



Citation for this collection:

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

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A Note from

W. Emerson Wilson

Dear John:

I see this is listed interview
with Delaware journalist. Lagarus
told me it was to be confined
entirely to my experiences on
foreign study.

You must have had
Rosemary Wood make this
transcript as there seems
to be so many breaks in the
Conversation (over)

I can understand why
Nixon is afraid of his
tapes. Any way I've
made some corrections
but I'm still afraid the
"baises" part doesn't make
sense.

It was ~~fun~~ doing it
and recalling that wonderful
year

Yours

WBU

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
NEWARK, DELAWARE
19711

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

March 4, 1974

Dear Mr. [unclear]

Mr. Dick in Special Collections
has the original transcript (the
ribbon copy) of this interview with
W. Emerson Wilson about his
experiences in the Junior Year
Abroad program. Wilson has
made corrections of importance,
particularly in French names,
on this 2nd copy. Could you have
them copied onto the ribbon copy?
I ask you because it is

an archival matter.

Yours,

John Kunze

P.S. You may want to have it re-typed. Suit yourself. I tried to reach you by phone, but yours was busy when mine was free.

Interview with W. Emerson Wilson, Delaware journalist, August 9, 1970, by Myron L. Lazarus.

Q This is a recording of the Oral History Program of the University of Delaware, and we're interviewing W. Emerson Wilson and the interviewer is Myron Lazarus. Mr. Wilson, where and when were you born?

A I was born in ~~North~~^{East} Maryland August the 5th, 1907.

Q North~~E~~^East, Maryland? Did you receive your early education at...

A No, when I was five years old my father got a job in Wilmington and moved to Wilmington, and I went to Number Two School, and Number 24 School, and Wilmington High School, and then the University of Delaware in September 1926.

Q Um hmm. When did you say you moved to Wilmington?

A When I was five years old.

Q Five years old.

A So all my schooling was in Wilmington.

Q But again, not a native Wilmingtonian.

A No.

Q You went to Delaware--were you studying journalism at Delaware or what did you study at Delaware?

A No,...well, I had started...I had taken every French course that I possibly could, and I was a real Francophile, and so I was majoring in French. But the first year I didn't have an idea of teaching French, but I did transfer...made education a major. But I switched around quite a lot.

Q Then you majored in education and French?

A And French, yes. And we had the best professor that I ever had, was David Oscar Evans. He was a Welshman, and he used to put a notice on the bulletin board that said, "Mr. Wilson, report to my office at 2:00. Signed: David Oscar Evans, A.B. Oxford, M.A. Cambridge, and Docteur Es Met (sp?) the Sorbonne."

Q For a simple note...

A Yeah, for a simple note like that he signed all these...but he was the greatest professor I ever had. He taught me research as well as French, and we would take one--in this advanced course I had with him--we took one French writer, Leconte de Lisle, and then went back and studied how he was affected by other French writers, in which we'd study their work too.

Q He definitely gave you the inspiration to continue studying French?

A Well, no, I had the inspiration from the very beginning, but he was a

wonderful professor.

Q Did you take French at Wilmington High School?

A Yes, all the French they had. Then...in those days there was a Women's College and a Men's College. And at one time Evans had three girls and two fellows who wanted to take advanced French. You had to have a minimum of five students. And he insisted that he had his minimum of five students, but the trustees said no, you cannot give that course because that would be mixing boys with girls. And so in indignation he left the university, resigned and went to the University of British Columbia.

Q But your ambition was to teach French?

A No, I didn't want to teach, but I wanted to do...make some use of my French. So I didn't want...avoid teaching if I could. And I'd met Courtland Eyre, a member of a former foreign study group, and he had gotten a job with the DuPont Company, who was then developing their international division, and he told me to see a man in the DuPont Company, whose name I've forgotten. And he said, "Well, yes, if you go over and do as well as Courtland did at the Sorbonne, we'll give you a job similar to Courtland's when you get back." Now, this was perfect for me. So...

Q You told him you were interested in French, and...

A Perfect, yeah.

Q Is Courtland Eyre still alive?

A Yes. But I haven't seen him for years.

Q He's not in Delaware?

A No, he always had an overseas assignment for the DuPont Company. Now, my second interest in Delaware was on the Review staff, and I started out in my freshman year on the Review staff, and then my sophomore year I was copy editor of the Review, and in my junior year, a very unusual thing in those days, I was elected editor of the Review. Generally it was only a senior, but here was a junior. Now, in the meantime, I had applied for an International Institute of Education scholarship to go on foreign study. And I received a scholarship; it was \$1000, and the total cost of this year in France was \$1800.

Q What organization gave you this money?

A The International Institute of Education. IIE, I think it was.

Q And they paid the whole thing?

A No, no. They paid \$1000, and it was \$1800, the total cost. That left me...

Q Is that right? Because earlier they were doing that on a thousand.

A What?

- Q Earlier...I mean other programs, were going through this whole program for \$1000.
- A Really? Well, it was \$1800 when I...
- Q Well, they went up when you got involved.
- A That's right. Now, I was...in May of 1928...
- Q So...it was a partial scholarship then...
- A Yeah. In May of 1928 I was faced with a dilemma. I could go on foreign study, or I could be editor of the Review, for the following year, see. Well, now, I couldn't take both, of course, so I chose the editorship of the Review and lost out on the scholarship. And I gave up any ideas of going on foreign study. And the following May I was reelected editor of the Review for my senior year, and I had a summer job as a beetle inspector with the U.S. Department of the Interior all through Delaware I had that job. But I was just getting ready to go on it when Dr. Hullien called me in and said, "Wilson, we are faced with a very unusual situation. There are no Delaware students in the Delaware foreign study plan this year." He said, "Would you be willing to go in your senior year?" I said, "Well, yes, if I got that \$1000 scholarship that I was offered before." He said, "Well, I don't know, but I'll let you know." So I went on to work in the beetle inspector job down in Cambridge, Maryland, and I got a phone call...
- Q This was during the summer, I take it.
- A That's right. So this was in June, and the group was to leave in July, see. And I got a call down there from Dr. Hullien saying that J. Pillingwright and some other Delawareans had gotten together \$1000 for you so if you can raise the \$800, why you can go on foreign study. So I then resigned as editor of the Review and hurriedly quit my job as beetle inspector, raced back to Wilmington and started such things as getting a passport and stuff together.
- Q Was there any kind of preparation before...other than this you just told us...in terms of how to behave, and what you should do, and...
- A No. There was a meeting in New York. We sailed at midnight. There was a meeting in New York at the St. James Hotel at 2:00 at which we met the group for the first time. There were 67.
- Q You didn't stay overnight at the hotel?
- A No.
- Q There were 67 people.
- A 67 people, 14 boys and the rest girls. And at this meeting at 2:00 they gave us a lecture on how you should behave on the boat, and some idea of what would be...would take place in France. But Buzz Wilkinson, the business administrator of Delaware, went with us. He was kind of a chaperone.

Q Did he go just over on the boat and did he stay in France?

A No, he returned. He got over...took us over, and then he stayed...oh, I don't know, he stayed a week or so. Well, he was an Englishman, a native of England, and after he dropped us he went over to England to visit relatives, then he came back to...A. G. Wilkinson, but everybody knew him as Buzz. And he was a little short jolly fellow, very nice. Well, we sailed from New York then at midnight. Well, it was prohibition...

Q What was the name of the boat?

A I think the ^{Coronia?} Corona. There were sister ships, the Carmena...I get 'em mixed up sometimes...but we came back on the Carmena and went over on the Corona. It was an old boat. Walter Panzer, one of the members of the group from the University of Illinois, had come over on the same ship as an immigrant when he was six years old, and...

Q Do you remember any experiences on the boat, anything amusing or fun, or...

A We were all in cabin class, but...

Q Which meant what, now.

A Well, it was...it was like tourist class today. But there was first class. And in first class everyone dressed for dinner and in cabin class, or tourist class it would be now, we dressed very informal. But the funny thing is...

Q Did you have one cabin with...

A No, there were four in a cabin. But in my case, my application came in so late that the tourist had been sold out. So I had a lovely room in first class to myself with a porthole and a bed instead of a bunk, and I had a pass to go from first class down to cabin class where I ate the meals and so forth.

Q But you rubbed shoulders with the...

A That's right. I met the girls in the first class and went to their dances. But this is very unusual, see.

Q The best of both worlds.

A Yeah. And when...

Q What was the trip like?

A On the ship? Oh, it was delightful. There was a Miss Dillingham who was supposed to be the...

Q Hostess?

A Well, no...she was in charge of the girls and she was to see the girls were all in bed at 10:00.

Q Was she from the University of Delaware?

A No, but she was from...I forget now where she was from, but she was hired as assistant director. Britton was then in France, and Miss Dillingham went over with us.

Q By the way, had you had any courses before with Britton?

A No. And of course Kirkbride I knew--he's the founder of the group. And he had been at the University, because he was sick, and he had to leave France, and he came back. And I don't...I never had a course under him, but we saw him quite frequently, and I talked to him about foreign study before I went over there. Well, on the...Miss Dillingham...it was up to Miss Dillingham to see that the girls were all in bed by 10:00, so there was a lot of fun of dodging Miss Dillingham, going up on the boat deck to watch the moon. Oh, it was very romantic, you know. And everybody was pretty sorry when we...oh, there was a famous fellow in tourist class who went around--he had a beard, one of those pointed beards--and he went around in knickers, and he was a jolly fellow but nobody felt he was of any importance. But when we pulled into--we stopped first at Plymouth--when we pulled into Plymouth, there was a ship came out...I mean a liner came out with the mayor of Plymouth on board with a gold thing around his neck, and they had a band, and lo and behold, walking down to board this ship was this fellow that we had so much fun with, all dressed up in morning suit and ascot tie and all this. And he was greeted...well he was...I've forgotten his name. His name was Post, but I've forgotten his first name, and he was...one of the three men who saw that Lindbergh fulfilled all the requirements of that flight across in order to win the prize that a London paper had put up. And he was a famous balloonist, and was quite a famous man, but we...

Q It wasn't Wiley Post was it? ...He didn't have a beard...but he was an aviator...

A No, this was a balloonist, but...this London paper...and he was quite prominent in those days. But with certain people...but I mean, to us, his name didn't mean anything. We'd known his name was Post all along, but we hadn't recognized him. Oh, and another surprising thing that shocked me was one day Buzz Wilkinson said, "Come on down and have a drink on me Wilson." Well, this was prohibition at home, and Buzz Wilkinson was especially hard on any students who'd break the rule and went to the speak-easies in Newark. And then to be invited by him to have a drink it was just, you know, a surprise. But otherwise there was nothing special on the trip. We took a train to Paris and in Paris we stayed at the Trianon Palace Hotel, which is not despite its fancy name, is not a very big or fancy hotel. It's right on the corner of the Rue de Saint-Michel and the Rue de Beaujereaux (sp?) which is opposite the chapel of the Sorbonne...so I suppose that's why they chose this hotel. We had a...oh, and that night, the first night in Paris, Arthur Bates from Courtland, New York, he's dead now, said to me, "I've heard so much about champagne--let's go out, you and I go out and buy a bottle of it."

Q Was he a student on the program?

A Yes. He said, "Let's you and I go out and buy a bottle of this champagne

and get really tight." I said, "Well, I don't know, but all right, I'll go with you." So we went into a sidewalk cafe and ordered a bottle of champagne--it came to 44 francs. And well, we paid the waiter with 44 francs but didn't give him a tip because we were used to leaving a tip when we went out, see. And then we started drinking this champagne and it tasted wonderful. But we noticed that the waiter was all upset and excited. He was running around and came over and talked to us in French, and although we thought we were excellent French students, we had a very difficult time understanding the French for the first two or three weeks. We didn't know what he was talking about. So he wrote out on a piece of paper, "10% ~~po~~ service." And we tried to explain to him in French that we were gonna pay him, but when we left; he said he wanted it now! So we finished the bottle of champagne and we both agreed that it tasted very good, but we looked at each other, and I said, "Art, do you feel anything?" He said, "No." Neither one of us had any reaction from this champagne, which of course you have to drink quite a bit of it to get...well, we got a little bit....Then we went back to the hotel, and Dick Porter, another fellow from Dartmouth, he came in staggering drunk. We said, what the hell have you been drinking? And he said, "Pernod." He says, "It's the darndest stuff you ever drank." And then...well, then we had...the next day they took us on a sight-seeing tour of Paris. And that night we went out to Versailles, where in a hotel out there they had a welcoming dinner to the...study group, which was given by a French organization called (?), but it was a very fancy dinner.

Q Why did this organization give you a dinner?

A Well, it's the Association for the Welcoming of Foreign Students. And then the next day we got up and went to ~~Nancy~~ (?) (sp). When we were invited to ~~Nancy~~, Mademoiselle Solash (sp), we met her for the first time--that's Mrs. Brinton. Brinton at that time was married to a woman whom he divorced a few years later. And Mademoiselle Solash was his secretary. Well, she put us in a bus and then...

Q Did you see the office, the university office, in Paris?

A Oh, yes.

Q Well, I guess you saw more of that when you came back.

A Yeah. Of, the first time we were in Paris was just sight seeing, and there was no attempt to...oh, any studies weren't even discussed. Well, we got to ~~Nancy~~, we got into the bus, and I was the first one off the bus, so this worried me. I had no idea where the rest of the people were, you see. And it was in the middle of the afternoon. This Madame Julsanglaire (sp?)--she had an apartment on the third floor of 14 Rue de Ville. As I said before she was a very prim and proper old lady. And, well, she gave me a glass of lemonade and we sat there and tried to understand each other's French, and she was the widow of the mayor of Petit Russelle (sp) which was a little town on the border. And when the Germans had envaded Petit Russelle in 1914, her husband, the mayor, and the priest were lined up and shot. And she had been under German occupation during the four years of the war. Now, she had two sons, Marcel ~~N~~ (sp), who was about 23 and he worked in an office, and

Edmonde, who was 19, and who was doing his service militaire (sp). But ~~Nausee~~ is, or was at that time, a barracks town, and he could come home frequently instead of staying in the barracks. So he generally came home for his meals. But there was thousands of soldiers in ~~Nausee~~ in those days. Well, then the bus went off; I had no idea where the rest were. I took a walk that night and never felt so lonely in my life. I did go out with this Marcelle, the older boy, he took me downtown and we walked around and came back. And then the next morning I woke up and looked out the balcony onto the street, and saw all these people...the women were all wearing these black stockings, not silk, you know, and the men were quite often bearded and entirely different from home...and I got terribly homesick. And I thought, good Lord, if I have to put up with a year of this....Then, we were to report to the university at 10:00, I think it was. And I started down the street, and somebody yelled, "Hey Emmy!" And it was Isabel Casebu, a member of the group. And as soon as I met her and got to the rest, well I forgot all about my homesickness. Well, now, at the university, we were bowled over, because the first thing they did was give us an examination, and then they took half of the 67 and put them in the Group Superior, and the other half in the Group Moyen. Well, I had had straight A's all through high school and in college, in French, and I thought, well, now, I'll have no difficulty, I'll be in the group superior. But out of the 67, 67 in the group, I ended up 49th. And I went into group moyen. And this worried me no end. But then when they got the two groups separated, we started...and at ~~Nausee~~ it was intensive studying. You started at 9:00 in the morning and there was an hour of dictation, and then there was an hour of grammar and translation, and then the two groups went together for a lecture on French history in the auditorium, and then that afternoon you had another hour of French literature, and then you had three hours of individual conversation and so forth and just general discussion. But the professor, Monsieur Culsaille (sp), that I had, was very...

Q These were individual instructions?

A Yeah....very strict. I mean, if you didn't pronounce the word right, you had to keep on pronouncing it until you did get it right. And if you made a grammatical error in your conversation, you had to ~~right~~ write it down five times to correct it...and this would go on for hours. So we rarely got out of the university until 6:00--sometimes it was dark. And then on top of that you had to write a dissertation on a subject assigned, so that your evenings you had to go...each night you had to translate about two pages of a book which they gave us and then on top of that you had to write once a week a dissertation on some topic that they assigned. And your standing depended on your marks on these dissertations and so forth. Well, I was so horrified at ending up 49th out of 67 that I really put in the work. And I did pull myself up to 12, and I got into the group superior after the first month. And some of them slipped down into group moyen. But after a while...I ended up I think, at the end of the term, about 32nd or something, because after I'd made group superior, I began to let slide a little. Well, there was very little to do in ~~Nausee~~. We would go to the Palis de Lapierre (sp?), which was a big modern bar-room operated by the Bier de Champignon (sp?), which was the ~~Nausee~~ *Nausee Nancy* brewery. And that had an orchestra in there. And we got them to play

American tunes. Joe Demayo from Boston was--brought over sheet music, and he would give the orchestra this sheet music he had and they would quite often play American tunes for us. And then...

Q Did you meet any French students?

A Oh, yes. At the University of Nausee, there were Polish students, Swedish students, and...no, we did not meet too many French, because this was the summer season and this course at Nausee was intended primarily for...entirely for foreigners. And another place in Nausee was the Nausee Temau (sp?). That was a big swimming pool and it had colonnades, and a porch--piazza, around the front, and a dance orchestra. So on Saturdays, we could go out there to the dance orchestra...I mean to dance with the girls of the group. They couldn't go out after 9:00 at night, and so they had it worse then we did, because on some Saturday nights we would go down to the Palis de laPierre. Oh, and then, while we were in Nausee, an American circus came--with cowboys and Indians. So we went to the circus and then went around to talk to the cowboys and Indians and found they couldn't speak any English at all. Even the Indians were Italians. So Nausee was a...oh, yes, I should say this. We had trips, and they took us to the battlefield of Verdun, and another trip to Metz, and one to Strasbourg. But the biggest trip was a surprise. We went to...we had gone on all these trips that nobody paid the slightest bit of attention to you. But now we were going to spend the day in Luxembourg. And when the train pulled in, outside was a band, and they started playing the Star Spangled Banner, and we got off the train, and they came up to us and gave a big bouquet of flowers to each of the girls, and a boutonniere for the men, and they marched us...there was a band ahead of us...we marched right through to the Palace of the Grand Duke, and there they took us into a big reception room, and filled us full of champagne and so forth. Well, everybody wanted to know, "How come? What's this?" It seemed that the first troops to free Luxembourg were Delaware troops, the 59th Pioneers under Capt. Henry C. Ray, and this was the first Delaware group that had come to Luxembourg since the war. That was the reason for the big sendoff we got. And then there was...the group gave some dances...

Q This is still at Nausee...

A At Nausee, yeah. And then we left Nausee at the end of October to go to Paris. And...

Q Living with a family there, what was that like? You mentioned already the family with whom you lived at Nausee. Did you have any other experiences of that kind?

A Well, as I say...oh! This old lady loved sauerkraut and sausage. I hated sauerkraut and sausage.

Q It's not typically French, though...that's a German...

A That's German. But you see, she lived in Lorraine, which was right on that section near the German border, and as a matter of fact, the first day when I couldn't understand some of her French, she would give me the German word, because she was bilingual. And quite often I would understand the German word because it was similar to English. And she

also had...every Sunday, instead of chicken every Sunday, we had rabbit every Sunday. And they thought it was wonderful; I didn't....The food was good and she did make some mirabel pies that were out of this world.

Q What's a mirabel pie?

A Well, it was a pie made of mirabels, and mirabels are something I never saw before, but she had a tree that was just loaded down with them in the back yard. It's a fruit...it's a cross between a plum and a cherry. And I think that was about...Lorraine is about--Nausee of course is the capital of Lorraine...that's one of the few places where mirabels grow, as I understand it....So one day, she says, "Look, I'm gonna have sauerkraut tonight; I know you won't eat it, so here's ten francs--go out and buy yourself a dinner in a restaurant. So what'd I do but go to the Chez Voltaire, the most expensive restaurant in Paris...and walked in and got the menu, I found the only thing I could get for ten francs were runyons (sp?). I had no idea what runyons were, but I had to order it because I only had ten francs. And it turned out to be kidneys, which I despised much worse than I did sauerkraut. And one dinner, she invited the...two of her friends, who were very prim and proper old ladies, and she wanted them to meet this young foreign student, and so during the conversation, one of the ladies asked me what is it you find most different in Nausee from Wilmington. And I answered that at home we never saw a girl and a boy kissing on a street; we never saw a boy kiss a girl on a street. And to my surprise, the old ladies showed all kinds of shock, and Madame Anglaire looked as if she was gonna drop dead, whereas the boys laughed raucously. I couldn't understand what was wrong until the boys explained to me later, after the dinner was over, that instead of saying "seeing a boy and a girl...boy kiss a girl on the street" I had actually said in French, "see a boy having sexual intercourse with a girl on the street," because the use of the word "bese" (sp), you have to have an object; if you don't have an object, then it means the other. It's in French slang, I suppose.

Q I don't think there'd be that distinction any more, do you? So by the time you were through at Nausee, you were well-versed enough in the language to handle anything at the Sorbonne.

A Oh, yes, yes. They really drilled it into you, even Saturday, Saturday 'til noon. Then you had Saturday afternoon and Sunday off. But that's one thing...it was rough going and unless you really had an interest in French...some of the guys who had gone over for the joy of it, of spending a year in France, like Kirkpatrick, well, complained bitterly. And as a matter of fact, these complaints did increase that Nausee was just a dull city where it was all work and no play, so that two years after that they moved from Nausee because of these complaints to Tulle, and that was closer to Paris, and I don't know what the system of education is, but looking back on it I think it was wonderful that we did get all this drilling in Nausee so that by the time we got to Paris we had no difficulty understanding, reading, writing or speaking the language. Then...well, in Nausee I was very fortunate 'cause I got a room at the...well, at 6 Rue de Beaujerard (sp), which is just a block off the Boulevard de St. Michelle, and right across the Boulevard de St. Michelle is the Place des l'Sorbonne and the Sorbonne. So that there was no difficulty...I mean I could...take me five minutes to get there.

Q Did you live with a family there?

A Yes, I lived with a...Madame...

Q Was this where the room was, now?

A Well, it was an apartment, really, again on the third floor. By the way, at Nausee, there was no bathroom. There was what they called the dubleu vessez (sp?), but...toilet, but no bathroom, and whenever I wanted a bath, Madame would heat a bunch of water in a huge tin tub and bring it in. But in Paris, Madame Colleau (sp) was quite different from Madame Anglaise. She was a short, stout, very dowdy woman, and this apartment where we lived, they had a dining room, there was a kitchen, a dining room, and a small bedroom, and then what had been the former salon, or living room, she had converted into two...left it as one room but had twin beds in there. But it had these huge mirrors on the wall, with gilt around them, that had been used in the living room. Well, she owned the house. And one day I was down on the...

Q Where you the only one staying at this place?

A Yes. They never put more than one with a family, because that would... you had to speak French. And they always put you in a family where no one in the family could speak English. And...well. She lived on the second floor with her son and daughter-in-law, but would come up and cook the meals for me. And here the food was much, much better, and on top of it, she started each meal off religiously with an aperitif, and it was generally in courses, and you had white wine for one course and a red wine for another course, and you ended up with a cognac and a liqueur. And this was really quite a change. And that bathroom was a great, great help, too.

Q This was, I take it, a richer family, though.

A Yes. She owned the house. And one day I was down along the...in those... along the Seine, they have these little places that they sell things, books and manuscripts and so forth...and there was a marriage contract of 1623...oh, it's a manuscript--I was very much impressed by the age and so forth, so I bought it for five francs, very cheap...brought it home and showed it to Madame. And she said, "You paid five francs for that?" She says, "There's nothing old about that." I says, "1623?" She said, "Well, look." She brought out a box and here was the deed and order for construction of this house in 1613. It seems the house had been built by...it was...another block away was the Luxembourg Gardens and the Luxembourg Palace. And that had been built by Marie de Medici; and it seems that this house had been built by one of the courtiers attached to the queen. She was queen mother, why she had to have a separate palace. The king and queen lived in the Louvre. And this house had been built at the same time as the Luxembourg Palace was built. There were eight floors, and on the top floor was a skylighted artist's studio, and there was an artist living up there, and quite often we would be impressed with the models going up and down. And another apartment in the house was owned...or was rented...by the manager of the Odeon (sp?) theater. And Madame introduced me to him, and so he gave me passes. Every Monday night the Odeon put on plays... well, they were classic plays--Corneille, Racine, Moliere, and so forth--and they changed each week. So each week I had two passes to this theater, which was...all the rest of the group were very envious of.

Q Did you go anyplace with this family? I mean, did you ever travel with them, or...get involved with their family affairs, or...

A Yes, I got involved with their family affairs, but we never went anywhere. I had correspondence for years with a French student studying English, Delfan de Moujier (sp) at Gisors in France, and I was telling Madame that I'd dearly like to go over and see him, but I didn't have any money. I was really strapped. Do you realize that they gave us \$5.00 a week, spending money, and although I would sometimes get checks from home, as soon as I did, I had been so strapped that I'd go out and blow it on something, see. So I quite often was...and it was strange about French money. Ten francs seemed to be a pretty good sum. And you would borrow ten francs but actually it was only 40 cents. Now nobody would think of going and asking somebody, "Will you lend me 40 cents?"...if you consider the loan as a major loan, as we did...the borrowing of ten francs was quite something.

Q You could probably do quite a bit with that.

A Oh yes, yes. For instance, a newspaper was only 10 centimes. Out of this \$5.00 I had to pay for my laundry, which took about half of it. And then the rest was spending money. And I was smoking in those days, and I couldn't smoke American cigarettes because they were 35 cents a pack, so I got down to smoking French cigarettes, and....Well, after a while, after a short while, Madame said she had to rent out this...I was living-- I had one of the beds in this double-bedded room. And she said, "I'm gonna transfer you into the smaller room because," she said, "I have two Spanish students coming in"--Rafael Pedraza and...Montoya was the name of the other one. They were South Americans; one was from Mex...no, one was from Venezuela and the other one was from Cuba. Pedraza was from Cuba. Oh, I should have said that Madame, as soon as I met her that first day gave me a lecture. She said, "Under no circumstances do I want you, or will I permit you to bring any women into your room." Well, she gave the same message to the Spaniards, but they broke that rule all the time. And they were a lot of fun. I used to sing a lot, and the Pagan Love Song was the popular song at that time. I used to sing that and to my surprise...the Spaniards couldn't speak a word of English. They spoke Spanish and French, and to my surprise, I suddenly heard the people next door sing, "Come with me and you will be..." -- they just picked it up from me. And they used to sing "Adios muchachos, companeros de mi vida..." So we were singing in the different languages that we didn't understand, just, you know, copying words....Well, I got very friendly with the Spaniards, and I had a chess set. And they had a radio...it was a crystal set, really...and I could generally defeat 'em in chess, I'm happy to say. But they were very much taken by this chess set, and I was very much taken by their radio. So they said, it belonged to Montoya, Montoya said, "I'll tell you, we'll make a swap--you take the radio and we'll take your chess set." So then I had the radio in my room, and Madame Coleau (sp?) had never even heard of a radio, for some reason that I don't understand. She used to bring me in, around 10:00 each night a before sleeping snack, which would be a bowl, not a cup, but a bowl of hot chocolate, and croissants, and other little pastries. And she and I would sit there and drink this and eat it and talk about the day's happenings. And then I got her to listen to this radio, and she said, "This is really something! I never heard of such thing. Why, you can hear music and everything, sitting right here in your house!" So she brought her son up and he listened, and he was amazed. And he went out and bought one of these

kits, and built himself a radio. And he had me down to listen to his radio. But my, you know in America we'd go out and buy one, but he went out and bought a kit and built one. Oh, and I had this correspondent I started to mention, that I'd corresponded all through high school. And he lived out at Gisors, and I said I didn't have money to go out there to see him. And Madame said, "Well, of all this time, you certainly have to...now, meet him," she said. So to my surprise--I'd given her his address--she wrote to him and said, "Come into Paris and be my guest. I want you to meet Mr. Wilson, who speaks so highly of you." So, he came in, and well, I thought, he and I will get together and we'll have a gay old time.

Q How did you get his name anyway?

A Well, this was correspondence in high school.

Q Yeah. You mean like a pen pal.

A Pen pal. Well, the French teacher gave everybody a pen pal, and some of those people would write one or two letters and quit. But we wrote religiously for years, all the way through high school and through college. And, well, he came in...he was a handsome fellow, but what shocked me was that he was married and had two kids. And he was the same age as I was, and...well, you were kind of hampered by that. So...well, she gave us...Madame gave us a...they arrived on a Sunday at about 10:00 and we sat and talked...well, maybe it was 11:00, and we sat and talked and she gave us a wonderful luncheon. And then that afternoon I was going to take him to an English movie, English-speaking movie, but he said, "My wife doesn't understand English. I'd dearly love to, but..." But, he had a car, and he said, "Let's go for a drive." So we went for a drive and visited some relatives of his out in Nuyee (sp?), and then so forth. So that was a very pleasant reunion which was made possible entirely by Madame Coleau.

Q I guess he was surprised to hear from you...

A Oh, yeah.

Q Have you ever...have you corresponded with the lady with whom you lived after you left France?

A Oh, yes, sure. Both regularly. She died of a heart attack during one of the very few air raids at the very beginning of the war, in 1940. There was a...some bombs fell quite closely...but she had a heart attack. And she was taken to the hospital and died a day later. Now...

Q How about the lady at Nausee? Did you ever correspond with her?

A Yes. I did, but...

Q But you didn't live with her too long...

A No. That dropped off...oh, I got one or two letters from her, and she told me that the son who was in the army had finished the army, and was now a pastry chef, and so on and so forth...a little news, but...no, that didn't...I didn't write to her...But Madame Coleau...I corresponded with her regularly up until her death. And then at the liberation of

of Paris, I went over in '53 and met her son, and had a little reunion, and he was telling me in '53 the most exciting thing was that right in front of the house where I lived there was an American tank firing right down the street at the German tanks in the Luxembourg Gardens, and that was really an exciting battle going on there. Because Luxembourg was one of the last places the Nazis were held up. Well, now that the ... at the Sorbonne, it was quite different, because you only had three... no, five courses, but they were scattered, so you never had more than three courses a day. And...but, you also had these...continued to have these individual, personal conferences at least twice a week.

Q For the purposes of improving your French, huh?

A Yeah. And they were a general checkup on how you were doing...and a discussion. I had Mademoiselle Sagene (sp?), who was a very nice looking young lady, and I enjoyed these individual conferences. The headquarters over there was...at first...was at...on the Rue de For (sp), 14 Rue de For, and there had been a decorative art exposition in 1927 and Americans had...American exhibit had been a typical frame house with dormer windows and...colonial type. And they had moved this...when the exposition was over there...had moved this house well into the center of Paris. The Rue de For was only a block off the Plaz Angemaine de Frey (sp), and they were using this as the headquarters of the Delaware group. And there we would have once or twice a week lectures by outstanding professors of the Sorbonne or the ^{Beaux Arts} Beazart (sp), or some of the other colleges.

Q Usually lectures on what topic?

A Well, on literature or French history or even on geography...the geological makeup of certain sections of Paris and anthropology too... oh, a wide variety of subjects...these lectures at least twice a week, sometimes more often.

Q Mr. Branton was the one who arranged all this?

A That's right. But then after about three months, they moved to the Rue de Glacier (sp?) for their headquarters. That was an ordinary French house. It was some distance to get to it, because it was... Rue de Glacier goes off the Boulevard Montparnasse, and it must have been...well, you had to take a subway or a bus to get there. It was very unhandy. But it was a nice house...had a little garden in front, and the first floor were offices, and a library, and the second floor was the lounge and also rooms to hold these individual conferences in. And...oh, then you had to write much more detailed dissertations once every two weeks. You had to do some research on this. And the Count diBardi was the man who directed each one. And he always made interesting little notations all the way down the dissertation. It was a pleasure to read these things...even if he was caustically criticizing you, they were still in such good humor that you almost felt good about it...your marks were--10 out of 20 were passing.

Q What do you mean 10 out of 20?

A Well, they marked you on 20. 20-20--20 over 20--would be perfect.

10 over 20 would be passing. And if you got 6 over 20 you were in bad trouble. Rarely did any...I never heard of anybody getting more than 15 over 20, but that marking system...

Q What was the 20--what did 20 mean?

A Nothing. They just chose 10 and 20 at random as far as I know, but... and of course the...but at the Sorbonne...oh! The first thing that happened at the Sorbonne was the official return or opening...convocation (I couldn't think of the word)...was the official convocation in the big auditorium of the Sorbonne. Now, that was for all the students in the Sorbonne, French and foreign as well. And that day we attended and it was quite a splendid affair. They had a big band there that played the Marseillaise, and among the people who got honorary degrees was Einstein. And there were two others, but their names...

Q Did you see all these ceremonies?

A Oh, yes. We had excellent seats. And I was very much impressed by Einstein...

Q Similar to ours--our exercises?

A Yes. The whole faculty was there, all in their robes and Einstein and each of the others made brief talks on accepting this honorary degree. And I was very much impressed by Einstein because this relativity...we had been trying to find out what it was all about in college when we left, and nobody was quite sure. Well, then there was another...later in the season there was a ball at the Sorbonne, and that was on the second floor. And you had this sweeping stairway, marble stairway, going up to this big reception room, and all up and down the stairs were this Guard Republican in their fancy dress costumes and gold helmets with horses tails. Well, you'd walk up between those with your date, and then when you came to the doorway, there was a man who wanted your name and he would announce, "Monsieur Wilson and Mademoiselle Sheppard." And then you walked through a line and met the President of France, Gaston du Mare (sp?). So that was quite an affair...and all the champagne you could drink. *Doumergue*

Q Well, this was a ball in connection with the Sorbonne?

A Yes, um hmm. Only for the students of the Sorbonne. And the strange thing was you couldn't take a girl to a dance. The girl came to the dance and met you at the entrance with her chaperone. And there was... her chaperone was announced at the same time. And then you went up the stairway with...

Q You met her there at the dance?

A Yes. You met her there at the dance, and you couldn't take her home, either. But you had to buy a box of candy for the chaperone, who sat along the wall and ate candy all night, and then you could dance with the girl, see, but the girl...

Q Did you have to buy her ticket? Or wasn't there any ticket involved?

A Well, in this case there wasn't, but I took girls to other dances, and if there was a ticket you had to buy her ticket and buy the chaperone's

ticket.

Q Were these Americans?

A Yeah. Yeah. And they could not go out after 9:00, see...unless a girl went out with a member of the group. She could get permission from Miss Dillingham to go out with a member of the group. If the girl would say she wanted to go out with me, I would go down and sign a paper for Miss Dillingham that I was going to take this girl to the Academy Francais, or someplace like that...the dance...that was open to...well Cercle Inter-alliais (sp?) was one I remember. It opened at 9:00 and I was to have the girl home by three, and so on and so forth. Well, then the girl could go out in that case. Well. There were only 14 boys and there was all these girls...

Q You had a wealth of opportunity.

A We had a wealth of opportunity, and as Kirkpatrick said, "Why we're all a bunch of gigolos." 'Cause we couldn't afford to take these girls out, and the girls paid for everything, see.

Q They paid your way too?

A Yeah. And I'll never forget how embarrassed I was once at the...at one of these very very swanky dances, I didn't have...even have enough money to get the hats--pay for the hatchecks and coats. So I said to the girl, "Give me some money to get the coats out of the..." And she gave me some coins, which immediately dropped and rolled out on the floor. I thought I'd die. But...

Q I can see your social life was rather complete. What about the cultural life in Paris? You did go to the opera...

A Oh, yeah. The group...included in your bill that you paid in Newark before you left, it provided for certain excursions. Now, we had an excursion to the Fontainebleau, and an excursion to Charka (sp?)...

Q Were these overnight?

A No, just one day. And to Versailles, and...there were one or two others. And it also included trips to the theater. And that was on an average of once every two weeks. We went to...we saw Tristan und Isolde at the opera, and we went to the Opera Comique (sp?)--saw Tosca...I kept looking at the guy sitting alongside of me at the Opera Comique, and I said, "Pardon my curiosity," but I said, "You're not Bill Tilden, are you?" He says, "Yes, I am."

Q The tennis player?

A The tennis player. Oh, and I met Hemingway, too.

Q Did you?

A Yeah. Well, another girl named Natalie Sheppard, whose father was the--she wasn't with the group, but her mother was spending a year in France and had leased the Palace of Pauline Bonaparte, and Natalie's father was

the president of the Central Railroad of Georgia. So I met Natalie at the Sorbonne, and she invited me around to their house and I met a number of people there, but I said...I told her I was dying to meet Hemingway. And she said, "Well, I can fix that up tomorrow if you want to." I said, "Why?" She says, "Well, I know that right now he's having breakfast at the Cafe de Dumagos (sp?) every morning at around nine o'clock." So, she says, "We have an 8:00 class at the Sorbonne, you and I. If we scoot down there, we'll run into him." So, we went down at 9:00 and walked into the Cafe de Dumagos, and there he was, eating breakfast. So she went over and said, "Mr. Hemingway, can we join you?" And he said, "Well, certainly Natalie." Her mother knew him, see. And so we sat there and talked for a short while, and then we got up and left. But at least I met him.

Q What did you talk about?

A Well, it was just a general conversation, and he said, "I heard some fool say that that (pointing at the church of St. Germain-des-Pres)... that the tower of that church dates from the 7th Century, and the base of the church from the 13th Century." And he says, "Now, how ridiculous can anybody get!"

Q Built it from the top down!

A That was one thing that I remember...but I didn't keep a...I'd like to have a tape recording of that conversation, but I've forgotten it now. Well, then came the examinations.

Q Before we talk about that, what are the French professors like compared with the University of Delaware professors? ...at the Sorbonne.

A Well, at the Sorbonne, all of our lectures, or classes, were held...except for the (??)...were held in the Alfeteat Richelieu (sp?), and that's a big amphitheater and the professor...you didn't get to know the professor personally, because with 300 or 400 students, he comes in, and as he comes in, everybody arises and applauds, which is unusual to us. And then he...

Q They didn't applaud at the end--or did they?

A Yes they applaud when he leaves. And he would just lecture, and he wouldn't know anybody in the class. After the lecture some of us... some of them would stay around and answer questions. Others would just say,... (tape runs out on Side 1)

Q You were going to say, about the examination.

A They consisted of a three-hour written examination, one at 9:00 and at 12:00 you had to leave whether you were finished or not. And they gave you a choice of three subjects on which you could write, but then you were supposed to write quite a long dissertation on that. It wasn't a specific question thing, it was just a general essay that you wrote on one of these three subjects. Well, that didn't seem to me to be too bad. But then you had your oral examination. And there for a half hour or an hour the professor would fire all kinds of questions at you in French--well, naturally it'd be in French--but I mean, he'd fire all

kind of questions at you, and you had to answer like that, see. Now, you got the same markings, 10 on 20, or 20 on 20, for both the oral and the written, but you had to pass both, unless you got---which was unusual--you got 14 over 20 on the written, why you could go 8 over 20 on the oral. I passed them all the first time. There were two semesters. The last time, to my utter amazement, I flunked the oral on the French Revolution, which I considered a cream puff examination and I hadn't even prepared for it--I thought I knew the French Revolution up and down. But that worried me no end...but I went to see Brinton. I said, "What in the heck is this going to mean about my getting my diploma when I go back at convocation...1930?" He says, "Don't worry about it, don't worry about it." He said, "They never see the marks we get from the Sorbonne. They only see the marks we send them." And he says, "That was just a fluke anyway." Then he says, "I can see from the rest of your marks that you should have passed that one easily." So that was the only thing...only trouble I had.

Q How about the rest of the group?

A I don't know how they made out, to tell you the truth.

Q Did many people flunk out along the way?

A No. We had one girl who was killed. Well, she wasn't killed, but she was on a plane going to London, and the plane was forced down in a snow-storm, and then they had to get out of the plane and travel some distance, and she caught pneumonia and died. And that was a very impressive funeral they gave her at the American church in Paris. Oh, and then on Christmas we gave up...we were to have a Christmas party and dance. And we gave that up and used the money that would have been spent on that to give a Christmas party for needy French boys and girls. Each boy had to pick up a French girl and each girl in the group picked up a French boy, and we took them to this Rue de For headquarters, and they had a Christmas tree and we gave them gifts and so forth, and that was a lot of fun. And we went to the home and picked up the child...and the French newspapers had reporters there, and they could use pictures and stories... Oh, I forgot to mention that in Nausee they did break up the...for a week's trip to the Alps. However, that was extra. And I remember one of them said, "Gosh I can't miss this--I've gotta go to the Alps. I gotta go to the Alps." And I didn't get any letter. And then...so I said, well I'm not gonna...I didn't have any money, so the train left, and five hours after the train left telegrams..."The expenses for your trip paid--Dad." Well, of course I couldn't catch up with them, so...and anyhow there was three or four who didn't make the trip, and so we had a pleasant week--bought bicycles and rode out...or hired bicycles and rode out into the countryside. And went over to Strasbourg and tried to go across into Germany, and we didn't have German visas, and while we were arguing with the French on this side, a French woman came up and said, "Oh, you're Americans." And we said, "Yes." And she says, "What's the trouble here?" I said, "Well, we want to get into Germany and we can't do it." And she said, "Well, you just follow me." There was Walter Panzer and Elizabeth Bell from Seaford...and I, three of us, and she pranced across the bridge, and after a while we came over to the German side, and here were the German soldiers looking very efficient and pompous. And she just said--they asked for my passport--she said, "My guests," and passed us through. I said, "Who the hell is she?" They passed us through that. Well, she

was the wife of the French Commander of the Army of Occupation. And in 1929 Germany was still occupied by the French. And so there was a big Army car there waiting for her, and we piled into it and drove some distance into the colonel's headquarters, and he gave us a royal welcome, and he said, "I'll give you something to drink you can't get in France... absinthe, real absinthe." Well, we took a drink of it, and were looking at it kind of scared, and it tasted to us just like pernod. But he took us on a...

Q That stuff could make you blind...

A Yeah...he took us on a...car...of a trip...oh, a couple of hours, all through that section of Germany, visiting little towns and so forth.... This was totally unexpected and a glorious trip. Well, then in Paris Easter Vacation is two weeks, and they got us...that...1930 was the centenary of the French acquisition of Algeria. And they were having an centenarian exposition in Algiers at a reduced rate for people to go to Algiers from Paris. So they got us all hepped up with a note saying instead of making the complete tour of France as we always do on our Easter vacation, there's a possibility of going to Algiers if people will...be a hundred dollars for the two weeks. Well, they couldn't get enough to sign up to go. But because they just lacked one or two, but they didn't have enough...so instead they took us into Spain and it was only \$60 for the two weeks, so we went to Toulouse and Carcassonne, and Perpignan and then across the Spanish border to Barcelona and we went to El Tibidabo and Montserrat and toured Spain for three or four days and then went on over to...across the Riviera and stayed at Nice and...oh, and went into Italy and I had \$25 spending money for this vacation, and I'd been holding onto that pretty close 'cause I wanted...it was gonna have to last me after we got home. And while we were in Italy, right on the border, there was a bunch of souvenir stands, and I bought a souvenir and dropped my \$25. And then we went on...from there we went on to Montecarlo--oh, and Dr. Hullien was with us, by the way, and he was quite a gambler. He had come over for the Easter vacation, to be with us. And we went into the casino and I wasn't gonna waste any money, but this gal from Seaford just threw a check out like that, and...360 francs she got back. And so I reached in for my wallet, and the wallet was gone. And I thought, my God, everything caved in on me. Here's my spending money for the next month, and it's all gone. And I said...went over to Miss Dillingham, and I said, "Oh, God, I don't have a cent." And she said, "Where'd you lose it?" I said, "Back at the border is the last time I remember having it." She said, "Well, now, isn't that strange." She says, "Just before the train pulled out, a man from one of those stands came and said that he'd found a wallet and was it any of our group." And she said, "I asked and nobody seemed to know anything about it." So she said, "Here's ten francs. Go out and get a bus and drive back there and see if you can't find that man." I went back there, found the man, and the man said, "Yes, I have it." And there was the \$25... so I gave him \$3.00, I think it was, as a tip, and he thanked me profusely and said he was gonna use it for a Mass for his mother's soul. Now...and I got on a train and went back to Nice. Oh, and that was a...I had traveled on French trains always, and you buy your ticket and you show your ticket just before you get on the train, and then there are conductors who occasionally will come up and down, but rarely, never, had I run into anybody who asked for tickets on the train, see. So I just bought a...nonchalantly bought a third-class ticket and went

and sat in first class, and got caught. And I had to pay double fare... fine. So...but on the whole that wasn't such a bad day. I got my money back, but, I squandered about \$5.00 of it, more than that I guess...

Q Did you do any traveling after you...after your year at the Sorbonne. Or did you come directly home?

A I came directly home. Some of the others did, but I didn't have any money for anything like that. Well, we...by doing this...taking that trip into Spain, we missed Biarritz (sp?), Lourdes, Chateau -du-loir (?) and things that I would have liked to have seen, but on a whole I preferred going to Spain, I think.

Q What do you think you gained from the program?

A Well, I...oh, I think it's a marvelous experience. And I do think that the discipline that we had is excellent. Now, my son got a Fulbright just 30 years after I was involved in foreign study.

Q To where?

A Toulouse, France. And...

Q To study or to teach?

A To study, and he was...

Q For one year?

A ...he was at the University of Delaware and when he graduated in '59 he was given a Fulbright for the year '59-'60, same as I had for '29-'30. But there he was entirely on his own, and he attended the courses at the university, but didn't bother to take any examinations. And I don't think he got nearly as much out of it as I did. I know he didn't. He made a lot of French friends and one of his friends, Roland Espidol (sp?) is now...with whom he corresponds regularly...is now the press secretary of Chavon DOMont (sp?), the Premier of France, under Pompidou, you know. ...When we were over there it was the Premier who had all the power and the President was a figurehead, but...but the Premier isn't nearly as important now.

Q Now, you were there in your senior year in France. How did you use this in your future career? Or did you use it mainly just culturally?

A That's all. When I came back...oh! We were in Nausee and it was in October, and the French newspaper came out with a big headline--"Crash Americaine" and we laughed and laughed--at least I did, what difference did it make to me? I didn't have any stocks and I didn't think my father had any, and we didn't think it was anything serious, until the letters started coming in. And there was one girl there, Billie Blake, her father says, "Drop out of the group immediately. Your room and board has been paid for the year, but start studying cooking or something worthwhile."

Q So she could come home and get a job...

A He says, "I'm wiped out. We're selling the house, and..." And another girl started getting these horrible letters. Well, when I came home, I went to the DuPont Company for that job, and the man said, "We're not hiring anybody--we're laying off people." And so the French...

Q There was no opportunity...

A Well, I did apply for a job teaching French. It was then late to get into public schools, and I was offered a job at West Nottingham Academy. But then I went up to get more facts about it. I had to live there and I had to eat with the kids to teach them table manners, and I said, well heck, this is more than teaching French. So I turned that job down. And then I applied for a job on the newspaper, and there was one open. I got it and I've been there ever since.

Q Could you tell us a little more about your career on the Journal? Did you start as a reporter?

A I started...now, that's a strange thing, too. Well, yes, I started as a fill-in reporter, a substitute when a reporter was sick. And the first day...the first assignment I ever had was to cover the teacher's convention, the DSEA Convention was being held at...in Newark. And I went down there and covered the convention, and while I was there...

Q What year was that?

A That was 1930....I ran into Britton. And Britton said, "By the way, you might be interested to know now that you're working on a paper that... this might be a story for you. He says, "We're gonna open up a foreign study group in Spain and in Germany starting next year." He says, "The plans have all been made, completed." So I went back to the paper and wrote my story on the DSEA Convention, and then sat down and wrote this unassigned story which came out on the front page and the editors were all very much impressed. "My God," they said, "Come up with a front-page story on the very first assignment!" So that put me in their good graces. But I still didn't have a job until the first of the...well the legislature was to start January 1st. They sent the assistant city editor down to cover the legislature. So they called me in and said, "You will take the assistant city editor's job while he's at the legislature, and then when he comes back, you'll be through again." So I started out on a full-time job on the paper as assistant city editor.

Q That's pretty high up.

A Yeah. Well, it was just drudgery work, though. I mean, you had to headlines and edit copy and take stories over the phone, and so on and so forth. And the paper was much smaller then. There were only four reporters and four desk men, and the city editor and assistant city editor. But when the man came back from the legislature in April, end of April, there was a reporter named Leary who had been taken ill and left. And I got his job. And I became a political writer, and that was a lot of fun. I covered political conventions, and then I covered the legislature. And then in '43 I was made city editor, and I was city

editor until 1950, when I was appointed to the editorial board to write editorials, book reviews, historical features, and so on and so forth.

Q Special features...

A Yeah. I write a historical column on Saturdays. There's no assignments; I just choose what I...if I want to write a story.

Q But your main job is being on the editorial board.

A Yes, that's right. Um hmm. These others are sidelines. But I'm very interested in history and so forth, so I write a lot of that.

Q Well, I thank you very much Mr. Wilson.

END OF INTERVIEW.