ORAL HISTORY: ELIZABETH POE KERBY

Interviewed by Larry Ceplair

Completed under the auspices
of the
Center for Oral History Research
University of California
Los Angeles

CONTENTS

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

OCTOBER 6, 2001

CEPLAIR: Betty, why don't we start off by you telling us when and where you were born.

KERBY: Well, I was born in southern New Mexico fifty miles north of the Mexican border in 1921. At that time, New Mexico had a population that was forty-five percent Hispanic, fifty percent Anglo which is what they called anybody who didn't speak Spanish and five percent Native American; which made the whole state a fascinating place to grow up, because of this cultural mix.

CEPLAIR: And what were your parents like? What did they do for a living?

KERBY: Well, my father, James Ralph Poe, was New Mexico State Dairy Commissioner for thirty years, and he was a fascinating man, a remarkable man who learned Spanish as a child at the same time he learned English. His parents brought him to New Mexico in a covered wagon when he was an infant, and he spoke good border Spanish. That served him well as a dairy commissioner because, as the dairy industry developed, laws and regulations had to be changed. He had to write the laws and enforce them. So he would go to the State Legislature and address them in both Spanish and English to tell them what he wanted. He always got what he wanted because he could speak Spanish. My mother, Mabel Parks Poe, was a school teacher. They both had bachelor degrees, which was unusual for people in that time and place. My mother was my second-grade school teacher.

CEPLAIR: Ah. Was your father a political appointee?

KERBY: No. He was appointed by the regents of the state university.

CEPLAIR: I see. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

KERBY: I have two sisters and a brother. One survives. [One of] my sister[s] still survives. Rachell Poe Cochrane survives. Ralph Parks Poe and Pauline Poe O'Neill are deceased.

CEPLAIR: Would you say your parents were political people?

KERBY: My mother was a very civic-minded person. She was involved in things like the Pan-American Roundtable. She and her buddies would meet with women middle-class women from Juarez and they would try to figure out how to get a better park for Juarez or a better school, and she was also very much involved in the university. A major part of my parents lives was involved with the university because they both graduated [from] there. I'm talking about the [New Mexico State] University [at] Las Cruces. I went to school there; I had eight aunts and uncles who went to school there, and both of my sisters and brother went to school there. In 1952, my mother decided that this was two years before *Brown v. Board of Education* she decided that it was terrible that there was a black high school in Las Cruces with 12 kids in it, and she led a movement to abolish that school and gets those kids into the Las Cruces Union High School, which was probably the worst high school in the world. I went to school there. [mutual laughter] And my father was a Democrat, a New Deal Democrat until 1948 when I'll never forget he had changed completely. He began to identify more with the dairy industry than with the farmers, and in 1948 he came in the house and said, "Truman has won. Labor has got the country." [mutual laughter] But the Democratic Party controlled everything that happened in New Mexico in those days. The party was very corrupt, and the president of the board of regents was a very corrupt Democratic ward heeler. Everyone was afraid of him. We were, therefore, instructed not to make any political comment outside the house, ever, and we didn't.

CEPLAIR: So you went to college New Mexico State, is it?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: When you went to college, did you know you were going to be a journalist or a writer?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: How long had you known that about yourself, that that's what you wanted to do?

KERBY: Since I was 15.

CEPLAIR: Really?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: What attracted you to it? Or why did you want to be a journalist?

KERBY: Not because I thought I would be any good at it, because I didn't write very well. I had to work very hard to write well. But because I couldn't figure out anything else to do in that little town. You either had to be a teacher which I knew I couldn't be or you had to be somebody's secretary; and I didn't want to do either of those things. We read the El Paso newspapers; and that looked to me like something I could do. So I started doing journalism in high school, and then in college I wrote a lot of college correspondence for the El Paso papers. I majored in English lit[erature], and when I finished I switched to government, because I knew that was the thing to do to become a journalist.

CEPLAIR: So when did you start at New Mexico State? What year?

KERBY: I was sixteen.

CEPLAIR: 1937?

KERBY: Oh, I must have been older than that. I don't remember. I graduated in '42, and I went there.

CEPLAIR: The start of '38 then. Maybe?

KERBY: Yeah. In those days they skipped kids in elementary school. I don't think they do that anymore, but they skipped me from the third to the fifth grade, so I can't do fourth-grade arithmetic. [mutual laughter]

CEPLAIR: Did you consider yourself a political person when you were in high school and college? Did you have a defined politics?

KERBY: No.

CEPLAIR: Could you tell us what were your politics, then?

KERBY: Well, I think a good course in American history makes a people radical, and that's what I did. I took a course in comparative political systems while I was still an undergraduate, and then I went up to Albuquerque to go to graduate school. There, I took a course called "Constitutional Law", and another one in political theory, and that was it. Those four courses made my political attitude.

CEPLAIR: Did you join any organizations when you were in college or graduate school?

KERBY: No.

CEPLAIR: So you were sort of an independent radical.

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: Is that because you distrusted organizations, or just because you?

KERBY: Just because ethical journalists don't join organizations.

CEPLAIR: No. Okay. So you already had a pretty clear sense of what?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: So, did you get a Masters Degree in the University of New Mexico?

KERBY: No, I was in the middle of doing that when I got a scholarship at Columbia [University]. I finished all of the class work for a masters degree at Albuquerque, but I didn't finish the thesis because I was working writing publicity for the university and going to school at the same time. So I was about ready to take it when I got this fellowship at Columbia. And I said, "Well, that's better than Albuquerque." So I went to Columbia.

CEPLAIR: Would that have been about 1943?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: This is the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

KERBY: Right. Graduate school. They don't have an undergraduate school.

CEPLAIR: And so you moved to New York.

KERBY: Yeah.

CEPLAIR: A country girl going to the city.

KERBY: Heavens! I was wearing bobby socks and saddle oxfords, and I didn't know that women didn't wear those things in Manhattan until I got there. There was a quite a bit of cultural shock. On the other hand, the class at Columbia was from all over the world. It was better than the faculty. It was fabulous: kids from China, Hawaii, Mexico, and Africa, and so I didn't feel as if I was an altogether out-of-place person. Everybody was out of place.

CEPLAIR: So how long were you at the school of journalism?

KERBY: A year.

CEPLAIR: And then did you get a job right after that?

KERBY: That was the best thing about Columbia. They placed everybody in those days. The managing editors came down in March to hire us to go to work the following October. This was during the war, and anybody who could really write was in demand. The *Baltimore Sun* the managing editor hired me, and right out of school.

CEPLAIR: And what kind of stories did you do for the *Baltimore Sun*?

KERBY: I was a generalist. In those days, Columbia was a professional school. You went to school at nine o'clock in the morning carrying your typewriter; you got your assignment. You turned it in by five o'clock at night. I lived in International House, and I had to carry this typewriter back and forth because I had to work at night on the fellowship thesis that I had to write. Columbia Journalism is an academic school now. It's a much different kind of school. Now you do journalism-medicine, journalism-

government, or journalism-law. We were told in 1944 that we were supposed to specialize, but they didn't let us out of that building to go across the street to listen to Mark Van Doren or anybody else. We were really doing professional journalism every day.

CEPLAIR: What was your fellowship thesis?

KERBY: A man named Edward L. Bernays. Have you ever heard of him?

CEPLAIR: Yes. Advertising. The person who started advertising.

KERBY: PR [public relations]. Yes. He gave fellowship money to Columbia, and told them he wanted somebody to write on the attitudes of liberal business men in the United States and the effect of their attitudes on public opinion, or on public action. That was my thesis.

CEPLAIR: Did you enjoy doing it?

KERBY: No, I didn't, because there was no one at Columbia Journalism who could advise me. The person who was assigned to advise me was a *Ladies' Home Journal* editor, and she didn't know anything about liberal business men. So I went down to *The Nation* and talked to Freda Kirchwey. I asked her what she thought I could do, and she gave me a list of people that she thought I should write about. She was really my teacher in that thesis because nobody at Columbia was. Columbia was marvelous in other respects: civic issues, such as "Should the subway fare be increased?" [was what] we had to write about. So, we heard experts on both sides address the entire class, and we wrote a piece and turned it in by five o'clock.

CEPLAIR: So you go to Baltimore, and what sort of?

KERBY: Oh, I didn't answer that.

CEPLAIR: That's okay. What sort of work are you doing in Baltimore?

KERBY: Everything.

CEPLAIR: Everything.

KERBY: A beginner has to do everything. I had to interview the parents of people who were killed in the war. I remember, because my own orientation was always toward government and towards civil liberties issues. One story I remember writing about when somebody tore down a bridge so that some kids had to walk about 2 miles farther to school. I wrote this story, and I said in those days you identified people as black or white so at the fifth paragraph, I said that the kids who had to do this were black. The city editor was not there that day, and the assistant city editor came over to my desk and said, "Don't you think you should have said that these kids were black in the first paragraph?" I said, "No, I don't think so. I think that if people believed this happened to a bunch of white kids for four paragraphs, it might be corrected. If they thought it happened to black kids, probably nothing would happen." That was the kind of stuff I was always mixed up in. I was really a tyro; I didn't know a thing. But so was everybody else; the paper was pretty bad because everybody who could write was in the war. They had two foreign correspondents: one in Europe, one in the Pacific. A man named Price Day was with Patton when he made his first drive into Germany. I'll get to the point of this in a minute. In those days, cable copy didn't have any punctuation. It didn't have any A's, and's, or the's, and somebody in the home office had to do that. So I had to do that for Price Day's big piece on Patton. I was just typing like crazy doing this, and that was the first day I had done a byline story for this paper. The paper had six afternoon editions, and this byline story I did was on some public utility fight. I can't even remember what it was about, but it was very complicated. After I typed [the cable copy], the farther back into the paper my story went until at last, in the end, it was at the end of the paper. And I remember that, just because it was funny. I got out of there as fast as I could, because I hated Baltimore. It was a terrible town. *The Baltimore Evening Sun* had a lovely city editor, but it was not a very good paper. It was still riding on its reputation. I forgot to tell you [the result of] that story about the school children: the city editor came back the next day, and he came over to me and said, "You were right on that argument."

CEPLAIR: So how long were you actually in Baltimore?

KERBY: About a year.

CEPLAIR: So that would have been about 1945 when you left?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: And then you went to New York? Back to New York?

KERBY: No, I didn't. Before I went to New York, I got a job writing as an information specialist for the Soil Conservation Service covering New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Arizona.

CEPLAIR: So, you went back West, then, to do this?

KERBY: Yes. I did that for two years, and then I went to New York. I went to work for *Time*.

CEPLAIR: That would be 1947.

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: Was the Soil Conservation reporting interesting?

KERBY: Some of it was fascinating. You could learn a lot from the scientists, from the botanists, the range specialists, the hydrologists. The bureaucrats were just a bit corrupt. I didn't want to stay there indefinitely, because the SCS bureaucrats were afraid that if they did anything really brave they would lose their jobs, that the cattle industry would get their jobs. So it was a New Deal agency that had lost its teeth, if it ever had any.

CEPLAIR: But that was probably true of most New Deal agencies during the forties.

KERBY: Probably.

CEPLAIR: So then you went to work for *Time* magazine in 1947. What sort of stories did you do for *Time*?

KERBY: I did national affairs. At that time, *Time* was divided up. If you did national affairs, you became a national affairs specialist; if you did something else theater then you were a theater specialist, and you stuck with it. I went to work there that day that Whittaker Chambers pulled his film out of his pumpkin, and everywhere I went people said, "You got a pumpkin?"

CEPLAIR: *Time* was very conservative in those days, wasn't it? Was your copy regularly altered by the editors?

KERBY: If you knew enough, and if you tried hard enough, and if you worked hard enough, you could get what you wanted in that magazine. But you really had to fight. You had to fight a story all the way to the managing editor sometimes to get what you wanted, because most people there were trying to be more royal than the king. So between me and the managing editor were two other editors and a writer to edit whatever I wrote; I was a researcher. I never wrote anything that I didn't believe in, I just argued with people all the time. Fought every day. An argument, for example I was the only person there who had ever been across the Hudson River, and so I had to do all the agricultural stories and all of the Western stuff. Am I being too?

CEPLAIR: No, you're just fine.

KERBY: And 1947 was a Republican Congress; it was the first time in a long time. One of the things that *Time* was constantly saying was how terribly press subsidies were, and that [was] because of terrible Democrats; and [that] FDR had installed this farm subsidy program which was just scandalous. After the Republican Congress was elected, these guys at *Time* kept trying to say the same thing. It was my job to point out we now have a Republican Congress, and they have not repealed a single farm subsidy law. At that time, I remember one of my Columbia teachers, John Chamberlain, was a writer at *Life* magazine, and he was one of the people who recommended me for the *Time* job. I remember when a first big farm subsidy came up in I don't remember what the year was he called me up and asked me what I thought

about it. I said, “Well, we’ve reached the point of no return. These laws will never be repealed.” I did a cover story on the Secretary of Agriculture. When Eisenhower came along to run for president against Stevenson, I decided I couldn’t play the game anymore; that it was just going to be an Eisenhower campaign pamphlet. I asked to get out of that section of the magazine. They put me in the press section, which was even more political than national affairs, but the editor was not a political man. I did anything I wanted in that section. I worked hard and had a lot of fun.

CEPLAIR: Did you have a reputation as being someone who just wouldn’t take no for an answer kind of a gadfly in terms of getting your?

KERBY: My boss told me I had a personality problem. [laughs]

CEPLAIR: One of your later accusers said that you had been active in the American Newspaper Guild. Is that correct?

KERBY: The American Newspaper Guild was not strong then. At one time, I think it had been obviously it had been strong, because there were very detailed job descriptions; there were pay scales for everybody below the editorial level, and they paid them at scale. They didn’t pay them any more, either. They paid their editorial people very well. The company was so paternalistic that, I think, in the five years I worked there I went to about four Guild meetings, and there were about four people at each meeting. All four of us were on the grievance committee, but we had no grievances. The only one I remember I went to work one day, and there was this cable on my desk which said that a stringer in Latin America I can’t remember whether it was Brazil or Argentina had been picked up by his government and dumped penniless in Mexico City without even a toothbrush or a nickel. So I went into the grievance committee meeting I think I went, all told, maybe three of those meetings and I said, “I think we should do something for this stringer stuck in Mexico City without any money.” So they gave him a hundred dollars. One other Guild issue I was involved in was a city-wide committee. I went to one committee meeting which was trying to get publishers to hire more blacks in exposed positions. That was funny,

because the Quakers had a program in those days in which they sent one black and one white to people in every corporation. These teams asked, "How many blacks do you have at this level, or this level?" So we thought we persuaded Henry Luce to have an interview with one of these Quaker teams. It turned out to be Roy Larsen, who handled all that stuff for Luce, and those offices were on the thirty-third floor of that building. I happened to go up on the thirty-third floor that day to do something or other, and everybody in sight was black. That was not a campaign, that was just the way that company operated. Their personnel policies were good, and What did you ask me?

CEPLAIR: If you were active in the American Newspaper Guild.

KERBY: Oh. The only other Guild issue I remember being involved in was at that meeting where we were talking about hiring blacks. The Guild had two organizers in New York; then there was a vacancy, and somebody said, "Why don't we hire a black for this vacancy?" And I said, "Great! Have you got one?" "No." And I remember having an argument with this woman and saying, "How can we have a black organizer if you haven't even got a candidate for this job?" She said, "We have to have a black organizer." And I thought, "Well, I'm talking to somebody who's got a party line." I don't know whether I was right or not, but that was the conclusion I reached. I never heard another word about that; I don't know who was hired. That was my total Guild activity.

CEPLAIR: Okay. Was the Guild being red-baited in those days?

KERBY: It had been. I think all of the militant people had been red-baited out of the Guild before I ever joined *Time*. Among the four people that I knew who went to these three meetings [were] one girl from *Fortune*, one guy from *Life*, one guy from the library and me.

CEPLAIR: At one of our previous discussions, you told me of a very interesting civil defense loyalty oath story.

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: Why don't you tell us?

KERBY: I love that story. When I was working in the press section, some baby bureaucrat down in the Civil Defense Department of New York City decided that reporters should sign loyalty oaths. I decided that was a way to close down the *Daily Worker* and the *National Guardian*. I just called this city bureaucrat and asked him a lot of questions. And he said, "Oh, you're one too." That was the only time I ever shivered in my twenty years working as a journalist. That really was scary and frightening. I mean, scaring me, but this guy did. The plan they had was to send a kit that reporters were supposed to sign, and when they signed it, they got an arm band which would permit them to cross the police line in a civil defense emergency. This was the plan, it looked to me. That was when everybody felt that the Russians were going to bomb New York city any minute. This was a plan to close down the *Daily Worker* and the *National Guardian*, and anybody else that didn't want to sign that oath in the case of a civil emergency. I said that to this guy. I said, "Is that what you are doing?" He was not very sophisticated man, and he didn't really answer that question. Anyway, they sent these kits out, and I called up the *Daily Worker* and I said, "What are you going to do about these?" They said, "They didn't sent us any." I called the Civil Defense Office and said, "What is this? You didn't send any kits to the *Daily Worker* or the *National Guardian.*" "Oh! We forgot!" So we were on a story that was when you could get anything in that press section. So we ran a story pointing out that the city had forgotten to send these loyalty oaths to the *Daily Worker* and the *National Guardian*. So the next week I called them up and said, "What's happened to your loyalty oath program?" and they said, "Well, we decided to drop that." I love that story.

CEPLAIR: Were there any repercussions on you personally from him?

KERBY: Oh, no; none. The editor of that section, Joe Purtell, was happy for any kind of a story. He had no political attitudes, and he did not regard that story as a politically loaded story. It was just the way things were, and he was a great crook. But you don't want to hear why he was crook.

CEPLAIR: Did the Cold War atmosphere affect you in any other way during those years when you were working for *Time*?

KERBY: Oh, yes. The Cold War was not as bad as World War II when I was in Baltimore. This feeling of being in the war was all over, and I remember feeling, "Why don't they draft me? Then I wouldn't feel so bad." But the Cold War atmosphere at *Time* was hot. I covered the [Alger] Hiss trial one day. We passed his trial story around; there were about six of us working on it. I was working in national affairs during his trials; during the Smith Act trials; during the William Remington trial; during the Judith Coplon trial. All these were very hot stories, and [required] very detailed coverage every week. The Hiss trials got to be so horrendous to cover that we finally made a rule that we wouldn't discuss the Hiss trial at lunch that day unless a new piece of evidence was offered. It was tough; everything was. Everything on every political issue was tough. There were two or three people working in national affairs who shared my views. I didn't have to fight with them. I didn't have to fight with the managing editor, either, if I had to take a story to him. Researchers had the right to go over the head of everybody, and go to the managing editor and say, "Fix this." Anyway, if you ever got to the managing editor with something, you usually won. I remember working in the press section. I was working with a man named Richard Clurman, who became rather well-known later. He wrote a story in which he described somebody as a Negro maid, and I said "This is not germane. Why are you calling this person a Negro?" The rule by then was you didn't do that unless it was germane to the story. He argued with me; he wanted it in there. I took the story to Otto Feuerbringer, who was our managing editor, and he said, "It doesn't seem to matter, so I guess we'll leave it in." That was the only time I ever lost a fight at the managing editor level. There were fights like that going on every day. They were not always political. I did a story about a guy who had arthritis had such serious arthritis that he couldn't. His hips were fixed. He was a salesman; he had to carry heavy bags and he was one of the first people who was given cortisone. So I wrote a long story about this guy, because he got so desperate that he went out and robbed a bank not a bank but a bar. This was very much out of character. He was a Sunday school teacher; he was a very nice guy. Everybody loved him. And so the

judge who was supposed to sentence him said, “We don’t know enough about the transitory effect of cortisone to tell whether this man should be sentenced, because it might be [a result of the cortisone]; since it was so out of character for him to become a robber, we should be kind to him.” So they didn’t sentence him. And I wrote this long story, and after I wrote it I went into my editor and said, “I think we should kill this story because it is going to scare the wits out of everybody in the United States who is taking cortisone.” I’m telling you this story just because it’s a typical fight that went on there. It was a very unprofessional position for me to take, he felt. But one of the things that they taught you at Columbia was not to feature a medical story. Because you were always in the position of scaring the wits out of people or of encouraging people that something some new cure had been found, and so you didn’t do that. It’s completely different today, every medical story is on page one all the time now. So I told this editor I didn’t think we should run this story, that it was going to scare everybody taking cortisone. He went in to makeup, and when those editors came out of makeup they were white in the face because everything they did affected millions of people, and he came over to me and he said, “I want you to know we killed that cortisone story, but not for the reason that you gave.” [mutual laughter] “We killed it because we thought some other story was better.” That was the kind of fight that was constant at *Time*, and at least as far as I was concerned.

CEPLAIR: What were the circumstances under which you left *Time*?

KERBY: Well, that’s pretty funny. You know, *Time* had the best correspondents in the world in those days. They had really terrific people, and you could learn an awful lot just by reading their copy. They got enough copy in that magazine from their correspondents from all over the world every week, at least five magazines [worth] and all that stuff went to the waste paper basket. They really wasted people, and *Life* was that way too. *Life* was worse, and after I had been there about three years I decided, “I’ve learned everything I’m going to learn in this place. I’ve got to find some other place to go.” And I started looking around town. I applied for jobs around town and it didn’t turn into anything, but *Frontier* was coming across my desk, and I started looking at that, [and realized] “That’s the magazine I want to work for!” I

had a sister, Pauline O'Neill, who was living here, and so I flew out here and called up Phil Kerby and asked him for a job.

He said, "How would you like to go to dinner?"

And I said, "Okay."

And then the next night he said, "How would you like to go to dinner?"

And I said, "Okay." And he said, "How would you like to get married?" [mutual laughter]

I said, "I'll think about that."

So I went back to New York and he flew back to New York in about three weeks. So we decided to get married in two weeks.

CEPLAIR: Wow.

KERBY: Married for forty years.

CEPLAIR: That's amazing.

KERBY: A *Ladies' Home Journal* story.

CEPLAIR: And he hired you to write for *Frontier*.

KERBY: No!

CEPLAIR: No.

KERBY: He didn't have any money.

CEPLAIR: Ah.

KERBY: But I wrote for *Frontier*.

CEPLAIR: Well, tell me a little bit about *Frontier*. Who started it? What sort of a magazine was it?

KERBY: Gifford Phillips was the publisher; Gifford had a great deal of money which he had inherited. His family was Jones and Laughlin Steel. Gifford decided he wanted to be a publisher in Denver. Phil was working on the Denver Post and winning prizes here and there. So Gifford called Phil and asked him to start a magazine, which they called the *Rocky Mountain News*. I don't know how long they did that. Not long. Anyway, Phil said "What we really should be doing is moving to Los Angeles and running a political magazine." There was no liberal magazine in Los Angeles, nothing but the *Los Angeles Times*, which was really bad in those days. Gifford was a Republican, and he was a lot younger than Phil. Phil was sort of a father figure for him, and turned him around politically.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

OCTOBER 6, 2001

CEPLAIR: Okay, this is the second side of tape one, and we're going to go back for another political problem that Mrs. Kerby ran into at *Time* magazine around the firing of General [Douglas] MacArthur.

KERBY: Yes. I thought the way to handle that story was to answer the question "Why?" And then anything else [that] was very important about it. Why did [Harry S] Truman do that? So, I went back months, and I wrote a story in which I listed all the things that MacArthur had done that angered Truman, including going down to see Chiang Kai-shek. MacArthur acted like a damned eastern potentate and they had been fighting. Truman finally flew to Wake Island to meet him, and MacArthur stayed in his little tin hut for forty-five minutes after Truman landed, did you know that?

CEPLAIR: Yes.

KERBY: I've heard that denied. I don't know whether it is true or not. What do you know about that?

CEPLAIR: You know, it is one of those stories that probably it should be true if it isn't.

KERBY: Right. Anyway, I just wrote a list of all the things that MacArthur had done that angered Truman, that would anger any president. Truman was that was one of his finest hours, and he didn't have very many. The way *Time* was structured, the person that was in charge of hiring and firing researchers, had no influence on what was published. The writers and the editors did that. So, Content Peckham, by boss, went to the writer, Louis Bank, for whom I had written this long piece of research. Content said, "This is terrible. What do you think about this thing that Betty wrote about Harry Truman?" And Louis says, "I liked it." It saved me. The first television broadcast I ever saw was that week when they brought a television set in our office, so that we could hear MacArthur address Congress. One of the things we got every week from the Washington bureau was called the Washington Report, and MacArthur said something or other that sounded as if he had read that report. And when he said that, all the national

affairs researchers burst out laughing. Everybody important at the magazine was sitting in the room and heard the national affairs researchers laughing at General MacArthur. And we got a message from our boss, "The national affairs researchers behaved very badly." It was like being slapped in the face with a glove. It was the only time that anything like that happened to me at *Time*. It was a pretty square place to work; you could challenge anybody; it was expected. The ideal was if anybody knew anything, they should say it. I remember sitting in a story conference once when the national affairs editor said, "Let's do a story on the Dust Bowl. We'll do it under "weather.'" And I said, "But dust bowls are not caused by weather. They are caused by farming practices." Somebody in the back of the room who was a buddy of mine said, "Listen to her! She knows!" And that story ran under "disaster." That editor couldn't give two lines to the fact that dust bowls were caused by greedy farmers, suitcase farmers, they were called who would plow up land that shouldn't be cultivated because it didn't get enough rain and that's what was going on that would just blow. That's what the dust bowls were about.

CEPLAIR: So Phil Kerby and Gifford Phillips had started this *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver, and what was its goal? What did they want to do with the magazine, or what did they want the magazine to do?

KERBY: I don't know, because I didn't know them, and I didn't know what they were doing. I think they thought they could publish a regional picture magazine. No regional magazine in this country that I know of has ever worked, except an academic magazine like the *Kenyon Review* or something like that. But again and again, the Saturday Evening Post or Collier's would send people out here to set up bureaus, and it never worked. That Rocky Mountain News didn't work, and so Phil persuaded Gifford to come out here and start a political magazine, a liberal political magazine. This was in 1949, and they expected to be before they came, that they would have the support of the Democratic Party. [tape recorder off]

CEPLAIR: All right. We were talking about *Frontier* coming to Los Angeles to be a liberal political journal in 1949.

KERBY: Yes. It was, of course, the wrong era to do that, because they did not get any support from the Democratic Party since at that time people like Jimmy Roosevelt who had been important in the California Democratic Party were taking a pro-[Joseph] McCarthy line that Phil couldn't go along with. Phil and Gifford thought of themselves as ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] liberals at that time. But the ADA wouldn't go along with them either. I mean, they wouldn't go along with what the ADA was doing. That's the way I should put that. So they did not get the kind of support that they expected to get from the liberal community here in Los Angeles, because it was so divided on the McCarthy issue, and that's why they had such a struggle.

CEPLAIR: Phil, I know, wrote an article in the New Republic for June 1952 called "The Legion Blacklist." Had you read that prior to meeting him?

KERBY: No.

CEPLAIR: Or was that after you had met him?

KERBY: No. I didn't meet him until 1953.

CEPLAIR: Oh. Okay. So had you read this article?

KERBY: Uh-uh.

CEPLAIR: Had you done any work at all on the blacklist before coming to Los Angeles?

KERBY: No. In the sense sometimes American newspapermen were blacklisted because of their political views, and I did stories about that in the *Time* press section, but I didn't know anything at all about the Hollywood blacklist aside from what everybody knew about the [Hollywood] Ten.

CEPLAIR: Now your first article at *Frontier* was entitled "Silver City: Who Caused The Trouble?" and it appeared in the May 1953 issue. It was six pages, and it referred to the making of *Salt of the Earth*. How did you happen to get on to that story?

KERBY: I was at Las Cruces on a vacation one year, and the El Paso papers were full of these strikers being jailed, which was very unusual and strange at that time, and so I wanted to know what was going on. So I borrowed my mother's car and drove to Silver City, which is one hundred and twenty miles. I wouldn't do that now, but I was not afraid of anything in those days. Clint Jencks was in jail; I met Clint Jencks for the first time when he was in jail. This was while I was still working for *Time*. I hadn't even met Phil. But I simply wanted to know what was going on over there, because it was so weird. I knew that I couldn't get *Time* to do anything about it, and I didn't expect I could get anybody to do anything about it, but I wanted to know what was happening and that's how I first got into that story. After I married Phil, and Paul and Herbert were being driven out of Silver City.

CEPLAIR: That's Paul Jarrico and Herbert Biberman.

KERBY: Yeah. Yeah. You know, you're a good journalist. [mutual laughter] So Phil says, "I've got to get that story!" I said, "All right, I'll go get it," and I went to Silver City, which I had been to many times in my youth because my mother's sister lived there and she raised her family there. I knew people in Silver City, but I didn't go interview any of my relatives or even let them know I was in town because I knew they wouldn't talk to me. I went to Silver City and interviewed Clint and Virginia [Jencks]. Then I talked to the filling station operators who had driven the people the Salt of the Earth people out of town, and tried to find out what they were up to and why. I talked to a priest and one of his buddies. The one I liked the best was the man who told me, "You know, during war we're Americans, and during election we're Spanish-Americans. And the rest of the time we are just damned old Mexicans." Empire Zinc actually on their payroll had things like seven Mexicans. No names, just seven Mexicans. I worked very hard on that story, but I didn't feel that I really nailed it. I really didn't quite understand this. I understood Las Cruces. Had this happened in Las Cruces, people like my parents would not have paid any attention to it. They certainly would not have driven anyone out of town. But there probably would have been a few wild men who would have, just as there were in Silver City. I mean, sensible people, I was going to say middle class but that sounds terrible sensible people in Silver City were not involved in that.

CEPLAIR: Did you talk at any length with Paul Jarrico, or Herbert Biberman, or any of the movie people who were doing *Salt of the Earth* at that time?

KERBY: Yeah. I talked to them at length before I went there.

CEPLAIR: So that was your first real introduction to the blacklist then?

KERBY: Right.

CEPLAIR: Now, about a year later you came out with another story called "The Hollywood Story," which was twenty pages. That is really, as far as I can tell, the first full story on the blacklist the first well-researched and well-documented. Did that just come out naturally out of the Silver City story?

KERBY: No. I did that story, which was extremely hard work. It took me a year. When I came to Los Angeles, I couldn't figure out why all these literate people like Dalton Trumbo and Paul Jarrico and Herbert Biberman hadn't written this story or hadn't got it published. In New York, nobody knew that three hundred people were blacklisted. Everybody knew that ten people were blacklisted. And so, when I came out here, I was puzzled about that. Phil was then on a committee that was called the Citizens Committee to Defend American Freedoms. This committee was set up to fight the House Un-American Activities Committee. The people in the U.A. committee included Larry Sperber, an attorney; a retired Methodist minister; Pauline Finn; a few other people whose names I don't recall. So I started going to those meetings, and I realized then that this was a very big story and that nobody was writing it. The *Los Angeles Times* hadn't touched it. Bosley Crowther, who was movie critic of *The New York Times* at that time, told me he came out here and spent two weeks and couldn't get the story. The reason he couldn't get it was, of course, that he didn't talk to the blacklisted people, and they were the only people who would talk about it. The other thing was that, that Gordon Kahn's book was sob journalism. Nobody wanted to sob about what was happening to American communists in the early fifties. Nobody cared. And I knew that what had to be done was a well- documented, carefully detailed description of what had happened, and I decided that I would write that kind of story because I didn't have to work for a living then; Phil

was supporting me. Finally, I could do what I wanted to do. I knew how to do that kind of story; I learned how to do that by reading the *New Yorker*. I certainly didn't learn how to do that kind of story reading *Time* magazine.

CEPLAIR: So, how did you approach the story? What was your?

KERBY: I called up Adrian Scott and talked to him, told him what I wanted to do and asked him if he thought the blacklisted people would talk to me, and he said, "Yes." He told me to talk to Paul Jarrico, and then I went from one man to another. Sylvia Jarrico called people up to tell them that I was safe, that I wouldn't attack them. I couldn't interview anybody before she did that. I interviewed people sitting in cars in the street with the motor running. People would I mean, there was so much fear that when I would ring somebody's doorbell, all the curtains would be pulled down. I could see somebody peeking around the curtain to make sure it was Betty Kerby and not some FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] guy. There was enormous fear, and people like Adrian Scott one of the ten told me that his phone would ring in the middle of the night and the FBI would be on the phone, and they would just breathe into the phone. There was so much fear that nobody wanted to. If you got a job in some store selling milk, the FBI would go to them and say, "You don't want to hire this guy. He's blacklisted." So nobody wanted to tell anybody where they were working. I can't exaggerate the fear that existed here. When Frank Wilkinson was black. You know Frank?

CEPLAIR: Yes, I do.

KERBY: When Frank was blacklisted, his wife lost her teaching job; but that's the way it went.

CEPLAIR: Did you talk to any studio people when you were doing this?

KERBY: I tried to, but they wouldn't discuss the subject.

CEPLAIR: Would they at least meet with you? Or they just wouldn't even do that?

KERBY: They wouldn't return my phone calls.

CEPLAIR: Okay. So you got all your information basically came from the blacklisted people.

KERBY: And agents.

CEPLAIR: And agents.

KERBY: It had to be agents, who were very frightened, too. At that time I knew a young man whom you know, who will not be named here who was an agent, and he got interviews for me with other agents, and it was vital to talk to these people because they confirmed what the blacklisted people told me.

CEPLAIR: You couldn't use their names, right? They had to be anonymous sources?

KERBY: Right.

CEPLAIR: Did you talk to any people in the labor movement while you were doing this particular story?

KERBY: Yes. I talked to Herbert Sorrell.

CEPLAIR: Did you talk to Roy Brewer at this time?

KERBY: No. *The New York Times* correspondent here at that time I have forgotten his name—I went to see him. He says, "Oh. Why don't you go talk to Roy Brewer?" He actually was frightened. He had never written this story. He had been sitting on it for five years, and he'd never written it. He was such a jerk. The only newspaper man who would talk to me was the editor of *Daily Variety* and he told me lots of things.

CEPLAIR: Did you talk to any of the Guild people? You know, like the Screen Writers Guild and the Screen Actors Guild?

KERBY: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I talked to two screen actors, and I talked to people who were officers in the Screen Actors Guild; Anne Revere was one.

CEPLAIR: Yeah, but I mean like the officers of the Guild, people like Ronald Reagan, or.

KERBY: Well, Reagan was long gone. He was governor of California by then.

CEPLAIR: No. He was.

KERBY: He wasn't in Hollywood, though. Maybe he wasn't governor, but he wasn't here. I don't know what he. He wasn't an actor in Hollywood at that time.

CEPLAIR: No, I think he was still with the Motion Picture Industry Council. I could be wrong. But, anyway, did you talk to any Guild officers at the time? Because they were, in some ways, complicit with the blacklist.

KERBY: I don't think so. All of the Ten had been officers in the Guild at one time or another, or most of them. But I don't recall interviewing any of the members, or any of the people who were active officers in the Guild at that time. I didn't even try to talk to people who were still in the industry, because, as a general rule, they'd say, "What blacklist?" There was just no point in it.

CEPLAIR: What was the general response to the article when it appeared?

KERBY: I was just absolutely astonished. It just created a sensation. *The New York*

Times guy wrote a column about it. Did you see that?

CEPLAIR: Yes.

KERBY: Which was very inaccurate. I was just flabbergasted at that. He said that everybody in Hollywood was talking about this piece. And *The Nation* wrote a very nice editorial about it, and I knew the man, Jack McManes, who was general manager of the *National Guardian* in New York at that time. He tried to get the whole thing reprinted in the *National Guardian*, but he didn't. He wrote me a nice letter. I got all kinds of mail amazing mail about it. I got a letter from Robert Hutchins or Phil did and I got a letter from Carl Ackerman, who was Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at that time.

CEPLAIR: Did you get any negative comments or letters from any of the anti- communists?

KERBY: I can't remember any. Oh! I remember! Do you know who Victor Lasky was?

CEPLAIR: Yes.

KERBY: I quoted him in that story saying that a psychologist out here was doing a land office business helping informers be informers, and he wrote me a letter denying that that's what he was doing. He says that was just a figure of speech. I can't remember what was in that letter, but it's in that file somewhere. And I think that that's the only negative letter I remember. Phil may have gotten some that I didn't see, but I don't recall them. Most of the people were astonished at that story, and I couldn't figure out why because everybody in town knew there was a Hollywood blacklist, and a lot of people knew who was on it. I got what I thought was remarkable support; and Carey McWilliams asked me to write a shorter version of it for *The Nation*, which he accepted and never published.

CEPLAIR: Do you know why?

KERBY: No, I do not know why. I have my ideas, but I'm not going to say it.

CEPLAIR: I also noticed that you had written or drafted a story about payoffs for clearances which you submitted to *Time*, but that was not published. What can you tell me about the background of that story?

KERBY: Yeah. *Time* got tipped that George Sokolsky was taking money to clear people, and so they sent us out here and asked me to. By that time, *Time* knew what I was doing, and was the man [Barron Bershoar] who was the Beverly Hills Bureau chief was a friend of mine. And he liked me, and liked what I was doing. His name was Barron Bershoar. He's dead now. And so Barron asked me to do that, to check out the George Sokolsky tip. That's what that story was about checking out that tip.

CEPLAIR: But *Time* refused to run that story.

KERBY: Right.

CEPLAIR: Because it wasn't documented well enough, or they just didn't because they were afraid of it?

KERBY: *Time* did not initiate stories. Had the *New York Times* done that, they would have run it. They wanted to know what was going on, but they didn't want to publish it. Most of that story, as you noticed, was rumor.

CEPLAIR: Yeah.

KERBY: You couldn't say, "Well, this guy took a bribe and that guy gave a bribe." You just couldn't get anybody to, everybody knew who was doing what and who was bribed. And those rumors were true, but, of course, I couldn't prove them.

CEPLAIR: All right, let's get into the Fund for the Republic report. You said that Hutchins, who was the president of the fund, approached you and asked you to expand your *Frontier* story into a fund-sponsored book. Then in your files, there are two letters you sent him in September 1953 outlining your proposal. Why did he retreat from that? Or maybe you could tell me what went on there.

KERBY: I don't know why he did. But he called me up and asked me for my advice on what the Fund for the Republic should do about the Hollywood blacklist. I said, "You should publish a book," and he said, "Will you do it?" I said, "Yes." "How long would it take you?" and I hesitated, and he said, "Six months?" And I said, "If I had some help, I could do it in six months. I haven't gone into the trade union background of the blacklist, and that's one of the things that has yet to be done," and he said, "Okay, I'll have to get it through my board." I never heard from him again.

CEPLAIR: Maurice Isserman, who wrote a biography of Michael Harrington, said that Hutchins was looking for an editor who would be difficult to smear as a communist supporter. Do you suppose that he heard rumblings about you being friendly to communists?

KERBY: Yeah. I'm sure that I'm sure that Paul Jacobs and Max Mont and all those people told them that I was a Red or pro-Red, and that's why he backed off.

CEPLAIR: So, aside from that initial approach, you didn't talk to him again about this?

KERBY: At one staff meeting. No, I never talked I never asked him, "Why did you do this to me?"

CEPLAIR: And then he chose John Cogley, who was the editor of Commonweal and was a liberal Catholic, to head the report. Cogley wrote that he had been introduced to Hutchins by Leo Rosten. Did you know Cogley prior to this? You know nothing about him? Did you know Leo Rosten?

KERBY: I knew his reputation. I knew what he had written.

CEPLAIR: Cogley said that his first choice for his staff was Michael Harrington because, quote, "He knew the ins and outs of the communist party better than any other non-communist of my acquaintance," end quote. And then he told the House Un-American Activities Committee, "I asked Harrington to join me in trying to get an overall picture of this situation before we chose the staff, so that we would know what kind of a staff to choose," end of quote. Did you know Michael Harrington at that time, or anything about him?

KERBY: No. He was not known then. He hadn't written his famous books at that time.

CEPLAIR: Then they came to Hollywood in September. According to Cogley, they met first with William Gordon who, I guess, was a publicist at Universal and, according to Cogley, the only person that he knew in the industry. And Gordon said, "There is a blacklist here, and there's a story, but it's important that you convince the industry that we are not attacking it." And he said that he believed you would have difficulties talking to industry people. Did you know who Gordon was, or anything about him?

KERBY: Never heard of him.

CEPLAIR: At any rate, Gordon sent them to Martin Gang. Who, as you know, was the attorney who was responsible for getting people to testify in a way that wouldn't get them blacklisted. At any rate, they said they interviewed other industry leaders, and then Cogley returned to New York, leaving Michael

Harrington to hire the rest of the West Coast staff. So, is that right? Did Michael Harrington actually? Was he the one who approached and hired you? Or how did you get hired?

KERBY: They horsed around, and I thought they weren't going to have, I don't know how I know this. You see, Hutchins never told me that he was not going to use me, but he called up Bob Kenny. He knew Bob Kenny, and he knew that Kenny was a friend of mine, and he told Kenny that he went back East, and or somebody back East told him he couldn't do a book on the Hollywood blacklist, that he had to do a book on the eastern TV industry, which was in the East at that time and therefore he had to hire somebody to do this who could do both posts, which was a pretty silly rationalization. I knew more about the East Coast than Cogley ever knew about the West Coast. Now, what was your question? Let me give you that answer; otherwise there was something else I wanted to tell you about that.

CEPLAIR: Who actually hired you?

KERBY: Oh, yeah. So at that time, Hutchins told Cogley to hire me to do the Hollywood stuff. I waited for more than a month. I don't know how I knew this. I can't remember how I knew this. He may have told Bob Kenny that, but I didn't hear from Hutchins; I didn't hear from Cogley; I didn't hear from anybody. So finally, I sent Cogley a resume and said, "What are you doing? Here's who I am!" So Cogley and Harrington finally came out here and hired me, but they took their time about it. They told me that the motion pictures studios would not talk to me, and that I had to find somebody else. They had to find somebody else who would talk to the motion pictures studios. I said, "That's just a ball of nonsense. I have talked to the motion pictures studios for *Time* and *Life* all the time." During that period I was working for *Time* and *Life* maybe two, three days a week, and for *Frontier* a couple of days a week. And the answer from Harrington to that statement was, "Oh, but not on this subject. You were not allowed at *Time* magazine to do political work." I was too intimidated for some reason or other to say, "I didn't do anything but political work at *Time* magazine for five years!" I didn't answer him because, out here, I didn't do political work for *Time*. I did a story once in a while on somebody's campaign for Congress or something like that. On the whole he treated me the way newspaper men treat women. That is, you do the

art stories, you do the music, and you do the theater, but you don't do anything that is really important. And the reason why I wasn't really annoyed with this was that I did a lot of wonderful art stories for *Life* and *Time* that I had a lot of fun with, and so I didn't care.

CEPLAIR: So did you meet Cogley when he came out on his first trip, which was, as far as I can tell, September 1954?

KERBY: I don't know whether that was his first trip.

CEPLAIR: Okay. You sent Cogley a letter on October 14, 1954 in which you write, "Michael Harrington tells me you would like a specific description of the work I want to do in expanding my work on the blacklist," and then you basically do a seven page memo outlining how you would approach the subject. Did Cogley respond to that letter?

KERBY: His response was to hire me.

CEPLAIR: Just to hire you. And then he also said that, on that trip, Michael Harrington hired Paul Jacobs and Dorothy Jones.

KERBY: Yes! Dorothy Jones.

CEPLAIR: Did you know Jacobs and Jones?

KERBY: No.

CEPLAIR: At that time?

KERBY: No. Oh, I knew who Jacobs was. He had a reputation as a journalist that you couldn't follow on a story, because he didn't check anything out. I mean, people at *Time* and *Life* knew that about him.

CEPLAIR: Well, I guess he had been a member of a communist youth group, and then had become an outspoken anti-communist. I guess he had been very active in the effort to deport Harry Bridges. Cogley said that Jacobs had spoken with Gordon about the project prior to Cogley's trip, and that Jacobs told

them, Cogley and Harrington, that Gordon, Roy Brewer and other people in the industry had discussed this project prior to Cogley's arrival. Were you aware of that, that there was a? So you didn't know the people knew about the project before they came. At any rate, Cogley said that Jacobs had excellent contacts in the industry and in the labor movement, and was recommended to him by Gordon, Max Mont, Martin Gang, Victor Riesel, and Halleck Hoffman who was Hutchins' assistant as an "active and well informed anti-communist." Then Cogley said, "When I met him, he seemed to be a balanced person who combined a loathing for Communism with an unwavering respect for democratic processes." Do you have any comments?

KERBY: Yeah. The problem. When I found out that Jacobs was going to be on this project, I went to Cogley and said, "I cannot work with this man. I won't have lunch with him. I won't work for you unless you assure me that he is not allowed to see my work or anything off the record that I send you." The problem with Jacobs was he had been a communist. That was known. It was known that he got to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], because it was well-known at that time that if you were publicly an ex-communist, the FBI hounded you and got you to tell them everything you knew. This was like having an FBI man on the project. I said, "Now, we have some serious security issues here." For example, Anne Revere. Were you acquainted with the Clint Jencks case, and how it went to the Supreme Court?
CEPLAIR: Yes.

KERBY: All right. That was going on at the time. I said, "I'm going to interview Anne Revere. She's been an officer in the Screen Actors Guild, and she took the Fifth Amendment. Now, the government hasn't discovered her yet. As soon as they do, they'll do the same thing to her that they've done to Clint Jencks. This is a serious security problem. I cannot be responsible for writing an interview with Anne Revere knowing that this guy Jacobs might read it and tell the government that there's a Taft- Hartley law that she has violated." I told Halleck Hoffman that that was one of the reasons why I thought it was a very serious mistake to have Jacobs on this project because of the security issue. Jacobs was an active member of the American Civil Liberties Union, and Eason Monroe was the director of the Union at that time.

Eason was having a lot of trouble with him, and so he said, "I'll put him on the board. Maybe I can shut him up that way." As soon as he did that soon after he did that Eason invited Corliss Lamont to come out here and give a speech. Jacob then went to Eason and said, "If you don't rescind that invitation, I'm going to resign from the board of the Civil Liberties Union and attack it as a communist-dominated organization." And I knew that about Jacobs. I don't remember whether I told Halleck Hoffman that but, I knew he was that kind. He was a blacklister. I couldn't figure out how he could be on this project.

CEPLAIR: I'm going to turn off the tape recorder, and I'm going to show you a staff list for the people who were working on the report and ask you to look it over and tell me if you have any comments about any of the other people on the list. Okay, I'm turning off the recorder now. [tape recorder off] We're back on.

KERBY: On this list there is somebody named Margaret Bushong, I believe that she was a *Time* researcher and that I knew her. I'm not sure. There was one there's a list of them here named Harriet Davis [Dryden], I remembered talking to her in New York. I knew Edward Engberg, because he came out here and interviewed me. Harrington? You want me to tell you what I think about him now?

CEPLAIR: If you wish.

KERBY: All right. When he put Jacobs on this project, he said that, "The motion picture industry will not talk to you, so we have to have Paul Jacobs to talk to them, and you will then interview the blacklisted people, and he will interview the studio people." During the time this thing was going on, this all went on for two years. I don't know why I didn't die while it was going on, it was so traumatic. He said, "You interview the blacklisted people." So, during this time, the House Committee came out here and had a hearing, and they subpoenaed an actress named Angela Clarke. I didn't even go to the hearing, because I knew what she was going to do and who she was. Paul Jacobs went to the hearing, and handed her his card and asked her for an interview which meant, of course, that Harrington had never told Jacobs that he was not supposed to interview blacklisted people. But Harrington had this scheme that he thought would

work, that Jacobs could somehow or other blunt my research, or put down my research. I think that's what he was on the project for. Harrington figured out this scheme where I would do the blacklisted people and Jacobs would do the studio, but he never told Jacobs about that. He's a two-faced man. Jacobs went to

England during this time, and Harrington by then knew I wouldn't talk to Jacobs or have anything to do with him, and he went out of his way to tell me that the fund was not paying for this trip. This was a private trip. But Jacobs [had] sent a memo around to all these people, including me, asking them for the names of all the blacklisted people that they knew in England, or Europe. This was additional proof that he had never been told that he wasn't supposed to interview blacklisted people. I knew about an actor who lived in England, who had told his friends here that he did not want me to write to him because he was sure there was a mail cover, and he didn't want anybody in England to know about his problems here. Everything Jacobs did indicated that he was working for the FBI. He was trying to get this man's name. Of course, I wouldn't give it to him. I wouldn't give him any names. And I don't know whether Jacobs was working with the FBI or not, but everything he did made me suspicious of him. The first interview I handed in was with Paul Jarrico, and Harrington read it and said, "This is not very objective!" I didn't say anything to him, but you forget lies you know, and you forget a lie that you've told. He had forgotten that he told me that I was supposed to represent the blacklisted people, so that when I handed in an interview with Paul Jarrico, which represented Paul Jarrico, Harrington complained that it wasn't objective, which sent another clue to what he was up to. He spent a lot of time in my conversations with Harrington and Cogley telling Cogley that he had interviewed a lot of people about *Frontier* magazine, and that nobody thought it was a good magazine. He was saying this to Cogley in my presence. I don't know what he was doing or why he was doing this, but I think he was trying to convince Cogley not to pay any attention to me to my work. At the same time, a friend of mine had applied for a job on this staff, and Harrington told her that my *Frontier* work was wonderful. And that's what I think of Mr. Harrington.

CEPLAIR: Is there any other name, are there any other names of people who you suspected of being of the Harrington-Jacobs sort of? Who you distrusted?

KERBY: Howard Costigan was a blacklister. He was one of the clearance men. And Harold Horowitz was a very smart guy. I interviewed him before I wrote anything. He was one of my major sources. He was the one who put me on to the American Legion and what they were up to.

CEPLAIR: He was a professor of law at Stanford [University], right?

KERBY: Yeah. Yeah. And he was living here. I think I footnote him in my.

CEPLAIR: Yeah. And he.

KERBY: C [inaudible] piece.

CEPLAIR: And he did a legal analysis for the report.

KERBY: Yeah.

CEPLAIR: Okay. I'm going to stop the tape now.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

OCTOBER 6, 2001

CEPLAIR: This is Larry Ceplair interviewing Elizabeth Poe Kerby on, still October sixth, and this is the first side of the second tape. [Paul] Jacobs wrote in his autobiography that, "A Los Angeles group approached Robert Hutchins and asked him to fire me because I was a red-baiter." Did you know anything about that?

KERBY: Phil [Kerby] and I went to Halleck Hoffman and told Hoffman about our reservations about Jacobs.

CEPLAIR: Yeah. Halleck Hoffman then wrote [John] Cogley that you had talked to him.

KERBY: What did he say?

CEPLAIR: Well, I'll turn off the recorder and I'll let you look at his memos. [tape recorder off] Do these memos accurately reflect the conversations you and Phil had with Hoffman about the project?

KERBY: Yeah.

CEPLAIR: So basically, why don't you just summarize what you said to him about it?

KERBY: We told him what we knew about Paul Jacobs as an ex-communist and as a probable FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] informer, because no ex-communist was allowed not to be an FBI informer. I think we told Hoffman that, I'm not sure. I can't remember what we told Hoffman. I think we must have told him that story about Eason Monroe and Corliss Lamont, but I think we also knew that Jacobs was involved with Max Mont and other people in trying to kill *Frontier*. Every time *Frontier* got a prominent contributor, they would write him a letter and say, "You don't want to write for this magazine. It's a communist magazine." So we knew Jacobs was doing that. We might have told Jacobs about that I mean, Hoffman. I think I must have told Hoffman. I know I told Hoffman my security concerns, and told him about the similarity of the Anne Revere situation with the Clint Jencks case. And he said, "Has that

gone to the Supreme Court?" He didn't even know about it. He didn't understand what the security issue was. He did not know what the Taft-Hartley Law said about Trade Union officers. And I was stunned by this. He should have known that. But he treated me. He sort of surprised me because he treated us as if we were just a couple of gossips.

CEPLAIR: About the same time, you drafted a letter to Hutchins resigning from the project and you wrote in it, "Michael Harrington had been investigating *Frontier* by going to Max Mont of the Jewish Labor Committee and John Despol of the Congress of Industrial Organizations." Michael Harrington said they were neutral, even though you say Despol's closely connected to Brewer. You also wrote that you do not believe you could, in good conscience, provide cognitive information on the blacklist for fear it will fall into the hands of the self-appointed clearance agents who manage the blacklist. You indicated that it was not Cogley but Harrington you feared in this regard. You said you also were angered by Cogley's asking the studios about your and his decision based on your reply to confine you to collecting information only from the blacklisted. You also stated your fear that the final report would not be anti-blacklist. How come you didn't send that letter to Hutchins?

KERBY: Well, I was in doubt about all of these statements. I wanted to work on the project. I thought I did have. I took the Dore Schary position that I thought I could have an influence on the project and I turned out to be right about that. I didn't send the letter, because I wasn't sure about John Cogley. I thought he was a decent man, and I didn't think he'd do anything bad, and I didn't think that he would I mean, I believed him when he said he wouldn't show my work to anybody. That was probably optimistic, but at least I had the impression that I had as good a chance to influence him as Harrington did, and that therefore I would stick with it. I often write letters when I'm very angry that I never mail. I think it's a good way to get rid of your anger.

CEPLAIR: In the [inaudible] profiles there is an undated resume of the project in which Cogley included a section entitled "Blacklisting of Anti-Communists." Did you see that, or know about it?

KERBY: No. I had never heard about it, but the report that the stuff happened was familiar to me, is familiar to me. But, I don't think it did.

CEPLAIR: But that seems to have been something that he believed from the very beginning.

KERBY: Oh, I think a lot of people believed it, but I never found any evidence of it.

CEPLAIR: That's what's interesting to me. I mean, I haven't either. It's very anecdotal, and all the evidence seems to come from the anti-communists.

KERBY: Yeah. Yeah. Well, the only story that ever resembled it even doesn't prove the point. ACLU [American Civil liberties Union] in New York at that time was very uneasy about, they were playing with the FBI, and they were very uneasy about our work. They asked Phil that question. "What about the anti-communist blacklist?" Phil said, "There isn't any, and we're not going to pretend that there is one or try to say that there is one just to look good, because there isn't any."

CEPLAIR: Okay, let's see. You also wrote to Cogley a seven page memorandum saying that you wanted to do the historical background and blacklisting technique section, and to supervise the section on *Salt of the Earth*. Did Cogley agree to that? To your proposals?

KERBY: I can't remember. I don't think I wrote anything for him on *Salt of the Earth*, and maybe I did. I can't remember.

CEPLAIR: Or maybe he decided just not to do anything.

KERBY: I don't think he did.

CEPLAIR: Because I don't think as I recall, in the report there wasn't anything on *Salt of the Earth*.

KERBY: I did ask him to let me report on the labor situation. I knew all the trade unions in Hollywood were up to their necks in blacklisting, and I knew that Jacobs would not report that, and he said I could

write that. He said, “Yeah. You write a piece about the labor situation,” and I wrote it, but he never paid any attention to it. He ignored it.

CEPLAIR: Okay. Then, in early January, 1955, Cogley wrote you stating that he hoped that, in time, your confidence in him would grow. Then he confined your interviewing to black-and-graylisted people, relieved you from any contact with Paul Jacobs, and said that he conceived of his, Cogley’s [role] as kind of an editor-in-chief to correlate and integrate the work of the reporters. And then you responded by admitting that you had, quote, “taken a rather rigid view of some of the difficult problems involved,” end quote. Why did you feel the need to write that to him?

KERBY: Well, I had been kind of mean to Cogley. I was reacting to Harrington. I never saw Cogley when he was not with Harrington, and [in] these interviews [I had] with these two men, Cogley didn’t say very much. Harrington controlled the interviews, and Harrington did everything he could to put me down. He was just terrible.

CEPLAIR: Do you think it was because you were a woman, or is it because you, your politics were bad?

KERBY: It was politics.

CEPLAIR: Oh, so politics.

KERBY: I think Hutchins would not have done what he did to me had I been a man. But I think Harrington was just such a vicious man that it didn’t make any difference whether I was a man or a woman. He was going to do away with me if he could.

CEPLAIR: Now Cogley and Harrington came to Hollywood in March, 1955. They said they wanted to conduct interviews, and you arranged nine interviews for them. Did those interviews go well, from your point of view?

KERBY: I’ll tell you an anecdote about one of them that was really amazingly funny. Harrington did all the interviewing. Cogley didn’t ask anybody anything. The interview that was most interesting was when

I got Trumbo, Dalton Trumbo, Adrian Scott in the same room with Cogley and Harrington and Paul Jacobs. Harrington said, "You people have boasted that you prevented anti-communist books from being made into films, such as *Darkness at Noon*." Then he named one other writer, one other book whose name I can't remember. But, anyway, Trumbo said, "Oh, I don't think you can make a movie out of *Darkness at Noon*. It's just a bunch of conversation." And Cogley said, "I'll accept that." Trumbo denied that they had prevented anti-communist books from being made into films. And then Harrington said, "There was an article in *New Masses* in which the Hollywood Communist Party boasted that it had eliminated the stock 'working man' as a joke." Servants were always black and the Hollywood Communist Party had eliminated that kind of stock casting from films. And Harrington said, "Do you remember that article, Mr. Trumbo?" And Trumbo said, "Well, I have a faint recollection of that piece. I'm not sure that we achieved that." And Harrington said, "You remember who wrote that article?" and Trumbo said, "No." And Harrington said, "You did." So he trapped him.

I set up an interview with Paul and Sylvia Jarrico, which went very well. Everybody was sociable. Sylvia told me later that Harrington was very snippy with her. I set up an interview with a screen reader, a man named Don Gordon who was a poet and who was older than most of them, and I wanted Cogley to see what would happen to an older couple. This made Pauline [Finn] furious. She wrote Pauline was my enemy in this whole thing. She was furious at me for doing any of this. I'll tell you why later, when it's pertinent to what you are asking. Adrian Scott was also in that room when Harrington trapped Trumbo. Afterwards, Adrian and Trumbo and I decided to have a Coke in the basement, and I said, "Let me pay for this." Trumbo says, "Do you mean I'm going to get some of Henry Ford's money?" And I said, "Yes."

CEPLAIR: Okay. Then there was a staff meeting in New York in April 1955. Did that go reasonably well, or was there any tension there?

KERBY: I had a hell of a fight with Jacobs.

CEPLAIR: At that staff meeting? Over what issue?

KERBY: Problem with trade unions.

CEPLAIR: Ah.

KERBY: I said there were no militant trade unions in Hollywood, and he said, "Oh yes there are!" and I said, ""Oh, no, there are not." He said, "What issue are you talking about?" and I said, "Job security." He said "Oh, that's not an issue. Trade unions don't pay any attention in Hollywood to job security. That's nonsensical." Finally, it reached the point where I said, "Well, if you know a militant trade unionist in Hollywood, I wish you'd give me his name," and Jacobs said "I will." He never did.

We had two meetings: we had a staff meeting without Hutchins; and the next day we had a staff meeting with Hutchins, in which we all said, did the same thing. It was the first time I met Dorothy Jones, and at the second meeting that Hutchins attended there was a luncheon after the meeting, and before we sat down to lunch, I left the room. When I came back, the only empty chair at the table was next to Paul Jacobs, which I'm sure had been arranged by Cogley or Harrington. As soon as I sat down, Jacobs said, "Oh, we had such a good time writing to people about how terrible *Frontier* was!" I felt like throwing a glass at water in his face, but I didn't.

CEPLAIR: How did you come to know who the graylisted people were, and how did you select them to interview?

KERBY: I came to know their names by talking to blacklisted people. There are a lot of other ways to do it, but that's the way I did it. If I were this Bob Hethmon, I would check the amicus brief, and everybody's name who was on the amicus brief who wasn't blacklisted was graylisted. And I would check names of people who had signed anti-HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee] petitions who were not blacklisted, because if they weren't blacklisted, they were graylisted. I would check the Tenney Committee reports, and everybody on most [of the] reports who wasn't blacklisted was graylisted. I mean, those were the ways you'd find the graylisted people. Those were not the ways I did it, because I

did it by word-of- mouth. I would talk to one person, and he'd say, "Well, this other guy is graylisted, so you should talk to him."

CEPLAIR: Were most of them willing to talk to you?

KERBY: Oh, yeah, but only because Sylvia called them or Paul called them.

CEPLAIR: And they also wanted to talk off, they didn't want you to use their names. Right?

KERBY: That's right.

CEPLAIR: The blacklisted didn't mind, but the graylisted, of course, did.

KERBY: Not altogether. Some blacklisted people did not want their names used. No graylisted people, of course, wanted their named used.

CEPLAIR: And to this day you've held to that. You have not.

KERBY: Oh, I have to. I couldn't possibly name anybody. That's what the Un-American Committee people wanted.

CEPLAIR: Sure.

KERBY: And the Cogley report, the Cogley hearings, they asked, I guess I.

CEPLAIR: We'll get to that.

KERBY: Okay.

CEPLAIR: Did you ever meet with or interview William Wheeler, or any of the other committee agents?

KERBY: No, I didn't. But I knew all about him. I knew who he was having affairs with. I knew everything else. I knew what he was doing. [He wasn't here when I was working on this subject.]

CEPLAIR: Now, from your records, I counted four reports you sent to Cogley. One about Sidney Buchman and bribes to HUAC, one entitled "Political Clearances", one entitled "Hollywood Emigres in

New York City", and then, the big one: "Political Blacklisting in the Motion Picture Industry", which was about sixty pages long. About two months later, he sent you a letter in which he said he didn't agree with you on the labor situation in Hollywood or on Roy Brewer's role in it. Did that bother you?

KERBY: I don't even remember that. I didn't know that he had done that.

CEPLAIR: Then, in September, he wrote that he was an unbiased person; and that the similarities in your and Jacobs' reports were remarkable; and that he was going to use more moderate terms than you had in discussing the House on Un-American Activities Committee. I'm going to turn off the recorder and I'll show you the letter he wrote and see if they [tape recorder off]. As you look over this letter he wrote to you on August 18, 1955, what is it that it recalls to you about Cogley and the way he dealt with your material?

KERBY: Cogley was not really able to distinguish some of the things that he thought from some of the things I said and some of the things that he probably said. I didn't say some of these things to him. Cogley had never been a *Time* researcher, and he didn't know what happened to you when you made that kind of mistake: you had to write an errors report with seven carbon copies. Cogley was not a very accurate writer. He did not remember what I had said to him. He said to me that he was not going to use the word political the way I used it. The title of that report I sent him was "Political Blacklisting." He said that he wouldn't use the word that way. But you know, and I know, that it was the code word that people in Hollywood used when they wanted to say, "I was not a communist." They'd say, "I wasn't political." It was a synonym. Cogley didn't know that, and didn't accept that. My feeling about most of his work was that he was just too politically unsophisticated to do the job that Hutchins had chosen him to do, and he was just an innocent. Also, the first draft he sent me of his, the thing, he had a whole lot of off-the-record stuff on it, stuff that I had given him off the record. I had to raise hell about that, and he corrected most of that.

CEPLAIR: Let me, I want to get to that in a minute. So, what about when he wrote you that, "I don't have any sympathy for what the blacklisters have done, neither do I have any sympathy for the communists as such. I don't mean to stand in judgement on either group." Did you know that about him, that he sort of saw himself as standing above it and wasn't involved?

KERBY: Well, he thought he was not. I mean, he didn't understand the issues. The Constitutional issue was why I was in this thing. He didn't know, he didn't understand the Constitutional issue, and he didn't care about it, if he did understand it.

CEPLAIR: He then says, "You will note that I have held off from using such phrases as Un-American Committee or describing the committee as one which inquires into political beliefs rather than as one which is investigating Communism. I think the use of such terms will not help the situation at all. It will only make the final report sound as if the investigation amounted to little more than a political essay," which seems to sum up what you just said, that he was politically naive about. Do you think he was also, perhaps, trying to protect the fund so that it wouldn't come under too severe an attack?

KERBY: It might have been. I don't know that.

CEPLAIR: Okay. You received Cogley's manuscript about the blacklisting, as far as I can tell, late January or early February 1956. You wrote a twenty page critical response to him, and another long letter to Robert Hutchins summarizing your criticisms. Did either of them respond directly to you about your criticisms?

KERBY: Did they include the use of off-the-record material? Because that's the only thing he responded to. For example, he said that Mike Wilson claimed that he was in the Navy when some informer claimed that he was here at a meeting, at a Communist Party meeting. I said, "That's a matter of official record! You don't use a word like 'claim'. Mike Wilson can prove where he was at that time." I asked him to change that verb. Other than that, I can't remember what I was mad about and what I was complaining

about, except that I thought that the whole thing was a blurred version of the truth in an effort to tone down the impact and the illegality of the blacklist.

CEPLAIR: Well, let me, maybe. But let me read you a few excerpts from your letter to Hutchins; maybe that will help you. You say, "It's hard for me to itemize all the problems I believe the report presents, since, in my opinion, it cannot be made into an objective and reliable report of what has happened in Hollywood in its present form. Mr. Cogley, of course, is entitled to his conclusion, but I believe the report should at least present opposing points of view in all salient facts on controversial issues." And then, at some point, you suggest that maybe what should happen is that, instead of having Cogley have the final say, that your reports and Jacob's reports should just be the ones used, because you thought [they] would present both sides of the issue more accurately. Actually, there was never a chance that they would do that.

KERBY: They wouldn't let me sign anything.

CEPLAIR: Yeah.

KERBY: See, they wanted to use me, but they didn't want anybody to know they had used me.

CEPLAIR: Yeah. And they didn't want to use your opinions.

KERBY: Right.

CEPLAIR: You had informed Cogley a few months earlier that you were going to write an article summarizing your research. He said he had no objection, and he also said he would not object to your publicly criticizing the report. But you wrote back that you didn't think you could, in good conscience, criticize the report. Why did you feel that way?

KERBY: Because he had been paying me for two years. I had been raising hell with him for two years, and had done the best I could to get my point of view into their fuzzy heads. I thought I had done all I could do on that part, and I didn't think that anything I said could compete with what they were doing.

CEPLAIR: So, did you? Is that why you decided not to write any more articles?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: Okay. I think what I'm going to do is I'm going to stop here, and then on our next session I would like to go over the report with you section by section and talk about your feelings about it.

KERBY: That's fine.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

OCTOBER 20, 2001

CEPLAIR: Today is October twentieth. This is Larry Ceplair, continuing with the interview of Elizabeth Poe Kerby. This is tape number three, side number one. Betty, I'd like to go back a bit. I reviewed the tapes of our first interview, and I have some follow-up questions I'd like to ask you. You said you had gone to work for the Soil Conservation Service. That seems like a strange occupation, given that you were a journalist. How come you decided to do that?

KERBY: Well, it was a journalist's job.

CEPLAIR: Okay.

KERBY: Information specialist. I decided to do that because I hated Baltimore. I hated the Baltimore Sun. I was very homesick for New Mexico, and my teacher at New Mexico State got me the job, because whenever they filled that job of information specialist for the region for the Southwest region they went to him and asked for a candidate. He knew I was miserable in Baltimore, and he recommended me for this job. It was writing news stories about conservation work on different areas of the Southwest; doing radio programs on the subject; traveling with the photographer and taking photographs of good work people were doing to the land. It was really fun, except for the fact that I didn't know enough to do the job. I would go around asking cattlemen how many cattle they had; this is like asking how much money they had in the bank. I was really pretty green, but I learned a great deal about the Southwest. The most important thing I learned was about the destruction of the Rio Grande watershed. That's not part of your story, but it's something that everybody ought to know who lives in the West Southwest.

CEPLAIR: And when the tape was off you mentioned that you had known I.F. [Isador Feinstein] Stone, and that you had thought maybe you might work for him before you came out to work for *Frontier*. Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with I.F. Stone?

KERBY: Yes. I met him at a Guild meeting. He was a speaker at a Guild meeting, and somebody I knew introduced me to him. He was so pleased to discover that anybody at *Time* magazine was reading him, that he was just bubbling over. He called me up the next day and asked me to look something up for him in the *Time* morgue, which I did. The [*Daily*] *Compass*, which was his last paper, was folding, and he told me that he wanted a *Time*-trained researcher to help him start the [*I.F. Stone's Weekly*] newsletter. I said, "Why don't you hire one of these guys who are being put out of work by the *Compass*?" and he said, "I won't hire a guy. He might want to write." I had friends who were as interested in him as I was, and we used to follow him around Manhattan and listen to all of his speeches. So we just would always meet and say hello.

CEPLAIR: Was he the model of an investigative reporter at that time? I guess the term might not have been used, but.

KERBY: He was just the best man in Washington for twenty years.

CEPLAIR: Okay.

KERBY: Even though he was deaf and had to wear Coke-bottle glasses, he was still the best reporter in Washington for twenty years. We just became friends. One summer, when some of the girls and I had rented a little house up in Fine Island for the summer, we discovered that Izzy had a house across the street. So, on weekends when we were out there, we would go across the street to the Stones' and spend time with him. Sometimes we would walk the beach with Izzy, but he walked too fast for me. And Esther, his wife, was with him, and we just all became friends.

CEPLAIR: Did he ever offer you a job?

KERBY: He made a date with me, at, I started saying Rumplestiltskin's but that's not

the name of it.

CEPLAIR: Rumpelmeyer's?

KERBY: Rumpelmeyer's, and that was the purpose of the date, to ask me [to do] the job. And I knew that he was going to do it. I knew I didn't know how to answer him, because I had an idea that he wanted me to sweep the floor. I also knew that he couldn't afford to pay me enough to live on. And, luckily, Phil [Kerby] had asked me to marry him a few days before, so I didn't have to make that tough decision.
CEPLAIR: Was *Frontier* a consciously anti-Cold War magazine? I mean, was it, was part of its purpose to fight the Cold War?

KERBY: No. Well, it was in part. What I'm going to do is give you a bound copy of the '67 which is the last year '67 edition of *Frontier* for you to take home and read and give it back to us. *Frontier* started out being a kind of an ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] liberal magazine. Then, as the [Joseph] McCarthy period got more and more serious, and the ADA people got less and less serious about opposing McCarthy, the magazine moved farther and farther to the point where it was simply an anti-McCarthy magazine. That wasn't all it was. Gifford Phillips wrote editorials, and Phil wrote a column. I did get a job on that magazine, finally. About two or three years before it folded up, I quit working for *Time* and *Life* and started working full time as associate editor of *Frontier*, because I got angry at *Time* and *Life* and I didn't want to work for them anymore. And I wanted to help Phil. He didn't have any help, so that's what I did.

CEPLAIR: To your knowledge, was there an anti-communist network in Los Angeles that was opposed to the blacklist being publicized or exposed?

KERBY: There were two networks of that kind. One of them was the Communist Party. I don't know a hell of a lot about the Communist Party you know more about it than I do, because you wrote about it and I haven't. But Pauline Finn was one of the people, and I don't know how many people agreed with her who believed that writing about the blacklist would expand it. When she found out that I was going to work for the Fund for the Republic project, she said, "Oh! We'll have to form a committee to tell you what to write!" This just floored me. I think that probably there were people in the party who agreed with Pauline on that, but I never met them. And I think I met everybody in the party. And then downtown I

should say there was this clutch of really awful people, including Johnny Despol, who was a trade union guy; Max Mont; Paul Jacobs and I don't know how many more they were psychotically anti- communist, and they were very much determined to destroy *Frontier*, if they could. They were the Western equivalent of a handful of very unscrupulous newspaper men who were primarily in the East, who included George Sokolsky, and Frederick Woltman, and here, a guy named.

CEPLAIR: Victor Riesel? Was Victor Riesel one of them?

KERBY: I hesitate to put, he was one of them, but he was, before he became one of them he was a labor reporter, and I think they just roped him in. He was unscrupulous. They were making a living out the Cold War. That's what they were up to. I thought they were pretty terrible. I don't know why the group that was here picked out *Frontier* to hate, except that *Frontier* was the only liberal voice in Southern California at that time. That's why they did it. Victor Navasky has a chapter about them in his book.

CEPLAIR: Right. I notice in your correspondence with John Cogley he regularly called you Betty, and you always called him Mr. Cogley. Why was that? Do you know?

KERBY: [laughter] He asked me to call him John. I think it was because I didn't like him.

CEPLAIR: Oh. Okay.

KERBY: I just didn't feel familiar enough with him to call him by his first name. I thought he was dumb, and ill-informed, and influenced too much by these screwballs, including [Michael] Harrington. That's probably why I never called him anything but Mr. Cogley. Also, I was working in a period in American journalism when women at least women like me just didn't feel equal to the men they were working with, because of the way they kicked us around. Some tough women probably always called the men they were working with by their first names. I called everybody I worked with at *Time* by first names.

CEPLAIR: I noticed, when I was going through the material you gave me, that you only had at least in the files one extensive interview with a non-communist and that was William Wyler. I'm wondering if

you could tell me why you chose Wyler, and how come that seems to be the only extensive interview with a non-communist, non- blacklisted person in your files.

KERBY: Wyler was a leader in the Committee for the First Amendment, and I can't remember why I picked him out. I think it was because I wanted a, this is a guess that it was because I wanted him to explain to me what the Committee for the First Amendment was about, and why they folded up, and why they got started. That's the best guess I can make. The other thing is, it is possible that somebody told me that he wanted to talk to us. I don't know whether they did or not. I don't know. He was a decent man.

CEPLAIR: Okay. Why did you entitle the draft you sent to I mean, why did you entitle your piece in *Frontier*, "Political Blacklisting"? Obviously, that was a deliberate choice on your part. Why did you use the words "political blacklisting"?

KERBY: Because I thought that the Communist Party was a political party, and I thought it was kind of silly to pretend that it wasn't.

CEPLAIR: So it was your, that what was the blacklisting was politics, in your estimation, and nothing else. Of course, there were other things, but that was the most prominent aspect of it. I assume Mr. Cogley didn't agree on you on that.

KERBY: Oh, he didn't. He went out of his way to tell me that he didn't. I don't know what he thought the Communist Party was, but no, he didn't. He went out of his way to tell me he wasn't going to use the word that way, and went out of his way to say that he wasn't going to call the committee the House Un-American Activities Committee, which is what everybody called it. He thought it was [inaudible] to call it the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which is nonsense.

CEPLAIR: Okay, that was the last of my questions. Now you said you wanted to have a follow-up on my question about interviewing the studio heads.

KERBY: Yeah. I want to put on the record this: "Today not only most producers, but agents, graylistees, and almost everybody else connected with the motion picture industry immediately profess ignorance when questioned about the blacklist. Studio representatives feared the litigation that blacklisted persons have started. Those who aren't sure they have been graylisted won't discuss it for fear that the conversation will be reported, and some agents admit that they are unable to get work for clients who have invoked the Fifth Amendment for the committee. Others bluntly evade the question, and said they never had any clients who became committee witnesses, and therefore know nothing about the situation. However, almost any studio worker knows the name of the executive at his studio who handles political clearance. After explaining why a producer at MGM [Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios] was too busy to discuss the problem, an administrative assistant said to me the man to see was L. [Louis] K. Sidney, who is known among blacklisted people as the dossier man at M- G-M. At Columbia Studios, when the vice president's, B. [Benjamin] B. Kahane's, secretary explained that he did not want to give out an interview on the subject, she was asked who at Columbia would be willing to discuss it. 'I don't think anybody else would prefer to discuss it,' she said, 'because it all centers in Mr. Kahane's office.'" So that is what happened when I asked the studios to comment.

CEPLAIR: Now, you were just reading from your article on the political blacklisting in *Frontier*.

KERBY: May, 1954.

CEPLAIR: May, 1954. Okay. All right, I'd like to get back to the report then. What I would like to do is read you some of the sections of your letter to Robert Hutchins on February 14, 1956, after which you have seen Cogley's draft and now you're being critical of it, and then talk about now, your present day thoughts on it. You wrote that, to Hutchins, "In my opinion, the report cannot be made into an objective and reliable report of what happened in Hollywood in its present form. Mr. Cogley is, of course, entitled to his conclusion, but I believe the report should at least present opposing points of view in all salient facts on controversial issues. In writing my reports on blacklisting and its effects, I made an effort to use low-key language and to admit value judgments, allowing the facts to lead the reader to whatever

conclusions were indicated. However, the material in Mr. Cogley's manuscript, which represents the point of view of the blacklisters, their assistants and associates, is often presented in the form of value judgments. Mr. Cogley frequently used my material in the form in which I wrote it, and in my opinion, he omitted key facts. The overwhelming emphasis in his manuscript is on the value judgment of people who believe in blacklisting. The terrible effect of this is to make the report more an apology for blacklisting than a description of it."

KERBY: You told me to go back and read that letter, 'cause I was kind of astonished at what I told him. It was true. And my re-reading the book forty years later, I thought, "Well, I was pretty tough on this man." But he didn't do the kind of job I thought he should have done, and he left out a lot that he should have put in. I thought that his chapter on the Communist Party problem was true, but the thing that I objected to about it was that it was not annotated? No reference you couldn't tell where he got it, no footnotes, no names. Obviously, his intention was not to tell anybody that this was testimony of informers before the committee. It might have been all true, but it was up to him to tell us where he got this stuff, and he didn't. Cogley was no scholar, and he didn't believe in explaining where he got stuff when he truly believed it himself. He didn't want to say this is what so-and-so said.

CEPLAIR: One thing that struck me as I re-read it is that it ends very abruptly. There is no conclusion, no moral drawn. It just stops. Why do you suppose he did that, or chose to do that?

KERBY: He concluded his section with a case history, and I thought he might have felt that a case history was the only conclusion he needed. "This is what happens to a man who is not only a television writer but also a television technician and he lost both opportunities." Now, he may have thought that way. If he took any kind of a course in writing in school, he might have thought that the concluding statement was the most emphatic, and he may have thought that. The other reason I think may be that he just simply didn't want to come to any conclusions. The people who believed in blacklisting did not have any respect for the First Amendment, and they just decided that it was more dangerous to have a communist trying to write pro- communist movies, which [the communists] never succeeded in doing. As Paul Jarrico said,

"We tried." But they might have thought it was clearly they thought that the Communist Party was a threat to the United States. They never considered the thought that ignoring the First Amendment was a bigger threat to the United States than the Communist Party could ever be, which is what I believe. And I just think that they were hysterical and nutty.

CEPLAIR: Again, on my re-reading, it looks like well over half of the report is based on your material. Some he uses like this material on clearances in Hollywood and the mass hearings and the American Legion. It looks like he took almost verbatim what you did, whereas the opening statement on 1947 hearings looked like he made it much blander than you had. Then the rest looks like it is all from Jacobs.

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: Does that seem like an accurate?

KERBY: Yes. I think it was a scissors and paste job.

CEPLAIR: Okay, but now that you have re-read it, what is your opinion today on the quality of the report?

KERBY: My opinion today is not worth a hell of a lot, because I don't know much about it anymore. I think a person who didn't know anything about it would read it and think, "Oh! Blacklisting is bad." They might say, "Oh! They had all these communists in the trade union. So they must have been in there trying to write stuff that was communistic." They might think, "The Communist Party wasn't really so terrible because it was" as Abe Polonsky said, "more a social group than anything else." The Communist Party in Hollywood was not like any other Communist Party in the United States. I think that I probably learned more about the Communist Party reading that chapter than I had anywhere else.

CEPLAIR: Okay. On June 7, 1956, Francis Walter, who is the chairman on the House Un-American Activities Committee, notified Robert Hutchins that hearings on the fund would begin on June 27. Did Hutchins inform you about that, or did you know about those hearings? Do you remember?

KERBY: I don't think I know, Hutchins didn't inform me, but I knew the hearings I knew when they were going to start. I think it must have been in the press.

CEPLAIR: Were you worried that you were going to be subpoenaed?

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: Were you frightened that you were going to be subpoenaed?

KERBY: Well, the only thing I was frightened of was getting a subpoena duces tecum, because of material that I had that was confidential in my files. And, after Cogley told them that he didn't have the names they wanted and he'd have to speak to an associate to get them, I hid my files in Bob Kenny's garage and was told by Bob, "If they come to your door with a subpoena, you tell them your files are in the hands of your attorney." That solved that, because that was the only thing I was really afraid of. I knew that they wouldn't give me a contempt citation, because they were very wary of socking journalists, and there are certain conditions which I am not sure of, I used to know in which journalists are privileged to say certain things, and I knew they weren't going to do anything to me.

CEPLAIR: On June thirteenth, Paul Jacobs wrote a long letter to Robert Hutchins advising him how to deal with the House Committee. He provided thumb nail biographies and analysis of the members of the committee and the committee council. Were you asked for advice on how to deal with the committee?
KERBY: No. I didn't know Jacobs had done that. The thing that Jacobs doesn't say and that everybody might know is that that committee was made up of the dregs of Congress. No respectable congressman would serve on that committee. Now, this is not just my observation. This is what Bob Kenny pointed out to me that that's the kind of committee it was. One of them went to jail, as you know.

CEPLAIR: Yeah.

KERBY: I'm sure you know of the stories about history running into [inaudible] and things like that.

CEPLAIR: Ah. The hearings began on July tenth with Cogley, and he was asked if he had read your article I think he was referring to the May 1954 article quote, "Vigorously attacking what she called the purge of people in the motion picture industry because of political affiliation or association," end of quote. Cogley said he hadn't read the article in eighteen months and didn't remember exactly what it said, but did remember it was not complimentary on techniques of discharging communists. He then went on to say he wrote the report based on his own judgement of the research reports that he received from the staff. Did you know about Cogley's testimony on July tenth?

KERBY: Did I know what?

CEPLAIR: Did you know about his testimony on July tenth when he said?

KERBY: No, I didn't know he said that. I had forgotten, or I never knew it.

CEPLAIR: On July eleventh, the next day, the committee heard testimony from Arnold Forster of the Anti-Defamation League; Frederick Woltman, a reporter of *the New York World Telegram and Sun*; and James O'Neil of the *American Legion Magazine*. So it is interesting that all most of the people they are calling are people who would have been antagonistic to the report.

KERBY: The whole sense of the hearings was to call up the blacklisters, put them on the witness stand and say, "There is no blacklist is there?" The answer is, "Well, of course not!" And all of the people that claim there is a blacklist are communists. That was the whole point of those hearings. That is what they were about.

CEPLAIR: Of those three, the only one to mention you was Frederick Woltman. He said that John Cogley and Michael Harrington were not communists, simply very mixed up; quote, "but Elizabeth Poe, on the other hand, wrote the *Frontier* article which is about as loaded with communist slant as anything as I have ever read about a so-called blacklist. If anyone looked through it, he could tell right away that the person who wrote it was very sympathetic to the communist movement. As a matter of fact, that individual was a member of the communist faction of the [American] Newspaper Guild at *Time* magazine and was for

some years. She was very active in the communist group. There was a split in most of the Guild units and she was very active in that." Michael Harrington, according to Woltman, said, "No matter who we have as reporters, their stuff is very carefully screened by us." And John Cogley told Woltman, according to Woltman, "We have a good anti-communist to handle that end of it, Mr. Jacobs. But we have to have somebody who is sympathetic with the communists, who is friendly with them, or whom we have to interview people, ah, or whom we have to interview people like Gale Sondergaard. That she had access to the communists out there and that there were quite a few, of course, the fund had to interview." What was your response when you heard about Woltman's testimony?

KERBY: It [was] perjury, for one thing. There was no split that I was aware of at the Guild, and the Guild didn't amount to a hoot in those years. There was nothing in the Guild. Nothing was going on. It had been [Joseph] McCarthyized long before, it was my impression. As I told you before, I went to maybe three or four meetings in five years, and the only reason I went to that meeting where I met I. F. Stone was because he was there. The Guild was nothing. It was, there were no editorial people in it. It was run mostly by truck drivers and librarians, and it was just a joke. Woltman's testimony is a pure lie. And he didn't know anything about me. I had never met him.

CEPLAIR: Yeah. You told a newspaper reporter the next day, "Mr. Woltman's statement is absolute nonsense. My position has always been to defend the principles of civil liberties regardless of who is involved. It is interesting to note that Mr. Woltman, even hiding behind Congressional immunity, does not say that I am a communist. That is because he knows that I have never been one. I stand one hundred percent behind anything I have written." So that was pretty straightforward on your part. Did you then think you might get a subpoena because of Woltman's testimony? Well it is interesting, Robert Hutchins then protested the hearings to Chairman Walter, but there is nothing in the letter defending the staff, you or anyone else. Cogley then had a press release in which he said, "Mr. Woltman testified concerning a conversation between himself and me that took place last November at a press conference in New York. If he is correctly quoted, he seems to have forgotten the substance of that conversation. Mr. Woltman is

quoted as telling the committee that I said that I had hired Elizabeth Poe because she was friendly to the Communist Party. There is nothing in my background that would make such a statement credible. I would be particularly stupid if I were to make such a statement to so famous an anti-communist as Mr. Woltman. Mr. Woltman has asked whether I knew Elizabeth Poe had written an article about blacklisting which he considered to be biased and slanted. I said I had read the article, and that Ms. Poe's opinions were not necessarily the same as mine. I said that I thought differences in outlook among members of my staff might enable me to get an objective view of the problem. I said that Elizabeth Poe and Paul Jacobs, both of whom were working on the Hollywood section of the report, had clear differences of opinion, but that I felt that the very fact that they differed so sharply would be helpful to me in reaching a final judgment." What I find interesting in all of this is that Cogley never comes out and defends you and says, "Well, he's a liar." You know?

KERBY: Of course not. Yes. I worked for a lot of editors, and worked for wonderful editors like Ed Young at the *Baltimore Sun*. I worked for incompetent editors, and competent editors, and unethical editors, and ethical editors but I never worked for an editor who refused to defend his own staff on the basis on an attack on what he had written. If you're not going to defend your own staff, you might as well not publish. I thought that the most shocking thing about the whole affair was that neither Cogley nor Hutchins had the decency to defend me. Hutchins called me and asked for my advice on what the Fund for the Republic should do about the blacklist. And I said, "You should publish a book." He said, "Will you do it?" And I said "Yes." He said, "How long would it take you?" And I said, "About six months with help, because I haven't done anything on the trade union association with blacklisting, and that is work to be done." And he said, "Okay, I'll just have to get it through my board," and I never heard from him again. Obviously, someone told him somebody in the Jacobs crowd told him I was a Red, and he decided he better get a professional Catholic to do this, that that might protect him. It turned out it didn't protect him at all. I could only conclude from his refusal to defend me, and from Cogley's refusal, Cogley practically confirmed that I was pro-communist. Neither one of those men ever had the decency to ask me

what I thought about the Communist Party, or whether I was a member. They just iced me from then on, particularly Hutchins. I met him at some kind of function downtown not long after that Phil was with me and Joan Phillips walked us up to the stage to say hello to introduce us to Hutchins, because he didn't know we had met him. He was as icy as he could be. As far as those who were concerned, everything that was said about me was true. They didn't even ask me if it was true. The weird thing about it was that I was smeared in precisely the same way people were being smeared in the study that we were supposed to be exposing. I didn't say that correctly. We were supposed to be exposing people who did that kind of thing, and they didn't seem to notice that that had been done to me and that was what we were supposed to be exposing. They just took it for granted that it was all true. I think I told you I ran into Halleck Hoffman in an ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] meeting in which Halleck Hoffman, by the way, was one of Hutchins' assistants, and I ran into him in an ACLU meeting in which some woman asked him in my presence, "What's happened to you people? Why don't you do anything active anymore?" And he turned to me and said, "She brought us down."

CEPLAIR: Really? Did you say anything to him?

KERBY: I said, "So <u>that's</u> what you think!" I was flabbergasted. But that's what he said. And if he thought that, probably Hutchins thought it, and probably Cogley didn't give a damn one way or the other. Cogley was just trying to do a job, and had no emotional commitment to anything as far as I could see. Hutchins was trying to do a job, but was apparently unwilling to be smeared without I don't know what Hutchins was up to. I don't understand why he behaved so badly. He was the golden boy of American education when I was in school. And he was the golden boy of American civil liberties in the 50's and how he could when he was up against it, behave as badly as he did, and refuse to defend me after asking for my help?! Beats me! The only thing I can say was that he was a dishonorable man and he was a cowardly man, or he wouldn't have done that.

CEPLAIR: Well, the next day, on July twelfth the committee called Vincent Hartnett and Roy Brewer and Paul Milton. Hartnett and Milton were professional anti- Communist witnesses. Richard Arens, the

committee council, asked Brewer about you, and he replied, “What I know about Elizabeth Poe primarily is that she wrote an attack on me in a magazine called *Frontier*, which is edited by her husband. The magazine was published as a so-called liberal paper on the West Coast but which, so far as I am concerned, is a completely Communist Party line publication.” And then Arens asked, “Was that attack prior to her work on the Fund for the Republic report?” And Brewer said, “Yes. I might say that in this report she did not distinguish at all between communist and innocents, or fellow travelers, or anything else. She took the position that my efforts against the communists were just as reprehensible as my efforts against anyone else. She did not, as I say, draw any line between them. She thought that any effort on the part of anyone to prevent communists from working in the motion picture industry was wrong.” And then the committee member, Gordon Scherer, said, “A little bit of that philosophy is carried over into the report.” And Brewer replied, “A great deal of it, but not quite so much.”

On July thirteenth, Phil Kerby, your husband, sent a telegram to Chairman Walter in which he said, “In the interest of fair play, I suggest that your committee invite the heads of the motion picture studios to testify as to their knowledge of the blacklist in the entertainment industry; and that way you can get at the truth.” And then a few weeks later he ran off a lead piece in the *St. Louis Dispatch*, in which he basically said, “The furor over the report is easily explained. The report is true.” Were you involved in the telegram? But, of course, you knew about it. But you, he did that. Okay. Now, in the next year in May, John Cogley received a second subpoena before HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee]. He wrote to you that this time it was a subpoena duces tecum, but he will not turn over his written material and he hopes that he can keep your name out of it.

You responded to him on May ninth, with a copy to Hutchins, “If there is any intimation again in the hearings that I am a communist or pro-communist, I want to assure you again that there is no proof in such a charge. I have never had any political affiliation except as a registered Democrat and have always taken my craft as a reporter seriously enough to avoid any associations I felt would prejudice my judgement.” And the next day you wrote to Hutchins, “I have always been baffled by the lack of an

unequivocal denial from some members of the Fund staff." Did you get any response from Hutchins to your letter? No. No response.

KERBY: All I want to say there is that it's not only because I'm an ethical reporter that I would never join the Communist Party, it is because I hate the secrecy of the Communist Party. I think that's the worst thing about it. I hate the fact that they don't believe in the First Amendment, because for any serious journalist, the First Amendment is sacred and I hate the fact that they tell writers what to write! I just think that is absurd and awful, and I don't see how any serious writer could possibly be in that party! And I have never been able to get. Well, we didn't talk about the party rules. We didn't ask about party membership. It was not a decent question to ask. That's what the committee was asking, so you didn't discuss that. Did you ever hear about a party at Helen Levitt's house right after the Twentieth Congress when [Nikita] Khrushchev ratted on [Josef] Stalin?

CEPLAIR: I may have. I don't remember it.

KERBY: Well, this was fascinating because it was the first time I heard anybody talk about when they joined the party. Present were Karl Foreman, Dalton Trumbo, Phil and Betty Kerby and, I don't know, about fifteen other people. People started talking about when they joined the party and when they got out. It was when Foreman was here making whatever arrangements he made to get off the blacklist. I don't know what they were. He said, "Why don't you all come and live in England? It is a nice socialist country." And he was immediately attacked by everybody in the room, who pointed out that England was killing East Africans at that moment. Foreman says, "I'll tell you something. Socialists kill socialists and communists kill communists." Then he said, "Why don't you all just say you are communists? You wouldn't be in so much trouble!" That made Dalton Trumbo very angry, and he walked up to him and said, "Karl, when did you join the Communist Party?" He said something like, "1942." I have forgotten that date. Then Trumbo said, "When did you get out of the party?" He said, "1947." [Trumbo] said, "And when did you buy that great big house?" [mutual laughter] Karl said, "1947." It was a remarkable evening in which people actually said things like that to each other. We went to Mexico in a couple of weeks. We

looked up a lot of people. Albert Maltz was living in Mexico at that time. We looked up a lot of people and they all knew about this party. [mutual laughter] I don't know, I wish I knew, but I do not know why that Twentieth Congress made these people feel free to certainly discuss things that they had never discussed before. Do you?

CEPLAIR: No, I don't. To me, it's always amazing that it took that or the Hungarian invasion to convince people of the problems of being in the party. All right, I'm going to. Let me ask one more question. Cogley responded on May tenth to your letter in which he said, "Thank you very much for your letter and the good wishes. I was very pleased to have such a forthright statement from you. I hope that your name is not brought into this hearing and I will not bring it up. But if it is brought up, I will do my very best to set the record straight." And as far as I can tell that was your last communication from Cogley.

KERBY: Well, he stole my copy of the Hollywood Ten report, and I got. Which wasn't mine, it was Bob Kenny's. He wouldn't give it back to me, and insisted that he had. And I wrote him a nasty note about that. That is the last thing I said to him. I think, actually, Harrington stole it, because Cogley is not the kind of guy who steals things, but Harrington is, or was.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

OCTOBER 20, 2001

CEPLAIR: You were just saying that you were while I was changing the tape, that you were the first person to actually make a count of the number of blacklisted people. How did you go about doing that?

KERBY: I used the 1953 annual report of the House Un-American Activities Committee. As I interviewed people, I asked them to look at the names on this report and tell me which people they knew, which people they didn't know, and which people they had never heard of. My chief source in this endeavor was Al Levitt, Al and Helen Levitt. They kept a lot of records that nobody else kept. They knew who had worked in the industry and who had not. And they were more help on this subject than anybody. And I was able to come up with the figure of three hundred twenty- four people subpoenaed and two hundred twelve actually in the industry. I know that I'm the only person who ever counted the list. As far as I know.

CEPLAIR: Late in 1956, Michael Harrington came under attack by [Frederick] Woltman and Fulton Lewis, Jr. Do you remember if the Fund strongly defended Harrington at that point the Fund for the Republic?

KERBY: I didn't even know that he had been attacked.

CEPLAIR: Yeah. And then, interestingly, the Fund created a trade union project. They named Paul Jacobs to head it, and then he hired Michael Harrington as a writer- researcher. Did you know about that?

KERBY: Actually, I thought they were both working for Hutchins, but I didn't know what they were doing.

CEPLAIR: They edited a book called *Labor in a Free Society*. Did you read that book? Okay, let's go back to your career. The next article that I see that you wrote was called "Credits and Oscars" for *The*

Nation in March 1957. That was about the time when *Frontier* became part of *The Nation*, or folded into *The Nation*.

KERBY: What date? That was ‘57?

CEPLAIR: March 30, 1957.

KERBY: No. *Frontier* was merged with *The Nation* in 1967.

CEPLAIR: Oh. Okay. So then you just did this as a freelancer. And then in 1957¬58, you had a Fund for Adult Education Fellowship at Harvard?

KERBY: Phil did.

CEPLAIR: Phil did.

KERBY: I went to Harvard illegally.

CEPLAIR: Ah. And what did you do there?

KERBY: Art.

CEPLAIR: Oh, really? You took art history courses, you mean?

KERBY: They had the most wonderful art. They would project five paintings on a huge stage so they were magnified about five times, and then they would compare them and tell you exactly what [Paul] Cezanne did to make that apple round. It was the first time in my entire educational career that I ever had a chance to do anything like that. I went to listen to J.K Galbraith, and I went to listen to Schlesinger, and I went to listen to Archibald MacLeish. They were mostly giving me the names of things I already knew. And I didn’t want to do any more government. I just had never seen anything like this art department, and so I spent I lot of time in it. We spent a lot of time socially with Nieman fellows, who included Tom Wicker, whom nobody had ever heard of then, and who was a wonderful guy. And that man whose name was, I have trouble with. He wrote such good stuff on the Vietnamese War and the Philippines. Anyway,

I'll think of it later. But they were two really good people in that Nieman group. Tom Wicker was one of them, he told Phil later that it was a watershed year for him. It was for Phil, too, because he took Constitutional law there. I had already done Constitutional law in Albuquerque. I thought the Harvard experience was simply marvelous for both of us, and Phil had never been to college. He never was able to do anything beyond high school, so this was a great experience for him. I had done six years of college, and it wasn't as new to me as it was for Phil. [tape recorder off]

CEPLAIR: And you wrote, it looks to me, three more articles on the blacklist, one for *Mass Media*, and then two more for *Frontier*. It looks like the last one you wrote was on John Henry Faulk in 1965. How come your output of writing on the blacklist became so few and far between at that point?

KERBY: Because a young man was born [David Kerby].

CEPLAIR: Oh.

KERBY: In 1964, and I just stopped working.

CEPLAIR: You just stopped being a journalist altogether?

KERBY: I wrote a little book after that, a sixth grade textbook supplement on the Spanish conquest [*The Conquistadors*, 1969].

CEPLAIR: Okay. So you basically stopped being a journalist when David was born?

KERBY: Yes, except for that little book and except for, I wrote another piece on the blacklist in 1975 that was about the difference between the Faulk case and the other cases that appeared in the Op-Ed page of the *L.A Times*, October 10, 1975.

CEPLAIR: Actually, that was 1975, I think.

KERBY: It was.

CEPLAIR: Right, because you said when *Fear on Trial* came out as a movie. You were commenting on that. You have said to me on several occasions you've never spoken about this whole experience before. Why not?

KERBY: I couldn't figure out any way to make it sound reasonable. Perhaps I still haven't. It just seemed to me that to try to write an article about it [would make it] sound unlikely to the average reader [because] this journalist no one ever heard of was attacking Robert Hutchins, whom everyone had heard of. I just couldn't figure out any way to do it without making it sound just silly and like some nut. And that's one reason. The other reason is that I actually tried to write it down twice, and I was so traumatized with the whole terrible experience that I realized that I couldn't write it. It was just, I'm a serious journalist, and I was taken seriously by everybody who read that *Frontier* 1954 May piece. [It was considered] as a serious piece of work, and I was given a great deal of praise for that work, received kudos right and left. I couldn't figure out how to write about the fact that I had been mistreated by these cluckheads, because I was the only one who really knew that I was a serious journalist, and a good one. After all, Robert Hutchins was somebody important, and I wasn't. I could not figure how to deal with that, and I was too hurt with the whole damned thing to write about it.

CEPLAIR: Is there anything else that you think we ought to include in this oral history that we haven't so far?

KERBY: I'll explain to you why I would never join the Communist Party. Was that on tape?

CEPLAIR: Yes, it was on tape.

KERBY: I have been called a communist since I was seventeen years old. I think that first happened to me when I was reading American history in college. When we came to the Spanish American War, I said, "Well, I don't see much difference between what we did then and what [Adolf] Hitler is doing right now." This is before we knew anything that Hitler was doing. Because I made remarks like that in school,

people called me a communist. I was living in a part of the world where nobody made any distinctions between a communist and a Democrat. Let's see, what else do we need to say? [tape recorder off]

It was clear that Hutchins would never have done any of this had I not written the *Frontier* piece in May 1954. My piece was what got him going on it. When he called me up and asked me if I could come to see him, I was astonished. I nearly fell out of the house, and I summoned the sense to say, "I'll come to see you." I went over there to see his mansion in Pasadena, and when we entered the room, he started to rise. I thought he would never stop rising because he was so tall. And the carpet was so thick, I thought we never would stop sinking in the carpet. That man loved luxury. His place up in Santa Barbara was just as luxurious a place as [the one] he had in Pasadena. I know nothing about the move that they made and why they made it, except that remark that Halleck Hoffman made.

CEPLAIR: What was the response of the blacklisted people to the report? Did they feel it was?

KERBY: My piece?

CEPLAIR: No, the report.

KERBY: The Cogley report. I was trying to figure that out the other day, and I asked Sylvia Jarrico what she thought about it when it came out. She immediately started talking about her contest with Dorothy B. Jones. Sylvia knows more about the content on film than Dorothy B. Jones. In the Leo Rosten affair, Rosten got the money to write about, I don't know anything about this, maybe you know about it, but Sylvia was aced out of the grant to do her doctoral dissertation on film content by Dorothy B. Jones because Rosten said to Sylvia, "I didn't know you wanted to do this." So she said her statement on the Cogley report was not objective, because, and there was no way she could make an objective remark because of the Dorothy Jones part of it, which she thought was bad, not done well. And my recollection is that Al, not Al Jared, but Al.

CEPLAIR: Levitt?

KERBY: Levitt was very pleased with it. They were all very pleased with it to the extent that I discovered to my amazement, several years later, that nobody among the blacklisted people knew that I had written anything on that subject before the Cogley report came out. They had all forgotten that I did, and they, I was introduced to people. I remember Ellie Abowitz introduced me to Rose, the Supreme Court Justice Rose.

CEPLAIR: Bird.

KERBY: Bird as "The girl who worked on the Cogley report," and that's who I was from then on. So they liked it. The quality of it, I think, didn't matter to them, because there was a relief to have anything published on the blacklist.

CEPLAIR: Any last words that you'd like to leave for the people who are going to be reading this in the future?

KERBY: Oh, I can't think of anything. Hutchins actually hired Jacobs to write something?

CEPLAIR: Yeah, hired him to be the labor to do this labor project, and I think he did several books for the Fund on.

KERBY: That guy Jacobs was a chameleon. He changed political postures three times that I know of. You know, first he was a communist, then he was an anti- communist, then he, Clint Jencks told me that he changed again became a decent person again. I said, "I don't believe it!" and Clint says, "Well, he had my doctoral dissertation copied for me." And I said, "That! He wanted a copy of it to give it to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]!"

CEPLAIR: I think, in his books on labor, he holds himself forward as a Democratic Unionist.

KERBY: Yes.

CEPLAIR: That's the position he takes.

KERBY: Jacobs knew that trade unions were all up to their necks in blacklisting, but he wouldn't admit it.

GUIDE TO PROPER NAMES