

Interview Time with Jeffrey Leboff
SESSION 1 (5/5/2020)
Timed Log

[00:00:00]

Leboff is born in Newark, New Jersey on July 4, 1943. Lives in Elizabeth, New Jersey until age seven when family moves to Los Angeles, California. During the Korean War, father gets a civilian job as a machinist working in the aircraft industry. Father previously served in the military.

[00:01:47]

Decision to come to the University of California, Los Angeles. Lives in the Westchester neighborhood of Los Angeles. Living away would be a financial hardship, and UCLA represents a university with a good reputation that is within commuting distance. During the first semester, the cost of tuition is fifty-four dollars.

[00:02:59]

Begins attending UCLA in 1961. As an engineering major, Leboff and his peers are somewhat isolated from the rest of the campus and they're even characterized by some as "uncultured slob." However, Leboff attends most of the UCLA football games and rallies. Also attends several tapings on campus of *Hootenanny* [a musical variety television show that aired from April 1963 to September 1964]. One of the acts was then a new standup comic, Woody Allen. Experiences the excitement of all of the new possibilities.

[00:05:36]

While a number of students live on campus and in the surrounding area, there are many who commute like Leboff. Attending college is not as widespread during this time, and Leboff is the first in his family to finish college. When he finds a topic interesting but a course isn't offered, he learns how to get courses offered by joining with five to six other students and finding an instructor to teach the course.

[00:07:51]

After growing up in an area that is not very diverse, UCLA is an environment with people from many different economic and national backgrounds. Particularly in engineering, there are students from Africa, India, and the Orient [countries in Asia, particularly eastern Asia]. Also diversity evidenced in the course instructors, with visiting professors from Israel and Syria. Everyone gets along fine.

[00:10:29]

Political demonstration on campus by Mario Savio. Savio is involved in the dirty speech movement [Free Speech Movement took place from 1964-65 on the University of California, Berkeley campus and also became known as the Filthy Speech Movement after 1965]. Savio demonstrates outside of the UCLA administration building, and while not many people participate in the demonstration, when shown on the news it looks like a larger demonstration. Savio's demonstration is short-lived at UCLA and he soon moves to UC Berkeley, but this seems to mark the beginning of demonstrations and sit-ins. As an engineering student, Leboff takes more units than the typical student, so has less time to be involved in political activity.

[00:13:12]

Aware of some political activity in the world and on campus, but not involved.

[00:15:22]

Assassination of President John F. Kennedy [on November 22, 1963] marks the biggest shock during time at UCLA. Learns about it when walks into the engineering lounge. UCLA closes for a period of time.

[00:16:15]

President Lyndon B. Johnson visits the UCLA campus on [February 21, 1964]. During President Johnson's visit, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) serves as a human corridor to separate him off from the people, and Leboff is one of the ROTC cadets involved.

[00:17:17]

The process of learning about JFK's assassination. While sitting in the engineering building drinking coffee, someone walks in and announces the president has been shot. Initially, the notice doesn't register and he takes a while to come to the realization until after watching the news. The event marks one of the overriding news events during his time at UCLA. UCLA hosts a day of mourning and closes the school for several days.

[00:19:31]

Elaborating on President Johnson's visit. President visits campus with then California U.S. senator, and people are excited to see the president. At the time, there's an absence of animosity that would later be directed towards the president. The ROTC cadets lineup and lock arms for the president to have a corridor to walk through as he and the senator shake hands over them.

[00:21:33]

Begins ROTC during his freshman year in 1961. At this point, ROTC is still mandatory for all male students during their freshman and sophomore years. Unclear whether the requirements apply to foreign students.

[00:23:06]

What being in the ROTC program entails at this time. During the first two years, ROTC cadets take a number of classes such as military history, and they perform drill and marching exercises. During the second two years, cadets continue to take classes and perform drill and marching exercises. Additionally, they complete training exercises at Camp Pendleton as well as a six-week summer camp between junior and senior year at Fort Lewis, Washington. Being in the upper division also provides a stipend of about \$50 per month and \$300 for summer camp.

[00:24:50]

University of California Regents vote to end ROTC as a requirement in [1962 and it comes into effect beginning fall of 1962]. Some students express resistance to taking ROTC or anti war sentiments altogether. At one point all Land Grant Colleges [which received land under the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1868] had to have an ROTC program on their campus. Despite the end of ROTC as a requirement, a sense of patriotism motivates him to remain in the program and earn a commission. Also, he believes he can serve the country better with the training as opposed to without it.

[00:27:48]

Interactions with an engineering professor and advisor who doesn't want to award credits for taking ROTC despite the courses being listed in the catalog for credits. Has to raise the concerns to the Dean, and ultimately gets the credits. Much pressure to get rid of the mandatory portion of ROTC.

[00:30:41]

Anti-war sentiment. Primarily demonstrated by students, but also some war opposition from teaching assistants (TAs), with whom there was more contact during the lower division courses. Anti-war views are overheard by some TAs in the lounge, but not expressed in class.

[00:35:22]

Political radicalism on campus seems to differ between the early and later sixties, but it could have been blown out of proportion. After getting out of the service he serves as a short-time advisor to the Engineering Society at San Francisco State College, which is a hotbed of protest at the time, but the students he works with were not.

[00:37:42]

Meeting Arthur Ashe. The two don't have a lot of interface, but Ashe is his battalion commander, and the two likely meet sometime around junior year [between 1963-64]. Ashe is likely away from campus often as he's the top tennis player in the country at the time. A number

of athletes are in ROTC at the time, and they were highly visible as a recruitment tool. Ashe is one of the few [athletes] that actually goes into the service after ROTC.

[00:39:15]

Leboff and Ashe work together on a project for ROTC. Leboff visits Ashe's apartment and sees trophies all over the place, one being used as an ashtray. The two drink beer with lemon, as Ashe says that's how the Australians drink their beer, and for a long time Leboff continues to drink his beer with lemon. [To estimate the time period, this probably took place in 1966 after Ashe and the Davis Cuppers had spent three and a half months in Australia between 1965 and 1966.] Characterizes Ashe as a "cool guy" who was very approachable, particularly for being the top tennis player in the world.

[00:40:34]

Athletes used for recruitment. During lower division time in ROTC, takes courses with Walt Hazzard and Gail Goodrich. The branches of the ROTC are in competition to attract people. Athletes were often the commanders and higher ups in the drills, as they were the ones who would lead the marches.

[00:43:00]

Ashe's responsibilities in tennis cause him to miss some of ROTC. Possible that similar responsibilities affected other athletes in ROTC, particularly the basketball players. However, tennis is a bit different than basketball which is part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). For tennis, both amateur and pro tennis exist at this time, with Ashe likely being in the amateurs [In addition to playing on the NCAA UCLA Men's tennis team at this time, Ashe is also a member of the United States Davis Cup team which at this time is only open to amateur tennis players].

[00:44:19]

Ashe's nickname "Art". This is the way everybody seems to know him.

[00:44:41]

Ashe as the battalion commander. Involves leading the drill and telling people how to march. The project Leboff and Ashe work on likely involves planning drills. To become a battalion commander, the ROTC advisers select people based on a set of criteria. Typically upperclassmen have higher ranks.

[00:46:27]

Ashe's leadership style. Ashe embodies a lot of confidence, but is approachable without having airs about him. His role as battalion commander primarily has him giving out marching orders.

[00:48:37]

Leboff graduates in spring 1966, and is commissioned that same year. Serves two years active duty, and goes into the inactive reserves afterwards. During active duty he serves as an ordnance officer and receives training in Aberdeen, Maryland and then stationed in Uijeongbu, [South] Korea. Isn't initially commissioned as an engineering officer as the specialty is considered a combat division and his eyesight disqualifies him. Colonel learns he's an engineer and trades him to an engineering battalion. As a first lieutenant, he fills a major's position and leads an attachment that advises Korean engineering battalion. Works in Korea for thirteen months.

[00:54:42]

Everyone who participates in the upper division portion of Army ROTC during this time earns commission serves during the Vietnam War. Without participating in ROTC, there is still the possibility of getting drafted, however it's unclear how many UCLA students who did not complete ROTC ultimately end up being drafted. Knows many people who join the National Guard to avoid the draft.

[00:56:10]

Draft is in part a motivation for completing the ROTC program, but not the overriding consideration. Draft is on students' minds, especially as things like student deferments continue to change.

[00:57:47]

Eligibility for student deferments. Being in ROTC is distinct from having a student deferment because it's similar to being in the military already. Student deferments likely involve being enrolled and maintaining certain grades in courses, however as more people are needed for the military conditions continue to change to gain a student deferment. Unclear whether the changes in conditions to get a deferment affected the number of people who pursue ROTC. As this is still early in the Vietnam War, the manpower needs may not have been as great.

[01:00:10]

Follows some of Ashe's career both in tennis and civil rights, however is not initially aware of his health conditions. Since Ashe and Leboff are the same age, Ashe's passing comes as a shock and really affects him.

[01:01:13]

Knowledge about human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Initially after Ashe's death, aware that his death is related to heart condition, but not AIDS. Only learns about AIDS diagnosis later.

[01:04:08]

Difficult to describe how a relationship with Ashe impacts his life, but there's a sense of pride and inspiration to have known someone who became the best tennis player in the world and also knowing his personality and later contributions.

[01:05:48]

Thanks.