

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Kristi: Today is February 23, 2008. I'm Kristi Hawthorne and I'm here with Lionel Van Deerlin at his home here in San Diego. If you could start off by telling me your name, and date of birth and where you were born.

Lionel: I can remember both my name and my date of birth! You've already given it: Lionel Van Deerlin.

Kristi: Do you have a middle name?

Lionel: Are you sure you want that? Lathrop. I always used just the letter "L". The date of birth will frost you: 1914, July 25th. That makes me a nonagenarian. It was much more fun being sexagenarian! My family came to Oceanside in 1927. My first day of school was on Valentine's Day, 1927. I would have been 12 years. You know how on Valentine's Day the kids all bring Valentines for the other kids, well, there was just absolutely no way for a kid starting school on Valentine's was going to have any valentines. But there was one girl, Jean Reekie, who was thoughtful enough. We remained in the same class right through high school. She realized that the new kid in class needed somebody to give him a Valentine.

The Grammar School, and of course it was the only grammar school, was adjacent to the high school, on the south side. We didn't have middle schools then so we went directly from grade school to high school at the end of 8th grade.

Kristi: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Lionel: Oh, indeed I do. There was a wonderful man named Jack Tenney, who was a rather feared disciplinarian. Because in those days there was nothing in the state law that would prevent modified capital punishment. No, not capital punishment, that's death! Corporal! I'm very grateful he didn't have the power of capital punishment! He was one of those people you just came to appreciate over time, his wisdom. Some kids are lucky to have teachers like that; some are not. He was one of those persons who had to find career satisfaction, because I'm sure the pay was not considerable.

It happened that later, my mother was on the school board of the grade school, when they had added additional schools in South Oceanside and one or two others, I suppose. I don't know exactly what her years of service were, but I imagine she was on the school board before Roosevelt was elected and she was still on after he died. The only interesting thing we didn't discover, until years later--I presume this is applicable because I'm sure that in order to hold any public office, including school board, one must be a United States citizen. My mother had come to this country from England at age two, her family coming to join what was already an English colony out in the San Luis Rey valley. In those days if a foreigner married an American citizen, he or she was entitled to acquiring citizenship automatically. It seems that my father, who may have shared my capacity for carelessness, failed as he should have done, to go down to the county courthouse in Los Angeles and register his marriage to Gladys, thereby making her a citizen! We didn't find out until when she was within a month of being 100 that she had never achieved citizenship. Yet, she held public office. Voted consistently! She never missed a vote! Multiple violations of the law, all because my father failed to go and register their marriage.

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Kristi: Will you tell us your parents' names?

Lionel: His name was the same as mine, very unoriginal to name your children for yourself. My mother's name was Gladys.

Kristi: Gladys Young?

Lionel: Gladys Young, yes, how clever of you. That was until she got married, of course. Since I brought up the subject of the school board and her service on the board during wartime--one incident that stands out, I was working back east already, but it's a story that seems to me will tell you a lot about public opinion during wartime, and also I think it speaks well of my mother's ability to stand up for people--They had a school janitor up there on the Home Street School, at the top of the hill. The janitor, whose name I remember, but I think I better not use because I'm sure still has progeny around, made the mistake of one morning running the flag up the flagpole upside down. This came to the attention of the local American Legion Post, who were very put out about it and thought it could only be deliberate. They came to a school board meeting and at the very least they wanted some severe punishment imposed upon this poor man. My mother just apparently read them off and told them how stupid and foolish they were. Clearly, it was a mistake; the man had intended no disrespect to the country, especially in wartime. I can see, knowing my mother's ability to give you what-for, I can picture the Legionnaires going off with their heads hanging low and sorry that they had ever raised the question! So what happens? Two weeks later, the very same thing happens again. Poor man, ran the flag upside down again! I think on that occasion my mother had to be just as hard on him as she was on the Legion!

Kristi: You said you came to Oceanside in 1927. Where were you living before you came to Oceanside?

Lionel: Long Beach. This was just as the Depression was coming on. The economy was failing. My father had a paint store in Long Beach that was not doing well. He had formerly worked for the Bank of California and he was able to get a job in the bank in Oceanside at the First National Bank. That's before there were two banks. The Bank of America came in across the street later, occupying the north[east] corner of Hill Street and Second, where the eatery named the Squirrel Inn had previously stood. There were two banks in a town which obviously needed only one bank. When the market crashed it brought The Great Depression of 1929 and the 1930s. The bank in which my father worked, the First National Bank, closed its doors, 'failed' that is, two weeks before Franklin Roosevelt took office. As you are obviously too young to remember, but some would, the day after Roosevelt took office, the first thing he did was close every bank in the country. He didn't want any more failures coming in and leaving people penniless. He found a way to save the banks, but it wasn't in time to save the Oceanside bank. So for my family, the Depression was a very real thing for two or three years. My father being in his 50's, some 15 million in the country out of work, older men were not the first to be hired.

Kristi: Where did you live in Oceanside?

Lionel: We lived on Nevada Street right at First Street. In fact, you would suppose that living two blocks from school you'd never be late. I can remember so many times, the school buses--everybody from Del Mar to San Onofre came to high school in Oceanside then. It was called

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Oceanside-Carlsbad Union High School and there were 6 to 8 school buses driven by male teachers. They'd come thundering in order in quick succession up First Street. I would frequently be almost late to school but getting there no earlier than some poor kid who might live in Olivenhain!

Kristi: What corner of First and Nevada?

Lionel: The northeast corner. It was a six-bedroom house, might have been only five-bedroom house, beautifully built. The rent was \$20 a month. As further indication of what kind of town Oceanside was, the lady who rented the house to us, as soon as the bank had closed and my father was without a job, she wrote a letter to my parents saying that she would neither expect nor accept any rent until my father was employed again. That is some kind of landlord!

Kristi: What was her name, do you remember?

Lionel: Yes, Lucy Crouch.

Kristi: Herbert Crouch's daughter?

Lionel: Yes. How clever of you to remember that! I'm sure I never met Herbert Crouch, but I do remember reading something that he had written about snow falling in Oceanside in 1880 on the beach. My goodness, you are well informed.

Kristi: Well, that's amazing; I didn't know she owned property in Oceanside.

Lionel: Her family lived in the valley, Witch Creek, which is near...well, it's east of Ramona, west of Julian, that's about the best way to describe it. The last time out there, since this last terrible fire, I noticed the house is still standing, which is nice to know.

Kristi: Who were some of the kids you walked to school with?

Lionel: Oh, except for Louise, they're pretty all gone now.

Kristi: Were there any boys your age that lived in the neighborhood?

Lionel: Well, of course. One of my very best friends was Harry Jones. We spent our entire time one Christmas vacation constructing two canoes in the backyard. We found some old canvas somewhere. We just spent hours every day building these two canoes and then shellacking them to make them waterproof. The climatic moment came when we found some kind of wheels to wheel them up to the San Luis Rey River, which was a better part of a mile to the north. There was this, as far as we knew, a bottomless pool in the riverbed there. We launched our canoes, and talk about love's labor lost, they both began taking on water faster than we could get them back to shore! We were not fully successful.

Another of my closest friends—it was a tragic story, 16 year old kid, bright as could be. Our senior year of high school, he and his family were preparing to leave for Christmas for family in Arizona, and he was cleaning some clothes with a cleanser that exploded or caught fire. He died before the

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

next morning. That Christmas of 1932 was totally ruined for many of his classmates. He was the manager of the football team...

Kristi: What was his name?

Lionel: Gilbert Glasser. He was Jewish. His father owned a downtown department store in Oceanside.

Kristi: Ike Glasser?

Lionel: Yes, my goodness. You know all these names. Some in our class--Harold Larsen, who married Pauline Larsen, who died rather recently. She outlived him by many years. He was the son of a blacksmith, Peder Larsen, who had, if you can imagine, a blacksmith shop within a block of Hill Street in Oceanside. There was still enough work for blacksmiths then. They were quite prosperous.

Kristi: What do you remember going the beach and your summer activities?

Lionel: I remember before the present pier, which was built in 1926, I believe, there was this rickety old wooden pier. It was quite adequate for some people. You know what surf fishing is, where you have boots on and go out into the low waves and cast as far as you can out. There are a lot of fish close to shore, but this pier, you could go after the same fish without getting wet. I remember one man in particular, he had a French name: LeBas. His wife was an excellent tennis player but he was the champion fisherman. I can remember being out on the pier half a day maybe and catching nothing but something six inches long. He'd come out and within an hour he'd have a couple of beautiful Corbina that he caught! I don't know how they did it!

Kristi: Do you remember a lifeguard at the beach?

Lionel: Oh, I'm sure there was not. I'm sure the city would have considered that an extravagance. You know, local government was then...well, the mayor delivered our meat and I can remember a city councilman who was a plumber, who came and fixed our kitchen sink on one occasion. In those days certain people would be prevailed upon to run for office. They didn't spend money on campaigns. They did not, in many instances, derive any pride or pleasure from being a city councilman or on the school board. They were implored to do it by residents who wanted responsible people in those jobs. Of course, there was no salary involved, so there was not that inducement even. I also had no recollection, as a child, even including my high school years when I would be more alert to such things, I don't remember any whiff of scandal in local government.

We had a City Clerk named John Landes, who performed, I may not be entirely accurate here, but it would be my impression, that he performed most of the duties of a city council. He decided how much money was needed for this or for that. They'd go through the formality of approving it, but John Landes was the man to see, a man of no pretension whatever. He had a slight accent, which he suggested that he was Scandinavian who had not grown up in this country. He was a wonderful man. I think he, and there was a Miss Manning, who may have been about the only other city employee, except for the librarian.

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

In those Depression Years our water bill was \$2 a month. So once a month on a Saturday I would work 8 hours in a road crew for the city wherever they were doing roadwork. Then I would take a slip into Miss Manning showing that I had done my 8 hours of work and that would take care of the family water bill for the month. The name of the man: Ernest Taylor, he was not only probably the most valuable city employee I've ever known, he was also a very close friend of my parents. He went off on weekends with them. Ernie Taylor was the head...I remember, the first day I went out to work as a member of the city crew--everybody was astounded by the size of the lunch I brought for myself! I was working with a shovel, moving dirt or something. Boy, I knew how badly we needed the money so I was working away at a furious pace. I think it was about mid morning, maybe around 10 o'clock and Ernie took me aside and said, "Kid, if you keep it up at this pace you'll never finish the day. Take it a little easier." Years later, when I had been elected to Congress, told me, "If I had known what kind of work you were going into, I never would have given you that advice!" He died only recently.

Kristi: Did your grandparents, the Youngs, live in San Luis Rey or Oceanside?

Lionel: How they could have been so foolish, I never learned why they did this: My grandfather was a headmaster of a successful school in West London and there were these friends who had preceded them in coming out to San Luis Rey Valley and bought farmlands and they were somehow persuaded to come along. So, in 1894... and you know in those days nobody flew, there was going to be this ocean trip and then maybe a five-day train trip coming from New York to California. When they left England, they didn't know but that it would be last time they would see their country. As a matter of fact, my grandmother and grandfather never became American citizens.

Kristi: What were their names?

Lionel: John H. Young and Fanny was my grandmother's name. She learned to drive a car at age 60 in about 1920, I think. They had this Dodge. My grandfather never learned to drive, which is probably a good thing. Granny had taken lessons in driving and she was told that you start in low and then you shift into second and then when you get enough speed, you shift into high. Well, she religiously would go an entire block in low, the next two blocks in second, and then she would shift into high--no matter what the speed! On at least two occasions she didn't put the brakes on in time when driving home. Grandfather would open the door for her. On one occasion my mother said to my grandfather, "Isn't mother about due home? Shouldn't you go open the garage door for her?" My grandfather said, "Oh, that won't bother her. If it's not open, she'll drive right through it!"

You may know that on Wisconsin Street, on the south end of Pacific as Wisconsin Street crosses the railroad tracks it take a slight bend. As you're driving west, there's a bend to the left. The city beautification program at one time put a series of small palm trees in the parkway on the west side of the railroad tracks on Wisconsin Street. They finally gave up because on two occasions Granny failed to make the bend as she crossed the tracks and mowed down all through the palm trees!

Kristi: Were they living in San Luis Rey or did they eventually move into Oceanside?

Lionel: They moved into Oceanside in a two-story house on the 1100 block of South Pacific, south of Wisconsin Street. At Wisconsin...these are all dirt roads, they were not paved or anything, at

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Wisconsin Street at Pacific it was given over to farmland operated by what we would now call, 'undocumented aliens.' The McNerny family had a house on the ocean side of Pacific about a third of a mile south of Wisconsin Street, and then after about another quarter of a mile, and these were the only houses there when I was a child, you would come to my grandparents' house which was exactly a mile south of the pier. About a quarter of a mile beyond that was the Blackburn house. There was a retired sea captain named Blackburn. His daughter, who was an excellent cook, earned money by putting on dinners for people. Obviously, this was in a time before Social Security and all, her old father the sea captain may have had a pension, though I doubt it was much. Then there was a cottage named the Palmer Cottage, someone had built. In that day that was before they got the automobile, so when I was small child it was a great thrill to go up to town in a horse and buggy. The horse had to be driven going up to town, but coming home the horse knew every turn and you just sat there and let the horse trot. For children, just coming into the automotive age, that was a real treat.

Kristi: Where did you keep the horses?

Lionel: Well, they kept the horse in a barn, which later became the garage for the car. Going to visit your grandparents was a real treat, because we never depended on horse and buggy for anything.

Kristi: Do you remember taking trips to San Luis Rey?

Lionel: Well, of course, being so close for one thing. I can remember growing up, being shown the old Libby School, which is now in Heritage Park, was a about mile north of there on the other side of the river, a one-room schoolhouse, where my mother started school. I don't know how many years she was in this one-room schoolhouse. The Episcopal Church there, All Saints, which has a cemetery around it, was built about 110 years ago. How it has remained in such good condition—it has a board that looks after it. It's had excellent care and has been mercifully free of any vandals. I think there was some concern when the area around there began building up with inexpensive housing, or what once was inexpensive housing, it might have been in danger, but it was not. The story is, at age five my mother and Mrs. Ronsse, who was the mother of Edith Swaim, who you could say runs the Heritage Park, they were two flower girls at a wedding and apparently they misbehaved and were both punished!

When I go through that cemetery and I see names on headstones and I can put the face with almost half of them. Old George Newham, I don't know what was his visible means of support, but he would meet every train that came in from north and south. There would be 3 or 4 passenger trains a day coming through that would stop at Oceanside to take on water. There was an old fellow named Joe Wimperis, who was a door-to-door drug salesman of sorts, I don't know exactly. He was known as 'Mentholatum Joe.' He sang in the choir! Miss Sadler is buried there. I can remember her on the tennis courts. It does give you pause. In the not too distant future someone will look at my headstone and say, "Oh, I remember him when he was only 85!"

Kristi: Did you go to church at All Saints or did you go to church at Grace Chapel?

Lionel: Grace Church in Oceanside. Yes. At various times both of my parents were on the vestry there. I feel certain they would look with sadness and disgust on the fact that this is one of the

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Episcopal Churches, which has pulled out of the main church on issues brought on by such social disagreements as the ordaining women as priests and the unwillingness to show some understanding of homosexuality. But, that's the way it is.

Kristi: North of the church was a park with a band shell. Do you remember that?

Lionel: Yes, that was before my time, though. The band shell in my time was down there on the beach. That was always the center for tremendous crowds on the 4th of July. There was for a long time, and I don't know when it was abandoned, a municipal band. Since it was all volunteers you can imagine the musical skills were somewhat varied. But the one story, which I'm certain is not true, but I've never hesitated to tell it, concerns the station master, a man by the name of Jack Tulip, who was stone deaf but played the trumpet. The story is they had just finished, it hardly matters what it was they had just played, but the leader, Jack sat right close to the leader with his trumpet, and the leader leaned down to him and at the top of his voice said, "Next we're playing 'Stars and Stripes Forever'"! To which Jack responded, "That's what I just finished playing!"

Kristi: Sadly he was so deaf, that he didn't hear the train coming and his car was hit by a train when he was crossing the tracks and he died.

Lionel: I am ashamed, in fact I'm almost so ashamed that I'll ask you to obliterate this from our conversation, that prompted me to note that 'he was one station master who rose above his station'! That's awful! His wife taught me Latin in high school, at least attempted to teach me Latin. She lived alone on the waterfront there quite a few years after Jack's death.

Kristi: Do you remember Dr. Reid?

Lionel: Do I remember Dr. Reid! It happens that on Wednesday of next week I am to be visited by a doctor and nurse here at home. I went and had my teeth cleaned the other day. I went to the dentist all right, I can be taken places. But there is a doctor coming to visit with a nurse next Wednesday and I'm going to tell him, 'you're the first doctor I've known who makes house calls, since I was about six years old in Oceanside', and that was Dr. Reid. I remember once, I don't know what was wrong with me, but Dr. Reid came to visit me and he noticed there was some candy on the table next to the bed I was in. He told my mother that he thought she should remove that because it wouldn't be good for me to eat that candy. My mother assured him that I was such an honorable child that there was no danger of that, I had been told not to touch it. And I can still remember gulping it down after he left!!

The drug store, Exton & Nichols--I'm not sure whether one of them wasn't an MD, but Mr. Nichols was sort of a typical storeowner. But with Mr. Exton you felt your were in the presence of majesty of some kind. He was so deliberate and struck you as being the wisest of the wise. One time Paul Beck's brother, Bob from Iowa, you know, Paul was the co-publisher of the Blade-Tribune, when we were kids, his brother and I broke something in the store. I think it was something to use in case you got bitten by a snake. Whatever it was, by examining it we broke it and the cost was 50 cents. So we divvied up, paid for it and we got outside and we were just old enough and smart enough to think, "Now wait a minute, that was the retail price we paid. They get it for wholesale. There must be a markup on that and we're entitled to the difference. We shouldn't be charged anymore than they paid!" We went back in and presented our case to Mr. Exton and he said, "I think you're right" and handed us each 15 cents!

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Kristi: You were telling me on the phone about Lukas Siefker who owned the barbershop. Where was his barbershop?

Lionel: It would have been one place off Hill Street, on the south side of Second Street, right next to Watson's Ice Cream Parlor, if that means anything to you! Luke Siefker, he wouldn't seem so old to me now, but he was really quite elderly then. One eye had been damaged so that he couldn't see through it. In his bare knuckles boxing days, down in Kentucky, he probably got \$10 a fight, or something like that. So he took up the gentler art of hair cutting. He was full of stories. He would still train. We had a Johnny Garcia in Oceanside who he trained and taught. I remember coming down with the two of them one time to San Diego. Johnny had a spot in one of the preliminaries for which he got \$15 or \$20. Luke Siefker, was just full of stories of days before the Marquess of Queensberry Rules. It turned out that later on when I got a newspaper job in San Diego, on the staff of the Union there was an old fellow about Siefker's age, and it seems he was also from Kentucky, he was an ex-fighter and when he found that I knew Luke Siefker, he actually became excited. I managed to get them together for a reunion. They probably hadn't seen one another in 40 years.

Kristi: You mentioned there was a shoeshine man, who at the time was the only Black man in Oceanside. Do you recall his name?

Lionel: Johnnie Mann. Amid some of the social troubles Oceanside has encountered in more recent times, most of which is traced to racial differences, not just Black and White, but of course, there were always plenty of Hispanics...But I just read this week that Oceanside today has the second largest concentration of Samoans in the entire country, and has produced a couple of pretty good athletes, with USC and Chargers. But Johnnie Mann, you try to think of five or six of the most popular people in town and he would have to be on anybody's list. And this was a time when the term 'Negro' was acceptable. He was not sub-serviant. I certainly wouldn't describe him as that. But he shined shoes and that maybe that's as high up the ladder as he was likely to go, not because he wasn't a man of intense great ability and certain great sociability, I think maybe in today's world he'd be doing something a lot more favorably viewed than shining shoes. It's just that Oceanside in that day was totally oblivious to racial things. I don't think anybody would have even been alarmed, Johnnie lived out over the hill on Second Street, but I don't think anyone would have been resentful or alarmed if he had found it possible to live in a more favorable part of town.

Kristi: Did he live in what we call Posole or Eastside? That would be over Mission Road.

Lionel: Yes. That used to be practically open country. There was a man who rented horses for horseback riding, which you wouldn't be likely to find that close to town any longer. You'd go out past the Rosicrucian Fellowship and then down a substantial grade into the San Luis Rey Valley. In the old days of horse and wagon, horses had to pull vehicles up that hill. So to come into Oceanside for shopping or a day at the beach, meant that most people would want more than one horse.

Kristi: Getting back to Mr. Mann, did he have a family, was he married that you know of?

Lionel: You know, I don't remember anything about ... He almost certainly must have had. I just knew him and to stop and converse with Johnnie was a high point of any day. Of course, the Blade

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Tribune where I worked part time, was on the same block where I'd be passing Johnnie several times a day.

Kristi: When did you start to work for the Blade?

Lionel: When I was 14 years old I was carrying papers. A simple little arithmetic will tell you that when I was 14 it was just at the onset of The Great Depression. It was about 1929 that the Beck family, which had a successful newspaper in Iowa, bought the then Weekly Blade and started a daily newspaper, the Blade Tribune. Someone else may have started it and they bought it out. In any event, as it turned out with the economy going to hell, it was a terrible time to be launching a daily newspaper in a town of 5,000 population without a considerable population farm population around it. When it went daily, the old Blade, if you go to Heritage Park you can see how it was printed. This thing would go up and down and have to be fed by a person pushing the paper into place to print it on. With a daily newspaper you're going to have a flat bed press. What they did, they bought one but I think it had come around the Horn. I don't know where they bought it but it broke down on occasion. I was a carrier boy, that meant that if it broke down it took a better part of two hours before they could get the web of the paper strung through again in place and have it running. More advertising, as is true today still, on weekends, so it was likelier to happen on a Friday. You'd hear this crash, bang, bang. So you knew it was going to be two hours late before I get started on my paper route. So you'd could go off and play hockey in the alley or go and get, right on the corner, two cinnamon rolls for a nickel.

Kristi: Who was selling them?

Lionel: The store, that's what the prices were. My gosh, across the street from the Grammar school on Horne Street, if you hadn't had a lunch put up for you, you could get hamburgers for a nickel! So now I'm 14 years old and deciding to do none of these things. The staff had left by that time and there were all these empty typewriters. I went in and sat down and started typing up doggerel one kind or the other about members of the staff, obviously not intending to be complimentary! I guess I hadn't been careful enough to throw it all into the wastebaskets before the press started up again and the papers were ready to go. The next day when I came into work, there was a lovely old man, I say old--he was probably 25 years younger than I am now! He was the editor paper and he beckoned to me to come in and he produced some of these things the night before. "Did you write these?" Naturally, all I could think of was, 'there goes my job.' But his next question is: "How would you like to write for the paper?" Oh, how would I like to write for the paper!

Kristi: What was his name?

Lionel: Pierce Eagan. His last previous employment was in La Mesa, if I recall. I don't know how it came about, but there was a town baseball team and they would have a game every Sunday at a diamond. We were talking about Wisconsin Street where it crosses the railroad tracks, well just south of Wisconsin before it crossed the tracks was this big baseball diamond. The ground rules were that if a ball was hit over the railroad tracks it was a grounds rule double. This was because it assumed a train might stop somebody from going after the ball. Of course, if you hit a ball over the railroad tracks it was far enough that anybody who wasn't on one leg could get a home run out of it anyhow. I soon was covering those games. They had a scorebook so I was the scorekeeper, too. That involved getting the names of the visiting players and keeping track as the game went through

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

what happened as each player went to bat. I think I would have to acknowledge that if Oceanside won one game in three it was a good season! It wasn't the best of teams. It's funny, I can still call off the line up from start to finish.

Kristi: What were their names?

Lionel: The point I was going to make, I couldn't do that with the San Diego Padres today but I can remember from way back then. Joe Stillman, Le--?, Jones, Stephensen, Pete Sever. Anyway, Stephensen worked at the bank with my father. He was a huge fellow. He was the only player I've ever seen who twice hit a single to right field and got thrown out at first base! He was so slow.

I, of course, being a little smart ass had to think up funny leads, or what I considered were brilliant leads. Since it frequently involved explaining why Oceanside had lost, I frequently turned on and found fault with the umpire. I don't know how the system worked but the umpires, all around the county there were teams and games like this, so they would send the umpires up from San Diego and usually it would be a different umpire every week. There was this one when the lead of my story about Oceanside losing the game, 'The only difference between this umpire and Jesse James was that Jesse James came to town on a horse.' Oh, I thought that was immensely clever! The very next week I'm getting the lineups about five minutes before the game starts. As luck would have it, the same umpire was sent up two weeks in a row! I heard this voice and he came over to our side of the field. "Is there somebody here named Van Deerlin?" "Oh yes, he's right out there!" I'm looking at the scorebook and this huge guy comes up and says, "Are you Van Deerlin?!" So I jumped up and said, "Yes, yes." He looked down at me and said, "Oh shit!" and walked away!

Kristi: Now how old were you?

Lionel: 14 or 15.

Lionel: I was covering high school games while I still in the 8th grade. I'm not sure how it appealed to some of the high schoolers. But what it did for me, when the end of my senior year came along, I discovered that USC offered scholarships in journalism to one boy and one girl in Southern California. So I went to work and got all the stuff that you're supposed to present. I shouldn't be too critical scholarship of my father not getting my mother registered as a citizen, because when the deadline came for getting the postmark on this to send it in and be eligible for getting the scholarship, I didn't have my stuff all ready until about 7:30. Well, the post office closed at 6:00, so that meant that it would get a date line on it until the next morning. Fortunately, at our church there was a nice lady who worked at the post office. She reopened it and got the date on for me!

Kristi: What was her name?

Lionel: Ackerman. She sang in the choir, too. I don't want to get her into any trouble! Although I'm sure she's not around. I won that scholarship and with my father not working yet, there was absolutely no way I could have gone to USC, which then was a private college.

Kristi: What year did you graduate from high school?

Lionel: 1933.

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

Kristi: Where did you have your graduation at?

Lionel: Oh they were beautiful in those days. I can't see why they abandoned it. They had this beautiful lawn out there. My god, you could see all the way to the ocean. I don't know who built it but they saved it year to year. Entirely lattice work...well it looked like the Paris style of the coliseum almost. They'd take trucks of kids out to the valley and they'd cut enough asparagus bush or plant. It was just lovely, lovely, just covered the thing with asparagus plant and gladiolas. I'm telling you, I've never seen anything to match it in Washington or any place.

Kristi: How many kids were in graduating class?

Lionel: 90 some, I think.

Kristi: You got the scholarship to USC. How was that leaving home?

Lionel: Fortunately, I had an aunt who lived in Los Angeles. She worked and had a good job with an insurance company, Pacific Mutual. She had very comfortable living quarters that she rented near the downtown close to Wilshire. On account of me she rented a house out near the USC campus and she let me drive her car! Even with a scholarship, and of course it's much more expensive today then it was then... I suppose I could have got a job and worked half the night, to do it, and I hope I would have had the guts to do it. But it did make it a lot easier for me.

Kristi: Was this aunt on the Van Deerlin side?

Lionel: It was my mother's older sister.

Kristi: What was her name?

Lionel: Sydney Young. When she was retirement age, she came and lived with my parents and after my father died, lived on with my mother for many years. They even a couple of times took trips together, once to England. She was 13 when they came over and my mother was two. As a matter of fact, this is conjecture, but my father died in 1952, and Gigi, as we called her, didn't die until 1973, and it's interesting Gigi would have been in her 90s then and mother had the responsibility of taking care of Gigi. After Gigi's death was when my mother started going downhill. When she was my age, well, for her 90th birthday, we planned a big party for her. She had been in a rest home up in Orange County, near where my sister lived. One relative came down from San Francisco for her 90th birthday. It was a big party. It was being held at a church north of Laguna Beach and my daughter Liz, and older daughter Susie, went to pick Mother up to bring her to the party. She had forgotten about it entirely and was ready to go to bed! It took Liz about 20 minutes to get her straightened up and dressed properly. Everybody was there at the party before the guest of honor arrived!

Kristi: When did you graduate from USC?

Lionel: 1937. I was not so bright that I did it in less than four years, nor so stupid that it took me longer! I was editor of the Daily Trojan. You can imagine in the middle of The Depression how

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

many Republicans there were likely to be on a college newspaper, none at all! Until a couple of kids moved in from Riverside Junior College, at the two year mark, one of whom Bob Hunter, the father of Duncan Hunter, who defeated me for re-election in 1980. He remembers that he and this other kid were the only two Republicans on the Daily Trojan staff. 1936 being the year that Roosevelt had won all but two states against Alf Landon, the Governor of Kansas, Maine and Vermont. So I immediately named him and this other kid Maine and Vermont! The Depression was still on when I got out of college.

Kristi: What did you do when you got out of college?

Lionel: I went to work on the San Diego Sun, which was a chain newspaper owned by the Scripps Howard chain. There were then three competitive daily newspapers. This was before television, of course, in San Diego. After six months the newspaper guild contract required that my pay be raised from \$18 to \$20 a week. It just so happened a friend of mine that I had been at USC with in journalism, he was a couple months ahead of me in school and he had worked two years on a daily newspaper in Santa Maria and he decided he wanted to get into something bigger. So he came and he got a job on the Sun and even took up residence in the rooming house that I lived in. After he had been there three weeks orders came from corporate headquarters that there had to be one economy firing. The guild contract required "last hired, first fired." So, he and I both decided there must be something better. So we took off cross-country, looked all the way through Texas and Louisiana, up through St. Louis, and all. Finally we both got jobs at the Minneapolis Tribune. So instead of \$18 I think I was getting \$24 or \$25 a week and had to spend the entire difference on an overcoat and snowshoes! It was ridiculous! On the other hand, my life was greatly changed, because I was not only drafted there, but I was married there.

Kristi: That's where you met your wife? What was her name?

Lionel: Mary Jo. I really did her a favor. Her surname was Smith and I gave her one she had to spell for people! She was one of the first...they hired ten nurses as stewardesses on Northwest Airlines, which was a new airlines. They served Rochester, New York, which was where the Mayo Clinic was, where she had taken her training, they required that their stewardesses be nurses. The line that I would always frost Mary Jo with was, "after that they hired pretty girls"!

In those days, newspapers carried what they called "vital statistics" every day in the paper: who was born, births, deaths, marriage licenses, applications for divorce, all these types of things. There was no way of avoiding it, it just automatically went in the paper. Because they were not allowed to marry, they wouldn't let stewardesses, marry I knew a priest down in Fairmont, Minnesota, which is right down at the Iowa line and we were going to drive down and get married. This kid that I came across country with, he wasn't married yet, so he was going to be my best man and one of Mary Jo's fellow stewardesses was going to be her maid of honor. Together with the priest's wife, there was only six of us in the church. Mary Jo was always a little bit careless when it came to time. If she had told me she was going to be here at 11:00 this morning, she wouldn't have been like you. Anyway, the other two went down ahead. Mary Jo couldn't get ready and it was going to take about four hours to get down there. It was obvious--it was a Friday and we didn't have a marriage license yet and the county offices were closed. Boy, this friend of mine did us a great favor. He went down on a golf course and found the county clerk! I don't know...for somebody the county clerk had never met, he comes back in and reopens the office and prepares us a marriage license!

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

I've never been so indebted to anyone in my life! I already had a reservation at a hotel in Mankato, Minnesota. I'd like to think that my reservation would not have been in vain, that Mary Jo would have made allowances! But it wasn't necessary.

Kristi: How did you end up back in San Diego County?

Lionel: There was a lieutenant I was in the Army with who was also...I don't know if he held any newspaper jobs, but that's what he wanted to get into. He had a modicum of money, very little. So we decided to find a weekly newspaper somewhere that we could maybe acquire. He would run the business side of it and I would run the editorial side. But we were lucky it didn't work out. We finally found an available weekly. It was in the same town of the daily newspaper in Bozeman, Montana. He had paid his money down on it and all. We actually had taken the paper over. We didn't want to just fire the editor. We were careful, we called Billings, Montana which is about 500 miles away and we got him a job on the paper over there, which he took! We ran into a guy who owned a furniture store that we both started in the Army with in Minnesota--the bank reneged on financing the deal--because we were from the East, I guess they felt we were dangerous people! Anyway, this guy said, "Well, let me introduce you to my lawyer. It seems to you've we have some rights here". We did. The lawyer got us, it was either \$500 a piece totaling a \$1000 or got us each \$1000. We got out of the deal. My friend and prospective partner went back to Tipton, Iowa where he eventually started or got a weekly newspaper. I came back to San Diego where the only daily newspaper in the country that had started during World War II, the Journal, was operating. I went to work there. I was the city editor when it folded, bought out by the Union Tribune. Already, the old Sun had been bought out by the Union Tribune in 1939, and this one was bought out in 1950. So I decided at that point there wasn't much future in print competition in San Diego. That was just when television was coming in. So I persuaded a new television station to let me do the news for them, and that's how that came about it.

Kristi: What year was that?

Lionel: 1950.

Kristi: What was the television station?

Lionel: It was a Mexican License Station, Channel 6. XETV. This was before they were even on the air, they put what they called a test pattern on the air and they played classical or semi-classical music behind it. Being Channel 6, for reasons that are unknown to me technologically, that screws up the adjoining channels. So people who were enjoying Lawrence Welk on channel 7 in Los Angeles, suddenly found this Mexican picture with music. Oh, they were raising hell! This was before we even had programming on the air. When they started programming, I had a 15-minute news program between two night movies. They were mainly a movie station. This was before Channel 10 was on the air even, there was only Channel 8. You had these two movies on and one of them would be over about 9:45, which would be a more mature picture would start at 10:00. So the 15 minutes in between were my news programming. I didn't have a single person that wrote a line for me. Of course it was only fifteen-minute program, so it wasn't too tough, but to do a decent job covering television news, having it so people could call you, certain police departments, and all, we got by with it. The advertising agencies, which would be buying time on television, they came to call that fifteen-minute period, "The Van Deerlin flush hour". Because no one was listening to

Interview with Lionel L. Van Deerlin, February 23 2008

my news show! They were doing other things and they'd come back to watch the ten o'clock movie! So it was a long time before they sold any time on that program!

Kristi: How many years did you do that?

Lionel: Well, until I got hired by Channel 10, when they came on. Then I got hired back by Channel 6 when they were willing to spend a little more money! We had our own couple of cameramen. That went on up to, well I had to get off on account of the law when I became a candidate for office in 1962. I had to be off the air in January. That's when Mary Jo's nursing really came in, too. She practically supported the family with night duty nursing. Democrats find it tough to raise money, or at least they did then in San Diego. It was touch and go. The first year that I won, I won with less than 51 percent. I remember it was still neck-and-neck and it got to be about midnight so I went home and took two Phenobarbitals. I woke up in time to find out that I found I won by less than 2,000 votes. On television, when I came downstairs, Richard Nixon was giving his farewell press conference at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Where he said, "You won't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore!" I remember thinking to myself, "My goodness!" Here he had been vice president for two terms and in the senate and all. "Who would have ever thought my political future would look brighter than Richard Nixon's!" All he did was become President!

Kristi: Let me ask you this... You were living on First and Nevada, then you were just up the street from Berry's Mortuary?

Lionel: Across the street from them.

Kristi: What do you remember about Mr. Berry?

Lionel: Never have I known a more appropriately named mortician! As a matter of fact, he had a young guy working for him who was dating a young girl named Betty Goetz, who was a beauty. So we saw quite a bit of him! My first cousin from Mississippi, who was a year older than I, and she came out and lived with us her and took her senior year at Oceanside High and then went to USC ahead of me some time later. She wasn't really as prissy and sensitive as she made out, I'm sure, but she'd be horrified by certain things. This guy was the mortician's assistant and there was some kind of truck accident or something and the deceased had lost his arm. He came over with an overcoat on and stuck out his hand to shake hands with Frances and it was this cold, clammy hand of the corpse! Which was of course, a horrible thing to do to anyone! She went absolutely out of her mind!