

National Venture Capital Association  
Venture Capital Oral History Project

**Walter J. P. Curley**

Interview Conducted by  
Carole Kolker, PhD  
March, 2010

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This collection of interviews, *Venture Capital Greats*, recognizes the contributions of individuals who have followed in the footsteps of early venture capital pioneers such as Andrew Mellon and Laurance Rockefeller, J. H. Whitney and Georges Doriot, and the mid-century associations of Draper, Gaither & Anderson and Davis & Rock — families and firms who financed advanced technologies and built iconic US companies.

Each interviewee was asked to reflect on his formative years, his career path, and the subsequent challenges faced as a venture capitalist. Their stories reveal passion and judgment, risk and rewards, and suggest in a variety of ways what the small venture capital industry has contributed to the American economy.

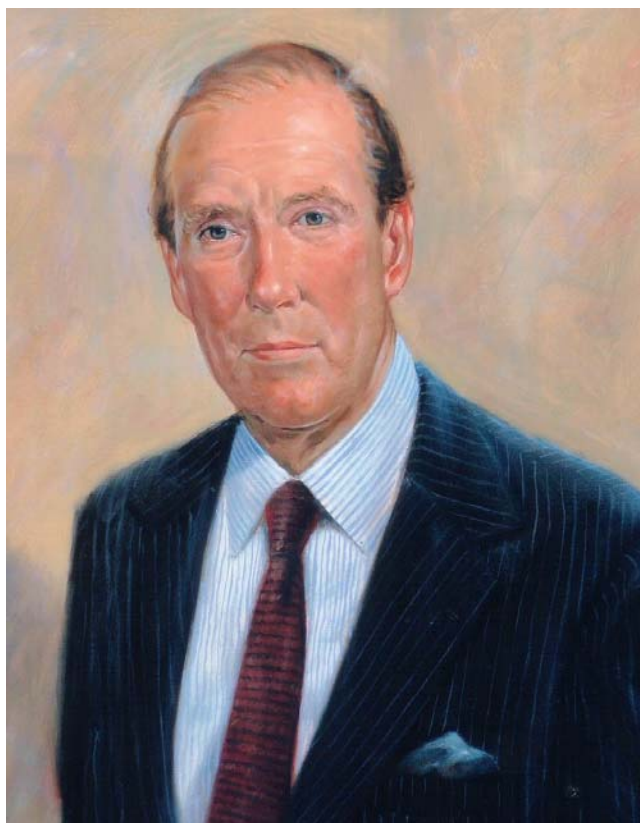
As the venture capital industry prepares for a new market reality in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the National Venture Capital Association reports (2008) that venture capital investments represented 2% of US GDP and was responsible for 10.4 million American jobs and 2.3 trillion in sales. These figures, while significant, greatly understate the collective accomplishments of the venture capital industry.

I'm pleased to have supported this project, which I believe will advance the understanding of the venture capital industry. This collection, along with Paul Bancroft's Bay Area oral history project at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and Paul Holland's Silicon Valley project for the Western Association of Venture Capitalists, will add significantly to a growing body of venture capital memoirs available to the public sector.

A special note of gratitude goes to each interviewee who generously gave of his time while candidly sharing his memories. Their recollections bring to life the dynamic story of venture capital in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing a powerful perspective on the history of this industry.

Charles W. Newhall III  
2009

## VENTURE CAPITAL GREATS



A Conversation with Walter J. P. Curley

Walter J. P. Curley was a partner in J. H. Whitney & Co from 1960 to 1974. Prior to that, from 1949 to 1959, Mr. Curley worked with Caltex Oil Company in India and Italy. He was the Commissioner of Public Events and Chief of Protocol of New York City, from 1973 to 1974, during the administration of John Lindsay.

In 1975, Mr. Curley was appointed Ambassador to Ireland by President Ford. He returned to the private sector to establish his own venture capital investment firm, in New York, in 1977.

Between 1989 and 1993, Ambassador Curley served as Ambassador to France under President George H. W. Bush. He participated in negotiations relating to French-American relations during the German re-unification, the dissolution of the USSR, and the Gulf War. Ambassador Curley has the rank of Commandeur in the French Légion d'Honneur.

In World War II, Mr. Curley served as a combat officer in the Marine Corps in the Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Guam and North China campaigns, and holds decorations from the Army, Navy Marine Corps, and The Republic of China.

Ambassador Curley has been a Trustee of the New York Public Library, Miss Porter's School, Brooks School in Massachusetts, The Buckley School (President), Barnard College, and is a former Director of the American Ireland Fund, The Irish Georgian Society, New York Life Insurance Company, Fiduciary Trust International, Bank of Ireland (Dublin), Crane Co., Guinness Peat Aviation, American Exploration Co., *The New Yorker Magazine*, the International Board of Banque Paribas, and Sotheby's Holdings, Inc..

Walter Curley was born in Pittsburgh, attended Andover, Yale University, Harvard University, the University Oslo, Norway, and has an Honorary Doctorate in Law from Trinity College, Dublin.

*The following interview with Ambassador Walter J. P. Curley is taking place at his office at 623 Fifth Avenue in New York City. My name is Carole Kolker. Today's date is March 24, 2010. This interview is being conducted as part of the National Venture Capital Association's Venture Capital Oral History Project.*

**Carole Kolker:** *I do want to thank you for setting aside this time.*

**Walter Curley:** I'm delighted to have you here, Carole Kolker, in the center of Manhattan, the center of Gotham; do you remember that word, an old Dutch word, seldom used. Anyway, it's nice to have you here and to talk about this subject, whatever items you have to talk about.

**CK:** *We're focusing on you and your career as a pioneering venture capitalist and whatever else has happened along the way. For the record, let's start with your early years: Where were you born? When?*

**WC:** My full name, if you have a tape long enough to collect it, is Walter Joseph Patrick Curley, Jr. I dropped the "junior" when my father died, so now I'm a little simpler in nomenclature. I was born in Pittsburgh, in 1922, right after World War I.

**CK:** *What was your family doing in Pittsburgh?*

**WC:** They'd been there for generations, and some had come from Ireland, some had come from England and Scotland; way, way back, I think — I know — some came from Spain. That goes back a long time. They came from Spain to Ireland and England. But we came directly from Ireland and Scotland and England — mainly Ireland. And interestingly, we came from the Old World to the New World directly to Pittsburgh. The boat that brought them landed in Philadelphia. A lot of boats in those days would come to Philadelphia, or Baltimore. My people came to Philadelphia, and then went over the Alleghenies directly to Pittsburgh, to western Pennsylvania.

**CK:** *Do you know why?*

**WC:** Well, I think they wanted to avoid — not avoid New York — but they thought it was the West. It was the call of the West, the promise of the West. So they went out there, and indeed, the promise was worth it. They went out there, and I was brought up in Pittsburgh. We lived in an area called Fox Chapel, but in those days we lived in town, in the east end of Pittsburgh. The ambience in Pittsburgh — like in a lot of places beyond the Alleghenies, and indeed in New York itself, but more so out there — I was surrounded from birth by private enterprise, entrepreneurship, if you will, or entrepreneurial spirits. I think everybody I knew was private enterprise-oriented. My father, all my father's friends, all my relatives — everybody was private enterprise-oriented. Nobody worked for the government. Very few people were in the State

Department or the Armed Forces, as my father had been. He'd been an officer in the US Army in France and Germany, Belgium, in World War I. But we all grew up in a business community, so your subject of entrepreneurialism, in effect, is something that I've known from birth. So where did I start? I suppose I, like many other people in that area, started right there.

**CK:** *What businesses were your family involved in?*

**WC:** My great-grandfather was in the brass and iron business. Not steel, but iron. And he had the Lappan Manufacturing Company, which became then the Cowan Manufacturing, which was my grandfather — Lappan was my great-grandfather. And Lappan being originally from Ireland — his father, he liked horses, and so he became a very avid and a very distinguished breeder, trainer, owner, and racer of trotters. So he became kind of a trotting king there for a while. But they were business people. That was my mother's family. And my father's family was equally oriented. My father was in the tank car business. He created a company called Conley, named after a friend of his who had been killed, Conley Tank Car Company. And he eventually acquired another company called Pennsylvania Tank Car Company, and it became the Pennsylvania-Conley Tank Car Company, and he built that up and eventually merged it into the General American Transportation Company in Chicago. And my father served on a number of boards in Pittsburgh. He was a director of the Colonial Trust Company, Pittsburgh Steel Company

and others outside of Pittsburgh. So it was a business-oriented atmosphere, always, and happily so.

**CK:** *And the conversation around the dinner table?*

**WC:** Not so much business, no. There was very little of that, very little of that. Strangely, isn't it? Thinking back — you'd think there'd be a lot of exchange. But there just wasn't.

**CK:** *What were the values in your home—maybe towards education or towards success?*

**WC:** Always. My mother was — at my age, you can imagine how old my mother would be — she was born in the 1892, and my father was born in 1888.

**CK:** *Your mother's name?*

**WC:** Her name was Marguerite Cowan Curley.

**CK:** *Your father's first name?*

**WC:** Walter.

**CK:** *Did you have any siblings?*

**WC:** No siblings.



**CK:** *Only child.*

**WC:** As they say in France, *un fils unique*. “*Unique*” in French does not mean unique. It means an only child.

**CK:** *That’s an interesting position in itself. I know there’s been a lot written about only children.*

**WC:** I don’t think it was a decision. I never knew the answer. My mother was an extremely healthy, charming, attractive athlete. She was a very good golfer — very good golfer, and was a good horsewoman — and she was a good shot. She was full of health, and Dad was almost as good a golfer, not quite as good as she was. They were very healthy people. So I never understood why I was the only, and I never had the nerve to ask.

**CK:** *Were you a tinkerer or more of a reader?*

**WC:** Both. And I loved sports.

**CK:** *What did you play?*

**WC:** I went to a boys’ school in Pittsburgh called Shady Side Academy. I was on the baseball team; I was on the basketball team; I did all of it. And I was on the football team, but I didn’t like that as much. I had a very good time at Shady Side. And then I was finally told by my parents, “You’re going away to school.” And I was surprised. In those days you didn’t really question your parents; you were told by them very nicely, but you were

advised what your next step was going to be, and get the pat on the head, and a lot of support, a lot of love; and I was told I was going to Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts. And I said, “Well, I’m doing just fine at Shady Side. I love everybody, I’d really like to finish there before going to college.” And they said, “That’ll be fine, dear; Your nametags are sewed in your shirts and you’re leaving.” So I was sent away. Just sent away.

**CK:** *Did you have any favorite subjects while you were at Shady Side?*

**WC:** Sure. I loved languages. I loved French; I didn’t mind Latin either. I didn’t like mathematics. Later in life, I was besieged by mathematics. History really appealed to me and so did languages. We didn’t have philosophy in grade school or those preparatory years. I would’ve liked that. I eventually did like it.

**CK:** *How old were you when you went to Andover?*

**WC:** I think I was thirteen, fourteen. Fourteen, maybe.

**CK:** *Was there a broader range of subjects that you were exposed to at that time?*

**WC:** Oh yeah. Shady Side was a very good school, Shady Side Academy, very good school, boys’ school. And Andover in those days was an exclusively boys’ school, but it was bigger than Shady Side. And the range of subjects, the curriculum was very sophisticated and extremely good.

**CK:** *Did you continue with your sports?*

**WC:** I did, but Andover being a bigger challenge, bigger talent required, I was soon happy to be out of the football thing, unhappy to be cut from the hockey — I was not good enough for the hockey team, but I made the golf team, and I played — I swam; I was on the swimming team, briefly, but I was on the golf team at Andover.

**CK:** *How would you describe yourself at this period of time growing up? Were you competitive?*

**WC:** I suppose, yes, I was.

**CK:** *Were you a leader? Did you see yourself as a leader or a loner?*

**WC:** I never thought in those terms. I don't think most of us thought in those terms. I think what happened would be indicative of what your question is. I was president of my class at Shady Side in the junior school, and I was on the student council at the senior school. And I was on the team, sure, yeah, I suppose.

**CK:** *Were you curious?*

**WC:** Curious would be a very, if I can — it's very hard for me, or I think anybody, to talk about yourself. It really is. Sounds like it would be a big treat; well, it isn't.

**CK:** *If I give you the cue of being curious—*

**WC:** I was. I was and am. I'd say if somebody said you're allowed one word to describe yourself that might be it.

**CK:** *How about your energy level?*

**WC:** Then or now or when?

**CK:** *I guess in general. Would you consider yourself high-energy, exuberant—?*

**WC:** I'd say enthusiastic — at times exuberant, and at times quiescent.

**CK:** *Balanced.*

**WC:** (laughter) Yeah. I reflected whatever was going on. I don't bore easily. I think if you get bored, mostly it's your fault.

**CK:** *Or your chemistry.*

**WC:** Or maybe your chemistry, that's right. I don't get bored easily. I've never walked out of a movie.

**CK:** *How about a book? Do you always finish a book?*

**WC:** I read a lot, and I've written several books, so I know what it is to both read boring things, and I suppose to write boring things. But I'm hard to bore at a theater or a show.

If it gets really bad, that's another show. If it gets so bad, then you're there having the time of your life not enjoying it.

**CK:** *That's a wonderful attitude. Did you ever work and earn money while you were going through school? Was that an option?*

**WC:** That's a really good question, and not an odd one. But in my case, funnily enough, it's a strange question, not a strange question, but a strange answer that I've not much thought about. I did the other day, strangely enough. In our household, and we lived out in the country most of the time — we moved from the east end of Pittsburgh out to Fox Chapel, which was then country, and I had two dogs, and I was outside a lot, and I liked it. I could shoot in the woods with the dogs, and it was fun, it was nice. But I was never paid to do anything around the house, ever, as a child: "Clean out this," or, "Do that," or, "Pick that up," or, "Mow that field, and here's the money." I was expected to pitch in. We had a man that did a lot of that heavy-duty stuff and some of the lightweight lifting too, but I was never paid to do that. But I was expected to pitch in when needed, and if you wanted to know what was needed, "Look around," my father used to say. "Want to find something to do? Look around and you'll find it." But he never paid me, never offered me anything, and it would've seemed strange to me too. I had an allowance, but that was it. I never got paid. First pay I ever got was working as a hay cowboy; I suppose a hay boy rather than a cowboy, on a ranch in Wyoming. It was a hay ranch.

And then I moved to another ranch, which was a dude ranch, so I was a dude wrangler.

That was the first pay I ever really got.

**CK:** *When was this?*

**WC:** Before the war, World War II — it was in the '30s, late '30s.

**CK:** *Was this a regular job or something you did in the summer?*

**WC:** Summer. A summer experience. Not the beginning of a great cowboy career, no.

**CK:** *Maybe you thought about it and dismissed it.*

**WC:** I did.(laugh). I did, exactly.

**CK:** *When you graduated from Andover, did you have a sense of what you wanted to do with the rest of your life at that point?*

**WC:** I think retrospectively, it's easy to remember what you think you thought. We didn't dwell too much on — although we knew that we had to major in a selected subject or subjects related to it in university. We knew that. But I had not made up my mind by the time I left Andover what I wanted to do. I knew what I didn't want to do.

**CK:** *Which was?*

**WC:** I was not thrilled with anything having a mathematical orientation, which then later became very ironic, because I got up to my ears in all of that. But I was not mathematically oriented.

**CK:** *That's fascinating. Have you kept in touch with any of your Andover classmates?*

**WC:** Oh, sure, of course. There aren't a lot left, but oh yes, I do.

**CK:** *I mean over the years; was there a network?*

**WC:** Over the years, forever, yeah. A lot of my Andover classmates went to Yale. So we went as a gang to Yale; and I had several roommates at Yale, mostly freshman year, from Andover.

**CK:** *That's the direction I want to move. In 1940, you went to—*

**WC:** The war was about to start; it hadn't started — and I graduated from Andover in 1940 and went to Yale.

**CK:** *Did you choose Yale?*

**WC:** That was chosen by me. That was left up to me. A lot of things after a certain age were left up to me. It was laissez-faire, as far as my father and mother were concerned. They trusted me, I think, and they were always there to guide, and they always did guide —

sometimes unsolicitedly, but they did. But the final decisions on those kinds of things were mine.

**CK:** *Why did you choose Yale?*

**WC:** Because I liked where it was. I'd been in Andover, in Massachusetts. I thought, Well, Harvard would be certainly great, and a lot of other good universities out there — Amherst would be another one — and plenty of others. But I thought, I'd rather be closer to the east and New York, and that sort of thing. And also the makeup of my classmates and friends — I had a lot of Pittsburgh friends who also went from Shady Side to Andover and to Yale. I had a roommate that lasted all through my life. He just died last year.

**CK:** *What was his name?*

**WC:** J. Mabon Childs. He was my very old friend in Pittsburgh at Shady Side and Andover and then Yale. We were ushers in each other's weddings. It was a continuous connection. I have a lot of those.

**CK:** *Was he a business associate in any way?*

**WC:** No, not a business associate, but he was in business, but not—



**CK:** *But your paths didn't cross in business?*

**WC:** They crossed all the time, but not in a business sense.

**CK:** *What did you choose to major in at Yale?*

**WC:** I chose a subject that I had never heard of before, because it was called—Well, first of all, you didn't have to make your mind up until the end of sophomore year, or towards the end of sophomore year, and the war had just started by that time. I had taken Japanese at Yale as a course, not as a war measure, but I thought it was a very interesting language. I loved languages — didn't know anything about Oriental languages, but there was a course at Yale in Chinese and Japanese. I chose Japanese, and then the war came, and so it was either fortuitous or a crazy choice, and my professor at Yale was half-French and half-Japanese. So he had kind of mixed feelings about the war, but he was an excellent professor. And I learned a lot about languages and the differences of grammar.

So I chose to major in a new subject, probably prompted by the war, called Foreign Area studies, and part of it was sociology, which was a new term to me. So I majored in Foreign Area Sociology, which covered various layers of study. Had a great professor, very inspiring professor, and sociology was on the verge of being recognized as a science, rather than an art. We were there, we didn't know we were, but we could feel — our professor said sociology will soon be recognized as a science, not merely a philosophical study or ethnological study.

**CK:** *So you obviously enjoyed that.*

**WC:** I thought it was really interesting. In particular, the foreign area had a little special section dealing in language. So I folded the Japanese language course into the foreign area thing. It worked out well for me.

**CK:** *Did you participate in any extracurricular activities?*

**WC:** I did, a lot at Yale, sure. The Dramat was one I was very active in; the Dramat, I liked that very much, and I was elected to — I was very proud of being a pundit. There was a group of historically recognized and featured in the yearbooks down through the decades, the pundits.

**CK:** *What did the pundits do?*

**WC:** It was founded by, and so the high priest of which was a man called William Lyon Phelps, and William Lyon Phelps was the epitome of a pundit. He was wise: he was a good listener; he was a raconteur. And every Monday we had the pundit lunch, and he would preside over this. He was an old man by then; I thought he was pretty old, he was in his 60s.(laugh) I thought he was ancient, just ancient, Solomon here. And then he had another professor called Jack Crawford, who was also a professor of English, and they were filled with erudition, filled with humor, and filled with wisdom. We had a good group. There were just six of us.

**CK:** *What might be the topic of conversation?*

**WC:** Anything. Well, mainly it had to be — it couldn't be bimbos.

**CK:** *Was it the news? Was it philosophy? Was it literature?*

**WC:** All of the above. All of the above. And there was a theme song — I don't know if we're getting off the track here. We sang it at the end of each meal. The pundit lunch was always the same: It was sort of an omelet with potatoes, it was especially done pundit style, over the decades. And at the end, we sang a song to the tune of a Gregorian chant. The song was called "TBIYTB." And we'd go "TBIYTB," the way a monk would sing it: "TBIYTB TBIYTB TBIYTB." (chanting) That stood for, "The best is yet to come."

**CK:** *I'm glad you shared that. That was wonderful.*

**WC:** I've never mentioned that to anybody.

**CK:** *Did you ever record it?*

**WC:** It's no secret — nobody ever asked me; I never told anybody.

**CK:** *Did you continue any of your sports at Yale?*

**WC:** Yes, I was on the Yale golf team. Well, I became a good golfer. I did go out for the junior or the freshman hockey team, giving it another shot, because I used to skate at

Shady Side. And like they did at Andover, they just laughed at me and told me to get lost, Skate on Sundays.(laugh) So I didn't make the team.

**CK:** *You had a lot else going for you, it seems.*

**WC:** I wanted to make the team, but I couldn't.

**CK:** *By the time you were getting into your studies, were you thinking — we do have a war going on — were you thinking at all about a career?*

**WC:** With the war going on, you know, Pearl Harbor — everything changed with Pearl Harbor, and we rushed to join. I should say this: In those days — it's hard to imagine this now — I knew nobody, man, woman or child, who wasn't behind the war. I'm serious about that. Not one. Old, not so old, young, so on. One hundred percent. I suppose there were some; I never met any. You'd read about escaping to Canada or something like that. So rare, it wasn't even worth mentioning. Man, women, child, all. And so I ran to join the ROTC, Reserve Officers Training Corps, which existed at Yale.

And at the end of the first year in the Reserve Officers Training Corps, I met, again, a fellow who had been several classes ahead of me called Elliot Detchon, and he was a big man on campus, and everybody liked him, and he was one of the stars in our fraternity. And he came back to Yale sort of as a recruiting officer for the Marine Corps. I, and several other friends, fellow Delta Kappa Epsilon members, saw him, had asked him how

the Marine Corps was, and he really did a job on us. I mean he was pretty cool.

Anyway, so as fast as I could and two of my other roommates, we jumped out of the ROTC — which was allowing us to graduate and then eventually get a commission in the Army — with all permission, had properly shifted out of the ROTC into the USMCR, United States Marine Corps Reserve, which also would allow us to finish and then go into the Marine Corps, headed for officers training school.

**CK:** *So your focus was on the Marines, not on your career at that point.*

**WC:** Well, you couldn't really — no, that's right. That's exactly right.

**CK:** *Now, I know, having read your diplomatic corps oral history that Richard Jackson did, which I enjoyed reading—*

**WC:** Oh, did you? Good.

**CK:** *Yes, I certainly did, and I thank you. I read that you went to Hawaii and Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and were aide-de-camp to General Arthur Worton. You mentioned General Worton as a mentor. Maybe you'd like to tell me why you cited him among four people that you see as mentors in your life.*

**WC:** Well, I have to track back just a little bit here. Yale sped us up. So in the last year, in our senior year, we had no summer vacation. We just went right from junior into the senior year. We were the class of 1944, but we graduated in 1943 and went directly to boot

camp in Parris Island. At the end of that, if you made it through that — it was pretty tough; I think it's changed a lot these days. It's still tough these days, but in those days it was really bizarre, and if you got out of that, you then went on to Quantico, where the OTC, officer's training camp, was, and that was equally hard in a different way, but really tough.

When you got out of that, you had to decide, or they decided for you, but they looked over what your qualifications were, what you had done, and they saw that I had a Japanese language exposure at Yale. And so they sent me to California, to Camp Elliott outside of San Diego. There was a Marine Corps language school there that wasn't as comprehensive as there was in Boulder, Colorado, which is run by the Navy. That was like a whole college course.

The Marine Corps Japanese language school was hard, but you had to combine that with your regular Marine Corps duties out there as a platoon leader. There was a lot of physical training and weapon training and that, along with the language school. And the language school, I must say, was very well-run, but it did not concentrate, did not fix upon the niceties of the language. Japanese is a very sophisticated, complicated language with many, many levels of politesse and gender and expectations. There's a lot of sophistication there and difficulty. The school out there was concentrating on: What do

you do with prisoners, and how do you capture these prisoners, and how do you get them out of caves?

We were going into areas of the Pacific that they know — I didn't know, none of us knew, but Pacific areas where there were caves and underground tunnels and a lot of hidden—How can we teach the Marines to speak enough Japanese to at least tell them what to do and understand a bit and interrogate them a bit if you can capture any people? So that was the purpose of it. And our division commander was Major General Keller E. Rockey, and he demanded a lot of troops. A division is a lot of troops, fifteen thousand men. So Worton was his number two, deputy commander, of the division I had joined. And so I met both of them, Worton being a junior to Rockey. So we all trained—I never saw the general; he knew my mother and father from Washington, but that had no bearing on my career.

**CK:** *How did he know your parents?*

**WC:** My father was stationed in Washington during the War. His company had an office in Washington.

**CK:** *During World War II?*

**WC:** World War II. They were supplying mainly tank cars to the Soviet Union, and my father — it was a big piece of business for the General American Transportation Corporation.

So he and Mother had an apartment in Washington, and they lived there and in Pittsburgh. So in some course of events, I think strictly social, they had met General Worton and his wife. Worton at that time was a colonel, and Mother met Mrs. Worton through Mrs. Truman. So mother used to be invited over to — thanks to Mrs. Worton — to Bess Truman's card-playing afternoons. So Mrs. Worton and Mother knew each other, and then Worton turned out to be deputy to Rockey. So when I got out in California, I was welcomed by Worton, who was stationed out there, whose wife was a friend of my mother's. So that was very nice. It didn't help me or hurt me.

**CK:** *But you were just a young man. You were what, twenty-one-years-old?*

**WC:** About, yeah. At that initial time, yeah. Let me see—Yeah. 1943, yeah.

**CK:** *When you think of a 21-year-old kid experiencing what you're—*

**WC:** You had to grow up very fast — and to take over as a platoon leader; there were a lot of guys there that were rougher, tougher, taller, bigger and older. So you had to say, Okay, now, this is the way it's going to be, and then prove yourself.

**CK:** *Is it because you're not rougher, tougher, bigger—are you smarter? I don't want to force you to say this, but would one have to be smarter?*



**WC:** I wouldn't say that, no. I would say you had to be — you had on your side authority.

This was vested authority in the system. You were an officer, and your men were officers, they were non-commissioned officers, and then there were the troops.

**CK:** *How did you feel about this responsibility?*

**WC:** If you don't like the kitchen, get out of it. Go be a private. You had to decide that early on. If you want to be an officer, you want to be a noncom, those are decisions you have to make, because it's not easy to become. So by the time you made the decision and go through becoming one, you're ready to do it. Oh yeah. And anybody who wants to get in your way better watch out.

**CK:** *So in what way does General Worton become a mentor?*

**WC:** Well, eventually — this is now becoming a wartime story, we're getting away from venture capital.

**CK:** *I know. But because he is a mentor—*

**WC:** It's interesting to me. Worton — we were on our way, we all were training to join the battle in the Pacific, but we didn't know where we were going. And the Fifth Division was suddenly being sent — we were in training for a year, and then we learned we were going to Hawaii. Now, where we were going after Hawaii, we had no clue. We trained in Hawaii, on the island of Hawaii, for many, many, many months; then we went to Pearl

Harbor, which is on the island of Oahu, and we laid an anchor there for a couple of weeks doing other things, sort of amphibious landings and practices of that sort. Then we went, and on the way, just before we went, Worton fell off a gang plank and broke his leg. So he had been deputy commander of a combat division, and actually he was in a hospital on Oahu, Pearl Harbor. So another general was — he'd been appointed general, brigadier general. Another brigadier was put in his place, and we sailed without him. Eventually, much later, after two very tough military operations, Worton rejoined Rockey when Rockey took over the 3<sup>rd</sup> Amphibious Corps and went to Okinawa, then China.

And a corps is three divisions. One division is, as I said, 15,000 men, and he took over a corps, it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Amphibious Corps, which is 45-47,000 men, for take over to Okinawa, and then move on from there to the occupation of North China. That's where Rockey had Worton as his ADC — I mean his deputy commander. And I was then tapped from being a platoon leader on Iwo Jima — I was a combat platoon leader, with the Japanese language training, so I had a special platoon who had had that capability — I became an aide, ADC, aide-de-camp to General Worton for the whole China campaign. So that's how that happened.

He and I lived together, we worked together, and he was my boss. By that time I was a first lieutenant, and I got promoted to captain. He was my boss and he was my mentor. Very good men. Both those men were totally different. General Rockey was his boss —

totally different in temperament. Rockey had gone to Yale, by the way of the Yale Forestry School, Worton had gone to Harvard. And they were both fine, fine men. I learned a lot from watching both of them, talking to both of them.

**CK:** *The other mentor you mentioned is your father.*

**WC:** Always. Always. Did I say that? My father?

**CK:** *I asked you to list a mentor or several and your father was one.*

**WC:** Well, number one: He was really a good man. It makes me almost tear up to think of him because he was — my mother was too, but we're talking about men. Dad was never interfering, but always there — very funny, very incisive in his thinking; Worked hard, loved every minute of it, and played pretty hard too. I mean, he had a very good time. I don't remember him not having a good time. He had his moments of sadness, of course, but he was a good man, and I learned mainly by watching. I didn't ask him; I just watched him, and we had a lot of talk too — we did talk a lot about things. But they were roaming sorts of thoughts.

**CK:** *Had he gone to college?*

**WC:** He had started at the University of Maryland, I think for a year — I don't even think he got through a year, because in those days, before World War I, I think he said, "Well, this is sort of dumb, and anyway I need the money." His father had said, "Listen, do

whatever you can, but feed yourself.” And so I think Dad saw that as kind of a silly thing for him. And he went to work. He was very smart. Very smart. And great fun. He was very good company. He had a lot of friends and they were fun. But he was good company and we had a good time. I knew I could always go to him and say, “What do you think of this?” Or if I did something wrong and didn’t tell him and he learned about it, boy, did I ever hear about it. Oh yeah, I heard all about it, and it wasn’t fun to be around when that happened. But also I saw how he approached his work. He loved it, and he worked hard. Didn’t always succeed in certain elements of what he developed, but he stuck to his guns, and he was a success. He was a good example.

**CK:** *Why did you decide to go to Harvard?*

**WC:** After the war?

**CK:** *Yes.*

**WC:** I didn’t want to go. And I asked Dad — I wanted to go back to China. I thought there was just so much going on there, so interesting, and a huge population, and freedom at last from the Japanese yoke, and they’d been there a long time. And I saw a great opportunity.

**CK:** *To do what? What would you have done in China?*

**WC:** At that time, I decided anything. I wanted to go under any circumstances and just looking for what would I do. And so I went to see my father, and my father asked me if I'd like to join him. And I said, "Well, personally, yes." But I said, "I'm not too sure about a son working for a father at his first job, real job." And he said, "I agree with you. Why don't you go and do what you want to do, and then if you ever want to come back or something, we'll talk about that later." And I said, "Well, I want to go to work." And he said, "Do you know how to read a balance sheet?" This was his question: "Do you know how to read a balance sheet?" And I said, "No." I know what it is. I didn't take any of those courses at Yale or Andover. Well, he said, "Whatever you do, you ought to learn to read a balance sheet." And he said, "If you learn that, I don't care what you want to be. You can be a magician, you can be an aviator, you can be a toe dancer, you can be a businessman, a doctor, a lawyer, whatever; that's up to you. But go learn how to—"

I said, "Dad, I'm not interested in that life. I'm more interested in history, languages, that sort of thing." And he said, "Don't make me repeat myself. Whatever you do, you'll need it someplace; go learn how. Promise me you will, and then go do what you want." And I said, "Is there some book I can read?" He said, "No. Go to the Harvard Business School." And I said, "I want to get going now." And he said, "No, go to the Harvard Business School." I said, "Well, how long is that? It's over a year, isn't it?" And he said,

“It’s two years.” And then we argued, and I said, “Two years! I went to Shady Side, Andover, Yale, the war. I haven’t stopped; I want a year off to go find myself.”

And he said, “I’ll find your bottom with my foot.” He put it just that way. “Go find yourself? No navel gazing permitted; just go learn to read the numbers, then go and be a navel gazer.” But he really laid it on the line. And I said, “How will I get into Harvard Business School?” He said, “Just apply.” And I did. And then it turns out that he had a good friend at the Harvard Business School who was a former general that he knew in Washington. It was General Doriot. He was French, originally French — his accent got thicker in French every year he stayed in the United States.

So Professor George Doriot was a friend of Dad’s, and Dad said he admired Doriot, who was in the Army in Washington when they were there. So I had a chat with Doriot, and Doriot was very persuasive and also very important at the business school. He was sort of an icon.

And so, I went to the business school and hated every minute. Hated every minute. At the end of a year, I went back to my father and I said, “I really don’t like this. I don’t care about a lot of these things.” And he said, “You promised me you’d finish, and I promised you that if you finished, I don’t care what you do. Just go back and finish.”

So I went back, and by God — oh, no, no, this is important to what we’re talking about. I said, “I’ve got to take a little time off. Really, a little time off.” And that’s when the

navel-gazing aspect came up. And he said, “Well, you can’t just go and gaze at your navel. Find someplace to take the time off and learn something. Not about business, but learn something else.” And I read an ad in a paper that said the University of Oslo, in Norway, was having its first ever summer school for foreigners, for Americans, and I said, That’s it! And I applied, and I asked a fellow in my class at Yale if he’d like to do that too, and a girlfriend that I had at the time, who was at Barnard. So we all thought, This is a pretty good idea. So we applied to the University of Oslo, and we got in, and we went. Got on a boat with a lot of other young people, a lot of them from Minnesota and the Midwest in general, some from here, some from New York, and we went there and had the time of our lives.

It was really, really interesting and fun and relaxed. I came home and said, “Dad, it was worth it.” And he said, “I’m glad you did it.” And I said, “I’m going back to business school.” And I went back. Within about six weeks, I began to like every minute of it. Honestly, a light bulb went on over my head. The business was interesting; business was better than that; it was fascinating, it was challenging, and it was do-able, and it was new. It was sort of a lightning bolt. I liked every minute of it, so I decided I wanted to go back.

**CK:** *What happened at the University of Oslo, during that short period, that you think turned you around?*

**WC:** I talked to a lot of Norwegian businessmen, because they were people who funded the summer school, and they all spoke perfect English, and they were all businessmen — almost all; one was a doctor. God, these guys really have—It was just fun that they had. And then foreign trade: I took a course called “foreign trade” in English, but one of the Norwegian teachers there and some businessmen would come in and talked. Something real. It was the reality of business — commerce and industry — really struck me as being something fascinating. And so I never got over that. I just went back and liked every minute of it.

I should mention an inspiration I had that sort of turned me on, or an added inspiration, was Professor Doriot, who had been General Doriot, as I said. General George Doriot was a professor, and he was the head of a course that you couldn’t get into, it was so packed. It was just jammed with people. And it was basically dealing with private enterprise. It’s a big, big subject. The name of the course was “Manufacturing”; that’s what it was called. But that was a great big tent. He had a deep French accent — and he’d been there before the War too. So he wasn’t anything new there. He dealt with — private enterprise was his holy grail. He loved every minute, and he conveyed that. He was a show. You went there, you sat, and it was an amphitheater size and shape. And he could pick people out sitting in the top row sleeping or talking or chewing gum or



whatever, he could spot—He made it a circus, but you learned, and you really learned from his passion and from his entrepreneurial fire.

You could just see — and he was funny, not meaning to be funny. And some of his French-accented phrases were hilarious. We all had a good time, and we learned a lot. And incidentally, he was one of the great founders of venture capital. The American Research and Development, ARD, that was his. But in those days, that phrase didn't exist at all. But he existed, and that was one of the main sparks. He, George, and then his wife Edna was a friend of my mother's, so they were very nice to me and my roommate, because every now and then they'd have us over for tea or something like that.

**CK:** *So he was quite an influence in your Harvard years.*

**WC:** George Doriot? Yes, oh yeah.

**CK:** *What were you thinking about your future when you were finishing at Harvard?*

**WC:** Then, in talking with my father — my father, in the tank car business had always had lots to do with oil people, people in the international oil business and the national oil business in America. And he always liked them. And Pittsburgh was a big oil town too. Gulf was there, and Plymouth Oil was there, and various oil companies — oil fields in Pennsylvania. So Dad said, "I always liked the oil business." And he had been a

wildcatter in his younger days, while trying to build up his own company. He'd take every now and then off, go down to Oklahoma and Texas, and wildcat — never very successfully, although he'd bring me home boots and lassos and things like that. But I don't think that was successful. The other part was very successful. But he instilled in me an appreciation of the oil business. So he said, "Why don't you—?" And he made a deal: — was very close to a Texas company, Texaco, and he had leased a lot of cars, tank cars, to Texaco. Matter of fact, every tank car they had was Dad's, and so all of them were his, so he knew those people very well. He said, "Why don't you go and see the Texas company people? They're good people."

And I went to see them in New York, and they said, "We don't operate in certain areas, certainly not the Far East," where I wanted to go. But he said, "We have a subsidiary that does, and that's owned by ourselves and by the Standard Oil Company of California. And so it's called CalTex, California Texas Oil Company. And it operates every place except South America and North America. It operates in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East." So I said, "How about the Far East, where I really want to go?" And they said, "We've got an operation there. Why don't we just—?"

So they set me up to be interviewed, and the interview was hard. When I say hard, it was well done, and I got a job. This is when I got out of Harvard Business School. A little bit before I got out. I lined it up before. When I got out of the business school and got

myself engaged to a girl I was madly in love with, and told her I was going to China, and she said, “Sounds good to me.” And so I worked for CalTex, and we eventually were headed for China, and, literally, at the last moment — it was widely known that conditions in China weren’t very good—Chiang Kai-shek, whom I had met and actually had been secundered to briefly — I was Chiang Kai-shek’s ADC for a while, in name only for a bit, just as kind of an honor to him, give him another aide. My general, Worton, gave me as a present to Chiang Kai-shek, sort of a chattel. There it was. But Chiang Kai-shek was in a shaky position out there, and the CalTex people hoped he would win the election to be reelected to president; and he was, so we all kind of had a sigh of relief about that. Then the Mao Reds started making inroads to the south, headed towards Shanghai, which is where we were going.

So I was told by the CalTex people, “I know you’re just getting married and heading for—Well, get married, that’s fine, but about ten days after you get married, you’ll go to China, but your wife will stay here, your new wife, your bride will stay in the States until it sort of settles down. But she can join you in a year or a year and a half.” And I said, “I’m getting married December 4<sup>th</sup>, and then I go to China on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and I see my bride in a year, year and a half? No.” So I had to do some fast tap-dancing backwards to find myself another slot. And they said, “Oh, by the way, something’s come up in India.” So at the last moment we canceled out of China, and we shifted to India where we stayed for four years.

**CK:** *I want to get on to your work in venture capital with Whitney. I know that you were in India, and then you were—*

**WC:** We were in India for four years. We had two children born there, one conceived there. We moved to Italy and spent four more years there, where we were in partnership with Fiat, and we went back after four years to New York, and we were headed for London for the Regent Oil Company; I was going to work for the Regent Oil Company, owned by CalTex, when I was approached by J. H. Whitney, who had just started an oil company called San Hasinto or San Jacinto Oil Company, and would I come? And I thought about it; and I loved CalTex, and I was doing well, I thought; and my wife said I was crazy to think about something else. She loved CalTex. We had great opportunities lying ahead. And so I sort of gritted my teeth and I joined.

**CK:** *How did you make that decision, based on what?*

**WC:** My wife and I talked it over a lot, and I went to see—I had a friend at J. H. Whitney & Company called Charlie Brown. He was a partner in the firm. There were eight partners.

**CK:** *How did you know Charlie Brown?*

**WC:** Around New York. We were old friends. He had gone to Princeton same time I'd gone to Yale. I used to see him around for years. You know, at dances and parties. We had a lot of mutual friends. We were just friends, and our wives were friends; we had been living in New York, with CalTex, before going to England. Charlie said, "We're starting

an oil company. We'd like to talk to you." And he said, "A man called Benno Schmidt would like to talk to you. He's going to be our chairman, and he's the managing partner of J. H. Whitney & Company." I said, "I'm really not that interested because I like CalTex, and I like what I'm doing; I like the way it's being run; I like everything about it." And he said, "Well, just meet with Benno Schmidt, so that I could just say I'd done it." So I went to meet Benno Schmidt at Rockefeller Center in the Whitney offices. And to make a long story, really long — not a long story, but it was an amusing meeting— Benno Schmidt was extremely impressive, very persuasive, and I came home and said to my wife, "I'm leaving CalTex." And she said, "No. Don't." And I said, "I've just got to do it." I told her the reason. She said, "I think you're crazy." And we discussed it, and then she said, "I see your point." I said, "I'm going to take a shot here."

**CK:** *What was the reason?*

**WC:** The reason was — J. H. Whitney & Company had been founded in 1946 by "Jock" Whitney — John Hay Whitney — and that's another story, but just for one minute we might touch on that. Jock Whitney had founded the firm, and then he found other people, and one of them — to join him in this — Bill Jackson, who used to be head of the CIA was one of them — smart guy, lawyer — and he'd met him. Jock had met him in London during World War II. He'd also met Colonel Benno Schmidt in London in World War II. So Jock had this idea of forming a company that I must tell you about, because it's

important in the world of venture capital. So Benno became a partner in J. H. Whitney & Company. That's how they met.

So Benno Schmidt was very smart, and he took up all the oxygen in any room, he really did. Sounds like a bad trait, but for me it wasn't. He was impressive, and Jock had this idea of the venture capital firm, and I liked that, and Jock Whitney was no fool. And I didn't know Jock, at that point, but there were serious people there, serious intent, and I liked the theory of building something big from nothing. And so I thought the rewards versus the involvement were also attractive. And the chance, you know, the world of chance, yea or nay, I liked that a bit, and there were a lot of smart people; I was going to take my chance. And my wife, Mary, who was really, really smart too, and she saw the point, but sort of reluctantly, because we had three little children by then, and she said, "What are we doing?" But, she agreed that we should do it. So I did.

**CK:** *You mean in a sense starting over with a new company?*

**WC:** Yeah. Right. I already had a pretty good jumpstart at CalTex, I was doing fine. She said, "Why don't we stay with this thing, because the pay's fine and you'll get more, the savings plan and all this stuff, it's all very attractive." And I said, "It is." And it was. I said, "This is worth the chance."

**CK:** *So you're a bit of a risk-taker?*

**WC:** Well, if you're not a risk-taker, you shouldn't get into the venture capital business. It's the last place you should get. So I told Benno Schmidt I would do that. So I got into the San Jacinto Petroleum Company; They wanted somebody that knew about the oil business for their new company. So we got in and we met all his chairmen. He was a partner at J. H. Whitney, but he was also chairman of San Jacinto, and he was a Texan.

So we built that company up, and with a lot of help, and eventually sold it to Conoco, Continental Oil Company. And Benno said, "All the San Jacinto Oil Company people are going over to Conoco, except you." He said, "I'd like you to stay right here." And I was very flattered and happy that he said that, because by then we were good friends. He said, "I want you to stay here, and we'd like to make you partner in the firm." So I said, "How did I suddenly land in heaven?" Really. Because I liked every one of them, I admired every one of them. And so I stood up, and I said, "Absolutely." So I became a partner in the firm, after we had sold San Jacinto.

**CK:** *You mentioned Benno Schmidt as a mentor and I can see from what you've said—*

**WC:** Yes. And stayed that way. Until he died.

**CK:** *Could you talk about maybe one or two of the companies that you were involved in with Whitney that stand out in your mind as being memorable for one reason or another?*

**WC:** Sure, I can do that. I think it might be interesting, because nobody talks about it anymore, and I never have talked about it. There was a rumor around; Benno Schmidt said it's not a rumor; it's a fact that Jock Whitney coined the phrase venture capital; that was his phrase. One day at lunch — we had a very nice little dining room in our offices — and several of us said, “Jock, did you make up that phrase?” And he stuttered a little bit — stammered; he didn't stutter, he stammered — I said, “Did you coin that phrase?” And he said, “P-p-p-probably.” So I do think that he coined the phrase venture capital. But in those days, the definition of venture capital — and these days, there'd be a vast change, and I think that's more interesting when we talk about what the investments were. In those days, venture capital, that game, that business, was run by patricians. They were people that were of patrician families — very, very long-standing. I've always disliked the word “wealthy”; I like the word “rich.” These were very rich, long-established families who had money. And they're the ones—Jock started it.

While he was captured by the Germans and eventually escaped and got to England — and he said, “I'm going to divide my fortune into three pieces: One, I'm going to do some good.” I'm being pretty general here. “One, I'm going to do some good for the world.” So he established New York Hospital, and also established one of the great art collections. I mean a seriously good art collection. And he said, “And number three: I



want to establish a source of money that somebody with some good ideas that no bank will look at — and it's too early in the game for a bank to lend any money, because the person has no collateral — I want to supply money for somebody to build a better mousetrap.” I guess it was in four pieces. “The rest of the money, I want to have some fun.”

So his idea of fun was establishing one of the great racing stables. He established Green Tree Stables; raised a lot of winners. Green Tree Stables were very big in the racing world. And also, in his idea of fun would be investing in wild things. He had some things on Broadway; he bought the New York Herald-Tribune — he owned and published the New York Herald-Tribune. And also, I asked him one time could we go into a movie venture? And he said, “No, absolutely not,” and I said, “Why not? You're so adamant about that.” And he said, “I only went in it once, and I made so much money that I could never repeat myself.” He backed David O. Selznick in producing “Gone With The Wind.” He said, “That's the only reason.” But he said, “I could never top that, so forget about the movies.”

**CK:** *Would you say that he was a smart man? Was he a visionary?*

**WC:** In his way, he was. He was a very good person at bringing extremely different people together and making it work. He wasn't conscious of that. He didn't do it consciously, but he was very, very good at bringing very disparate entities, in the realm of people.

together, to make them happy and make them successful. And that element was brought into J. H. Whitney Company, because he had a very big amount of certain things he never wanted to do because of their nature, and other things he thought he should do. But he always said, “Whatever we go into, we’re not going into this as philanthropy.” He said, “I try to do plenty of that on the side. We’re not giving any money away. We want to put it into things we can grow and make money, and when we do that, we can then put it into something else.” So that’s what we did. But it was run by patrician thinking. There were no venture capitalists around that were—Banks, for example, have venture capital operations. That wasn’t the definition of venture capital. Venture capital was this: You put your money into the venture; if you win and you make some money out of it, that money goes right into your pocket — your pocket. If you lose, you don’t get your money back — it’s gone. Now they have funds and banks who lend money or who—But the guy who’s running that venture capital section in the bank — if the thing’s a great success or a great failure, he doesn’t either win or lose; he just gets his very high salary. It has totally changed, but I mean totally.

**CK:** *What venture firms were you working with when—*

**WC:** There were no venture firms. There were none. We worked with families. We worked with the Rockefellers. We made a big deal in Australia — you asked me to mention some deals — with David Rockefeller.

**CK:** *What was that?*

**WC:** It was a great big sheep ranch and agriculture property in Western Australia. And another, I think, Spencer Chemical was one of the first ever—Jock put \$10 million in, in 1946; one of the first ventures, he put \$1.5 million. \$10 million in 1946, nice piece of change. The first big one he had was Spencer Chemical, and that’s industrial chemicals — big, big success. Another one early in the game was Minute Maid Orange Juice, where Jock Whitney was a great friend of Bing Crosby’s, and Jock invested J. H. Whitney Company money — or, we did — in a chemical formula — nothing to do with Spencer Chemical — but in a professor’s formula of making frozen orange juice, how to do it; never been done before. We sat around a conference table like this, testing about every three months; we’d have to send a guy back to the drawing board because it tasted so terrible. Then one day he showed up and we said, “That’s it.” And we went into it full force, and then Jock asked Bing Crosby to mention it on his — well, he gave Bing a piece of the action; he gave Bing a piece of whatever came out of Minute Maid Orange Juice. So Bing very happily: “Well now we’ve got something very new here.” So Bing sang about it — talked about it on the radio, and Minute Maid Orange Juice just took off — took off — and we actually sold it to Coca-Cola. And that was a big success. Storage Technology was another very, very big success. Global Marine Exploration was another big one. San Jacinto Petroleum, as I say, was one.

**CK:** *How do you vet a company — whether they come to you—*

**WC:** This is a really good question. We kept a record up to 1992 — started in 1946. So over a period of forty-six years, say, because I don't know anything that happened after '92 — I didn't pay any attention because I was long gone. Long gone to another career. But over a period of forty-six years, we did five a year — if you averaged them out, divide that forty-six into the number of deals we did, it comes out to five a year. How many did we see a year? Two-hundred and fifty. Now, “see” could be a man walks in and you hear a deal and you know in fifteen minutes that it's not going to fly or not for you anyway. And then there are others you take three months to vet and say, “This is it for you.” But you learn — one learns, and we got pretty good at it too, as the guy walks in the door you could almost sniff him. Honestly. It sounds crazy, but you get, “sniffing” is not the right verb, but you get a feel for the way he talks, the way he carries himself, the way he expresses his enthusiasm or lack of. All these things add up. And if somebody said to me — and they have said to me in the past—“What's the secret ingredient in a good, successful venture capital deal?” Whatever they might tell you — timing, location, location, location, all that kind of thing — the secret ingredient, as far as I'm concerned: people. It's who's in it, who's running it, whose idea is it, who's implementing it? The secret ingredient is people, and you've got to learn somehow how to spot them. You will sometimes make mistakes, but other times you don't.

**CK:** *So is it more than being smart—this ability to smell, or sniff it?*

**WC:** Yeah, you can see it, you can feel it. Sometimes you're wrong. Some guy comes in, looks like a loser, and you can say, "Is this really going to fly?" Three years later he owns Silicon Valley. But you get kind of used to knowing what will play and who will play. You just sort of get used to it. It's not a science. It's an art.

**CK:** *Comes with experience?*

**WC:** I'd say, yeah, right. Sure. And it was fun. We had two other things that are different. There were always about eight to ten partners — that was about what it fluctuated. And if we saw a deal — we'd all sit around and make the decision together, and whoever found the deal would explain it — and then tell them to get back, get more information. But once decision time came to go or not go, we had to be unanimous. Three partners couldn't say, Well, it sounds pretty good to us. We think we're going to go. And the rest say, I don't really like that. We all went or nobody went.

**CK:** *If it was yours, you were selling it, more or less, if you had brought something—*

**WC:** More or less, oh yeah, to your partners. When you were putting your money — if you say, "Well, you guys are all crazy in not liking this; I'm putting money in." No way. You just were not allowed to do that; you couldn't do that.

**CK:** *What kind of work did you have to do before you brought a deal to your partners?*

**WC:** Lots of work. First of all, you'd find somebody that might've known something about the business, some partner that had already been down that road, had already been exposed to the business or that industry. And then if you didn't have anybody around the table to do anything about it, you went out and found somebody and hired them to teach you about it. Or, we developed a lot of friends, so we would — if we were in the oil business, we'd go and ask somebody that was in the oil business. So we had a lot of network. We did a lot of homework — a lot of homework. And then another thing that we did; we weren't just an investment company; we were a venture capital company. If we put money in, we didn't just put the money in; we put ourselves in. We took our coats off; we rolled up our sleeves; put our money in; and in many cases served on the board of the new company that we were trying to create, and bringing them our experience, if any, or going and hiring and helping—We put up the money; they put up the sweat equity and so on.

**CK:** *What do you think is more important? The technology/entrepreneur or the management, when it comes to the success of a company?*

**WC:** The answer would differ according to the stage. An entrepreneur with a good idea is very hard to get, very hard to find, very hard to beat. But an entrepreneur with a good idea with bad management can be a disaster. But a lot of good managers aren't very good entrepreneurs. Some are.

**CK:** *You can't turn around a bad idea.*

**WC:** That's right. Some can do both. Some are just wonderful at both, particularly in the—  
Once there's growth in there, you have to be careful. If I had to choose, would you rather have a good entrepreneur or a good manager, I'd take a good entrepreneur anytime, anytime. I can hire management. I can hire good management. I can hire the best. I can't hire entrepreneurialism.

**CK:** *How do you sense when someone comes to you that their idea is going to fit into our economy, our industry? That when it's ready, that the timing of it is right.*

**WC:** You have to sit down and talk to 1,000 people; not 1,000 people. And when the time comes to jump, you gotta hold your breath and jump. You have to do your homework; I wouldn't go flying blind into any of these things. A crapshoot is only a crapshoot as long as the dice aren't loaded. Oh no, you do your homework and then you jump.

**CK:** *Calculated risk in that sense.*

**WC:** Oh yeah, that's why it's risk capital.

**CK:** *I wanted to ask you how emotionally you get involved when you're with a company, when you brought it to your partners, and you are—*

**WC:** Well, to say "not at all" wouldn't be true in my case, and I think in most people's cases. But I think it depends on the individual's makeup. My makeup or my partners' makeup.

Some people are not very emotional about anything. So there's a whole rainbow of differences there. But I'd say the normal, or not normal, average — everybody was normal — the average reaction would be a fair amount of involvement. Nobody was dispassionate about it.

**CK:** *How personally involved have you been with the entrepreneur? If you want to, cite some company that you've had to see through its ups and downs.*

**WC:** I'll tell you this: There was a company, which shall be nameless, in West Virginia, and it was in the lumber business, and there was sort of a hot dog running it, and we thought a really good guy, and he wasn't as good as we thought he was. So he was really running it into the ground. Now, we were very loathed to pull the chain, pull the cord on him too early. In venture capital, you've got to give it a chance. But there comes a time where you really have to say bye-bye. And I had to do that twice. One time because Benno Schmidt, who should've done it, but as I say, he used up all the oxygen, a great big guy, good guy, but he was a pussycat at heart; he couldn't fire anybody. So he had me fire somebody one time. He had some excuse like — he was from Texas — “I gotta go down and see an old friend of mine from the University of Texas. Now, could you go down to West Virginia and give that old boy a goodbye sign?” And it was Christmas time. So I had to go down and fire this guy.



**CK:** *And he was an entrepreneur, or was he the head of the company?*

**WC:** He was both.

**CK:** *He was running his company.*

**WC:** Yeah. I had to give him a (whish sound).

**CK:** *Obviously, that wasn't—*

**WC:** No, it doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's no fun, and you learn from it. You hope you learn, and you don't do it meanly. You do it as sugar-coated as you can.

**CK:** *Diplomatic.*

**WC:** Yeah, diplomatically. We had a sort of a birthday party for the firm at the '21' Club. Do you know '21'? It's Jack and George '21' at 21 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street — wonderful old, old place, and we had a private room and sort of an anniversary. "Jock" was there and the rest of us were there, the partners. And Benno Schmidt had suggested that we list all of our winners and all of our losers, and then announce that—over a period of ten years. Announce what they were and how many there were, how many losers, how many winners. So I compiled, with another fellow, we compiled this list, and at the lunch at '21.' After a drink or so, and I think towards the end of the lunch, I tapped the glass and pulled out the sheet of paper and said, "Well, here it is." And this was a fact. There was no embellishing: "Over the period of the last decade, we have had ten losers."

Everybody goes, “Ohhhhhh,” looking at each other. And then I said, “And then we had ten winners. So in all those years, we’ve had ten winners and ten losers. How about that.” And everybody’s going, “What?” And I said, “However, — Jock really thought this was the best. I didn’t make it up; it was just a fact — the losers lost this much money, the ten; the ten winners made this much money, and the difference between the two sums was astronomical.” So everybody, “Yea.”

**CK:** *It wasn’t a wash.*

**WC:** It wasn’t a wash, no. It was good news, very good news. Jock always said too — this is sort of a parenthetical thing. Thinking back, I haven’t talked about these things ever. Jock always said, in his inimitable way, “Some of the reasons we don’t go into certain things, like—” I remember him using the example, “ladies’ underwear or hose,” or some crazy thing. He said, “The reason we don’t go in for men’s garters or—” Some, I can’t remember, but four or five really ridiculous—“The reason we don’t go into those, not because they wouldn’t be great money-makers; anything we go into, we want to be proud of when it’s over.” And he was deadly serious about that.

**CK:** *Interesting. I’m struck by the fact that when you talk about your investments, everything is “we.” It seems like it was always the partners, “we.”*

**WC:** Oh, always, oh yeah, I don’t even think about that.

**CK:** *That it's not your deal or his deal.*

**WC:** Oh no, it was our deal.

**CK:** *You were all in it together.*

**WC:** Absolutely. I had nothing to do with the Australian property. I knew about it from the meetings, but I knew nothing about that. We were all in it together. We had to be.

**CK:** *So you were making the decision on investing and—*

**WC:** Right. Sure, we all made the decision, but the person who brought it in, so to speak, would be the one to serve on the board, unless he thought somebody else should, and would follow it. So there was a certain attachment there, but not just one; you had various attachments. One other ground rule we had was that the partners were encouraged, strongly encouraged, I'll say strongly discouraged from serving on other publicly held companies — on the boards of other publicly held companies.

**CK:** *Why?*

**WC:** Because any attention to boards should be on our boards, boards of companies we're interested in, not your private.

**CK:** *So there was a real sense of commitment to Whitney.*

**WC:** Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, absolutely. We didn't want people worrying about something that we had no interest in as a team.

**CK:** The following question was added in a recorded phone conversation with Ambassador Curley, from Ireland, May 19, 2010. *You talked about Benno Schmidt, and I wanted to know in what way you saw him as your mentor?*

**WC:** Benno Schmidt was the managing partner of our firm, J. H. Whitney & Company. The senior partner was Jock Whitney himself, who was the founder. But Benno C. Schmidt was the managing partner, and for all intents and purposes was the chairman, if you will. But it was a partnership; we were all general partners, there were no limited partners, there were only seven of us. And I was exposed instantly, when I became a partner, to Benno's very broad and deep intelligence and his courage of decisions; his ability to analyze quickly and thoroughly, and his great ability, as well, to size up people, instinctively well, but always accompanying his decisions and his view points with a pretty deep analysis. He wasn't just sort of an off-the-hip kind of a shooter. He had the instinct, and he was all for doing much research on the backgrounds of people and on the industry that we were interested in getting into. He also was very, very good company and had a very good sense of humor, and he was a sportsman; he loved sports. He was just a fine companion. He was ten years older than I was, and I found his slant on life and his view of our business very refreshing and educational. He wasn't perfect, but who

is. But he was a very good venture capitalist, and a very good fellow, and a very good friend. We became very good personal friends as well as business associates, and so did our wives.

**CK:** *What did your experience in the service contribute to your success as a venture capitalist?*

**WC:** That is another excellent question. One, I think experience in the service for anybody broadens your spectrum, so that if you have a very tightly focused view of life, you only expect things from a certain kind of person. You're surprised when other people come up with good ideas or—Strangeness is a turn-off. And the service, I think, stretched everybody's mind, so that you could see there were good ideas, good guys, bad ideas, bad guys, in all walks of life, in all kinds of ethnic backgrounds, there were good and bad. So I say, the service made you appreciate that diversity much more deeply and much more acutely. So that was a big plus. And also, most of the people you were dealing with had been in the service, so there was a bond of some kind. Everybody I knew on the board, in the partnership, had been in the service, and then anybody I was dealing with in a venture capital sense also.

**CK:** *Chuck Newhall [NEA] has used this expression “band of brothers” that he found in venture capital. Did you find that to be true?*

**WC:** With our firm, I did. Not so much outside. I always have said so, because it’s become a broader thing—there are more people in it now. We were a band of brothers. I’m not saying anything against Citibank — that’s my bank. Citibank had a venture capital section. To call themselves a band of brothers, please, come on — you’re a band of bandits. No, not bandits, but a band of merchants or monetary people; they’re not a band of brothers. When you’re bonded by a partnership, all general partners, that’s a band of brothers. Incidentally, “band of brothers,” which is sort of bandied about for so many years, it comes from the theme song of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity that a lot of people will recall.(sings) That’s the first line of the theme song of that old fraternity, “A band of brothers in DKE, dadadada.”(laugh)

**CK:** *It all ties together. I love that. You went to Yale and in the service — and then Harvard. Is there a network of people that has been important to your work in venture capital, or to your success?*

**WC:** I’d say more Yale than — not really; not really a network in the venture capital. I’d say if there was any — a lot of my Yale buddies are in the financial world, so there’s a lot of entré and a lot of washing each other’s hands and helping each other. Yes, there’d be that. More, funnily enough, more at Yale than Harvard Business School.

**CK:** *If you see another Yalie at some meeting—*

**WC:** Well, it would have to be my — not a Yalie, no; it'd have to be my class. Also, the gang — not just a Yalie. A Yalie would be the same as a Harvard— Well, I was at Yale for four academic years, and Harvard for two, so cut it in half right there.

**CK:** *How did you handle the tension in this business?*

**WC:** I don't handle tension. I probably do, I don't know. I don't feel tension much, I don't think so. I really don't. I mean tension—

**CK:** *You sleep well.*

**WC:** Most of the time, not all the time—most of the time.

**CK:** *During your involvement with some of these companies, when they were young and you were trying to move them along and things were sliding a little bit in the wrong direction—*

**WC:** Worry. If worry is tension, yeah, I had worry. But I don't know. How do you handle it? How do you handle worry or tension? I don't think you handle it, because it's like a sore foot. How do you handle it? You wait until it gets over, I suppose.

**CK:** *Great attitude. I see that in, is it 1973, you get involved in public service, or more involved.*

**WC:** Do you want me to go through that?

**CK:** *I certainly want it — it's part of your story.*

**WC:** I'd be happy to.

**CK:** *I think it should be recorded.*

**WC:** I was a partner at Whitney at the time, and I was approached by the mayor of New York, who was John Lindsay, and a very dear friend of mine, and a classmate of mine at Yale, by the way. And he was, he had lost one of his commissioners, Commissioner of Public Events, and there was another job combined with that, different hat, different office, called Chief of Protocol for New York City. And he'd lost him. So he came to me, Mayor Lindsay, and asked me if I would step into his shoes. I said, "Well, I'm a partner at J. H. Whitney Company." So I asked Jock. And Jock said, "Hey, you know, you're here. You're one of our partners; we can't have you go—" He said, "How much do you get paid?" I said, "A dollar a year, plus a big limousine at my disposal." He said, "Well, go, but come back. How long will it be?" And I said, "The mayor's asked me to stay until he finishes the job."



So Jock said, “Fine, go, but come back.” So I worked for the mayor as Commissioner of Public Events and Chief of Protocol for the rest of the Lindsay Administration.

Fascinating. Really. He was a good guy, I’ll tell you. A lot of people say, How was he as a mayor? He was fine. He had big problems, but he was a good mayor, and I liked him a lot. When I came back to J. H. Whitney & Company, I was approached by the then ambassador, the US Ambassador to Ireland, whose name was John D.J. Moore, who was also a Yale guy. It sounds like a Yale—

**CK:** *Reunion.*

**WC:** Yeah, Yale reunion. He was also not only a Yale guy, but he was also a member of my senior secret society, but that was all incidental, but it was a nice coincidence. He was a good friend of mine. He was about ten years older than I, fifteen years older than I was. He said, “My wife, — he had a really nice wife called Mary — Mary, is back in Dublin at the embassy, but she’s dying.” And he said, “She’s so sick, and I’m just so worried. She has cancer.” And he said, “I’ve really got to resign, resignation of grief and necessity.” And he said, “I’ll be surprised if she isn’t dead in a month.” But he said, “I want to tip you off, because I haven’t told President Nixon yet.” I mean, not President Nixon, President Ford. He’d been there since Nixon. He said, “I’m going to tell him next weekend, I’m going to go back and I’m going to resign.” He said, “I want you to put your hat in for the job.” And I said, “I have a job.” I said, “Really, I have a job.” He

said, “Think about it.” He said, “There are 1,000 people after that job. Regular career guys and others, a lotta, lotta, lotta people.” And he said, “I can put your hat in the ring.”

I said, “I’m not going to put it in myself. I’m happy where I am. Thanks for the thought.” So I went and I asked Jock, and he’d just returned from being Ambassador to the Court of St. James in London. So I told him what the thing was, and I said, “If it is offered—” And I said, “It probably will be. But if it is offered to me, the way they always do is say, ‘You can’t turn down the government; that’s the way it is.’ They’ll say, ““If offered, would you accept?”” And I said, “What should I do?” And he said, “Don’t miss the opportunity.” He said, “I did it in London, it was a really interesting experience. One you’ll never forget. You’ll have a very, very interesting time. Not all fun.” Which, I knew that. But he said, “It’s extremely interesting. If it’s offered—” Well, it was offered, and I took it. And Mary, my wife, I told her, I said, “I don’t really care about this because I’ve got a job I’m crazy about at J. H. Whitney & Company.” She was an English major at Vassar, so she loved history and knew a lot about Anglo-Irish relations, and she was so thrilled, and she said, “Take it if it’s offered.” Well, it was offered, and I took it, and we went, and we were there, and we had a really interesting time. Very, very interesting.

Ireland at that point had become the President of the EU, you know, there's a rotating presidency. It became the President, so Dublin was a very lively place, and we had a very interesting time.

**CK:** *I just wanted to go back to one thing, because I'm reminded that your father said you had to learn to read a balance sheet.*

**WC:** Yes.

**CK:** *And then you go from your work with CalTex, but you didn't say what you were doing for CalTex.*

**WC:** I was what is called a section manager. A section manager, we had the manager of the area, and then I was a manager of a section. Most of us there in the managerial top spots were European extraction, not Indian. Most of the others were Indian, and very clever, very smart. Most of the accountants were Indian. Our job was mainly a marketing job, but we had to oversee all of the others. So I gradually picked up enough of the accounting, enough to know my way around sufficiently, and to trust the people that did run it, who were Indians, and very clever and very honest.

**CK:** *And then you were offered this position with Whitney, and I'm thinking: What made you think that you were well-suited for venture capital?*

**WC:** Well, I'd spent ten years in the oil business, and there was a certain amount of venture at the heart of the oil business, as you know. So you're surrounded a lot of times by — and in India and China and the rest of the places where CalTex operated — the element of chance, the element of drastic changes in politics — kind of keeps you on your toes. And so you're used to chance; you get used to things not going predictably. Some days they go better than you hoped, or worse, but you get used to that ambience.

**CK:** *And now you came back from Ireland, and you came back to J. H. Whitney?*

**WC:** By that time Jock had died. He died at seventy-seven. And when I did leave — when you're in a partnership like that, legally, you have to take everything out and put it in an escrow some place, because of the government rules — I withdrew everything from my partnership, and it was awkward to go back to a partnership and reinstitute the split of the partnership percentages.

So I decided to go into the game myself, and under the proviso, remaining very close friends with J. H. Whitney & Company, and particularly Benno Schmidt and others. So that when deals came to them that looked pretty good, but they were too small for them, they'd pass them along to me, and I'd take a look. And there were plenty of times when I'd have things come to me that were too big for my bite, so I'd pass them on to Whitney.

So we had a nice sort of thing going. And then I really got into a lot of other things on my own, and I served on a lot of boards. And in that role, I was up to my ears in numbers and accounting, and up to my eyeballs. I was on the board of the Bank of Ireland, and also a director of the Fiduciary Trust Company International. I was a director of the New York Life Insurance Company. I was on the board of the *New Yorker Magazine*. I was on the board of the Crane Company, and a lot of other boards. And the insurance company, New York Life, that's a big company—An awful lot of it. And then I was on the Sotheby's board at one point, and I was on the audit committee. And if you don't know, I was on the audit committee of the Bank of Ireland. If you don't learn some accounting pretty fast, you'd better learn it. So I was exposed, you know, *whoa*, like this.

**CK:** *I hope your father knew. Your father lived a long life.*

**WC:** He died at eighty-one. He died before I ever got to Dublin. He knew all about J. H. Whitney & Company, and he used to come and have lunch with us — and knew about CalTex, of course, came to India to visit us with Mother. Alas, and I think about this a lot: My mother died when she was only fifty-seven-years-old. That was just the shock of my life. She was, as I said, a very good athlete — would've loved every minute of visiting in Ireland. But Dad didn't know I ever became Ambassador, but he did visit us in India.

**CK:** *But he did know you learned to read a balance sheet.*

**WC:** He did. But he would've laughed. He died before I got on the board of the bank, and the Crane Company. He would have laughed: "You're on the audit committee? Wait a minute." He would've laughed.

**CK:** *When you were on your own, were you a generalist? Did you focus on any particular industry?*

**WC:** There were certain things I avoided, because the bites had to be too big. It wasn't rather the bites, because I would syndicate it if it were too big. I just did things I thought were interesting and fun, really. And one of the things, I put together a group and we bought two big castles in Ireland. One's Dromoland Castle, and one's Ashford Castle. Big deals. We just sold that. We didn't pay this much; we made a lot of money. We sold Ashford Castle after twenty-three-years, and we sold it for \$80 million two years ago, and we didn't pay anything like that for it. So that was good. And then Dromoland we still own.

**CK:** *So you're still active.*

**WC:** Yes, this is why I'm here.

**CK:** *Since we're talking about going out on your own, I want to know, what continues to excite you in this venture capital industry?*

**WC:** Well, I've kind of pulled in my horns a bit, and I shepherd the things I have, and with a lot of help. Ashford Castle was one thing that we worked hard on, and one of our associates got into it — worked a lot harder than I did, because I was Ambassador to France, so I was away. I spent time on that. And also, with my father, before he died, he and I bought a property in Ireland ourselves; it's in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland; it's a sheep farm. I bought that with him with the idea that if I got shot, he'd get my half; if he got shot, I'd get his half. Well, I got his half. So I own that sheep farm, so we have that. We have Dromoland Castle, and they take some attention.

**CK:** *What do you think has given you your self-confidence?*

**WC:** I didn't know I had it. I hope I do have it. Well, I guess I do. I'll tell you, if there's an answer, sort of a crazy answer: It's fun. I think most of the time and most people are fun. Sometimes it's pretty draggy; sometimes people are pretty draggy, but not most of the time. I think life is pretty good fun.

**CK:** *I do want to get back to your appointment as Ambassador to France, because I think that's certainly part of your life, and you took another break from venture capital.*

**WC:** Yes, yes, I did. I'll tell you how that happened. I got a call one day from George H. W. Bush, who I'd known for a long, long time.

**CK:** *How did you know him?*

**WC:** We went to school together. His brother was in my class at Yale and was my roommate.

I used to take his sister out. I'd go there on weekends in Greenwich when we were at Yale. Or to Andover, up to Andover, they all went to Andover. We'd go down to the Bushes for weekends, and there was a sister who was always a drawing card. She eventually married one of my friends at Yale, in my class, but she was there, and we all became friends. George H.W. Bush was two years younger. We were always friends. And he was serving as our envoy — you could say Ambassador to Taiwan, at the time. He was eventually Ambassador to China and had served before that as an envoy to Taiwan; and there were sort of mixed signals there, but he had both those jobs: While he was our emissary to Taiwan, I was Ambassador in Ireland. So we used to exchange kind of ideas — and we were friends anyway. And then when he was in New York as the Ambassador to the UN, we saw a lot of them; he and Barbara were good friends of ours, and we shared a lot of professional interests, not just sporting interests, but knew each other, we liked each other. We knew each other as friends and people.

He asked me on the phone one day, he called me and he said, "I have a quest that I'd like you to help me with." And I said, "Well, sure, I'd be glad to. What is the quest?" He said, "The presidency." I said, "The presidency?" I said, "Some quest." And he said, "Well, will you help me with it?" And I said, "Let me think about that." So I said, "How long do I — Can I let you know?" And he said, "Sure, take as long as you want, but call



me back tomorrow.” Just like that. So I knew he was right in saying that. So I went home, and I talked to Mary, and she said, “This is up to you”— to me. She said, “But if you do it,” — this is very sound advice — “you have to do it full measure; you can’t just sort of do it half-baked or do it sort of every now and then.” So, I called up George H.W. and said, “You bet. What can I do?” And he said, “Well, okay, so I want you to run the New York area, be chairman of that, get yourself a co-chairman if you need one, and then be in touch with the co-chairman of the national campaign committee. And he said, “And we’ll make policy, and we’ll try to raise money, and we’ll do all this stuff.” So we did that. And I said to him one time, “I’ve got to tell you, really up front, please don’t think that I’m doing this to get a job in the government; I don’t, I don’t really want a job with the government, really, I’m fine, and I really mean that.” And he said, “Fine.” And so we started, and we put the team together. We got a very good team together. Took us time. It took a lot of time, but, a day a week, then it became two days a week, a creeping occupation. And then eventually it took full-time and overtime. And he lost. So the team sort of relaxed, and then he became vice president — big surprise. And he said to me, “Don’t let the team disappear; we might need the team again, so keep track of the team.”

So he went through two terms as vice president, and then when he decided to run again, (*whisp*), we blew the whistle and brought the team back, but it didn’t work as well that time, because other things had happened. When he did win, he said to me, “I’d like you in the administration.” And I said, “Honestly, really, there’s nothing I’d like better than to

do anything like that, but me, I'm okay, and then we really don't want to go to Washington." And in just this way, he said, "All guys that get to be president need a coterie of people around them that have no other agenda that they can totally trust, not people that are looking over their shoulder or around." So he said, "I would really like you in the administration, one place or another." He said, "What about an ambassadorship?" And I said, "Good, as long as you send us someplace where we really have to work." Because, I said, "I'm in good health, and Mary's in good health, so send us someplace where we'd really do a job of work." And he said, "Okay, I'll have Jim Baker call you, and you can talk to him." No, no. First of all, he said, "I hear you speak Italian." No, no, he didn't say that, he didn't say that. He said, "I hear you may want to go to Italy." Because we'd lived in Italy, and I do speak Italian. And I said, "Well, yes, I do speak Italian, and so does Mary, and we loved it." But I said, "Send us to Ethiopia; send us to some—"

**CK:** *You want to work.*

**WC:** Yeah. And he said, "Well, look, think about it, and we'll talk next week." Actually, we were in Nassau at the time, sort of goofing off, and I thought to myself, Oh yeah, sure, he'll call back. Oh yeah. Well, sure enough, in two days Jim Baker called back, who was a good friend and is a good friend. He called back, and in that inimitable voice of his, said, "Now, I hear that you may want to go to Italy." And I said, "Jim, that really isn't—" He said, "Is your Italian as good as you told the president it is?" And I said, "Yes, it is

pretty good.” And he said, “Well, I don’t know what good that’s going to do you, because you’re going to go to France.” That’s how it happened.

**CK:** *What did Mary say?*

**WC:** She was delighted, either way — delighted. And my French was not non-existent; it was fair. And it got better, it got good.

**CK:** *Hard to get accepted — your French in France, from what I understand.*

**WC:** My French was okay. That’s how that happened. I was there a little over four years.

**CK:** *You were Ambassador to Ireland; you were Ambassador in France for four years: How did those positions and those experiences impact on your venture capital work? What had you learned?*

**WC:** What did I learn in those jobs that would’ve helped me?

**CK:** *Yeah. Did it change you in any way, your outlook or your world view?*

**WC:** Well, my work in the world of venture capital certainly exposed me to a lot of different businesses. A lot. Different kinds of businesses — from banking to other things, many other things, so that I was able to have a cogent conversation with a wide variety of business people abroad. And certainly that was one of our big issues there. And I had much more experience in the business world and in the world of hands-on business than

any career ambassador ever had. So it was a big advantage to me for the business communities of these countries, both countries, to have somebody in there who knew what they're talking about.

**CK:** *So in this case, it's what your experience in venture capital brought to your ambassadorship.*

**WC:** Sure, yeah. And the other way around, what was the impact on the venture capital: A familiarity with the functions of the White House, the State Department, the Department of Commerce. That's a biggie. All those agencies down there — the CIA, the Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture — everything, everything had an office in our embassy in Paris. So all of that kind of washed each other's hands.

**CK:** *Because you're dealing in two different worlds. You're dealing with a world of politics, and you're dealing with business.*

**WC:** Once you get into the seat of ambassador, a good ambassador — and I'm really serious about this — a good ambassador drops all politics, all American politics. Any ambassador who starts criticizing other previous ambassadors or existing ambassadors of a different party, they ought to get out of the job; they don't know what they're doing, they don't. Once you're in that job, no matter what your party, you're ambassador, not a politician. That's very hard for some to realize. What was the other part of your question?

**CK:** *But you're, in a way, politically involved in another country.*

**WC:** You're politically involved in the country. Oh yes. From a partisan standpoint, no partisanship. No ambassador can ever support a political party in another country. Our Ambassador to France did that one time; it was disgraceful. He campaigned for a candidate using the American embassy as a background — it was really stupid.

**CK:** *I'm also thinking you're really an eyewitness to the politics of another country, what's going on in another country.*

**WC:** Oh, a front row seat. Front row seat, oh yeah. In the old days it was a bilateral situation, say, before the UN was created. Ambassadorships were bilateral instruments. Since the creation of the UN and all these other different kinds of bodies around the world, an ambassador has to deal with many sorts of—It's a multilateral job — not just the country you're in, but all the countries that country deals with.

**CK:** *Thinking about the time that you were there, there was an explosion of things going on in Europe.*

**WC:** We had a cascade of events happening. The Berlin Wall came down first. In France, we had the Gulf War, number one, Gulf War happened. The implosion of Germany, I mean the Wall — the collapse, tearing down of the Berlin Wall. And then the implosion, I meant, the Soviet Union. Who everybody had guessed — our wiseacres in Washington at the time, of both parties, our Secretary of Defense said, “The Soviet Union is here; it'll be

here for the next seven years, and there'll probably be some changes—" It was gone in seven months, to everybody's surprise. It just imploded, and all the repercussions from that. Maastricht happened. Just a torrent of activity. All interesting — some good, some bad.

**CK:** *It must have been fascinating.*

**WC:** It was. In Ireland was the same. My closest colleague among ambassadors there — there is a collegiality between ambassadors, particularly in a smaller post. In Ireland my closest colleague and good pal was the British Ambassador to Ireland — very tough job, as you could imagine — and he was assassinated. He came to see me one morning about a matter — and a very interesting guy, good guy, good fun, smart — and he left, he said, "I've got to go." Looked at his watch — he had to go off to give a speech, as I did too, in a different area — his was in Dublin, mine wasn't. And I was in my car, and I had a radio phone in the car — the driver had it. And the driver says, "You're wanted on the phone, Ambassador." And he hands the phone back to me, and we were somewhere near Waterford, I think. And the embassy called and said, "The British Ambassador's been assassinated on his way home." And boy, that was big time, big time. So there were a lot of things that were happening in Ireland too.

We have thirty people in our embassy in Dublin, thirty, of whom twenty were Irish or non-U.S. So there were ten to twelve Americans in our embassy. Oh, we also have

thirty-three million Americans of Irish extraction, and a huge number of American tourists go to Ireland every year, as you know, and the trade between Ireland and the US is extremely active. The Soviet Union has no tourists coming to Ireland, zero, and very few Irish were going to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had 120 people in their embassy, all Russians, all Russians. And I used to kid the Soviet ambassador about that, and I'd say, "How many Russian tourists are there? What's your balance of trade between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Ireland? What is the balance of trade? How many tourists from here go there?" And he got sort of annoyed, but he'd laughed every time. They were up to all kinds of nefarious—It was sort of a spy center. Of course, Dublin was very, very slack about security in those days. I mean a guy could walk through the customs in Ireland with a violin case with a submachine gun in it and nobody'd pay any attention.

**CK:** *Things have changed. Do you have a sense of making a contribution, through your venture capital career, to the economic growth of this country?*

**WC:** Yes. Unhesitatingly, I say yes. Yeah. I mean I think any venture capital firm that survives, and then the things we selected to go into, and as Jock had said, "Be proud of what we've done after we're finished doing it." And I think that was true. There's nothing we were not proud of, and I think it did contribute. I think, yes, Memorex and a lot of those things. Half of them contributed very positively to the economy.

**CK:** *Then looking back at all we've talked about, what legacy do you hope to leave?*

**WC:** I'm not leaving.(laugh)

**CK:** *Right. Yet we all think: "Well, this is what I feel I did with my time."*

**WC:** Well, confining this to the venture capital world, I think we created new entities, that created new jobs, which created new wealth, and I don't use that randomly. I mean, I think we *created* new wealth, not old wealth recirculated, or coming out in a different form, like they do on Wall Street. Not that. This is new — not new labels or recycled ideas, these were new, and I think that was something; I'm happy I played a part in that. And as far as the other State Department thing, I think serving one's country in any role, whether it's an arms-bearing Marine or soldier or sailor or airman, Coast Guard, whatever, that's serving your country, and I'm proud of that. And in the diplomatic world, the same. So I just did what I could. I was lucky, I was lucky to be there at the time, and here at the time.

**CK:** *Thank you very much. This is wonderful. I thank you for the National Venture Capital Association, and Chuck Newhall, who certainly spearheaded this project.*

**WC:** Oh, please give Chuck Newhall my respects. And good luck on your project. I hope this was not too long.



**CK:** *This was just perfect.*

**WC:** I should add one more thing.

**CK:** *And I should ask: Is there anything I left out that you would like to add?*

**WC:** No, nothing you left out — you were extremely incisive and extremely easy on the subject here. I should add that I was with J. H. Whitney & Company eighteen years. That's not all my life. That's a relatively short period of time. So compared to other venture capitalists who have been in it longer, I salute them, because they should be the ones that are speaking and not me, because they have a longer perspective, and I have great respect for all of them and great respect for that business, whatever definition it has now — different or not, I respect them all.

**CK:** *You were with the founding venture capital firm, and there's nothing insignificant about that and your contributions.*

**WC:** We had a good time, too, we had a very good time. I've had a good time this morning too.

**CK:** *Thank you, and so did I.*