



Andy Landforce Oral History Interviews, May 22, 2013

Title

“Meeting Evelyn and Starting a Family”

Date

May 22, 2013

Location

Landforce residence, Corvallis, Oregon.

Summary

In interview 2 Landforce relays the circumstances of his meeting his future wife Evelyn, herself an OSC alum. He also discusses his early years as a family man in both Joseph, Oregon and Corvallis.

Interviewee

Andy Landforce

Interviewers

Mike Dicianna, Debora Landforce

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/landforce/>

Transcript

Mike Dicianna: Like we started before, one of the things that I really think is a story, both for the family and your Oregon State College family, is a love story between you and your wife of 69 years that started in the OSC library. I'm just going to turn you loose.

Andy Landforce: Are you recording this?

MD: Yeah, we're good.

AL: Oh my gosh, okay. I was working in the library and this very nice person came in and handed me the slip of the books she wanted. So I go back in the files and bring them out, and she signs her name down there. She just had a manner around her that was just very classy, very sincere. I thought, gosh she was kind of nice. And so one of the days, I'm walking from the library, and she's walking towards it. I had remembered her, and when she was 15 or 20 feet away, I said, "Hello Evelyn." And it took her by surprise so much that she watched me go by, and you could think she thought, "Well, I wonder who that guy was."

Then we used to have nickel dances in the MU that I had a lot to do with getting started because of the sociability and we wanted friendliness on the campus. We wanted people at Oregon State to like each other. Anyway, it so happened then that I would dance with her. It was rather a platonic arrangement, because she had two cousins here, Margaret Domes [?] and Dorothy Schumacher [?], were cousins. Eventually then, Helen Cooney sister of the Dean Cooney who was Dean of the School of Agriculture for a while, and John [?], and Willis Evans [?], and Betty [?], we would take a sack lunch because Evelyn was from Waldo, and we would walk up the railroad track here, walk out to Bald Hill, and there weren't any houses or fences there then, and Bald Hill was bald. We'd go to the top there on a Sunday, and have our brown sack lunch, and walk back, and that's how we were visiting. That's how we got acquainted.

Now Mike, you got me started on this.

MD: That was my plan!

AL: Okay, I'm going to tell you. Graduation in June, and I have got to be sure to do everything I can to get away from common labor, but I'm an ROTC student. And I'm ordered into the service, and I leave Evelyn and everything behind and it was hard. I found out after I left her how much I liked her. So on to Camp Roberts and Fort Sill Oklahoma, where about thirty of us Oregon Staters were in the artillery. Mel Cummings, he's married to Alice, was back in Fort Sill. So we had finished a three months course of training, and you got an assignment to go overseas. You went to a different battalion, you went someplace else, I read my orders, and I was ordered to teach the course for the next three months. Hot dog! I'm going to be in the United States for three more months. My vision of proposing to a girl in my younger days, was that we would have pack on our back, going up a hillside, and be perspiring. Horses sweat, girls perspire I suppose, or glow. And say, "Hey, life is like this. It's a tough pull. Will you pull it with me?" But Mike, rather than that, I wrote her a letter from Fort Sill, Oklahoma and asked her if she would marry me. She didn't know anything about me hardly at all, other than the visits. We were married at Fort Sill with all officers from Oregon State. First Vice President, Ken Robinson was there, Mel Cummings was there, and Alice was our bridesmaid. She's gone, but Mel's living up in Salem, and he's still our friend. Ken is gone. Anyway, that started it. [0:05:49]

Okay, I might as well tell you the rest of it. We were married, and we went to the 275th artillery battalion, where I was a motor officer. And then from there, I got orders to be the commander of the war dog reception training center in Helena, Montana. We drove across the United States, and I rented a summer cabin with thin walls. And in the winter time, the water froze up in the house. Our light was a lantern, oh man. Anyways, she stuck with me. When that assignment was over, I was Company Commander for 3745th Quartermaster Trucking Company in Fort Benning, Georgia. So then I went back there, and got a house and everything. There were four Caucasian officers, the rest were African Americans. We were training men as truck drivers. Captain Talbot was captain of the 3533rd Quartermaster Trucking Company, they were on maneuvers, and they killed him, the company. But they're getting ready for overseas, and I'm ordered to be company commander for that. I went out there and know what it is to be absolutely hated. And then I eventually had to bust the first sergeant, and court martial a couple of officers because I was the Caucasian in the group. And then took them overseas.

But when Sergeant Coleman came and checked in with me, I got a real education. Sergeant Coleman came up in a Jeep and he says, "Sergeant Coleman reporting for duty, sir. And I met a man that was probably the finest man I've ever met because he saw the situation right away. After a day or two when he got control of the company, he called me in and say me down and he gave me instructions on how to be a company commander. Which is just simply this: "I know how to deal with these people and you don't. I don't want you to touch one of my soldiers. Every time you meet one of my soldiers, you salute. Captain, you are saluted in that uniform, I will require him to salute you He is saluting your uniform. You represent the United States of America, and you salute him. And when the soldiers are disrespectful or are insubordinate, you come and tell me. I'll take care of them. And so, I want your authority as a Company Commander, I want you to back me up."

And we remain soldiers all through that war. We went from there to Boston, to England across the canal, up over France and Germany. We were in Munich. Germany when the war ended. There are six companies in a battalion, and my company had the most outstanding record of service, so I'm elected to go to the Southwest Pacific. That man took us to the Southwest Pacific, the Panama Canal, the Solomons, New Guinea, and from the Philippine Islands. We had to go ashore, Sergeant Coleman required me to black out my face and everything so I couldn't be identified as we went ashore. We lost one man and a couple wounded on that invasion. And then to Manila, and out to Novaliches.

We were training to be the third wave on an assault on Japan when the war was over. Our training stopped about 11:30 in the morning because it was hot in the afternoon. I'm in a tent, laying there, and I can remember the perspiration gathered. And up pulls a Jeep, and out gets a Second Lieutenant and comes and hands a slip to me that the war is over. MacArthur required officers to have a driver, not Eisenhower. But anyway, the war's over. I got that slip, and I just laid there and thought oh no. So we had dinner, and I then told Sergeant Coleman this, he says, "Captain, get out of here. Just leave, don't come back until tomorrow." Sergeant Coleman announced to the troops that the war was over. When this happened in Munich, there was more shooting and firing and celebration as you can imagine. There were at least six soldiers that thought the world was better if I wasn't there. Sergeant Coleman took us through the Southwest Pacific and then I became the Port Commander for debarkation in Manila, and then my company went from overseas to San Francisco, and I came back to Evelyn. [0:13:00]

MD: Now, where was she during the period that you were overseas?

AL: She went back to college, and graduated in 1946.

MD: Oh okay, at Oregon State?

AL: Yes, at Oregon State.

MD: So, family. When did this start?

AL: Family started right there when we got a little car. She still was driving the same car. The first night was in Crescent City, California. And I had then been promoted to a major and had an assignment in the San Francisco. I'm out of common labor. I've got past my opportunity in Alaska has faded away in the war. I'm there. The second day going up the Oregon Coast, I have a lady that says to me, "Andy, that's fine that you have an appointment to be a major, I don't want to be in the army anymore. I want to live in the northwest, I want to have a house someday with neighbors and come flowers and a garden, and I'd like to have children. And we will have enough." So okay, that started it, but I need a job. So we go up to Evelyn's folks, 37 miles north of here. And we are together, just like a shadow, I mean on everything. One day we're up on the farm and I say, "Evelyn, I want to go back to the campus and just walk around there and just get that feeling again. Those were some of the most beautiful and meaningful days of my life. I just want to go back there. I will go to Professor Dimick and see if there are any job opportunities." So I went back to campus and talked to Professor Dimick, and when you think about moments in your life, I walked across that campus, out of that building and towards the Home Ec, started across the campus, and in that stretch, that's the reason I'm sitting here. Frank Ballard came walking down there, and we met Frank there. What prompted me to leave just at that moment so I would manage to meet this man? And I said, "Hi President Ballard." He looked up and says, "Well, Andy. My gosh." Let's go to the MU and have a cup of coffee. The man offered me five jobs. He offered me a job in five different counties. I selected Wallowa County. We go up to Wallowa County, and I got an extension. Can I make it? Can I pull this and get credibility? Well I did. I loved it. I loved the people, the force of the program. Later, I found out I got the job. I was approved by the other

administration because Evelyn was an outstanding forest club girl. And Harry Seymour, who was chairman of the Forest Club Department, he said Evelyn can teach him a lot about forest club work, which she did. One of the days, I came back and I got chosen to be Junior First Citizen. Credibility, hot dog.

Well, by then we have a little girl, Diane. She sat down after dinner, Diane is in bed, and Evelyn said, "I'm tired of having to ask you for grocery money." Up until this time I made all of the decisions to buy, the house, the car, the job, and Evelyn just went with me. "I'm tired of having to ask you for grocery money. I want a husband, and you're missing too much of life. You're now a father, I want you to learn how to be a father, learn the real love of being a father. And you know, I don't go any place with you."

"Oh hey, I always ask you if you want to go if I'm going to the grange or here."

"That's what I mean Andy. I want to be invited."

I started out 101 on how to be a husband, and I followed along. I married a woman who constructed our lives like a river. A river knows its destination, and it knows how to get there. Running water never gets tired. She wanted a family that was in harmony. One of the guiding posts was that when we got into conflict in this family, where people wouldn't let down, don't be disrespectful. Excuse yourself and get away. Let some time go on, and come back. Most of the time, like Debby has pointed out, the things we fought over weren't very important anyway to the big picture. So when we went through life with three children all different as night and day, but in harmony, and having a bond of love, that is invisible, but is powerful. And when she passed away this last February at 6 o'clock in the morning, she knew she was a loved woman, and she'd reached her destination. And we are the ones who have benefit. I learned to love my children. I learned emotion. I have a place where you just want to cry, I don't know why, with your children. And we've done all kinds of things together as a family. She taught us. She taught us how to do it and encouraged us. Mike, I'm sitting here. That woman supported me on going fishing up to Canada for a week every year for years. I come to Corvallis, and I go back to Wallowa County every year for 17 years straight going deer and elk hunting. I would say, "Hey I've got a window where I can go fishing tomorrow." The lunch was ready for me, and I can't ever remember being hollered at. Man, did I luck out. I'm enjoying that woman more after she's passed away than I did before. And I was happy then, but now I'm grateful. [0:21:09]

MD: I have to regain my composure now. Now I understand she was at Waldo, and you were at Poling. Now are there stories about Waldo Hall that you can relate? Being at the door waiting for her to come down, or friends at Waldo? Because we've been doing some historical work on that building too.

AL: Well, we had house mothers I those days. And she checked out because we didn't have any money, Mike, and so we walked together a lot. I'd call her up and we'd have about twenty minutes so we walked around the campus. We'd just walk and talk. We talked about her mom and dad. Evelyn liked her relatives and activities that they were doing. When I was President of the Student Body, when I was going to special dinners I invited her. We visited with one another. The usual custom was when dates came back to Waldo Hall, we would kiss each other goodbye. I was afraid to. I was afraid to because I was getting to like this woman, and she was one wonderful person. At that time, you've got to get away from common labor, because when you read other people, there were too many young men and women that fought each other when they were unhappy with one another, or they broke up and so on and so forth, or they got totally infatuated and nothing else mattered. And I could see myself in that role, so don't do it. Oh dear, so anyway, our whole family and we're still enjoying it because of her teaching and influence. We bought this place here, and that was one of the other things. In Joseph, Oregon, when I'm tired of asking you for grocery money, right there we talked about our finances.

"You handle the money," and she handled the money the whole time, and now we're sitting in the house that we own.

MD: I can relate to that, I'm not allowed to touch money myself.

AL: I never felt I didn't have money. [0:24:19]

MD: When did you move into this house?

AL: Less than 100 years ago. It's got to be fifty years, hasn't it Debby?

Debora Landforce: Yes, fifty-two years ago.

AL: Yeah, because you weren't ten years old when we moved out here.

MD: So you grew up in this house?

DL: Yes, I did. Actually we had a house which is where the oceanography building is now on 27th street right on campus. They actually moved the house, which is now still in Corvallis. But at that point, we moved out here.

MD: This is going to be an ongoing thing between you and I, but is there anything that you'd like to leave this session with? Any pearls of wisdom or just anything we haven't covered that you think we need to talk about?

AL: We had a custom – and when I go to say this and even though I'm an older senior citizen I'm recognizing that right now there is a tremendous amount of ignorance that I haven't used yet. One of the guideposts that we've had here is that you worked and did your best and cope with the rest. So that is on the headstone over there; "Work for the best, and cope with the rest." One of the reasons for that is you never want to feel beaten. When you have done your best and failed, you're not beaten. You didn't get beaten. You are going to turn off and do the best you can with the rest of it. I think that's been the ongoing idea in the family for a long time, and it came from Evelyn. Don't you think Debby, that that's been a guideline all the way through?

DL: Yes. That's been your motto.

AL: And it comes up day after day in our life. It's a guideline. So I think as a family, we have had pride, and we've made mistakes. And we've had detours that we've had to take, but I don't think we've ever felt beaten. That's what life's all about.

DL: I agree. I have a couple other stories I would love to complete this part. Dad, I'd love you to talk a little bit more about your wedding because I was always so impressed with the vision that I had of the full military wedding. Can you tell us about mom's trip there driving back and the ration on gas, how she got there and your brief honeymoon?

AL: Okay, here. Evelyn came back on the train. I met her in Lawton, Oklahoma. I had made arrangements with Major Lively that historical church on Fort Sill, Oklahoma, a beautiful stone building with ivy and so on, and a big room. There I had all of my friends from Oregon State, like I said Ken Robinson, there was Alice, and there was Mel and so on. As you see at this time in my life, I was making all of the decisions. So I selected the music, and one of the songs I had was "Always."

MD: We played that at our wedding.

AL: Did you?

MD: Yes.

AL: I remember that and then we walked on with those swords and the rest of those things, and I had set up a room in Lawton. We then went from there to Arkansas for our honeymoon. I like to bass fish, and so we rented a boat on a little lake and we went around bass fishing, and we never caught a thing – wrong time of the day. We came back, and then we had to return to Fort Sill. But there at Fort Sill, she got a job in an airplane factory sewing fabric together for the curtains in planes and things like that.

DL: And then when she came back, she came back on the train, right?

AL: She came back to Lawton on the train, right. I met her in Lawton, Oklahoma.

DL: And then when she came back here, did she come back to Oregon State on the train?

AL: No, no. She came back from Fort Benning, Georgia. She drove the little car from Fort Benning, Georgia across the United States.

DL: Yes, and how did she get the gas?

AL: Okay, we had to get stamps. But I was in the army, and I'm going overseas, and that's how she got all the stamps that she needed. Actually, it was a little Plymouth. [0:31:03]

DL: Was it 35 cents a gallon?

AL: I don't remember, but it was something like that.

DL: She drove alone all the way across the country.

AL: I think she stayed two nights all by herself.

DL: And then she lived in the fraternity house, right dad?

AL: She lived in Kappa Sigs Fraternity house down here as she was finishing her school.

DL: The men were gone.

MD: Because the men were gone and they needed more housing so actually fraternities were used for excess housing?

AL: And the philosophy of her mother and father and mine was that once we were married, Evelyn was my responsibility then. Well, the way my life has been, I haven't needed the money for my own recreation or anything else, so we started right off the bat. Again, if you read your fellow man, they do a lot of things to get in trouble. So why did you get in trouble? Well that's simple, just don't do it. Do what you're supposed to do. Come back and do what you're supposed to do because the goal is yours. So I sit here today, and I'm very proud of the fact that I never got drunk. I've never been drunk in my life. And I plan to live the next twenty minutes, or three years, or six years, or whatever it is. But I have enjoyed the goal, I have enjoyed not doing it.

DL: Thank you dad. Thank you for filling that in. That's a special piece to think about your wedding and to think about mom going back and forth across the country. And what people did in wartime, it's just so different. Of course then, for us to imagine her saying goodbye to her new husband -

AL: Oh, brother.

DL: -and just what families went through in that time, and couples, and we were all maybe 26 or 27 and mom's 19? You know, how do these people do this? I just think that relational pieces just fascinating around that period.

MD: I know we have a copy of your v-mail that you sent to the *Oregon State College Yank* magazine. Now did you guys have regular mail when you were overseas? Was it sparse because of where you were?

AL: The situation I was in that all letters that came out had to be censored. So my letters were censored also. And I don't remember not being able to post the letter. But I can remember getting some of the letters from Evelyn as a group. I don't remember, there was one place where we moved into a city, and the war's on so I had trucks and everything, so I just moved into a park area and moved the families out. And one of the places, and this was in a bombed out area, I found a sword, a regular sword with a sheath and everything else. I don't know how that ever got home; I undoubtedly had to send it. I don't know where the sword is at now, but John played with it for a while.

DL: We might find it one of these days!

MD: Wonderful, let a child play with a sword.

AL: But so the mail, I was busy. I experienced loneliness, lots of fear. One of the nights where we got orders to move into harm's way, one of my soldiers didn't want to face it, so he killed himself. I can remember thinking, "Hey, that's a waste. You outta go in and see how long you can last." You know? So it wasn't that bad. It was just a waste, unfortunately. But the fear and bombing, when you get so scared that you lay down on bricks, and you lay there long enough that you have indentations, and you get up, it never hurt. The scariness trumped it all. [0:36:35]

DL: Wow, thank you Dad. That's amazing. I think that's a beautiful set of stories for now.

MD: Yeah, I think we're well on our way. Like I say, I am just honored. I'm not the detached oral historian that I'm supposed to be. Dr. Barber, I'm sorry.

AL: I think coming back, this idea of everyone being your teacher, thank you Evelyn. I learned there, and from Slat's Gill to listen, but to learn. And now to this day, I need to honor people when they say, no you shouldn't drive at night now and so on, because I feel perfectly comfortable to drive at night, but I need to start getting the juices out of those mornings.

DL: Another chapter that we want to be sure to include at some point is some of your phenomenal health and your health habits and your fitness. I mean we should really just capture the Health and Human Services Department, because that really just reminded me, when you said that of just how well you have taken care of yourself for so many years and just how its paid off, and how it's such a model.

MD: Oh yeah, it's one of those, "What's your secret?" type things.

DL: Yeah it will be, and in this case because it's certainly so true. And your appreciation of Mom is well placed because she was an incredible homemaker and an incredible cook, and a nurturer for everybody. She kept it going well for many, many years.

AL: While you're on that topic, I frequently think of that lady's continual concern about balanced nutrition for all of us. Well, she was a Home Economics graduate.

DL: I was going to say that college here, which is now HDFS, right? It's very proud of her a graduate and have done some write ups and different things, and so that's another piece that kind of weaves in here because of her Home Economics and child development, specifically.

MD: Yeah, right there in Milam where History is at now.

DL: Yes.

MD: Yeah, I spend all of my time there in the History in Milam, that same building. In fact I had a class, there's a room down in the bottom floor, in the basement of Milam that we have history class in. It was a war history class, and there's a kitchen in there. It's been remodeled, but it was an actual kitchen. It looked like Betty Crocker's kitchen. That was in Milam. It's just now recently that they've remodeled it and turned it into a full media room. I was there when it was still back in the old days. [0:40:14]