



Joseph Edgar “ED” Lillard, SMA ’48



Ed was born on March 7, 1931, and entered Staunton Military Academy (SMA) from Washington, DC, as a freshman in the fall of 1944. He graduated in 1948 as a member of the Medical Detachment of Headquarters Company.

After graduating from SMA, Ed attended Georgetown University for two years before entering the Marine Corps, serving in the Korean War. He was a Radio Operator (Voice) serving in the “Neutral Zone” at Panmunjom. Because of a great need for telegraph operators at the Marine Corps headquarters, Ed and another radio operator taught themselves how to operate the telegraph key and had their designations changed to Radio Operator (Voice and Telegraph). Because of that change in designation, Ed had been assigned to the First Marine Division Net on July 27, 1953, and was able to witness the arrival of General Dwight D. Eisenhower for talks with North Korean delegates.

“He was close enough for me to recognize him as he walked from his staff car to the negotiation tent,” Ed says. “I saw him go inside, and, later, I saw him come out, get in the car, and ride away. I don’t know if anyone outside of that tent (even the General’s brother, Milton, whom I knew later) knows what General Eisenhower said that day, but the war was over immediately.” Ed was back in the States in November of 1953 but still remembers that, soon after the signing of the armistice, he saw (U.S.) medivac helicopters (with two basket stretchers like seen in M.A.S.H.) ferrying the seriously wounded from both sides back to their respective zones as stipulated in the armistice.

After his discharge from the Marine Corps, Ed got his real estate broker’s license in 1954. He and his wife, Anita, were living in Maryland when he began a career as a retail locator for major grocery store chains. The first position he had was in Arlington, VA, as the National Real Estate Representation for Southland (7-Eleven) stores during that company’s first expansion into the mid-Atlantic states. He

worked with Southland from 1955 – 1962 and, then, went on to represent various other retail grocery companies in their real estate needs.

Ed's first acting experience was in 1967 in the second season of the famous Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre – theatre under the stars. Ed was cast in the part of Rev. T. Lawrence Shannon, the lead in *The Night of the Iguana*, by the play's director who was a friend of Tennessee Williams and who had seen something special in Ed during an audition. The play was a success. A reviewer said that the character of Rev. Shannon was too complex even for Richard Burton, but he had not seen an actor get closer to the mark than Lillard, an actor with absolutely no experience. Ed was also commended for his ability to call down lightning from God because as Ed was saying the scripted lines about "lightning and thunder" the heavens opened up, lightning struck, and rain fell on the theatre goers. Ed stated that *The Night of the Iguana* was his favorite acting experience.

In 1973 Ed and Anita and their four daughters moved to Pinehurst, NC, where he and a partner ran the dinner theater at the Pinehurst Hotel. Ed had a part in most of the plays presented there, including Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* and Oscar in *The Odd Couple*. The business turned out to be a success.

Ed's film career started in 1982 in Wilmington, NC, and he has been an active member of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) since that time. He was an actor in the following films and TV shows:

1982 *Dogs of Hell* – Doc Fellows
1989 *Black Rainbow* – Pastor on Train
1990 *Crazy People* -- Senior Executive Matthews
1992 *The Vacation* -- Judge
1992-1995 *Matlock* (TV Series) -- Editor / Man / Judge
1993 *Lovejoy* (TV Series) -- Second Oldtimer
1993 *The Portrait* (TV Movie) -- Alan
1993 *The Lost Colony* -- Second Oldtimer
1994 *Justice in a Small Town* (TV Movie) -- Senator Bo Denton
1994 *The Hudsucker Proxy* -- Newsreel Reporter
1997 *My Stepson, My Lover* (TV Movie) -- Parker

Ed is a *Gold Life Master* bridge player whose passion for playing cards started in his youth. He recalled that, during school breaks, he played cards continuously on the train from Staunton to Washington, DC, and back.

Anita, Ed's wife of 40 years, passed away in 1996, but his four successful daughters still live near him in the Raleigh, NC, area where Ed, at 83, is still an active commercial real estate broker.

This biography was dictated to Kelly McGavock, SMA '59, by Ed Lillard who reviewed and approved the content for the Hall of Fame webpage. Any errors in editing are solely the responsibility of Kelly McGavock who thoroughly enjoyed interviewing Mr. Lillard.