Paul Turner: All right. We're at the CottonTree Inn and Convention Center in Mount Vernon, Washington. It's May 2, 2007, and it really is a convention center. We're halfway between Seattle and the Canadian border. And I'm Paul Turner; I'm a justice for the Court of Appeal in Los Angeles. I'm here with our producer, David Knight of the Administrative Office of the Courts, the administrative arm of the Judicial Council. And we're here to interview Retired Justice Lynn D. Compton, Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Two.

First question: Lynn Davis Compton, State Bar Number 20933. Why do we call you "Buck"?

Lynn Compton: Well, if you haven't noticed, "Lynn," my given name, is a woman's name. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: I still get advertisements from Victoria's Secret to Ms. Lynn Compton. *[laughing]* So I started early on when I was a kid not liking the name, and until one day . . . And I had a hero of mine who was a catcher with the L.A. Angels by the name of "Truck" Hannah. The next thing I thought, what the hell can I take for a name, you know, and I didn't want to just copy "Truck"; so "Buck" was close enough for jazz, and I just named myself "Buck." *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: How old were you when you made this decision?

Lynn Compton: Well, I was in elementary school; I was probably—

Paul Turner: Were you given a hard time because your name was Lynn?

Lynn Compton: No, not that I recall. I just didn't like it; it just didn't seem to fit. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: When we talked last night, I told you we'd start with when you got out of the Army and go all the way through your career to now, and then we'll talk about elementary school, high school, UCLA, and the Army.

First of all, where were you when you got out of the Army?

Lynn Compton: Where?

Paul Turner: Where.

Lynn Compton: Well, at Fort MacArthur was where they actually, you know, did the paperwork.

Paul Turner: And when was that?

Lynn Compton: Well, it had been either late December or early January of '46.

Paul Turner: Did you know what you wanted to do when you got out of the Army?

Lynn Compton: I thought I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to play professional baseball. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Did you try to do that?

Lynn Compton: Yeah. I went down to the L.A. Angels, which was a Chicago Cub farm team in the coast league, and I was working out with them down there and trying to catch on. But, you know, by this time I'm what, 24 years old, and that's a little late to get started; but anyway, I was giving it my best shot. Well, as it turned out, in the summer of '46, the Angels had a farm team up here in Spokane. It was a B league called the Western International and it was in Spokane, Tacoma, Wenatchee, Vancouver, you know. So anyway, one day that team from Spokane was traveling over the Cascades there in a bus and went off the road and killed about eight of the players and injured the rest of them. So they're scrambling around for ballplayers to fill up the roster in Spokane and so they offered me the princely sum of I think it was 1,000 bucks to sign and 300 a month or something to play up here in Spokane. *[laughing]* And my wife would not hear of it, and so I passed, and that was the end of my baseball aspirations.

Paul Turner: Had you gotten married after you got out of the Army or what?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: And who'd you marry?

Lynn Compton: Well, I married a girl that I'd gone with since high school. It lasted less than six months. *[laughing]* But anyway . . .

Paul Turner: I didn't mean to bring up a sore subject.

Lynn Compton: *[Laughing]*

Paul Turner: At some point, you decided you wanted to go to become a police officer.

(00:04:40)

Lynn Compton: Yes. Well, then so much of life and decisions and career moves involved playing baseball. It turned out that the LAPD had a baseball team. They had a bunch of guys that had played some pro ball, a couple of major leaguers, had some major leaguers, and I'd played against some of them in semipro ball around Southern California. One day I ran into this guy, Jackie Coleman, and my wife had left me and I was at law school. And he said, "Why don't you come on the job and play ball with us?"

So I said, "Well, you know . . ." So I took the test and they offered me a job as a cop, and so I took it.

Paul Turner: Did they have a police academy then?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: They did? How long did you get training before you actually went out on the street? How long did that last?

Lynn Compton: I forget how long that was; it was at least . . . I think it was about three months, you know. It wasn't a year or anything like that, but I think it was something like that.

Paul Turner: Who was the chief of police?

Lynn Compton: At that time, the chief of police was a guy by the name of Horrell, H-O-R-R-E-L-L.

Paul Turner: And what were your assignments when you were a police officer?

Lynn Compton: Well, there again, because I was on the baseball team and they wanted me to play ball, Chief Thad Brown, who was one of the deputy chiefs was at that time chief of patrol, which had charge of the vice squad. And so when I came out of the academy, I went straight to central vice; I never worked a day in a uniform, never worked in radio cars, went right to plainclothes working vice in downtown L.A. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: And was that the . . . all the time you're a police officer, were you always working vice in town?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: What other assignments did you have?

Lynn Compton: Well, I went from vice to the academy and I taught classes up at the police academy for a while, and Tom Reddin at that time, who later became chief, was the lieutenant in charge of the academy. I taught . . . it turned out one of the recruits that came through that was one of my students was Daryl Gates. *[laughing]* But anyway—

Paul Turner: Who later became the chief.

Lynn Compton: What?

Paul Turner: Who later became the chief.

Lynn Compton: Right, right. So, anyway, I taught there for a while, and then I went from there to the Detective Bureau. I worked what they

called morning watch in the business office, which was midnight to eight, and we had all the dead-body calls and stuff like that. And then I went from there to central burglary and worked there until I went to the DA's office.

Paul Turner: Now, when did you start law school?

Lynn Compton: In '46, yeah.

Paul Turner: And why did you decide—

Lynn Compton: September of '46, yeah.

Paul Turner: Why'd you decide to become a lawyer?

Lynn Compton: Well, it's kind of funny. *[laughing]* My wife left me, as I say, so I was looking around for what to do about that. And my dad—who's dead by this time—but my dad went to Manual Arts High School, and in his class at Manual Arts were a whole bunch of guys like Goodwin Knight, who later became Governor, Jimmy Doolittle, Buron Fitts, Lawrence Tibbett, and a whole bunch of people in this class of his at Manual Arts. So I looked up Goodwin Knight and he was a superior court judge at the time, and I went down and talked to him and I told him I needed a lawyer and some advice and what-have-you; so he sent me over to his old law firm to a guy by the name of Sid Cherniss, whose son was later a Deputy DA when I was in the office. But—

Paul Turner: And whose son later was a superior court judge.

Lynn Compton: Yes, but this was the father.

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: And he was a baseball fan. He was a big SC rooter; he knew me because he used to sit on the SC bench and ride my tail when I was playing them, you know. *[laughing]* And so anyway, I'm sitting there in his office one day and I said, "How do you get into this racket?" *[laughing]* And he says, "Well, you gotta go to law school." And I said, "Well, how do I do that?" And he says, "Well," he says, "I'll send you down to see the dean" at the SC law school at the time—I forget what his name was.

Well, they had so many applicants, and my undergraduate record was not great scholastically, and so I couldn't get into SC law school. So he said, "Well, go down to Loyola and talk to Father Donovan," who was this Jesuit priest that ran the law school. And he was a baseball fan, and all he wanted to do was talk about Ducky Medwick and the St. Louis Cardinals and Dizzy Dean, you know. *[laughing]* And I said, "Well, you know," I said, "just let me have a chance." And he said, "Oh, no, you're not a good enough student"; he said, "You'll never make it."

And I said, "Well, just let me try." And we went back and forth till finally he said, "Okay." He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I've got an aptitude test that I've designed here." He says, "I'll let you take this test, and if you do all right on that, well, I'll let you in." So he gave me this test and I took it and apparently I did all right, so he let me in. *[laughing]*

(00:10:59)

Paul Turner: Today if you want to go to law school, you have to take the Law School Admission Test. Did they have one like that then?

Lynn Compton: No, no, except this one he designed. You had to take his, you know. It was the first LSAT I think, LSAT test, and he designed it; but it was his own little baby, and he put a lot of stock in it.

Paul Turner: And so did you attend Loyola at night and then work for the police in the daytime or—

Lynn Compton: Well, I did both. I got through in two and a half years. I went year-round; I didn't take a vacation. And I took 16 units or whatever, you know, and I'd go when I . . . like when I was working at the academy, when I was going to the academy as a recruit on the PD I had to go at night because I was in the academy all day long; but then when I got to working vice, my hours were 10:00 to 6:00, so I used to go and take 8:00, 9:00 classes. The law school was at 11th and Grand Avenue, and I just would take a couple of classes in the morning, I'd run up to the Central Station up by Hill Street there, and then go back at night and take a couple more night classes. And so—

Paul Turner: Were you playing baseball also for the department at this time?

Lynn Compton: Yeah. We played mostly on weekends, you know, semipro ball.

Paul Turner: And who would you play?

Lynn Compton: Oh, we played the L.A. Angels; we played the Hollywood Stars; we played the colleges, SC, UCLA, you know.

Paul Turner: Did you beat UCLA?

Lynn Compton: Oh, I'm sure we did; we had a damn good team. *[laughing]* We had a pitcher that had been with the New York Giants, a guy by the name of Kenny Brondell, and he was really good -- a good ballplayer.

Paul Turner: Were virtually all of the police officers veterans?

Lynn Compton: I don't remember that. I didn't pay that much attention to that at the time. My partners were not veterans; they were older, I think. My first partner was a guy who had graduated from USC who had played . . . he'd been to SC on a baseball scholarship

himself; but when he got out at the height of the Depression with a degree in marketing from USC, he couldn't get a job, so he went on the police department. *[laughing]* And he was my first partner.

Paul Turner: There were a number of people who were on something called the Hat Squad.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Tell me about the Hats.

Lynn Compton: I don't know much about them.

Paul Turner: What did you hear about them?

Lynn Compton: I knew one of them. Well, I knew they worked central robbery; I remember Stromwall was one of them.

Paul Turner: Red.

Lynn Compton: And I don't know about the other guys.

Paul Turner: I can't remember Harry's name; Harry . . . I'll think of his name before we're done.

Lynn Compton: But I didn't know that much about them. I got to meet Stoner, who was working robbery at the time, and of course I knew Donahoe, the captain of robbery.

Paul Turner: Well, the Hats were legendary. What were they legendary for?

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't know; however you get to be legendary. Maybe I guess they solved the hard cases or something. They were high-powered robbery investigators. As a matter of fact, at the time I was on the PD, I never heard of this thing, about the Hats; that came out later, after Stromwall and all of them, you know, and all that. They would talk about him and how he had been there, but I never really knew that much about him.

Paul Turner: I'll try to remember Harry's name as we go on; it's on the tip of my earlobe.

While you were a police officer, did Chief Parker become the chief before or after you left the department?

(00:15:06)

Lynn Compton: Before.

Paul Turner: Historians claim that Chief Parker was instrumental in eliminating or dramatically reducing corruption in the Los

Angeles Police Department, people taking payoffs, people not working. What's your read on that?

Lynn Compton: Well, as I say, I didn't know anything about it, you know, the corruption. I was fairly young and new, you know, and I just would work this job; and then I saw something in the paper like everybody else when this guy Stoker supposedly started talking about things that were going on, and then eventually the high-ranking police officials were invited—I think there were about five or six of them, including the chief. It wasn't Parker; they brought in a Marine general by the name of Wharton or something as an interim chief of police.

The one thing I remember vividly was that the theory was that they could stop corruption and they could stop a lot of the stuff that was wrong by transferring people, because people were staying in the same job too long and building these little fiefdoms or whatever. So I remember these transfer lists came out—you could paper the wall with them—on the teletype, and everybody got transferred. That's when I got transferred to the academy, was I was in vice; I didn't know anything about it, but I got transferred right along with everybody else and went up to the academy.

But, yeah, Parker no doubt was a straight-arrow guy. He was a great guy and a good chief, you know; but as I say, I was not intimately familiar with all that was going on, because as I said, I had just come right out of the academy into central vice and then into the Detective Bureau, and I never . . . I wasn't an old-timer by, you know, those standards, and so I don't think I was really taken into anybody's confidence that would've, you know . . . the Hat that would have been involved in something, because they didn't know who I was or anything about me.

Paul Turner: When you got out of the Army, at some point you were in the Air Force Reserve, correct?

Lynn Compton: Yeah. Well, I switched to the Air Force Reserve, because it was right after the end of the war that they'd made the Air Force a separate branch, you know. It was originally part of the Army and the Army Air Corps. And the reason for it was that I was a reservist, you know, because of my ROTC thing, I was still a reservist, an active reserve, even though I was not on active duty, and I was doing my summer-camp stuff and all that. And several of the guys on the LAPD were . . . and the Air Force created its own criminal investigation division called the OSI, Office of Special Investigations; and so these guys would come, were working OSI as reservists.

So it was in order to get into the OSI that I switched to the Air Force and did my reserve duty for a long time as an OSI agent. And it was in that capacity that I met Evelle Younger, because he was working doing his reserve time as an OSI agent, too,

because he'd been in the OSF during World War II, which is the forerunner of the CIA, and he was very active with his military career as well.

Paul Turner: And tell us, give us . . . jumping probably a little ahead here in your career, but could you tell me how your career played out as a member of the Air Force Reserve?

(00:20:00)

Lynn Compton: Well, I did, you know, my summer stuff and my . . . one or two days a month I, you know, took correspondence courses, and I eventually ended up retiring from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel.

Paul Turner: And were you always involved in investigations?

Lynn Compton: No, later in my reserve career I switched to the JAG, and I ended up being attached to the JAG office of a command called SAMSO, which was Space and Missile Systems Organization, which was headquartered at El Segundo, this building down there with a missile out in front of it, down in El Segundo.

Paul Turner: They tore it down.

Lynn Compton: Did they? Oh. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: They did that last year. And is that where you did your . . . I guess when I was in the National Guard, it was called drills; you did it at that facility on El Segundo.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, when I was in the JAG Corps, yeah.

Paul Turner: Okay.

Lynn Compton: When I was in the OSI, we were over at Maywood. There was an air base over in Maywood.

Paul Turner: And now to drop back, you finished up your career in LAPD and you joined the DA's office, right?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Why did you decide you wanted to become a deputy district attorney?

Lynn Compton: Well, to tell you the truth, I was enjoying it. *[laughing]* I loved police work; it was fun, you know. And my wife, after this first false start in marriage, I finally found a gal that was just the greatest.

Paul Turner: What was her name?

Lynn Compton: Her name was Donna. We ended up . . . we were married 47 years.

Paul Turner: And when did she pass away?

Lynn Compton: When?

Paul Turner: When.

Lynn Compton: In April of 1994. But anyway, she was working all the time when I was going through this law-school thing and working days and nights and, you know, we had a hectic life there for quite a while, while I got my law degree. But I stayed on the PD for about a year after I got through . . . admitted to the bar. One day she says, "Hey, we got a little bit invested in your law degree." *[laughing]* She said, "Maybe you ought to try to do something with it." And I figured, well, yeah, I owed her that. So that's when I went to the DA's office.

Paul Turner: Who hired you?

Lynn Compton: Ernie Roll.

Paul Turner: And what, did he have an interview, or what happened?

Lynn Compton: Well, he was the chief deputy DA, you know. But I got to meet him and a lot of these high-ranking people, that's true. I joined the Masonic Order, then I joined the Shrine and they had a Shrine Club called the Peace Officers Shrine Club, which is made up of cops and judges and everybody that's in the Masonic Order and the Shrine. I met him through those connections. And when I went over to ask for a job, you know, well, he thought it was a big deal, because I guess maybe I was the first ex-cop to become a deputy DA. And so he took me out to the different places with him and introduced me when I first joined up, because it was kind of a political—well, not political, but—I mean, he was making some use of the fact that I was a policeman, you know.

I'll tell you a funny story about Roll when he was still chief deputy. *[laughing]* I was in the Hall of Justice working preliminary hearings or something when I first became a deputy, and there was a guy by the name of Jim Ford, who was a young deputy there. We were in the men's room there on the sixth floor of the Hall of Justice one day, and I'd just come from court, having a battle with a judge by the name of F. Ray Bennett, who was a real prude and kind of a pain in the neck, you know. And I said to Ford, you know, standing there at the urinal, I said, "You know," I said, "I don't know about these guys that use first names for initials or the initials for their first names, like F. Ray Bennett." *[laughing]* And then behind us a stall opens and out walks S. Ernest Roll. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: *[Laughing]* Did he forgive you?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: So tell us about your assignments in the DA's office. Did you start down in HOJJ? That's what we called the Hall; well, the HOJJ was the Hall of Justice Jail. Did you start out in the Hall of Justice?

(00:25:20)

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah, the old Hall of Justice is what they called city preliminary, where you did preliminary hearings for the L.A. Muni Court there in downtown L.A. Then I went from there to what they called the county run, which was where you'd go out to all these little justice courts that existed, muni courts and so on, all over the county from Lancaster to Pomona to, you know—

Paul Turner: How much time did you spend in Lancaster?

Lynn Compton: Oh, I don't know, I can't put it in hours or days; but, you know, that used to be one of the . . . Newhall. They had a justice court of Newhall and a muni court and the justice court in Lancaster. Used to catch those—Redondo Beach, you know, they'd hold court.

I remember one time Bernie Lawler was the JP in the Centinela Township, which was outside of Inglewood, and he had an old, abandoned market building there with a bench that he sat behind with a couple of boards laid across a couple of barrels *[laughing]*; so, my god, we're holding court in this vacant market building, you know. It was really like the Old West.

Paul Turner: How about the one on Lancaster? As I recall, that was a community center with a table that the judge sat behind.

Lynn Compton: I don't have a clear recollection of that. I remember, though, the orchestra pit of some municipal auditorium someplace where they used to hold court down in the orchestra pit there; I remember that one. *[laughing]* And then there was one up over a drugstore down in Gardena someplace. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: What would they do with the custody of the defendants, or would they do anything with the custody of defendants? They would just bring them in chains and have them sit down?

Lynn Compton: I guess, I don't . . . You know, that's an interesting question; I just don't even remember. I'm sure the sheriff's office hauled them out there, you know, unless they were held locally by the . . . There were some substations, and there were some small city PDs that were in existence at the time, but—

Paul Turner: After you got done with the county, when you were paroled from the county run, what'd you do then?

Lynn Compton: Let's see, from the county—

Paul Turner: Did you go to Long Beach?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah, I went to Long Beach. But I'll tell you, this might interest you, one day I'll never forget. I'm still on city preliminaries, okay? I've been in there less than six months in the DA's office. I'd never tried a case, never impaneled a jury, never done any of that—just preliminary hearings.

I come back from lunch, and Kenny Thomas, who was the head of the city preliminaries at the time, says, "Hey, they just sent this file down here from one of the trials in the superior court departments, and it's been farmed out to a superior court sitting over in the city hall"—they used to have some superior courts over there—"and it was one they just couldn't handle and they just farmed it out." He says, "Take it and go try it."

And I open up the file, and it's a 2-0—whatever that Little Lindbergh statute was, 209?

Paul Turner: 209; kidnap for—

Lynn Compton: For robbery or ransom with injury?

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: And this was a robbery where they'd moved the guy from the front of the store to the back of the pharmacy and then kicked him in the mouth and his teeth, and they've got him charged with 209; it's the death penalty, but that's okay. I've never impaneled a jury in my life, and they had . . . You know, it's not about training. They hand me this file, and I go over there and I try the same case. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: What were the results of the trial?

Lynn Compton: We convicted him, but we only got the life without parole; I didn't get the death penalty. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: *[Laughing]* Who were some of the deputy district attorneys you worked with there? Was Arthur Alarcon a deputy district attorney?

Lynn Compton: Well, he came later. Art was quite a bit junior to me, in terms of time in the office. The big guns in those days were Miller Levy, who was still in the trial department; they had Mark Brandler. Oh, geez, it was just, there was a lot of old-timers.

Paul Turner: And Mark Brandler later became a superior court judge and stepfather to Ronald M. George, the Chief Justice of California.

Lynn Compton: Oh, is that what it is?

Paul Turner: Stepfather-in-law, I think that's what the relationship was. No, stepfather; he was the stepfather. He married Ron's mother.

Lynn Compton: Oh, really?

(00:30:26)

Paul Turner: So you ended up in Long Beach.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: And do you eventually become the head deputy there?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Now, did you live in Long Beach?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: Where'd you live then?

Lynn Compton: Well, when I first was transferred to Long Beach, I was living in the San Fernando Valley in North Hollywood *[laughing]*; and this was the days before the freeway. And of course, I got transferred there, see, because they wanted me to quit. They thought I'd quit. There was a problem. I don't know how much you want me to go into it.

Paul Turner: Yeah, go into it. Tell us about it, because today that's called freeway therapy.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: But tell us what happened. They transferred you to Long Beach.

Lynn Compton: Well, there was a—oh, how the hell do I start this? I was on the county run and I came back; I got through early with whatever I was doing, and I came back to the Hall of Justice. And I'm sitting in the office there in the office in the Hall of Justice, and one of the girls at the front desk calls and says, "I got a couple of guys from either West Los Angeles or Valley detectives that want to give a complaint," and . . . Who's going to see all this? *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Well, who's going to see it? Scholars are going to see it. I mean, someone working on their master's degree at Sac State, I think that's the thing. If you don't want to talk about it, it's no problem.

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't mind telling it. I'm writing a book myself, you know. There's a guy writing a book about me and—

Paul Turner: All right. So you're going to tell this in the book?

Lynn Compton: I'm going to tell all this; but I'll tell it. You know, I just don't want to . . . it's a kind of a sensitive thing; but it does explain how I happened to be at Long Beach.

I was working county run and I come back, and I'm sitting there and the girl calls and says that all the complaint deputies were busy, would I talk to these two detectives, and I said sure.

So they come in, two guys I never met before, and they got a young girl with them—she was a little gal—and she's got bruises all over and she's, you know, beat up pretty good, and they want an assault to commit rape complaint against the guy. And I interviewed her, and she told a story about how she was an aspiring actress and this guy who was a producer had asked her to come out to his house, you know, and then he tried to get her in bed, and chased her around and held her down and bruised her, and she finally escaped out the window of the bathroom and got home and called the cops.

So her story was perfectly believable, because she didn't claim rape; she said she'd fought him off and she'd . . . Anyway, so it turns out that this guy who's the suspect is a guy by the name of Snader, S-N-A-D-E-R, who was a producer in the early days of television on a thing called Snader Telescriptions.

So anyway, I filed a complaint against this guy; I don't know who . . . I don't know him, didn't know him from Adam's long locks or that much about him, and it hits the papers that this guy is charged with this assault on this woman. And a friend of mine calls me up who knew the guy, and he says, "Boy, you really got the right guy on that one." He says, "That guy's an SOB," you know, and blah, blah, blah; and I said, "Okay, great."

So anyway, one day he calls me again, and he says, "You know," he says, "that Snader was out in a bar the other night; he's out on bail, and he's telling everybody that he's got this fix, that he's put $15,000 down in the DA's office to square this beef." And I said, "Well, okay."

So anyway, I'm going about my business and I'm in the hall one day, and Ernie Roll, who is now the DA, stops me in the hall and says, "Hey, did you know that case you filed the other day?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Bad case." He says, "That girl is a bum." And I say, "Okay. You know, it's out of my hands, it's in the mill. You know, what the hell, do whatever you want with it, you know; I don't care." *[laughing]*

So anyway, time goes along, and one day I get called into the DA's office and Roll's there, and there sits Chick Abbott—I don't know if you know Chick Abbott; he was the chief of the Bureau of Investigation—and a guy by the name of Don Avery, who worked for 20 years at least in complaints; that's all he ever did was work in complaints in the DA's office.

They're sitting there in Roll's office, and Roll says to me, he says, "You know, you're scheduled to go to Van Nuys tomorrow on the county run." And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well," he says, "that case you issued is on the calendar out there." And I said, "Yeah." He says, "You're going to handle everything but that case, and Avery is going to go out to Van Nuys and handle that case."

You know, this was strange, because Avery hadn't set foot out of the complaint section for 20 years that I knew. *[laughing]* But anyway, they do. I go out there and they're there, and they dump the case. They said, "This girl's got a bad reputation," while I sit there and watch.

Well, everybody thought something was wrong. The judge called me up to his chambers after they left and said, "What's that all about?" And I said, "I don't know." *[laughing]*

I get back to the Hall of Justice, the press guys are there. And so, you know, they come over and say, "Hey, you know, there's something funny going on here." I said, "Leave me out of this." *[laughing]*

Well, anyway, they had a deal going in the office at the time that at the end of the year there in December, they post your assignment for the next year on a bulletin board. So I went over there to look at my posting for the next year and it's Long Beach, and I'm living in North Hollywood. *[laughing]* So that's how I ended up in Long Beach; they figured that I'd quit, but I didn't.

(00:37:30)

Paul Turner: Now, Roll is replaced by . . . who replaces Roll as the district attorney?

Lynn Compton: Ultimately he was replaced by Bill McKesson. He died in office. And Bill McKesson, who was a retired superior court judge, was appointed by the board of supervisors and he took over.

Paul Turner: Did Roll drink a lot?

Lynn Compton: I don't know; not that I know of. I wasn't that close to him other than just, you know—

Paul Turner: Now, you're in Long Beach. Tell us about what it was like being a deputy district attorney in Long Beach. What year was this, mid-'50s, '56, '57?

Lynn Compton: No, it would have been . . . let's see, I went in the office, so probably '52, something like that.

Paul Turner: Oh, '52? Okay.

Lynn Compton: Well, the guy that was running the office at the time had a reputation for being a real hard guy to work for, you know. I remember one of the guys said, "Well, if you can get along with Stanley, it's a pretty good place to work."

Paul Turner: What was his name?

Lynn Compton: Ted Sten. And so anyway, I went down there, and he was very nice to me. He had this terrible reputation with his deputies that he was hard to work for, but he was just the greatest guy to me. But he said, "Jesus, they really must be mad at you." *[laughing]* And I said, "Well, I don't know; I guess."

But I didn't want to move down there, because I figured if I did that then they'd turn around and transfer me back to the Valley or something, you know, just to . . . So I just did that commute for quite a while.

Paul Turner: How long did it take you to drive to work?

Lynn Compton: A couple of hours each way, down through Gardena, you know, no freeways. There was a guy working with me down there who lived in Inglewood by the name of Ted Shield—I don't know if you know Ted Shield—and we were very good friends. And I used to stop in Inglewood and pick him up, and then we'd go on down there. *[laughing]* But Stan would say, "You know," he says, "look, I know it's something; just get here, you know. You can be a little late getting here, and you can leave a little early." And he was just really good, really good about it, and he made my life very comfortable. And so I just outlived him.

Paul Turner: Ted Sten's name is legend in the DA's office, isn't it?

Lynn Compton: Well, it was, yes. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: I think it still is.

Lynn Compton: Is it really? Yeah.

Paul Turner: Did you sense that he wanted you to work closely with the police in getting your cases ready? It was Sten's reputation as someone who worked closely with the police. Did you see that? Did you perceive that to be the case?

(00:40:34)

Lynn Compton: No, quite the opposite: he was very skeptical of the police. He was, you know . . . he was a hard nut to crack with the police in terms of getting complaints and stuff, yeah.

Paul Turner: No, not that; in terms of helping the police do a better job.

Lynn Compton: Oh, oh, oh.

Paul Turner: Because sometimes that was sort of the reputation that I hear. I could be wrong.

Lynn Compton: No, he never, I never . . . You know, that was never an issue. But he did give me a lot of good cases to try, you know, and everything. I got to where I was trying most of the murder cases that were handled down there and so on.

Paul Turner: How many years were you in Long Beach?

Lynn Compton: Let's see, that would've been about '52. I moved out of Long Beach when Younger became DA, whatever year that was; that would have been in the '60s, I guess.

Paul Turner: So you were there, you were in Long Beach for what, well over a decade as a deputy district attorney?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: Now, Younger becomes the district attorney. Did he make you the chief deputy?

Lynn Compton: Not immediately, no. My first move he moved me to the job of chief of all the branch and area offices, all the outlying offices. And from there he moved me to what they call the assistant DA, which is the number-three spot, or was, in the office, and then eventually to chief deputy.

Paul Turner: Retired Judge Larry Waddington said -- told me that when you were the chief deputy you formed a training unit to work with and provide training for the police. This was after, around the time of the Dorado decision, *Escobedo* decision, *Escobedo v. Illinois* and maybe around the time that the *Miranda* decision, around the time *Miranda* was decided. Can you tell me about the training unit that you formed?

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't specifically remember that unit as such. We worked very closely with the police. We did a lot of consulting with them, we went to a lot of meetings with them, and we did form a unit. As a matter of fact, we executed probably the biggest and most drastic reorganization of the office that it had ever gone through. It had just sort of grown like topsy, you know, and there was no real organization to it. And, you know,

I'm not patting myself on the back when I say what I did; but I got wind, I got a feeling that this job was going to become more of an administrative job than it had been looked upon in the past. In other words, it was going to take someone . . . to run this office right, it was going to take some management skills. So I went to night school at Harbor Junior College and took courses in business management and organization, stuff like that.

Well, it turns out the next promotional exam for head deputy for the branch office was a written exam that focused on all that stuff, and I came out number one on the list at that time *[laughing]*; that's how I got the job as the head deputy there, because I'd gone to night school and studied business administration a little bit.

Paul Turner: That's the head deputy in Long Beach.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: All right. And did you prepare training materials when you were the chief deputy for local law enforcement?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we did that, yeah.

Paul Turner: And Judge Waddington said you actually used television.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: And he said you were the one who approved all of the scripts. You had to sit there and read them and correct them to make sure they were accurate.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, we produced a manual; we tried to produce a manual for the police, a legal manual. Yeah, we did a lot of things. But we were the ones that organized the office into these three main directorates that still exist to this day. Of course, they've got more people. We had about 700 lawyers working in the office when I was there; now it must be close to 1,000 deputies. But this basic structure we put in place is still there.

(00::45:37)

Paul Turner: And how would you describe that structure?

Lynn Compton: Well, it's a trial, you know. The whole idea really of administration is to try to reduce the span of control of the executive so that he doesn't have to deal with, you know . . . we reduced it down to three people. Right under the DA's office, there was central operations, branch operations, and special operations. That's the three jobs we created. And so the DA himself or the chief deputy only had to deal with three people

rather than about a dozen, the way it was before. There was no chain of command, so to speak; and we created that.

But Younger was a great one for innovation, and he approved all of this stuff about the training, you know, and . . . wanting to tell you, we were involved with the facilities and needed some help from the PBS public broadcasting television, you know, with some of the television stuff.

So, yeah, in my opinion, when Younger was the DA it was the heyday of the district attorney's office, I think in its peak in terms of being totally free of any corruption and any political influence. Younger was a straight-arrow guy, I think, and I think everybody that was there at the time would all testify that that was the heyday at that office.

Paul Turner: So you were the chief deputy—radical changes because of Supreme Court decisions on what the police can or cannot do.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Exclusionary rule—how do you come down on the exclusionary rule? Take the Fourth Amendment exclusionary rule. How do you come down on that?

Lynn Compton: I think it's totally unwarranted. I think it ought to be done away with. There's nothing in the Constitution that requires the exclusionary rule; the Fourth Amendment prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures, but it's a remedy for a breach that is not spelled out in the Constitution. And traditionally, a suit for damages for a violation has always been the traditional mode of redress for a violation. But I think it's too high a price to pay for the public, because while the rule stated sounds fine, the nuances and the variations that have worked their way into it, that if the public really understood and knew how much time and energy was devoted to litigating and complying with that one issue, which has nothing to do with guilt or innocence, they'd be shocked.

I mean, to decide that, for example, if a policeman can stand outside a car and see a gun lying on the floor of the car, he can grab it and it's okay; but if he has to put his head past the line of the window into the car to see it, then he can't. I mean, little nuances and things that get involved in the rule and all the erratic rulings by various judges and their approaches to it, it's just a . . . I did a study one time in the office, and 25 percent of our man hours and court hours were devoted to that one issue that has nothing to do with guilt or innocence. There's got to be a mechanism for redressing the abuse without that rule. It's not constitutionally based.

(00:50:03)

Paul Turner: What about *Miranda*? How do you come down on the *Miranda* rule?

Lynn Compton: Same way, same thing. I don't . . . I never . . . I'm not advocating involuntary confessions or anything like that, or torture or beating up people. The point is, we dealt with that issue judicially for years, had judges ruling on it. We even had once a jury on disputed facts, sometimes on admissibility. There's nothing in the Constitution as I read it that suggests that the police should have an affirmative duty to discourage somebody from talking. I mean, I'm not . . . you know, it's quite a leap from saying "we don't want you to torture or coerce confession" to "you have a positive duty to discourage them from talking even if they want to talk." And that's what the *Miranda* rule's all about, is this affirmative discouraging of a suspect's talking.

Paul Turner: Let me ask a bunch of questions about Sirhan Sirhan. First of all, where were you when you heard that Robert F. Kennedy had been shot?

Lynn Compton: At home.

Paul Turner: How did you find out?

Lynn Compton: By television.

Paul Turner: What did you do at first? At first did you call the office, or what happened?

Lynn Compton: Well, I got in my car. I knew that the news broadcast said that they had him at Parker Center; so I jumped in the car and went to Parker Center.

Paul Turner: So in other words, when you heard that Sirhan had been arrested, you knew he'd be taken to Parker Center, or at least that was your assumption.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Did you go to Parker Center?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Tell us what happened.

Lynn Compton: Well, I went there, and Emile was already there; and Reddin, who was the chief, was there; and a couple of . . . John Howard, one of the deputies, was there. There was a whole school of LAPD people there, and a couple of our investigators, DA investigators, were there when I got there. And they had Sirhan in an interrogation room, and they'd been trying to find out . . . they didn't even know who he was; he didn't have any

ID on him, and he wouldn't give his name, and he wouldn't talk or anything.

So I got together with Younger and Reddin and, you know, decided what we were going to do, how we were going to handle it and what-have-you. And Younger was a pragmatist, you know. This was obviously a case that was big news, and it is the kind of a case where in ordinary circumstances you would expect an elected district attorney, who is a politician in a way, would say, "Well, I'm going to personally handle this myself" and so on. But Younger, you know, he had been a superior court judge, and I think he'd been city attorney or something for Pasadena or whatever. But he had no trial experience as a prosecutor, you know, and he recognized that even though it would make a . . . even though it might be a grandstand play for him to say, "I'm going to personally handle this," he just didn't have the experience in the courtroom to do it.

So the next best shot was that he wasn't going to handle it just like every . . . just like a routine case; and he didn't, you know. *[laughing]* So he picks me and says, "Well, you know, you handle it."

Paul Turner: Was that decision made that night?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Now, did you see Sirhan that night?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: Tell me what you would do, what happened in the next couple of days.

Lynn Compton: Well, we put together . . . you know, Reddin agreed with this, that two of the chiefs . . . that I would not only handle the trial matter, but I would also supervise whatever investigation that was conducted pretrial. So we had two phases to this thing. We had, obviously, putting together the case against Sirhan himself for court, the witnesses and so on and so forth and trial preparations, and then we had the overriding issue of was there anybody else involved or, you know, anybody there that night or was Sirhan working with anybody else; was this part of some conspiracy, you know?

(00:55:12)

Paul Turner: Was Judge J. D. Smith involved in the investigation?

Lynn Compton: Who?

Paul Turner: J. D. Smith, later became a Glendale Municipal Court judge and then later a Los Angeles Superior Court judge. Do you remember if he was—

Lynn Compton: I don't remember him by the name; but the people I dealt with were we had Bob Houghton, who was the chief of detectives, LAPD. He put together this unit in the LAPD called Special Unit Center where he gathered in about 50 of their homicide guys from all over the city.

Paul Turner: 5-0?

Lynn Compton: Huh?

Paul Turner: 50, 5-0, not --

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: Okay.

Lynn Compton: We had Frenchy Lajeunesse, who was the agent from the FBI who was put on the case, and had his agents and resources. We had the Secret Service, the local Secret Service there. We had our own investigators, who were under the command of George Stoner. So we had a sort of a task force that we met almost daily with Holton and Stoner and Matt Byrne, the U.S. Attorney for the Central District, and the heads of all these various agencies; we'd meet and we would go over leads, we would assign leads, we would evaluate stuff and so on. That was the phase dealing with who else might be involved, because we already knew what had happened in Dallas, because this wasn't that long after the JFK assassination and the grassy knoll and, you know, all the stuff that came out after Dallas. So we decided we would leave no stone unturned, you know, on this phase of it. And so I got two of our deputies, John Howard and James Fitts, to do the work of putting together the case against Sirhan for trial. They set up an office right there at the Ambassador Hotel; we had a room with an office there, and we had law clerks and Fitts and Howard were there interviewing witnesses right on the scene, you know, and all of that sort of thing. And then we had this other phase of the investigation of whoever else might be involved.

Paul Turner: Did you ever . . . did you find any evidence, were you able to document that anybody else was involved?

Lynn Compton: Absolutely not.

Paul Turner: Were there reports of other Middle Eastern men fleeing the area on the evening of the shooting?

Lynn Compton: Well, I can't tell you specifically. We got all kinds of phone calls, postcards mailed in, you know, that they saw Sirhan up in

Lompoc sitting on a bus bench with a dark complexion, you know. And we'd sent people out and we ran down everything, I mean, even though they were obviously crank stuff, you know. But we never . . . there wasn't one thing that we just brushed aside. And this is what's always bugged me about this, the aftermath and to this day: there's still talk about this second-gunman theory, you know. And the theory . . . they love to beat up on the LAPD, and the theory behind most of these conspiracies is that the LAPD was just lazy, that they had a slam-dunk on Sirhan and so they just folded their cards and ignored any other possibility. And that's just absolutely false.

And even if LAPD had taken that attitude, even if Holton had said, "Well, we're satisfied that Sirhan had it and we're going home," I would still have the FBI and our guys and the Secret Service; you know, we still would have worked it, and there's absolutely no motive for anybody to just ignore the possibility. I mean, what's to gain by it, you know?

Well, the thing about this second-gun thing is that they still keep bringing up from time to time is, number one, it is obvious to anybody, I think just logic, common sense, that if there was a second gun in that room that night, Sirhan would have had to know who it was. I mean, the coincidence of two guys independently deciding to both come to the Ambassador Hotel that night at that point in that room to get Kennedy and not know one another, I mean, is astronomical.

Secondly, if you took the route . . . I had an interview with the Discovery Channel here not too long ago; there's one coming out pretty soon from them on this same thing. And, you know, the Discovery Channel has a program they call *MythBusters*, and I said, "You know what you guys ought to do?" I said, "Get those two *MythBusters* guys and re-create that room where that shooting occurred, and then fill it to the gunnels with people shoulder to shoulder, front to back, jammed in this room, and demonstrate how one guy could be standing like this among Kennedy supporters, shoot a gun, and nobody saw him or heard it."

I mean, it's impossible for it to have happened and ask the question, "Why, if there were two guns, did they only grab Sirhan?" I mean, it wasn't the cops; it was Rosey Grier and all these people that went to grab Sirhan by the arm and disarmed him. And why did they let this second guy get away, you know? *[laughing]*

(01:02:19)

Paul Turner: Is the Discovery Channel going to do that?

Lynn Compton: Well, no, I don't think they're going to do it; I was just needling them, you know, but they were interviewing me and saying,

"Well, what about this and what about that?" And that's when I said, "Well, why don't you just re-create this thing and see how it's possible?"

And the other thing about it is Sirhan was offered a life sentence in exchange for information of anybody that was with him or helped him. And Grant Cooper and Russ Parsons, they went to him and they talked to him; this is mid-trial, you know. They said, "You can get life, you know, if you want." They come back and they said, "He can't come up with anybody, there isn't anybody." *[laughing]* And so he gets the death penalty, and then there's a year where he's facing the death penalty—he knows now it's not a gamble—and the offer's still open. And to this day, if he would come with a second gunman or somebody that helped him, he could probably get his parole, buy his parole. I'm sure that the DA's office would probably even now be willing to make a deal with him for information on somebody else, even at this late date; but he can't come up with anybody.

Paul Turner: Let me go back to the day the first time the case comes to court. It was in front of Arthur Alarcon, now a judge of the Ninth Circuit, former Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four. He issues this order: "It is the Order of this Court that no party to this action, nor any attorney connected with this action"—I'm skipping here—"shall release or authorize the release for public dissemination of any purported extrajudicial statement of the defendant relating to this case, further provided there is to be no comment on any document, exhibit or other evidence, the admissibility of which may have to be determined by this Court".

On July 19, 1968, you personally moved in a written memorandum to set aside the order. Dick Shauer, who was the judge who arraigned Sirhan, he strongly believed that press coverage could present a threat to a fair trial. Looking at it now, how do you come down for like the question about *Miranda* and the question about the Fourth Amendment exclusionary rule? How do you come down on the use of those sorts of gag orders?

(01:05:23)

Lynn Compton: Well, we were always opposed to them. Younger himself was personally opposed to them. We thought that, you know . . . Younger's favorite remark about that was, he says, "Those judges, it's like eating peanuts." He says, "They eat one, and they can't stop eating more of them." *[laughing]* And he said he just thought that they were trying to get their names in the history books and all that sort of thing. *[laughing]*

There wasn't anything that we were in possession of the press probably hadn't already released anyway. I mean, Sirhan never did confess to anything, you know. He did get on the witness

stand and take a position that he didn't remember or . . . and there was all this business about self-hypnosis and all that. But we weren't sitting on any evidence that would, that could, change the picture much. I mean, it's going to be hard to find a jury anyplace in the United States on a case like that that doesn't know pretty much all the facts that, you know, the press has already been out with a lot of stuff; and to try to create this pristine atmosphere is almost an impossibility on a case like that, regardless of gag orders or whatever. That was our attitude, and we felt that obviously there was such a tremendous press interest in the case that we were going to be besieged daily, you know, with questions about the case. And we didn't want to feel like we had to run and analyze some judge's order—well, you know, can I answer this question or that. You know, we just thought that we were worth at least being given the benefit of the doubt as to our credibility and professionalism without being told by Art Alarcon what we should do about this.

Paul Turner: Let me ask you about the lawyers who represented him eventually. First of all, he was represented by Bill Littlefield. Do you remember at the beginning, the public defender's office—

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah, the public defender's office was in there, right.

Paul Turner: Do you think Littlefield could have done a better job than Cooper, Berman, and Parsons?

Lynn Compton: No, I don't think anybody could have done anything with that case that wasn't done.

Paul Turner: When you read the transcript, you come away with the impression that you had a very cordial and professional relationship with the defense lawyers; at least in the courtroom, it comes out that way. Is that a fair characterization or—

Lynn Compton: Yeah, I would say that, and I think that's the way it ought to be. I don't like to try cases when the lawyers are at each other's throats. Grant Cooper was a high-class, highly experienced professional guy; Russ Parsons the same. I didn't know Berman. I think Berman was simply imported for the obvious fact that he was Jewish and Sirhan's whole motive in killing Bobby Kennedy was because he hated the Jews and the Zionists, and so they felt like Berman would maybe counterbalance that a little bit.

Paul Turner: Today, we're doing this in 2007. On some occasions, there will be public discussion of the relationship between Islam and terrorism. Was there any evidence of any religious motivation on the part of Sirhan? In other words, was it religious motivation, or was it more political motivation?

Lynn Compton: Oh, political. I mean, it had the overtone of the Jewish thing; but basically what his story was, if you'll remember, was that he had considered himself to be a big fan of Kennedy, and he thought that . . . And he was brought up in the Palestine area there during the British Mandate and at the time when the Zionists were doing some things themselves that they're not too proud of today like the Haganah and the Stern Gang . . . And there was a certain terrorist element involved in that he grew up being told that all of the hardships that they were suffering in the Palestinian area were the result of the Zionists and the Jews, and that they were the enemy. And so he felt oppressed and so on, and he felt that Bobby Kennedy and the Kennedys were friends of the oppressed people of the world. And when he suddenly found out that Bobby Kennedy, being a senator from New York, was advocating that the Israelis be given the top-of-the-line American fighter—I don't know what it was at the time, the F-something.

Paul Turner: F-4 Phantom.

(01:11:16)

Lynn Compton: It blew his mind that Kennedy was abandoning, you know, betraying, the little people by siding with the Zionists, you know. That was his kind of a mixed-up, obvious, dumb thing; because, you know, American politics, what it is, is a big Jewish vote in New York. *[laughing]* You don't expect a senator from New York to be anti-Israel, you know *[laughing]*; but he did, apparently.

Paul Turner: You called 59 witnesses to testify for the prosecution; that was my count.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Why 59?

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't know *[laughing]*. Just we thought, we wanted to make sure, you know, we painted as vivid a picture as we could of what went on and so on; I don't know. I don't know that we arbitrarily just picked the number 59; I do recall everybody that we thought, you know, we didn't want the jury to say, "Well, I wonder why didn't they call this or that?"

Paul Turner: Were you concerned about the Mark Lanes of this world? I know once I think I saw a speech where you refer to "the Mark Lanes of this world." Mark Lane made a career out of suggesting that there were other people involved in the killing of President John Kennedy. Was that a concern also, that you wanted to make sure you put on all the evidence, so there were no questions?

Lynn Compton: That's right; that was always in the back of our mind that we knew we were going to get second-guessed, no matter what we

did; I mean, that there was going to be somebody coming out of the woodwork and saying, "Hey, you didn't do this" or "You didn't do that." And Younger, I can remember, made the order that when we finished that we took every file, every report, every note that we had in our possession and lodged it with the court, as not an exhibit exactly, but just to archive it, you know, so they couldn't say that we were sitting on anything; that we wanted to be as fully expositive of the evidence as we possibly could to avoid these accusations.

Paul Turner: For any scholar who may watch this, someone working on their master's degree at Sac State, all of those documents are available in the State Archives in Sacramento which you all lodged, which included all the LAPD documents.

Lynn Compton: Right, right.

Paul Turner: If you want to go look at it, you can go look at it in the State Archives in Sacramento.

Lynn Compton: Right.

Paul Turner: Let me ask you about the psychiatric testimony. All of the psychiatrists testified that Mr. Sirhan could not act with malice, and each of them were asked—and I think this was the exact question—"Could Sirhan contemplate and understand in a mature way his duty to conform his conduct to the requirements of the society?" And they all said, "No, absolutely not."

At one point in your argument, you said this, and I'd like you to tell us about this: "But at some time in my life, I have heard that Charles Dickens once wrote in which one of his characters said something about 'The law is an ass,' and I think that's true and I'm a lawyer. I think the law became an ass the day it let the psychiatrists get their hands on the law." Pretty memorable words. Tell us about it.

(01:15:05)

Lynn Compton: *[Laughing]* Well, you know, not to denigrate just psychiatry as a profession generally, but I'm talking primarily about these forensic psychiatrists that make a living testifying about these people who commit criminal activity. And I think that probably . . . I've always argued to jurors about the thing that the best evidence of a defendant's state of mind are the things he does and says. *[laughing]* And when Sirhan had the whatever you want to call it, the presence to go out and acquire a gun, go out to a pistol range and practice with it, go down to the Ambassador and take all of his ID off his body and leave it in the car, park his car four blocks away and go down there and do it—or three blocks or whatever—and do the deed the way he did it speaks pretty much for his presence of mind. And of

course, we had a psychiatrist on our side, at least one, that went against these guys, you know, that testified; but the lead guy on the defense side . . . Well, there were two: the little psychologist from San Diego that we destroyed with the book that he plagiarized, a report out of a book that somebody else had written. But this guy Bernard Diamond—who is the leading Freudian psychiatrist in the field, or was at the time—who had written that famous pamphlet saying in effect that there's no such thing as free will, that nobody who does anything does it volitionally, that we're all such a captive of our history, our past life's experience, that we have no control over what we do. And that was what he was advocating, you know.

Paul Turner: I was interested. While you were going through the facts, it was not word for word; but it was largely almost exactly what you said on pages 8753 through 8755 of the reporter's transcript after all these years. You left out the thing about he . . . I think he *[inaudible]* he wrote, "RFK must die." But then I think also when he shot him, I think he called him a son of a bitch, didn't he?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, he said, "You son of a bitch."

Paul Turner: And "I did it for my country."

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Who was the lawyer who was the deputy attorney general who represented the People on appeal in *Sirhan*?

Lynn Compton: Bill James, wasn't it?

Paul Turner: No, it was Ron George.

Lynn Compton: Oh, was it Ron? Oh, Ron, yeah.

Paul Turner: Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court.

Lynn Compton: I was kind of disappointed in Ron. I don't know whether I should put this on here.

I watched Ron grow up, if you want to call it that. *[laughing]* But he was a deputy AG and he started getting some of the cases and I used to talk to him, and we were pretty good friends; and when I was on the Court of Appeal, he was still working in the AG's Office, I think, and I had conversations with him. And several years later, after I had retired and I'm up here, and he's now Chief Justice in California, I called his office one day to ask for a copy of an opinion that they had written that I was interested in, and I wanted to read it in detail. And I got his secretary and I told her who I was; I couldn't get through to him. I said, "Well, would you please send me a copy of this opinion, and ask him to call me when he's got a minute?"

And I never got the opinion, never heard from him. It was like I didn't exist. It kind of disappointed me. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: When the trial's over, you get appointed to the Court of Appeal. You were appointed by Ronald Reagan.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Had you met Ronald Reagan, Governor Reagan, before?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

(01:20:06)

Paul Turner: What was your relationship with him?

Lynn Compton: Well, the first time I met him was just casually, not personally. He started an organization in the picture business called the Motion Picture Alliance, which was an anti-Communist group; and several members of my family were in the picture business in various positions, and they belonged to it. I went to one of the meetings with him and met him. But beyond that, I met him basically through Ed Meese. Ed Meese had been a deputy DA in Alameda County. And his boss, Frank Coakley, used to be the chairman of the legislative committee for the state peace officers of the state DA's associations. And I was on that committee, and I also had a similar position with L.A. County peace officers and DAs. And so when I used to go to Sacramento to testify for or against legislation that affected the criminal justice system, Ed Meese used to be there as a full-time lobbyist for the state peace officers and so on because his boss would assign him over there while the Legislature was sitting. So I got to know Ed; and then of course, when Reagan became Governor, Ed became his legal affairs secretary and then he became his executive secretary. And it was through *[inaudible]* meetings with Ed in Sacramento that I met Reagan and had chances to talk to him.

Paul Turner: Now, today, if someone wants to be a Court of Appeal justice, they submit an application; they have friends write letters. Was there anything . . . did you ever submit an application or anything like that?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: Did you know you were about ready to get appointed?

Lynn Compton: Well, not really. *[laughing]* It's kind of funny; I'll tell you a funny story. I hate the sound of this, because, you know, I don't want it to sound like self-aggrandizement. But I'm chief deputy DA, and mainly I figure Younger had thought about running for Attorney General, and I figure I got a pretty good chance of being DA if Younger becomes AG.

So I'm sitting at my desk one day, and then Hutchinson calls me—he was appointment secretary for Reagan—and he says, "Hey, Buck, the Governor wants to appoint you to the superior court." And I said, "Oh, gee, that's great."

So I run in to Younger and I say, "Hey, Dave Hutchinson just got off the phone, and he wants to appoint me to the superior court." And Younger says, "You don't want that." He says, "Those jobs are a dime a dozen." He said *[laughing]*, "Stay here and be DA." And I said, "Okay." *[laughing]*

So I go back and I said, "Ed, I guess not, I guess not." He said, "Oh, god, we just assumed you were available." *[laughing]* And I said, "Well, I talked to Evelle," you know, and so on and so forth. Anyways, that goes by the board.

So then one day I'm sitting there, and the phone rings and it's—Herb Ellingwood was Reagan's . . .

Paul Turner: Legal affairs advisor.

Lynn Compton: . . . legal affairs at that time. He says, "Hey, Buck, we're looking for a Chief Justice." I forget what happened, either he died or the Chief Justice . . . I forgot what it was, but anyway—

Paul Turner: It would have been Traynor?

Lynn Compton: I guess it was.

Paul Turner: Traynor had retired to teach at . . . am I right about that? I think he went to teach at Hastings. Does that sound right?

Lynn Compton: Yes, probably.

Well, anyway, he said, "I've got three names I'd like to run by you to see what you think about them." And he gives me three names, one of whom is a deputy DA that had worked for our office and was a superior court judge and one's a lawyer in private practice. And I said, "Jesus, what are the specs for the job?" *[laughing]* And he says, "Well, you got to be under 50, and you got to be a strict constructionist of the Constitution." And I said, "Well, god, where do you put in an application?" *[laughing]* You know, I was just kidding. And he said, "Are you interested?" And I said, you know, "Does a bear go in the woods?" *[laughing]* And he said, "Well, let me see what we can do."

So, anyway, he kept calling, and finally he said one day, "Well, you know, we can't pull this off." He says "You don't have any judicial experience or with an organized bar." You know, he went on with all this. *[laughing]* And I said, "Well, I can

understand that." He said, "But would you be interested in the Court of Appeal?" And I said, "Well, yeah, I think so; let me go talk to Evelle." *[laughing]*

Then I go talk to Evelle, and Evelle said, "Well, yeah." I said, "That's worth something." *[laughing]* So anyway, that's how that came about. *[laughing]*

(01:26:05)

Paul Turner: And now, today if a justice is nominated by the Governor, there's a hearing in front of the Commission on Judicial Appointments. They bring in your friends *[laughing]* . . .

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: . . . and your friends get up there and swear you'll be great. And then they vote, and then there's a big, expensive reception held afterwards where everybody gets to eat free food.

Tell us how your proceeding with the Commission on Judicial Appointments went. Did it meet in public when you were a—

Lynn Compton: They didn't have . . . all they had was the three, the Attorney General, the Chief Justice, and the senior presiding justice.

Paul Turner: And did they meet in private?

Lynn Compton: I guess so, because Don Wright was on it at the time, and I guess he was the Chief Justice at the time. And he called and said, "We just approved your nomination" or something like that. I said, "Thanks." *[laughing]* And that's all there was to it.

Paul Turner: Let me ask you about Chief Justice Wright. When he became the Chief Justice, it is clear that his opinions were different, one, from his opinions in the Court of Appeal; and they were different from what he said when he had his press conference when he was appointed.

Lynn Compton: And different from what he told William Frank Smith and all of Reagan's advisors, you know, when they interviewed him.

Paul Turner: What do you make of that?

Lynn Compton: I don't know. It's like so many things; people surprise you. I don't know. It's not for me to judge. I guess it was . . . some of the things I heard that he said later bothered me more than anything else, I was told that, you know, he had agreed with the Reagan Administration. He didn't sit there, you know, *[inaudible]* on age; I mean, he was older than they had wanted. And so he supposedly agreed that he would retire before Reagan left office so Reagan would have a chance to appoint his successor, and that when the time came to call that marker, he

refused to do it. And his excuse—and this is what I was told by some people that know what went on—he told Ed Hutchinson that he was not going to let Reagan ruin the California court system by appointing people like Buck Compton and Bill Clark. You know who Bill Clark was. So he used Clark and I as the reasons for his not, you know, following through on his promise to—

Paul Turner: Both Ellingwood and Meese told me that he had promised to leave.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: What do you think about a justice who accepts a position with the understanding that he or she will leave before the Governor leaves office? Do you think that's the right thing to do, a bad thing to do? How do you come down on that?

Lynn Compton: Oh, I didn't really give it that much thought; I just assumed it was done probably more often than anybody knew. *[laughing]* And I don't know whether . . . you mean, is it ethical or not? I don't know, I don't think it's such a bad thing. I mean, I don't think it's unreasonable for appointing officials that want to, you know, appoint people that are going to be there a long time. They had that in mind with everybody else when they set that age-50 mark; but they just couldn't find anybody that would fit the bill, I guess, that was that young at the time. But, you know, it's not for me to judge the propriety of that sort of thing.

Paul Turner: Let me ask you about a couple of Court of Appeal justices, people who became Court of Appeal justices who worked as research attorneys at the Court of Appeal when you were there. Ken Yegan?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: What did Ken do with the Court of Appeal?

Lynn Compton: Well, he's the one who eventually went on the Court of Appeal himself up in Ventura, right?

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: Yeah. Well, he was what they called a staffer. We had what they called a central staff, as I recall, who used to screen and prepare memos on writs and workers' comp stuff that we would get that was sort of considered to be more—I don't know what the word for it was—administrative rather than judicial in nature, I guess, if you want to call it that. I guess at one time, yeah, they were also . . . that's right, they used to screen out what they viewed as frivolous appeals, and they'd write these short memorandums, as I recall. I'm kind of vague about how that worked. But anyway, they had a lot of responsibility

screening out a lot of the appellate work that was, you know, cluttering up the calendar and the processes. But they were . . . we relied very heavily on them and on their judgment.

Paul Turner: Don Gates; tell us about Don Gates.

(01:32:22)

Lynn Compton: Well, he was in the same thing. Don Gates, of course, Don Gates had worked personally for, oh, one of the justices that was on the court that was on the division I was in. It was—

Paul Turner: Bob Lester?

Lynn Compton: No, was Ross, Fleming in this—

Paul Turner: Herndon.

Lynn Compton: Roy Herndon. Roy Herndon, he'd worked for Roy Herndon. And he was a great writer. Don Gates had a flair for writing and a turn of phrase, and he was a very bright guy. He always impressed me, you know, a lot.

Paul Turner: Tell me how opinions were written. How would a typical opinion be written in Division Two when you were there?

Lynn Compton: Well, the clerk would bring around on a random draw all of the . . . I might tell you, add, throw in, something here I think was interesting. When I first got there, they had a routine that every month, the first of the month, the clerk would come around and put five cases on your desks. Everybody got five cases. Why five, I don't know; it was like the Easter bunny coming around there. Sometimes those five cases you could dispose of in a week *[laughing]*, and sometimes, you know, one would take a long time.

But anyway, this practice of just limiting it to five cases started creating a hell of a backlog. At one point, there was a great backlog in the Court of Appeal, and you had the option of going to the clerk; if you'd finished your five and you didn't have anything to do, you could go and say, "Hey, give me an extra case" or something. He wrote down a case and he'd give it to you, you know. But it was a strictly random thing. Nobody got any particular case; they just by lot went around.

And so my process was to . . . I would read the briefs of the cases, get a rough idea, and I would sort of split it up with my research attorney. I'd set out to try to write some of them myself and let him write some, and then we'd trade back and forth. I eventually got to the point where I let my research attorney write a proposed opinion before I undertook to do any writing myself. Is this what you wanted to know?

Paul Turner: Right, right.

Lynn Compton: But I'll tell you this for Division Two. One day we sat down, and I suggested to him, I said, "You know, I kind of think it's dumb that we have this backlog sitting back there and they just sort of take five cases at a time and peel them off." I said, "Why don't we take all the cases that are ready for appeal, ready to be dealt with, and assign them to somebody in the court and start working on them? You know, just take the whole backlog and start working on them and see how many we can clear up. You know, maybe we can eliminate the backlog."

Well, we sit down to do it; and you know, it was sort of like the old picture of the python with the whole pig going through the system. We had this lump that went through, and we eventually got where we were absolutely current. And the delay from the time that it was ready for appeal until opinion was, you know, I think we got down to about 30 days or something like that; I forget what the day was, but that was a conscious effort on our part at Division Two to eliminate the backlog. But that's the way they operated before.

(01:37:11)

Paul Turner: Roger Grace, who was the co-publisher of the *Metropolitan News*, who named you as either the second or third Person of the Year of the *Metropolitan News*. You got an award with a banquet and everything, right?

Lynn Compton: Right.

Paul Turner: Well, I was one of three persons who were Persons of the Year . . .

Lynn Compton: Really?

Paul Turner: . . . this last January, and I tell people that I'm one-third of the Person of the Year that you were.

Lynn Compton: *[Laughing]*

Paul Turner: Here's what Roger Grace said. He said, "Division Two was the best appellate court in California, clearly superior to the California Supreme Court." What do you think of that?

Lynn Compton: That's quite a compliment. I'll tell you one thing about it that I felt was quite flattering. I hadn't heard Roger go that far; but there was a guy that did a profile of our division for the *Daily Journal*, and he interviewed one of the public defenders; I forgot which one it was at the time. The public defender said that Division Two was Death Valley for a defendant, a criminal defendant, on procedural matters, but it was the best division on sufficiency of the evidence. That is, on the issue of guilt or

innocence, he said we were the best court in the state; but we were bad for the defendants on procedural things, such as search and seizure and that sort of thing.

Paul Turner: When did you retire? Do you remember the date?

Lynn Compton: Well, it was 1990; I forget exactly what day it was; whenever the 30 years, 20 years was up or whatever.

Paul Turner: Where have you lived since you retired?

Lynn Compton: Well, as I say, when I finally retired, I was living in Lopez Island in the San Juans. And then when my wife died rather suddenly back in 1994, why, I moved onto the mainland, where my two daughters had followed us up there and they were both living on the mainland; and so I now live with one of my daughters.

Paul Turner: What's her name?

Lynn Compton: Her name's Tracy.

Paul Turner: And what's the other daughter's name?

Lynn Compton: Cindy.

Paul Turner: Let me ask you about what you've been doing since you've been retired. Let me ask you about Initiative 933. Tell me about that.

Lynn Compton: *[Laughing]* Well, Washington State adopted, in this frenzy and this fanaticism of the environmental movement, they adopted a growth-management act. They didn't want anybody to move to Washington, and they didn't want anybody, any growth, up here. They don't want the villains of the world and what they refer to as the big developers, whatever that means. But anyway, the point is that they have created this mechanism whereby through the use of down-zoning, and environmental and use regulation of private property, they've taken something like—I think the University of Washington studied that they have taken something like—$8 billion of property value from property owners here in Washington without compensation. And the Constitution clearly provides that when you take property for public use or purpose, it must pay reasonable compensation for the property.

But the environmental movement has been able to do an end run around the eminent domain clause and take private property; they say, "Well, we're not really taking it; we're just telling you you can't use it," you know, which to me is the same thing. Because when you buy private property, that's all you get is use; you can't pick it up and move it, you know. *[laughing]* So you get a certain use out of it is what you pay for it, and the government then comes along and says, "Well, we've changed

that use, and your property is now worth one-fourth of what you paid for it."

Well, to me that's wrong. And they put a proposition on the ballot here to correct that and give these regulatory bodies the option of either paying for the property or rolling back the taking. They didn't have to pay the money; they had a choice, which is what I think government should do—they should make a cost-benefit analysis of their regulations and decide.

But anyway, that got shot down. I don't mean to get maudlin about it, but we've paid a pretty high price in blood and life for private property. I mean, that's what we're fighting for when we fight wars. Our way of life is based on private property and freedom, and we've paid a high price for that; and to see it eroded the way it's being eroded under the guise of protecting the environment, they're breaking faith with the guys who gave life at will.

(01:43:04)

Paul Turner: Now, you did commercials against—or for—Prop. 933, Initiative 933.

Lynn Compton: A couple of little radio things, yeah.

Paul Turner: A couple of little radio things?

Lynn Compton: Yeah. The Farm Bureau, who sponsored it, didn't have any money. The environmentalists hit them with multimillion-dollar slick television ads, making it sound like if that passed, the whole state of Washington was going to be a strip mall or something. And we couldn't come up with any money, so I did a couple of radio things; but, you know, nothing.

Paul Turner: The death tax, you and Don Malarkey have done commercials to repeal the inheritance tax, am I right?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: And we'll talk about Don in a little while, I love his last name; Malarkey was one of the great names. There's two great names out of World War II: Malarkey and Tojo. Now, Tojo, you know, is an infamous name, particularly in Japan, as well as in our country; but I like the name, it's got a ring to it. Malarkey and Tojo are just great names.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Tell us about . . . both you and Don did some commercials, am I right about that? And who'd you do them for? Do you remember the group?

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't know if it was a group; it was a guy by the name of Dick Patton, who was a friend of a friend of ours who . . . He initially had been the one years ago who by an initiative amendment was able to repeal the death tax here in Washington, and they of course reinstituted it recently; but he took up the fight to try to repeal it at the national level as well, and asked us if we'd contribute to do a commercial, and I said hell, yeah, you know. Malarkey I think did it primarily because of friendship; I don't know that Malarkey has as strong personal feelings about it as I do; but anyway, we were willing to help out.

My attitude about the death tax is, I think that any tax which taxes the same money twice is simply immoral and un-American. *[laughing]* I mean, it's one thing to pay your income tax; but then it's another thing after you've paid your income tax to then not be able to give it to your kids without having to pay another tax on that. *[laughing]* To me, that's again the kind of thing that we fought for in the various wars that we've fought: a freedom, an individual freedom, and in opposition to what I refer to as collectivism. I think this redistribution of wealth and this collectivism mentality is taking hold of this country, and that's what we've been fighting against since the Revolution.

(01:46:27)

Paul Turner: There's two commentators at Radio Station KLKI. You and Charles Osgood are the two commentators. Look on the website, there's two commentators: there's Charles Osgood and you. Tell me about how many did you do—two a day, or is it one that's played twice a day?

Lynn Compton: Well, I didn't realize I was going to . . . Osgood, he's nationally syndicated. Nobody hears me except farmers here.

But anyway, no, I do these taped commentaries, and they play them twice a day, two days in a row; so they're played four times, each one I do.

Paul Turner: Now, today, I listened to it this morning. You didn't have anything nice to say about the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Lynn Compton: Oh, is that right? *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Yeah, you had a commentary about her, and you remember what you said?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, I remember.

Paul Turner: What'd you say?

Lynn Compton: Well, I said I think she's overplaying her hand; I think she ought to be content to be Speaker of the House and not try to be Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and also Secretary of State at the same time.

Paul Turner: As I recall, there was something in a *Washington Post* editorial to the same effect.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, that's what surprised me. The *Washington Post* said she was an embarrassment, with which I agree. *[laughing]* But beyond that, I'll be even stronger: I didn't say it before, but I . . . one of the many great benefits that I have experienced as a result of this *Band of Brothers* thing is that I have an opportunity, as a result of the popularity of it, I've been given an opportunity to go around and talk to a lot of people about a lot of things. People are interested in my book and everything, and so they ask me, you know. I've gotten to go on a USO tour to talk to troops out in the Pacific and in Korea and Japan. I've been over in Europe talking to the troops that have been in and out of Iraq. I've been to Walter Reed Hospital. I've talked to the wounded guys from Iraq, and I try to use that to try to counter a veil, if that's the right expression, of what I consider to be absolutely traitorous, treasonous conduct on the part of some political figures in this country that are absolutely aiding and abetting our enemy every time they open their mouths.

Paul Turner: Later this month you're going on a tour, aren't you?

Lynn Compton: Not a tour; we're just going to Germany to visit with the 1st Armored Division, which is preparing to go back to Iraq. We've talked to them once before when they'd just come back from Iraq, and now that they're getting ready to go back, the commander asked us to come back; for some reason they like to hear from us.

(01:50:03)

Paul Turner: We talked earlier. You said that these kids want you to autograph *Band of Brothers*, right?

Lynn Compton: Yeah. They have books and the DVDs, and they stand in lines two blocks long for us to autograph them, which is flattering as hell to me that those kids would care to hear from old buzzards like us; but we try to tell them that Nancy Pelosi and John Kerry don't speak for the heartland of the country.

Paul Turner: Okay, let me ask you a couple of questions. We're more than three-quarters done.

Lynn Compton: Okay.

Paul Turner: Where were you born?

Lynn Compton: Los Angeles.

Paul Turner: Tell me who your parents were.

Lynn Compton: Well, my dad's first name was Roby, R-O-B-Y, and my mother's name was Ethel; her maiden name was Cleveland.

Paul Turner: Were they also native Californians?

Lynn Compton: My mother was; my dad was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi.

Paul Turner: And how did he end up in California?

Lynn Compton: His mother and dad brought him out here as a young man, and my mother and dad met in high school, Manual Arts High School. As I mentioned early on, they went to Manual together.

Paul Turner: And what'd your father do for a living?

Lynn Compton: Well, at one time I think he worked for the railroad; when I was knowing him, he was an escrow clerk for the Security Title Insurance Company.

Paul Turner: Did your mother work outside the home?

Lynn Compton: Only after my dad died; not before.

Paul Turner: How old were you when your father passed away?

Lynn Compton: I don't know.

Paul Turner: Teenager?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, I just graduated from high school; so I guess I was 17.

Paul Turner: Did you go to L.A. High?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: You went from L.A. High and went to UCLA.

Lynn Compton: Right.

Paul Turner: Why did you pick UCLA?

Lynn Compton: Well, a couple of reasons. I was kind of a timid kid, and I was kind of reluctant to go away from home. *[laughing]* I mean, you know, we had a chance to go up to Berkeley, Washington, and Stanford and a couple of other places; but I couldn't visualize myself living away from home. *[laughing]*

And the other thing was—and this is the funny part—I had a good—

Paul Turner: Well, I'm still laughing about you being timid. *[laughing]*

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah, I was. I had a good buddy by the name of Herb Wiener, who we were teammates in high school, played high-school football together and then later on in college, and we wanted to play and go together, you know. And he was a hell of a good football player, but he wasn't as big as I was. And my dad had always wanted me to go to USC—although my dad didn't go to USC, but he took me to SC games and he was a big SC rooter. And I had a chance to go to SC; but for some reason, they didn't want Herb. I was bigger; I weighed about 220 and Herb only about 175 or something, and they wanted big guys and so they didn't want Herb. So I didn't want to go without Herb. And so Herb says, "Well, hell, let's go to UCLA."

Well, there were two advantages to that. It was smaller—our chances of playing were better, you know, than they were at some of the bigger schools—and they were close to home. And so that's how I ended up at UCLA.

Paul Turner: Buck, it was divine intervention. Where were you December 7, 1941; Sunday, December 7?

Lynn Compton: '41?

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: Well, I was living with my mother in a little apartment out near Beverly and La Brea.

Paul Turner: How did you find out about the attack?

Lynn Compton: Well, this apartment we had was a single story. It was kind of staggered back on the lot, and where my bedroom window was, right outside a couple of neighbors were standing out on the walkway out there, and I woke up and I could hear them talking about the Japs bombing Pearl Harbor; that's how I heard about. We just finished a game with SC the day before and got beat, you know. But I remember hearing about it from these neighbors talking.

Paul Turner: And what was your major at UCLA?

Lynn Compton: Physical ed.

Paul Turner: Really?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Are you sure you didn't get tied by SC? Sure it wasn't a 7-7 tie?

Lynn Compton: Well, it could have been. I don't remember.

Paul Turner: That's right, it was. I will tell you, I'm looking at the official UCLA statistics, which cannot be wrong, and it shows on 12/6/41, 7-7.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, okay.

Paul Turner: And then you went out a couple of weeks later, beat Florida 30-27.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: You went out to Tallahassee to play.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, right, right. Okay.

Paul Turner: Okay. And so it was a tie.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: So you didn't lose to SC.

Lynn Compton: Right. I didn't remember that.

Paul Turner: Well, neither did I. So that's the reason I keep the stats.

Did you know your life was going to be changed that moment, or is it something as the weeks went on you realized this: "I'm not going to enjoy four years of college."

Lynn Compton: Yeah. Well, I don't know that I thought in that, those kind of . . . We knew, I think we all pretty well knew—maybe not that instant I heard about it, but within a matter of days—I think every one of us knew we were going to be in a war and we were going to have to go in the service.

Paul Turner: Did you listen to President Roosevelt's speech on the 8th?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, I heard that, yeah.

Paul Turner: Tell me what was . . . the people you were with, you were with your mom or maybe you were at school; that would have been on Monday.

Lynn Compton: I think I was out at UCLA, and I think I was in Kerckhoff Hall when I heard it.

Paul Turner: And what was the reaction of the kids?

Lynn Compton: I don't remember the kids; I remember just that I was . . . I don't know, it just confirmed that we were in a war and, you know, that we were all going to be in the service. I mean, it

was just a given. That's something I tell people nowadays, too, that surprises them, I guess.

When I first went to UCLA, it was mandatory that every male student take two years of ROTC. That was just part of the overhead, and nobody gave it a second thought. *[laughing]* And all of my contemporaries knew that they were going to go in the service. I never heard anybody say, "Well, I'm not going to go." It was just a question of what branch: are you going to go in the Navy, are you going to go in the Marines, you know, whatever.

(01:57:38)

Paul Turner: Now, let me ask you about a couple of people you knew at UCLA. We talked about this last night. Superior Court Judge Hank Shatford was a columnist for the *Daily Bruin*. He knew Jackie Robinson. He said he only knew him as Jack; you knew him as Jackie Robinson, not just Jack Robinson?

Lynn Compton: Well, we called him Jack, you know, when I knew him.

Paul Turner: And also Kenny Washington.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Now, did you all have discussions about who was going to break the color line in baseball?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: No discussions at all like that?

Who was the better ballplayer when you were at UCLA? And realizing this is 1941 and Jackie Robinson didn't start playing till, what was it, '48 is when he started playing for the Dodgers? Who was the better ballplayer, Robinson or Washington?

Lynn Compton: Oh, Kenny Washington. Kenny Washington could hit for power while he was at UCLA. Jackie couldn't hit for power. He didn't . . . I mean, I don't say that he couldn't, but he didn't. He mostly got by by being fast on his feet and, you know, agile; he could get the ball, he could outrun someone.

Paul Turner: When you were playing with Robinson, did you ever see him steal home?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: Shatford said Jackie Robinson could sure steal home. That was what Shatford said, but Judge Shatford made . . . Robinson was there before you, wasn't he?

Lynn Compton: No, no, no. I think, in fact, Robinson was a junior-college transfer. I entered UCLA in '39. I think Robinson transferred in probably in '40 or '41 as a junior-college transfer.

Paul Turner: Now, you were catcher.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: You were an All-American catcher?

Lynn Compton: No.

Paul Turner: So when people say you were All-American, that just wasn't the case.

Lynn Compton: Every college athlete that had either played baseball or football five years out of college is a former All-American, you know. *[laughing]*

No, I was the best. I was, in baseball, I was All-Conference catcher one year, but not All-American. They didn't even have an All-American baseball team in those days.

(02:00:07)

Paul Turner: 1942. You're playing football for UCLA, and you got beat by U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School 18-7 on October 3, '42. How did you lose to the Pre-Flight School?

Lynn Compton: Well, they had Frankie Albert for a quarterback for one thing. *[laughing]* And they had a whole bunch of . . . they had a great football team. They had Joel Rich from Notre Dame was All-American guard; they had Bill Radovich that had played at USC. They had a hell of a lineup. I'll never forget Albert.

David Knight: All right. Just a second there.

Paul Turner: All right. While we were changing tape, apparently at some time you were playing Navy Pre-Flight, Frankie Albert comes out of the huddle. What did he say?

Lynn Compton: Well, he just walks up to the . . . you know, Neil's out on defense over by the ball in the middle, and I remember he walks up and looks down at me and the guy next to me, I guess, and says, "If we can't make five yards through these punks, we'd better give up." You know, he was just a cocky guy, you know, and I guess he had something to be cocky about. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Did he make the five yards?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, they beat us. I don't really know. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Let me ask you about a couple of players on the team. Burr Baldwin.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Was he an All-American?

Lynn Compton: Not in my year. He played there afterwards, too. He was a little bit . . . maybe a year, you know.

Paul Turner: Now, he was in the Army Reserve, too.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Don, what's his name? No, Jack Lescoulie.

Lynn Compton: Well, Jack was a guy from Venice High School. He and I played freshman ball together at UCLA. He and I played … there were three of us that played the guard position there. There was a guy by the name of Sparlis, Lescoulie, and myself primarily. I played both guard positions, left and right, and Sparlis played one only and Lescoulie one only, and we rotated.

But Lescoulie long suit was defense. He was great, a pretty good defensive lineman. My long suit I guess was block and line-block and offense. Sparlis, his long suit was he was the only guy on the team that could, I think, place-kick. *[laughing]* In those days it was hard to find somebody that could kick an extra point.

Paul Turner: But didn't Jack Lescoulie go on to make it in show business?

Lynn Compton: Oh, no, that's not the same guy.

Paul Turner: Not the same guy?

Lynn Compton: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. Yeah, I know who . . . you're talking about Lescoulie . . . No, Jack Lesoculie married a girl, and he was in the garment business and married a gal, a really attractive gal, from UCLA; but, no.

Paul Turner: Okay, what about Bob Waterfield?

Lynn Compton: Well, of course Waterfield was one of the all-time great quarterbacks in football and a great all-around athlete; there was nothing he couldn't do well.

Paul Turner: Did he ever marry anybody famous?

Lynn Compton: Well, he married Jane Russell, the actress.

Paul Turner: Oh, okay.

Lynn Compton: In fact, they went to Van Nuys High School together.

Paul Turner: Oh, really?

Lynn Compton: And another guy I haven't mentioned here because you didn't ask—maybe you don't even know who he is—but a guy who's still a very close friend of Jane's today and was close friends with Bob and Jane, a guy by the name of Jack Singlaub. Do you know . . . does that name mean anything to you?

Paul Turner: Well, are you talking about the former general?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: General John Singlaub. Well, I've met him.

Lynn Compton: Oh, have you?

Paul Turner: I met him, yes.

Lynn Compton: One of the founders of the CIA.

Paul Turner: Singlaub was . . . if I'm thinking of the same guy, he eventually was a four-star general, am I right?

Lynn Compton: Two-star.

Paul Turner: Okay, you know, was it his son was the one who was fired by Carter?

Lynn Compton: No, it was him.

Paul Turner: It was him who was fired by President Carter, because he said that the withdrawal of American troops from the sub-peninsula in Korea would lead to war.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: President Carter had wanted and was unsuccessful with his initiative . . .

Lynn Compton: Right.

Paul Turner: . . . and wanted to withdraw the troops.

Lynn Compton: That's right.

Paul Turner: I met that man. See . . . I realize this is your oral history.

Singlaub also ran the Special Operations Group, SOG—not Special Operations; Studies and Observations Group, I'm sorry, I got it wrong—in Vietnam and was one of the . . . resulted in the rescue of prisoners of war. Singlaub is a . . . and, you know, I think as general it's not his role to contradict the Commander in Chief; I think he was wrong in that regard. But as a general, as a leader who got infantrymen to behave bravely and serve their country, he is one of the great unsung heroes of American military history. And the reason is, is because a lot of the stuff he did was special operations; he's just not going to talk about it. That's what I think about Singlaub. So Singlaub knew—

(02:05:54)

Lynn Compton: Well, Singlaub was a . . . he was in our ROTC class. He was our number-one cadet graduate. And we went down to Fort Benning together; then he and I ended up in the same unit for a while, the 515th Parachute Infantry. And while we were at Camp Mackall, I had went on detached service to Edgewood Arsenal, and when I came back he was gone. And I said, "What happened to Singlaub?" And they said, "Well, the OSS came through and recruited him, and he joined the OSS."

Paul Turner: Right, right.

Lynn Compton: So I hadn't seen Singlaub since that day until last November. I went back to Washington to a veteran's big do that they had back there where they had Jimmy Doolittle's crew. And they had a lot of things for veterans there, and Singlaub was there and had a program of his own, you know, a panel of his own where he talked about his experiences.

Paul Turner: Did he talk about the Son Tay raid?

Lynn Compton: I can't remember all the details; but I got to see him again, and he and his wife and I went out to dinner and we rehashed UCLA days. *[laughing]* He told me he's still in contact with Jane Russell and sees her quite often, and they were very good friends.

Paul Turner: Let me take you to December 12, 1942, in the Coliseum, playing SC. UCLA has never beaten SC.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: You beat them.

Lynn Compton: Right.

Paul Turner: Was there an enormous sense of elation and achievement? Tell me what it was like once you realized, "We got 'em." Or did you see it that way?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we felt great about it, you know, being the first team to ever pull it off. And of course it meant not only the win, that; but it meant we were going to the Rose Bowl. So it was a big deal for us, yeah.

Paul Turner: Was there the sense of crosstown rivalry that exists now?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah, there was. There was considerable rivalry, yeah. Actually, although I tell people sometimes that from my own standpoint, while it's a rivalry and you loved to win and beat them because they were so damn good for years and had such a great history, I never had the animosity or personal dislike of the SC players that I did of the guys from Berkeley.

Well, I'll tell you about that. SC had class, you know. I mean, and when you beat them, you beat a damn good team and, you know, when you got beat, you knew you were beaten by a good team. And they had a certain amount of class.

We'd go up to Berkeley, and they'd do chicken things, like somebody would go in the locker room and take all your street clothes and tie them in knots and throw them on the floor, or they'd turn off the hot water in the showers. And, you know, their rooting section was low-class chicken stuff. I'd rather beat Cal than SC, you know. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: *[Laughing]* On January 1, 1943, your last college football game, did you have any inkling that you'd ever be a lawyer or a judge?

Lynn Compton: No.

(02:10:02)

Paul Turner: Now, in your last football game, you guys got beat by Georgia. What went wrong?

Lynn Compton: Well, to start with, they had a darn good football team. They had two All-American ball carriers, Sinkwich and Trippi. Although Sinkwich was kind of banged up with a broken jaw; he had a big mask on. But they were a well-coached team and a good team; and Waterfield, just like so many of those guys, he just had an off day. Every pass he threw was maybe just a foot too far, you know, that kind of thing. We just couldn't get on track. And the biggest thing that I came away with was the fact that it was the first time in our history that any of us had run against a team that did anything on defense that was tricky or unusual. I mean, we were used to set linemen on defense, either five or six. They all came straight ahead; they were all spaced the same, and all our blocking assignments were based on that spacing and so on.

We had a man in motion; we had an unbalanced line right and left with a man in motion going to the weak side, and whenever we'd do that, they'd slant their defense, and the lineman instead of coming straight ahead would go sideways like this, and they were screwing up our blocking assignment. So nothing worked for us that day. That's just one of those things.

Paul Turner: When did you go in the Army? You were in the Army Reserve.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Tell me about your training.

Lynn Compton: Well, I took the two years ROTC that was required, and then I opted for the two upper-division years, and so I did four years in the ROTC at UCLA. I might mention . . . I don't know if this rings a bell for you or not. Do you remember a judge by the name of Tom Cunningham, superior court judge?

Paul Turner: I don't. I don't.

Lynn Compton: He left the bench and became chief counsel for the Regents at the University of California after, when he left the superior court. He was one of the PMS&Ts at UCLA at the time. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: What is a PMS&T?

Lynn Compton: Professor of Military Science and Tactics. He was a major at the time, Major Cunningham.

Paul Turner: Okay.

Lynn Compton: He was one of my instructors. But anyway, I took the four years; but one of the requirements of getting the commission was that you had to go to a three-month summer camp program, which usually was, you know, like maybe in your junior year, you'd go do this three months at a regular Army base.

Well, of course when Pearl Harbor hit in ’41, all of the bases suddenly were on a wartime footing, and they weren’t, didn’t have the time to screw around with a bunch of college kids, you know. *[laughing]* They were getting ready to fight a war. So they canceled this summer camp program, so that when we got to the end of the four years, we still didn’t have this requirement; so they sent us to the regular OCS, three months OCS at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Paul Turner: Now, what would be a typical day in OCS? What time would you get up?

Lynn Compton: Obviously early, like 6:00, you know, that kind of thing. You had to fall out, do all your things, get your uniform on, get the bed made and everything, and then fall out for breakfast; and it was a really typical military regime.

Paul Turner: Did they have tactical officers?

Lynn Compton: Did they have what?

Paul Turner: Tactical officers, people yelling at you?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, well, they didn't do a lot of yelling; but we had a lieutenant that was in charge of our group, Lieutenant Barbanell. I'll never forget him. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: And did you know you were going infantry when you were at OCS?

Lynn Compton: Oh, yes. We knew that.

Paul Turner: Was everybody going infantry? Was that the deal?

Lynn Compton: Well, yeah. OCS, Benning, is *the* infantry school, you know.

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: That's what they call it, yeah.

Paul Turner: And you graduated from OCS.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, right.

Paul Turner: Then what'd you do?

(02:15:02)

Lynn Compton: Here again, baseball comes into play. Apparently, somebody found out that I had played baseball. Most of the guys that got out of that class were assigned to these replacement depots all around the country like Camp Robertson, you know, and were shipping out with units. I got assigned right back at Benning to the 176th Infantry, which was a Virginia National Guard outfit, and they were the demonstration troops for the infantry school; that is, if OCS is showing a platoon an attack, they'd have the platoon out there, you know, demonstrating.

But me, I get assigned to them; but I don't have any duties except to play baseball. They got a league going there in a field, and they play night ball and weekend ball on the main post there at Benning. And so that's my only job. I get up in the morning and have breakfast and go to the officers club and hang around, and get ready to play ball that night or something, you know.

Paul Turner: Did General George C. Marshall know this was going on?

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't know if he did or not. *[laughing]* But I used to write my mother and I'd say, "Don't tell anybody what I'm doing; there's a war going on." *[laughing]*

So that's how I got in the paratroop league. Because this colonel, if you put in for a transfer and said, "Yeah, I want to be transferred to an outfit going overseas," if you were a jock, he wouldn't let you do it. He would negate the endorsement, you know, a negative endorsement. So I found out the only way you could get out of this deal was to either go to flight training or paratroop. Well, flight training was a year long at that time, and I thought the war was going to be over in a year and I was afraid I was going to miss it; and here I was sitting there playing ball. So the paratroops seemed like the ideal thing for me; so I put in for the paratroops and got transferred.

Paul Turner: How long was jump school?

Lynn Compton: A month.

Paul Turner: And what would be a typical day in jump school? Get up and fall out at what time?

Lynn Compton: Well, it's the same; no matter where you go in the Army, it's the same early fallout, shave and all that, you know. And the jump school had four stages to it. The first stage was nothing but a full day of physical exercise, from running to calisthenics to hand-to-hand, you know, the whole thing for a week. Did I say a month? A week.

Paul Turner: A week, one week. No, you said one week.

Lynn Compton: Second stage was what they call a mock tower. You jump out of a tower about 30 feet high in a harness on a cable, and you ride down this flat cable.

Paul Turner: I'm not afraid to say . . . I was not Airborne; but I did go back to the jump school. I'm not afraid to say that when I got in the door to do that, I had tears coming out of my eyes. I'm not afraid to admit that that's what happened.

Lynn Compton: Was that the jump, the mock tower?

Paul Turner: Yeah, it's 32 feet now.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: There were actual tears in my eyes, and it was one of the greatest rides I ever had. Once you get out of the door, it felt great.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: But anyway, like I said, I didn't go to Airborne; but I did go back to Benning and did that.

Lynn Compton: Okay.

Paul Turner: Tears, actual tears coming down my face. Anyway, so then after you do the 32-foot tower or 30-foot tower, then what do you do?

Lynn Compton: The big towers, where they take you up with the chute fully opened, and it's like going to the county fair or something and you ride down in these chutes. And then the fourth stage is live jumps out of the airplane.

Paul Turner: And what kind of airplanes did you jump out of?

Lynn Compton: C-47s.

Paul Turner: Now, your jumps, did you jump with weapons, or did you have what they today call a fun jump and just have a chute on a reserve?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, as far as I recall in school, it was just a reserve chute, yeah.

Paul Turner: And so now you're Airborne, you've got the wings.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: You've got the hat that's got the parachute on it.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: What happened then?

Lynn Compton: Well, that's when I was assigned to the 515 in what they call the frying-pan area at Fort Benning, and that's where Singlaub was also assigned. And then while I was with them, we got transferred to Camp Mackall. They eventually became part of the 17th Airborne, which was up at Bastogne alongside of us. And the men made a jump later into Germany behind the Siegfried Line.

Paul Turner: And that's the jump that's portrayed in the film *Band of Brothers* that then-Captain Nixon went on? Is that the—

Lynn Compton: No; oh, yeah, yeah, that would be the one.

Paul Turner: And Captain Nixon had three, what, three combat jumps? He had three combat jumps.

Lynn Compton: Well, I guess. Nixon was not one of my favorite people. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Well, he seemed to have a drinking problem.

Lynn Compton: Well, more than that, he was just a . . . if you wanna know. *[laughing]*

(02:20:48)

Paul Turner: Do you think he was accurately portrayed in the film, or did they—

Lynn Compton: Pretty much, yeah. He was sullen, you know, just not a likable guy at all. He took a particular dislike of me for some reason.

Paul Turner: Well, you know, if you listen to General MacArthur's speech, "Duty, honor, country," and what it means to an be an officer and a gentleman . . . and the phrase "gentleman" there is not gender, he may made that gender-specific, but it's not. Today, we'd view it as a gentleman being a woman also who has the characteristics of an Army officer. Nixon never had that. The guy was a drunk. And he stayed in staff jobs, because really, you didn't need him leading men in war. That's my view.

Lynn Compton: Well, I'll tell you what he did. Am I taking too much time here?

Paul Turner: No. No, no.

Lynn Compton: After Normandy, we're back in Aldbourne, we're sitting around; and somehow, I don't know how, because he's on the battalion staff . . .

Paul Turner: Right.

Lynn Compton: . . . and, you know, that's a mile away from a platoon leader normally in a rifle company, you know, because battalion staff is up the line.

So anyway, I'm sitting there outdoors in this little town and he's there and we're talking, and I can't tell you how it came about. And just gratuitously, out of the clear blue, he said, "You know, I got no damn use for you jocks." And I said, "Okay," you know. *[laughing]* And he said, "You know, you're a bunch of jerks." He said, "When I was in college, I had a girlfriend and we used to party a lot, and you're out sweating and practicing." And I said, "Well, you know, everybody's doing his own thing, you know." And so then he said, "You know what I'm going to do with you?" And he really had no direct control; he was a staff man at the battalion headquarters.

Paul Turner: I believe he worked . . . he was the Assistant S2 or was the S2.

Lynn Compton: Yes, he was S2 at the time. But anyway, he says, "I'm going to make you the battalion physical-fitness officer." And I said, "Okay." He says, "Every morning I want you to have this whole battalion out on the road; I want you on an hour's run." And I said, "Fine." So out comes the order—over the battalion commander's signature *[laughing]*—that Compton was appointed so on and so forth. Down at the bottom it said, "Uniform of the day: Enlisted men, T-shirts, jump pants and boots; officers"—and there's just one—"ODs and a necktie." So I'm out there with a wool shirt and a necktie on, sweating with these guys in all their T-shirts on. *[laughing]* I mean, now that's Nixon. It's just, you know, chicken stuff like that, and that's why I say I just never liked the guy.

Paul Turner: When'd you get to the first of the 506?

Lynn Compton: When?

Paul Turner: When?

Lynn Compton: It was early December of '43. I don't remember the exact date.

Paul Turner: Was that in England or—

Lynn Compton: England, yeah. They were already in England.

Paul Turner: At the beginning of the book *Band of Brothers*, I'd like you to just give me a read on this:

"The men of Easy Company, 506 Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, U.S. Army, came from different backgrounds, different parts of the country. There were farmers and coal miners, mountain men and sons of the Deep South. Some were desperately poor, others from the middle class. One came from Harvard, one from Yale, a couple from UCLA. Only one was from the old Army, only a few came from the National Guard or the Reserves. They were citizen soldiers."

(02:25:14)

That describe accurately what was going on, in your view?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, I'd say that's pretty good; yeah, that's . . . I mean, each thing is true, yeah. They ran the gamut and so forth.

Paul Turner: After the war, most of them went back to being citizens, right?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, you know, once—

Paul Turner: They got out of the Army.

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah; yeah, most of them. There were some other guys that were reservists, like Bob Brewer was an ROTC guy like myself, and he stayed in and went in the CIA. He was from California; in fact, he was from Los Angeles. He went to a military school out in the Valley run by an Episcopal church. I don't remember what the name of it is.

Paul Turner: I think it was Lieutenant Matheson who was from UCLA. Did you --

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah, it was Salve Matheson. Whitey Matheson, who was Sal's brother, was a center on the football team. That's how I knew Whitey Matheson. But Sal Matheson was an ROTC graduate, and he had gone, left the campus and had gone out to and was in the paratroopers and then came back on campus while I was still at UCLA. And I was impressed with the boots and the whole thing, you know. *[laughing]* He eventually ended up on the regimental staff of 506. I think he might have been an S1 to Colonel Sink. He later claimed that he said he saw my name on some kind of a list, and that's how I got transferred into the 506, was because he had picked me off some . . . I don't know how that would work, because then I got my orders from Camp Mackall.

But anyway, that's a long answer to your question. Yes, Sal Matheson was a lieutenant at the time, but he retired a major general.

Paul Turner: In the book, Steve Ambrose quotes David Webster, and Webster writes this; and we talked about this last night. Webster was in the Headquarters Company; and when he was in the Headquarters Company he got to see the different companies. And he thought that, he said he found that, in Easy Company—today we call it Echo Company—he said that he found men who liked to talk about going to college after the war. And here's what he said about you; this is what Webster says. And this is not in quotes, so this is Ambrose's summary of what Webster says:

"He thought Lieutenant Compton, leader of the Second Platoon, a friendly and genial man who was everyone's favorite." This is what Webster says about you. "He had convinced the college-bound group that UCLA was the only place to go for an education." Is that true, or is that apocryphal or—

Lynn Compton: Well, I don't know where he got that, you know. I don't remember that I was in the business of proselytizing for UCLA at the time. *[laughing]* I probably talked favorably about my experiences at the school, you know. And I know a lot of the guys were interested in the fact that I had this Rose Bowl wristwatch, which they all wanted to look at. Like when the guys were waiting on tables in the officers' mess, one of them

would want to take it back to the kitchen and show it to one of the cooks and, you know, something like that. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Did you wear that Rose Bowl watch through—

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: You wore it all the way through Bastogne?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Do you still have it?

Lynn Compton: I probably do; it's probably in a box someplace in the home. I don't know; I haven't seen it for a long time.

Paul Turner: Now, you've hired someone to write a book—or, I'm sorry, you entered into an agreement with someone to write a book, right?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: Make sure you show that to that person.

Lynn Compton: The watch?

Paul Turner: Show him the watch.

Lynn Compton: Okay. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: I mean, they'll put that watch on the cover of the book. It's got, like, roses on it or something?

(02:30:09)

Lynn Compton: No, it was a very, very modest watch that had some very rough engraving on the back. They got them in a hurry, because they hadn't contemplated us going to the Rose Bowl, I don't think. *[laughing]* And they weren't the most impressive-looking thing. On the back they just had, "Pacific Coast Champions," you know, and so on engraved; but it was not a real fancy-looking watch.

Paul Turner: All right, D-Day, your first day you stand down, because the 5th is the day you're going to go; you stand down because of the weather. What's it like? First of all, what time did you get out to the airfield to get on the aircraft?

Lynn Compton: I don't remember. We were there more than one day. We were at that field for—I don't know, I can't remember clearly just how many days we were there. I know we were there long enough that there was a lot of horseplay going on around the camp there. And this Ray Schmidt, who was my assistant

platoon leader, and Winters got to horseplay wrestling; and Schmidt fell back on his neck and injured himself and was unable to make the jump into Normandy because of the injury he got wrestling around in the marshalling area, you know. So we were there for a while.

Paul Turner: Were you there when Eisenhower visited, President, then-General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander? Were you in the part of the field where he went?

Lynn Compton: I don't remember if I was or not. I know that famous picture, I was not in that picture; but we were close. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: So you . . . but let me ask you this. Before that jump, had you ever jumped at night?

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: And when you'd do the night jumps, did they always have you land in open fields? I would assume so.

Lynn Compton: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Paul Turner: Okay. And do you remember what time you physically got on the aircraft?

Lynn Compton: You know, it seems to me that . . . you know, as I say, this is so long ago.

Paul Turner: I know.

Lynn Compton: But my memory, it seemed to me it was still daylight. Now, I don't know how long it takes to fly from where we were in England to where we actually jumped; but I know it was dead of night when we jumped. But I have an impression that we had taken off in the daylight. That could be wrong, but I don't know.

Paul Turner: First of all, what weapon did you take? Did you take a Thompson, or did you take an M1?

Lynn Compton: I had a small -- one of those light .30-caliber carbines. It had been modified by the guys in the armored *[inaudible]* in our company. *[inaudible]* the sear on it was fired full automatic, and it had some extra-long clips that went with it. It was a pretty neat little weapon.

Paul Turner: You get up in the air. Do you know how long the flight was over till dropping?

Lynn Compton: Again, I don't know.

Paul Turner: Were you supposed to drop at 1:00 p.m.?

Lynn Compton: Well, we were supposed to land at 1:00 in the morning.

Paul Turner: And you don't remember what time you actually got down on the ground. Okay, green light goes on; stand up, hook up, shuffle the door. Where were you in the stick?

Lynn Compton: Where was I in the what?

Paul Turner: Where were you in the people coming out of the aircraft? Were you first, last, middle?

Lynn Compton: I was first.

Paul Turner: Okay. The aircraft you were on, was it taking anti-aircraft fire?

Lynn Compton: Not directly. I could see the stuff in the air, but it was not close to us. You know, I could see traces and everything, but nothing . . . I never felt threatened by it.

Paul Turner: You go out the door. There was something called a . . . is it a bizette bag?

Lynn Compton: Leg bag.

Paul Turner: Leg bag. What happened to your leg bag?

Lynn Compton: Well, it was . . . you know what it is, you know what it looks like? It's like a duffel bag on end with a pad on it, and you strap it to your leg with a couple of quick-release—they called them grommet quick-release things—and you have about 20 feet of hand line that runs from the top of the bag and then hooks to your saddle on your harness. The theory was that you'd put all your heavy stuff in this bag, and then you'd coil the rope up in your hand and you'd kick the bag out the door; and then when the chute opens, it releases and lets the bag down so that when you landed you didn't have all this heavy stuff on you. It's supposed to reduce injury, and apparently it worked pretty good for the English; but they were going out the bottom of the airplane, you know, over the tail end of the airplane.

What happened when we went out the side of the C-47, we're in the prop stream and we're getting this prop blast. When your chute comes open, you get this tremendous jolt—opening shock, they call it. Well, because these guys weren't, pilots weren't, slowing down like they were supposed to, when I went out that door I got one hell of an opening shock; it was so bad that I had one of those cups on my helmet liner, my jaw flew open and broke the strap that was holding the helmet liner on. *[laughing]* My helmet stayed on, but the inside liner thing. . . . And that bag went off my leg like it wasn't even strapped to it; it just went shhht, like that. And the rope was feeding out and burning my hand; I couldn't hold it any longer, and I just let go

and it snapped, and I haven't seen it since, you know. *[laughing]*

(02:36:43)

Paul Turner: What was in it? Was it mainly ammunition that was in the bag?

Lynn Compton: Everything: my weapon, my ammunition, my Musette bag with my rations, all my personal stuff, plus several rounds of 60-mortar ammunition. My mortar guy was on the same plane with me. He was jumping the base plate and somebody else had the tube, and then some of us took some of the ammo. So I had all that was in that bag.

When I hit the ground, I had a trench knife on my belt, a canteen, and some of those old D rations, those highly concentrated chocolate bars, in one of my pant legs. And that's what I was sent to fight the war with: chocolate bars and a knife. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: By the way, the film *The Longest Day*, was there anything in there that remotely appeared to be accurate?

Lynn Compton: I can't tell you, because I can't remember it that well. It was such a long picture, you know.

Paul Turner: It's the longest picture.

Lynn Compton: Yes, I just don't remember.

Paul Turner: Where did you land?

Lynn Compton: Somewhere as best I can reconstruct it to the south of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, roughly.

Paul Turner: And did you land . . . were you able to get your guys, your platoon, together, or were you just all stretched out?

Lynn Compton: No, the first guy we ran into, the first guy who landed in Germany was from the 82nd Airborne. We got out on the road and picked up people as we went along; but it was days before we had any semblance of a unit.

Paul Turner: The morning of the 6th or afternoon, can you walk us through what happened at Brécourt Manor?

Lynn Compton: Well, I just recall coming down the road with a group; I think by that time, I think Guarnere was with me.

Paul Turner: Did you have a weapon by then?

Lynn Compton: Yeah, oh, yeah. Well, that's the thing. I had run across a lieutenant from D Company who had broken his leg on a jump;

he was laying in a kind of a ditch alongside the road, and he had one of these Thompson submachine guns. And I asked him if he could . . . you know, I said, "I haven't got a weapon, and you don't really need one, you know, because if you get captured, they're not going to have an excuse to shoot you."

Paul Turner: So you talked him out of his gun?

Lynn Compton: Yes, so he gave me the gun. So I took it and carried it, and I change to Brécourt Manor when I come across Winters. And he's standing there with some guys by a barn and we could hear this artillery going off, and he said that some artillery pointed out in the general direction. He said, "I don't know what it is and where it's aiming; but why don't you go out there and take a look and see what you can see?"

So they set up a machine gun on the road there. And the guys were not supposed to spray over my back, and I crawled about, I don't know, 50 yards or something—Field Manual 710, you know. *[laughing]* But anyway, I get out there and I get to this hedgerow, and I peek through this hedge and I look on the other side. There's this trench there and then a trench runs down and takes a curve and it goes out to a gunner place, and there's two Germans out there stoking this cannon.

So I thought, "Well, you know, this doesn't look like too big a deal." So I thought, I'll jump through this, into this trench and I'll give it the Jimmy Cagney with the Tommy gun. *[laughing]* And so I did, and when I pulled the trigger, it goes "plunk," you know. And so I rack it back and a live round flies out, and I thought, "Well, you know, it's got a broken firing pin or something." These two Germans, they looked at me, and they don't know what the hell I'm doing. *[laughing]* And by that time Guarnere jumps in with me and he starts shooting at them, and they take off running. And I let fly with a hand grenade or two, and we got them both.

But anyway, that's Brécourt Manor as far as I'm concerned. But the rest of the day was spent creeping around in those trenches and trying to avoid a lot of small-arms fire we were taking. I never actually saw the other guns; I just saw the one, the one gun there, the one that I knew about or at least that I can remember. I have a spotty memory. I can't even remember now how it ended at Brécourt Manor and how we got to Carentan. I just . . . it's a blank. I can remember being in this trench and working our way along this trench, and then the next thing I remember is we're on high ground looking down on the town of Carentan.

(02:42:44)

Paul Turner: And that took several days.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah. So, you know, what happened in between, I don't know.

Paul Turner: After a while, you go back to England. That's where you and Lieutenant Nixon have . . . he decides you're going to leave the regiment in Petit. Market Garden; finally you jump. Dick Winters in his book and also in a book written by a journalist from Hershey indicates that once you hit the ground, a lot of equipment's coming down. Do you remember it that way?

Lynn Compton: No, I don't remember it. I'm not saying it didn't happen.

Paul Turner: It may have been just where he was.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, yeah.

Paul Turner: Eventually, you're wounded in Market Garden.

Lynn Compton: Yeah.

Paul Turner: And the people who are there said that you're wounded, and you told Roe and Malarkey and Heffron to take off, let the Germans take care of me. Did you really say that, or you just don't remember?

Lynn Compton: I don't remember saying that. Malarkey attributed stuff to me, and I'm not sure it ever happened. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: You're saying that might be a lot of Malarkey.

Lynn Compton: *[Laughing]* Well, I don't know. He's got an awfully vivid memory of a lot of stuff, I can tell you that.

Paul Turner: Is it true—because people want to know, inquiring minds want to know—that Carlton Lipton looks at you, you've been shot in the buttocks, and it had gone into the right cheek, out on to the left cheek and out, and that Carlton Lipton says, "You're the only guy I ever saw in my life that got hit with one bullet and got four holes." And you're up on a tank. And Compton growls, "If I could get off this tank, I'd kill you." Do you remember that?

Lynn Compton: Well, it's obvious that somebody's wrong, because there's only three holes, not four, or else they wouldn't have had to take me to the hospital to take the bullet out, you know. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: *[Laughing]* You know, it could be that they meant something else.

How long were you in the hospital?

Lynn Compton: I don't remember that at all. I remember I was in the hospital in Eindhoven for a short period of time, and then I was in a

hospital up, I think, in Brussels. Eventually, I moved back in Oxford, England, an American-run hospital in Oxford, and it was from there that I went back to Aldbourne. And by that time they were . . . No, wait a minute; I didn't go back to Aldbourne from there, I went to Mourmelon-le-Grand; Didn't they go back to Mourmelon-le-Grand and Reims after Market Garden?

Paul Turner: I don't know.

Lynn Compton: Yeah. Well anyway, yeah. Anyway, by the time I joined them, they were back from Holland, and I think it was, we were at Mourmelon-le-Grand.

(02:45:58)

Paul Turner: On the 15th of December 1944, the day before the Battle of the Bulge starts, what was your unit preparing to do?

Lynn Compton: We were preparing to have a football game at Rheims on Christmas Day, and I was coaching this team we had. I don't know where the hell we got the uniforms; but anyway, we had uniforms and shoes and the whole bit, and we were getting ready to play a game against another unit—I forget what unit it was now—in Rheims called the Champagne Bowl or something. And we were out practicing in a field there outside the base in the morning, I remember, and word came out that we were all to report to the headquarters, company headquarters, at noon or something like that.

Anyway, so practice broke up and we went back and got our gear together and went and reported to where we were supposed to report. They loaded us onto trucks, told us that there had been some kind of a breakthrough on the line someplace, and so that's all we knew; we just headed out.

Paul Turner: Was the movie . . . and everybody says it was just really cold, and you all didn't have proper uniforms, is that correct?

Lynn Compton: It was cold as hell. I'm not—

Paul Turner: Did you have winter clothing?

Lynn Compton: Not that I'm aware of. I don't recall; but I don't recall that that was the problem exactly, or maybe it was. I know everybody talks about that. They say we were short of ammunition and didn't have winter clothes, and I can only assume that that's right. It doesn't stick out in my mind. The things that stick out in my mind are how we got there and getting into the position; the things that happened, you know, the artillery we took and the harassing that we took from some of the, you know, listening posts. But you know, I can remember a lot of detail, like what went on in those woods; but the specific thing about

the clothing and how we kept warm, I just don't have a clear memory of it.

I remember sharing a foxhole with Guarnere; and I remember at night we'd take turns staying awake two hours and sleep two hours, you know, and we had a sound-powered telephone there and a listening post out across the road. I remember Guarnere is the kind of guy who I'd wake up, and he'd say, "Oh, Lieutenant, go on back to sleep, I'll take care of it." You know, he's that kind of a guy and—

Paul Turner: Tell me about, when did the reunions start?

Lynn Compton: Well, I'm not exactly sure when they started. I wasn't in on the first one or anything; but most of … I think the first reunion that we attended was a Division reunion; it was the 101st Airborne, which is a big, big outfit, you know, like so many things, a lot of guys, you know, angling for jobs or to be elected this or that, you know. *[laughing]* You know, you end up spending most of the time with the guys that you were close to with anyway, and so it was Guarnere's idea to break away and just start doing our own company reunions. And I remember the first one I remember going to was in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Paul Turner: A number of people who have written about it said that there was the Toccoa men—the ones who were there when it started out—had Lieutenant Sobel running the show. There was a certain something there, that the people weren't the Toccoa men. Did you see it that way?

(02:50:41)

Lynn Compton: Well, of course, I'm not sure that I would have known it as between enlisted men.

Paul Turner: Right, who was a Toccoa and who wasn't.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, no, that there was any friction or feeling about it. There was obviously a certain esprit de corps or pride that the guys that were Toccoa took in having been there and done what they did; but I don't know that they ever actually made anybody who wasn't a Toccoa feel like they were, you know, somehow not a real soldier or anything like that. I had a feeling that there was . . . that as an officer, at least, I had a certain barrier to overcome that wouldn't have been there if I'd have been at Toccoa with them, you know. I mean, I felt like they did look at me a little different than they looked at the guys that were at Toccoa with them, because they knew them better and everything. So I might've gone out of my way, I guess, to try to overcome some of that.

Paul Turner: Do you think your experience as an officer in the U.S. Army affected the way you acted as a police officer, as a deputy district attorney, as a justice in the Court of Appeal? Were there things, traits that you learned from that experience that you felt later served you well? That's the real question.

Lynn Compton: Oh, I don't know. I have a hard time relating the military experience to my civilian experience other than the police department, it being a paramilitary organization in itself. Having served in a military organization, yeah, you develop an ability to get along with tough guys and, you know, to function in an organization like that. I mean, I suppose there's some of that; but, I mean, you talk about leadership skills, I don't think I ever had any leadership skills to begin with. *[laughing]* I just felt like I was a rifleman with bars on my shoulders and I had some damn good enlisted men; and all I had to do was pass what I got from the company to them and it got done, you know. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: Well, I would submit that that is the definition of an officer and a gentleman.

The thing that impresses me in all this is you beat SC. As I told you last night, my wife and I on December 2 at the SC game, we stayed for 20 minutes afterwards, after we beat those guys, and it . . . I have to tell you, if you went back to UCLA today and they introduced you and said, "He beat SC," people would stand and cheer. And based on what they've seen in *Band of Brothers*, I'm sure they'd cheer even louder.

Buck, thanks for taking the time to talk to us. We appreciate it so much.

Lynn Compton: Well, I hope I didn't talk too much. You know, you mentioned last night about my visit to the law school. You know that I was . . . as I said, I had been looking forward to that, and I was a—

…

Paul Turner: Tell them what happened when you came to the law school; I was there.

Lynn Compton: Well, I felt like I . . . when I was invited, it was a very nice-sounding letter from the faculty or the dean of the law school saying that they want me to come there and discuss the function of the grand jury and the grand jury system. And I thought, "Well, gee, here I am," you know. I felt pretty proud of the fact that I was a chief deputy DA for all of L.A. County, and here's my alma mater; this is the first invitation I've ever had to go back to my alma mater. *[laughing]* And when I drive up out there at the law school, I see . . . first, I see a television crew or a truck, you know, and I see some guys out in front handing out leaflets. *[laughing]* And I start to walk up and I look at one of the leaflets and it says, "Come to the law school

on such-and-such a day and off the pig," you know, and all this stuff. *[laughing]*

Paul Turner: And you realized that the pig they were talking about was you.

Lynn Compton: Yeah, and it was just a horrifying experience.

Paul Turner: You know, I'll tell you what. I was in the audience, and people were accusing you of being a fascist. I don't know if you remember that. They were accusing you, you know, "You're a bunch of fascists."

Lynn Compton: Oh, yeah.

Paul Turner: And at that time I didn't know anything about World War II and your participation, and they didn't say anything. They didn't say anything about the fact that you were on the football team or anything. They didn't say anything about beating SC. And I remembered you were as calm as could be. You may not remember it; you looked at everybody, and you were taking it in. And it offended me to no end. I didn't see it as fair at all.

I thought it was, and to this day think that it affects UCLA's ability to be a better institution. There is that element there that treats people in an irresponsible and a discourteous way. But no, I remember it; that was an angry mob. I shouldn't say "mob"; that overstates it. It was an angry crowd.

Lynn Compton: Yeah. Well, one of the most vocal was a guy that was a professor there by the name of Tiger or something. You know, he used to write letters to the editor at that time. *[laughing]* So, you know, he was a real radical.

Yeah. Well, you know, I thought when I first sensed the atmosphere, I thought, maybe I should just leave. And then I thought, no, hell, I'm not going to let them get the best of me. I'm not going to cave in; I'm just going to sit here, and I'll out-sit them, you know. And so I made up my mind to do that and that no matter what they did, I was just going to keep my cool and stick to that.

Paul Turner: The utter irony of it all is they called you fascist. You had killed fascists, and people who were not fascists who fought for a fascist regime. You had friends of yours who died in your presence fighting fascism. And the utter incongruity of it once you know something about your background and about what you did during World War II was amazing.

Lynn Compton: *[Laughing]*

Paul Turner: Let me turn to the producer. Can we leave now? Dave, thanks; I appreciate it.

Buck, thanks.

Lynn Compton: Oh, okay.

Paul Turner: You and I going to get some lunch?

Lynn Compton: Uh-huh.

Duration: 178 minutes
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