people, very close friends. I've helped Margaret [Owings] in a lot of her causes since.

Riess: Did Nat Owings have Margaret's, or your, expertise on parks, or did he bring the architect's view?

Lane: He brought a background, but I don't think he had the same commitment—he hadn't been a packer or using the parks the way I had.

Also at the same time he was chairman of the—not Constitution Avenue, what's the street that was all redesigned? Pennsylvania Avenue Commission. He was chairman of that. I worked with him a lot on it, but I never went on his commission.

[looking at a document] I don't know what this is about, something that Cecil Andrus put together. [pause]

Riess: Well, these are interesting letters, including copies of some from you. You are a good writer. Do you dictate these letters?

Lane: No, I usually handwrite them. Although a lot of times I will dictate, as Karen knows, over the phone.

Riess: How did you do the work in Washington? Was a lot of it by phone?

Lane: [laughs] I did a lot of *Sunset* by phone.

[looking at documents] Here's an agenda in '79, and here's a meeting of the National Parks Advisory Board with kind of an interesting format. See, we met in different places, but this was up in Boston and that's the *U.S. Constitution*.

Riess: You said that when you were very involved that it was *Sunset* that was being run by telephone because you'd be back in Washington?

Lane: A lot, and I would leave a meeting in Washington and go up and make a sales call in New York or Philadelphia or someplace.

This was a note from Cec Andrus. And here, Bill Whalen. Oh, god, if I ever got into this stuff, I'd snow you. But I've got files.

Riess: Well, now. How do you think we can best deal with this?

Lane: He [Andrus] reappointed me in '78. [reading April 5, 1978 letter from Lane to Cecil D. Andrus] "I also appreciate your recent reappointment for me to serve another term as member of the California Desert Conservation Area Advisory Council, created by the Organic Act. I enjoyed being elected and serving as the first chairman and I feel we made considerable progress in the first year."

Not long after that we became very close, and I was sort of his liaison with the committee or with the board. He used me as kind of a sounding board.

[pause, both looking through papers] Oh, god, I've got mountains of this stuff.

Riess: When you were running *Sunset* by telephone, how did it work? Who was at this end? Was it Mellquist you would talk to, or Karen?

Lane: Oh, I worked directly with department heads, and usually I would always fly back for the Monday morning executive committee meeting.

Riess: Every week?

Lane: Yes, I would sometimes fly all night and go back that afternoon.

About that same time I was moving very fast up the PATA [Pacific Area Travel Association] ladder. I was chairman in 1980-1981. Now, that was by appointment of the secretary of commerce. I got into that in the Carter administration.

I would say my history on all the boards is one of pretty constant kicking them in the butt to think differently or to think big, or throw the book out the window, because there had been no gateway park in a major suburban area before San Francisco and New York. We finally got Santa Monica Mountains.

I used *Sunset* a lot, a lot of reprints were used. Not unlike John Muir's articles that Washburn sent out to members of Congress in the early 1890s that helped create the congressional approval of Yosemite and then subsequently actually Grant and Sequoia. Kings Canyon was added later. But I use *Sunset*—well, the last big effort I did was that Presidio article [November 1989], which I worked on with Bill Mott. That was sent to all members of Congress, and I hope will have a lot to do with keeping the integrity of the Presidio with this Duncan bill coming up to try to chop it up.

I see that there was a very good editorial on it in the morning *Chronicle*. I got Doug Wheeler [California secretary for resources] to get Governor Pete Wilson down last week on Friday, and we had a press meeting overlooking Golden Gate at Crissy Field and got Wilson on board for a very strong endorsement of keeping the Presidio as it is, with a letter to a fellow Republican member of Congress, Duncan

And of course, Nancy Pelosi is doing a good job, and so are our two senators. But we've got some Republican members of the House who are not—George Miller, of course, Democrat, but we're trying to get nonpartisan backing.

Lessons in Leadership

Riess: You were saying that when you write your position papers you go back to the big thinkers and quote from them.

Lane: Oh, hell, yes, Muir, and the presidents, Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, I sure do. We do it all the time, I think, with presidents. And in the environmental world, Aldo Leopold. Starker Leopold over at Cal was one of my closest friends, and he was on one of these early committees. Starker and I worked very closely together on a couple of projects.

I think it's awfully important to go back to fundamentals. Right now, as I say, I'm reading Olmsted again, whom I've read many times over the years, because a lot of the thinking he gave to Yosemite was very visionary, as indeed the Lincoln Act was itself in the midst of the Civil War [the Yosemite grant of 1864]. And some of that came about from the paintings of Thomas Hill and some of the writings of people who had gone in there. But it wasn't discovered until about the middle fifties, when the first white man saw it. So by '64, to get it designated as a protected area, was quite phenomenal.

Riess: The Oakland Museum has some grand panoramic paintings that were the first glimpse of Yosemite to people on the East Coast.

Lane: Yes. And John Muir's writings were very much a part of that.

[looking at files, reading] Here's a note from Cec Andrus.

Riess: [reading] "Now that we finally have a desert plan, I'd like to express my appreciation to you for your many years of help and leadership. Immediately after being designated as chairman of the original task force by Secretary Morton, you began the arduous task of bringing all of the diverse groups together..."

Lane: See what I said? You didn't believe me. [laughing]

Riess: I believed you. "I know also that some of these meetings were more destructive than constructive, but you were always there to see that our environmental concerns were considered and that they did not eliminate the necessary industrial uses"—ah!—"in this area of the state."

"Did not eliminate the necessary industrial uses"?

Lane: Well, we had, what, thirty-two municipalities in the area. They obviously had to have a viable opportunity to maintain their little economies. That is another way I think both Mel and I—Mel was chairman of the first BCDC [Bay Conservation and Development Commission], first chairman of the Coastal Commission. We both have recognized that there's a balance. I hadn't seen that letter since I put it in there.

Riess: It's pretty nice. He hopes that your trails will cross again.

Lane: Well, they have. I got an award from him a year or so ago, from Idaho, the state government of Idaho.

Riess: What you're talking about today is the leadership role that you've taken. At the end of doing this oral history I would like anyone reading it to understand how someone who has got his fingers in so many pies can effectively move from one to another and can bring completion. It looks like you must go in, get started on something, and then you're dragged off to the next commission?

Lane: I've always been pretty firm and selective in cutting things out where I began to sense I was not going to be able to make the full commitment, for different reasons. Just yesterday, for the Stanford Mansion project, I told the head fundraiser, Charles—what's his name? wonderful guy—that completing a reception I have agreed to host—and I'm going to have it in the Big Four Restaurant where there's a lot of Stanford memorabilia, along with the other Big Four—that I am going to bow out of that. I want to make another contribution at some future date, and I want to stay on that board, but I don't want to be the lead dog, which I am now, on fundraising.

I've got one project to complete with Steve Bechtel, and we just got \$100,000 from him, but there are still some ribbons to tie around that. [sighs] I'm going to bow out of it, because right now they're pushing too much at me. They say, "You're the one"—I don't say it the way it sounds, but this is what they said—"You're the one person on the committee that seems to get things done and be able to bring some action." They couldn't get in to see Steve, and I was able to get in, and we had a productive meeting, and we're going to get \$100,000 from him, or from the Bechtel Foundation or something. And Reilly told me the other night they might even increase it.

But in any event, I just have decided that on that project I just am not going to continue full-bore, because I want to give more time to some other projects. Frankly, at seventy-five—and having these three friends, younger than I am, pass away. All of a sudden they wake up and they've got prostate cancer or something else, and four months later they're dead. I'm in good health, and I just don't want to keep pushing the way I've been pushing. So I really am very anxious to cooperate with you on this project.

[End Tape 11, Side B]

[Begin Tape 12, Side A] ##

Lane: I would like to think that there might be some lessons that would not duplicate, but be relevant, for those people who have certain availabilities and certain interests to be able to do a lot more in public service, and at the same time find ways that could also enhance, if they had that as an ambition, as I did, success in their business careers. I never would take on something that I didn't feel in some way would make me a better person or a more effective person in running our family business, or helping run it with my brother Mel.

If there was anything that could come out of this, by using some examples—rather than a laundry list of what Bill Lane did, or extolling the virtues of Bill Lane—any way to come out with some guidelines, that's one of the things that interests me in doing this.

Riess: You talk about making a full commitment to anything you take on. Yet everything you take on seems to have spin-offs, so you don't *just* serve on the advisory board, you become chairman of it, and all its ancillary involvements. The potential to be effective must be exhilarating. But then what happens to your job? What happens to your family? You said that it was hard with Jean in the seventies.

Lane: Yes. That was the reason, partly, I resigned—I remember up at Yosemite we were having a National Parks Centennial Commission board meeting, and I came back from the meeting and I told Jean, "I'm going to resign." She didn't say, "Well, that's great," or anything, but I am sure—I've forgotten what our kids' ages were, and I had some other reasons that made me decide.

We'd accomplished everything, we'd raised the money, we had gotten the approval on the medallions, we'd gotten the approval from the Post Office department on the stamps, we had set all the conferences. The reason we were up there is we had a big environmental conference later in Yosemite, after I had gone off the chairmanship. So everything was in place, and both Secretary Morton and Hartzog said, "You got the show on the road, so it's okay," so that's when I resigned. Thornton came in and did a good job of following through. But I had the satisfaction of knowing I had gotten it going.

And I have the same satisfaction with the Stanford Mansion. They were telling me yesterday, they said, "Until you started taking some action, we weren't able to get anybody else to. Now we've got three or four other people that are also moving." Governor Deukmejian has now gotten on board; Tom Campbell has gotten on board; Don Kennedy has gotten on board, and they're all going to be, I think, helpful. Nobody was doing anything before I started stirring the pot.

Riess: Luckily your jobs haven't always had to do with raising money.

Lane: Oh, no. Most—well, the chairman, say, of the Pacific Area Travel Association, I didn't have to raise any money except that the United States government is not a full member partner of PATA, and the board of PATA did not want the usual assistant secretary of commerce or whatever from the United States to be the chairman, which is customary. The minister for tourism in Indonesia is the new chairman of PATA now, a very senior person in the government. That's usually been the case. They asked President Reagan to appoint me, and he did, and that was when I became chairman of that. But I didn't have any money to raise, just organizing it.

The same way with this park conference coming up. I don't have money-raising responsibility in that.

[looking at files] Here I was defending some of the concessionaires: "Mr. Lane added...the fact is that the concessionaires are getting hung up on the rack," which is a term I used to use. "Mr. Lane said he wouldn't underestimate the importance of the board in reiterating that." This looks like a verbatim of one of our meetings in Yosemite or something.

Advisory Board and Council on National Parks, Members

Riess: I would like to go through the names of the National Parks Advisory Board members, see what you recall of their work on the board, and your work with them. How about Sigurd Olson?

Lane: Now he would be one who would have been appointed because of his credentials in parks and open space and so forth.

Riess: Did you visit him in his part of the world, go canoeing with him?

Lane: No, I never did.

Riess: The chairman was Linden C. Pettys. The vice chairman, Dr. Douglas W. Schwartz, Santa Fe.

Lane: Oh, yes. Doug was head of that wonderful museum in Santa Fe, what was the name of it? The School of American Research. A wonderful fellow, and we visited him

several times in Santa Fe. He was a very constructive member of that board, innovative and energetic.

Riess: Congressman E. Y. Berry from Rapid City, South Dakota.

Lane: Yes, Berry was a good member, and he was kind of a jolly fellow. He was very active. He always attended meetings, which isn't true with a lot of congressional members of committees who get prioritized by their staff or their own interests and don't attend some of these kinds of committee meetings.

Riess: Berry and Alan Bible are referred to as "lawyers and conservationists." Conservationist in that case, can that be read either way?

Lane: It certainly didn't have the connotation it has today.

Alan Bible from Nevada was a close friend. He was one of my Centennial Commission members. He did many wonderful things for the parks. He and George Hartzog were a fantastic team, and a fellow by the name of John Saylor, who was a member of Congress, a member of the House, from Pennsylvania. I think Bible may have been chairman of either the Interior Committee or the subcommittee for National Parks.

Riess: Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

Lane: I see. Well, besides that, he was very respected and a wonderful member of the Senate.

Riess: What did it mean when they were called conservationists that is different from now? Would David Brower call them conservationists?

Lane: In those days, conservationist was a more selective label for people, and not many businessmen were identifying themselves as environmentalists or conservationists.

You get into the debate that I suppose you see most pronounced in religion in the Middle East, and in Ireland today—well, not so much in the Middle East, but in Ireland—among the different branches of the Christian religion. Or in Africa with sects. What would have been a conservationist or an environmentalist years ago would be quite different from what it means today.

Now, I've just gone on this Yosemite National Park Advisory Board, and David Brower is a member. It's going to be interesting to see how he performs for a large

conglomerate like Delaware North. Doug Wheeler and myself, and David, and I've forgotten the other three members of this advisory committee. We're having our first meeting in June up at Yosemite. Personally, I would imagine that David has mellowed somewhat from a pretty tunnel vision of conservationist in his younger days, but I don't know that.

Riess: He must be so used to being the environmental conscience that he can't help himself.

Lane: Well, you know, I credit David with an awful lot of progress. It's almost like [W.] Glenn Campbell at Stanford, who got in so far with ultra right-wing Republican groups that he just lost his effectiveness for a university environment, and was so combative and had a drinking problem, whatever. But he did a hell of a lot of good for the Hoover Institution.

Brower I think did a fantastic job for the Sierra Club. But he just grew beyond what Wayburn and some of the other members of the board felt was his usefulness to the movement.

Riess: Yes. Okay, going on down this list of the advisory board members: Starker Leopold you have talked about.

Lane: Yes.

Riess: Anne Morton, Rogers Morton's wife.

Lane: Yes. That would have been after he died.

Riess: Mrs. Paul Rennell, Nancy Rennell, from Greenwich, Connecticut.

Lane: Yes. I've forgotten her background. I think she was a friend of the Mortons', and I believe there was another connection there too, but I'm not sure about it. But she was a very effective member, and very hard-working. Little bit of a social person, but a lot of good connections, and a very lovely lady.

Riess: Steven L. Rose, from La Cañada, California.

Lane: [laughing] He was on this from another facet. He was a big white hunter, and he was far more of a developer, and I wouldn't say exploiter, but nobody would ever label him as a conservationist. But he was an interesting guy, and a very gracious

host when we would have meetings in southern California. His big passion in life was hunting.

Riess: It says "outdoor enthusiast."

Lane: Well, yes, he was an outdoor enthusiast, but his out-of-doors was killing animals. And so it wasn't terribly compatible with protection of animals in the National Park Service, but certainly he never advocated hunting in the national parks as I recall.

Riess: So why would he be on this?

Lane: Well, he was probably a friend of the president's. Whether he was a friend of Ford's or Nixon's or Carter's or whatever—I don't know when he came on. But this was a very prestigious board.

Actually, Bill Clark found it invasive on the authority of the secretary, and he did away with it. He terminated it in '85, I think it was, when he was secretary of the interior. He and I have talked about it a number of times since. By that time, actually, in some ways I think he was right, although I would have gone in and overhauled it rather than succumbing to what it had become, and that was more of an adversarial group with the secretary's office, rather than working for what it truly was, and that was an advisory board to the secretary.

My guess is—those terms overlapped from one administration to another, and there were some Carter appointees in there or something that didn't agree with the [James] Watt-[William] Clark team—not that Watt and Clark were together, because they weren't. But Clark is not a conservationist either. He was put there I guess after he had been over at State, where Reagan put him in to watchdog Haig. Clark was a sort of a trouble-shooter, foreign affairs in the White House, and so on.

Riess: It certainly is glossed over in this press release which says the advisory board was being eliminated simply to save money and reduce redundancy. That hardly begins to get at what the committee was all about.

Lane: No. It was a snow job. I would gather Bill found it a nuisance rather than a help.

Riess: Okay. Dr. William G. Shade of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Lane: He was a history professor, and had some credentials, as I recall. He was rather quiet. I don't recall too much about him.

Riess: Edgar A. Toppin, specialist in history of blacks in America.

Lane: Toppin was a black. He brought in, obviously, minority representation, but very capable. I've forgotten, he was with a university, I think, down south [Virginia State College]. I see Doc Toppin—he later went on the Colonial Williamsburg board where I was also. I went on the Colonial Williamsburg Hotel Properties, Inc., board of directors in the early seventies, about that same time.

Riess: Dr. J. O. Brew.

Lane: I don't remember him.

Riess: Dr. Edward B. Danson, Jr. of Flagstaff, an anthropologist, museum man.

Lane: Yes. He brought in a lot of knowledge, particularly of the monuments in the Southwest, where most of the monuments are—the antiquities act—protection and preservation of the Indian monuments, Canyon de Chelly and so on.

Riess: Joe Frantz, Austin, Texas?

Lane: Joe I remember vaguely, but not too much.

Riess: Melville Grosvenor.

Lane: Oh, yes. That wasn't the young Mel Grosvenor now. That was the uncle, or—he was sort of the senior Mel Grosvenor. He was very active, and a wonderful man.

Riess: Actually, those last four names since Dr. Toppin were council members, not the board. The more important group I guess was the advisory board. The council included Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, Nat Owings, Melvin Payne of the National Geographic, Sigurd Olson. But you were on the board.

Lane: Yes. I've forgotten the distinction on that council, whether it was supplemental, or people who had been on and retired.

There were so many perks in that. You visited these fantastic national parks, and they had very lovely social events—we had numbers of dinners, barbecues at *Sunset*. Mrs. Johnson had a wonderful thing at the ranch once. I was on her Beautiful America committee, too, so I saw a lot of Mrs. Johnson. In fact, we still get Christmas cards. And Lynda Bird and Charles Robb were our guests in

Australia. Mrs. Johnson was a very avid reader of *Sunset* and had a lot of our garden books.

Riess: So it was fun.

Lane: It was fun. But very demanding. I used to keep a big room in Washington, and they put a Chinese screen in the middle of it. They called it the "Ambassador's Suite" after I'd been in Japan in '75-'76, which of course was after the National Parks Centennial Commission. I began staying there for sometimes a couple of weeks: I'd fly home weekends and maybe stay here Monday morning for the executive committee meeting at *Sunset*, and fly out red-eye Monday night or something and get there Tuesday.

Choosing Between Appointments, Interior or Australia

Riess: Did you say to me when we first met that you had been asked to be Secretary of the Interior, or did I misunderstand that?

Lane: Yes, a couple of times. When it got most serious was when Hickel was fired by Nixon. Russ Train was his deputy, and Russ and I went over to talk with Nixon, and I guess Mrs. Armstrong was there. And then, in the first Nixon administration, Senator Clifford Hansen, who was very close to Reagan, wanted to put my name in the hat, and I later learned from Meese that if it had gone in the hat the President was prepared to appoint me. I don't know, because I didn't go ahead with that.

Riess: Was that hard for you to decide?

Lane: Not particularly, because Secretary of Interior is just a bone-crushing job. Hodel, who went in, came out of the Tennessee Valley Authority or something. You have to have a pretty hard hide, callouses almost, to withstand on the one hand the development of offshore oil leases, and BLM, which is a type of development agency—it's almost like the Forest Service, selling timber. BLM is in a lot of mining and a lot of leasing of lands that make money for the government.

It's just a Pandora's box. And I didn't want to give up *Sunset* at that time, and I would have had to. So what I told the President—and then Mr. Bush—was that I would do something the second term. Then I was asked if I would consider the Department of the Interior for the second term. I decided I didn't want to do that, and that's when this Australian thing came up.

Riess: I see.

Lane: [Pete] Wilson was very involved in that, because he was on the Armed Forces Committee and knew the potential seriousness of our situation in the South Pacific with New Zealand pulling out of the alliance, and the Soviets building up Cam Ranh Bay, and running a big KGB operation. And Reagan was very concerned because if we lost Australia, we would have lost the joint facilities that monitor the Soviet Union testing. We put up a huge new satellite just these last few days to monitor Russia.

At that time we were doing most of our monitoring with satellites, three of them, of which there was one over England, one over the United States, and one over Australia, that we monitored all the testing—we said of the Soviet Union, but we were actually monitoring India and China, too, primarily from the downlink station at Pine Gap, which is right outside of Alice Springs in Australia. And there were two others, one for submarines and another one for the air force in Woomera in South Australia. So Australia was a very, very key part of the world.

Riess: Somehow, I thought that ambassadorship was a reward for you for good work in government, but this sounds much more.

Lane: No. I didn't particularly want to leave the country, but I knew Australia very well. In fact, I'd briefed Governor Reagan and Mrs. Reagan when they went down, in '71 or '72, representing President Nixon on a tour around the Pacific. I briefed them on that trip. So he was well aware of my military background—and Weinberger was, too. A lot of it had to do with the security of defense, and I knew Bill Casey very well. All the KGB operations in all of Southeast Asia were in the headquarters in Australia.

Riess: I want to save further discussion of Australia, and I hope you've got lots of files on Australia. But what you're saying, really, is that you felt that that was a job that you couldn't say no to, but you could say no to the Secretary of the Interior job.

Lane: Well, I didn't particularly want the interior job. It was just too much. I didn't see how I could encapsulate it, and it was his last term, so whatever you did, you had to do it in the time you got confirmed, three, three and a half years. And although I knew Vice President Bush very well and I probably might have been reappointed by him, I just didn't want to take it on.

There were some other things that were probably possible, but the Australia assignment had a combination of security issues, and trade. They had just passed

the new food bill, and we knew we had a lot of problems with Australia on subsidized grain and rice and sugar, where we were very competitive with them in the Pacific.

I knew Japan, and I knew the Pacific. I didn't have any briefers at State, Defense, CIA, or anybody that I ever was briefed by that knew more about the Pacific or Australia than I did. I don't mean that braggadocio, but I knew the Pacific very, very thoroughly. Not every aspect of it, and I had to be briefed on some of the legislation that was coming up. We had a big aviation donnybrook with the Australians on access after Pan American folded and United was trying to get more, and I negotiated a major aviation agreement.

California Water Issues, and Taking a Balanced View

Riess: I want to go back to the parks in a specific way: In your editorial piece on the national parks ["How are our national parks? It's time to take a concerned look"] in the May 1990 *Sunset* you mention something I just read about in the *New York Times* a week ago. In 1990 the Virgin River, and Zion National Park, were threatened because of the demands for water by Las Vegas.

Lane: Well—[gets book] I've forgotten when this book was done. This is the *California Water Atlas*. You just could predict—with the growth of Las Vegas, you just knew that water was going to be a problem. [looking through book] This is a crazy thing, they don't have a date in here. Oh, 1978, and this is Jerry Brown.

I was chairman of Reagan's gubernatorial environmental conference water section, and that would have been in the early seventies. But water is such a key factor to the desert, along with air conditioning, which involves water, particularly in the early air conditioning, which was largely air fans going through water, and air conditioners still consume a lot of water, if for nothing else, just generating energy. It was just inevitable, I guess, that it was going to be a problem.

Riess: In the article in *Sunset* you listed issues in the national parks and environmental issues that were coming up and they've all come up.

Lane: And those things are reprinted. That editorial, I don't know, I've got it someplace. It was reprinted by—I don't think it was the Sierra Club, I've forgotten, but another one of the environmental organizations. They sent out hundreds of them, maybe

thousands, in the mail. I think the whole issue was sent to all members of Congress and the California legislature.

[End Tape 12, Side A]

[Begin Tape 12, Side B] ##

Riess: You were making your readers into an advocacy group.

Lane: Oh, very definitely.

Riess: But you don't exactly, at the end of your editorials, say what to do, like "write to so-and-so."

Lane: No. Well, we tried to balance that off. Occasionally we would, but we knew that where our readership were in the demographic strata of the total population, that they were getting lots of appeals from these organizations. We did not feel that it was our responsibility to push them. Our role was to give them better information, and I mean by "better" more thorough, more anticipatory of future problems, not just dealing with today's problems. And also sometimes we were giving both sides.

The Redwood National Park was a case in point where the Sierra Club and the Redwood League couldn't agree on the boundaries. Congress wanted to have a Redwood National Park, but here the two main advocacy groups couldn't agree. I hosted a lunch at *Sunset* that represented both groups. Nat Reed came out from Washington, and I think Bill Mott—I've forgotten who was director of the National Park Service—and I had all three members of Simpson Logging and the three big logging companies up there come down to *Sunset*, and they all met in my office one by one with Assistant Secretary Nat Reed.

They hammered out what was kind of a bastard boundary for the national park, but at least we got it legislated and created, and now we're filling in the gaps to round it out. In the meantime, some of the virgin timber and some of the watersheds have been cut, and we've lost that, but at least we got a part, which prior to that they couldn't agree upon.

What we did in *Sunset* was to publish an article giving both views and saying that there had to be a resolution. I've forgotten how the article went—it goes back many years—but the idea was that we had to find a compromise from both organizations, or else Congress didn't have a clear mandate on what they could support legislative-wise.

Advisory Board and Council on National Parks, Disbanded

Riess: Right now one of the thorny issues is mining outside of Yellowstone. If there were still a National Parks Advisory Council how would they be able to help? Or other issues in other parks.

Lane: Well, in the interim there are lots of groups such as the Yosemite Association, Yosemite Fund, that have developed to support individual parks. In the Pacific Northwest, I'm a founder and on the board of the Olympic-Rainier Fund, which is going to be more a group to sponsor activities and to help fund activities in those two national parks.

Riess: That is a new movement?

Lane: Well, relatively. Some parks have had it for longer than others. Yosemite had the Yosemite Natural History Association which is still very active, which was not an advocacy group. That was more a group of people who loved Yosemite, and put out different books and bulletins and all that came out on Yosemite. That was not what you'd call a group that would encourage people to be writing senators and taking positions so much.

The Advisory Council, actually I suppose the reason in part that Clark disbanded it was tokenism, like some of the things that Clinton's done at the White House, to "cut staff" in sort of a symbolic way that doesn't really have a lot of substance. I think in the environment that Clark was working under there probably was some pressure to reduce expenses.

Here were some advisory committees that per diem is paid for, some entertaining is paid for—nobody gets any salary—some staff is dedicated to, so you can say, "Well, we can save \$10,000 or whatever it is." It's token, but to eliminate a major advisory committee reads well in the press. Most people probably think it costs a million dollars or something to have that advisory committee, when in fact the people are contributing their time. They get \$52 a day or something.

I never have *ever* put in a per diem expense, and usually things I get involved in, I've made a major contribution of some kind. But that is not anything I would brag about, because I was able to do it. I'm sure Lawrence Rockefeller probably never put in a per diem either. And very frankly, I didn't in probably most of my cases—I didn't with *Sunset*, and I don't now. But it is something that I was able to do.

Riess: In any event, you are saying other groups have taken up the slack.

Lane: I would say so, that there are more active groups such as the National Parks Foundation, the National Parks and Conservation Association. The Sierra Club now has their separate Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund—you can't take a tax deduction on that legal fund, but that's come about.

But I would not say these groups are serving the same purpose as an advisory board. Very often they are thorns in the side, and are not terribly constructive at some times to, say, [Secretary of the Interior] Babbitt right now. But I think Babbitt, and I know Roger Kennedy, the director of the National Park Service, would benefit tremendously from a good, qualified, nonpartisan advisory board such as those early advisory boards were. Kennedy particularly would benefit from it, as would [George] Frampton, Babbitt's assistant secretary, because they're just out of touch.

Babbitt is in touch, but he would be able to administer the National Park Service better if he had an advisory board that was beholden to him, not to the director of the National Park Service. Although in my days, certainly Hartzog was very much with Morton together in administration and in the handling of that advisory board. It was a very good team. But I would assume probably that also began to get a little rusty. I don't know who Clark's director of the National Park Service was—that would have been in 1981.

Riess: Russ Dickinson?

Lane: Russ, could have been.

Riess: And then Mott, of course.

William Penn Mott—*Sunset's* Rose Garden Ceremony

Lane: That's right, Mott came in. Have you seen my picture of the early swearing-in of Bill Mott? [tape interruption] [looking at photograph] I got so excited about Bill's appointment, I called him and I said, "When are you going to be sworn in?" He said, "Well, they don't know about the scheduling in the Rose Garden." I said, "Well, if I got permission from the White House, maybe we could have an early swearing-in."

I called Meese, or somebody who was still then at the White House, and he said oh, it would be all right. So we had it all set up, with a lunch at *Sunset*. These were all the key players. [shows photograph] That's Gary Everhardt.

Riess: This is May 17, 1985.

Lane: Yes. And that is Stan Albright, who was a regional director. Bill Mott of course. These were mostly regional directors. And that's Bill Briggie.

Now this part of the picture, this is pretty much the same group because they decided we couldn't have a swearing-in unless it was on government property, so we went down to the U.S. Geological Survey, which is just down the street in Menlo Park. I got some federal judge out of San Francisco to swear Bill in. And about a week later, he was sworn in in Washington.

But he was able to get the ball rolling, and he issued his famous key points—I've forgotten just what he called it, "Eleven-something"—and that was his Holy Grail for his administration of things he wanted to get accomplished. He was just off and running. This early swearing-in permitted him legally to be able to start giving orders and taking action.

Riess: Brilliant! The caption reads "Bill Mott's First Day On the Job as Director, U.S. National Park Service, Menlo Park, California, May 17, 1985." You refer to these people as "the first transition team" in Bill Mott's pre-official swearing-in?

Lane: They were regional directors for the most part. Bill Briggie was then deputy director for the Northwest territory.

Yosemite Park and Curry Company, and Firefall Nostalgia

Riess: When were you on the board of Yosemite Park and Curry Company? Was it at this same period of time when you were on the Advisory Council on National Parks?

Lane: Well, it's over twenty years ago, because I was in a transition period from the Curry Company to MCA, and U.S. Natural Resources was a concessionaire there for a while. They, as I recall, bought out Yosemite Park and Curry Company. They owned the Ice Follies and something else, and I think they bought the Curry Company out. They kept the name, Yosemite Park and Curry Company, as MCA

did too. I had been on the board for the Curry Company, and then I was on an advisory board, I think, with the Curry Company.

Riess: Who appointed you to that?

Lane: That would have been Stuart Cross, who was the son-in-law of Mrs. Tressider. Mrs. Tressider, of course, was the daughter of David and Mrs. Curry. So it was a family business of the Curry-Tressider family until they sold to U.S. Natural Resources, which had mining and a conglomerate of things.

During that period of time I was very involved in some environmental things that took place. One of them was a program to eliminate a lot of the automobile traffic in the upper end of the valley, close off Mirror Lake and Bridal Veil Falls and put in the public transportation. We got the government to buy the open trains, the "elephant trains," and the Curry Company would operate them.

Also I was involved in the demolition and removal of the old village, so that as you come in now, the only thing there is a church. That whole big commercial area, the dance hall, theater, restaurants—Degnan's was down there then, a big grocery, general services store, greasy spoons, hamburgers, what they called the old village. And also the old hotel, which was left standing until not too long ago. It was not being used.

Riess: Was that your doing?

Lane: Oh, I was very much in favor of eliminating it.

Riess: Were they already thinking about all of this?

Lane: I don't know when the thought came up. I just was very much encouraging that. All these environmental projects Yosemite Park and Curry Company took the leadership on. Among all the concessionaires in the National Park Service, Yosemite, partly because it was such a prominent park, whatever it did had a tremendous influence.

It may be doing a disservice to a little small park where they also were doing some innovative things that just didn't get noticed or anybody pay any attention to them, but certainly Yosemite was a bellwether for getting a lot of momentum going because it attracted so much attention, whatever it did. It wasn't quite, "As goes General Motors, so goes the U.S. economy," but Yosemite was certainly a bellwether for things that were good.

Riess: Was the Tressider family quite enlightened?

Lane: Well, the family wasn't very active. Actually, Stuart Cross was the only active one. Either Mrs. Tressider was not active or had died. There were no other family in it, and that's one of the reasons they sold. There was a Curry son, who I suppose would have been the brother of Mrs. Tressider, but I don't remember any others. There were some daughters and things, but they weren't involved in the company.

Riess: And the rest of the board?

Lane: I remember Don Hummel, who had Glacier National Park, and also a park in the Southwest, those two concessions, he was on the board and he became one of the officers of the company temporarily, I think chief executive officer actually, as a general manager. Not president or anything because it was owned by this conglomerate.

Riess: The 1980 general management plan, were you working on that?

Lane: Yes, but that was long after I was on that board.

Riess: Were you on the board when you were working on that?

Lane: I'm not sure.

Riess: In the vitae you've given me, there are boards and activities listed but really no dates to speak of.

Lane: Yes, I know that, and it would be very difficult, even with digging back into the files, to get precise dates. It would be very difficult.

Riess: We talked about your days as a packer, but I didn't ask you about the Tressiders or Mother Curry. Do you have stories about them?

Lane: Oh, yes, you bet I do. Not in any voluminous way, but I helped take care of Dr. Tressider's horses at the stables and used to saddle up for them. He and Mrs. Tressider would very frequently ride on a weekend, or sometimes during the week.

I knew Mother Curry. When I did the children's burro picnic, she would sometimes come down and see us off. This was in '38, '39. We gathered at Camp Curry, and she had her little cottage up behind there, and she'd come down and see us off.

She, Mother Curry, also was a very close friend of a Señora Lindeman, a Spanish lady who had married a German in Mexico and had two beautiful daughters who sang, the Lindeman sisters. There were three of them. One was Coco, a beautiful brunette a little older than I was, and I liked her very much—and in fact, we're close friends now. She was widowed not too long ago and married the president of the University of British Columbia, and spends part of her time here in Portola Valley, has a home here.

But Coco played the guitar, and the girls used to sing "Indian Love Call" for firefall, and I would call firefall quite often when they sang while the fire was falling. She was the hostess on the children's picnic, and I was the packer guide, and so we became very close friends.

Bertha, another sister, lives over in Woodside, also widowed. I've forgotten where the other sister lives—in Palo Alto, I think.

But I got to know Mrs. Curry quite well, and then later when I was going up to some of those early board meetings Mrs. Tressider, I think, was still living down at Stanford, and I would stay in their suite, which was in the top of the Ahwanee, or one of the bedrooms of their suite. I knew Mrs. Tressider quite well.

There is a very interesting book on Dr. Tressider's years at Stanford. I don't know if you've ever seen it or not, but it probably has some background on his days in Yosemite. Mother Curry was very much of an equal partner with David Curry when he was a teacher in the Redwood City school system, and they got this little camp up there, and he developed the firefall and slowly built up Camp Curry. She did all the cooking and administered the camps.

Mrs. Tressider was also a powerhouse, her daughter, in running it. She was, on her husband's death, president of Yosemite Park and Curry Company, or chairman, I've forgotten what. And her son-in-law, Stuart Cross, took over from her as president. I think it was at that time that I went on the board, when Stuart became president.

Riess: Were you up there when the Sierra Club would take really huge groups on the high trips?

Lane: I would pack them. I was one of the packers for them. I know once we went up to the Tioga site when Mather, with the Sierra Club, donated the road. He bought the private road and gave it to the Park Service I think about the year he became the first director, 1916 or 1917, right after he became director and founded the National Park Service, which was founded really after the California State Park

System. The secretary that he was so close to was Franklin Lane, and they both came from San Francisco with President Wilson's election.

But in any event, I was a junior packer and I took a Sierra Club group. We went up Tenaya Canyon, Tenaya Lake, and on up to Tuolumne Meadows and on up to the summit of the pass, at the site where Mather had turned over the road to the park.

There was another big group that used to go out. The Fuller family had a huge group that used to go primarily out of Sequoia, but occasionally out of Yosemite too. They kind of alternated between Sequoia and Yosemite, but on more than one occasion it was a long ride and they would go from Sequoia to Yosemite or Yosemite to Sequoia. Once or twice with Ike Livermore, who was the packer that I worked with in Sequoia before I went up to Yosemite, I helped pack them out of Sequoia on the first week or so of their trek up Yosemite. That was one of the biggest pack trips I think probably conducted in the high Sierras.

Riess: And what were the considerations of impact on those big trips?

Lane: I don't think I thought too much about that. Horses and mules and the mountains are kind of a natural phenomenon, although I can appreciate on certain trails—I was very supportive of restricting certain trails for the use of horses, not because of manure particularly, but just like dirt bikes or motorized vehicles, or some of those jeep trails, where they chop it, and then the winter run-off just makes gullies.

Later we closed a lot of trails in Yosemite to horses, but I am very much opposed to any movement to eliminate horses from national parks. First of all, the supplying of the camps that they want to have for their hiking groups, you have to haul the sewage out now. And I'm all for hauling in feed and not grazing on the meadows, and spreading the manure or hauling it out. So I'm very much in favor of a lot of the environmentalists' ideas. Actually the back country has not had an increasing use as have the more accessible areas. The back country in the Sierras has not been terribly impacted in recent years.

Fun Parks—Competition with National Parks

Riess: The May 1990 *Sunset* piece on Yosemite was about the back country.

Lane: It was, but that article, 1990, the centennial of Yosemite, the reason for focusing in on it was to not implicate further density of visitors to the main visitor areas but to get more people into the back country.

I haven't seen the figures for the last couple of years, but young people today are not progressing as they were in terms of backpacking and camping, and young families are not doing as much camping as they were. Maybe it's because of more commercialized fun-parks. There are a lot of reasons that have been given, more travel, more accessibility to somewhat more commercial destinations. Even some of the river runners are not doing as well as they used to do—I was talking to Martin Litton the other day. So the wilderness is surprisingly not getting as much impaction by increased population as you might think.

Riess: But the drive-through population is still there. At Zion National Park they are putting in a big-screen theater outside the park so that people can get "the Zion experience." As if they're suggesting that some people could just do that and go home, and let Zion continue to be a sleepy little underused park.

Lane: Yes, there's a lot of support for that kind of activity. The new Disney operation in West Virginia, which will replicate a lot of history of our country, my wife's on the board of the Smithsonian Natural History Museum and she says that there's a concern about what impact it [Disney] would have on people visiting some of the museums. Not that the Natural History Museum is colonial history particularly, or Civil War history, but both eras will be reflected in that Disney park.

It will be interesting to see how people will gravitate, as they have anticipated at Zion. Zion, as I recall, is kind of a test case of that theory, that if you can give them a minimal experience that is quality and has real substance to it, that that would help to minimize the traffic inside the park.

[End Tape 12, Side B]

VII AMBASSADORSHIP

[Interview 7: September 16, 1994]

[Begin Tape 13, Side A] ##

Ambassador-at-Large and Commissioner General, World's International Ocean Exposition, Expo '75, Japan: Okinawa

Riess: You've referred to your ambassador-at-largeship in Japan under President Ford. The title was Ambassador-at-Large and Commissioner General, World's International Ocean Exposition, Expo '75, Japan. What was your mission there?

Lane: Well, to go back, I had been asked in about 1972 by President Nixon to be chairman of the United States Bicentennial Commission. That was leading up, of course, to the Bicentennial in 1976.

There had been several attempts in the sixties to get the Bicentennial organization off the ground—I don't know when it began, it could have begun with President Eisenhower or Kennedy or Johnson, but there were several attempts. I know Dr. [Wallace] Sterling, the president of Stanford University, upon his retirement was chairman for a while. There was a man with *McCall's* magazine, a big hot shot who was a friend of Kennedy's I think, who was brought in. Finally Congress bit the bullet and decided to create a commission, or some official government agency.

At that time Ann Armstrong was in the White House, and she knew Secretary [Rogers] Morton, whom I had been with and gotten to know when I was chairman of the Presidential Commission on the Centennial of the National Parks—and I knew Nixon and Haldeman and those guys. This would have been about 1970 or 1971, because the centennial was in '72, which was the hundredth anniversary of Yellowstone National Park. As sometimes happens with Congress the funding and so forth was delayed, so we had to move awfully fast, but we brought off a very outstanding centennial celebration for the whole year.

In the course of that period, and I'm not sure of the exact date, Ann Armstrong asked me to come over to the White House and talk to the president, and it turned out to be, "Would I be chairman of this new government commission [United States Bicentennial Commission]?" Well, I said no to that, and subsequently John Warner took it on.

Riess: Why did you say no to that?

Lane: Oh, I think because of the long term, to '76, and then you had to make the report to Congress, which took I figured at least two years. And the funding was for two years following for the report that would go back to Congress on the accomplishments of the Bicentennial. It was just too long a time frame for *Sunset* and for my family and other things. It was going to be a very, very heavy job to do from the West Coast.

Riess: It's not a figurehead job.

Lane: Oh, God, no. No, it wouldn't have been anyway.

There are figurehead jobs, and the job of the ambassadorship in Japan could have been a figurehead job. In fact, the state department would have much preferred it that way. But that was not the way I took it. No, this was going to be a hardworking job, commuting from the West Coast and all. I would practically have had to resign and live back there.

In any event, I didn't do it, but when the Ford administration came in, belatedly there was a World's Fair in Japan, in Okinawa. The roots of that, ironically, came out of the 1972 trip that Nixon and Kissinger made to China: on the way back they signed an agreement with the Japanese government on the release of the Ryukyus, which we had kept after the treaty with Japan because of our heavy military investment and position in the Ryukyus, of which Okinawa is the capital of that prefecture. The agreement called for a \$25 million gift which we said we would give to Japan to help them reunite the Ryukyus with the mainland.

The Japanese government decided that the way they would do that would be a World's Fair with their principal trading partners primarily, which were in the Middle East and in Asia. The United States was already committed, of course. So they decided on a world's fair on oceanography and the sea around us.

I had been involved with water and ocean things, and I think I told you an early investor in Sea Life Park in Hawaii, and I had been invited to be a part of the Law of the Sea [Conference] with the United Nations, although I didn't do that either. I knew some of the people in the Ford administration—I didn't know President Ford particularly well, but I knew Kissinger, who was then secretary of state, and this was a state department function, our participation in the World's Fair, through the United States Information Service, which is an arm of the state department.

A Mr. Kehoe, who was a former *Time* executive, was then director of the United States Information Agency, which is what it's called domestically—overseas it's called "Service," United States Information Service. I was asked if I would be the ambassador for our country. There were forty-five other countries which were primarily trading partners with Japan that were invited. We were the lead country, but there was also the Soviet Union and Iran and Iraq, and Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Australia and New Zealand, Taiwan, Korea, and so forth. China did not have an exhibit, as I recall.

So I said yes to that, fully assuming that I would be living in Japan as United States Commissioner General of our exposition there, of our pavilion, so to speak. And being on oceanography, I had a lot of interest in that.

Riess: Who was our ambassador there?

Lane: The ambassador to the country was a former Lockheed executive, and I'll think of his name, who was a good friend of mine. We became very close, and he and his wife were very hospitable. We had a suite in the embassy in Tokyo where I spent a lot of time. But this is getting ahead of the story.

The Move to Okinawa

Lane: It turns out that USIA people assumed, as had been true with other World's Fairs overseas, that the ambassador would only visit there on occasions, and for ceremonial events and the opening and closing and the National Day and so forth. But it never entered my head that that was what they were thinking about at USIA, so from the minute I said I'd be interested in it, and I talked to Jean, it was always in my mind going to precipitate a move of our family.

I checked into the Department of Defense schools, which our children would be attending on Okinawa, and found they were very good schools. I went over there on a trip, and checked into housing. I found a home that had been started in construction for Admiral Nimitz right after the battle of Okinawa, but then the atom bomb precluded his moving from Guam to Okinawa for the invasion of Japan, directing the battle for the invasion of Japan, so he never lived in the house. It was completed, and it was owned by a Foremost Dairy executive who had a big contract for the military. He was willing to rent it, so I made a tentative agreement that we'd rent this home.

Riess: And you figured it would be a year.

Lane: Well, it was about a year and a half.

The hearing in Congress—Chuck Percy was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and my hearing was before him. Shirley Temple and I went through the same class on hearings; she was going to Ghana and I was going to Japan.

Riess: What do you mean class on hearings? That's a kind of prepping?

Lane: Well, yes, briefings that you were getting. She was getting briefings, of course, on African politics and things in Ghana, and I was getting briefings on world's fairs.

It turned out that I knew a hell of a lot about the history of world's fairs. I loved the San Francisco World's Fair when I was a kid, and my dad was very much involved in the organization of Treasure Island. So I had a lot of literature and knew more about it than anybody I talked to in Washington! And I had been on the Japan-California Association, so I knew a lot of the people from that, and the Pacific Basin Economic Council, so I knew a lot of the government and business people.

Riess: You didn't need the prepping.

Lane: No, I didn't. But I learned a lot, and I also got involved in what we needed. We needed a big, key exhibit, and because I had a lot of contacts at Lockheed here in Sunnyvale I got Lockheed to make a mock-up of a new technology which they had developed where you took warm surface ocean water and cold deeper water, and with some kind of gas you generated power. They subsequently put that into an operating test model and operated it off of the big island [of Hawaii] right near the Mauna Kea Hotel. But that mock-up was our key exhibit, and the state department or USIA didn't have a damn thing to do with it.

The Motubu Peninsula, where the fair was located, now a beautiful resort area with lovely hotels and all, was quite a ways from where our housing was, and they didn't have a boat, so I got a very fine cabin cruiser from some boat company up in Seattle put on loan, and then we sold it and made a profit. Also I moved in on helping with the exhibit, and I got a lot of electronic gear from Hewlett-Packard that helped us in some of our other exhibits.

We got moon rocks, and the Japanese went bananas over moon rocks. We just had gotten these moon rocks a couple of years before, and they were hard to get. But I got them out of NASA.

Riess: It sounds like without you it would have been a pretty thin thing. In fact, it sounds like they really hadn't taken it all nearly as seriously as you took it.

Lane: Well, they did, but it was a half-assed effort. It was not the best our country could put forward.

In any event, I plowed into this, and this upset some of the people at the USIA. Then I told them I was going to live over there. Well, this really knocked the socks off of them, because they hadn't anticipated this.

Riess: Was it the cost?

Lane: Oh, just the nuisance, I think, of having an ambassador there. I took over the office of the deputy, who was full-time, so he—it would be like the deputy chief of mission who didn't expect an ambassador to a country to live in the country, and so he had taken the ambassador's office. We moved over and pushed this guy out of the corner beautiful office overlooking the ocean from the Motubu Peninsula, which was a very important battlefield in the battle of Okinawa. A little island that I could see from my office was where Ernie Pyle had been killed.

We had a beautiful pavilion. Gee, I wish I'd brought some of the material down that I just came across out in my country office, pictures of our pavilion and all. It was just a knockout. In any event we lived out there, and Jean got very much involved. In fact, we were just at a wedding of a family that we met, a wonderful wedding up in Seattle. And Jean had lunch yesterday with some Okinawan friends that live in the area now.

Our kids, our two youngest, went to the Department of Defense schools. Our daughter, who was in college—there wasn't a college there really, the University of the Ryukyus—she taught English in a Japanese school. But it was a great cultural experience. I got a horse for my youngest daughter.

Riess: Well, wonderful. Now, what did you generate from all this?

Lane: [laughs] What we generated—first of all, I was elected chairman of what they call the College of Exhibitors. The forty-five other heads of their delegations, most of them were ambassadorial rank, but not too many of them lived there. They met at

the beginning, and once or twice during the six months, and then at the end for the closing when the prince was there, who's now the emperor, who closed the exposition.

Riess: Was there a lot of good press for this country?

Lane: Oh, a lot of good press. We made fantastic inroads in helping achieve what Kissinger and Nixon had hoped for in '72, that it would help to reunite the Ryukyus.

Ryukyu Island Chain, and the Pacific Basin

Lane: The Ryukyus have always been separate from the mainland in that they didn't get much milk, or attention, from the royal family. As they say on an Iowa farm, it's the left-hind tit—an island is the left-hind tit.

Riess: Left-hind tit?

Lane: It's the left-hind tit that doesn't get much milk for the little piglet that's stuck down there; the other piglets are getting all the milk before it gets down there. The Ryukyus is this chain that almost goes to Taiwan, that goes down south—[looking at globe] there's a whole chain of them. Naha is right next to Taiwan. In fact, from Ishigaki, which was the last of the Japanese Ryukyu prefecture, you can see Taiwan.

It's an old culture, and quite different from the mainland, for reasons that I'll mention. But the emperor [Hirohito] did not put any of their historical temples and castles on the Red Cross list that we tried to adhere to for our bombing, that we would avoid, like Kyoto. We didn't do any bombing in Kyoto, or the Imperial Palace and so forth, but we just plastered the Ryukyus, Okinawa particularly, although it had grown back.

Today Okinawa is one of the major tourist destinations. As the economy has gone baloney over there, people who would normally go to Hawaii now go to Okinawa, where there are beautiful beach hotels, and pineapple plantations. It's just a lovely island, and it was in '75 to '76.

We helped very definitely to reestablish and reunite the Ryukyus with the mainland. Another reason it was not part of the main fabric of the Japanese

political or cultural scene is that it remained open during the 200-plus year closure of the mainland islands, and that was the reason Perry went into Naha in, what was it, 1848 or '46, whatever it was. Naha was an open port.

If you go through the graveyards there, you see Portuguese, Dutch. And there were a lot of cross-marriages with the Chinese, with the native race of Taiwan, with Koreans, so the people of the Ryukyus, particularly in Okinawa, have much different facial features.

In any event, Perry went in there because it was an open port, before he negotiated with the Shoguns to come up to where he brought his fleet eventually for the opening of Japan, the so-called Black Ships.

Riess: You are so good on history. Before you got over there did you get that kind of background, or is this what you learned there?

Lane: Well, I had traveled to Japan before, and I am very interested in the Japanese history and the Japanese culture, and Jean was interested in it. I was involved with the Japan-California Association and the Pacific Basin Economic—and then PATA, Pacific Area Travel Association. President Ford, and Kissinger, they both knew my background in the Pacific, so I related to all these Pacific countries.

But the way I got started—well, again it piggybacks back to the bicentennial. Kissinger, when he was with Nixon in the White House, was aware of my background that made them approach me to be chairman of our Bicentennial Commission for the United States, and he asked me would I help coordinate, in the Pacific, countries that were going to be participating in our bicentennial. I worked with John Warner, who was then heading up the commission, the job that I had been offered. [John Warner, Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, 1974-1976.] I traveled all over the Pacific in early '75 helping to coordinate when I went to this job.

So not only did I relate to all of these specific countries when they visited their World's Fair pavilion, and there were many ministers of tourism and so forth, and dignitaries that came to this World's Fair, but then Kissinger gave me a special travel allowance over and above the one I had, which wasn't much, because my job was primarily right there, except for back and forth to Tokyo.

In fact, Jean and I spent our twentieth wedding anniversary, in 1975, on Heron Island on the Great Barrier Reef. I was down there to speak to a large business

conference at the Opera House in Sydney, and to meet with the head of IBM in Australia who was chairman of the U.S. Bicentennial Committee for Australia.

The Australians had all kinds of things they were doing directly [for our bicentennial]. They gave a million dollars to Harvard for an Australian study program, and they rotate now key people from the United States to serve on this million-dollar chair, which would now be probably ten million dollars at Harvard, but at that time it was a million. Malcolm Fraser, who was then prime minister, who's a good friend of mine now, hand-delivered this million-dollar check to give it to President Ford as one of their gifts.

And the Emperor of Japan gave a fabulous collection of bonsai which is still in the Smithsonian National Arboretum. All those countries did a lot directed to recognizing our bicentennial, and I was helping to coordinate, give ideas, and cooperate. If I found a snag, say in the Philippines, where they weren't getting the right contacts in the United States, I would facilitate that, and report to Kissinger, who was kind of the overlord, and to John Warner, who was chairman of the commission or whatever it was.

Riess: You said that you knew Kissinger from an earlier time?

Lane: I met him in the Nixon administration. I had lunch with him just recently. We're not intimate friends, but he gave me a very nice inscription in his recent book on diplomacy, which is a hell of a good book, incidentally. Kind of an ego trip, but it's an excellent book.

Riess: The Pacific Basin I know has been an area of interest for *Sunset*. But it was particularly so for you?

Lane: Well, twenty years before that I'd been involved in the founding of the Pacific Area Travel Association. So I wouldn't say there was all that great of an awakening. It strengthened my interest, and I guess my breadth of contacts, because in that job I met probably more senior people from corporations, particularly Japanese corporations, all of whom had major exhibits there—Sony, Toyota, most of the large companies had big corporate exhibits at that World's Fair. We entertained a lot, and they entertained a lot, and they had a lot of key people.

I made a lot of contacts and many of them got played back to members of Congress who came out. Because I had been elected chairman of the College of Exhibitors, of all the countries, I was in a position not exactly to take advantage of it, but there

was good exposure. Many occasions I would speak on behalf of all of the countries, from a fair where they couldn't have everybody speak.

Riess: The U.S. is almost by definition lead dog in these things?

Lane: Well, yes, I would say so. At least in the Pacific it is, and in Japan it was, partly coming out of the MacArthur era of the equivalent of the Marshall Plan of reinstituting democracy and getting their industry back on its feet.

Sunset, Long-Distance, and Abroad

Riess: How did this feed back—I know you think about this—into editorial and advertising at *Sunset*?

Lane: Oh, the entrees that I could give our editors, just as domestically I've pointed out on national parks they would give us entree, or they would maybe say yes to us in the early days of powerful travel media like *Holiday*—today it might be *Condé Nast Traveler* or whatever. But to the extent that they would give cooperation.

We did a film for Chevrolet on national parks, and the superintendent of Glacier, who is now the superintendent of Rainier, Bill Briggie, gosh, he provided a car, provided a crew, he got the concessionaire there to comp. A Chevrolet guy was there from their advertising agency, and he was just dumbfounded. He told me, "I don't think they would have done that for Time Inc."

I said, "Maybe not, but I don't think Time Inc. has done as much for the national parks as *Sunset* has either." We've promoted national parks far more than all the Time Inc. magazines together, and this was at a period when Time Inc. was riding high.

Riess: That's a very interesting introduction to your ambassadorship to Australia, and in a way it answers a question of how did you know how to do it? You were very much in the system.

Lane: Well, it strengthened it, no question about that. And it was a wonderful family experience. Culturally, the kids got a lot out of it, although it is very Americanized, and at that time it was more so than it is now. Now, they've reverted to the left-hand drive and things, but at that time it was American, and we bought most of our goods at the PX stores and things like that.

But we made a real effort to get the kids out into some of the native villages, and our housekeeper took us to her family home. One of my security guards took us to his father's funeral, which was quite different in Okinawa than it is in the mainland of Japan. We learned a lot of the Okinawan traditions that were unique.

Riess: Now I'm sure you work by fax, but this was twenty years earlier, so it was just telephone communication with *Sunset*?

Lane: Yes, it was, and I came back at my own expense on several occasions to report to Secretary Kissinger. And Mel and Joan came out there once, and there was a lot of correspondence with *Sunset*. In fact, this morning we were talking about it [how things were done in an earlier day] because I was meeting the new ad manager, and that's why I was a little late for you. He's a wonderful guy, comes from California, but he's been with Time Inc. back in New York now for ten years. They were kind of milking me for history and why did we do this, why did we do that. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I made a point to them that I felt they had maybe lost sight of some of the, not constraints, but some of the guideposts and some of the strategies that we were so strong for in terms of policy, that you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that. Now, some editors chafed under that, that they couldn't take a home article and maybe go more into interior decorating.

But we said, "Interior decorating is not our field. We're not expert at it, and we're going to stick with more the structural changes. Interior direction by indirection is going to get a benefit, because you don't remodel your kitchen and not buy new appliances. You buy paint and wallpaper and so forth." So the advertiser has the opportunity to provide the what-to-do-it-with complement to the *Sunset* editorial. We are not going to try to compete with *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* on interior decorating."

So the point being there that we had these policies. And I mentioned Chuck Percy as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He didn't ask me to resign my positions at *Sunset*, so I continued as publisher and chairman of the board, or president, or whatever I was at the time.

Riess: But it's the how do you do that?

Lane: Well, I've always been a good communicator—I'm sure if I ducked into the files—you don't know how many times I've used that letter [Cecil Andrus' January 6, 1981 letter to Lane]. [laughs]

Riess: But didn't you have to approve each month's magazine?

Lane: Oh, no, I didn't do that. No, the editor, Proctor Mellquist came over twice, Mel came over once. No. In fact, I never "approved the magazine" when I was there [at *Sunset*].

Riess: Wasn't there a way in which you walked past the final board each time?

Lane: Oh, yes, I'd go by on that board, that's right, and long before that board was final, when it's up there in rough draft, the scribbled-in title is there, I might tell Mellquist or somebody, "I think that's a little off base for us."

I remember they came up with an article on boutique breweries, which was quite a fashionable thing twenty-some years ago, and I said, "It's fun, it's a good tourist attraction, but how can you promote editorial and come across credibly to not only readers but to your advertisers when you don't accept beer advertising?" So we knocked it out. I think we later let it go—I remember there was one in the old downtown of Portland that they'd restored, and I said, "Well, okay, a paragraph or so in there, as one of the attractions to see." But that's quite different than a feature article on boutique breweries. We had, for instance, let beer and certainly occasionally liqueur, which we didn't accept [advertising for], to go into recipes.

Riess: It's a reminder that the staffing at *Sunset* has been consistent and long-term. After all, if Proctor Mellquist didn't know what you wanted, and if you didn't know what he was doing, there was something wrong.

Lane: Oh, yes, and we had a very strong policy book. In terms of the style of writing, we had a style book which was very tightly administered. And my brother was there, Mel was there, and he, I'm sure, walked down and looked at the articles. He wouldn't have had the same sensitivities, perhaps, that I would have had to certain things, but he probably had some different ones than I had. It never worried me that we were going to get way off track, or that if I missed having a phone call that something catastrophic was going to happen.

I remember there was a situation with a personnel issue that I got involved with, a key person. I flew him out there, and gave him a Dutch uncle talk and got him straightened out.

Riess: Do you keep various offices, like USIA offices or embassies, supplied with complimentary *Sunset* magazine?

Lane: I used to. I don't know, if I looked at my comp list today—USIA on their own has had *Sunset* in most of their offices overseas. We were one of the few that never had an interruption during most of the intense period of restricting U.S. publications into the USIA library in Moscow. *Sunset* went through. The first editor that came from *Pravda*, from USIA, that came to the United States after the Berlin Wall, we had him at *Sunset* I remember.

And there are other examples of where *Sunset* fit in. Take Moslem or some other cultures, the magazine was allowed because we didn't have tobacco, we didn't have liquor, it was family, we didn't have sex, we didn't have some of the things that different cultures object to.

Riess: It's a real "Voice of America" magazine, really.

Lane: I would say so, yes, *Sunset* and the *National Geographic*. And in fact, Gil Grosvenor and I have talked about this. Even the *Reader's Digest* [might be taboo] because they would get into articles on abortion or something else that some countries found objectionable to their religious beliefs or whatever. Whereas *National Geographic* and *Sunset* were generally accepted.

Riess: Do you make that kind of point to your advertisers?

Lane: I did. I don't know whether they do now or not, and I don't know whether we still have that acceptability.

[End Tape 13, Side A]

[Begin Tape 13, Side B] ##

Lane: Dan Boorstin, one of his daughters worked in southern California for *California* magazine or something, and he knew *Sunset* pretty well, and he told me he thought *Sunset* was one of the best representatives of what America would like to be thought of, or like to be judged by, overseas.

Riess: This is the Librarian of Congress?

Lane: The Librarian of Congress.

Ambassadorship to Australia: Lane's Background with Reagan

Riess: Then you were back here in 1976. When did the ambassadorship to Australia come up? When and how and from whom?

Lane: Early '85. Well, I had been approached by the president.

Riess: And that was Reagan, whom you had known quite well already?

Lane: As governor, right. And I knew Bill Casey very well, who came in and headed up his [Reagan's] campaign towards the end, and I knew Cap Weinberger and others in the administration.

Riess: Had you worked on Reagan's campaign?

Lane: No, I never—I was reading *Foreign Affairs* magazine last night, and they keep bitching about political ambassadors buying their way. I don't think I ever gave more than five or ten thousand dollars, and I definitely was not involved in the campaign. I'm supporting Feinstein right now—I got a call yesterday from her administrative assistant in Washington thanking me—because I think she's done a hell of a good job. And I don't like [Senate candidate Michael] Huffington.

Riess: You were supporting Reagan?

Lane: Yes. I supported him, but I've never really been a big donor. I supported the Congressional Circle, which is for Republican members of Congress, but now I'm supporting individually Dianne Feinstein. I generally am in agreement with the Republican party, so I support that. I support the Eagles, which is a group that supports all kinds of Republican causes. But I did not come in heavy on that. First of all, I couldn't afford it in those days. I mean, a \$100,000 gift, I just didn't have that in my *Sunset* days.

Riess: All right. Did the notion of an ambassadorship ever enter your mind?

Lane: No. In the first Reagan administration I was asked [to be Secretary of Interior] by Senator [Clifford P.] Hansen, who had been on my national parks centennial commission—I had four senators and four congressmen on that centennial commission in '72, and Senator Hansen was one of them. He was approached by Reagan to be Secretary of Interior and he turned it down, and then he said to Reagan, "You've got a fellow Californian," as he told me later, "out there who I imagine you know."

The president said, "Who's that?" Hansen said, "Bill Lane. Bill's been involved with BLM, parks, Indians, and so on and so forth in interior, and interiors normally come from the West," and so forth. So I was asked to come back, and I talked to the president and Casey and some others.

Riess: Tell me about that meeting. What did they ask?

Lane: Well, "If we were to put your name forward, would you consider accepting?" Because they don't want to get a name out there and then the guy says no. Recent appointments have had that, and it's very embarrassing to them.

For one reason or another, in that first [Reagan] term I said no, that I did not want a permanent appointment, but that I would welcome an opportunity to serve in a commission of some sort. I went on to a trade commission of Bill [William Edward] Simon's—Bill Simon was the chairman. In fact, Simon was just up to the house for dinner the other night and we were reminiscing about that. It was called the Noncompetitiveness Commission. I served three or four appointments in that first Reagan term. [Appointed to National Productivity Advisory Committee, November 1981]

But I had said that hopefully, by the second term, I'd be interested in a full-time appointment. Well, about mid-term with Watt, when he was beginning to get into hot water, either Bill Casey or somebody else called me—I know, it was Bob Tuttle, who was the director of personnel for Reagan. He called and said, "Would you be interested in putting your hat in the ring for interior again?" I said, "Well, I'm not sure about that, but maybe." I talked to Jean again, and Mel, about four years in the second term, because it was assumed Reagan would be reelected.

Then Casey called me, and he had a job which I definitely didn't want, which was something with the CIA.

Riess: Really? What?

Lane: Well, it was to help train—which now they're doing very aggressively—to help train and coordinate overseas businesses on the security of patents and things which the Japanese, even our allies, are trying to get. The Japanese got, what was it, some silent submarine propeller patent [from the British].

You know, that's such a screwy world. I told Casey, "I couldn't live with my family, my kids particularly. We couldn't talk about any of this stuff." But it's part

of the world, I guess. In any event, I said, "No, I wouldn't want that." We were talking a year or two ahead of time for the second term.

Background on U.S. Embassy in Australia

Lane: So in '85, when Reagan was reelected, Pete Wilson called and said he'd been over at the White House and learned that the ambassador to Australia was retiring, a fellow by the name of Bob [Robert D.] Nesen. He was my predecessor. He was one of the "kitchen cabinet" of Reagan's election, and he was a major contributor. Largest Cadillac dealer in the world or something. Nice guy, but I would say he would be one that if I were career state department I would say he wasn't really qualified for the job.

Riess: And that reflected our attitude towards Australia?

Lane: Well, it was a concern to the Australians that Nesen was promoted as having this great close contact with Reagan, which he did, but he lacked an expertise, he didn't have any experience with Congress, he didn't really know Australia very well. He was interested in cattle and he had a cattle ranch, but he was just—the state department cut him off at the balls every time, so he just sat. And his wife didn't like it.

He was an example of a political ambassador, very definitely not up to the standards of what we should be represented by. He didn't get around, he didn't like to speak, he hated the press, he got clobbered by the press. So he was a very ineffective ambassador.

Riess: You're saying that the state department was kind of working against our interest in Australia then?

Lane: Well, the ambassador was. And frankly, the career state department people kind of like that, because it means that the deputy chief of mission and all the people in the state department don't have to fuss around with this ambassador. They can just send him out to do a few ceremonial things.

In fact, Nesen's deputy chief of mission, David Lambertson, made so many brownie points that he was appointed ambassador to Thailand. We were just his guests there last fall. Most of his brownie points were made when this ambassador [Nesen] was sitting in his library doing nothing, or making terrible mistakes, where

the state department comes along and bails him out, and the chief of mission becomes a hero. Well, George Schultz was getting fed up with this.

Riess: When you say "cut him off at the balls," you're really saying that they castrated him.

Lane: Yes.

John Gardner—I think I told you, I'm sponsoring a three-year trial for this leadership program at the [Stanford] business school. They've got a fantastic lineup of CEOs who want to lecture to the class. John was saying yesterday—I had really unloaded on him—he said, "Bill, you've got to talk about leadership as a chief of mission."

The big leadership problem, as I've told you, is that the state department would like to present to the world that "the foreign embassy is," quote, "the state department," when in fact it's frequently, as it was in my case, a minority in terms of personnel. You have agriculture, commerce, defense—defense alone was twice the size [of the state department] because you have the army, navy, marine corps, the three major defense elements, all of which reported to me, not just for Australia but for the whole South Pacific. I had six pilots on my staff, for my plane, that rotated, and they had desk jobs, but I had a defense department that was twice as big, three times as big, as the state department. The state department just goes bananas when you point that out.

Riess: So about Nesen?

Lane: Well, the prime minister, Bob Hawke—whom incidentally I'm sponsoring for a big program up in Seattle next week, I'm bringing him over, he's now retired—he complained to the president, "We need a better ambassador." The president said, "Well, I'll replace Nesen, but I don't want to fire him." So Nesen resigned at the end of the first term, or said he would resign.

That's when the president mentioned to Pete Wilson something about, "Your friend Nesen." Wilson, coming from southern California, knew Nesen; he was on the military committee and knew Nesen was just embarrassing us down there. He [Wilson] talked to the president about replacing Nesen. The president, Pete has told me, said, "Okay, you're going to get your wish, we're going to have to appoint a new ambassador."

That's when he said, "Do you have any ideas?" and Wilson said, "Bill Lane." And the president presumably said, "Yes, I remember he briefed me on my trip when I was governor. I'll talk to him." So he actually called me on the phone.

Riess: And had Pete Wilson talked to you about it before?

Lane: No. As a matter of fact, before the president called, Bob White, who's now Pete's chief of staff—still is, was then, and in fact was when he was mayor—Bob White, when I was back in Washington on some other, and he asked to have breakfast with me at the Hay-Adams. We were just laughing about this a few weeks ago.

He said, "Bill, would you rather live in Washington or Australia?" I said, "Well, they're both nice. I guess it would be a little different experience to live in Australia, although I have visited over there." He said, "Well, you may have a chance, if you want." I've forgotten just exactly how the conversation went, but I got a call a week or two later from the president who said, "Would you accept my nomination?" I said, "Yes." That was in March of '85.

Riess: You didn't put any restrictions on it, like, "Yes, if I can really make a difference," or some such?

Lane: Oh, I remember one thing, and he and I have laughed about it, I said, "Mr. President"—both he and Mrs. Reagan read *Sunset*, and they gave *Sunset* books away and so forth—I said, "You know I don't need to go to Australia to throw another shrimp on the barbie." That was the term I used. [laughter] I'm glad you brought that up!

He laughed. He said, "No, I realize that. We really need you down there. If you don't believe me, talk to Cap Weinberger and Bill Casey and George Schultz. But would you accept the nomination?" And I said, "Yes." I've forgotten just what he said next, "I can't make any promises now," or whatever. What happens is that the state department put their candidate up. In this case, it had some support from George Schultz, whom I knew slightly, and he and I have laughed about this since. In fact, he was at the dinner with Bill Simon a few weeks ago, and it came up in our respective comments after dinner.

Schultz had been a friend of a career ambassador by the name of Tom [Thomas Ostrom] Enders who had gotten shafted by Bill Clark when he was over monitoring General [Alexander] Haig—Haig was starting to get off the track, and the president sent Clark over to be his deputy. Clark tangled with Enders over Nicaragua or something, and put him into some country he didn't want to go to.

Schultz had gone to school with Enders guy at Yale or Princeton or whatever, and felt some obligation to give him a good post. He had said he would like Australia. Well, that put Schultz in a kind of embarrassing position.

So at that meeting with the president I said, "Yes, I will accept, but please don't put my name forward until I can have visits with these friends," and that meant Schultz, along with Weinberger and so forth. When I met with Schultz he didn't mention Enders, but as I was leaving he said, "Bill, you should spend some time mending your political fences."

I said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well, there will be perhaps some discussion or debate or whatever on your qualifications." I said, "Well, I can't do anything about my qualifications now." He said, "No, I mean politically."

Riess: Whose warning was this?

Lane: This was Schultz's. In his office. This was on a Saturday he called me up.

I said, "Well, I don't have time at this stage of my life for mending fences." [laughter] That's what I thought. Now he says I didn't say this, so I guess it just must have been in my mind, that I'm not going to spend any time mending my political fences, as he put it.

Strategic Importance of Australia to the United States

Lane: Then I saw Weinberger, and Weinberger was probably the most insistent, because he and Casey were both aware of these joint facilities—did I mention this?—that were very classified at the time, the satellite downlinks at Pine Gap and Ayers Rock for monitoring all the aerial testing in the Northern Hemisphere. [looking at globe] Because of the strategic position here, Pine Gap is right in the center of monitoring with a satellite that was about over the Philippines, and it could monitor—whereas in the Northern Hemisphere, for the Soviets particularly, we just don't realize how much closer it is to the North Pole. So Great Britain and our allies—and we had no other ally in the South Pacific after New Zealand pulled out, and they didn't have any joint facilities, so the nuclear ship issue was nothing for them, but we had three of them.

We had another one [joint facility] down in Woomera with the air force, which was a satellite downlink. Then we had a low-frequency radio, below-surface submarine

communication center here for all the allies' submarines in the Pacific and in the Indian Ocean. Australia was key to that, and if they had gone the way of New Zealand on nuclear ships, we would have lost the joint facilities, too. Nobody saw the end of the tunnel in the Cold War in '85.

And to keep our finger and pressure on the Soviets on aerial testing we also had very deep geological seismic monitoring for underground testing, which we could pick up all around the world. So between the underground and the satellite, we could tell [if there was testing going on]. We didn't admit it at the time. Even Australia was not aware that we were also monitoring China and India's testing. They were very dicey about that, because they had these trade relationships with these two countries, and they didn't want to be perceived as being spying on them.

Australia also had trade, wheat and so forth, with the Soviet Union. But they were an ally; they couldn't make a secret of the fact that they were part of the Western Alliance as far as the Cold War with the Soviet Union. And they were always very sensitive about being perceived as being enemy or in any way spying on China or India. But we were watching them [China and India] very carefully, and we could do it very well with this same satellite which was here.

Riess: Well, that's very interesting, the sense of Australia as an observation post and not just wool and lamb.

Lane: No, that was one of the main reasons I went down. The trade and the other stuff I knew about, and I'd worked on a lot of these agricultural things with some of the countries, not necessarily Australia, although I was very familiar with Australia and got briefings from Agriculture Secretary [Richard] Lyng, who was from Fresno, had been with the president in the state government, was then secretary of agriculture. He was a wonderful person to work with. Clayton Yeutter was the trade commissioner then.

Malcolm Baldrige was commerce, and commerce was another big department that I had, that was very important. He [Baldrige] was killed up there on that ranch in northern California not too long after I went down to Nassiter, but I still worked very closely with the department of commerce. Here again, the state department was always at odds with commerce, agriculture, and defense, because they always felt competitive.

Bill Lane Makes His Presence Felt

Riess: What did you do when you first got there? First you must have had to reorganize the offices.

Lane: Oh, I did, and that's what John Gardner is asking me to stress [in talking to the class at Stanford]. It was the equivalent of a company where you have manufacturing, sales—as in Hewlett-Packard you have product development, and you've got scientists, and they're upset because their brilliant idea doesn't get on the production line, or doesn't get promoted, or whatever.

You're doing the same thing in a country, but you're not doing it in the same way, because while it's all coming out of the taxpayer's pocket, these departments in government have developed their own special entity and identity in a very solitary way with their own lobbies, their own promoters in Congress. And that all is depending upon the strength of the secretary.

Right now State's taking a buffet on budgeting, because Warren Christopher just cannot compete with some of the other members of the cabinet on the Hill. He's getting knocked all over the place on some of their budgeting. Whereas—well, Defense is obviously a good example, although Perry is not doing too well at it, but Weinberger did very well with his budgets.

Riess: As you describe the situation, it sounds like Nesen had essentially absented himself.

Lane: Yes, to his chief operating officer, who in a corporate sense is not a CEO, he has no authority in the letter from the president or the advice and consent of the senate, so he can't make any decisions, he can't represent the government in the final sense. When Nesen was there, they [state department] usually would send out an assistant secretary, an undersecretary, to be the official [government representative], which can override an ambassador. But I never had one single state department official come out to override me when I was ambassador.

In fact, at one instance I told Schultz, "I'm going to resign if you send this guy out." I think it was on the aviation agreement, and some jerk back at the state department wanted to make brownie points to sign this agreement on a new aviation agreement with United Airlines, I think it was, and Qantas. I negotiated it, and in fact I had pulled it out of the fire—the state department had screwed it all up. I insisted I was going to sign for our government, and a lot of the state department career people had said, "No, this should be signed by an assistant secretary."

Riess: When you got there, did you have a different notion of what you could do than when you left? In other words, when you got there, did you perhaps have meetings with everyone and say, "Now, we're all going to be much more open with each other."

Lane: Yes, I did, and I would say, though, that what did surprise me was the degree of intimidation. I would call it unfair, but more unpatriotic, in a way, the subliminal ways that the state department would try to weaken your position, or to mitigate your effectiveness by different crusades on things they didn't want or didn't like. Or, giving you information that was not totally complete.

Riess: Incredible! Sounds like the movies! Did you have a mole in the state department? You needed one, didn't you?

Lane: Well, yes I did. He wasn't a mole, but he was a declared Republican, a fellow by the name of Jon Glassman, who was a country officer. When I was getting delayed by these yo-yos in the state department on searching my political contributions or whatever, finally even Schultz moved in and said, "Why in the hell aren't we getting Lane down to Australia?" "Oh, we're still researching his political contributions," or something. [laughter]

This Jon Glassman was a declared Republican, while most state department are Democratic, and he encouraged me several times when I said, "Gee, I don't have time to let these people—" because I'd already made arrangements with my brother, I was going to resign, and I had resigned from the PG&E board. I was in a position where I was still getting paid by *Sunset*, but I was wondering. He said, "Oh, no, hang in there, hang in there. We're going to make this."

So when I went down to Australia, he warned me. He said, "You're going to have some real problems with that deputy chief of mission." Well, I took him on as a challenge, and we subsequently became very good friends—he's the fellow I referred to who's now ambassador to Thailand [Lambertson]. I confided in him from the beginning. I said, "We've just got to work together. You've got to be loyal to me, and my word is going to be final."

I will say, for the three or four months that he remained, he was [loyal]. But what he did do, which was all right, was he worked with all of his friends back at state to get transferred. He did it with some degree of my knowledge, not as much as I learned afterwards. I think he was honest, he had to go back and visit his sick father, but he spent a week in Washington, and I'm sure he was just beating the drums: "Get me out of this situation down in Australia, because we've got an active

ambassador." Nesen had retired in June, so he was the chargé from June until I got there in late December. He was riding high, wide and handsome as the chargé, and making a lot of brownie points. He got transferred as DCM [deputy chief of mission] to another political ambassador who was in Korea, but it was a career ambassador, and he was a lot more comfortable working in that environment. He also spoke Japanese and a little Korean, so he had a language advantage. I recommended him for the transfer—it wasn't a promotion, it was a sideways movement. He was a gentleman, and he and his wife were lovely people, but he just didn't feel comfortable.

Then I took another deputy chief of mission, Dick Tier, who had had the same job in New Zealand, whom I knew and liked well enough, but he was really out to clip my feathers. I gave him pretty good recommendations and he's now ambassador to Papua, New Guinea. I gave him a big dinner in Washington before he went over.

I've thought of a book to be called "Guideposts Down Memory Lane," just little vignettes and things, and if there's any one thing that I would like to say it's that I'm always trying to override the personality conflicts. I'm always trying—this sounds Polyanna-ish and I don't mean it that way—but I really have enjoyed trying to bring out the best in people, and to make things work.

I like helping an underdog, I like helping the disadvantaged, I like helping a person. In fact, just this morning at *Sunset* I saw this black fellow in the mail room—a terrific guy, can't think of his name now, but he wasn't doing very well, and he's not very smart. What's this movie now about this guy who's kind of dumb?

Riess: *Forrest Gump*.

Lane: Yes. Well, he's a Forrest Gump without any luck. Gump had a lot of luck.

But I like him, and I had a long talk with him once, and I don't know, I helped bring him out a little bit. Now he's a very trusted employee, and Time Warner has kept him through a lot of personnel cuts. So it isn't just the top—I like gardeners or whatever, or people in the mail room.

I worked with Dick Tier, even though two or three times—I sent two officers home, which a political ambassador never does. You just wouldn't dare do it, and you'd be intimidated to not do it, as I was intimidated—"this is the end of the world for these two officers." I said, "No, I'll give them a good recommendation."

One guy, he was economics officer but he'd never been involved in the practical, day-to-day business of commercial activity, he was just out of his element, fellow by the name of Tom Forboard. A professor, nice family and so forth. I learned the state department loans officers out, and that there was an opening for an officer to be loaned to the Import-Export Bank. The president of it was a good friend of mine from Wells Fargo—Reagan had appointed him, can't think of his name. I called him up and said, "I've got this officer with fine credentials," and this was a research job, "and I think he would be fine in research in the job as I understand it." I sent him back, he was interviewed, and he got the appointment.

My own personal assistant withheld information from me, and I could have fired him really for insubordination and lying, but I liked him, he just had a new baby and all this and that. His wife was German, and I got him a good job in Bonn, and had a stern Dutch uncle talk with him. But I sent two officers home who just were insubordinate. And I could have sent my DCM and ruined his career, because on a very critical issue he withheld a document that only came to my attention when he was on a holiday. My defense and CIA attachés came in and said, "Bill, have you seen this?" And I said, "What is it?" I looked at it. "No."

I read the first page, and it was a proposal by the Australian government—this was during the Christmas holidays, when it's down time in Australia, like August in Washington—a proposal recommending that we change the structure of the joint facilities so that they were under Australian management rather than American management. We [both countries] had equal numbers of people, but this was just contrary to everything our country stood for. This Dick Tier was working with some of the people in the ministry of defense, and their equivalent in the CIA, on why this would be a good idea. It turned out he had made reports to some subordinates at state department about the study, and had never shown it to me.

Well, boy, that was grounds for just all kinds of hell breaking loose. I called up the [Australian] minister of defense, Kim Beasley, and Michael Cook, who was then head of this intelligence group, who subsequently became ambassador for Australia in Washington. I said, "I've just seen this for the first time. Under no circumstances will I approve this. If this is released or in any way given credence with the prime minister or your cabinet, I can tell you that I will go to my president. That is definitely not what our government is going to accept, or at least what I would recommend to our government."

[End Tape 13, Side B]

[Begin Tape 14, Side A] ##

Lane: State department people are accused of getting client-itis. They get close socially, they get close patting each other on the back with the subordinates that they deal with, and in this case it would be maybe the assistant minister of defense—actually it wasn't, the minister of defense had only seen it as a discussion paper when it was about to be presented by our government as a document that we should hold meetings on or something. I've forgotten just exactly what the situation was.

The *Coral Sea* Anniversary Power Struggle

Riess: What is the chain of command? Is the state department a separate bailiwick?

Lane: No, but the state department will give you, in their briefings, every impression that you can't do anything without working through the secretary of state, but in the real world the constitutional authority is the letter of authority from the president, that you ultimately report to the President of the United States.

Riess: And if there were emergency issues?

Lane: Any issue.

Riess: You're like a president, they would wake you up in the middle of the night.

Lane: Yes. The state department would like you never to contact anyone, Secretary Weinberger, for instance, without going through the secretary of state. But I said, at the very beginning, "I will not accept that." I told Schultz, "I certainly will keep you informed on the defense issue, but I'm going to work directly with Secretary Weinberger, and copy you." Obviously you've got to keep the secretary of state informed, your salary is coming from the state department, your operational line of authority is with the state department.

I was told on one occasion that the secretary did not want me to do something, and I said, "I'm going to do it." They said, "Well, you can't do it," and I said, "I'm going to do it." It was to get a representative of the president to come down to represent our country on the anniversary of the battle of the *Coral Sea*. I had asked for a cabinet officer, and Secretary Baker was coming down but cancelled at the last minute—he was then treasury. The word came back that the state department did not want a replacement, that it was just a ceremonial event, and so forth. Well, it was a very, very critical event with the Australian government, and it was being decided by some jerk back in Washington, probably too young to fight in Vietnam,

let alone Korea, and didn't know a damn thing about World War II. And for the Australians, what had saved them from the Japanese invasion was the battle of *Coral Sea*. The annual anniversary is very critical, and a representative from the president had been coming down for thirty years.

"Well, we can't get anybody down there." This was about thirty-six hours, and I knew the only way I could do it would be to get a dedicated plane from the defense department or the White House, so I went directly to the president, and he called Weinberger, and we got the Secretary of the Army on a defense department plane, and he and his wife came out in about twenty-four hours. And they were madder than hell that I had gone over their head.

Riess: How many times did you have to go to Reagan like this?

Lane: Oh, I'd say about three times. Once, twice—maybe more on the threat of going to Reagan. But after that one time I remember one of the senior officers, fellow by the name of Thompkins, who was a wimp, he came in and he said, "Mr. Ambassador"—they'd had a kind of a coffee break of the senior staff—"Mr. Ambassador, you certainly taught us a lesson," or something like that.

I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, we all thought you were just threatening on—" I don't recall whether it was on this or another time I said I would go directly to the president—"but you proved your point," he said.

Riess: They thought it was only a false threat before or something?

Lane: Right. Nobody else ever mentioned it. The DCM was, I knew, madder than hell. His wife told my wife that he had never been so embarrassed in his life. Well, that's his problem, not mine. If he wants to work against the interests of our country, just to try to make a point on who he thinks I'm working for, he's got another think coming.

Riess: It sounds like a lot of power struggles rather than substantive issues.

Lane: Well, that was substantive. This was a big defense department entree, or historical relationship with Australia, that mitigated the image of the state department controlling all the foreign relations. That bothered the state department.

I said informally to my DCM a couple of times, when we had head-to-head discussions, I said, "If I today had to eliminate a department, or cut back on departments that I felt were most critical to me and my diplomatic and foreign

relationships with this ally, our only ally in the Southern Hemisphere, where we have a trade imbalance two to one in our favor, where we are negotiating with all of our allies for military intelligence and working in so many other ways with NASA and so on and so forth—" I had a big NASA contingent there, one of the biggest monitoring satellite stations in the world, Tidbinbilla, was right outside of Canberra "—before I would get rid of defense, agriculture, NASA, and commerce, I'd get rid of the state department."

I tell you, that didn't set well at all! [laughs] But really, as far as my day-to-day relationships with the Australian government, the business community, I'd far rather deal with the commerce department than I would with the economics officer of the state department, because he [commerce department head] is much more knowledgeable.

Riess: State department people are more interested in the underworld of what's going on?

Lane: Well, they're living in a kind of never-never world of, "We are the professional diplomats." I've talked to Mike Armacost—he's down at Stanford temporarily, and he may retire, he's not sure. He had a key job under Schultz, and I dealt with him.

Riess: What does he think they were up to?

Lane: I never pushed him against the wall.

CINC-PAC and the Nuclear Free Zone Issue

Lane: But a secretary of state is so busy—Schultz, if you think of the things he was dealing with, it's understandable you're going to delegate the running of the state department to these career people underneath you. Occasionally there will be a political appointee whom Schultz had, and was at constant loggerheads with, because Weinberger had insisted this fellow be in the state department, like that fellow by the name of [Elliot] Abrams, who was in charge of Central America. Schultz did everything he could to get him out, but Weinberger insisted, and he in effect was kind of a spy for Weinberger in the state department.

But here again, you get these trade-offs. State had a couple of key people, one in Hawaii with the CINCPAC [Commander-in-Chief, Pacific], who's a power of all the Pacific from Hawaii, in the Pacific—that's what Admiral Nimitz was. It's still a very powerful position for all the navy in the Pacific, and it was one of the key

reasons I went down there, because the South Pacific islands, led by Australia, which is a member of the South Pacific Island Council, wanted to declare this a nuclear-free zone. That was one of the first things that hit me when I arrived, and I said, "Over my dead body." But the state department was supporting it, and they had encouraged the Australians to pursue this and were becoming heroes.

We were then escorting Iran and Iraq oil out of the Gulf to protect the oil ships to Japan, and we didn't want to do it from the Mediterranean because we were afraid of the Suez Canal, so we were bringing all this stuff out and around here [looking at globe]. Because the Soviets had submarines, and they occupied Afghanistan, we were escorting all these oil ships around using ships out of CINCPAC and the Philippines. The last thing we wanted to get involved with was nuclear-free zones.

Riess: That would have closed down all that traffic through there?

Lane: Yes. But the state department thought it was a good idea.

Riess: Usually things are Australia-New Zealand, but this ambassadorship was not? Did we have an ambassador in New Zealand then?

Lane: Oh, yes, Ward Cleveland. In fact, I'll be with him next week for the Australia-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce joint meeting in Seattle where I'm going to introduce the keynote speaker, Prime Minister Hawke. Ward Cleveland was a career ambassador. He and I went through the same class, were sworn in and had our hearings together in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We are very good friends.

Riess: But that must be a very minor embassy.

Lane: Oh, it is. In fact, I was offered it. I was in New Zealand when the president called and said, "Bill, George and I have gotten together"—I've forgotten, he didn't say, "I won," but what he meant was Schultz had withdrawn the state department candidate, Tom Enders, and had agreed for me to go. I was in New Zealand at the time. Cleveland is a very competent ambassador, and he subsequently went on to Thailand, I think, and now he's back at the state department. Very fine.

In fact, I told you I took my deputy chief of mission from New Zealand, who had served primarily under Monroe Brown, another California cattleman friend of Reagan's who was in the first term and also did a lousy job.

Riess: You've been thinking about the leadership aspects of all of this. I wonder if I can get you to say more about how you organized your office, and where you got your ideas.

Lane: I brought in more junior officers. My DCM recommended that we only have heads of departments, and I said, "I want assistant heads of departments," which made a very, very nice impression on a lot of the younger people who were then invited to the weekly meeting, called country officer meeting.

Years ago, the state department had made a case, and there was some validity, that the department of commerce commercial officers should be located in Sydney and not in Canberra, because that's where most of the business was or whatever. At the same time, they had excluded that officer from attending the weekly country officers' meeting because of "inconvenience and the cost of transportation."

I immediately said, "The hell with that." I mean, one good trade deal would pay for his round trip a thousand times over from Canberra—Canberra and Sydney is like here and Sacramento, a little further. Well, it's actually about San Francisco-Los Angeles, about the same time.

Riess: So you had a larger, more open meeting.

Lane: And they didn't have the NASA officer. They said, "He's not involved in the day-to-day operations of the embassy." I said, "Maybe not, but he's representing one of the most important relationships our country has with Australia." We were doing a lot of joint research because the atmosphere is clearer, it's the Southern Hemisphere, and we monitored virtually all of our orbits plus a lot of our satellites. Crazy not to have the NASA officer in this meeting. All the junior officers.

The Embassy Social Presence, Protocol

Lane: We did a lot more at the embassy socially, getting the wives involved. Jean worked very hard on that. The DCM's wife was not all that happy about it, because she had kind of run it for seven months or whatever, and the ambassador's, Nesen's wife, hardly ever came down. For nearly four years Mrs. Tier had been, as wife of the chargé—well, the deputy chief of mission and then the chargé—kind of heading a lot of the wives' organizations. Jean comes down, and Jean's got a lot of gumption and go and a lot of capabilities, and it was an adjustment for Jeannie Tier.

Here again, though, I come back to something that I hope overrides all of these things, and that is that I wanted to keep the Tiers—I wanted them to be good friends. I don't like working with dissension. Having authority and saying, "You do it," doesn't give me any satisfaction. I would like to think that it was willingly, even though I know in some cases it's not willingly, and this gal was a bitch in many ways. She'd do some things that would just drive me up the wall, and I will give you one example.

But I finally called her in and I said, "Jeannie, you've got an active ambassador here, you've got a wonderful lady, she's a pianist, she's a horticulturalist, she can become a good friend and you can work together, because she's dependent upon you. You know the ins and outs of all this protocol and so forth of the state department. Work together." And they did, and now she and Mrs. Tier are very close friends, and exchange Christmas cards and birthday cards.

But this gal just couldn't get it [her former role] out of her system. She would always come up out of habit—and Jean said, "Fine, I appreciate your help on this"—to check with the butler on the placements, and the spelling of names and so forth, all this protocol, who sits where and so forth. She knew that better than I did, better than Jean did, and we tried to tell her, "This is where you can be very helpful."

One time—she'd come up about a half-hour early, which the DCM should, to check on how we handle the group, and who's going to get who in a corner, because these social events have a lot of structure to them. [laughs] You know, you wanted to get the defense minister next to this other guy, and find the opportunity to talk about why the hell we weren't doing better and so on. Well, after having been around the table to check on things umpteen times, as we were walking in to the dinner she whispered to Jean, "Isn't it too bad that Ambassador So-and-So's name is spelled wrong?"

She did this three or four times, this or something like this. "Isn't it too bad that he's sitting next to so-and-so." And this devastated Jean, because she was trying so hard. I called her in. "Jeannie, why the hell are you playing this petty game? You're a Christian, aren't you?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Well, do you believe in the Golden Rule?" She did a lot of petty things. She wouldn't tell Jean going into some meeting, say going to some gathering of diplomatic wives, about a very key person there.

She knew Jean was a very fine pianist and harpsichordist and I remember Jean went to a lunch where Jeannie Tier went too, and Jean sat next to this ambassador

from Egypt's wife or whatever, and learned she was a very fine pianist, and would like to participate in any kind of a musical event. And Jean asked Jeannie, "Why haven't you mentioned that to me?" Part of the role of the DCM, and certainly the DCM's wife, is to give you all the tools you can possibly get to relate, and to expedite a half-hour or an hour's luncheon to make it the most productive thing you can make it.

She said, "Oh, I just forgot." Hell, she didn't forget! And more goddamn petty stuff like that. But some of it wasn't so petty, like that withholding of the restructuring of the joint facilities. That I could have taken to [Senator David Lyle] Boren, the chairman of the intelligence committee in Congress, and he would have raised all hell with the president, and certainly Schultz. I would have gotten this guy kicked out of the foreign service, ruined his career. Instead I helped him, and now he's ambassador to Papua New Guinea. And we're good friends. I think he learned a lesson, hopefully. I said, "You know, I can get you fired on this, or certainly cause you a lot of trouble." He said, "Well, you'd have to do this or that." I said, "Don't kid yourself. I'd do it."

Riess: I'm sure you're very convincing.

Lane: [referring to printed announcement] This is an interesting guy coming over here. I'm helping sponsor him at a Commonwealth Club lunch next week. I think he's speaking two days before to a combined meeting of the Commonwealth Club and the World Affairs Council.

Riess: Vaclav Havel?

Lane: Shirley Temple is shepherding him around, of course, but he's coming down here to Stanford for that meeting.

Riess: Let me ask you more about running meetings. When you had your country meetings, you had an agenda?

Lane: An agenda, and like any agenda, or most agendas, you ask, "Is there any item that is not on the agenda that any of you would like to put on the agenda?" We had some ground rules on what for that meeting should qualify as agenda items. If it's a personnel problem that you're having with a subordinate that does not relate to the good of the meeting—I mean, obviously, you can come to me and talk about it, or you can come to the deputy chief of mission and talk about it, or the officer in charge of personnel, but you don't bring it up at the weekly meeting. So there were

sort of some guidelines that were proper for the agenda of the country officer's meeting. But I've always had an open door.

Riess: And you wouldn't be surprised by issues? I mean, that's important in the leadership role.

Lane: No, very definitely. Nor reprimand anybody in public in front of a group, "How stupid to bring that up," or anything like that. No, I might say, "That's a very interesting subject, but I think it's probably something you and I had better talk personally about, or you should talk to so-and-so, and if you don't find a solution, feel free to come to me."

Keeping Going, Dealing with Stress

Riess: Yes. Was the job stressful to you?

Lane: Yes, I'd say it was quite stressful. In fact, flying around a lot, I got onto Halcion. Now you read about Halcion—I was on Halcion for about three years, fifty milligrams, which now they would say would put you in a nuthouse, or you'd jump off a bridge! I'd be a case study for Halcion. In fact, the people at Stanford who have been informed about it said, "You must have"—I don't know, I'm not bragging—"the constitution of an ox." [laughs] The way it started, I just couldn't get to sleep sometimes. So this stewardess said, "You should take what we take in the cockpit." "What is that?" "Halcion, it's wonderful. You don't feel any hangover, this and that." I got on this thing, and I had a druggist out here in Portola Valley, so I didn't go through any doctor, I just called up and he'd renew it. Well, now he'd go to jail for that. But he'd send me down a bottle of a hundred pills. And I slept like a baby. [laughter]

There were a couple of times I can think of—but I never, it never hit me the way now you read about people who've been on it for a month and they get suicidal, or they do this or that.

Riess: Did you have a hard time stopping it?

Lane: No. When I learned about it, which was while I was still there, I talked to the doctor who I'd originally gotten the prescription from, and mentioned something about Halcion. He said, "Are you still taking that?" I said, "Yes, it's terrific to get a good night sleep," or whatever.

He said, "Which doctor are you getting it from?" I said, "I'm not getting it from any doctor. I'm just getting my druggist to renew it." He said, "Jesus! We could both be sent to jail," or something like that.

He said, "That has now been proven to be a very dangerous drug for any length of time over a month." I'd been on it for two and a half, nearly three years! He said, "Have you had any suicidal thoughts?" Well, actually one trip—what precipitated it was I was very tired, and I got very stressed out here at home. Floyd [Shaw] and Karen [Hamilton] were in the office, and they both were very concerned about me. I'd flown in, and I had to go down to Palm Springs to give a talk I didn't want to give, and I really was depressed. It was when some of these things that the state department was doing were going on.

I remember I had a ten o'clock flight out to go back to Australia or something. And unbeknownst to me they called this doctor, Dr. Barber, and he came over and took me to dinner, and he said he wanted me to check into the hospital or something. I said, "No, I'm going to get on the plane back," and I did. But he gave me a real tongue-lashing on the use of Halcion, so I stopped it.

Riess: How about Jean? How was it for her to be the ambassador's wife?

Lane: She got stressed out. Yes, she got stressed out. She took it seriously. But now some of our best friends are from that time. We had a couple over from Australia, and he was my guest at Bohemian Grove. We have wonderful memories of Australia. When Jean was back for a Smithsonian board meeting in Washington while I was up at Yosemite, a meeting of the natural history museum, a lot of members of our staff, the former CIA officer, and a couple of the other people, they had a big dinner party for her. Mike Owens, one of the key state department people, who I thought was one of the better people, has now got a very responsible job in the state department, and he and his wife were there.

Riess: I am curious, as a Californian did you have to consciously work hard to represent the whole United States of America?

Lane: No. I always made the point that I was representing the United States of America, not the state of California. But we served California wines, and of course, I had a lot of contacts in California. And California is the biggest state.

Bill [William F.] Bolger, the postmaster general, gave me a set of stamps for all fifty states, and I took two maps, one for the residence and one for the embassy—I brought one back, left one at the embassy, it's still up—and I put a line to each state from each stamp.

[End Tape 14, Side A]

VIII CURRENT ACTIVITIES

[Interview 8: November 17, 1994]

[Begin Tape 15, Side A] ##

California Water Service Company

Riess: You were mentioning the group you had just retired from, what was that?

Lane: California Water Service Company. It's one of the biggest investor-owned water companies in the United States. We were taking on a lot of water districts that just couldn't keep up with the technology and the new equipment. We have all the mid-peninsula here, Salinas, Stockton, Chico, Bakersfield, a pretty good chunk of Los Angeles, actually.

Riess: Why did you choose to be on that board?

Lane: Well, I've always been interested in water, and government—with a regulatory agencies you are involved with government all the time. And I was brought on, as I was with PG&E, as sort of wearing the environmental hat.

Some cities operate their own water districts, San Francisco for instance, Hetch Hetchy, the San Francisco Water District, but more and more, cities want to get out of it, and so Cal Water is taking over in a number of smaller water districts. Palo Alto has its own water district, and they had wells for many years, but they buy water from Hetch Hetchy. Hetch Hetchy sells a lot of water to other water agencies, including cities like Palo Alto.

I guess I was also brought on because of my involvement with residential development. I don't know what percent they were operating in residential as opposed to industrial, but a big part of it. Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Woodside, are all in the California Water District.

Riess: Was it because of your involvement with Portola Valley?

Lane: That probably had something to do with it. I had been involved with the incorporation, and I suppose they wanted that experience. The board is also kind of heavily Stanford, or was for a while—now it's kind of drifting away from them. Two consecutive chairmen were Stanford. Bob Brown, who brought me on the board when he was chairman, was a very active Stanford alum. That's the way I got to know him.

Riess: Now that you have celebrated your seventy-fifth birthday, are there boards you have to leave because of age?

Lane: Oh, most boards are seventy-five, or seventy-two, some.

I had to retire from PG&E when I went to Australia, and I told them at the time I didn't want to come back to it. I recommended my brother, and Mel went on the board, and he's still on the board. He goes off next year, I think. I've forgotten, I think their age is seventy-four or something. Different companies have different cut-offs. Other boards, nonprofit boards and so forth, you continue.

Riess: The financial responsibility of board membership, do you think hard about that before you go on?

Lane: Oh, very definitely. I've served on a number of audit committees, so that I've been very conscious. I have not been associated with any corporation where there has ever been any problem. I've been on—I counted last night—seven boards, including Lane Publishing: Bruner's, Yosemite Park & Curry Company, Crown Zellerbach, PG&E, Cal Water, Interstate Bakeries, and Lane Publishing Co.

California State Parks Foundation

Lane: The voluntary nonprofits can get out of hand, as Asilomar did, and as you pointed out in your letter, the California State Parks Foundation. That was a case of the audit committee not really doing their job. The chairman, Henry Trione, is a banker, not a career banker, but by merger or buyout from Wells Fargo of his savings and loan up in Sonoma he went on the board of Wells Fargo.

Henry Trione was not a good leader in the sense that he didn't take the responsibility of a chairman in monitoring some of the red flags that came with an otherwise very fine executive director, and did not want to risk what he felt might come about if he confronted a particular action of a homosexual. Wayne Guthrie was very homosexual, and we all recognized it, and yet he did a good job.

He alienated the state park people, and I almost did not go on the board because of it, because I know all of them very well, Doug Wheeler, who is resource secretary, and Don Murphy, California State Park director. They just couldn't communicate, which is really a tragic situation.

Riess: You are on the State Parks Foundation board?

Lane: Oh, yes, I'm still on it. In fact, I'm on the ad hoc emergency committee, and I was asked to be chairman of it, but I didn't want to, so the chairman is Mervin Krasnansky, vice president of McKesson.

Riess: When you see that the leadership is not doing what they need to do, what do you do?

Lane: It came to light while I was up at Cascade. I said, "Fire the guy, and the hell with the lawsuits; I'll pay the legal fees." But legal advice said it would be very dangerous, so we pushed him [Guthrie] hard enough with the evidence that he resigned. Now he's going to probably be prosecuted by the federal government on income tax evasion, and some other charges.

The sexual harassment charges have been dropped, but he paid one of the women thirty-some thousand dollars, not unlike this guy with the MPCA. She, and he, are vulnerable to that. There's nothing that we're doing to prosecute her, but we are going to him, because he took endowed funds from gifts. I and several others pledged to make up I think it was \$40,000 out of I don't know how many millions of dollars in the fund.

We hired a retired executive director of the Commonwealth Club with an impeccable record, Mike Brassington, as the official executive director. I got a meeting with the state people right away, and we reestablished regular relationships with them. We had a hold on three gifts, which have now agreed to come back. It's been a good thing. It's a classic example of a crisis turned into an opportunity.

Riess: When you're on a board you tend to be a leader. Isn't that a problem, if you have a board full of born leaders?

Lane: Well, some of them aren't. They're lawyers, or they're—but yes, you're right. PG&E, and Peter Magowan, when he was Safeway.

But you know, if you think of large corporate scandals over the years, the Pennsylvania Railroad and some others, I don't know, there are leaders among leaders. The military is the best example of that. You've got umpteen lieutenant colonels, colonels, majors, or whatever it is on up the way, and only one makes that chief of staff.

Stanford Leadership Seminars

Riess: Some aspect of leadership is learning to be a follower?

Lane: Well, but continuing to be a leader. I mean, you remain a leader of the platoon, or you remain a leader of the Pacific fleet or the Mediterranean fleet, and maybe retire in that job. Maybe you don't get promoted because of age, or for lack of political acceptance with the review committees in Congress, or God knows what-all, but the leadership role plays right down to the captain or the commander of the gun crew. There are a lot of levels of leadership. And that's one of the things I hope to get across in this lecture on Monday.⁶

Riess: I'm looking forward to that lecture.

Lane: I'm writing some notes on that, and having a hard time wrestling down what I'm going to try to put into forty-five minutes—and then the questions and answers, which I look forward to. I'm meeting with John Gardner tomorrow. The reason he and I got talking about this course, and I agreed to fund it the first year, was he's very anxious for me to elaborate on leadership in government, not elective government, but more appointive, like the things I've generally been involved in.

Riess: He is the Common Cause John Gardner?

Lane: Yes.

Riess: And is he here as a visiting scholar?

Lane: No, he's a permanent faculty at Stanford.

We go back many years, into the sixties, certainly into the Johnson administration when he was secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. I knew him then, and then Common Cause, and I have used a lot of his books. He wrote a book, *Excellence*, long before Peters was born. I'm a great admirer of his—Democratic, but he and I have been close friends. He came to both my swearing in and my retirement as ambassador, and I was one of the few people invited to his recent eightieth birthday, I guess it was.

⁶Bill Lane was to lecture to a graduate seminar on leadership at Stanford University on the Monday following this interview.

Riess: That phrase, "Democratic, but—," do you sort your friends by political party?

Lane: Well, only because society and the press do, not because I do. It's the same way—I don't recognize a Jew or—in fact, yesterday Mel and I were down at the business school and the dean, Michael Spence, said about the professor who's conducting the course, "He's one of our best minority professors." I said, "Minority? What minority is he?" because the dean's fundraiser was there, and she's Jewish.

I turned to her and I said, "Well, he may be Jewish but that doesn't even enter my mind. What minority is he?" He said, "Well, he's Hispanic." Porres.

But I don't always think about it. I kind of gather you may be Democratic, but I don't know that, and it doesn't make a damn bit of difference to me.

Riess: I wonder why the dean said that.

Lane: Oh, I don't know, the deans are all under a lot of pressure. Condi Rice is pushing like hell to get more minority, and she's accused of bias towards blacks. So the deans are very conscious of it.

Meeting and Defeating Adversity

Riess: After our last interview time you mentioned the idea that for you defeats, getting knocked down, kind of rev you up. Would you say more about that? Some examples?

Lane: Well, this Parks Foundation is a case in point. Or television.

Television, it just made sense to me, when I looked at A.C. Nielsen figures and others, that viewing went up in the winter. Coming from the Midwest, I knew what the hell winter was like, because this was long before the Midwest adopted cross-country skiing and snowmobiles and stuff like that, so that they were outside more in the winter. But also it just seemed inevitable to me that viewing would be off in the West.

We got regional figures, which they were not releasing at the time, but I got them from Nielsen, and sure enough the figures for the West for all the popular shows at that time were way down. In fact, when Arthur Godfrey read some of my research he wanted to come and call—he landed by helicopter on our lawn there at Sunset,

and I got a good picture of him coming in—because his ratings were down in the West, and he was trying to figure out why that was true. He'd heard we had some research on it, so he came.

But we [the magazine] boomed through television, because when you put the mix of television being weaker in the West, rather than buying up all these supplemental televisions to just beef up "television," we said, "Look, you can wrap the West up with your best customers"—this wasn't for all advertisers, but for automotive, for airlines, for bigger food companies, Kraft and so forth, who were big into television—"you can wrap up all the West to compensate for those weaker ratings."

Our advertising in some of the biggest issues—in fact, we had to turn down advertising, because the presses at the time would only handle three hundred pages or something like that.

Riess: But for you personally, I had a sense that you were talking about a real charge you get out of adversity.

Lane: I do. Well, it gets me mad, not mad in the sense that I feel we've been unfairly treated, it just makes me not want to get pushed around by something when I think the facts are contrary to what Sunset's mission, in that case, is all about.

And the same way with the Park Foundation. We do wonderful things. We've raised some hundred million dollars for parks. Why should this one queer who got off the track, in spite of the fact he did some very good things, blow us out of the water? We should learn from the experience, and clear the table and get on with it.

What's the old analogy? The two bums on the railroad track looking at the bottle of wine? One guy says, "I think it's half empty," and the other one says, "Gee, I think it's half full." It's a simplistic approach, but I think there are a lot of things in life we just take for granted, things that we're very fortunate to have. And the good things—I don't dwell on the negatives, and those aspects of life that are not always too happy.

An Environmental Award

Riess: Before we get to the main topics, tell me about being in the Rose Garden with our president.

Lane: It wasn't the Rose Garden. It was a rainy day, so it was in the East Room. It was going to be in the Rose Garden.

Riess: And that was to receive the Conrad Wirth Environmental Award.

Lane: Theodore and Conrad, father and the son. I sent you a clipping?

Riess: Yes. I'm most interested in the ramifications of that.

Lane: This was done with the National Park Foundation board, of which Wally Haas and quite a few key San Franciscans are on the board. I've been asked to be on that board, but I never have done it. They elect one person every year for really a lifetime of service.

I'm just getting another one [award] which I'm really, in a way, more pleased about. It's not that I'm looking for awards, but— [moves away from microphone] [note: Bill Lane received a letter from Paul Pritchard, president of the National Parks and Conservation Association. He is going to receive their highest honor, the William Penn Mott Conservationist of the Year Award, on March 1, 1995. The last recipient was Representative Sidney Yates; before that, Charles Bennett; before that, the Association of National Park Rangers.]

Riess: When you were in Washington did you get the ear of anyone? Was it a chance to lobby for anything?

Lane: Oh, sure. I talked with several of the cabinet people. Babbitt, who I know quite well, was kind of the M.C. And I had a visit with Hillary. And quite a few congressmen and people who were there. But the reason I was there was to receive that award.

The thing that pleased me the most, and I've been working for years on it, is to have a week announced and committed to by the president of the United States. So this also coincided with his announcement of the first annual National Parks Week. That's what gave me more satisfaction, almost, than receiving the award.

IX THE SALE OF *SUNSET*

Early Approach from Time, Inc.

Riess: Now in our story chronologically, you came back from your ambassadorship. I'm interested in how you thought about "what next," how you and Mel were looking at the future, how you were assessing the likelihood of this continuing to be a family business, what all that process was. You were away off in Australia.

Lane: But we were in constant touch, and I came back here several times. I was allowed to remain on the board, because it was a family-held business, but I couldn't receive any compensation.

Riess: Tell me about the stages of all this. When you went to Australia, had you and Mel already been approached to sell the magazine?

Lane: No, no. And as a matter of fact, Time Inc. sent Don Logan out to Australia. Don, who now is the president of Time Inc. Magazines, just replaced the CEO, a fellow by the name of Reg Brack, on the masthead.

Don was then president of the parent company of *Southern Living*—I've forgotten what that was—but when Time wanted to buy *Sunset* some years ago I referred them to that organization, because they had been a family business but had grown to about a hundred stockholders and so forth. I knew Everett Cunningham, the chairman and CEO, was looking for ways to sell it, or go public, and he didn't want to go public. So Time went down and they bought it.

Riess: You weren't considering buying it?

Lane: No, but we helped inspire *Southern Living*. No, I never—I'm not particularly keen on the South. I mean, I think it's a great part of the country, and I like a lot of southerners, but I was too challenged by the West, and particularly the adjacency of the Pacific. That intrigues me a lot more than the Caribbean, which the South sort of envelopes.

Riess: *Southern Living* does that?

Lane: Not much. No, they really haven't put a line in the sand of "what we are doing or want to do in the Caribbean." It doesn't exist, as far as they're concerned, in the magazine. They have a book on sailing or something that I think gets down into some of the islands. But they haven't incorporated the recipes, they haven't

incorporated the culture, where we embrace the Orient, we embrace the Hawaiians, we embrace the Japanese, Chinese cooking, wok cooking, Japanese, and travel books, probably the best in the nation. I don't think they have a travel book on the Caribbean.

Riess: I had no reason to think you considered expanding, I just wondered.

Lane: We looked at other activities. I looked at *Western Horseman*, and we looked at some book operations. Mel got intrigued with this *Learning Spanish* and *Learning Italian*—in ten minutes. [laughter] It's turned out that Time Warner has kept it, as a matter of fact. It was offbeat for us, but it fell into the travel category.

Riess: So Don Logan?

Lane: Well, he came out to Australia, because they were then owned by Time Warner, and he was sort of emissary. He came out, and his wife and his son. They made a trip out of it.

I said, "I'm not going to even think about this. Mel and I have talked about it, in case one of us gets hit by a truck, or both of us do, because we travel together, and we want our widows and our heirs to know how we feel about certain things. But I'm not ready, and I plan to go back to *Sunset* and go back full bore." And I did, and really had no thought of taking any immediate action.

I came back. I went immediately out into the field and met with readers, met every governor in the thirteen states to learn the market, the changes that had taken place in the four years.

Riess: Had there been substantive changes?

Lane: The Pacific Northwest had become much more of a dominant factor. This pleased me, because for so many years California had been sort of the main drive of the Western market. Now we were getting the south and the Rocky Mountains through energy and so on and so forth and that was a dramatic change. Coal, oil, gas.

Riess: You mean advertising?

Lane: No, no, for the economy. I don't know how it affected advertising.

Riess: But you said "getting them through energy."

Lane: Oh, no, getting it through energy, coal and gas and oil, and the Rocky Mountain shale, coal shale. All kinds of mineral developments. There were a number of things. A number of service industries. I've forgotten, I remember meeting with the mayor of Denver, and in that year two or three new insurance companies had started up in Denver.

Riess: These parts of the world were booming.

Lane: They were growing at a very rapid clip. This was great, because *Sunset* was committed to the Far West, not to just California. We often got hit by being a California magazine, and I was reared up on that, and asked salesmen to make the point. You can draw all kinds of analogies to this, where there is one strong force, but that force is surrounded by—kind of like our—well, there are a number of analogies.

Riess: Previously you had to search for editorial material on the other areas?

Lane: Oh, no, the editorial was always there. We didn't have any problem with editorial, the editorial was booming, it was that the economy made the market more viable. No, the Northwest office always outproduced—I mean, there was more gardening up there, more outdoor living, great designs, wonderful architects.

In our Western Home Awards program the Northwest usually was the predominant regional leader in awards. They're very creative. To our taste—although the AIA panel was not a *Sunset* judgment, it was a panel of their peers—but using organic materials, timber, rocks, they did a much better job. Also they're more conscious of weather and of orientation. And in travel and food, very innovative, more home cooking, more use of fresh vegetables and fruits in the Northwest.

In the Southwest, more Hispanic, more this or that. In the Central, more Oriental, more Italian. So every area had its strengths. When we added the Rocky Mountains, the scouting that went on in New Mexico, Denver, Wyoming, and Montana—Wyoming and Montana you had to scratch a bit, but there was one interesting area, I've forgotten what the hell it was, I think it had something to do with cooking, but we found just a gold mine of information up in the Montana-Wyoming area.

***Sunset* in 1989—The Presidio Issue**

Riess: You came back in 1989 and it looked very healthy.

Lane: Right. We produced a "Western Market Almanac." You've seen that, but I want to show it to you again.

[End Tape 15, Side A]

[Begin Tape 15, Side B] ##

Lane: [looking at "Western Market Almanac"] Usually we got different economists or people to write the foreword, but I wrote the foreword to the first one after I came back, to kind of put my own stamp that I was back.

Riess: Gosh, it's such a handsome publication. What a convincing thing.

Lane: We did it every two years. But it separates the Western market from the other three major economic areas that are measured by the government, and it points out how different the West is in terms of purchasing, and then there's a chapter on the audience.

Riess: You sell it for twenty-five dollars?

Lane: Mostly we gave it out—the twenty-five dollars was just to put a price on it, that it was valuable. But we did sell them—the Bank of America bought three or four hundred for branch managers, and we charged them five dollars apiece or something like that.

Riess: That's quite a tool.

Lane: Well, yes, and it puts us in touch with a lot of government officials who furnished us the figures, because a lot of those figures come from other sources, not just *Sunset*.

Riess: Is Time Inc. continuing to do this?

Lane: No, they dropped it. I think it's crazy. They've lost a real franchise, unfortunately.

The other thing I did was to shake the editorial department up that I was back. I came back in May or June, and normally our cover stories are a year or so in the making, but Bill Mott had just retired from the Reagan administration, and he was assigned to the Presidio, which was one of his big pet projects over the years. I met

up with Bill, he and I got together, and I decided that I would change signals with the cover story and I did something that had never been done before.

I don't know what the cover story was going to have been, but this was so timely, and we were then getting into the politics of it in Congress and so forth, that I took our best editor, who lives in San Francisco, Dave Hartley, who was then, I think, still travel editor, and we did this [flipping pages of the issue] in two months, which had never been done before, this fantastic article on the Presidio.

It was a bang-up success. The Park Service sent it to every member of Congress. It's still being used. I go up to the Presidio for meetings—I'll be up there on Tuesday again for the new visitors' center meeting that I'm very much involved with—and every time I go to a meeting somebody pulls this out. We did this first really, that kind of a map, and we gave it to the Park Service. But we had a wonderful reaction from the army.

But to do it in two months, really—the November issue comes out in the middle of October, so we produced it in a very short period of time and worked around the clock, weekends and so forth. I had to pull a lot of strings to get some of these photographs. But Bill Mott was very much with me, and so we cut through a lot of red tape.

Riess: And you were suddenly very visible to your staff.

Lane: Yes. It wasn't just that Bill Lane's back and sitting there in his office. And in the sales department, I used that ["Western Market Almanac"] And we did something in the production—oh, I changed the size of the logo.

[tape interruption]

We weren't a newspaper, we weren't trying to scoop anybody in any sense—I didn't know of any other magazine that was working on it, but it was such a natural for *Sunset*, it tied into the history. This fort goes back to before the Civil War, and of course, the Presidio itself goes back before the United States. And here it's going to be a national park, or can be. This was a very powerful tool to do it. So it was a banner, you might say, to get the whole department going, and for my getting directly involved, as I dictated what I wanted pretty well.

I sold this ad to Cadillac—this is a premium price page—to take advantage of the gatefold.

Electronic Present and Future

Riess: There was an article the *New York Times*, May 1984, about *Sunset* being known to be exploring a number of electronic variations. I thought it was fascinating.

Lane: Well, but what it came down to, when we surveyed the readers, there weren't enough readers who had the hardware in their house, in my opinion, to make it viable.

Riess: But who had brought this idea into the magazine in '84?

Lane: I did. With Donnelly we developed the first computer typesetting from the editor's desk directly to the printing plant. We were able to do that because we were with what was called cold type, offset litho printing, for the whole magazine, whereas many magazines were still letter press. The technology was there, and we installed it and trained our people in it, and we were a pioneer in the industry in doing it. So I figured, well, maybe we can do something with readers.

Riess: Is that because you are close to Bill Hewlett and so on? I mean, how come you were so smart about becoming computerized?

Lane: I've just always been interested in electronics. I had one of the first televisions in San Francisco after the war. I had little crystal sets as a kid, radio. I remember listening to the report on Lindbergh's flight on a little crystal set.

Riess: Did your staff fight being computerized?

Lane: It was hard for some of them to learn, but no, they were very happy because it gave them a lot more flexibility and they could work a lot faster. They could correct, you know, it's so efficient. I took a fellow by the name of Leon—what the hell was his last name?—I took him out of another department and put him on training people, and we did in-house training, which was helped by the manufacturer who did some training, too. But we did it in-house, and it's worked very well.

It never quite got as far down the road as you could today with things that *Sunset* is starting to do. At a recent advisory council meeting of the [Stanford] Graduate School of Business, there was some talk by pretty knowledgeable people that the people in an industry, and I've seen this happen, get so wrapped up in what they think everybody is going to do, but the fact is everybody doesn't do it.

For instance, the video business has not been nearly the booming thing that everybody thought it was, although now they're coming into another era where this new film, "Texas," by Michener, isn't even going to be released to movie theaters, it's just going to be sold in video stores. That is going to be an interesting development. It's a very expensive movie, produced strictly for video. It may later come out as a movie, but after the video market has been plumbed to its maximum depth, which is the reverse, of course, of what happens to movies. Movies milk the movie potential and then they put it into video stores. There's been a lot of changes going on.

Riess: But what this 1984 article is really anticipating is CD-ROM.

Lane: Right, but it was not in the home. In fact, I don't even remember having that name as a common name. And the way you could get something to a reader was going to be very expensive. The thing that really convinced me to drop it was that, in the interviewing with readers, either they didn't want it or, more importantly, they didn't have the equipment, and they didn't intend to get it in '84.

Riess: This is interesting, that you don't do yourself any favor by leaping ahead of your readership.

Lane: Well, your audience's not so much interest but capability of being able to receive it electronically. All the uses of phone lines and wireless telephone types of communication and all just were not that advanced at the time.

We had another *modus operandi* that was somewhat of a factor in that we didn't want merger, we weren't interested in mergers, we didn't want debt, we didn't want finance capital. So some of the things that you might say, "Well, you could have—" or that might have been done by merging, as so many companies are doing now, Time Warner with one of the baby Bells and umpteen others and stuff they've merged with, we didn't want to lose any of our ownership.

We were very healthy and making a profit, growing. We weren't trying to be the world's biggest, and we had no stockholders to answer to. We were happy and working hard and doing very well. So debt, financing, going public to get more money, merging, some of the opportunities that might have been there, I don't know if there was a company out there that might have given us a jump into that market, but we didn't even spend any time looking.

Riess: When you talk about "we," you're talking about you and Mel?

Lane: Just Mel and myself, and to some degree myself, because I was much more of a factor on the goose that was laying the egg, and that was the *Sunset* magazine software that was making most of the books, but increasingly not as many of the books, as we got into these other types of books. But the hardcore books, the garden book, the barbecue book, the best cookbook, salad, blah blah blah, was 90 percent of the business, and a little bit more than the profit because we could have such long runs and reprints on those books. So any merger, we would never have gotten credit for the franchise we have on the software.

There are a bunch of egotists who think that everything is going to—it's where a lot of the hardware people got out of sync with the software people, and it permitted Microsoft and some of the other companies to come along and do much better than the hardware people, because the hardware people got ahead of themselves on what people could do with it.

Riess: You probably saw this article this [Oct. 23, 1994], about Time, Inc., putting parts of *Sunset* on the Internet.

Lane: Oh, yes, right. Libraries—that was one area I thought, well, we might go to libraries. Because all the research showed that of all the consumer magazines in Western libraries, *Sunset* was either the number one or number two—*National Geographic* was the other—of magazines that were requested for research and reprints and so forth. In fact, I developed our table of contents in the Los Angeles library system of cataloguing articles from our then three editions. They had a very fine program down there, and I picked it up, and that's what we used for our table of contents. I don't know what the date of this [article] was.

Riess: That's October 23, 1994. Just last month. What does this mean? There's something here that I highlighted.

Lane: "I think publishers are further ahead on the edit side than agencies are on the advertising side." Well, I don't know who said that—Richard Smith, editor-in-chief and president of *Newsweek*.

Riess: I guess that's the idea of getting advertising onto the Internet?

Lane: Yes. I have a card here from the president of Young & Rubicam, who I sat next to at the Council for the Graduate School of Business. He wants me to see him when I'm in New York in January, and I imagine this could be one of the subjects, I don't know.

Advertisers have long tried to dominate programming and editorial content, and they have had to recognize, and certainly in *Sunset* we made it so very clear to them, that they really were the beneficiaries of the main reason people read a magazine, which is for the editorial content, not the advertising.

The editorial simply opens the pores, opens the doors to people who are interested in a subject, and then have to turn to—don't *have* to, but they frequently do turn to—a source, a place they want to take a vacation, the product they want to buy to do the recipe, or the paint they want to use to paint the deck or whatever. And we used to simplify it: how to do it and what to do it with. Our job is how to do it, and yours is what to do it with.

We did a lot of surveys that proved that people enjoyed the advertising as much as the editorial, because the advertising as much as possible was related to what would help fulfill the editorial. But, they still carry this kind of cocky attitude that they are the power behind the throne of successful media, because by withdrawing their advertising or the threat, they think they can make you be subject to their pressures. When we turned down or didn't accept many categories of advertising, or turned down the American Rifle Association or whatever, it was always kind of a shock to them that we would do that.

But advertising on the Internet? The average consumer doesn't want to get advertising on the Internet. What they want is the editorial content. So suddenly Cadillac or Kraft Cheese or whatever find that people are getting the service material, from either the editorial or the programming, and they're left out in the cold, and, "What can we do to get our visibility?"

Now advertisers are sponsoring all kinds of events, doing all kinds of things, dirigibles flying around a football field or whatever. Wherever there's a crowd, you'll find advertisers, at a concours d'elegance or a sports event.

Riess: Yes, it's back to the billboards, actually.

Lane: Well, yes, that's about it. Where you get a captive audience, as they're doing now in schools, with the programming of getting advertising into the schools.

Riess: That's very interesting.

Lane: I'll get Karen to give me a copy of that article, because I don't have that. I was aware of it, because a lot of Time Warner annual reports and things have picked it up, and I've talked to the people at *Sunset* about it. I think it's a good opportunity

for *Sunset* if, *if* we get paid for it. If we don't, just the privilege of making your editorial content available by this new technique is self-defeating.

Riess: You talk about "we." If we get paid for it.

Lane: If *Sunset* gets paid for it. And as a big stockholder of Time Warner, I have a possessive feeling, I guess. And being a consultant of Time Warner and on the board of Time Inc.

Bids for *Sunset*, and Assets

Riess: Okay, let's talk about the sale, and what the current state of affairs is. Who came to you first?

Lane: Time had been coming for many years to my father, and most of the big companies, Hearst, Condé Nast, Newhouse—Sam Newhouse flew out and Mel and I had breakfast with him. Over the years, *Sunset* was considered to be probably the real plum of the whole industry. When we decided that we would consider selling, we went through the list of people who had called on us, and one or two others. [Rupert] Murdoch had been out there for a long time.

Riess: Did you know him?

Lane: Oh, knew him very well. In fact, I took my son to call on him down in Manhattan when he had the *Post*. In Australia, when he was out, we were guests at their home several times, and he has had several of his people call on us over the years. Maxwell, Densu in Japan. But I made a ground rule right at the beginning, and Mel agreed, that we would consider no foreign ownership. Murdoch's an American citizen, and News-whatever, his parent company is, is now incorporated in the United States, but still.

Newhouse I ruled out. Hearst I liked, because I think they do a very good job with magazines and they're committed to it. But it would have been a cash deal, because they didn't want to have any stock transfer, and we didn't want to pay the taxes on cash. And also, they were not up to the amount of money that we felt was a minimum that we should start with. We had never put a priority on earnings. We made a good profit, we shared the profit with the employees, good benefits, but the stockholders never maximized—in fact, we tried to keep as much cash in the

company as possible, up to the limit that our attorneys said the IRS would approve it.

Riess: Who are the stockholders?

Lane: Just the family. Mel and I owned 60 percent, I think, and the wives and the children owned 40 percent, or something like that.

Riess: Have the employees been given stock options?

Lane: No.

Riess: Have the employees ever agitated for that sort of thing?

Lane: No. We considered an ESOP [employee stock option], as opposed to going public or selling, once we decided that at our age, and the stage of our children perhaps coming in—they all were great kids, and they all had worked there, and my son was working in the Seattle office as marketing rep, but he was a long ways off.

We thought we were a little further along than my dad was at age fifty-five when he brought in Howard Willoughby, who was general manager for years, with the understanding that, "I want my boys to come into the business after the navy, and I want you to help them go into management responsibilities." That was Howard's charge, and he was a wonderful man, and he did it.

[tape interruption]

The kids all have equal ownerships from my parents' trust, and so if my son had come into a management role, in terms of deserving it and wanting it and liking it, then would he want to work for two sisters? Two sisters-in-law, maybe a mother, maybe an aunt, if something happened to both me and Mel. I said, "I think life's too short." My experience with family businesses is that those conditions spell trouble.

[rustling papers] I know he was disappointed, and it was very hard for me, but he agreed, and he's loving teaching now. He may not always teach the rest of his life, but he loves coaching, and he's always been great with kids. I think we did the right thing. In part, it was just the way the ownership was left, that it wasn't feasible really for him to have control. To be a CEO and run a business and not have control is living death, in my opinion, and I've done a lot of research on that in family businesses.

Riess: Did you have an absolute value for the company? What was it worth and how did you know?

Lane: Well, we had a minimum figure on our assets. We owned all of our real estate. We owned a big ranch, 5,000 acres of prime land up in northern California, eighteen beautiful residential acres. That was all Lane Publishing. We had a lot of cash, and we had a franchise. There was no one could even touch us on Western America, and certain companies had a lot to gain by getting the *Sunset* identification and the access, not just to publishing *Sunset* but the access to our friends, to our readership for promotion if they had other magazines. They couldn't just buy it for the earnings, because we never maximized earnings. So we had a minimum figure.

Riess: And you weren't inclined to break it down to bits and pieces?

Lane: No, we didn't want to sell it piecemeal. We did, in that Time didn't want the ranch or the real estate out here, so Mel and I bought that back at appraised value, or we just deducted it from the sales price, once we agreed upon the sales price.

Riess: What real estate "out here" do you mean? Do you mean right here?

Lane: I mean the eighteen residential acres, which actually the president of Hewlett-Packard just recently bought from us, Lou Platt, and then a man up in Redding bought the ranch. So we don't have those two properties any more. But that was the only thing we peeled out, and it was at Time Warner's request.

As far as we were concerned, if they wanted the real estate it had to be included, added onto the price of the magazine, and the book publishing and so forth, the assets, plus the four buildings we owned in Menlo Park, and that would be all right with us. But they decided they didn't want the ranch or the other properties, so we bought it out. They were just deducted at appraised value.

Bankers and Negotiators

Riess: You said that you would have been interested in Hearst, but Hearst couldn't come up with the minimum. So then you turned to Time?

Lane: We actually went through probably the top investment banker in the magazine industry, Veronis & Suhler.

Riess: Veronis and Suhler?

Lane: Suhler. His father was the former circulation director of *Look* magazine. [flipping papers]. John Veronis was a former publisher of *Saturday Evening Post*. They have a business that helps buyers and sellers of, primarily, magazines. They also do some radio stations and all. But they're a big New York firm, and we knew the principals very well.

We went through about ten different companies, and we selected six, I think: *Reader's Digest*, Time Warner, Hearst, who signed the agreement for the confidentiality of the complete breakdown of all the finances and all, which were all private in our company, and we didn't want to reveal them, and we also didn't want to reveal that we were looking, or that we were interested in selling, so this all had to be done very confidentially. It was only done with the CEOs, the chief financial officer, and I've forgotten—there were three people who all had to sign a statement of confidentiality.

Riess: What year?

Lane: This was probably the early 1990, because we consummated it with Time Warner for the final term—the due diligence, I suppose, was sometime in May, and the deal was signed June 1 of 1990. That was the \$225 million.

We went through a due diligence process with them where they could come to the company and talk to certain officers and so forth. It was decided it would be better to go from Veronis & Suhler [letter on Veronis & Suhler letterhead] who were handling our contacts and this [shows Riess] was a copy of the letter to Reg Brack which I wrote, Mel and I—I had Mel go over it too.

This was written March 21, so we were getting to the end of March. We had April, May that we were still negotiating, and then the deal was completed in June. But money wasn't even mentioned. I mean, we had a minimum threshold of the companies we would discuss this with who we felt could do a good job, but I cited in my letter three things that I felt were very important, and money wasn't even considered.

You can keep the letter. It concerns what happened to employees, what benefit there would be to *Sunset*, what benefit there would be to the buyer, and particularly how Jack Henning would be taken care of. Jack Henning was the continuity of our management, because he was by then president—Mel and I were co-chairman. Jack had been a long time with us and we promised Time, and Jack had agreed,

that he would stay on for a year. So I wanted to know how he would be handled—I wanted to be assured of that.

Riess: Who acted as your attorneys in all this?

Lane: Oh, we used the attorneys and the accountants and the bank, Wells Fargo, all of whom we had had for nearly forty years, and in one case, McCutcheon, the attorney, for longer than that. The original partner who had been with McCutcheon and knew my father, Morris Doyle, is still a partner at McCutcheon. In fact, Tom Worth works for him, and John Laurey, and Tom and John Laurey are the principal contacts.

Riess: Was it awful then, and is it still sort of awful to think about?

Lane: Well, I was a reluctant seller. When I go down—I was just down there for lunch the other day with a group from Stanford. They [Time Inc. *Sunset*] sort of use me [papers rustling] to kind of burnish their Stanford contacts.

Riess: They use you and Mel to burnish their Stanford contacts?

Lane: Well, to polish up their relations, among other things. We meet with them informally. I met with the new advertising director and publisher, Steve Seabold, a while back. He wanted to talk about some things. But I don't push it, because I've frankly got too many other things to do, and I find it a little frustrating when I think I'm making a point—like I think they made a very serious mistake in dropping that.

Riess: In dropping the Western Market Almanac?

Lane: Yes.

[End Tape 15, Side B]

[Begin Tape 16, Side A] ##

Riess: This picture that you're looking at, what is the date?

Lane: Probably early sixties, because my father looks pretty healthy there, and he began to get weaker in the mid-sixties and passed away in '67. That's him there.

This is Pat Patterson, president of United Airlines, and this is the first Western meeting of the United Airlines board of directors. They had never met out in the West before, and I thought maybe we could do something dramatic. I arranged for

the meeting to take place, although my dad was involved somewhat in it. This is a key fellow from N. W. Ayre, the agency for United Airlines.

Riess: N.W. Ayre?

Lane: N.W. Ayre and Sons in Philadelphia—head of the agency. That's my brother Mel, and I'm over here. And this is Proc Mellquist, who was then editor. Howard Willoughby, who was still the vice president, although Mel and I had come up—we were president and vice president, I think, of the company at that time. I know I was publisher of *Sunset* magazine.

Riess: Why do you have this out right now?

Lane: It was brought to me by an employee who saved it, fortunately, because he knew it was a rather historic event. For another reason also: I had become friends with Stan Hiller, who had a plant, who built in Menlo Park before we did, actually, in the late forties, and was producing different generations of helicopters. One of the reasons they were out here was that they were opening their first suburban ticket office in Redwood City, and the building is still there. A travel agent and somebody else are in there now.

I arranged with Stan to pick up Mr. Patterson, the president of United Airlines, in a helicopter off the parking lot there, and we had a lot of press and so forth, and then we would land him in the lawn. Someone at United Airlines said, "Is it an FAA approved heliport?" It wasn't. So I got the FAA to give is a one-time permit to land Mr. Patterson in the lawn out here, which was about two acres of lawn.

Well, here he had just landed, and then these are members of the board of directors of United Airlines. But I would say it is an example of innovative new things that we did continuously at *Sunset* that separated us from a lot of companies that were much bigger than we were—we were taking advantage of our area, our unique publishing headquarters that represented the Western part of the United States. It also got us up with the higher-ups of the industry. We did a number of things like that to influence upward visibility in our leadership role there.

No Regrets on the Sale

Riess: What I was asking you before we turned the tape over was how it was all feeling. Was it a tragedy?

Lane: Oh, hell no. Again, this sounds self-serving, and I don't mean it that way, but I have always—once you make a decision, then make the best of it and move on. There are a lot of exciting things that I have done since, a lot more I want to do, and I'll never do them all, but I think we did the right thing.

The money has enabled me to do some things that I wasn't able to do. A lot in philanthropy. We're major donors now to some very significant things. I'm giving money to the Bill Mott Memorial exhibit at the visitors' center at the Golden Gate Recreation Area, the visitors' center there. And the Presidio. And I'm involved in the restoration of Glacier Point, which has a lot of personal meaning to me, restoring the natural habitat, redoing trails, building the amphitheater for lectures, stargazing.

A lot of the money in our lifetime, and a lot of it after we're gone, will go to good causes. The Peninsula Community Foundation, the philanthropic ventures that Bill Somerville has over there at Jack London Square.

When you look at the pluses and minuses, it was always on the plus side. We haven't changed our lifestyle. I've taken a little longer on vacations than I would have, probably, because I never took more than a week or two weeks at *Sunset*, unless it had a very strong business connection. But now we can tool around some canals in southern France for two weeks, three weeks, just absolutely no business—[laughs] although I'm going to be using it, in fact a couple of points, in this lecture on Monday.

I really find a lot of satisfaction in pulling examples from experiences that illustrate a point. There is a point on leadership that I'm going to refer to with regards to the captain of this barge, who had a crew of about twelve people, and they were all a bunch of individuals. He and I were talking about how you get them to work together as a team. I'm going to refer to him, that he was a leader, he had this team to manage, he was responsible to Abercrombie & Kent, this huge company in Great Britain and the United States—he owned the barge, and he wanted to get more business, and how he invested in that and so forth.

I don't really do anything, I guess, that I don't find some example of working into a talk, or using in a conversation like this. So it's not in that sense strictly vacation,

that I don't get something out of it. And I stay on the fax. Karen faxed a lot of stuff, a lot of mail came over to the hotels. In some little dingbat town I'd find the fax number of a hotel or something and get some stuff faxed over in five minutes. I can call her up, "What have you got?" Give her the hotel, the fax number.

But no, I never had any regrets. I am giving a lot more time to causes that—well, I spent a lot of time doing that when I was at *Sunset*. The one thing I miss is the staff. Karen and I just can't do a lot of the things by ourselves. I could pull in some people to work on a project, whereas now I don't have that at hand when I could use it. I'm involved in a big, big project with Australia next year on celebrating the end of World War II with the peace of Japan, and there will be all kinds of activities between our two countries.

Riess: What is your role?

Lane: They want me to be chairman of a foundation, the United States Foundation for the Australian-American Friendship Celebration.

It's more or less like the Utah Beach, the landing, and then the end of World War II, which was celebrated, the anniversary, just a few weeks ago. In fact, we were in Paris when the peace was signed for the end of the European war. But the war wasn't over for Americans and we got into some of our deadliest battles in the Philippines, Okinawa, the kamikaze pilots and submarines.

We were still going through a lot of hell when England and France were all over, except England and France both sent a lot of ships and troops. So they weren't out of it exactly, but at least their land was not threatened—and neither was our land threatened.

Riess: But it is not as easy to take on those jobs if you don't have the *Sunset* staff?

Lane: That's right, and I had to turn it down. I'm helping to finance it. But I've got Cap Weinberger and Colin Powell, some people lined up, and the chiefs of staff, and Perry, whom I know. He just had his office down the hall here, the secretary of Defense.

Riess: Perry has an office down the hall here?

Lane: He did, before he took the job. He was just down the hall, and we would stand together in the men's room. [laughs] I didn't spend a lot of time with him, but he was also a lecturer at Stanford.

Riess: What was his office here?

Lane: Some kind of a consulting business.

The Transition Period

Riess: How did you delineate the position that you and Mel would have with this five-year interim thing? Was that something that they wanted you to have?

Lane: We were equal stockholders, so there was never any discussion of it, really.

Riess: Did Time Warner say, "We don't want the magazine unless we can have you for five years"?

Lane: No. We made it very much up front that we did not want to continue.

A lot of owners would make that as a request, and we could have, they would have been very glad. But I don't think either one of us would have been happy going through some of the changes that they had every right to make. Like they have pulled together their health care, they pulled together benefits, they've pulled together a lot of accounting, which is fine, and inevitable. They've done it generally by attrition, and good buy-outs, that have been largely fair. Not always. In my opinion.

Many owners, it's their only interest in life, and so to continue, and even get buffeted around by the new owners, would have been, from their point of view, perhaps a good trade-off. In our case, we both had so many other things that we wanted to get involved with.

Riess: Now what is your actual position been vis-a-vis the magazine? I know that you're stockholders.

Lane: I go down there.

Riess: But there is something called the five-year period, isn't there?

Lane: Oh, yes. Well, that's the five-year period of the noncompetitive agreement, by which we cannot compete in any way, and they have been pretty—I was interested in a research company, but they saw it as some kind of a—and in the fine print, we

cannot speak in a derogatory manner about the company, which we wouldn't do anyway, publicly.

I wouldn't be too open with, say, students in answering some of the questions I've answered with you, or certainly with the press. I get lots of requests for interviews. One I made recently—well, you saw that article, "Quality" or something, I've forgotten exactly.⁷

There was a follow-up to that on some changes that have been made at *Sunset* and what did I think of them, and I said, "Well, like most things in life, I don't know very many major shifts in either leadership or fulfillment of new policies that you agree with 100 percent, but by and large, I think they're doing a very conscientious job. They're keeping things primarily Western, they're keeping it primarily family, it's still in good taste, and those are the most important things to me. I think some of the things they're doing are very innovative, and that we would have done. We made a lot of changes."

I got a thank-you note from Robin, the president, and also from Steve Seabold, who's the publisher now. So we were trying to be helpful. If an advertiser or reader complains, I say, "They think that we didn't make any changes because the Lanes were there. Well, the fact is, we made a hell of a lot of changes, layout, new editorial, new typefaces, new this, new that. We were very innovative.

Riess: *Sunset* subscribers are calling a Lane to complain?

Lane: No. Except as you run into a neighbor or something. In all fairness, the Lane image probably was pretty well limited to the Bay Area. [laughs]

The reader in Missoula, Montana, or even Seattle, unless they know something about the history or run into a Lane, which is a very limited splinter in a pie chart of the total market, they don't know if it's Lane or Smith. They're looking at the product, just like you look at a program on television and really, it doesn't make any difference to you who the sponsor is. Some commercials may be more interesting or whatever, but if you look at Letterman or whatever, the advertisers aren't why you look at that program, and you really don't give a damn whether it's NBC or CBS.

⁷ "A Champion of Quality," interview with "Bill" Lane by Erika Isler in *Folio* [The Magazine for Magazine Management] magazine, June 1, 1993.

Riess: Absolutely.

Lane: If you like Letterman and he goes to another network, you go with him. And that's what happened, of course. You don't have any brand loyalty to a network, or to a Foster & Kleiser billboard, but you do have a loyalty to *Sunset*. I've referred to the interviews we've done with readers that comment in kind of a flesh and blood way—"I took *Sunset* to bed," "I enjoy reading it in the bathroom," "I took it on vacation." "It's part of the family."

"Part of the family" is perhaps the most meaningful one. You don't say NBC is a part of the family, you don't say the *Chronicle* is a part of the family, but you do say it about *Reader's Digest* or *National Geographic* or your favorite magazine, whatever it may be. Magazines have the capability—they don't always do it, but if they do the best job they can they will gain a franchise that will make that magazine a "part of the family"—or the habit or the lifestyle of the individual, if it's not in a family environment.

That's one of the unique features of a magazine. And when you start rocking the boat on that personal relationship, and coming across as a different personality, different values, it's almost like a sudden change in your doctor or your lawyer or your banker whom you've trusted and with whom you have built a common understanding, and you think you know him or her or whatever it is, and all of a sudden, bingo, they're different. It kind of makes you think a little bit.

Riess: The five-year period expires this June.

Lane: And that's when the Time Warner financial commitment is to be completed, which provides different alternatives for all of us in the family, to look at the preferred stock, very fine preferred stock, convert it to common stock, cash out, whatever. And Time Warner has an option of what they can do to meet that obligation, the financial obligation, starting with the \$225 million. Of course, some of that's been paid out.

Riess: What a very major responsibility. You could be buying the Leonardo da Vinci *Codex*.

Lane: Oh, sure. But we just don't have—I may get a new Jaguar or something, but we just haven't changed our lifestyles. Our kids have to some degree, they are buying better homes than they would otherwise. But all of them are in their mid to late thirties, and I feel putting it into a home is great. Coming from the ethic that I come

from, and *Sunset*, and my own feeling about real estate and a home, and the values of what a home means—well, they're not squandering it, they're not misusing it.

Our daughter, Brenda, is very much into horse training, and she and her husband have just gotten a property over in Woodside that has a beautiful horse setup. That makes me happy. I love horses, and it's going to be good for our relationship.

Riess: I know you wrote a letter to one of them about choosing an architect.

Lane: Right. It's been a lot of fun counseling them and helping them. But that's the only thing they have done that would reflect—and maybe a little better automobile.

There are five of them, 8 percent each, 7 point something or 8 percent each. So they're all multi-millionaires all of a sudden. I sent them an article the other day on sports figures who become suddenly wealthy, and how so many of them wind up broke, but when you analyze it, it's that one had eighteen cars, and another one had two mistresses, and a lot of gambling, of course, and a lot of payoffs to women or whatever, and houses that were just overpriced Hollywood Taj Mahals. I sent it as just a reminder that, don't take this for granted. And investments—I went through a Depression when apparently good investments turned belly-up. Oh, they get all kinds of appeals on how they should spend their money.

Riess: Well, you're certainly a model as a citizen.

Lane: Jean and I really haven't changed one iota, as far as I know. Except philanthropy. In philanthropy, we've changed a lot. First of all, there are a lot of tax advantages to it. And there are just a lot of good causes that we are very anxious to help.

Riess: Good.

I read somewhere about your consideration of purchasing another magazine. Is that so?

Lane: Oh, I've looked at a couple. *Western Horseman* is one that, if it came up for sale after June would be interesting to me. In fact, I've asked the Time Warner people—I don't see that that's any competition with any Time magazine—"Well, it's publishing, and they carry truck advertising," or something. So Mel and I have decided we're not—well, he actually got into a Latino magazine, and he got their okay on doing it because it was a minority, and they thought, "Well, that's nice."

Riess: What would be your motivation in wanting to run another magazine?

Lane: I wouldn't run it. I would just get involved, be chairman of the board or something, but the CEO would be a—no, I wouldn't want to run it, I don't want that routine. I don't want the discipline of having to go to work every day if I don't want to. I do, but I don't—it's a nice feeling. As I tell my wife, the difference between being retired is that I know I don't have to, or I don't feel an obligation to employees, or in government to citizens, or just the workload that demands it. If a letter or some paper stacks up, I really don't give a damn.

Riess: Hard for me to think of you running a different kind of magazine than *Sunset*. Hard for me to think of you as not being competitive in your nature.

Lane: Well, the horse magazine is very competitive. It's a competitive business, and I helped *Western Horseman* with a lot of things over the years. I was just back there consulting with them, and I didn't charge them anything, so I wouldn't get in any donnybrook with Time Warner, although I don't think they would have been concerned.

I took our former book division manager, because I'm helping them get more invested in the book publishing and in the horse training—both training and horse care. No, a lot of the principles of *Sunset* apply to other magazines, publications.

[tape interruption]

Thoughts on the Oral History, and Priorities

Lane: [reviewing oral history so far] The table of contents you sent is staggering. It is easy to put those items down. I don't know how much depth there is or how much I would be willing to say, "Well, that finishes off that subject," with regards to something I might think about later. I'm sure that's always a problem with someone who's been around long enough and will recall things that come up that are relevant.

I just made a few notes here of things that I may incorporate in that lecture on Monday that I hadn't even thought about. But you have been good in opening up the pores to thinking about some of these things.

Riess: When I send the oral history to you for your review I hope it will be something you'll enjoy working on.

Lane: Yes. Well, if I felt it was of interest to anybody I probably would. I guess I don't visualize who the hell would be interested. I don't find young people today all that interested. I'll have to admit that when they ask me, "What did Grandpa Lane die from?"—great-grandpa, my father's father—I don't know.

We have not been the most diligent about family history, even Jean and I coming from the Middle West. I just kill myself that I didn't take a tape recording of my dad or my parents before they passed away, on some of the relatives, and just let them talk. Just never did it.

Riess: Well, we'll see what you'll do with this transcript.

Lane: Well, it had moved it ahead. It's way ahead of the game, that's for sure. If you follow the original comment I made to you that John Gardner said, or one of them, Michener, one of my people that I respect who does a lot of writing, "Just write something you'd like for your grandchildren to read, even if they don't want to read it, or even if they might not read it." He put a few things out like that, that the goal would be what you would like for your grandchildren to read. Maybe they'll be interested in it.

I'm very glad we're doing it. Someone who puts as much energy and effort and enthusiasm into a job as you do, I would not in any way want to mitigate your feeling of accomplishment or doing something that was appreciated and worthwhile. I know I will get a lot more value out of it than I can envision now, as a reference, a resource, and maybe some kind of a saleable—not a saleable, but kind of a book.

Riess: We let libraries and institutions know about the oral histories, and I think that it's going to have great interest.

I hesitate to say this, because I think you'll be annoyed, but today, and I don't know that you've done this all the time, but today it seems like your mind is on two things simultaneously. I wonder if you go through a lot of your dealings on two levels.

Lane: Yes, I do. In fact, I don't know a time when I haven't. [laughs] No, I have two situations that are very much on my mind now. In a way, I looked at this this morning, and I thought, "Oh, gosh, do I have to do that today?" Because I'm really chafing at the bit to do something else, and to get closer to a situation that I'm not too happy about, and it's going to take some doing.

In fact, I've got about four things right now that I would say are kind of on the front burner. And this in a timely sense is not on the front burner. To be giving an hour and a half or whatever to it is not what I would do as a priority.

One of them involves one of my children; another one involves an obligation I feel to Mr. Platt, the president of Hewlett-Packard, who bought our property, who's getting buffeted around by a bunch of goddamn neighbors, and I've got the goods on them, and I'm going to nail them to the wall. I've retained an attorney, and I met with them yesterday and the Platts. But I've got a time deadline of next week that I've got to reach some people.

A petition was signed by a bunch of neighbors. Now, I'm going around to some of those people, giving them the facts, and I've already gotten one to write to the town that he was misled and is withdrawing his name. I think a few more like that will defuse this neighbor who is opposing the Platt development and who has hired one of the best attorneys in the country to fight it. So I've got that.

I've got this situation with one of my kids I want to help out on. I've got the lecture on Monday, and I want to do a good job on it, because I helped found the course and paid for the first year of it, and now I feel an obligation to John Gardner, who I'm having lunch with tomorrow. I want to sound logical and sensible to him, because I've given it a lot of thought, and I've got a stack of material.

And then I've got a talk in Indonesia, in Djakarta, that I've got to give, on the Americas' influence in the Pacific following the PBEC meeting, and I've got to fly down there on December 2. It's being held by Suharto and the minister of communications and tourism. It's an offshoot of the impact of tourism and trade in the Pacific. It's not in the mainstream of the trade issues being discussed at the PBEC meeting, but the heads of state have authorized a—[secretary enters room]

[to Karen, the secretary] Suzanne tells me I have something else on my mind. I usually have something else on my mind! Heck, I don't know what I haven't!

[End Tape 16, Side A]

[Begin Tape 16, Side B] ##

Lane: I'm not begrudging this at all. I'm enjoying it more than I would enjoy some of these other things, maybe. But here again, the situation out there in the town, Lou Platt said yesterday, "You look like you're enjoying this." I said, "I am. I'm looking forward to nailing some of those people to the wall, because they're so off-base and unfair."

Riess: What is it? They think he's going to develop it?

Lane: Well, yes. It's eighteen acres, it's this property that Mel and I owned. And he's putting two lots on it, one ten acres and one six. And my God, it's an area with a two and a half acre minimum, and they've got some neighbors that are fighting it on all kinds of crazy reasons. I've got enough to nail them at the next town council meeting, but I've got to get some of my arrows polished up.

Riess: And then, of course, you're having lunch with the lady who does boots. [referring to telephone call Lane took during interview]

Lane: Yes, you'll see Monday at the lecture at Stanford. I'm working on an outline that I'll probably have memorized by Monday, and that is what I worked on last night and early this morning, and one of the things I'm talking about right at the beginning is the satisfaction of having some kind of leadership role in big events, education, military, business, public, community, investments, and family, the satisfaction involved with learning to lead, I am saying I'm enjoying giving time and fulfilling somewhat of a leadership role.

One point I want to make, you don't have to be at the top of the pyramid to be a leader, you can be a leader in different ways of influence. I helped lead the decision to have this course, and I'm very proud of that, as an example. But I'm going to give these other areas of education, military, business, public service, community, investments, and family. I've got examples of where I have been involved with firsts, different levels of leadership. In this case, encouraging John Gardner to go ahead with it, making a call on the dean, "We ought to get a course," and saying, "Okay, I'll pick up the tab for the first year." So that's a role of leadership.

So one of the things I want to point out is that leadership can come in all kinds of different ways. You don't have to be a CEO of a company, which is what most of these kids think of as leadership. I'm going to mention investments, and I'm going to have a pair of these Ariat boots on.

Riess: Ariat?

Lane: Ariat boots. It's a great company started by two Stanford MBAs, and they're going to both be there. I'm going to dangle that [idea] out, which I love to do with these classes, and hope somebody will say, "What other examples have you been involved with?" I'm pretty sure somebody will pick up on investments, being from the Graduate School of Business.

I'll say, "Well, you're looking at one right now." Somebody may say, "Those crazy-looking boots?" Because they're very stylish but they don't necessarily go with a business suit. But in any event, I'm going to have some fun with that. So that's the reason she's fitting me out with their latest style of boots today.

Riess: We ought to stop now, and give you a chance to take a break between events!
Thank you.

[End Tape 16, Side B]
[End of Interview] ##

