

Interview with Dudley Kennedy and Lorena Sala for the Hagley Museum and Library Oral History Project by David Farber on April 2, 2004.

FARBER: It's April 2nd, 2004. We're in Alamo, California. This is David Farber. I'm talking with Lori Sala and she is the granddaughter of John Raskob and I am talking with Dudley Kennedy, who is married for many years now to Dolores, who was married to Robert for twenty odd years. Is that right?

SALA: Oh, no, they were married longer than that.

DF: Thirty-five years. Is that right? For thirty-five years.

LS: I actually think it was longer than that. They got married in 1936.

DF: We're going to try to share some memories.

DF: '37.

LS: '7? See, mother—they never told me the truth about anything. I'm telling you!

DF: Disregarding the fact that they never told you anything true, we'll try to get true memories down here. [laughter]

LS: Yes, they told me they got married in 1936. Why would they tell me that? Maybe they forgot.

DF: It could be. We'll have to probe that question.

LS: Yes, because it says right here on the book, 1937.

DF: Yes, that was my clue.

DK: That's what I was using.

DF: I think the way this should work is either one of you jump in or answer anything that comes to mind, though I might specifically ask one or the other a few questions.

LS: Okay.

DK: All right.

DF: So I guess one of the things I want to have you help us to remember is some of the things that you might know about stories you heard, first of all, about, Lori, your grandparents. So, did you ever get a sense from your mother, in particular, from Dolores, about her relationship with either of the Raskobs, either Skipper or John Raskob? Or Dudley, too, feel free to jump in.

LS: Well, like Dudley said earlier, yes, mother got along really well with Skipper and I think that she really admired Skipper. The few times that we were around them—I mean, I was pretty small still, so I don't remember Skipper all that well. I remember more her second husband, you know, because he was more active with us as kids. But mother got along really with Skipper, and I remember that when we'd go up to the lodge and stay up there, that mother and Skipper would like hangout in the kitchen, you know, and they'd disappear. Papa Jack would have to amuse us, and I don't know where daddy would disappear to. He would just vanish. Well, maybe he was hanging out with Skipper, too.

DF: Do you have any idea what they would talk about? Did she ever tell you what kind of conversation she had with her mother-in-law?

LS: No.

DF: You're forgiven. You were a small child. And what with John Raskob. We've heard tales and have seen some evidence in letters that John Raskob took a real liking to Dolores. Do you know anything about that?

DK: Yes. When Dolores first went back east, as I said, for a number of months she went out on the sailboat—I think I mentioned this—

with Bob and John J. saw the boat out there in the bay and he went hollering and screaming down to get Bob back because he was worried about Dolores not having a lifebelt or not being able to swim. I guess he gave Bob holy what-for.

Going back to the kitchen, Dolores was a whiz in the kitchen and the thing, Skipper had been so busy with the children, now whether or not she did much of the cooking, I don't know because they had a group of people in the kitchen. But she and Dolores did well and she gave Dolores a number of compliments on her ability to cook. So Dolores and Skipper got along very well together.

DF: I remember, Dudley, you telling me that sometimes parties would be held by Dolores which John Raskob would attend.

DK: When she and Bob were living down in Albuquerque, New Mexico, John J. came out, theoretically to take care of some of his business out here, but actually it was to have one whale of a big party with Bob and Dolores. Dolores always made his wonderful old-fashioneds with all kinds of goodies in them, and a couple of times she had to help him up topside, but he enjoyed his parties tremendously with Bob and Dolores.

DF: Did you ever hear more details about those parties? Who would come to those parties?

DK: Well, that—I know they were familiar with Jimmy Stewart, the actor. He was on duty at the airbase down there [Douglas, AZ], so they used to have some of the fellows come in for dinner or so. So they got to know Jimmy Stewart quite well and all the people on the base just loved to come over to the Raskob's because they got such wonderful dinners. I guess they had pretty good drinks, too.

DF: So once in a while John Raskob, when he was perhaps somewhere in the west doing business, would make sure that he got to their house.

DK: Or else he made sure he had business out here because he really liked Dolores very, very much. She thought he was pretty smooth.

DF: Pretty smooth?

DK: Yes.

DF: Did she ever say anything else about him?

DK: I will not answer on the grounds it might incriminate me.

DF: Come on, you can tell us. [chuckles]

DK: No, Dolores, had never mentioned a word, you know, that anything of any irregularity might have occurred. She was a lady and he was a gentleman, I guess.

DF: But they enjoyed each other's company.

DK: Right.

DF: Lori, do you remember anything along those lines?

LS: Nope.

DF: Never heard those stories?

LS: Nope.

DF: Tell us some about, if you can, Lori in particular, about Bob's relationship with his parents. Did you get a feel for that ever?

LS: Well, I know that daddy admired his father very, very much, but daddy would tell stories and it wasn't so much as, you know, like what my father did kind of thing. You know, he didn't talk about what his dad did so much as their little private relationship occasionally. Like when Dad Raskob thought that my father was old enough and that he should be a man, he said he made him sit

down and smoke an entire cigar and drink whiskey, hoping I guess that he would get sick and then never do that stuff. You know, so he wouldn't have these bad habits. But you know, other than those kind of things, I really didn't—and I thought that was funny, that he made him smoke a whole cigar.

DF: Your sense he was fourteen years old at the time?

LS: Yes, probably, fourteen or fifteen. Yes.

DK: If I recall, Bob did not smoke.

LS: Yes, he did.

DK: He did?

LS: Yes. Well, he didn't smoke cigarettes. He smoked cigars for a very long time and then when we lived in Orinda, we had a two-story house and a basement that was kind of like daddy's den, and mother wouldn't let him smoke down there because she said that cigar smoke would come through the whole house and stink everything up. So he switched to pipes and for many, many years he smoked a pipe. I don't think he stopped smoking a pipe until we moved out to the ranch.

DK: I don't remember seeing him with a pipe.

LS: Yes, he loved his pipes. In fact, I always wondered where they went to. He had four or five, and they were very well used, you know, because you get favorites and you don't want to have to break a new one in.

DF: Lori, you were born after John Jacob passed away, so you have no direct memories. Do you get a sense that your father looked to his father for advice? Was his presence still in his life, even after he passed away?

LS: You know, that's really hard to say. I really don't know. It was almost like the sense that I got was that they raised the children up to be independent people and to make their decisions, and they sent them to college and then they said, "Okay, now you go out and prove to the world that you can be somebody," and so they did. Sure, they had connections to get, you know, jobs or whatever. In fact, we were talking about the copper mine earlier and I think that that was family owned, or had controlling interest in it at one time, and daddy ended up being a manager out there, but even then I really didn't know that much about what was going on. That was all before I was born, anyway.

So as far as like family history, I'm kind of, you know, at a loss that a lot of stuff that the other—particularly the ones on the east coast knew that I didn't know out here.

DF: How about with Skipper, did your father maintain, I don't know, an intimate relationship with his mother? Did you get a sense for that kind of relationship?

LS: No, not an intimate relationship at all. Kind of strange. It was more like she was the boss, rather than mom, you know. That's the feeling that I got, anyway, was that she was the Skipper, and all of them were her little minions. [laughs]

DF: Even when he was older?

LS: Well, she was still the boss, yes.

DF: How did that come out?

LS: You know, I don't know. It just was and so when we were little kids and we would see her, she was still the Skipper, you know, I

mean even to us. We had to behave and you didn't want to get in trouble and do something bad and have Mama Skipper mad.

DF: And would she raise her voice or was it just her—how did she maintain that?

LS: No, she wouldn't. It was just her demeanor, I think, that you just behaved and if you didn't, you didn't want to find out what happens if you didn't behave. So I guess I never misbehaved, you know, because I don't remember her ever hollering at us or punishing us for anything. So I guess we didn't get into trouble. I guess we were good little kids.

DF: And you said earlier than in general Skipper was not the kind of grandmother who sat and played on the floor with you.

LS: Absolutely not. No. She left that to Papa Jack and—

DF: What kind of things would Jack Corcoran do with you?

LS: He would take us out fishing because I guess he was good at that, and so it was very enjoyable for him and he took us out and we'd go along the creeks and see if we'd find a good spot, then he'd help us put the line in the water and try to catch fish. It was fun. It was just fun hanging out with him. It was cool, you know, and if we were good all day and we'd come back, we'd have lunch and then after lunch he'd give us a sucker. Yes, a lollipop, and they were shaped like animals, and I've never seen those again, but they were shaped like camels and elephants and stuff, and they were really good lollipops. I don't know where they were from—probably some fancy confection shop, you know, that he got them from. That was real special for the kids. I think he enjoyed them, too, though.

DF: So he was like a grandfather to you?

LS: Yes, he was more the grandfatherly type.

DF: Let me switch back to you, Dudley.

DK: Yes, sir.

DF: You got to know Bob. You were both already mature men at that time.

DK: Right.

DF: Did he ever talk to you about his family in the east? That he was a Raskob? Did that have meaning to him in a way that he conveyed to you?

DK: No, because I first met him at the trailer rally. We went on and we talked about trailers. He was interested in machinery and that sort of thing, but I have the feeling, having gone through it as a kid, that he was going to make his father appreciate him or going to "Show the world I'm going to do something." I think he had that attitude to a certain extent that he was, you know, behind the eight-ball, as far as physical appearance and that type a deal, but he wanted to do something and that's why I think he got into this business of helping the Catholic schools so much. But he never mentioned it, and there were plenty of situations.

DF: Did you know he came from a wealthy family?

DK: Well, yes, because I grew up in upstate New York and my mother came from Pennsylvania. Her family weren't quite that well-to-do and they hated Catholics and they hated the Irish. So when Al Smith ran for President, Bob's father took over his campaign and because in the Midwest the hatred of Catholics and everything else, Al Smith never had much of a chance. But Bob was

determined he was going to do something, be something to prove to his dad that he could do it.

DF: So even when you knew him, you think there was still that monkey on his back?

DK: I would say, to a certain extent.

DF: Did you get that sense?

LS: Uh-huh.

DF: Not at all?

LS: No, not really because by then, you know, Dad Raskob had already passed away, so I think maybe the monkey was gone. But I never really felt that he was trying to prove himself to anybody. We always knew early on, too, though, that we came from a very wealthy family back east. I mean, we knew about the Empire State Building and all that. That's always been heritage. That's been something we were always very, very proud of, that they managed that. That they were able to pull that off during the Depression.

DK: If I could interrupt a second. At the end of the this trailer rally, where we'd been together for three days, we were all packing up to leave and some people said, "Well, do you know who that was?" I said, "Yes." I said, "That's the Raskobs and they're quite famous," because of living in upstate New York. I said, "I don't care where they're from. She's a wonderful looking girl."

DF: You were more impressed by her.

LS: Oh, Dudley's been in love with mother forever. Even way back when. Quite the looker.

DK: She was.

DF: Tell the story, either one of you, though I think, Dudley, you told us something about it at the restaurant earlier, about Dolores sort of setting her sights on Bob, knowing who he was in this small town. Do you remember that sort of courtship story?

DK: Well, that would be hearsay, because there's absolutely no reliability to the fact—we made jokes about her mother taking her out behind the barn and saying, "You marry that guy!"

LS: Well, once they figured out who it was, though, because originally remember mother was working for that department store.

DF: Stationery store.

LS: Stationery store or whatever.

DK: Carlisle.

DF: Say it again, the name?

DK: Carlisle.

LS: Carlisle. Yes, see, now I didn't know that, but that's a whole 'nother thing again. I thought she was working at a department store, the kind that has different floors, you know, and daddy would come in and pass by where mother was, whatever section she was working in, and I guess he thought she was quite fine looking and wanted to ask her out. He kept trying to ask her out and she kept giving him the brush off. Well, she thought because a Mrs. Raskob came into the store that daddy was already married, and that he was trying to play the field, here. Come to find out, it was Uncle Jake's wife that was coming in and had an account there, as well. So she found out that daddy was the single brother, then that was okay and so then she wanted to go after him.

DK: Can I inject a bit here?

DF: Please.

DK: The way I heard it, she was at the counter and Bob came in for some stationery for the plant or for the company that he was working for. He met Dolores at the counter and then came back a few days later, bought more stationery and like, the old deal, “selling her one sheet at a time.”

LS: That’s very possible.

DK: And that’s when he asked her out, and she burst into tears and ran up to the ladies room, and the manager came up and said, “What in the world are you crying for?” She said, “He asked me to go out and he’s married,” and this is the way Dolores told it to me. He started to laugh and he said, “That’s not Bob. That’s his brother, Jake.”

LS: That’s married.

DK: “That’s married.”

LS: Yes.

DK: So finally she accepted a date to go for a ride with Bob. Of course, he was a tremendous motor fiend. It had to be the latest. Anyway, he took her for a ride and they rode, and they rode, and they rode. Not rowed, but rode, and finally she had to wee-wee and they were getting hungry and tired and she got mad. Finally, she hollered at somebody. He drove back and took her to the best restaurant in town, but she was not impressed at all on the first date. But things came on and then they got married.

DF: Now, she was not Catholic.

DK: No, not at the time, so she had to take instructions. They kept in touch with the priest for years, I guess.

DF: That was still in the small town in—

DK: Reno.

LS: They were in Reno at the time.

DF: Reno, right.

LS: Yes, because daddy was working in Virginia City at that time,
and—

DF: Close enough.

LS: Yes, and she was living in Reno.

DF: And then you said after she started her instructions in Catholicism,
but before they married, she went east?

LS: I thought it was before she got married. Now, I might be wrong,
maybe it was right after, but I thought it was before she got
married that she went back and stayed with Skipper and learned
the finer things. You know, how to give a dinner party and how
to—because she would have never have learned that the way she
grew up. I mean—part of her growing up she lived in a boxcar
kind of a set up, you know, where the foreman lives right there out
on the track, you know, and has a crew that comes in and they lay
track. So I don't think that she would have had any opportunity to
have learned all that prior, so Skipper wanted to make sure that she
was properly trained.

DF: Because you said that she came from an immigrant family, is that
right?

LS: Yes. Her father was a German that came with the railroad up
through Argentina and ended up back in—I don't know, wherever.
Washington, I think, because mother was born in Washington.

DK: Washington.

LS: Well, see, you know more than I do. Anyway, she was born in Washington, but they moved all over the place and her mom was a little Italian lady that came over straight from the old country.

DK: France.

LS: She's not French, but –and this brings up the thing that we had talked about earlier. In those days, in the '30s, in the '20s, you didn't want to be an Italian. Well, unless you happened to be with the mob, which would be cool because then you would have been all right, but if you were upper crust, you know, you didn't want to be an Italian and you certainly didn't want to be associated with longshoremen. So they concocted a story because the father being a German, you know, the name was not Italian. The last name was Hartor, that they would get rid of any of the Italian influence. So Uncle Frank had to leave and not come around anymore, and mother told everybody she was French.

DF: And this was even before she met Bob Raskob?

LS: No, this was because of daddy—it didn't have anything to do with before. Before that she was probably Italian, and then she met daddy, she became French. [laughs]

DF: This is their perception. We have no idea if the Raskobs would have cared one way or the other. We only know that they worried—

LS: That they thought that. The mother thought that. The little old Italian lady thought, "Oh, my God, you know, my daughter's got a chance at this really rich guy and he's good looking and they've got money. My daughter's going to marry this wonderful person, and if he finds out she's an Italian, he'll dump her." So, you know.

DK: Now wait a minute. Bob—I don't want to say he adored her mother, but he liked her very much and she was a little lady, you see. So one time the truck drives up in front of the Hartor house and the men get out and unload a refrigerator, one of the new ones, and wheels it in and Mrs. Hartor came out screaming, "I didn't order it! I'm not going pay for it! Take it back! I don't want it!" and Bob had driven up behind the delivery truck—

LS: Probably giggling the whole way, huh?

DK: And he said, "It's yours. It's a gift, [unclear]" and she adored Bob. Dolores mother—I can see why, but anyway he called her "Shorty," and of course, she could cook quite well, too.

LS: Well, her and the grandfather on that side, Papa—we called him Papa, they made the most wonderful raviolis and they weren't French, either. They were just the most wonderful, and I still remember that and I wish I'd had that recipe from mother because they made—ah, just to die for raviolis. He would go down in the basement in our house in Orinda, the old man you know, he'd be down there with flour all over him and mixing stuff up. He was a pretty good cook, although he had a problem cooking roasts and things like that. He would cook everything until it had absolutely no moisture left at all.

DF: Did the Raskobs senior, John Raskob, Skipper, did they ever meet, do you think, Dolores' parents?

LS: Oh, I'm sure they did. They must have at some point.

DK: At the wedding.

LS: Well, there's no pictures of them in there.

- DF: I don't know that John and Skipper were at the wedding. There's no pictures of them at the wedding. We don't know.
- LS: And there doesn't seem to be any record of that, one way or the other.
- DF: Just curious because they come from such different worlds.
- LS: Kind of interesting. Yes, but I would have-
- DF: But you never heard a story about that?
- LS: No, but I would have thought that they would have met them at some point because daddy adored my mom's parents. In fact, they lived with them for a while in Orinda.
- DF: Why did he adore them, do you know?
- LS: I think they were just kind of down to earth kind of people, you know.
- DK: Mr. Hartor loved to go gardening, which he'd never had a chance to do on the railroad, so he had a garden right there in Orinda. That I don't remember too much about.
- LS: I don't either, really, because I think that was kind of before, you know, before us. Before me and my sister.
- DK: But evidently, when Bob went to dinner at Dolores' home before they were married, I guess Dolores' mother was quite a cook. So Bob fell in love with the cooking and also the short, cute little older woman, and Bob just, you know, was sort of patronizing and would pat her on the head and call her "Shorty." He liked her very much.
- LS: She was very tiny.
- DF: You told me some funny stories earlier about the bootlegging days and Prohibition. Now, these are secondhand stories.

LS: Yes, it's all hearsay, of course.

DF: What the heck.

LS: And some of it I've read in other places that doesn't have anything to do with the Raskobs per se, but in the history of Lucky Luciano, John Raskob is mentioned as coming to Luciano's office or place of business, wherever that might have been, and doing some sort of wheeling and dealing. The gist of the story and my understanding of it, was that Luciano was putting up money to back Al Smith. As well as, there was the exchange of alcohol going on because there was no place to get really good whiskey, unless you knew somebody, and they were bringing in Canadian whiskey.

DK: I was going to get you that gallon bottle with the label still on it.

DF: Okay, I want to see that. We can do that later, if you can wait a little bit.

LS: Yes, I want to see the label, too, because I don't think I've ever seen the label.

DF: So you know something about this story, too, that they got this old bootleg whiskey?

DK: Me?

DF: Yes.

DK: No. All I know is—

LS: He's tasted it. He's tasted it, but that's where it came from.

DF: So Bob got this through his dad?

LS: Through his dad. I guess, I'm assuming the other family members each got X amount of gallons. According to mother, it was divvied up.

- DF: Well, one story we heard actually from Pete is that your grandfather, when he knew Prohibition was going to happen, bought a distillery in Kentucky so he could get the whiskey.
- LS: Oh, that was good.
- DF: And that's why I want to see this bottle later, because we saw Pete also has a bottle from his father and I wonder if it's going to be the same whiskey.
- LS: I'm sure it will be the same whiskey.
- DF: So, John, rather than having to go to Lucky Luciano, you know, if you've got some connections, sometimes you can do better. He literally bought a distillery and it was fine Kentucky bourbon. We'll have to check this bottle out later.
- DK: Well, one of the reasons we got it in these gallon jugs, I guess they bought it—I won't say they had fifty-five gallon drums in those days, but I guess they had a barrel or so.
- LS: Barrels of it, yes.
- DK: Yes, and so each of the children got eighteen gallons, after John J. died.
- DF: Oh, this is from his cellar?
- DK: Yes.
- DF: So in 1950 there was still lots and lots of Kentucky bourbon.
- LS: Yes.
- DF: Or Canadian whiskey, we're not sure which one.
- LS: Well, I think that this probably is the Kentucky whiskey, myself, I think. Good Kentucky bourbon.
- DK: That's exactly what's on the label.

- LS: But I'm thinking that somewhere along for the Manhattan apartment, there was also some Canadian whiskey that was brought in.
- DF: Yes, he might have had that bourbon but we know for a fact also because I've seen a funny letter between Walter Chrysler and John Raskob that the two of them had cellars full of liquor of all kinds. Not just bourbon, I mean, everything.
- LS: Well, yes, because you want to be well-stocked. You know, he wouldn't want to be dry because I mean they had their men's parties and the cigars and the bourbon and all that stuff going on. But I thought that that was cute that my mother's mother thought that they wouldn't like Italians, but yet on the other hand, Dad Raskob was dealing with Lucky Luciano, which I don't know. I just think that's a hoot.
- DF: That was a great story.
- LS: And it is in the biography of Lucky Luciano, so I would assume that—
- DF: And that's where you know it from? You never heard a story from your mother or father?
- LS: I didn't hear it from mother and I—you know, I'm saying daddy told us something a long time ago, but I just can't remember exactly what he said. But there was something to that effect, but he never named names, and then I found it in that book and I thought that was funny.
- DF: Do you know the reasons why your father ended up in the west?
- DK: Yes.
- LS: Wasn't it for the mines?

DF: Well, it had to be earlier than that, right, because we know by 1937 he's in Reno.

DK: No, the war came when he met Dolores in 1930 whatever it was in Reno. Then they dated and everything else and they got married in '37 and they went to live in Douglas, Arizona, 1940-41.

LS: But he was out here prior to that. What he wants to know is how come daddy was out here in the west?

DF: Yes, what brought him here.

LS: And I think he came out because of the mine in Virginia City.

DK: Well, yes. He and his brother were sent out by papa.

LS: Yes, to take care of—

DK: To check the mines to see if they were worth keeping.

LS: And make sure that they were—you know, and then they were charge of running them and so-forth.

DK: So they were in capacity of running these mines out here. He had gold mines in Arizona, New Mexico.

LS: And the silver mine at Virginia City.

DK: In old Mexico, this is where Dolores was in her prime. I don't know whether we mentioned this, but when she was a little girl and they were working on the railroad, her dad was a track superintendent of construction, or whatever the title was, and they say, "Hartor, take your crew and go out there Blinko, 120 miles from somewhere, and they furnished him with a rail car to live in. Her dad and mother and Dolores and the kids got in the car and drove out and that's where they stayed until they finished that section of track. The only kids Dolores had to play with were the Mexican children from the workers, and she came into her mother

and said, “Mother, they won’t learn English. I’ll have to learn Spanish,” she learned perfect Mexican Spanish from the children. So as time went by, the mother would tell the kid, “Go and see and find what they do with their babies,” so the kid would come to Dolores and Dolores would go to her mother, get the recipe and give it to the kid, take it back. So she was a go-between, but she spoke perfect Mexican Spanish, so when Bob had to go into Mexico, she was able to help him, speaking the language.

DF: They were in Mexico for the same reason, looking after mining interests?

DK: Then they got interested in helping Father Wasson and they’d go to Mexico to help the orphans down there.

DF: This is Bob and Dolores.

DK: Bob and Dolores.

DF: Charity work.

LS: Yes, that was much later on. That was when we were kids.

DF: Late ‘50s and ‘60s.

LS: That would be in the ‘60s, yes.

DK: After ‘37 they were still down at Douglas, Arizona then when the war came up, Bob joined the Air Force and got a job in the, not the quartermaster corps, but the motorpool end of it.

DF: Where was he stationed?

DK: He was stationed in San Diego, and where else was he stationed? I think on the west coast.

DF: Stayed in California. So did he volunteer?

DK: I believe he did, but that I don’t know. I’m pretty sure he did.

LS: Oh, I’m sure he volunteered, yes.

- DF: Because he was already older.
- DK: Right. See, the reason he couldn't get in the Air Corps [unclear] was his eye problems.
- DF: So he wanted to fly, do you think?
- LS: Probably. You know, with the gadgetry that he liked and stuff, yes, but he wore very, very thick glasses.
- DK: We all wanted to fly until they—
- LS: They wouldn't let you. If you wore thick glasses, you couldn't fly. His eyesight was really terrible, so he was in charge of the motor pool, which he liked.
- DK: He knew automobiles.
- LS: Yes, he liked to play with those, too. Of course, that was a novelty still in the '30s. I mean that wasn't, you know—mother said that she always knew when it was him coming home she'd look out the window and he'd be coming down the street and she could see his car coming because it had lights all over it. He had gadgets and, you know, extra lights put on. Probably fog lamps of the day, whatever, you know, and running lights on the running boards and just kind of duded it up.
- DF: Most tricked out car in California at the time.
- LS: Yes.
- DF: Did he maintain an allegiance for General Motors cars?
- LS: Absolutely. We still do.
- DK: I've still got a Buick in the garage.
- LS: Yes, I won't drive anything but a Chevy. Oh, I did for awhile. I had a Lincoln. Shame on me, but at least it was an American car.

But, no, I'm back to driving Chevys again. So, yes, we have all General Motors and thankfully my husband is the same way.

DF: Let me go back again to your father coming out west. His father seemingly having sent him to manage the mines with his brother, look after various business interests. Did he continue to go back east? Did he and your mother go back east? Did they—

LS: Well, for visits and things.

DF: That's what I mean.

LS: But they didn't go back to live. They never owned a house back east that I'm aware of.

DF: One of the things that I'm sort of feeling my way into is that there seems to be a little bit of a split, sort of the west coast part of the family and the east coast family. Did you ever have any sense of there being sort of two wings to the Raskob family?

LS: Yes, but I really can't define it for you. But, yes, it seems like, because Aunt Marcy.

DK: Yes.

LS: Aunt Marcy married a Texas rancher and they moved to Oregon, and that was the west coast. Then Uncle Ben moved out to Albuquerque, and it seemed like they were the ones that were doing kind of the odd things. You know, like being in mining or whatever, and Aunt Marcy marrying a rancher, where the ones back east were the doctors and lawyers.

DF: So you were aware of that, even as a kid, not a three year old, but a twelve year old?

LS: Yes, kind of, but I don't think it really mattered. You know, I don't think it mattered. Uncle Jake lived out here then, too, with—

Minerva for a while out here. I never really got the whole connection of that figured out, but they'd have the meetings out here, the Foundation meetings out here and daddy would be in charge of setting up the restaurants and making sure everything went smoothly.

DF: Did his Catholic faith and your mother's adopted Catholic faith play a real role in their lives?

LS: Oh, definitely. Definitely.

DF: How so?

LS: Charity-wise. I mean they really—well, daddy loved kids. He just adored children and so anything that he could do that he thought was helping children in any form, he would pursue that. So there was a lot of things that went on as I was growing up that I got to see and then some things that he did on the sly that I didn't even know about until later. One was at Christmastime he used to take just a car full of presents over to an orphanage in Oakland, and I never knew anything about it. He took me finally when I was older. He took me one time with him to deliver the Christmas presents. As far as ongoing things, through the Foundation, through the Raskob Foundation he got the Reading Center started up at Holy Names College here in Oakland.

DK: Dyslexic treatment.

LS: Well, yes, but for a lot of different things, too. Medcraft's boy went there because he had a learning disability and they couldn't figure it out in school. They couldn't understand why this kid wasn't learning, you know. He was a smart, bright kid, but he just was having a terrible time in school. Well, they sent him over to

the Reading Center, he was deaf in one ear and because of alphabetically—you remember when we were kids they'd make us sit us alphabetically in class, and because of where he was alphabetically, his deaf ear was to the teacher. So they got him switched around and after that he was fine. So they taught a lot of different things there.

DF: Take a quick break now to change tapes. [tape off/on]

DF: I can't resist getting a quick shot of the famous Belmont Distillery that we think John Raskob bought right at the onset of Prohibition so he'd have his very own first-rate bourbon whiskey. And we all took a sip and it still is quite smooth.

We just finished changing tape, and now we're going to continue discussing some of the philanthropic activities.

LS: The first one that I became aware of was Holy Names College was brand new basically, over in Oakland, and it was a pretty young college at that point and daddy became involved with some of the nuns over there in putting together a request to the Raskob Foundation for a learning center for children. The Foundation approved it and they named it the Ellen K. Raskob Foundation and it was to help children who had—

DK: Dyslexia.

LS: Well, learning disabilities—

LS: Yes, but it covered a lot of things. My sister went there. She was having problems in school and they sent her to see what kind of learning problems that she might have at the time. Then I mentioned the Medcraft boy went there and they found out it was just because he was deaf in one ear. So it covered a lot of things

and a lot of children from all over Northern California were sent there to help them find a better way to learn in school.

DF: Why do you think it was that issue in particular that attracted your father?

LS: Well, I don't know if it was so much that issue, is that that's what they wanted to do. You know, he wanted to make sure that every child had the opportunity to learn, and so in this particular case kids that had reading problems and learning problems in school, you know, had this opportunity then to go to there. There were scholarships and so on and so-forth.

DK: Well, then too was the [unclear] some electronic deal or they were trying to set up a phone system, but communications inside the school and he rewired the whole thing or something.

LS: Well, he did that on several occasions. The Learning Center, the Reading Institute at Holy Names College had a language lab and so-forth, and so from that then he carried that over into St. Elizabeth's grade school in Lafayette and put in a language lab there so that they would have one. Then when I went to Carondolet High School, he put in a language lab there and they used it to teach Spanish. I never was in any of those classes, so I don't know what all went on in the lab there, but it was very interesting and he oversaw the whole thing and he had a little office at the high school while I was still in school and he liked video cameras. They had just come out with video cameras and so he tinkered with those, too, and he had a TV up in his office, a big old ugly black and white TV and he had the video and he'd tinker with it and like show different events, tape different events on this

video camera and then play them back on the TV. He'd show the nuns, "This is what the kids did," you know. He got real good with the camera equipment, and when we had our class play, which again I was not part of because that was not my bailiwick, but they had a problem. They needed a ghost to come out of the wall, and daddy figured out a way to make a ghost appear to come out of the wall, which now we know it as holograph, but back then, I don't know, he just came up with this plan and tinkered with these machines until it made this ghost come out of the wall. It was very, very cool.

So he really enjoyed being around the kids all day, and he'd stay there all day and hang out and do things, you know.

DF: He never made a living doing these kinds of things? It wasn't his professional—

LS: No, the last thing that he—

DF: But it was his gift and his talent.

LS: Yes.

DF: That it came upon.

LS: The last thing that he did that was actually his business was he owned a car dealership in Livermore, but after that most everything that he did was tinkering with electronics. He just thought electronics were just the new wave, and he was right. It's just too bad that he didn't live long enough to see some of the major inventions that came after his death, because he would have really liked some of the new stuff, digital cameras.

DK: May I interrupt a second?

DF: Please.

DK: Speaking of the Catholics, he was trying to help the nuns very much. He's in his office at the car dealership and he saw an older car parked there and these two nuns got out and he said, "Oh, good heavens." He said, "They probably want more money," see. He said, "By the time they walked out, they had a new car." He'd given them.

DF: He was very generous.

LS: Oh, very generous, yes.

DK: But the nuns just thought he walked on water.

LS: He was a pretty easy target for them, but when it came to the children, that was his big thing. He just—you know, he really enjoyed being—and not just to do stuff for the kids, he wanted to be around the kids. You know, he wanted to see them progress and to see them playing and having a good time and opening presents or whatever. He wanted to enjoy that.

DF: As a young man, before getting married, before moving out, I mean he was somewhat older than the rest of his brothers and sisters, do you know, did he speak as sort of having those kind of experiences at Archmere and Pioneer Point? You know, playing with the younger kids? Some of his siblings were sort of much younger than he was.

LS: No. No, he just talks about how they were overwhelmed because there was just a few boys and all those girls, and so you ended up learning how to do girl things. In fact, when I was in, I think my freshman year in high school, I was really struggling because one of the mandatory classes was taking home ec, to be a good little female. So I had to learn how to cook and sew, and I could not

figure out that sewing machine to save my soul. Daddy would help me do my sewing projects.

[end of Side A, tape 1]

LS: He helped me put my zipper in and he showed me how to make buttonholes. So he learned all those things from his sisters, having to help them, and all they did was give him measles four or five times. I Remember him laughing about that. Every time one of the next youngest ones would get the measles, my father would get them, too, or the mumps or whatever, you know. He got them all, multiple times.

DF: Was there a sibling that you felt he was closer to than the others?

LS: Uncle Jake. Uncle Jake. He really liked Uncle Jake. I don't know, probably—he would have probably been close with of course Uncle Ben, too, but Uncle Ben lived further away. I think he—you know, he had a good relationship with most of the sisters, too, particularly Aunt Sis and Aunt Betty. You know, when we'd go to family functions, everybody seemed to get along really well. There was never any animosity or anything like that, so I don't think that there was any kind of rivalry going on. At least not that I was aware of. Everybody got along famously. Like I say, when they still had the Foundation meetings out here on the west coast, and they would all come out here and we'd go to dinner and the last couple of times they did it, I was old enough to attend. I wouldn't go to the meetings, but I'd join everybody in the evening for dinner, and it was quite something.

DK: Speaking of restaurants, there was a very famous restaurant in San Francisco called Omar Khayyam's, which is almost as famous as

Trader Vic's, which now is gone. But many, many years ago, it was November 11th and we asked Sister Arlene Cronin to go to dinner. So we drove down and went down to San Francisco and went to Omar Khayyam's restaurant. It was this very famous restaurant for Asian, Persian food. So we walked in, sat down, waited for a table and had our drinks and things, and they brought us over to our table and it was Dolores, Sister Arlene Cronin, myself and I think Taffy was there. Anyway, so we sat there at a table, getting ready to order our dinner and here comes this big man out of the kitchen, bald as billiard ball, black suit and sat down at a little table near the kitchen door. I recognized him from his pictures, you know, and during the war Omar went all over the United States teaching mess sergeants, mess personnel how to cook for thousands of people free of charge. So he was an honorary general. So the devil got behind me and I called our waiter, I said, "Sir, could you give General Mardiken Major Kennedy's compliments." He walked over and he leaned over and George got up and walked to our table, see, and I stood up and saluted him and introduced him to Ellen Cronin, the Director of Raskob Foundation, Raskob Institute, Dolores Raskob. He said, "Raskob, they used to have their parties here when they came out to San Francisco." So he drew up a chair and joined us, had a marvelous meal and we got the baklava for dessert and all the wine. We had a rip-roaring time, but the crowning blow came, when he said, "Is there anyone here who can read?" and here's Ellen Cronin who's the head of this super reading deal for the college, see. So he gave us a book, I still have it, of his story in

America. How he came and how he built his restaurant and these recipes. It was a wonderful evening. But I'll always remember, he said, "This is where the Raskob Foundation used to have their dinner when they came to San Francisco, when they weren't at Trader Vic's."

LS: Yes, because most of the time I remember them being at Trader Vic's and then the Blue Fox for the luncheon.

DK: Right.

LS: Daddy had his favorites, you know, so that's where they went.

DF: He was the host because he knew the area.

LS: Yes, he would host the ones out here on the coast. It was kind of fun.

DF: I'm getting the sense in hearing you talk about Bob that he was a very egalitarian man, not someone who put on airs or traded on status.

LS: Oh, no, not at all.

DF: Is that a fair characterization?

LS: Oh, yes, you should have seen him out at the ranch. He had like old dungarees on, you know.

DK: He never, ever put on airs of any sort or threw his weight around. I won't say he was humble, but he was very modest.

LS: He was very modest and people didn't know he had money, for the most part. I mean, they would never guess that, just to look at him, particularly if he had the straw hat on. It had been sat on way too many times.

DF: That seems to be something valued in the family, that sense of social ease, but also a kind of democratic spirit, small D.

LS: Yes, small D.

DK: Very definitely.

LS: Yes, I think that's why he was so easy to be around for other people, too, because he didn't put on airs at all.

DK: Well, before you go we can go in the family room and we'll show you the table that Dolores carved, and in the old big house up at the ranch, we had to leave the bar. In July, she found this old Mexican woodworker. Of course, she spoke perfect Spanish, so she took carving lessons.

LS: On the sly.

DK: On the sly and she carved this whole bar. You can see the little table we have here. The bar out at the ranch house was twice as big, but it was all hand carved, and she had it set up. So Christmas Eve she brought Bob in, showed him his Christmas present and he loved the bar because he was behind it and all the people had to come up to him. He was never one to bust in and start talking. He was rather, I won't say shy, but almost reserved.

LS: He was shy. He was very shy.

DK: And it was hard for him to meet people, but behind the bar they came to him for a drink or something and boy he expanded.

LS: Yes, that was like his little kingdom, you know. It was really cool. He had all kinds of gadgets there, too.

DK: I still have some out there. But he was a remarkable person considering- one of the charities they did start, which is still working, is a trust fund, they took twenty-five thousand dollars, I believe it was, and set up a trust there where every year the money would go to Father Wasson's orphanage in Mexico. So to this day

every Christmas a check goes to Father Wasson's "Friends of our Little Brothers." [Amigos de los Ninos] So they still get their income from that trust.

LS: That was one of the big pushes they did every year and I don't know how much of it they collected from other people, but we had that motor home and daddy had it built with all this undercarriage space which back then they didn't do. Now they're doing that more for storage for other things, but he had it built with all kinds of storage space underneath and then underneath the beds on the inside, and they would load that thing as stuffed as they could get it with clothes and blankets for the little kids in Mexico, and every year they'd make a run down there with this thing just fully loaded and they could get it through the border without having to go through a bunch of rigmarole because the stuff was all hidden.

DF: The only people smuggling clothes to Mexico versus the other way.

LS: Yes. They'd take it to Father Wasson's orphanage for the children.

DK: Oh, that reminds me of the Chocolate Lady.

LS: What Chocolate Lady?

DK: Dolores. This motorbus, we went with them two years in a row down to Mexico. She went to Ghirardelli in October or November and said, "I want to take some candy to the children in Mexico. How much?" They said, "Well, it's so much a pound." She said, "Well, I want five hundred pounds," and they said, "Oh, my God!" So she finally got a hole of number one man and beat on him, hollered at him and smiled at him, and I guess they got it for twenty-five cents a pound or something. So they had least three

hundred pounds under all these boxes and things in the motor home, see. We head down to Mexico. We had our eighteen foot—no, it was a thirty-one foot—which one? No, we had the twenty-one foot trailer. So we took the trailer on our car and they had the motor home. So as we headed down, we'd park at night and Dolores would have the old-fashioned all ready and when I unhooked and got the car ready, we'd go over to the motor home and sit around for happy hour, and then we'd use the car to go different places. So we got down to Mexico City, and head for a place that was about eight miles out of town, and it's a little, tiny village, and they had an old monastery or something there which they were using for the kids. So we got down there. We went in the office and the lady said, "Dolores Raskob." And Dolores, "Don't say a word." I said, "What's the matter?" "The head of the chocolate business in Mexico is here visiting, and it's against the law to bring chocolate into Mexico." She said, "Don't say a word." So they had to get all this candy out and wrap it up in little packages for the children and so help me, the wife of the chocolate man came out because she was wrapping chocolate with all the rest of us. So next morning they had this great big huge basket just heaping with these little, you know, quarter of a pound chunks of chocolate. So they lined all the kids up, you know, all the way down to here, the big ones, the little ones, the little ones in the front, and Dolores sat there with this big tub between her legs and the kids came up and she would hand them a little wrapped up deal with a twist around it, and within ten minutes the place was jumping—here's these kids licking at it and then putting it back to

save it for tomorrow, see. From then on she was the “Chocolate Lady,” but I’ll never forget it, the smell of that chocolate in the warm weather.

DF: Maybe I can just speculate a little bit because, you know, you’re talking about orphans and actually Pete told a similar story about Skipper and sort of taking food out to the Navajo reservations and driving around. But also, John Raskob, their father some of his first charitable endeavors were with orphans and he would give a lot of money to orphanages, a root in his philanthropism. I wonder if maybe you can think, knowing these people as they did, why were orphanages significant to them? Why would they chose that cause, perhaps over other ones? This is, as I say, speculative.

DK: All I know is that Dolores, every time she saw somebody with a bassinet, she had to go over and look at it and touch the kid. She loved little kids. She’d see them on a TV show there—

LS: Other people’s little kids. [laughs]

DK: So she just liked children, yet she was very strict with the ones she had.

LS: Uh-hmm. I don’t know why. I think maybe because they felt that—first of all, their great love for little kids, particularly daddy’s was because those kids didn’t have somebody.

DK: They didn’t have anything.

LS: And so regardless of whether it was the little kids in Mexico or orphanages here, those kids didn’t have anybody, you know. They just had each other and in this case Father Wasson to look over them, and so—to them that was a bigger need than some of the other charities that they could have been helping.

DK: I think part of it this, too, is as a little girl she had to play with the Mexican kids and she saw that—

LS: Well, that's why they picked Father Wasson, I'm sure, but I mean as far as daddy's love for the children and the other schools and stuff that he helped here, was just because he wanted to see kids have every advantage. The orphanages weren't going to get any other help, particularly with Father Wasson's orphanage. But they brought in, because of their relationship with Jimmy Stewart and stuff, they started getting a lot of people involved in that. So that really did—I mean they did a lot of good with that one, and Jimmy Stewart wasn't the only one.

DK: No, what's her name?

LS: Helen Hayes.

DK: Helen Hayes is one who was very much interested.

LS: Also got very involved with that.

DF: But this is first based on your parents' interest and then—

LS: Well, and Father Wasson having been, I think, from California originally.

DF: Ah, so he had connections back in southern California.

LS: Yes, and so I think everything got tied together and it worked out really well for the orphanage ultimately.

DF: Do you have any last kind of recollections or anything else you'd like to say? Any memories?

LS: I don't know. Why don't we turn that off for a little bit and we'll chat and see if something else pops up.

DF: Okay. Thank you very much.

End of Interview