PART 1

Other Speaker: Ah, start with your name, say it and spell it and your title please.

Edward K. Eckert: Edward K. Eckert, E-D-W-A-R-D, K, middle initial, Eckert, E-C-K-E-R-T, the Board of Trustees Professor of History at Saint Bonaventure University.

Other Speaker: Awesome. How did Jefferson Davis come to be a cadet at West Point?

Edward K. Eckert: Well, I think it was much to his surprise that he became a cadet at West Point.

Other Speaker: Remember to say Jefferson Davis.

Edward K. Eckert: Oh, okay.

Other Speaker: See what I'm saying? Because “he” could be anyone.

Edward K. Eckert: Okay. Jefferson Davis, ah, was surprised at his appointment to West Point because it was not something that he really wanted. It was something that his brother managed to obtain for him through a Mississippi congressman and when he offered it to Jefferson, Jefferson wasn't even sure he wanted to take it, but because his brother had done so much for him and for his family he had an obligation to do so. Now you'll have to remember he's almost through, ah, Transylvania at that point, three years, and now he would have to start all over for four years as a freshman again. That was too much information.
Other Speaker: It was not. It was wonderful.

Edward K. Eckert: Okay.

Other Speaker: It, it worked out. He says, he said his brother so it's okay. Um, were the **** okay?

Other Speaker [cameraman]: Don't even worry about that.

Other Speaker: Okay. Um, how was Jefferson Davis as a student at West Point?

Edward K. Eckert: Jefferson Davis wasn't your model student. Ah, in, indeed Sylvanus Thayer, who is seen as the real father of, of West Point, used to refer to Jefferson Davis as his “unnatural child” because Jefferson Davis was a problem, a disciplinary problem, ah, at West Point, probably because of his fine education before he went there; particularly at Transylvania University. Jefferson Davis wasn't so interested in the course of study, ah, he was not particularly good at drawing although he had done fine drawings, um, and he didn't like, ah, the whole idea of being there, so he used, ah, West Point, his years at West Point as a means of making important contacts. Ah, he, he hung out with – Jefferson Davis hung out with other southern, ah, gentry boys. Jefferson Davis also kept getting into trouble. He was nearly thrown out of West Point three or four times during his –

Other Speaker: And now I'm going ask you –


Other Speaker: About –

Edward K. Eckert: Right. Okay. Yes. Yes. I realized that, but I don't know how to get out once I start. Okay.
Other Speaker: Ah, explain for us what happened with Jefferson Davis at Benny Havens’ tavern.

Edward K. Eckert: Well Benny Havens’ tavern was, was legendary. It was just off the, ah, campus or just off the grounds of West Point and Jefferson Davis and other cadets would sneak out for a drink or two.

Other Speaker: I apologize. That was my fault. Let me just start over. I dropped my pen. Explain for us, ah, what happened with Jefferson Davis at Benny Havens’ tavern.

Edward K. Eckert: Well it wasn't, ah, Jefferson Davis frequented Benny Havens’ tavern, but it was something many cadets did. It was kind of a challenge. It was right off the grounds of West Point and Jefferson Davis and other cadets would sneak out there for a drink or two, ah, in the evening and then sneak back to their, to their rooms. Ah, on one occasion coming back Jefferson Davis fell down a hill and broke a, ah, I can't remember what he broke. Was it his arm or his leg? He broke a limb. He broke –

Other Speaker: His arm. His hand. [no broken bones, just injuries to arms and hands]

Edward K. Eckert: Once on the way home from Benny Havens’, Jefferson Davis fell down the, ah, hillside, the steep palisade and broke his arm. Ah, other times he had gotten caught there and received demerits. Jefferson Davis actually had so many demerits one year he should have been thrown out of West Point, but what was traditional at West Point was that a cadet could be given a, a, leave of one demerit and for the other demerits that were over he made the technical argument that the rules of the Military Academy forbid cadets from drinking ardent spirits and what he drank, he claimed, was beer, and therefore beer wasn't an ardent spirit, and therefore he did not get, ah, dismissed from West Point but it was actions like this that really drove Sylvanus Thayer crazy because Sylvanus Thayer saw West Point as the model of, of an engineering college.
Other Speaker: Describe for us how Jefferson Davis got into trouble with regards to the Christmas eggnog riot of 1826.

Edward K. Eckert: The – in the 19th century, cadets remained at West Point throughout much of the year. They rarely went home. Indeed they got a, a leave to go home only between their third and fourth year at West Point. So when Christmas came, the cadets would find means of celebrating. The famous eggnog riot of 1826 Jefferson Davis was involved with other students in preparing the eggnog and preparing for the party. The party got completely out of hand and the chief participants in it were expelled from West Point. Jefferson Davis did not receive demerits for that at all and the reason why was that Jefferson Davis had become so drunk during the day that he fell asleep before the riot got underway and therefore he avoided any disciplinary action or severe disciplinary action for, for, for the eggnog. [he was ordered to his room by an officer and then fell asleep]

Other Speaker: Upon graduation from West Point, describe for us his early military career.

Edward K. Eckert: Jefferson Davis like most officers went first to Jefferson Barracks, which was just outside of St. Louis, Missouri, where he would receive some initial training. Then he was assigned to western camps where he was an officer, a commander of, of a unit of Dragoons. I believe that's correct, isn't it?

Other Speaker: Yes. Well the Dragoons came later.

Edward K. Eckert: Yeah.

Other Speaker: That was –


Other Speaker: Let's start over.
Edward K. Eckert: Okay.

Other Speaker: Describe for us Jefferson Davis's early military career.

Edward K. Eckert: Let me, ah, focus that question. By early military career, you mean his pre-Mexican war career?

Other Speaker: Absolutely.

Edward K. Eckert: Okay. That's what you're –

Other Speaker: And if this question is too broad, we can focus specifically on Jefferson Barracks and Fort Winnebago.

Edward K. Eckert: Okay. All right.

Other Speaker: Give us what you –

Other Speaker: The first assignments out of West Point.


Other Speaker: Ya know, which was obviously not illustrious, as he was in the infantry.

Edward K. Eckert: All right. Jefferson Davis’s first assignments outside of West Point because he was low in his class, he, he was not given some of the, ah, premium, ah, positions that the better students had received and therefore when he first went out he went to Jefferson Barracks, as did all new officers, where they received some sort of officer training with enlisted men, and then he was assigned to various frontier positions. The best known of them is at Fort
Crawford in Illinois [Wisconsin] where his commanding officer was Colonel Zachary Taylor of Louisiana.

Other Speaker: Now, um, meeting Zachary Taylor for Jefferson Davis was fortuitous, to say the least. Ah, what happened with Jefferson Davis and Zachary Taylor's daughter?

Edward K. Eckert: Okay. While at – while Jefferson Davis was at Fort Crawford, he fell in love with the, his commanding general's, what's his name –

Other Speaker: Take two.

Edward K. Eckert: Take two.

Other Speaker: That's why we're not live.

Edward K. Eckert: Yeah. Okay. Jefferson Davis, while Jefferson Davis was at Fort Crawford, he fell in love with his commanding officer's daughter. His commanding officer was Colonel Zachary Taylor of Louisiana and his daughter Sarah Knox Taylor was, was a beautiful young woman. Very headstrong, very intelligent and the two fell romantically in love. They courted in the nineteenth-century manner with, with chaperones and they were constantly together whenever they could be. Colonel Taylor and Mrs. Taylor, however, did not approve of Jefferson Davis. There have been many discussions of why. I believe that part of the why was due to his, his, ah, spirited youth. Ah, he was a young man who was single. He was on the frontier. He had a very good time partying through West Point and to think those things had changed as a young officer I think, I think it, it is not so. So, the Taylors told, ah, told their daughter Knox, as she was referred to, that they did not, she did not have their approval to marry Jefferson Davis. Knox was every bit as strong headed as Jefferson Davis and kept pushing them for permission. Davis even resigned from the army because, the stated reason why Colonel and Mrs. Taylor would not permit the marriage was because, they did not want their daughter marrying a military officer. Now that's kind of hard to draw out when Colonel Taylor is obviously a military officer. He, his, there are other members of his family who are as well and
just to point on this one thing and, and make a wedding based upon that seems to me a little
strict. Davis resigns and the Taylors still don't want to give permission; however, ah, Knox, ah,
being as headstrong as Jefferson Davis, told her parents they were going to get married anyway
and they really would like the parents' blessing. One has to presume it was reluctantly Colonel
and Mrs. Taylor approved the wedding, and Jefferson and Knox were married.

Other Speaker: Soon after the marriage of Jefferson Davis and Sarah Knox Taylor, they,
aha, became ill. Can you describe what happened there?

Edward K. Eckert: On their honeymoon, they did what so many, ah, young southerners did.
After being married in Memphis at the house of, ah, Knox's aunt, they went down the Mississippi
River to New Orleans. On the way down, they visited the family home here at Rosemont in
Woodville, ah, Mississippi, and they also went on to Locust Grove in St. Francisville, Louisiana.
While they were at Locust Grove, the young couple comes down with malaria and it's a serious
case. They are both very, very ill. Jefferson manages to struggle back. Unfortunately, Knox
dies from malaria, ah, on the, ah, Jefferson Davis’s sister's plantation and [cough] excuse me, on
the way down, they stop at the family plantations. Both, both this one, which was known as
Poplar Grove at the time in, in Woodville, Mississippi, as well as his sister's plantation which is
in St. Francisville and is known as Locust Grove. While they were there, they caught malaria
and Jefferson Davis and his new wife, Knox, come down with a serious case of the disease.
Jefferson manages to recuperate, although throughout his life he will still have bouts with
malaria. Unfortunately, Knox dies at that point. Here the woman that he loved and had fought,
aha, to make his wife, he brings her to his home, only to have her come up, come down with
malaria and die.

Other Speaker: How did Jefferson Davis handle the death of Sarah Knox Taylor?

Edward K. Eckert: Jefferson Davis was shattered by his young wife Knox's death. He goes
into a period of grieving that will last almost a decade. He travels at first to Havana to try and
seek some cure for his malaria, but when he returns from there his brother, Joseph Davis, is
23 [born in 1786] years his elder, invites him to his home, Hurricane, about 11 miles south of
Natchez [Vicksburg] right on the Mississippi River, and gives him land. He never formally signs his title over which is, Joseph never formally signs the deed over to, to Jefferson – did I say that right? Joseph never formally signs the deed over to Jefferson which is going to cause problems later on, but Joseph teaches him how to be a planter, a slave-owner, how to be a southern gentleman and the issues on which southern gentleman were basing their heritage and, and their society. It's really in the decade between Knox's death and his reemergence, when he runs for Congress in 1844, that Jefferson Davis learns to be southern leader. Before that time, I think Jefferson Davis really was a spoiled young man, a man whom a lot was given to. He was the youngest of ten children. A, a man who got himself into trouble, such as at West Point, but now the burdens of maturity and adulthood seem to drop on him, particularly with Sarah Knox's death, and so his brother took him aside and teaches him to be the man that Joseph Davis couldn't be and – Joseph Davis due to problems with his reputation, ah, due to the fact that he had children out of wedlock, due to the fact that his wife was as old as, as young as, his oldest daughter, made it very difficult for him to be a serious political leader of this area, but his brother could do it and he learned from his brother how to be not only a planter, which Davis never really liked. Davis was never fond of the land and working in the dirt. However, Jefferson Davis could be that leader, that spokesman for the Mississippi planter class which his brother represented.

Other Speaker: Excellent. Excellent answer.

Other Speaker: Very good.

Edward K. Eckert: Okay. Okay. The – Joseph Davis’s plantation, Hurricane, which is 11 months – Joseph Davis’s plantation Hurricane, which is about 11 [20] miles south of Natchez [Vicksburg]–

Other Speaker: Vicksburg.
Edward K. Eckert: Oh, geeze, why can't I say it? I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Ya know I went into the Mississippi – where was his plantation anyway? Well by God I knew the answer to it, but I can't get it out of my mouth right this time.

Other Speaker: Maybe because this is a beguiling place.

Edward K. Eckert: Yes. It is. It is. Joseph, ah, Joseph Davis’s plantation, Hurricane, about 11 miles south of Vicksburg on the Mississippi River, the spot called Davis Bend.

Other Speaker: Okay. Always look at me. Never look at the camera.

Edward K. Eckert: Well I thought this was just audio, okay.

Other Speaker: That's just audio.

Other Speaker: Um, okay. Describe Mr. Davis’s relationship with, ah, Black Hawk.

Other Speaker: Actually, hold on.

Other Speaker: Oh. During Jefferson Davis’s, I guess we could say self-imposed, exile after Sarah Knox's death, as you said, he, ah, really became somewhat of a hermit and apparently did a lot of reading during those nine or ten years. Are you aware of what books he read and the influence those books had on him?

Edward K. Eckert: We're not, ah, totally aware of the library that Joseph Davis had in his plantation home. We do have hints at what they were talking about. Certainly one of the most important of the books that Jefferson Davis read was a series, ah, compiled by Jonathan Elliot. They were debates over the adoption of the Constitution by the 13 states and these debates are rich with material on the nature of the Union and the idea that it was a compact agreement among equals, equal states and that the states had to preserve their own rights. These were frequently debated, ah, at the time and become a very important document at the, in the 1850s as
the people North and South tried to interpret the meaning of the Union. Davis, Jefferson Davis and Joseph Davis also read the Federalist Papers and discussed them, but we also have to presume that they mostly were talking about contemporary political issues and how they compared, or would have compared, in the minds of the founders of the republic. So what he gets there is, is time to read about the history of the United States and the history of Britain, particularly the idea of Britain coming to prominence in the 19th century based upon a class society, not a classless society, but a class society. The proper leadership to, to bring people into the modern age.

Other Speaker: Speaking of a class society, there was a sense that the life of a southern planter, politician-planter. What does that mean, southern planter politician?

Edward K. Eckert: Okay,

Other Speaker [cameraman]: Watch your head. Sorry about that. Thank you, Brett.

Edward K. Eckert: There's far more to being a planter than living on a plantation with magnolias and mansions and mint juleps. It was a position of great importance. It, it was a central position of the southern society, economy and political structure. The hierarchical structure of the South is very similar to the hierarchical structure in England. The idea that there's a certain class of people, who by education, by birth, by training, have a right and obligation to, to, uh, govern, to take care of other people. Davis had to – you're bothering me by doing that [pointing to interviewer]. Don't do that.

[laughter]

Other Speaker: Just need to look away from the camera.

Edward K. Eckert: Uh, let's pick up on this. The, the gentry class, the upper class southerner was not a, a class of luxury and relaxation. It was a class of law, hard work and great responsibility. These men took their position very seriously, and sometimes I think we look back upon the time as though these people had nothing, nothing to do but to sit on their verandas sipping, uh, sipping mint juleps. That simply wasn't the case. First of all, they had to run a
business. They were agrarian capitalists, really. They weren't farmers. They liked to talk about themselves as farmers and the land, but, but they were capitalists, providing a crop, a product, and looking into the world market to sell it. Secondly, they were responsible for a great many people. Today people who – if you've ever been a boss, you know that you have power over people's lives, power to hire, power to give them a raise, power to fire them, and they–

Other Speaker: Hold on a second.

Other Speaker: ****

Other Speaker: Speak.

Edward K. Eckert: To be a planter in the 19th century was more than to sit on a veranda and sip mint juleps. Sometimes the picture that we place in our mind sees a person who does very little except to enjoy life. In actuality, the planter leader had tremendous responsibilities and tremendous obligations. First of all, he had to run his plantation as a business. It really was agricultural capitalism. It was producing a product for the world market, and the price of the product will be affected by that world market. He had to prepare for everything it took to grow the crop, to sell the crop. He had familial obligations, plus he had the responsibility for a large number of people he owned, slaves. Now imagine owning other people and that responsibility. They're not family. They're not really employees, but they're people whom you can decide basic things about their lives, who they're going to live with, where their children are going to go. There is tremendous responsibility, but there is tremendous, uh, gratification from this, to have this kind of power. One historian, Eugene Genovese, speaks a great deal about the, the psychological, uh, nature of being a plantation leader, and having these people under you and making decisions that affect so many people's lives. So the life of, of a southern planter, he not only has to grow the crop, take care of a large number of people, but he also has to help govern, and that's his responsibility, and that's really what Jefferson Davis moved into, to be a governor, a legislator, a person who looked out for the best interests of this class of people, who in essence were the class that was running the southern economy, the top of the society, the leaders of, of the antebellum South.
Speaker 1: So what was Jefferson Davis’s view of slavery?

Eckert: Jefferson Davis, like every other American in the 19th century, with very few exceptions, was a racist. In that I mean that Americans in the 19th century, be they an Abraham Lincoln or be they a Jefferson Davis, believed that some races were inferior to other races. And therefore the Caucasian race had an obligation, as what they called the superior race, to take care of less fortunate people. In actuality, the slaves on Joseph and Jefferson's plantation were treated very intelligently and – that's not the word I want to say –

Speaker 1: Pick up with “in actuality.”

Eckert: Okay. In actuality, the slaves who lived on Joseph Davis’s plantation and Jefferson Davis’s plantation were given an enormous responsibility, uh, to help run –

Speaker 1: Hold. What was Mr. Davis’s view of slavery?

Eckert: Slavery is one of those topics that permeates all of southern society in the antebellum years. I think too often we focus on slavery without understanding that slavery is
like focusing on the family in, in America today. There are so many different types of families and so many different types of relationships today, it's very hard to pin it down with one thing or another. What we know about Jefferson Davis and Joseph Davis were that they were very concerned to provide their slaves with all possible freedoms within the parameter of the system of slavery and within the beliefs of racism. Consequently, their slaves on their plantation were allowed to run the day-to-day routine of life and they governed their own brother and sister slaves on the plantation through a type of trial system and a type of justice system within the plantation. The Davises took a kind but paternalistic view of people of color. Uh, Jefferson had a very close friend, James Pemberton, as a young man; he was very good after the war at trying to stick to his brother Joseph's agreement with a slave family, a, a, now a freed person's family, the Montgomerys, who were in essence sold the plantation land and were given loans so that they could make a success for it. He was very disturbed when, due to economic conditions really, that the Montgomery family failed and he had to foreclose on, on the property. The Davises also adopted a young boy during the, uh, Civil War. Jim Limber they called him. I'm not sure of the, all of the details of the story, but he lived with them and their children for a time when they were in Richmond during the war. So I think that the, that both Joseph Davis and Jefferson Davis had a very enlightened view of slavery and accepted within the parameters of the system whatever they could do to ameliorate the condition of the slaves' life.

Speaker 1: Is there any evidence that Jefferson Davis engaged in physical or sexual abuse of slaves?

Eckert: No, there, there, there isn't evidence of that. There is –

Speaker 1: Include my question in your answer.

Eckert: There is, okay. There is no real evidence, there's no evidence that I have ever seen, that Jefferson Davis or Joseph ever, Joseph –

Speaker 1: Take 3.
Eckert: There's no evidence that I have ever seen that either Joseph Davis or Jefferson Davis ever had sexual relations with slave women or treated their slaves inhumanely. Uh, sometimes, I'd like to compare that to, uh, today's, uh, times. I tell students in class, I know there are parents who abuse their children, men who abuse women, uh, but I don't hang out with those types of people. Uh, I don't know anybody who abuses his wife and I don't know anybody who abuses their children, and if I did, I would report them to the authorities. So while slavery permitted that type of inhumane treatment, it was not something that southern culture ever condoned and encouraged. It simply was there as a part of human relations.

Speaker 1: What did Jefferson Davis decide to let's interject one more in there and I think we were talking about last night, why do you think Jefferson Davis chose to seek public office?

Eckert: Jefferson Davis had to seek public office because that was part of his destiny as a leader in the South. Joseph Davis was unable to seek office due to some personal problems that he had caused, having children out of wedlock, having a very young wife, and it made him not the perfect person to be a leader of the class as they wanted to, as they pictured themselves. Jefferson Davis, on the other hand, a young planter, a, a, a man with a substantial stake in, in, in southern cotton, uh, economy, if he was going to be a person of any influence, of any importance, he had an obligation to, to go into public office. There's no indication that Davis did this for personal gratification. Over and over he complained of the burdens of public office, but it was something that you did in the 19th century because you had to, it was noblesse oblige, a part of the responsibility of the, of the leading class. You could not be a, a leading class or a member of the ar, the southern aristocracy, not true aristocracy but the southern leadership, without accepting the responsibilities of that as well as the privileges.

Speaker 1: Jefferson Davis chose to leave the Congress, uh, in which he was just elected, to contribute and fight in the Mexican War. Um, what were some of his contributions during the Mexican War?
Eckert:  His greatest contribution was being appointed colonel of the First Mississippi, uh, Rifles and then going to fight under his former father-in-law, and that, that was an awkward moment. He was –

Speaker 1:  Pause a second, please. Camera speed. What was some of Jefferson Davis’s most significant contributions during the Mexican War?

Eckert:  When Jeffer, when the Mexican War began, Jefferson Davis had no doubt but that he belonged in the military. He returned to Mississippi where he was given the, uh, rank of colonel of the First Mississippi Re, uh, Regiment. They carried rifles, one of the earliest units to carry rifles in the United States, uh, Army. At the Battle of Buena Vista, he served under his former father-in-law. Uh, it was a difficult time for Jefferson Davis when he went to see his former father-in-law for the first time. But Zachary Taylor welcomed him and used him in an important position. He placed him on the Union left flank and it was the Mississippi Rifles along with some other regiments who held the left flank. It was a very touch-and-go battle and, and he, his men managed to hold the position for the United States Army. During the battle, he suffered a wound. Uh, what happened was a, a bullet shattered a brass spur on his, on his foot and it drove shards from that spur into his foot. And they really had no way to remove the shards in those days, so for many years--I'm talking decades--pieces of brass would work its way out of, of Davis’s foot and he would be in constant pain with something that would trouble him for much of the rest of his life.

Speaker 1:  Jefferson Davis is well known for what's called a V formation during the Mexican War. Please describe that for us, and explain the significance.

Eckert:  The V formation was actually an upside down V formation, uh, it meant that he met the enemy with the center of his regiment pulled back from the two exposed flanks. And in so doing he invited, if you would, the enemy into the area where his men could more effectively fire upon the Mexican troops.
Speaker 1: Upon his return from the Mexican War, how was Jefferson Davis received in Mississippi?

Eckert: Oh, he was, when Jefferson Davis returned from the Mexican War, he was greeted as a hero. Uh, he came in in good health except for the, uh, the wound that he bore on his foot and therefore had to be in, on crutches and was very quickly placed into the United States Senate. In those days, remember that the, uh, senatorships were not a, an electable offices, they were appointed offices. So a grateful people from Mississippi found in him a man whom they respected not only on the field of battle, but were also going to place him in the Senate.

Speaker 1: Upon his entry into the Senate, um, what were his main responsibilities and duties? I guess I'm ****

Eckert: I don't know – what are you –

Speaker 1: What I'm getting at is because he was a war hero, he became chairman of the Military Affairs Committee and –

Eckert: I really don't have answers for that.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Eckert: I, I, I must admit.

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: Those 3 years or so –

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: Okay.
Speaker 1: There's absolutely no problem there.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: **** skip pages if I may. Um, why don't we jump – actually back to the secretary of war years.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: As a military historian, um, please describe for us the circumstances whereby Mr. Davis became the secretary of war.

Eckert: Jefferson Davis was appointed secretary of war by Franklin Pierce. Uh, Pierce had served as an officer in the Mexican War and they had met there. Pierce, like Davis, was a national politician, uh, in the Senate, and was chosen to be a Democrat running from New Hampshire and was called the, the “New Hickory” or the “Little Hickory” after Old Hickory, uh, Andrew Jackson. They had, he, Franklin Pierce and Jefferson Davis had similar political views. They had met in Mexico, uh, Pierce knew him as a senator and he also knew he had military experience. He was the perfect man of secretary of war. You have to remember in those days, the cabinet offices were not as large as, as they are today, so there were a relatively small number of people under him, uh, including the military which, which are small in number as well. As secretary of war, he showed a great deal of confidence in, in handling the office. Perhaps the one he's best known for was the so-called Camel Corps. With the Mexican War, we brought in a tremendous amount of territory and much of it was desert, and Davis, uh, a man of, an erudite man, knew of course what, uh, about camels and he decided that maybe they were the perfect beast of burden to accompany the military when they were on patrol in the Southwest. Therefore
he brought over camels and he brought over camel trainers. Unfortunately, the camels were a different type of camel than the trainers were used to and they had difficulty with those animals. The camels did work, though, and, and, that's what people forget. The camels worked, they were an asset to the army in the desert, but with the coming of the railroad, the coming of the Civil War, they were forgotten; many of them were sold to circuses and supposedly a few simply ran wild in, in, in the desert. He was also responsible for the, for building parts of the Capitol and for building bridges, particularly a bridge over the Potomac River, and this is because the branch of the U.S. government that had engineers was the army. The United States Military Academy was really there to train what we would call civil engineers, what they called topographical engineers in those days. So consequently the army would be used for a lot of civic purposes such as, as surveying for railroad lines or helping to build public buildings, and he was a superb, uh, leader there. It was during his years in, in Washington, those years, when the first, when a second tragedy occurred in their family, when their young boy died of fever in Washington, D.C., just a year old, young Samuel Emory Davis died and he was shattered by this. And this is the first of four sons that he's going to lose in his lifetime. It, it, it seems to be the burden, uh, from the loss of his beloved children, uh, was more than a man should have to handle in a lifetime.

Speaker 1: Very well said. Jefferson Davis is considered by many to have been maybe the best secretary of war in the history of the Union definitely up to that point in the history of the young nation. Do you subscribe to that view, and if you do, why?

Eckert: Jefferson Davis was one of the two best secretaries of war. Uh, John C. Calhoun and Jefferson Davis, interestingly both southerners, both senators, were two outstanding secretaries of war. I think Jefferson Davis’s contribution was he was not looking for political benefit. When Jefferson Davis went in to do a job, he went in to do it professionally and that's what he did as secretary of war. He went in and did the job as well as he can. Because the office of the War Department was so small, one man could handle many of the different day-to-day routines and Davis excelled in that. Now, that does not become his strong suit when he's president of the Confederate States, when there are many different issues he has to deal with, but [he] really prefers to stay with military issues, which is his own interest, and to, to watch over the
day-to-day routine. So as a cabinet secretary that day, that job was fit for Jefferson Davis and he was outstanding as the secretary of war.

Speaker 1: My guess is that clip makes it into the documentary. I don't know, call me crazy.

****

Eckert: I love the birds in the background.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Um, how do you feel about talking about Jefferson Davis’s view of secession, whether he ****.

Eckert: Okay. Yeah, we can talk a little about that. I think others will have, are more expert in this. The interesting thing about Jefferson Davis and the idea of secession was that as we became closer to the actual act happening, he became less sure that he wanted to see the act occur. Davis always had a very legalistic mind. Davis liked to argue points, uh, and win debates, if you would. And quite clearly, the issue over secession was a topic that deserved debate in the antebellum years. He subscribed to the compact theory, the idea that the states came into a compact with each other to form a nation, only giving up certain portions of their sovereignty. So when, when you see the words in the preamble to the Constitution, “We the people of the United States,” he interprets it as we the people of, uh, of Connecticut and we the people of Georgia, rather, turn over these rights to form a national government. He felt very strongly that this was the case and he also felt very strongly in the issue that John C. Calhoun raised. You know, democracies can be tyrannies as well. How do you prevent the majority forcing their ideas on the minority? And Davis and the southern leaders found clearly a majority of Americans were moving toward a position that they could not accept. The only solution for them would be to leave the Union, to break the contract that their ancestors had signed and Davis felt very strongly of this, but again, as you get into the election of 1860, when it becomes obvious that Lincoln has won and that southern states are going to leave, Davis is less shrill about it. Uh, he never was a fire-eater like, like, uh, Rhett was or, or Yancey was. Instead he was always a person who argued on principle and when the practice came, he wasn't so sure of it.
I mean, he supported it, it was the way to go, he wasn't backing off, but he was less sure that he was positive that that was the way to go.

Speaker 1: Let's move to the Civil War, and what I'd like to do, and Brian can help me out here, what I think we may want to do, ask him about some of the more significant battles ****. During the Civil War, give us a sense of how men, how Johnny Reb and Billy Jack, or whatever it is –

Eckert: Billy Yank.

Speaker 1: Billy Yank, whatever it is, how they fought.

Eckert: Okay. When I first began teaching more than 3 decades ago, I was talking about Civil War tactics, the way the men fought on the battlefield. And the way they fought was to go in as infantry in a line, a regiment normally would have a thousand men, although they would, that, that would be culled down during the war, but a thousand men in three ranks, so about 300 men in each rank with a colonel at the lead on horseback, with the colors in the center and with the subalterns, or the lower officers, in the rear. They would march at the enemy and the enemy was in a similar formation. When I first started teaching more than 3 decades ago, a student of mine said that was ridiculous. No man would be that stupid. He knew he wasn't that stupid and his ancestors couldn't be that stupid as well. So the question keeps occurring is why did they fight in this manner? They fought in this manner really to concentrate the infantry firepower. The weapons that they used prior to the Civil War were highly inaccurate. By the time of the Civil War, they had far more accurate shoulder rifles. [pause, looking off-camera:] What's going on? Prior to the Civil War, uh, war, uh, shoulder weapons were highly inaccurate. Therefore the only way to fire shoulder weapons at the enemy was to group a mass of men, face them all in the same direction, and to fire their weapons at the enemy and the enemy would, would fire back. With the invention of, by a Frenchman of the Minié ball--it was a bullet that made rifling possible. Military thinkers had always known that rifling a weapon, which is putting grooves in the bore of the weapon, causing the bullet to spin as it comes out on its longitudinal axis, grooves which caused the bullet to spin on its longitudinal axis cuts down on air resistance, and it means
that the bullet can go farther and do so more accurately. So what before had been a musket and was highly inaccurate at 50 yards suddenly becomes totally accurate at 300 yards. Yet, at the same time, they had no way to change their, their tactical structure in order to use this additional firepower because they had no command and control. There was almost no communications. If you've ever been in battle or a high-pressure situation, it’s confusion, what's going on, how do you hold the men together, have them all go in the same direction? What you do is you put them in a line. Crazy? Perhaps. But their grandsons would do the same thing in World War I. It takes a long time for human beings to learn how to change. Another example of this is cavalry. People see the cavalry and expect that the cavalry can go charging through an infantry line, breaking up the infantry, and sending them on their way. The truth is just the opposite. Infantrymen, if they hold their line and have bayonets on the end of their weapons, and they hold that solid line, a horse, you cannot train a horse to spear itself upon the end of a bayonet. They can train human beings to do that, but you can't train horses. It says something about evolution, I don't know. But the point is, the point is, the fighting was done up front, in line, and that caused terrible casualties on the battlefield. Sometimes you see these movies, these great epic movies, and soldiers seem to die so gracefully, they fall upon the field. You have to remember, like during Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, there are almost 10,000 men crossing the battlefield. By the time the final lines and the Confederate line get to the Union position, they're climbing over their comrades' bodies. They're, they're stepping over them, they're stepping on them, they're stepping around them. The, the, the, the gore, the blood, the horror of it. Sometimes I think that Civil War tales do an injustice because they glorify war. I don't think, there has to be the right combination between that and the gore, the horror of it all, that we're putting our young people in to fight and to die in these situations. Too much preaching, okay.

Speaker 1: Oh, I disagree.

Eckert: Okay.

Two speakers conversing: Um, give us a sense of the strategy that Jefferson Davis adopted. Give us a, a sense of the strategy that Jefferson Davis adopted and, as Brian suggests, they
were fighting a second independence, a war of independence a second time around. Why didn't they adopt George Washington's ****?

Eckert: One of the major problems to come out of the Confederacy was the lack of a successful national military policy. It probably lends itself more to the fact that the Confederate States of America and its president Jefferson Davis felt that not only had they every legal right to be a nation, but that they had actually achieved that idea. So, consequently, what you have there is a nation that's being invaded from, by foreign forces. Initially, Davis’s military strategy was to repel each of these attacks. His job was more complex than the job that Abraham Lincoln faced, because each of the 11 states, if you would, that formed the Confederacy had its own sovereignty and independence as well, so it's very difficult to take young men from one state and put them in another state when their home state is being invaded. So Jefferson Davis’s initial strategy was to repel any and all invasions and send them back. He's often criticized, for instance, at the first Battle of Manassas, which happened in July of 1861, the first real battle – am I going the right way? I saw your eye movement –

Speaker 1: My eye movement I saw personal ****

Eckert: Oh, okay.

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: Okay. Uh, the, uh –

Speaker 1: Start with in the first Battle of Manassas –

Eckert: In the first, in the battle, in the first Battle of Manassas, which was in July 1861, it really was a touch-and-go battle. It could have gone either way. But in the late afternoon, when the Union forces decide to withdraw from the field, which is the hardest tactical maneuver for any commander to do, get his, his troops off the field, became a panic and the Confederate forces had won. The question was why not follow them, why not invade the North? Davis, who was
on that battlefield, is going to be criticized later for not ordering the troops to do so. Davis felt, and I think quite rightly, first of all, the Confederate troops were equally as green as the Union troops, and it was a lucky chance that they won so significantly in that first battle. Had they continued to attack, God knows what would have happened on the way north. Secondly, and more importantly for Davis as the commander-in-chief, there was, he did not want to invade a foreign country. He wanted to repel aggressors and he had been successful in doing it. He had no idea that the war was going to last another 4 years almost and therefore they had done what he wanted to do. His biggest problem, however, is he never settles on one particular strategy. He allows his generals to try a variety of things. You have two different concepts of strategy occurring with Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston. And in 1863, perhaps the crucial year militarily for the Confederate States of America, you have one general in the east taking a very aggressive initiative, attacking the enemy's home soil, while you have a general in the west whose philosophy is to give up land, to fall back, very similar to George Washington during the Revolution, to fall back, turn over land to the enemy and, and to prolong, to prolong the war so that, uh, the enemy, that is the Union, would grow tired of it. Davis never settled on one or the other. I think Davis’s problem was he, he should have accepted one or the other and stuck with it, so that more reinforcements perhaps could be given to Lee's army and more invasions of the North, which were credible invasions of the North, could occur or he should have done the opposite and taken Johnston's strategy and have pulled back. Now, that would mean abandoning Richmond. Uh, because Richmond was the plum that so many of the Union commanders were interested. Frankly, I think if McClellan had taken Richmond in 1862 the North would have lost the war because I think Jefferson Davis and the South would have been forced into accepting Joseph E. Johnston's strategy, which I really think is the only strategy which would have worked for the South, to give up land, to buy time until, until the North grew tired of the war. I think with McClellan, if McClellan took Richmond, he wouldn't know what to do with it, and McClellan as being now the hero-general, if you would under that scenario of the North, he, he could not be removed. The, the administration could not fire him then. And so I think it's fortuitous for the North that they were unsuccessful in taking Richmond at that time 'cause had they taken it, I think the South would have been forced into the better strategy.

Speaker 1: **** we're gonna change tapes.
PART 3
Speaker 1: You will speak.

Eckert: Jefferson Davis never managed to come up with a national policy to win the war militarily. Initially, he was going to repel all invasions. But one invasion that is simply inexplicable to anyone is why New Orleans was left so defenseless. This is the one major city in the Confederate States of America, the one international city, a city whose bank vaults held a large percentage of southern gold and silver. And yet, it's largely undefended. No one really thought about it, apparently, the importance of it and how to defend it. Another problem with, uh, Jefferson Davis also never –

Speaker 1: You want to avoid –

Eckert: **** okay.

Speaker 1: – also **** others because we may pull out.

Eckert: Jefferson Davis never came up with a credible national strategy. Take the western states, for example. They were always cut off from the eastern states by the Mississippi River. Yes, that is a natural barrier, but you don't separate your command by having a commanding general responsible for the three states to the west and commanding general responsible for the eastern bank. Somebody has got to be responsible for that river area in its entirety. One of the problems is that Jefferson Davis never comes up with a military advisory staff. Some people would suggest that Jefferson Davis's natural inclination to run the military in the war, uh, was the primary reason why he never came up with the idea of having military leaders suggest national policy and come up with a policy that, that could be used. I don't know what the, uh, deep reason for it, but Davis was interested in all aspects of the war. He served not only as commander in chief and responsible for a national strategy, which would not only, by the way, be a military strategy, but an economic, a political, a diplomatic strategy as well, but he also liked to run the day-to-day routine of the office just as he had done as secretary of war under Franklin Pierce. It's one thing to do that as an underling. It's another thing to do that as a
national leader. Jefferson Davis never learned how to share the burdens of his office with the other members of the cabinet. He was the type of boss who was always looking into every aspect of your business. Kind of looking over your shoulder at anything that you do. Stephen Mallory, secretary of the navy, a man from Florida, complains about Davis constantly supervising and looking after minor problems, and that seemed to be the case. Davis makes no real attempt to put together a national cabinet that could work, that could see the big issues.

Speaker 1: Why do you think that?

Eckert: I don't think Davis saw the big issues. [chuckles] Davis always understood the Confederate States of America to be an established nation, something that's working, rather than a revolutionary new nation that had to set out on its own and take its own turf. So rather than looking at a nation who had to, just had to find help from Europe, had to come up with a national policy because it's a nation immediately at war, he acts as though it was the United States, say in the 1830s, just kind of living itself out, dealing with domestic problems, dealing with other nations in a formal fashion, rather than the true dangers that the Confederate States of America were facing. He never seemed to grasp that issue. He alw, coming from his position, I think, of the righteousness of the southern position to secede from the union and form its own nation, he frankly didn't understand how anybody could disagree with him. So, so the English, uh, the British, I should say, and the French hesitation, the idea the northerners would invade the South, I don't think he quite understood the other point of view, if you, if you know what I'm trying to say. He, he didn't really, he didn't have a broad enough mind to appreciate the fundamental truths of the opposition's argument. His answer was so obvious to him and so correct that he didn't think anyone could stand up on any issue opposed to it.

Speaker 1: That being said, was he successful in rallying his troops behind his position that you're advocating?

Eckert: Okay. It's hard to find the troops referring affectionately to Jefferson Davis. It's hard to find the people of the South responding affectionately to Jefferson Davis. He and Abraham Lincoln were approximately the same age, within a year of each other. Abraham
Lincoln is frequently referred to as “uncle” or “old” in an affectionate term by the people, “Old Abe” or “Uncle Abe.” You don't find that type of affectionate titles for Jefferson Davis, be it from the military or be it from the people. He had a very difficult time explaining his position to other people. If you read his work, they are brilliant explanations, very legalistic explanations of his position, but they don't have the phrases that capture other people. He did not know how to make himself into a politician of the people. Lincoln knew that because Lincoln had to rise on his own from the bottom, run for office. When Jefferson Davis ran for Congress, the only real national office that he wins in an election, by that I mean a senator is a appointed and he is appointed provisional president. He runs for governor of the state of Mississippi and loses. But in the election of 1844, there’s only about 1,100 votes cast and consequently it is very small number of people who are choosing him. It's not a political situation that would happen similar to that in the North, in a northern city where he would have to go in and meet the people and get the people to vote for you. That's not part of Davis’s job. That's not part of his person. That's not part of his culture. He's there because of his background, his training, and it comes to him naturally. So he never wins among the people of the South affection for himself or even more importantly, affection and acceptance of the idea of a Confederate States of America.

Speaker 1: Along those lines, how did he deal with his political enemies like Alexander Stephens, the vice president?

Eckert: Mm hmm.

Speaker 1: Or, Mr., uh, Rhett, Toombs, Yancey.

Eckert: One, I think the, the Confederate States of America are a good example to all of us for the need for two or more viable political parties. There was, there were no political parties per se in the Confederacy. There was only the people representing a certain group of fellow southerners. And although the ideal of working harmoniously together for the good of all sounds very good, the two-party system, or a multi-party system, will come up with policies and will come up with people who are capable of bringing those policies about. So what happens with Jefferson Davis and his political enemies is they become personal enemies, and once a problem
becomes a personal problem, it is very difficult to resolve. One person or the other person has to leave and that's part of the problem with the whole structure of the Confederate States of America that it never achieves a multi-party system of government. And –

Speaker 1: Well, um, give us a sense of how Jefferson Davis, the president and commander-in-chief managed his generals. Feel free, by the way, to use names.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: Uh, because we are going to be referring to these individuals.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: So the names that will be coming up often are Beauregard, Bragg, Lee, Johnston, Albert Sidney Johnston. Those are the big five that I see.

Eckert: Okay. Okay. Jefferson Davis handled his generals individually as persons with whom he had contact that was both professional and personal. Jefferson Davis, for instance, had a strong loyalty to those who, with whom he had made friends and who had supported him in some way, uh, in politics or in, in his life. Among those who supported him were Leonidas Polk, who was at West Point at the same time as Davis and who would later become an Episcopal bishop, and, and also Braxton Bragg. Davis thought highly of those two men and would keep them in their military positions even when others complained about them. On the other hand, a Joseph E. Johnston or P. G. T. Beauregard, who were at least as talented as Bragg and Polk were, he disdains them. And part of his disdain for these men is a, is a personal problem in the case of Johnston between Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Johnston. He allowed personal, uh, faction to enter professional decisions. His favorite general, in the sense of the man he really thought was the best general the Confederacy had, was Albert Sidney Johnston. He admired General Johnston since he had been at West Point. He admired Albert Sidney Johnston since he had been at West Point and saw him as the best possible southern commander. Most historians, looking back particularly at Albert Sidney Johnston in the Battle of Shiloh, do not have the same degree of
confidence in Johnston as President Davis did. There, he came up with an unusual positioning of the troops which made it very difficult for them to maneuver and may have been a factor in why the, the, uh, Confederate troops were unable to completely drive the Union troops off the field. Unfortunately, for Davis and for Johnston, uh, Johnston is killed during the Battle of Shiloh, so he can never retry his skills. As for Robert E. Lee: Robert E. Lee in the American army as early as 1861 and before had a status that other individuals didn't have. So therefore he stood alone in his wisdom, uh, his guidance of, of, of Confederate military policy. Davis respected Lee. Some people suggested that he was afraid of Lee getting too close to him because he wanted to control the situation. But I don't think that's true at all. I think he respected Lee and understood that Lee's real genius was in the field and therefore, that he, he provided Lee with whatever needs the general had. I think a good example of the Robert E. Lee/Jefferson Davis relationship and the whole approach to military strategy is in the summer of 1863, when the center of the South is under its most serious challenge. Ulysses S. Grant and Union armies are coming south along the Mississippi River, are poised to take Vicksburg, Mississippi, and by taking that important fortress city on the river would mean that the whole river was open to the Union troops. Invading that area, the best Jefferson Davis could do was to come up with Joseph E. Johnston who keeps reappearing in different parts of, of, of the South. Johnston, as is true to his mien, comes up with the idea of giving up land for time and he orders the general who is holding Vicksburg, James [John C. ] Pemberton, to abandon Vicksburg and to pull back and join Johnston's army. Davis was afraid that was going to happen and had previously ordered Pemberton to hold Vicksburg at all cost. There's a strategic value in Vicksburg, but people frequently pointed out that it's only 11 [20-25] miles north of Davis’s family home at, at Brierfield on the Davis Bend on the Mississippi River. He turns to Lee and he suggests that Lee sends some of his army, which had been so successful at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, to send some of his army and perhaps himself into the mid-South. Lee, however, the type of commander who has his own persona and his own individuality and, therefore, turns to Davis and says, no, I have a better plan, and his plan is to invade the North, but what you have there really are two different things. You have a Jefferson Davis whose idea of nationhood and the Confederacy means that all parts of the 11 states that formed the Confederate States of America are equally in, uh, valuable to the nation. Whereas, you have a Robert E. Lee who is focused upon one of the 11 states, less than a tenth of the Confederacy in Virginia. There was no way
that Lee was going to leave Virginia and go to Mississippi at that particular time. So what you
have there again is split policy. Who is calling the shots? Is it the generals in the field? You
have one general, uh, Johnston, who is trying to give up land and fall back, another general who
wants to invade the North at the same time, and a president who would really like the general in
the West to invade the North to give aid to the general in the central South. Davis doesn't say, I
am the commander-in-chief. I am the president of the Confederate States of America. You will
do thus and so.

Speaker 1: Why?

Eckert: It's based upon the relationship of equals. Again, you have the idea that there is a
certain type of a person who is bred in some way to be a leader, and each man has his own
honor, and that honor cannot be shattered by another man. Lee, Davis fully knew, would have a
very difficult time accepting the idea he should go west and fight, and Davis never put Lee into
that position. Will you under direct orders, will you go and, and, uh, seize, uh, expel the Union
invaders in the Mississippi? He never makes that direct order. He allows Lee, in essence, to
decide what he's going to do, which may be okay if the whole national policy followed that, but
at the same time that's going on, disjointed from it, is this invasion that's going on in the center of
the South, and when the Confederacy loses both of these at Gettysburg on July 3rd and at
Vicksburg on July 4th that really is the changing tide, the ebbing tide of the Confederacy. They
didn't know it then, but with hindsight we can go and see Lee is never going to take the offensive
again. He can't, and in the South, and in the center of the South, there's going to be a constant
falling back, and yet it never becomes policy. It's only when it becomes policy, you see, when
Washington in the Revolution made that policy, then it had sense. When it just occurs, then
you're losing ground for nothing, and that's what Davis never manages to package together as a
national military strategy. It may not have worked. I'm, um, uh, what we're presuming, you
know, that had he done that he would have brilliantly brought about success. We don't know
that, uh, but I think, I think the, the problem there was to allow too many generals to do their
own thing without some sort of national military focus and strategy.
Speaker 1: Why do you think that Robert E. Lee ended the war somewhat unscathed in terms of his reputation, whereas Jefferson Davis has had a difficult time, a more difficult time, to rehabilitate his reputation both during life and post?

Eckert: Robert E. Lee was in a position as the general to be with his men. Robert E. Lee when he was on the field never took his headquarters in, in somebody else's home [not correct]. He always slept in a tent [not correct]. He was with his men. He was legendary. He had the charisma of a person who was able to make other people do what you want them to do and feel part of it in their best interests. He was loved by the men he commanded. We see that during the final, uh, invasion of, of the South by Grant in Virginia. When a couple of times he goes toward the front lines and his men pull him back and say, Lee to the rear. They didn't want him in, in front. They respected him so highly. When the time came, too, to surrender and know that it's over, that you can do no good by continuing it, Lee does that. Lee's surrender at Appomattox came as a shock to Jefferson Davis, who was moving government rapidly south in, inland away from Richmond and to Danville, Virginia, and then further south, uh, at, at, as they continued. Uh, Davis thought the war should continue and he, it wasn't clear how and it wasn't clear where, but he, he was disappointed that Lee had surrendered his army because the surrendering of the army by Lee made the other armies quickly follow suit. There really was nothing left of Confederate armies willing to fight after Lee surrendered his army in northern Virginia. Davis wanted to continue the fight. It's, it's not clear. Some people suggest that he wanted to go in the mountains and have guerrilla warfare, but he even rejects that idea. What, the, he's trying to get west and the, the only army that's still standing is Edmund Kirby Smith's army west of the Mississippi River and he wants to join it, he doesn't want to let go of it. He doesn't accept the reality that the situation is over, whereas Lee accepts it, and I think later in life Lee accepts the practicality of life following the defeat at Appomattox and what he has to do as a leader of now another South, or another period in the South's history, and Davis never quite adjusts himself to that.

Speaker 1: Do you think the war would have been different, if the war would have possibly been successful for the South, if they had kept a capital in Montgomery as opposed to moving it to Richmond?
Eckert: The question over where the Confederate capital ought to be seems to most of us a, an, an issue, I want to say no-brainer, but no-brainer isn't good to put into this type of thing. The, the discussion over where the capital of the Confederacy should be put was something that never came up at the time of the Civil War. Apparently the, uh, southern government felt it had the right to put its capital wherever it wanted to within the Confederate States of America. So it wasn't a major decision to decide that they were going to move from this rather small, rural, urban area, uh, uh, I know that's contradictory but it, it's a small town. There, there isn't much there except the government in Montgomery, to Richmond, Virginia, which is the “mother of presidents,” has all the historic tradition, is one of the most, if not the most industrialized, and that's questionable, city in the South. The problem was it was only 100 miles from the Union national, uh, capital. Quite clearly, if they had been willing to give up some of that land in Virginia and North Carolina and Tennessee and pull themselves back into Mississippi and Louisiana and Alabama, they would have had a better chance of success. However, they would have had to have made that fight without Robert E. Lee and persons like Robert E. Lee because so many southerners were not fighting for this idea of Confederacy. They were fighting for their home state and once their home state was lost they really had no reason to continue to fight. Yes, Montgomery clearly would have been a better choice for a Confederate capital. It's not clear had it been taken that they could have won or that they would have the support they had by moving it to Richmond.

Speaker 1: Jefferson Davis, as president, uh, had passed or at a certain level made sure that certain provisions were put into place that were somewhat controversial such as conscription, such as income taxes. Why don't you talk to us a, about those, um, I guess you could say a certain level, a dilution of [the government?]?

Eckert: One of the most interesting questions to, to follow in Jefferson Davis’s mind, I think, is the question of which side caused the centralization of national power. Was it the Davis government and the Confederacy or the Lincoln government and the Union? Interestingly, many of the seizure of state powers, such as income tax, such as conscr, national conscription of troops, such as censorship, such as suspension of the writs of habeas corpus, actually occurred in
the Confederacy before it occurred in the Union. It did so, in Davis’s explanation, because the Confederacy was being invaded by a foreign nation and, therefore, a nation has the right to protect itself from such intrusion. So it was understandable that since they were being invaded they would have to call out men on a national conscription. They would have to get money in a new and creative way. He always condemned to his very end the Lincoln administration for doing these same policies that his government did because the Lincoln administration, in Davis’s mind, was not under serious threat. The Lincoln administration was a foreign country undertaking an offensive war against another country. So why did they have to have income tax? Why did they have to conscript young men? There was no threat to them. Somehow he manages to ignore the great threat of the breaking-up of the Union in, in 1860-1861 and that's how he justifies his position. I'm gonna come back and do a second part of that. The seizure of power by the central government in such things as conscription, income tax, suspension of habeas corpus, censorship of the press, led many southerners away from the idea of continuing with the Confederacy. So many southerners fought this war for their homeland, their state. That's where their loyalty, if you understand the Constitution before the 14th Amendment, that's what it says. If you're a citizen of a state, then you're a citizen of the United States. That's reversed with the 14th Amendment. However, they saw their, their home as being Virginia or being Mississippi, and once it was clear that states' rights and state sovereignty could not last and could not protect slavery, uh, there was a national government now that had seized extra power; when they had the choice whether, in this case they wanted to continue as Confederates or as Americans, they chose to continue as Americans. That's where their heritage, that's where their history, that's where their background, that's where their loyalty; Pickett talks about that. When he first invades Maryland some of his soldiers supposedly fire upon American flags on, on the north side of the Potomac River, and he, he not only orders his troops to stop firing on the American flag or removing it from buildings, but he tells his troops that he served that flag nobly for many years and would not, did not, want to see anybody showing disrespect toward that flag. So there's an interesting thing in the background of southerners, uh, that they go from state to national government and somehow they, national government particularly, as the war years goes on, is more and more the United States rather than the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis was one of the very few southerners who really was a nationalist in the sense of the Confederate States of America.
Speaker 1: Speaking of the CSA, there is a view in the 20th and 21st century that the CSA was formed exclusively to maintain the institution of slavery. Could you give us a sense of the importance that tariffs played in the South's decision to, uh –?

Eckert: Percival [Beacroft], you wrote this question. That's your question. That's who –

Other Speaker: ****.

Eckert: I knew it would come up. I knew it would come up. Tariffs with, uh –

Speaker 1: - tariffs.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: Uh, uh, and if you can actually, and you know, Percival and I spoke about this but give us a sense of was it slavery? Was it tariffs? Was it both? Was it state's rights? I mean there are a lot of competing arguments on the issue of secession.

Eckert: Okay. Slavery. Without slavery I don't think the Civil War would have occurred. Slavery was the issue on which no compromise could be made. Other issues, compromises could be made. Slavery, that is whether you hold people in bondage or not, is something that isn't sort of or isn't partial. It's absolute. You're either free or you're slave. I don't think the South went to war over slavery, but they went to war to preserve their way of life, which to a great degree is, is, is based upon the slave system, not the slaves as laborers in the field. I mean we're not talking about people of color working fields for, for white people. What we're talking about there is the system by which a people is responsible for another person, by which their whole culture is, is based on having a leadership class over an inferior class of people, inferior not, uh, not because of something they had done, like lost a war or attack, but because of their beliefs in racism and that people of color simply do not have the abilities of white people. So there are a number of issues. The issue -
Speaker 1: Can you hold on a second? Let's change the tape.

PART 4
Speaker: Okay.

Eckert: Okay.

Next Speaker: The audience is moving closer.

Eckert: There, there are many reasons for the Civil War. Clearly, at the heart of the whole issue was slavery, which was an uncompromisable, uh, issue. Uh, the question of owning people or not owning people was something you can't partially own someone rather than you, that's terrible. Stop that.

Next Speaker: Actually, you've done slavery. So why don't you just jump to tariffs?

Eckert: Okay. Another issue are tariffs. Excuse me. I'm sorry. An issue that caused a note, uh, uh, problems among southern leadership were the ways that the national government found to support burgeoning northern industry at the expense of the South. A good example of that is over tariffs. Actually, the American government and most governments then, uh, their primary source of revenue were tariffs, but these were revenue tariffs. They were very small amounts on a lot of goods that the government collected at port of entry, taxes on imports, that allowed the government to function. A new type of tariff begins to appear in the early 19th century –

Next Speaker: Let me call you back.

Eckert: Just not gonna get through this issue, are we?

Next Speaker: If you could start with a new type of tariff.
Eckert: Yeah. Well, we got an airplane now. Any, in the early 19th century, a new type of tariff appears as industry begins to blossom in the United States, and that's what's called a protective tariff, in other words, a tax at the border in order to protect your own industry, to encourage its expansion. When this was first proposed, it was proposed by a southerner, Henry Clay, and had the strong support of John C. Calhoun. And the tariff, combined with internal improvements, would help the United States grow. The problem, of course, is what is being protected? And what [was] increasingly being protected was costly to the South. What they were protecting were the production of the steel and cotton mills in the North and the Midwest; and the South, which really didn't have industries, had no advantage from these protective tariffs. Indeed, it's the tariff in 1828 which, for the first time, will cause the South to stand up to the issue of who has ultimate power of taxation and sovereignty in the government. John C. Calhoun, in his famous position on, called the concurrent majority, which means that the minority has to agree with the majority on major issues, came up with the idea of nullification. Nullification meant that a state, and only a state, could decide, since a state is sovereignty, along with the national government, could decide whether or not a federal law could be enforced within the state. This comes to the whole, whole idea of states' rights. What most people don't understand is that the government of the United States is formed by two sovereignties, state sovereignty and national sovereignty. In our own lifetime, the 21st century, there's very little of state sovereignty left. Indeed, it's, it's hard almost to come up with an example of something that is not overseen by the national government. But in the mid-19th century, that wasn't the case. So the problem comes with push, when push comes to shove, where does the ultimate power lie? Does it reside with the people of the states separately considered or does it reside with the people of the United States collectively considered? And there are arguments on both sides. So, as the United States begins to expand, as it receives all this land from the Mexican War, the question comes, can slavery expand into the new territory? To northerners, they say no, not all for altruistic reasons. In some cases, they didn't want people of color nearby. In some cases, they feared the plantation system, which is like a Walmart’s coming into your small town, uh, a large, a large plantation coming into, perhaps, the west or something might make it impossible for the small farmers to survive. So, there were other issues. The South, on the other hand, said slavery is not something that is illegal or unconstitutional. Therefore, the national government has an
obligation to protect slavery, slavery wherever slave-owners want to go. It's only when a territory becomes a state that the state, through its own sovereignty, has the right to decide whether it will be free or slave. Until that point, slave-owners have, have the right and should be protected by the government of the United States for their, uh, their property protected, the slaves, wherever they decide to go. It's a much more complex issue. It's not just slavery. But it's hard to conceive that tariffs, which, after all, can be decided by how much, you know, I, I'm opposed to tariffs, and I'm opposed to taxes, but, as a rational person, I see that I have to pay taxes or pay a tariff. So then, the question becomes, how much am I willing to pay? What percentage of my income? You can adjust on that, but you can't adjust when it becomes a moral issue. You can't adjust on something like slavery. So slavery caused it but, by far, was not the only issue that brought about the Civil War.

Next Speaker: We hit on this at some level, but we'd like to expand. Give us a sense of Jefferson Davis's political acumen, uh, thinking about your “for example” or other instances where he may have succeeded or failed **** Jefferson Davis, the politician, during his presidency.

Eckert: I think Jefferson Davis lacked political acumen. I don't think he was a good politician. He did not know how to sell himself and sell his position because he came from a class of people to represent that class of people. So, therefore, everyone within that class understood, to some degree, what the policy was. The secret of a politician is getting people who are either adversely affected or not affected by the same policies to agree with you and to go along with you. Davis never developed that ability. For instance, during the so-called bread riots in, in Richmond, Virginia, Davis shows his personal, his moral courage. He goes out among those people and, and, and without fear for his own, his own safety, meets them on the street, stands up in a cart, urges them to disperse, and threatens them with force, if necessary. But the challenge to a politician is to, is to find, I suggest, some bread to give to these people and to turn those people from being your opponent and blaming your government to supporting your government. Davis never came, never had that ability. He never had the ability to make the national or Confederate issues into everybody's issue.
Next Speaker: However, before the CSA was formed, Jefferson Davis was seen as quite a national leader. In fact, he was rumored or even considered as either a vice presidential –

Eckert: Mm hmm.

Next Speaker: – candidate both in 1860, 1856 or 1860, and even rumblings about him being the president of the United States. Um, what is your sense as to Jefferson Davis as a national leader in the United States as opposed to Jefferson Davis as a national leader in the CSA?

Eckert: Uh, Jefferson Davis was a very important antebellum political leader. Uh, he, he spoke with a great deal of authority on what his area, his, his, Mississippi and other states with similar interests wanted. Uh, he led opposition to plans among states that wanted, for instance, higher protective tariffs, who wanted, uh, aid to, uh, to internal expansion. He was an excellent and important sectional politician in national politics. But there's a difference between that and being a politician who can get votes among the common people. He never had to develop that here in the South because it wasn't a one-party system. There were Democrats and Whigs until the 1850s, and that breaks down as just a Democratic party. But there were, there were clear party differences, but they appealed to a certain level of people. First of all, they were male. They were of a certain age. They were all white. They had enough money that they could vote or hold office. It's not an entire electorate. In the North, when a politician ran for office, because of the professionalism of politicians, uh, in urban settings in particular, they had to win the support of tens of thousands of people for, for them. Therefore, they had to come up with different ways of campaigning, different issues that people could support, where Jefferson Davis did, didn't. Yes, he's an important national figure with the understanding that he represents one of the political structures, a sectional political structure, that differed somewhat from political structures in other parts of the county. One isn't necessarily right or wrong. It's just that his way of achieving office, he did not have to go through the same type of campaigning that many northern politicians had to go through.
Next Speaker: Some historians have argued that if the CSA was never formed, Jefferson Davis would have become either the vice president or the president of the United States of America. Do you support that argument?

Eckert: Well, frankly, you or I could be vice president of the United States, as long as –

Next Speaker: ****

Eckert: – we remain Vice President.

Next Speaker: ****

[laughter]

Eckert: Uh, I think, you, you frequently find, uh, people who try to reflect on the importance of Jefferson Davis, saying he would have been a perfect president of a nation not at war in, in the mid-19th century. He certainly would have been equally effective as James Buchanan, probably his friend Franklin Pierce. He had all the abilities to, to organize and leadership in, in the national government. I think, yeah. I, historians don't like to answer, uh, those types of questions. But, yes, I think he would have been a, a good president. Probably not a great innovative president, because that wasn't his strong point, but he certainly could have handled, in the non-threatening environment, the issues of government.

Next Speaker: But, aside from whether he would have been a good president, do you subscribe to the viewpoint that he was on his way, maybe in 1864 or '68, to being vice president or presidential nominee?

Eckert: No. No. The, the tide had changed. The tide of public opinion had gone into the majoritarian position by 1860, and there, a person such as Jefferson Davis, coming from his background and representing what he represented, could not have been the choice of the party, um, could not have, would not have been successful as the party's choice in running for president of the United States.
Next Speaker: Give us some more compara – anything, first of all?

Next Speaker: ****

Next Speaker: I have one more question on this, too. One more question, and I think that's it ****.

Next Speaker: ****

Next Speaker: That's it?

Next Speaker: ****

Next Speaker: The last question until we have our illustrious executive producer join us on the veranda would be, and you've done it a little, but we'd like more, please, uh, a compare and contrast of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. It's a broad question, but if you can give some highlights, main similarities [or differences?].

Eckert: Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln are individuals and personalities, uh, that have strengths and weaknesses in each person. In trying to evaluate their success or their importance, so much goes to the victor that often the man who’s defeated is ignored. What, the strength of Abraham Lincoln and going into a modern culture, which was happening at this time, was the strength of being able to enunciate, elaborate his ideas in a way that a common, the common people could understand them and to build support among the common people for these issues. Davis was never able to do that. He was never able to define the issues that he thought were important for the Confederacy in a way that the common people of the South could understand them. And because he wasn't elected, uh, really by the common people – he was appointed and became the only choice for, for, uh, to become the, uh, the full president of the Confederacy the year later – he did not really have to present these issues to the public. Lincoln was always going to be faced with an election in 1864, so he had to make sure that his policy was clear, that it was doable, and that it had public support. Davis didn't have to do that. Uh, so
I guess what I'm saying is that Lincoln better understood the reality of the situation at the time and was more adaptable to that reality. Davis, looking backwards, I mean, some people would say it's not a revolution, the Confederate States of America. It's a reaction. So what Davis is looking back toward the past, the way things were when it was rapidly becoming modernized. And, and, therefore, Davis never had the ability to make people see the future, uh, uh, that it was a better future, something that they could share in. As for individual strengths and, and shortcomings, uh, Lincoln was a better administrator because he didn't worry about the day-to-day routine of office. Davis, on the other hand, worried about the day-to-day routines of office. As for presence, Davis has a stronger presence. Everybody who saw Davis—Davis was the type of person who looked important, who you knew that he had an air about him, an ability to him, that he was important. There's all sorts of remarks about Abraham Lincoln and laughing about it, uh, comparing him to a gorilla or, or something else due to his size and his shape. Uh, Lincoln—I think that's enough for now. Uh—

Next Speaker: Let me ask you one question—

Eckert: Yeah.

Next Speaker:– first of all, and then, is there any evidence, because we can't seem to get an answer on this, that Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis ever met?

Eckert: No. There is no evidence. They both were in the same war, the Black Hawk War in 1832.

Next Speaker: I need you to repeat my question, though.

Eckert: Okay. There's no real evidence, uh, no solid evidence, that Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln met. The only possible time they could have met was during the so-called Black Hawk War of 1832 in Illinois when, uh, Abraham Lincoln was captain of a local militia company and, uh, had seen some military service during that time.
Next Speaker: Had Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln ever met each other?

Eckert: To the best, to the best of my knowledge, there's no, there's no evidence that links the two together. Uh, Da, Davis served in the Black Hawk War in 1832, as did Lincoln, but there's no evidence that the two men ever met. Lincoln and Davis were both elected to Congress at the same time – stop. No.

Next Speaker: I don't think so.

Eckert: No. When was, when was Da, uh –

Next Speaker: ****

Eckert: – '46. When's Lincoln force –

Next Speaker: ****

Eckert: Okay. All right. That's what I was, okay, I should have said.

Next Speaker: I don't think they ever ****.

Eckert: No. No. No. Well, he left right away. He left in '45. So okay.

Next Speaker: You got your answer.

Eckert: Okay. When –

Next Speaker: Um, if you can expand on the tariff issue as you ****

Eckert: In the unit, in the mid-19th century, the United States was becoming more and more the –
Next Speaker: Just so you know, you could do it as an insert. You don't need to do a whole discussion.

Eckert: Oh, okay.

Next Speaker: Just an insert.

Eckert: Okay. Okay. The 19th century found the northern views of industrialization, of modernity, of expansion becoming more and more a factor. And, consequently, as the northern interests got more power in the Congress, they were able to pass laws that benefitted them and, in so doing, penalized the South, although it wasn't their goal to penalize the South, the practical nature was it did. An example of this is the Morrill Tariff passed shortly before the war begins, and the idea is to raise the protective tariffs on goods. And, in doing this, southerners then, or any part of the nation, not only southerners, would have to pay more to obtain these goods. That meant that the northern industrialists could charge more for the products they were producing. So it wasn't a free market type of an idea. It was a protected market.

Next Speaker: Um, if you can insert the notion about Abraham Lincoln versus Jefferson Davis ***.***

Eckert: Yeah. We just spoke about, you know, let's see how did –

Next Speaker: Principle versus ***.

Eckert: How did we get to that?

Next Speaker: It's just an insert.

Eckert: An example of the difference between the two men would be Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln had said, let us not be bound by the past. Let us live and
do what is necessary for, for the present. When he first became president, he was, he was challenged as to whether or not the war was over freeing slaves. Davis answered, actually shortly before the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation came out, he answered Horace Greeley and told him in his famous letter that in order to preserve the Union, he would free all of the slaves or none of the slaves or some of the slaves.

Next Speaker: Okay. Do you mean Davis or Lincoln?

Eckert: Lincoln.

Next Speaker: You said Davis.

Eckert: Okay. I apologize. The difference, perhaps a, an example of the difference between the two men could be over Lincoln's handling of crucial issues. For instance, slavery. Lincoln had made it clear, publicly, that in order to save the Union, he would free all the slaves, none of the slaves, or some of the slaves. He would do what was necessary in order to win. He was a practical man. Davis, on the other hand, was a man of principle. He stood on the issues that he felt was most important and had a very difficult time in making decisions that would overturn his principle. I'm trying to think of an example of that. Uh….

Next Speaker: That could be it. We don't ****

Eckert: Okay. Okay.

Next Speaker: Um, could you talk to us, just two more issues, and then we're ready to go on. Could you talk to us about the peace envoy that Jefferson Davis sent to the North, um, and Lincoln's response.

Eckert: Okay. It had been suggested to Davis several times, and particularly in the final months of the war, that a delegation from the South, uh, from the Confederacy, go and meet with a similar delegation from the North, both with the approval of the president of each nation, to
discuss terms. The problem was that Lincoln refused to ever meet with representatives of the
Confederates States of America. He would meet with them as individuals, or he would meet
with them as representatives from their states, but never the Confederacy. As Davis was always
correct in pointing out that these, uh, discussions were not going to go anywhere because the
basic premise, the right of a state to secede from the Union, was never accepted by Lincoln and
the northern government. And because of this, he always knew that they would fail. Towards
the very end of the Confederacy, however, he agreed that Alexander Stephens and other
prominent Confederates meet with Union, uh, leaders to discuss the terms, simply because he
didn't want to be accused of not looking for ways to end the war more, uh, more quickly. The
one caution he gave them, the one issue that they could not agree to, was to, was to go back into
the Union, that they were separate and independent and, in essence, representative of a separate
nation talking with representatives of another nation. Because this is exactly the term on which
Lincoln, at that point, at any point, was not going to compromise, it made any discussion of these
issues impossible. So there was one very early in the war – and the question was whether or not
Lincoln knew about it, how much permission he gave. Uh, Seward, uh, the secretary of state,
was actively involved in it – and one towards the end of the war, where we know Lincoln had
given his approval based upon the condition that the South was willing to return to the Union
with no questions asked.

Next Speaker: Is there any evidence that Jefferson Davis was involved in the assassination of
Abraham Lincoln?

Eckert: There is no evidence that I know of. There, it is true that there was a secret
service that operated for the Confederacy. It was more something that was established by
individuals who occasionally reported back rather than the government establishing a secret
agency. There has been some contentions made, uh, that Lincoln, uh, uh, Lincoln's capture, the
possibility of capturing Lincoln, was made known to the Davis government. There is no hard
evidence on that. But what is clear is that the Davis government never realized, never approved
of the assassination of the president of the United States or the attack upon other government
officials. It's questionable whether he knew that some northerners were planning, perhaps, on
kidnapping Abraham Lincoln. Uh, it sounds to me a little bit more problematic, uh, because the
question always comes, what would he do with Abraham Lincoln once he has him? You know, what difference would it make, and where would he be? So I find it, personally, I find it hard to believe, but I know that there has been scholarship done. It's been good scholarship, and those questions have been raised. So I can't dismiss it, but I don't see it as occurring.

Next Speaker: ****

Next Speaker: And we are rolling.

Next Speaker: We're rolling.

Eckert: There was an attempt to kidnap, uh, Jefferson Davis by Union cavalry; but in a, in the same way that there is no evidence whatsoever linking Jefferson Davis and the high administration officials with any attempt to kidnap Lincoln, there is no evidence that Abraham Lincoln had knowledge of the attempt, uh, to kidnap Jefferson Davis.

Next Speaker: If you can, um, as I told you, we're gonna be using chess pieces as a visual metaphor **** if you could help us out and –

Eckert: Okay. Uh –

Next Speaker: Something like tell me some ways you could see the Civil War as a chess ****

Eckert: Let, let me think about it. Let –

Next Speaker: ****

Next Speaker: Eckert interview moving inside **** plantation [Rosemont].

Next Speaker: Okay. Real quick, before we go, as –
Next Speaker: Steve, wait. One more thing on this.

Eckert: Oh, okay.

Next Speaker: ****

Next Speaker: Please provide us with ****

Next Speaker: He's using several versions now.

Eckert: I am. Okay. Uh, in, in playing the strategy, uh, for, for the war, uh, many generals, particularly, uh, George B. McClellan, wanted to capture the Confederate capital. Critics of it always referred to it as swapping queens. Like in a chess match, one side would – let me start over. Like in a chess match, one opponent would take the other's most valuable piece and, in return, the opponent would take the, uh, first person's most valuable piece. It was like a chess ma, uh, match between the two sides.

Next Speaker: ****

Eckert: The military training of the men who were the leaders, uh, most of the generals, was to see a battle as a complete piece. It's like a chess match. As they prepare to meet the enemy, on what movements they're going to make, they anticipate the enemy's movement in return, and they want a countermove. The problem comes when the enemy does something that's not expected. The great generals were able to rise to that situation, like Lee or, or Grant. The –

Next Speaker: If I sneeze again –

Eckert: Okay.

Next Speaker: Oh, that, that's perfect.
Eckert: Okay.

Next Speaker: So that's that.

Eckert: The way the, uh, generals were trained, uh, many of the leading generals were trained at West Point to study a battlefield situation, almost like a chess match between the two sides, to plan ahead on their first move and to anticipate what the enemy's next move would be. It worked many times, but the problem was when the enemy made a movement that you had not prepared for. Only the great generals like Grant or Lee were prepared for action at that point. Is that enough? Is that enough for your thing?

Next Speaker: ****

Eckert: Okay.

Next Speaker: Next time, be careful.

PART 5
Speaker 1: Please give us a sense of the charges that were filed against Mr. Davis and why did those charges not, uh, play themselves out?

Eckert: Basically, the government, uh, indicted Jefferson Davis for treason. There were several indictments handed down, at least one from a grand jury, but initially when Davis was held, he was held as a military, uh, combatant, and the army held him. The charges were made for civil court; they were charges of treason, which meant that Davis would have to be tried in civil court. Treason is one of the most difficult crimes to prosecute effectively in the United States because, of all the crimes, the criteria is spelled out in the Constitution, what is needed to be found guilty of treason. Quite clearly, Mr. Davis would have to be tried by a jury of his peers in a state where the "treason" had occurred. Now, many northerners agreed that Davis perhaps had fought too long, had a misunderstanding, but they also all agreed that the issue of secession was one that was held in good faith by a great number, millions of Americans. So the question
becomes, how can you prosecute a man for following what was espoused by many statesmen, believed by millions of Americans, and find a jury that's going to convict him for treason?

Speaker 1: And ultimately, what happened?

Eckert: OK, ultimately what happened. After 2 years in, in prison, the government, uh, the Johnson Administration, decided to turn President – I don't want to call him President Davis – sorry, Percival [Percival Beacroft], I don't want to call him President Davis. Uh, after, after years in prison, the government finally decided to turn Davis over to civilian authorities. It had been proposed to do this for several times, but the government, for a variety of reasons, had difficulty getting the judges [Supreme Court justices], specifically, uh, uh, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, in Richmond in time to meet with the federal judge there, Judge Underwood, and to hear the case. Finally, word was given to Chief Justice Chase that the government would not fight a writ of habeas corpus. The writ was given. A writ of habeas corpus means to produce the person in the courtroom and hear the charges against the person, and then the judge will decide whether or not that person should be held with or without bail. After 2 years, the government decided to release, or to remove Davis from Fort Monroe and turn the imprisonment and the issues for which he had been charged over from a military tribunal type of a situation to a civil court. Therefore, he was brought to Richmond in the hearing and a bail was set of $100,000.00.

Speaker 1: Describe the involvement of Mr. Greeley, Mr. Smith and Mr. Vanderbuilt.

Other Speaker: ****

Speaker 1: ****

Other Speaker: ****

Eckert: There were many men of principle in the North who, although they didn't agree with what Davis or the Confederacy had done, did agree as men of principle that, that he had the
right to speak to it and to undertake the actions that he had done, however wrongminded they
may be, and not to be persecuted for it. Among those were Horace Greeley, the editor of the
New York Tribune. He felt that Mr. Davis was being held unfairly, supposedly under military,
Uh, control, and that he had a right, as any citizen did, to have their case heard in public before a
jury of his peers. Therefore, he got two other men of principle, Mr. Vanderbuilt and Mr. Smith,
also from New York. Gerrit Smith was a prominent abolitionist before the war. Indeed, he had
been one of the contributors to John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. However, he too believed
that Mr. Davis had not committed a crime and, if he had committed a crime, it was up to the
government to prove that before a civil court. Therefore, these wealthy men stood before the
court and pledged their personal money as bond for Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis was released on that
bond and twice more he would be called in later to the court, when it looked like the government
was finally going to go ahead with the trial. But by the time, by 1868, uh, uh, Mr., uh,
President Johnson had been impeached, the trial had been held, they were going into, into the,
the following, uh, year, 1869, and, and Mr., uh, Johnson is going to be removed from office by
the electoral process, and frankly nobody had the heart to pursue it any further; and in all
likelihood, if he were tried before a jury of his peers in Virginia, he would be found not guilty;
and if he were found not guilty, then that would open up the whole discussion over secession
once again. Secession or non-secession may not have ended in a court of law, but it certainly it
ended in a battlefield, and nobody wanted to debate that question again in court.

Speaker 1: So what did the government decide to do?

Eckert: Basically, the government decided not to, uh, not to pursue the charges and did
drop the indictments against Mr. Davis.

Speaker 1: Uh, during his time out of prison, but before the charges were dropped, during
that bail period, Mr. Davis, um, moved out of the country. Talk to us about, uh, Mr. Davis' time
and – if, if you can, and I don't know if this is your area—Canada and England.

Eckert: Yeah. Mr., uh, after being released, uh, at the courthouse in Richmond, and there
was a crowd of, of Virginians and other, uh, former supporters out there who, who paid homage
to, to, uh, Mr. Davis – the, Mr. Davis and, uh, Varina and their youngest child, Varina Anne Davis, left for Canada. Now, they actually travelled separately because there was fear in the Davis family that he would be maltreated by northerners as he went north into Canada. The Davis children were already at a school in Montreal. Uh, Varina was very uncomfortable keeping her children in the United States, be they the southern states or the northern states, because other children picked upon her children because they were the children of Jefferson Davis. Uh, Mr. Davis goes up to Montreal first, and then they have a house in Lennoxville, a small town, uh, near Montreal, and, uh, they try to put their lives together. There are many ex-pats there, ex-patriots from the Confederacy, who welcomed 'em and entertained them; they travelled to Niagara Falls, for instance, and other places, and then they travelled to England. Uh, Davis was looking for something to do, quite frankly. He was looking for a period of time with his wife to, to spend time, to, to, uh, have time for themselves, and also some of the ex-patriots had gathered a fund of money to provide them some support that they needed. Who's beeping?

Other Speaker: ****

Speaker 1: So with, and some of the ex-patriots –

Eckert: OK.

Speaker 1: – provided a fund.

Eckert: Some ex-patriots were happy to provide money to help support the Davises. We don't have the full details of that, but we know particularly Judah P. Benjamin and other, uh, prominent Confederates who had managed to go to England were there and able to provide him some support. There were Confederate monies in England and Europe during the war that had not all been spent, and some of these monies were available to help support the Davis family. We're not sure – I don't think we've seen evidence of how much it was, how much was coming from private funds, and how much could be considered coming from Confederate funds.
Speaker 1: Please give us a sense of Mr. Davis' professional efforts after he was released from prison and the charges were dropped. Broad question, but –

Eckert: What do you mean by his professional –

Speaker 1: – well, you know, how he –

Eckert: What, what was his profession?

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: Is that what you’re trying to do? OK. Uh, –

Speaker 1: What we're tryin' to get at is –

Eckert: OK.

Speaker 1: – didn't do so well.

Eckert: No, no, OK. After his release, uh, Jefferson Davis tried to find some sort of employment for himself which would bring, which would be a position of dignity and a position that would provide enough benefits that he could support his family. Uh, he was invited to be president of Randolph-Macon College, but unfortunately he – first of all, he didn't want to do that because he said he would bring, uh, some focus upon the college and it may not all be, uh, uh, what do I wanna say –

Speaker 1: Positive.

Eckert: – positive, thank you. It, it would, it would bring some negative, perhaps bring some negative criticism to the, to the college. Um, he, his wife Varina very much wanted him to write his memoirs, but it was difficult. He complained that the topic still hurt him too much, it
has been too soon since the death of so many of his friends and fellow Confederates, that he wasn't able to, to face that immediately. The farm, that is the plantation, the family got back through a, uh, lucky incident. Joseph, his eldest brother, who had actually given him, uh, Brierfield, had never completed the, the deed to turn over the land to Jefferson Davis. Because of that, the land wasn't confiscated 'cause technically the land still belonged to Joseph Davis. Consequently, he had, uh, that land was available to them, but Jefferson Davis and Joseph Davis weren't willing to farm it. Instead, they sold it to a talented family of freed people, that is ex-slaves from the plantation, the family of Benjamin Montgomery, and provided some loans to the family to help them, uh, try to establish a plantation on their own. This is a black family in, in Mississippi after the war. So he got some funds from that. He got some funds from ex-patriots. He, he, uh, was, was, also then looked for a job, a position that would have some sort of dignity, and he kinda bounces around. He can't find anything that is, that provides him enough, with enough money and also provides him with the dignity that he wants. You have to remember in a southern leadership eye, to go into capitalism or to go into banking or industrialism is anathema. That's what they had criticized about the North, and this man, who, who is so proud and who, who was such a spokesman for the, the southern view, was not ready to open a factory someplace and, and head that factory. So he finds two positions eventually: president of the Carolina Life Insurance Company, which was headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, and basically it was nothing more than sending salesmen out on the road to send life insurance policies, uh, to sell life insurance policies. With the economic changes that occur, and, and the cycles of depression, recession, depression, and prosperity in the 19th century, that company went bankrupt. He tried to head another company which would provide a direct means of trade between Europe and the Mississippi Valley, but that company hardly gets off the ground at all. Uh, he basically never finds a position for himself. He never can find a position in which he can view Jefferson Davis doing the job because the jobs that would make enough money to bring, to allow him to live the way he wanted to were too, were too commercial, whereas, the jobs that were offered to him, and I, frankly I think he would have done well, he was actually offered the presidency of three colleges, but he said to one of the colleges "The salary you're offering me is $1,200.00." He was getting paid $12,000.00 as the president of the Carolina Life, uh, Insurance Company. So money played a, a factor in it, but at the same time, so did his image of himself.
Speaker 1: Um, describe the circumstances surrounding his ultimate writing of his memoirs. If, if you feel like –

Eckert: Yeah, no, uh, I, I just tryin' to figure out where to start. Varina and Jefferson Davis had a very special relationship. Uh, she was more than a wife to him in the sense that she was his, his secretary, she was his literary aide, she helped him in many ways. This was both before the war as well as after the war. She recognized that if Jefferson Davis would start writing his memoirs that it would bring out issues that he could clarify and learn how to deal with. So she encouraged him to write his memoirs. Unfortunately, due to their relationship with each other in, after the war, Davis was always more relaxed and more able to deal with issues when he was apart from Varina than when he was with Varina; and you have a period of time where they're simply separated. They, they, they love each other, they continue to write to each other, but they both agree that they're better off if they don't live together. So Davis had to find a place to go; and there was a, a wealthy, uh, woman, a wealthy widow, in, uh, with a home on the Gulf Coast--the home was Beauvoir--and she invited Jefferson Davis to come down and to find the relaxation from the saltwater air on, on the coast and to write his memoirs, and she would help him. The woman, Sarah Anne Dorsey, was a writer in her own right, and she established an office for Jefferson Davis and helped him get started writing his memoirs. A paid assistant was hired after a contract had been placed with a publisher, and this was Major Walthall, and Major Walthall's job it was to write down Jefferson Davis's reminiscences throughout the day. He would listen to him. Davis didn't sit down and write this book so much as discussed issues. He discussed issues on constitutional government and, and other important issues, and Walthall took notes and was to write it up into a book form. Walthall really got nowhere, and after months and months of this going on, finally the publisher sends a representative down there to find out how much manuscript has been written and, much to his chagrin, he found out that almost nothing had been written. So this editor, a man named Redpath, stays there and helps put Jefferson Davis's book together. By that time, Varina had come to Beauvoir to live there and to work alongside her husband. At first she wouldn't go there because this other woman, Sarah Anne Dorsey, had replaced her in a very cherished part of her relationship with Jefferson Davis and, uh, - let's see, OK.
Speaker 1: Is there any evidence that there was an affair between Mr. Davis and Ms. Dorsey?

Eckert: No, but I will –

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: - uh, Davis's sexual activities were speculated on both before the Civil War and even after the Civil War; and even as an old man, the speculation was given out that he may have had sexual relationships with Virginia Clay as well as Sarah Anne Dorsey. There is no evidence of any substantial kind that any such union took place. I think, more likely, he was fond of women friends and worked well with women, and the women admired him and provided him, not only in Sarah Anne Dorsey's case, not only with the place where he could write and, and care, but she also helped, knew what to say to him at the right time to encourage him to write and get out his thoughts, but there's no evidence that he had an affair.

Speaker 1: Um, how did the book do once published? Hold please. I just don't want to sneeze during your answer.

Other Speaker: ****

Speaker 1: How did Jefferson Davis become acquainted with Sarah Dorsey?

Eckert: Sarah Dorsey and he had known each other since children [incorrect] and, uh, since –

Speaker 1: Take ****

Eckert: – Sarah, OK – Sarah Dorsey and Jefferson Davis – What was Sarah Dorsey's, uh, maiden name, Percival?

Other Speaker: ****
Sarah Anne, later Mrs. Dorsey, and Jefferson had been friends since childhood [incorrect; Sarah and Varina had known each other growing up in Natchez]. Uh, they knew, they, they came from similar families in the Natchez/Vicksburg area, and after the war, uh, she had married well and she had become a minor literary figure, uh, uh, on her own, particularly in New Orleans, and she had a lovely house on the Gulf Coast east of New Orleans. And Jefferson Davis was, was trying to find himself, and he travelled as, he trav, he travelled in New York, he travelled in Canada, he travelled in the Northeast, trying to find a place where, where he could kinda find himself and, and, an, an, and sit down comfortably and write. Mrs. Dorsey, now widowed, invited Mr. Davis to spend some time at her home called Beauvoir near Biloxi, Mississippi. He came down there, and she not only was willing to have him use room within the house, but she built a special office for him outside [the “library cottage” was part of the original estate, built before the Civil War], where he could concentrate on his writing. Mrs. Dorsey was very sick with cancer and she would eventually die before Davis finishes with the book and completes his work; and although she had sold the house to Jefferson Davis, and Jefferson Davis had made the first of three payments on it, she left the house and other property to, to Jefferson Davis.

Speaker 1: Did Mr. Davis at all remain active in politics after the Civil War?

Eckert: Mr. Davis, uh, uh, uh, as he – after the Civil War, Jefferson Davis liked to portray himself as a man without a country. He would sometimes go and speak before, uh, groups and would start out with the phrase such as “fellow citizens” and then correct himself and say, "Oh, I can't call you fellow citizens because I don't have my citizenship." Therefore, Davis was never really involved in politics after the Civil War. He, he was certainly opposed to Republican, uh, administrations in the South, but politics seemed to be removed from his area of interest once the war had ended.
Speaker 1: Give us a sense of the difference between the myth of Jefferson Davis and the history of Jefferson Davis.

Eckert: The myth of – you don't mean the myth of Jefferson Davis, do you?

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: – do you mean the, uh, do you mean the Lost Cause myth?

Speaker 1: ****

Eckert: There are two types of, of memory; one's a narrative memory and one is an actual memory. The actual memory, it's what happened, exactly when it happened, where it happened, it's like testimony in a court of law. Narrative memory, on the other hand, tells a story. It tells a story which has meaning and it may not worry so much about the particulars as the essence of the meaning. Some people say the South, more so than other parts of the nation, has more stories or perhaps even myths. Myths are important feature, are important stories that tell – let me start there. Myths are important stories that try to allow people to live with the reality of a situation when the ideal is supposed to be something else. America is the land of freedom, of prosperity, of military success; and the South in the late 19th century seemed to be a region of poverty, military failure, and less freedom. The South had to come up with a way to deal with the reality. The republic had been founded on the ideal that all men are created equal. This was an, an ideal from the enlightenment; and even though Thomas Jefferson, a slave-owner, had used the phrase, it, it was a time when people believed in the future, the United States truly would be a land in which all men are created equal. Within two generations after Thomas Jefferson, however, that wasn't true throughout the entire United States. So, how do you deal with the reality of a situation, a situation that's slavery in a nation that is born of the ideal of all men being created equal? You come up with explanations. They are very deep. They're, they're not fictitious, they're part of a person's soul that it's, it's incumbent upon a certain group of people to teach those who are less prepared, for whatever reason, how to live in this particular society. So for
the antebellum South, the plantation myth was that a backward people, the slaves, had to be watched over by an advanced culture and race and brought somehow into the standards that this nation cherished. When the war came, the Civil War, and these people had gone to war with the belief that they were not only had the correct interpretation of the Constitution, but were somehow protected by God in what they were doing, there needed to be an explanation with these beliefs, which by the way Jefferson Davis always held were the correct beliefs, and the reality that they lost; and when human beings lose something of dear value, they try to find an explanation for it, a transcendent reason how this could have occurred to the people. The post-Civil War myth, uh, is the Lost Cause myth; and that's summed up with the phrase "It is better to have fought and lost than never to have fought at all," and Jefferson Davis was always a prominent leader and a prominent symbol of this myth. He lived that myth, consciously lived that myth, throughout his life; maintaining as late as the mid-1880s, that if he had to do it all over again for the principle, to stand up for what he believed was right, he would do just what he had done. And when he says that, re, recall that he's talking about the loss of 600,000 American youth, the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars of property, the freeing of the slaves, and the South being put under re, re, Republican Reconstruction. That's a big thing to say. I don't know, I don't believe it, I don't know if, uh, many, uh, people today still believe it; but to stand up there, to have been through that and say "I was so right that I would do it again despite the reality" meant that there had to be a reason for it, and the reason for it, the transcendence was this idea of, of the noble cause, the lost cause. So the Lost Cause myth is the idea that what the South did was absolutely right; by leaving the union they correctly interpreted the Constitution, they correctly understood why people, uh, they correctly understood American government and therefore everything they had done was right. Now they may not have made all the right decisions in pursuing the war, but the big issue of whether or not they should have seceded, stood up for their rights, leaves no doubt in their mind.

Speaker 1: You're most well-known for a phrase--"fiction distorting fact." Describe how that phrase applies to Jefferson Davis and, uh, the Civil War myth.

Eckert: Well, the phrase, the phrase "fiction distorting fact" was actually coined by Jefferson Davis and he wrote that in, as marginalia in his copy of The Prison Life that Craven
supposedly wrote. It, it was a criticism of the book, uh, it was a criticism that, uh, Jefferson Davis was particularly bothered by a section on General David Hunter. Hunter was a, came from a prominent Virginia family and yet was a, an ardent unionist, and he not only was one of the first generals to declare slaves free in his area, but, but he eagerly participated in the burning of buildings in the Shenandoah Valley later in the war. And when Craven put Hunter and Davis together, Davis was furious—“fiction distorting fact.” Now that's not really what you asked me, uh, –

Speaker 1: It's not a bad answer –

Eckert: OK, OK, OK.

Speaker 1: Um, would you believe that – it's, it's kind of a follow-up to the question –

Eckert: For, your previous question, OK.

Speaker 1: – about, yeah. it's kind of a follow up in terms of, you know, Jefferson Davis' legacy and how he was perceived both toward the end of his life and after his life, you know, we're tryin' to –

Other Speaker: ****

Speaker 1: **** OK.

PART 6
Speaker 1: Do you believe that, uh, Mr. Davis was a scapegoat for the Confederacy and the post-war South? And if he was, was that appropriate?
Eckert: Jefferson Davis definitely was a scapegoat for the South. Uh, the scapegoat is the individual who bears the, quote unquote, “sins” of other people and is punished in lieu of the entire South being punished. Jefferson Davis saw himself, and both he and Varina Davis, as well as many other prominent southerners once he was in prison, described him in so many words, as a scapegoat for the cause. Uh, Davis writes to Varina while in, in prison that if he could bear s, the, uh, that if he could bear the punishment of his fellow southerners on his back alone, he would gladly do so. The choosing of Jefferson Davis to be punished, and particularly the humiliation of Jefferson Davis with the manacling. The manacling only lasted for 5 days at most, but was, but was a punishment which was meant to degrade a very important and very proud individual. And it precisely did that, but at the same time backfired. There was no need to manacle Jefferson Davis, and everyone knew that. So in a way, he is suffering for the other Confederates by his imprisonment, and he was greatly aided in that by descriptions coming out of the prison in the press or in the fictitious book, uh, attributed to memoirs by his physician, *The Prison Life of Jefferson Davis*, that the punishments were more severe than they were in actuality.

Speaker 1: Along those lines, uh, a gentleman named Edward Pollard essentially stated that if the Union had simply turned him loose, turned Mr. Davis loose and let him go, he probably would've just drifted off into oblivion or remained extremely unpopular. Please give us a sense of who Mr. Pollard is, what his theory is, and what you believe about his theory.

Eckert: Uh, Edward Pollard was the editor of, of the Richmond *Examiner*. He was ardently anti-Davis and was one of the first of the southerners to write a history that put much of the blame for the loss in the war on Jefferson Davis, so there was no love lost. He is the one who remarked at, at one time that the Union had made a mistake by imprisoning Davis. They simply should have let him go and if he had done so, he would be largely forgot, forgotten. Interestingly, the president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, had made a similar remark to General Sherman, when, after Lee had surrendered, they knew that Davis was fleeing and they were searching for him, and he remarked, that is, Lincoln remarked to Sherman, that he wouldn't mind it if Davis escaped from the United States unbeknown to him. What he meant was once you have Davis in hand, what do you do with him? And of course this is compounded by the
assassination of Lincoln and the hysteria that follows that, because of all the assassinations, that's the one that's most clearly a conspiracy. How deep does the conspiracy go, what the problems are out there? Davis would have been a lesser figure, I do believe, among his fellow ex-Confederates than if he had not been imprisoned, uh, than he was. I think for history, as historians, and for people today, North or South, Americans in general, I don't think the imprisonment of Davis matters that much at this point.

Speaker 1: Mr. Davis, throughout his life, was quite interested in technology and advancements in technology. Uh, [mostly?] technology focusing on the military side, um, a big proponent of rifles. How did that interest play itself out postwar?

Eckert: I don't know. I can't answer that. I, I –

Speaker 1: Okay, that's fine.

Eckert: I, I, I just, uh –

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: Well yeah, I was just interested in the theme. I was interested in, you know, if ****.

Eckert: In my research, uh, to write a biography of Jefferson Davis, I noticed there were two periods in his life that a fundamental change, either in Davis himself or the way Davis was perceived, occurred. The first of these was after the death of his first wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, and Davis goes into seclusion, grieving for nearly a decade. What we know, we don't know fully what happened in those 10 years, but we know that the Jefferson Davis, the young man who, who went into that in 1835, was a very different personality than the Jefferson Davis who emerged from it, uh, 10 years later. The Jefferson Davis who went into that was a young, vibrant, happy young man who pushed the rules to the limits. He, he was, he was not the most obedient son. He was not the person who we think of him later on as being, a solemn or austere
type of personality. Somewhere in that decade, he goes from being a person really interested in
the nation and the military and his own life, to being a prominent spokesman, and he
immediately goes into Congress following this, a prominent spokesman for a particular way of
life. The second change occurs during his imprisonment. Now that change is different in
perhaps that Davis doesn't change so much as people's perception of him change. What you have
going in there is a man who is blamed, if not for the war itself, for prolonging the war beyond
what it should have been, for continuing the fight when it was obvious to others that, that they
were not going to win. Uh, they talk of things in 1865 and begin to, begin to free slaves and, and
how the slaves would be freed and, well, why didn't he recognize that sooner? Why hadn't he
done something about it more, uh, uh, quickly? People blamed him for prolonging the war.
“We'll Hang Jeff Davis from a Sour Apple Tree” [a song of the time] was not something that
only northerners would sing, southerners would sing that as well. Indeed, Mrs. Davis, one of the
reasons she sent her children with her mother to Canada before she could go up there, were
residents of Savannah were teaching her children to sing that about their father. The
imprisonment, however, means, and, and graphically portrayed in newspapers and the book
*Prison Life of Jefferson Davis*, changed the South's perception of their president. Here is a man
who would, had not only led them, but was willing to suffer for them. And consequently,
Jefferson Davis comes out of that a much cherished figure and a representation of the southern
position, the right of the southern position in seceding. And in a way, this will burden him for
life, because Davis is caught in his own myth. He cannot, he cannot easily put that aside and
perhaps go into a commercial endeavor that would make him a lot of money. He's always
troubled by this and has to pre, he used to wear suits of Confederate gray whenever he would go
out late in life to speak and make public appearances, again, in a way of triggering that memory,
and again, forcing people to remember who he was and what he had done for them. So what you
have there is a different Jefferson Davis. He is no longer the leader of the South, the, the, the,
uh, person who is going to take the South into this new position. He is the memory of the South,
the collective memory of the cost of the Civil War on all southern people.

Speaker 1: Other Confederates did get back into politics. Alexander Stephens, for example –

Eckert: Mm hmm.
Speaker 1: – the vice president of the Confederacy –

Eckert: Mm hmm.

Speaker 1: – wound up back in Congress. Why didn't or couldn't Jefferson Davis reenter the national stage?

Eckert: Jefferson Davis was never again a citizen of the United States, and he proclaimed that. He was a man who had never been, who had never been pardoned because he refused to seek pardon. So, consequently, his, uh, political privileges had never been restored to him. And that was very important to him. It, it's ironic that perhaps the most southern, the first really southern president after the war, Jimmy Carter, is president of the United States when Congress restores citizenship to Jefferson Davis. Uh, I'm not a southerner, but Robert Penn Warren was, and Robert Penn Warren said there was no greater injustice ever done to Jefferson Davis than to restore his citizenship, because that's the man he was and the man he wanted to be. He didn't see it as a punishment. He saw that as something to be proud of, that he stood up for principle and was willing to continue for principle. So the answer is, Jefferson Davis can't be involved in politics until he re, he applies for a pardon. Now you understand, uh, uh, a pardon in, in, um, American, um, jurisprudence is really an admission of guilt. A guilty man does not need a pardon because he will be found not guilty by the courts. Uh, excuse me, an innocent man does not need a pardon because he will be found not guilty by the courts, but a guilty man needs to be protected from the possible punishment of the court. Therefore, the pardon is, is, is an admission of guilt. And although almost all other prominent, uh, southerners after the war, including Robert E. Lee, including his brother, uh, uh, Joseph Davis, in, in, including Vice President Stephens, they were willing to apply for a pardon so that they could become leaders once again in the South. Davis saw his, his position as kind of outside that political leadership.

Speaker 1: For the health question, do you want just a general discussion of how health impacted his life?
Other Speaker: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Please give us a general discussion of how his health maladies affected his life.

Eckert: Well first of all, Jefferson Davis did suffer from some serious illnesses. Uh, the wound, the shorts [shots], uh, in, in, into his foot. He suffered from neuralgia. He suffered from what's called St. Vincent's Fire or erysipelas, which is a staph, uh, uh, a staph infection. It's kind of a rash on your face. He lost eyesight. Uh, uh, I'm not positive why he lost that in, in his left eye. He suffered from rheumatism. He had trouble sleeping. Health was an ongoing problem with Jefferson Davis, and the war and the worries did not improve the situation. He also suffered from malaria, uh, uh, uh, which he contracted on his honeymoon with, with, uh, Knox Taylor. Uh, so Davis was an ill man, but yet, at the same time, you have to remember that he, that he lived to be 81 years old. And so that's also there. So both, both things. [cough] Excuse me, I need water.

Speaker 1: You need some water? ****. Um, were there any nations that recognized the legitimacy of the CSA?

Eckert: The, there were no nations that formally recognized the Confederate States of America. There was a Polish government in exile which recognized the government of the Confederacy, and then there's the story that deals with the papacy. Uh, southerners were complaining –

Speaker 1: And speak.

Eckert: Southerners believed, and perhaps rightly so, that, uh, northern priests were going to Ireland to recruit young men to serve in the Union army and consequently, the southern Catholics complained to the pope and asked him to intervene and, and stop this recruitment of young men for the Union army. It came through the office of Jefferson Davis, the, the letter to the pope, and the pope returned the mail and wrote to Davis and addressed the envelope to the Honorable Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America. Now when you
recognize a government, it doesn't take an act of Congress or Parliament or whatever it is. It's one head of state recognizing another head of state. And in those days, the pope actually did control some land known as the Papal States above and beyond or, or more than the, the Vatican, uh, City today. So the only two, uh, governments to recognize the Confederate States of America as le, as a legitimate government was this Polish government in exile and the papacy. And the papacy did it accidentally by the address, the address written by the pope on, on the envelope.

Speaker 1: Describe for us the relationship with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell.

Eckert: Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis had a, an interesting relationship. She was 20 years younger than Jefferson Davis. And –

Speaker 1: Hold. She was, it was actually 18 years 'cause she was –

Eckert: I thought she was born in 1828 and he's born in 1808.

Speaker 1: Well I have, when they got married, she was 18, he was 36.

Eckert: Okay. Okay.

Other Speaker: It's about 20.

Eckert: About 20 years.

Speaker 1: Yeah, yeah. About 20 years.

Eckert: Yeah, yeah, okay. Varina, Varina Howell was about 20 years younger than Jefferson Davis when they were married. And her family clearly came from a status beneath that of the Davis family at that time. Indeed, she has a great deal of difficulty with her in-laws and, who she feels feel they are better than she, and she's right, because we have letters from her
in-laws to each other, I'm talking about brothers and sisters of Jefferson Davis, that describe her as coming from a lesser class than, than theirs. Her father was a ne'er-do-well planter. He actually was a transplant from New England [New Jersey]. And she married this man who was a widower, uh, nearly 20 years her, her senior, and she later in life admitted that she had married a man without ardor, that a man has only one love in life, and once that love is expended, he may be, to use Varina's words, like an oak tree, strong, but he's an oak tree that never blossoms again. And she was writing to her friend whose daughter was thinking of marrying a widower. And in her letter, she said she had married a widower. He was good to her. He was strong. He was a loyal husband. He was a fine father. But he didn't have that romantic love which she was looking for as a young girl. Once they were married, Varina, who was very well-educated, liked to spend time with Jefferson, not only as his wife, but also as his secretary. When they first went to Congress immediately after their marriage, she was one who was going to be at his side. She was going to be there. She was his, uh, amanuensis. She, she wrote letters for him. She was his secretary, and she really enjoyed that role. Once Davis goes off to Mexico and they begin to have children, they, she enjoys the domestic life that Jefferson and she share. But she does not like being down here in Mississippi. She prefers to be in Washington D.C., or other cities, where she is not under such direct observation by her in-laws. She always felt that Joseph, uh, Davis and, and the other Davis, uh, siblings were, were putting her down. So she tried to avoid them and her way to avoid them was to go elsewhere. Jefferson and Varina Davis also used illness as a way of intimacy between the two of them. Uh, their relationship, probably very typical of 19th-century middle-class relationships in the western world, was not one of ardent love, but one of helper and domestic partners. And when stress would occur, one or the other was frequently ill, which required the, the other spouse to show kindness and care and love toward them. So they seemed to make more out of their illnesses, uh, than reality suggested. One has neuralgia or one has rheumatism or other pains. Today you take something for it, hopefully. Uh, you, you, you, you live with it, I think, or we encourage people to become more active. In the 19th century, you secluded yourself. You went into a darkened room. Somebody took care of you and could minister to you in some way, and that part of the relationship was extremely important. Unfortunately, it breaks down after Davis is freed from prison. His wife goes there and becomes his strongest advocate to release him. She purposely uses his physical condition. Um, he, he's not that ill, even in prison. He's terribly bothered by
the light and the sounds at night. He doesn't get sound sleep, uh, for the first year of his imprisonment because there's always guards outside and a light is burning. And he complains about it, but he also keeps telling his wife in his own letters from prison, my health is not nearly as bad as people are making it out to be. But she uses that as the key to get sympathy for her husband, which was something she knew in the past from their relationship, and it works very well. It focuses upon the care that's being given to Jefferson Davis in prison. After he's released, though, their relationship is very different. I don't know if it's due to the death of three of the, uh, two of their sons and two more would, would, would die during that period of time, of the late years of, of, uh, Jefferson Davis's life. I, I don't know if it's due to menopause. At one point, she does write to Davis about women my age having problems dealing with things. I don't know if it's about the disappointments they faced, the, the, the number of people they knew who had died in the war, the, the, the financial loss, the loss of, of place in society and, and political structure. But the two of them become very, very ill and, and kind of, particularly she, she, she just finds it difficult to come back into the South. Baltimore is about as close as she wants to get. Memphis, perhaps--her oldest daughter lives in Memphis--but the idea of coming and living on Beauvoir or going down to New Orleans is something that she fights. Indeed, after Davis dies, she moves to New York City and, and that becomes really her home. So illness is a very important part of the Davis relationship, uh, Jefferson and Varina Davis's relationship to each other, but it's also an important part, I think, of 19th-century, middle-class, Victorian, uh, domestic life. Uh, it's pre-Freudian, it's pre-Kinseyan, so consequently, one, one searching for sympathy, one searching for, for, for, uh, companionship, one searching for sex, turns into kind of taking care of the other person, and I think that, that's part of their relationship.

Speaker 1: Very compelling. What is the legacy of Jefferson Davis?

Eckert: Jefferson Davis leaves us mostly, uh, uh, uh, uh, a legacy to be proud of. First of all, he was a man of honor. He was a man of his word. Uh, he, he stood up for his beliefs. He was a brave man, both morally and physically. He was willing to do what a, what was right to serve his community. Uh, Jefferson Davis had a tremendous loyalty to friends. He was a loving father and a, and a good husband. Uh, he was a man who, uh, got a college education, served his country in the military, served as secretary of war, served in the Senate and the House
of Representatives of the United States. There's much to be admired. He's also the man who wanted to be a military leader if war came, but was chosen by his people to be president of the Confederacy. It was a job which he claims that he didn't want, and I believe him, but it was a job that he knew he was going to be called to do, and he responded and did the best job he could. I think Davis's other side to that legacy, where he leaves us down, is that he did not recognize the importance of the rebuilding of the South after the war, his insistence on his position being the correct position, and that if he had to do it all over again, he would do it all over again, I don't think helped the South mend. I think what Davis should have done is accepted a presidency of a college, for instance, and then used that as a pulpit to, to help educate young men to work, to work for the rebuilding of the South and providing a fairer system of government and a fairer economy and a better society throughout the South. I'm asking too much there, I know that. And, and, and, but at the same time, Davis should have gotten away from the academic issue of, of, uh, the compact theory of government. Okay, he's right. His arguments were correct, but so what? The war had shown that the nation was going a different way and Jefferson Davis never quite accepts that and become a spokesman for rebuilding the South.

Speaker 1: Is the Civil War over?

Eckert: Oh, I think so. I think, I, I, I think the Civil War is over, and I think changes are occurring as we realize the direction this nation is going to. We are a more democratic nation. We do respect each other more, and we have greater diversity. I think, eventually, the Civil War battle flags, the Confederate battle flags that have raised such discussion, uh, in recent years, some day will be found in museums and not publicly displayed. And when that occurs, I think the nation will be better. They will be there to be studied, to be understood and to be honored, but will not be used for current political or social issues.

Speaker 1: What can a 21st-century American learn from the life of Jefferson Davis?

Eckert: I think what a 20, a, a 21st century American can learn from Jefferson Davis that, first of all, an education is important, first of all, being a person of integrity, to stand up for what you believe in, to have enough confidence in what you believe in to compel you to act in favor
of, uh, of that. It teaches a 21st-century American to be a good husband, a good father, a caring individual. There's much to be admired from Jefferson Davis.

Speaker 1: What do you think Jefferson Davis would think about 21st-century America?

Eckert: Oh, God, I don't wanna handle that. Give me a break.

Other Speaker: Anything, anything else? ****.

Other Speaker: Me. Uh, talk to us about the death of, uh, Joseph Davis, the child, and if you'd like to expand upon the death of the other children during their lives, uh, lifetimes.

Eckert: When I first, uh, started studying Jefferson Davis, he appealed to me because his career spanned the three areas that I taught in upper-level courses and were my areas of interest--the Civil War, military history, and the South. And as I began to study Jefferson Davis, I saw a far more complex man, and a man who had met challenges in life that I could only begin to guess how one could feel. And one of those challenges that he faced were all four of his sons, four of his six children, died, predeceased him. The first child died when he was about a year old, Samuel, uh, Davis. He, he died of an infection, and Je, Jefferson Davis was devastated by it. Varina later wrote that, that he, he'd walk at night for hours back and forth, said he was unable to bring out the grief that he felt. And actually, very soon after the little boy died, only a year old, he goes back to work as a means of I think working through this, this tragedy. Then, as president of the Confederacy, a son falls off the balcony about 20 feet below to the ground and is killed. Once again, this family is challenged by the death of a child. The other two children will die as men [one was 12, one was 21], uh, one from yellow fever, the other from diphtheria, and they're, they're just sha, I don't know how parents deal with that. And I've never been able to, to come up with a good answer of what it must have felt like. I've known parents who have lost one child, but to lose four children seems, seems to me beyond explanation. Uh, the fact that he had any sort of faith after losing those children and, and continued to, uh, express a strong belief in, in his faith as a Christian, as a, as a confirmed Episcopalian, was something that I think lesser people might, might just walk away from life. And Varina was terribly affected, as one can expect.
Indeed, she's going to have to experience a fifth child's death before her own, uh, when their youngest child, Varina Anne Davis, “the Daughter of the Confederacy,” as she's sometimes called, uh, dies, predeceases her in, in, in, in life. So it, it's, it's a family full of tragedies. And when I realize this, I, I've never been able really to tackle that, I must admit. How do you get around those personal tragedies, plus the professional tragedy of the war and what that cost the South? And maybe the only way to deal with it is to say if I had to do it all over again, I would live my life just as I did. Maybe there is no other way to remain sane and to deal with that kind of professional and, and personal tragedy.

Speaker 1: Please comment upon –

Other Speaker: Uh, hold on, we've got to change tape.

PART 7

Speaker 1: Please describe Varina Davis as the First Lady of the Confederacy.

Eckert: Varina Davis had a great deal of difficulty as First Lady of the Confederacy because when they moved the White House and the capital to Virginia she was moving into a social structure which considered itself far above her background. Uh, indeed at, at some place a woman referred to her as an olive-skinned squaw, uh, a, a woman with no real knowledge of how to entertain properly and how to do the correct things. Furthermore, Mrs. Davis tried very hard to observe the, um, the southern sacrifices during the war so that she would have parties where local wines or even water were served rather than fine wines that perhaps could have been brought in from Europe. But this was as part of keeping with, uh, what was right because it wasn't right to serve imported wine, but yet she was criticized for that. She was also criticized for interfering in her husband's decisions and, and for personal conflicts between Mrs. Davis and like Mrs. Joseph E. Johnston, affecting the way President Johnson's [Davis’s] view was for General Joseph E. Johnston.
Eckert: She was all, uh, Varina Davis was also criticized for having too much influence over her husband. Uh, both because she was one of his primary advisors, uh, uh, she was again a very well-educated woman, a man [woman] whom he shared ideas with and freely shared her ideas with her husband. And also she was criticized because the president, President Davis, sometimes took personal conflicts that Mrs. Davis might have with other people into consideration; at least he was accused of doing this, we have no evidence. For instance, Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Johnston, Mrs. Joseph E. Johnston, did not get along. And consequently President Davis's treatment of General Johnston is sometimes blamed upon this, this, uh, fiery relationship, uh, uh, be, between two women. Uh, the way she dressed was commented by, on by other women, she did not have the proper standards and she was a pretend, uh, she was, she was not – Okay, that's enough there.

Eckert: Am I –

Speaker 1: **** jacket of the ****.

Eckert: Have you, have you lost some of those, uh –

Speaker 1: No, no, just right at the end.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: ****.

Eckert: Okay, well, really said, any other ideas? Percival [Percival Beacroft]? Linda [Linda Eckert]? Uh, out there about Mrs. Davis as First Lady?
Other Speaker: Well, I, I think –

Other Speaker: **** also I said to you.

Eckert: Okay. Okay. Are you ready?

Speaker 1: ****.

Eckert: Okay. Uh, Mrs. Davis was also very astute in politics, she had a excellent education, she was aware of the personalities, aware of the issues, and had strong feelings on them and she didn't hesitate from advising Jefferson Davis. Now, some people used her influence with her husband to their own advantage and an example of that, perhaps President Davis’s most talented cabinet figure was Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana. Mr. Benjamin was not only a key advisor to the president, President Davis, he was also a frequent visitor to and a friend of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, and many of his ideas would get to the president or be reinforced with the president through Mrs. Davis. So Mrs. Davis definitely had a n important influence on many of the policies that the Davis administration would follow.

Speaker 1: Got it.

Eckert: Okay.

Speaker 1: Everything ****. Okay.

[long pause; period of outdoor filming]

Other Speaker: It means you cannot go any further left or you're gonna fall in that hole.

Speaker 1: Okay, straight, straight back, okay. Here we go.

Eckert: Poplar Grove was Jefferson Davis’s childhood home. It was here where he grew up. The attraction of Davis to the land was not as great as one might have guessed. Instead,
farming was a way of life, part of the cultural background of Jefferson Davis, but it's not something that he liked to do himself. As a young man, Davis went to his father one day and told his father that he was sick of going to school. And his father, rather than over-reacting, took a look at his youngest child and said, that's fine, Jefferson, but you have to do something. If you're not going to work with your mind, you have to work with your hands. He said that beginning tomorrow you will go out in the field with our servants, as they called the slaves in those days, and work alongside them to learn about planting crops. Jefferson Davis went out with them and as his wife tells us in her memoir of her husband, went out only for a day when he returned to his father and said Dad, or Father, tomorrow I think I'd like to go back to school….

[Eckert, not Davis:] I didn't like it.

Speaker 1: That's all right, that's good practice. Okay, are we ready to do it? Okay, any time.

Eckert: Poplar Grove, as it was called –

Speaker 1: Hold on. What we'll do is when you walk in –

Eckert: Yeah.

Other Speaker: The camera has speed.

Eckert: Poplar Grove was Jefferson Davis’s home as a child.

Speaker 1: ****.

Eckert: What?

Speaker 1: Just start one more time.

Eckert: Yeah, I kinda –
Speaker 1: I think, um, I think when he comes in .... all right, camera has, camera HAS speed.

Eckert: Poplar Gove was the home of Jefferson Davis as a child. He grew up here, but he never really treasured living or working on the ground. When he was a young boy he told his father that he had had enough of school and he no longer wanted to attend school. His father, in, full of wisdom, said to him, that's fine, but no son of mine is going to do nothing. If you're not going to work with your head, you're going to work with your hands. He told him beginning the next day he wanted him to go out and work alongside the servants, as they called their slaves at that point. Davis did so, and after one day of working alongside the slaves he returned to his father that afternoon and said, having, and in all things considered he'd just as soon go back to school. Can I do it again?

Speaker 1: I think as you, as you come in –

Eckert: No, I –

Speaker 1: Okay. Anytime you're ready.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, Jefferson Davis’s childhood home. He grew up here, but he was never overly fond of the land. Varina Davis tells us a story about her husband as a youth. She said that one day Jefferson Davis, who, like any boy had grown tired of school, told his father that he no longer wished to go to school. His father, really in more wisdom than many of us would have, told him that was fine but no child of his was not going to do no work. Therefore, if he couldn't work with mind, he had to work with his hands. He told Jefferson the next day he was going to go out with the servants, the slaves, and work alongside them to learn about working the farm. After one day, Varina tells us, Jefferson returned to his father and said, all things considered, he thinks he'd just as soon go back to school.

Speaker 1: And let's do it.
Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, Jefferson Davis’s childhood home. Although Jefferson Davis grew up in his early years on this ground, this, the life of being a farmer, never really attracted Davis. Varina Davis tells us in her memoirs of her husband that Jefferson Davis went to his father one day and told him he was tired of going to school, and he asked him if he had to continue going to school. Jefferson's father, with a great deal of wisdom, told his son no, he did not have to continue with school but no child of his would, could, no child of his – You want to reshoot this, okay. I feel, I feel like –

Speaker 1: And camera, camera has speed.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove. It was on, it was here that Jefferson Davis lived as a child and grew up, but Jefferson Davis never had a strong attraction for the land. His wife Varina tells us in her memoirs that one day Jefferson went to his father and told him he wanted to quit school. His father, with a great deal of wisdom, told him that was fine, but if he wasn't going to work with his mind then he had to work with his hands. The next day Jefferson Davis went out with the slaves to work alongside them to learn about farming. At the end of the day, Varina tells us, Jefferson had changed his mind, went back to his father, and told him that all things considered, he'd just as soon go back to school.

Speaker 1: Got a plane, just a second.

Other Speaker: ****.

Speaker 1: Okay, and we're ready anytime you're ready, Ed.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove. This is the farm on which Jefferson Davis grew up.

Other Speaker: Take it again.

Eckert: What happened?
Other Speaker: ****. ****.

Other Speaker: What?

Other Speaker: ****.

Speaker 1: Okay, we ready? Okay, here we go; anytime Ed.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, Jefferson Davis’s home as a child. It was here that Jefferson Davis grew up and learned about farming even though Davis himself never really appreciated the land.

Speaker 1: That is really hot, I'm sorry. Make sure I don't see our shadows. Okay. All right. Let's give it a try.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, Jefferson Davis’s home as a child. It was here that Jefferson Davis grew up and learned about the farming. Varina Davis tells us, however, that, ah, shit, I just blew it.

Speaker 1: That's all right, let's just go back to one.

Eckert: It's not all right.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Eckert: It's not all right.

Speaker 1: Okay, it's awful. All right, anytime you're ready, Ed.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, the childhood home of Jefferson Davis. It was here he grew up and learned about farming. But farming was never that much appealing to Jefferson Davis.
His wife Varina tells us in her memoirs that, as a child, Jefferson Davis came home from school one day and told his father that he'd like to quit school. His father, with a great deal of wisdom, told the young man that that was fine, but no son of his was going to do nothing in life. Therefore, if he wasn't going to work with his mind, he'd better learn how to work with his hands. The next day Samuel Davis sends his son, Jefferson, out to work alongside the slaves. Varina tells us at the end of the day he returned to his father and said, all things considered, I'd just as soon go back to school.

[long pause; outdoor filming, including night shots of Rosemont]

Other Speaker: **** or anything, **** upstairs is a **** that look too much like anything or no?

Other Speaker: **** bed.

Other Speaker: **** huh?

Other Speaker: **** the house?

Speaker 1: All right then, uh, okay, any time, Dr. Eckert.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, this is Jefferson Davis’s boyhood home, a place he loved very much. He loved it for his family and, and place. But he wasn't a lover of farming. Indeed he spent relatively little of his time as a man farming. Indeed later in life his wife remembered a story from his childhood. After attending school and growing tired of it, he went to his father and said Dad, or Father …. I'll have to cut that, uh, I want to …. he went to his father and said, I'd like to drop out of school. His father, with unbelievable wisdom, turned to his son and told him that was fine, but no son of his was going to do nothing. If he wasn't going to work with his head he was going to work with his hands. Varina, who tells the story, says that after a day working in the fields alongside the slaves, Jefferson returned to his father and told him, all things considered, he thinks he'd just as soon return to school. There's a lot of wisdom in those words.
Eckert: This is Poplar Grove, Jefferson Davis’s boyhood home. It was here that he grew up and went to school for the formative years of his life. He loved this place very much; he loved place and he loved family. What Jefferson Davis didn't love was farming. He did relatively little farming, actual supervision of his plantation, later in his life. Varina tells us a story about his youth, when, coming home from school one day, he had grown tired of studies and he went to his father and asked him if he could drop out of school. His father, with infinite wisdom, said it was fine with him but no son of his was going to do nothing. Therefore if he wasn't going to work with his mind, he had to work, learn how to work with his hands. He sent him out the next day to work alongside the slaves in the field so he'd know about farming. Varina tells us at the end of that day Jefferson went back to his father and told him that, all things considered, he'd just as soon go back to school. There's a lot of wisdom in those words.

Speaker 1: Okay, here we go. Let's start right there. All right, we're set. Anytime.

Eckert: This is Poplar Grove; it's the boyhood home of Jefferson Davis, a place he loved very much. He loved the place and he loved seeing his family; what Jefferson Davis never liked was the actual work of farming and he rarely did farming, even when he owned his own plantation. Varina tells us a story about his youth, when, after a day at school he came home and saw his father and told his father that he would like to leave school. His father, with infinite wisdom, said to him that was fine but no son of his was going to do nothing in life. Therefore if he wasn't going to work with his head, he'd have to learn how to work with his hands. The next day his father sent him out to work in the fields alongside the slaves. Varina recalls at the end of that day Jefferson returned to his father and said, all things considered, I'd just as soon go back to school. There's a lot of parental wisdom in those words.

[filming at Locust Grove Cemetery, St. Francisville, La.]

Speaker 1: Checking my exposure, okay, good. That exposure all right?
Other Speaker: Yeah, that's good.

Speaker 1: Okay. All right, so I'm set and then you're gonna give him his queue, Ron.

Other Speaker: Okay. ****.

Speaker 1: That's fine.

Eckert: This is what remains of Locust Grove, a very important spot in the life of Jefferson Davis. It was here that his older sister Anna married Luther Smith and this was their plantation. Jefferson Davis and his young wife Sarah Knox Taylor came here to visit family on their honeymoon trip from Memphis [Vicksburg] to New Orleans. It was here that Jefferson and Knox both contracted malaria. Knox's remains are here in the cemetery, which played an important part in the life of Jefferson Davis and his second wife, Varina Howell, because after their marriage, 10 years after Knox's death, they too took a honeymoon down the Mississippi River, stopping first at his mother's plantation, Poplar Grove, and then stopping here at Locust Grove. Varina tells us that one day he took her out to this spot to visit the tomb of his first wife. It was not only poignant, it was very meaningful, that relationship. Much later in life, after Jefferson's death, Varina wrote a letter to a friend whose daughter was thinking of marrying a widower. She recommended to her friend that he not permit his daughter to marry a widower, as she compared it to her life. She said her husband was like an oak tree, strong and ready for her, able to support her, a good man. But he was like a girdled oak tree, one without blossoms because, as she told her friend, every man has but one heart to give away and Jefferson had already given that away to Knox.

Speaker 1: Okay, cut. Return to one.

Eckert: We're at Locust –

Speaker 1: Hold, hold, hold. Wait until I give you the sign.
Eckert: All right. We're at Locust Grove plantation. Little remains of the glory of, the antebellum glory of this spot but it was the home to Jefferson Davis’s sister Anna and her husband Luther Smith. It was here on his honeymoon trip with Knox Taylor, on the way to New Orleans, that he stopped to visit family. While here, both Knox and Jefferson contracted malaria. Jefferson recovered, Knox did not. Here she lies, buried, on the family plantation. But this spot has an even more poignant history than that. After Davis married Varina Howell –

Speaker 1: ****.

Eckert: What?

Speaker 1: ****.

Eckert: We're at Locust Grove plantation. This was the home of Jefferson Davis’s sister Anna and her husband Luther Smith. It was here that the young Jefferson Davis and his wife, Sara Knox Taylor, visited with family on their honeymoon trip to New Orleans. It was here, too, that the couple contracted malaria. Jefferson, of course, survived, Knox did not. She lies here in the graveyard. This was an important stopping spot also for his second wife Varina because, like Knox, they too went down the Mississippi River to visit family and they also stopped here. Varina remembered the day when Jefferson took her to this spot to visit the grave of his first wife. This poignant story is one that remained with Varina throughout her lifetime. Much later in life, she wrote to a friend, warning him [her] not to allow his [her] daughter to marry a widower. She spoke of her own life, her husband being a man strong as an oak tree, but a girdled oak, she said, an oak tree that no longer could blossom. Varina said that a man has only one heart to give away and her man, Jefferson, had already given his heart away to Knox.

Speaker 1: And cut. Good. We've got time for one more.

Eckert: We're here at Locust Grove, the home of Jefferson Davis’s sister Anna Smith and her husband Luther Smith. It was here, too, that the young Jefferson Davis and his bride, Sarah
Knox Taylor, visited on their honeymoon. They were taking a trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans, stopping at important family sites along the way--Poplar Grove, Locust Grove. It was at Locust Grove that Jefferson and Knox both came down with malaria. Jefferson, of course, survived; Knox, however, was buried here at this spot. It's a very poignant story, but even more poignant; 10 years later Jefferson Davis took another honeymoon with Varina Howell. On their way down they again stopped, first at Poplar Grove and then here at Locust Grove. Varina remembered throughout her life her experience here and walking out with Jefferson to the graveyard and visiting his first, the tomb of his first wife. The story is poignant, but it even becomes more so because later in life she wrote to a friend whose daughter was thinking of marrying a widow[er] and she warned her friend that a man has but one heart to give away. She said that her man was like a tall oak tree, strong and able to protect his family, but he was a girdled oak, according to Varina, one that no longer blossomed because Jefferson had already given his heart away to Knox.

Speaker 1: And cut.

Eckert: Okay. Want to try ****. We're at Locust Grove, the home of Jefferson Davis’s sister Anna and her husband Luther Smith. On their honeymoon trip from Memphis [Vicksburg] to New Orleans, the young Jefferson Davis and his new bride, Sarah Knox Taylor, stopped to visit family along the way. Here at Locust Grove the couple caught malaria. He, Jefferson, of course, lived. Sarah, however, died and her remains are here in the cemetery. This story is very poignant but it becomes even more so when one realizes that 10 years later he took his new bride, Varina Howell, on a honeymoon trip, making stops along the way to visit his family. Here at Locust Grove, Varina tells us, Jefferson walked her out to the grave site of Knox. The story grows later in life when Varina is contacted by a friend whose daughter is thinking of marrying a widower. Varina tells her about her life with Jefferson. She says Jefferson was like a strong oak tree, able to protect her and provide her with what she needed, but this oak tree was girdled, Varina said, and no longer could blossom. A man has but one heart to give, and Varina told her friend that her man, Jefferson, had already given his to Knox.

Speaker 1: And cut.
[applause]
Other Speaker: Very nice.

Speaker 1: That's the one. Woo, woo.

Other Speaker: Okay, cut.

Speaker 1: That was the one.