**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Cheryl Lansdown**

Interview Conducted by

Juliana Nykolaiszyn

August 4, 2016

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

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**Interview History**

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Cheryl Lansdown is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on August 4, 2016.

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**About Cheryl Lansdown…**

Cheryl Lansdown was born in 1945 in Lawrence, Kansas. The family moved to Vinita, Oklahoma, a short time later. Cheryl graduated from Vinita High School in 1962. For five summers, beginning the summer after she turned sixteen, Cheryl worked as a waitress at the Glass House Restaurant on the Will Rogers Turnpike. She has many fond memories of working for Annabell Southern, well-known in the Vinita area.

After high school, Cheryl enrolled in Northeastern Oklahoma Junior College and later transferred to Oklahoma State University where she graduated in 1967 with a degree in family relations and child development. She married Bob Lansdown in 1965 and while he was finishing his degree Cheryl taught in the public school system in Stillwater, Oklahoma. When Bob graduated the couple moved to Bartlesville, Oklahoma where Bob worked for Woolaroc Museum and Cheryl taught in the public schools there. Cheryl retired in 2003. Cheryl and Bob have two sons and reside in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

**About the Glass House…**

At the half-way point on the Will Rogers Turnpike near Vinita, Oklahoma, stands an iconic landmark. The arched building opened in 1957 and was the first restaurant built over a U.S. public highway. Conoco (Continental Oil Company) commissioned the building with an aim to serve the needs of motorists passing in both directions. The building housed the Glass House Restaurant, dedicated in 1958, and included a cafeteria, snack bar, and sit-down restaurant. On each side of the building, motorists enjoyed full-service gas stations, operated by Conoco initially. Over the years other restaurants and fuel facilities have operated at the service plaza. Host International, Interstate Hosts and Howard Johnson’s have operated the plaza at different times. The Glass House and the Conoco stations employed many of the area’s youth through the years and served many, many travelers. Renovation began on the service plaza in 2012 and in 2014 it re-opened with a new name, the Will Rogers Archway.

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| **Cheryl Lansdown**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn  August 4, 2016  Vinita, Oklahoma |  |

**Nykolaiszyn** *My name is Julianna Nykolaiszyn with the Oklahoma State University Library. Today is Thursday August 4, 2016. We’re in Vinita, Oklahoma, interviewing Cheryl Martin Lansdown as part of our* Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project *with a focus on the Glass House Restaurant. Cheryl, thank you so much for being with us today.*

**Lansdown** You’re welcome.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well let’s begin by learning a little bit more about you. Could you tell me the year you were born and where you were born?*

**Lansdown** Sure. I was born in 1945 in Lawrence, Kansas. My father was foreman of an ammunitions plant there and we were, we lived in a little place called Sunflower. We later moved to Oklahoma after the war and my father established a business, a Phillips station and a garage. And my mother was a school teacher. And I grew up in Vinita.

**Nykolaiszyn** *So when you were growing up in Vinita, tell me about the schools you attended.*

**Lansdown** Okay. First of all—my mother was a teacher, and at that period in time I was five, they needed teachers badly and so they wanted her to teach third grade at Welch [Public Schools]. I was unable to attend school because legally I wasn’t of age. So the superintendent said, “Well just bring Cheryl as a visitor and she can go through first grade as a visitor.” So I did that, rode to school with Mother every day, and after the first grade I came back to Vinita. They decided I was ready to go into second grade so I went to Riverside [Elementary School], which is a little school in the northeast quadrant of Vinita, not too far from where we lived on Illinois Street. I was able to walk to school every day, and I did that second, third and fourth grade. Then in the fifth grade, my mother was teaching at a little country school called Carselowey, Carselowey. Strange name, probably an Indian name. And I went there half of fifth grade and sixth grade and then came into Vinita and did junior high and high school and graduated in 1962.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. During that time period, did your father always have the Phillips station?*

**Lansdown** He had the Phillips station until he decided to go into the business of building homes. And he built a lot of homes in Vinita. Mother continued to teach at Ketchum School for many, many years and ended up her teaching career at Will Rogers here in Vinita.

**Nykolaiszyn** *So you know we’re here today to learn a little bit more about the Glass House, and I want you to share probably some of your earliest memories of the building. What, what do you recall?*

**Lansdown** First of all, I recall the turnpike going in because my two uncles were on the group that installed the big signs that went up on the turnpike. That was an exciting period of time because watching that road come into completion and the Glass House being built it was rather an ominous thing. It later turned out to be so iconic because it’s so unusual but as a child, as a young child probably in my junior high years, you know we would just watch it being built.

The lady that ended up managing the Glass House was a dear friend of my mother’s. As I was looking back on this I thought, “You know I don’t recall applying for this waitress job. It just happened.” And I’m sure at church one day my mother said, “Cheryl’s sixteen Annabell. Do you think you need her to work at the Glass House this summer?” And I’m sure Annabell said, “Sure, send her out.” I don’t recall ever going through an interview. I just went to work one morning. And that’s a rather funny story I’ll have to share real quickly. I was sixteen, only child, never had done anything except a little babysitting, and I had my uniform, here again I don’t know how the uniform appeared at my house.

**Nykolaiszyn** *I’m going to pause you.*

**Lansdown** Okay!

**Nykolaiszyn** *So I’m going to have you pick up on your first day at work if you could. Start it from the beginning.*

**Lansdown** Sure. Like I say, I just ended up with a uniform at the house and that little perky, white cap that we had to pin onto our hair. So I went out to work early in the morning, like seven o’clock and I drove out. I had a car and I drove out to work, and we parked in the parking lot for employees and had to walk across another parking lot to get in the Glass House. So I appeared, not having a clue what I was going to do, I knew I was going to be a waitress and that was about it.

So Annabell Southern, so like I mentioned was a dear friend of Mother’s, and previously she had been a public service employee, that if you happened to buy an electric range, Annabell would come to your house and show you how to use it. All the little bells and whistles that it did. Very, very social, great person to work with, full of personality. She was always available. She never was in her office, she was always out on the floor. She was a small stature lady but very energetic and just always had a positive attitude about things.

So I walk in and it happens to be very busy. A lot of people eat breakfast at seven o’clock in the morning, and she hands me a pad and a pencil and said, “This will be your table. Go out and take their order,” and I said, “Okay.” You know I’m sixteen, I can do anything. I go out and I get this couple and they tell me what they want, the eggs and the bacon, and they tell me how they—and I’m trying to write every single thing down. Well, I learned very quickly that people are extremely particular about the way that they like their eggs cooked, and often I would not convey the message from the person ordering to my tablet to the person cooking. So at my break I decided I didn’t like doing this. We only had a phone that was available to employees kind of in a corner. So I went back to the phone during my break, and I called my mother and I said, “I don’t like this, and people are being angry at me, and I don’t want to work here anymore.” And Mother said, “Meet me in the parking lot in five minutes.” She didn’t handle whining very well.

So I met her in the parking lot and I said, “Mother, people are just mean to me. They’re talking bad to me when their food isn’t just right.” And she said, “Well honey, did Annabell mention how to shorthand things and how to…” and I said, “No.” She said, “Give me that pad.” So Mother quickly gave me a five-minute lesson on how to take orders. I went back in and stayed five summers. (Laughs) I loved it. I loved my time out there. I met so many precious people that were travelling. You know they’d come in exhausted, and they were just glad to see a smiling face. So I ended up staying five summers.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow.*

**Lansdown** Loved it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well describe your uniform for me.*

**Lansdown** Okay. My first uniform was white and kind of nylon. Food slid right off of it. This little apron, little white apron, and it was more fitted, kind of an A-line, and we just wore white tennis shoes and this little white hat thing. My best friend and I worked three summers together and that made it really fun, cause it was just someone you knew. There were a lot of every day [year round] employees that were there, but there were just a few of us that worked the summer help. We ended up working about two months, but the uniform was very simple.



The second uniform that I wore was over in the Broiler Room. We always called it “The Steakhouse” because it was a kind of expensive place to eat. You know if you wanted to go on a nice dinner you went over there. But it was white with little buttons down the front, and we had this pinafore with kind of ruffles and a larger apron, and I don’t recall a hat. We may have had a bow or something, but I don’t recall a hat. The apron was much larger and the skirt much fuller, shirt ways just fitted, puffy sleeves. That’s kind of the uniform.



**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, describe the restaurant set-up for me.*

**Lansdown** Okay. There was a snack bar and there was a cafeteria line. Now on the south side there was the cafeteria line and the breakfast room. The breakfast room, where I began working, was the room that could be modified to hold big groups. We ended up having both our junior and our senior before-prom dinner out there in that room, because they could modify the tables and hold big crowds. The other side of this, of the Glass House had the Broiler Room, the steakhouse, and it had booths down the side of it near the wall that had the walkway from one end to the other. There was a long walkway with the gift shop being at one end and a snack bar being at the other. At least during the period I was there.

The whole Glass House went through a whole number of relocations and renovations after I left. But this was the way it was when I began. So after the breakfast was finished serving, then the cafeteria opened and the Steakhouse opened then later in the afternoon. My shift was like two to ten, once I got over there. And I was so happy to be over there because we made sixty cents an hour. That was our wage. But our tips, on a good day we could make twenty dollars in tips and that’s a lot of twenty-five and fifty cent tips. You know rarely did you get a five-dollar tip, rarely, and that had to be a really big group if you got that.

But that’s kind of a lay-out of it. I didn’t spend a lot of time anyplace other than where I was working. We didn’t wander around a lot. We just kind of, you know, did our job. I was trying to remember the break room. I’m sure we must have had one but I don’t recall where we went for breaks. You know we had a short break, I’m sure, during our time. And once in a while if we finished, if there wasn’t a lot of people we’d get to come home early. That was always fun, cause ten o’clock is late. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Describe the menu for me.*

**Lansdown** Course the breakfast menu’s very standard. Over on the steakhouse, what I remember, and I have to tell you about this one thing as I thought back about it. They served a beautiful fruit salad, and I had never seen a fruit salad quite like that with a whole bed of lettuce and half pears and half peaches and slices just of all kinds of fresh fruit. But the thing I remember being so impressed with, because we participated in this, was a half a cantaloupe and you put a scoop of vanilla ice cream in the middle, chocolate syrup, and then we had a bottle of crème de mint, a liqueur, and we used a capful of the peppermint, the mint, to pour over the top of the chocolate over the ice cream in this cantaloupe. That impressed me so much. First of all because we got to prepare it if someone happened to order it. But you know, as far as the general menu, I don’t recall a lot about the type of steaks that we had or the hamburgers or chicken. I don’t recall specifics about that. I’d have to refresh my mind by seeing a menu. But I do remember that cantaloupe. That really impressed me for some reason.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well I guess I was wondering if there were any like signature dishes that stand out or signature desserts or…*

**Lansdown** I’m sure there may have been but I don’t—I remember chocolate. There was a lot of chocolate it seems like that people enjoyed. I do remember on the cafeteria line when I worked it. We were never, we were allowed to pretty much have anything on the line that we wanted except the pecan pie, and I don’t know why. I suppose it was maybe a little bit pricier than the other pies. But I remember one day, now keep in mind I’m sixteen and I’ve not been out in the world too much. One of the guys working obviously really wanted a piece of pecan pie, so he picked up a piece and he said, “Oh look. There’s a thumbprint in this one. It can’t be served.” And I remember thinking to myself, “I can’t believe he did that. He made a piece of pie flawed just so he could eat it.” I would have never thought to do anything like that. You know that was completely unacceptable. But I didn’t tell. I just swallowed it and went on.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well I think a theme we see with a lot of folks who worked during the time you did was the influence of Annabell Southern. Can you just tell us a little bit more about her and her management style?*

**Lansdown** Like I said, she and my mother were very close friends, went to church together. I’d known Annabell all my life. I remember as a young girl, she got the very first microwave in Vinita, at Public Service. And they had a glass front building that you could walk by, and there were displays of various electric appliances that were in vogue. You know the very best range, the very best refrigerator, the very best oven, and she had a microwave and positioned it in front of this glass window that you walked by, and she cooked cupcakes in this microwave. It was the very first time I had ever seen or ever heard of a microwave, and you could watch the cake rise through the little, small glass window that she had.

So I had known Annabell—I was very active in 4-H and so we used a lot of her resources for demonstrations that we did for public speaking, this type of thing. So when the Glass House was built and she took over as manager, I don’t think they could have searched the world and found a lady that was more qualified. Had a perfect personality for working with both tourists and employees. She was always in the middle of whatever we were doing. She was not one of those, she wasn’t a micro manager. I don’t mean that, but she was always available if we had a question or if we had a need.

One really funny story and I probably shouldn’t even tell this but I will. My parents and I always travelled a lot in the summer. I’d end up working six to seven weeks at the Glass House. Well one summer, must have been about the third summer I was out there, Mother and Dad decided to go up north and meet my aunt and leave me home. I was like eighteen, you know. No problem. Well I go to work, and of course I’ve got the saggy face cause they’ve never gone on a trip without me, and I had to go to work and they’re off travelling. So Annabell, about ten o’clock, comes out on the floor. I was still working in the morning at this point and she said, “Your mother just called and they’re coming to get you.” She said, “Here’s how the conversation went. I answered the phone,” my mother says this, “Hi Annabell. How are you doing?” And she said, “Fine.” She said, “What would you think about us taking Cheryl out for a short trip?” And Annabell said, “Well I’m sure we could probably work that out. When did you plan to leave?” And Mother said, “Oh we left this morning and we’re at Welch and we’re turning around. We’ve decided to come back and get her.” And Annabell said, “Lucille, I’m gonna get you for this.” (Laughs) So she came out and told me and said, “Go home and pack your bag. Your parents are coming back to get you.” And just laughed about it, but she took everything in her stride. Nothing threw her off.

She just was great with the temporary help. She was great with the full time employees. She was always available. She always had a smile on her face. She just had a great, warm personality and I’m sure the tourists loved her cause she would circulate all the time.

I remember one time a family came in. We got all kinds of tourists and the majority of our patrons were tourists. And this little family came in and they went through the cafeteria. They looked at all the prices and they had like five or six little children. And the father came up and said to me, “Do you think we could buy a loaf of bread?” And I said, “Let me get my manager.” So I went to get Annabell and she took care of them. I feel certain they left with a full tummy. But they just couldn’t afford. The prices were high for some tourists, especially over in the Broiler Room. The cafeteria was very reasonable and the snack bar was just snacky things so you know you couldn’t really get a meal there. And I’m not sure they realized they could pull off the turnpike. You know Vinita was just right there, but in those days you didn’t. You kind of stayed on the turnpike if you were on it, you didn’t get off that much.

I have to tell you one quick story. You know all the signs that are on the turnpike. You mentioned in your little questionnaire what question were you asked the most. The question I was asked often, they’d be sitting at the table and I’d come by to get their order and they said, “We have a question.” I said, “Sure. What is it?” “What does the sign mean *Do Not Drive into Smoke*?” And I found very quickly that if I just said, “If you see smoke, don’t drive into it.” “Oh!” For some reason, just turning it around just made sense to them, but they lived in a part of the United States that didn’t have prairie fires like we have here. I have a friend that was raised in the north and she said, “I didn’t have a clue what that sign meant,” and we still see signs that say *Don’t Drive into Smoke*. But by turning it around they would go “Oh, makes sense.” That was the question I got probably the most.

That and that feeling of there was a little bit of give in that floor when a heavy semi would go under, you know. It was very gentle and very subtle and we became very familiar with it quickly. But the tourists would sometimes, you know (laughs), “Is it safe? Is this building safe?” “Oh sure it is. Enjoy your meal, you’re fine.” (Laughter)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Do you recall any of your fellow employees?*

**Lansdown** I recall a few, Warren. Warren was one. P.A. Eagle was a classmate of mine, and I hope you’ve gotten P.A. to come. I don’t know if you managed to get in touch of him or not but he ended up working for the group that owned the restaurant chain, that later took place at the Glass House. I remember Warren. I remember a sweet little lady that worked full time that had a lot of children, a little black lady, little tiny thing. She worked all the time. But as far as others, I don’t recall any that stood out in my mind.

You know summer help is kind of different than full time help. Often you’re looked upon as, you know, the second child. You’re just there for a little while and then you go on with your life. I was like a bad penny. (Laughs) I just kept coming back every summer. It was just so easy to do. But as far as any that stand out, you know they revolved too, of course, the full time employees.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, when you were not working at the Glass House, you graduated from high school, what were you doing?*

**Lansdown** I went to junior college first at NEO [Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College]. I stayed there two years, and during my second year, in November, President Kennedy was assassinated. And my future husband was honored with being in his funeral service and then stood guard at the grave. (Phone rings) Okay, so I was in NEO College, and Bob had gone to NEO before going in the Army and came back. So in December, after the funeral, he was released from the Army. There was a big article about Bob with the president of the college welcoming him back. And I saw that picture and I thought, “I think I want to meet him.” So I walked in the Student Union one day and there he sat with two girls in a booth. I just walked in and sat down beside him and said, “Hi. I’m Cheryl Martin and you’re Bob Lansdown aren’t you?” He said, “Yes.”

Well we ended up dating and became engaged about two months later and then about two years later got married when we were both juniors and seniors at OSU [Oklahoma State University]. We later went there and graduated. I graduated in the middle of the year and Bob finished up in May. So I taught in the public school system of Stillwater. I had done my interning there. So I taught. My advisor was Dr. [Lola Idella] Lohmann, and my classroom teacher was finishing her Ph. D. So these two women cut a hole in the top of my head and just poured knowledge in. I just had two of the most phenomenal teachers in the world, plus my mother. She was an educator as well, so I had a lot of help becoming a teacher.

And then when we graduated we came to Bartlesville, and Bob went to work at the museum, Woolaroc Museum. He became director about two years later, and I taught in the public schools there. We had two sons that are now grown. One is an employee at OSU, a senior graphic designer, and the other son is the father of twin girls and he and his family live in Castle Rock, Colorado. He owns a software company. So we have a small family. Bob and I are both only children so we rely on our cousins a lot.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And what year did you graduate from OSU?*

**Lansdown** Nineteen sixty-seven.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. Well kind of going back to your summers at the Glass House, you know we’re talking about the early 1960s. Do you notice anything in terms of the time period, in terms of the customers going through the turnpike it being the ’60s?*

**Lansdown** Oh, the people, the tourists were, for the most part—now you remember a few that were not happy, but the tourists were just so happy to be in a nice place with a smiling face after driving *long* miles. You know it was just an unusual place to have a stop and to have a meal and those windows were just massive. I don’t know if I ever really got used to that scene of those windows and looking at that traffic going under you. They always came from the north and went to the south. I mean they went both ways but I worked on the north so I watched the traffic coming. It was just, it was a sensation that I don’t think I ever, ever became completely used to. It was like living in a treehouse when you worked up there.

We were fortunate enough, every afternoon highway patrolmen would come by for their coffee break, and they always liked to sit in the very first booth. As you entered the door there was a corner booth that could handle several guys, and we got to know those men. Just everyday they were in, wonderful, wonderful men that cared a lot about the safety of people. They were very approachable. They were always visiting with the tourists, answering questions. They were very adaptable to any situation. I never feared highway patrolmen after working those five summers. You know it never bothered me when I got pulled over, and I did a few times. Never got a ticket, haven’t gotten one yet, but I know one time I was coming back from Bartlesville to Vinita, and a highway patrolman stopped me and he said, “You’re in a really big hurry,” and I said, “Well I’m going to…” I mentioned a name of a friend, and he said “Oh, you’re going to be late. You better go on.” (Laughs) You know it’s a hometown. Everybody knows everybody but it was nice getting to know the highway patrolmen that came in every day.

**Nykolaiszyn** *We’ve read that there was one worker who would dress up in Native American apparel. Was that happening while you were there?*

**Lansdown** No. No it was not. I don’t recall that at all.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay.*

**Lansdown** That would have been interesting.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Inside the facility, do you recall any displays or anything on the walls in particular?*

**Lansdown** I’m trying to imagine. You know it had a center walkway that went from the snack shop to the gift shop. Just a long, open hallway and there were bathrooms at both ends of that hall. But the hall itself either had doors that opened—the cafeteria was exposed. You could see it when you walked by, but you had to walk in an entry to the Broiler Room, a big wide doorway. And I kind of remember the register being on the right as you walked in and then the booths went down the side, tables over by the windows and tables in the middle. I don’t recall, I can’t recall what was hanging. I presume there were pictures of Oklahoma. Something very tourist friendly, I would imagine. But I don’t recall a lot of particulars about that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Now after you would take an order, what would you do with it?*

**Lansdown** You take the order back to the area, the window, where the cooks were doing their thing, and of course it was back through a preparation area because we were involved in some of the preparation of the food. Then we would take our order. Huge trays, oh my goodness! That was the hardest part about the job. And you couldn’t really, you weren’t supposed to carry them like this. (Gestures out) You were supposed to get them up, and I was worried about hair getting close to it but they were pretty good sized trays. They were hard to manage, either with food or with empty dishes you know, because we, most of the time, bused our own tables. But the food was prepared back in that east corner and then we brought it out on the trays and served it and then cleaned up afterwards. Now after my home ec degree, I know it’s a very good idea to have bus boys to do that. A person serving should not pick up dirty dishes. (Laughs) That doesn’t make sense, but back in the ’60s we did it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Do you recall any large groups coming through where, you know, you just thought “Wow”?*

**Lansdown** You know I’m sure we had busloads. We had to have had, but I don’t recall them being overwhelming. Here again, I was an age that I didn’t realize you could be overwhelmed. You know at sixteen and seventeen you just do it. And Annabell, here again, just had a calmness about her. You know I’m sure she was never riled when a bus appeared, and there wouldn’t be any forewarning. They would just appear. They would just drive in and appear.

**Nykolaiszyn** *In your time there, did you notice a lot of folks from Vinita visiting the Glass House or it was a strictly tourist travel?*

**Lansdown** I would say 90 percent tourist. Very seldom did we see Vinita people, I personally. That always surprised me, but we had some really nice restaurants in Vinita. So unless you wanted to do something special, like a little birthday party or a special date, and it was expensive for kids in high school dating so I didn’t see a lot of my friends coming through and eat. But we did have prom dinners out there, but as far as the everyday traffic, it was the majority tourists for sure.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well let’s talk about those prom dinners, because I find that very interesting. So now this is Cheryl as a student…*

**Lansdown** I’m a junior, I am a junior in high school. I have a date. If you’re in a formal the last thing you want to do is park in the parking lot for townspeople. We drive to Big Cabin [town south of Vinita], get on the turnpike and drive to the Glass House, because then you can park where all the tourists park, and you’re right by the entrance into the Glass House. So here we come in all of our paraphernalia you know, are dressed up. The guys had their suits on. One theme for the prom, at least, one was “Blue Hawaii,” and the next year it was something, had a Japanese theme. I can’t tell you exactly what the name of it was.

We paid for our dinner out there and then all of us—they just had long tables set up. There was a head table for like the president of our class and his date. There was not a lot of entertainment. Seems like there was music in the background playing, which I’m sure was just piped music, and we had our meal and then we left. Went back, that time I think we came home through the Vinita exit, but you couldn’t get on and get to the Glass House in Vinita. You had to go to Big Cabin and get on because you couldn’t get there. You couldn’t go that direction at the Vinita entrance. So that was always, always kind of special to do that. So we did that two years, our junior and senior year both.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And I’m guessing that was a pretty common theme for Vinita schools at that time.*

**Lansdown** I presume it was. It was, number one, the only facility that could hold us. I had a hundred, over a hundred students in my graduating class. I was the youngest. I want to say 105. Around one hundred, let’s say around one hundred. So you know a good majority of us went with a date, often within the class, often not. So it was a big crowd. In the breakfast area on the cafeteria side is where we held the dinner. And we still had that nice glass view, you know, still there but that room was more adaptable for big groups. Those are good memories from high school.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you were talking a little bit about how you could eat off the buffet line. Was there a go-to that you liked on that cafeteria line?*

**Lansdown** You know, I didn’t work in that cafeteria line but one summer. Then I was across the way, and I would come at two. I must have eaten something in the evening. I don’t remember eating a lot of meals out there but I must have. When I worked in the morning, I’d have breakfast at home and then I’d have lunch. A sandwich, you know, it was nothing exciting. I didn’t choose anything particularly exciting. I was probably on a diet, you know, (laughs) seems like most of my life, so probably a lot of salad. (Laughs) I remember there were a lot of choices on the cafeteria line. I can’t specifically tell you what they were but there were a lot of choices, you know, to come through. That’s kind of what I remember.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you have any interactions with the workers on the Conoco end?*

**Lansdown** No.

**Nykolaiszyn** *The service station attendants?*

**Lansdown** No. I seldom went to the gift shop, seldom. You know I went to work, I did my job, and I left and went back home. I thought later, “I wonder why I didn’t spend more time in the gift shop cause I love to shop.” But I think I was probably ready to go to work when I got there, and I was ready to leave when my shift was over. So I didn’t really spend a lot of time in the gift shop or the snack shop. I just did my job.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How big was the gift shop?*

**Lansdown** Well it was pretty good size, because it was that far end. It was pretty good size. You walked around standing displays. There were stands of things as well as counters. Can’t remember where the register was but I do remember standing exhibits. Postcards you know. That type of thing. My son has since gotten me some really neat old postcards from the Glass House, which I’m sure you’ll have more than an abundance of. Did Warren keep a scrapbook, I think someone mentioned?

**Nykolaiszyn** *I don’t know but we’re interviewing him later today.*

**Lansdown** Great, great. He’ll be a good one. He’ll have a lot more specifics than I will. I’m just kind of general, you know. (Laughs) At sixteen, you know things are not quite as impressed on your mind.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, you know, this was one of your first major jobs.*

**Lansdown** Absolutely.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What are some lessons that really, that you take away from your time working in the Glass House?*

**Lansdown** Well of course my first was, if you make a commitment, you stick with it. My mother said that in not so many words in the parking lot that first morning at my break. “You made a commitment. You go back in, you finish your job and then we’ll talk.” Annabell’s style of managing was one that I have always held in high regard. The way that she trusted us to do what was right, but was always available if we made a mistake, you know, if we had a question. She was an excellent choice as a first boss to have. I really learned a lot from her, and of course my mother.

You know, mothers. Mother was always there to guide me. When you have an only child you put a lot of focus on it. I know when I went to Bartlesville to teach, I had taught second grade in Stillwater, and I have an early childhood degree all the way up through high school, home ec. I got a double major and four minors. I just got the whole thing while I was there. Well they had a fifth grade opening and I said, “Oh I’d rather not teach fifth. I like second.” And he said, “Well I have a fifth.” This was in August. So I called Mother when I got home and I said, “I don’t know if I’m going to be able to teach or not. They have a fifth grade opening and I really want second.” She said, “Cheryl Martin Lansdown, any teacher worth their salt can teach any grade. You teach fifth grade for two weeks and then we’ll talk.” I said “Okay!” So I called him back and I said, “I’ll take it.”

Here again there was not a big formal interview, you know. I met the superintendent after he hired me and that was it. I stayed in fifth grade for several years, I loved it. Mother was always right (laughs) and Annabell was always right. You know they were two of a kind. They were that strong, driven, women. Mother was the only one in her family and the first one to receive a degree. She taught school. Annabell was like that. You know those women were different than we see today often. They were, they just had a drive that was instilled in them to succeed.

I can’t tell you the number of kids that Mother and Dad have taken to NEO and enrolled and gotten in school. If they wanted to go to school, Mother found a way to get them there. She found a way to get them in. She and Annabell both, maybe that was why I was attracted to Annabell so much, they were a lot alike. They were very positive, they were very approachable, they had an opinion about everything and didn’t offer it unless you asked. But they were happy to share their opinion with you if you asked for it. And I often did. (Laughs) Often.

**Nykolaiszyn** *They sound like great role models.*

**Lansdown** They were great role models, oh definitely. We lost Mother in ’03. It was, it was hard. Annabell passed later. Annabell developed Alzheimer’s and that was very sad, to see a woman of that, of that grit, you know, to lose some of that but still had that smile, still had that twinkle, that orneriness. You know there’s, there’s a twinkle in the eye. I learned to read eyes *very* quickly as a teacher. You know give me about five minutes with a child, and I can pretty much tell you what’s going to happen. (Laughs) But they taught me a lot about people, just about getting along with people and understanding people and giving them a little bit of lee-way. Give them the benefit of the doubt and I certainly used that theory a lot in teaching.

**Nykolaiszyn** *When’s the last time you’ve been to the Glass House?*

**Lansdown** My husband and I went out there when they were doing this last renovation on it. It still has that same feel. You know you still walk across those glass windows and see that traffic going by. It still has that same magical feeling that there just can’t be many other places. I think we were very fortunate in Vinita to have a place like that, and it’s iconic you know. It’s something that is completely unusual. Granted, there are a lot of restaurants that are higher, bigger, wider, but spanning a turnpike, probably not.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You’ve lived in this area for quite some time. You know when you look back on your time in Vinita, I know you’re a Bartlesville resident now but, how has this area changed through the years?*

**Lansdown** Vinita as a community?

**Nykolaiszyn** *Yes.*

**Lansdown** Probably the loss of some of the businesses, as far as manufacturing companies, that employed larger numbers of people, and I think this is a common scenario in a lot of communities the size of Vinita. But the warmth, you know when you walk in Clanton’s [Café] it’s still the same. My dad’s garage was just across the street from Clanton’s, so I grew up seeing the *Eat* sign. My boys grew up thinking that was the name of the restaurant, *Eat*. That’s what was out front on the big marquee. You know it had to be the name of it.

But the town itself, the people are still—I’m surprised at a number of my classmates that have moved back to Vinita when they retired. One lived in the middle of the state down near Oklahoma City, worked for DHS [Department of Human Services]. She has since retired back here. A friend of mine, my best friend, we worked together, her parents had a ranch here. She has retired back here and is now teaching. She’s still teaching at Nowata. A number of people have moved back to this community. It’s close to the lake. We had a lake house. You know we were thirty minutes away from the lake growing up.

It’s just a nice location. You’re close enough to Tulsa to get there when you need to. You’re close enough to Joplin [Missouri]. There’s lots of places but as far as the change the little community has gone through, I can certainly see a difference when we started losing some of the little plants. They weren’t large but they were large enough that they employed a good number of people, so I can see that as a change in the community. But the warmth that it has, you know it’s still home. It’ll always be home to me.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Has Route 66 always had an impact in the area?*

**Lansdown** Oh I think so, that combined with Phillips 66. That combo has just made it a really special place. That and the fact that two major railroads cross in this little town. That doesn’t happen frequently so, even though it’s often a headache if you’re going north, south, east, or west. Only if you’re going one of those four directions does it really bother you. But you know, you learn to just kind of time it by when the trains were going to come, because fortunately they’re on pretty much of a schedule. But the fact that it has that and its proximity to a lot of things, and there’s a lot of history in this town. As you mentioned earlier that little museum that we have is just such a blessing for this town, because it’s keeping alive some of those history moments that we need to treasure, need to keep, keep alive.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you look back at your time working those summers at the Glass House. What is something you want to make sure that we know from your experience?*

**Lansdown** First of all, I have a strong, strong feeling about young people working. I know it helped build the kind of adult that I turned out to be, that and tremendous parental guidance. But a job of any kind, whether it’s at the Glass House, I was just fortunate to work at the Glass House. But it doesn’t matter where you work. It’s that feeling of doing something, getting paid for that and feeling good about what you’ve done.

I was really fortunate because my parents instilled in me a feeling of confidence if you had a savings account. So the first summer I worked they said, “Whatever you deposit in your bank, we’ll match.” Well my whole check went in the bank. Duh, I still got an allowance so I didn’t really—but they taught me that importance of saving, and in some ways I think our world today has gotten away from that. We have been too quick to help people for too long without giving them that feeling of pride and self-worth of just doing a job. I don’t care if it’s pushing shopping carts or whether it’s mopping a restroom floor or serving food, you feel good about a day’s work. You feel a lot better than getting a check in the mail and that tends to be cyclical.

So if nothing else, I think I learned as a young person that you feel better about yourself if you’ve worked and earned a little bit of money. That you can then do what you want to with it. That was really important to me, and it was a continuation of what my parents had always taught me. They were not in that mindset of buying something on time. You saved up until you could buy it, and then you bought it. And our world has changed, but I still have that mindset. I still want to be able to pay for something when I get it, rather than let someone else you know charge me a lot more for it.

So that’s what I got out of working at the Glass House. It happened to be at the Glass House, it would have been anyplace I would have worked, but that was the only job I had until I became a teacher. I didn’t have any other part-time jobs. I didn’t work in college. I only worked in the summers, so that was my platform for learning right there. I was very fortunate to have Annabell at the head of it. And she jived with Mother and Dad’s philosophy so that just really impressed me.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What year did you retire from teaching?*

**Lansdown** Retired in ’03, the year Momma got sick, and we were able to spend a lot of time with her. Bob and I both retired in June, our son got married and then Mother became ill. We spent every day over here with her. So ’03. It’s a long time ago and then after that—Bob was a country boy. He was raised in the country over near Bartlesville. And we bought twenty acres of Phil Phillips’ old land. Phil was one of the old Phillips people, and he and Bob were great friends. He was a benefactor to the museum and they had a great friendship so Bob wanted a little piece of his ranch so we bought twenty acres with a big fishing pond and built a home. Bob fishes every day in Phil’s old pond, and smiles when he catches a fish. (Laughs) Phil Phillips is a whole other ballgame. You should do a study on him. He was interesting. Great man.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And what are you doing these days in your spare time?*

**Lansdown** Oh gosh. Well Bob and I love antiques. I do a lot of collecting, so I still do programs on, you know—once a teacher, always a teacher. What is it my mother used to say? “You can always tell a teacher. You just can’t tell them much.” I do a lot of collecting and so I give informative programs about the history of different antiques that I collect. Mother was a quilter so I collect old quilts. I like the history of fabrics, textiles. I like antique sewing tools. I do a big program on antique sewing tools. Course I love children, still involved with children. I don’t do Vacation Bible School anymore. Once the kids grew out of that I kind of dropped that. We travel to Colorado when we can. We like to go to Stillwater, visit OSU, as often as we can, and just enjoy our days. Bob likes to plant trees. So Phil cleared the land and Bob’s filling it back up. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you mentioned when you were younger, Annabell would be involved with 4-H activities with you. Did you ever make it to 4-H Roundup in Stillwater?*

**Lansdown** Every year. In fact I was district secretary. I ended up very, very active in 4-H. Got lots of scholarships for college. It was a platform I would wish upon every child, if they had the opportunity to be in 4-H. Loved Roundup, oh my goodness.

Kansas City Royal, one quick short story. We always went to the state fair in Tulsa, and we had a big notebook that we kept with our things that we had done. Mother was the 4-H coach and she said, “You’ve got to choose something to judge.” I said, “Chickens.” And she said, “Chickens? You don’t know anything about chickens!” I said, “I’ll go to a workshop. “ They had a workshop in Pryor, I went. Wouldn’t touch one. The first one I tried to pick up got away from me, and it got out loose. It was just very embarrassing.

So we go to the Tulsa State Fair, and at that time we stayed several days, in a bunk house, and we did our judging. So I go to the poultry barn and back in those days, before your time, there was a poultry barn and a pig barn, and so I went to the poultry barn and here are all these farm kids. There were probably over one hundred kids. We had our little notepad, our notes and we were to judge these chickens. I swear, true story. I won Grand Champion judge. I didn’t touch a chicken, I just guessed. Went down the whole list, won the whole Tulsa State Fair contest.

So later that year I won a trip to the Kansas City American Royal. We rode the train up, Mother and I went. In those days we had dyed-to-match sweaters and skirts and mine was blue, and I had the little pearl collar. Everyone had a pearl collar, because you could wear it on different sweaters. Had this blue, had the three kick pleats in the back which was a big deal. I walked into the hotel and there’s three guys up at the desk signing in that are also 4-H. And they say, “Oh there’s that champion chicken judger from Vinita, Oklahoma,” and I just about died. I just fell over in embarrassment. That’s all they remembered about me was that I was the champion chicken judger, and that was the last thing I knew about. (Laughs) So I had a little bit of a famous moment there. It was much more fun being Princess Vinita in the Tulsa parade than it was to judge chickens at the state fair. (Laughs)

But 4-H was a great platform, great platform. I learned public speaking, I learned how to get in front of a crowd, you know. I led “The Pledge of Allegiance” to the whole Roundup at the stadium and didn’t bother me. Four-H was great. Were you in 4-H ever?

**Nykolaiszyn** *I was not.*

**Lansdown** It’s wonderful, it was wonderful. Mother was a coach, and we had something called “Share the Fun” acts, and we would put together skits and we won every time. Mother was a great putter-togetherer. Is that a word? Putter-togetherer? She would put together skits and we always won. So 4-H was a great platform, and Annabell was a good resource at the Public Service Building. She, you know, was always more than willing to share information. One of my demonstrations was with an electric skillet, preparing breakfast in an electric skillet in front of a whole panel of judges. Yeah, lots of public speaking, lots of talking and writing speeches. Yeah, it’s good.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What a great time, as you saw this great shift in technology and to have a resource like Annabell, who was right there with access to these tools.*

**Lansdown** And knew about it all!

**Nykolaiszyn** *Yeah.*

**Lansdown** And could talk to anybody, you know. She could go into anybody’s kitchen and feel comfortable. So it was a neat memory. Certainly different than today.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Great memories. Cheryl, thank you so much for spending some time…*

**Lansdown** Well, you’re welcome.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Is there anything else you’d like to add before we close out?*

**Lansdown** I think you’ve covered pretty much all of my memories. I had to really think back about those memories, because I often just cover the five years as my five summers at the Glass House, and I don’t think about these specifics so it was kind of fun with that little list that you sent of these questions to really think again about it. Cause it was a, it was an important part of my history. It was an important part of my formation of, I hope, a successful adult. I think we’re missing the boat by not encouraging young people to work more. I’m a strong believer.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well we appreciate your time, and thank you once again.*

**------- *End of interview*** *-------*