Interview with John Linehan
The Town of Chevy Chase Oral History Project
Interviewed by Stephanie Brown on January 30, 2004

STEPHANIE BROWN: This is Stephanie Brown interviewing John Linehan at 4127 Woodbine Street on January 30, 2004. Alright John, you moved to the town in—when did you move to the town?

JOHN LINEHAN: Well, we moved here on April 1, 1960.

SB: From?

JL: From Georgetown.

SB: And why did you move up to Chevy Chase?

JL: Because they were raising the rent on our apartment. And then—well, they raised it $20 from $105 to $125. But believe it or not, in those days that was a substantial increase, and we were mad because we didn't get any notice. So then we went looking for a house all over the Washington area. We looked at houses in Arlington, and in the District, and where else? Some places out here in the county. Then one time, as I recall it (Jean recalls it a little differently) we happened to come up Woodbine Street after having dinner—Sunday's midday dinner—at her parents' house, which is around the corner, and this was for sale.

Well, we took a look at it and it looked like the devil. All the walls of the hall, and the living room, and the dining room, were a sickly chartreuse in color. I may be repeating Jean's stuff, but it was such that they were having a great deal of difficulty selling it, which was too bad. There was also the dining room. Which after all, is not the largest in the world. It's not the smallest, but they had enormous Japanese furniture that was war loot we thought. We think. Yeah. We're not one to slander that family, but it was just overwhelming. In fact, they had made great improvements. Instead of the walkway going boompa, boompa, boompa, down the hillside when you're going straight down the hill, they made this very attractive curve. And the thing that appealed to me most was that the backyard was level and didn't have a blade of grass on it. I grew up in a town in Massachusetts. The house I grew up in is right up there [photograph on the wall], and I had half an acre of land and a lawn to mow. That did not appeal to me but this did. So, it was much more expensive than we felt we could afford at the time, but we made an offer. And, to make a long story short, between that and getting a low mortgage, we were able to swing it. But they had to sacrifice a lot of money. It was too bad. But they did a lot of things, like a retaining wall that had to be

replaced in about five years, and a lot of other things that they did had to be replaced. And some of it still has to be. But anyway, that's enough. As I tell people, Jean married me for adventure and moved around the corner. And that's what happened really. We were hesitant. We had to ask Jean's parents, who were a very nice couple.

SB: The Dinwoodeys.

JL: The Dinwoodeys. Yeah. Meadow Lane—If it bothered them if we moved into their territory, but no not at all. And then we asked them to look at the house and make sure that we were doing the right thing. They thought it was just a fine buy except that Jean's mother, Edith Dinwoodey, said, "John, are you sure you want to live in an old house like this?" It was built in 1922. I said, "Well, I grew up in a house that was built in 1785 and my mother's still in it." [Laughter] So touché and so forth. Anyway, that's how we came here, and we've lived happily ever after.

SB: Now tell me who were your neighbors when you first moved here.

JL: There was a family named Young, Elvira and Bob. I believe his first name was Bob. Yes. He worked for the Bureau of Standards, and they had three children. All of whom were, you know, fairly in their teens at this time. They had a summer home in Squam Lake.

SB: Where's that?

JL: Squam Lake is in New Hampshire. Not far from Lake Winnipesaukee in the lake district of New Hampshire. It's a very attractive lake. But anyway, they were there during the summer. And Grace Weppner down the street, who we immediately came to know. She was a very pleasant, charming, gregarious lady. And the lady here, Mrs. Farnsworth--

SB: The woman you bought the house from?

JL: Yeah, she was having a garden party or something. Grace said—Grace was always planting things in people's yards and so forth. She beautified the driveway here. [Chuckling] Nobody asked her to, but she was sort of born with a trowel in her hand. She said Mrs. Farnsworth told her that it was pretty drab, the backyard. She says, "Well, they'd look good over there!" Because there were some flowers about to bloom over in the Young yard.

SB: The Young yard, which was—

JL: Which is over here to the—yes, next door.

SB: To the east.

JL: So they transplanted them. Because after all the Youngs were at Squam Lake [laughing] and so they transplanted the flowers. And I don't know whether they forgot or something, but the Youngs came back earlier than usual and caught them. [Laughing] I mean, not planting the thing, but saw that part of their garden was in this yard. That was on one side.

And on the other side—Let me see. We had a family named Gilman, and they had children much younger. They had five, I think. They were all nice kids. And Buddy and Betsy were great, funny, wonderful neighbors. We're still in touch with them. They moved to California because he was with Navy League or something. So they moved the whole family out to Long Beach. But we had some very funny times. And when our children came along Betsy would go bobo down the stairs. This means you sit down on the stairs and you sort of slide all the way. Do you ever do that? Do you do that all the time? [Laughs]

SB: Not frequently.

JL: [Laughs] One time Betsy was—It was her birthday--

SB: So this is the wife?

JL: This is the wife. Buddy Gilman and Betsy Gilman. She was the daughter of Porter, of Arnold Porter. Or Paul Porter. He had been in the Roosevelt administration, I think. There's only one. She had a charming mother. They were divorced and her father had married Kathleen Winsor who wrote *Forever Amber*.

Mrs. Porter had the unfortunate habit of parking right in the middle of the driveway and going in for lunch and that kind of thing, you know. Which didn't help her relationship with me I can tell you. She was a very nice lady. But, what was that leading up to?

SB: So after your children arrived Betsy would go—it was her birthday once.

JL: Oh, her birthday, yes. Well, Buddy gave a surprise birthday party for her which included, among other people, a very important admiral, Admiral Radford. [Laughing] So she arrived in this chaotic house, [laughing] and poor Betsy. She was just ruined because all she could think of was the bathroom and the towels. [Laughs] There was a bunch of rather distinguished people there. It was really funny.

SB: She must have been horrified. She hadn't been able to clean the house.

JL: Yes, and she didn't have a happy birthday. [Laughing]

SB: Poor Buddy.

JL: Oh, I know. I'm sure he got an earful when they finished it.

SB: When the Admiral went home?

JL: Yeah.

SB: So how did sharing the driveway work then? Was it the same way?

JL: Yes it was. Aside from Mrs. Porter, who was just plain thoughtless. I mean, of course, we'd like to get the cars out and that kind of thing. But yes, it worked very well. And believe it or not all through the forty-four years, the driveway that has never had any problems. And we've always been very friendly with the neighbors. Of course, I didn't like it when Barbara Borchart—I don't know whether the Borcharts came I believe, right after the Gilmans left. So then there were the Borcharts, then the Shapiros, and then the Modlins. But I think that's all.

The Borcharts were very, very good neighbors. They had five children, and we're in touch with one of them. We've seen her in Vermont. The youngest was, well, was just a little older than our children so she was over here a lot. Her parents weren't getting along and unfortunately we didn't know that. She calls our place a refuge. Anyway, they were all nice kids.

SB: Were all the backyards fenced in when your children were growing up? Or was it more open than it is now?

JL: Yes. It was more open. But ours had a fence. But it wasn't this fence. It was—what do you call it? A wire fence.

SB: A metal or chain—

JL: Well, sort of. chain link fence, yes. It was all—Inside the fence was a ring of forsythias. It happens that I don't like forsythias, so you haven't seen any around here. I think they're all right, but when you have thirty in the back, that's a little much. Anyway, so there was no fence there—I can't remember. I just don't remember about your yard whether it was fenced. I know that it was the Shapiros who did a lot of the fencing, and put the hot tub in, and other things. But it wasn't so open that you communicated much with the people behind you. Which is too bad I think.

SB: Tell me about the other neighbors. What about your neighbors behind you?

JL: Well, that's it. You never got to know them because you had the fences. But when we had one family over there, Jack and Lois Coon was behind your house, in the white house. They had two kids. We were friendly with them. I can't remember about the house directly behind us. We finally had a delightful guy. I think they

got a divorce, but he was a—he liked to sing. I've forgotten his name. He moved to California. As so many people do. Oh, he had a non-speaking, non-singing role in a Placido Domingo production of Gian Carlo Menotti's Goya.

SB: Downtown?

JL: Oh yeah, the opera. The Washington Opera.

SB: So he was a spear carrier?

JL: Well, not that. He was Goya at one point and Placido Domingo's singing his aria, and the spotlight is on Joe Blow over here. You know, painting a picture. I said—I mean he didn't just steal the scene; He was the scene. And Placido Domingo is just singing away and nobody's paying much attention. [Chuckles] So I teased my neighbor about that. And then, along came the 1989 storm. Oh, that was quite a production.

SB: Tell me about that storm.

JL: Yeah, I will but—well, okay. Well, I'll tell you about that storm. It didn't take very long. Jean was off somewhere in one car, and twenty minutes before the storm arrived I went off to Rockville for some reception. When we came home, we couldn't get here. Really, there was a tree down out in front. The MacGlashan house was almost torn in half by another tree. Oh yeah.

SB: Two houses up the street on the other side, the MacGlashan's house.

JL: What about them?

SB: I'm just saying where that house was—is.

JL: Oh yes. Across the street from us, yes. Well, a tree went right through the roof, halfway—at about the middle of the house. Well here, we were very fortunate, because there were two kind of rotten trees that came down. One on the front lawn to the left of us, and one on the front lawn to the right of us. And it came smashing down the driveway next door, right up the driveway, and the other tree, right up the other driveway with only just a scratch on our side porch screen. That was incredible. I mean, neither one hit this house. But, we had both cars out of the carport, which was lucky. There was a hickory tree in between your garage and our carport, and it came smashing down on our carport destroying it.

SB: Now tell me about that carport. It had just been built.

JL: It had just been built by Roger Gregory who was our savior in many, many situations here over the forty years. He said, "John, I have built this to last."

SB: He had just finished building it.

JL: He had just finished building it two or three months previously. And oh, he had to turn around and rebuild it. It was just terrible. He was out there with a jack hammer, you know trying to get—the foundations of that carport are like three feet deep. Oh, poor Roger. I just couldn't—I felt terrible.

Anyway, but the fellow behind—he was just a delightful guy. He came around, he said, "John, I have your tree." [Chuckles] I'm going to make coffee tables, and all sorts of things—it's a hickory tree, you know. Very rare wood. Well the aftermath of the storm was, there was a lot of trees around here, and nobody made anything out of anything except the people who tore them apart and carried them away.

The first—oh, the Shapiros were in New York and we had their phone number up there, you know, because we always left information with one another. So I just had to explain to them what was going on and they came home in a day or so. But meanwhile, all sorts of people were in town trying to get work, They would come up to you and say, "I'll chop up your tree for $5,000." We passed on that one. Can you imagine? That's the one in our joint driveway. But the first priority was the MacGlashens. They'll have to tell you about that one because they really had a production there.

SB: Were they home?

JL: Well you know, I think not. But oh, I don't remember. As I say, when we came home we had to crawl over and under trees in order to get to the house.

SB: Where did you leave your cars? Out on [Connecticut] Avenue?

JL: Yeah. Well no. Not on the Avenue, but as close as we could get. I think I left mine down on Oak Lane and walked up the hill and under trees. It was incredible. It was very unexpected—and of course we had a refrigerator full of stuff, and of course we had no electricity. Nobody thought anything much about all this, but this outage went on for five days. By this time everything in the freezer was just totally rotten and had to be thrown out. And it was our stupidity in a way. We felt so stupid, because we could have given away the meat to friends and our children. But I wasn't able to do anything. We kept thinking it would go on any moment, but it took five days.

SB: What time of year was it?

JL: Well, it was warm. I think it was June. Then there was a big town party afterwards. By this time, 1989, the community center had been built, so we had that up there.

SB: So what kind of—it was a storm party?

JL: Yeah. It was a clean-up party. [Chuckles] Afterward everything was cleaned up. I forget. I can't remember too many of the details. But Jean, you know, was pretty active in getting all that complex built.

SB: Getting the Leland Center built?

JL The Leland Center, yes indeed. She worked very hard on it, as did a number of other people. But Jean had some very special idea that I think saved them a lot of money. Then—she was also very helpful. And she and another lady, Kate Clark down in the village, worked tirelessly to get an addition to Chevy Chase Elementary School. That was a long time—not the most recent addition, but one that was some years ago.

SB: In the ‘70s.

JL: In the ‘70s. Yeah. Anyway, the storm was a very unusual storm. Oh, what’s his name? He’s a dear man, and he’s been working for the town for forty years, and—

SB: Peyton. Mark Peyton.

JL: Mark Peyton. Yeah. Well we were kind of buddies, and—he came after the storm. We went out on our side porch, Mark and me, and he said, “Look.” And you could see where this swath of a—like a tornado had come through. In fact, it may have been a tornado. The first time I looked out off the porch, here was this woman down on Oak Lane; she was walking through her attic. The roof had gone. And there she was, you know.

It was—we didn’t have much damage, but some people—like she had to move out for several months while they repaired her house. Anyway, I hate to see the trees go. But nobody got killed, and that was—or hurt, I don’t think. I don’t know of anybody. But it was a local storm. They called it the yuppie storm because it hit rather nice neighborhoods, you know.

SB: Tell me about other neighbors on the street. You know on the other side of house, or two houses down from us, there is someone that you knew.

JL: Well there was a family there—Oh that would be next door to you—named Caroll. And this is a little house. They were not very well off. But then the Weppners, Bob and Grace Weppner.

SB: In the brick house.

JL: In the brick house. They were a very nice couple, with two grown children. One lives in New York, and I think the other is in California of course. Bob was an architect, and Grace well she was at home, as the saying goes. Gardening all over the neighborhood. [Laughs] They were a very, very nice couple.

Well, Grace died some years ago of emphysema brought on by smoking, just as Barbara Borchardt who lived in your house. Long agonizing illnesses, both of them. And then Bob lived to be eighty-eight. He had remarried his former old sister-in-law I think. Something like that. Or his brother-in-law's wife. Widow. Wonderful lady.

But then they both died, shortly one after the other. Bob first. And when she died—and I can't remember her name—there was a yard sale. Not a yard sale. Estate sale. Well we had a house full of stuff, but I was curious. And I went over there and—I don't know whether I want to tell this story. But, up in his bedroom in a closet was a coat for sale for thirty-six dollars, and I looked at it, and I tried it on. And I looked at it, and it was thirty-five percent cashmere. This is an overcoat.

SB: A greatcoat. A winter coat.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. It was lightweight. Sixty-five percent vicuna. Well obviously people had passed that by because nobody knows vicuna from, you know—

SB: Rayon.

JL: Yeah. But I do. And so that coat went home with me. And I went down, and I went to check it out. First I looked in my wallet and I had thirty-six dollars with me. I just couldn't believe it. I said, "This is kismet." So off I went with the overcoat. But I said, "I'll come back." I went down and they wanted to charge, you know, tax. So I said I'll come back with whatever it is. Two dollars and a quarter or something like that. And she says, "Oh don't bother. I'll readjust this." So off I went, without the thirty-six dollars but with the coat.

And the first I—when Jean came home and admired it—it's sort of a charcoal gray. It's a very nice coat. Still, a little frayed at the cuffs. I said well—I'm remembering a friend who just bought an expensive Burberry coat and sat on it in the restaurant. It was so precious. [Laughs] I didn't dare hang

mine up with everybody else's coat. "Jean," I said, "Let's put a patch over this." So she got a piece of silk and she sewed it on over the label so no one would give it a second thought.

It was made in Copenhagen for him, in the 1930s I think. Because I knew he was over there studying architecture. But in any case, the label is non-existent, and I can throw [it] anywhere I want to, and I leave it, and I never care—One time at the Chevy Chase Club, I was over there and the Philippine lady who was hanging up the coats said, "This is a beautiful coat." I didn't tell her what it was, but she could tell that it wasn't your ordinary wool.

SB: She knew. She probably handled a lot of nice coats.

JL: [Laughs] Yes. Probably.

SB: Now you served on the town history committee.

JL: Yes. That's the only thing I ever did with the town. I said when I—I was with the Voice of America you know, and we dealt with everything. I was the Far East news editor. I said, "Jean, you take care of the town. I'll take care of the world." [Laughs] But anyway, yes. I was on the history committee. But Bill Duvall and a number of other people are still around. Have you interviewed him?

SB: Someone is going to.

JL: Yeah. Because he's full of historic facts—He grew up here. He lived in the same house all his life I think. I think. But anyway, I was the editor of the publication. Do you know the publication?

SB: I have read the publication.

JL: Oh. You have read it. Very good.

SB: So what was that like? Putting it together?

JL: Well, I think Susan Goodman who lives up the street—is she on your committee?

SB: Yes.

JL: I don't know. I offended her somehow along the line. I think it had something to do with she made a mistake and she put the Georgian, the Georgian Architecture in the wrong century and I picked her up on it. She says, "Well I know I'm right." You know. "What do you know about history?" she said. I said, "Well I've been reading." Well it turned out I was right and she hasn't spoken to me since. Maybe that wasn't the reason. Maybe she just didn't like me, but I'm sorry she hasn't.

SB: Well it's too bad.

JL: Well otherwise it was fine you know.

SB: How did you do the research?

JL: Well I just knew.

SB: You just knew. You didn't have to do research.

JL: Well I've been studying history all my life like everybody else, and yeah. Including British history and architecture. At one time I thought I wanted to be an architect. I know a lot about old houses and what period they're in. I come from a part of world, there are a lot of old houses--some quite famous .

SB: From Danvers, Massachusetts.

JL: Danvers, Massachusetts. Which is behind the Salem drugstore. Salem, Massachusetts. Somebody told me once. Somebody from Salem. [Laughs]

SB: That if you go to Salem and you look behind the drugstore—

JL: There is Danvers. [Laughing] Danvers that had twelve thousand people. It was a wonderful town to grow up in. And I couldn't believe it when I came to Chevy Chase Maryland. I thought it was a town. It was just a blob. It was just a suburb. You know. I mean it was just—it wasn't even a—it was just a housing development. And I was shocked.

Danvers of course, the apple of my eye still, it had its own school system, police department and fire department. You know, town meetings were very important. Still are. But here it's all counties, so you never know where you are really. You're just in a tract.

And another thing that shocked me is the kids play in the street. I grew up with a yard that was a half-acre in all, and it was within a ten minute walk of the downtown. And downtown was where everything—all the action was. There were all the stores. We had four grocery stores downtown. Five, and they all delivered by the way. Just like the milkman delivered milk and the ice man delivered ice. You know, we're talking back a few years. [Chuckles]

SB: This was in the '30s? The '30s and '40s when you were growing up.

JL: Yes. And our house was very conveniently located. Still is basically. But downtown now, it's all lawyers' offices and stuff like that, and shopping. And the food is all on the outskirts of town, and malls. It is not exactly the same.

SB: Now tell me how you came to be in Washington in the first place. You grew up in Danvers, and you went to—didn't you go to Andover?

JL: No. I went through the Danvers schools, which were very good. That's because it's run by the townspeople. Then I went to Exeter for a year. I always followed

whatever my father wanted me to do. It was really true. He thought when I was five years old that I ought to be in school and not kindergarten. So he ran a petition around town suggesting that five-year-olds go to first grade. So they—it was a successful petition, and they had all of us five-year-olds take tests, a test to get into the first grade. And it was a simple test that most five-year-olds could answer, and thirty-five of us did. And we were like a pig in a python as the saying goes. We went through the whole twelve grades. Not one of us stayed back.

But by that time my father had changed his mind. He thought because I was sort of small you know, younger than my pals, less mature. He thought maybe I shouldn't go to college right away. I should have an extra year at a prep school. Well I was making the money to—and I did. I got a scholarship to Exeter, a part scholarship. And then I—the rest of the money I made up, because my father never had any money. But he was a wonderful father.

SB: What was his profession? What did he do?

JL: He worked in a leather factory. And through the Depression he didn't have any—it was hard to find work. It was really hard to find work. There was a lot of time—he was a marvelous man. There's a picture of my father and my mother at their wedding. He—well his story is very long and I won't go into that. But his own education ended in the ninth grade because his father wanted him to go to work. Which was not unusual in 1906, maybe or whatever it was. But anyway, he married a teacher who had been to college, which was rare in those days. And they bought that house. It was a lovely house really.

SB: So they bought that house in the early 1920s?

JL: About 1924. I was born in 1925. And the girl who grew up across the street told me last year, two years ago, that I was considered the miracle baby. Because my mother had bone cancer. She had had it for years, and then it was in arrest. And they had been going together, my mother and father, for years.

So then they married, and had me, and when I was a year and ten months old she died. And then my father had a choice of leaving me with her mother and family, which is a very extensive family in another part of Massachusetts, in East Walpole, or struggling along with me. So he could leave me there and then he could go back to school, but there wasn't that much—I don't know how he could have done it exactly. He was a very bright guy. But he chose to stick it out with

me. Fortunately, there was an aunt of my mother who had been a child nurse who was retired, and she came to take care of me.

SB: So she lived with you in your house?

JL: Oh yeah. Yeah. She brought me up. She was the baby of her family, so everybody in town called her Aunt Babe. [Laughs] She was very gregarious, and she was wonderful. Delightful person. She picked up all my mother's friends. Which was lots. There were lots from all over town.

SB: So, your father remarried?

JL: Well, my mother on her deathbed said, "Denny, you've got to marry again." But he didn't for seven years. And then he married a family friend who was like an aunt to me. She—just delightful. There she is there. That picture. And that's my birth mother. I had a very stable upbringing. Anyway, he thought I was too young. I was only turning just seventeen when I got out of high school. So then I went to Exeter for a year. Then I went to Harvard.

SB: Why Harvard?

JL: Well we didn't know any other place. We'd heard of such places as Princeton, Brown, and Yale. But of course that was not in the cards. [Laughs] So Harvard—I could have commuted to Harvard. It was only twenty miles away. But I didn't. And once again, my father didn't have any money, so I plugged away at different jobs. I made my way through all right. I had a wonderful time. Learned a few things. [Laughs]

SB: What did you study at Harvard? What was your major?

JL: Well, I started studying economics. I had this tutor named Herman Finer, and he despaired of me because I couldn't get it through my thick head. Herman Finer was, oh, sort of a big shot at the time. But anyway, so I switched to political science, and that's where I stayed. And I liked it. I wanted to get into international relations, and I did.

SB: So this was in—you were class of--?

JL: Of 1947. Let's see. We just had our fifty-fifth—

SB: So you started mid-war?

JL: Started in 1943. Yeah, in 1943, I was eighteen.

SB: But your eyes kept you out of the service?

JL: Yes. As a matter of fact, all of the services. And everybody wanted to go to that war and get involved. And I tried to get into the Navy, and then the Army, and

then the Merchant Marine. I quit school. I quit Harvard at the end of the second semester. I guess it would have been 1944, January, to go down and enlist in the Merchant Marine. And there was a big sign up in front of it, "No Enlistments". Yeah. They had enough people in it. So I scurried back to college.

SB: So you went back.

JL: I scurried back to college and went through it all in an accelerated program so that I was just barely twenty-one when I graduated in 1946. Meanwhile I tried to get in—I had heard that they were looking for people as diplomatic couriers in Washington. Well I had never been as far from home as Washington, though I was desperate to get to India and other places. So I came to Washington to apply for—you know to become a diplomatic courier. I figured this was helping the war effort. They were all bouncing around North Africa and so forth. And I was rejected. My mother had a cousin who she—you know, they were good friends—who was a senator from Wyoming, became an important senator.

SB: Who was it?

JL: His name was Joseph C. O'Mahony. He was a Democrat, and he was influential in keeping Roosevelt from packing the Supreme Court. Roosevelt at one point wanted to enlarge it because these old fuddy-duddies were blocking all his revolutionary New Deal proposals. So anyway, Joe O'Mahony, I knew him. And you know he'd take me to lunch in the dining room and that kind of thing. We asked him to inquire as to why they turned me down for a diplomatic courier job. There wasn't much of a physical exam, and the fact that one of my eyes doesn't work—and he said that I looked too young, and I was too young. I was nineteen you know.

SB: So this was while you were still at Harvard.

JL: Yes. That's right.

SB: So you were going to quit Harvard and go and be a diplomatic courier.

JL: And the irony of it all is the Harvard Class at our fifty-fifth reunion—no it was the Exeter reunion, and I said, "Why don't you ever come to the Harvard reunions, Ray?" And he said, "Because it's run by all these 4-Fs." Well 4-Fs were the people who were rejected, for physical reasons. Yeah, he didn't go to war. Well, the funny part of it is that he was in our Harvard class too. Because Exeter you know, at that time sent a lot to Harvard, half of the class anyway.

Well anyway, so I said, "Let me tell you something Ray. It wasn't my fault that I have only one eye that works." And I said, "Here I was working three jobs," and lots of these guys who went to Exeter came from millionaire families. I mean, one being the grand-nephew of J. P. Morgan and that kind of thing. I said, "They're sitting there in the V12, in the Elliot House and Kirkland House, taking the same classes I was and getting a free education." And I tell you the truth, these V12 people—

SB: Now wait. What's V12?

JL: Oh. V12, that was a program to make officers for the Navy. Manufacture officers for the Navy. Well, some months later my class at Harvard put out a book about people's war reminiscences. I said, "Here are these people getting a free education. And I'm sitting there slaving away at the library, and delivering newspapers," and I said, "And these V12ers just coasted right through." Well, when I was reading the reminiscences of people, guess who was a V12er? This particular guy. [Laughing]

His stepmother was again related to the Morgans and this kind of thing. [Laughing] But anyway, life is very funny. [Laughs] Not only that, but one of the guys—one of the nicest guys in our class was involved in my conversation about the V12. It was so funny. The guy was from Colorado. He was laughing. Ray was a little bit taken aback. But it was funny. He's a nice guy.

Anyway, so I got out of Harvard and I went to New York looking for work, and I got a job with the Marshall Plan. No. No. *Liberty Magazine*, which was like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Colliers*, only the third. It said reading time thirteen minutes. They put reading time in it. [Chuckling] And I ended up as the assistant to the editor, who went on to greater glory. I didn't. The magazine collapsed. I was out of work.

SB: Where did you live when you went to New York?

JL: All over the place. I mean, I've spent four years of my life in New York moving from pillar to post. I've lived in every neighborhood in New York. On Manhattan. And I think one in Brooklyn. But the first time I would go there, I was broke of course. I had just hitchhiked to California with one of my roommates. Which didn't bother his father who was Chief Justice of the West Virginia Supreme Court, but my father was very upset about it. He said, "Two weeks out of Harvard, and already a bum." [Laughs] But I went anyway. I didn't have much

money, but we had all sorts of adventures. I mean in 1946 there wasn't any—there weren't any cars on the road. There weren't any cars. [Laughs]

SB: No. It's a long way to walk.

JL: We didn't think of it. [Laughs] And to complicate things I had a hernia operation. And at those days, I was in the hospital for almost two weeks. I had a wonderful time. A guy who was—I hadn't known very well. Of course he was two or three years older in high school. That's a big deal in high school. He and I shared a room, and it was laugh after laugh. And he'd had an operation too. But when I recovered from—oh, my doctor didn't want me to go to California. He didn't want me—but he told me you can—I said, "Am I going to be well enough if I have this operation?" And he, "Oh yes John. Yes. Yes." And then he tells my father, "I don't want him to go." So it finally came to pass that we found out why he didn't want me to go. He says I'd be all right physically to go, but too many people being killed. Hitchhikers being killed. You know, and irresponsible drivers and so forth. So I went. We had a great time. A lot of adventures, but I won't go into that. [Chuckling] We're talking about the history of Chevy Chase.

SB: Well we're getting there. We're getting there.

JL: I worked for *Liberty*, and then I worked for the *New York Daily News*, and I wanted to go to Europe in the worst way. And a friend of mine says, "John, if you want to go to Europe, why don't you get a second job? Save up that money." I mean I was making peanuts at the *New York Daily News*. You know, just an apprentice type thing. But I thought that was a good idea, so I went out and got all these temporary jobs typing. And I saved up the money and went to Europe on a student ship.

It was a troop ship called—it had been. They had a whole class of them named the Marine Flasher, the Marine Tiger, this and that. I think I went on the Tiger. I did, because I got involved in the ship newspaper. We called it *The Tiger Tales* you see. And it was a tub, you know. It was a ten-day trip to Plymouth from New York. I had a wonderful time. A lot of young GI's going over there with the GI bill. Well, see I didn't have any of that stuff. Art Buchwald was one of them. He was not on that trip but he was on the next. So about the same time. Anyway, so—

SB: Then you went to Europe. You went to Europe without a job. You just went to Europe.

JL: I had saved up an extra $400. And I was required, in order to go, to have a return passage. So I had saved up for the passage. Now the passage was like $150 or $160 each way, which wasn't bad you know. But come to think of it, years later you were able to fly over to London and you don't have to go—for about the same amount of money. [Laughing] Except in those days a hundred dollars was like a thousand today. But anyway—

SB: So you landed in Plymouth.

JL: Landed in Plymouth and hitchhiked around England, and went over to Ireland and hitchhiked around Ireland. Then I decided to settle in Paris, and I went over to Paris. I wasn't there very long when I got wind of the fact that they were recruiting people for the Marshall Plan, to work for the Marshall Plan. In a clerk capacity, messengers that kind of thing. Well, I applied and I got a job with the Marshall Plan.

Of course I had to have clearance. I had to be cleared, so that would take a while. So meanwhile I went off to Rome. I wanted to see some of Italy, so I took a train to Rome, and made arrangements to go to Naples. I went to the Vatican—oh also I was a stringer for a New York paper, so I had sort of journalistic credentials. And I had already sent a couple of things about Ireland that were published. I don't know where they are now. Anyway, so I went to the Vatican and I asked them if there was a way I might see the Pope and this monsignor was very nice, and he said—this is Pope Pius XII—and he said, "Well, yes. We'll see what we can do about that. What are your plans? How long will you be in Rome?" I said, "Well, I was planning to go to Naples tomorrow and then come back in three days." I was living in a little modest pension of course, staying there. And he said, "We will try to fit our schedule to suit yours." Well, I didn't think much of it. I thought that was very nice of this nice monsignor.

So when I got back to the pension from Naples, there was all sorts of excitement because a papal messenger had come by with a big envelope full of an invitation to me to go see the Pope. I thought nothing of it. I assumed I'd be with fifty other people; you know and people clopping around. This horse and wagon--not wagon, a coach I think. I don't know. It delivered these things you know, papal messengers?

Well, I got to the Vatican and I didn't see too many people going in there. It was a rainy day. There was a young French guy also walking in about the same

time and we decided to stick together. And he had an audience with the Pope too, so to speak. You know, I mean thousands of people go to—We walked through. Papal chamberlains took us through, oh, all these beautiful corridors, with Raphael frescos, really impressive. And we came to this big audience chamber, and then a few other people trickled in, and we got to realize there aren't going to be too many people in this audience.

Pretty soon, in comes this Cardinal, all these flowing red robes, and he hugs his fistful of invitations, about eight of them I guess. He had us all spaced around this big room about ten feet apart. And he had Signor Linehan right at the top of the pack. And I wanted to be—The Frenchman and I were way down at the end of room because we wanted other people to be before us. As it turned out, as a good Catholic I was supposed to genuflect on the wrong knee—the other—and kiss the Pope's ring, and I had all these rosary beads from my family and so forth.

By golly, before I could really think about it too much, the Pope came in and turned right directly to me and started talking. And he had this Italian accent in English strangely enough. All I could think of was my barber back in Danvers. [Laughter] And here's the holy pontiff. Anyway, we had a nice conversation for about four minutes. Mostly about a very important Jesuit priest who I knew and he knew, who was later defrocked. But that was later. And he started to move on to the next person, and I said, "Oh, just a minute." [Laughs] Well the Swiss guards were just about to stab me with the halberds, you know. And the Pope turned to me and smiled and said, "I've already blessed your religious articles." [Laughter] Well, nothing daunted. Really I felt this is fantastic that John Linehan should get an audience with the Pope.

But then anyway, on we go to—it's still raining, and in the afternoon I decided I wanted to interview George Santayana if I could, the philosopher. But he didn't know me. But I, you know, I'm a writer and I wanted to write a piece about it. So I went to this hospital in Rome where he lived.

SB: He lived in a hospital?

JL: He lived in a hospital. Oh, and that was a very interesting story connected with that. During the war he didn't have any real money, and he was able to move to this hospital while his publisher in Boston fed money to an order of nuns that was in Rome and in Chicago. He made an arrangement. He had two rooms in this

hospital. It was not a—you wouldn't know it was a hospital. But these nuns with their flying headdresses were very nice.

But anyway, I walked into the place and I asked the nun if I might be able to see Mr. Santayana. And she said, "Follow me." I went down a corridor, and another corridor, and another corridor. She knocked on the door and she said, "Mr. Santayana? Mr. Santayana there's a young gentleman to see you if you would." He said, "Show him in." So here I go into this room. I didn't know I'd ever see this guy. Eighty-two years old. Little fella. Bald head. And I introduced myself, and made sure he knew immediately I'd gone to Harvard. Which is where he taught you know. He was a Harvard connection.

Well, we hit it off immediately. We spent—every time I wanted to go, I would get up to go because this man was sitting on his footstool, and I'm sitting in his chair. And I'm twenty-three and he's eighty-two. But, "No John. Stay." Well we covered the waterfront. We talked about everything under the sun for five hours. It began by my saying, "I don't know much about philosophy."

I was terrified. I didn't really expect to see him. I said, "I always thought Socrates was a fraud." He said, "Why?" I said because he trapped people into believing what he already concluded. He said, "You know I've written almost those exact words in an article I just sent to the *Atlantic Monthly*." Well we talked about everything. We've gotten away from the Town of Chevy Chase somehow.

SB: So you spent the afternoon with him.

JL: Most of the early evening. He didn't go out much. Eighty-two, I guess it was kind of rough. And so I think he was glad to see me. But we did talk about *everything*. And especially religion.

SB: Well you'd just been to see the Pope after all.

JL: [Laughs] I hadn't told him that. Anyway, he believed in—what is it? He saw beauty in theology without belief. That was it. He says—as I was leaving he says, "Well John, now that you've heard my side of the story, you should go and see the Pope." [Laughs] And I said, "Oh, Mr. Santayana you're too late. I saw the Pope this morning." [Laughs] He said, "Well you must promise to come back to Rome and see us both again."

Meanwhile, when it was towards the end of our five-hour conversation I said, "Oh my heaven. I forgot to tell you I came here to interview in hopes of being able to do a piece about you." "Oh my goodness," he said. "I've told you all

sorts of personal things that I never would have divulged if—" I said, "Well whatever I write I will send to you, and you can cut out anything you see. It's just going to be a frivolous piece anyway."

I wrote a piece about him. I sent it to him. He changed almost nothing in it. [Laughs] What he changed was little things like, "I don't have a tuxedo," he said. And he changed that to dinner clothes. He said, "You were talking with one of the Harvard wits of the 1870s." Anyway, he was—And I have his letter in a safe deposit box along with the piece as he sent it back.

I was never able to sell it until—then 1952, when I was through with Europe, I was coming home—By the way, with the Marshall Plan, once you get on it, it was not a student ship that I came back on. It was first class on the Liberté, one of the great ocean liners of the day. And the same was true going back to Europe. And that was a story too. The Queen Mary.

It was a story because my parents and I arrived at the dock, and I was under the illusion that it was leaving at noon, and I asked the stevedore, "Where can I park my car?" and he says, "Are you taking the ship buddy?" and I said, "Yeah." And he said, "You better step on it. It leaves in three minutes." Well, we stepped on it and I made it. Two stevedores dropped my stuff at the top of the gangplank, and rode the gangplank down, and the ship goes "toot, toot" and off we went to Europe, you know. But anyway, well--I'm rambling away from Chevy Chase.

SB: No, no. So you came back from—

JL: Oh yes. Well, I decided to take as long as possible to get home. And the longest journey was from Genoa on one of the Italian liners. Oh, a lot of stories about that. Never mind. I went to Genoa, and I left my card in Genoa, and took the train to Rome, because I felt that Santayana would die before I got back. I thought I would I never get back to Europe. Little did I know. But anyway, I went to the hospital, and I knocked on the door, and I asked if I could see Mr. Santayana. And she said Mr. Santayana was not receiving visitors. I said, "But I've come from Genoa to see him." And she said, "People come from all over the world to see Mr. Santayana," and she graciously shut the door in my face, so that was the end--

Then a few months later--or was it the next year? He died. And then I wrote a piece about him, which got wonderful rejections from the *New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*. But because--Each of them had a good excuse. They said that--*The*

Atlantic was expecting a piece by his nephew, and the *New Yorker* had, as I knew, had a long piece about Santayana by one of their big writers Edmund Wilson. It was understandable. So I threw the thing in a drawer and I went to a—

Later I was working for the *New York World Telegram and Sun* and I found that one of the fellows there that I got really friendly with was a philosopher, so I told him about this piece I'd written about Santayana. He said, "I'd like to read it." I said, "Well next time I'm in Massachusetts, I'll see if I can dig it out." So what I dug out was a copy of it. You know, your carbon copy. In those days you typed things carbon copy. And my dog had chewed a corner of the piece. I don't know. I had a wonderful dog. There's his picture. Poco. But then still, you could read it all. So I brought it back and I gave it to him and I thought nothing of it. And the next thing I knew, he said the *American Scholar* wants to print this. They think it's the best thing ever written about Santayana. You know the *American Scholar*? Phi Beta Kappa. Jean is Phi Beta. I was C. Gentleman's C. So they did.

SB: So they put out your piece on Santayana.

JL: Yes they did.

SB: So now you came back from Europe, and where did you go? Did you go to—?

JL: I went to New York again, because you know there was not too much going on journalistically speaking. I love Massachusetts, and I love Danvers. So I scrounged around New York and did a lot of freelance work for different magazines. And I had an agent. And I tried to sell a novel—no, some fiction. But he concluded that I was not a good fiction writer. I mean that my stories—that I was a reporter. So we finally parted ways--very nice guy.

But anyway, by this time I had got a job with the Voice of America. This time it took eight months for my clearance to go through. It was during the time of Joe McCarthy, and there was a communist under every bed. It was just a cruel time. Eight months! And I had been cleared up until '52, and this was like '54. 1954. I was cleared for top-secret work and all that, you know. But I had to do it all over again. But then I finally ended up in Washington with Voice of America.

SB: And you came to Washington in '54? '55?

JL: '56. Late '56. No. I think it was '56, February. Yep. And I met Jean the next year, and the next year we were married. It's all history. Well, we went to—I had an apartment at 1914 G Street NW. It was just two blocks from my office at that

time. At that time, it was a totally different Washington. 1914 G Street is now a part of a block long building for the World Bank. You know that. How do you know that?

SB: I get lost down there.

JL: [Laughs] Really? Oh what are you doing down there? You're supposed to be at Hillwood. But anyway, Jean had an apartment on Dumbarton Avenue in Georgetown, and I wanted her to move to my apartment because I had a wonderful view of the Washington Monument. I was up on—sixty-two steps up. She was far fewer steps up. So we moved to her apartment, and rented mine for a profit. Furnished, because she had enough furniture. But then, as I say, they tried to raise the rent on us. We beat them out.

The only thing I really miss is we had a back porch on this apartment, with wisteria climbing all over it. And it smelled so good in the springtime. Wonderful. But anyway, that was the only good thing about it. You had to park in Georgetown. Then, as it is now and is and will always be—I don't know why people live there frankly. [Laughs] But we moved out here, out to the country.

SB: Tell me your favorite story about Woodbine Street. You know, I remember once you telling me about you were going to ride a bicycle or something? Or you were going to have roller skates? Or maybe it was during a storm, but you came out your front door and fell all the way down—

JL: Oh yes. It was a slick, you know, the freezing rain, and I was in a carpool with other friends who worked at the Voice of America. And I just went blithely off the front steps, and when I picked myself up I couldn't walk on the walk; it was too slippery. So I walked on our azaleas. I finally got down to the car by hanging on the railing, you know. It was just a sheet of ice. I got in the car, and I started it but I didn't have to. All I did was take the brake off and down the hill it went. [Chuckles] I mean it was totally out of control. I was able to catch it in the yard—in the driveway of Kristen and—you know, across the street. Then I had to crawl on my hands and knees, literally. There was no way of walking. I managed to make it back to my house and call my buddies and tell them I can't get it going. It's every man for himself getting to work today. I finally did get to work, but it was not easy. It was not in the car either. It must have been a bus or something up here. That was a—that can happen. Just be careful. [Laughs]

SB: We have tape enough for one more story about Chevy Chase. Or about someone in Chevy Chase that you—

JL: Well of course Jean's parents were marvelous people, and were very well respected around town. They were both so very active in different things. I'm trying to thing of something, an anecdote related to them in Chevy Chase. They didn't mind us moving in to their territory.

As it turned out it was very nice, and for years, you know, as our children came along they'd spend a lot of time over there. Denny would be going to school and pass the house. Of course they all walked from the first grade. There was no—it was quite different. You didn't feel insecure about that. They had this wonderful rose garden over there. It was big. It was extensive. I felt that we got the roses and they got the thorns. It was not fair.

When they wanted to move, they wished that we could move in. Of course we couldn't afford that house. But furthermore, I didn't want to. All that lawn? All that upkeep. I'm what a Chinese friend of mine called a "Chinese-man-does-nothing." [Laughs] Anyway, I wish I could think of something to say about how wonderful they were. But it all depends—you know I—one time we met in Switzerland. But this has nothing to do with—

SB: So tell it.

JL: I had foster parents in Switzerland…

SB: So you met up with the Dinwoodeys in Switzerland?

JL: Oh, yes. We were traveling over in Europe. This was just after we were married. About the next June or July, Jean and I went to Europe. We got this Volkswagen, a little bug. In 1959 this was, in the summer. We got this [Volkswagen] bug in Paris. It was the first 1960 Volkswagen to be delivered in Paris where they had a big operation, and it was just perfect. Because they had a wider window in the back for one thing. And we had that car for nine years.

But anyway, we drove all over the place, and we were—as it happened, I had foster parents in Ascona, which is a lovely resort on Lago Maggiore in Switzerland, in Ticino. So we were going to visit them. These are people I got to know very well in Paris. He was a professor of history as a matter of fact. Anyway, we met.

Meanwhile Jean's father and mother and Jean's aunt—Her mother's sister was a wonderful woman. The dean of women at the University of Utah—And her

playful fifteen year old brother David—we all met in Ascona, and we had a wonderful day. But I almost killed my father-in-law. I mean, this Professor Tritsch, Dr. Tritsch was insistent—we were going up—you know, views are everything in Europe.

The first thing I notice about the apartment we're moving to, it has no view. But it has other attributes which I love. [Chuckles] But anyway, he insisted that we go to the top of the mountain where there was a churchyard. There were people in it—everybody wanted to be buried in it. They were buried in there, then other people died and they'd have to be moved. The old people moved down to the valley to another cemetery, and a little old chapel. Well anyway, so we start up there, me driving the other three—

SB: In the bug.

JL: In the bug, yeah. With Dr. Tritsch, Jean's dad Dean Dinwoodey and her brother David in the backseat. We go up this curvaceous road, and we come to a point a bridge that was just wide enough to get the buggy across. And there's a drop, a limitless drop, and as we were going—I got across the bridge and then this car is coming down the hill, which meant I had to back across the bridge. Well, you know, [laughing] I don't like to back down out of a driveway, let alone a mountain in Switzerland.

SB: [Laughing] With your father-in-law in the car.

JL: Oh! I'm thinking here I have a hundred and fifty pounds of gold in the backseat, and my brother-in-law, and my very precious foster parent. Well obviously I succeeded. I made it, but my palms were sweating. And my father-in-law says, "John, you did a beautiful job," and I really liked that

I was just thinking of the first section meetings here in Chevy Chase that I attended. Jean's father was on what was known as the Section Committee for a period after we moved here. He had been, as Jean may have told you, a warden during the war. It wasn't exactly a town because, you know, it was just a little community. The Section Committee took care of everything. We didn't have a town hall.

SB: Did you meet in people's homes, or did you meet at the school?

JL: I think they met at the school. I wasn't on it. We'd have a town meeting, you know. We'd discuss the most important issues of the day, like squirrels. Yeah. We'd have long discussions about squirrels, and what to do about them. And

finally we decided not to do anything about them, and that's the way it is now. [Laughs] Anyway, so that's it I guess.

It was a small—it was just Section 4. Section 8 and Elm Street, Lynn Drive and Oakridge Lane were not involved. They became involved at a time when there was development up on Wisconsin. As it happened I was going up—there was a nice shopping center up at the end of Leland Street at Wisconsin. On this side of Wisconsin. And I went up there to get something one day and there was a big pothole in the middle of the parking lot. So I called this friend of mine whose firm owned the whole shebang there, and I said "Jim, there's a big pothole up there in front of Wittelsey's Drug Store. It needs to be fixed." And he said, "Well you'll have to call so-and-so in Dearborn, Michigan because Ford Motor Company has just bought the whole lot." And I said, "Why?" "They're going to build a big office building."

Well it turns out of course—It's what they called the Ford Building, although I don't know whether they call it that now. This big glass monstrosity suddenly appeared. Anne Bushart, who was very active and prominent here, called it the Linehan Building because I spread the alarm to the town and the Section Committee, and she was on it. Pretty soon Section 8 and the Elm Street, Lynn Drive and Oakridge Avenue merged with Section 4 and became the Town of Chevy Chase, and it became much larger. People you should talk with, or somebody should, is the Dabrowskys. Have you ever heard of them?

SB: No.

JL: Well they don't live in the town anymore, but it is Fran and Spike Dabrowsky. They lived, for two generations, in the white farmhouse on Leland Street.

END OF INTERVIEW