

Editor's Note

Bill Lane decided to begin writing his memoirs in the autumn of 2008, shortly after his eighty-ninth birthday. On the strength of our mutual Stanford associations, Bill asked me to help him with the task. The process began with a series of audiotaped interviews conducted at his home in Portola Valley and, on one occasion, at his summer home at Lake Tahoe. These interviews were supplemented, and greatly facilitated, by frequent consultation of a printed copy of an extensive oral history that Bill had given to Bancroft Library's Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) in 1993 and 1994. Those interviews, expertly conducted by Suzanne Riess, proved to be an invaluable resource for refreshing Bill's memory and were an essential foundation for the writing of this memoir (ROHO interviews with Proctor Mellquist and Walter Doty, as part of the Thomas Church oral history project, were also helpful). Other essential building blocks were Bill's extensive private archive of speeches, photographs, and memorabilia, as well as *Sunset*-related correspondence written by Bill and by his father, Laurence William Lane, Sr.

Bill Lane was keen to have his memoir elucidate his life beyond *Sunset*—his service as a naval officer during the Second World War, his committee work in Washington, D.C., in the 1970s, his diplomacy as ambassador-at-large to Japan in 1975–76 and U.S. ambassador to Australia from 1985 to 1989, his environmentalism, his love of horses. Always, though, the memoir, like the man, remained tethered to *Sunset*, which, along with (indeed often inseparable from) his family, was the center of his life.

Bill made it clear from the outset that he did not want his memoir to bore people with personal family details. The one family member whom he was concerned to discuss fully and fairly was his younger brother, business partner, and fellow environmentalist, Mel. Mel Lane complemented Bill at *Sunset* with his formidable creative and management skills, which were responsible for making *Sunset* Books such a huge success. Whereas Bill welcomed the limelight, Mel preferred to remain in the background.

As a result, Bill, with his larger-than-life personality and booming baritone voice to match, became the face of *Sunset*. As he composed this memoir, Bill kept checking with his editor to make sure that he was giving brother Mel his due.

Throughout Bill's time at *Sunset*, from his postwar apprenticeship through his years as publisher of the magazine, he was used to playing multiple roles on both the editorial and the business sides. These included the role of editor, an avocation he continued to practice as a memoirist. He was constantly revising the wording of his text and, like many writers, found it difficult to decide that a chapter was finished and to part with it. He was editing the final draft of the manuscript almost to the end, which came on July 31, 2010—Bill Lane's last "closing date."

Bill's widow, Jean, and the Lane children—Sharon, Bob, and Brenda—in keeping with Bill's wishes, have enthusiastically supported the publication of this memoir. The project was also aided by the contributions of Joan Lane, Donald C. Meyer, Jack Morton, Charles Palm, Bill Marken, Floyd Shaw, René Klein, Lauren Dunbar, Spencer Toy, Barb Newton, Donald Lamm, and especially by the efforts of Bill's secretary of nearly thirty years, Karen Hamilton.

Bertrand M. Patenaude
Stanford University