



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with
Charles Lindbergh Bohannon, 1927-2016

April 27, 1992



Tape 1, Side A [MP3 Audio File](#) [Length: 0:57:28] (26.3 MB)



Tape 1, Side B [MP3 Audio File](#) [Length: 0:15:16] (6.98 MB)

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PREFACE

This interview provides an interesting and informative biographical account of life along the southern California seacoast. It is the story of Charles Lindbergh Bohannon, whose father was Cornelius Bohannon, the builder and operator of the Bird Rock Inn, a well-known eating-place in La Jolla in the 1920s.

Charles Lindbergh Bohannon, or "Lindy," as he was called, and his brother Jack had a great deal of freedom. They lived on the shore of the ocean and their lives revolved around it. In the early years they played around tide pools and swam, but eventually turned to diving for abalones, trapping lobsters, catching eels, and so forth. This is a fascinating story for anyone interested in seacoast life and activities during the 1920s and 1930s. Lindy's account, and the stories that accompany it, provide a picture of an era that now seems lost and that will probably never be recovered.

Thomas E. Walt, Editor
August 2, 1994

Tape 1, Side A:

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE

This tape is an interview conducted by Craig Carter for the San Diego Historical Society. I am interviewing Charles Lindbergh Bohannon on April 27, 1992 at the home of his brother Jack.

CRAIG CARTER: Now tell me about it; you were not actually born at the Bird Rock Inn, were you?

CHARLES BOHANNON: No, my parents were living at the inn, but I was born in San Diego in 1927.

CC: Where about?

CB: I believe it was the Mercy Hospital; I am not sure. I'll have to look in my birth certificate.

CC: And you were named after a very famous person. Tell me about that.

CB: Well, when Charles Lindbergh came out early in 1927 to supervise the completion of his airplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis* at the Ryan plant, the men there in the plant had a Bunsen burner and they would cook sand dabs out of the bay over this Bunsen burner and Charles Lindbergh raved. You know how much he liked seafood, so they told him, "Well, we'll have to take you out to Neil Bohannon's Bird Rock Inn on the cliffs near La Jolla and get you some real seafood." My father had built this restaurant right at the foot of Bird Rock Avenue out of boulders from the beach, and he had some men that worked with him to trap lobsters and take abalones, and catch fresh fish right there in front of the inn. So it was probably the best seafood you could get. So he (Lindbergh) did. He did come out to the Bird Rock Inn and this must have been in about March 1927, and my father served him. My father, of course, knew why he was in San Diego and knew the tests that he was going to conduct with his airplane. My father became very, very enthusiastic about the attempt to fly the north Atlantic, so after dinner my father sat down and talked with Lindbergh. And my father got so enthusiastic, he said, "Mrs. Bohannon is pregnant and no matter if our child is a boy or a girl, the child will be named after you." So, as the powers that be would have it, Lindbergh took off from New York on the morning of May 20th, 1927. I think it was around six o'clock New York time, and I was born around six o'clock California time. So by the time I was born, he was up over Newfoundland and headed out over the north Atlantic. So I was the first Lindbergh baby - the first person to be named after Lindbergh.

CC: Since your father said whether it was a boy or a girl, it's a good thing you turned out to be a boy, isn't it?

CB: Although my nickname was Lindy when I was young, I imagine so.

CC: Oh, sure, Charley or Lindy, too. Lots of girls are named Charley. That's fascinating. How did the plane get the name Spirit of St. Louis?

CB: Well, I believe because his backers were the men of St. Louis. They had faith in him and the one gentleman was able to secure a loan from the bank there in St. Louis to build the airplane. Lindbergh first went, I believe it was, to New York state to talk to the aircraft manufacturers there in New York and he couldn't reach a meeting of minds with them and some of their demands. He had a lot of confidence in the aircraft that the Ryan people were building, so he came to San Diego and talked with Claude Ryan and his partner and they got along just fine, and had a meeting of minds.

CC: I wanted to ask you whether or not Ryan ... From what your family has told you because, of course, you were not born until Lindy had already made his flight, did Ryan and that bunch go to dinner at the Bird Rock Inn quite a bit before they took Lindbergh there that time?

CB: Well, they may have. I am not aware of the facts there because they did know about the inn, so they must have been there in order to recommend it that they go there with Charles Lindbergh.

CC: Well, what do you remember about the Bird Rock Inn, if anything? I'll let you tell it.

CB: It seems that I remember my father once. I do remember and I was only two and a half years old.

CC: Sure.

CB: But I do remember him coming up from the ocean and he had just been in swimming and drying himself with the towel.

CC: Your sister told us in my interview with her that your mother lost the inn a couple of years after your dad's death. So where did you then live and where did you and your siblings have your beach life? I want to talk to you a little bit about what it was like to live near the beach in La Jolla in those days.

CB: We were at the La Jolla playground at Halloween, I think it was 1929, and my father had a heart attack and we felt that this heart attack was brought on from the hard work that he had done in bringing the boulders up from the beach to build the inn. Of course, this was the beginning of the Depression times and my mother worked to keep the inn operating. But she was unable to do it by herself, and (with the help of) the friends we had. And the people that had the mortgage on the inn foreclosed on us during the early part of the Depression. There were four children and just my mother, and we didn't have any money. She managed to find a house up on Beaumont Street above the ocean there in Bird Rock, above La Jolla Boulevard. We moved up there in a small home and fortunately there were a lot of good people, and I think the rent at the time was \$20 a month for this little house on Beaumont. And she had to go to work. She worked for several of the prominent ladies of La Jolla: Mrs. A. L. Searle and Catherine Smith, and some of the other women. She went in and did housekeeping for them. She also helped with parties, catering, and she did that the rest of her life. She died when she was 65 years old. But after we moved up to Bird Rock Avenue, I mean Beaumont, it wasn't but about five minutes at the most to get down to the ocean, and that's where my brother and I spent a lot of our time. We loved to go to the ocean, especially at low tide. And when we were little, before we knew too much, we would just go around in the tide pools and play in the tide pools and catch little fish, with just a string and a small hook, in the tide pools. The Japanese had truck gardens at the time, just south of Bird Rock, between Bird Rock and Pacific Beach, and they were growing watermelons and tomatoes and beans. Of course that was before the war and before the gunnery school was built along the cliffs there south of Bird Rock. My brother Jack and I would go down to the beach and we would see these Japanese and they would have these goggles that were made out of bone and they called them bone goggles. And they had put the glass in the round bones with wax and then they had a tube around the back of their head to hold these in place. And they would go out off the reef and dive down and pick abalone off the rocks. We thought that was just great that they could do this. They would take the abalone up on the beach and they would build a big bonfire on the beach and then put a kind of

a wet, or green, plank in the bonfire and place the abalone in the shell on the plank and cook them this way. And then, after they thought that they were cooked enough, they would pull them out and take them down to the salt water and put them in the saltwater to cool them down. And at the same time that they cooled them down, the shell would become real flaky and they would just break off the shell and the trimmings, and they would take a knife and just cut off and clean it up a little bit and cut it in chunks and eat the abalone that way. They gave my brother and I abalone to eat.

CC: That's fascinating. What do you know about those bone glasses? Never heard of such a thing. Do you have any idea how they did that?

CB: I guess those were the first, you know, diving-type glasses that people used before the face plates came along, you know. Before goggles, you had these rubber goggles, you know. Well, they had these bone - the Japanese used these and they must have used them for pearls, maybe, in the orient, you know, when they went pearl diving or something.

CC: Yes, in other words, the bone goggles enclosed the eyes so that the water didn't get into the eyes, like modern day goggles.

CB: Yes

CC: Well, that's a fascinating piece of history. I had never heard of that

CB: Yeah, yeah.

CC: Well, now about these bone goggles, how did they keep the water out of their eyes, then?

CB: That was a problem because they didn't fit very securely, so they had these little tubes with bulbs with air in it and they just pumped the air in and keep the air pressure in the goggle and keep the water from coming in, and get rid of the water.

CC: Right. Were these Japanese, as you just said, were they the ones that had the truck gardens and that sort of thing?

CB: Yes

CC: This was when they were not truck gardening; they were out getting abalone?

CB: Yes, out on the beach, and they would also go after octopus - they loved octopus and eel. In fact, later we made change by selling them when they didn't have time themselves - octopus and eel. The way they catch octopus is they go down at low tide and they would have a can of lye, like you would use to clean out your drain. And they would take a bottle and one of these syringes like you used to do to fill a car battery. And they would have an old cloth flour sack and they would go along in the tide pool... There was a lot of bamboo growing around Bird Rock at that time, and they would get a very fine piece of bamboo, maybe about three feet long and they would go in the tide pools and they would see these little cracks under the water going back under the rocks. And they would stick the bamboo back in these holes, and if there was an octopus in there, the octopus would wrap its tentacles around the bamboo, and the man could feel it - feel the octopus - with the bamboo stick. So then he would just leave the bamboo stick in place and he would put a little lye in the jar (like a mayonnaise jar) and put some saltwater in there and shake it up. And then he would take the syringe and fill it up with this lye water and stick it in beside the bamboo and just squirt it in all over where the octopus was. And that octopus would leave and come out into the tide pool and they would grab him and throw him against the rocks to stun him a few times. And then they would put him in their flour bag. So you would see them going along with this flour bag with octopus in it and going from tide pool to tide pool. Later the state law was changed to prohibit the use of lye to catch octopus because it was killing the tide pool creatures along with getting out the octopus. Then

the eels - I am going to jump ahead a little bit. I think my brother got into this, or he taught me how to do it. We would take a coat hanger and straighten it out and get a pretty good sized hook and then attach the hook to this long piece of wire made from the coat hanger. And then we would get the old rotten fish, like a bonito, or tuna head, or barracuda, or something like that. Tuna and bonito was the best and we would go down at low tide and get out on a rock where it might have been two or three feet deep alongside of the rock and there was a lot of eel grass and reeds. You take the tuna head and just rub it against the rock at the edge of the water and all of the fiber and blood would go down into the water and then we would put in chunks of it. Pretty soon the eels would show up and then we would stick this coat hanger with the big hook with a chunk of bait on it, down into this area and sure enough, the eel would come out and take that bait. And then we would hook him and then take him up on the reef and beat him against the reef until he gave up, and then throw him in the flour sack and take him up to the Japanese and sell them for ten cents apiece. And that's how we started making our living out of the ocean.

CC: That's great. I noted that the Japanese gave you some abalone. Did they also feed you octopus and eel?

CB: Well, I don't know if the first octopus that I ate was what they gave me. I know they cooked it there on the beach, too, or we cooked it ourselves. But we did try it, although we liked abalone much better. First, when we were kids, you know, we were just little guys. We would go along and we saw these men looking under the reef with hip boots and go along and turning over rocks and all. So we picked up on that and we started getting abalones at low tide, especially the minus tides we would watch for and go out. And there were plenty of abalone around in those days and you would spend an hour or two on the beach. You could get some abalones, no problem. But as time went on, it was more difficult, so ... but we transitioned with it. This is when the face masks were first in the forties, the late thirties and the early forties, when they first came out with the face masks first, and then later with the swim fins.

CC: The snorkels?

CB: Yeah, right. And so we got into that as it came along and I remember the thrill of the first dive that I was ever able to go down under a reef and take an abalone. And that was a big difference because when you could go down under the tide line and go for the abalone, that was great fun. And we used to, my brother and I, and a few other of the young men ... We used to have a grand time going for abalone. There were a lot of abalone there off Bird Rock in La Jolla in those days. In fact, we would have contests with each other to see how many abalones we could get in one dive and I think my brother was better at that than I was. But we could get three or four abalones in one dive, quite commonly - a good sized abalone.

CC: That meant holding your breath how long?

CB: I wasn't one of the people that could hold their breath a long time. My brother and the "bottom scratchers" and those fellows, they could do much better than I could. I would say over a minute.

CC: Did other kids of that era do all this? Did you have competition from other school kids of your age?

CB: Not really. Surprisingly, there weren't too many. I think ... You see, we were born and raised right on the water and we weren't afraid of the rocks or the eels or the sharks. We didn't have any fear. Some of our friends from school that we tried to teach how to dive, they were afraid of the eel grass and the rocks, and if they hadn't grown up with the ocean, they were a little bit reluctant to get that close to it.

CC: Why would they be afraid of the eel grass?

CB: I think maybe they thought there were eels that would get them.

CC: I see. What schools did you go to, by the way?

CB: I went to La Jolla Elementary and La Jolla High School. In those days we had a streetcar running up through Pacific Beach and in through Bird Rock. The street was then called Electric Avenue. It was one block above La Jolla Boulevard and ran right up behind La Jolla High School, and just a block from La Jolla Elementary School. We had the terminal down on Prospect Street in La Jolla.

CC: Did it run into San Diego?

CB: Yes, all the way into San Diego. It went through Pacific Beach and Mission Beach, and then went across a bridge there at the end of Mission Beach, over into just the start of ocean Beach. And then it cut along the bay and went in by the Marine Corps area there. Then it went along just above Pacific Highway, and you could look over and see Consolidated aircraft plant as you went along.

CC: There was a tram, or streetcar of some kind still running from San Diego downtown to the Marine Base when I joined the Marines in 1935. Was that the line that even at that time probably still continued on to La Jolla?

CB: Yes, I think that was the same line

CC: Okay. I meant to ask you if you ever took that streetcar down to the famous Belmont amusement center?

CB: Oh, yes. We used to go down there all the time. That was the favorite thing for us to do.

CC: Tell me about that. What was it like?

CB: Oh, it was ... They had a lot of stalls there. Of course, the main attraction was the roller coaster and they had other rides. But they had stalls there where you could throw balls at the milk bottles and knock them over, or mannequins. I think all the kids have seen the attractions. They had a lot of them and it was a kind of fun place to go. Another thing we liked about Mission Bay - we called it Mission Beach Amusement Park - they had a huge swimming pool and I think we could get in there for about a dime, and we used to go to that pool. And then, of course, the beach was right there, too.

CC: I was thinking that since you could swim in the ocean all the time, I was going to ask you if you also liked to swim in the pool. Apparently you did.

CB: It was pretty popular. So for young kids we could get on the streetcar from Bird Rock and ride down there, or we would ride our bikes down; it wasn't very far.

CC: What did the streetcar cost?

CB: Probably a nickel or a dime.

CC: Not much.

CB: No. In fact, we used to get men in our neighborhood who caught the streetcar into San Diego during the week, and they purchased a weekly pass. We would, of course, borrow the pass and take the streetcar.

CC: Your sister was considerably older than you guys, you and your brother. She spoke of enjoying going to downtown San Diego. Do you remember going to downtown San Diego much, and, if so, what was it like?

CB: Well, I had a lot of freedom when I was little because my mother was working full-time and we were more or less on our own. So, yes, we went to San Diego when we were quite young. I don't think a child would be permitted to do that nowadays, but we would wander all over the waterfront. Of course, we were fascinated by the tuna clippers and we would go up to the zoo and we would just wander all over San Diego on a weekend and enjoy it. At the foot of Broadway they had a place where you could get, believe it or not, hamburgers for a nickel. They weren't much of a hamburger, just a bun with a small piece of hamburger in it. But for a quarter we could have a pretty good day when we borrowed the pass. What we would do when we got on the streetcar, we would show the pass to the conductor and at the next stop we would hand the pass out to our buddy and he would catch the next streetcar. So that one pass would go quite a ways. We had to do the same thing in San Diego coming back, you know, and figure out ways to make that pass stretch.

CC: That was a great idea, from your viewpoint. What did you have to pay to get into the zoo?

CB: Sometimes we didn't have to pay if we could find a place to sneak in, and we would do that if we could. But I think it was minimal - we didn't have any trouble.

CC: What was the zoo like in those days?

CB: It was great then. Even then it must have been one of the finest zoos in the United States

CC: Did you have any favorite animals that you always went to see?

CB: I think the monkeys and the seals. Of course, the snakes were kind of scary.

CC: They were.

CB: I would like to go back and tell you some more about the ocean.

CC: Okay, good, fine. Tell me more about the ocean

CB: So we were still quite young and I don't know how ... while we did ... Of course we started diving for abalones and we would get our limit each day and we would have them for ourselves. And we would sell them around the neighborhood and would make some money. And we used to have abalone fries and fish fries when we got older. Especially, we liked to go up to Dr. Bernard Ederer's house (he's a dentist there in La Jolla) and have these fish fries and abalone fries. We'd do it on the spur of the moment. They'd say, "Let's have an abalone fry tonight." So we'd hit for the beach and go and get the abalone and come back and have an abalone fry. So it was pretty neat to have those fresh abalones.

CC: That was doctor who?

CB: Dr. B. F. Ederer.

CC: What was his practice there in La Jolla? He was a dentist in La Jolla. He was quite an outdoorsman. He had gone to Alaska in a canoe and had done dental work. He wrote a book. The name of the book is Through Alaska's Back Doors that relate to his adventures in taking the canoe up through Canada and through Alaska. He ended up in Juneau on this trip.

Tape 1, Side B:

CC: Now, one of the things you mentioned earlier was a group called the "bottom scratchers." I would like to know what you remember about the bottom scratchers so that we can have them on record here - who they were and what it was all about.

CB: The way I met the bottom scratchers is (through knowing) Bob Rood. Bob Rood had a shop in La Jolla where he rebuilt automobile engines and he was one of the bottom scratchers. And my brother and, of course, young men were interested in cars. I think that is how we got to know Bob. And Bob found out that we also were divers. And I remember something that Bob did for me that I still have it. He made an abalone iron for me out of stainless steel spar from an airplane, and he engraved my name on it, "Lindy," my nickname. He fixed it up real well. He wrapped the handle and gave it to me as a present and I still have it. But we got to know him and then there was Jack Prodanovich, and a man named Mortimer. And these fellows were really fantastic. They did a lot of diving right off Casa de Manana by the children's pool at La Jolla. They would launch there and they would take a board out and they would take their spear guns and go out in the kelp beds right off of La Jolla. They were capable of diving to great depths and staying down for a matter of several minutes. And one of their favorite things was to stalk these huge black bass called jew fish. I have a few recollections of the stories of them catching those big jew fish.

CC: And there was a third name that was mentioned earlier?

CB: Mortimer, I believe, was the other man. I didn't know him as well as Bob. Bob was a close friend.

CC: Now, when I interviewed, and I think it was Prodanovich I interviewed, he mentioned diving to rescue people's pens and things that they had dropped into the bay in San Diego, and earning some money doing that. Do you know anything about that side of the bottom scratchers?

CB: No, I don't.

CC: Yeah. We'll move ahead from that, then. Okay, now you mentioned earlier a gunnery school along the cliffs in La Jolla. What was that all about? What era was this?

CB: Going back to 1941 when the war started, the area between Bird Rock and Pacific Beach where cliffs are before it turns into a sand beach, those cliffs along there were used as a location for turrets like they would have on ships. They would build the gunnery turrets on concrete bases there along the cliffs. They had quite an installation, and gunnery men from the ships would receive their training there. They would have an aircraft flying over pulling a sleeve out maybe a mile or so, not even that much, offshore. And then they would fire at the sleeve. One thing we didn't like was Bird Rock itself, the rock itself. The government took about three or four feet off the top of it and they put a 55 gallon metal barrel there and painted it orange, and it was a landmark for the pilots on making their runs, making their flights, around the course for the gunnery students. We used to have a lot of fun chasing the sleeves when they cut the sleeves off. We would always try to beat the Navy to get to the sleeve.

CC: Did you get to keep it?

CB: If we could stash it away and get away before they got there, we would get it.

CC: Well, you were quite rascals, weren't you, when you were a kid?

CB: Oh, yeah, we had a lot of freedom, and, you know, Bird Rock area in those days was just wide open. There were very few homes, and the hills up in Muirlands above us, it was wide open sagebrush and we hiked through the hills a lot - go rattler hunting and camping. A big day might be a hike up to Mount Soledad and maybe spend the night up in the hills.

CC: Oh, yeah, great

CB: I want to go back and tell you some more about the ocean. So we got into seeing the lobsters under the reefs when we were diving for abalone. We thought this might be fun to take the lobsters by hand. So we started doing that and we got good at that, too. We got that down to a pretty good art. It takes a bit of doing to take a lobster from under the reef. You go about it very gently.

CC: I should think so

CB: He would be there looking at you and you would put one hand on the reef to steady yourself, and you would take the other hand and, of course, you would try to keep yourself in place with your fins and you just take a hold of his feelers. You wouldn't pull on them because they would break off. So you take a hold of his feelers and just kind of hold him steady and let go of the reef with your other hand. And you reach back and grab him by the horns on the front of his head. Once you got him by the horns, then you had him and you could reach up and grab both horns and just pull him out. And, of course, the big thing was to get a bull lobster that way. We used to have a lot of fun diving for lobsters. Some days we would forget about the abalone and just go out and dive for lobsters. There were a couple of fishermen, one I remember particularly. He had a boat that he would fish lobster traps out of San Diego bay. We called him Pete, the Greek. He liked to fish off of Bird Rock out toward the kelp beds. The winter storms would come up and once in a while you'd go along the beach there at Bird Rock and find one of Pete's traps that had made it all the way to shore in the storm. First, we would take the trap up, find some laths, and rebuild the trap. Then we would set it as deep as we could without a boat at low tide. At the next low tide we would go out and secure it. It has to set overnight and then at the next low tide we would go out and get the lobsters. But we thought, "Well, we can do better than this." Somehow we came across an old, old beat-up boat, a skiff about 12 or 14 feet long, really in sad repair. Somebody gave it to us. We got some cotton-like material and with screwdrivers, we put this cotton in all the cracks. Then we got some tar and put the tar over the cotton. We got the boat to float and took these few traps that we had rebuilt out into the water. Actually, we had a line going down with a buoy at the top and set these traps. That's how we first caught lobsters. We said, "Well, this is pretty good; this will pay good money." We started building our own traps, my brother and I. We would build 40 traps before the season would start. I remember our first outboard motor was a three -horse powered Champion outboard motor. That darn motor would just run and run and run; it was just the most marvelous motor. I tell you, that motor worked like a charm. And so we got started in the lobster business and I gave up my part-time job working in a gas station because I was making more money fishing lobsters instead of working in a gas station. Dr. Ederer thought this was great. His son, Jim, got into the lobster business, too. My brother and I fished together and Jim and I fished together over the years. A friend we made along the way was Max Miller.

CC: Yeah, tell me about that.

CB: Max Miller, the writer, wrote I Cover the Waterfront. And he wrote another book I brought along with me, about a trip he made down to the Sea of Cortez. But Max was a good friend and he had a home right above where we kept our boat on the rock beach at Camino de la Costa (in La Jolla). When the storms would come up we would put our boat right close to the cliff, but sometimes the stormy surf would get up and get to our boat. He would be on the telephone saying, "You had better get down here because your boat is in danger." He kind of looked out to the ocean for us and he

always thought that the ocean belonged to him. But we knew it belonged to us and we shared it with him. He liked to try and dive for abalone. I think if he ever got one or two he was quite thrilled. Somehow he just couldn't quite pull it off. But he liked to try. He was a nice gentleman and he was good to us over the years.

CC: Tell me more about Max Miller

CB: Max Miller, of course, was famous for his writing, but he also wrote for the San Diego Sun newspaper. He was always writing about us in the newspaper of our lobster fishing exploits. He would always swim the La Jolla rough water swim. When it first started, the swim would originate over on the other side of Scripps pier. It was truly a rough water swim. They would swim the distance all the way to La Jolla cove. He always swam it. He kind of took pride in that he was the last one to finish. I remember they would give him the caboose red light, you know, as an award. Then in later years they moved the starting point to the Beach and Tennis Club at La Jolla Shores, and they swam to the cove from there. Max Miller used to walk from La Jolla Hermosa (from his home there) to the cove every morning and take a swim. That was his daily exercise routine. Very nice people, the Millers.

CC: Did you ever do the rough water swim, or your brother?

CB: No, I never did. I have swum between the Beach and Tennis Club to the cove, but not in a rough water swim. There used to be a lot of abalones there off Devil's Slide in that area of the cliffs between the Beach and Tennis Club and the cove.

CC: Incidentally, when you were talking about all your activities and so on, was that along the stretch of coast around what is now the "children's cove" and Bird Rock, or your tide water pools where you would catch your octopuses and lobsters? Was that all along that stretch?

CB: Where we spent most of our time was at the foot of Bird Rock Avenue, and maybe a mile or so north, or a mile or so south.

CC: Good. Before you get started on something else again, I want to ask you one particular question. Did the family ever hear from, or have any further touch with Charles Lindbergh after his flight?

CB: My father started a kind of a fan club, I think, as I have a copy of the original check that was used to purchase the Spirit of St. Louis. On the back side of it he has the signatures of about 20 different men and this is kind of a Charles Lindbergh Fan Club, I think, that he organized. My father died a few years after, and I doubt if he had any contact with Lindbergh in that short time.

CC: As a matter of fact, in the file which I used with my interview with your sister, Mary Hurd, I had a Photostat copy of the check that you are mentioning. So I had seen a copy of that check for \$15,000 and it has all these signatures, as you say, on the back of the check. But there was no real personal touch kept with the Lindbergh's?

CB: Not to my knowledge.

CC: Okay, back to Max Miller.

CB: Back to Max Miller. He wrote another book called The Town With the Funny Name, of course, meaning La Jolla. Jack Benny used to call it "La Jollah" on the Jack Benny program. My brother was one of the characters in his book, The Town With the Funny Name.

CC: Your brother, Jack?

CB: My brother Jack, yeah. I have an amusing story, I think, to tell you about lobster fishing. I paid my way through college at San Diego State by fishing lobsters. I would get up early in the morning at five o'clock and go out and pull my traps, then be finished by nine or so and make my first class at State by ten. We used to take lobsters into the commercial fish market in San Diego and sell them. We didn't want to do that, but we had to do that because they were the source of our bait. And we used a lot of bait in our traps. So they would agree to provide our bait if we would sell them the lobsters. But they were only paying us about 35 cents a pound for lobsters.

CC: Now tell me again. Who was it that provided the bait?

CB: The commercial fish market in San Diego.

CC: Where was that located?

CB: Ah, we went to two or three of them and I can't remember the one we used to use primarily. So to increase our income, we would hold back some of the lobsters and sell them from door-to-door there at Bird Rock and in La Jolla Hermosa. Well, about that time this beautiful, beautiful home was built on the shore there at La Jolla Hermosa at Camino de la Costa.

CC: What is that word, "Hermosa"?

CB: Hermosa? It's Spanish and means beautiful.

CC: Hermosa, is that a particular area along there?

CB: Yes. It was the area between Bird Rock and La Jolla proper. It was where the wealthy people lived in those days along the ocean. In those days a home over \$100,000 was a very, very, very expensive home. This count that had come from England built a home there on Camino de la Costa. I would go to the service door with lobsters and they became customers of mine. They had these English maids and cooks working for them. This young English maid, a little bit older than I, seemed to have an interest in what I was doing, fishing lobster. So I asked her if she would like to go out and watch us pull the traps; she could sit up in the bow of the boat and watch us pull the traps. She did on Saturday when we ran the trap line and ended up in front of their home where she worked. I thought it would be a neat trick just to take her here in on the beach in front of her home and drop her off right there. I knew the shoreline pretty well. There were some small waves that broke there, but it seemed to be easy enough to do. I waited until there was a calm spell. I took the 14-foot skiff with an outboard motor on the back and ran it in toward the beach. I was going along slowly toward the beach and then a wave broke behind me. She didn't know it, but we were only in about three feet of water. I just kept the boat facing the beach and the wave came up from behind the boat. It had quite a lot of white water in it, and it swamped the boat. The boat just sank right there while we were only in two or three feet of water, but it scared the lady. So I stepped out onto the bottom and my friend, my partner who was with me, walked the boat on in closer to the beach. We helped her out. She got out and went up on the shore. But it did scare her to have the water submerge the boat.

CC: I should think so.

CB: We had gotten the motor wet and we had our lobsters in the sack. So we took the motor off and with the sack of lobsters, went up onto the beach. I told my friend, "You stay here with the lobsters and the motor and I'll row the boat down and get our car and come back and get you." I took off my

hip boots and my shirt because it was wet. I just had Levis on in the bare boat without anything in it except the oars. I stood up and waited for a calm time. I started out and got out about 50 yards or so and here comes a line of waves. I got over the first one all right; the second one I just barely got over it. The third one I got up to the base of the wave and it put me over. By this time all the family, the lord, the count, the count's brother, the two countesses and all the maids were standing up on the cliff watching the spectacle. I was swamped and I had to swim the boat back to the beach to get the boat back up on the shore again, tip it over and get all the water out of it. My friend helped me. Then I got ready to do it again. They were still up there watching. I got out in the water and the same darn thing ... The first wave I got over was easy and the next wave, a pretty good sized wave, I just got over the top of that one. The third wave was another big one and I just rowed my heart out. I was standing up rowing and I was exhausted. I went up the face of that wave and I just barely got up on the top and fell over the back of it and made it. I went home, and that was the end of that. My mother, as I mentioned to you, worked for Catherine Smith and for Mrs. Searle. Catherine Smith had purchased some tickets to the La Jolla Black and White Ball, which was an annual fund raiser and was held at the La Jolla Country Club. She gave two tickets to my mother and said, "Maybe your sons would like to have these." My mom said, "Would you like to go to the Black and White Ball?" I called my friend, Bill Eisenhower, and he said, "Sure, let's go." We rented a couple of tuxedos and that evening went up to the Black and White Ball. They had gambling in one room, and dancing with a big band. Everyone was elegant, you know, in their black and white outfits - the ladies in their white gowns and the men in their tuxes. With this one party of people we were talking with momentarily, the two men said, "We'd like to gamble. Would you dance with our wives while we go gamble, and we will buy you a drink or two?" They were very attractive ladies, so we thought, "Yes, that's nice; we'll dance with your wives." The music started and I invited this lady to dance and my friend Bill invited the other lady to dance. This woman said to me, "The most horrible thing happened to me this morning." I asked, "What happened?" "Well," she said, "this crazy fisherman took my maid out in his boat and almost drowned her." "Oh, that's terrible," I said, and let it go at that. The countess' sister told Bill the same thing and Bill said, "Yes, that's my buddy." I got back to the table and that was the end of that. So we went off and enjoyed the ball, but that was the end of our relationship.

CC: That's a fascinating story.

CB: It could only happen in a town with a funny name.

CC: Do you remember which count it was that may have existed in time and history for us?

CB: I could point out the house to you, but I don't remember the name. Tape 2, Side C:

CC: You were going to tell me something about what was it, the game warden?

CB: Yes, the Fish and Game Warden that patrolled along the coast there at Bird Rock and La Jolla. His name was Frank Felton and we got to know him. Of course, he was doing his job and we were trying to make a living catching lobsters. In those days lobsters had to be ten and a half inches between the horn and the end of their tails, unlike how they measure them today. So we had this board, two by four, in the boat with a spike driven in and then it was ten and a half inches from the spike. We would slide the lobster on the board and then measure him that way. Frank would stop us once in a while and get out his board and check to make sure that all the lobsters were ten and a half inches long. And, knowing the value of each lobster, if one was an eighth of an inch short, it was rather difficult to throw them back in the ocean.

CC: Yes, I should think so.

CB: My brother was pretty good at what we call spanning a lobster. By spanning a lobster you could put your thumb down on its tail and just by that pressure of the tail, you could make up that eighth of an inch or so. So we used to count on that. One Saturday morning we had the bait all ready. We had to ... We usually rebaited our traps Saturday morning when we had more time and we didn't have to be at the college. So this one Saturday

morning we were up early. Actually, we had already pulled all our traps and I guess one man took them to market. The two of us went back out in the skiff to rerun the set of traps to bait them, and we were not far into this procedure. We carried binoculars, but we could see pretty well with or without the binoculars. We used to know where to look to see if he (Felton) was watching us. And, sure enough, he was up there watching us. And on those cold mornings we used to also, once in a while, buy a bottle, a gallon, of wine to help keep us warm while we were pulling our traps. So in between, you know, we would work one trap and then while we were running to the next trap, we might take a swig out of that gallon bottle to warm our blood. We were going on baiting these traps, but we kept our backs to the shoreline so as to keep our bodies between ourselves and the traps. We were kind of dramatizing our actions, you know, pretending to put lobsters in the sack, but we would bait and set the trap. The sheephead fish used to gather around the trap and when the water was real clear, you could look down 20 feet or so where the trap was on the bottom. You could see these big sheepheads swimming around the area where the trap was. We used lath traps in those days and there was a space between the lath as wide as the lath. The legs of the lobsters would hang out through these spaces and the sheephead would bite off the legs of the lobster. So, between the eels getting into the traps and getting after the lobsters and the sheepheads biting the legs off, we always wanted to try and pull our traps by early in the day. The lobsters came in overnight. Anyway, we had consumed some of this wine and we were feeling pretty good, so we decided to fish for sheephead before going to shore. We caught some and put them in the bags. We used to use these Union ice bags (these heavy reinforced bags that they used to deliver ice in) to put our lobsters and fish in. We did that for quite a while and then we went in on the beach, decided to throw some wood pieces out off the beach, drink wine and throw pebbles at the wood blocks in the water and see who was the best at throwing rocks. We managed to carry this on all day and it started to get dark. Then we loaded up all our gear, what we did on the beach, took one of these bags and filled it full of seaweed and rocks and junk and carried that bag and our motor and the fish up the bank and crossed the vacant lot to Camino de la Costa. We were opening up the trunk of the car and here comes Frank Felton. He had his lights right on us and he came to a screeching halt right behind us. We had just put down the trunk lid of the car and he said - he didn't say hello or anything - he said, "Open that up." So we opened it up and he reached in and grabbed the bag, turned it over and shook out all this junk. He had been there all day waiting for us. He shook all of this junk -onto the concrete, and you know what he said? "You son of a bitch..." He got in the car, slammed the door and he never bothered us again after that. He was so embarrassed.

CC: (Laughter) Oh, that's a great story! Well, you have one more story for us before we quit.

CB: Going back to Max Miller, our friend ... My brother Jack and I were out pulling our traps one day. My brother has excellent eyes when he is on the ocean. He can see things on the ocean that I can't see. Anyway, this one day we were quite a ways off and he said that there is something in the water, right below the surface of the water down there. He said, "Go over that way." So I ran the motor along and when we were about 50 yards away, he said, "What I would like to do is just get the boat moving in the direction of that ripple in the water." When we are about ten or fifteen yards from it he said, "Turn off the motor and just lift it out of the water." So I did as my brother instructed. We got up in the bow of the boat and we glided up to where the motion was in the water. My brother reached down and slipped his hands in the gills of a big, black sea bass.

CC: Good Lord!

CB: We lifted it up and I went up and helped him slip the fish into the boat. And this is a true story.

CC: How big was it?

CB: Big! I think it was 92 pounds, as I recall. So while we were doing this Max Miller was standing in front of his house on the cliff. My brother said, "Let's make up a story to tell Mr. Miller about this fish." Actually, the true story was better than the one we made up, but my brother said, "Let's tell him that we struck an oar through his gill and caught him on the oar. So we got in there and hauled this big fish up." Max Miller was looking at it and looking at our lobsters like he always did. We told him the story. The next day in the San Diego Sun he wrote about this big, black sea bass that we

had taken this way. He also talked about lobsters and about Frank Felton and how he knew that the smaller lobsters were tastier than the large lobsters. Frank Felton didn't need to tell him that; he knew it and said that the boys know it, too. Then he got into this story about this huge jew fish that we caught. Actually, my brother and I think what happened was that the sheephead was tired and had escaped from a net, or maybe its tail was bruised, or a seal, or something had given it a bad time. So he was just lazying along the top of the water when this happened.

CC: One thing for sure, you don't usually catch a black bass like that by putting your hand down in his gills.

CB: It surprised the heck out of me.

CC: Well, we've had a good chat about all this and I certainly want to thank you. We have learned a lot and it will be a good thing to have in our files. Thank you again for letting us come.

CB: It's a pleasure.

CC: Good. And, incidentally, I will add this on. I am going to try and interview your brother, Jack, about the part he played. Why don't you tell us more about your brother?

CB: Well, after the lobster fishing he got into tuna fishing. And he was an engineer on a tuna clipper, several tuna clippers, that fished all the way down to the equator, at Galapagos, and South America. He had quite a career there and then after he stopped doing that I got him interested in the sport fishing business. For one period of time we worked on a sport fisher together. After I joined the Air Force he went on to become one of the finest marlin skippers in the United States and had terrific success with marlin fishing off southern California.

CC: Good. I will try to set up an interview with him. A man named Bob Wright has interviewed a lot of tuna fishermen. Maybe he will want to talk to Jack about that. He is more knowledgeable about it. We will see. This is in the future. Meanwhile, I thank you. Now look, just before I turn the tape off, what did finally become of you? I mean, you graduated from San Diego State College, didn't you?

CB: I graduated from San Diego State. I worked a little while for the Coca-Cola Company and then I worked for General Foods Corporation, the Birds Eye Division. I received a letter from Uncle Sam in 1952 and I decided to join the U. S. Air Force. After an enlistment period, I went to OCS (Officer Candidate School) and became involved with the control of aircraft, with control towers, and radar approach control. I did that for several years in the United States, Greenland, and Europe. Later I was trained to be an international ballistic launch officer and I worked with the Atlas F missile and the Minuteman II missiles which were capable of delivering a payload over a distance of 6,000 miles. I ended up my career at Headquarters, Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii doing staff work. I retired there and went into the real estate business there on Maui. I was in business for about 12 years. I sold that and retired permanently in 1986.

CC: Good. Well, that was quite a career. Okay, that gets it onto the tape, and thanks, again.

CB: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW
