

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH M. LEON CANICK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Leon Canick on October 11, 1994 with Kurt Piehler and

Patrick Goodwin: Patrick Goodwin

KP: in New York City. I guess I would like to begin by asking a few questions about your parents... Your father came from Russia. What prompted him to leave Russia? ...

Leon Canick: Pogroms. Do you know what pogroms are? Well, the Kishniev pogroms of 1905 prompted a huge migration of the Jews out of Russia.The Jews of Russia, almost exclusively, were living in what they call "The Pale of Settlements," and that included Lithuania, Latvia, part of Vilna, part of Poland, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and so forth. And my father lived in a county called Minsk and that was run by a count who lived in Paris. ... When Alexander ... was assassinated, Russia, which was beginning to turn towards a more liberal attitude in the 19th century, became much more conservative or reactionary and then the pogroms started. So a large number of Jews left in the 1890's, and then a much larger number left in the 1900's.

KP: Did your father ever mention the pogroms or experiencing them? Did he ever tell you any stories about them?

LC: Well, he didn't tell me any stories about them. You know surprisingly, he spoke relatively little of those events, but I know that there was murder and rape and that people had to leave, but there may not have been vicious pogroms in his community. ... He was in a town called Berezin and if you know your history, the Berezina River was where Napoleon was defeated by the Russians and Hitler was defeated by the Russians with their massed artillery. ... And then the other thing that pushed him out, really pushed him to go to America, was that he was no longer Orthodox.

KP: Oh really. That was one of the driving forces in his decision to go to America?

LC: ... He was going to be a brilliant Rabbi. He was a noted Talmud scholar and he was a ... Hebrew scholar.... His Rabbi dismissed him for the simple reason that he wasn't Orthodox any longer, because the Reform Movement breezes came in from Germany. ... People were saying: If there's a God let him strike me dead! ... And so he left in 1906, and he had an uncanny facility for the English language. ...He was teaching English on the boat out of Hamburg. And when he got here that's part of the way he supported himself because he started medical school in 1910, the same one I went to. ...In that four years he had to earn a living by teaching English and Hebrew to polish up on his own language and go to high school or take high school equivalency courses. ... His one year of college requirements he took while he was going to medical school.

KP: So he really worked quite hard and was quite bright, [wasn't he]?

LC: Yes and also ... very, very poor.

KP: Now, you mentioned ... [he was going to be a rabbi]. Was he in a line of Rabbis ... ?

LC: ... He was in a line of Hebrew teachers. His older brother was a Orthodox Rabbi, but his father was a Hebrew teacher who had been a cornetist in the Russian Army. That was a period, in fact there's a exhibit of Jews in Czarist Russia at the Jewish Museum here and they mention how the Russian Army tried to attract Jews because there was a lot of mingling of Jews and non-Jews in these areas. ...They tried to get a lot of Jews to come into the Army and they gave them good jobs, like being a cornetist. But a Jew ... had to sign up for 25 years. So after 25 years ..., no Jew was a Jew anymore. ... But he came from a line of intellectuals and Hebrew teachers. Everyone in his family was a professional. My mother was born in this country.

KP: ... She was born in Philadelphia [wasn't she] ?

LC: Yes. Right.

KP: ... I want to ask some questions about your mother in a minute. Your father, why did he choose medicine?

LC: Well, it was something that was ... open still. You know the sharp curtailment of Jewish admission to medical school (the quota system) started in the late 20's and 30's. But at that time they were yanking them in off the street So that was something that was open for him. The law apparently didn't appeal to him and business was an area which nothing in his family, nothing in his background prepared him for. ... In fact he transmitted that same attitude towards me But, ... that's really one of the main reasons.

KP: Your father served in the First World War?

LC: He was a captain in the Army ... in the Medical Corps. He didn't go overseas.

KP: Where did he do his service?

LC: Over here, in this area, maybe Fort Dix or Camp Kilmer. Possibly Brooklyn.

KP: It was ... in this immediate area?

LC: Yes. Right.

KP: Did he enlist or was he drafted?

LC: He enlisted. He, and that whole group ... of Russian Jews, were tremendously patriotic ... towards America. They were violently anti-Bolshevik you see. They were not so anti-Russian as they were anti-Bolshevik ... They were not so happy in Russia and of course the Bolsheviks hadn't even come on the scene. Still, there were plenty of Reds and left-wingers and so forth ... The Russians were nothing to admire either, but that group of them, (the Bolsheviks) was even less to be admired

KP: So your father was always very proud of his service in World War I?

LC: Oh yes. Sure.

KP: Did he ... ever join the American Legion or any of other veteran's group?

LC: No, no neither did I for that matter.

KP: But he was always very proud and he didn't have any regrets about serving?

LC: No, no.

KP: Your mother ... was born in Philadelphia?

LC: Yes.

KP: ... Were her parents born in the United States?

LC: No. Her parents were Rumanian and my grandfather was born in a little town outside of a city where there were a large Jewish population called Iasi. ... He came here initially in 1883, I think, and he couldn't find the girl he wanted, so he went back to Romania to marry his first cousin, who was a beautiful woman. ... Then all the children (there were nine but one died from diphtheria so there were eight living children) were born in this country. My mother was the next to the oldest and she was the first, one of two, born in Philadelphia. Then my grandfather moved his business back to New York. This was a leather works factory. He also had a small farm in the Catskills.

...

He was in several areas. He was in the Brownsville [area] of Brooklyn and he was in New Brunswick. Aside from my aunt and my mother, the others were born in either New York or out in New Brunswick.

KP: So ... your family has always had ties in New Brunswick ...?

LC: Oh yes, for a long time. They were in New Brunswick probably, at least, four years before my uncle (who went to Rutgers) was born in 1912.

KP: Your mother and father, how did they meet?

LC: Oh probably through matchmakers ... My father wanted a beautiful wife and my mother was certainly a beautiful woman ... He wanted an American woman and he was himself a good looking man

KP: You mentioned that you spent a lot of time in Brooklyn growing up. [Was that the only place you lived?]

LC: And [at] the farm outside New Brunswick. During the first 20 years of my life about equal number of days were spent at the farm or in Brooklyn.

KP: And just for ... the record, your farm was ... your grandfather's?

LC: It was my mother's father's farm.

KP: Okay.

LC: And it was opposite Clyde Lane, four miles outside of New Brunswick ... It was a 100 acre farm. One and a half miles further out Hamilton Road was Middlebush where I went to public school. I lived on the farm during this period.

KP: ... You said it was a Rockefeller farm ... [didn't you]?

LC: ... It had been ..., that's right. It was a Rockefeller Foundation farm with this gorgeous barn, a slate-roofed barn, two stories, where they had their horses for diphtheria anti-toxin. We grew, ... wheat, corn, oats, cows (between 6 and 12), [and] chickens. We had 3 horses and a tractor.

KP: So you were very comfortable around the farm?

LC: Oh yes.

KP: You did your share of chores?

LC: Yes, that was expected from boys and girls alike. ... The only extended period that I was in Brooklyn, four years, was when I went to Boys High School. But otherwise I was back and forth to the farm, ... every summer, every weekend, and every holiday. ... My father had his office in Brooklyn. We had a lovely house there. ... When I came back to medical school, it wasn't long after that, about a year and a half, that I left to go to midshipmen's school. So I spent a lot of time on the farm and you know, it was an antiquated type of farm. ... We had a harvester when people already had combines. ... Van Cleef was down the way there. He used to come with his thresher and we would have these huge stacks of bundles of wheat. He would come one night with his thresher and then the next day we'd start crushing [and] separating the wheat from the stalks and corn. ... It was just a working farm. We always had [chickens], every year, we got 2000 chicks. A wonderful place to grow up.

KP: So you had quite a bit of different produce ... [and animals]?

LC: Yes, produce. Most was for the animals. We had ... milk from which we got cheese, ... cream, and butter from the cows. But the horses, as far as I could see, they worked hard for the grains that fed them. It was not a very productive farm and as a matter of fact, it was out-of-date already. Even in the 20's and 30's it was out-of-date. But you mustn't forget ... [that] in the 30's in Jersey, the average income in the depression was minus two dollars for the farms and throughout New Jersey [incomes were low]. ... There's a documentary thing that they do on Jewish farmers in New Jersey

and ... I wrote an article for them on this farm. Really it had a lot to do with my grandfather who was a wonderful person.

KP: Oh really?

LC: Yes. So go ahead [with your other question].

KP: You went to elementary school in New Jersey. Why did your parents send you to elementary school [in New Jersey]? Were the schools better than the one you would have gone to in Brooklyn?

LC: That didn't really enter in. I'll tell you, this business of better schools and better teachers is nonsense. You want some philosophy. I'll tell you frankly that I don't think there makes ... a damn bit of difference. If you happen to be a reader, and you happen to have some brains, and you're encouraged, then you're going to learn. And If you're not, [there is a problem]. I just did an interview ... with a young fellow, [just before this], ... applying to medical school and it was obvious from his MCATs and from other things that he's not a reader.

KP: Really, you can just tell if someone is a reader or not?

LC: Yes, well, he did poorly in the verbal reasoning. ... I gave him a two paragraph article. I wanted to test him to see what the MCATs were bothered about. ... I gave him a two paragraph item from today's newspaper on how on how the real superstars in sports and music ... practice, practice, [and] practice... [They] work and they develop super skills. And what he got out of it was that they, ... they begin to deteriorate. There was nothing in that section that had anything to do with ... [deteriorating] and ... I had given him a couple of hints. But he is the kind of person who did very well in his grades at school because he knows how to study. But he has no verbal reasoning, [his score was] low, and his physical sciences somehow went down ... for his second MCATs. ... I ... could hear [by] just talking to him that this is not a man who's interested in reading ... So when it comes to schools, that didn't enter.

KP: Did your parents have this notion that ... [private schools were better than public schools]?

LC: ... Not at all. Middlebush Public School was a good public school. My uncles and aunts had gone there when it was a one room school house and my oldest sister had gone there when it was a one room school house. Hers was the first class to graduate from the eight room brick school house that it became [when it moved] across the street ... It had [a] little bunch of very competent teachers, but you have to understand that when you're talking about my education, and you compare it to today's youngsters, they have to know [a] trillion times more than I had to. When I see what my residents have to do on an in-service exam, or when I see what you have to do in high school compared to what I did in college even, ... [there is] just no comparison. So, either their smarter, or like this article say[s], they've been trained more or whatever it is. I don't know.

KP: Ray Taub and several others I've talked to mentioned that around the Sommerville area and other areas around New Jersey, there was Ku Klux Klan activity. [Is that true?]

LC: Yes in our area too.

KP: Do you remember any activity?

LC: I don't personally remember it, but my uncles do. They burned a cross on our farm.

KP: Oh, okay, so they did come close to [you]. You went to high school in Brooklyn?

LC: Yes.

KP: What was that transition like, from going to a public school in New Jersey to high school in Brooklyn?

LC: Well, as I say, I had been going back and forth. ... Actually I only went to school seven years, because I skipped, and I started five years of age in the first grade. ... I knew about Brooklyn. ... [We had a] lovely house, ... a brownstone house, and I was more attuned [to Brooklyn] than most of my cousins. I'm one of 22 first cousins on my mother's side and most of them lived in suburban and still live in suburban areas. The only ones who lived in the city were my sisters and myself. Of that group, we were more used to it. Now, I went to a high school, Boy's High School, where my 89.5 average made me out like I was a moron, you see, because 97's and 98's were a dime a dozen. Bright. Not today's Boy's High School! But at that time.

KP: So you ... had a lot of bright ... [classmates]?

LC: Very, very, very. Let me tell you, I have the yearbook here and that was in the midst of the Depression [when I attended]. A lot of those fellows, even the bright ones, couldn't go onto college unless they got scholarships. [In] those years, scholarships were only on merit or mostly on merit.

KP: Did most go to ... City College?

LC: Well, [to get into] City College, you had to have a certain grade. I got into Brooklyn College, but I wouldn't have been able to get into City College. I didn't have quite the grades for City College, but I had enough to get into Brooklyn College. But to get into Columbia, for instance, if you were Jewish particularly, it was extremely difficult, and yet fellows did ... I have a cousin ... on my father's side who is a genius over there in Berkeley who went to Harvard on a scholarship and Harvard Medical School on a scholarship [as well]. His father was a doctor too. [He] came over with my father.

KP: In your high school, how many ended up going, [or] were able to go onto college?

LC: Well, amongst the Jewish people, about 40 percent. Amongst the non-Jewish, somewhere about eight percent maybe. Not only because they couldn't, but because they weren't going to. In the United States in those years, four percent of high school students went onto college. So Boy's High, since it was in the city, ... in Brooklyn of course, but it was in the city, ... was such ... a school

like Bronx High School of Science or Stuyvesant High School. They had a little cut above [the] kind of student [in the city schools]. So maybe there was as much as ten percent [going to college].

KP: Which was very high ... [during] the Great Depression.

LC: That was a very high percent. Most people just couldn't afford it. Unless you got a scholarship, you couldn't go. Until, of course, they came back from the war and they got the GI Bill.

KP: Did your parents assume you would go to college?

LC: Oh yes. ... In that era, when a tiny percent of girls went, my three sisters went to college.

KP: ... That is very high.

LC: Sure. My sister, Sylvia, who is now dead unfortunately, she graduated high school in '31. Let's see how old was she, she was born in '17, she graduated in '35 or '36 from college. Now that's very, very unusual. None of my aunts went to college and my mother neither, but there were people of that generation who did, I mean women, but it was very rare. But, all my first cousins, including myself, went to college. But as I say, my sister, my next sister, and myself are the three oldest cousins

KP: How did the Great Depression affect your family?

LC: Well, I have to say that we saw it and we knew it. We saw the Hoovervilles and we[would] go on the train and they would put a stick of gum on your trousers and hope that you would give them a nickel, but even a penny would have been something and [then] give them back the gum. ... [During that time,] the penny was a lot of money and newspapers were two cents. And you could go for hot dogs for five cents. The Depression didn't hit us as much as others. Everybody in my family, in the extended family, had some kind of a job or was a professional, but ... you could see it everywhere.

KP: So your family wasn't personally affected but you knew it was there?

LC: ... We really weren't personally affected by it except that we ... tended to be careful on how we spent money. In New Brunswick you could buy a pair of shoes for two dollars and ... when that sole wore out, you could put a piece of cardboard in it. So you know, you were just careful and you wore hand-me-downs. And my father was a very ethical surgeon, so you know, there was no fee splitting and he didn't have the kind of income that some other doctors had, ... but he was earning a doctor's income at a time when Woolworth was paying their girls for a 48 hour week, ten dollars a week. ... That comes to \$520 a year. ... He was earning probably around \$4000 [a year]. ... Even a cop, probably didn't earn more than about \$1800 a year.

KP: Your father had studied to become a teacher?

LC: Yes.

KP: Did he remain active in American Judaism ...?

LC: Absolutely, particularly the historical and rational Judaism. In fact ... he was an ardent Zionist, an ardent Hebrew scholar, a[n] advanced Talmudic scholar, and he belonged to Hebrew societies and Hebrew medical societies, as well as regular medical societies. He was that kind of a person. He liked to belong to societies. More so than I. I'm more reserved.

KP: ... Did [he] enjoy the comradely?

LC: Yes, he liked to join, and I think he liked the fact that he was so brilliant that everybody looked up to him. But he wrote a lot of articles on his field, proctology and he taught in the Post-Graduate Medical School, which was ultimately connected with N[ew] Y[ork] U[niversity]. And he was the first proctologist in Brooklyn, and certainly the very first trained proctologist in Brooklyn, because he went to Austria and Hungary in 1927 to round out his education in proctology.

KP: ... Had you [or your mother] traveled with him when he went to Austria?

LC: No ... The wife stayed home with the four children and the husband went ... traveling. He wouldn't have dreamed of it. He also visited Palestine on that particular trip, what is now Israel.

KP: What did he say of Palestine ...?

LC: Well, ... there were Jews [there]. The pioneer movement was starting. He wasn't particularly Orthodox. He went to Egypt ..., to Jordan and ... to [Palestine]. ... Some of the famous names in Judaism were entertained ... at his house or he was part of committees. This fellow Menahem Ussishkin, who was a big name in Zionism and Albert Einstein. ... He managed to encourage ... his nephew and niece, his sister's children, to go to Israel in the '30's to become pioneers, one at Kfar Menahem, the other at Ein Hashofet.

KP: Oh, wow.

LC: And they're still there.

KP: ... Why did you go to Rutgers?

LC: Well, there ... [were] good reasons. I had two uncles who had gone [to Rutgers]. My uncle Harry Rubin (that was my mother's maiden name) was in the Class of '24 and he founded the Sammies, SMU, is it? He became a lawyer.

KP: Sigma Alpha Mu.

LC: ... Sigma Alpha ..., yes, SAM. And my Uncle Will, ... who graduated in '32 ... [from] Rutgers and graduated [from] medical school in '37, he spent five years in the Army in the South Pacific and the Phillippines during the Second World War. There was also a cousin Chas Rubin, a radioman

on a mine-sweeper. Besides [Rutgers] was near the farm and there was a feeling that it was perhaps a cut or two above Brooklyn College. I also got into NYU, but they had dollar signs written all over them.

KP: ... I heard ... [that] from someone else ... who went to Baruch ... when I was working in Baruch. He had said the same thing, that he was going to Baruch in the late '30's, ... that .. smart kids went to Baruch, ... well then City College, and ... then NYU [was] for the people who really ... [had money].

LC: Yes ... if you wanted to play around. ... We used to ... laugh at the people who went to Erasmus in Brooklyn because that was co-ed and you knew that was the fast crowd. Of course, I never went to a co-ed school until I got to medical school.

KP: Really, so you were always ... [attending all male schools]. [What about elementary school? Was that co-ed?]

LC: Well ... elementary [school] was co-ed, but Boy's High School, Rutgers, and even the medical school, (only seven out of a 108 were females) and of course midshipmen school was ... [all male]. When I took a masters in History at N.Y.U. (1980) that school was co-ed.

KP: Yeah ... well, now I'm going to let Patrick ... ask some questions about your years at Rutgers.

PG: Okay ... It [Rutgers] was an all-male school and they had the women's college where Douglass now is.

LC: Yes. The New Jersey College for Women.

PG: [Was there] ... a lack of relationships between students?

LC: No. They came over to the library at least. ... I don't recall having any woman in any of my classes with the exception of the time when I went to summer school The Rutgers pre-med course was so filled with science that there was no way of getting a decent amount of the liberal arts courses. So, on my own, I took a history and a literature course in summer school. So maybe there was a woman there. I don't remember. I went over to ... New Jersey College for Women to take piano lessons and that poor fellow ..., that professor ... [who] smoked himself to death. But there were social [events]

PG: Dances?

LC: Well, not ... sponsored by both colleges.

PG: Oh no ...?

LC: ... I mean not deliberately combined. Yes you would, if you had a sophomore, or was it the Junior prom, ... or was it the Senior prom and the Junior ball and the Sophomore hop? I forget now

which is which and the freshman something or other. You could invite somebody from the New Jersey College for Women, certainly. I went out with several women. I ... didn't go [to social events] at all until [the] ... end of my sophomore year. I was a very young fellow and I was very, very shy. Whether they would have liked to gone out with me, I don't know, but I didn't go out with anybody, ... but I went out with ... young women from the New Jersey College for Women. Yes.

PG: There were no restrictions between the ... two?

LC: No. Of course, I lived off-campus. I didn't live at Rutgers. I lived on the farm.

PG: Did you work on the farm while you were attending classes?

LC: Well, it so happened that my grandfather was still living into my sophomore year [at Rutgers]. Unfortunately, he died in October of my sophomore year and my grandmother stayed there until the winter got too severe. ... His sons, myself, and others helped keep the farm going, but we had to get a tenant farmer. Then the last two years, I lived there by myself on the farm, a pretty big farm for one person to live in. And for a while I had a cow. The lousy cow interfered with my social life and everything else, so I got rid of her ... It was ... a sort of odd ball existence, living there by myself.

KP: You had a big farm house to ... yourself?

LC: Yes, I had the whole farm house to myself in the last two years [at Rutgers]. Except, of course, the summer months.

PG: So [did] you spent more time ... in the social aspects of your life, than the studying part, the school part or the work part?

LC: No, no. I felt once in two weeks was enough to go out on dates and I had a pleasant time with women. There's no question, but if you want to know how I spent my time, it was reading. That's what I did. I went down to the stacks in the Rutgers library and I read everything I could get my hands on except my studies.

KP: Did you know Lew Bloom at the time?

LC: Lew Bloom?

KP: Yeah ... It sounds like a very familiar [thing]. He had said the same thing. He was in history and political science [at Rutgers].

LC: Oh yes? Well, I ... mostly knew the people in my ... curriculum ... but I did a lot [of reading]. I ... was a[n] [avid] reader since ... some eight, nine years of age. I have to tell you ... even in the city I would go to ... the library and come home with a bunch of books. My sister would come home with a bunch of books and I'd grab hers and finish hers off in a day, in one evening, and then I would go to mine. That's the way it was. I was ... perhaps one of the very few people who read the

newspaper at Rutgers. ... I read a lot of detective stories I played the piano and ... you know ... I was by myself.

KP: ... You were one of the few people to read the newspaper at Rutgers?

LC: Yes, ... amongst the students.

KP: ... What so often I've asked people in the interview about [was] the approach of war ... Many of them say that they really didn't know In a sense it came out of the blue almost.

LC: I want you to note ..., my class was as ignorant as any class and probably all the other classes were [too], but I wasn't. I read the news[paper]. There was an alcove in the ... library. I don't think ... it's still there. They probably changed [it]

LC: ... So there was an alcove there where they had newspapers on those long racks you know, and I would read the newspapers religiously. I entered a contest in high school for the New York Herald Tribune on the value of democracy or something. I got an honorary mention. But anyway, I read newspapers. Very, very few [read newspapers]. In fact, very few of my colleagues, now read newspapers, if you want an ignorant bunch, Well, I shouldn't go on ... I did a lot of reading and a lot of fictional reading then. I stopped [reading] fiction about the age of 35. I read very little fiction, except for detective stories which I read over and over again. I read almost only non-fiction now. But, I read everything that you can name, every famous author that you could name, almost everything that they ever wrote. ... But I'm just trying to think of what [I did]. Well, I played some intramural football between the College of Arts and Sciences and Engineers and Aggies and so forth Do I have [any pictures up here]?. No, I don't have one up here, but I had All these wonderful pictures, by the way, up there on the farm and all that were taken by my sister. But I had a uniform and everything. ... We had the whole works Then, of course, I was in the R.O.T.C. ...

PG: The football, the intramural football, did you compete for the Keller Cup? Was that the goal of the intramural sports?

LC: I don't think there was any cup. We just played and I was a half-back. That's all I can tell you.

PG: Was it the Commuter Club ... [that you played for]?

LC: No, it wasn't quite that small. It was colleges, the College of Arts and Sciences against the Agricultural College against the Engineering School. Things like that. It wasn't just small clubs. It was real. It was sponsored by the school ... with helmets ... padding, and everything else. ... [When] the summer came around, everyone came out on the farm. We had the pond there.

PG: So you hosted social gatherings on your farm?

LC: No, I'm talking about the family. I have to tell you, most of my social interest was the family.

KP: So as a commuter, ... having in some sense [this] peculiar circumstance of having a whole farm house, how much time would you spend at Rutgers during the week?

LC: Well, I spent time there. We had 40 hours of class and lab work per week. I worked on the Targum for a while. I was in the Commuter Club. ... I think there was a ... Jewish Society, or Hillel society, something like that. On the weekends, very often I would go into the city.

PG: ... A practice of old-time Rutgers was Chapel once a week. What were your feelings on that?

LC: Very, very strong. Very strong and negative. First of all, the pastor there was the dean, "Whistling Willie" Metzger, and he was obnoxious and bigoted. I don't mind if it goes on the record, but he had been that way all the time. Other people knew him from years back. It was compulsory and of course that was very much against my feelings to do anything on a compulsory basis What do you call [it] when you join the fraternity at first?

PG: Pledge.

LC: Pledge. I pledged to the SAM. My uncle sought that out. Of course I had to do that. Well, I didn't like it for two reasons. I didn't like the sort of smell of elitism, and I didn't like the fact that they could paddle me and I couldn't paddle them back. So I pledged for one year or less and considering where I would have to live in the SAM house and ... how I could live on the farm, I preferred the farm. Truth to tell, I was wrong. My father was wrong too. I should have been pushed into staying at Rutgers and not living on the farm all by myself, which fitted my temperament, but wasn't very good for my social skills

KP: So you do have some regrets about not living on campus?

LC: Yes, yes I do. I think it was wrong for me. I think it was wrong that I was so much by myself.

PG: Would the cost have made much of a difference at that time, ... the cost of living on campus? Was that a factor?

LC: Well, I don't think so at all. It was such a low tuition to start with, [about] \$175 a term, \$350 a year. I don't think it would have cost that much [more to live on campus]. A lot of commuters lived on campus, a whole bunch from Newark and West New York, ... New Jersey, and all the other places. A lot of them lived on campus and I could have. As I say, I think that I have some regrets, but I did love that farm.

PG: In regards to classes, did you ever take ... a class in etiquette ...?

LC: Etiquette?

PG: ... I read that ... [for] etiquette and right living, there was voluntary classes you could take.

LC: I never heard of such a thing. I know what etiquette is, but I never heard of such a thing. No.

KP: You mentioned ... a lot of your classmates weren't aware of what was going on [in the world].

LC: Oh no.

KP: I've also heard that ... there were some American Firsters on campus.

LC: ... There probably were. There was certainly plenty of anti-Semitism, but it was shaded in a way. In other words, the non-Jews who were that way, they belonged to the fraternities that were like that. They belonged to the clubs and there were certain clubs that Jewish fellows didn't get into. On the other hand, there were no[ne], that I recall ... personally, any overt feelings [of prejudice]. I really can't. Now, I don't know how many people even knew I was Jewish, except the Jewish fellows you see. I don't know. My name is Leon Canick, which could be almost any kind of name. As a matter of fact, it was an original Russian name, Kanik. So, you know, I really don't know that I personally [felt it]. I had more of it ... at Middlebush, the public school, overtly from the little farm kids then I had at Rutgers. I never had it, by the way, at Midshipmen School. Talking of American Firsters, the President Robert Clothier was a prominent isolationist.

PG: How about in the Navy ...?

LC: Well, there was one, one fellow amazingly. One lousy Polish LCT skipper who was nasty. Otherwise, ...[not really]. I don't know what they knew I was and I wasn't bragging about the fact that, "Oh, I'm Leon Canick, Jew." You know, I don't do that, but ... there just was very little of it that I saw, personally. There were, of course, pro-Nazi German professors who had to flee to Germany.

----- End of Tape One Side One -----

KP: You mentioned ... Dean Metzger. You had some run-ins with Dean Metzger.

LC: No, I didn't have any run-ins [with Dean Metzger].

...

KP: You mentioned that Professor Peterson was one of your favorite professors.

LC: Yes, I'm trying to think of the other one and I think I got it. The genetics professor, Dr. Boydon. ... There was a Shakespeare professor I had that was very good, Professor McGinn. ... The professor of organic chemistry was a very, very, nice guy, especially since he gave me some decent grades, which I hardly ever got, Professor Cottle. And Professor Charanis in History.

KP: Your father was very active in Zionist organizations?

LC: Right.

KP: What was his attitude towards the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930's?

LC: He was tearing his hair and he was, you know, engaged in meetings and ... activities, ... and demonstrations. I have a letter from Early, Stephen Early of FDR's [administration], but I don't have the letter my father sent. I don't know what it was but I'm almost certain it had to do with what is this country doing about it [the Nazi's].

KP: So you were very aware of it ...?

LC: Oh yes, and you see, in New York there was the German-American Bund right over here in ... Yorkville. It's only a few blocks away from here. Then there was Father Coughlin and ... others. The United States was very isolationist. ... If you know your American history, you know that the Jews were accepted in, not with great applause, but they were accepted in. Then anti-Semitic stirrings started in the '20's Then the quota system started, not only in immigrants, but in college admissions and so forth. A fellow I know very well is a plastic surgeon. He's a little older than I am. He's about eight years older or something. His father was one of the first dentists who wanted to get into ... what is now the First District Dental Society. And he was told, "We have no room here for Jews." In the '30's it was almost impossible to get in if you were Jewish, into a medical school [that is], unless you went to Europe To get an internship, forget it. So, you know something, there were 42 pre-meds at Rutgers when I graduated. Twenty-one were Jewish and 21 were not Jewish. Two, only two, me and another fellow whose father was also a doctor, got in[to medical school] amongst the Jewish fellows. Ultimately, others got in and there are some other ... Jewish doctors from that class, but that was who got in initially Everyone of the others, including abysmal imbeciles got in. So that's the story, and that was already the early '40's. ... That didn't change really until the middle '50's when Sputnik went up.

KP: I had a doctor actually who basically told me that that's why he got in, because he wasn't Jewish. He, in fact, got in because of the quotas. He would not have gotten in probably [if it hadn't been for the quotas].

LC: Oh, no question about it ... and yet in midshipmen school where you would think you would get the heart of Gentile indifference to Jews, I never felt it at all. I never felt it in the Navy. I was a skipper of an LCT As a flotilla commander once said. We ran over a buoy. Do you know what a buoy is? Anyway, ... we sunk it. I happen not to be on the conning tower. My executive officer was. I was off on the stern, doing a maneuver with the crew on an anchor. So we hit this damn thing and we sunk it We had to make a report, so I come into Pearl Harbor, this is in Pearl Harbor still, and I say to them, "Well, if you don't want to believe me, ask my crew." He says, "Your crew. You lie and they'll back you up every time." So I had no problems really, not in the Navy.

KP: Did that surprise you that the Navy would [not be prejudice towards you for being Jewish]?

LC: Yes it did, but peculiarly I liked the Navy from way, way back. Whenever my cousin and I, he's a half a year younger than I, whenever ... we bet on the Navy-Army game, I always bet on the Navy ...

KP: So you really had this interest in the Navy.

LC: Yes, all the way back.

KP: Do you know why ...?

LC: I really have no idea [why]. There's certainly nothing in my background. I like to row. That's about all I can say. I like to go ice skating.

KP: ... Otherwise you can't [say why you had this interest in the Navy]?

LC: I have no ... idea.

PG: ... What you were doing in between the time you graduated Rutgers and you went [to midshipmen school]?

LC: I went to medical school ..., and then in my second year I left because I wanted to go into the service and I went to Midshipmen School.

KP: Why did you feel so compelled to serve?

LC: Because I wanted to serve. I didn't ... want to sit out this war.

KP: ... Would you have preferred to fight against Germany ...?

LC: Well, I guess I might have. I guess I might have, but ... the Japs, excuse me for using the word Japs. I got so used to using that. The Japs ... had done something very heinous in my mind and everybody else in this country. ... We had a real contempt for them which was not valid because they were very, very fine fighters. But it really didn't make so much difference to me [who I fought against]. I didn't think that I was going to get into the ... European War because I finished midshipmen school in the ... winter/spring term ... with a month off ... for leave ... and I didn't really get into any training program until June In June of '44, that was the invasion of Normandy ... and I still had to do some more training I was sent here and there and finally I was given an LCT When I had [a] certain amount of training in Solomon's Base in Maryland, I ... was certain I was going to go to the Pacific. They didn't have any use any longer for LCTs [in Europe]. They did use them in the invasion of Normandy, but they didn't have any use after that, not in September or August [of 1944].

PG: How long were you at Midshipmen School?

LC: I was in midshipmen school for four months, ... one of those 120 day wonders Then I had this month off. Then I went down to Fort Pierce, Florida ..., but they didn't need us anymore. They were for the little boats that run along side the AKAs and APAs. They didn't need us anymore so they sent us back up to Solomon's Base in Maryland and we were supposed to have six weeks of

training. When ... I got there, they said hello and they told me right off there's no three week of schooling at all. Forget that. The next day, they gave me my crew who [were] far, far more up on LCTs than I was. ... I went out one day with another skipper and his crew. Then I went out the second day with my crew and ... myself ... with another skipper on my boat. Then the third day they said, "There you are."

KP: You mentioned your crew was more experienced then you were.

LC: Oh sure. Well, they went to school for that purpose. We were learning about recognition signals of F4Us and MIGs and things like that and ... destroyer [recognition] on the horizon and navigation and all kinds of things like that. We didn't even hear the word ... amphibious.

KP: ... When you went into Midshipmen School, would you have preferred to go onto a big ship?

LC: I thought I would, but of course as it turned out, I was much better off. Here I was this lowly ensign and I was a skipper of a boat. No, it was not a ship and it wasn't a big wonderful thing, but you know I had sixteen crew[men]. I had a[n] executive officer, I had two 20 mm anti aircraft guns, ... two 50 caliber machine guns on the bow, and I had a conning tower. ... I was a real skipper, or as my crew would say, most of them coming from the south, "Skippah, Skippah." ... I don't know how they got that extra sort of syllable in there.

KP: So you were with a lot of southern sailors [on your LCT]?

LC: A good number of them were southern. There were several from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and upper New York State. There was one fellow from Detroit, one fellow from the State of Washington and I think all the others were south of the Mason and Dixon Line.

KP: For many of them you were really the first Jew they had ever had any contact with.

LC: Oh, let me tell you about that. ... I'll tell you when it was. It was on V-E day. That was in May of '45. Now they had been with me, mind you, since June of '44 and finally they got up the nerve to ask me, "What are you skippah?" So I said, "Well, American, just like you are." "No, no what are you skippah." So I said, "I'm Jewish." "Oh come on skippah you're kidding." Well I want you to know, over half of that crew never believed that I was Jewish. Never. They would come up to me periodically and say, "You was kidding me weren't you skippah." Because as far as the southern person was concerned, first of all Jews were "Jew-bastards." I mean that was their word for a Jew. It almost caused a fight over there in Israel ... once when there ... [were] American troop[s] [there]. But more than that was the fact that I didn't have horns. I didn't have a tail. They had no idea what a J-E-W was. Interesting huh? But I had a very good crew. They were very young. So was I and in 1944 when I got them, I was still 21.

KP: Who was the oldest in the crew?

LC: The oldest in the crew was a fellow who was 42, whose son was in the service At Okinawa, he got a dear John letter from his wife. He promptly injured himself and I surveyed him out of the service. He was able to go home, but I don't know if he could save his ... marriage.

PG: Your crew stayed with you through Okinawa and Iwo Jima?

LC: Yes and before that through Solomon's Base, Maryland and down to New Orleans to Shell Beach where we did anti-aircraft [training] and through the Panama Canal. We went to ... Guantanamo Bay and they arranged a dance not for just us, but for the whole flotilla that was going, a big dance. We had a wonderful time Anyway, then we went to San Diego after the canal, then we went to Hawaii, that's where we put our boat together. [Our boat was] ... in three sections on top of an LST. We put our own boat together.

KP: ... Did they throw in a regular seaman, a regular Navy seaman, or were you ... all ... draftees?

LC: No, ... there were no draftees in the Navy. Everyone was an enlisted man, but they were all new people (no regular Navy personnel). They had gone through boot camp and they had ... learned their skills. My highest ranking mate was a ... motor machinist mate, second class, when I got him. That was the fellow from Troy, New York. I remember his name, Flanagan. He ultimately got promoted to motor machinist mate, first class I was [not] entitled to a chief petty officer, so he couldn't ... go to something higher than that But on the other hand, I had my gunner's mate [who] was a seaman's second class. He could never get to first class. He couldn't pass the test.

PG: You were in the invasion of Okinawa and Iwo Jima. When you staged for the invasion of Okinawa ... [and] you were on Leyte, in the Philippines, did you have interactions with the natives on the island?

LC: All totally negative. I have to tell you. It was a beat up, muddy, disgusting island anyway. The Filipinos were telling us about push push with their sisters or aunts or cousins or whatever. We really had almost no contact with them except to see them and to see what the Japanese had done to them, down-trodding them and ... what they did to their animals. They would cut out sides of live cows as they walked around and of course kill them, but we had really very little contact in Leyte with them. ... In Leyte I was trying to find out if I could reach my uncle who ... was in Luzon. He had come up from ... New Guinea. He had been in a number of invasions. He was a doctor, but I couldn't get in contact with him.

KP: You had mentioned that you had staged in Maryland and then you went to New Orleans.

LC: No, I trained in Maryland. We staged at Saipan and Leyte.

KP: [You] trained in Maryland How did you travel to New Orleans?

LC: By train.

KP: By train?

LC: By troop train.

KP: What did you think of the South and New Orleans?

LC: Well I thought very well of ... New Orleans because I fell in love with a girl there I left before anything too serious transpired. ... She wasn't Jewish anyway , but I really remember her with a great deal of affection. New Orleans itself was a lovely city. But we didn't have too much to do with the South as we went by train though [it]. I can only tell [you] about the South through my crew and as I wrote to my father, I said, "You wouldn't believe in a thousand years I would have met people like this."

KP: So what was so striking [about them]?

LC: Well, they were almost totally illiterate. They were almost totally amoral Their language, you know now I use plenty of curse words myself, but in those years it was so unusual for me, and especially the kind of ... [language] that they used. I can't bring it to mouth even now. ... Their kind of life was just unbelievable, except this one fellow, my quartermaster. He came from Emory, Georgia. He came from apparently a little better family. His brother was a jeweler. He ... died young, [at] 46. He once visited me here in New York, but otherwise, they were some bunch.

KP: Did they gamble a great deal?

LC: Oh yes. Especially ... my gunner's mate, I call him a gunner's mate. He really wasn't entitled to that title, but my gunner. He was pretty good. In fact ... we got credit for [knocking out] one and a half [Jap Zeros] and he knocked down the one. Anyway, he could lean against a wall, we call it a bulwark, and go to sleep. So ..., he told me he knew all the tricks in cards and I wouldn't let them play with money.

KP: Really, you ordered them [not to play with money]?

LC: I wouldn't let them play with money. So I said to him, "Listen Patton, if I ever hear that you cheated any of this crew ..., I'll get you a court-martial and it won't be done by me." He said, "Skip! I don't have to cheat to beat this crew!" ... We had gotten lumber on one of our trips and it was getting hot as hell so ... the fellows built a platform across our after deck in the stern between the two sets of cabins. We had four different cabin spaces. And they put up a house and they had screens. It was really a very nice little room Let me tell you, that was a blessing. The screens cut out some of the breeze, but under that shade, it was cool always. During the typhoon, I was standing on that platform for sixteen hours. The roof was going to come off but we ... hung on to it, then we got ropes on it and we managed to save it. I was the only LCT that was still at anchor after [the storm].

KP: ... Was that your only typhoon you've ever ridden [out] while in your LCT?

LC: No, there were two typhoons. One was a very, very serious one ..., but it hit the land a little more than it hit us Our conning tower was 30 feet high and waves were 65 or 70 feet high. They were really enormous. This one typhoon though, an LST, (now we weighed 150 tons, the LST, the same as the one which carried us, weighed 2000 tons) ... went out of control and was banging against us. Ultimately, because I was letting my anchor cable go in and out to ride with the waves when she came alongside us The water got sucked up in the anchor winch and that knocked that out. ... Thank God a[n] ocean-going tug came along and pulled her off, otherwise they would have drowned us. ... After this fellow got injured and I sent him home, we got somebody out of a brig in May, and he comes out with an ax. He's going to cut the cable so we can go in like all the other LCTs and get washed onto the land. Some LCTs had broken out of their anchors and cut the cable. Some of them were 75-100 yards from shore, [and] they never could pull them off. So I took out my trusty revolver and I said, "You get back into the cabin." That guy! The minute he came on board, he says, "I gotta have my cup of Java!" We used to have this evening cocoa break because we had to turn off our generators, and we had to lock up the refrigerator. Around eleven o'clock we would have cocoa with powdered milk and water and then my cook baked bread and we had the caned ham and cheese, and it was really very delicious. This joker comes along and suddenly we have to have coffee. I never drink coffee ... but that was a problem for me only.

KP: You mentioned you saw a number of ports on your way out to Okinawa and Iwo Jima. You saw Guantanamo Bay and New Orleans?

LC: Oh, that's in the states. But after Hawaii, we were at Eniwetok and Kwajalein in the Carolines. ... Then we saw Tinian, Guam, and Saipan in the Marianas. We staged in Saipan for Iwo Jima We staged at Leyte in the Philippines for the invasion of Okinawa. Then we saw the island of Okinawa ... and we saw Iwo Jima Panama, by the way, was a filthy little place, but if you went by train up to the hill, they had a racetrack up there. I took a day off and I went up there, not that I gambled but ... it was fun, and it was very pretty.

KP: When your sailors got into port, how [many] problems did you have?

LC: Well, first of all in Guantanamo they didn't get into port. In the states, I don't know what they were doing. They were separate from us in New Orleans. They were in another area and we were with officers including Russian naval officers. By the way, that was out in the bayous where you could go to a wooden bar-saloon, a wooden-frame house, and you could get a pile of shrimp this high for free and a beer or a crab meat sandwich with three ... crabs, soft-shell crabs for 25 cents. Then of course, I went in to see my girlfriend all the time and almost never slept that few weeks that I was there. Anyway, so what they did on land, just like they don't know what I did in Solomon's, Maryland, New Orleans, but I'm not telling you either. I don't know They didn't go ashore in Guantanamo and they didn't go ashore in ... Panama, but in San Diego, which I just re-visited after 49 years for a convention, in San Diego they went in there and we go to this ... ship supply and I see them in the distance down this big, huge Quonset, carrying out this huge meat slicer. And I wanted to yell at them, "What are you doing with that thing. It's as big as our galley," but an officer saw them before me. He wanted to report them, but we just returned it. ... So in Hawaii, they did go into town. And one day, they all come back from Hawaii and they each have a little sparrow tattooed on their shoulder-blade. What could I do? ... We weren't doing much of anything in

Hawaii, in Oahu ..., little training exercises, nothing very much. We did a lot of training exercises on our own in Solomon's Base, Maryland where we got stuck out at midnight with one engine and the rudders on either side of it. We got back at six o'clock in the morning and there was a boat on fire so I pulled alongside and I went down to the engine room. They tied a rope around me. [I went] to see if there was anyone left down there. Well, there wasn't. They wanted to give me an award on that. I said, "Nah."

KP: Did you have any severe discipline problems?

LC: I really didn't. They liked me very much and I got along very well with them. I didn't believe in running to the superior officers for disciplinary things. I took care of all my disciplinary things myself. I had a whole list of disciplinary punishments and what they did to deserve them. The worst punishment was being put at the end of the list for rotation home.

KP: You had a lot of responsibility. [Were] there very many people for you to depend upon?

LC: No, but ... some of the petty officers, second class, third class ... were pretty reliable. This fellow Cantrell, this fellow Flanagan, Lighttower ... who took care of the bosun duties of the ... ship. ... They were very reliable The other guys, the seaman first and second classes who couldn't get any higher, they were different. There was one fellow ... from Washington, Gailbrath. I told him, "the way you curse, you can't eat at my ... table." We had to eat in two shifts. I wasn't one of these skippers that insisted on having [my meals separate from the crew] There were some that did it, [eating in] their little cabin. The only thing I didn't eat, because I couldn't stand the smell, was pork chops. I couldn't eat them later on in my internship at the staff house either. I just couldn't stand that smell. So they had to make me a Western omelet We got this frozen ... mutton from Australia, and they didn't want to eat it-these guys who ate corn pone and chicory and some other non-food down there in the south. So I told my cook to tell them it's roast beef.

KP: Did you ever get to shore in Hawaii?

LC: Sure, oh sure. The very first night we got there, I went to shore and met a soldier, Tickles the Clown. He had been in the states. He took me to people who were way up in the mountains and I think they were Fifth Columnists. Oh, we had some night there. And we drank, and we ate. We made a recording and I played the piano and I sent the recording home.

KP: Do you have it still?

LC: I don't have it. I don't know who has that recording.

KP: You were in the landings on D-Day [at] both Iwo Jima and Okinawa. What are your most memorable, vivid memories of those two landings?

LC: Well, at Iwo Jima, I have to tell you, I was still on the LST, but I was right off shore, and we were at out guns. The most memorable was the raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi at Iwo Jima. The other most memorable thing was the fact that the Marines landed on Iwo Jima after 92

consecutive days of bombing and shelling. At five o'clock in the afternoon, they were almost wiped off the island because the Japanese had not been destroyed at all. A seven day campaign took thirty days and huge numbers of casualties.

KP: [Was] the notion ... [that] Iwo Jima should have gone much quicker [than it did]?

LC: Oh, so should [have] Okinawa, absolutely. Iwo Jima was supposed to have been 7 days [to capture]. Okinawa was supposed to be [taken in] 30 days. Iwo Jima took a month, [and] Okinawa took 3 months.

KP: Did you get to know any of the Marines from either campaign?

LC: The only one that I know, but I didn't know him well ... Some of the Marines slept on my boat ... on the way to Iwo Jima. One of the Marines was a 25 year veteran and he was there at the raising of the flag at Mount Suribachi and [then] he was killed. That was the only thing I know about him. I really had very little contact [with the Marines]. Actually, one of my crewmen, the least moral of all my crewmen (he had a child out of wedlock back in ... Alabama). He managed to get in touch with his brother, who had been in the invasion of the town at the south of Okinawa called Naha. And he came along and God there was this dirty, begrimed Marine. So we gave him showers. We gave him clean clothes, and he gave us some stuff he had picked up in from Japanese. And then he went on his way. That was the only Marine I ever really [had contact with].

KP: Do you remember what [stuff he gave you]?

LC: Yes, ... these are the two items.

KP: Oh yeah, a diary.

LC: I'm not sure it's a diary I think it's some kind of a Bible or something possibly from his family.

KP: Yeah. ...

PG: Your unit received citations ... [for] the landing?

LC: ... I got island command citation for being one of the first 10 LCTS to land on Okinawa on D-Day with 100 octane aviation gasoline so they wrote us out a little commendation. That's all.

PG: Can I ask you what the fuel was for if you were one of the first landing [crafts on the beach]?

LC: Planes. Airplanes.

PG: Were our planes on [Iwo Jima]?

LC: Oh sure.

PG: That didn't make sense to me when I read that in the form you filled out.

LC: Yes.

KP: You ... came under hostile fire?

LC: Sure.

KP: ... When was the first time ...? Was it in Iwo Jima that you came under hostile fire?

LC: At Iwo Jima there were some degree of hostile fire from the beach, but ... they really weren't aiming at us because we were obviously not worth-while wasting ammunition on. But on Okinawa, the kamikazes were there and they were striking. There was an LSM not far from us who against regulations, opened fire in the smoke screens at one of the kamikaze planes that they could see. The kamikaze plane, in turn, followed the tracers right down to the ship and strafed them ... and damaged them heavily. But you know we got shrapnel. We got pieces of metal that came on board. The constant noise of guns firing was awful! No one was particularly firing at us except that ... half of a kamikaze where we were along side a ship unloading her. This was a merchant ship by the way. We never liked to unload the merchant ships because we had a hard job wheedling food out of them and we had to unless we wanted only to eat canned food because we couldn't get back to our mother ship as often as we would like. So the ships that we unloaded had to give us food. ... The merchant ships didn't want to because they had to give a tally of it and I didn't have a commissary officer on my boat. So anyway, ... this plane came down on us, and you could see it coming directly down on us. And the fellows wanted to leave their guns. I made them stay with their guns, 50 caliber guns and the 20 mm anti-aircraft guns and then he was up about, oh I don't know, maybe like the top of this building is to us on the fifth floor, maybe a little higher, probably a little higher. ... So he tried to swerve down and go up again so he could hit something worth while like a destroyer or something significant, but we shot him down. We shot him so he laid a bomb in that ship. Thank God it wasn't in us and ... we got him half-way up through his crawling, and he slid down the side of the bigger ship.

PG: How were your feelings towards the Japanese at this time?

LC: Very negative. Very negative and they haven't changed much.

KP: Would you buy a Japanese car ...?

LC: No, I wouldn't buy any foreign car. I buy American, but I'm very negative about the Japanese because ... I could see, from the way they've been, the way they talk about their past, what they did, what they did to women, their whole attitude in themselves, their whole attitude of taking and taking from the United States and then thumbing their nose at the United States economically. I really dislike them and I've been in Japan once on a trip to China. I went to Japan too for a few days and it just happened to be the cherry blossom time and ... all the men were sitting out on these mats drinking sake and they were all angry, drunk, red, and just like their art work, which very often

(except for the ones who are ludicrous), is very angry and I have never really gotten over it. We have a fellow from Japan as a visitor with us in my residency program now and you know I can't really have any personal one-on-one feeling about him. He wasn't born in that time and all that. But it's very hard.

PG: So those times stay with you?

LC: With me certainly, but with Germany even more so, but that's another matter.

KP: You mentioned, it's a small point, but you mentioned you had to do quite a bit of bargaining for food.

LC: Yes, ... we didn't bargain. We just asked. We begged for it. We would go to a AKA or an APA, usually an AKA and you know they would give us a couple of crates of oranges or apples and they would give us a bunch of chickens or a bunch of bologna's or salamis or cases of Canadian... Australian mutton and things like that. From the merchant ships we used to get [food] too because we would tell them, "If you don't give us the food. We're going to pull off from you and go to our mother ship and get food." Because it's no fun to eat canned food all the time and frozen food, two years or not, it was still better than anything out of a can. ...

----- End of Tape One Side Two -----

LC: [We went for] two weeks, even three weeks, I remember, with just canned food, powdered eggs, of course, powdered milk, of course, and that because we couldn't get to the ... mother ship. For instance, we would get called to unload a ship. Now on D-Day, we were tossed into the water. The LST cantered over and pulled the trigger and they shoved us into the water. We went right then and there to a[n] oil tanker with barrels of oil, loaded up our LCT and went in on the beach. All right, that was unloaded pretty fast. We had to organize and that was part of the reason they gave the commendation [to us], because we organized the units to remove our load But there were times when we would go in on the beach and we would be there for two, three, four, five days before we were unloaded. Well, they didn't maybe have the Seabees or they didn't have the equipment or they couldn't get to us or something. Well, then we would hear over the radio, go to AKA something or other. Well we couldn't say, "Well wait a second, we need some food." So we went and then we would unload and by the time the mother ship was available, usually an LST to get food from, it might be night or might be a storm, or might be that we were on the beach again. So we took it when we could and therefore, we begged these ships for food and most of the time they were pretty good about it.

KP: What about showers and water?

LC: We had a shower...

KP: Salt water or [fresh water]?

LC: No, fresh water. We had a tank. We ... were a double deck boat with empty spaces and tanks for fuel, of course, and for water, and we had a shower with a handle. We could take a shower.

KP: So you didn't have a problem with water and such?

LC: No, no. But we had to paint our water tank and at first the fellows didn't want to go down there. It was only a little manhole to get in there and then I saw them waiting in line and they're coming up and they're laughing and they loved it. So what happened was that the paint fumes were making them high, so they were getting a cheap drunk. It's like when V-E Day came. We were out waiting our turn to come in. We were at anchor at Okinawa and of course our war hadn't ended at all. I broke out a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label, which I had brought all the way over from New Orleans and it was only a fifth because that's all they had in those years. They didn't have liters. ... So how much could you drink ... if you had eighteen, myself, my exec and sixteen crew. That was eighteen people. How much of a drink could you get? You could get one and a half drinks. Some of them didn't drink, but let me tell you, we got quite a high on that one and a half drinks and then they called us into the beach and how we even got through and managed to get between two LCTS with just enough width for my boat, I don't know, but we did. We're talking about getting through at Solomon's Base, Maryland when they were training us. You know they gave us no training. So the first time I come back to the dock, I ... smashed right into the dock. Anyway, I ultimately learned.

KP: ... I don't mean to come all the [way] back to training, but did it ever seem strange being in Notre Dame to learn how to be a naval sailor, so far from the water?

LC: Yeah it was, but you know ..., you just don't think about it so much and then we did have a weekend on lake, what the heck's the lake outside of Chicago? ... Superior, no Michigan.

KP: Lake Michigan.

LC: And let me tell you we had, I had, the best sleep in my life because they put us up in hammocks and there was [a] mattress in the hammock and the boat was underway and you had this rocking and oh that was the most beautiful sleep. But anyway, so that was our one contact with water at Notre Dame. But you see, we were training. You asked before about whether I would have liked to have been on a big ship. Sure, when I asked for my preference I put down [the] destroyer or destroyer escort even. I didn't have any engineering skill enough to be on a submarine, but you know I thought maybe. But would I have been on a destroyer or certainly on a cruiser or a battleship if I was a fancy enough ensign from Annapolis? I would be maybe examining the heads or the third in charge navigational officer. But here I was a skipper of a boat and I could go and speak to a four striper. I had one stripe. I could go and speak to a four striper, see here's my lapel things from that time, ... on an almost equal basis

KP: In other words, ... in the Navy there was a great status to having a ship even if it was a small ship. You still [had status]?

LC: No, no. There was no particular status. Just my own feeling.

KP: Yeah.

LC: But there was a lot of fun for yourself.

KP: Very fulfilling.

LC: Yes ... [for those] ... who did get on ships, a lot of them had engineering degrees, but an ensign on a big ship, ... really has no ...power ... and for me, who was used to being responsible. As I say, I lived on a farm by myself I was used to it. It didn't bother me at all and while it's a little scary at first, you know, to go out on a boat you never ever heard of [before]. They didn't even mention this boat in midshipmen school.

KP: Do you ever wonder why you weren't put into the Medical ... Corps of the Navy?

LC: Yes, because I didn't want to. They asked me.

KP: Oh, you did [get asked] to be a surgeon in the Navy?

LC: Yes, I didn't want [to].

KP: Why didn't you want to be a surgeon's mate?

LC: A pharmacist's mate. Well, the reason was that I wanted to be an officer. ... I thought I would be happier being an officer.

KP: And it seems at the end you were in fact [happier]?

LC: Yes.

KP: How many people made it through officer's training school ..., midshipmen School I should say?

LC: Well, quite a few. Almost all of them made it. At least 85 percent.

KP: It didn't have a high wash-out rate?

LC: No, no we didn't. They really needed them. I happened to be in the top ten percent of that group. That's the only college I ever went to that I was in the top ten percent. But there wasn't a high washout rate. ... They really needed the officers, first of all, and you see now that LCT could easily be manned by a petty officer and three or four crew in peace-time. But if you had general quarters and you had to have watchers and you had to have people at the guns and you had to have people there ... then you needed to have that kind of a crew and this was a pretty nice LCT. This was a Mark VI. The ones down in New Guinea and Bougainville were Mark V's and they had the cabins all off the stern and the back. We had two cabins, each was 10 X 20 feet. ... In the back was

the galley, and the other back was the head, ... the shower, and all that. ... The sleeping quarters had twelve of the crew sleeping in one of ... those rooms and four of them slept in the aft part of mine. My executive officer slept in a bunk on top and they ... made me a bed out of pipes and springs and got me a mattress.

KP: ... After the Okinawa invasion, how long did you think the war was going to last?

LC: Well, I just saw yesterday, or whenever I was looking over all this stuff, a letter that I wrote to my father in February I have it dated February 29th of 1945. That was while we were in staging for the Okinawa campaign and I wrote there that the way I see and hear about the war going on, I wouldn't be surprised if its over in about two months. Well, that was pretty sharp because that was March, April, and the war was over in three months. Well, the Japanese invasion would have lasted longer.

KP: So you saw the end coming?

LC: I didn't think there was any question about it and of course once the atomic bomb dropped, ... then there was no question at all.

KP: Where were you when the atomic bomb dropped?

LC: At Okinawa.

KP: And what was your reaction and your crew's [reaction]?

LC: Great happiness and thrill We already had our orders to go on the invasion of Japan. And on my little LCT that made six knots on an average. That's pretty slow. We were planning to go 2500 miles to go in on the invasion because we couldn't be lifted back up on a LST. So we were going to have to go on our own power to northern Japan and there would have been enormous casualties, not like what the Smithsonian [Institution] tried to say about the casualties. That's outrageous. There would have been ... enormous casualties of American servicemen, but three times [as] enormous casualties amongst the Japanese. So we were very, very happy when that atomic bomb dropped and shortly thereafter was V-J day.

KP: And then what happened to your vessel and to your assignments?

LC: ... We still had assignments. I noticed in ... the log I kept of what I did [that] I worked until the end of August. August 29th is my last one that I mentioned in that log ... and all kinds of stuff we took in and of course that's where we got cigars and other stuff. We broke into it. But anyway, then of course my crew, ... who needed fewer points. We needed to have certain points to get home. [Some of my crew] were beginning to be pulled off [my boat] and being sent home after the war. But all of them were still there when the typhoons hit.

KP: Because the typhoons hit after Japan had surrendered?

LC: Yes.

KP: Were those more frightening than the enemy?

LC: Oh, by far, by far. I can't begin to tell you how frightening those typhoons were and there was a lot of loss of life and a lot of ships and boats damaged.

KP: Did you feel as captain that that was the biggest burden of responsibility?

LC: Oh, without question, without question. I mean it was scary. For instance, if you were told to go across the bay where there was coral ready to rip your bottom out under a smoke screen, yeah that was scary. Or, for instance, when I took a[n] Army anti-aircraft unit on my boat up to a little island way north to the northeast of Okinawa. We had airplane coverage for part of that time and the next morning, we had to anchor because I couldn't find my way in. It was the night-time. The next morning, there are huge waves. A gale sprung up and we were ... dragging anchor. We were heading towards the land. That was scary, sure. And we had to stay that whole day under way until the following morning when we could find our way through the coral and land that unit and then we didn't know what we were going to face there but ... it was vacated. On the way back from that, we got into another gale and the compasses on the LCTS had been all knocked out of whack with carrying barrels, carrying tanks, and carrying other stuff, trucks. So you couldn't count on them so we really navigated by sight. But it was storming and the rains were coming down. Impossible. And when it cleared, at one point, we saw we were heading inland right to this huge rock in the ocean. Well, we backed up. We didn't hit it and we went down to the ... bay and that's where we were stationed and that night, the typhoon hit, one of them. But that was one, as I say, much worse for the land facilities, but that's the one that they heard about in the states and it drove my father, particularly, and everybody crazy because there was no word from us. There couldn't be any word from us and it was three days maybe before they could get word from us and he called everybody under the sun to find out. Anyway, but the worst typhoon for us was that one where that LST came along side ... but that ended up pretty nice because we couldn't pull up our anchor and when we finally took it up by hand, when the weather cleared up a little, then we couldn't anchor again. So we had to pull along-side another LCT and that LCT had hundreds and hundreds of thousands of cases of beer They were going to [the] Officer's Club on shore and I go into the cabin of the other LCTS skipper who I knew. In fact, we were good friends for a number of years afterwards. He lived in Illinois. I should have stayed good and friendly because he got into oil and all that. But anyway, ... we had a wonderful relationship and I heard a little scrapping on the deck, but I figured they're taking off a few cases of beer and then I noticed that day after day there's always two cases, you know flat cases, of beer in the refrigerator. No matter how much they're drinking, no matter what there always is two cases of beer and ... my cook told me they weren't eating. So it turned out that they were drinking beer. They had taken off 160 cases or 150 cases of beer. So, one time, we took in a stand of Garand rifles and they broke into them and each one took a rifle. So we got a little complaint about that and I told them that they got to quit and they did, of course. That was one thing about the young people, then and now you see. I could talk to a young person in the clinic or some other place like that and just get crap but not from these guys. As crappy as some of them were in many respects, not when it came to discipline and respect. They were brought up in it

and that was one of the good things about them being southerners. They were brought up in a military tradition. They were all volunteers.

KP: So when you did sort of call them on the carpet, they accepted responsibility?

LC: No problems. ... This whole list is LCT 1350. I have a picture of that LCT 1350 somewhere. Where are my pictures? ... Here I am tied up with some others. Here are some of the pictures of my crew and so forth

KP: Your crew looks ... like kids.

LC: They are. They're young. They're 16, 17, 18 [years of age].

KP: Here you wrote the ages down.

LC: Here's a fellow, that fellow who had to have his Java. This one is on board the LCT on February 7. We were at Saipan ready to invade, preparing to invade Iwo Jima. He slept on watch. Now, you know, on a ... destroyer that's a captain's mast at least, but I gave him seven night watches, no liberty in any port until invasion, [and] fourteen hours extra duty.

KP: This woman, where did this [come from]?

LC: I don't know. I just know that she's attractive.

KP: You don't remember which island [she's from]?

LC: I don't know where I got it or from whom. I certainly didn't take it myself.

KP: These pictures that are singed, [how did they get this way]?

LC: They got burnt in some house or someplace because I lost a lot of stuff from flooding and from some fires. These are all on the LCT 831 punishments [I gave out]. ...

KP: Did you give any thought to a career in the Navy?

LC: Yes, ... I thought about it. I had only the best of evaluations ... each evaluation period, and I thought about it, but not for very long because I realized that the kind of mentality and the kind of reaction that you have to have to be a suitable officer was foreign to me. As you can see, I'm a fairly free talker, free thinker, and of course part of it is my age. I wasn't quite that way when I was young

KP: You could see that the Navy and you might clash over time?

LC: Yes. Even if they wouldn't clash even if I wouldn't be ... insubordinate, but I wouldn't be happy. ... That wouldn't make a satisfactory officer if I was always having questions in my mind about ... this and that. I mean, I accepted a ... lot of nonsense, but ... I went along with it.

KP: You knew [you officership] was for the duration of the war?

LC: Yes, for instance, I'll just give you a silly little thing. We were in Pearl Harbor. We were in a restaurant, two officers and myself and there was a very attractive young woman who was obviously from the states. I make eyes at her and she makes eyes at me and we meet out in the front of the hotel. I make arrangements to have a date with her. So I get back to my base and I ask the commanding officer if I can borrow a jeep. [He says], "Yeah, sure." So I think it was a week later, I'm ready to go, no he needs it himself. Well, you know ... it's not a serious thing and by the time I did get in [to town], she had probably found somebody better You see, that kind of unnecessary thing [turned me off]. You get it in medicine too. You get it in surgery, particularly. You get directors and senior attendings who treat everybody like crap, you know This is not necessarily treating people like crap. This is more a rigidity in the kind of thinking [in the military]. Only those few at the very top ... have the freedom to let their imagination go so that a Midway could happen and things like that That .. I felt, would not be good for me.

KP: Where you felt with medicine you would have more [freedom of expression]?

LC: Yes, I really wanted to be a doctor although I could have gone back into the service as a doctor. But, that didn't come up. I married after my first year in internship, so it really didn't come up.

KP: You got back to medical school. Did the G.I. Bill help at all?

LC: Sure, sure. I had all my tuition, all my books and \$130 a month.

KP: Which was good money [in those days]?

LC: Yes and that extended until almost the end of my first year of internship. Of course there was no tuition in internship In five years as an intern and resident, I earned \$3,000 ..., \$600 a year. My ... senior residents are earning \$51,000 a year. A little different. You see that's when they could take advantage of residents. That's really what it's all about. You could do that with the Army too. A dollar a day, where do you think that came from? That's what they paid, a dollar a day. There was money to pay better, that's no kind of salary.

KP: Oh yeah, I hadn't thought about that until the expression, "A dollar a day."

LC: Yes, that's where it comes from, \$30 a month, that's \$360 a year. Even in the depression that was nothing.

KP: ... Do you think any of [your crew] benefitted from the G.I. Bill? Do you know of any that ... took advantage of it?

LC: Well, I really don't know. There was one fellow, Hilde from Detroit. He was one of my two, or three perhaps, high school graduates.

KP: You only had three high school graduates [in your crew]?

LC: Yes, although some of them were older and could have been but they weren't. He possibly ..., he and another fellow, Chapman, we were on the island of Kauai where we were sent to dump ammunition. We were taking out 150 tons of ammunition, three times a day to the deeper water and dumping it because they found some faults with it. ...He and this fellow, Chapman, two cute fellows, they got a little drunk and they went into town and they tore apart a wall from somebody's house. It happened to be a Justice of the Peace so they were picked up by the Shore Patrol and they were put in the brig. Meanwhile, I was at the Officer's Club and I get this call. There's this frantic voice over the phone saying, "Skippah, skippah, their gonna shave our hair!" I said, "Too bad on you, I'm here at the Officer's Club, you'll have to stay there. Don't go tearing down people's property." The next morning I came there and they were just about ready to have their hair shaved off. Both of them were so vain about their hair, as young fellows are. ... I took them out [of the brig]

KP: You had gone to medical school. How was that transition like to go from skipper to [student]?

LC: It wasn't bad. I came back ... [and] was assigned to an LCI. I think I mentioned it in my outline. I was on that for several months until we took that boat apart. I got out in May of '46. Meanwhile, I was in my uniform going to classes, because I had already been accepted back in medical school. All these people were there and they would see this guy with the salty ... hat. Here see how salty it was. It got all [salty from the sea].

KP: Oh yeah.

LC: So you know, I was sort of a celebrity and then you know I adjust to these kind of things.

KP: So you never felt [awkward about going back to school]?

LC: I realized I was older, that they hadn't had this experience. And I was happier then, then even before that I had made the decision to get into the service. I really wouldn't like to be sitting here telling you that I really wasn't in the service, that I got in in '46 or something like that after I finished medical school.

KP: You felt ... your decision was right [to join]?

LC: Yes, I have always felt that.

KP: Do you think your military service, your being a skipper, helped you be a better doctor ...?

LC: Well, I'll tell you. As I say, I was always a responsible person, and I could handle almost anything. It certainly helped me in small ways. "Oh, you were in the service?" You know, it counted for something in many areas. ... That's a sort of a, you can't put your finger on that. As far as, from a practical viewpoint, I really don't know Obviously, I had to handle any and all

problems that came up [as skipper]. ... While I couldn't handle the mechanical ones, I did handle one. We were on the beach at Okinawa and they hadn't unloaded me and I couldn't take myself off [the beach]. So the next ... high tide came up and rocked my boat a little bit, [but] I [still] couldn't go off They finally unloaded ... [my boat]. But, the next high tide didn't come up to my boat, so then I had to put the boat on circulating the water in the tanks. I couldn't use ... the generators without getting the water from the boat. Finally, several high tides later, [the water] got up high enough so that I could call for help and a sea-going tug snaked me a line and pulled me off. ... Then my motor machinist mate, who always loved to tell me about problems with a smile on his face, he'd come up to the conning tower where I'd be sitting out there [and say], "Skippah, well we got a hole in the engine room." That's what he told me The pumps are not holding it. So I went down there and I saw that there was a hole, that the coral had torn in the bottom of the boat. And the pumps were not holding it. So I said, "Give me one of those big wooden plugs we have," and I took off my shoes. That they couldn't get over, that I didn't want to get my shoes wet while the boat was sinking. It was comical in a way. ... I went down there and I took out a big mallet and I banged that plug in there. And of course we could then we could control the water until we got onto a floating dry dock [and] they could put a plate of metal on the bottom there. So I was handy How do you know what in your life develops you so that you can handle anything It's very hard to say. Out on the farm, for instance, between my junior and senior years [at Rutgers], I planted 5,000 seedlings in the soil conservation program in ... the eight acres and a half that we had of not such good land. Pine seedlings, Norway Spruce, Red Pine, and White Pine [of which] 3,800 grew. I had to water them and this and that. ... I suppose all of these things have an affect. There's no question about it.

KP: ... Your career spanned ... major changes in medicine. ... You started medical school during the war and you then went back to medical school when the war was over. Could you see how the war affected medicine ...?

LC: No, not at that time. ... I came out of medical school in '49 and I came out into an era of medicine, with the exception of antibiotics and certain anesthetics ... that was not too dissimilar from my father's era as far as attitudes, as far as the place of a doctor in society. The patients who would kiss your hand, after paying you, after giving you a gift. In the hospitals, the doctor was the God, not the lay person, not the ... financial administrators Don't forget I came out into an era, after I finished my training which was in '54, where I gave twenty hours of prime time for free every week (I'm talking about daytime alone, never mind emergencies or night, to train residents or to do service work ...). There weren't that many plastic surgeons. I was number 385 in the country with Boards in plastic surgery in 1957 That way of practicing continued. ... Of course there were advances and there were better instruments, ... better sutures and techniques In the middle of the '60's was when medicine changed forever. That was when Medicaid came in and Medicare came in. Now I have many pluses to say about [the] both of them and many negatives, [but] I'm not going to get into that. But what changed forever was the attitude of people as well as the attitude of doctors. Now there was no longer anybody doing free work, because even if you got very little, you got something. ... The patients got to expect that everything was due them. There was no longer thankfulness. ... Coincidental with that and the change of where the power structure was, there were also remarkable changes in medicine from the '70's on. In the next 20 years, not only in anesthesia, not only in urology and orthopedics, which I used to think were such brutal specialties Now they ... did kidney and knee [transplants] In my field, there was not only fine sutures and needles

and instruments ... but there was micro-vascular surgery, ... free flaps, and muscle flaps and other advances. ... In general surgery, there was this fiber-optic type of ... [surgery]. This is all in this period, of course. There had been changes previously, but as I say, in the past 20-25 years enormous changes, but the pleasure in medicine went out of the life of most doctors. I am a rare bird. I left private practice after I was offered a full-time position at the medical school SUNY Brooklyn. I'm Director of Plastic Surgery at the Kings County Hospital and [I] happen to be this year also the acting chief of the entire plastic surgery service I'm an associate professor at [the] medical school

KP: So you still work full [time] ...?

LC: Yes.

KP: I see you even have a beeper on.

LC: Yes, [in fact] that call there was from my service. For me, it's a big improvement because I don't have to worry about the computerized this and the OSHA and the IPRO and the H.M.O.. I can tell them to go to hell.

KP: Is that one of the reasons you wanted to get out of private practice?

LC: That was one of the reasons. I no longer wanted to do any emergency room work. I didn't want to do [any of] this H.M.O. type of surgery, [and] there were certain types of surgery I no longer cared to do. I didn't want to do breast implants. I didn't want to do a number of things. And it ... affected my practice. Also, the fact that many, many of my colleagues had died, had moved away, or had retired. So my referrers were not there anymore. And you know, malpractice. When I went into practice, ... say the late '50's, early '60's period, I went into practice in '54, malpractice premiums were somewhere in the 1,400, 1,600 dollar range. In the '70's, it went up to 4,000, then it went to 8,000. Now for somebody fully in practice, it's 55,000, 60,000 dollars for plastic surgery. Just malpractice alone. So that whereas I was used to a lot, 27, 28% of my gross for expenses, now it's 52 and 55% of the gross for expenses. And that's in my field where you have very little expenses actually. You don't have to buy x-ray machines or make other heavy outlays.

KP: Are there any other changes in medicine that you look back on that are most [remarkable]?

LC: ... One major change for instance is the amount of time patients spend in the hospital. In 1984, let's say, ... any five types of cases. Let's take cosmetic surgery, such as rhinoplasty, otoplasty, face lift, breast reduction, [and] abdominal surgery. Let's take those five. [These five operations] would have required and would have had 26-28 patient days in the hospital. Most of those same five patients ... today go... in and out the same day. ... So now there are 7-8 patient days for the same five operations.

KP: Do you feel over time you were able to do more for patients ...?

LC: No question You mean than patients of my father's period? Oh without question. ... The guys in the future are going to do still more. [They are] ... going to take off parts of skulls and turn them around and ... do all kinds of things. Take anesthesia, for instance. I did ... most of my patients under local with a jolt of sedation at the beginning. Then along came sedation with local anesthesia so the patient sails along. You give them a little local anesthesia ..., very nice. There is so many things. Endoscopy, you want to take a wrinkle out of here, ... you want to go down into the uterus, you want to go here, endoscopy, micro-surgery. There's many, many things in the future [It's] really incredible But it's going to be a much, much more controlled environment

KP: So much of the autonomy that doctor's had...

LC: That's why so many women are being actively encouraged to go into medicine. Because, women without being in any way sexist about this, are more flexible, are more malleable as far as working for a date, a shift, or working under these controls because they may want to have a home life. They might want to have children. They might want to bring up the children. They might be very happy with things like that. Where as the rugged, individualistic doctor, why would he go into medicine of all things You can't believe the amount of paperwork I get, never mind the guys in practice. But I get to cover every little thing we do and this is mandatory, what you have to do. You have to take four hours of courses to find out how to put out a fire. You have to do this. [You have to do that.] It's incredible.

KP: You mentioned how erratic doctors schedules used to be. ...

----- END OF TAPE TWO SIDE ONE -----

LC: I'm working now say somewhere between 35-40 hours a week, but when I went out into practice, I was putting [in] plenty of 75 hour weeks, 65-75 ... [hours per week]. When I was an intern, when we were on [duty], not like nowadays, where we were on [duty] every other day [and] night, we worked 100 hour weeks. There were times when I had as many as ten emergency calls in a day. ... You still had to do clinic work. You still had to do service cases. That's right, but there was an exciting existence out there.

KP: In talking actually to Dr. Mancusi-Ungaro, he mentioned that the notion of giving free service was that there was a real professional expectation [as he said], among your colleagues. You expected to give [free service]?

LC: Yes, that's right. No one thought any different. You couldn't even belong on a hospital staff. Now you can't belong on a hospital staff unless you want to take emergency calls, although some of the hospitals don't let you even on the staff because you can't get into their H.M.O.. But, you have to take emergency calls in your specialty. But, there is a fee for all that. ... As far as we were concerned in my early years, there were no fees, no expectation of a fee. [We] just did [our] thing. There wasn't even the idea of a fee for emergency calls. ... On the other hand, the people who could pay, did pay. Ninety-six, ninety-five, ninety-seven percent of those who you expected to get a fee from did pay. It's probably down to about eighty-two percent now, a lot of four-flushers.

KP: You're now a teacher?

LC: I've always been associated with the medical school in one capacity or another, but this is more formal. Right.

KP: What do you think of ... medical education [today] compared to ... [the] medical education [you received] and the current crop of doctors?

LC: Well, as I said before, the amount of material that they have to learn in medical school, as well as in training, is so far in advance of what we had to [learn]. Which was, in turn, so far in advance [of] what my father's generation had to [learn]. There's just no comparison. ... No comparison at all! I don't know if I mentioned it, but if I see the in-service exam that my residents have to take, ... literally, I get into an anxiety state.

KP: If you had to take [some test] like that ..., you wouldn't have [been able to pass it]?

LC: I wouldn't have been able to without heavy, heavy studying. Of course, now with all ... these years, that I've been spending in this program, I'm pretty much up on most areas You mustn't forget that there are many things [we didn't do that they do now]. For instance, we did hand surgery. It involved tendons and nerves from the wrist down [to the fingers] and skin loss, and fractures in the fingers. They're doing [today] major things into the upper arm, the elbow, the forearm, and all kinds of transferring of tendons and nerves. That's just one area [of the body]. They're ... far advanced, far advanced. ... Only somebody like myself who is in there full-time and being forced to read ... the journals and go to the conventions, and go to the conferences [could keep up with today's techniques]. For instance, in my program, we have a Monday morning conference ... [from 8-12] and we have a Tuesday morning, which was this morning [in which] I gave my slide lecture ... that went from 7:30 to 9:30. Then we had clinic. Tomorrow is going to be an operative day. Thursday we have a study class that starts at quarter to seven and goes to eight. Friday is another operative day. This particular Saturday, we have a hand conference and a journal club. Now if some of that doesn't get through even a thick head! ... I just came back from a convention [where] there were lectures and other programs. Thursday I have to give a talk to medical students. Well, no one gave us a talk on plastic surgery when I was a medical student. Who was going to do it? They had one and a half plastic surgeons in Brooklyn.

KP: How did you end up going into plastic surgery?

LC: Well, ... my father had said to me before he died, he died in my junior year in ... medical school ..., "Why don't you think of plastic surgery?" He didn't want me to go into proctology. So I said, "Me, go into plastic surgery [and] do noses all my life? Nah, I'm not going to do that." But, when I went to King's County, this same hospital as an intern, I had a rotating surgical internship and residency. I had to take plastic surgery. And a nurse there said to me, "Dr. Canick, you're going to like plastic surgery." And I loved it. I just loved it. I loved the whole aspect of constructiveness, the delicateness, everything about it. ... Nothing else appealed to me. As I told you, I wouldn't dream after that experience of going into GYN or GU or orthopedics. Neuro-surgery was out of the question. The only thing I could have possibly considered [was] ...

ophthalmology. ... But anyway, I still had to take some more general surgery and I took it, but I saw that plastic surgery was where I should go.

KP: You knew you wanted to be a surgeon?

LC: Oh yes! ... I think I would have been happy in other fields. I was doing medicine [during] my training period, but you know, you had to be much smarter than us surgeons to go into medicine. That's for the bright boys and girls.

KP: What was your relationship with nurses ...?

LC: Mostly very nice and sometimes Actually, I got along quite well. I was always very respectful. And I always called them Miss [so and so], whatever their last name was. ...I got along [with them] but I never tolerated them trying to push me around in areas that I knew about. ...They'd say, "You have to do it this way," or "You have to do it [that way]." I'd say [to them], "Look it, I've gone through medical school, I've gone through seminar training. I know what I have to do." But otherwise, I got along very well and almost all the nurses liked me very much. I got along [with them] very well.

KP: What do you think of efforts in medicine ... to give greater authority ... to nurses and the idea of making nurses much more practitioners?

LC: ... You see, what's happened in medicine is that the nurses have become not only a specialty, which they always were, but a specialty unto themselves. They are no longer the hand maidens of doctors, so they don't want to do anything in a hospital. They don't come around. They don't help. They don't do a lot of things. They're busy with their paperwork. But nurse practitioners or physician's assistants, I think there could be a lot of that. Do you think that I had to take out all my stitches? I can assure you I didn't. I finally trained one of my nurses to do some of it. But, I was very nervous about letting anybody do it. If you ... find out that they can handle it very well, why not? Take IV's, start IV's, take bloods, do certain tests. Why not? Sure.

KP: So that you think is a positive [thing]?

LC: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I think that the trend toward less high fees is going to be a good [thing as well]. Of course that's coming.

KP: In what way?

LC: In my specialty particularly. The era of the no-end in sight fee rises is finished.

KP: So you think doctors will have to learn, in a sense, to live on less money?

LC: Well, what they have to do is, don't worry about them ..., charge less. For years and years, they were earning roughly four times what a policeman earns ... or an engineer on a train. That was what doctors tended to ... earn. But that didn't go past the '60's. Then they began to earn ten times

[what those other professionals earned]. That's when the antagonism towards doctors and their high fees started to come in It's [going to be] a different story. They're going to have to learn not to be ... such high flyers. Especially in fields like my own. But with that comes some responsibility on the part of governmental agencies and others to cut down on the malpractice suits and the malpractice premiums and the other expenses that come up all the time.

KP: I have thought that if I was a doctor I would want to join an H.M.O. or do what you have done, simply because the sheer amount of paper work. I have a friend who started a private practice as a lawyer and he was just amazed by this "stuff" that has nothing do with what you are doing.

LC: Right, right. I use to say so many times when I was in practice, if they would only leave me alone, if they would only leave me alone. But they don't. There are a millions things you have to take care of.

KP: ... Going back, in a sense, to the war ..., what was your reaction to the discovery of the concentration camps and the death camps ...? Did you suspect it was that bad?

LC: Yes, yes, yes, yes. We knew. It had been reported and it was known. They didn't know how bad. They really didn't know that it was really that frightful. But people knew that horrors were being perpetrated. People did know that. ... They talk about F.D.R. and ... [how] he changed America and this and so forth and so on. There's a program on television tonight I understand. I hardly ever watch television, although there was a wonderful one from Carnegie Hall last night. But anyway, they talk about F.D.R. but the fact is he could have saved millions of Jews, easily. But neither he, nor Australia, where ... [they] were dying for people, nor Canada, no one would do a thing. So I've always felt very, very bitter about him. I have been one of the few Jews, amongst the intelligentsia particularly, who was anti-Roosevelt. I thought compared to ... [Roosevelt] Truman was a prince.

KP: So Truman, you were very [fond of]?

LC: I liked Truman. I liked that man. This book by McCullough, it's one of these books in this batch here, a wonderful book, but he just had character and Roosevelt didn't. He [Roosevelt] was very good for the first four years, there's no question about it, he stopped the panic and he made some changes. Let no one kid you though that the Depression was ended by Roosevelt. The Depression was ended by the ... Second World War, not before.

KP: When the State of Israel was formed, how proud were you?

LC: Enormously. That was in '48. My father lived long enough [to see that happen]. He died on February 14th. He lived long enough to see the United States and the U.N. pass the resolution about the formation of the State of Israel. He didn't live through the first war [between the Jews and the Arabs]. But it was unbelievable, [the formation of the Jewish state]. And I've been to Israel six times I went there in '54 to bury his ashes. Actually, you were supposed to spread his ashes, but his sister was still living and she didn't want to have that happen. So we buried ... [his urn] on one of the Kibbutizium in one of the settlements Kfar Menahem that one of her children lived in. They

were there from the '30's. Then I was back there several other times. Then I was there in '73 before the '73 War, I was there as a visiting professor at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

KP: Oh that would have been immensely gratifying for your father.

LC: Yes and also my mother and sister who were very active in Hadassah. ... It was a brand new suite set up for visiting professors with this gorgeous marble patio and outdoor view. ... I taught the residents. And of course, they stop work at two o'clock in the afternoon so I used to go hiking up the Judean hills. And of course, I lost weight. [When] I came back, I looked wonderful and I never looked like that again. ... Israel is [a] funny place. In the '73 War, I called the people at Hadassah Hospital and I said, "I'm ready to lend my services and when [do you want me to come]? [They replied], "Well, we don't need it. It's all right. It's okay." The fact is they needed desperately to have plastic surgical help and I should have gone anyway, but I didn't. Then I went twice again My sister, the one that died, was a big power in Hadassah.

KP: ... Are you hopeful about peace for the Middle East?

LC: Yes, I am. It's hard to know whether all the countries of the world will say they will help ... or cry big crocodile tears if Israel gets destroyed, that's hard to say. I think that with the exception of Syria ... things can really happen there [to promote peace] because if you know your history of that area, [you know Jews and Arabs once lived in peace].

Josephine Canick: Can I listen?

LC: Yes, sure. If you know the history of that ... area, you know that the Arabs were not, with the exception of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and a few others. They were not particularly anti-Semitic. The Turks, the Ottomans, the others, they weren't particularly [anti-Semitic]. ... Maybe the Jews were second class citizens, like Christians were, but they weren't ... brutalizing [the Jews]. There was wonderful golden periods. I think that Israel could get along with Jordan. I think ... [Israel] could get along with Lebanon. I'm sure it could get along with Egypt, if Egypt doesn't go down the drain with its poverty and its Islamic fundamentalists. They can certainly get along with Morocco and Tunisia. Some of the other countries, Saudi Arabia, maybe. Do you know Saudi Arabia still has slaves? Algeria forget about and Libya, I'm not interested in them. The only country that I have real doubts about is Syria. I think Syria has the same exact mentality as Iraq. And I just don't think that I trust them. If I were [Yitzhak] Rabin, I wouldn't be in any rush to give over the Golan Heights. But, other than that Israel's position is much better than it had been and it has become a[n] interesting state in that it hasn't become the Levantine state that they feared for it. On the other hand, it hasn't become the priest-ridden, rabbinic state that I would have feared and others would have feared. It's become reasonably successful and prosperous. ... There is a tremendous loyalty [from the people towards the state]. I was just reading an article about how Israeli youngsters wanted to get into the elite units in the Army. Of course, everybody has to get into the Army. ... They have done pretty well. I just don't know There were golden eras before too, so I can't tell you.

...

KP: Is there anything else I have forgotten to ask about ... your war-time years, your pre-war years, after war years?

LC: Well, midshipmen school was interesting. A lot of tough subjects. I can't believe I did as well as I did. Maybe [I did well] because ... the lights had to be out at ten o'clock and I had to be up at five. I had a roommate, maybe we studied together, I don't know [how I did so well]. I think I had a lot of bad study habits because I would prefer and I still prefer as you can see, and my wife happens to be another reading nut, we prefer to read beyond almost anything else. So midshipmen school went along. It was sometimes tough on me physically because I wasn't built to go running around a football field three times. When this petty officer once said, "You've get up and start running." I said, "Like hell. I was in medical school and I know it's bad [for you] and I'm not going to and you could report me."

KP: So what happened?

LC: He did [report me]. One other time though, I decided I was going to sleep through the 5:30 call. As luck would have it, that particular morning, I was called on to be the acting ... leader of my squadron. They called "Canick". He's not there, and when they came around to inspect to see that no one was doing what I was doing, I hid behind the door. So then ... my roommate came back. He came from Birmingham, Alabama. ... He came back and told me what happened. So then I had to go take myself over to the sick-bay [and] tell them I had ... diarrhea and I had to drink paregoric. [I did this] to prove that I was sick and that I had a legitimate reason [to miss the call]. But, other than that I never slept on watch [and] I never had any problems. I had some nice times ... on liberty in South Bend, Indiana. And I had a few nice dates and things like that. I went to listen to music at the U.S.O. My training experience I've told you something about that. Pearl Harbor was just a matter of getting the boat together, which was a [hard] job to give to inexperienced people. We had to hook up lines ... [and do] all kinds of things

KP: It basically [sounds like] you were operating from a [do-it-yourself] kit in a sense

LC: Yes, I mean ... it was unbelievable to me. My poor crew had to go sinking under that filthy water to ... bolt the sections [of the boat] together. Of course, all the ... engines and all the piping and everything was ... in the stern third [of the boat]. The other part [of the boat] was ... water tanks and food storage. And the forward third had the ramp, which had ... its own machine. We were ... 32 feet wide and 120 feet long So that was the only difficult part We did some nice sight seeing in Hawaii. Now Hawaii was a ... place I didn't like because there [it] was obvious that they were out to get the service person, no matter what. New Orleans wasn't like that. They were much more decent In Kauai that island I told you I dumped ammunition [at], there we had some lovely picnics, we had some swims, and we had some nice times. ... Talk about wanting to get into action, I didn't even mention this. I was on my boat ... and I went to the commander in Oahu and said, "I want to go overseas. I don't want to stay here" So as luck would have it ... one of the LCT skippers got hepatitis. They took him off and his crew. They were already loaded on this LST, ready to go ... further overseas. They gave him my boat, ..., and I got his [boat]. ... He had ... a drinking fountain on his. That's when I left from ... [Hawaii]. ... I took my crew on that boat and he took his crew off [his] and then they went on my boat, (which was LCT 831). [His was] 1350.

... I told you about the travels over there, and the bombardments and all that other stuff. ... The only thing I could tell you on that other little story was that we were coming in toward a battle ship with a load of ammo from way out because the ammunition ships they put way, way out in the harbor, miles away from any other ship at Okinawa. ... We were coming near the *New Jersey* ... or the *Iowa* ... and I'm down in my cabin reading Cantrell comes scurrying down the ladder ... [and] says, "Skippah, they're going to shoot us" (He was always such a nervous wreck. He became a big balloon after the war, but during the war he was such a nervous wreck he couldn't eat, so he became skinny like a rail. I put on weight. In fact, when I came home, they asked me whether I had [even] been in the war.) So, I go up there and my executive officer, who was another ensign, but more junior to me, he ... [didn't] know the recognition signal. ... The recognition signal was simple. They turned a flood light one way, you were supposed to ... turn it that way and back the other way and then back again. That was the whole recognition [code]. Well, he didn't do it and the big ships were scared stiff of suicide boats. So there was general quarters [on the other ship]. I could see them manning their guns. They didn't have to ... get to a sixteen inch gun, but they had other smaller guns [they could use]. ... They sent a boat around and they circled me. My boat was welded one-quarter inch plates which wouldn't stop a 50 caliber machine-gun bullet. I spoke to them ... because if they were to fire on us, it would have been a disaster for them too. We had 150 tons of ammunition on board. ... So that was a[n] [experience]. ... Truth [to] tell, it was a lot of hard work at Okinawa, a lot of nights, a lot of ... strain, but you never thought you were going to get killed. ... [Those] typhoons, I was telling you about that, they were by far the worst experience. Those waves, those winds, unbelievable. I had never dreamed of being in such a thing. Then for days afterward, the bodies were floating in because we lost a lot of lives, a lot of boats [in the typhoons]. ... In another bay ... just north of us, six LCTS had tied themselves together to offer some way of not turning turtle. ... The typhoon waves turned the whole six over and they drowned everybody [on board]. ... The only way ... for an LCT to ride out those typhoons was the way I was doing it, at anchor ... pulling in and out with my stern to the waves or to ... go in on the land and let the waves carry you up as high as they could It really wasn't worth ... losing your life after the war. [Although] you didn't think of it that way, at least I didn't. ... That's the story.

KP: Okay, ... Patrick do you have any more questions?

PG: ... Not particularly.

LC: I came back on a troop ship. [I] came back to San Diego ... because San Francisco was on strike. ... Then I took my first plane ride, just before Thanksgiving. I had gone up to Hollywood and saw Lana Turner. Was she gorgeous! ... Not compared to you Josie, but she still was gorgeous. ... I took my first plane ride in my life back from San Diego to New York. And that took sixteen hours. ... That was the only time I ever got a little sea sick. I didn't up-chuck or anything, but I felt a [little queasy].

KP: [But] on the boat you were fine?

LC: I never did get sea-sick but my poor cook in that stinking galley, he was sea sick all the time. My LCT, even loaded, we drew ... three feet aft and a foot and a half forward. When we were

empty, it was a foot and a half aft ... and three-quarters of a foot forward. ... If ... [the water] rippled ..., that boat rocked. ... Poor thing, he was sea sick all the time. ... An interesting story about him is that he was ... a seaman, first class when I got him [under my command]. So I said to him ..., "I'd like you to bake us bread." [He said,] "Nope, a seaman first class don't bake bread." So I had to promote him to a petty officer third class before he baked bread, and [then] he baked bread. He, by the way, saved every cent. He never went on liberty. He never went on leave. [He] saved every cent and he ultimately opened up a diner in Philadelphia.

KP: Oh really, did you ever go [to his diner]?

LC: No, I never went to him. I remember his name too, Capaldi. As a matter of fact, I think I remember almost all my crew's names.

KP: Wow, a lot of people I've interviewed don't remember their crew's [names].

LC: ... The ... petty officer who is in charge of the ... everyday life of the boat, the boatswain, his name was Lighttower. He came from Pennsylvania.

PG: Did you ever have a problem with your crew ... going on leave and then smuggling booze back onto the boat?

LC: No, we didn't have that but the Navy got [into] a problem at Okinawa with the merchant ships. The merchant men were making a fortune by the way, compared to the people ... [in] the Navy on a similar kind of ship. [They were] selling liquor for forty and sixty dollars a bottle of "Three Feathers" or "Four Roses" or whatever. Junk liquor. ... The island command cut off our pay. They just put the money in escrow for us, so we couldn't buy ... [the liquor]. Then where else could they go [to get it]. Once we left Hawaii, what were they going to smuggle? Where were they going to smuggle? We left Hawaii in the end of December or January of 1945 and from that time on, until they went back home in October, they weren't in any place where there was liquor. Maybe that's good. ... I don't like beer particularly, but there was nothing I could drink except beer. ... The Officer's Club at Pearl Harbor ..., they would come and bring me back [when I drank]. ... I think we have covered it pretty well, ... the post years [included]. You know you have a little bit of disdain for those who weren't in or those who weren't in action. ... It's natural. I don't think ... I've pushed it very far or have done anything about it

KP: When you were in medical school, did people ... ask you why you were not in the service ...?

LC: No, my class knew I was [in the service]. My class knew I was.

KP: ... When you [were first in medical school before the war, did your classmates wonder why you enlisted]?

LC: I was actually in service. I was in the V-12.

KP: So you were in the V-12 going through medical school? So you could have just stayed in the medical school and not gone to active [duty]?

LC: Right. Absolutely. But, I'll tell you, many of the fellows who thought they got out of going into war by staying in medical school, got into the Korean War. They wanted to get me back. I said, "Nothing doing buddy." I'm in the reserve and I've ... done my duty.

KP: So you did stay in the reserves?

LC: Well, until Eisenhower kicked us out. He said nothing, no more, finished. Inactive reserve, finished. When I came back from Okinawa, I went down to Washington. I happened to meet a classmate of mine from Notre Dame Midshipmen's School and I got a position as an executive officer on an LCI, so I didn't have to go to Europe. ... I could have ... possibly missed the next year of medical school if I was over there long enough. ... I didn't have hardly any points. I was an officer (a lieutenant, j.g., by this time) and I was very young [so I could have been sent to Europe].

KP: Thank you very much. This concludes an interview with Dr. Leon Canick on October 11, 1994 with Kurt Piehler and

PG: Patrick Goodwin.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

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