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Oral history interview with Edward Stanley, 1965 July 27

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Edward Stanley on 1965 July 27. The interview was conducted at the NBC Offices by Richard K. Doud for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

RICHARD DOUD: This is an interview with Mr. Edward Stanley of the National Broadcasting Corporation [NBC] in New York City, July 27th, 1965. The interviewer is Richard K. Doud.

All right Mr. Stanley, if we could sort of start out with a little background material? What was done so far, was primarily to talk with Roy [Stryker, 1893-1974] and to interview some of the photographers who worked for him and our interest now I think is with the attitude of people who were with the press or some sort of public communication set up to find out how these things, these photographs actually worked, and the practical end of the business. Could you give me some idea of just what you were doing at the time and where you fit into this thing?

EDWARD STANLEY: I worked with-- I was, when I first encountered Roy was, I think the Executive News Photo Editor for the Associated Press. This was wire photo and mail pictures as well, also what we would call a matte service-- these are mattes you make stereotypes from, for smaller newspapers that didn't have engraving facilities and didn't have time. We also had feature service, which I can't recall if that was under my angel wings at that time or not. The thing, I suppose, that first attracted us to the photography that Roy was supervisor-- is hardly the word for it—directing, mothering, I presume, you might say, was its superior quality.

The history of news photography really for a long time was that they were lucky to have any kind of a picture and this was mostly concerned with the, I suppose with riots and police work, fires and things of this kind, which required the photographer to be physically active and willing to put himself in some hazard. This had not at all disappeared, of course, but as the character of the country and the problems that people met changed, they became, not exactly abstract, but for a whole different kind of exposition was required. I tried hard to upgrade my photographers both in their intellectual approach, if that's not too big a word to describe what you're trying to do with them. But also in the field of composition and the kind of picture that you have. There was some great news photographs that came along earlier, but largely by accident, and it is quire possible obviously that a picture could be composed, just as an artist would compose a picture in his head and people like [Edward] Steichen [1879-1973] or [Alfred] Stieglitz [1864-1946], and [William Henry] Jackson [1843-1942] if you like, and of course [Mathew] Brady [1822-96] in the past too, had done this, but the crop I was working with at any rate were boys who had learned to run the camera and probably would come up through the mail room with-- or something like it. I used to make them go to Museums to look at pictures, and feeling perhaps some of this would come off on them, and it did, it did. This was odd, simply that they could remember, this is a graphic pattern, well-- along comes Roy now and, while Roy's background was sociology and economics, he had a sensitivity, I think, to good composition, that responded-- that found a response in the photographers that he-- I suppose trained. I never got the sense in some ways that Roy was especially skilled in photographic techniques, exposures, cameras, things of this kind.

RICHARD DOUD: He knew very little about it.

EDWARD STANLEY: That, he knew very little about. You see this is not what was required. I knew very little about it too. I think if I had taken probably three pictures in my life time and I tried not too-- but you can understand what it is-- the information you are trying to convey-- and that you must do it with great honor and great integrity, but at the same time you must have the artist's eye, and the artist's eye, so to speak, is exactly like the writers mind, the two go hand in hand. Well photography is a kind of bastard art in many ways-- that is to say, you use a machine to do it with, but it becomes great too, often by happenstance because it is an instantaneous record of something. Well a lot of what Roy had of course, was not instantaneous, and you had somehow to illuminate a problem and in the farm world of course at this time the problems were very depressing. Pretty depressing, you had to have someone who understood the tragic character of-- you call it a problem, I suppose it was a disaster, a calamity. Someone who had not merely an understanding of the economics, but some understanding of the psychological disasters that were taking place, too. Sociological and this is-- these are all bastard sciences, you know, which are in any way complete, and now they have a new name-- behavioral sciences, as they call them-- still it is the same thing. What was happening was happening

both to the land and to the people. Dorothea Lange [1895-1965] in many ways, I suppose, was the greatest of the photographers that came out of Roy's school, was a sociologist to begin with and I think her husband was too, I'm not sure.

RICHARD DOUD: Yes, he was.

EDWARD STANLEY: So that these two people, who knew how to run the camera so to speak, and had almost instinctively, I suppose a kind of an education that you're likely to get some feeling for art, not a bad, but this was because there was a "y" on it, you know, "arty." Well, "arty," this is almost as bad as Tiffany glass, you know, but gifted people had a feeling for the Okies and for this great migration that was taking place, this was a wild, unbelievable tragedy in many respects. And they managed not only picture this, but to begin to show, in her photographs particularly, (I don't to ignore the other photographers) the depths of human resource, of resilience, and the ability of people to help each other, and the necessity for a government, if you like, a society of people, also to be helpful. And well these were all impressive, there were other photographers of course working the same areas, working with rivers, with-- well, he had a good many, you have the names of some-- some are superior to others-- John Vachon [1914-75, Photographer], a kind of a physically awkward Lincoln-esque kind of lad- I don't know where John came from-- Wisconsin?

RICHARD DOUD: Minnesota?

EDWARD STANLEY: Minnesota. I can't now know what his educational background was, and he's changed a great from the last time I saw him, but you began to get a sort of feeling about things an almost structural quality in his photography. I think later he became a more professional photographer, and less a sociologist, in it all I don't know but some of his. I'm not very close to this field any more, but some of his pictures I saw last seemed to me to have a little more of that slick quality that you'd expect in Life. You get so after a while you understand what kind of a photograph is likely to be selected and turned up.

RICHARD DOUD: This is a real force working on these people. I think working for picture magazines is…

EDWARD STANLEY: Well picture magazines have some man that they want, I think, in the technical end of it, I think in some respects, they have not been quite equal to the composition-- competition here-- Television has a very stiff piece of business here in a way because it's fluid and graphic, and I'm sorry to say that in our-- I think in our news coverage, so to speak, newsreel coverage, we're not-- we don't begin to get the-- were still in a stage where you're lucky to have anything. In many, many ways, this is probably true. Again, but the photography-- at any rate I don't have a good respect for their artistic content, this will probably happen. The newsreel never did get it, the documentaries have it sometimes, but our documentaries are largely on television, all television is so involved with the idea that they lose the technical quality that has to be in it too-- excellence is what I'm after here. And it's so gruesomely expensive that one way or the other this often doesn't happen. I think this is sort of a pity and it'll take fifteen years, you know, before they'll settle down to do this. And the still business I don't follow very closely, any more. I see Life occasionally, I see Look-- which I think is a better magazine at the moment-- Life, I'm told is now coming back, but both of them moved quite strongly into text. And this is the result of the graphic competition television officers, I suppose. I don't know. Well, come back to Roy.

RICHARD DOUD: Could I ask you, in giving back, when this whole business first came to your attention?

EDWARD STANLEY: I think when I first encountered this was probably about 1936. I had various executive assignments at the Associated Press. I had been the general manager's executive assistant, which is in effect-- how can you say it-- a troubleshooter, if you've got a real problem some place, I'd go out and stand around for a while, and I had two major new divisions, I had-- and he had great problems with the new photo service, it wasn't any good and it was also running in the red-- so I took it over, I think in '36. And we got out of the red, we introduced the five-day week, which was quite a novelty then, and we equipped every photographer in the service with three new cameras-- these were Rollieflex, these were a Lieca, a Contax, and a new Speed Graphic, I was trying the smaller Speed Graphic. We got in better film-- we did lots of things of this kind, to give them the tools with which they had to work. They hadn't had them before. They had been buying second hand cameras. They were 45 Speed Graphic and there they were. And so I spent a lot of time working in just the technical side of it, not knowing very much about it. I got the people who made the Speed Graphic; I think [George] Eastman has it now, but to put another focusing screw on the other side. You see we had the focusing screws on the same side that the flash bulb was on and I said, "What the hell, why don't you put one on both sides, you could use both hands then, and it will only cost you nine cents;" and they did incorporate it in the next model, and I wished it to be named the Stanley Focusing Screw-- I was just kidding, but of course they didn't do this. And we had a little flash bulb, they were coming in at that time, lots of things were happening on the technical side. We bought many long lenses because if you don't have the proper tool, don't kid yourself, good picture taking with a Brownie, a 2-8 Brownie, you know, is an accident. This is all. So that you've got this-- we had all the cameras, we had everything-- we had nothing in the way of good cameras. Very expensive, but what the hell, you know, this

is a different thing. Well, I think Roy had three operating cameras, as I recall, to work with. He didn't have the kind of equipment, one of course was the Speed Graphic, which was good, but somewhere in the line, there had to be an old Keystone View Camera, for many things, you know, that's the best camera that was ever invented. You'll never get better pictures of the West than old Jackson had, you know.

RICHARD DOUD: That's right.

EDWARD STANLEY: And what he packed was a Keystone View all over those goddamn rugged mountains out there. Well, we had Rollieflex, Speed Graphics of various kinds, and Contax and Lieca's were easy to work with. I think Roy liked the Rollieflex and this gave you a real feeling of depth, often in a picture that somehow you don't get with the others. Well, this is when it came to me, and you have a problem, of course, in the news service which is that you're not trying necessarily to propagandize a government operation, of any kind, not everyone agreed with it. But this is information, what you're really after here; and as you may recall, Roosevelt Administration did not always have happy relationships with the American Press at all. This didn't bother me very much. We used a great deal of this material coming out of it. Not because we were really trying to move any particular project in the Department of Agriculture, but rather to give a higher level look at what the problem was. We wrote over our own cut lines, we selected our own pictures, we did all of these things and the quality was here. I think that if anyone examines the organic law of virtually all of the government departments, will find the obligation to disseminate information. It's probably the very first sentence in the organic-- it certainly is with agriculture-- it is with the interior, it is in such a thing as the U.S. Office of Education-- I don't know about the others-- Treasury, I presume is entitled to retire into its cool vaults and count its money, but the other-- the State-- I presume is different. But the others have this in so that they have this obligation. I'm not absolutely sure that Agriculture because of its enormous size and the inter-departmental rivalries that went on-- Roy managed to get out from under it, I think, the dead hand of the department or division of information, whatever they call it, which was all minor bureaucracy presided over, I think at the time, by Milton Eisenhower [1899-1985, Three-time University President]. Milton was a great chart drawer and a great performer and so on, but I would think that it would have been deadly, I don't know. So that he was performing in a slightly different source and in order to keep his people employed and perhaps to extend the beneficence of this, they hired out to others-- that is to say the Treasury used them, the Interior used and so on. He had-- and I'm not sure again it came in under Roy-- he had at one time, there was at any rate in Agriculture, a film unit, it may still be in operation. And this attracted many of the very good people, Clary was involved, Pare Lorentz [1905-1922, Filmmaker] was involved, and I don't know who else and so on in the things, and this was a-- was quite satisfactory-- quite big. There is another side of the course, which was actual information of a-- what do you call it? -- Oh a "nuts and bolts" character and I don't think Roy did a lot of that, but elsewhere. Roy's real feel was with the American people, and not with specialists in the line. They don't necessarily want anything to get in the way of a piece of information, they're like engineers. We're doing a course for engineers. Don't give it much in the way of production value on television, keep it plain, because otherwise they'll smell some culture in it you know, and so it ought to look a little bit like a-- I presume-- like a warehouse, you know. Be very careful because your special audience is very sensitive to it and they wouldn't believe you, they won't believe you. Well, I don't know what's happened to the files, I think it's a pity if they are not available, that they are-- they gave a whole picture of the America of the 1930's and perhaps of the early 40's. We lost a course when the war came and they cut out everything they didn't need and absolutely have to have, and some of this got moved over into the armed forces. [Edward] Steichen of course did quite a piece of business in the Pacific and some others too. But not much, not much, you're back again to "be glad that the pictures was taken at all." It was a miracle.

RICHARD DOUD: Were you with OWI [Office of War Information] at all?

EDWARD STANLEY: Oh yes, oh yes. I was the-- most of what USIA [United States Information Agency] now does-- except for radio-- grew out of the department that I organized and initiated-- called the Bureau of Overseas Pictures and Publications. I was chief of the Bureau and then I was Deputy Director for the Overseas Branch, and the wonder of that was not that some of it was done badly, but Dr. Johnson's Lady Preacher, you know, that it was done at all. It was almost unmanageable, it never had the sincere interest of the President; he had other more important things; he could only see trouble coming and he didn't think it would move very many people. We had problems getting people because most of them had been snapped up, you know, lieutenant-colonels and majorities and all this kind of stuff, they weren't available, but-- and we used to have as much as we could of Roy's material. Not always-- I would have liked to have had him in a full-time situation-- It was pretty hard to do, partly because Agriculture didn't want to give it up, as I recall it, Roy was not eager necessarily to come into the hazards of our operation, which might drop dead you know, the next day. But we did not use it. We sent lots of pictures of Roy's. We developed, coming out of a picture background, I had-- I don't know how I had Wirephoto service [started by Associated Press in 1935] -- a year and a half, two years, something like this. I'm kind of a hard study. I've worked very hard understanding what I'm trying to do, usually. I knew that there had been some experiments with radio photo, sending pictures in this inexpensive way-- there was a way that the British had called the Ranger, and it's a little too complicated to try to explain. I'm not sure I could any more. Also they had a clamp on it, you know, they weren't about to give up the monopoly and so on, well it didn't go very many places in the world, because-- I don't know if whether the Times-- I think the Times did these experiments and a

couple of other people. They had brought some photos back from Antarctica when [Richard E.] Byrd [1888-1957, Explorer] was down there; a man with a ham operator, so to speak, up in Albany had been transmitting the pictures back and forth from Alaska and sometimes you have to take a big gamble, that they're likely to put you in jail for, you know, if it doesn't pay off. So we ordered $500,000 worth of these from the Times and the Signal Corp which had been putting around, all this time was given the courage of its convictions and ran in right after us, and don't think they don't take precedence sometimes in war. So they took half of them. We had a hard time getting them and we put these in, (this is not really about Roy Stryker) we put these in, various odd places. We got one in Geneva before that closed down, we got one into Moscow, got one in Chunking, we had them in Stockholm, we had them in Turkey and we transmitted photographs every day to these places. Well one place which was extremely useful-- we didn't have the stuff to come back, we had receivers-- one place that was extremely useful was in China. This is-- this you can't quite prove this. First picture, of course, that we sent was Madame Chiang [Kai-Shek, 1898-2003, First Lady of China] up in a nursing home in Yonkers. In the second picture was a Japanese cruiser, you may recall it-- limping home after the Battle of Midway with the guns hanging over the sides-- you remember that incredible-- and a lot of those. Just at this time in China there had been a very big appeasement movement to make peace with Japan and collect themselves and get out of this. And these pictures just stopped them dead; never heard another word out of them. Just stopped them dead. Well, this was worth your $500,000. We didn't spend quite that much, but we could have. This was worth it. I couldn't prove this; this-- it would take you five years research-- you know. Many of the people now dead, would never admit they were for appeasement anyway. So that was out of one of these involvements. Shows actually that the-- I presume the power of realism. It's impossible to fake a picture. And it's very rarely that you can make it convincing; you know it's fake. Somebody does something just a little bit too much, you know. And you can tell it, you know. I mean this is all-- even though you can't prove it, you know this is an unreliable piece of information.

RICHARD DOUD: Speaking of fakes, what do you think of the charges that some papers labeled against some of the—

EDWARD STANLEY: Arthur's "skull"? That was the only one. And this was the photographer's mistake. Whether he carried it around the car, took it out to take a picture whenever he wanted to, I don't know. I mean young men perhaps do foolish things. It was not-- there were cattle skeletons in the field. Cattle did die in the field of Kansas, more so than in the fields of South Dakota, where he first took the picture. This was too bad. I had to fire a couple of very good men once because they faked a picture on peonage in Georgia, and peonage is a federal crime, as I'm sure you're aware, and they were anxious somehow to please the Yankees, I guess, and so they got a man to sit on his porch with a shotgun in his hand, and the negroes working out in the cotton field and corn. And the FBI was in that, you know, before dawn. [Laughter] And those poor boys, I got them jobs and so forth. I really didn't maintain the integrity of my own service. I had to fire them and discipline in this area. I took it seriously. So I would never had taken that—"but here you are," this was-- I don't know who was the man, it sounds to me like Arthur Krock [1886-1974, Journalist] and Krock is a great one to pick up a small item of this kind and cast doubt over everything and so on. Very bilious man-- I know all the problems I've had with him. I don't know if he was the one in this instance, but they were looking for any stick to beat a dog, you know. And so again this is a-- you are sometimes at the mercy of the reporters, or your photographers, and then they do foolish acts. But one of the main problems Roy had was nobody spoke up very hard in his defense, and said "What of it, what of it, you may not always be able to have the cow in the right place," but I have a feeling that Arthur-- I only saw one so far as I know there was only the one, and I'm quite sure that this was a surprise to Roy. I don't think he would connive in a thing that even had the color of misinterpretation-- which is all this actually. Arthur was a fine photographer, hard working man, he-- in some ways he would have been a better photographer for that area if he had been born there. He was a city fellow, this sometimes makes a problem. But on the other hand Roy did some work in the cities too. And if they had the view now that is often-- you know the country agent—and the land-grant colleges and so on-- the big problem isn't on the farm any more, its in the urban centers, and the colleges, the universities have this great responsibility now to social problems in the cities as they had those on the farm when we began. But what are you going to do with the country agents? So, Berenice Abbott [1898-1991, Photographer], I'm not sure if Berenice was on Roy's staff or not-- maybe-- I can't tell you, but she was a WPA [Works Progress Administration] photographer.

RICHARD DOUD: Yes.

EDWARD STANLEY: You don't know her work?

RICHARD DOUD: The thing on New York.

EDWARD STANLEY: Oh, you don't know whether she was?

RICHARD DOUD: I don't think she was ever with Roy's-

EDWARD STANLEY: I don't know, I don't know, but there was some city work, you see. And some great

photography which sort of led the way for some commercial people-

RICHARD DOUD: Well, in this business of getting pictures to the press, how did this operate? Did these papers go to Roy?

EDWARD STANLEY: Roy would usually come up and show me what he had, or suggest that I come down and look at what was available, figuring out the feature story-- these were never hot news items. I don't think we ever moved any on the Wirephoto. We could have, but I don't recall it. I would have to satisfy myself as an editor. And I did almost all of this personally. I guess maybe because I wanted to, but partly because I didn't have an editor that I thought the way I did, and sometimes the boys in Washington, but this was a, you know. So I did this myself, by and large. He had some other photographers-- Marion Post—Wolcott [1910-1990], I think her name is now. I don't know.
RICHARD DOUD: Yes.

EDWARD STANLEY: What she is doing, if she lost her photography. And in many ways Marion had a sensitivity that some of the others didn't have. Well, I took her on for some special coverage that AP [Associated Press] wanted at one time. This was-- her and another little bouncy girl that never worked for Roy, who was of a different school entirely. Constance Bannister [1913-2008, Photographer], she is the one who does the baby pictures now and so on.

RICHARD DOUD: Oh yes.

EDWARD STANLEY: To do some special coverage on a big Legion parade. They had a convention here. Well, my own photographers who were all male and mostly Irish took this as a direct insult to them. I had more damn trouble in the dark room of torn pictures and stuff and so on, but these were different kinds of pictures. Connie went on and one winter, covered society for us, at Palm Beach, and I had a male photographer too, and this was quite a thing. But Connie's pictures were different and she used-- what I could only describe as feminine wiles-- and they were pretty wily I guess at the time. And once she came up roaring up at the end of it and went into the library and came back with a whole stack of negatives that had never been printed. They had been developed, but never printed. And there they were-- Al Smith [1873-1944, Politician] coming out of the water with his big round belly, you know. Well, and Marion did these and I don't think she might have done another assignment for us, I don't know, but she had a, how could I describe it, it was a little more Emily Dickenson, more poetic, softer and she did some New England villages that gave you a little of the feeling and quality of life in the villages, although they didn't tell you what real bastards, you know, can get into a town meeting and-- which is the worst form of government ever devised-- it's worship apparently.

RICHARD DOUD: Sure.

EDWARD STANLEY: But this is like Grandma Moses [Anna Mary Robertson Moses, 1860-1961, Folk Artist], she is not a painter, she is a novelty-- well any way.

RICHARD DOUD: Well, I have a couple of questions I wondered if you would answer. First, do you think that newspapers utilized this material as much as they might have, or as much as they should have?

EDWARD STANLEY: No, no question of it, but they used a lot of it. To answer the first part of the question and I think that Roy was in this respect, and as I too had often been too, you're a little bit ahead of yourself, you know. You now have in many places, a more thoughtful kind of journalism in the newspapers, forced to it of course by our news activities, you know, more-- something like 61% of the American people now prefer-- get their news from the television and prefer it, but find it more reliable, or so judge it, you see. And this has moved many newspapers now into-- well how can I saw to a depth kind of-- the critical department in major newspapers are beginning to open up. This is something we cannot yet do and all, so that we're this coming up now, I would think it would be much more widely used, than it had been. And this is one of your problems, you have to have people who understand what it is that they have in their hands, you know. And that is not just the rape suspect being led from the paddy wagon, you know and all this is also changing, I'm sure you're aware of this. But, so that this is-- I don't mean this as a criticism-- but the state of the art if you like at that time was not quite, except for a few, up to this, and all I had-- you had such a hard time at one time discussing venereal disease. They didn't use the words. The first time that gonorrhea was ever-- or syphilis-- put on the wire, this was an occasion. Everybody was very brave about it. I had done with Dr. Parent and I'm not sure whether Roy's people did this or not, a whole series-- photo series on what was it-- "No more Bad Blood"-- tests for gonorrhea and all, and a certain general then-- Thomas Bearing-- who, a terrific man, this broke a great deal of ice, but there is only certain amount of ice that can be broken. I can't do clap every other week, you know-- photo service and all-

RICHARD DOUD: Sure.

EDWARD STANLEY: But here, so I would have a feeling here and any historian that now wishes to go back to a graphic history of the period has to consult on those files, or so it seems to me. They are reliable; but they are

not perhaps our best foot forward. This is what photos have always done in the past, you know. But they are reliable and they reflect the-- well, there was great despair at one time, and I think if the photographer is not somehow involved, and not somehow implicated in the problem, that it is likely to be-- his photographs are likely to respond to that, but let me go back a little bit. Roy was not a photographer, but he was a teacher, and I think he used almost what you would call a Socratic method, you know-- that is questions and answers and questions, so that a great deal of conversation-- who was like him, I don't who was like him there, but so that his photographers could begin to get some feeling of the problem. And he was interested in what their experiences had been, and what their work was like, and what kind of people did they meet and all. He may have seen [Margaret]Bourke-White [Photographer] and [Erskine] Caldwell's [Author] book-- You Have Seen Their Faces [Viking Press, 1937]-- and this in some degree grew out of it, I suppose, many of my conversations with Peggy. And she later married Erskine, and Erskine had a very dramatic feeling about the South, that he had come from. And I think Peggy was the best portrait photographer without being a portrait photographer, she would sweep from this you know, and a little melodramatic but not really-- and that was a very moving book. No one ever went though Roy's file and ever did anything like that quite so fine… [Pause] I don't know why, but many of his people are also superior people, some became-- one I think became an artist afterwards-- but this is long, you would think they would be exhausting conversations, perhaps they were. Sometimes I think some of the people felt Roy wished to be more involved in their lives, and give advice to them in their personal lives than they could quite endure, but I don't think that's a sound criticism really. I think he wanted to know what kind of people they were, he felt a great responsibility for their-- how can I say, intellectual and emotional development so that they would be-- well, great photographers perhaps, but great journalists and great reporters, if you want, in a sense that no one else was doing. Well, now I have a little bit of this, of course, and I had some of this in a different way, but I am a professional in mass communications, and I'd hope-- I'm often tired of teaching by now, you know, and I'd hope that some would come with enough spark so that you don't have to do it. They don't, very often, honest to God; I don't know what-- why-- I don't know that Roy made them read, probably not-- I'm involved [and I don't mean this to be a comparison between me and Roy] in a religious field. And I make my people read. I am a linear man in many respects, I suppose, hopelessly linear, because this is my generation. The next one will be graphic, and the next one beyond that. This might have been his great contribution, which is, "what is the problem, what are you trying to photograph, what do you hope to bring back, what is the story that you are telling." You didn't have time for that in the newspaper business, by and large, and I don't suppose you have enough time really in the photo magazine businesses either, you know? But Roy had it. He was a patient man and apprehensive, Roy grew apprehensive; his budgets would disappear, and all these things-- wonderful man and like all of us not without some vanities, now without some wishful recognition and all. Well, I then, after the OWI thing, just carrying this on a little bit. I was involved with Standard Oil Company of New Jersey's public relations program. And just the deals, that this was part of it-- or those chemical patents or whatever. What kind of people make oil, who are these characters, you know, they could do this with photography-- well at this time their problem was so deep, and they weren't absolutely sure it was soluble, I guess, they would try almost everything. And I got Roy to come up from Washington, and said, "Roy, you've about had it now, you know, nobody loves you, nobody loves your outfit, and you could probably poodle along and die as a civil servant, and a respectable pension I suppose. So why don't you give this a whirl; this is a great big corporation, beautifully run, not as malignant as it is presumed to be, and in many places benign, but here is one of the major industries of the world. Wouldn't you like to photograph it?" And he thought about this for a while, because going to work for a corporation and picturing it, often suggests to a man that he is about to enter orders and so on. This is not true. It depends on the kind of man you are. And no restrictions were ever put on Roy's back and this same group, and some others, went along. A beautiful photography and began to understand the problems if you, in oil. So there are pictures of roughnecks on oil fields, the drillers, the this and the that and other countries that-- and we began to put up the annual report-- we did this on year, annual report was a novel thing for the New Jersey Company, with a face from every country in which they did business so to speak. All these places like Venezuela, Arabs, trench-men, you know, all these faces-- illuminating, for their stockholders too. I think Roy was always apprehensive and nervous, but nonetheless this is a great collection of pictures. Eventually I suppose they decided they ought to save some money, but Roy went to Pittsburgh and that's quite an operation too. I saw many of those, but this was the time when Pittsburgh was endeavoring to have a renaissance, you know. They were modestly successful at this. Got the smoke situation sort of cleaned up, some new buildings down on the point, I just think it's a modest success, you know, but any success in a major city is significant I presume. Well, then the next I knew he did some work for Jones and Laughlin [Steel Company], some consulting work, and now he's down in Colorado where he always wanted to be anyways, you know.

RICHARD DOUD: Well could you, is it possible at all to evaluate the impact or the impression that these photographs of Roy's people made on the general public?

EDWARD STANLEY: Well, how can you evaluate this, being a-- I would say that photography the same again. It's a social photography if you want to call it this and it had a very enormous and lasting influence, but if you want to say what was the impact? You've got so many things operating, you had the [John] Steinback book [referring to *Grapes of Wrath*, 1939], you had the movie, you had Roy's photographs, you had our photographs, you had

the-- why can't I think of his name-- Paul Sears, Deserts on the March [Sears, 1935], many items that all moved in on the Dust Bowl problem. You'll be amused to know that I coined the phrase "Dust Bowl."

RICHARD DOUD: Oh really?

EDWARD STANLEY: And really searching for a tidy phrase-- we used to describe it as a saucer shaped area, "ya, ya, ya, ya," and so on and you haven't got this much time. You need something that is-- what do you call it in the computer-- the pattern recognition, and-- well, so this is a little hard to know how much of this could be attributed directly to Roy. But so far as I know, he was the first, his people were the first to move into the area. It took him probably a year or maybe longer to sort of arrive at his own sensitivities because early on I think Roy was a pictorial statistics man, he'd follow and he used to use these little pictographs that were-- what the hell was his name-- Motley used to do and all. These all came out of [John] Von Neumann [1903-1957, Mathematician], I think it was, the great Austrian statistician. You don't know this?

RICHARD DOUD: No.

EDWARD STANLEY: Oh god, he was wonderful in using graphs and pictographs, and things of this kind to hope to make the statistics more readily understandable. Almost at a glance and his graphs got so complicated, it was the colors that were really stunning abstractions. They never said anything to anybody; you needed a reference book in order to do it. It's almost like-- Fortune once ran a photograph--- the interior organization so to speak of a ship-- with all the plumbing and all the electric lines, air conduits, the steam conduits, water conduits, salt water conduits, all painted a different color. Beautiful, decorative-- and so on-- well here you got so far off-- well I think originally that Roy as a sociologist or as an economic sociologist, or a socialist economist, whatever the hell you wanted to call it-- got interested in trying to explain statistics, you see, make them understandable, easily, to people who had sort of limited response, I think. And I have spent a lot of time with this too, because I'm in the mass business and I'm trying to bring esoteric information really, into the minds of a mass of people, so I look for really quite sophisticated ways which will seem simple to follow. These photographs of Roy's, for example, are very sophisticated documents. This is why Shakespeare was a very sophisticated poet. He had, how much did he have? 500 years of mystery and morality plays in the back of him. Well, I'm not comparing any of us to Shakespeare, because it is one of the acts or God, to show us how it ought to be done. But there's a great deal of intellectuality and sophistication in it except that when it arrives then it has to be honest. It has to be extremely good and extremely honest. Well, so what's the impact? I don't know how you're going to separate it out, but it was one of the principal forces, certainly in moving people. I'll tell you another place that it worked, which perhaps might not have been thought of, or seen, and this is amongst government officials who saw these photographs, you know. These people are like the people the psychiatrists call gate keeper. The gate keepers are the district judges and county sheriffs, marshals, probation officers, mayor of the town, all these people, a kid in trouble comes up to them, you know, and they can open or close a gate. Well, these are-- what can I say-- a second, third and fourth rank of civil servants who were not out in the field, who worked with paper mostly, and suddenly something is illuminated, you know. Well they saw a lot of these too, you see. You talk about they never really got the rural housing projects going, you know, none of them really ever worked. The aggregate, you know, the earth, pounded earth, houses, all these things they thought of that people could do, never really came together. This must have had some impact however, on housing, generally. Much of this kind of stuff, anyone looking at the kind of housing in the backward south for example, or in some of the slum pictures that crept in, the Farm Security got into this, by following where did these people go from the farms, what happened to them? And back here you had to have this kind of lively concern you know, I never have understood why Roy wasn't a Methodist minister, you know, and all, because he had much of this-- Quaker, I suppose might be better-- but much of this activist concern as to what happens to people. This is-- we are not a great big representative government meat grinder, you know, this is not what we are set up to do, we are to set up to- if we can possibly-- this is why [Lyndon B.] Johnson is likely to be so great-- he wants people to be able to extend their lives somehow, you see, and all. I don't mean the length of their lives, there's nothing wrong with this, I suppose, although the last ten years are usually worthless to most people, and all. Well-

RICHARD DOUD: The statement was made-- talking about the influence of these-- the statement had been made that these photographs played a significant part in reelecting [Franklin D.] Roosevelt in 1936. Do you think that statement could be made?

EDWARD STANLEY: OHHH, NO! That just seems to me to be somebody- reaching for it here. Do you want to know who played a significant part in reelecting Roosevelt in '36? It was Alf Landon [1887-1997, Politician] and the people who persuaded him to take a revanchist step. I presume you might call it, economic view. Actually, Landon was quite a bright man and had much better outlook than this and so on. One time before he was nominated but when it got there he could smell it, why he could-- and Alf and his Pennsylvania friends, you see, who, you know, haven't learned anything since the fall of the Roman empire, I guess, you see, managed this. This is the same hard core that wrecked the Republican Party. That's what elected Roosevelt. Christ! If they had had a substantial way to turn, maybe. But I don't think that anyone had lost the confidence in him that the newspapers led you to believe. You know, you had such kind of foolish stuff as the New York Sun. I think it was

then-- poking fun at the boondoggling at the Shelter Belt. Have you ever been out through the high plains in the last twenty years to look at those Shelter Belts? Well, all of us that came from there-- I'm from Nebraska originally- we knew that trees grew because you had the Homestead Act [1862] which has the woodlot provision, and so on. Cozad, Nebraska is the largest seeded nursery in the whole Forestry Service, you know, miles and miles and miles. And now you drive along these country roads and here are the Chinese Elm, Siberian Olive, and the whole thing. Well, anyways, that's what did it. No. In fact they weren't really in motion yet big enough to do it here. No, I would think the influence would be more lasting than that. And I don't think I would ever think of it as political. I would think that many of the, the program- how can I say it?-- Of repairing society has been broken up several times, you know, it started in his own limited way with Teddy Roosevelt and this got really stopped by World War II. And we had the catatonic period of the twenties when not very much happened. We just got ready again and the depression came and we sort of got under way again-- I don't know what problems might have arisen economically-- pretty bad ones, I expect, when World War II came, and this took another ten years out of the deal. But photographs like these, and the leadership in the whole graphic field, if you like, had something to do with preparing the national acceptance now, not for a welfare state, but for the possibilities that great things can be done. There were many TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] pictures, for example, there were many Bonneville pictures, and Grand Coulee, and Fort Peck and all of the great public works: Bureau of Reclamation, and Army Engineers. And they began welcoming these photographers, you know, and so on, when they saw what-- so that this, I think had a lot to do with that. I think it is not within our social conscience really to accept that people ought to live this way. Just as I think that while Roy, I would say, had a substantial and significant part, but as a politician I presume this was a libel, perhaps people might say that, that this was designed as part of the Roosevelt propaganda machine. I suppose had some of this that went on, he was very sensitive about his handicap and didn't like any of those pictures anywhere at all, but beyond this he was the greatest persuader and he was the one that they…

RICHARD DOUD: This file still exists…

EDWARD STANLEY: In the Library of Congress.

RICHARD DOUD: …in the Library of Congress…

EDWARD STANLEY: Yes.

RICHARD DOUD: And it's pretty much intact, I think. The question is this: What value or values does this thing possess and how should they be used? Is it enough to leave the thing there?

EDWARD STANLEY: Well, I don't know how they can be currently used except by people that need them. It would be impossible to really write about the Civil War without some reference to [Matthew] Brady's photographs. It would be impossible really to talk about the opening up of the Rocky Mountain West without [William Henry] Jackson's photography, I presume; there were some others- I don't mean here that he was alone-- and there were some others beside Brady. They have this kind of purpose. I don't know what use can be made to fan them out now because this is thirty years ago, you know, and in the lifetime of our country, at any rate, this moves awfully fast. So that it's a pity that the collection isn't really maintained- if it isn't maintained, I don't know- and readily available, but I wouldn't think that its current uses would be in this aspect. I don't know-- anyone who puts out a book-- this would be a good thing to do-- maybe they're done and I don't see them. Well, you have to find someone that wants to do it, it's painfully slow work, you know, and at the end of which you'd likely get $3,000 for a year's work, you know, and so on. Or anyone who gets a grant in-- I would like to see something like this going on now in the government, and I don think it goes on, because we are about to move into a whole-- I would think it's metropolitan now, I mean this is an urban set of pictures and I don't know who's doing-- you know, civil rights is one; housing is another, housing and city planning and all of these things, because very often-- it's a pity, you need ten years for people to really make up their minds to turn, you know. You may have seen, for example, I don't know why no one picks this up and does something with it, a proposal to bring Canadian water down from the North, bring it clear into the Great Lakes and so on. I think it's a magnificent idea, not very expensive really, not really very expensive, you know- a billion dollars, I guess, something like this. Well, what kind of money is this, you know? Nothing. Well, this is the kind of exciting-- I don't see pictures coming on river pollution, I don't see anyone reporting actually the kind of situation we're in. But we're in it; Philadelphia's in it; Newark's in it, all around the Northeast. Well, sure! Maybe next year it'll rain. But in the meantime there ought to be some other… All right?

RICHARD DOUD: Yes. Very good. Thank you very much.

EDWARD STANLEY: Yes.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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