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Philip Bancroft

POLITICS, FARMING, AND

THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY IN CALIFORNIA

An Interview Conducted by

Willa Klug Baum

Berkeley

1962



Philip Bancroft

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INTRODUCTION

BANCROFT
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The Bancroft name has been prominent in California since Hubert Howe Bancroft, a young New Englander, came to California in 1852 to establish the stationery, printing, and publishing house which proved so profitable that seventeen years later he could partially retire from business to devote the rest of his long life to collecting books and manuscripts on Western American history and to putting together the voluminous Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft.

Philip Bancroft, the youngest son of Hubert Howe Bancroft, has likewise impressed the Bancroft name on the history of California, both in politics and in farming. He entered politics as a grass-roots, doorbell-ringing worker in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, won a seat on the California delegation to the Chicago Republican Convention in 1908, and helped to nominate his favored candidate Taft. Four years later he was again a delegate to the Republican convention, this time as a loyal supporter of Governor Hiram Johnson, and like Johnson, he walked out of the Republican and into the Progressive Party after that convention was "stolen" from Theodore Roosevelt.

Always a political activist, Bancroft throughout the years could be found working on the campaigns of those candidates he supported, the foremost of which was Hiram Johnson. He was one of the rare early Progressives who remained faithful to Johnson until the Senator's death. Some of the Progressives returned to the Democratic Party

from whence they came, others became either stand-patters or internationalist Republicans; only a few such as Bancroft continued with Johnson in opposing our entry into the League of Nations and later our Lend-Lease support of Britain. Bancroft's political activity was climaxed in 1938 when he won almost single-handedly the Republican nomination for U.S. senator by a series of hard-hitting, no-punches-pulled radio broadcasts. He lost that election, but a decade later he was in the forefront of the senatorial, vice-presidential, and finally presidential campaigns of Republican Richard Nixon.

Although Bancroft began his career in 1905 as an attorney in San Francisco, following military service in France during World War I he turned to farming so that his children could grow up in rural surroundings. His activity as a pear and walnut grower has been typically Bancroftian -- thorough and vigorous. By instituting the most scientific methods, he developed the family properties in Walnut Creek into a highly profitable farm, pear production was increased from 200 tons an acre to 1000 tons an acre, and for seven years in a row his pears won first prize at the state fair. In the meantime he was enlarging his holdings by purchasing other lands for additional production.

Just as Philip Bancroft had early joined with his fellow San Franciscans to exert political influence on the affairs of his city, state, and nation, so he quickly became active in farmer organizations after he entered farming. He served on the board of the Walnut Growers Association, the Pear Growers Association, the Farm Bureau,

and the State Chamber of Commerce. During the depression when labor unrest and the threat of unionization of farm laborers caused many farmers to join together in the Associated Farmers, Philip Bancroft's vigorous speeches in defense of the farmers' position gained for him the office of president of the Contra Costa Associated Farmers, and later the vice-presidency of the state Associated Farmers. It was this role -- spokesman for the farmer, vigilante against Communism, and critic of the New Deal -- that led to his nomination for U.S. senator.

Knowing that he had participated in so many historical events, Professor Walton E. Bean and Professor George P. Hammond of the Department of History suggested that Philip Bancroft be asked to tape record his memoirs. He proved exceedingly cooperative in this enterprise and devoted much of his time and thought to it. The interviews were recorded between April and August of 1961. Prior to the interviews, Mr. Bancroft made available to the interviewer his collection of letters, speeches, scrapbooks, and photographs (most of which he has since donated to Bancroft Library) and helped plan the outlines of the material to be covered.

Our first meeting was in the office of the Mt. Diablo Fruit Farm which Mr. Bancroft shares with his son, Philip Bancroft, Jr., now the manager of the farm, and Ralph Hinds, who has been Mr. Bancroft's assistant for over twenty years and who now also serves as eyes for Mr. Bancroft since his own have deteriorated to the point where he can no longer read. The office was the old-fashioned,

strictly-business type; superficially cluttered looking, yet its inherent order was evidenced by the speed with which Mr. Bancroft, aided by Mr. Hinds, could locate from within the numerous filing cases, boxes, and desk pigeon-holes any materials pertinent to the interview.

All the recording sessions took place in Mr. Bancroft's room in the small house he and Mrs. Bancroft have occupied since they turned over the big house to Philip, Jr., and his family. The tasteful period furniture, the ever-present vases of flowers, the large, carefully-tended gardens surrounding the house, and Mrs. Bancroft's attractive afternoon costumes, all indicated a habit of gracious living firmly adhered to. Family portraits and Japanese prints hung on the pale yellow walls of Mr. Bancroft's room; a television set, a neatly-arranged and apparently often-used desk, and a record player with a constantly changing pile of Books for the Blind disks told something about Mr. Bancroft's non-farming activities. Outside the window a young magpie, a Mother's Day gift to Mrs. Bancroft, hammered on the glass for his hand-feeding of hamburger and egg and a speech lesson. Occasionally from the living room could be heard the singing of several little girls, Bancroft grandchildren and daughters of employees, rehearsing with Mrs. Bancroft for a show the children on the farm were planning.

Mr. Bancroft, a slender man with steel-grey hair parted in the middle, looked very much like his campaign pictures of 1938. His memory was sharp, his comments direct, his methods of working efficient; only failing eyesight and a slight stoop marked the passing of eighty-one years. Mrs.

Bancroft participated in one session. Although on doctor's orders she had to rest often, it was easy to see with what vigor and enthusiasm this tiny, gracious lady must have supported and assisted her husband in his busy life. Mrs. Bancroft passed away in May 1962 after the recording was finished but before the final typing of the manuscript.

Following transcription, and with some editing by the interviewer, the manuscript was returned to Mr. Bancroft for his editing and approval. Assisted by Ralph Hinds and Mrs. Bancroft, he went over the manuscript very carefully, making slight corrections where the original version failed to convey the meaning clearly. At no point did Mr. Bancroft modify his candid, straight-forward manner of speaking; the document as it reads is an accurate representation of his opinions and mode of expression. At the close of the work Mr. Bancroft donated pictures and illustrative material to accompany the manuscript. Furthermore, he was instrumental in arranging interviews with two of his colleagues, Max Thelen, former Progressive and president of the State Railroad Commission, and Wofford B. Camp, Kern County cotton and potato farmer. His persuasion was also effective in setting up an interview with Arthur J. McFadden, Southern California fruit grower, by the Oral History Program at the University of California at Los Angeles.

This interview forms a part of the collection of autobiographical interviews conducted by the Regional Cultural History Project with persons prominent in the development of Northern California. The project is under the administrative supervision of Assistant Librarian Julian Michel.

Willa Klug Baum, Head
Regional Cultural History Project

1 December 1962
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CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

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Life in the Hubert Howe Bancroft Household

Baum: Well, this is a beautiful spring day, here in Walnut Creek, April 27, 1961. Suppose we begin right at the beginning, with your birth. When were you born, Mr. Bancroft?

Bancroft: I was born June 30, 1881.

Baum: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Bancroft: Yes, I had two brothers, Griffing, two years older, and Paul, who was four years older, and then I had a sister who was one year younger, Lucy, and I had a half-sister, Kate, who was considerably older. She was, perhaps, fifteen years or more older than I.

Baum: Where were you born?

Bancroft: I was born in San Francisco, at 1298 Van Ness Avenue. That was our city home, and it was on the corner of Van Ness Avenue and Sutter Street.

Baum: And when did you move to Walnut Creek?

Bancroft: Well, when I was about four years old, 1885, my father bought this place, and as early as I can remember we were out here during the summertime. He bought the farm because he wanted to live a part of the time in the country. He suffered very

Bancroft: severely from asthma and he felt that if he moved out here for part of the year it would help him to get away from the sea dampness.

Baum: Do you remember your life in San Francisco, or are most of your memories out here?

Bancroft: Well, most of my memories are out here. We'd spend the summers out here or at the farm that my father bought near San Diego, in Spring Valley; we'd go down there once in a while with him, but most of the time we lived here. We'd spend the winters in San Francisco. We children always dreaded going to San Francisco, because we liked it so much better out here. We had horses out here, and our guns, and all of the country living that we were able to have. Our descendants will never have the opportunity of having the wonderful life that we had.

Baum: Wasn't it lonely out here?

Bancroft: Oh, no, we were never lonely. I've never been lonely in my life. There were three of us boys and we always had plenty to do. My father always used to have us do chores, and we traveled around a good deal, and had a tutor. First we had a governess when we were very young, and then we had a tutor, because my father, as he would travel around on his historical work, would take the whole family with him. And, of course, we had a little sister that tagged along. She must have had a pretty tough time of it, but she was always willing to do anything, and she was a very fine horseback rider. She'd ride her little pony bareback at a full gallop anywhere, all

Bancroft: the time.

Both my brother Griff and I were very fond of riding, we had our own horses, and whenever we had any spare time we'd be apt to spend it riding. And then when I was eight years old -- as far back as I can remember we used to shoot under supervision -- but when I was eight years old my father gave me a gun of my own and each of my brothers had guns by that time and we all did a good deal of shooting. We were very fond of shooting.

Baum: Under whose supervision did you ride and shoot?

Bancroft: Oh, by ourselves. Until we learned to shoot we were given very careful supervision as to how to handle a gun and so on, but after we learned it we were on our own. We were taught to be responsible and to be careful, and also not to do any damage to anybody else, and my father never wanted us to shoot anything just for the sake of killing it; that is, we'd shoot squirrels and pests just to kill them, but anything else, any game bird or anything, we would have to skin it and clean it and eat it. We were never allowed to shoot things and just let them lie dead, except pests. For instance, birds, song birds and owls and things like that, we were not allowed to shoot.

Baum: Did your father have much time to spend with you boys?

Bancroft: He was very fond of his children. He was a wonderful father. My mother was a wonderful mother, and they devoted a great

Bancroft: deal of time to us children. Of course, my father was one of the hardest workers I've ever seen, or ever known, and still he'd always take time to be with us children and he just loved to be with us. For instance, when he went down to Mexico to write the life of Porfirio Diaz he took our whole family and he even took our tutor, who at that time was quite a remarkable man himself. He had ridden clear from his home -- we always considered it across the continent, in what we called the East, but that might have been the Middle West, I'm not sure of that -- but he had a horse that he was very fond of and he didn't have the money to ship it across by rail, so he rode the whole way across on his horse, getting work as he went along, stopping off long enough at different places to earn enough to support himself and his horse, and he always wore a silk hat, a stovepipe, and my brother Griff said, "Well, did you ride in it across the continent?" He said, "Yes."

Baum: Wearing the hat?

Bancroft: Wearing the stovepipe hat.

Baum: Was he a well-educated man?

Bancroft: Yes, he was well-educated, and he also was musical. He had us all playing the violin and instruments -- I think it was all violins that he had us play.

Father was very fond of violins, and he was really musical. When he was a farm boy he saved up money for three or four years, gathering berries and things of that kind, a few cents

Bancroft: at a time, 'till he finally got enough money to buy a violin. I think it was four dollars and something he had to pay for it, and he said it never occurred to him that when he got the violin he wouldn't be able to play it right off, and when he found he couldn't that was a great disappointment to him, and then his people all frowned upon it; they considered music -- I mean, his playing a violin or a fiddle, as they called it -- as, well, conducive to dancing, and dancing was a practice of the devil.

Baum: Oh, they were very religious.

Bancroft: Oh, yes, and they discouraged it very much, so he never did much with his violin. He had a very good voice, though, a natural, untrained voice, but very good, and he used to sing, oh, way up into his eighties he used to sing.

So he started all of us boys with violins and musical teachers, but we unfortunately didn't have his natural musical talent. My brother Paul did very well with the violin, but later on I gave up trying to play the violin and played the mandolin, which I enjoyed very much.

Baum: What other kinds of subjects did you learn from this tutor?

Bancroft: Oh, all kinds of subjects.

Baum: Did you have the same tutor the whole time?

Bancroft: We had him for a good many years. All kinds of handling of horses and things, he taught, and we got sound drilling in spelling and English and things of that kind.

Baum: Did you have certain hours each day set aside for your education?

- Bancroft: Oh, yes, we had regular school work, and very regular hours. But I was always in very poor health when I was a child. Well, for a good many years they didn't think I was going to live. My poor mother was constantly picking me up and taking me from one doctor to another, hoping that I would get better, and 'till I was about fourteen, I think, I was very delicate. But that didn't prevent my riding and hunting and all those things. In fact, it was probably doing that that did me so much good.
- Baum: Was it because of your health that you didn't go to a public school?
- Bancroft: No, it was because we were traveling around so.
- Baum: Your brothers and sister were in good health?
- Bancroft: Yes, they were in good health for most of the time.
- Baum: So it was the traveling that kept you out of regular school.
- Bancroft: Yes, and my father thought we'd get better instruction that way, too. We had, when we were very young, a German governess, so as to learn German. We'd talk to her and she'd read to us at nights in German, and so on, and then when we went down to Mexico we learned Spanish.
- Baum: What was your life like when you traveled around so much? You went with your tutor and your father and mother and, I presume, some other people to help.
- Bancroft: I remember once we had a nurse when I must have been very young -- we had nurses up to that time -- but as far back as I can remember, say from when I was about seven years old, we didn't have anybody with us except our tutor. My brother Griffing

Bancroft: and I, I suppose when I was about ten or twelve, used to mold our own bullets, load our own shells, and we used to enjoy that very much. It wasn't that we couldn't buy shells or cartridges -- they were available at that time -- but we could load our own very much cheaper; in other words, for the same amount of money we could have a great deal more shooting, and we used to be very fond of that.

Baum: Would you say that your major interests were outdoor things?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, living in the country, they naturally would be.

Baum: I've read part of your father's autobiography, and it sounded as if he worked very many hours every day.

Bancroft: He did. You see, he would, when we were out here, spend his week in San Francisco and would come out here on Saturday -- not Saturday morning, they didn't take off time -- but he'd come out perhaps Saturday afternoon, get here at five or six o'clock, and then spend Sunday here and go back Sunday night or early Monday morning, and then he worked there thirteen or fourteen hours a day on his history, standing up most of the time, too. He'd stand up at a tall desk.

Baum: Was it customary for your friends, the young people you knew, to have tutors, or did most of them go to public school?

Bancroft: They went to public schools or private schools.

Baum: Did you feel a little bit strange, not going to school?

Bancroft: No, I took it as natural, living in the country.

Baum: Your father was a bit older than most people's fathers...

Bancroft: Yes, he was born in 1832, so he was forty-nine years old when

Bancroft: I was born.

Baum: Do you think this made any difference in your relationship with him?

Bancroft: Well, I think it probably made him more indulgent to us. He felt that he had had a very hard boyhood, and he was giving us as fine a childhood as he possibly could. Both he and my mother were very indulgent, but he was also strict about our not lying or not doing anything like stealing or anything of that kind. He was a good disciplinarian.

Baum: Could he tolerate noise around the house?

Bancroft: He'd tolerate an awful lot from us children.

Baum: Now, what was your mother like?

Bancroft: Well, she was one of these very self-sacrificing, very sincere and devoted wives and mothers. She came from New Haven, Connecticut, and her family were quite religious, and she used to find it a little hard that the boys were not more orthodox. For instance, in her family she'd felt that playing cards on Sunday was a wicked thing to do, and so for the early part of my life we never did, but as we boys grew older we began playing cards on Sunday. It was things of that kind -- she didn't want us to shoot on Sunday, and we for the most part didn't, but as we grew older we naturally became more liberal in the things we thought it was all right to do and in the things we would do.

She used to go with my father when he would take dictations and collect data -- he would try to collect data from the old pioneers that were dying off -- and she would very often get



Hubert Howe Bancroft

- Bancroft: data discussions and information from the pioneers' wives. She'd take that all down in longhand. She was well-educated and did everything she could to help him do his part, and she was very conscientious and self-sacrificing.
- Baum: Was she a small woman?
- Bancroft: Yes, she was. And he was a large man. He was about six feet one or so, weighed about 190 pounds.
- Baum: Would you describe her as gay, or rather sober?
- Bancroft: I think under other conditions she would have been decidedly gay. She enjoyed the lighter side of life, while my father didn't.
- Baum: Well, do you think she would have preferred more social life if your father had liked to go in for that sort of thing?
- Bancroft: Yes, if my father had been inclined that way. She was quite interested in social life, but he was interested just in his work and his family.
- Baum: Did she have parties at the house?
- Bancroft: Once in a while.
- Baum: Was that here or in San Francisco?
- Bancroft: Well, it would be here and in San Francisco, and then we lived in San Diego for quite a few years, off and on.
- Baum: Did she belong to any organizations, women's clubs, or something?
- Bancroft: No women's clubs that I know of, but I wouldn't know of any organizations she belonged to. One of the great interests she took was in getting good roads out here. In the wintertime

Bancroft: we wouldn't live here on the farm because the roads were such that they were almost impassable; the only way we could get from here to Walnut Creek would be to hitch up a team and drive through about six inches of mud all the way. So she was interested in getting good roads, but what we considered good roads then were well-graded dirt roads that we'd expect to be too muddy in winter to drive an automobile on.

Baum: Was she active in church work, or did she live too far away from a church?

Bancroft: I think she lived too far away. She used to attend church quite regularly, but I don't think she was active in church work. She was too busy with her family.

Baum: Was your father interested in the church?

Bancroft: He had been originally, but I think when his first wife died he lost interest in church and religious work.

Baum: What happened if you were bad? How were you punished? I presume you were bad sometimes.

Bancroft: Yes, but we weren't bad in the sense that you find it in children now. If we were bad we were supposed to be whipped, and my mother would usually do the spanking. But there was very little spanking going on. In fact, I don't remember ever having been spanked or whipped. We'd get very tough lectures, and usually a lecture from my father was much worse than a whipping would be.

Baum: Was the lecture from your father or your mother? Or did it depend on how serious the offense was?

ancroft: Both. As I say, we never had any serious offenses. We might have had what other people would call offenses, but we'd practically never do anything we were told not to do, because with my father you didn't do things that you were told not to do. And then I think we were quite resourceful. If we did anything a little out of the ordinary we usually didn't get caught at it.

aum: I see.

ancroft: The things we would do would be usually things we'd think up that we hadn't been told not to do, and some of them wouldn't be at all wise to do. For instance, I remember one time we boys were playing up in the loft of the barn -- we had a great big barn up here -- and my little sister wanted to come up with us. Well, she couldn't climb up so we put her in a sack and hauled her up, way up into the loft. When my parents found out about it they gave us a pretty heavy lecture, but it wasn't anything that was done with any evil intent. It was just to help out my sister and, as I say, she was always game for everything that came along.

aum: Did you play with her quite a bit?

ancroft: Oh, yes. She used to ride with us, and so on. She could ride as well as any of us, and was absolutely fearless.

aum: How would you describe yourself, as a boy? You say you were not very well.

ancroft: No, and I was very conscientious, if I do say it myself. I guess it may be because I wasn't very well that I tried to do



Paul, Lucy, and Philip Bancroft

Sanncroft: what my father and mother told me to do.

Baum: Do you think you were more conscientious than your brothers?

Sanncroft: Oh, I wouldn't say so. I think my brothers were, on the whole, very conscientious. My brother Griffing was always the one to get into trouble, if there was any trouble, but there again, I don't recall his ever having done anything intentionally bad. He was more careless than we were and he was always getting into some scrape.

Baum: Were you the kind of boy who thinks before he rushes into things? Or were you an impetuous child?

Sanncroft: I suppose I'd be the kind who would think before. But leading the sort of life we did, we didn't have any temptation to get into trouble. We had the whole farm to roam around in, we played our own games, did our own things. If we wanted a garden we had our own little garden, some things of that kind. And, as I say, we had our chores laid out for us and then we would be paid for doing different things. I know my father thought it was good for boys to go barefoot. He used to pay us six dollars a month if we'd go barefoot -- we wouldn't have to go. And you know going around barefoot on the hot dirt in the summertime was very unpleasant, but he thought it was good to toughen our soles -- both the soles of our feet and our souls.

Baum: Did you play with other children much?

Sanncroft: Not an awful lot. We weren't recluses or anything, but we were just more or less sufficient to ourselves, and the nearest child might be a mile or more away.



Hubert Howe Bancroft and
grandson Philip, Jr.
Humboldt County 1915



"Living room" at camp

Baum: Were there other children out here occasionally, like your cousins or relatives or friends?

Bancroft: Yes, at different times. As I grew older when we would go in town my mother'd take great pains to have us meet and play with other children, and as we grew older we'd always have children come around and play at our house.

Baum: How were your family finances? Did you consider yourself well off, or rather poor?

Bancroft: We considered ourselves rather poor. We were sort of land-poor, but my father had quite a little land and then, when I was five years old or so, his store building burned down and he suffered very heavy losses there and we weren't really poor at any time, but we had to be very careful about money matters a large part of my boyhood.

Baum: Did you have an allowance as a child?

Bancroft: No. As I say, we'd be paid for things like doing chores, so we had enough. We didn't have much, but it'd be stuff that we'd earn that way.

Baum: What did you do with your spending money?

Bancroft: Put most of it in the bank, spent some. We spent it for powder and cartridges and things of that kind. We all became extremely good shots, but the neighbors sometimes objected because we were fond of shooting rifles. We had been taught never to aim a gun at anything -- that was one of the cardinal points. And another was never to think that a gun was unloaded, always treat it as if it were loaded. And never play with a gun --

Bancroft: use it just for shooting. But, on the other hand, sometimes if we saw a rabbit that was going fairly close to someone we might shoot at it knowing that there was no possible danger of our hitting the person, but the people that had a rifle bullet come within twenty yards of so weren't so confident that our shooting was safe, so once in a while there'd be complaints about our shooting too close to people, which was one of the things that I was always concerned about. I was always concerned, if I would shoot a rifle and not know where the bullet would land -- you know, for instance, shooting over a hill or something.

Baum: So you do sound like a very conscientious little boy.

Bancroft: Well, we were taught to be conscientious. I mean, to be careful about our deeds.

Baum: Who took care of the family finances? Did your mother ever...

Bancroft: No, my father did, and then he'd give my mother what they called in those days an allowance, money for the household expenses. But he would take care of all the finances and my mother then would take care of the household expenses.

Baum: She never delved into business herself, the operation of the farm?

Bancroft: No, no business at all. She was fully occupied without doing that.

Baum: Did you have any domestic help?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, we always had help. At that time, of course, the best help was a Chinaman. When we were very young she had nurses for us.

Baum: This would be one nurse to take care of all the children?

Bancroft: Yes, one nurse to take care of all the children, and then she would have a Chinaman to do the cooking, and they were marvelous cooks, and of course the Chinamen always want to take over and run the whole house -- they become part of the family and they always want to run everything, the kitchen and so on -- and then she would usually have a maid besides.

Baum: Did you ever hire other groups than the Chinese?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, lots of times we'd have cooks that were Irish or Swedish or anything of that kind, but we'd never have more than one Chinaman.

Baum: I've read what good servants the Chinese were.

Bancroft: Oh, they're marvelous. But they wouldn't take the place of the house servant, mainly cooking and the kitchen.

Baum: Do you recall any important events, such as -- well, I suppose the first big event that happened in your family was the fire in 1886 that burned down the store.

Bancroft: Yes, but we were down in San Diego at the time. We were living down there then, or out on the farm, but most of the time there we were in town. So I don't recall much of that, except as I know about it reading. But it didn't make too much of an impression on us. You were asking whether we regarded ourselves as rich or poor. That just never entered into our heads either way.

Baum: I don't think anyone regards himself as rich, but some people regard themselves as poor.

Bancroft: Well, we never regarded ourselves as poor, but we always had to be quite careful about spending money.

Business Problems After the Fire of 1886

Baum: After the fire, was there any more financial stress that you recall? I'm sure that there was less money after that, but perhaps it made no --

Bancroft: It made no difference as far as we children were concerned, in our living, but my father was very much concerned because he had quite a few law suits come on after that, and you see, he had almost retired from business, and he had to go back into it again.

Baum: Well, you're probably familiar with the article on A.L. Bancroft by Henry Wagner?

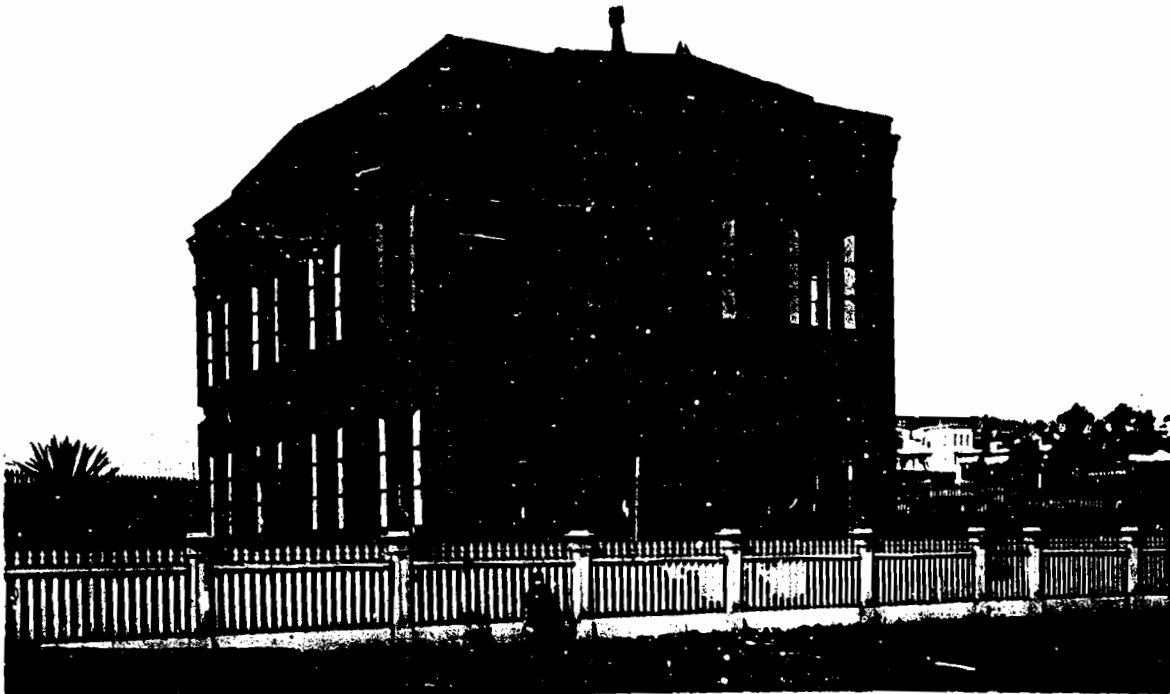
Bancroft: I don't know.

Baum: I brought a copy of that. I wanted to ask you about some of the things in here. Now, one of the things the article said is that your father had a nervous breakdown after the fire. Was that true?

Bancroft: As far as I know, it was absolutely untrue. A.L. Bancroft was very bitter toward my father; he and my father bought this place and the place next door together, and they divided it up, but my father had started him in business, brought him out here, and thought the world of him for a long time, and then they quarreled. I don't know just what started it, but A.L.



St. Dunstan's Apartment Hotel
Van Ness and Sutter Streets
owned by Bancroft Family.
Dynamited in 1906 fire.



HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT'S HISTORICAL LIBRARY OF PACIFIC COAST BOOKS, MAPS AND MANUSCRIPTS, 1538 VALENCIA STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

To Subscribers to Bancroft's Works, with compliments of the Publishers.

Bancroft: became very bitter toward my father and I know he collected for years scrapbooks with all the disagreeable things that were said about my father. My father hadn't any use for him, but he didn't have the same sort of bitterness toward him. He felt that A.L. wasn't good at business and so on, and he thought that, of course, A.L. had mistreated him very much.

Baum: Well, as I understand it A.L. was much younger than your father and he came out and your father started him in the business.

Bancroft: Yes, he was. And made him a partner or gave him half the business or something and finally bought it back from him -- something of that kind.

Baum: You don't know the source of this quarrel between the two men? Well, I guess Wagner doesn't know the source either.* This article is called "Albert Little Bancroft," and it's by Henry Wagner, and he said that one of the things that might have been the cause of the argument was an article called "A Cosmopolitan Publishing House," published in The Paper World in 1881, and the article "bears a portrait of Albert and appears to have been written by someone connected with the house. It gives full credit to Hubert for his literary endeavors but assigns to Albert in forthright words the credit for the expansion of the business. As Albert had been actual as well as titular head of the business since 1870, and in fact from 1866" -- I

*California Historical Society Quarterly, September 1950, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, "Albert Little Bancroft" (continued), by Henry R. Wagner, p. 227.

Baum: believe this is the time your father retired from the business to work on his writing -- "the credit accorded him in the article was only just. In my judgment, this article was the cause of Hubert's resentment, which finally flared up in 1886." This was one idea.

Bancroft: Well, as I say, I don't know anything about that. My father and mother didn't want to involve us in the dispute, you know, although my father was very forthright in saying what he thought of A.L., and so on, but as far as the business ability of the two was concerned, I can only judge by the fact that my father started out with nothing and by the time he was -- what time did it say he retired, in 1866? Well, that's by the time he was 34 years old -- he had made enough so that he was able practically to retire from business and devote his time to collecting the library and writing the histories. My father never cared much for money for money's sake, and by that time he had developed a tremendous business. It was the largest business of its kind -- book stores and a book-publishing house and so on -- west of Chicago, and he had done that all in that short time. He didn't come out here 'till he was -- he started when he was 19 and I think he was 20 when he arrived in San Francisco, and in that sixteen years he had done that. Poor old A.L. was quite a failure in business after they had a split-up.

Baum: Oh, that's right, he invested his money in a water company that failed.

Bancroft: I don't even know what happened, but I know he had nothing but the farm left at the time he died, and I know toward the end my father wrote to him once and told him, when he was sick and so on, if he needed anything to let him know, he'd be glad to help him, and A.L. wrote him, no, he didn't need anything. He was still very bitter, they didn't go to see each other or anything, although A.L. was living right next door here, right across beyond those eucalyptus trees.

Baum: Oh, is that right? And did you children go over there ever?

Bancroft: No, not much. Once in a while we'd see the other boys, I mean, when we were children. Later on we became very friendly with their children and with their grandchildren we became particularly so. Several of them came over from that place and worked for us, because they didn't get along, I mean, they had disagreements in the family. They were a family of five, I think.

Baum: Five children?

Bancroft: Yes, and they didn't get along any too well. I don't mean that they were -- but the family sort of split up. We had very little to do with their children. There were Frank Bancroft and Bert Bancroft, the children of A.L. Bancroft. Then there was a boy by the name of Karl who was named Karl because he was born when A.L. was in Germany, and he finally changed that to John -- he left the family and went east somewhere; I remember having seen him once or twice when he was a boy but that's all. But Frank Bancroft we became very good friends with later on, when he was grown up, and he was

Bancroft: quite a scholar, very able and scholarly. Bert Bancroft used to manage their farm, and later on there was some disagreement so he was not managing their farm, and for a year or two he managed this farm. Frank Bancroft's children we were very fond of but that again was, oh, that was after I had grown up. In other words, we didn't carry the feud on into the later generations. Martin Bancroft, one of the children, he ran our packing house here on the farm for two or three years, and we were devoted to him, but he died finally. Then their daughter, Frances Bancroft, was a great friend of our children's. But, as I say, A.L. Bancroft became very bitter toward my father, and the more successful my father became and the more unsuccessful he became the bitterer he grew. I heard they gave his books to the California Historical Society and that he had quite a venomous attack there on my father, but that may be this book.

Baum: Well, these were some of A.L. Bancroft's diaries.

Bancroft: Well, I've never even read it. People said, "Well, aren't you going to answer that?" And I said, "No."

Baum: There was no venomous attack included in here, and Henry Wagner, who wrote them up, apparently didn't know what the cause of the feud was between them. He thought either it was this article I have mentioned or that there'd been some falling out in business.

Bancroft: Well, there was falling out over business at the time of the fire. I don't know, but I think they had some lawsuits against each other and things of that kind. But as I say, that's

- Bancroft: something they didn't try to have continued by the children, to have the feud passed on.
- Baum: Do you know when this feud started? Wagner wasn't sure of that either.
- Bancroft: No, I don't, but I know that when I was quite a boy it had already started, the farms had been divided up, and it was going then, but we kept on this side of the boundary line, and they stayed on that side. There was no effort made to have antagonism arise between us -- the children of one side and the children of the other -- but we were not encouraged to be particularly companionable at that time, although later on became very good friends with the children.
- Baum: Somebody told me that when the feud began you were all sharing the same house with a line drawn down the middle of the house.
- Bancroft: Not to my knowledge. My father and brother may have owned the property together at that time and may have divided the property in two.
- Baum: Divided the property, but not the house, to your knowledge?
- Bancroft: Not to my knowledge, no, and I'd be surprised, because I don't think there was any house large enough to take both families at a time.
- Baum: You would have remembered that, don't you suppose?
- Bancroft: Oh, yes, I'd have remembered it if it had happened at the time of the fire.
- Baum: Do you know if your father was an owner in the Bancroft-Whitney Co.?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, I know he definitely was. He was the Bancroft in that. As I understood it, there was a publisher of law books, Whitney & Co., and they were, of course, rivals; instead of competing against each other they found it much better to join forces.

Baum: Are you sure that was your father? Now, let me see. It said, "Albert's principal business during this period was as president of the Bancroft-Whitney Company..." and this was the one that printed the law books. "This company was incorporated with a capital of \$200,000 with Albert L. Bancroft," Sumner Whitney, and some other people.** But it's not apparent whether Hubert Bancroft owned shares in that or not.

Bancroft: Well, I know my father owned a very substantial portion of that because after the fire -- I don't know how long after the fire -- I remember that he sold out his interest to Mrs. Hearst, and he got quite a substantial sum for it. You see, he had a heavy mortgage that he had to pay off after rebuilding the building.

Baum: So it's your understanding that he sold out his share of Bancroft-Whitney Co. to Mrs. Hearst?

Bancroft: Well, it's not only my understanding, I'm very sure of it, because I heard him discussing it.

Baum: And this was in order to rebuild after the fire?

Bancroft: Well, he had already rebuilt, but he had a heavy mortgage on the place and he was very anxious to cut down on the mortgage. Now, I don't mean that A.L. didn't also have substantial interests in it at one time, because they probably both had.

**Ibid., pp. 360,361

Baum: Here it says, "the article [in the San Diego Union] proceeds to state that Hubert had turned over to his daughter, Kate, his one-half interest in the Bancroft-Whitney Co." But, Wagner continued, "I have never been able to discover whether Kate was actually a stockholder. The probabilities are that the stock stood in her name but really belonged to her father, as at this time Hubert Bancroft was turning over to his wife and daughter practically all of his property."***

Bancroft: Well, then she probably turned it back to him under some arrangement later on because, as I say, I remember that he was discussing the matter and speaking about it to us, that he was selling that to Mrs. Hearst, his interest.

Baum: Well, it may have been that he put things in his wife and daughter's names -- at the time you say there were a lot of lawsuits and all.

Bancroft: Yes, it might have been something of that kind.

Baum: Well, apparently they don't have very good documentation on all of this because I think that Mr. Wagner has investigated quite a bit and couldn't find much. You'd probably be interested in reading this article some time.

Bancroft: Oh, I don't know.

Baum: It's long past now.

Bancroft: It's long past, they're both dead. My father never dwelt on it much, but I know whenever he did speak of A.L. he was quite

*** Ibid., p. 361.

Bancroft: caustic in his remarks and claimed that A.L. had acted very badly after the fire. My thought was that their real falling-out had come after the fire.

Baum: Well, I think in the 1890s your father was denounced by some of the historical societies and I wondered if -- apparently he never responded to this -- if it upset him in the family.

Bancroft: Well, he was denounced and carped at and criticized very generally for, oh, the first ten years or so that I can remember. I hardly ever heard anybody say anything about him except to denounce him.

Baum: Oh, is that right?

Bancroft: Well, he was very caustic and outspoken in his remarks and he'd never pulled any punches or anything. Now, for instance, he was elected an honorary member of the Society of Pioneers, California pioneers, on account of his historical work; then he made very severe criticisms of Fremont and ridiculed their calling him "the pathfinder" -- he said that he never was a pathfinder, that Kit Carson was a pathfinder but that Fremont just went where other people had already been -- and then he showed up Fremont's misconduct in a great many ways when he was out here in California. Of course, he told the story of the Bear Flag Revolt, and so on, and took Vallejo's side in that, said that they acted very badly toward Vallejo who, after all, had been a friend of the Americans. Of course, those were two pet subjects for the Society of Pioneers, and they called him up to

Bancroft: have him answer charges as to why he shouldn't be expelled, and he paid no attention to it, didn't appear, and they held a meeting and expelled him after having elected him an honorary member. I heard one man say later on that he was elected an honorary member because of his historical work, because he told the truth in his histories, and then he was expelled, also for his historical work, where he was also telling the truth.

Baum: Did this sort of thing seem to bother him?

Bancroft: Oh, it would bother him, the same as it would both you or me, to be unjustly accused, but he -- oh, they'd even attack his library and say that that was just a bunch of junk.

Baum: Oh, yes, I read about that, too.

Bancroft: When the University of California was considering buying it, they said it was a lot of worthless stuff. You see, when he wrote his histories he did it on a mass production basis, and he was perfectly frank about it. He didn't pretend that he wrote the original drafts of most of it, but he'd hire writers and researchers. He had about twenty men and women working for about twenty years, compiling the data. It would have been utterly impossible for one man to have written a quarter of that himself. As I say, he would get these people to write the drafts, then he would go over them. All my early recollections of him are going around with galley proofs of the histories, correcting them, and changing them where he wanted, to change, and so on, working with them. I hardly ever remember

Bancroft: seeing him when he didn't have some of that with him and was working on it, on one history or another.

Baum: So he didn't really take a holiday, even on Sunday.

Bancroft: Oh, he wouldn't take a holiday. He didn't know what it was to take a holiday or to just spend his time enjoying life. He worked so hard all the time.

Preparatory School in Massachusetts

Baum: Well, you went off to Philips Exeter, didn't you? How old were you then? That was in 1894 and 1895.

Bancroft: Well, you see, 1894 I would have been 13 when I went there. I spent one term at Exeter. I was one of the four youngest boys there, and my health was so poor that I dropped out of school and didn't do any more the rest of that school year.

Baum: Can you remember that school very much?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, very well.

Baum: You were boarding there?

Bancroft: No, our family went there. You see, my two brothers were at Exeter, one the third year and one a senior, and then they both took their college board examinations and passed them and were admitted to Harvard -- one took it when he was a senior and the other took it when he was a junior -- and so they both went to Harvard the next year and the family moved to Cambridge.

Baum: Now, when you say the family, was this your mother and children

Baum: or did this include your father?

Bancroft: It included my mother and four children and my father when he was east. You see, he'd be east and then be west, but he spent quite a lot of time in the East with us. Then the next year I went to Browne and Nichols, which was a very fine private preparatory school, and I started at the bottom there of a five-year course and I finished that in three years.

Baum: How did you feel about going to school after you'd been tutored?

Bancroft: Oh, I felt all right. Oh, we had lots of boys and friends then.

Baum: Did you enjoy that?

Bancroft: Yes, I enjoyed it very much, except that I was working pretty hard to get through.

Baum: Why were you hurrying so?

Bancroft: Well, I was put back a year there, on account of my sickness, and then I was put back in a five-year course, where at Exeter I would have finished in four years, so I was really two years behind. What I would have been if I hadn't been sick -- I wasn't sick in the sense that I was sick in bed much of the time, it was just that I was puny, headaches and things of that sort.

Baum: Were you especially small for your age?

Bancroft: No, but I wasn't robust. But I wanted to catch up the time I had lost so, as I say, I went through in three years.

Baum: What were your outside interests when you were there in school?
Still riding and --

Bancroft: No, they didn't have any riding when I was at Browne and Nichols. We had a little shooting gallery we set up down in the basement, which we kept a little quiet. We were stopped by the police for playing tennis on Sunday. I remember we rigged up a court in our -- it wasn't a backyard, it was a part of the house that we'd rented, and we were stopped playing tennis on Sunday, but we had all kinds of interests. I tried for the athletic teams in the schools, but of course never made them. But we had pets and I remember we brought east with us one time after we'd been west in the summertime two or three roadrunners that we'd caught by riding them down. I read in a book somewhere that they could outrun the fastest horse. Well, my brother Griff and I didn't think so, so we went after roadrunners on our horses there down in Southern California and we would have to jump over cactus bushes and everything else because they would take off through the brush and we would chase them until we'd tire them out, then we'd jump off and run after them on foot and catch them.

Baum: So they couldn't outrun the fastest horse?

Bancroft: No, they couldn't begin to. They'd fly sometimes, if you'd just keep after them, and the interesting thing about them was that then we'd put them in a big cage and we'd catch live mice to give them and within two or three days after we'd caught them in the wild they'd be coming up and eating out of our hands. So they were quite a curiosity and we took two or

Bancroft: three of them east to show them to the professors in the East.

Oh, then chess was another thing. I was very fond of playing chess at that time.

Baum: Was this mostly in your family still? Most of your social life was still with your brothers?

Bancroft: No, no. You see, I had very little with my brothers after I went to school, because they were at Harvard University and I was in prep school. So my life was with my friends there and my sister and her friends. Oh, we had a chess club and a chess tournament and so on. I happened to have won it, so I was very -- I used to enjoy chess very much and I played it until I went to college, and the first year there we had a freshman chess tournament and the first boy I ran up against, I remember his name was Murphy, and he was a very good player and we spent three hours at the game and he beat me, and it wasn't because he beat me, but because I decided I didn't want to spend my time in college spending three hours at a chess game, so I gave up chess. I've never taken it up afterwards, just because it took so much time. If you were going to play in tournaments or play a top-notch game you'd have to spend an awful lot of time at it, and I wanted to spend my time at other things.

Baum: Why did your family go east?

Bancroft: Because they thought that the schools and colleges there were better than they were here. And they thought it was a good thing to travel around, to not live all our lives in California,

Bancroft: but we always would want to come back to California in the summertime when we were at college. When I was in college, I went back to California every year in the summertime except one year when I went to summer camp and took engineering and surveying courses.

Baum: Suppose we start on Harvard next time.

Harvard, 1899-1904

Baum: I think when we stopped last week you had just finished Browne and Nichols. Your family was living in Cambridge. Do you remember how old you were when you finished prep school?

Bancroft: I entered Harvard in 1899 and had taken out one year, so I was seventeen years old when I finished prep school. After staying out quite a few months I went back to Exeter and spent one or two terms there.

Baum: Am I correct: you went to Exeter and you stayed one term and then you left and went to Browne and Nichols for three years.

Bancroft: I stayed out one year, then I went to Browne and Nichols and I did the five-year course there in three years, and then I thought I'd better stay out one year and I spent some time in New Haven with my mother and her family, about three months, and then I went to Exeter for either one or two terms, I think the last two terms of the next year, where I took some extra courses, and then entered Harvard in the fall of 1899.

Baum: How was your health then?

Bancroft: It was all right. I wasn't sick a day from the time I was 14 until I got a very severe attack of dysentery in the world war over in France, that'd be from about the end of '98 to pretty close to the end of 1918. And I've hardly been sick a day since. I don't remember having spent a day in bed since that time, except when I was in the hospital for operations. I can't complain at all. I'm very fortunate.

Baum: Why did you select Harvard College?

Bancroft: Well, my father thought it was the best of all the colleges, and he wanted to give us all the chances in the world. I don't say it did too much good. He wanted to give us the opportunities.

Baum: Were you interested in returning to the University of California?

Bancroft: No, I was very much interested in the Harvard Law School; that was without question the finest law school in the country at that time. I think it still is, but it was outstanding at that time, and they made you work awfully hard there. I gave up all my social activities and everything else and even left the dormitory that I'd been living in, the college dormitory, and lived in a private house, as a good many of the fellows did that went to the law school, so they wouldn't be tempted by their friends to spend too much time on outside pleasures.

Baum: When you started in to Harvard were you already planning to be an attorney?

Bancroft: No, but after about a year or two I was.

Baum: What did you plan to be when you entered, or didn't you know?

Bancroft: Well, I didn't have any specific plan at that time. I had thought originally that I'd like to be a mining engineer, but then I found that the mining engineers had to spend most of their time outside of the United States, and unless they were quite fortunate a good many of them didn't have a very successful life. That was before Herbert Hoover had shown what a mining engineer could do.

Baum: What course did you start out taking?

Bancroft: Well, I took all kinds. I took all the scientific courses I could take and the engineering courses and things; at that time, of course, those were in sort of disrepute. I could get very good marks in those and in mathematics and in things of that kind, but those things were a little bit frowned upon; they thought you weren't getting a classical education and I liked the practical end of things better and I could do them with so much greater ease. I could get an "A" in almost any of the engineering courses with comparatively little trouble, but of course I wasn't in a scientific school so they didn't think very much of those things. Then I took courses in government and in history and in economics and in -- I took a course in international law and I got an "A" in that and then I decided I was quite interested in that, since I had a very good teacher in it. I also was very much interested in courses such as geology and so on.

- BAUM: What did your father think of your scientific and practical bent?
- Bancroft: Oh, he thought it was all right. I mean, he left those things to us very much. Then when I decided to become a lawyer he was very much pleased that I had decided to become one.
- BAUM: What would he have thought of your becoming a mining engineer?
- Bancroft: He would have thought it was fine, if I did a good job. It was all right with him as long as whatever I did I worked hard at and did well at.
- BAUM: I thought possibly as a historian he might favor the classical education. Do you recall any of the outstanding professors there? Are there any that stand out in your mind?
- Bancroft: Yes. I'm not very good at remembering names, as I told you before, but there was Professor Shaler and Professor William Davis, both in geology and both very fine teachers. There was Professor -- oh, I would rather try to look some of them up and see if I can get you their names, because there were a number of outstanding professors. I thought a great deal of the professors we had there. They were very outstanding men. There was one in fine arts, I think he was Professor Robinson, gave us a course in Greek arts and early classical sculpture and architecture and things of that kind, who was an outstanding professor. There was one in philosophy-psychology that was very good, he had a German name, Professor Munsterberg. But there were outstanding men. Professor Hart was another that was fairly well-known. Professor Copeland

- Bancroft: used to read Kipling wonderfully and he would have -- a great many of the students would come to his evening readings and so on that he was doing outside of the actual teaching.
- Baum: Did you attend those?
- Bancroft: Yes, I used to go to them.
- Baum: What were they like?
- Bancroft: He would read, he was especially good at reading Kipling.
- Baum: Was this in his home?
- Bancroft: It was either in his home or I think he did it in one of the halls, but he'd do it in the evening, just read for an hour or so.
- Baum: And the students would just come in?
- Bancroft: Yes, in droves.
- Baum: My goodness, I don't think they do that nowadays.
- Bancroft: He was quite famous for it.
- Baum: What kind of things did you like to do outside your classwork?
- Bancroft: Well, I liked almost everything. I was on the shooting team, the revolver team, and also on the trap-shooting team. I was first secretary and then president of the shooting club. I won the inter-collegiate championship twice in trap-shooting. I also joined a number of organizations, like the freshman debating club and the freshman mandolin club. I enjoyed playing cards very much and I enjoyed -- well, I went out for several of the athletic teams just to try out for them. I knew I couldn't make them, and I never did make any athletic team. I was a member of the Pi Eta Club. I was president of

Bancroft: the California Club of Harvard -- there were about 50 Californians there altogether. Each of these things I say I was president of, of course at first I was just a member, then secretary, and then the senior year usually president -- you wouldn't be until the senior year. It was a strange thing: I was first secretary of the California Club of Harvard, and then when I came out here I became secretary of the Harvard Club of San Francisco, and then I was vice-president of that.

Baum: I see in politics later that you were often secretary and treasurer. Sounds like you began that very early. I think that's usually the job that takes the most responsibility.

Bancroft: Well, I usually found that it did, and the most work, and if a person was willing to do the work and attend to it, it wasn't very hard to get the job usually.

Baum: Those sound like a lot of activities. How did you manage to squeeze those in, along with your studies?

Bancroft: Well, when I was at high school I worked very hard to go through in three years when I was at Browne and Nichols, and one of my very good friends said to me, "Now, Phil, when you go to college don't turn into a grind." I thought that was very good advice and perhaps I took it a little too strongly because at first I didn't work very hard when I was at college. I was interested in so many outside things and had quite a few friends there, but in the last year, when I had decided to go into the law, then I studied hard, and I studied very hard at the Harvard Law School. I was there two years.

Baum: Then at first your grades must have not been so good.

Bancroft: Well, they weren't bad. I don't think I ever got lower than a "C," and I graduated cum laude and if I'd stayed four years I'd have graduated magna cum laude. One of my roommates, he'd done just the same as I, going through in three years, but he wanted to get his magna cum laude so he stayed an extra year. I didn't think it was worth it, because as a matter of fact nobody ever knew after I got out whether I'd graduated cum laude or just scraped through.

Baum: Did the boys in those days date much?

Bancroft: No, practically not at all. It wasn't a coeducational college and personally I think it was a great advantage, not dating, because I think it's much better for boys when they're in college to be off by themselves and to be thinking of their college activities. Another thing, you know, when boys date as they do around here in these days, it's quite an expensive thing for a boy to take girls out.

And you asked me before about how we lived and whether we considered ourselves rich or poor. Well, as I told, we never even thought about it. I was thinking, since you asked me, that I received, and each of my brothers -- it was the same way when we went to college -- we would receive \$100 a month allowance and that was to take care of all of our expenses, our tuition, our trips -- if we wanted to go back to California in the summertime we'd pay that ourselves -- we'd pay board,

Bancroft: books, everything. And in my case I went through until my last year and then I told my father I was finding myself pretty cramped with that, and asked if I could have a little more, and he said, "Certainly," and gave it to me. But he would give us the money at the beginning of the college year and leave it to us to handle it and live within our income, and we three boys, none of us ever failed to live within what we were supposed to live within, while we were at college. But you see that was not very much and yet, of course, money went a great deal further in those days than it does now. But at that time we felt we were receiving enough. We weren't one of the rich boys, but we weren't one of those that had to work our way through.

For instance, my senior year I got high enough grades to qualify for a top scholarship, but they had what they called the John Harvard Scholarships, or something of that kind, that they gave to fellows who didn't need the money, but they would receive the credit just the same as if they had made a scholarship.

Baum: This was just a nominal scholarship?

Bancroft: It was just an honorary scholarship, you might say, but it was the top grade of scholarship, and I got that my senior year. But with \$100 a month I wouldn't have considered that it would be right for me to apply and they wouldn't have considered it right for me to apply for a scholarship.

Bancroft: In other words, it was not only not a great deal of money, but you have to figure pretty closely, and that was a good thing for us. That's why my father did that. He didn't want us to feel that we had all the money in the world, and that all we had to do was take it and spend it. We always felt, and we were taught by our father and mother, that the money that we received was the result of someone else's labor and his savings, and we always had a real regard for a dollar, which altogether too many people don't have now.

Baum: It sounds like the training in managing that money must have been valuable to you in later life. Now, where did you live at Harvard?

Bancroft: Well, I lived in college dormitories. That is, the first year it was one of the dormitories on the Yard in Matthews Hall, and then in the second year and third year I lived in the dormitory called Craigie Hall. It was one that was built quite a little distance from the Yard.

Baum: So this was 1899, 1901, 1902.

Bancroft: I would have graduated 1902 except I stayed out, I let my graduation go a year to graduate with my class. In other words, I was in 1903 and we didn't think much of 1902 or 1904. We thought 1903 was the only class and of course we wanted to graduate with our class.

Baum: So you finished school in 1902 but you didn't graduate?

Bancroft: Yes. I couldn't go into the law school unless I had a college degree or I had done all the work. They had a provision there

Bancroft: that you could enter if you'd done all the work but simply had not graduated-- if you were entitled to graduate but didn't graduate.

Baum: So did you go right into the law school?

Bancroft: Yes, then I went into the law school and spent two years there. I received an A.M. degree in law school.

Baum: This was very hard work?

Bancroft: Yes, and to get an A.M. degree you had to get within five per cent of an "A" for all your studies.

Hastings College of Law, 1904-1905

Bancroft: And then I came out to California in 1904 to spend a year at Hastings College of the Law, which is connected with the University of California, in order to learn California law while I was still getting my legal education.

Baum: Why did you select Hastings instead of Boalt?

Bancroft: Because Hastings was in San Francisco. I wanted to be in San Francisco.

Baum: Was your family in San Francisco at that time?

Bancroft: Yes, my father and mother were.

Baum: Well, what did you think of Hastings?

Bancroft: Very good.

Baum: You were comparing it with the best law school in the country.

Bancroft: Yes. Well, it was not up to Harvard Law School. You couldn't expect it at that time. At present it's improved a great deal.

- Baum: Didn't a lot of people who went to Hastings work also?
- Bancroft: I wouldn't know if there were many. I mean I don't remember many of them that were working.
- Baum: Most of them were full-time students.
- Bancroft: Well, unless they were working in a law office, something of that kind. I wouldn't say that either at Harvard or at Hastings many of them were working at outside jobs because it took just about your full time at either one.
- Baum: Then you graduated from Hastings in 1905?
- Bancroft: Yes.
- Baum: And you say that it was not necessary for you to take bar exams.
- Bancroft: No, we were admitted, all the graduates from Hastings, we were admitted on a motion of the bar.
- Baum: Then did you have to take difficult examinations?
- Bancroft: Well, yes, we had to complete our course and get our degree from Hastings, you see.
- Baum: And they felt that was the equivalent of passing the bar exam.
- Bancroft: Yes, you weren't supposed to have any trouble passing the bar examinations if you got a degree from Hastings or from Harvard, as far as that was concerned, but they didn't allow the degrees to admit you to the bar from any college except Hastings, I'm not sure about Boalt, but they certainly didn't allow them from any colleges outside the state. They all have to take exams now, even from Hastings, I think.
- Baum: Do you recall if they gave any courses on professional ethics?

Bancroft: I presume they gave them but I don't remember taking any. I don't remember that they gave them but I presume they did.

Baum: I think that was before the State Bar was formed, wasn't it?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: Then you went right into law practice?

Bancroft: Yes. I entered the law office of Curtis Hillyer in San Francisco and then shortly after that I was married.

Marriage to Nina Otis Eldred

Baum: Where did you meet your wife?

Bancroft: At Coronado. She came originally from Wisconsin, but the time I met her was one summer -- that was either during my freshman year at college or before I went to college, I'm not sure which -- at Coronado. She was then living in Philadelphia and was going to Vassar, and then I saw her quite often, during vacations and summer vacations.

Baum: Was this as a date or was this as a family friend?

Bancroft: No, we didn't date in those days. We saw all the girls we wanted to, which again I think is a very much better plan than what they have now. It's a very bad custom that they have of boys and girls going steady starting early in high school, and a boy doesn't have a chance to see any other girls. Why, we would think that if a boy took a girl to a dance and he danced the first dance with her, usually the supper dance, and then sometimes the last dance, if he did any more than that we would

Bancroft: think either she was a pill and he couldn't get anybody to dance with her or else that he was just monopolizing her and that he couldn't find anybody else to dance with him. Ordinarily, he wouldn't have more than two dances with any one girl, and that gave all the girls a chance to have a little variation, as well as it gave the boys that chance. We would have thought if a fellow and his girl had to dance the whole night together, well, it was just because there was something queer about one of them or the other. Probably both.

Baum: Well, you say she was in Philadelphia. Did you go down to her home or did she come up to your home?

Bancroft: No, I went down to her home. And then once, after two or three years that I'd known her, she came and visited in our home once or twice after we came to California.

Baum: Well, this must have been pretty serious for you to go that far to visit her and for her to come --

Bancroft: Oh, I used to have a good time. There were other girls there, too, but I never thought much of any of them compared with what I thought of her.

Baum: Well, then, this wasn't unusual for a young man to go visit, stay at somebody's house, on weekends and --

Bancroft: It wouldn't be weekends. At college we had our college activities and so on which were distinct. She was at Vassar, she was finally president of her class at Vassar, but she wasn't spending her weekends going to parties and things of that kind while she was at Vassar. She had plenty of social life after-

Bancroft: wards and plenty of friends and so on. We weren't in any sense going steady or anything of that kind. She was engaged two or three times before she was engaged to me. She would have friends and I'd have friends and if you do that then when you finally fall in love with each other and decide to get married you have had some experience with others and you know what you're getting into. It seems to me a very much better system than the system they're using now, and I think one of the reasons that there's so many divorces and things of that kind is that a fellow and a girl get married and they've never seen anybody else and then after they've been married for five or six years somebody else comes along and they fall in love and it's only natural that there's going to be trouble.

Baum: What was your wife's maiden name?

Bancroft: Nina Otis Eldred.

Baum: What was her major in Vassar?

Bancroft: I don't know. I think it was just an academic course. She took Greek and Latin, things of that kind. I didn't take any Greek or Latin in college, that's the reason I had to take so many other courses to make up for it. She was always much more popular, amounted to much more socially than I did. I was not nearly as good a mixer, for instance, as she was.

Baum: She was more of an extrovert than you were.

Bancroft: Well, I don't know the name of it, but she was just naturally very popular, and I was just reasonably so.



Philip Bancroft, Sr., Philip Bancroft, Jr.
and Hubert Howe Bancroft

Baum: Then you decided to get married as soon as you went into your own law work.

Early Law Practice in San Francisco

Baum: This Curtis Hillyer was an established attorney in San Francisco?

Bancroft: Yes. He later went down to San Diego and became attorney for the Scripps interests there.

Baum: Was his a large office?

Bancroft: No, it was a personal office. He was the principal man there. I think he only had one other, something like that, but it was not a firm, it was individual practice. General practice, not criminal, general civil practice.

Baum: How long did you stay with him?

Bancroft: Oh, a year or maybe a year or two. Then I became associated with two other young lawyers and we had the firm of Hewlett, Bancroft, and Ballantine, and then later on it became just Bancroft and Ballantine.

Baum: Were they young men about your age?

Bancroft: Yes, or a year or two older, I'd say. We practiced in San Francisco and then finally Mr. Hewlett left and went to Chicago or somewhere and Mr. Ballantine became a professor of law. He taught, I think it was in the Michigan Law School, and he taught in two or three law schools, and finally was professor of law at the University of California. So then I was practicing alone.

BAUM: Where did you have your office?

Bancroft: First it was in what they called the Call Building, or the Claus Spreckles Building, at Third and Market Streets.

BAUM: Did you say Call?

Bancroft: Yes, the San Francisco Call was published there. It was one of the finest buildings in San Francisco, about 15 or 18 stories high, and at the time of the fire and the earthquake I went down there in the morning right after the earthquake and I took some things from my office and from the desk and so on -- each suite had a vault. Of course, it was a fire-proof building, and then they had the vaults inside that, and I put them in the vault to be sure they'd be all right, if the fire got to the Call Building, that we'd figure there was no possible chance of its burning. There wasn't any fire then within, I'd say, half a mile that we knew of. When I came back about three days later the whole building had burned and everything in the vault had just been charred to cinders, because we found that the fire-proof buildings were not fire-proof. The wood trim and the floors and things like that, it got so hot that those things would burn. Then we set up temporary offices. My father's building, the Bancroft Building, was destroyed by the fire, and also the apartment hotel that we owned and lived in up on Van Ness Avenue and Sutter Street, St. Dunstan's -- it was a very fine apartment hotel.

BAUM: So you were without home or office?

Bancroft: Yes. We moved over to Oakland for a little while and rented a house over there and we pitched a tent on my father's lot where he had had a building and started our practice of law

ancroft: there.

um: What kind of cases did you handle right after the fire?

ancroft: Largely insurance cases then. Then later on when the Monadnock Building was finished we had our offices there.

um: You continued to practice in San Francisco until World War I?

ancroft: Yes. I became an examiner of the Railroad Commission about 1915, as well as practicing law. There were three examiners of the Railroad Commission and we would hold hearings and write up decisions of cases which would then be passed on to the Commission and they would accept them. They could, of course, not accept them, but they would practically always take our decisions and affirm them. By 1915 there'd become so much work for the Commission to do that the three commissioners couldn't handle it all so they had three examiners.

um: Who were the other two examiners?

ancroft: Myron Westover and Harry Encell. Myron Westover later became a superior judge of Los Angeles.

um: What kind of cases did you handle before you became an examiner?

ancroft: Just general practice.

um: Did you tend to specialize in anything?

ancroft: No, anything that came along, except that we didn't take divorce cases or criminal cases.

um: I know so many attorneys didn't take any criminal cases that I wondered if there were sufficient attorneys for the criminals.

ancroft: Oh, there are always plenty for them. It's a special line of

Bancroft: work. I've often thought it was probably the most interesting line, but the reason I didn't go into criminal law was that I figured that the only way you could become a thoroughly successful criminal lawyer was to get off criminals. In other words, it was easy enough to get off an innocent man, but you'd have to be able to get off a guilty man in order to be an outstanding criminal lawyer, and I didn't want to spend my life getting off guilty men. I think you get very interesting cases that way, though. I like to follow criminal cases. I generally follow them much more than I do civil cases.

Baum: Did you have to go up in court for jury trials very often?

Bancroft: No, not many. We had not more than one case in five or six, maybe not more than one in ten, because it's pretty expensive. You have to make your client put up quite a good deal of money and then if he loses the case he has to pay the other fellow's expenses, too, as far as the jury is concerned, that is, the court costs, and so as a rule if you can avoid a jury trial and get a good judge and if you have a good case you don't want a jury trial. Then sometimes the other fellow does.

Baum: Did you take any part in the formation of the State Bar? I think that was going on in 1912.

Bancroft: No, I didn't take any part in it.

Baum: Did you have any insurance cases -- I guess that would be liability?

Bancroft: You mean the liability cases of personal injuries? No, I don't think we had any of them.

ENTRY INTO GRASS-ROOTS POLITICS

The Graft Prosecution in San Francisco

ancroft: When I first came back to California from the Harvard Law School I wanted to take an interest in politics. The politics in California were in an awfully bad state at that time. The popular government in California had got into the control of the Southern Pacific political machine and the chief counsel for the Southern Pacific, William F. Herrin, absolutely controlled the Republican political conventions; the state went Republican practically always at that time as a matter of course. Nobody would get nominated for any statewide office unless he received the approval -- he'd have to go and see Mr. Herrin and get his consent to his trying for the nomination and so on, and if he didn't do that he had no chance whatever of getting the Republican nomination for any state office. But we also found that practically nobody could get the nomination at any Democratic convention, except for once in a great while, unless he also had William F. Herrin's permission. So he would just put up two men to run against each other and one of them would very often say he was running against the Southern Pacific machine -- usually that would be the Democrat -- but before he got the nomination he'd have got the consent of the chief counsel of the Southern Pacific to run. Of course, that was a breakdown of the representative government and so a number of

ancroft: us were very much against it and I was very much against it right from the start, and I felt that the only way to do anything in opposition to that was to get into politics myself.

So I went to someone and said, "I'd like to start in." I thought I'd like to be an election official at the polls at the start, to learn the business from the bottom up, and I said I was interested in reform politics. I went to one of these politicians and he said, "Oh, yes, of course," and he referred me to State Senator Keane, said, "You want to go and see him." Now, I had his card, I showed it to you the other day. I won't even attempt to give his name an initial. They said, "He controls your district." So I went to see him and told him and he said, well, that was very nice that I was interested in reform politics and he would help me, he would send my name in. So, I was duly appointed on the election board and I served there at an election, must have been in 1904. That was when I first came back to California.

am: This was a Republican organization that you went to?

ancroft: Yes. I went to the state senator of my district and he controlled the whole district and he appointed me. Of course, he was in there with the consent of Abe Ruef and all those that controlled the city government at that time, and when I received my \$10 for serving on that I sent it to a committee of three that were either representing the chamber of commerce or the merchants association that were starting an investigation and a reform

Bancroft: movement against Abe Ruef and the city government. I sent my \$10 to them with a letter, but unfortunately they seemed to like it enough so they published it in their little paper that they were getting out and after that I didn't receive any more appointments.

But then the earthquake and fire occurred, in 1906, April 18. They kept up the investigation of Ruef afterwards, and I became interested in that and we had a great many spirited meetings in connection with the group that were against the Ruef-Schmitz regime, and then they finally indicted both Mayor Schmitz and Ruef. My brother served on the jury that convicted Schmitz, and sentenced him to San Quentin. Then that was appealed and finally the decision was reversed on appeal. The same group was also attacking Ruef and he was tried and I think it was during his trial that Francis Heney, the chief prosecutor, was shot, and Hiram Johnson came in. He'd been working with this group, but he then came in and took charge of the trial while Heney was out of it, and Ruef was convicted and was sent to jail and served his term.

Baum: Did you participate in any of these reform activities?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, all the way through.

Baum: What did you do?

Bancroft: Well, we organized voters and groups in our districts, each district. I was then in the 41st Assembly District, and Mrs. Bancroft organized a women's club in that district that did a great deal of work. We would go from house to house and canvass

Bancroft: the voters, urge them to register, and urge people to get out. We did regular house-to-house precinct work. Each of us would take our own precinct and work in it, and then, of course, we would attend the meetings and things. They had mass meetings in an effort to get rid of Ruef and Schmitz, and there were non-partisan meetings, Republicans and Democrats together on that. But Abe Ruef was a very smart political boss and it was very hard to beat him and it wasn't until all this corruption was shown up that he was finally beaten. Then he was sent to jail and a reform board of supervisors was put in with Dr. Taylor as mayor. Dr. Taylor had been dean of the Hastings Law School when I was there. He served very satisfactorily, and my brother Paul Bancroft was one of the reform board of supervisors. He served then as supervisor and was re-elected for one or two terms, as long as he wanted to be. For quite a while he remained as supervisor and finally, then, he didn't run again. He was never defeated, and most of the members of that board were never defeated. Dr. Giannini was one of them, Dr. A.H. Giannini.

Baum: I gather that politics was discussed in your family.

Bancroft: All the time, yes.

Baum: And Mrs. Bancroft was politically-minded, also.

Bancroft: We were always together on politics, never had a disagreement.

Baum: Did you feel that the labor people were supporting the reform?

Bancroft: Not the Union Labor Party.

Baum: I know -- that was Ruef's party, wasn't it?

Bancroft: It was a union labor bunch that got in there and did all this crooked work.

Baum: Well, do you think the actual labor union people, not the Union Labor Party, were in support of that administration?

Bancroft: I think most of them voted for the Union Labor ticket, yes. Now, Andrew Furuseth was one of them that was always with us. John I. Nolan was another that was very strongly with us, a strong labor union man. And James A. Johnston was another; he was later warden of San Quentin and put in a great many reforms. He was on that board of supervisors. Oh, yes, a great many union labor men undoubtedly voted our way, but I would think the great majority of them voted for the Ruef-Schmitz ticket. Langdon was district attorney elected by the Union Labor crowd, but he joined the prosecution of them when he found that they were doing crooked work and taking bribes and so on.

Baum: Did you know Furuseth?

Bancroft: Yes, just as I knew these others. I didn't know him outside of our political meetings and things.

Baum: I've heard him described as rather a saint-like person.

Bancroft: Yes, he was a very fine man, absolutely dedicated to the work he was doing and he did very fine work for the sailors. He was always interested in good, honest government.

Baum: Was he mostly interested in municipal government, not active in the state?

Bancroft: No, he wasn't active in the state affairs. He was mostly interested in the welfare of sailors.

Baum: I know he went to Washington sometimes to speak for the sailors.

Bancroft: Oh, yes, he was nationally known. Then when we had the graft prosecution trial he was on our side. But the great majority of the labor union leaders were against us, because they had their labor union government and a lot of them claimed we were attacking the labor unions, which we weren't.

Baum: That was your feeling, that the Union Labor Party was supported by the labor unions?

Bancroft: Oh, there was no question about that.

Baum: I think that there was an attempt after they convicted Schmitz and Ruef to convict Patrick Calhoun --

Bancroft: Yes, I was going to go right into that. As long as we were simply going after the crooked supervisors and the crooked mayor, and so on, who should have been sent to San Quentin, we had the support of all the leading people in the community, businessmen and bankers and so on, but as soon as we began going after the people that had given the bribes, who were also legally guilty, then we had a very sharp division in San Francisco and quite a good deal of bitterness. When Patrick Calhoun and a number of others were indicted for having given the bribes there was a tremendous flareup, and from that time on for a number of years there was a great deal of bitterness between the two groups. I never felt bitter toward them, I felt sorry, as a matter of fact, that we had to go after them, but I couldn't see but what those who said we must go

Bancroft: after them were right, that it takes two to do bribing, and one is just as guilty under the law as the other. Personally, I've always thought that the man who holds office, he is committing a breach of trust, while the other one is just urging him to do it, but still there was no question but what they were both guilty.

Baum: So that you favored convicting the bribe givers, too?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, that's what those who were backing the graft prosecution were doing, they were favoring convicting both, because otherwise there wouldn't have been any of this big fight that we had because everybody admitted that you should send the bribe takers to jail except the bribe takers themselves, but a great many felt that you shouldn't send the gentlemen that had done the bribing to jail. They should be left off.

Baum: Why? What was their reasoning?

Bancroft: Well, their reason was because of lot of them represented people in the city who were mixed up in it in one way or another.

Baum: Simply because of their social prestige.

Bancroft: Yes, and also because they felt that they were being held up by the supervisors. A great many people would say you can't do business with a bunch like that board of supervisors unless you do bribe them, so the fellows that do the bribing are not as guilty as the others, and personally, as I say, I don't think they were as bad, though they still were guilty, and the only way to stop bribing is to go after both groups, because

Bancroft: if you're going to allow the rich men to offer these poor office holders -- and I don't mean poor in the sense that I'm sorry for them, I mean the impecunious office holders -- if you're going to allow the rich men to offer them \$5000 apiece for their vote, there are going to be a lot of them that will succumb to the temptation, and the only way you can stop that is to obtain indictments against a few of the rich people, try to put some of them in jail. So that was the big fight in what they call the graft prosecution.

Baum: Rudolph Spreckles was one of the financiers behind that.

Bancroft: Yes, he was one that was with the graft prosecution. Now, almost all the financiers were against the graft prosecution. Oh, it was upsetting business, it was upsetting the corporations and making a lot of trouble, indirect trouble, and that went on for a number of years.

Beginning to Campaign Against the Regular Republicans

Baum: Is it from this that you then went on into Republican politics?

Bancroft: Well, in 1908 we organized to get control of our district. Yes, we were working all the time along the same lines. We wanted to get that out of the hands of the old Republican bosses and so on, and we were in a district that was considered the safest district for the machine, probably the safest congressional district in the state. We did the house-to-house canvassing --

Baum: Who is "we"?

Sancroft: We were called at that time, or very shortly after, the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, and it was all over the state, there were efforts to organize it, and in our district I was one of those in the 41st District that was very active in the organization and the work of it and the house-to-house canvass and so on. When we came to elect delegates to the state convention, we in the Fourth Congressional District elected a group of delegates that were opposed to the machine, and by doing active work while they were more or less asleep on the job -- I mean, it was a district where they were so sure they didn't have to bother, and on election day we had watchers at the polls and everything, urging our side to vote, and when they counted the ballots they found we had carried that district and elected our delegates to the convention. When they got to the convention they had to choose two delegates to the national convention from the Fourth Congressional District and they chose another man, Mr. Marvin, and me, and we were the only two that had broken the slate; our district elected the only two delegates to the national convention that were not machine controlled, but we were all for Taft anyhow at that time so it didn't make any great difference that way. But it was a break in the solid machine. I imagine Herrin must have given his underlings Hail Columbia for having allowed that to happen.

Baum: You feel you did this just by house-to-house canvassing?

Bancroft: Yes, by organization -- not that I did it -- but the whole group did it by house-to-house canvass, going and ringing doorbells, telling the person that answered the door who you were and what you were doing and that you wanted to get them to register. Sometimes they'd almost kick you out --

Baum: You were already calling yourselves the Lincoln-Roosevelt League?

Bancroft: I'm not sure whether in 1908 -- yes --

Baum: I think they were organized in 1907.

Bancroft: I think so, yes, because then we had state conventions, and at the state convention, I think it was at Sacramento, we found there were a number of young fellows from Los Angeles that had broken through and got their delegates elected and from all over -- San Francisco was one of the toughest districts to crack -- but Los Angeles and San Diego and other places, there were a lot of men that got in as delegates.

And at the state convention they had a very tough fight about admitting the delegates. There were contested delegates from quite a few places where the machine had just run in a bunch and said these are the delegates. We claimed that our men had got elected. I remember there was one close district in the Sacramento Valley where the Lincoln-Roosevelt League or the regular Republican candidate would win -- it was either the Weed district or that the men came from Weed -- they (the machine) brought a whole train-load of voters down from Weed to this district, not residents at all, to vote at a primary, and the delegates that they said were elected with the help

Bancroft: of these voters were contested by our group who'd been up there.

I remember a very prominent middle-aged attorney, Tom Dozier, got up and said, after both sides had presented their case, "You've heard a lot of charges and counter-charges, but in a case of this kind you don't want to be too nasty-nice. You should vote for those that were recommended by the regular Republican ticket." So, he was known after that for years as Nasty-Nice Dozier. Of course, that was repeated over and over again.

Anyhow, we had those conventions and we had meetings of that kind for the rest of 1908 and we kept agitating all the time along the Lincoln-Roosevelt lines. There was a group of men who had been urging that we have the direct primary such as they had in Wisconsin. There was a bill before the state legislature to have the direct primary established, and there were three men that were asked to go up there to appear before the state legislature in order to get the direct primary, and my brother Paul Bancroft was one of the three that were to go. They employed Hiram Johnson to represent them, so he went up and appeared. I think that somebody like Rudolph Spreckles put up the money. Anyhow, they had funds and they were able to employ Hiram Johnson to represent them before the legislature, to work for the direct primary, and the direct primary was put through. That's where Hiram Johnson came into the picture. What put him in the public eye was his fight in the graft prosecution and his work in the Ruef trial; I meant,

Bancroft: that that's where he got interested in our Lincoln-Roosevelt League, and immediately his ability was recognized and he immediately assumed leadership in our fight.

Baum: Who was the other Fourth Congressional District delegate, did you say?

Bancroft: Mr. Marvin, as I remember the name.

Baum: Was he as young a man as you?

Bancroft: No, he was in his fifties, I'd say.

Baum: Weren't you a rather young man to be so actively engaged in politics?

Bancroft: Yes. I was the youngest delegate in the entire delegation, by far the youngest.

Baum: Could you describe what the state convention was like?

Bancroft: State conventions were held to nominate state officials and also to elect the delegates, the members of the state central committee.

Baum: Was there quite a clash after that state convention between the Lincoln-Roosevelt men and the regulars?

Bancroft: Well, the state convention didn't elect the delegates to the national convention, but I think it was the delegates from each congressional district, and they would elect two men to the national delegation. All the other congressional districts were controlled by the machine and it was just the Fourth Congressional District where we broke through.

A Delegate to the National Republican Convention, 1908

Baum: You were elected secretary of the California delegation to the national convention.

Bancroft: Yes. Of course, they didn't have to elect me secretary, but I suppose they -- I was secretary-treasurer, as a matter of fact.

Baum: Yes, I recall you had all the money to handle, too. How is it that they elected one of the two independents as the secretary-treasurer? They didn't hold that against you?

Bancroft: First they elected the chairman, and that was M.H. deYoung, the editor of the Chronicle. Then they called for nominations for the secretary, and Mr. Marvin surprised me by nominating me, and there was no opposition and so I was elected.

Baum: Was there any feeling in the delegation against you and Mr. Marvin?

Bancroft: No. Of course, if there had been I wouldn't have been elected. I think they hoped to get us into their camp by treating us very nicely, which they did. I don't mean they got us into their camp, but they did treat us very nicely. I found a good many of the older men were quite interested in a young man as myself being so active in politics, and they were very nice to me. And, of course, I did everything I could to do a good job and you may have noticed one or two letters from the delegates after the convention was over complimenting me.

Baum: I think they commented that they had seldom had a secretary-

Baum: treasurer who was so careful about keeping the accounts accurate.

Bancroft: Yes, and who gave a financial report afterwards.

Baum: Did you feel any antipathy towards them, knowing that they were part of the machine?

Bancroft: No. I appreciated their all being so nice to me when I was in the minority there. In fact, when we got down to Los Angeles -- we had left from San Francisco in a special car, and picked up some of the delegates in Los Angeles -- we picked up there a congressman and (I never saw him afterwards, I was trying to think of his name) he seemed quite interested in me and he told me one time, when we were together in a private conversation, he said, "Young man, don't you get involved in politics. Here I've been elected to Congress a number of terms and one of these days I'll be beaten and then I'll just be out, and in the meantime with the number of demands that are made upon me" -- he didn't say by the machine -- "I'm not my own boss." He said, "Don't you ever run for office and get in that fix."

Of course, when a person got into politics the way he was -- he had to spend his time in Washington, and also running for re-election, he couldn't make any private fortune legitimately, and he was evidently a very honest man, and he was just giving me that as a piece of fatherly advice. But I had no intention then of running for office. My father had told me that I could do much more if I didn't run for office by working for the public interest and for getting good men to run than if I ran for office myself.

Baum: Did your father encourage you to take this active kind of office?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, he was very much pleased.

Baum: Your brothers weren't as active as you were, were they?

Bancroft: No, except my brother Paul was quite active locally. He was more interested in municipal politics; he was with this reform board of supervisors and he was interested in this job they were doing which was helping to rebuild the city. The city was just gone, the whole main part of it had to be rebuilt, and there was a great deal of work in connection with that, and so he was devoting all of his time to that. He wasn't doing any of this precinct work or anything.

Baum: Then your brother was active in municipal government, but not in the state.

Bancroft: No, he wasn't active in the actual political work. You see, he was chosen as a representative citizen and served as such and he never took part in the state politics or the ground work, you might say. He was never a member of the county central committee or anything of that kind.

Baum: Getting back to your job as secretary-treasurer in the delegation in 1908, what were your duties?

Bancroft: It was practically managing all the financial affairs and also the hotel arrangements and things of that kind, and when we got there, the headquarters arrangements.

Baum: So that you had to get reservations in Chicago. Did you have to reserve a train, or a car?

Bancroft: Yes, a special car. And we had to get reservations for the different members of the delegations, and then, of course, we had lots of applications for tickets and things of that kind, visitors' tickets. And we didn't have any to give out, except we each had two of our own and I believe maybe the chairman had a few extra or something of that kind.

Baum: Did you go to San Diego before you went to Chicago?

Bancroft: Not that I remember.

Baum: You still had the family farm in Spring Valley?

Bancroft: Yes, and I know after the convention was over and I got things cleared up I went down there. I think my family was down there at the time, and I went down for a week or so.

Baum: I believe each delegate paid \$100.

Bancroft: Each delegate and each alternate was assessed \$100.

Baum: Did that \$100 cover expenses?

Bancroft: It didn't cover his railroad expenses or anything of that kind. He had to buy his own ticket.

Baum: And what did the \$100 cover?

Bancroft: It covered the expenses of the delegation, the headquarters and the badges and the flags and a great many incidental expenses of that kind.

Baum: And he paid his own railroad and his own living accommodations in Chicago? I see. I was wondering how far \$100 went.

Bancroft: It was considered quite an honor to be on the delegation. A great many people want to get on, you know, and they still do.

Bancroft: The last delegation I served on was in 1936 and we were still contributing \$100 apiece.

Baum: Oh, no more? Well, in 1936, I guess prices were low then, too.

Bancroft: I doubt if it's gone up any. They probably don't spend quite as much, although as I remember, when we went in 1912 we had a special train, not just a special car, and we had two dining cars on the train so that everybody could eat without having to be held up while the others ate.

Baum: Was that just the California delegation?

Bancroft: Just the California delegation. Oh, we traveled in style.

Baum: In 1908 the California delegation was pledged to Taft. Was there any feeling among the delegates that they would rather have supported someone else?

Bancroft: Well, a good many of the delegates at the convention would have liked to have voted for Roosevelt again. He had declared definitely he was not a candidate and he was urging all his friends to vote for Taft, and still the leaders of the Republican national organization were scared to death that the convention would be stampeded for Roosevelt.

Baum: Weren't many of the leaders of the Republican Party a little bit fearful of Roosevelt's radical ideas?

Bancroft: That's what I mean. They were very much against him. The New York crowd and the big business interests wanted very much to get Roosevelt out of there, because you know he had been speaking of trust-busting and the malefactors of great wealth -- that was one of his expressions -- and there were plenty of

Bancroft: them, and of course all the machine organizations and so on wanted to get him out. They were very fearful that the convention would be stampeded to Roosevelt so they had a number of his friends, like Elihu Root, people like that, speak at the convention and quote messages from Theodore Roosevelt, that he was not a candidate and that he was in favor of the nomination of Taft.

Baum: I visualize the California delegation as being a standpatter crowd.

Bancroft: Absolutely.

Baum: And you say that some of them still would have favored Roosevelt?

Bancroft: Not in the California delegation. They were held very well under control. There were two of us who would have favored Roosevelt.

Baum: You and Mr. Marvin would have been Roosevelt supporters.

Bancroft: Yes, and there was at least one other that had slipped in that I know would have favored him. That was S.M. Augustine of Marin County. I think he was of Marin County; he was in that district.

Baum: He was elected by the regular Republicans, but he was breaking away a little bit?

Bancroft: Yes, he was ready to break away.

Baum: Did the delegation see Taft as being more conservative than Roosevelt?

Bancroft: Oh, yes. He was recognized to be a good deal more conservative. And Taft was a very good man, but after he was elected President he sided a little too much with the conservative group and the standpatters and so on.

Baum: I believe he tried to stamp out the Insurgents later.

Bancroft: Well, that was in 1912.

Baum: But I think in 1910 he was already trying to defeat some of the Progressives, La Follette --

Bancroft: Progressive Republicans.

Baum: Yes, they were Republicans then; there was no separate party at that time. I noticed that the Charles Evans Hughes people of New York had been soliciting votes from the California delegation in case Taft was not nominated. How did you see Hughes? As more conservative or less conservative?

Bancroft: Well, he was supposed to be a little less conservative than Taft.

Baum: So that he would have been considered a little more left wing or radical. I guess you didn't have left wing in those days.

Bancroft: No, we didn't have left wingers. He would have been considered more progressive, and the standpatters didn't want any change at all in there. They wanted things left just as they were.

Baum: M.H. deYoung was the chairman. What kind of a man was he? A regular Republican?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, he was a very conservative Republican, and he would go right along with the machine on everything.

Baum: What was his stand on the graft prosecution?

Bancroft: As I remember it, he was quite strongly against the graft prosecution, but I don't know definitely. But as I remember it the Chronicle was very strong against the graft prosecution.

Baum: I believe I saw the name of Jesse Steinhart; he wasn't in the

Baum: delegation?

Bancroft: No, he wasn't in that delegation, but he was working with us in that same movement.

Baum: He was a Progressive Republican?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: I told you we interviewed his sister.

Bancroft: Yes, you told me.

Baum: So I was wondering what kind of a man Jesse Steinhart was as you recall him in those days. He must have been a very young man also.

Bancroft: Yes, he was just about my age. He was -- when you say his sister, that was not Rose Steinhart, was it?

Baum: Her married name was Braden, Amy Steinhart Braden.

Bancroft: Yes. That's another sister. But his sister, Rose Steinhart, and he were very active members of our district organization. We were all working together.

Baum: So that the Steinharts were Progressive Republicans in those days.

Bancroft: I don't remember Mrs. Braden's stand. I'm very sure she didn't take a very active part at that time.

Baum: What was Jesse Steinhart's business?

Bancroft: Lawyer.

Baum: So, were most of your group lawyers or professional people?

Bancroft: No. Mr. Marvin wasn't. He was a businessman. And, as I say, I'm not absolutely certain of that name now; it was so long ago.

Baum: An alternate was Frank Marvin. The regular delegate was Charles Field.

Bancroft: So he didn't go to the convention, or something of that kind.

Baum: Then it was Frank Marvin who was your comrade there. I also saw the name of Beach Thompson in this early group.

Bancroft: He was a very fine man; he took lots of interest in me as being a young man.

Baum: Do you know what he was doing at that time in a business way?

Bancroft: I'm not dead sure, but I think he was representing the electrical lines that were getting power from the mountains -- getting electricity from water power and having the long transmission lines in San Francisco. I think at that time they had the longest high powered transmission lines in the world. I'm not sure. As I remember, he represented them. I know there was one delegate there that was representing those interests. And as I remember, it was Beach Thompson.

Baum: I know he was interested in hydroelectric power; he was also interested in the telegraph system, Poulson wireless?

Bancroft: It was hydroelectric power that he was representing at that time. Then they had Henry Oxnard of Oxnard, California. He was representing the beet sugar interests. A good many of the delegates there were representing special interests.

Baum: How do you mean they were representing an interest?

Bancroft: Well, they wanted to see that men were elected to Congress and men were elected to the United States Senate that would be very favorable to the hydroelectric interests or the beet sugar

Bancroft: interest. All the big industries wanted to have their representative in Congress.

Baum: Did they try to influence the platform?

Bancroft: They would if there was anything that affected their industry. They just wanted to see that their industries weren't discriminated against. And they probably wanted to see that they were given any favors that they could think of that were legitimate. Well, for instance, like a high tariff on sugar, and so on. I don't mean that they were representing them to get any crooked work through or anything, but on the other hand, some of those people did get a great deal more than they should have gotten for their industries. But they were each there to see that their industry got as much favorable legislation as they could.

Baum: I've heard Beach Thompson's name mentioned in so many things, and I've wondered what kind of a man he was.

Bancroft: Oh, he was a very cultured, kindly sort of a man, and I've always considered him a very fine man.

Baum: Was he a good government man?

Bancroft: No. He was for the standpatters.

Baum: In this convention of 1908 did it appear to you that Taft was being steam-rollered in?

Bancroft: No. For instance, in our delegation we all voted -- there was no question of our not voting -- for Taft. We were pledged to Taft and we wanted to be that way.

Baum: And you too?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: You and Mr. Marvin were satisfied with Taft?

Bancroft: Not only satisfied with him, we had been for him right from the start. We were for Teddy Roosevelt, and he was Teddy Roosevelt's choice.

Baum: And you honestly felt that he was Teddy Roosevelt's choice?

Bancroft: Oh, there's no question about it.

Baum: There was no feeling that Roosevelt would have liked to have been nominated if possible?

Bancroft: No. There was nothing of that kind. A good many of us felt that Roosevelt had been sorry that he had made the statement that he wouldn't run again. And I always personally thought that he himself had regretted making that statement. But, having made it, he stuck by it and refused to run. He could have had the nomination without any question at all if he had been out to get it and hadn't made that statement.

Baum: He was terribly popular, wasn't he?

Bancroft: Yes. He was the first man in there for a long time as President who had been able to defy the powers that be.

Baum: I had the feeling that he really stirred the imagination of the American people.

Bancroft: Oh, he did. He was defying the bosses and so on and doing what he thought was right for the welfare of the country irrespective of the influence that the higher-ups were trying to use against him.

Baum: After the election then you returned to your business?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, after clearing up the affairs. I imagine it took three or four weeks, something like that, for me to get everything cleared up. You see, after we got all through with the convention and with these assessments of \$100 each which were all collected before the delegation arrived in Chicago -- because we knew that that was the time to collect it, that after that it might not be so easy to collect -- and after that was all collected -- I was careful about the expenditures and so on -- we had about \$700 and some odd dollars left over and I turned that over to the state central committee for use in the campaign. And that was what surprised them, that there was any balance left.

Baum: And I think that the way you did everything in such a business-like manner surprised them too. Do you recall if you were active in politics any further that year? Of course, I suppose you campaigned for Taft?

Bancroft: Yes, but it was almost a foregone conclusion.

Baum: So it wasn't necessary to be very active.

Bancroft: No, I was spending more time then getting back into my law practice.

Baum: I should think your law practice must have suffered considerably when you were on a political --

Bancroft: Oh, it did.

Baum: At that time did you have partners?

Bancroft: No, I didn't have any partners.

Baum: You were just alone there so there was no one to handle the

Baum: business when you were gone.

Bancroft: I said I was alone -- now I take that back. I'm very sure we were a firm then, Hewlett, Bancroft, and Ballantine. But Mr. Hewlett was down in Los Angeles most of the time; he had an office down there.

Baum: You had an office in Los Angeles too?

Bancroft: Well, I'm not sure whether we had an office or not, but he was down there doing work for some Los Angeles clients that we had.

Baum: This meant that you had cases that extended from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

Bancroft: These weren't cases so much as what you might call corporation law, representing legal interests of different clients.

Baum: That seems unusual for such a young organization.

Bancroft: Mr. Hewlett, you see, had been practicing longer than we had, and they were mostly his clients. All of the Los Angeles work was for his clients.

Baum: What did he think about you being so active in politics and also so often engaged, I imagine, in political activity?

Bancroft: Most young lawyers were doing that. Mr. Steinhart was doing it the same way, but not quite as actively as I was; still, he was very active in politics then.

Local Politics

Baum: The next point that I found out you were active was in the 1909 elections. Do you recall those?

Bancroft: We were taking the same activity. Our little district club was very active then. But then, of course, that was more non-partisan. We had Democrats in with us and soon working against the Schmitz-Ruef crowd.

Baum: In 1909. McNab?

Bancroft: Gavin McNab was a Democrat and we were working with him. He was a Democratic leader. And the Democrats and the Republicans were working pretty much together opposing the Union Labor Party. Now, I don't remember what year that was, but it was from 1905 or '06 on.

Baum: You were active in the Municipal League of Independent Republican Clubs, of which your district club was a member.

Bancroft: That was a good deal like the Lincoln-Roosevelt League.

Baum: I think they were the same people as made up the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. And this was again combating the Union Labor Party, is that right?

Bancroft: Well, this was favoring the graft prosecution, as I remember.

Baum: Well, and then there was another Republican group called the United Republican Clubs. Were they the same?

Bancroft: I don't remember. They might have been, but I don't remember that name.

Baum: The Municipal League of Independent Republican Clubs was thinking about who they wanted to run for mayor, and I believe they were thinking about James Rolph, Charles Moore, William Crocker, Charles Bentley, or Marshall Hale.

Bancroft: Well, Marshall Hale was with us in our Progressive movement and Charles Bentley was very active on our side.

Baum: So you'd call those two men Progressives. What about Rolph? Was he a Progressive?

Bancroft: He was more, as I remember, at that time interested in local politics, the same as those others you named. Now, those names, if you read them over again, Charles C. Moore --

Baum: Yes. Charles Moore, James Rolph, William Crocker --

Bancroft: Well, William Crocker, when it came to the graft prosecution, he was on the other side. He was very much against the graft prosecution because they were trying to indict him.

Baum: It seems curious that this group of five men would be considered together as possible candidates for mayor by the same group. This was 1909. It was in the primary that these various men were being considered.

Bancroft: Well, those men weren't for the graft prosecution; as I remember, both Mr. Hale and Mr. Bentley were; but Moore and William Crocker, and some of those others were very definitely against this at that time. But they were with us in the municipal fight, until the graft prosecution stirred things up.

Baum: So that those who had been with you at a certain point might later on be against you?

Bancroft: That's right.

Baum: And they might be with you on municipal things but against you on state politics, or national?

Bancroft: Yes, you see, state and national politics were partisan while the municipal politics -- one of the strongest men with us was Gavin McNab, who was the leader of the Democratic group in state and national politics.

Baum: What kind of a man was Gavin McNab?

Bancroft: He was a very good citizen.

Baum: A lot of people disliked him, didn't they?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, of course, a lot of people disliked all the good citizens. A lot of people hated Governor Johnson because he was destroying the Southern Pacific political machine with which they were aligned.

Baum: And you think people didn't like Gavin McNab because of his policies, not his personality?

Bancroft: Yes.

baum: Was he a personable person?

Bancroft: Yes. I think he was a Scotchman, I'm not sure, Scotch ancestry, I mean. Oh, he was a very plausible, agreeable lawyer when he wanted to be, and I imagine he would stand up against a lot of people when he thought they were wrong and they would then dislike him for that reason. But he was a popular man, I would say.

Baum: Popular with the ordinary people?

Bancroft: I would think so. I don't remember that he ever ran for office, but I mean he was a powerful Democratic politician.

Baum: And your group didn't mind working with the Democrats?

Bancroft: Oh, no, we were tickled to death to work with them.

Lincoln-Roosevelt League Leaders

Baum: Well, then, I guess the next problem that came up was who to nominate for governor in 1910.

Bancroft: Well, you see, by 1910 the graft prosecution had come and in the prosecution of Ruef, I think it was, Heney was shot, and Hiram Johnson had taken his place and finished the prosecution. He'd been working with that group before a little, but he had not been taking an active part in our Lincoln-Roosevelt League or anything of that kind.

Baum: Oh, he hadn't?

Bancroft: No. He was probably a member of it, and so on, but he was a practicing attorney. As I remember it, he had joined in the graft prosecution with Heney, but wasn't taking the lead at all until Heney was shot. Then he stepped in at the request of those who were interested in continuing the graft prosecution, and he did a very fine job. He was a very fine orator and an able courtroom lawyer and he stepped in and finished up the prosecution, and Ruef was convicted and sent to San Quentin.

Then, of course, he was an outstanding figure politically, and he also took an active part in getting the direct primary law through the legislature. He wasn't a member of the legislature, but he went up there and spoke for it, and so on. And then he ran on the direct primary and made a statewide campaign,

Bancroft: went to practically every county in the state and had tremendous crowds. He was overwhelmingly nominated. Then the Southern Pacific group all backed the Democratic nominee for governor against Johnson, but he was elected by a smaller majority because the Democrats, almost all of them -- that is, of the Democratic politicians -- they naturally supported their man, Theodore Bell, who was also supposed to be running against the Southern Pacific machine, but he was much more amenable to the control of Southern Pacific and also he wasn't as able a lawyer or politician as Hiram Johnson, couldn't appeal to the crowds the way Hiram Johnson did, and the Southern Pacific crowd figured they could control him, while they couldn't control Johnson, so they all swung behind him and it made it quite a hot fight in the final election in 1910. But Hiram Johnson was elected then. And after that he did so well as governor that he could have been elected governor as long as he wanted to be.

Baum: Before they finally settled on Hiram Johnson as candidate for governor, let's say back in 1909, do you recall who were the leading Lincoln-Roosevelt people in Northern California? This was before the Johnson group really got rolling.

Bancroft: I could tell you if I saw their names. Chester Rowell was one. Ed Dickson, he came from Los Angeles; Meyer Lissner came from Los Angeles, Marshall Stimson -- I would say they were the three. And then there was a man by the name of Gates, Lee C. Gates. They were all from Southern California.

Baum: Chester Rowell was the only one from Northern California?

Bancroft: Yes. He was from Fresno. Then there was Frank R. Devlin, and I believe that Irving Martin was active at that time. If he wasn't, he was active soon after. Max Kuhl was another one who was active. And there were others, a good many. If I could see a list of the names of the delegates to the 1912 convention I could tell you. Charles S. Wheeler was active.

Baum: And Fremont Older? Was he active?

Bancroft: No. He was a newspaper editor. He was backing us on a great many things but he wouldn't take part in the political.

Baum: Heney. Was he in political affairs then very much?

Bancroft: Yes. I think he was a Democrat, though.

Baum: I think he had switched over, but only recently.

Bancroft: Yes, something like that. He was very active at that time, when Johnson was running. Rudolph Spreckles was the man that was putting up the money for the fight, and he was, you might say, the leader as far as Northern California was concerned, but he didn't go to conventions or anything of that kind. In other words, he wasn't doing the groundwork.

Baum: Did he stay behind the scenes?

Bancroft: No, he was active. He'd appear at meetings and things of that kind, but what I mean is, the organization of district committees and things of that kind, he wouldn't be doing any house-to-house work. Not at the precinct level. He wouldn't attend as a delegate to any of these -- he was right at the top. He was probably the best-known man next to Chester Rowell in Northern California of what they now call the brass, the top

Bancroft: men in the movement. He was very active in the graft prosecution, raising the money for it. He put up his own money and helped raise money and so on.

Charles Bentley and Charles Wheeler were from San Francisco. Irving Martin was from Stockton; Chester Rowell was from Fresno.

Baum: According to George Mowry -- do you know his book, The California Progressives?

Bancroft: I haven't read it, no. I've heard of it.

Baum: In one of the letters you showed me Edgar Luce was very critical of Mowry's book.

Bancroft: Mowry was very unfair to Hiram Johnson. Have you that letter?

Baum: Yes, it's in your Johnson file. There's also a letter there from Al McCabe.

Bancroft: That letter from McCabe I want to keep. I want to have it copied sometime and send it to the Bancroft Library, because they have all of Johnson's own papers and they haven't any of McCabe's -- of course, he had them all destroyed at the time of his death. Well, I assume he had a lot of confidential things in there that he'd received in confidence. I know he could have given you an awful lot of stuff.

Baum: Well, I think this letter from Edgar Luce also is a valuable --

Bancroft: Yes. I'd urged him to write to the Bancroft Library.

Baum: Edgar Luce is dead now, isn't he? This is the letter he wrote to Mowry and he took issue on certain comments of Mowry's and pointed out why he thought he was wrong and gave some exact examples, so I think that's a very valuable letter.

Baum: Those two I want to have copied before I get through.

The Gubernatorial Campaign of 1910

Baum: Well, at the time that the discussion was going on as to who should run for governor, and I think it was before Johnson had really come to the fore, there were many people proposing Heney -- this was after Heney had been shot and had recovered. Do you know what the feeling was in your local groups concerning Heney?

Bancroft: Well, we were for Johnson.

Baum: Right from the beginning?

Bancroft: As soon as it was a question of who should run. We all preferred Johnson to Heney.

Baum: Why?

Bancroft: Well, I think he was a much higher type of man than Heney, and I think Heney would have been much more radical than Johnson if he had been elected.

You see, one of the very strong points in favor of Johnson was that he was going into politics to kick the Southern Pacific out of politics in California. He never said that he would try to kick the Southern Pacific out of California or that he would attack the Southern Pacific as a railroad and try to destroy it, anything of that kind. He just wanted to get them out of the control of politics.

Bancroft: Now, my opinion of Heney is that he would have been extremely radical against a concern like the Southern Pacific and would have tried to have injured them commercially or economically, which Johnson never did. Now, under Johnson the Railroad Commission was appointed and it regulated the Southern Pacific drastically, but not improperly. In other words, it always recognized that the Southern Pacific and all the public utilities were entitled to make a fair, a very fair return, on their investments. In fact, I think they established eight per cent as the limit of what they should make on their investments. But they didn't try to cut them down to where they would make only three or four or five per cent, or put them out of business. Now, a good many of us felt that Heney would have been unfair to the corporations and to the business life of California if he had been elected. He would have been on the radical side.

Baum: Was part of this suspicion because he'd been a Democrat?

Bancroft: No, no, it was his nature. He was very vindictive, and while he was in the graft prosecution we were all backing him on that, I mean our group, but there was no question but what we favored Hiram Johnson. I remember that Jack Eshleman (he had been chairman of the Railroad Commission under Johnson) told me one time, "You know, the Railroad Commission is tremendously popular because we are determined to allow them a legitimate profit, and a lot of people will want us, for instance, to cut down rates and to have a hearing, and we'll find that the rates

Bancroft: are reasonable. Then we will have to deny the petition to cut down rates and then we're going to lose a lot of our popularity." You find that in Johnson and you find that in Ashleman, but you wouldn't find it in a man like Heney, in my opinion.

Baum: I believe Heney was more favorable to the labor unions.

Bancroft: Oh, and public ownership and -- I don't think he was any more favorable to the proper aims of the labor unions, but I think he would have been very ready to back anything the labor unions wanted if he thought it would help him politically.

Baum: So you think he probably was a political opportunist?

Bancroft: Yes. And, of course, later on, he was very bitter against Johnson because Johnson went so far ahead of him. I think he would have liked to have got the backing to run for governor the way Johnson got it.

Baum: I don't think the two men were ever very close friends, were they?

Bancroft: Well, they were very close in the graft prosecution, especially at the time when Johnson went in there and took his place.

Baum: I think the other two leading candidates for the nomination for governor were William R. Davis and Charles Belshaw of Antioch.

Bancroft: I knew Charles Belshaw quite well. He would like to have been governor, I also knew William Davis, and Davis was, I would say, a good deal superior to Belshaw. Belshaw wasn't bad, but he wasn't of governorship caliber. He was a state senator.

Baum: How would he have differed from Johnson, aside from not being

Baum: of governorship caliber? How would he have differed in his policies?

Bancroft: Well, I don't think he was in the same class. In the first place, I don't think he ever came anywhere near being backed for governor. He wasn't regarded very seriously as a candidate for governor.

Baum: At the time that he was put forward Johnson said he wouldn't run, and Belshaw would run, and Rowell and Older came out and said they would absolutely not support Belshaw, even if he were put forward by the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, and I wondered why?

Bancroft: Well, I think that it was just that they didn't consider that he was the caliber of man to put up. Now, for instance, I can tell you one incident. I was secretary of the Harvard Club of San Francisco and we had a meeting one time, and the toastmaster called on two of us to speak. They gave me some sort of light, foolish subject to talk on, and they gave Belshaw the subject, "If I Were Governor." Well, it was considered more or less of a joke. He got up and made a speech: "If I were governor, I would do so and so and so and so." And made a record political speech telling all the things he would do "If I were governor," and of course it was a club meeting and a social meeting and everybody was laughing about it before he got through -- not laughing, but --

Baum: Sounds a little like Upton Sinclair's book, I, Governor of California.

Bancroft: Oh, yes. But if he had been making that at a political meeting or something it would have been one thing, you know, but at a social meeting of the Harvard Club to get up there and make a speech when everybody -- when he had been given the subject as a joke -- This must have been some time after he didn't get the nomination, you know. I'd say perhaps 1914, 1915, something like that.

Baum: He wasn't acute to little social nuances?

Bancroft: No, not just that. He just wasn't of the caliber you would back for governor.

Baum: What about William Davis?

Bancroft: As I remember, he'd been mayor of Oakland or something like that.

Baum: Frank Mott was mayor of Oakland; he was also proposed.

Bancroft: That's what I was thinking of, then. But I remember William Davis just as a nice, a very good man, but he wasn't enough known over the state and he wasn't a man that we would have felt would make a successful campaign. He was, I would say, a good deal higher grade man than Belshaw was, and I don't mean to say anything against Belshaw. I was always friendly enough with him. But I never for a minute thought that he was a good man for governor.

Baum: I guess Harris Weinstock of Sacramento --

Bancroft: Yes, he was a very fine man.

Baum: Did these men from Antioch and Oakland and Sacramento get together with your San Francisco groups very often?

Bancroft: Not often. We'd get together at state conventions or at other meetings of the league.

Now, Harris Weinstock is one of the men that should have been mentioned when you were asking me of the prominent men in Northern California in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. He was head of the firm of Weinstock-Lubin & Co. Simon Lubin came from that and he turned into a very radical man and sided with the worst left-wingers that we had here in California before he got through. He was appointed to some office under Roosevelt and he became exceedingly objectionable.

Baum: What about Weinstock?

Bancroft: Weinstock was all right.

Baum: As I understand it, the reason these other men were proposed for a long time was that Johnson refused to --

Bancroft: Yes, I remember. He didn't want to run, and it was only --

Baum: Do you know why he didn't want to run?

Bancroft: Well, I think he wanted to continue his practice of law. He was a poor man and he was an able lawyer and doing well as a lawyer; and also, I think, another reason was that his father had been a state senator, I think from Sacramento. He lived in Sacramento anyhow and he was an ardent standpatter, and I think that Johnson knew that he would be attacked as insincere and so on because they would say, well, just look at his father. I think he was Grover Johnson or some such name as that.

Baum: Oh, I saw cartoons saying, "Like father, like son."

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Bancroft: Yes. And I think that was one reason why he was very averse to running.

Baum: He thought his father's reputation would make it hard for him.

Bancroft: Oh, his father's reputation was just as a tool of the Southern Pacific. And here he was attacking the Southern Pacific. His father was very successful as a politician. He was reported to have said that his philosophy in politics was to vote for every appropriation and against every tax increase.

Baum: That's a popular stand, if you can make your government run that way.

Bancroft: Well, that still works with politicians pretty well today. But he was candid enough to say so.

Baum: Well, I've heard it said that one of the reasons Johnson didn't want to run was that Mrs. Johnson was opposed to living in Sacramento again and that she didn't particularly want him in politics.

Bancroft: Well, she was fearful that he'd be defeated, you know. It was a very uphill fight at first and if it hadn't been that we had a man of Johnson's ability running we would never have won that fight, and I think she was always a little pessimistic about his chances, and Johnson himself was always pessimistic. He always thought he was going to be beaten in the fight at the start. We used to have to try to give him all the encouragement we could. He was perfectly willing to fight even if he was going to be beaten, but he was always -- he thought we were all too confident. He realized the forces against him and the

Bancroft: uphill fight that he had.

Baum: Did you know Mrs. Johnson personally?

Bancroft: Yes. I think she was a devoted wife and did everything she could to help him during the campaign and so on, not going out politically or anything but keeping things nice at home and trying to save him all the worries and cares she could.

Baum: She wasn't active in politics at all?

Bancroft: Oh, no.

Baum: I think your wife was active in politics.

Bancroft: Yes, she was very active in all this political work we were doing, local work in the district and so on, but she, like Mrs. Johnson, didn't believe that if her husband was running for office she should be tagging along to be running too.

Baum: In one book it said that Mrs. Johnson had said she didn't want Johnson to run for governor, but if they offered him the nomination of senator that would be better.

Bancroft: I would say that Mrs. Johnson acted a good deal the way Mrs. Truman did. In other words, she did everything she could for helping her husband at home but kept out of the political limelight as much as possible. She felt it was his job and she shouldn't be in there sharing the glory or anything else, but she was always with him and helping him when she could. I don't mean she traveled around with him -- she did sometimes -- but she never did anything to hinder his work as far as I know, except, as you say, she probably didn't want him to run originally. I didn't know her at that time. I didn't know her until

Bancroft: after he -- I met her a great many times, but I don't remember exactly when I first met her.

Baum: When did you first meet Johnson? Before he ran for governor?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: In the graft prosecutions?

Bancroft: Yes, I had just met him then.

Baum: Later on you became pretty good friends with him.

Bancroft: Oh, yes, I saw a great deal of him.

Baum: When did this friendship really develop?

Bancroft: Just as soon as he was nominated, as soon as he became our candidate.

Baum: Back before he was governor.

Bancroft: Oh, yes. You see, he wasn't in our Lincoln-Roosevelt movement until a short time before he ran for governor. Our Lincoln-Roosevelt crowd wanted very much to have him accept the candidacy for the nomination but he hadn't been in our organization, doing any of our organizational work or anything of that kind. But just as soon as he was, then of course we began to see quite a good deal of each other.

Baum: Did he advise you on what to do at the grass-roots level in organizing politically?

Bancroft: Oh, no; it wasn't that he kept out of it, but he just wasn't in on it. After he started to run he was just overwhelmed with work. He didn't have a political machine to do the running for him, except the Lincoln-Roosevelt League and the group down south. They organized things for him down there as much as they

Bancroft: could, and we organized things as much as we could for him up here in the San Francisco area.

Baum: You mean you set up meetings at which he would speak?

Bancroft: First we'd set up a complete organization of county committees and district committees and so on. He'd come to each district to meet the proper leaders in those districts. Then he'd be making his speeches and we'd have to arrange for the halls and all of the work that you had in connection with a meeting, the advance notices and all those things.

Baum: When you set up all these district clubs, county clubs, and so on, did you have a hard time getting people to take an active part in them?

Bancroft: At first it was not too easy, but you see the groups had been working together quite a while before he ran, that is, from say 1907 to 1910, something like that, and it wasn't too hard because there were a lot of dedicated workers there. There were also quite a few that began to think that he might win and wanted to get on the bandwagon. It wasn't too easy but it wasn't too hard.

Baum: Did you know Governor Pardee at that time? He was on the Conservation Commission then, wasn't he?

Bancroft: Well, I don't know, but he was another of the very fine Northern California leaders. I don't think he was taking such an active part in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, so far as I remember, but as soon as Johnson was running or very soon afterwards he began to take a very active part.

Baum: He was a staunch supporter of Johnson?

Bancroft: Yes. Now, I don't know just when he became a strong supporter but he was a very strong and loyal supporter.

Baum: By 1910, by the time the election was coming up, did you think Johnson would win?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: Johnson didn't?

Bancroft: Well, he was just -- but his friends all around him felt the ground swell, and I won't say that he didn't think right before the election that he would be elected. I think he probably thought he would be that time, but in the early stages he didn't think he would, and of course we didn't know in the early stages but we figured we'd make a fight. Then when we saw what kind of a speaker he was and how he appealed to the people, we felt very confident.

Baum: I've read that his program was mainly "Kick the Southern Pacific out of Politics." Other than that he didn't have a strong program of reform. Nor did the other Lincoln-Roosevelt candidates.

Bancroft: That was our aim. In other words, we weren't in there to try to upset the world or anything of that kind, and the great fight we were making was to try to get the control of the government back into the hands of the people instead of being in the hands of the Southern Pacific machine. That was our big fight.

Baum: You were rather conservative reformers.

Bancroft: Yes. We weren't radicals and yet we were progressives. We wanted to have progress. We weren't against any proper reforms, but on the other hand we weren't for tearing down our whole economic system or turning it into a socialist drive or anything of that kind.

Baum: I believe William Kent had a more complete program of reform than any of the other candidates.

Bancroft: Well, maybe he did. I know his son became quite antagonistic later on, because they wanted to go a great deal more toward the radical than we did. But William Kent's is another name that should be put in at the beginning there with prominent leaders in Northern California.

Baum: Were some of the Lincoln-Roosevelt people suspicious of Kent's program at that time? They went along with it at that point?

Bancroft: No. We went along with it. He was interested in helping kick the Southern Pacific out and that's what we were interested in and I never knew that he had a program until long afterwards. I always thought he was one of us and doing a fine job over in his county, and I'm not sure how far he went, but I know his son has gone very far with the --

Baum: Roger Kent. He's one of the leading Democrats in California now.

Bancroft: Kent at that time was a Republican, as I remember it, and then he became a Progressive with us, and then he went over to the Democratic end, because we weren't radical enough for him, I guess.

Baum: But at that time you all worked together.

Sanborn: Well, we didn't know that he had radical tendencies. I just knew he was working with us on that end of things and we thought he was a very fine man. He'd given the redwood forest -- Muir Woods -- to the state, and he was a public-spirited man. We thought he was fine; a lot of these socialistic things that have come up since -- we didn't know he had ideas of that kind. I don't know whether he did, either. I mean, at that time we weren't discussing any of those things. We were just discussing getting the control of politics out of dishonest hands and out of the control of the Southern Pacific. You know, there was a good deal of graft that went on at that time. People of this day don't realize the amount of crookedness that there was in politics fifty or sixty years ago in California because it's been cleaned out. We have a lot of crackpot ideas, like the ham-and-eggs and things of that kind that have come up since, but you don't hear of graft going on. It's very unusual to hear of even a single case of graft, while at that time it was quite common. "So-and-so, oh, yes, he's getting --" he may be a state senator but "he's representing such-and-such a company and getting his pay from them." It was common knowledge, and that's what we were fighting against.

Baum: Theodore Bell, the Democratic candidate for governor, put forth a much more substantial program of reform measures than Hiram Johnson, including kicking the Southern Pacific out of politics, which he said he would do as strongly as Johnson. And yet you feel that Bell was supported by the Southern Pacific?

Bancroft: Oh, there's no question about it. You look at the Republican votes that we used to have -- California was very strongly Republican then. If a man got the Republican nomination, unless he had an opponent that was outstanding, like for instance a man like Franklin Lane or someone like that on the Democratic end, that was equivalent to election, practically. He'd just breeze through in the final campaign. That condition had existed for quite a while. We always felt if you could get the Republican nomination you were in. But when Johnson got the Republican nomination he had a terribly hard fight for the final election because the Southern Pacific and the whole machine swung over to support Bell.

Haum: You think that the support that went to Bell was Southern Pacific support and not people that thought Bell would be a better reformer than Johnson?

Bancroft: Oh, no, it wasn't. People were asking for a whole lot of reforms, they were asking for honest politics. There were a lot of things that they wanted. For instance, the Railroad Commission was an elective job at that time and it was created in order to have control of the railroads to keep them in line and the principal railroad was naturally the Southern Pacific, and the way the Railroad Commission worked was that the Southern Pacific would choose three men that they wanted on the Railroad Commission and they would be elected and proceed to keep the Southern Pacific in order. Well, you can imagine

ancroft: if you can appoint your own commission to act properly, you're going to be able to act about any way you want. Our main fight through the early stages was to get men in office, honest men who were not dominated by the Southern Pacific or any other outside organization of that kind, any other business interest or any kind of interest. We didn't want them to be absolutely controlled by labor unions, although we worked with a great many of the labor groups. At first most of them were opposing Johnson.

Baum: Did the labor groups tend to support the Democratic candidate?

ancroft: Yes. They always had.

Baum: I just wondered if you would have any examples that would illustrate that Bell was the candidate of the Southern Pacific.

ancroft: Well, he wasn't originally. They must have okayed him or he wouldn't have been nominated, probably. I don't know enough about the Democratic political campaign of that year to be able to say that he was or was not chosen by the Southern Pacific. I know that up to that time nobody had been nominated, not in recent years, for a statewide office without Herrin's consent on the Democratic side, at least an important statewide office, but you see he came under the direct primary, so I don't know enough about that to say. But I do know that the Southern Pacific machine just went wholeheartedly for Bell after Johnson got the nomination. There was no question about that. Now, how Bell got his nomination -- he possibly

Sanicroft: may not have been their original choice because we then had the direct primary and he could have been nominated by those who were not in control of the Southern Pacific. I do not know, but that would be very easy to find out. But the question of whether the Southern Pacific backed him in the final election was never even raised. Everybody knew it.

You know, the Democratic fellows, we'd know a good many of the candidates, we'd be talking things over with them, and they'd say, "Oh, yes, I wanted to get the nomination so I went up to see Herrin," or "I had some friend get in touch with Herrin and I got his okay to run for the Democratic nomination." They didn't make any bones about it. And neither did the Republicans. A fellow'd say, "I want to run for state assemblyman or state senator or state controller," and he'd go up in the Republican Party to some prominent Republican and say, "I want you to endorse me." "Well, did you see the old man?" They'd never make any bones about it.

THE 1912 REPUBLICAN CONVENTION - THE PROGRESSIVES BOLT THE PARTY

Robert M. LaFollette Considered for Republican Presidential
Candidate

- Baum: In 1911 the National Progressive Republican League was formed and the charter members of this league were Hiram Johnson, William Kent, Francis Heney. The purpose was to nominate LaFollette in 1912. Do you recall that?
- Bancroft: Yes. That was at the time that they thought that Theodore Roosevelt wouldn't run again.
- Baum: Were you a member of that group?
- Bancroft: I presume so. I was acting with them right along there and I remember that we tried to get a boom up for LaFollette; you see, we wanted to defeat Taft. But LaFollette didn't seem to appeal to the people, he wasn't getting anywhere, and that's why they got Roosevelt, finally persuaded him to run.
- Baum: Did the leaders really want LaFollette, or was he pretty much a second choice?
- Bancroft: Yes, but that was when they thought they couldn't get Roosevelt.
- Baum: But were they enthusiastic about LaFollette? Assuming that he would be second choice.
- Bancroft: Not the way they were about Teddy Roosevelt. Of course, his people in Wisconsin were very enthusiastic about LaFollette, and Wisconsin had been the original state to put through a

Bancroft: number of these progressive principles or laws and programs, like the workmen's compensation, things of that kind. And California adopted a number of them and we considered that LaFollette was the best candidate next to Theodore Roosevelt but, as I said, LaFollette was too radical for a good many people, and I myself always felt he was too radical, but that something had to be done and that he was better than the old crowd that was in control.

Baum: Rudolph Spreckles was, I believe, his chief supporter.

Bancroft: Well, he would have been in with that crowd that you mentioned, without any question.

Baum: But according to my notes most of the Progressives didn't like Rudolph Spreckles. They worked with him, but they weren't really very fond of him.

Bancroft: Well, I don't know. Some of them were suspicious of him because he had so much money. Of course, he was the one that put up a lot of the money in a lot of these early campaigns, but I always found him to be a very fine, patriotic man.

Baum: Did he have some personality trait, perhaps?

Bancroft: No, he had a nice personality. I think it was more that they felt he was one of the very rich men. Now a man with that amount of money wouldn't be considered very rich, but at that time he was considered one of the rich men, and a number of people had prejudices against men that were very rich. I haven't had that prejudice but a good many did.

Baum: According to my notes the Lincoln-Roosevelt League got behind

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Baum: LaFollette and called a meeting and they even failed to invite Rudolph Spreckles, although he had been the first man to begin the boom for LaFollette. Then Chester Rowell had to do a lot of talking to try and make Rudolph Spreckles feel good about coming back into the organization.

Bancroft: I hadn't heard about that. I don't know. I never heard that, so whether it's true or not I don't know.

Baum: As far as you know, this agitation between some of the leaders and Spreckles didn't get down to the people who were --

Bancroft: No, not down to the rank and file of the group.

Baum: And then later on when Roosevelt did declare he was a candidate -- I think he told Johnson in private that he would be willing to be a candidate -- the California delegation swung around to Roosevelt instead of LaFollette.

Bancroft: Yes, that's correct. I don't remember the exact way in which it was announced, but we found out that he could be persuaded to run.

Baum: William Kent and Franklin Hichborn didn't want Roosevelt then. I guess they were strong LaFollette men.

Bancroft: They were probably both strong for LaFollette, stronger than we were. He was never our first choice.

Baum: Did Johnson and LaFollette remain friends?

Bancroft: Well, I don't know, but knowing LaFollette's attitude I would doubt it very much. You see, all we asked of LaFollette when we had the convention in Chicago was to have a man who would judge the contests fairly, have that man elected as temporary

Bancroft: chairman of the convention, just so we could get a fair deal out of the decisions in regard to the contested delegates. So we nominated LaFollette's own governor, Governor McGovern, to be temporary chairman, and the other side nominated Elihu Root. LaFollette wouldn't even support his own governor, so it looks as if he felt very bitter against Roosevelt and Johnson and would rather see Taft nominated or see Wilson elected than to see Roosevelt elected. That's the only thing we could assume, and after that, of course, there was a good deal of very strong feeling against LaFollette because he wouldn't back his own governor to be chairman of the convention.

Baum: Well, there was talk before the convention that Johnson would be vice-presidential candidate -- of course he was, on the Progressive platform, later. How did you Californians feel about losing your governor to the vice-presidency? Was that popular in California?

Bancroft: Oh, there was no objection to it. It would have been popular. I don't think there ever has been a feeling when a governor has a chance to be nominated either for President or Vice-President that he shouldn't accept it, except where a man has promised that he would not be a candidate, as Governor Brown promised when he was running against William Knowland.

Baum: Back in 1912 the vice-presidency was a pretty second-rate job. It's not now, but it was then.

Bancroft: Yes, it was then.

Baum: But even though it was such a second-rate job, you wouldn't have minded losing Johnson to the vice-presidency?

Bancroft: Oh, no. We all felt that if he became Vice-President it would not be a second-rate job, as long as he was Vice-President. He was too dynamic to just sit back and wait for the President to die, as most Vice-Presidents had done up to that time.

Baum: Did you have in mind any ideas that the vice-presidency ought to be a more important position?

Bancroft: Oh, I think everybody felt that it ought to be. You know, they used to make lots of fun of Vice-Presidents and so on.

The California Delegation to the Republican Convention

Bancroft: You know, you were asking about the names of the delegates and I ran across this list of the delegates to the Republican National Convention. I think those were the ones that were in 1912.

Baum: [Reading] Hiram Johnson, Chester Rowell, Meyer Lissner, Francis Heney, the Honorable William Kent --

Bancroft: Kent was originally a delegate to the Republican National Convention. That was before the split.

Baum: Yes. Mrs. Florence Collins Porter, Marshall Stimson, Charles S. Wheeler -- now that was your fellow delegate -- the Honorable George C. Pardee, Lee C. Gates --

Bancroft: You were asking about the different men in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. Now, all of those were in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League.

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Baum: Honorable Clinton L. White --

Bancroft: I don't remember him as being in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, but he probably was, up in Sacramento. He'd been mayor of Sacramento.

Baum: John M. Eshleman, Honorable C.H. Windham of Long beach, Honorable William A. Sloane --

Bancroft: He was Judge Sloane of San Diego.

Baum: Oh, I recall. He was mentioned in the Edgar Luce letter, and I believe you worked on his campaign, you got some letters sent in supporting him. Ralph W. Bull of Arcata, S.G. Beach of Placerville --

Bancroft: He was a man that had a very subdued little wife, and he was a lumberman, I think, owned a lumber yard up there, and she was telling Mrs. Bancroft on our trip to Chicago how S.G., whatever his name was, was a very skillful man with lumber. They were going to have a hanging of a "lady" up there at Placerville and they didn't have anybody else who knew how to build a scaffold, and so they got S.G. to do it, and he built a perfectly beautiful scaffold and it worked just perfectly.

Baum: Oh, dear, what a dreadful story!

Bancroft: [Laughing] But she was so pleased about this.

Baum: Did all the wives go to the convention?

Bancroft: Quite a few. Oh, we had quite a party going to the convention. And when they got in the convention, this S.G. Beach, when it came to voting, they voted whether those other two delegates

Bancroft: should be seated, for instance, and here he was up in the convention -- he was a great, rangy, tall fellow -- and each delegate would stand up as he voted, and when it came to his vote whether those two should be seated, he said, "No, by God!", waved his hat, and yelled it out as loud as he could. Oh, he was a character.

Baum: John H. McCallum, San Francisco.

Bancroft: Yes, he's another one. I don't think he went into the Progressive Party, but he was very active in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League.

Baum: Truxton Beale of San Francisco -- and you have a little note, "not going." W.D. Tillotson, of Redding.

Bancroft: He was a prominent man up there.

Baum: Sumner Crosby of Pittsburgh, Charles E. Snook of Piedmont --

Bancroft: He had been, I think, mayor of Oakland, or else a congressman. I'm not sure which. His son ran for Congress later on. But he was always very prominent in the Lincoln-Roosevelt movement.

Baum: Mrs. Isabella W. Blaney of Saratoga --

Bancroft: That was Charles D. Blaney's wife. He was one of the prominent men in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. He was an alternate. He would have been the delegate but they wanted some women there.

Baum: Why?

Bancroft: Because they were getting ready for woman suffrage.

Baum: So it was good politics to have a few women in your delegation.

Bancroft: Well, they didn't want to say they didn't have any. They didn't want any more than they had to have. We wanted them along as

Bancroft: our wives, but not as our bosses.

Baum: Frank S. Wallace of Pasadena, C.C. Young of Berkeley.

Bancroft: He later became governor.

Baum: I see here it says "care of Mason-McDuffy Company." Was he a real estate man?

Bancroft: Yes, he was a member of the Mason-McDuffy firm. He was originally a schoolteacher, as I remember it, then he was with Mason-McDuffy for a number of years, then he was, I think, speaker of the assembly -- he was elected to the assembly.

Baum: Jesse L. Hurlbut of Santa Barbara and Philip Bancroft of San Francisco.

A Woman's View of the 1912 Convention

[Mrs. Bancroft enters the room.]

Baum: Mrs. Bancroft, I know you accompanied your husband to the Republican Convention in 1912. I wonder if you would be willing to add the woman's point of view to Mr. Bancroft's description of what happened?

Mrs. B.: Yes, if I can be of any help.

Mrs. Bancroft's Political Background

Baum: Let me get a little bit on your political background before we get into the convention. Was this the first political activity you took part in, Roosevelt's candidacy?

Mrs. B.: Well, I came from political people. Our family has always been

Mrs. B.: interested in politics. I carried a banner for Bryan.

Baum: Oh, you did? What year was that?

Bancroft: That was before she married me and got converted.

Mrs. B.: Somewhere along in 1896 or 1897. I think I was in high school and I think I was the only person at my school in the Bryan parade, as I remember it. We were Democrats.

Bancroft: Her father was a life-long Democrat, but he left the party.

Mrs. B.: No, he didn't leave the party.

Bancroft: No, I mean he voted against Bryan when he ran on free silver, because as Nina says he tramped the floor --

Mrs. B.: And made such an impression on me, because he walked back and forth, back and forth, discussing --

Bancroft: All night.

Mrs. B.: It was not all night. -- [laughing] and then put me on a chair and told me when I voted I must never vote for a party but for my country. I remember the lecture very well. And if I thought the candidate of my party was not right for the country then I mustn't vote for him. That's my earliest political remembrance.

Bancroft: He voted against Bryan on account of the free silver.

Baum: So he was conservative in monetary matters. Did he return to the Democratic fold then?

Bancroft: Oh, he never left the Democratic Party.

Baum: So he continued a life-long Democrat, and you switched over to Republican later on.

Mrs. B.: I didn't switch over to Republican until after I was married.

Bancroft: I married a red-headed Democrat and took an awful chance, but we've agreed always ever since.

Mrs. B.: [Drily] Well.

Bancroft: Well, haven't we? I've agreed with you.

Mrs. B.: [Laughing] You don't even know what I think.

Bancroft: I know how you vote; I think I do, unless you've lied to me.

Baum: Well, I know there was one time when you two disagreed, because I found a letter from Mr. Bancroft that commented that Mrs. Bancroft had sent a letter too -- I think it was to Johnson, disagreeing with something he did -- and you, Mr. Bancroft, sent a letter immediately saying that you didn't agree with Mrs. Bancroft on that point.

Bancroft: Oh, it was some little matter. I don't think we've ever disagreed on voting for a state official.

Baum: You told me before, Mrs. Bancroft, that you were not a suffragette. Were you in favor of women having the vote?

Mrs. B.: Mildly, but not excited at all.

Baum: Were you interested in politics at all?

Mrs. B.: Yes. I went into politics because I was a born social worker, just a natural one, and reformer, do-gooder, that horrible, slimy type, and you see the Republican Party of the state of California was going to reform and make things right. That's when I went in, because I felt they were going to save the world.

Baum: And I suppose you were devoted to Theodore Roosevelt, too?

- Mrs.B.: Yes, and to Hiram Johnson, too.
- Baum: Did you do anything in politics before 1912?
- Mrs.B.: No.
- Bancroft: Pardon me. We were quite active in supporting the graft prosecution.
- Mrs.B.: Oh, of course, it was the graft prosecution that pulled me into politics.
- Bancroft: That was 1906, 1907; we were married in 1905. But, of course, that was not political, in a sense. It wasn't partisan politics, because Democrats and Republicans were working together on that.
- Baum: In this newspaper clipping of March 18, 1912, I see that the women organized the Women's Roosevelt League, and you were chairman. What were your duties?
- Mrs.B.: Oh, just buzzing around.
- Baum: Buzzing about to women's clubs?
- Mrs.B.: Women were just beginning to get interested. I wasn't anybody. I was just one of the herd, bubbling around.
- Baum: Did you go out and speak?
- Mrs.B.: No, I didn't speak then. I spoke a good deal later, but not then. Well, I made some speeches at that time. That was the first one I made, except in our small club in the 31st district, and I don't remember when we started that.
- Bancroft: I don't remember the exact date, but you were going full blast in 1912. I think it would be about 1910 that you started, just as soon as the women got the vote.



Campaign Against State Senator Eddie Wolfe

[Looking at newspaper clippings in Mrs. Bancroft's scrapbook.]

Baum: Who was Eddie Wolfe?

Mrs. B.: That was one of the interesting figures. Eddie Wolfe was a politician in San Francisco and he had been in for years and years, state senator, and all the reformers were trying to get him out, and that's when we women formed that first big club in the 31st district. I think it was the first big women's club there was. And we women defeated him. We were an awful wet blanket. Then they recalled our man, and put Wolfe back in.

Bancroft: But that wasn't for some time. He was out for a couple of years. Edwin E. Grant was the Democratic nominee.

Mrs. B.: A very nice young fellow. I remember it had something to do with the red light abatement. Here's an article by Bessie Beatty, who was a great reporter of our time, entitled, "Women Win Fight in Thirty-first." [Reading from clipping in scrapbook:]

Witness the sad tale of the political death of Edward I. Wolfe of the 31st. Eddie I. Wolfe...has been state senator so long that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. The masculine voters of the 31st have been electing Wolfe for many a weary year, and the presumption was the feminine voters would straightway acquire the habit along with their new-found right to vote. Alas, the undependableness of the feminine sex. It never can be counted upon to take the program. Sometimes it goes off and makes a program all its own. The women's program in the 31st was 'Defeat Eddie Wolfe,' and the head and front and shoulders of the fight was Mrs. Philip Bancroft. Mrs. Bancroft's house became political headquarters. Mrs. Bancroft's dining room was

Mrs. B.: robbed of the usual functions of a proper and well-regulated dining room for three whole weeks. During that time not a single meal was served in it. Instead, the women of the neighborhood gathered there to fold and address circulars and they worked day and night with the determination to cure the district of the Wolfe habit. Like a general marshaling her forces was this little political Napoleon of the 31st.

We did a thorough canvass. We saw every house in the district.

saum: You and the other ladies?

Mrs. B.: Yes. And there was a Negro among us, which I think is interesting to remember. One of our good workers was the Negro cook of a very wealthy family that lived near us. On Tuesday morning we all went down to the polls. We had baby-sitters go and take care of babies while mothers voted -- all this sort of thing you do now we began right then. [Reading]

They made their fight on one thing and one thing only: Eddie Wolfe's record.

And that, I remember, was stressed very much. Eddie Wolfe was -- we were not concerned with Eddie Wolfe, that was his business, but all that we were concerned with was his record.

[Reading]

'I don't know Mr. Wolfe personally, our fight is not against him,' said one woman on election day to a man who stopped at her picket station and questioned her about her work. 'We are making this fight not against a man but against his record. I have his record here and every other woman in the organization has it here.' 'Then you don't know Mr. Wolfe, you've never seen him?' the man asked. She assured him and they talked along, further discussing the record. 'Permit me to introduce myself,' he said, presenting his card. It bore the name of Edward L. Wolfe. There was just a moment of embarrassment, and the quick-witted lieutenant launched into further discussion. 'I kept him talking there for half an hour longer. I knew he was out of mischief there,' she said, relating her experience afterward.

Bancroft: They had the record written out, type-written, and the different workers at the polls had it to show to anybody that came up, just how he'd voted on this and that.*

Mrs. B.: Well, from that it just went on. We didn't think anything about it at the time. It was just all in a day's work.

Baum: You had babies then, too?

Mrs. B.: That's right, three little children.

Baum: When were your children born?

Mrs. B.: In 1907, 1909, and 1911.

Baum: So by 1912 you had three small children to take care of.

Mrs. B.: [Laughing] No, I didn't, because I had wonderful help.

Baum: I see by your photograph printed with this newspaper article that you were an extremely beautiful woman. Is this your son?

Mrs. B.: Yes, here he is in the baby carriage.

I'll tell you another thing: Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who later became colonel -- at that time he was just Ted Roosevelt, Jr. -- was also active with us in this district. He spent two or three years in San Francisco and they were friends of ours.

Bancroft: They lived near us.

Baum: So is this where you became friends? Or was it at Harvard?

Bancroft: No, in San Francisco. He was several years younger than I.

Baum: I see. I know you were life-long friends, weren't you?

Bancroft: Yes, we were after that.

*Edward I. Wolfe, Republican, State Senator from 21st Senatorial District from 1896-1912. Frederick C. Gerdes, Republican, elected to State Senate from 21st Senatorial District, Nov. 5, 1912, and Edward E. Grant elected from the 19th Senatorial District. Grant recalled Oct. 8, 1914, and Edward Wolfe elected to his seat in the State Senate. [WB]

The Convention

Baum: Then you went to the Chicago convention. [They look at a photograph of the California Republican delegation of 1912.]

Mrs.B.: I will tell you, they were a group of determined men.

Bancroft: I want to have you tell about the convention. The two men that were contesting for our seats and were put in the permanent roll were Tryon and Myerfeld.

Mrs.B.: They sat up in the high gallery.

Bancroft: You see, Mrs. Bancroft, as a guest, sat up in a gallery and they sat in front of her, and she said she wanted to take a book and whack them on their bald heads, but she restrained herself.

Mrs.B.: Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Bancroft sat in their seats during the whole convention. They never dared throw them out of their seats. Every time that the vote was taken Hiram Johnson stood up and remarked -- how many votes did we have then? -- "The state of California casts 28 votes for Theodore Roosevelt."

Bancroft: Some of them were challenged.

Mrs.B.: Now you be quiet, because you get me all mixed up, you correct everything I say. Then the chair would say, "The state of California casts 26 votes for Roosevelt, two for Taft."

Baum: You mean Johnson would claim the whole number because he claimed that Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Wheeler were correctly seated?

Mrs.B.: Yes. Then they would poll the delegation, and when they came to polling they would never call Mr. Wheeler or Mr. Bancroft, they would call Tryon and Myerfeld, and this went with every single vote that was cast. Mr. Johnson would stand up and say,

Mrs. B.: "There is no man by the name of Tryon or Myerfeld in this delegation, and if there is we'd like to see him." Then they'd all yell, "Bring him down, we want to see him! Bring him down, we want to see him!" But they never --

Baum: These two gentlemen from the gallery would then answer, is that right?

Mrs. B.: Not a word, not a peep out of them. I don't think anybody knew where they were.

Baum: Then how did the chair know they were voting the other way?

Mrs. B.: Oh, they had it all on paper. Those two men were put in there to vote for Taft.

I remember one incident that impressed me very much. We were sitting in front of a hotel and a very nice-looking man came up to Mr. Charles Wheeler and a group of us were there, and he said to Mr. Wheeler, "Mr. Wheeler, the chairman of the delegation on credentials would like to talk to you." And Mr. Wheeler was a large, extremely dignified man, and he rose miles in the air and he said, "Young man, go back to the boss who sent you and tell him that I was elected by the great vote of the sovereign state of California. I answer to no bought committee. Go tell him." And the man slunk off.

Bancroft: No, we wouldn't appear before the committee because we said there was no question about it. We had our certificates from the state of California, the secretary of state, with the seal of California.

Mrs.B.: What they did was they went over the different delegates and they picked a man out here and a man out here and a man out there from various delegations, just a few, you see, to make enough votes to nominate Taft. They made the mistake of not knowing or not realizing that the state of California had voted their delegates by direct vote, and they took out two of ours, and that's what raised the fuss, you see. Now, a man would go up and say that you were not appointed, so-and-so was appointed, and he had nothing to back him up except his own word, and then they'd just throw him out. Every day we marched from the hotel with a band down to the convention hall -- oh, it was wonderful -- we marched with a band and everybody yelled, "Here's California!"

Baum: Was California looked on as rather a leader of the Roosevelt boom?

Mrs.B.: Yes, it became so because we advertised ourselves so in Chicago, made such a fight.

Baum: Were the people in Chicago enthusiastic about Roosevelt?

Mrs.B.: Well, it would seem so, because they always cheered our delegation as we marched.

Bancroft: I think they very definitely were strong for Roosevelt in Chicago. The Chicago Tribune was the great newspaper there and it was strong for him.

Baum: Do you recall whether on your train trip east your delegation was optimistic about Roosevelt's chances?

Mrs.B.: Yes, very.

Bancroft: Very much so, because we knew we had elected a majority of the delegates and we didn't think that these contests would amount to anything.

Baum: So on your way to Chicago you assumed that Roosevelt would be the candidate?

Bancroft: Yes. Now, I want you to tell about the Beveridge speech, because that was one of the most remarkable things about the convention.

Mrs.B.: Senator Beveridge. This is as I remember it, and I'm sorry I can't find the paper. Well, anyway, I think it was the keynote speech he made. Is that right?

Bancroft: It was either that or the nomination of Roosevelt. He was making a speech for Roosevelt.

Mrs.B.: And it was a very fine speech, a very enthusiastic, high moral speech.

Bancroft: And favoring Roosevelt all the way through, because he was our leader.

Mrs.B.: And suddenly there was a tremendous applause and everybody cheered and yelled and suddenly all the little anxious Progressives -- I was sitting up and looked down at them -- suddenly you saw all the Progressives shushing, they noticed that all the Taft men were applauding and our men all applauding. Just went like a telegraph all over the Progressives -- "Don't applaud, they're trying to stampede the convention." And the

Mrs.B.: Taft men -- you can see some of the cartoons in that book of cartoons -- there's one picture where the Taft man is looking at his watch, he's got two minutes more to applaud, you see, but all the Progressives are sitting there like sourballs.

Baum: Was it something Beveridge had said? Why were they --

Mrs.B.: It was during the speech; something he said was very patriotic or very fine or something. They all yelled. It's a very interesting thing of mob psychology; they let the yell get louder and louder and louder and, of course, we were yelling for Beveridge, but when we saw the Taft people yelling for Beveridge too -- of course, I never saw it, but there were state politicians who saw it and they said, "Look out, they're trying to stampede this convention to Beveridge." It was a tremendous demonstration, and all the Progressives stopped applauding and the Taft men were going on and on and on, and finally they let it die down. When we walked out on the street the paper was for sale, "Beveridge Stampedes the Convention."

Bancroft: And there's one thing that you couldn't see where you were in the gallery: in the back of the hall in the gallery they dropped down a banner, "Roosevelt for President." A great big banner. Two women in the gallery dropped that down to stop the stampede, and then when, as Nina said, when she went out of the hall, they'd found that paper -- in other words, the whole thing had been planned by these people. They weren't particularly enthusiastic about Taft. What they wanted to do was to defeat Roosevelt, and they had the whole thing planned

Bancroft: to stampede the convention for Beveridge. And they got a tremendous amount of applause, you see, because it was the only occasion in the convention where both sides were applauding.

Mrs. B.: I learned then what an awful thing a mob is. The anger -- the Progressives all got angry -- you could feel the anger in the air like a circulation, bzz, bzz, bzz. I remember I pressed myself against the back of the building, it was so frightening. It was as if a terrible cyclone or something were about to overcome you, but it died down. I thought there'd be fighting and a terrible thing -- that feeling of anger was so awful.

Bancroft: That was when they were stealing the delegates.

Baum: Were most of the wives sitting up in the gallery?

Mrs. B.: Oh, some of us sat in the gallery. This particular day we were sitting on some benches downstairs. Many times we went all day long without food. Some kind man might come in with a bag with a couple of sandwiches and pass it up and we'd each have a bite. You sat in your seat; you didn't give up your seat.

Baum: I was wondering if in the gallery were mostly wives of the delegates, or if there were --

Mrs. B.: Oh, anybody. The public.

Baum: Were there people who were paid, as there seem to be now, to come in and parade when someone's name was mentioned?

Mrs. B.: They had parades in the aisles, but I don't think it was as far developed as it is now.

Bancroft: Well, they didn't get paid people to do those things. It was

Bancroft: volunteers. Whenever there'd be a parade there'd be these supporters, the real supporters of whoever it was.

Baum: I've heard that Heney especially almost got into several fist fights.

Mrs.B.: Oh, Heney was on his toes.

Baum: Did this almost lead to trouble in the convention?

Mrs.B.: I don't remember him any more than anybody else. There were a lot of eager fists at that convention.

Bancroft: They were all ready for the two delegates, if they'd come down.

Mrs.B.: Oh, yes, if they had got those two men on the floor there'd have been something that amounted to murder, I suppose.

Bancroft: No. They'd have just kicked them out. They'd say, "You didn't belong!"

Mrs.B.: "Bring 'em down! bring 'em down! Let 'em stand up, if they're here, let 'em stand up. We want to see them!"

Bancroft: There would have been two men that would have been eating their meals off the mantelpiece for a while, that's all.

Baum: I suppose the feeling of anger was very great when Taft was finally nominated.

Mrs.B.: My memory doesn't -- oh, we walked out, we marched out, weren't in the hall when Taft was nominated, we had all marched out.

Baum: I think Johnson marched out several times.

Mrs.B.: And marched over -- no, there was one big walk out, we marched over to the theater back of the hotel that we stayed in and held a Progressive convention there. That's when the boom was started. Don't you remember that theater back of the hotel?

Sanncroft: It says in the paper here, some hall or theater. Was it the auditorium?

Mrs.B.: Well, maybe an auditorium. At that time I didn't know the difference. [Laughing]

Baum: Was it a feeling of dejection or was it a feeling of optimism that you could win with a third --

Mrs.B.: Optimism. Optimism, a fighting spirit, great righteousness. There's one thing that I remember about that convention. When the California delegates were meeting in the hotel before going over to the big hall they sat around a big table and one man said, "I don't know how the rest of you feel, but I'm a religious man and I'd like to pray." And man after man prayed. It really was like a revival. They prayed for guidance. They prayed, "Lord, let us do the right thing. It's our country that we're thinking of. Let us do the right thing." That impressed me very much indeed. Those men were sincere, honest men. It wasn't the politics that moved them, that delegation, it was a question of right and wrong to them. But man after man around that table offered a little prayer. I wonder if that ever happened at a convention before. And it was sincere, there was no one there but ourselves, you know.

How'd I get into all those things? [Laughing] I was always sitting around listening.

Baum: Was this usual, that most of the men brought their wives?

Mrs.B.: No, not very many did.

Baum: So there were just a few wives.

Mrs.B.: Mrs. Wheeler and I were both there.

Sancroft: I think Mrs. Johnson was -- she didn't take part in any --

Mrs.b.: I don't remember Mrs. Johnson at all.

Sancroft: Well, I think she was probably at the hotel. But Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Blaney and Mrs. Florence Collins Porter --

Mrs.B.: Mrs. Beach of Placerville. There was a good group of women. Helen Todd.

Baum: What was the role of the wife at this affair?

Mrs.B.: Just good wives.

Baum: You just went to watch.

Mrs.B.: We had nothing to do, no. We just went.

Baum: Well, sometimes you have nothing official to do, but there are many unofficial duties such as hostessing or --

Mrs.B.: Well, there were no cocktail parties, of course, in those days. We sometimes would have a dinner, but we wouldn't get home. We just ate when we could. We might not have a dinner until 9 o'clock, you see, and a few of us would go off together, but there were no big dinners. There was no social entertaining at all that I knew anything about. If there was, I was left out of it. I don't know of any.

Baum: Did the delegation meet at night to talk over strategy for the next day?

Mrs.B.: Sometimes. The only meeting that I have a clear memory of was the one where they prayed, but I know that they did meet.

Baum: Did the wives offer suggestions?

Mrs.B.: No, we kept quiet.

Bancroft: Well, when it came to the strategy there'd be one or two men from the delegation, for instance Johnson and perhaps Meyer Lissner and Chester Rowell and a few like that. Our whole delegation wouldn't be in on the planning of the general strategy of the fight. We would be told about it and be ready to do whatever we had to do, but I mean you couldn't have that many men from each state deciding what to do.

Baum: Well, when you returned to California, I presume you went back in your train?

Mrs.B.: We sort of sifted back.

Bancroft: We were back separately. They always do, because some want to stay for a while, and so on.

Baum: What was the feeling as you returned to California?

Mrs.B.: High optimism.

Baum: And then you immediately planned to return to Chicago for a Progressive convention?

Mrs.B.: Then we formed the Progressive Party, started working on that.

The Progressive Convention of 1912

Baum: Am I correct: you returned to California and then later you returned to Chicago and nominated Roosevelt and Johnson?

Mrs.B.: Yes, for the bull Moose convention. I didn't go to that.

Bancroft: That was perhaps a month later, something like that.

Baum: Now, what did you do in California in between these two periods?

Mrs.B.: We had meetings.

Bancroft: Told the people what had happened there and prepared to start the Bull Moose party.

Baum: And did the same delegates return?

Mrs.B.: It was a different group of people in the second delegation.

Baum: Why was that?

Mrs.B.: Well, some could and some couldn't.

Baum: All of your delegation from California worked on forming this third party, is that right? In Chicago at the time that Johnson walked out, all the delegates were personally in agreement to walk out?

Mrs.B.: Well, they all walked out. I don't know whether they were in personal agreement. I assume they were. I know of no one that refused, do you, Phil?

Bancroft: I was just trying to think -- I'm not sure whether any of them refused to go back as Progressive delegates. I think that all were offered the chance, all the delegates were offered the chance, to go back as Progressive delegates to the Progressive convention, but some didn't go on account of the expense and some didn't go for other reasons. They weren't able to get away for a second trip, things of that kind. But I don't remember. Though there were a lot that had been with us that wouldn't leave the Republican Party. I could name perhaps half a dozen, out of the delegates I don't remember any that didn't favor forming a Progressive Party and going ahead on that basis.

Baum: Then you returned to Chicago, Mr. Bancroft? And you, Mrs.

Baum: Bancroft, didn't go back a second time?

Mrs.B.: No.

Bancroft: Mr. Wheeler, I know, was back there, and a whole crowd. Of course, that's a matter of record, who were the delegates to the Progressive convention.

Baum: According to my notes, this Progressive Party convention -- Bull Moose convention? --

Bancroft: It was the Progressive Party but they called it the Bull Moose.

Mrs.B.: We had to have an animal, you see, because they had the donkey and the elephant, so we had the bull moose.

Baum: That was sort of Theodore Roosevelt's symbol, wasn't it?

Bancroft: Sumner Porter had written it.

Mrs.B.: That he stood there bellowing like a lone bull moose.

Bancroft: He was as dangerous to an adversary as a bull moose, as an angry bull moose, and they picked it right up and used that.

Baum: Now, the Progressive convention met in August 1912 in Chicago, and at that time I understand there was a considerable squabole within the Progressive Party as to who would be the influential members, and that there was a fight led by Johnson and the California delegation against the influence of George W. Perkins and Frank Munsey.

Bancroft: Well, now, I don't know about that. That was on a higher echelon than we were.

Mrs.B.: You're talking to foot soldiers.

Bancroft: Well, now, you're talking to lieutenants, and those'd be generals. We weren't foot soldiers, though we did a lot of foot soldier work.

Baum: So you don't recall this squabble within the Progressive Party?

Bancroft: No, it didn't come out in the open.

Baum: And there was some comment that Johnson and Senator Beveridge also went at it. I don't know over what issue that was.

Bancroft: Well, probably Johnson thought he had tried to double-cross us at the convention, because that wasn't just spontaneous, you know.

Mrs.B.: It was planned. He must have been a party to that.

Bancroft: We all believed after that -- we thought a great deal of Beveridge up to that time -- but we all felt that he had lent himself to that.

Baum: After the Progressive Convention of 1912 you were still exceedingly satisfied with Roosevelt?

Mrs.B.: Oh, yes.

Bancroft: Stronger for him than ever.

Baum: I guess from some of the things I've read Roosevelt seemed to be tending against Progressivism already by supporting this Perkins, who was a house of Morgan banker.

Mrs.B.: Are you sure that's the way it was?

Bancroft: Oh, Perkins was one of our leading supporters financially. We, naturally, were all that I knew of for Perkins, because he was doing a good job. Of course, a man like Kent or a man like Heney would look askance at a fellow like Perkins, but he had been very loyal all the way through in the fight against Taft and for Roosevelt in the Republican convention. I never remember hearing anything against Perkins, except that he was a

Bancroft: partner of Morgan or something like that, but we knew that all the time; it'd be just like being against Rockefeller because he's a rich man.

Mrs.B.: Or against Kennedy because he's a millionaire.

Bancroft: I mean, there was no secret but what he had been associated and a partner of Morgan's.

Baum: I guess every party needs a few rich men to make contributions.

Bancroft: I remember in the 1908 delegation I was telling you about how these older men would talk to me and give me advice and information, and I asked one of them why a certain rotund gentleman had been accorded the honor of being a delegate. "Why," they said, "he carries a barrel," meaning that he was a rich man who was a very liberal contributor. There was nothing wrong in it, it was just that a party needs funds.

Baum: Do you recall any more about the Progressive convention that might be interesting?

Bancroft: No. They had a great deal of enthusiasm and the usual number of speeches. It was like almost any political convention except that they were a good deal more enthusiastic, those that were there, because they were in a fighting and crusading spirit.

Baum: I think sometimes minority groups are more enthusiastic.

Bancroft: They were singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and all that.

Mrs.B.: And the great song of ours was "He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat." I think Roosevelt used that in a quotation. Oh, we sang a great deal. Do you know that

Mrs.B.: verse? I think it's the most beautiful verse in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat, He is sifting out the souls of men before His judgment seat. Be quick, my soul, to answer him, be vigilant, my feet, for God is marching on.

I think that is beautiful. Oh, we sang it. [Laughing]

Baum: Did the Progressives expect to win?

Mrs.B.: Of course, we did.

Bancroft: I did not.

Mrs.B.: [Laughing] I was expecting to win.

Bancroft: I always used to bet on elections, I naturally liked betting, and it was always one of my pleasures to bet on --

Mrs.B.: If you bet against Roosevelt, I'll --

Bancroft: No, I didn't bet against him, but I wouldn't bet that he could be elected ever.

Baum: You worked for him, but you didn't think he could win.

Bancroft: I had a chance to get a big bet; a man from Chicago sent word (he knew I liked to bet on elections) he had a friend that wanted to bet a thousand dollars that Taft would get more electoral votes than Roosevelt, and I telegraphed back to him, "I'll take up the bet if you can get him to place it, and I'll deposit the money in the bank in any way he wants it." We didn't get the bet up because Roosevelt was shot and the man who was backing Taft was afraid that there'd be a reaction in Roosevelt's favor because he'd been shot so the money was never put up. It was something like 68 to 8 -- Taft got 8 electoral votes -- but

Bancroft: I didn't get one cent on our carrying the election. I'd have bet on Roosevelt to beat Taft. I just worked my head off there for two or three months. But I wasn't letting my betting judgment be wrecked by my enthusiasm.

Further Political Activities of Mrs. Bancroft

Recall of Judge Charles L. Weller, 1913

Baum: Before you leave us, Mrs. Bancroft, were you involved in any other political activity?

Bancroft: Well, now tell them a little bit about the Weller campaign, because that's another thing.

Mrs.B.: Well, that too is very vague in my mind. I cannot remember that I was on the Weller committee. I think at that time I was working as an unpaid worker in Judge Frank J. Murasky's court. They were getting the juvenile courts started, and for that reason I was sent upto the meetings, but this is very clear in my mind: a group of men were being tried for statutory rape, and we went in to one of the cases of one of those little girls -- she was eleven years old -- and as I went in to that case the policeman called me and said, "I want you to look at this," and showed me Judge Weller's [Judge of Police Court Charles Locke Weller] record on one man nine times excused for rape. I think that's how it was.

Baum: And you were in this case because you were a volunteer worker?

Mrs.B.: Yes, I had to go up as witness or something.

Baum: What were you doing as a volunteer worker?

Mrs.B.: Well, when I was young, you see, there were very few paid workers. You gave your time. And I was giving my time to Judge Murasky's court.

Baum: And what did you do?

Mrs.B.: Well, I went down and visited families, went into cases --

Baum: You were sort of a social worker or a probation officer?

Mrs.B.: No, it was more like a social worker. We followed up cases for him. I have a very keen memory of that.

Bancroft: Judge Murasky was a very fine --

Mrs.B.: He was a Catholic judge and a very fine, honorable man, and he was interested in the juvenile courts and I was too, you see, and I offered my services down there and worked for quite a long time for Judge Murasky.

Bancroft: There was nothing political in this.

Mrs.B.: Nothing paid, no record, anything.

Baum: Did many women that you knew do anything --

Mrs.B.: Well, I was the only -- he had one paid worker, a very fine woman, who did all the real investigating. I picked up loose ends. I visited families. I'd go into the family and see what was the matter. But that was all volunteer work then; just as Associated Charities was all volunteer work, you did it because you believed in it, not to make money. But that policeman showed me that Weller thing, that's how I got interested in it. I went down and told the girls of the Weller committee, wherever they

Mrs.B.: were, and I suppose they all flocked up and looked at it, too.

Baum: So there was already a movement afoot to recall Judge Weller?

Mrs.B.: Evidently. You're taking a great chance calling me in because I have no memory for dates at all. But that is how that was, because I remember that case. The father of the raped girl was perjuring himself; he'd evidently sold out.

Bancroft: As I remember the Weller recall, it was largely that same group that were in that 31st district club that were very active in the Weller recall. You helped get the signatures. I have something here with a whole bunch of signatures that were evidently not used.

Mrs.B.: We got signatures and information and we tracked down cases.

Bancroft: You see, to start the recall you have to get the signatures of a certain percentage of the voters of the city or the district that the man is elected from. In the case of a police judge it was the city.

Baum: Well, I know there is a strong feeling against recalling judges. Was this true at that time?

Mrs.B.: Yes, many people are opposed to recall of judges. I'm not sure whether I'm in favor of it. I think it's a good thing to have if you don't use it, except in extreme cases.

Bancroft: And this was an extreme case. As I told you, he was the son, I think, either the son or the grandson, of one of the early governors of California. He was a man who should have made a fine record as judge and he was a disgrace to his position, and

Bancroft: it was high time that he should be recalled -- as far as I know that's the only judge in California that has been recalled.

Mrs.B.: There was a little girl that was taken like a slave by a man down on Fillmore Street, a restaurant man, and they kept her in a sort of an out-house in the back, a shanty there, for immoral purposes. That's what started the Weller recall, that he would not convict him. It was something to do with that. It was a flaring case.*

Registering Progressives

Baum: Did you also work on the registration of Republicans as Progressives? You both worked on that?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, her little club did a lot of that. They got the biggest percentage, I think, of any district in the city to register as Progressives.

Mrs.B.: [Laughing] Funny things flash in your mind. I can see Rose Steinhart running down the street with a banner and a man set his dog out. He didn't want any of these women ringing his doorbell, he said, we ought to be home taking care of our children. And he closed the door and sicked the dog on us.

Baum: Did you do a lot of work with Rose Steinhart?

Mrs.B.: Yes. Oh, she was very active. She was as smart as a whip. I didn't have the brains. I had the enthusiasm and the verve and the faith, but Rose Steinhart had a good, keen mind. I thought everybody was good. She'd put her finger right on something.

* Judge Charles L. Weller, Police Court No. 1, recalled in an election held April 22, 1913, and Wiley F. Crist elected to replace him. This was the first successful recall of a public official in California. [WB]



Mrs.B.: Oh, she was smart.

Bancroft: Well, you were too. You just underestimate yourself.

Baum: Did she remain a Progressive?

Mrs.B.: Rose? Oh, yes.

Baum: And her brother, Jesse Steinhart, also?

Mrs.B.: Her brother went to the Progressive convention.

Baum: I guess I didn't realize that he was that much of a Progressive.

Bancroft: Oh, he was very strong.

Baum: I believe I told you we have an interview with Amy Steinhart Braden. She was the other sister.

Mrs.B.: An older sister. Amy, as I remember it, was always -- I believe we call it liberal now, we called it something different then -- she was always radical, as I remember. Rose and I used to whisper in her presence.

Comments on Women in Politics

Baum: Were you active after this time?

Mrs.B.: No, I had children. I always worked in a campaign.

Baum: What about in the 1930s when Mr. Bancroft was running for Senate?

Mrs.B.: I did very little then.

Bancroft: I think that was really your first heart attack, only the doctors didn't call it a heart attack. You remember when you were down with Eleanor in some sort of a place like a hospital for a while.

Mrs.B.: You make it sound like a home for the feeble-minded.[Laughing]

Mrs.B.: I made one speech during Phil's campaign.

Bancroft: But she did a lot in making things comfortable for us to wage a campaign.

Baum: Well, I don't know if it's proper for the wife of a candidate to take as active a role as his friends can.

Bancroft: I don't like to see it.

Mrs.B.: I objected to Pat Nixon. I thought Pat's children -- their mother should be with them. I thought it was her first duty. But that's none of my business.

Bancroft: I don't think when a man's running for an office as Nixon was that every time it should have been Dick-and-Pat.

Mrs.B.: And I notice Mrs. Kennedy's using very good judgment about that. She appears as a hostess when it's necessary, but you never see her.

Bancroft: And Mrs. Truman always kept in the background.

Mrs.B.: I always liked good old Bess. I think she was a fine woman.

Baum: You don't talk so favorably of Mrs. Eisenhower.

Mrs.B.: Well, Mrs. Eisenhower just disappeared from the picture.

Bancroft: I think we were both thinking of Mrs. Roosevelt, Eleanor. Now, the first Mrs. Roosevelt, Teddy's wife, was a wonderful woman. But we don't either of us think much of Eleanor.

Mrs.B.: I've never had any confidence in her. I think she's a dangerous, stupid woman. I think she has very limited mental capacity. But she had a charm, what it is is a drive, tremendous drive, and I think she's done a great deal of harm. That's my opinion of Mrs. Roosevelt.

Sanncroft: She was entertaining young Communists at the White House. She was responsible for getting Harry Bridges back into this country. He went up to Canada once and the immigration authorities refused to let him back, and all he had to do was telephone to her and have her telephone to let him in. What business it was of hers -- she wasn't President -- but she got him back into the country.

Mrs.B.: Well, I think she's stupid, if you read her line, if you think of it as you read it, you see the amazing statements that she dares to make, such as that wages have nothing to do with the cost of production, she has the nerve to stand up and talk about cost of production when she doesn't know any more than that. And almost every subject she discusses -- I think she has a great heart, I think she's very emotional, I think she wants to do good, but she's extremely stupid, she has a very slight comprehension.

Sanncroft: And she came out in favor of Alger Hiss while he was being tried and all that sort of business, you know. If it hadn't been for the Communist traitors that we had in this country we would never have got into the Korean War, China wouldn't have been turned over to the Communists, we'd have backed Chiang Kai-shek. But we had Communists over there representing us in the State Department -- you know, Pat Hurley told all about them.

Mrs.B.: You know, it's a quarter before five. We've just chattered like magpies.

The 1912 Election

Baum: Before we leave the subject of the 1912 election, do you think that many Republicans who would have preferred Roosevelt still voted for Taft in order to stick with the party?

Bancroft: Yes, a great many did. A great many were opposed to a third party and that's why Roosevelt was beaten. In fact, we knew at the time that he was very apt to be beaten, but we felt that the convention had been stolen and we didn't want to have a man elected President by his friends having stolen the convention for him.

Baum: In effect, well, you were really choosing Wilson, then, over Taft.

Bancroft: We were choosing Roosevelt, but we felt it was better to go down to defeat with Roosevelt than to win with Taft after the Taft bunch had stolen the nomination. It was an out-and-out steal, there was no question about that.

Baum: This was mainly because of the convention, or because of your feeling about Taft for the four years previous?

Bancroft: Well, we were against Taft for what he had done in the four years previous, but the feeling of bolting the convention was entirely on account of the convention having been stolen. In other words, if we'd gone into the convention and the elected delegates had voted for Taft we would never have thought of bolting and trying to set up a third party, because we knew it was a very difficult thing to do.

Baum: So that if Taft had won the convention fair and square you would have supported Taft.

Bancroft: There would have been no question about that if it had been a fair decision. The only basis on which Roosevelt would have consented to run was that the convention was stolen from him, and we would all have abided by the decision of the convention if the convention had been set up fairly.

Baum: I read that Johnson made some statement as the train left California that the California voters would have an opportunity to vote for Theodore Roosevelt by one means or another. This was later interpreted by historians to indicate that at that time he was thinking of a third party.

Bancroft: No, I don't think anybody wanted a third party, any of us anyhow. Now, men like Kent -- and maybe Hichborn, I don't know, but he wasn't a member of our delegation -- but men like Kent might have wanted a third party, but none of our regular crowd that were behind Johnson wanted it. Johnson, I'm sure, didn't want it himself, because he knew what a difficult position it would put him in. Any man who was less popular than Johnson couldn't have survived that and then have gone back into the Republican Party and won every contest he ever went into after that.

Baum: Most of your Progressive Republicans were pretty firmly wedded to the Republican Party.

Bancroft: Oh, very definitely.

Baum: I guess Heney had been a Democrat, isn't that right?

Bancroft: Yes, and I would have said that Heney, like Kent, would very possibly have preferred to have a Progressive Party, and, of course, there were several men like that, but very few among the top leaders or among the rank and file that I knew. I know we hated to leave the Republican Party and start a new party because we knew the difficulty of starting a new party. Then all the office holders, for instance, state senators and people like that, they were very much against starting a new party if there was any other way out of it because it made it very much harder for them to get re-elected. In other words, we knew that if we started a new party that would be a split of the Republican Party and that would give the Democrats a very strong chance to get in.

Baum: Was it mainly on the basis of practical politics you didn't want to split, or was it an emotional attachment to the Republican Party?

Bancroft: It was mainly on the matter of practical politics, and also on the basis that when you have a primary fight, if you lose in the primary, then you will accept the decision of the majority of your party and go along with it. That feeling was very strong with all of us.

Baum: The feeling that this was part of the rules of the game.

Bancroft: I don't know any of us who didn't feel we would be under obligation to back whoever got the nomination when we were in a primary fight, just as when Heney got the nomination over Rowell

Sanncroft: for United States Senator. I was very much against Heney at that time, but I voted for him at the final election because the majority of our Progressive Party had voted to nominate Heney. I felt we'd made the best fight we could to nominate Rowell, but since we had failed in that it was not only the fair thing to do but it was also the sporting thing to do; if you make a fight and get beaten fairly and squarely then you should take the consequences, so I gritted my teeth and voted for him.

Baum: I guess in a case like that, even though you vote for the man, you don't run out and work quite as hard on his campaign.

Sanncroft: Oh, no, you don't have to break your neck working after it. A lot of them didn't break their necks to work for him and as a result he didn't get enough votes to win.

Baum: So that even though a candidate may win the primary fight by getting the rank and file of the voters behind him, it's also significant that the leaders must be strongly in favor of him or no one will lead the campaign.

Sanncroft: Well, he'll have people leading it but there may not be enough of them or they may not be the type that the voters will follow. Now, I would say in Heney's case that the men that were leading the fight didn't inspire confidence in the majority of the voters, and so a lot of them wouldn't follow him.

Baum: Well, in 1912, after the Progressive nominated Roosevelt and Johnson, then the problem was to get Roosevelt and Johnson on

Baum: the ticket as Republicans rather than Progressives -- or to decide whether to get them on the ballot as candidates.

Bancroft: Yes, and that's where the state central committee or whatever it was, to my mind, made a great mistake. What they did was -- I don't mean a great mistake morally, I mean a great mistake practically -- what they said was that since the nomination was stolen away from Roosevelt, that he was really the man who was entitled to the nomination, therefore they would pledge the Republican electors to vote for Roosevelt. That left no electors to vote for Taft, so when it came to the final election in California the Taft men, who were in a considerable minority in the Republican Party and yet were within 78,000 of as many as there were Progressives who were for Roosevelt, they, a lot of them, went out and voted for Wilson, and that was the reason that we didn't carry the state by any substantial majority. In other words, the electors were voted for -- I think there were 14 -- and their names appeared on the ballot and you'd stamp each one or you'd stamp up on top with a rubber stamp for the whole 14. And the election was so close that I think something like about ten were elected of the Theodore Roosevelt electors and about four of the Wilson electors. I remember General Del Valle was one of them, and we went up to Sacramento and cast our votes accordingly so that the electoral vote in California was split.

Baum: Were you an elector?

Bancroft: Yes, and both Charles Wheeler and I, we'd been getting a lot of

Sanncroft: publicity on the thing and we got a few more votes than some of the others, so we were both elected. But at least four of our ticket failed to get elected. It was very close, you see.

Baum: Well, you're saying that you think this was a poor strategy.

Sanncroft: Oh, very poor, because we would have carried the state overwhelmingly if we'd just run Roosevelt as a Progressive and let the Taft people have Taft.

Baum: Why did the leaders decide to run as Republicans?

Sanncroft: because they felt that the Republican machine had stolen the nomination away from them and that --

Baum: That's their rationalization, but in practical politics they must have thought that they would do better in getting votes.

Sanncroft: I don't know. It never seemed to me good practical politics at all. I mean, we would surely have carried the state by a big margin if we'd run as independents, if we'd run as anything except running in such a way that it gave the Taft people an excuse to vote for Wilson.

They said, "We've been disfranchised -- that's not a democratic form of government," and they raised an awful howl about it. And they were raising a howl about that just as we were claiming that the convention had been stolen from us. Well, as a matter of fact they had been practically disfranchised in that and as I say, the reason for that was that the convention had been stolen, but it was very poor strategy, and I never believed in it, but I didn't have anything to do with that

Bancroft: because that subject was determined by the state central committee.

Baum: I understand that Johnson had spoken quite highly of Wilson, and then suddenly he was forced to run against him.

Bancroft: That was undoubtedly true. We all thought Wilson was a very fine man when he was running, and he was a fine man, although a lot of us didn't believe in his League of Nations and we thought he was too theoretical.

Baum: Do you suppose this was a problem -- did many of the Republicans who voted for Wilson really favor Wilson, or was it --

Bancroft: No, because Wilson was quite a Progressive. He had adopted a lot of our Progressive ideas, and so the men that were voting for him, the Republicans that voted for him, wanted a stand-patter.

Baum: So they were the men who really couldn't go along with his policies.

Bancroft: No. They were more opposed to his policies than we were.

Baum: Was there much of a difference between Roosevelt's and Wilson's policies?

Bancroft: Not as much as there was between Taft and Wilson.

Baum: What did you personally think of Wilson? This was in 1912, so it would be based on his domestic policy at the time.

Bancroft: Well, I thought he was a very fine man, the former president of Princeton University. And he was a fine man. He had high ideals but, like a lot of professors, he wasn't very practical when he got down to things.

- BAUM: Did you feel that in 1912, or was it later on, that he wasn't practical?
- BANCROFT: No. In 1912 I thought he was a pretty good man. But, of course, I didn't think he was as good as Roosevelt.
- BAUM: Were you glad he got the nomination then?
- BANCROFT: No, I would rather have seen somebody else that I didn't figure was as strong a candidate.
- BAUM: I guess Champ Clark was the other man. Do you think Roosevelt could have beaten Clark?
- BANCROFT: Oh, I don't say we could have beaten Clark. I don't think we could have beaten anybody with that split.
- BAUM: I guess that's always the problem when the other party puts up a good man: you don't know whether to be glad because he might be elected or sorry because he has a stronger chance of being elected.
- BANCROFT: That's correct.

ERA OF THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY

Registering Progressives

Baum: In January 1914, according to a letter you wrote, your big job was to try to get all of the registered Republicans to re-register as Progressives.

Cannock: That was when we had formed the Progressive Party. We wanted to get as many registered as Progressives as possible.

Baum: Was that an easy thing, to get your Republicans to re-register, or were they reluctant to change?

Cannock: It wasn't so much the reluctance to change as just the mechanics of getting a whole group to re-register that was the problem. If a person wanted to remain a Republican we didn't try too hard to get him to change to a Progressive, but on the other hand we wanted everybody that wanted to be a Progressive and wanted to vote that way to register as a Progressive in order to get the party well under way. That was before we finally felt that the Progressives couldn't win as a party and we had to go back to the Republican Party. In other words, after six or eight months or somewhere around in there, a year, we found that we weren't going to have three parties and that the Republican Party was stronger than the Progressive Party, in other states especially, and therefore a lot of us went back to the Republican Party. I forget just when that was, but it was before 1916.

Baum: Was it your idea in early 1914 that the Progressives would become

Baum: the permanent second party?

Bancroft: Yes, at first.

Baum: So you thought there'd be a two-party system, but it would be the Democrats and the Progressives.

Bancroft: Yes. We wanted a two-party system.

Baum: You mentioned that C.C. Young had suggested passing out some little cards to people as they went in to register, and the card suggested they register Progressive. Was that very effective?

Bancroft: Yes, at the beginning the difficulty was simply getting them to register as Progressives when they were Progressives but had registered as Republicans for so long. And then some were Democrats and had registered as Democrats for a long time and didn't want to change. I'm not sure of the exact time, but it used to be that people would have to re-register every two or every four years, something like that.

Comments on Leading Progressives

Baum: I see you were often in communication with Martin Madsen.

Bancroft: Yes, he was one of the two secretaries. I think he was the executive secretary to Hiram Johnson while Al McCabe was the private secretary.

Baum: Was Martin Madsen one of the original Progressives?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: And where did he come from?

Bancroft: I don't know where he came from and I don't know whether he was

Bancroft: originally a Republican or a Democrat, but he was, as far back as I can remember, with us right from the start.

Baum: I didn't run across his name in many of your political papers and documents and so I wondered if he was active politically.

Bancroft: He wasn't one of the leaders or anything of that kind until he was appointed as Governor Johnson's executive secretary. I imagine he had acted as some kind of secretary during the first campaign, but I'm not sure.

Baum: Do you know what his occupational background was?

Bancroft: No, I don't, because as far back as I remember having known him he was the Governor's executive secretary.

Baum: Was he a young man at that time?

Bancroft: Well, I would say he was perhaps ten years older than I was, yes, he was young at that time.

Baum: How about Al McCabe? He was quite a young man, too, wasn't he?

Bancroft: Yes. He again was about ten years older than I. He and Martin Madsen were about the same age, I would think.

Baum: I run into Al McCabe's name often in books.

Bancroft: Well, Al McCabe was more like the assistant governor, in a way. He was very close to the Governor and very close to appointments. If anybody wanted a job he'd go to see Al McCabe, and then Al McCabe would take his name and submit it to the Governor, and so on.

Baum: Didn't Martin Madsen also do the same thing?

Bancroft: I think he did very little of that. I think the idea generally was that Al McCabe had a good deal more say-so in regard to the

Bancroft: appointments. Of course, they were all put up to the Governor himself. If a person wanted an appointment he'd naturally go to Al McCabe, or directly to the Governor, if he happened to know the Governor very well.

Baum: Then Al McCabe was in on more policy decisions than Madsen?

Bancroft: I would say so, yes. I would say that Al McCabe was more in on policy decisions and Martin Madsen was more on routine work of the Governor's office.

Baum: What kind of a man was Martin Madsen?

Bancroft: He was a very fine man, thoroughly honest and whole-heartedly devoted to the Governor, and I believe he was afterwards Governor Stephens's private secretary, but I'm not certain.

Baum: That would have been quite a switch-over, wouldn't it? There was a little ill feeling, wasn't there, between Johnson and Stephens?

Bancroft: Well, there was in that one matter that you saw in Al McCabe's letter. He explained the situation there, but there was not any feeling of hostility among the rank and file there toward either one. We didn't even know about there being any feeling between the two, most of us, at that time. We just accepted Governor Stephens as the choice of Governor Johnson and as we weren't able to have Jack Eshleman on account of his death we accepted Governor Stephens as the choice of the southern Progressives. There wasn't any open break of any kind.

Baum: I guess it was a little the same as you accepted Taft to begin with after Roosevelt.

Bancroft: Yes, only we didn't have any misgivings toward Governor Stephens.

Baum: You did about Taft?

Bancroft: Not at the beginning.

Baum: You wrote to Martin Madsen and suggested that he look into some red light petitions which you felt were forged. You said you had evidence they were forged and District Attorney Fickert had evidence that these petitions were forged. Do you recall what that was about?

Bancroft: I have just a faint recollection that that did occur. I think they had some definite proofs that forgeries were taking place, but the principal reason I was anxious about that was that we didn't want our election machinery corrupted. I wasn't taking any active part in the red light abatement bill one way or the other because I never thought it would do very much good. In other words, it's awfully hard to reform men by law, and you can't make a man moral by passing a law.

Baum: You didn't have much confidence in these moral-type laws, then. Including prohibition?

Bancroft: No, I didn't vote for prohibition. I will say this, that after prohibition was passed I observed it strictly because it was part of the Constitution of the United States, and -- I bought myself a good stock of liquor while it was legal -- but all through the prohibition period I wouldn't drink any bootleg liquor. But that again was not because I was a prohibitionist, because I wasn't, but because I knew that everyone who

Bancroft: patronized the bootleggers was guilty of breaking the law, and accordingly he was in a way more or less responsible for all the corruption and bootlegging that went on.

Baum: Well, speaking of moral laws, I think that just recently the Supreme Court, within the last two days, has upheld the right of states to make laws prohibiting business activities on Sunday -- blue laws, they call them. What is your feeling on the right of the states to do that?

Bancroft: Well, I think they've got the right.

Baum: They've got the right, obviously, from the Supreme Court decision. Do you think it's wise to do that?

Bancroft: I wouldn't say obviously from the Supreme Court decision, because I think the Supreme Court has made a lot of absolutely wrong decisions recently. I think they paid no attention to the law in a lot of their decisions, including the decision requiring the schools to be integrated down South. I think the schools and the handling of the schools was entirely a local matter, that the states had jurisdiction there, and not the United States.

Baum: I've heard Meyer Lissner described as possibly the most idealistic of the Progressives. Do you think that's true?

Bancroft: No, I wouldn't say so. I would say that Irving Martin and Rowell were probably the most idealistic, and I would say that Meyer Lissner was a very fine man and probably the most astute politician of the whole crowd. He was a very able executive and absolutely honest, as the other two were also, and

Bancroft: absolutely loyal to Governor Johnson, as the others were, but I wouldn't consider him quite so idealistic, if you want to put it that way, as Rowell and Irving Martin.

Baum: I haven't run across Irving Martin's name as much as these other men's.

Bancroft: He lived in Stockton and he never came forward, never pushed himself forward at all, and I don't think Rowell pushed himself forward at all, but Meyer Lissner was exceedingly able as an administrator and as a politician so you naturally heard a great deal more about him, though I don't think Meyer Lissner was pushing himself forward.

Baum: Well, Rowell, being a newspaperman, would be better known.

Bancroft: Well, Irving Martin was owner and editor of the Stockton Record. Rowell was the editor of the Fresno Republican.

Baum: I believe that Eustace Cullinan wrote a campaign biography of Hiram Johnson in 1914 and Hiram Johnson asked you to read proof on that. Do you recall if you were able to do that?

Bancroft: No, but if he asked me to I did it. I'm not sure. Of course, I remember Eustace Cullinan very well and if they asked me to read it over and comment or anything of that kind, that was just part of a day's work. I naturally did it.

Baum: What was Eustace Cullinan's business?

Bancroft: He was an attorney. He was with Matt Sullivan, who was a Democrat, and Theodore Roche.

Baum: Cullinan was a Republican and a Progressive?

Bancroft: Yes. Well, Matt Sullivan became a Progressive. I assume that he registered as a Progressive. He was a very prominent attorney and his firm, as I remember it, was Sullivan, Sullivan & Theodore Roche, and Eustace Cullinan was also a member of that firm. They were always together and I believe he was a member of that firm.

Baum: Did Eustace Cullinan remain in politics?

Bancroft: Well, he always took an interest in politics, right up to the time of his death, and he was always a very prominent San Francisco attorney. And he was a very fine man. There were a number of very fine men in that group.

Baum: Sounds like being active in the Progressive Party was sort of an entree to some of the most interesting men in the city at that time.

Bancroft: Well, it was. It was a very interesting time and there were a lot of interesting men.

Baum: Sounds like a Who's Who in San Francisco when you read through a list of the people in the Progressive groups there.

Bancroft: No, I wouldn't say it sounds like Who's Who, because it's rather lacking in the prominent businessmen. There were quite a number, but the most representative bankers and businessmen and wealthy men were on the Republican side.

Baum: But when you read about the men who got things done I think the progressives had a large share of them. They may have not had the biggest bankrolls.

- Bancroft: No. But also the men nationally were very interesting that I used to meet. We used to have many of them up to our house as they passed through San Francisco. We had very interesting times. I remember men like Medill McCormick (he was senator from Illinois), Gifford Pinchot, the noted conservationist from Pennsylvania; and even Justice Brandeis, later of the United States Supreme Court, came up to my office one evening for a little gathering. I think he was a Democrat.
- Baum: Former Governor George Pardee was in your original Progressive group. Did he remain a Progressive?
- Bancroft: Just the same as the rest of us. We went back into the Republican Party.
- Baum: In 1914 he was still with the group?
- Bancroft: Oh, he was with us all the way through. He was another very fine man. You know, later he was on the East Bay Municipal Utilities District board which brought the water from the Mokelumne River into the East Bay here, and they did a marvelous job on that. That was years after he'd been governor.
- Baum: And he was a fairly young man as governor, wasn't he?
- Bancroft: Yes, he must have been. You run across him in 1938. He was a very active supporter of mine in 1938. He hadn't been taking an active part in politics...
- Baum: He was governor in 1902, was it?
- Bancroft: Yes, 1902 to 1906; then Gillette, 1906 to 1910.
- Baum: You usually don't elect a youngster to the governorship.

Bancroft: Well, he lived to a ripe old age, I would say around eighty.

Election of Judge Angellotti to California Supreme Court, 1914

Baum: You worked on the election of Judge Frank M. Angellotti for chief justice of the state supreme court, I think it was in the fall of 1914.

Bancroft: Yes, I did quite a little on that.

Baum: Were there any special issues in that election?

Bancroft: No, just personal. He was a very fine man and he was a candidate for chief justice. I think it was chief justice. I know he later was a chief justice and I think that he ran for the position of chief justice.

Baum: Yes, he was running for that. I saw the campaign brochures. I believe the head of his campaign was Charles A. Shurtleff.

Bancroft: Yes. Now, you see, he was a Democrat. He was one of our Progressives who came from the Democratic Party.

Baum: How did you feel about these Progressives that came from the Democratic Party?

Bancroft: Oh, we were very glad to have them in.

Baum: Did you have full confidence in them, or did you think they'd switch over to the Democrats again?

Bancroft: Well, if they did that was their privilege, just as it was our privilege to switch over to the Republicans again. Curtis Lindley, I think, was Shurtleff's partner. Lindley, I think, was a Democrat, and he was a leading mining lawyer of the state and he was very active in the graft prosecution, being

ancroft: on our side, and he was also the man that got Mr. Herbert Hoover started as a mining engineer. That's as I understand it.

baum: And who was Shurtleff again?

ancroft: He was a prominent attorney -- I think it was Lindley and Shurtleff who were partners. I know they were very close to each other.

baum: Shurtleff took part in several judges' elections.

ancroft: Well, he was a man that any of them would have wanted to have backing him.

baum: Did Johnson participate in these?

ancroft: No. You see, that was something he was supposed not to, and they simply wouldn't have wanted to have him participate, because it would then be making it a partisan matter and that's one thing they would have wanted to have avoided. They could have all the rest of us doing it, but if the governor of the state began participating in it, it wouldn't look then as if it was a nonpartisan campaign.

baum: You had Democrats and Republicans and Progressives working.

Rowell vs. Heney for the Republican Senatorial Nomination

baum: At the same time that you were working on registering people as Progressives and on Judge Angellott's election, you were also working on Rowell's campaign to be senator, or trying to work up an interest in getting him to run for senator and getting him nominated.

Cancroft: Yes. Rowell was a very fine man, and one of the top leaders of the Progressive Republicans and of the Progressives when we became Progressives, and he was recognized as such, but Heney appealed more to the rank and file as the vote showed finally. Rowell had a remarkable mind and was a very high-type man.

Baum: Were you a personal friend of his?

Cancroft: Oh, yes. I was a personal friend of Heney's 'till we found that he was a little radical and a little too rough and so on. He wasn't the same type at all as Rowell. Rowell would have been a great credit to the state if he'd been elected senator.

Baum: I believe Meyer Lissner was also encouraging Rowell's candidacy.

Cancroft: I think so. I think you'll find that most of the leaders of the Progressive Party --

Baum: Not most. Earl and Dickson were encouraging Heney, I believe.

Cancroft: Yes, but I say I think you'll find most of the leaders were for Rowell. The big strength for Heney came from Southern California, where they didn't know him as well as we did up north.

Baum: Even in those days did Southern California have more of the vote?

Cancroft: Well, not nearly as large as it later had in comparison to Northern California, but it had a very substantial vote, and I have an idea that Heney won even in Northern California, but I meant among the leaders of Northern California I think almost all of them were for Rowell, while down south most of them were for Heney.

Baum: How did Johnson feel about the competition between Heney and

Baum: Rowell for the senatorial nomination?

Bancroft: Well, if you read those letters you'll get an idea that Johnson didn't want to come out for either one.

Baum: Oh, I know he tried to keep clear of it. You must have known how he felt.

Bancroft: Well, Martin Madsen wouldn't have been as strong for getting Rowell in as he was unless Governor Johnson favored Rowell. I would say he was very much in favor of Rowell. I never discussed it with him, except I discussed it very often with Martin Madsen, and I would certainly have gotten some hint from Martin Madsen if Governor Johnson hadn't favored Rowell.

Baum: So that you had to get your directions indirectly.

Bancroft: No, I didn't get any directions for that; in matters of that kind I was a free agent, and I was just for Rowell very strongly.

Baum: Wouldn't you have been influenced if you had known that Johnson was for Heney, let's say?

Bancroft: No. I was a loyal follower of Johnson, but on the other hand I was not taking orders from him politically or anything of that kind. If it was something that concerned Johnson's campaign, that'd be one thing, and I didn't ever want to do anything to embarrass Johnson. I wrote in one of those letters asking if it would embarrass him in any way if I got into Judge Angellott's campaign. I think I wrote to Madsen on that. Did you run across a letter of that kind?

Baum: Yes. You asked on somebody else's campaign, too, I remember,

Baum: before you took part in it.

Bancroft: Yes, because I was so closely identified with Johnson, and if he had been very anxious to support Heney, for instance, and if he had asked me not to take an active part in Rowell's campaign then I probably would have said, "Well, I'll keep my name out of it," or something of that kind. In other words, I felt that I was close enough to Governor Johnson so things I did might embarrass him if they were contrary to what he favored, and on the other hand I wouldn't have supported Heney as against Rowell even if Johnson had been very strong for him.

Baum: You personally didn't favor Heney.

Bancroft: No, very definitely not, and I wouldn't have supported anybody against Judge Angellotti, if they'd asked me to, but on the other hand I wouldn't have taken the active part I took in Judge Angellotti's campaign if it would have embarrassed the Governor.

Baum: Was your name fairly closely linked with Johnson's in the public mind, in the local public mind?

Bancroft: Well, I would think so. I was known as a Johnson man and I was secretary and then chairman of the Republican county committee of San Francisco and so on, and it wouldn't have looked right for me to have been actively and militantly supporting someone where Johnson was actively and militantly opposing him.

Baum: In one letter you remarked, I believe this was to Martin Madsen, that Andrew Gallagher was supporting Heney against Rowell, and

Baum: then you went on to comment that the men supporting Heney are generally "men who are not and will not become Progressives." I just wondered who these men were. Were they Republicans, or Democrats?

Bancroft: They were probably Democrats. I think Andrew Gallagher was a Democrat.

Baum: So you felt that they really weren't in the Progressive Party anyhow.

Bancroft: Well, of course there was enough support in the Progressive Party for Heney to get the nomination of the Progressives. Rowell didn't have the appeal to the public that I thought he would have.

Baum: Why not? Wasn't he a good speaker?

Bancroft: He was a little too intellectual for them. He had a remarkable intellect and I think he talked above their heads probably. He wasn't pompous or anything of that kind.

Baum: And Heney was able to talk to the crowds?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, that was his strong point.

Baum: A good crowd orator.

Bancroft: He wasn't so much an orator as he was a little along the demagogue type; I wouldn't say he was a demagogue, but he was a little along that type, while Rowell was entirely constructive in his arguments. Rowell would make a very logical argument about something, or a brilliant argument about it, but it might not be the type that would appeal to the crowd.

Baum: Well, sometimes it's the enthusiasm with which you speak, which may have nothing to do with your ideas, that determines how a crowd reacts.

Bancroft: Well, Heney would have that more than Rowell. Rowell would have more of the appearance of a professor. Well, you know, the average college professor, especially one that's quite well known and a little bit old, he wouldn't have the same ability to rouse a crowd as an enthusiastic give-em-hell type like Truman.

Baum: Yes, I was thinking of Truman when you said that, a regular politician who has behind him more experience.

Bancroft: Well, Heney was more along those lines. I would say it would be somewhat similar to a possible campaign between Hoover and Truman. Hoover would appeal to the people who listened to logic and to a lot of reasonable remarks, but yet he wouldn't be able to get the votes that Truman would get. You don't want to have too much reserve if you're trying to get votes.

Rowell was very able. For instance, he was the sort of man who could write a treatise on the procedure in the United States Senate and things of that kind, governmental procedure, and he could write a commentary on almost any kind of governmental actions or any state administration or anything and have it very accurate and very readable. He was much stronger as a writer than he was as a speaker.

Baum: He'd be accused of being an egghead nowadays, I suppose.

Bancroft: Yes, he might, but he wasn't like the present-day eggheads. For

Bancroft: instance, you take a man like Stevenson: he sounds like an egg-head, and Rowell didn't. Rowell was a very nervous type, and what he said would be very interesting as a rule rather than sort of professorial, the way I'd say you'd hear Adlai Stevenson talk. He sounds like a professor giving a rather dry lecture, but you'd hear Rowell talk and it'd be intensely interesting even if you didn't agree with him. Now, I didn't agree with him about the need of the Americans going into the Second World War -- that's about the only serious difference I ever had with him -- and about the League of Nations. I didn't agree that we should join the League of Nations and, of course, I don't know how he felt about the United Nations, but I felt the same way about that. But I found him just as interesting when I didn't agree with him as when I did -- not as pleasant to have on the other side, because he was the sort of man I always like to have on my side. But with Stevenson, he just sounds to me like a typical egghead, and then, of course, his head and everything is shaped that way, too.

Baum: Running in the Republican primary in 1914 for senator was Samuel Shortridge, whose name I have come across fairly often. Was he a regular stand-patter Republican?

Bancroft: Yes. He had been defending some of the men in the graft prosecution.

Baum: Was he an SP man?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: Do you know what Johnson thought of him?

Bancroft: Just what we all did. He wasn't a bad man or anything. He was known as Talky Sam, and he was very glib. He was an attorney.

Baum: Do you think he was corrupt?

Bancroft: No, I wouldn't say he was corrupt. He was just a machine man. I wouldn't say at all that he was corrupt. I don't know how stalwart he was. I don't know anything about that part of him, but we never accused him of being corrupt or anything of that kind.

Baum: I've read things that sound like people thought he was corrupt, without having evidence.

Bancroft: Well, the fact that he took the part of the men that were indicted during the graft prosecution -- a great many people thought that he was corrupt on account of that, but they didn't understand that a lawyer is supposed to take cases, and the fact that he takes the cases of men that have been corrupt doesn't make him corrupt. A great many lawyers will take cases of men who have done things that they would not think of doing themselves, and if they once take their cases they've got to defend them to the best of their ability.

Baum: That's the basis of our legal system. If we didn't have attorneys to take criminals' cases, they would have no defense.

Bancroft: Yes. I wouldn't want to make a specialty of that, but I don't think that Sam Shortridge did make a specialty of criminal cases. He was just given some of these cases because he was an able lawyer. He wasn't one of the very top lawyers, but he was a thoroughly able lawyer.

John Eshleman

- Baum: In 1914 John Eshleman was elected lieutenant governor. Could you describe him?
- Sancroft: He was an exceedingly fine man and very able, and a very courageous fellow. He had tuberculosis, I think, when he first went to college. He worked his way all the way through college, and then he went into politics, and he was a natural leader. He was elected president of the Railroad Commission when Hiram Johnson was elected governor, or soon after, and he changed that from being a tool of the Southern Pacific to controlling the Southern Pacific, and all the other public utilities in California. He did a splendid job, and then he ran for lieutenant governor in 1914, I think it was, and was elected; he died shortly afterwards.
- Baum: People knew he was ill at that time, didn't they?
- Sancroft: Oh, he was ill all this time that he was doing this.
- Baum: What kind of personality did he have, in getting along with the party workers?
- Sancroft: I don't remember him as being anything remarkable in the way of a speaker. I don't remember ever hearing him make a speech. He made 'em all right, but he wasn't recognized on account of his ability as a speaker. It was more his personality and the way he did things, and the things that he did, the constructive work that he did.
- Baum: How was he in a social situation? Was he very sociable, or was he more quiet?

SanCroft: Just about average, I would say.

Sam: Did he inspire the sort of loyalty that Johnson did?

SanCroft: Yes. He inspired the same sort of loyalty, but he didn't have the personal magnetism, I would say, that Johnson did. He had plenty, but Johnson had it to a marked degree. Johnson could just make you feel -- you just enjoyed being in his presence and hearing him talk. Well, you'd enjoy being in Eshleman's presence and hearing him discuss the work he was doing and so on, but you could be with Johnson and he could be discussing any kind of a subject, whether it was baseball or anything else, and it would be just delightful to be with him.

But Eshleman did such a remarkable job with the Railroad Commission that it impressed people all over the state, and it even impressed the men in the public utility field that he was regulating because he tried to be absolutely fair. He told me once, "Now, we're fair-haired boys with the public. We're very popular because we've been reducing rates that were excessive, but the time is coming, and it won't be too long, before we'll be in a very different position, because we will be upholding the rates that are fair, refusing to reduce rates when the popular demand is for reduction." As a result, you haven't heard much in favor of the Railroad Commission, or the Public Utilities Commission as it's now called, in recent years. On the other hand, you haven't heard the opposition to it that he expected you might hear because the people realize that it's been run fairly.

Baum: In 1914 when Johnson ran for governor again and Eshleman for lieutenant governor, and I know you worked on that campaign, did Johnson then have his eye on the senate seat in 1916?

Bancroft: I don't think so.

Baum: I wondered if that was why he was trying to get Eshleman elected as lieutenant governor.

Bancroft: Well, I think we all thought that sooner or later Johnson would either be senator or President.

Baum: Oh, yes, that's right. I suppose he could have had his eye on the presidency then, or at least his followers could have had their eye on the presidency for him.

Bancroft: Well, yes. He'd run as Vice-President and I think he had his eye more on the presidency than on the senate.

Baum: Well, that would come up in 1916, too.

Bancroft: Yes. Of course, I don't know just what his ideas were then, because he wasn't discussing it too much. He naturally wouldn't be discussing it generally, and we wouldn't ask.

Other Judicial Elections

Baum: In September 1914 you and other attorneys were active for the re-election of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Lucien Shaw.

Bancroft: Yes, he was another fine judge.

Baum: It seems to me it was the same committee as the committee that favored Angellotti.

Bancroft: It would have been the same crowd generally.

- Baum: The same group also worked for Judge William P. Lawlor.
- Bancroft: Well, that's a little bit different. Lawlor was a judge during the graft prosecution and he was an out-and-out Progressive, and I think that some of the men that were working for Angelotti would not have worked for Lawlor. Lawlor was a fine man but he was so identified with the graft prosecution that I think some people were sore at him.
- Baum: So that some of the more conservative attorneys would not have supported him as they did Shaw.
- Bancroft: I think that would have been the case. Of course, we supported him as hard as we could.
- Baum: On the group that was supporting Shaw I noticed the names of, for one, Edward Treadwell. Did you know him? Could you describe him? I ran across his name so often.
- Bancroft: Well, he was a very able young attorney. At that time he was quite a young man.
- Baum: Wasn't he a Miller and Lux attorney? At least he wrote the book about Miller, I think.
- Bancroft: Yes. He wrote a very good book, too. I don't know how many other concerns he was attorney for, because with a concern like Miller and Lux it would take an awful lot of a man's time just being attorney for them. But he was a good man and a very able attorney; he wasn't very active in politics as I remember. I don't say he wasn't active, but I just don't remember his being very active in politics.
- Baum: No, I don't see him often on political committees.

Bancroft: And I think he may have been a little on the other side, on the corporations' side. I'm not sure.

Bancroft becomes an Examiner for the Railroad Commission

Baum: At one time you suggested a dentist to the state board of dental examiners. Did you occasionally suggest appointments to Johnson?

Bancroft: Well, just as little as I could. I had hundreds of people coming to me to try to get me to do that and I ducked it just as often as I possibly could because I didn't want to be in that position. You get in the position of trying to handle patronage and you make ten enemies -- not enemies, but you disappoint ten people if there are eleven applicants, while you may cheer up one, and it was always a distasteful part of politics to me because I wasn't in it to try to get jobs for myself. I never applied for anything until I wanted to become an examiner in the Railroad Commission, and that was considerably later.

Baum: Yes, in August 1915 you, Harry Encell, and Myron Westover were appointed examiners for the Railroad Commission.

Bancroft: That was a rather minor appointment, but that was the only time I ever asked for anything. I was very much interested in the work the Railroad Commission was doing.

Baum: Did you remain in that position?

Bancroft: I remained in that until I went into the army and came back. I felt that that was a line of work that I was very much interested in. After I came back from the war I decided to go into

Sancroft: farming and came out here to Walnut Creek. Then I was offered the job of chief attorney for the Railroad Commission if I would give up my farming and return to San Francisco, but that was not through Governor Johnson. Governor Stephens was then governor and it wasn't through him. It was through the members of the Railroad Commission. They'd seen the work I'd done there as examiner and they were evidently satisfied with it. There was this vacancy which would have been a very fine job if I hadn't decided that I wanted to go into farming and to give up life in the city.

Baum: How much of your time did examiner take? Was that a substantial part of your practice?

Sancroft: Yes. It took, I would say, about from 80 to 90 per cent of my time.

Baum: So that was just about all you could handle for those years.

Sancroft: For those two or three years, yes. I could handle a few legal matters.

Baum: I suppose that got you off into one specialty which you would have continued in if you'd --

Sancroft: Yes, if I hadn't gone into farming I would have continued in that.

Baum: Well, if you had suggested appointments do you think Johnson would have responded favorably? Could he have? I'm sure that he had many people suggesting appointments to him.

Sancroft: I think if he felt they were good suggestions he'd follow them,

Bancroft: at least follow some of them. He couldn't follow all of them because, as you say, there'd be so many men that would be suggesting appointments.

Making a Living

Baum: Wasn't it rather difficult for you to keep up a law practice and continue active in politics?

Bancroft: Yes, it was. That's one of the troubles when you're in politics, there's so much to do and it's very hard to keep up what you ought to do in political work and what you ought to do in your law work. You'd have to not take on too many cases or anything.

Baum: Then that, of course, cuts down your income?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: I should think it would be more feasible for an older man, well established, to go into politics and have his junior partners carry on the law work, but for a younger attorney to be so active must have been quite a sacrifice.

Bancroft: Well, of course, if a younger attorney were just out for what he could get out of it he'd get a political job just as early as he could, if he's in politics, and then he'd keep up more in politics, but it's like doing anything else --I was more interested in politics than I was in law really, although I was very much interested in law work also, but you get into a political situation like this and it's absorbing, especially

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- Bancroft: if you feel that your people are doing what's right and are trying to overcome wrong conditions, which we felt very definitely at the time.
- Baum: Were you ever tempted to go into politics yourself, as a candidate for office?
- Bancroft: Yes, I was tempted to, but I resisted the temptation because I thought I could do more of a job the way I was than if I'd gone out to get a political job.
- Baum: I remember the advice you said you got from the old politician when you first started, to keep out of politics if you wanted to be a free man.
- Bancroft: But, of course, that would not have applied if I'd gone in on our Progressive end, because we didn't have anybody holding a whip hand over us, but it would have applied as far as building up my position as an office-holder and sacrificing everything else to it, having no law practice, and then possibly losing out in an election, leaving me flat on my ear.
- Baum: Then you'd have to start from scratch after spending a large part of your life in political office.
- Bancroft: But I never had a desire to make a large amount of money. I always wanted to make enough for my family to live comfortably, and I always enjoyed making money when I went into anything, but if I'd been anxious to make a lot of money I'd have never gone into farming.

In business matters I'd always been able to do pretty well,

Bancroft: but I found it very difficult to make money in farming at the time I went into it. Almost all the farmers were losing money. I felt that this farm could be made to make a pretty fair living for my family and myself, but I always said that I expected to make less than if I continued living in San Francisco. On the other hand, I expected that we'd spend less if we lived out in the country, and I liked the country life and my family liked the country life and, after all, after you make a certain amount of money, making more doesn't make you any happier. I know my father felt the same way. He always said he could have made a good many millions if he'd stuck to his business and hadn't commenced writing histories and collecting his library, but he had a much fuller life and did a great deal more by making a moderate fortune and then devoting his life to collecting his library and writing his histories. Well, of course, I didn't have any such fine object as that in view, but I had the pleasure of living in the country and having my children grow up in the country, which I consider a very much better way of life than growing up in the city.

Baum: Well, this is an especially beautiful ranch to live on. Some farms aren't pleasant.

Bancroft: Oh, lots of them aren't pleasant, but I think it's a better life for people. It's a harder life -- of course life on this farm is no longer a hard life; in fact, it is now a rather luxurious life -- but most farm life is a good deal

Bancroft: harder than life in the cities. On the other hand, I think it produces better workers.

Baum: You say that you were able to do all right in other business ventures. What kind of business ventures did you go into?

Bancroft: Well, I had a couple of nickelodeons, moving picture theatres.

Baum: In San Francisco?

Bancroft: Yes. And they were very profitable, and I had quite an interesting experience in one of them. Both Mrs. Bancroft and I were interested in trying to help out prisoners when they got through serving their terms. We knew Warden Johnson very well, the warden at San Quentin, and he was interested in trying to help these fellows get jobs, and so we'd from time to time give a fellow a job. One of them we gave a job at one of the nickelodeons, and he did very well and we gradually advanced him and we even got to where we were letting him handle the money, the receipts, you know. He stayed with us about a year and a half, and he finally got an offer for a better job, and we told him by all means, take it, and so he took it. But before he went away he said to my manager, who was a Jewish gentleman, he said, "You know, you and Mr. Bancroft have treated me awfully well. You've never used the fact that I've been in trouble before against me, and you've always given me a fair break and given me just as much as if I hadn't been there, and have trusted me, and I wanted you to know that I appreciated it and if there's anything I can do for you I'd like to do it, and if

Bancroft: you ever want to have a man bumped off I can have it done for you for \$50." [Laughter]

My manager said to me, "Oh, Mr. Bancroft, it just made my blood run cold. Why, he really meant it."

I said, "Well, of course he meant it. He was showing his gratitude to us." That was the only thing he could think of where he might possibly be able to help us.

Baum: What other things did you do besides the nickelodeon?

Bancroft: Well, I wasn't taking an active part. First I owned part of one of them and then I owned all of it, and then I owned all of the second one, but I mean I had a manager all the time to do it so that I wouldn't be appearing at all. I didn't feel that for an attorney and a fellow in politics that it would help out either cause to be known as a nickelodeon owner.

Baum: Did your friends know you owned them?

Bancroft: Some of them. I didn't make it public either. There were corporations that we'd organize and they knew I was an attorney and so on and a lot of them didn't know how much I owned. The admission finally went up to a dime, and this made them even better for me.

Baum: How long did you keep them?

Bancroft: Oh, I'd say perhaps fifteen years, something like that; as long as they were profitable I kept them.

That real estate that you spoke of, most of it was what my father had. My two brothers and I put some money into a lot, one of them, but it was practically all my father's property,

Bancroft: both the property there on Market Street and also at Sutter and Van Ness.

Baum: What kind of buildings were they?

Bancroft: Well, it was a loft building on Market Street, a six-story building, the Bancroft Building, and on Van Ness Avenue it was a very fine apartment house, apartment hotel you might call it, but a very fine one and quite a large one, and both of them were burned during the fire of 1906 and it was a very heavy financial loss to the family.

Baum: Oh, didn't you have those later? I was thinking of 1913 -- you commented that you'd built a building there on Van Ness.

Bancroft: We built a two-story and basement building there, just a commercial building, a very cheap building compared to the other one.

Baum: Did that prove profitable?

Bancroft: Well, we had to build something there. We had the land. We didn't want to sell, and it's a valuable corner now. I own a third of it -- that is, I inherited it from my father. But at that time my father owned it, in 1913.

Baum: Did you manage the property for him?

Bancroft: My brother Paul did. And I had a good deal to do with it. We would discuss everything that came up about leases and everything.

Baum: You bought a farm in Garberville?

Bancroft: Well, that was just for summer. That was not a working ranch.

Baum: Did you develop a country place out there, or was that just a camping place?

Bancroft: No. We developed a very fine camp up there, with tents and running water and things of that kind, and a vegetable yard, and there was a house on it. We had the man we had up there take care of it on shares, but it was never bought or used as a money-making proposition. That was when I was getting along pretty comfortably financially and could afford it. That was up in a country where there was good fishing and good hunting and beautiful oak growth and all kinds of growth. You know, Humboldt County is a very beautiful county.

Baum: Did your family go up there in the summer?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: Did you, or did you stay down and work?

Bancroft: Well, we'd go up for about a month of vacation.

Baum: Did any of the other Bancrofts beside your immediate family go up there?

Bancroft: Well, my brother and his sons came up, and my father came up to see us for a week or two. And we had our horses up there.

Baum: Did your wife like camping?

Bancroft: Yes. It was a very comfortable and delightful camp. One time after the war we took about twenty boys up there who were friends -- no, there were about twenty forming the party altogether -- and we spent a month or 'two up there. Boys from around here.

Baum: Your sons' friends?

Bancroft: Yes, and some relatives -- my nephews and so on.

Baum: Did you have any other type of investments -- this was in 1914, 1915?

Bancroft: Very little.

Baum: So your time was taken up mostly with politics and your legal work?

Bancroft: Yes. Of course this other didn't take up too much of my time.

Baum: I had one note after Johnson's election in 1914 as governor; you remarked that you had laid a bet on Johnson winning which brought you such substantial returns that it repaid all your campaign contributions, which I know were substantial contributions.

Bancroft: They weren't very heavy then, because I didn't have much money then.

Baum: You contributed about \$100 to one or two or three campaigns?

Bancroft: Yes. I think it might have been \$250 or \$300, somewhere around in there.

Baum: Did you usually lay bets on the elections?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, I like to bet. I enjoy betting.

Baum: Sounds like your brother did, too.

Bancroft: One of my great pleasures now is playing poker, has been all my life. My wife says the reason I went into farming was because it was the greatest gamble in the world, and she probably knows.

Baum: Do you still lay bets on elections?

Bancroft: No. They've made it against the law, now.

Baum: You can bet with your friends, can't you?

Bancroft: Well, I bet a few dollars now, but I wouldn't bet substantial amounts now. I think it used to be against the law but nobody paid any attention to it then, but there's another reason, and that is that a bunch of professionals got into the game who would take polls and they'd have an advantage against you in betting, so that I began to lose interest in betting.

Baum: So now you think it's turned into a financial thing -- it's not just fun any more.

Bancroft: It isn't as sporting a proposition as it used to be. But even so, sometimes you get into an argument with a person, he offers to bet you \$50, and I'm not averse to taking that up, even now.

Return to the Republican Party

Baum: I heard a comment that after Johnson was re-elected at the end of 1914 the Progressives had fairly well run out of reform ideas and from then on the party was on its way down. Do you agree with that statement?

Bancroft: Well, I will agree with it to a certain extent, and that is that we had accomplished our objectives and one of the things that I give Johnson a great deal of credit for is that he didn't go haywire the way a lot of the reformers have gone. That is, after they've accomplished what they set out to do then they get a whole lot of wild ideas of other things that should be done, they're going to reform the world in a short time. And that's something that I give Johnson a great deal

Sanborn: of credit for, that he knew when to stop. Instead of running out of ideas, there was very little left to do of what we set out to do. It had been done, and there would have been no sense in adopting a lot of these wild-eyed ideas and trying to put them through as a good many of the extremists wanted to do; and most of them became Democrats.

Baum: Is this one of the reasons why the Progressives were ready to go back into the Republican fold by 1915, because they felt they had accomplished many of their aims?

Sanborn: Well, I think it was that and the fact that they saw that they couldn't make the Progressive Party a dominant party, one of the two principal parties, and they realized that we ought to have a two-party system.

Baum: Were there any substantial outstanding differences between the Progressives and the Republicans by that time?

Sanborn: Well, aside from personalities I would say there were very few after that, because the Republicans claimed they wanted honest government and we did want honest government, and the other things were mostly sort of scars of the former campaigns which we could heal. When we went back into the Republican Party we didn't go back as penitent sinners or anything of that kind. We went back as people who'd gone out because they were practically kicked out by having the convention stolen from them, and we went back since that was no longer an issue.

Baum: Right after the election of 1914 you wrote a letter to the

Baum: Honorable Winfred T. Dennison, secretary of the interior of the Philippines, at Manila, and you mentioned to him that you thought by 1916 all the Progressives would have returned to the Republican Party.

Bancroft: How soon was that after?

Baum: That was November 7, 1914, which I believe was probably the night following the election.

Bancroft: Yes. He came up to our house to dinner, I remember, before he went to the Philippines.

Baum: Did most of the Progressives agree with you by that time, that you would be back in the Republican fold by 1916?

Bancroft: I wouldn't say that most of them did; at that time I think I was one of the early ones that was advocating going back. As soon as I saw that it was no use our staying out I didn't believe in staying out just because we'd got out.

Baum: You were more practical than some of the others.

Bancroft: Yes, and because there was no longer the issue we had when we went out.

Baum: And you also comment that you thought the Republicans would nominate a Progressive for President in 1916. Was that Johnson you had in mind?

Bancroft: Well, I didn't have anybody very definitely in mind then, but I thought, you know, that it might be Roosevelt, it might be Johnson, it might be somebody else. I wasn't a crusader about electing Johnson President.

Baum: Well, that brings me about to the end of 1914, Mr. Bancroft, and I think this would perhaps be a good time for us to close up, because I have a lot of things to ask you about 1916, and I'd like to start fresh on that one.

The Election of 1916

Baum: After the 1914 election, as I understand it, most of the California Progressives felt pretty strongly that a third party was not feasible and the best thing to do would be to go back into the Republican Party.

Bancroft: Yes, most of them did. But I will say that there were quite a few in 1916, for instance, that went to the Republican convention, who wanted to have Roosevelt run as a Progressive again, and he wouldn't do it, and a good many of our good Progressives got quite sore at Roosevelt on account of that. I felt exactly opposite, that the reason the Progressive Party had done as well as it did was due to Roosevelt, that Roosevelt had seen the uselessness of trying to establish the Progressive Party as the dominant opposition to the Democrats, and that he was taking the sensible course in going back into the Republican Party, so I didn't want to go to that convention and I didn't go.

Baum: So by 1916 you wanted to be a Republican again, or you'd re-registered?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, it was probably 1915. It was right after 1914. We saw the handwriting on the wall.

Baum: Well, after World War I began, Roosevelt became more and more belligerent while many people wanted the United States to remain neutral. And many of the Progressives who had supported Roosevelt began to resent his belligerent attitude. They felt he was becoming a super-patriot and turned against him for that reason.

Bancroft: Well, I didn't see many that did.

Baum: Not in California, maybe?

Bancroft: No. I don't think they did generally. I think after the Lusitania was sunk that the feeling in general was that we ought to get into the war. I know I felt that way, and I have since decided that I was a victim of remarkably well-planned propaganda by England. I think now that very definitely we should not have gone into the First World War, we should have stayed out of it, and stayed out of the Second World War, and we'd have been very much better off. We wouldn't have a Communist nation facing us, and more than that, we wouldn't be thinking that we had to support all the rest of the world when we represent only seven per cent of the population -- that is, we did. At the rate the others are growing I doubt if we represent more than a twentieth of it now.

Baum: But in 1915 you would have favored our going into the war.

Bancroft: Yes. I was completely fooled by the English propaganda. For instance, when I went into the army and was sent over to France I took along a camera -- as a matter of fact I have the

Sanncroft: camera right here, a small one -- in order to get pictures of the Belgian children who'd had their hands cut off by the German Huns, as we were told. Such a man as Lord Bryce who'd written The American Commonwealth and whom we believed to be perfectly reliable and truthful, he was on a commission that certified to all this, so I wanted to get some pictures of them in order to bring home to show my friends that the Germans had actually committed these crimes.

Well, when I first got over there we were sent up into the advance sector and I began asking officers that I'd meet where I could get some pictures of the mutilated Belgian children and they said, "What mutilated Belgian children?"

"Why, those that we've been hearing about all the time."

One after another would say he'd never heard of any, and during all the time that I was over there I never heard of a single case or saw a single case of mutilated Belgian children. I talked with men that had served in Belgium and never heard of a case of that kind. And that's just one example of the many distortions and absolute lies that were fed to the American people, and I admit it fooled me completely. But then when the Second World War came along and they tried the same thing I didn't believe it and I was very much opposed to our going into the Second World War.

Naum: Do you think the Allies could have won the First World War without American aid?

Bancroft: I don't know. I think the United States would have been much better off if we hadn't and if they'd lost it. No, I don't think they'd have won it. But I think the United States would have been much better off, and I think the world would be much better off if we'd stayed out of that war and let Germany win it rather than for us to go in and lose perhaps half a million fine Americans, upset our whole economy, and put ourselves in the position where we're almost a bankrupt nation right now, because we didn't follow Washington's advice

Baum: Are you speaking of World War I or World War II or both?

Bancroft: I'm speaking of both of them.

Baum: Back in 1915 you would have agreed with Theodore Roosevelt that we should have gotten right in.

Bancroft: Oh, I did. And I objected to Wilson's saying that we were too proud to fight. I think that was a very unfortunate expression, because we weren't too proud to fight. If we felt it wasn't to our best interest to fight that would have been all right, but he didn't put it on that ground. But, as I say, I was completely fooled by the propaganda that was issued.

Baum: How about most of your Progressive friends? Did they agree with Roosevelt or was there wrangling in the ranks?

Bancroft: Not about that issue. As far as I could see out here in California they were very strong for getting into the war.

Baum: Was there any serious consideration in 1915 that Johnson might be nominated as President?

Bancroft: There were times after that when he was quite a serious

Sanncroft: candidate. I don't think there was in 1916, but in 1920 or 1924 there was a very active campaign by his friends to try to get him nominated.

Baum: Well, I had read that Lissner and some of the Californians had in mind a slate that might include Charles Evans Hughes as President and Johnson as Vice-President -- this is if Theodore Roosevelt couldn't be nominated, because I don't think Johnson could have been the vice-presidential candidate along with Roosevelt. They have had to balance the ticket.

Sanncroft: Well, that was very probable.

Baum: Do you remember any booms along that line? Or was it pretty much just writing letters and thinking about it?

Sanncroft: That would have been quite in keeping with Lissner's plans, with his mode of procedure. He would have figured that Johnson couldn't be running with Roosevelt again, that that wouldn't do, and that Hughes and Johnson would have made a very good ticket. They'd have been elected too, without any doubt. because Hughes almost got elected as it was.

Baum: There were some Republicans in California who called themselves "United Republicans," I think. They were former Progressives who wanted to send a slate of delegates to the 1916 convention that would be pledged to nominate Johnson for Vice-President. Do you recall all those political shenanigans?

Sanncroft: I think they held a Progressive convention -- there were a lot of Progressives that went to Chicago -- I know I declined to be a member. They wanted to nominate Roosevelt and Roosevelt

Bancroft: wouldn't accept the nomination and they came back quite sore at Roosevelt.

Baum: You agreed with Roosevelt's strategy even before it came up?

Bancroft: Yes. I assumed that he would have judgment enough not to run again.

Baum: Roosevelt, I believe, recommended either Leonard Wood or Henry Cabot Lodge as presidential candidates, and I believe Johnson was appalled at these two men because they weren't anywhere in the Progressive line.

Bancroft: Well, that I do not know. That's upper workings. I never took a very serious part in the presidential aspirations of the different candidates because that was above my line. I was very active in the state fights but not in the presidential behind-the-scenes work.

Baum: Some of your Progressives went over to support Wilson then.
Kent --

Bancroft: Yes, quite a few.

Baum: -- Heney, Older. Did any of those you were close to switch over to Wilson, or did most of your close political friends stick with Hughes?

Bancroft: I think all my close political friends were sticking with Hughes, until that incident occurred down in Long Beach, and then I suspect that some of them went over, but I don't know. I think probably some did because I know a great many of the Progressive Republicans did go after that.

Baum: Johnson ran for senator in 1916 and he had quite a fight in

Baum: the primary to win the Republican nomination. The regular Republican candidate was Willis H. Booth. Many of the Progressives were afraid that Johnson could not get the nomination. Were you worried about that at the time?

Bancroft: No, I was not.

Baum: You were pretty confident that Johnson could carry it. I think Johnson didn't think he could.

Bancroft: Well, Johnson was always very pessimistic about his chances, and rightly so. It's better to be pessimistic than over-optimistic, because if you're second choice in the public mind and make that sort of a fight then there are very often a lot of people that'll vote for the underdog. You work harder than if you feel you have the election cinched.

Baum: So you think that Johnson's pessimism was often to his advantage in running a campaign?

Bancroft: Yes. I don't think it was assumed or anything, but I think it was to his advantage.

Baum: You worked on the Charles Evans Hughes committee, didn't you?

Bancroft: I imagine so, I don't remember.

Baum: Yes, I think I saw your name there, and all the while it seemed like the Hughes men were giving Johnson a pretty raw deal. I know you were also working for Johnson. Didn't you feel rather split up?

Bancroft: No. I felt that Hughes was a very good man and if we couldn't elect our man I thought he'd be a very good President. I still think so. You see, a candidate is apt to get very bitter if

Bancroft: he loses out and his followers, some of them, will get bitter and others -- well, they made a good fight but they lost out and they'll support the other man wholeheartedly. I was supporting Hughes wholeheartedly after he was nominated.

Baum: William Crocker, who was head of the Republican Party in California at that time, seemed to be giving Johnson a very raw deal.

Bancroft: Oh, he was very bitter against Johnson, and Johnson, of course, was bitter against him.

Baum: Did you have to work with Crocker on the Hughes committee?

Bancroft: Well, Crocker was the chairman of the committee and so on but the work down below -- I wouldn't be running into him, I'd run into the next echelon, you might say, one lower down.

Baum: Were most of your political friends working for Hughes and Johnson?

Bancroft: Most of them were working for Johnson.

Baum: Were they working for Hughes?

Bancroft: They weren't doing much for Hughes. They were going to vote for him but they weren't breaking their necks for him. But then there were quite a few who felt just as I did and were working quite strongly for him.

Baum: The editor of the Argonaut newspaper, Alfred Holman, came out with quite a bitter attack on Johnson during that campaign.

Bancroft: He was very strongly anti-Johnson all the way through. I used to know him.

Baum: Was this way back from --

BANCROFT
LIBRARY

Bancroft: From 1906, from the graft prosecution.

Baum: Oh, he was bitter against Johnson the whole way? What sort of a man was he? A regular stand-patter?

Bancroft: He was a newspaper editor. It was a weekly, you know, and it was supported probably by advertisements and things from the business interests. He was representing their side and he was just bitter all the way through.

Baum: I've read the Argonaut. It's still published. I think Mr. Holman was quite a famous newspaper editor on the West Coast, aside from the Argonaut. He published other newspapers.

Bancroft: I don't know about that, because the only place I knew about him was in the Argonaut.

Baum: Could you comment on his other political views?

Bancroft: No. I don't remember his taking any active part in politics except in his work in his editorials in the Argonaut. That was the most influential weekly in San Francisco, but that isn't saying that any of them are terribly influential, the weekly newspapers.

Baum: I believe it was the policy to keep almost all of the Johnson men out of the Hughes campaign. They weren't invited to introduce Hughes, or Johnson wasn't invited to introduce Hughes on the stage.

Bancroft: Oh, no, and of course that was a great mistake because if he had introduced Hughes a lot of his followers who were wavering or feeling like going over to Wilson would have stayed in the Republican Party or gone into it if they were Progressives,

Bancroft: and have voted for Hughes.

Baum: The Hughes men must have estimated that the people didn't really think that much of Johnson.

Bancroft: Yes, or else they felt much more bitterly against Johnson than interested in whether Hughes beat Wilson or not.

Baum: Do you know how Johnson felt about Hughes? I think they were cordial -- I mean, Hughes sent congratulations when Johnson was nominated for senator, not very gracious congratulations, but cordial.

Bancroft: Well, all I know is that Johnson was campaigning for Hughes right along. He was campaigning all over Northern California and he kept on campaigning after that incident down in Long Beach, and kept speaking for Hughes. I don't think he -- naturally, when Hughes got the nomination when Johnson wanted Roosevelt to get it and he wanted to be Vice-President himself he wasn't very, oh, enthusiastic about Hughes, but he was backing him enough to recommend him in all his speeches.

Appointment of Stephens to Succeed Johnson

Baum: Jack Eshleman, the lieutenant governor, died before Johnson's election to the senate, leaving the problem of a successor to Johnson for two years of his term. Did it disturb the party when he died? Was there squabbling for position?

Bancroft: No, but the Progressive Republicans felt that the next governor ought to come from the south, and William D. Stephens, who was

Bancroft: then Congressman Stephens, was their choice. Those of us up north didn't care so much for Mr. Stephens; we didn't think he was bad in any way, he was a good man morally and so forth, but we didn't think he had anything like the force that a man should have to follow in Johnson's footsteps.

Baum: Well, I've heard that Johnson would have preferred a Riverside man named H.L. Carnahan.

Bancroft: Well, Carnahan would have made a much better governor.

Baum: Did you know him?

Bancroft: Oh, very well.

Baum: Was he active among the Progressives?

Bancroft: Yes. Then he became lieutenant governor later, and as a matter of fact he was very active in my campaign when I ran. But he also had either tuberculosis or cancer, I don't know which he had. He was terribly sick a lot of the time that I knew him, but he, just like Eshleman, disregarded it, and became a very prominent politician.

Baum: He lived as long as your campaign, to 1938?

Bancroft: Yes, he lived to, I'd say, 1940-something. He was quite a young man.

Baum: I also heard somewhere that Johnson might have liked to have had Jack Neylan succeed him.

Bancroft: Well, if he could have had a man from the north I think he very possibly would have had Jack Neylan.

Baum: Was Neylan close to Johnson?

Bancroft: Yes, he was chairman of the board of control. He had been on one of the San Francisco papers as a reporter, and was very active in his campaign, and he was very able. He was appointed as chairman or elected as head of the board of control, and after that I assume his headquarters were in Sacramento, but I'm not sure. But before that he had been living in San Francisco. He was quite young. He was, I'd say, two or three years older than I was. I don't think he had gotten into politics until the 1910 campaign for Johnson, and then I don't think he got into it much. He was then working as a reporter, but Johnson liked what he did as a reporter and also was impressed by his force and his ability, and of course he did very well after he became an attorney. He had a very lucrative practice.

Baum: After Johnson was elected senator he continued to serve as governor for many months and there was a great deal of bitterness between him and Stephens.

Bancroft: That's told in this letter that Al McCabe wrote. I never even knew that they had this row.

Baum: At the time they kept it pretty well quiet.

Bancroft: Yes, it didn't get out. I didn't know about it.

Baum: I think it's an interesting point to realize that most of the people who had their ear to the political ground, which I would assume you did, didn't know about it, so therefore it must have not been publicized in any way.

Bancroft: No, and they weren't talking about it, because I'd be seeing the different people all the time.

Baum: In 1918 I understand that Johnson, who was then in the Senate, and fifty of the Progressives, some of the leading Progressives, wanted to get up a boom for Rowell as governor and get rid of Stephens. Were you in on that?

Bancroft: No, I was not in on that.

Baum: I believe Rowell didn't want to run.

Bancroft: No, I would assume he wouldn't, after having run for the Senate in 1914.

Split-Up of the Progressives

Baum: I read that by 1919 Johnson had an idea that he would run for President against Wilson, and therefore he began to attack the League of Nations, thinking that this would be a good major campaign issue.

Bancroft: I was in France, and when I came back from the war I stopped in at Washington to be discharged and I called on him as Senator Johnson and he was then reading the draft of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles. He said he was very much disturbed by it. He said he was giving it very careful consideration and I said I was dead against it, that I thought it was a very dangerous thing for us to get mixed up in and he said he was going to go over it just as carefully as he

Bancroft: could but he was -- at that time he had it on his desk, and he was very much disturbed by it. In other words, he felt that we were getting into entangling alliances and we would be shoved around, as we have been ever since, by the English and others who are much smarter diplomatically than we are.

Baum: Do you suppose your ideas would have been just about the same as Johnson's ideas at that time?

Bancroft: I think so. I never discussed it with him again because I didn't see him again until he started on this campaign to block the League of Nations, ratification of it, but I think it must have been the same general idea that he had.

But I had those ideas when I came back because I'd seen the workings over there in France a good deal and I told my brother the first few days that we were back -- he said something about the League of Nations, and I said, "Well, I hope to thunder we never join that."

He said, "You do? Why, everybody here is for it."

Well, before we got through, after Johnson came out and addressed the San Francisco meeting of the Commonwealth Club, the tone changed entirely out here.

Baum: So he had quite an influence.

Bancroft: He had a tremendous influence. But he didn't do it in order to get a political issue. I know, because as I say I had that conversation with him when I first got back from the war. If he had thought it was a good political issue he'd have said

Bancroft: somewhere during the conversation, knowing that I was very much interested in politics, "Well, it would be a great popular issue if it was presented properly," or something of that kind. He never brought in the question of politics at all and he was hoping, as he was going over that, that he would see some way that he could support it, something in it that was worthy of support as he saw it. Instead of that he could see nothing in it that would give us any protection from being dominated by the European powers who were always fighting.

Baum: I have a note that Hiram Johnson wrote to you in 1919, and he suggested that you communicate with Harold Ickes in Chicago, because Johnson said he had a complete understanding with Ickes, and that Ickes was working for Johnson for President in the 1920 election. I was rather startled to find Ickes mentioned there. Do you recall what part he played?

Bancroft: In 1919 I'd just come back from the war and I was busy getting my affairs straightened out and moving over here to the farm and so on. I wasn't taking an active part at that time in politics or in anything else but getting straightened out.

Baum: In some of your papers it seemed like you were working on Johnson for President clubs in 1919.

Bancroft: I assume I was, but I wasn't devoting a whole lot of my time to it the way I had been before. Before, during the campaign, I'd be devoting about two-thirds of my time and energies to it, letting everything else go, but after the war I had to bring loose ends together again.

Baum: I noticed a curious thing: by 1919 -- this was when Johnson was thinking of running for President -- his chief backers out here in California were Frank P. Flint, Michael deYoung, William Crocker, Herbert Fleishhacker, and Joseph P. Knowland. That seemed like a curious group to be supporting Johnson. He was campaigning to try and get the nomination in 1920.

Bancroft: And those men were supporting him?

Baum: I saw William Crocker on the list and I remember what Crocker had done to Johnson in 1916, and this was only three years later.

Bancroft: Joseph Knowland was a bitter opponent of his. Why, I'm amazed at that myself.

Baum: Maybe that wasn't very public then. Of course, again, you weren't around at that time. By this time Earl and Dickson had fallen out.

Bancroft: Had they backed Wilson?

Baum: I don't recall. I think they fell out over the Stephens issue. Lissner and Rowell were still backing Johnson but they weren't finding it very easy going because they supported the League, and by 1922 Rowell had broken with Johnson, and Rowell was intending to run for senator against Johnson. I don't think he ever did run.

Bancroft: I don't think he could have considered it seriously.

Baum: In 1920 you were offered a membership on the Republican National Ways and Means Committee of California and you turned it down. Now, you said that the reason you turned it down was because

Baum: you were pulling your affairs together, which I'm sure is true. Did you turn it down also because you were not in sympathy with the stand-patter Republicans?

Bancroft: No, I was very much more in sympathy with them than with the Democrats at that time, not on account of the party but on account of what they were standing for. Just as I was telling you now, I hadn't remembered that particular incident, but I had to spend my time getting my affairs straightened out. It is quite a break when you just drop everything, leave it to others to do, and then have to pick up the loose ends.

Baum: Especially because at that time you made your decision not to continue as an attorney. You were building your house at that time.

Bancroft: Yes. That's the large one here on the farm that we lived in a good many years until we turned that over to my son. We lived in that all the time my children were growing up, from 1920 on -- our children then were quite young -- and until they went to college and then were married off. Then we didn't have any need for such a big house.

Baum: Who was your architect?

Bancroft: I forget his name. He was a man that Mrs. Bancroft had had do some work for us during the war, working on one or two rooms or something, and we gave him the job under a contract and he drew up plans. We told him that we didn't want to go above I think it was \$35,000, and the price was so high that we then changed and cut off one wing -- there were two wings to the

Bancroft: house -- cut it down very materially, and then he sued us for a second set of plans, fees, and so on. We had quite a suit tried here in Martinez and we won it completely. He didn't have any ground on which to sue us except that he'd had that extra work to do, but it was his fault because he had way exceeded what we had planned to spend.

Baum: Well, it looks like an exceedingly beautiful house.

Bancroft: It is a very nice house.

Baum: Did you say that it was photographed for some magazines?

Bancroft: Well, it was photographed originally and they sent a transparency of it up to the state fair as a house in Contra Costa County, showing what was going on in Contra Costa County. Now nobody would look at it twice for anything of that kind, but at that time it was one of the very fine houses of Contra Costa County. It's always been a very nice and a very satisfactory house.

Baum: I have a note that in 1922 you were busy supporting Johnson for senator. I think every time Johnson ran for senator you were active in his campaign.

Bancroft: Yes, I always supported him for senator, but when Coolidge ran for the second term I was supporting Coolidge because I thought that he'd made a good President and should have a second term.

Baum: By 1922 Rowell and Dickson and Stimson and Pardee all worked together to support Johnson's opponent, who was C.C. Moore, and the only old Progressive who stuck with Johnson was Lissner;

baum: that was when Johnson came up for re-election. I think it was the League issue probably that caused the break.

ancroft: It must have been the League issue.

baum: I believe one of the comments I read was that it was the League issue that really killed the Progressive Republican cooperative spirit. That was the end of all those men working together. One by one they'd fallen off, the leaders, except for Lissner, and he sort of went out of politics.

ancroft: Of course, Jack Neylan always stood by Johnson. Johnson kept his popular appeal because he'd always get re-elected by bigger and bigger majorities all the time. Now, the only time I left Johnson was when he came out against Hoover. I backed Hoover at that time, and in 1924. I didn't go as a delegate to the convention because I didn't like to appear against Johnson, and on the other hand I didn't feel like backing him. I didn't take any part against him officially because I felt that the reason I was having the influence I had was largely because of my association with Johnson, and I didn't think it was fair to use that then to trade against him. But on the other hand, when Johnson came out against Hoover I was very strong for Hoover at that time and I left Johnson completely. But that was only in that campaign. When he ran for the Senate again I was for him.

baum: You and he were pretty close in the thirties, is that right, in ideas?

ancroft: Yes, I was for him in everything except when he was running for

McCroft: the presidency against Coolidge, and when he was against Hoover. He made a very bitter speech against Hoover in favor of Roosevelt. That was in 1932.

Sum: Why do you think he switched like that?

McCroft: I think he was terribly disappointed. I think he was probably embittered because he had failed to accept the vice-presidential nomination under Harding and become President. He always had been the fair-haired boy of California, and here another Californian came in and replaced him. I don't know, but I think that had something to do with it.

Sum: You think it was just personal ambition and not a change in principle?

McCroft: I don't think it was just personal ambition, I think that that had something to do with it. I think that had something to do with his bitterness in the speech he made, and I think also he felt that Hoover was inclining more toward the business interests and so on, and Roosevelt's platform was a remarkably fine platform the first time he ran. I understand that Moley had a great deal to do with with writing it and getting it together. (There was hardly a thing in that platform that Roosevelt lived up to after he was elected.) As a matter of fact, toward the end of Johnson's life he was telling his friends that they ought to support Hoover and what he was doing. He became reconciled and stood with Hoover against what Roosevelt was doing toward the end. There was a period there in the 1932 campaign where he came out very strongly against Hoover and in

aneroft: favor of Roosevelt.

am: What did you think of Hoover as President?

aneroft: I thought Hoover was a very fine man, but he was a good deal too idealistic to be in politics. He was too modest, too unselfish, and too inclined to hide all the good, unselfish things he did. For instance, following his work as closely as I did I never knew that in all the time he was President he never drew any salary for himself. He gave it all to subordinates and so on. He'd never let a thing like that get out, and yet that's going further than I'd ask anybody to go.

am: I want to ask you about something in this letter from Al McCabe. McCabe characterized E.T. Earl as a very dictatorial man. Would you agree with that?

aneroft: I think that was so. I didn't know E.T. Earl personally. I knew almost all the other editors but I didn't know Earl himself, except for casual meetings. Brundige was the man who represented Earl.

am: Harley Brundige was appointed railroad commissioner in 1919 instead of Lissner. This was under Stephens, and I think this was another blow to Johnson because, of course, Lissner had been such a long-time supporter of Johnson, and Lissner needed a job at that time, and instead they appointed Brundige.

Let's see if there are any other comments in this letter. We've talked about the Stephens matter. In Judge Edgar Luce's letter one of the things he was commenting on was that in George Mowry's book, The Progressives, it said that Johnson

Sum: signed his letters, "the boss," and Luce said he didn't.

Sanerof: I never heard of it.

Sum: He wrote to you often and I notice he just signed himself "Hiram Johnson."

Sanerof: I never heard of his signing any letter that way and I don't think he ever did. He used to call his wife "the Boss" quite often, and they generally referred to him as "the Chief."

Sum: I noticed in your letters to Martin Madsen you called him "the Chief."

Sanerof: They didn't even call him "the boss," let alone his referring to himself that way. That, I think, is the last thing in the world he would have done. That's out of character.

Sum: To your knowledge did Johnson dislike Pardee?

Sanerof: I thought he liked him.

Sum: I think Mowry made some comment that he thought Johnson didn't like former Governor Pardee, and Luce took issue with it.

Sanerof: I thought he liked him very much. He always treated him with great courtesy and referred to him as "Governor" and so on. Pardee had been a loyal supporter of his and I always thought he thought a great deal of him. I saw them together a great deal.

Sum: Sometime around 1916, when Johnson still had an idea that he might run for President, Pardee wrote in his Oakland paper that Johnson was not presidential timbre. I should think that wouldn't have made a big hit with Johnson.

Sanerof: Well, that may have happened after that. I don't know.

um: Later on Pardee and Johnson did fall out, I think over the League issue.

croft: But, you see, where I knew them was earlier, say between 1910 and 1915.

um: And then another point that Luce brought up was Mowry's statement that Johnson was not loyal to his supporters. Mowry said that Johnson would desert his supporters if it was politically expedient to do so.

croft: Well, I never saw any sign of his doing that. I don't think he would be the type who would give a job to a man just because he wanted the job or because he needed it -- he wouldn't give it to him unless he considered him competent. I say that as a rule, but I've know him sometimes to give jobs to supporters that I thought weren't competent. He did it just because he felt he couldn't let them down. I always considered him very loyal to his supporters, and his supporters generally stuck with him very well until some issue like, as you say, the League of Nations, some issue where they had definitely different ideas, and wouldn't stay with him, or, in my own case, where he was attacking Hoover. I think he lost a lot of his remaining supporters then because he made that very bitter attack against Hoover.

um: Edgar Luce said that in his opinion it was the League of Nations issue that divided and permanently ended the Progressive movement in California. That was 1919 that this issue came up,

am: and it seemed to me the falling-out had begun before that, that perhaps 1915 was the splitting period.

croft: Well, you mean that the Progressive Party ended?

am: Not the party. The party ended before that, but the movement, the feeling of cohesion.

croft: I would think it was when Johnson was elected to the United States Senate and left California. I think Johnson was the chief and he was a great governor, and I think when he left -- you could see just what would have happened if he hadn't been governor, we'd have never been where we could do what we did, because there would have been fallings-out all the time, and I think that was when the party really broke up.

WORLD WAR I

Army Service

Baum: You interrupted your work as an examiner for the Railroad Commission to enlist in the army. When was that?

Bancroft: I think it was either April or May 1917. We went for three months to the First Officers Training Camp that was at San Francisco at the Presidio, and I was then in a battery of field artillery.

Baum: Were many of your friends in the same group?

Bancroft: Well, a good many. There were a large number in that First Officers Training Camp, there were something like twelve, and perhaps the twelve of my friends that were in the camp were in field artillery.

Baum: Were there many other fellows like yourself who were family men?

Bancroft: I'd say about half and half. These were all volunteers, of course, and I would say about half of them were married.

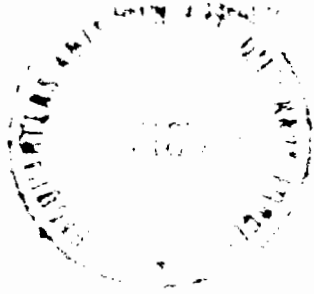
Baum: I just wondered if you were a little bit unusual.

Bancroft: Well, I was a little older, quite a little older than the average. I was 37 at that time, and no one was being drafted who was over 27 or thereabouts. But these were volunteers in the Officers Training Camp and they were somewhat older; many of them were, I would say, 28 or 29, something like that.

Baum: Did you have any interest in a military career when you joined up?

AMERICAN
EXPERIMENTAL FORCES

IDENTITY CARD



Bancroft: Oh, no. I just joined because I thought that every able-bodied American ought to do his share, just for the same reason that I had belonged to the National Guard for three years. I joined that as soon as I came out to California. There again it's just because I thought that every American ought to do his share and I was a good shot and I felt that I could do my part. I didn't try to become an officer; in fact, the fellows wanted to elect me an officer. At that time in the National Guard the men of the company would elect the officers. When the time came for the end of my three year service in the Guard, they wanted to elect me a lieutenant, but I didn't want to continue. I thought I'd had enough experience to be able to do my share if war started. We weren't contemplating any war then anyhow.

From the Presidio I was sent up to Camp Lewis in Washington with all the other newly-commissioned officers. I was given a commission as second lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps. Well, I didn't like being in the Quartermaster Corps because there was no active service, actual combat, there, and I tried to get back into field artillery and the colonel of the company, who had been one of our instructors down at the Officers Training Camp, sent word that he'd be glad to have another officer and myself transferred to his regiment if it could be arranged. So we put in an application for that and he said that he would recommend that we be transferred to his regiment and be promoted to first lieutenants, and the officer in command of our group endorsed it, it went up to this colonel, he endorsed it, and

Sancroft: it went clear up to the secretary of war and he turned it down because he said he didn't want any changes at that time. So I remained an officer in the Quartermaster Corps.

I was at Camp Lewis for about three months, and then our whole group was sent down to Camp Joseph E. Johnstone, Jacksonville, Florida, and there I was able to get transferred into a company of the Motor Transport Corps, No. 424. First Lieutenant Reebie was head of that; I was second in command of that company. We drilled our company very carefully and tried to handle it properly, developed good discipline and so on, and when we went over to France they told us that they would give the company over to other officers, that they'd done that with all the companies that had been sent over, but ours was the first company in the Motor Transport Corps that they did not shift over to some other officers, and we remained as its officers throughout the war. Lieutenant Reebie was promoted to captain and I was promoted to first lieutenant and we were sent up into what they called the advance sector there in France and stayed there throughout the war in charge of a large camp near Dijon. It was a place where the Motor Transport trucks would come through and be reconditioned and be sent onto the front lines, or they would come back from the front lines and be repaired and reconditioned and sent back.

Sum: So you were a large corps of mechanics.

Sancroft: We had about 2,000 men and officers in the camp, and I was later promoted to camp adjutant, which is like being secretary of an

Bancroft: organization, attending to the details of running the camp when the commanding officer or the major was away, as he was, on trips a good deal.

Baum: How did army life agree with you?

Bancroft: Very well indeed. It was much easier than civilian life, in a way, because you didn't have the responsibilities you did in civilian life. We had our orders to follow and I was able to enjoy for once a release from any responsibility for what I was doing, except to follow out the orders and do the best we could.

Baum: Did that also include a curtailment of your freedom?

Bancroft: Yes, we were completely curtailed, but that was part of our job. No, it never bothered me the slightest bit, and we enforced strict discipline among our troops -- not rigid, arbitrary things, but we required good discipline and the troops responded to it. They considered our company a very fine company and they always, when they were transferred out of it, would try to get back in again.

Baum: And you would say that morale was high?

Bancroft: I would say very high. Quite a few of our men were selected by generals to run their automobiles for them, act as their chauffeurs, and they almost all of them sooner or later came back to our company. They'd work to get back in after they'd chauffeured a general; for a month or two it was very interesting but they got to where they'd want to get back to our company, to their friends.

Baum: I think you mentioned you were ill.

Hancock: Yes. I got an attack of dysentery and I was sent into a hospital. At that time they were burying something like six men a day out of that hospital with the flu. Being an officer I was given a semi-private room; there were just three of us in it, two other officers in it with the flu, and they had pretty bad cases. The nurse that was taking care of me when I went in there died from the flu before I left the hospital -- that was in two weeks -- and when these two officers were discharged I asked the major surgeon in charge, "Isn't that flu very contagious?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, would you mind if the next two men you put in are men that haven't got it, who have some other trouble? I've been pretty lucky so far; I haven't caught the flu; I've been around it an awful lot, but there's no use trying to tempt your luck too far." And he said he'd see what he could do. And he did send two other fellows that had other troubles. I asked the nurse later, "Why did they send me in here in this little bit of a room with those two fellows that had the flu?" "Oh," she said, "They didn't think you were going to get well anyhow so it didn't matter."

Baum: Were there many men dying of dysentery?

Hancock: No, not nearly as many as the flu. When we first went over to France it was an interesting thing. The men in our company began getting flu on the ship going over. They picked up the bugs there, and I noticed their temperatures would get up to

Bancroft: 103,104, and I used to go down among our men all the time and I'd say to the doctors in charge, "Well, isn't that a pretty serious thing, when their temperatures get up that way?" "Oh," they said, "No, they'll have this but they never die of it." And at first the flu was that way. I guess half the fellows in our company got it and none of them died that time. They'd be sick for about a week and then be all right. But later on it kept getting worse and worse -- evidently it got more virulent as time went on -- and, as I say, when I was in the hospital there pretty near the end of the war they were having six a day die just from flu alone. In all that time where I was exposed to it with our men I never avoided it, because I always figured I was pretty well immune to it, and I never got it and I've never had it since, although all the members of my family have had it.

Baum: Well, since your youth you've acquired quite a healthy constitution.

Bancroft: Very much so.

Baum: Then you were one of the first groups that came back?

Bancroft: Yes. Pretty early. It was 1919.

Baum: And you returned to San Francisco?

Bancroft: Yes. And I resumed practicing law and working with the Railroad Commission as examiner.

Baum: Did they hold your job open there?

Bancroft: Oh, yes. I enjoyed it very much, but I had been living all the time I was in camp, from the time I went down to Camp Joseph E.



Lucy and Philip Bancroft
and Frank Gomez, Jr.,
the son of the foreman
at the Walnut Creek Farm.

Bancroft: Johnstone on, always in a tent, out of doors, and I got used to living out of doors and sleeping out of doors and I found going back to city life very confining, and also I was sorry that my children were not having the chance that I had had to be brought up in the country. So I finally decided, with Mrs. Bancroft's complete cooperation, we'd give up city life and become farmers. So we moved out here. Then I was offered the chief attorneysnip for the Railroad Commission, which would have been a very fine position if I'd been wanting to stay in the city, but I told them no, I'd made the change and didn't want to change again.

Baum: Is this the property that you came to? And this was in your family already?

Bancroft: Yes. This is where I was raised most of my early life.

Baum: Did your brothers become farmers?

Bancroft: No. Both of them lived in the city. One lived in San Diego and one in San Francisco.

Baum: So they didn't go back to the country life like you did.

Bancroft: No.

Helping Organize the American Legion

Baum: After you returned from France I know you were active in the newly-forming American Legion. What part did you take in that organization?

Bancroft: I think as far as the American Legion goes I can cover it in very short order because about the only part I had in that connection was to be one of the five organizers in this state.

Bancroft: Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., was organizing it nationally, and he asked four or five of us to be the organizers in this state. I don't even remember the names of all the other organizers.

Baum: Now, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., was a personal friend of yours from the time he'd been living here in San Francisco. Did you see him over in France?

Bancroft: No, I didn't see him, but I heard from him. I don't remember whether it was during the war or right after it.

Baum: When you were over in France was there any talk about forming a veterans' organization?

Bancroft: No, we didn't talk about it 'till we got back here. I got back just after the Armistice; of course, we all wanted to get back, but my friends exerted a little pressure and got me back pretty early, so I got back in 1919.

Baum: How did Roosevelt get in contact with you? I think his job was to organize this veterans' group, wasn't it? This was one of the purposes that he wanted to get back for.

Bancroft: I think so, and the fighting being all over he was discharged and started to organize. And I've belonged to it ever since, but I haven't been an officer or anything of that kind in it because that's a career all in itself, in a way. First I was a member of the California Post No. 1 in San Francisco, and then a bunch of us transferred to another post in San Francisco when that was being organized in order to start it. Then when I came out here to live in Walnut Creek I transferred to the Walnut

Saneroft: Creek Post and I've been a member for about 41 years.

SAIZ: Do you still attend meetings?

Saneroft: I don't attend them any more, but I still keep my membership up.

SAIZ: Did Roosevelt talk to you about why they were organizing?

Saneroft: There were a number of veterans' organizations that were starting up and the idea was to organize one that would be stronger than any of the others on a national scale and would be truly representative of the veterans.

SAIZ: Why did they want to have a veterans' organization at all?

Saneroft: It was partly in order to look after the veterans, see that they were treated properly. (After the Civil War the veterans were treated very badly until they got their Grand Army of the Republic, and then they became too powerful, in a way.) They wanted to see that they were treated properly and they knew there'd be some organization that would be formed and they wanted this to be representative.

It was, and it immediately became the strongest one. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., came out on his organizing trip and made a speech at a mass meeting in San Francisco and we all met him again. Then I assume he made one in Los Angeles and so on, just made a swing around the country to help get the Legion organized in proper form and to have a systematic set of rules and systematic constitutions and so on in the different states. Each one was organized in the separate states, but under a general supervision.

Baum: So the primary purpose you think was veterans' benefits and to be sure it was a representative organization since they knew there was going to be some organization.

Hancock: Yes.

Baum: How about fun and good fellowship?

Hancock: That was secondary but, of course, it was always involved. You expect to have that, but it was to see that the thing was run right. In other words, there was bound to be some organization and they also felt that the fellows that had done the fighting ought to have a very definite say in regard to matters of preparation for future wars and protection of the country itself. The American Legion has always been very strong for its patriotic work for fighting communism and things of that kind. Well, if there hadn't been some organization like the American Legion formed you'd have had a bunch of organizations and some of them would have been run by Communists and exploiters and so on.

Baum: Do you think that affecting the national legislation in other areas than veterans' benefits was also a purpose?

Hancock: No, I wouldn't say so. I'd say it was chiefly and almost entirely for benefits and protection of veterans.

Now, I don't believe in everything that the Legion has done, especially in regard to the soldiers' bonus. One of our first commanders here was General David P. Barrows, and he was opposed to the soldiers' bonus. He took a stand against it, but the members overwhelmingly favored it. I felt that anyone who'd

Bancroft: gone through the war and hadn't suffered any real disability, hadn't been wounded seriously or in any other way disabled, ought to be thankful enough not to ask for a bonus, and also that it was belittling his position because we all of us sacrificed very much more than any bonus would amount to financially in going into the service, and those who volunteered especially were doing that without being required, and then to put the whole thing just on a cash basis seemed to me wrong.

Baum: What did you do as an organizer? How did you get things started? I suppose you were responsible up here in San Francisco.

Bancroft: Well, there were two or three of us up here that were quite active in it. It received so much publicity that we just mostly organized; we'd receive applications and then we'd get those members to get in other members, and so on.

Baum: It didn't take very long, did it, before things got rolling?

Bancroft: It didn't take long and it didn't take much effort.

Baum: What did you use for money before you began to have enough in membership dues?

Bancroft: I don't remember that.

Baum: Did everyone have to chip in \$100, or --

Bancroft: No, no, I don't think we had any trouble at all. I think we just charged so much initiation fee and started right in collecting. For a thing like that we didn't have to work hard to get members. We were all doing it voluntarily. I don't think we even employed any secretary or anything at first.

Baum: You were in the same camp with Barrows, weren't you?

Bancroft: I was in the first officers training camp, but there were something like ten companies there, about 200 in each. I wasn't in his company.

Baum: What did you think of Barrows?

Bancroft: I thought he was a very fine man, and I know he hated to oppose the view of the great majority of the members in regard to this soldiers' bonus, but he thought it wasn't a thing that they should be asking and he opposed it, but when he had finished his term they took up a subscription and gave him a gold watch. He said he appreciated that very much, especially as he knew that he had taken the unpopular side in opposing the soldiers' bonus.

Baum: I believe he was followed by Buron R. Fitts from Los Angeles?

Bancroft: I don't know. I didn't follow things in the Legion after that. I let the Legion take care of itself. I had enough problems of my own I had to handle.



Bancroft Tract



Bancroft Farm, about 1927

RUNNING A FRUIT AND NUT FARM

Developing the Farm Properties

Baum: After you went into farming did you find the life of a farmer, aside from living in the country, the business part of the job, more satisfying or less satisfying than your work as an attorney?

Bancroft: I found it more satisfying because you were producing something that you felt the community wanted and the people wanted. You were producing something of value. Now, if I were producing wheat or cotton, for instance, when we have much more than the people want, I wouldn't have that feeling.

Baum: You're saying that you have a greater feeling of service as a farmer than you would have had as an attorney?

Bancroft: Yes. I enjoyed the work as an attorney but I didn't feel it was nearly as productive as the work of a farmer, and I enjoyed very much my association with the farmers, just as I enjoyed my association with the other attorneys. With the farmers, we were all working toward one end, and with the attorneys we were spending half our time trying to beat the other fellow, which is all right as far as it keeps you up on your toes, but we had enough troubles as farmers to be kept on our toes pretty well, too.

Baum: When you came out here to this farm, about how much property was there here at that time?

Bancroft: One hundred and eighty acres, which my brother Paul and I owned

Bancroft: together, but he left me to do all the managing of the farm while he looked after property interests that we had in the city.

Baum: So you divided up your management duties?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: Didn't you have other farm properties besides this, or acquire other farm properties?

Bancroft: Yes. My brother Paul and I bought about 500 acres down along the Tuolumne River bottom about nine miles east of Modesto, in 1919 or 1920. I also had for a while 160 acres in the Oakdale area, but I disposed of that.

Baum: Why did you decide to buy in Modesto?

Bancroft: Because we could get water down there, and we were very short of water up here at that time; I came to the conclusion we couldn't hope to make money permanently farming if we didn't have water and down there we were right on the river and could get all the water we wanted. In fact, we got too much several times, with floods.

Baum: What did you raise there?

Bancroft: We raised walnuts, peaches, prunes, apricots, and pears.

Baum: Have you always specialized in tree crops?

Bancroft: Yes, always. Once in a while, down there, we would plant certain acreages to alfalfa or to beans or something of that kind, but that would be usually while we were getting land in shape to plant trees. The peaches and prunes we planted, though, after about 18 years or so petered out, and we planted walnuts in between, or planted them in between the walnuts, put it either way

Bancroft: you want, with the idea of taking them out as they got too old and then having just a walnut orchard. Our pears didn't do very well down there, the quality wasn't as good as up here, so we got rid of them finally, which left us nothing down there but walnuts. Then we deeded that to our two sons in 1932 -- my brother Paul deeded his interest to his son and I deeded my interest to my son; Paul Bancroft, Jr., and Philip Bancroft, Jr., own that farm.

Baum: When you got this Modesto farm, was it raw land?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: And you had to plant all those tree crops?

Bancroft: Not only that, we had to have the wild growth grubbed up, then have the land leveled, and then build levies around it to keep out the flood waters, and then plant it.

Baum: Was this in the Modesto Irrigation District?

Bancroft: A little of it was, but most of it was not. It was just adjoining the Modesto Irrigation District.

Baum: Was most of it outside an irrigation district?

Bancroft: Yes. Oh, I'd say 80 per cent of it was outside the district -- perhaps 80 acres were in and the rest out, something like that.

Baum: Did you feel that it was an advantage to be outside the district?

Bancroft: Well, it wasn't necessary for us to be in the district as long as we were bordering on the river and had what they call riparian rights, but part of the land was in the district because that was not river-bottom land.

Baum: Did you have any problems about water rights? You didn't have

man: to protect your rights through lawsuits or anything?

Sanroft: No, not through lawsuits. We had to protect them by using the water and filing reports.

man: When you took over this land in Walnut Creek -- this was in 1919?

Sanroft: Yes, 1919. I went into farming exclusively. I'd been sort of looking after the farm for three or four years before I went to the war.

man: So this wasn't a grand jumping-off venture; you had had some experience. What did you have planted here on the 180 acres you had?

Sanroft: We had two different varieties of peaches, prunes, almonds, and pears -- I think that was all we had at that time. Then when we bought some more land here we had apricots and grapes. Then we found that our almonds were not paying us well, so we grafted all the almonds over to prunes. We used to raise a large tonnage of prunes, which we dried and sold as dried prunes.

man: You dried them yourself?

Sanroft: Oh, yes. We had a big dry-yard here from about 1919 to 1948. The families would come up from Southern California, the men would work in the orchards picking and so on, and the wives and the children would work in the dry-yard cutting up our pears and peaches while the men would dip the prunes in a boiling lye solution and handle the trays. In drying the pears and the peaches the men would attend to the sulphuring of the fruit, the spreading out of the trays in the sun for one or two days, then stacking the pears for about ten days of shade drying.

Bancroft: During the entire drying season we would have to be prepared to call out the men in case of showers any time, day or night, to stack the trays of fruit and then cover them with empty trays to ward off the rain. We made up and used thousands of trays. After buying the property next door we were using eight or ten thousand altogether, big 3 x 8 foot trays. We'd buy the shooks and make them up on the place at about a dollar apiece.

When I first came here and began farming, the Japanese, who used to attend to all the orchard work, and were supposed to be the best farmers in any part of Northern California, insisted, when I tried to get bigger crops than 200 tons of pears from our orchard, that it was a 200-ton orchard and there was no use of my trying to get any more, that if I could get more one year then I'd have less the next. I could see that if we kept on getting only 200 tons of pears we couldn't expect to make any real money out of the farm, and so I tried all sorts of things -- different types of pruning, different fertilizers, and so on, different cultural practices, including the development of some irrigation water. Our valley was almost devoid of good irrigation wells. Over the years, prior to our purchase of additional land, I put down something like 16 wells (in addition to our two domestic wells), only three of which were of any value, and from these three we could get a total flow of only about two hundred gallons per minute. Nevertheless, with this small amount of water we increased our yield materially.

In a few years we got to where we were averaging 300 tons,

Bancroft: then 400 tons, and we got up to 600 tons, and since about 1930 we get from 800 to 1000 tons from that same orchard. It's only on account of that heavy increase that we've been able to get along as well as we have in farming.

We've gradually got rid of all our tree crops except walnuts and pears and have confined ourselves to these two crops since 1949. We've found that this district is particularly well adapted to those two crops. There are other districts better adapted, for instance, to grapes, and other districts better adapted to prunes, and so on. As to peaches, growers got to planting so many of them we figured that they would not be profitable in this district, and they haven't been.

Baum: Isn't that a very big decision, when you decide to take out an orchard and put in another kind of tree?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, but we often do it. You see, a peach orchard doesn't last more than about ten to 15 years at profitable bearing, and we usually make changes as our orchards begin to peter out.

Baum: How many years does it take after you put in an orchard before you begin to get a good crop?

Bancroft: It depends on the different crops. A peach orchard, if you have irrigation, in five years you begin to get a pretty fair crop. With pears, we've always figured we didn't get a paying crop 'till they got to be about 15 years old. Now, where they have heavy irrigation and so on, they're getting to where they can get a paying crop earlier that way, perhaps nine or ten

Sanerft: years, but we've always figured they have to grow about 15 years here.

Sam: So that in order to put in a new orchard you have to have other bearing areas that will sustain your farm?

Sanerft: Yes, absolutely.

Sam: I should think it would be impossible then to operate on too small an acreage.

Sanerft: It is. It's getting to be where it's impossible to operate on too small capital, too. If a man is going to do that he'd better either do it as a tenant, a sharecropper with somebody else, or work for some concern that has the capital, because it's a bad thing to try to run a place on too small capital, for in that case you're not able to get the best machinery and the most efficient spray materials and all of that. In other words, it's getting to be very expensive to produce a crop, the labor is such a high part of the cost and the materials and taxes are all very much higher than they used to be.

Sam: You mentioned these Japanese that were here. Under what arrangement were they here? Were they tenant farmers?

Sanerft: They would farm. They were doing it all over the district. There'd be a boss Japanese and a whole lot of men under him, and they would, for instance, do your pruning and do all the handwork, the picking and spraying and everything of that kind, for a share of the crop, say 50 per cent of the crop or something of that kind. The owner would do the plowing and cultivating and horse work and so on, because the Japanese at that

Bancroft: time weren't good with horses or machinery.

Baum: So that it was kind of a contract arrangement?

Bancroft: Yes, it was like a partnership. The Japanese boss would have his arrangement with his men.

Baum: Did they live on the property?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: Would this boss handle several properties?

Bancroft: No, he'd handle one.

Baum: You mean that on this 180 acres you originally started with there were a number of Japanese living, and this was their main living?

Bancroft: Yes, they lived here all the time.

Baum: With their families?

Bancroft: Oh, they didn't have any. The boss would usually be married and his wife would do the cooking for the crowd.

Baum: Was this arrangement when the owner was absent?

Bancroft: No, he had to be there to tend to the plowing and everything else.

Baum: Was this the usual arrangement?

Bancroft: Yes. It was almost universal, and I got rid of them as tenants and commenced hiring them as day laborers because I wanted to run the place the way I thought it ought to be run and they thought it was all wrong, that it was a big mistake to prune my way, and so on. I said I'd rather just pay them, so I hired them all.

Baum: So instead of being on a contract basis you hired them by hour or day? And then they'd have to do it your way.

Bancroft: Yes. They'd still want to do it their way; they had our interests at heart, you know, and they'd think I was doing it all wrong. But it worked out very well.

Oh, another thing was, not only did we get those big crops, but we also used to exhibit our pears at the state fair, and we won the first prize there for seven years in a row, then we missed one year and got second prize, and then we won again, so eight out of nine times we got the first prize.

Baum: When was this, Mr. Bancroft? In the 1920s and 1930s?

Bancroft: I should say in the 1930s, and so far as I know no other farm had even won first prize twice in a row, and we won it seven times in a row.

Baum: How long did it take you to get your orchards reorganized from the time you took them over to when you were producing these large crops?

Bancroft: I should say ten or 12 years to get them to where they were producing heavily, and of course it was partly because we developed some water here and also because later on we got in the Contra Costa Canal and we got all the water we wanted, and also, when we bought the farm next door to us in 1927 we got water from Walnut Creek itself. During the winter we could get that creek water and for about, I'd say, seven or eight years in there before we got in the Contra Costa Canal water we were depending a great deal on the water we were getting out of Walnut Creek itself.

Baum: When you bought the other farm you acquired riparian rights?



Walnut Creek at Flood, March 1930.

Sancroft: Yes. They'd been using the water for 30 or 40 years.

Baum: Is this the farm that was adjacent to yours?

Sancroft: Yes.

Baum: About how many acres do you have here now?

Sancroft: We have about 450 altogether, but part of that is not adjacent. There's 30 acres about a mile and a half north of here, two miles maybe, and 110 acres I'd say northeast of here. The rest of it is right here at the home place.

Baum: Are those outside acreages close enough for you to move your men and machines?

Sancroft: Yes, we farm it as one farm.

Baum: How did you develop these cultural changes, new methods of pruning and all this; how did you figure out how to do that?

Sancroft: Well, I spent a great deal of time studying the trees and watching the way they grew and everything, following the recommendations -- I don't mean that I followed all the recommendations of the University, but I listened to their recommendations and took those that seemed right and wouldn't follow those that seemed wrong.

There's a question of long pruning or short pruning of pears and we developed a sort of a modified form, about half-way in between, and systems of that kind. Then I fertilized very heavily. I bought up all the manure from all the dairy farms around here; we established a regular service that we'd send our truck out and collect it and so on. In fact, I had it so well tied up that people couldn't even get a load within 20

ancroft: miles of here because we wouldn't take on the service of hauling it and getting it from these dairy farms unless they would give us the exclusive output, because otherwise they'd give the best to some people and then want us to clean up their places. You see, their principal reason for selling to us was to have us clean up their places and haul away the manure from their dairies and they used to call me the manure king of Contra Costa County.

aum: Well, as you were putting in these changes were the other farmers around here also inaugurating the same methods?

ancroft: No. We used to irrigate all winter long, because we'd have rain and be able to get some water, and one of the standing jokes they had for years and years when I'd go into the town of Walnut Creek during a rainstorm would be, "Well, are you irrigating today?" And I'd say, "Sure." They'd laugh, you know, and think here this city fellow's coming out and irrigating -- but in that way we'd store water in the ground during the winter and then in the summertime the trees would be getting it. It made quite a big difference, and I never, when these fellows would make these cracks about it, I never told them that we were about the only pear orchard in the valley that was making money, because they all figured that I was getting the money from San Francisco and blowing it in here.

aum: They thought you were just a gentleman farmer.

ancroft: Yes, instead of a dirt farmer, in which case they were mistaken, because we developed this place just from what we made out of it and not from what we took from the outside at all.

Sum: Did you have to borrow money to improve your Modesto area?

ancroft: No, we took some money that we had for that. But we did borrow money to buy the place next door to us, borrowed \$150,000 at the bank, and then I had to pay that all off. But we sold part of the land to pay that off, and then paid off the rest with what we made. I aimed then to sell off, not the poorer land, but the unproductive land. What I was interested in was in getting the water rights and the pear orchards. You see, it takes a long time to produce a first-class pear orchard. When I said I'd figured that it would begin to be a profitable orchard when it was 15 or 16 years old, to get to be really a first-class pear orchard you'd want it to be about 30 years old.

Sum: How long does a pear tree live?

ancroft; Well, if it doesn't get some disease it's hard to tell. Our trees are 75 years old and they're still getting better, and some trees I've seen that must be at least 90 years old bear very well. You're apt to get better quality pears on the older trees than you get on the very young trees.

Sum: Did the farmers out here get together to discuss methods of cultivating and marketing and so on, or were they pretty much lone wolves?

ancroft: No. We'd discuss different ways of doing it and so on, very far from being lone wolves. We'd talk very freely about what we were trying to do, and so on. We'd all have our theories and be working on them. When it came to dry-yard work or anything of that kind we'd work very closely with the University of

ancroft: California College of Agriculture and follow their recommendations. They had a number of men in there that would go out in the fields and talk and work with the farmers and try to improve our cultural methods and so on, and they did very good work. A new pest would show up and they'd help us find what was the best way of destroying it and keeping it under control.

sum: Did most of the local farmers work closely with the Agricultural Extension?

ancroft: I think a good many of them did. I used to work very closely with them; they'd be running experiments out here on our farm.

sum: As I understand, in the early days of Agricultural Extension -- I think this was before 1920 -- many of the farmers looked on them as crazy scientists who really didn't know about dirt farming.

ancroft: Yes, I think some of them did. That's the reason I said I felt some of the farmers worked very closely with them and some did not, but I began by realizing I didn't know much about farming and I worked very closely with them. As a matter of fact, I went up to Davis and took a two-weeks' short course of theirs, anything I could learn up there about farming.

sum: You say they, the farmers, worked pretty closely together. Then they thought of themselves as co-producers rather than competitors?

ancroft: Yes, especially the local farmers. For instance, we considered ourselves competitors of the farmers in the Northwest (Oregon and Washington), but even so we worked closely with them. We

croft: recognized that we were definitely competitors of the fruit farmers of the East and of the Middle West, and there we wouldn't be working quite so closely. Even so, in the case of farmer-competitors it wasn't as if they were antagonists -- there was and is a good deal of community feeling and spirit among the farmers.

Q: Let's see, you had some pears in the 1920s, although your greatest production occurred in the thirties, is that right?

croft: Oh, we had pears right from the start. It was our biggest crop from 1919 on.

Q: And these were more profitable and that's why you slowly switched over almost completely to pears and walnuts?

croft: Yes. It's because I have concluded that in California you're not going to make money over the years in farming unless you are growing something that your district is particularly suited to. For some crops a farmer won't do nearly as well in this district as he will in some others in California, but for pears or walnuts he should do very well in this district. Of course, we've had trouble develop in what they call the black line that's killing off the walnut orchards here, but before that developed this was an almost ideal place for raising walnuts. And it also is a very good place for raising pears, the soil is well adapted to it, and the climate is well adapted.

Q: When did you decide to put in walnuts?

croft: Well, my father put in walnuts for border trees back about 1900

Bancroft: and then we just kept on increasing them. We used to have walnut trees bordering the Ygnacio Valley Road and what is now Bancroft Road, on the border of our place. We originally had fences and then we took down all the fences, but we had fig trees, and we never made anything out of them because people used to pick too many of the figs.

Q: Trespassers did?

Bancroft: Yes, as they'd drive along. So we gradually replaced them with walnuts. We would plant the black walnuts native to this district and then we'd graft them as they got to be fair-sized trees. Then about 1915 we began planting more. About 1925 we had the border trees all in and we had about ten acres down at the northerly end of the farm planted to walnuts. That was before 1925, and then about from 1923 to 1928 we did quite an extensive planting. In place of every other tree on every other row in our almond orchard, our prune orchard, and our peach orchard, we planted a walnut tree. You see, the fruit trees were roughly 22 feet apart. Well, if you take out every fourth tree and replace it with a walnut tree then you have walnut trees about 44 feet apart and that's the way we planted them. Then we let those trees grow while the peach orchards, the almond orchards, and the prune orchards were still bearing; finally, as the walnut trees got big enough, we removed the fruit trees, and that's the way we converted the whole place to walnuts, where we didn't have pears.

Q: What is this black line you speak of?

A: It's a condition of incompatibility between the English walnut that's grafted onto the Northern California black walnut, or any other native black walnut. The black walnuts will grow better and they're less liable to disease than the English walnut, especially diseases like oak root fungus and crown gall, so all of our trees practically are on black walnut root.

Q: At about what age of the tree does this black line appear?

A: Well, now, that's a strange thing. It didn't appear in any of our trees until they were about 40 years old at first, and it didn't appear generally until our trees were about 50 years old. Now it's appearing much earlier. We have one orchard here where the trees weren't 20 years old before they were practically all killed off with the black line.

Q: Is it a fungus, or a disease?

A: We don't know. We know what happens; the graft where the English walnut was grafted onto the black walnut, the union there, looks perfect for many years and then gradually something occurs that prevents the sap that should go down from the leaves to the roots from passing the union where the graft is. If you cut into the union you see a black line. The tree may go on growing for five or ten years up above that and down below that, but there's no union during that period and it gradually gets to where that line goes clear around the tree and chokes it and no sap can get down into the roots and the roots and tree

croft: die. In regard to black line, it makes no difference whether the English walnuts were budded or grafted onto the black walnut.

Q: Are the growers considering not growing walnuts any more as this progresses, or will they just replant trees and expect them to live 40 years and then replant again?

croft: It's worse than that, and yet in some ways it could be better. They can plant trees with the English stock, for instance, and not have that trouble. But we have other troubles. We have nematodes, and with the black line and the nematodes the proposition is quite serious. And then we've got one proposition that's really more serious than either of them and that is the subdivisions and the spreading of suburbs over all our best farm land.

They are offering us prices that we couldn't expect to make through farming, and the result is that this whole valley is apt to be turned into one vast bunch of subdivisions and all this fine land ruined for agriculture. How much longer we can keep going I don't know; they were telling me twenty years ago that we wouldn't last five years longer. Well, we're still lasting and going strong. We know we could right now make much more money if we just ripped up every tree on the place and sold the land for a subdivision and put that money into tax-exempt bonds. Then we'd have much more money than we could hope to make out of the farm, all of which would be non-taxable.

croft: We're farmers, however, and intend to keep it going as a farm as long as we can, until we get taxed out of existence. A great many people around us have already sold their orchards. There's no way by which we could take the land and clear it and plant a new orchard and have it pay anything like what we could get if we just sold the land and had no risk or trouble.

us: Economically walnuts are on the way out here, except for a few people like yourself who like the work?

croft: Yes. As I was saying about my grandchildren growing up and getting to where they might not have to work: we want to keep them where they have to work. We don't want them to become drones upon society, and we also feel we ought to preserve good farm land because sooner or later people in this state are going to get hungry for what the land could have produced when they find all the best land gobbled up by real estate promoters. On the other hand, there's always a chance we may be taxed out of existence, you know, because they'll say to us, "Well, now how can you claim your land isn't worth more than \$500 an acre when your neighbor just sold his for \$5,000?" "Well," we say, "for farming it isn't; for other things it may be." I used \$500 an acre just for bare land; of course a bearing orchard can be worth much more than that, but it can't be valued at anything like what it would be worth as a subdivision. The trouble is, this is very desirable land for subdivision purposes. We have, I suppose, three or four people a week

Bancroft: coming here trying to buy an acre or something like that, anything from an acre to a hundred acres.

Q: I wonder where the next area of walnuts will be?

Bancroft: Oh, there're lots of other places in the state where they not only can plant them but they are planting them. The difficulty is in the danger of overproduction rather than underproduction. I'm just speaking of walnuts.

Q: Where are they going to plant?

Bancroft: Up in the Sacramento Valley is where they're apt to do the most re-planting. There they have too many peaches.

Labor Policies on the Bancroft Farm

Q: About how much do your laborers earn?

Bancroft: We figured last year they averaged something like \$1.45 or \$1.50 an hour.

Q: I think the unions are demanding \$1.25 an hour. Do you think the AFL-CIO will succeed in unionizing the farm workers?

Bancroft: I don't think they're going to be able to force the unionization of farm laborers because the situation is entirely different from industrial laborers.

Q: Well, if you were forced to join a union would you prefer to join the AFL-CIO union or the Teamsters?

Bancroft: Well, personally, if I were forced, and they'd have an awfully hard time forcing me, if I were forced I would rather go out



Picking pears, Bancroft Farm.

McCroft: of the business of farming first, but if I couldn't do that I'd rather tie up with the Teamsters than to trust myself with this crowd that's trying to unionize farm labor under the AFL-CIO, because they're asking for \$1.25 minimum this year. If you sign up with them the next time they'll be demanding \$1.50 minimum and so on.

Sam: You don't think the Teamsters would do that?

McCroft: Well, I wouldn't trust them too far but I don't think they would want to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. In other words, I don't think that they would want to force the price up so high that it would put the farmers out of business. Now, I think these other people aren't worrying at all whether they put the farmers out of business or not. Every once in a while you'll see them make some sort of a statement that they made that farmer pay the price, even if it did force him out of business; or they'll say they prevented a man from harvesting a third or a half of his crop, which they consider a great triumph. And that, of course, is the crux of the situation, that a farmer can't stand a strike during his harvest season. Sometimes if he has to stop work for a week he'll lose half his crop or two-thirds his crop.

Sam: I wondered what farmers thought about the Teamsters. They seem to have such an unsavory reputation, from the recent labor union investigations.

microft: Yes, well, that is a different proposition. That is an unsavory reputation on account of the way the officers of the Teamsters Union have been handling the union funds and so on; they've made a lot of money out of it for themselves, especially nationally. Now, out here I don't think they've done that so much, and we've had very little trouble with the Teamsters themselves. We find that most of the men, for instance, driving the big trucks and so on, are very nice men to deal with and they don't stick too closely to union regulations.

For instance, the unions have provisions that they don't have to help load when they load one of these big trucks, they don't have to do anything, but almost all of them do help the farmers and the farmers help them. I mean, there's no antagonism at all between the farmers and these men that come out for them, the commercial truckers. The feeling is more that, well, they work very hard and they're getting good wages but they're earning them, and on the other hand, the farmers expect those men, if something comes up, to lend a hand just as they would lend a hand to them if they were in some sort of a jam. For instance, suppose a truck should get stuck somewhere and need to be pulled out with a tractor. Well, we wouldn't just sit back and say, "You send in to San Francisco to have a tractor sent out here, or two or three extra trucks to pull you out." We'll help out. And, as I say, most of those men would do the same for us.

Q: Do you have less favorable relations with other unions?

A: No, we have no relations.

Q: It's just the Teamsters that you come in contact with.

A: Yes. No, I never had any trouble with any unions.

Q: Well, I know some of the factory owners we've talked to have found it not too much of a disadvantage to have a union in that the union can control the workers and things are fairly reliable.

A: We don't mind paying more when we can afford to pay more, but we don't like to be told that we have to pay more than we can afford to pay or more than is reasonable, and also we don't like to have anybody have the power to put us out of business by calling a strike at harvest time. You see, these people that you've talked with are in industrial work and that's entirely different, and they also have some protection against an outrageous increase in wages, for instance, or giving a lot of holidays. Now, I know in the case of the organization of the milker's union when a farmer would have one or two or three or four members of the milker's union working for him -- that is, milkers who belong to the union -- if a cow would have a calf out in the field somewhere and the farmer would get one of these men to go out to help him bring in the calf, I've known cases where the unions have fined their men from \$25 up for helping the farmer do that. Well, now, on a farm we all expect to have any man that works for us, and the men themselves expect it, do any kind of work that is necessary and comes up during

ancroft: the farming.

am: You can't compartmentalize it like you can factory work.

ancroft: No, you can't. We have, for instance, five or six men that will drive tractors on our place at different times and we don't have enough work to keep anybody steadily driving a tractor. When it's time to disk up the orchard, we have to have almost all our tractors in use; then we'll go sometimes for weeks without having to use more than perhaps one tractor, and sometimes it's not even one. Well, if we have men that we call tractor drivers and who do nothing else, then we'd be in a very difficult position, we'd waste a lot of manpower. Now, we give a man a little more when he drives a tractor, but as soon as he stops driving the tractor then he gets the same as the other men that are doing field work or irrigating or anything of that kind. We give a man perhaps a little bit more for irrigating than for doing most other work, but it's only while he's irrigating. Sometimes you need six or seven irrigators and sometimes you don't need any at all.

am: You like to keep the same men working at all the different jobs you need, rather than --

ancroft: You like to keep the same men working and they want to keep working.

am: And you don't feel it would be possible to work a reasonable arrangement with any union?

Sancroft: Yes, it would, if you knew that they were going to be reasonable and that the same union would keep in power all the time and that they would not strike during the harvest season, but you can't get any union that will do that.

Baum: Then you feel a part of this problem is this jurisdictional problem between unions themselves, squabbling so that you can't tell who you're dealing with?

Sancroft: No, it isn't that. For instance, if you sign up with the Teamsters Union and any other union comes in and tries to make trouble the Teamsters will bring in their goon squads and clean them up. We've had the Teamsters' representative offer us -- I remember we were having an apricot strike up at Winters and they said, "If you'll sign up with us we'll police everything for you."

And we said, "Well, we'll do our own policing to that extent." We don't need the unions to protect us in our rights as long as we're willing to fight for our own rights.

Baum: I was wondering if you felt that was one of the advantages, if you did sign up with the Teamsters, that at least they could prevent jurisdictional squabbles.

Sancroft: Oh, yes, I think you'd find they would, too. They're a bunch of hardy lads, you know, and they're not going to let anybody else horn in on them. But on the other hand they would also be in a position where they would be able to say, "Now, next

Sancroft: year you get down to a five-day 40-hour week and any other time beyond that will be overtime at a dollar and a half or two dollars an hour instead of a dollar an hour" -- if they establish the wage at \$1.00 an hour. Well, we can't limit our work to 40 hours and we can't afford to pay time and a half for work done overtime, or \$2.00 or twice the regular pay for work done on Sunday, if we are already paying as much as we can reasonably pay and as we should be paying for wages for the regular work. In other words, the crops don't grow any faster and they don't produce any more fruit on Sunday or after eight hours' work than they do during the rest of the day.

The men that work for us understand that. We don't have any trouble with our men. My men are glad of their jobs here. Of course, you have to treat them right if you want to have them satisfied, but most farmers do treat their men right. Occasionally, there are employers in any industry that will not treat their men right and will try to cheat them and everything else, but there are very few among the farmers that do anything of that kind. We don't, for instance, in our Associated Farmers, countenance any kind of mistreatment of the men. If a farmer isn't absolutely square with his men we won't have anything to do with him, we don't want him as a member of the Associated Farmers.

Caum: What do you call mistreatment of the men?

Sancroft: Well, suppose a farmer shortchanges them on his weight -- suppose

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Bancroft: they're supposed to fill a box so full and he makes them fill it to overflowing or anything of that kind -- in other words, if he tries to take advantage of his men over what is the proper way to treat them.

Q: I wondered if the matter of dignity and respect plays any part in it, or is it mainly a financial --

Bancroft: No, it isn't a matter of dignity or respect. They don't have that feeling among the farm workers because the farm workers are very close to their employers. Now, for instance, we don't want anybody working for us who doesn't take an interest in the job he's doing. I don't mean he has to like it, because a lot of jobs on a farm you don't like. But we don't want anybody working for us who doesn't care a hoot whether we make money or lose money, because if he doesn't take an interest in his work he isn't going to do nearly as good a job as the man who does take an interest.

We also don't want to have to hire men that are incompetent. If you have to take any man that the union tells you to take then you're up against it there. We need the right to hire and fire and we need the right to use our own judgment as to what work each man will do. On the other hand, if we find that a man doesn't like pear-picking, for instance, but does like driving a truck, why, he'll come to us and say, "Can't you put me driving a truck?" And we'll always try to do that, because you get better results and it's pleasanter to have everybody satisfied, and there isn't a man on our place that has any

McCroft: hesitation about coming up and talking to us about anything he wants.

They come to us with their family troubles; well, when they have troubles with their wives that's one thing we don't try to help them out on. But on everything else we do. If a man gets arrested we go right to the bat and see what we can do for him and so on, on everything except drunk driving. I tell the men I won't do anything for them on drunk driving because if they drive when they're drunk they're apt to kill somebody or have a serious accident, and then they're apt to be sent to the penitentiary. I tell them that they've just got to leave automobiles alone when they're drunk. We don't try to prevent a man drinking in off-hours provided he doesn't get into fights. If he gets into fights or anything of that kind that's a thing we can't allow on the place; if he gets arrested for anything else we always try to see that he gets a fair deal and if he needs bail or something like that we help him out.

Sam: These are the men who are fairly permanent on your place?

McCroft: Yes, but even the men that work for us just in the summertime -- I assume that about half of them are permanent summer workers -- they come to us every year. We have men that have been coming to us for 20 years; lots of them have been coming to us for from five to ten years every summer.

Sam: Are these men itinerant? They come around during the harvest season?

McCroft: Yes, they follow the crops and they're not the poor downtrodden

aircraft: men that you read about in the papers. Of course, some of those come in, too, and we give work to them, but most of them not only own their own automobiles but they own trucks, some of them come with trailers. They don't make such measly wages as they talk about; they usually make higher wages per day than the general run because they're men that have been following the crops for a long time and most picking is now done on a piece-work basis. Of course, when there's an influx of people from other states such as there was during the Dust Bowl period well, then, you get a lot of men that are not regular followers of the crops and that are not very competent, though a few of them are very competent in a crowd like that. But ordinarily we try to get experienced men.

For instance, for pear-pickers we don't want men unless they've picked pears before because if they haven't they're apt to pick the wrong sizes -- every pear has to be picked according to its size, they must be up to a certain size before they are picked and we have rings to test these as they're picked -- and not only that but they're apt to be, if they haven't had experience, slow workers, and then they don't make as much as they should, as much as we'd like to be able to pay them, and they're not so well satisfied as those that are making double what they're making. Usually the fast pickers do better picking, besides; they do less damage because they know how to handle everything. There's one other thing: a man who hasn't

ancroft: worked on a farm and done that sort of work is much more apt to get hurt while he's picking, he's apt to fall off a ladder or hurt himself in other ways while he's working. So we try to get as nearly as we can experienced farm workers.

sum: Do you hire local high school boys or college boys?

ancroft: We hire them down in our packing house, but unless they have worked on a farm before most of them are not worth hiring for orchard work. You take a fellow that lives in the city, 19 times out of 20 he isn't used to hard work such as you have on a farm and he doesn't turn out well.

sum: Is he usually not physically able to keep up with the work?

ancroft: Well, I don't know whether it's physically able or whether it's just that they aren't willing to work as hard. For instance, we'll have little Filipinos that'll pick a great many more pears per day than fine large football players who we've tried at certain times to give jobs to, college athletes and school athletes.

You'll find a good many times you use two or three boys from high school, for instance, but if you put a bunch of them together you don't get nearly as good work. They want to fool around. We've tried them over and over and we've never gotten good results from them working in the fields, except those who were raised on a farm, and they're used to hard work.

There are a lot of fool laws about giving boys work, and one of them is that you can't give any boy under 18 any work

ancroft: on a truck or any of the moving machinery on a farm.

AME: Do you have many minority race workers?

ancroft: Yes, any kind -- we make no distinction whatever in pay or anything else between Negroes, Filipinos, Japanese, Mexicans, or white Americans.

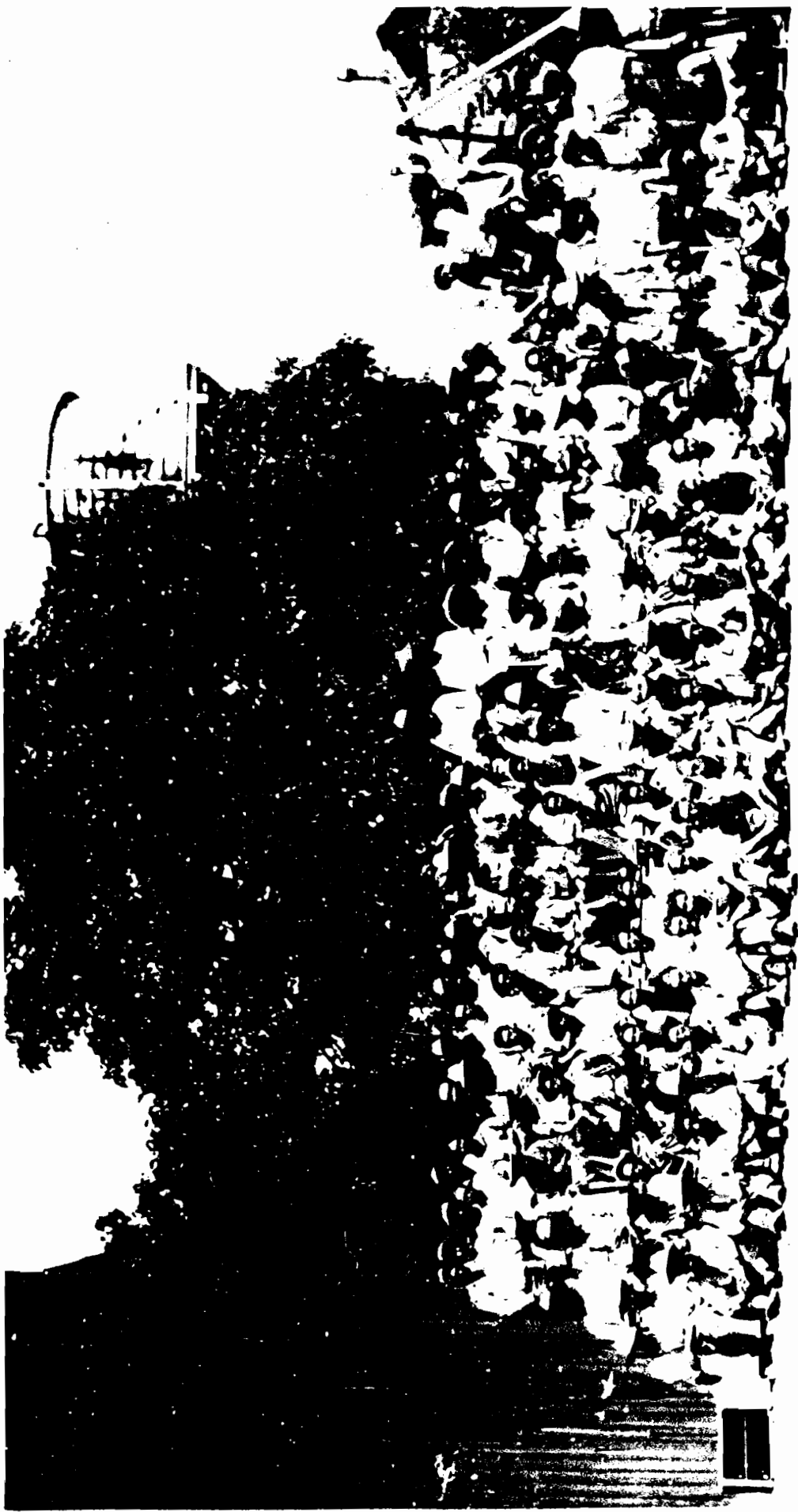
AME: Do you have any minority groups or racial groups that specialize in certain crops?

ancroft: At times. We've had, for instance, Filipino pear-pickers, and they're the smallest men you can get and yet when we used to have them quite a little they were the finest pear-pickers we could get. They were very agile and showed remarkable strength. They'd work all day with remarkable endurance. Lately it's been very hard to get them because those men are making so much more in other farm jobs at piece-work. They're so much faster than the general average -- I'm speaking about the very good Filipinos -- and they were even faster than the Japanese or anybody else for the same type of work, as a class, that is. Now most of those men will go into the asparagus fields where it's hard stoop labor and make perhaps \$20 to \$25 a day and things of that kind on piece-work, and it's very hard to get them now. And you can't get them because a great many of them -- I'm talking about the younger men and the better workers -- they'll go into town and get jobs in hotels and clubs; they're very courteous and right on their toes all the time and they get very good jobs with good tips. The same

Sancroft: with the Japanese. The Japanese have gone in a great deal for farming on their own, or they'll rent a place on shares or something of that kind. It's very hard to get Japanese now. They were and are very good workers.

You take white men that have been farming for a number of years: they're apt to be very good workers but they're apt to get permanent jobs more or less as superintendents or bosses or so on. They're in high demand. In other words, any good worker is in demand and there's a tremendous difference in what a good worker will do and a poor worker in his output during the day.

I used to be criticized terribly for hiring Japanese and hiring Filipinos and hiring Mexicans and so on. Now these same groups, and especially the CIO leaders who used to criticize all of us farmers and people like myself in particular before the legislature and everywhere else for hiring Japanese and Filipinos and all that sort of stuff, as they called them, they're now shouting to high heaven about race equality and opposing any kind of discrimination. That is, they claim to oppose any kind of discrimination, but a lot of them will discriminate in their own unions against the minority groups. We have never had any race trouble or any antagonism. If a man ever treated the Japanese or the Filipinos or the Negroes contemptuously or unfairly with us we'd just fire him, but we've never had more than two or three instances in all the time



Pear pickers on the Bancroft Farm, 1930.

Benbroft: where men tried to work against others because they were of a different race. The races have gotten along very well on our place.

Sam: Have you had many Chinese?

Benbroft: We used to, years and years ago, but it's practically impossible to find Chinese agricultural workers now. They were very good workers, too. In fact, almost all the regular farm workers are good workers because they realize you've got to work well to do anything.

Sam: I suppose many of the workers now are Mexican.

Benbroft: Yes, a great many of them. About half of them are American citizens, Mexicans that were born in this country who come up from Texas and Arizona and Southern California and so on. We have men every year that will come up from the Imperial Valley and places like that where it gets too hot in the summertime. It's like the rich men that go to Palm Springs in the winter or to any place that's cool in the summer. These fellows come up here and then when it gets to the rainy season and cold up here then they go down to the Imperial Valley where it's warmer, and in that way they're able to work out of doors all the year in comparatively pleasant weather.

Sam: Do you have any language problems with the Mexicans, or do most of them speak English?

Benbroft: No, because we have a man that's, well, you might call him a Mexican foreman. He is a sort of a sub-foreman and he's a

Sanroft: Mexican himself and he's been with us, oh, I guess 25 years.

Sam: Is he permanently on your place?

Sanroft: Yes. We have about 20 families that live here all the time.

Sam: And he handles all the Mexicans?

Sanroft: Yes, he handles them under our direction. We speak to them a little in Spanish and then a lot of them learn English pretty fast.

Sam: Do you have any Negroes? Or do they go into farm work?

Sanroft: No. We used to have more than we have now; right at this moment, for instance, we haven't any. Last year we had one or two, but we used to have, oh, perhaps five or six, something like that. But they as a rule don't want to work out on a farm if they can get a job in the steel mills or something in the cities, but those that we have had are real farm workers and want to work on a farm. We've never had any trouble with them in any way, any more than we have with our others.

Sam: Well, I know there's such a large Negro population around Oakland and Berkeley and many of them are unemployed. I wondered if they came out and tried to get jobs farming.

Sanroft: Very few of them. They don't want the hard work. They want the easier jobs if they can get them. They are not, as a class, as hard-working as any of those other groups, but on the other hand we've had individuals that have been among our very best workers and have received top pay.

Sam: Well, the Filipinos, Japanese, and Chinese always have a reputation for being hard workers, but I wondered if this was true

Q: of the Mexicans, too.

Aircraft: The Mexicans we have, they're hard workers.

Q: Are you able to make any of the men from these groups into foremen?

Aircraft: Well, we'll sometimes take two or three men, something like that, to do a job and say, "You'll go together," so we don't formally make anyone the boss, but one will naturally assume leadership and we'll have that quite often. We'll send out three or four men to cut pear blight for instance. One of them will sort of be looked to as the head blight-cutter, or something of that kind, and he'll be a Mexican or anybody. Filipinos we've never had much for blight cutting because they were the fellows that liked to pick. Now, a lot of men don't like to pick. But we've never had any trouble where they objected to taking orders or suggestions from another Japanese or another Filipino or anything. I don't remember ever having a Filipino that was in charge of anything like that, but we've had Japanese fairly often.

Q: Yes. I was just wondering if it ever worked out that you could have them, say, in charge of a large group of men of not the same race, or would that work out?

Aircraft: We'll have a Mexican gang boss. For instance, we usually have gangs when we're picking of about 25, and we'll have one man who's a gang boss who doesn't do any picking but drives a truck, takes water around to the men, and sees that they are

Sancroft: picking the right kind of fruit and the right sizes and everything of that kind, and that man can be a Mexican.

SAHM: If he were a Mexican, would he be mainly in charge of a group of Mexicans?

Sancroft: Yes. Then we might have four or five white men in that same group.

SAHM: Would you ever use a Filipino or a Japanese for a gang boss?

Sancroft: We'd use a Japanese as a gang boss if we had other Japanese and Filipinos, and maybe once in a while we could have a few white Americans in there, too, but we usually try not to mix the races so that there would be any question of that kind coming up.

SAHM: In other words, you wouldn't want to have one Filipino boss and 25 Mexican workers?

Sancroft: No, and yet if we had one that was good enough I don't think there'd be any serious trouble, but they wouldn't like it as well as working for another Mexican. In other words, we don't try to start any crusade, and we want the men to be satisfied and to be happy, and as a rule the Mexicans would rather work for another Mexican and the white Americans would rather work for another white man. But the Japanese, if we have a Japanese gang boss, as we do once in a while, we'll have Filipinos and Japanese with him as much as possible and try not to raise any questions of that kind. There might be some, there would be some, who'd not like to have a boss -- but then if we have anything of that kind they would come to us and make their

Bancroft: complaints, ask if they couldn't be put in another gang. We quite often will have men say, "Well, can't I be put in so-and-so's gang, instead of being --" Well, if a man objected to working with a Japanese boss or a Filipino boss he'd come to us and ask us if he couldn't be put in another gang, and we'd usually try to arrange it, say, "Well, as soon as we can arrange it we'll do it," so that it wouldn't hurt the Japanese boss's feelings.

Q: I would assume that among your men the feeling would be the greatest against a Negro boss.

Bancroft: Well, I don't know. The last Negro we had in here, he was in jail about half the time and I'd have to get him out of jail because he'd get drunk. He was a very good-natured sort of a fellow and he would lend the other fellows money and everything and he was a very strong man physically and if they had any very hard lifting or anything of that kind they always liked to have him along. He got along perfectly with the fellows and when he was sober he never had any fights or any trouble with any of the fellows on the place.

Last time he got into a fight he was out somewhere drinking and somebody made some slighting remarks, said they wouldn't work for a Bancroft under any conditions, and he objected and said it was a very good place to work, and this fellow said, "Well, nobody but fools work for him," and our fine Negro gentleman drew a knife on him. He went after him, but I think

Bancroft: they found they both had knives; he didn't hurt him or anything. Then he got arrested and I couldn't get him out for about 30 or 40 days, but he was -- a lot of these fellows, you know, they get into fights when they drink too much, but we had very little of that. But over the years we've had a good many cases where fellows drank too much and would get into fights.

Baum: I would think a man like that wouldn't be reliable as a boss.

Bancroft: Oh, no, he was never a boss, and also he was one of the greatest liars I ever saw, he'd tell you every time he got arrested how it wasn't his fault, that he hadn't been drunk, that the police just had it in for him and so on, but he was a good, loyal worker. We'd have him still except that he had a trailer and he used to live in it very comfortably but he one time brought a white woman down there to keep him company and we said we couldn't allow that, so he left us.

Baum: He left on moral grounds, eh?

Bancroft: Well, we don't try to run a Sunday school or go after out men to reform them in their morals, but they've got to behave when they're on the place.

Baum: I wondered if you had any sort of training for them or any way that you hoped would improve, for instance, their drinking?

Bancroft: No. Well, we talk to them and everything, but you can't stop a man that wants to drink. A lot of our very best workers are at times hard drinkers. We try with our steady men to hire men that do very little of that and, of course, we won't

croft: let them drink while they're on the job, but at weekends and gatherings we just can't control that; a lot of these men, if you did stop their drinking entirely, they wouldn't work for you, they'd go somewhere else where they could work and drink, because you know, if a man's a confirmed drinker he doesn't want to stop, whether he's a working man or whether he's any other kind of a man.

am: Oh, I'm sure everyone wants a certain amount of privacy, to live their private lives the way they want to live them.

croft: Well, yes, but it isn't that so much as that liquor'll get the better of a lot of these men. That's why a lot of them are farm workers, as a matter of fact. A lot of them have intelligence enough to be executives, but they can't leave the bottle alone permanently; I mean, they'll go off on toots three or four times a year, something like that.

am: Your steady workers, the 20 or so you have here, so they stay here with families or are they single men?

croft: They have families.

am: Do their children go to school in Walnut Creek?

croft: Well, they go to school around here. They don't go into Walnut Creek, but they'll go to Concord or other places. We're on the edge of the school districts that go toward Concord and Clayton.

am: Your itinerant workers, do they come with families?

croft: A good many of them. I would say about half.

am: What happens to their children as far as education is concerned?

croft: Well, you see, they come here in the summertime.

ME: You don't have any heavy work during school season when you have extra men in?

croft: We have pruning, and those men come usually without families.

ME: Their families are permanently established somewhere?

croft: Yes. You see, in the summertime a good many of our men just camp out: we have tents and running water and showers and things of that kind for them and a nice tenting ground under the trees and so on and a great many of our men, especially those that come with families, can live out there in the camp in the summertime. That's when we have the itinerant workers.

ME: I guess one of the concerns in the state is these children who travel from school to school, two weeks in one school and two weeks in another.

croft: Yes, that is a serious problem and I don't know how they can handle it unless you want to say that a man that has a family can't get a job on a farm. Most of them try to get permanent jobs but a lot of these men don't want a permanent job on a farm. They want to work on a farm for a while one place and then move on to another. They have this natural desire which is not only in farm workers but you find it in lots of people, they don't want to stay in one place year in and year out, they want to keep moving. A 'fellow'll be very anxious to get a job and after he's been working for you about a month he'll want to move on to the next job.

Baum: So you feel in part this problem hasn't got anything to do with the type of labor; it has to do with certain personalities?

Bancroft: Well, I wouldn't say it hasn't anything to do with the type of labor because I think it's a very serious problem, the fact that in farming, in California especially, when you have these speciality crops like fruit and field crops, you have a tremendous increase in demand for workers when you're harvesting your crop.

Baum: You must have itinerant laborers during the heavy season.

Bancroft: Well, if you call them itinerant laborers, seasonal laborers.

Baum: But they would have to be traveling people unless you got local labor?

Bancroft: Yes, and you can't get enough people locally that are ready to work on a farm. Sometimes you can get all you want locally when jobs are very scarce, in a depression or something of that kind. For instance, when the steel mill is closed down here then we have a lot of people come to us wanting work, but we're not going to displace the men that come to us regularly every year to pick for the fellows that are out on a strike, or out because the mill is closed down. We have to take care of our regular workers first, so we don't have any jobs open.

Baum: How do men find out that you need so many workers? Now, your steady workers know you and they come back every year, but where do you get your other men?

McCroft: A great many of them from friends of our workers or men who've worked for us before. We try to hire men that we know are good men so that we don't have to hire a bunch and then weed them out and fire two-thirds of them.

AM: Would this be true, that most of your men are either steady, they come back every year, or they are sent by other steady men?

McCroft: Well, we will tell them, "If you've got some friends you can guarantee'll be good workers we'd be glad to have you bring up one or two or three with you," something of that kind.

AM: You'd have to make this arrangement a year or two before, then, wouldn't you? Or are you in touch with your men inbetween time?

McCroft: We'll be in touch with a good many of them; they'll write to us and ask, tell us, they're coming, but usually we go to a good deal of trouble to be sure that we'll have plenty of men and not have too many. In other words, we don't want to advertise that we want men, but we have to get, to harvest our crop and also to run our packing house, as many as 200 or so workers during the summertime. Well, in the packing house that's an entirely different crew and there we can use high school boys to quite an extent, but not for the real packing. A pear-packer will make -- they're largely women that do our pear-packing, two-thirds of them, I think, are women -- from \$20 to \$25 a day while the packing is good, but there again that is piece-work and they're exceptionally skilled workers.

Q: Are these women the wives of the seasonal laborers?

A: No, very seldom; there might be four or five of them out of 25 that would be wives. But they're regular. Almost all of them are regular packers that follow the crops.

Q: Separate from their husbands?

A: Yes, or some of them haven't any husbands, and sometimes their husbands will be with them, you know. But they're an entirely different group, the packers, they're professional packers, and if you tried to pack your fruit with packers all of whom had had no experience, you'd be in a terrible mess. You'd better get out of the packing business and sell all of your fruit to a cannery.

Q: A lot of women I know in Oakland work in canneries a certain number of months. Would these women come out to pack?

A: No. They couldn't pack unless they had had experience.

Q: Do they come out?

A: Yes, but we don't want them. As I say, the packing is piece-work and we have the same packers year after year. Every year they write to us and we keep in touch with them. Now, for instance next month one reason I told you I want to get as much of this interviewing off as possible before it got too late was we'll be getting letters all the time from our packers wanting to know when we're going to start. For instance, a packer'll say, "Well, I've got a friend" or a sister of someone, "that I'd like to bring along if you've got a job." And

Bancroft: we have quite a long packing season usually, a good deal longer than most of the pear districts, and we've always had very good relations with our packers, so we hire very few new ones in any one season. I know one of the food inspectors told me that he was up on the River and he heard one packer asking another how she could get a job down at the Bancroft place, and she said, "The only way you can do it is to wait until somebody dies." We don't want to get too many. It's piece-work and we want it so that each packer gets plenty of work. The packers just work eight hours a day and that's about as much as they can stand at the rate at which they pack.

An expert packer will pack perhaps four tons of pears in a day. Each pear they have to pick out of the bin, wrap, and put in a box just the right way, and they must have those boxes weigh within two pounds either above or below the established weight, and they must have the number of pears in them within four of certain numbers, that is, some boxes will have 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 120, 135, 150, 165, or 180, and they must have one of those, and then you stamp on the box the number of pears in the box, and you must be within four of the right number, and they must get the weight. Now, to do that they've got to be pretty good. And then they pack three or four tons of pears in a day to make -- of course, we don't require that they pack that many, but if they want to make \$25 a day they'll have to pack four tons. Some days they make a little more than that, some days they make less, some days we don't have a full day's

croft: packing. But we try to give them a chance to keep as busy as they can. We try to pick just enough for the packing shed so that it'll keep the packers busy, but not get too much fruit there, and then the rest we send to the cannery.

Q: I read somewhere about some problem about Japanese pear-packers in 1924 and I didn't know what that was about. Do you recall that incident?

croft: Yes, they tried to run our pear-packers out because they were Japanese.

Q: Who tried to?

croft: Oh, some groups of white people.

Q: Were these Japanese pear-packers a packing company, or were they your own private packers?

croft: No, we would hire a crew to come down and pack, pay them so much a box and so on.

Q: You hired them to come to your ranch and pack for you.

croft: Yes, they would pack down at our packing house, and at that time quite a few other farmers were having pears packed by Japanese, and we all got sworn in as deputy sheriffs and went armed for a month or so while our packing was going on in order to protect our packers, to see that they had a perfectly legal right to pack and that they weren't browbeaten, beaten up, or run out.

Q: Who were these people who were going to beat them up? Were they organized in any way or were they just people that wanted a job?

croft: Well, a lot of them didn't even want a job, they were just against the Japanese. I think that they were probably members of the unions, but I don't know. I don't know whether they had a packers' union at that time.

me: I wouldn't think so. That was back in such early days of unionization.

croft: But they had lots of agitators and lots of people that were -- it wasn't that there was any lack of jobs for white people, it was just that these men did a much better job of packing than the white packers did and the white packers didn't like the idea of our hiring them because they wanted to keep more or less a monopoly of the white people.

me: Do you think it was an economic issue or a racial issue?

croft: Well, I think it was more racial there.

me: Racial prejudice of this white group against the Japanese?

croft: Well, that's what they tried to make it.

me: Or was the real issue they just wanted those jobs and that was an excuse?

croft: I think mostly it was racial.

me: The sheriff of Contra Costa County cooperated with the growers?

croft: Yes, we were sworn in as deputy sheriffs because it would have been utterly illegal for the white men to run those Japanese out.

me: Getting back to the present, do you ever get workers from the state employment service?

Macroft: Very seldom, because they don't send nearly as good workers, as a rule, as we can get by getting friends to recommend them. You get a good worker and he says he's got a couple of friends. So you say, "Are they good workers? Are they as good as you?"

"Well, they're not nearly as good as I am, but they're good workers." [Laughing] These good workers, they know pretty well whether they're good or not. I know we had a man one time that had been working for us for quite a while, and his gang boss called him down pretty hard, and said if he did something he was going to see that he was fired. He said, "Well, if you try to get me fired I'll go to Mr. Gomez" -- he was foreman at the time -- "and he knows about me and if he doesn't back me up I'll go to Philip" -- that's my son -- and he said, "If he doesn't back me up I'll go to the boss. He knows I'm a good worker. He won't let me go." They have that confidence in themselves, the good workers, and also in the fact that they get fair treatment.

Sam: Do any of them seem to nanker toward joining a union?

Macroft: No, I don't think any of them want to join a union. They know they couldn't get any more out of the union than we give them. See, our place is a little different from a good many because we've been very successful in farming and when we have a good year we give good bonuses to our men, and the bonuses are entirely voluntary.

LIBRARY



Fears rotting in the orchards
because of manpower shortage,
World War II.

Problems of Paying Laborers a Bonus During World War II

Mcroft: I have something I'd like to show you about that. When the wages and hours regulations were established at the time of the second world war, you know, we were told we couldn't raise our wages, and I went into San Francisco to see about being able to pay these bonuses to our men. We were having good year then so our bonuses were larger. We had always reserved about 15 or 16 per cent of our profits that we'd distributed as Christmas presents to our men when we had profits, and during the war as we were making much more money than formerly we were able to make much bigger distributions, and I made up a long petition, something like 11 pages, and had to make seven copies of it, and file it.

Q: To be able to pay the bonus?

Mcroft: Yes, I had to file this petition with I think it was called the wages and hours board in order to be able to pay the increased bonuses to our men.

Q: It says:

We have several problems in connection with the wages and bonuses we pay our men, including our foremen, on the two farms we operate, which are as follows:

On the Stanislaus County farm, consisting of approximately 500 acres of which about 200 are in bearing walnuts, we have a foreman, I.L. Leech, Route 3, Box 966, Modesto, Calif., to whom we have for a number of years paid \$6.00 per day (plus his cottage), plus a bonus equal to 5% of the farm's gross profits after deducting his wages (but not his bonus) with the understanding that if the going wages of the

regular farm laborers should increase beyond \$6.00 per nine-hour day he would then receive wages equal to the going farm labor wages plus his 5% bonus. The regular farm wages in that vicinity have now risen to 75¢ per hour (plus the cottages furnished the laborers) and we wish to apply for permission to pay I.L. Leech 75¢ per hour plus his cottage and his bonus. In this connection it should be stated that we furnish cottages free of charge to all our farm laborers who live on our farm. In the past we have usually kept about four regular farm workers on this place throughout the winter and have used between 20 and 40 in harvesting our walnut crops. We paid to I.L. Leech in the last two years the following amounts.

And then you list 1941 wages, \$1890, bonus \$810.74, total \$2,700.74; and in 1942 wages, \$1890, bonus \$960, total \$2,850.

Brocroft: Now, if you'll skip a page I think you'll get to where we speak about this farm here.

Sam: The Ygnacio Valley farm in Contra Costa County, two and a half miles from Walnut Creek,

containing about 500 acres, including about 177 acres of pears, 210 acres of walnuts, 15 acres of prunes and 22 acres of grapes (which last are leased to a tenant), we had for over twenty years paid our foreman \$4.50 per day or the regular rate of our farm laborers (whichever was higher) plus a bonus of 5% of our gross profits. At the end of the harvest season of 1940 our foreman died and we appointed his son, Frank Gomez, Jr., as foreman under the same arrangement (commencing with the year 1941). He also acted as our farm packing house foreman for about six weeks in the year for which he received the going farm wages plus 30¢ an hour. His total pay in the last two years was as follows: 1941 wages \$1730.67, bonus \$1583.19, total \$3313.86. 1942 wages \$2081.53, bonus \$3974.95, total \$6056.48.

At the same time we appointed Frank Gomez, Jr., as foreman, we made a similar arrangement with

Ralph M. Hinds, the man who takes care of the codling moth bait pans, watches out for pear blight and worms in the orchard and has about ten or twelve other duties connected with the orchards and the farm office work, including all the bookkeeping, etc. The arrangement with Mr. Hinds was that he would receive the going farm wages, but not less than \$105.00 per month, plus 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the gross profits, with the result that he received the following: 1941 wages \$1260.00, bonus \$832.71, total \$2092.71. 1942 wages \$1530.44, bonus \$2090.70, total \$3621.14

So this is to indicate how closely you had to show what you had been paying in order to increase the bonus, is that what you wanted to do?

Saneroff: Yes, you see I had to show that, and then I also go on to our regular men --

Saneroff: Oh, yes, another group are ordinary farm laborers.

Saneroff: How much were the ordinary farm laborers getting?

Saneroff: To these we pay the regular basic farm wages, with allowances of from five or fifteen cents an hour extra for such jobs as tractor driving, irrigating, night work, truck driving, etc...1940 total ordinary labor bonuses \$1944...1941 total ordinary labor bonuses \$3230...1942 total ordinary labor bonuses \$9078.

It has been our custom to make the bonuses to our steady men much larger than those of our seasonal workers. For instance, in 1941 each of our laborers who had worked for us a year received a bonus of \$100.00, while the seasonal workers who stayed with us through the season received about \$25.00 each. In 1942, our steady workers who had been with us a year or more received \$500.00 each; those who had been with us almost a year received \$200.00 each, while those who stayed with us throughout the season and didn't lose too many days through drinking, etc., received \$100.00; a few other men got bonuses of around \$25.00 each.

McCroft: I can explain the rest of it. You can take this along with you and look at it because it's an interesting document showing how much we had to explain and how much care we had to take in order to get permission to pay those wages.

The interesting thing was at first they weren't going to give me permission to do it. In order to do that, I had to show that we had had a long, established custom of doing it because I had nothing in writing, no legal obligation to pay those bonuses, but I had a moral obligation because the men understood they would be getting them. But I never promised them, except for our foremen.

I went into San Francisco and went into a committee. They had a lawyer there and the top official or whatever he was, and they went over this and he said, "Why, no farm workers get as much as you're asking to pay."

I said, "They've been getting it." I had to show it in the figures.

And the man said, "We can't allow that."

I said, "Well, those men ought to get those wages and we ought to be allowed to pay them. Do you want to go to those men and tell them that I can't pay them their bonuses this year, or I can't increase their bonuses when we're making more money, that I'd like to do it but that the great New Deal administration that always claims it's looking out for the workers won't let them get what they're entitled to, and

McCroft: so I'll have to pay them much less?" I said, "Of course that is apt to get in the papers; I probably can't keep it out because some of them will remark about it."

And he said, "Well, we'll see what we can do." And before they got through they gave me permission to pay just as I had asked.

Q: Had this been your policy for quite a while, to pay a definite percentage of the gross profits?

McCroft: Not a definite percentage, an approximate percentage, and I showed each year what we paid and that we had done that. Not definite, because we've been gradually increasing it as we got to where we were making more money. I mean, we increased the percentage a little bit. We're paying now a somewhat higher percentage than that.

Q: Well, I see here when you mentioned your foremen they got a certain percentage, like plus 5 per cent of the gross profits. That was a definite percentage. And for the common laborers --

McCroft: It was just a present at the end of the year. But we figured it ourselves each year to increase it in proportion to the profits we were making, and it got up to where our ordinary men were getting as high as \$500 a year at Christmas time. Of course that was a very nice present for them to get.

Q: And I assume it improved the caliber of the labor also.

McCroft: Yes, it naturally made jobs more attractive.

Q: And also I should think you'd get better labor because they

BAUM: would be concerned about seeing that you made a profit.

SANCROFT: I've always said if we made more money we'd pay higher wages, be glad to, but we couldn't do it after it was frozen without getting a special permit.

An Insecticide Problem During World War II

BAUM: [29 June 1961] Congratulations are in order on your eightieth birthday.

SANCROFT: Oh, thank you. That's tomorrow.

BAUM: I should ask you to what you attribute your longevity. To heredity, I suppose?

SANCROFT: I would say so, and to a very good wife who takes good care of me and also to the life of a farmer which is an open sort of a life, though it's a much more dangerous occupation than most people realize. Used to be we'd get kicked by mules or thrown off of horses; now we get it with tractors and machinery.

There's one thing I wanted to tell you about, and that was that during the second world war we were unable to get our usual spray for thrips. Thrips are little insects between a sixteenth and an eighth of an inch long, like little beetles, black, and there will be dozens of them get into one fruit bud and eat it and ruin it, and they are particularly injurious to prunes and pears. We were raising a good many prunes as well as pears at the time -- they wanted these dried prunes for the army.

ancroft: We ordinarily sprayed with Blackleaf 40, they called it, nicotine sulphate, and that's an extract from tobacco, a very concentrated extract, and we would spray the buds just when they began to open so the spray could get in there and that would drive away or kill the thrips. But we found we couldn't get an nicotine sulphate in the country and we were told it had all been sent to Russia, so we applied through the agricultural department for another spray, tartar emetic, which was a stomach poison. The trouble was that the thrips didn't like the taste of it and in order to get them to eat it you'd have to mix sugar with it, and at that time sugar was very strictly rationed. We couldn't even get enough sugar to preserve our fruit; farmers' wives always put up a lot of fruit every year and we couldn't get sugar for that. We had a very hard time to get as much as ten pounds of sugar even with our ration slips and everything else.

Baum: I remember those years.

ancroft: But to get this farmers had to use a lot, if they had large orchards. In our case, we needed something like 6,000 pounds, which would be 60 100-pound sacks, and we had to get all sorts of permits to get that, of course, but we got it finally. We got the coupons with which to get it, then we had to go and buy it at a retail store. We bought it from a little storekeeper; he had to order it for us, which he couldn't do unless he had the coupons, and it was a big truckload. But it so

Bancroft: happened that year that the thrips didn't come, so we didn't need to use the sugar. So here I was with 60 sacks of sugar that was very difficult for anybody to get.

Baum: You looked like a black marketeer.

Bancroft: It would have made me into a black marketeer if I'd kept it, and so I reported back that I wanted to return it, and they said I would have to return it through the retailer from whom I'd bought it. So I told the retailer about it, but I told him I was sure he couldn't take it back and he said he wouldn't use that much sugar for a year and had no place to put it.

Baum: I suppose no one even bought sugar in 100-pound bags.

Bancroft: Not then, no. So I wrote the federal authorities and had quite a lot of communication with them, and in the meantime it got into the papers and about half the people that read it got sore at me for having 60 sacks of sugar. It was out of all reason. All the other prune-growers around here had sugar in equal proportion to their crops. And most of the farmers objected because I had to return it because then it put them in the same fix. So I was in a bad spot all around, not that it bothered me any. The authorities didn't seem to have any provision for taking it back, and they even sent a representative out here one time when I wasn't here and he saw Mrs. Bancroft and he asked her all sorts of questions. Finally he asked, "Well, where does your husband keep that sugar?"

Bancroft: "I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"No, he didn't tell me because he knew if he did I'd take a sack for our preserves."

Finally, after many weeks, I was able to make arrangements so that the authorities would take back the sugar and reimburse me.

Reorganization of an Automobile Finance Company

Baum: Before we get into the big subject of farmer organizations, you mentioned that you had some legal and financial problems with the West American Finance Co., in which you had invested a substantial sum of money. What was this company?

Bancroft: That was a three-million dollar company that was organized for the purpose of financing the sales of automobiles. The idea was to get the agents of the automobile distributors to form their own finance company and carry their sales into that company so they would be able to get a lot of business with very little effort, and each one would own stock in the company.

Baum: The dealers would own stock in the company?

Bancroft: The automobile dealers. For instance, one might buy 2,000 shares at \$10 a share. Preferred was to pay 8%, and they sold \$2,000,000 worth of preferred stock at par, and the common stock was to pay nothing unless the company should

McCroft: first make enough money to cover the preferred dividends. Then the common stock was to get all the rest, and they thought they'd make even more than 8%. They had a remarkably fine set-up because they had all these dealers selling large numbers of cars and there was big money in financing automobiles.

Q: This was in the 1920s.

McCroft: Yes. They issued, as I say, 8% preferred stock. Well, I had some money that I'd invested in Owl Drug Co., about \$20,000 worth of preferred stock, and I got out of that and I wanted to invest, not speculate, just invest for the income, and I looked into this company and it looked like a very good company. It had approximately \$3,000,000 except for what they paid for organizing and selling the stock and so on, and preferred was paying 8% and looked very safe, and I bought \$20,000 worth.

Everything seemed to be going along all right until I noticed that the value of the stock was dropping quite a little. It dropped down to around \$6 a share from \$10, and I went around to see the president of the company to see if there was any reason for it to be dropping. He insisted that there wasn't and showed me his reports, the business they were doing, and I asked was there any danger of the preferred stock not being able to pay its dividends -- I wasn't interested in the common, which was more speculative -- and he said "No," and gave me all this information.

So I bought another 1,000 shares at \$6 a share, and it

ancroft: went on for a while and then they stopped paying dividends. The preferred stock was just stock that was supposed to get the 8% dividend and they had no vote as long as they were getting that dividend, but there was a provision that if they failed to get the full 8% for a year, then at the end of that time the preferred stock would also have a vote the same as the common stock. After a year of no dividends, we had a vote. The company had failed for a year or two to pay dividends on the preferred stock and a number of the preferred stockholders tried to get some redress from the company. I was busy farming and took no part in the proceedings at first, but when I found that the organization was headed by two doctors, Dr. Binkley from San Diego and Dr. Charles C. Falk from Eureka, who had no legal experience, I knew they wouldn't get anywhere unless they had help, so I attended one of their meetings and got busy.

The two doctors and myself were put on a sub-committee to investigate and report back to the stockholders. We investigated and we began to see that things looked very fishy. So we organized a stockholders' protective committee and assessed ourselves a small amount per share and hired Courtney L. Moore as our attorney and demanded the right to get a list of the stockholders and check up on the books of the company and so on. Before we got through we found that the company was being definitely looted by the management, and we brought a stockholders' suit against the corporation, certain members of the

ancroft: board of directors, former directors and officers, alleging conspiracy to defraud the stockholders.

I took the matter to one attorney that I had been very closely associated with when I was practicing law and he said he didn't think we had a chance to win. He didn't want to even touch the case. Then I heard of another attorney, this Courtney Moore, who had carried on similar suits, so I went to him and got him interested in the case and showed him what we had. Well, you get a couple of doctors and a farmer trying to carry on fight against men that had the company and had their attorneys and had been practicing what they were doing for a good many years -- we had a pretty uphill fight, but we finally circularized all the stockholders and told them what the situation was and got injunctions against the officers and directors. Mr. Moore did a fine job as our attorney. We got proxies from all the stockholders we could, had a big stockholders meeting on March 14, 1931, and we hurled charges against the gang of fraud and gross mismanagement, and they came back with all their legal technicalities. They, of course, had some business associates that they were tied up with that were on their side.

While we were battling they suggested a compromise board of directors. Well, we weren't at all sure of being able to win out on the vote so we went over the names of those who would be on the board and we thought we could get a fair enough deal out of them to go ahead on that basis, and the compromise board

Sancroft: was elected. The company at that time had a board of nine directors, and on the new board of the nine there were four of us on the stockholders' protective committee who were then elected under this proposal, another representing the common stock holders, and then there were four others, two of them quite well-known men and two others representing the old gang. After we elected directors, we proposed that we depose the president. We found that the gang had got the other directors pretty well tied up, so it looked as if it was going to be a five to four vote, but we finally, after several months of wrangling, convinced one of them that our side was right and the other side was crooked, and got him to vote our way, and then I was elected president of the company and we elected Mr. Fred L. Wolfe secretary. We went in for a complete reorganization of the company, but there was outstanding a great big bloc of stock that was tied up in a defunct finance company which was in bankruptcy and our attorney made one slip-up and we didn't get control of those votes that controlled the West American Finance Co. Before, this stock couldn't be voted. One of the men, Joseph J. Scott, who had been a director before, claimed to be entirely on our side and double-crossed us. He got us to appoint him to buy this stock for the company and he prevented our buying it and let a third party buy it that he said would be entirely on our side and so on, and the third party was on his side,

Sancroft: so they switched over and threw me out as president when it came to electing the president the following year. Then we started the fight all over again, although there was a man from Los Angeles, named P.H. Greer, of the Greer Robbins Co., who was representing the common stockholders.

Baum: Was Greer Robbins a stockbroker company?

Sancroft: No, Greer Robbins was an automobile agency, and he had come in as one of the original founders of the company. He was an honest man himself, but he was representing the common stockholders, and you see the gang of crooks in there had looted the company so far that instead of there being assets worth \$3,000,000 there were about \$750,000 worth of net assets, and there was a provision in the formation of the company that in case of dissolution or in the case of winding it up that the preferred stockholders would have first call on all the assets, so that the common stockholders wouldn't have any claim. He was representing the common stockholders, so he was against us because we were representing the preferred stockholders who were legally entitled to the whole business. He was working to get me out, which as I say -- he was honest in the thing, it was just that he was representing a different group. It wasn't the right thing to do, but there was never any crookedness on his part because he frankly all the time was representing the common stockholders who really weren't entitled to anything although they'd paid

Bancroft: their money. He said they'd paid just as much for their stock as we had and so on and he was going to get what he could out of it for them, so he wanted me out of the way and he got me out, but on the other hand we got a compromise president for the organization and we ran the company that way about 18 years.

Baum: When did all this take place, around 1929 or 1930?

Bancroft: Well, the old gang was thrown out in March 1931 and I was elected president of the company about three months later, but then I was thrown out as president about the middle of 1932 by being double-crossed, as I have already explained.

Baum: And he ran the company for 18 years after that? That would bring it up to around 1950.

Bancroft: The compromise board ran it those 18 years.

Baum: I'm surprised a company like that could weather the depression, even if it was honestly run, let alone having this backlog of looting.

Bancroft: Well, we did a pretty good job. In the year that I'd been president I got rid of a great many of the obligations, including about \$700,000 worth of guarantees that the company had made that we got released from, and so on. We had this compromise board and we watched them very carefully and, as I say, there was no crooked work there, but all that time the preferred stockholders were deprived of any income or any assets and there was nothing we could do about it.

Then the value of the stock fell way down; preferred

Sanncroft: stock dropped to \$1 and even lower for a share of \$10 stock, and the common stock dropped to about 10¢ a share. Then gradually a couple of outside investors, R.W. Schumacher and Mark H. Greene, began buying up the preferred stock, and it went up to about \$4 a share and by that time they had bought up a very large quantity of it. I had bought up quite a little myself, not as much as they had because they were fellows who were engaged in that business and I was engaged in farming, but when it was selling at about \$1 a share I naturally bought up some, although I got so much that I finally sold out part of it because I felt that if we could ever work out anything with the company I'd have enough to come out very well anyhow.

Finally the three of us made an offer to buy out Mr. Greer and all of his common stock for about \$163,000 and to also pay the same price per share to any other stockholders, because if we had bought him out without giving the same offer to other stockholders of similar stock there would have been criticism and possibly trouble, at least there'd have been very severe criticism of him, and he wouldn't want that. So we made that provision, the three of us, Mr. Schumacher, Mr. Greene, and myself.

While we're about it, I ought to give you the names of some of the other preferred stockholders that worked with us in our fight and did some very good work for us. There was Fred Wolfe, who became secretary of the company. Two others were

Bancroft: George W. Hendry and D.H. Duncanson who came to be directors and backed us loyally all the way through.

Baum: Did it take you much time when you were acting as president?

Bancroft: Yes. I used to go into San Francisco for two or three days every week.

Baum: This was at least a half-time job for you.

Bancroft: Well, I was getting well paid for that. I didn't get any pay as a member of the committee, but after I became president I was getting a good, fair salary.

Baum: Did this cut into your farming, or did you have your ranch going pretty well?

Bancroft: I had the farm going so well then that it didn't cut in too much.

We finally bought out Mr. Greer and bought out all of the common stockholders. Then I was elected president again, and Mr. Schumacher treasurer, and Mr. Greene vice-president, and we ran the company for about three years and got it in very good shape and improved its financial standing to where we finally sold out all of our stock, Mr. Schumacher, and I, to Mr. Greene. We sold out on a basis of \$10.50 a share, which was 50¢ above par but no accrued dividends.

Baum: Had you been getting dividends over the years?

Bancroft: In 1952, or 1953, after we got control, we gave very small dividends, something like 20¢ a share; it was supposed to be 80¢.

baum: Then on this whole deal you came out ahead on the share you'd purchased when they were very low but not on your original shares.

Bancroft: I came out even on my original shares.

baum: And you'd bought a lot for \$6 and \$1.

Bancroft: Yes. When we offered everybody else the same price, those that hadn't sold to us sold to Mr. Green at \$1050, so those that were able to stick with us ultimately received their principal all back and 50¢ a share more, but the trouble was a great many of them couldn't afford to hang on that long and a good many of the original stockholders had died in the meantime, so it was a very unfortunate thing the way it came out. I wanted very much to wind up the company after we first got control in 1932, but the common stockholders naturally didn't want to. So we went on a long time without the preferred stockholders getting what they should have gotten out of it, but if it had been wound up at that time it wouldn't have brought more than perhaps \$3 or \$4 a share because it was necessary for us to handle things pretty well for several years after we got complete control before we got the real value into the company that we finally had when we sold out.

Then Mr. Greene, as I say, bought out Mr. Schumacher and myself, and all the other preferred stockholders. First we were talking about selling it out to an investment company at \$8 a share and I got up a prospectus which figured out

ancroft: just what each property was worth, and I said, "Well, it's worth more than that." Mr. Greene, who had been holding for a pretty good price all the time said, "Yes, it is."

"We ought to get at least \$10 a share."

"Well," he said, "if you'll give me an option, I think it's worth \$10 a share." See, when we wound up we figured we'd have to pay taxes on capital gains which would reduce it somewhat, and he said finally, "I'd like to work on an option; I'd take it myself for \$10 a share."

"Well, make it \$10.50 and we'll do it." So we gave him this option and he went back and raised enough money to do it, not only to buy ours but all the other stockholders who still had the stock, so it worked out splendidly. Mr. Greene who bought it died, and his son is operating it, but it's just a family corporation now.

During the course of our fight in 1933 I believe the old gang were at one time bringing counter-charges against me on this or that; they weren't accusing me of any misappropriation of funds or anything, but they were accusing me of making charges that were unfounded, outrageous charges, and all that. They brought three libel suits against me for \$150,000 each, accusing me of lying. They brought the suits, so they were hanging over my head, but they didn't serve the summons. They didn't come to me directly; they had some supposed friend of mine that had been talking with them and they offered some

Cancroft: kind of settlement. This friend said, "Well, they'd dismiss those suits, you know."

I said, "I don't care to have them dismissed. Let them serve the summonses and I'll answer them and I'll plead truth on every item that I said and I'll prove it. What advantage is it for me to have them dismiss the suits?"

"Well," he said, "it would improve your credit."

"On the contrary, I think their having sued me for \$450,000 libel is the best thing for my credit that's happened for a long time because I never considered I was worth that much. If they consider I'm worth that much that's fine. Just let it stand."

Baum: That would impress lending institutions.

Cancroft: Well, the result was finally they dismissed the suits of their own accord. I never paid any attention to them after that, but we did have a long, hard fight and we were naturally pleased to have it come out the way it did.

Baum: You've had your experiences in corporate management, also.

Cancroft: It also was a vindication, and a very profitable one as it turned out. I could have made much more money out of that if I hadn't wanted to let the preferred stockholders share in everything I could do, but I felt that they were trusting me to make the fight, and so everything I did I tried to give them all an equal chance to come in on the stock. I'd report all the progress we made as we made it.

WORKING WITH OTHER FARMERS

California Walnut Growers' Association

ME: I have a lot of questions to ask you about the marketing cooperative you belonged to and the other voluntary farmer groups you were active in. How about starting with the Walnut Growers' Association?

McCroft: Fine. I was a director in that for a long time.

ME: I believe it was somewhere in the 1920s that Contra Costa County really became a big walnut-producing section.

McCroft: Yes. I think the Contra Costa Walnut Growers' Association is probably the biggest of all the locals, but I'm not sure.

ME: Earlier in the century most of the walnuts were produced around Los Angeles.

McCroft: Yes, in Southern California Los Angeles County, Ventura County and Orange County were the big producers. They'd produce about 85 % or 90 % of the walnuts. When they wanted us to get into the Walnut Growers' Association I used to tell them at first we had our Contra Costa association, that we didn't want to join because we had to ship all our walnuts down to Los Angeles and then they would be send out as Los Angeles walnuts, and I said that the time is coming when we'll be producing more walnuts, or as many walnuts, in Northern California as you produce in Southern California, and they thought that was preposterous. Now we produce something like 85 % of the walnuts in the state.

baum: Did they originally require that all association members would ship and pack through -- no, each local packs, don't they?

McCroft: Each local would handle the grading and the bleaching and all that, but then they'd have to ship everything down to Los Angeles.

baum: That seems a redundancy.

McCroft: Not if you knew Los Angeles.

baum: I assume that then they would be shipped all over the country and that many points would be closer to this area.

McCroft: Yes, but they could get a rate for handling in transit.

Oh, there were a great many points why they wanted to handle everything down there, why they didn't want a lot of local places, and finally when the change came a few years ago they moved up to Stockton and they have a very big plant up there, something like a twelve or thirteen million dollar plant, and now all the walnuts from Southern California have to be shipped up to Stockton. You see, they can handle them better in one place because, for instance, they have an order of \$50,000 worth of walnut meats for an organization. Well, they may want to get some from Southern California, some from Northern California, and so on, and then they have to meet certain grades, so it makes it work better if they concentrate pretty well, which they're doing.

baum: You were a director of the Contra Costa Walnut Growers'.

McCroft: Yes, and my son is a director and vice-president of that association now.

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baum: You were a director of the Contra Costa Walnut Growers'.

Wancroft: Yes, and my son is a director and vice-president of that association now.

- Baum: As director of the Contra Costa Walnut Growers' Association, what were the chief concerns of the association at that time? Pricing? Grading?
- Bancroft: At that time it was getting rid of the walnuts at the best price they could and also trying to make proper arrangements with the chain stores for handling them, and trying to get protection against the imports from China and other countries.
- Baum: Did your local concern itself with imports, or was that mainly done in the main office?
- Bancroft: That was done at the main office, but we all were concerned about it and we all talked about it and would write letters about it and so on, and we still are concerned about it.
- Baum: I believe the import of walnuts is almost nothing now.
- Bancroft: Well, the problem isn't the way it used to be when they'd come from China, where they could get the work done for almost nothing. What we're claiming now and insisting on is that they should require the same standards of health protection from imported goods like walnuts and dates and raisins that they require from us. "Why," they said, "if we did that we couldn't import them, the Turks won't pack their dates in a sanitary manner." Well, then, you're willing to feed the people food that you don't consider fit for human consumption just in order to maintain your diplomatic relations abroad. That's about what it comes to.
- Baum: Is importation of walnuts much of a problem now?

ancroft: It's quite a problem right now. You see, over half our sales are walnuts that are shelled, because people don't want to take the trouble to crack them open, and a great deal of the cost of handling shelled walnuts is labor, and of course they can get the labor done in Europe for a fraction of what we can get it done here for. The amount that is imported is quite a serious problem even now, therefore, and it could develop into a much more serious problem. The only way we can increase the consumption of walnuts to any extent in the United States is to sell more in the cracked form. We're trying all the time to get tariffs that'll protect us. Well, we get a little protection, but we don't get as much as we ought to get, but on the other hand if it hadn't been for the association the chances are we wouldn't be getting any because the free traders are always wanting to --

Baum: I saw Hiram Johnson's name associated with getting the tariffs up when they had been reduced.

ancroft: Oh, he was always helping us on things of that kind.

Baum: Was that through your influence, or California's?

ancroft: No, that was through the fact that he realized that the farmers needed that protection. It's a perfectly simple thing. You can't expect us to compete and have a prosperous industry in raising walnuts if they're going to allow walnuts to come in, cracked walnuts especially, from other countries without any duty, where their labor costs are almost nothing compared to

ancroft: ours. Now, the reason I say cracked or walnut meats is that none of the other countries have ever established a standard such as we have for our Diamond Brand walnuts, so that our Diamond Brand will bring quite a little more than the walnuts that are imported from European countries.

am: Was your local -- this was some years back -- were they concerned about pricing, or did they pretty much leave that to central?

ancroft: That was entirely left to central, we had nothing to do about the price.

am: Did your members squabble about that at meetings or were they satisfied?

ancroft: They were satisfied. The central walnut growers association at that time was probably the most successful and best-run cooperative in California, one of the very best in the country, and it did a very good job.

am: I believe that the California Walnut Growers' Association has spent a substantial amount of money on advertising, and I wondered if your local members approved of that policy.

ancroft: Yes, we did, and also our pear association spent quite a good deal of money advertising and we approved of that, because advertising pays, or there wouldn't be so much of it done.

am: How do the California Walnut Growers' vote, but member or by amount of walnuts produced?

ancroft: We used to vote by members, but now I think they're changing that.

um: One member, one vote, regardless of amount of production.

ancroft: That's the way it used to be.

um: Do you think that was a valid way of running the association?

ancroft: No, I don't think it's the logical way, but it might be the political way. In other words, we never had any trouble between the big growers and the small growers, but if you let a man who has, say, one ton of walnuts have as much say-so in how the crop should be handled as a man who has a 100 tons, that doesn't seem to be a very logical way to run things. But on the other hand it keeps the fellow with the one ton satisfied, and we had practically no differences at that time. Now, I think they have had some differences since, on some of those things.

baum: Do you attend meetings now?

ancroft: No, I don't attend them now.

baum: Does your son?

ancroft: Yes, he does. I go to the annual meeting or something of that kind, but I don't attend the directors' meetings because I'm not a director any more.

The Walnut Growers' had a great deal to do with establishing the industry on a sound basis; before that the price that they'd get for walnuts was very low and since that time, as you say, the Walnut Growers' Association does a great deal of advertising, and it has helped increase the demand for walnuts and it's also kept the walnut marketing up to date. For

croft: instance, it used to be we'd sell all our walnuts in 100-pound sacks. Well, now they're selling most of the walnuts either cracked, selling the meats, or they're selling them in one-pound cellophane bags. Now they have to pay something like 4¢ a pound more for walnuts in those cellophane bags than they do in bulk, yet the stores can afford to pay that 4¢ more rather than to get them in bulk.

me: Otherwise they'd have service problems in selling them to the customer.

croft: Yes. And a customer, when they see a pack of walnuts on the counter there in a cellophane bag, they're much more apt to pick it up and buy it than if they just see them in a big sack. Then there's one other thing: people are very apt to, as they go past, to pick up two or three and crack them and eat them, and if they're in cellophane bags they can't, but that amounts to quite a heavy drain on the stock. But that's just one thing, you see, that they're doing. They have to keep up with the market. If they hadn't done that they probably wouldn't be selling more than 60 % of what they're selling now, if they'd tried to stick to selling them in bulk.

Oh, there was another thing. You know we used to sell -- this was before they got to selling them in cellophane bags -- them in bulk, and Diamond Brand was recognized as a very fine brand of walnuts. We'd sell, for instance, to the A&P, and they'd have the sack with Diamond Brand on it and sell out the walnuts, but when they got that sack empty they'd take

ancroft: another brand, dump it into that sack, and keep selling them and making people have the idea they were getting Diamond Brand walnuts.

So the Walnut Growers' Association spent years and a great many thousand dollars -- they offered \$10,000 for someone who could devise a proper stamping system so they could stamp every one of their Diamond Brand walnuts with the Diamond Brand on it, and they finally got the best machine they could, paid the man the \$10,000 price for having developed it, and then worked on that for a number of years and finally got a machine that would stamp enough of them fast enough to do it. They had to do it by having the stamps on rubber things like rubber balls, you know, where the walnut would be pressed against it, because it was a hard thing to stamp "Diamond Brand" on the rough shell of a walnut. But they did that to protect themselves, so when people bought walnuts they were getting the Diamond Brand.

Now, one trouble that has arisen with walnuts is that as the walnuts have deteriorated down south and in other places, the orchards are apt not to be turning out as good a delivery as they used to, and they want to lower the Diamond standard so that they can still sell their walnuts as Diamond walnuts. These are the southernors, not the northernors.

ancroft: Well, I won't say it's just the southernors, but I presume that's where most of the trouble comes from.

um: They have a second grade that's called Emerald.

ncroft: Yes. There's a constant pressure to lower the standard so they can ship more as Diamonds, and there the growers with small deliveries are more apt to be urging that than the growers with large deliveries, and that's where the difference of whether you vote by tonnage or vote by person might make quite a difference.

um: This would have the effect of negating your advertising eventually, wouldn't it?

ncroft: Yes, it doesn't pay to advertise a product unless you've got a product that's worth advertising, and it's better than that of your competitors. But I mean, that's why I don't believe that an association should be one person, one vote, and yet I think that a great many associations have found that they had to do it in order to have popular support.

um: I believe Mr. Charles Teague was president for 32 years?

ncroft: Yes, he was president both of that and of the Sunkist organization, and he served as president for a great many years in each one and always did it without any recompense at all. That's where the cooperatives have been quite successful, I think, in getting men of high grade to serve for no compensation because they are growers.

um: Mr. Teague was from Southern California.

ncroft: Yes.

um: I suppose you didn't have much contact with him up here.

ncroft: Oh, I used to know him quite well because we had so many

ancroft: interests in common.

um: Did he come up here to look after affairs, or did you go down there?

ancroft: There was a manager; and Mr. Teague was just the president of the association, but Carlyle Thorpe was the general manager, and he was the one that used to keep in contact with everybody, he and his sales force, and they would send up men for all of our annual meetings and everything of that kind, and there was no antagonism between the north and the south in those times. We all realized that they had done a very good job down there and, of course, they were the organizers of the Walnut Growers' Association. When it was first organized I don't think 2 % of the walnuts grown in the state were grown in Northern California because it was thought that we couldn't raise them up here on account of the frosts and cold weather.

um: When you were a director of the Contra Costa association -- did all the local growers belong to that?

ancroft: No. I think we had about 85 or 90 % of the walnut growers in the state, that is, of the tonnage.

um: How about locally here, in Contra Costa?

ancroft: Locally they were almost all members.

um: There were no outstanding growers who refused to join?

ancroft: Not that I know of, and I'm very sure I would know if there had been any.

um: Were all the local members satisfied with the policies set

um: by the central?

croft: I should say so. There was very seldom any dispute. If anything did come up it would be discussed at the meeting and it would be straightened out. There was no cause of friction in the local at all. There'd be come feeling in the local that the walnuts ought to be sent directly or handled a little differently by the state organization and not all shipped down to Los Angeles and come out of Southern California.

um: Was this the only source of antagonism between your northern growers and the rest of the walnut growers?

croft: I wouldn't say it was antagonism; it was just a little problem.

um: You mentioned that that situation had changed now.

croft: Oh, yes, it's entirely different now. All the walnuts, about 85 % of them, are raised now in Northern California, and the rest are shipped up here and sent from Stockton. Of course, now the Walnut Growers' Association doesn't control as large a percentage of the crop as it used to. There have been a number of independent buyers who've been buying and selling the walnuts in competition with the California Walnut Growers' Association, and personally I think that's not a bad thing. It keeps the association up on its toes.

The whole idea of a farmers' cooperative is to be an organization of farmers, and we're supposed to get away from the middlemen and so on, but gradually as the association gets older and large and more complex it will be more and more run

croft: by professional businessmen or operators, and therefore in order to keep them on their toes I think a little competition is a very good thing.

am: What is the disadvantage to the grower of having the management acquire more power?

croft: Well, sometimes management uses that power in order to keep the different members of the management in office, and in order to raise their salaries, then they can work a little less hard, and so on.

am: So they tend to decrease in efficiency, you think?

croft: They're apt to.

am: Well, I was wondering specifically how this would be evident. Would it be in increased costs of handling?

croft: Well, it got to be evidenced in regard to walnuts. I consider the Walnut Growers' Association one of the very best-run cooperatives in the state, and yet it got to where private individuals could come in and compete and buy walnuts in the field from the farmers, and pay more for them than the farmers were getting that delivered their crops to the cooperative. That is where the competition, I think, has helped out the industry rather than injured it.

am: You said Carlyle Thorpe was the business manager for many years.

croft: Yes, and he was very able, and while he was running it, the independents didn't make anywhere near the headway that they made later on when others were running the organization.

Q: So you think the golden years of the cooperative were when Carlyle Thorpe was running it?

A: Well, I wouldn't say that necessarily. It may be that the golden years are still ahead, but I would say that it was extremely well run while he was actively managing it.

Q: Was there any opposition to him in the local membership?

A: No, I wouldn't say so, not that I know of. He was a live wire and he did a very good job with the cooperative. Well, I'd say that if it had not been for the cooperative the walnut growers themselves would have got a lot less on the whole than they did get. In the beginning, practically all were sold as unshelled walnuts, as you see them on the table, for instance, at Thanksgiving time, and then we got to producing so many walnuts that we couldn't sell them all that way and there were some that would have to be sold cracked, that is, for the walnut meats, and they would go to bakeries and candy makers and people of that kind.

Q: Those were less profitable to the grower, weren't they?

A: Yes, they were less profitable for the grower. Then, you see, we got to where nobody wanted to sell them as walnut meats and everybody wanted to sell his walnuts in the shell, and that's where the Walnut Growers' Association did a very fine job. It would apportion the amounts you got from what were sold in the shell and what were sold as walnut meats, and it kept the number that were sold in the shell that were offered to the

croft: market from being excessive, but if you were keeping that from being excessive you'd have to crack more nuts than you otherwise would have.

Q: You mean they spread over all the growers the reduced returns that came from the shelled walnuts?

croft: Yes. You'd deliver your walnuts to the Walnut Grower's Association and they would say, "Well, they might make Diamond Brand" or "They might make Emerald Brand" or even Suntard, which was a lower brand, or they might be so poor, some of them, but they would crack them up and sell them as shelled walnuts. But they used to take the lower grades that way to crack up for shelled walnuts and the better grades to sell as either Diamond or Emerald walnuts. Your walnuts would be graded as you turned them in to the association, and you would get a certain credit for your Diamond; then whether they were large, small, or babies, you'd get different ratings there; and the same with Emeralds and the same with Suntands and then the same for those that had to be shelled, or culls. They would want to keep from offering more than the public had a demand for as walnuts in the shell.

Then what they had left over they would either export or shell. Well, now, for export walnuts we didn't get as much, so everybody would want to have his, if he were an independent, sold in the shell, and he wouldn't want to export any, but if he didn't export any and tried to sell them all then in the

croft: shell, then the value of those sold in the shell would drop way down. In other words, suppose we could sell 40,000 tons in the shell possibly: if we offered 60,000 in the shell to be sold in the United States we wouldn't get as much total for the 60,000 as we would get for the 40,000.

am: The surplus would depress the price.

croft: It would break the price. Since World War II there hasn't been much of an export market, but before that, before World War I and even after that there was a very good export market, although we wouldn't expect to get as much in the export market as we'd get if the walnuts were sold here. Then we would sell the rest, they'd go to what they call the cracking plant. For that reason we wanted everybody, as nearly 100 % membership in the association as possible. Gradually we got to where I think we had over 90 % of the walnuts that were raised in California in the association, and also they had some that they raised in Washington and Oregon. In the rest of the United States there's practically no walnuts of what they call the English walnuts, just the native black walnuts, which don't compete with ours.

Well, then, later on they organized what they called the Walnut Control Board, because even the independent merchandisers realized that they were better off with some control and they realized that if they tried to send all their walnuts as unshelled that the Walnut Growers' Association would meet

croft: their competitive price and it would run the price way down and nobody would benefit by it. So there was organized what they called the Walnut Control Board that was separate from the Walnut Growers' Association and from the independents, and that board would control both groups.

am: This was under the provisions of the Agricultural Adjustment Act?

croft: Yes. That has worked ever since and is working satisfactorily.

am: I wanted to ask you what you thought of the Walnut Control Board. Did you think that was a reasonable idea?

croft: Yes, I thought it was an entirely reasonable idea, because it extended the same sort of control that the walnut growers had been using for their own nuts, extended it to all of them.

am: You can't make that compulsory on all walnut growers and dealers?

croft: On all walnut dealers, we could say, and as the walnut growers have to sell their walnuts through the walnut dealers, practically all of them, it made it compulsory on both, but there's been very little complaint about that. There was some objection to putting it through by the independents, but since it has been put through I think they all realize that it has worked very well.

am: Did you favor that AAA legislation when it was passed in 1933?

croft: I favored that part of it very much. I didn't favor their killing the little pigs and things of that kind, I didn't favor the big subsidies that have been granted to farmers for growing crops that nobody wants, and so on, but for the control

ancroft: of marketing and for associations -- I worked very hard with the pear growers in Washington and Oregon, trying to get them to join in a Pacific Coast pear growers' association.

um: I don't think you mentioned that.

ancroft: I'd better go on with the walnuts here, but I'll tell you that later.

um: About the walnut growers, did all the local members come to meetings and vote, or did just a few take an interest and the rest sort of --

ancroft: No, we used to have regional meetings, you see. The Walnut Growers' Association of California, what we called the central organization, was composed of these local organizations, and with the local organizations we'd have a meeting once a year and have a very large attendance.

um: Only once a year?

ancroft: We'd have a regular meeting once a year. Now, if we'd wanted any others for any special purpose we'd have them.

um: But otherwise it was in the hands of the duly elected directors?

ancroft: Yes, and they'd serve without pay so that they usually elected farmers that were raising a substantial amount of walnuts, because otherwise if a person didn't have quite the interest in it he wouldn't want to serve on it without pay, spend his time at it.

um: Did it take much time?

ancroft: It would depend. When we were putting up a building or when we

McCroft: were getting new machinery or something of that kind, some problem would arise and we'd have to have quite a few meetings, but ordinarily we'd have meetings as we needed them, sometimes once a month and sometimes two or three in a month if something important would come up.

Q: I guess one of the problems in human relationships is how you can get a lot of people together in a cooperative organization and not have petty squabbles and squabbles over personalities breaking out.

McCroft: Well, in our Contra Costa County organization we had practically none of that; I don't remember ever having had any real squabbles. Once in a while some grower would register a pretty strong kick about something, but usually when we'd explain it it would be all right, except once in a great while there'd be some question of grading where they wouldn't be satisfied; naturally, a grower who'd had his walnuts graded practically all Suntand or one of the lower grades while another would have his graded as the top grade, there'd be a certain amount of claim by the one who got the poorer grades that he was being discriminated against, but that didn't amount to much of anything because when they would grade your walnuts they'd take, say, a hundred out of the delivery of perhaps five tons or three tons or one ton, and they would take one or two out of one sack and then out of another and so on in order to get a fair sample, crack those, and then they would count just how many of light meat, how many you

ancroft: had of wormy meats, if any, how many were shriveled, and so on. They would keep those in a box of a 100 with 10 rows of 10 each -- they had cardboard boxes made up -- and they would keep those until the growers had time to come in and inspect them and see just what their sample was. They had the grading all done by hired girls or women -- almost all of that work was done by women -- and then after the nuts were cracked and placed in boxes of 100 each with a man's number or name on it, they'd show them to you and you could see yourself just how many you had that were Suntands. If you didn't think it was a fair grading they'd say, "Well, you go pick out the walnuts and we'll crack another bunch," and the different samples would run very close together, so it was fair.

baum: In general the membership felt the grading was quite objective.

ancroft: Oh, yes, it was absolutely impartial.

baum: Wasn't it a very tense moment when your crop was graded?

ancroft: No, because we usually knew ahead of time about how they were running because we cracked some of them ourselves. You see, you harvest them and then you have to dry them and get them to a certain dryness. Now, once in a while a grower would deliver his too wet, not dried out sufficiently, because he'd want to get all the weight he could. Well, the art of delivery is to deliver them dry enough but not the least bit too dry, just as soon as they get dry enough deliver them so that you don't lose in weight. And also, don't have to use the

McCroft: capacity of your dryer to keep on drying them after they're dry enough. But once in a while they deliver them too wet, and then they would be sent back to the grower and he'd have to re-dry them. Of course, that wasn't a popular thing to do. But taking it all in all there was I would say just as little friction as you could possibly ask for in an organization.

Sum: Do you have any comments on how you achieved this formula of such a little bit of friction. In most cooperative organizations some trouble may arise, maybe having nothing to do with issues, but with who wants to be elected director, and that sort of thing.

McCroft: I was going to say that that was a thing that we didn't run up against here, but I've seen it occur in cooperatives or in any organization. Two or three men, for instance, if there was a position open as director or a position open as an officer, would want the job, and that's just a natural thing in human nature that the fellow that doesn't get it is disappointed.

Sum: Even unpaid jobs like that carry a certain amount of prestige.

McCroft: Yes, that's what I meant. For instance, the president of our association never received any money, but a man might want it, probably several people wanted it every election, but in our organization all of that was reduced to a minimum. I never saw much evidence of it. I know we had one fellow that used to be a good deal of a kicker, so I said, "Let's elect him a director and let him kick from the inside instead of the outside." So we did and after that everything was perfectly smooth.

ancroft: He'd had the responsibility and he'd seen that what we were doing was for the best interests of the growers. Before we got through, he was elected president of the organization.

I wanted to say in regard to the Walnut Growers': before our local group joined the state organization one of the things that I told you I objected to was the fact that all the walnuts had to be sent down to Southern California and shipped from there. But another thing I objected to was bleaching the walnuts. I believed it injured their quality and they insisted that it did not. Well, for a year or two we sold to an independent, largely because we didn't think the handling of the walnuts was right. Concord walnuts, which were the principal walnuts that we raised in this county, had a more tender shell than the Franquettes and a lot of other walnuts, and so with the heat of the summer the meats tended to become tanned a little, and also their shells might be a little bit darker, but it was mostly that the meats would be tanned instead of completely white, you know, the very light-colored meat. We insisted that that was just the natural way they grew and that the idea of bleaching the shells was not good for the walnuts and that the central organization was marketing on the wrong basis, that they should emphasize the quality of the meats and the taste rather than the color, but they insisted that that was not the case and the bleaching didn't do them any harm nor injure the taste at all. And it

McCroft: doesn't at first, you don't notice it, but now they will admit to you that it's much better not to bleach where you're not selling the walnuts in-shell. In other words, we were right on part of it and they were right on part of it.

Sum: You mean it's better not to bleach the shelled walnuts?

McCroft: Yes. When you bleach them you use chlorine and so on, and a part of that gets through to the walnuts, so we were right on that part; on the other hand, they were right on the fact that the American housewife -- I've always said she's a very poor buyer -- will buy by eyesight and not by taste. Now, the European housewife is much more apt to buy --

Sum: She'll buy a shriveled little fruit if it tastes better, and the American woman will buy a big, fat, mushy one.

McCroft: You brought out a very good point, and we experience that too with our prunes. I can tell you about that. But where these walnuts originated -- they were from Persia, I believe -- principally they went to France, and the French climate is such that you get a very light meat, but in our dryer climate here you're apt to get a darker meat when the walnuts are allowed to mature properly, and we insisted that they ought to allow them to get that darker meat and sell them accordingly, and they insisted that they were no better to get the darker meat and that our Concord walnuts were accordingly not as good as walnuts that were raised down south with a harder shell and a lighter meat. Well, our walnuts were if anything better,

Bancroft: but we found ourselves that they wouldn't sell as well if the meat was darker, and they wouldn't sell as well if their shells weren't bleached. But they have found that they can go to the expense of bleaching them and get quite a little more for them than they can if they don't bleach, and if you eat the walnuts within a reasonable time you don't notice the deterioration, but if you keep them over a year, for instance, or something of that kind, those that were bleached are apt to turn rancid while those that are not bleached are not improved by keeping but they don't turn rancid.

Baum: What about nutritional value?

Bancroft: Well, I imagine they're about the same. I never heard any complaint about them. Of course, the pure food and drug group would go after them if they were injured nutritionally. But I remember several years later we had a Chinese cook, and he cracked the walnuts for us, and I noticed he'd always put the brownish walnuts on the table to eat. I asked him one time why he did that, why he didn't give us all of the meats. (He'd use the others in cooking or something.) "Oh," he said, "those not ripe. These ripe." And as a matter of fact, he was dead right. If anything, the flavor is better.

Now, in order to get our walnuts with light or lighter meats, we have to pick them just as soon as they're mature, because if you leave them on any longer they turn a little darker in their meat, and if you leave them much longer they

ancroft: turn a great deal darker. So now we all market just the minute the walnuts are mature enough to stand it.

um: This means a number of pickings, I suppose.

ancroft: No, it means knocking them off the trees, and of course we do that now with mechanical shakers.

Now, you brought up the subject of smaller fruit. We used to raise about 200 tons of prunes here a year, quite a large number. Well, we had what they called the Petite French, the regular French prune, and as you raise them you grade them out in sizes, and you'd get about double the price for the large French prunes that you'd get for the smaller ones. We used to take the small ones ourselves, and we used to give them to our friends in the East and also out here, we'd send them at Christmastime and other times, and they'd always come back and say, "Where can we buy prunes like those? We can't find anything like them." Well, the reason they wouldn't would be that the housewives wouldn't buy them in the streets; they would always want the bigger prunes even though they cost more and were not as good, and so there wouldn't be these small prunes for sale in the stores because we'd send all of them to Europe.

baum: Were they more flavorful, the small ones?

ancroft: Yes, and the large prunes of this particular variety were also very good. I've always thought the medium-sized prunes were better than the large ones, but the point is, then they

ancroft: introduced what they call Imperials, and all different varieties of prunes that would be larger, and they were far inferior to the original French prune. You know, they would bring perhaps three or four great big things on a plate if you ordered prunes when you were traveling on a train like the Super Chief, and they don't have anything like the taste that the others have.

You take pears. They don't care anything about the taste of pears when you're selling them, for instance, wholesale ; you sell them in the markets or anything, they don't care about the taste. They want the looks and the keeping quality because they sell on looks. You take a lot of California fruits that are sold in New York and the East on the market: everybody that buys them says that they're tasteless. Well, it isn't because they are tasteless when we raise them here in California, it's because we pick them so green in order to get them to market when they look nice that they aren't properly matured. And that's one thing where pears have an advantage over the other fruits, because with pears you have to pick them green in order to have them mature properly.

baum: You don't recommend buying California fruit in Eastern markets?

ancroft: Well, yes, I'd recommend it. I'm a Californian. But I would rather recommend buying California pears on the Eastern market,

Back to the walnuts: as I say, that's the reason we held out for a couple of years or so, and of course the independents

ancroft: who were buying from us at that time kept plugging that to us, and said, "Yours are really a lot better than those they raise down south; they can raise light meat and so they use that and you'd better not join them."

um: They were trying to keep you from joining them?

ancroft: Naturally, because they wanted to be able to buy our walnuts.

um: Was it a substantial switch-over when you switched to artificial dehydrators?

ancroft: Yes, it's quite an expensive thing, but we used to have, oh, acres of dry yard, and now we dry entirely with natural gas. First we dried our walnuts with butane gas and now we dry with natural gas, have blowers.

um: The saving in space compensates for the additional expense?

ancroft: Oh, no, the saving in space doesn't begin to, but the efficiency of drying does. For instance, we'd have these trays all spread out and then have a rain come and we'd have to stack them. If it was rainy weather for quite a little while they might begin to mold on us. We had to dry them in the shade, you see, we couldn't dry them in the sun because that would be too hot and would discolor them. You leave them out one day or a half a day in the sun, pile the trays one on top of the other, leaving a little air space -- you'd have cleats or something for each of these big trays. As I told you, we used 3 x 8 foot trays. They have another way of drying walnuts where they have walnut trays about 6 inches deep, and

croft: dry them, but as we were drying a lot of fruit besides we'd use the same trays for drying walnuts and just have single layers of walnuts and we'd stack them. Well, when a rain came up we'd have to cover all those stacks --

um: [Laughing] It kept you on your toes day and night.

croft: Oh, boy, you'd go to bed at night and in the middle of the night a rain would come up and you'd have to get everybody out of bed and go out there and cover them up, and so on. Then, of course, there was a good deal of hand work in emptying the trays and all of that sort of business, and sacking the walnuts.

Now we use bulk delivery; we pick the walnuts, hull them, and run them into the dehydrator, and our type of dehydrator is formed where you have a bin with about three or four sections, and the top one you put green walnuts in. After they have been in for a day or so you're able to take the walnuts out at the bottom of the stack so you drop them down one bin, and then you can put another load of green ones in on top.

um: Is this dehydrating always done on the growers' property?

croft: No. In the larger places as a rule they do it on their own property, but the smaller growers can't afford it, so they have to hire it done by a contractor who does that.

um: But it's not done through the association.

croft: No, they have to be dry when they're delivered to the association. It doesn't have any facilities for doing the drying.

ancroft: That would be an awful job, because what happens is that a grower takes his in to the commercial dryer and the commercial dryer will very often also do all the harvesting: he'll have the machines that'll knock the walnuts, and then he has people to pick them up, and then he hauls them in and dries them and does the whole thing at so much a ton, about \$100 to \$125 a ton is what they charge the grower for doing that.

California Pear Growers' Association

Baum: I believe the California Pear Growers' Association was organized about 1917. What was their function?

ancroft: To get an orderly marketing of the pears. They had directors from all the pear-growing districts of the state and we used to try to get the pear canners to give us a fair price for our pears and we would meet with them and try to set what was a fair price. They'd tell us how much carry-over there was and so on. We used to call them the "crepe-hangers" when they would come to talk to us about the pears and tell us what a large crop there was going to be.

Baum: To try to reduce the price.

ancroft: Yes, but on the whole we used to have amicable meetings and get along pretty well. On the whole most of them were pretty fair. Some of them would try to take advantage of some growers but they didn't take much advantage of the growers who belonged to the association because we'd all stick pretty

ancroft: well together.

In this connection, I don't want you to think that I was always acquiescent with the canners. I remember one meeting we were having where the pear growers were discussing some sort of marketing agreement and we had the salesmen who represented the companies that were shipping the fruit for us, like the Earl Fruit Company and the Stewart Fruit Company and so on, all the different companies. They were trying to get us to do something but the canners had to be there too at the meeting, and somebody said, "Well, the sales managers have endorsed this." "Well," I said, "I wouldn't trust them any more than I would the canners." And at that the head of the canners' group got up and stalked out of the meeting.

am: He was insulted?

ancroft: Yes. And I hadn't even intended to say anything against the canners. I just took it for granted that they knew we didn't trust the canners. He wouldn't come back to the meeting until the next day, and some of the others got hold of him and mollified him, told him that I hadn't meant to say anything against the canners, it was just the feeling that the growers had toward them. In other words, the reason we were organized was because we had to be protecting our own interests, the farmers' interests, and we couldn't trust the canners to look out for our interests any more than they could trust us to look out for theirs.

Q: You were a director in the California Pear Growers' Association. Are they divided into locals like the Walnut Growers'?

A: No, they're not. Our association had members from Lake County, Sacramento County, Santa Clara County, Solano County, Sonoma County, and so on, Napa County and Contra Costa County; we had members from all over the state.

Q: You didn't divide yourself into locals that made up a central.

A: No, but we elected directors roughly in accordance with production; that is, we would allow one director from each district and then if they had over a certain number of tons they'd have two directors; a district like Santa Clara County where they had a tremendous crop, they had, as I remember, three directors.

Q: How did the Pear Growers' Association compare to the Walnut Growers' Association in getting along together?

A: Well, we used to have more arguments than the Walnut Growers' because there was more difference in pears than there were in walnuts. I mean, a walnut was a walnut, if it was a light meat or a good merchantable nut. Some were better than others but on the other hand generally only the best varieties were raised; each district might have a variety that was better in its district than the other varieties were. Now pears sell by the district they're raised in, and for instance, on the Sacramento River they claimed that their pears were better than those raised in Santa Clara County, and they were, and they would get a higher price. We claimed that ours were

ancroft: better than the pears that were raised in Santa Clara County, and they were, and we would get a higher price than they would in Santa Clara County, but we couldn't get quite as high a price as they'd get on the Sacramento River, so that when the prices were established, suppose it was \$50 a ton for pears on the River, it might be \$45 a ton for pears in Contra Costa County, \$40 a ton for pears in Santa Clara County -- we always, in our own case, claimed that our pears were just as good as the pears on the River, and I'd get the same price from the canners, but that was because we did raise very good pears and also we made very good deliveries. But the pears on the River come in a little earlier when the canners want them more, and ours come right in the middle of the season. In Santa Clara County the pears aren't as firm and hard as ours, so they can't ship the pears east in competition with ours. We can ship our pears east in competition with the River and do just as well for the pears that are shipped at the same time, but the River pears come in about two weeks earlier than ours and during the first two weeks they bring in much higher prices. The first pears in the market will bring fantastic prices, perhaps \$8 or \$9 a box, where they'll drop to \$4 a box later.

But taking it all in all, we'd have those arguments but after we got through arguing the Santa Clara people knew that their pears weren't as desirable as ours even though they would never admit it, and we knew that the Sacramento pears

Bancroft: were entitled to get a little bit more than Contra Costa County pears on account of the time they come in, and we knew that the Lake County pears were entitled to get a little more because they come in so late. With our pears, the canners buy them and they have to put them in cold storage before they pack them, they have that cost. If they can take the Lake County pears, get them late enough, they may be able to can them without putting them in cold storage, or they don't have to keep them in as long. It just depends on how the canners work. Then with pears, they use them a great deal for fruit cocktail and they have to use them at the same time that they get the peaches and the pineapples and grapes. (I left out cherries because they have to pickle the cherries separately so as to be able to put them in at the right time.)

Baum: But the canner bought directly from the grower, except that the money went through the association, is that right? The canner negotiated with the grower?

Bancroft: I think he'd negotiate with the grower but I think he'd buy from the association this grower's crop, or so many tons of this grower's crop.

Baum: If the grower belonged to the association, then he had to agree to sell it at not less than the association price and through the association.

Bancroft: It's a long time ago and we've had so many different arrangements since, but as I remember it that's what it used to be. When we belonged to the association we would abide by the

Bancroft: association price, we wouldn't sell any less than that, and it would be sold through the association. But the canners would buy so many tons of the Bancroft pears and if they didn't like another grower's pears they wouldn't buy them.

Sum: The growers were in competition with each other as to quality.

Bancroft: Yes.

Sum: Were most of the growers able under this system to sell their pears at the agreed-upon price? Or did some growers get less?

Bancroft: Well, generally it'd be only the growers that had very poor crops or trouble or something. You see, the association would make every effort it could to sell the growers' fruit for them, but if they didn't sell it for them the other growers wouldn't get stuck. Now, in the association they have right now, you see, they agree to sell the fruit and if they can't sell it the other members will get stuck and have to bear their share of the loss.

Sum: In other words, the association now owns the whole crop and then they sell it and if they don't sell it all then all the members share the loss. That's the way the walnuts go.

Bancroft: Yes. But a number of us pear growers don't approve of that method, because we believe that if the other growers don't raise a good enough product that we shouldn't suffer if the canners don't want to take their pears. We never have the canners refuse to take ours.

Sum: Through the 1920s were most of the growers in the association?

croft: Yes, most, but by no means all.

um: Did the growers who were in the association adhere to the association price? Were there any problems about some of them trying to undersell?

croft: No, we didn't have any problems of that kind. Sometimes we'd have problems as to whether they could deliver the quality or not, something of that kind, and also there were some times when canners would get into trouble financially, another thing we had to look out for very carefully.

um: How do you mean?

croft: Couldn't pay for the crop as they'd agreed to pay. They'd go broke and the association had to be very careful who they dealt with and so on for that reason.

um: Was there any problem about independent growers who would undersell the association growers?

croft: No, we didn't try to put up a price and hold it above what the canners would agree to pay. We'd always tried to come to a settlement with the canners. I don't remember that we ever had a time when we had to say to the growers, "Sell for what you can get," or something of that kind, "we can't make any kind of a deal with the canners." We'd sometimes have two or three meetings before we'd come to an adjusted price. You see, with pears, if we couldn't sell them to the canners at a price that we thought was right we could always ship them east, or ship them to market. Now, with a lot of fruit you can't do that. With cling peaches you can't for instance. Nobody

croft: wants to buy cling peaches if they know they're getting clings. Sometimes they'll buy them because they look nice, not realizing they're clings, but a person doesn't want to buy them except in cans.

am: As a pear grower you had more means of selling your crop than other fruit growers have?

croft: We could sell them as fresh pears, or sell them to the cannery, or dry them; we had three outlets there. But gradually it got to where you couldn't get anywhere near as much net from the dried pears as you can get from the fresh pears because you have so much labor cost and handling costs in drying them. It was quite an expensive thing to dry pears and there was practically no market for them in this country. In Europe they'd pay more for dried pears than for any other kind of dried fruit.

am: When you sold fresh fruit, how was that handled?

croft: That was handled very much the way it still is. We'd go through a selling agency usually and we packed and wrapped and shipped east and sent to the auction markets or to private sale.

am: Did the selling agency buy a certain percentage of your crop, say at the orchard, and then handle it from then on, or did they just handle it for you on a commission basis?

croft: They had all sorts of different arrangements, but usually it would be that they would charge you so much for sorting and packing, and then they would charge you a commission on the sales. For instance, suppose they would charge \$1 a box for

Bancroft: sorting, packing. (At one time I know it was down to \$.25 a box in the early days, for the cost of the box, the cost of packing, and all that sort of business.) Then they'd load it on cars and ship it east and they'd have the freight charges added to that and the icing charges added to that. Then it would be sold in the auction market and you'd have the auction charges and they'd sell it for so much. Then would come in all the deducts, which would be the auction charges, the hauling charges, the drayage charges, the refrigeration charges, and the railroad charges, and so on, down to sometimes where there wouldn't be anything left and sometimes there'd even be red ink.

Baum: In other words, the grower took the entire risk.

Bancroft: That was generally the way it was. Now, sometimes we would get the shipping company to guarantee \$25 a ton, but sometimes we'd take the entire risk. In my own case, I always took the entire risk, but when we began shipping ourselves we got to doing our own packing and ran our own sales end of things and cut out all the commission that we had to pay to the fruit companies.

Baum: You never could cut out the sales commission, could you?

Bancroft: Oh, no.

Baum: You never would be able to market them individually.

Bancroft: No, we would send our pears through the auction markets and we'd have to have an agent in each city where we were selling.

Bancroft: Now we have one in Chicago, one in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, and so on.

Q: What do you mean, "we?" The association, or the Bancrofts?

Bancroft: The Bancrofts. We ship a carload. Then the agent at the other end takes care of that car when it comes, sees that it's sold at the auction to the best advantage, watches the market. For instance, if he thinks there are going to be too many cars sold tomorrow he'll call us up on the teletype and tell us the situation and say he thinks we'd better not sell our car until the next day, or we'd better hold it over until Monday, and we usually follow his advice on that. Then he gets a certain commission or a certain amount per car, for each car that's sold, and the auction company gets a certain commission, say $1\frac{1}{2}\%$, something of that kind, for the selling price. That doesn't sound so bad, but then you figure they're getting $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ commission not only on what your fruit is actually bringing but on the freight east and on the icing costs and on the packing costs and on the costs of the materials that went into the packing boxes. So they may be getting 10% of your net, of what you get for the fruit itself. There's nothing cheap about the way we're marketing it, but on the other hand, all those things cost; those companies probably don't grow exorbitantly rich either.

Q: Wouldn't it be more efficient for the association to handle the sale of fresh fruit through their own agent?

Following pages:

1. Letter from distributors to Philip Bancroft
2. "Mt. Diablo" and "Aloha" Bartlett pear display, Pier 22, New York City. August 1950.
3. "Mt. Diablo" pears at New York auction. The bidding.



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August 10, 1950

Mr. Philip Bancroft,
P. & P. Bancroft,
Walnut Creek,
Contra Costa County, Calif.

My dear Mr. Bancroft:

You will be interested, I know, in the attached photograph showing typical display of a car of your pears as set up on the railroad pier and ready for inspection by buyers prior to the auction sale.

The gentleman on the left is Jack Peters extolling the merits of your Brands. We took this photograph for possible use in connection with additional publicity.

The Dealer Service--Sales Promotion work continues to go along actively and is keeping the trade thoroughly Brand conscious on "Mt. Diablo" and "Aloha" Bartletts.

With best regards from all,

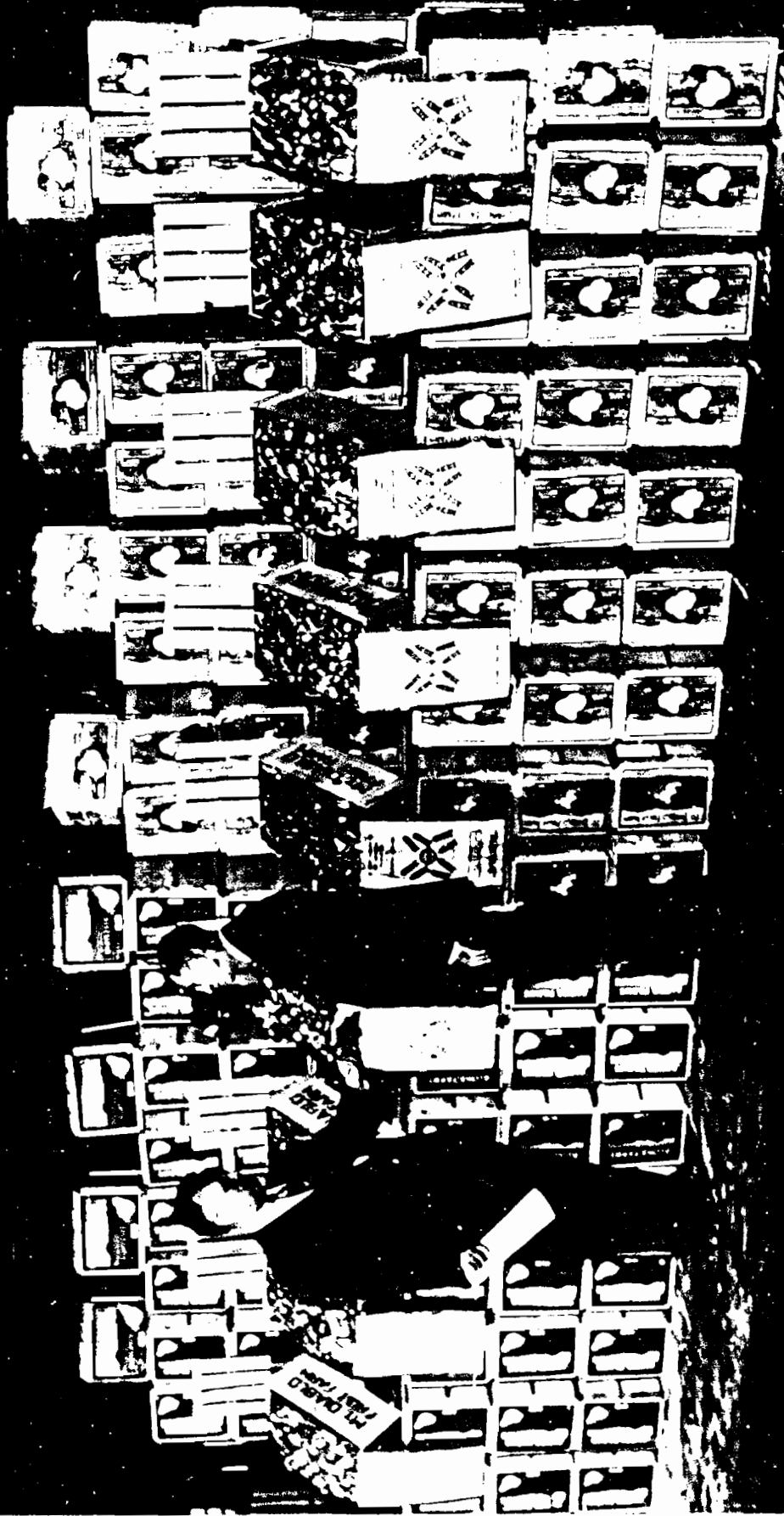
Very truly yours,

Yeckes-Eichenbaum, Inc.,

George White
Manager

Advertising--Dealer Service Dept.

GW/s





Bancroft: Well, they have an association, the California Fruit Exchange, that does that, and they do very well. A great many people ship through them, but when you can do your own packing you can get a little bit more attention paid to your fruit if it isn't in with a lot of other people's fruit, and if it has its own brand and its own name and so on, and if you put out a superior product I think you can get by a little better doing it yourself.

Sum: It's an advantage to remain independent if you have a superior product, and have built up a reputation for it.

Bancroft: Yes. We're getting now to where it's getting very hard to keep our brand up because a great many of the packing houses now can take out all but the very best of their fruit and sell what they take out to the canneries and then ship only the very best, what they call the U.S. Number One, and our packing house isn't arranged so we can do that, so I think it's making it so we can't expect to keep up our brand. Our brand is just as good as it ever was, but theirs are getting better, so we'll probably very soon sell all our crops to the canneries.

Sum: What is your brand?

Bancroft: Mt. Diablo brand. We have two brands: Mt. Diabale and Aloha. The Mt. Diablo is our best and most of our pears go into the Aloha brand. They're the same kind of pears and everything, they have the same eating qualities, but they may have little blemishes on them or not look so good.

BANCROFT
LIBRARY

Baum: I understand that you did quite a bit of shipping pears abroad.

Bancroft: Yes, we used to, in the 1920s and early thirties.

Baum: You don't any more?

Bancroft: No. I don't know that anybody does very much of it now. They have got so many provisions against the exchange, what they'll allow to be sent to England, we gave it up quite a while ago.

Baum: I couldn't quite understand the story, but when you were selling pears to England -- you got involved in currency exchange.

Bancroft: Yes. Well, we were shipping about 40 carloads a year and we expected to ship 40 carloads to England in that particular year, and I was afraid of the English pound. I'd been reading a good deal about conditions, I always try to keep well-informed, and I was afraid that its value might depreciate, so I sold about \$50,000 worth, through my bank, of English pounds for dollars, and --

Baum: Before you continue, where had you gotten these pounds? Had they paid you ahead?

Bancroft: No, I was expecting to get them.

Baum: So you sold future pounds?

Bancroft: Yes. And then we began shipping. Then things did happen in England and they had sort of tough times and they went off the gold standard and the pound dropped from, say, \$4.80 to about \$2.80 in value. So if I had not sold that and we'd sold for the same price I would have got a very poor price in dollars for the fruit, but I'd sold these pounds in

Bancroft: advance, so I wasn't --

Baum: You got the number of dollars you thought you'd contracted for.

Bancroft: Yes. Then, on account of conditions being as poor as they were, I only sent about half as many pears to England as I'd intended to send and we came out all right on them, but I made more money on the pears we didn't send on having sold the pound at \$4.80, I think it was, being able to buy the pounds later for \$2.80.

Baum: Did you have many problems with foreign currency?

Bancroft: No, that was about the only time we did that.

Baum: Well, now, you started to tell about your work in trying to get the Washington and Oregon pear growers --

Bancroft: Oh, yes. When the AAA was first organized they were helping out the farmers on different things and they were carrying out some of the ideas that we had started here in California in our cooperatives, such as the control board that I was telling you about; they were suggesting having a marketing agreement for all the Bartlett pears, canning pears, and shipping Bartletts that were commercially grown on the Pacific Coast, because that represents practically all the canning Bartlett pears that are sold in the United States. We had our California Pear Growers' Association, so we tried to get the Oregon growers and the Washington growers to form similar organizations so that we could all three combine and not be competing against each other.

...
aun: You had to get a certain percentage of the growers in order to formulate these marketing agreements, didn't you?

ancroft: Yes, and they sent me up there with one or two other growers, both to Washington and Oregon, a couple of times, and we tried very hard to get them to organize. But up there, at that time, in the earlier thirties, the farmers were in an awfully tough state, poorly off financially, and the pear orchards were pretty much controlled by the shipping companies at that time. I imagine they'd lent them so much money and so on that they could tell them about what to do, so that we could not just deal with the pear growers themselves, we had to deal with the pear growers and also with the heads of the shipping organizations. We couldn't get them to agree to any kind of an organization, although I think we tried for about three months, all through one winter.

I know one crowd that I was talking with insisted that their pears were better than ours -- this was up in Oregon or Washington; it would be immaterial which because they had the same idea in both places. They raise a longer pear than we do, and the canners had been moving up into Washington and Oregon and telling those fellows that they liked their pears better than ours, just to give them a little soft soaping, and they thought that on account of their pears being better the canners liked them better and they didn't want to organize with us, they didn't want to join.

Sum: The canners were opposed to you getting this organization.

McCroft: Well, I won't say that they obstructed us in any way, but I certainly, if I'd been in their place, I wouldn't have wanted to have had it; they didn't do anything objectionable, but naturally they would tell their growers, "Why, you've got better pears, you shouldn't tie up with those fellows." But they told them that anyhow. You can always pat a farmer on the back and tell him how good his crop is and get him to sell it to you for a lower price, while if you begin knocking his crop it gets his back up. But anyhow, I said to them finally, "You know, it's an interesting thing to me; we have at least five districts in California including my own in each of which we raise the best Bartlett pears in the world, and now I come up here to the north and I find that there are two other districts, one in Washington and one in Oregon, that also raise the finest pears in the world.

"But," I said, "we're able to get along there in California and have an organization, and admitting for the sake of argument -- now, remember, it's just for the sake of argument -- that your pears are better than ours, why is it that we get \$30 a ton for our pears from the canners while you get only \$25 a ton from the canners for your better pears? If they are better than ours it must be on account of our organization that we're able to get that extra \$5 a ton."

Well, they didn't have anything to say. That convinced

Bancroft: the growers pretty well, but they'd hem and haw about this and that and the other thing. They were afraid that we would have more members, more directors, and so on -- which we would have because we had directors elected according to tonnage -- and while everything could have worked out all right we couldn't get them interested enough in the thing to put it through. But we worked on it for a long, long time, and as I say I made two or three trips up there. The individual growers were fine; we had no trouble at all talking to them, getting them interested and so on, but we found in a lot of cases that they didn't have the final say-so as to whether they could join an organization like ours. Their crops were already pledged.

Baum: Does this all mean that you were never able to market your pears as advantageously as you could your walnuts?

Bancroft: Yes. Well, now, the situation is somewhat the same in walnuts, except that they have an organization. In Oregon they raise walnuts.

Baum: I believe the Walnut Control Board included Washington and Oregon walnuts. I'm sure they had one man each on the Walnut Control Board, Washington and Oregon, which is about representative of their crop as compared to the California crop.

Bancroft: The Walnut Control Board has the independents' representatives, representatives from the association, and so on, so that it's really very representative of the industry, it's representative

Bancroft: of the marketers and the producers.

Baum: Well, were you ever able to control the marketing of the pears effectively, as an association?

Bancroft: As an association, yes, we could deal with the canners, and that's all we attempted to do, to get the canners to agree on basic prices.

Baum: I believe Frank Swett was for a long time in the Pear Growers'.

Bancroft: Yes, he was the head of the California Pear Growers' Association. I think he was either the chairman of it or the executive secretary, but anyhow he was the man that was running it, he was the paid manager for it.

Baum: Was he a grower?

Bancroft: To a certain extent, yes, but it was more that he was just managing it.

Baum: And you were a director.

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: When were you a director?

Bancroft: Well, I wouldn't remember the exact time, but it was from about 1920 or 1921 on as long as the association was active.

Baum: It is not active now?

Bancroft: No. We have another association. This was just a Bartlett pear growers' association. Now they've got one that includes Hardies. It's called the Canning Pear Association. And a number of us who belonged to the other don't belong to this one

Bancroft: because they have put in Hardies, which are a winter pear and not as good as the Bartletts, and they've put them in on the same basis as the Bartletts. Also, they have this other condition that we don't like, and that is taking over the ownership of the pears and being responsible for marketing all of them.

Baum: This pear association owns the whole crop on the trees?

Bancroft: That's as I understand it.

Baum: And you plan to sell your crop independently to the canner when you stop shipping fresh fruit?

Bancroft: Well, we are now selling three-quarters of it to the canners even while we're shipping some fresh fruit.

Baum: What price do you use? Do you negotiate independently with the canners, or do you try to cooperative with the pear association?

Bancroft: Well, we never sell for less than the pear association, but we usually get \$5 a ton more than the regular Contra Costa price, because we have better pears and make a better delivery, and we get the same as the Sacramento River price, which is top price for pears at that time of the year. We just tell them we won't sell them for any less. They say they can't do that but they do it.

Baum: And you think if you joined the association you would then have to sell at the regular price, which would not include a premium for your better product?

Bancroft: I think it would come to that, yes. I don't see how we could consistently get a higher price if we dumped our pears all in with the others, and besides that we don't feel that it's right to put the Hardies in on the same basis as the Bartletts. A lot of these growers have both Hardies and Bartletts, and they will get the canners to agree to buy their Hardies at the same price as the Bartletts, even though the canners don't like them as well, but the canners will do that in order to get their Bartletts. Well, we don't have the Hardies and we don't want to be penalized for those that do have the Hardies and are able to get the price up to the same as the Bartletts. The Hardies are not as good for canning; they're a winter eating pear. They can use them in fruit cocktails and things of that kind, although they don't make as good a fruit cocktail as the Bartlett pear.

Baum: Do most of the Bartlett pear growers, if they're exclusively Bartletts, stay out of the association?

Bancroft: I don't know. In this county there are very few that have joined the present association.

Dried Fruit Stabilization Committee -- Farmers and Safeway
Work Together to Promote Sale of Dried Fruit

Baum: I came across a paper where you decided to refuse an appointment to the State Board of Agriculture (your name was being suggested around), because you were winning many prizes for

- Baum: your pears, and you felt you couldn't accept prizes any more if you were on the board. This was in the 1930s.
- Bancroft: Well, I felt that if I were a member of the state board it wouldn't look good when I was winning all those first prizes to say, "Well, he's a member of the board, naturally he's winning them."
- Baum: A Mr. Raymond Miller had written to you asking you to suggest -- this was after you turned down the possibility of your own nomination -- that you nominate someone else, think of someone else to run on that, and I don't know what happened after that. Do you recall?
- Bancroft: Oh, I think I named two or three names and I think one of them was appointed. Now he, Raymond Miller, took a very active part in representing stores like Safeway and other chain stores, food marketing stores, when where was an effort made to put them out of business in California.
- Baum: Was he an attorney?
- Bancroft: No, he was a farmer, a leading farmer up in the Lodi section. [Cawing from pet magpie outside*]
- "Well, Maggie. Yes, Maggie, I'm sorry, I'll feed you later." She comes and calls; she'll come, before I'm dressed in the morning, in this window here, and beg to get in and squawk at me if I won't let her in, and flutter on in.

*This baby bird was a Mother's Day gift to Mrs. Bancroft. Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft were raising the magpie on a mixture of hamburger and egg fed by hand, and were training it to talk. The magpie was a regular visitor at the recording sessions.

Bancroft: "Yes, Maggie, I wish I could let you in, but you know you'd be like a bull in a china shop."

Baum: Does she come in the house?

Bancroft: No, but we go out in the garden in the evenings, and when we're sitting out there she'll come and jump on our laps -- she just likes company and she likes to have you play with her. She'll pick up a leaf on a stem and pull with it almost like a kitten playing with it. These birds, they want company, human company. It's a strange thing.

Baum: That's because of the way she was raised.

Bancroft: Oh, yes, because if another person comes along she has a terrible time, except if it's Mrs. Bancroft or Masako, our Japanese who comes in and helps Mrs. Bancroft with the housework, and I have a little transistor radio here and I turned that on the other day full force when she was by me, and she gave it the dirtiest look you ever saw and flew off as mad as could be. And then she came back to me again and I turned it down very low and she looked at it, came up to it, walked all around it, and gave me a look, and then I took it away because I was afraid she'd go into it to try to bust it up. She's got a very strong beak. She'll go off and catch a spider and bring it up and want to drop it on my neck. That'd be just from her affection; she wants to tuck things down your neck, put it in your pocket, or anything like that. You feed her and she gets all she wants to eat, then she'll take off with

Bancroft: something and put it down behind a cushion, hide it, you know, so that she can go to it later.

I was talking about Raymond Miller. There was an effort made to put the chain stores out of business -- you know, that's been done in different states, and they do it by levying a tax -- and he represented either Safeway, or all the chain stores, Safeway was the principal one, anyhow. I think it was at their suggestion that he headed the thing, but it might have been his suggestion. He was a very able man, smart man. And they came to us growers and said, "Now, you're having very serious trouble in marketing your dried fruits" -- I forget what year that was, 1934 or 1935 -- "and the Safeway proposes to help you out, if you'll cooperate, and put on a drive in all their stores all over the United States for the sale of the different dried fruit, and we want to have a statewide California Dried Fruit Stabilization Committee." And they got the government to be in favor of it and so on, so that the national authorities wouldn't be getting after them for any kind of --

Baum: This wasn't one of those marketing control boards, was it?

Bancroft: No, it was a voluntary one. "I'll tell you," they said, "we want to do what we can do to help you out in the marketing of your fruit, get representative farmers from all over the state and have them formed into an organization and see if we can't help them out in the marketing of their excess dried

Sancroft: fruits."

So such an organization was formed with, I imagine, 15 or 20 representative farmers, maybe 30, on the board of directors, and I was elected a chairman -- we had chairmen, secretaries, and so on -- and we had a number of meetings and discussed our problems. Well, one thing they asked, "What objections have you to the chain stores?"

"Well, one objection is when they sell the fruit as loss leaders. Now, for instance, you sell fruit that should sell at 10¢ a pound at 6¢ a pound and it makes the other stores sell it at 6¢ a pound and you're all selling at a loss and then you pay us less for our fruit and it runs down the price of fruit."

And they said, "Yeah, that's a legitimate complaint, and we'll agree to stop that. Well, what else?"

"Well, we think you ought to do more than you do to help promote the sales of fruit when we're in distress."

"We'll agree to that, that's what we want to suggest, that we put on campaigns and do everything in our power to sell more of your fruits that are in excessive production." So they put on a very extensive campaign, drew up posters and all these things at their own expense.

Baum: Was this just Safeway, or in conjunction with other chain stores?

Bancroft: That I'm not sure. Safeway was so much the biggest that -- I don't remember that A&P joined in on the thing -- I think the thing was done by Safeway and the Purity Stores. I know the president of the Safeway organization came out and we met with him and the head men then and Safeway was the moving force, if not the whole thing. They spent quite a lot of money. They furnished the money and we furnished the directions of what we wanted them to do after discussing it with them and they'd have a week, for instance a "dried peach week" and then a dried -- they put on a tremendous effort to sell -- a "dried prune week" or a "dried apricot week" and so on.

Baum: Was this California Dried Fruit Stabilization Committee mainly promotional?

Bancroft: Entirely promotional. We didn't have anything to do with the sales, we didn't have anything to do with anything except to clear up the surplus stock that was depressing the market, and it was entirely voluntary on our part.

Baum: What were your duties, suggesting promotional ideas?

Bancroft: Yes, and to cooperate with them and to avoid any practices that we felt were not right or advisable or beneficial to the farmers. It was to get the farmers behind the chain stores instead of getting them in opposition to the chain stores. There was a drive on to a statewide vote on the question of whether they would initiate this tax or whether they would

Bancroft: tax the chain stores, practically tax them out of business, so much if you had ten chain stores or if you had more, with additional store bringing a very heavy additional tax.

Baum: They wanted to get you behind them legislatively in return for this promotional support?

Bancroft: Yes. They did a very good job for us and we did a pretty good job for them and it was all open and above board. They said they could be of service to the farmers and the farmers could be of service to them, and also be of service to the consumers, because the consumers with chain stores were getting their food at very much less of a markup than they were getting it with the corner grocery, and that was true. There's a much smaller markup if you deal through chain stores than if you deal with little independent stores.

Baum: I know Safeway has worked closely with the farmers for a long time, hasn't it? Was this the beginning of their cooperation?

Bancroft: Yes, I would say that was the beginning.

Baum: Didn't they contribute to Associated Farmers?

Bancroft: I imagine so. There has been a great deal of criticism by the left-wingers against the Associated Farmers on the grounds that the railroads and PG&E, whatever companies there were, and the stores, like Safeway, and the oil companies, and so on, were contributing to our Associated Farmers. Well, the reason they were contributing was because they didn't want the farmers to be put out of business and they were getting

Bancroft: a tremendous income from the farmers, the railroads were, and it was to their interest that the farmers should continue to farm successfully, as we have continued to farm. So they were contributing, but they had nothing to do with running the farms or anything. As I remember it, Safeway and a number of other organizations like that did contribute to the Associated Farmers.

Baum: I had a list of the major contributors.

Bancroft: We never made any secrets about it.

Baum: I was wondering about Safeway, did they do any growing? Were they growers, too?

Bancroft: I don't think so.

Baum: They do a lot of packing and canning, I know.

Bancroft: They used to do a lot of canning, and I think they gave that up in California, at least, because they found they could do better by buying from the canners.

But I was going to say about the railroads and the Associated Farmers, people'd say, "Oh, well, they contributed" -- well, the railroads used to get from us, when we were shipping all our pears east, about \$300 or \$400 an acre a year in freight rates for our pears. I could figure it up if I took the time. Every year they'd get that, so you can see how important it was for them to have an uninterrupted flow of agricultural goods. Of course, our pear orchard was very productive and the freight was high, much higher than they'd

Bancroft: get from most places, but they would get maybe \$100 an acre a year from a great many orchards, so the small amount they contributed to us -- I don't remember how much it used to be, maybe \$2500 or something like that -- to help the Associated Farmers keep going, was nothing compared to what it meant to them to have us continue without being blocked by strikes and things of that kind.

We'll go back. You asked me something about Safeway?

Baum: No, I think that's all the questions I had on Safeway. It was a fact that they did their own packing?

Bancroft: Oh, yes. As I said, they had quite a large cannery operation here, but they gave that up. Now, I don't know whether they do packing in other states or not, I wouldn't be surprised if they did.

The California Packing Corporation -- Calpak, they call it, and they also call it the CPC -- have quite extensive agricultural operations in peaches and, I think, asparagus, but these other concerns so far as I know do not. I think Armour & Co., when it came out years ago, had very extensive asparagus production in California, but it sort of blew up. In fact, they can usually buy better products cheaper from the farmers than they can get by producing them themselves. Of course, they are in the pineapple business, the big packers over in Hawaii, but that's different.

Baum: I think most companies find that if they specialize in something they can do a more efficient job.

Bancroft: Yes. That's the reason I am not too much in favor of growers doing their own canning and things of that kind. If we run our farming operations and they run their canning industry we can each do a better job probably than the other way around, although we do sell a few of our pears to a cooperative that has just been formed, but that was because we were selling to an individual canner that was absorbed by the cooperative. We used to sell to Filice and Perrelli [sic], and they became part of this cooperative organization, Cal Can. I imagine it was state taxes. They were putting up a very superior quality of a lot of canned goods which they sold under their own name. Then they also sold a lot to other organizations and they were marketed under the other names. You know, that's the way it's done by canners a great deal.

Baum: That's the way Safeway gets their company brands.

Bancroft: I think they do now. At one time they had their own cannery and that's the way S&W does. I don't think they do any canning, but they buy according to very high specifications from the other canners. And you know, that has quite an advantage in one way, because when you take a company that does its own canning and has to sell under its own brand, if it has a bad year and the fruit it gets is poor or anything it still sells it under its own brand and its brand is dropped that year. But now a company like S&W doesn't have to do that because it just won't buy a brand that isn't up to its

Bancroft: standard and it doesn't get stuck with products that are not.

Baum: Now, Mr. Raymond Miller, you said, represented Safeway, and he was a farmer. How do you mean represented Safeway?

Bancroft: I never asked him the exact arrangements -- he was a farmer friend of mine that I'd known for a long time; he was a representative walnut grower up in the Linden area -- but I think they got him as head of their public relations department in dealing with farmers. He went all over the agricultural portion of the United States later on, and I think it was for Safeway at that time, improving the relations between the chain stores and the farmers. He did it all in a very constructive manner, very much along these same lines that we had our dried fruits stabilization committee. Now, I don't know whether he was the one that originated the idea, or whether Safeway originated it and got him, but I have an idea he would have had a good deal to do with originating the idea because otherwise I don't know why they would have picked him out. In other words, he was a farmer known principally, almost entirely at that time, for his farming activities. But he became very well-known. He received honorary degrees and so on, and he did a really very fine job. Incidentally, when we got through with our dried fruits stabilization committee and they had the statewide vote, chain stores came out with flying colors.

Baum: How did you manage that?

Bancroft: The chain stores managed it.

Baum: How did the farmers contribute to it?

Bancroft: Just the fact that they were helping out the farmers.

Baum: You didn't have to go around through your farm organizations?

Bancroft: We didn't have to do anything, no.

Baum: The farmers just knew that they were helping --

Bancroft: They didn't ask us to do anything in return for them -- they're smart in this, too. They said, "We want to help out the farmers and we naturally think that we're an advantage to you and you recognize it." But they didn't ask us to do any proselytizing or anything. But it was known everywhere in this dried fruit stabilization committee that Safeway was responsible for it and was getting us better prices all over the United States than we would have got otherwise.

Baum: Who was Alex Johnson? He was something to do with the --

Bancroft: He was secretary of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Baum: I noticed he had something to do with appointees to the State Board of Agriculture and the fair board.

Bancroft: He was very prominent as the secretary of the Farm Bureau.

Baum: Who was Charles Jacobs?

Bancroft: I'm trying to think -- there was a man by the name of Jake that was very prominent, I'm just trying to think if that's the same man.

Baum: I had come across the names of Miller, Jacobs, Fred Hart, and Johnson all as being able to influence Governor Merriam, along

Baum: with yourself, to suggest to him appointees to the agricultural board.

Bancroft: Fred Hart was from Santa Clara County. Ray Miller was very close to Merriam, much more than I was.

Baum: Did you ever suggest appointments to Merriam directly? You weren't close to him like you were to Hiram Johnson?

Bancroft: No, we were a little on the other side, but I was friendly enough with him, but not close the way I was with almost all the other governors.

Other Farmer Organizations: Farm bureau, Grange, Farmers' Union

Baum: What other farmer organizations were you active in?

Bancroft: For two or three years I held the position of chairman of the deciduous fruit department of the California Farm Bureau Federation. We were interested in all kinds of deciduous crops and did everything we could to help promote the proper growing and culture and marketing and so on of these crops.

Baum: Was this mainly advisory? You had no power on marketing?

Bancroft: No, and it wasn't a legal position or an official position in the sense that it wasn't a governmental position; it was purely a Farm Bureau activity.

Baum: Were you active in the Farm Bureau?

Bancroft: Well, to that extent. I used to go to all their important

Bancroft: meetings, and also to the meetings of what would correspond to the board of directors -- they had some other name for it, house of delegates or something -- and I used to go to that as the head of one of the departments. They had perhaps eight or nine different departments; they had a citrus department, and a livestock department, and so on, a vegetable department.

Baum: Was this in the county or in the state?

Bancroft: In the state.

Baum: Did you go to all the county meetings?

Bancroft: No. I'd go to some of those in Contra Costa County, but very often I was too busy to go to them, but I'd go to the state meetings because they were more important.

Baum: Did the Farm Bureau serve mainly an advisory function here in advising the farmers how to handle their work, or was it partially social?

Bancroft: Well, in a way, but it was more advisory and getting together for collective action. For instance, we would get together if the farmers wanted to form a marketing cooperative. The Farm Bureau would be very helpful in that.

Baum: Well, I think the Grange serves a social function in many communities.

Bancroft: It's more along social lines than the Farm Bureau, and I was also a member of the Grange, but I never took the active interest in the Grange that I did in the Farm Bureau.

- Baum: Was the Grange active here in Contra Costa County?
- Bancroft: Oh, it had chapters.
- Baum: I think the Grange and the Farm Bureau were often opposed to each other in the legislation they encouraged.
- Bancroft: Yes, the Grange is more radical. It also seemed to take delight in opposing any measure that the Farm Bureau was advocating, not every measure, most of the measures. Once in a while we could get together.
- Baum: Did you find it consistent with your ideas to belong to both?
- Bancroft: Oh, yes. They were both organizations for advancing the interests of the farmers, and we could express our opinions. For instance, quite a few farmers belonged to both.
- Baum: Are you still a member of both?
- Bancroft: No, just the Farm Bureau.
- Baum: Did the Farm Bureau work closely with Extension out here?
- Bancroft: Yes, very closely. I worked very closely with them because they were doing a lot for the farmers.
- Baum: What other farm groups were you in?
- Bancroft: I was also in the Farmers' Union, which was another farm organization.
- Baum: I don't know that organization.
- Bancroft: No, it was just a small organization. There is a National Farmers' Union, but that's a very radical organization.
- Baum: That's in the Midwest, isn't it?
- Bancroft: Yes. And that ties up with the radical elements and the chapter out here was under the control of the president of it who

- Bancroft: was very much interested in the welfare of the farmers, and he was against most of the radical things that the National Farmers' Union was for, and they finally revoked his charter because he wouldn't go along with their radical stuff. He sided with the Farm Bureau and the rest of us who were trying to run things on a sound economic basis.
- Baum: Then this Farmers' Union you belonged to was a chapter of the more radical outfits, but this was a maverick chapter.
- Bancroft: No, it was a correct chapter. The others were maverick.
- Baum: I guess I have read about that union and it's not been very prominent in California.
- Bancroft: No, but in the Midwest, around Minnesota and a lot of those states, it's the radical element. It ties up with the CIO and all that sort of stuff.
- Baum: You were in the chamber of commerce.
- Bancroft: I was in the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce and I used to go to the State Chamber of Commerce meetings very often, but I was not a member of the State Chamber of Commerce, and I wasn't at all times a member of the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce, just two or three years.
- Baum: Did the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce do much on farmer concerns, or were they mainly business?
- Bancroft: They were mainly business, and my interests were mainly farming, so I wasn't an active member of that, just merely joined them for two or three years. What they wanted principally from me was my \$5 dues or whatever it was, which they got.

Baum: Well, I know you were in the Walnut Growers' and the Pear Growers' Associations. Were you in any other marketing cooperatives, or growers' cooperatives?

Bancroft: I don't think of any that I was in for any length of time. In other words, I'd sell some things independently, and some of the cooperatives I didn't think were being run well; I didn't want to join them, and there were other reasons I didn't want to join. Some of those cooperatives weren't run very well for quite a while, and later on they were run well.

Baum: What about buying cooperatives?

Bancroft: I never cared about them particularly.

Baum: I imagine you bought in substantial quantities for your own farm, so it wasn't necessary.

Well, is that all we have on farm organizations, aside from Associated Farmers, which is a big subject?

Bancroft: I wouldn't say it's all, but it's all I think of at the moment.

Organizing to Get More Water for Farming and Industry in Contra Costa County

Baum: How about telling me something about the Bay Barrier Association before we get into the Associated Farmers?

Bancroft: Well, there was an organization called the Bay Barrier Association that was composed principally of industrialists, but also they wanted somebody to represent the farming interests, so I was appointed a director of that. The effort of the Bay

Bancroft: Barrier Association was to get some kind of a dam or dams put where the Sacramento River and the San Joaquin River would both be controlled -- it might be somewhere near Carquinez Straits or something like that -- or there was some effort to make it take in all of San Francisco Bay, except the part where the shipping would go, put one dam on the northeastern side and another one down on the southern side of the Bay, so it would make a big fresh-water lake of the Bay.

Baum: Was this to store irrigation water?

Bancroft: Yes, to make a big body of fresh water that could be used instead of allowing it all to go to waste. We worked on that for quite a number of years, because it seemed a very serious thing, letting all that water go to waste, and these institutions and factories and things along the bayshore and here in Contra Costa County needed a lot of fresh water. The water that they used to get, for instance, for the sugar refinery, they used to pump it right out of the Bay of Suisun or the Straits of Carquinez, and as irrigation water began to be used more and more upstream this water became so salty that they couldn't use it for manufacturing purposes, so the factories, the steel factory and others, were very anxious to get fresh water in, and of course we farmers were very interested in getting fresh water we could pump.

Baum: Do you remember about what year this was?

Bancroft: No, I don't. It was in the thirties and it went on for a number of years. You may have heard of the Reber Plan; that was one that was suggested. We weren't trying to push any particular plan. There were a good many questions that came up that would have had to be solved by engineers. When they put in the Shasta Dam and the Central Valley Project, then we worked to get the Contra Costa Canal established here as part of that project, and when we got that then there was no need of the Bay barrier as far as we were concerned.

There again, in order to get that they had to have it done as a project to help farmers principally, but also to help the industrial and manufacturing interests and to get water in here where it was needed. I was put on the committee of farmers that was instrumental in getting that through. We had to work for quite a few years with the federal authorities before we got that through, and then when the canal was put through here a Bay barrier wasn't needed as far as we were concerned.

Baum: Do the industrialists have adequate water now?

Bancroft: Yes, I would say so. They have a big water supply. I wouldn't say that they have all they want, but they have a lot of water, and so have the farmers now.

Baum: Did this Contra Costa Canal require a repayment contract?

Bancroft: Yes. We pay for it over something like 40 years, but no interest charged. Well, when you can get a loan for 40 years without interest you're getting something, because the interest will amount to more than the principal of the

Bancroft: loan. That has worked out very well for us.

There was one thing in that that was sort of interesting: after we got the Contra Costa Canal through here, an effort was made by a number of farmers in certain districts to have laterals added to the canal which would have probably cost more than the canal itself.

Baum: They wanted this on the same basis of federal loan with no interest?

Bancroft: Yes, but it would have been a very expensive thing. In the first place, in order to get the canal through here we had to have a canal district and we had to agree with the federal government to buy the water and we had to obligate the whole district to it. Well, we had to vote on that and when we started to get it through, of course, a lot of the people in the cities weren't anxious to be obligated to stand behind our payment for the water, and so on.

Baum: Was this to allow a tax upon all the land --

Bancroft: Well, there was a very small tax on the land. It was almost insignificant, just to keep the headquarters of the district going and things of that kind, and then the water was to be sold at prices that would pay for the cost of operation and repayment. Of course, the agricultural board established rates; the water for irrigation purposes was very much lower -- I forget now just how much lower it was, but not more, I would say, than a third of what they charged industries, and

ancroft: then for domestic use another rate.

In getting the district formed and having the voters approve of it, our committee sent out a printed circular stating that if the canal was voted the people who wanted water from it would run their own laterals to the canal. Well, after the canal had been put through a lot of us were getting water because the canal went through our property, without the cost of running any long laterals to it or anything. Other people who were further away wouldn't get the water unless they ran laterals, but that was the understanding on which the canal was built and the district was formed. But after it had been in operation a while, those that were at some distance from it wanted to have these laterals installed at the expense of the canal district, and the labor union group voted for that, endorsed it and so on, and a number of organizations endorsed it, and it looked as if it was going through. I objected to it and a few of us made quite a fight against it because in the first place we felt that anybody who wanted the water and could use it properly should run his own laterals to the canal. For instance, we have about three miles of underground irrigation pipe on our farm. Well, the plan was to have the district run laterals to every 40-acre piece in the district which, as I say, would have been a tremendous expense, and yet these organizations, like the labor unions and so on, they'll endorse almost any

Bancroft: bond issue or proposition where they think it'll make more work, no matter whether it's sound economically or not. By that time the district had its board of directors. I was no longer on the committee.

Baum: What's the name of the district?

Bancroft: I think it's called the Contra Costa Canal District, some such name as that. It looked as if they were going to have a vote on the laterals, and it looked as if it would go sailing through.

Baum: This would have to be a two-thirds vote, I imagine.

Bancroft: I think so. It wasn't a bond issue and I'm not sure, I don't remember now for certain, but anyhow I made that fight almost single-handed because I felt that it was unsound in the first place. A lot of these districts, there was no earthly use for their getting laterals; they were being turned into subdivisions or industrial plants or something. In the second place, it was against what we'd promised.

Baum: How would these laterals have been paid for? By additional tax on the property or by increased cost of the water to all users uniformly, or greater cost to those that had water carried to them over a greater distance?

Bancroft: If they'd intended to pay for it by the additional water that was carried to these other districts, that wouldn't have been so bad, but the idea was to make everybody pay for it.

Baum: A uniform water rate that would include the cost of the laterals?

Bancroft: Yes. So just a short time before the election I wrote a letter to the Oakland Tribune and to the various papers in the county, the principal papers, stating just what the situation was and thanking the voters of the cities for their willingness to help out the farmers, that it was something that we'd agreed to do ourselves but that if the city-dwellers had shown a great willingness to bear this additional cost while I personally would never have asked them to do it, I certainly appreciated their generosity in being willing to help out the farmers, getting the water and having the laterals paid for by the city-dwellers and home-dwellers when the farmers had agreed to do that of their own accord. You can imagine what the labor union fellows and the others thought about that, and when the vote came they voted it down, very definitely, so the laterals were not put in on that basis. Later on, certain laterals were extended, not to each block of land, but a few lines where there was a demand for it and where they could be used and where they would be paid for by the use of the water.

Baum: These laterals were put in by the district but they were paid for by the water that was delivered on those lines?

Bancroft: No. The laterals that were put in by the district were put in as part of the canal, one lateral for two or three thousand acres. For instance, they might extend for two or three miles in a certain direction so that more water could be used from

Bancroft: the canal than otherwise would be used, but that was paid for just the same as any other water that was used from the canal. It just made the canal more useful.

Baum: And the cost was recouped in the greater sale of water?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: Who favored putting in the laterals besides the labor union people?

Bancroft: I would say the principal representative farmers were against it, but it was the holders of small acreages that were for it, and of course some of the farmers that had big tracts that were way off from the canal wanted to get it done free for them.

Baum: I suppose how you felt about this depended on how close you were to the main canal.

Bancroft: Well, yes, if you didn't have any regard for your word or for forcing a thing like that against the absolute assurance and promise of the Farmers Committee. You see, I was a member of the Farmers Committee and I had joined in this assurance to the people that they would not be called upon to pay for laterals to the canal. Well, then, after you get the canal finished you stick by your agreement.

Baum: It must have been difficult to determine where the main canal was going to go.

Bancroft: Well, that was determined by the Army Engineers or the engineers that were putting through the Central Valley Project. I think at that time it was not the Army Engineers. I don't know who

Sancroft: it was that was putting it through.

Baum: The Farmers Committee didn't have anything to do with that?

Sancroft: Not as to where the location would be. For instance, the fact that it ran through the middle of our place made certain people say my being on the committee made it run through the middle of our place, but as a matter of fact we didn't want it to run through the middle of our place. We'd have much rather had it run at one edge, because they had to condemn much of our land and then we had to pump from where it ran to higher ground, while if it had run on the outside of our land we could have irrigated everything by gravity. Nevertheless, people would say naturally my being on the committee and it running through the middle of our place, that I'd used influence to do it, but what they did was to run it on what they called "the 100-foot contour." That was a line, the elevation that they established. You see, they'd let it fall so much per mile or something like that. In order to irrigate they had to pump water out of a place called Rock Slough, pump it up, and then let it flow along, and I think they had pumping stations in between, but they wanted it to run by gravity after the main pumps had done their pumping so that it was all done by the grade of the land, and that was all determined by the engineers. We didn't have anything to do with that.

Baum: Were the men who got the Contra Costa Canal in the same group as had formerly been in the Bay Barrier Association?

Bancroft: Well, they all joined in, but it had to be done as a farm project primarily.

Baum: The industrial people had to take a lesser part.

Bancroft: A much lesser part, but as a matter of fact they took a large part of the water and they're paying for by far the greatest part of the cost of it, because their water is so much higher than ours. Industrial water is always higher, because agricultural water has got to be cheap or else it can't be used.

Baum: Is water an appreciable cost of your production?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, it costs us, when we're getting water from the canal, about \$1,000 a month. Of course, we get a lot of water from Walnut Creek on our farm.

Baum: Is that cheaper?

Bancroft: It's just the cost of the power to pump it out. We border Walnut Creek and have riparian rights. For instance, we're still irrigating from Walnut Creek, but we have to stop for a little while now in the summer and depend on the water we can get from the canal. About half we can irrigate from Walnut Creek.

Baum: I should think this puts you in a favorable economic position compared to your competitors who don't have Walnut Creek water.

Bancroft: It does. As a matter of fact, that's one of the principal reasons we enlarged our place and bought land adjoining until

Bancroft: we could get down to the Creek.

Baum: Does the addition of irrigation water greatly increase the crops you can raise, as compared to dry farming?

Bancroft: Yes, but we weren't doing dry farming before. We were using well water. We had something like 17 or 18 wells on this place and got about three fairly good irrigation wells out of the 17 or 18.

I had a rather interesting experience in that connection. I don't know whether you've heard of water witches or not. I never believed in them or paid any attention to water witching. Well, we put down about 15 wells without getting a good well. We could get wells for domestic use, but not a good irrigation well. Finally I tried one with a water witch and got a pretty good well, and then after that I'd always try a water witch. There was a man here who was considered a very good witch, pay him \$25 or something like that and he'd come out and test around. By and by, I fixed up a water witch for myself and I could make it dip at certain places and so on, and I began using that, and got three good wells that way.

Baum: By the water witch, or by your own water witching?

Bancroft: I didn't depend on mine because he was an expert and I was just an amateur, but I could feel the rod bend down at certain places.

Baum: And it really bent down?

Bancroft: Oh, it really bent down, but how much scientific basis there is for water witching is a very much disputed point. One time one of my professors, Professor Davis of Harvard, who was a nationally-known geologist, came out to California, and he came to visit us at our house for a little while. He was a very interesting man and we began to talk about different things, and I brought up the subject of water witches, and he was aghast to think that I was paying any attention to water witches and he said, "Why, to think that one of my star students" -- I'd been getting As in geology -- "didn't learn any more from me than to believe in water witches. I can hardly believe it."

"Well," I said, "Professor Davis, I won't say that I believe that water witches really tell you where the water is, but after putting about 15 wells down without the use of a water witch and not getting a single good one, and putting down three more with the use of water witches and getting water, whether I believe in it or not I'm going to use them hereafter for any wells we put down."

Baum: I suppose you check it with engineers as well?

Bancroft: No.

Baum: And this well water you can count on?

Bancroft: You can count on it unless it gets too dry and the rivers begin to dry up, and then you're apt to get salt that comes in from the ocean through the Bay.

Baum: That would ruin your land, wouldn't it?

Bancroft: Yes. We have to analyze the water in the dry season, in fall or the late summer, to check up on it, to see how many parts per million there are of salt, and we have the apparatus to do that so if it gets too bad then we go very light on the use of water, because the salts are apt to be cumulative, you know. You can stand one irrigation with quite a little salt in it, but you don't want too many irrigations because each time it's apt to leave the salt in the soil unless you use a lot of water and leach it out. Then when you leach it out you're apt to leach your fertilizer and chemicals out too.

There are a lot of very complicated things about farming that people don't realize at all, the average person. For instance, everybody knows you have to have nitrogen and you have to have a certain amount of phosphates and you have to have a certain amount of lime, but what they don't know is that you have to have a certain amount, an almost infinitesimal amount, of elements like copper and zinc and boron, and so on. Now, if you get a little too much of those -- I think magnesium, too -- then it will ruin your soil for plants. In other words, with boron you have to have a little and if you don't have it your trees won't bear properly, and then if you have a little too much it'll kill them off. It's a remarkable thing that you have to have what they call "trace

Bancroft: chemicals," but you have to have them. For instance, when you don't have enough zinc, where there are walnut trees we drive those little pieces of zinc, the kind that glaziers use, into the trunks of the trees. If you don't have enough iron we have one orchard where we have to either spray with some iron spray or get it in some way. We've tried even boring holes in the trees and putting in the iron salt and then plugging up the holes in the trunks of the trees. Those things are hardly believable except for the fact that we know they're necessary.

Baum: You can't get a fertilizer that is properly balanced with all these elements?

Bancroft: Sometimes you can, sometimes you can't. In our own case we have relied principally upon good old barnyard manure. We don't get much barnyard manure any more because --

Baum: You said you used to buy all the manure from the dairies. You don't do that any more?

Bancroft: We don't do it because the dairies have turned into subdivisions. We send clear down now to Manteca, which is about 60 miles, and get the manure from the feed lots. That's about the best kind you can get because they feed the steers concentrates to fatten them up, and you don't get so much weeds that way and also you get more nitrogen and a better product. But it's expensive. Where we used to get it for 25¢ a ton

ancroft: and send for it and haul it ourselves, we pay about \$8 a ton to have it brought in and delivered. But it's better. It's worth perhaps twice as much as what we used to get.

THE ASSOCIATED FARMERS

Beginnings of the Associated Farmers

Baum: Well, I'd like to know about the Associated Farmers.

Bancroft: Well, that's a long story, but I can begin telling you about it. The article, that address that I made at the Commonwealth Club called "The Farmer and the Communists," well, that tells the situation as it was in April 1935, tells it about as well as I could tell it. If you'll just read that it'll save my going over that.

Baum: If you have a number of copies of that address I could put a copy in each volume.

Bancroft: Yes, I can get you that. That tells the basis on which we were starting the fight. Now, here's a pamphlet: I refer in here to things that they say and you can read through the different things that they accuse us farmers of and what they were doing when they started these farm strikes.

Baum: This is the booklet from which you took some of the statements about what the Communists are looking toward. It is called "The Farmer's Way Out: Life Under a Workers' and Farmers' Government." It's published by the Workers Library Publishers in New York City.

Bancroft: Yes. The Communists wanted to get control of agriculture in

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THE FARMER AND THE COMMUNISTS

An Address by

PHILIP S. BANCROFT

PRESIDENT OF THE
ASSOCIATED FARMERS OF
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Before the Commonwealth Club of California

Friday, April 26, 1935

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By

PHILIP B. BANCROFT

President of the

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COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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Mr. Chairman and fellow members of the Commonwealth Club: I want to thank Admiral Cole for his very complimentary remarks. It makes me feel good just to be here and to see so many of my old friends again. Over-kind though he was in his introduction, however, your chairman omitted to mention my principal claim to fame—the fact that though I have been an ex-luncheon chairman of the Commonwealth Club for some twenty-five years, I have never inflicted you with a speech. Now I am about to lose my only distinction and I should not be guilty of such an indiscretion and attempt to address this large audience unless I felt that we farmers, in our fight against the Communists, have not thus far got an even break, either from the members of this club or from the residents of the bay cities. I can not hope to make as smooth and plausible a speech as that of Mr. Simon J. Lubin, when last spring he accused the farmers of Imperial Valley of many misdeeds and, so far as I can recall, said not one word against the Communist agitators, who had caused the trouble.

Too Busy

In common with most other farmers I was at that time too busy, getting ready to resist the trouble that these same down-trodden agitators were preparing

to make us, to try to answer him. I had my family's living to make out of what we could raise from the soil and I did not have a \$5900.00 political job, which would first permit me to throw my influence on the side of the Communist agitators and then to send my report broadcast through the mails on a Government frank—in other words, at your expense and mine.

Both Mr. Edson Abel and Mr. Ralph Taylor have ably addressed this club on the general situation; but I waited patiently for some farmer to present our case from the farmer's viewpoint, and having waited in vain for almost a year, and in default of a better speaker, here I am. Knowing that the members of this club are much more interested in the facts themselves than the way in which they are presented, I shall proceed accordingly.

Got Little Support While Communists Got Plenty

For several years we farmers have been on the firing line in the fight against Communism and, at first, as I have already intimated, we got mighty little support from most of you city people—while the Communists got plenty, both financially and through the San Francisco press. During the San Joaquin Valley cotton strike, in 1933, I read a

great deal about the so-called starvation wages that were being paid the cotton pickers but I read very little of the hardships of the farmers, both small and large, many of whom were receiving far less for their year's labor than were the lowest-paid of their workmen. How many of you were told by our press that farm labor in California is paid higher wages than in any other agricultural State in the Union, or were reminded that labor is the principal cost of raising cotton, as well as fruit crops, and that California cotton has to compete with cotton grown in Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi and the other Great Cotton-growing States of the South, where the farm wages average about half the rate of those paid here, and with the cotton grown in Egypt and India, where the wages are far lower still? All the alphabetical combinations and juggling in the world and all the fatuous arguments of the parlor plinks, reeling in their comfortable drawing rooms while the farmers are sweating away in their fields, will not alter these facts or reverse the fundamental economic laws.

Problems Now Different

Now the problems of farm labor are very different from those of industry, and while we farmers sympathize with the aims and most of the actions of the American Federation of Labor, we would regard the unionization of farm labor as absolutely ruinous to us, as well as injurious to the laborers themselves.

The main differences are as follows: First, if a strike is called in industry, the plant may be shut down for two or three weeks or even months; but as a rule, after the strike is settled, the men return to work; the factory resumes its operations and often,

by working the rest of the year to capacity, can regain all, or a large part, of the ground lost. In the case of the average farmer, however, he has spent eleven months and all the money he can borrow, as well as all of his life's savings, in producing his crop; and if he is prevented from harvesting this by a strike, he loses not only his whole year's profit, but the much larger amount representing his whole year's production costs. With conditions as they have been in the last ten years, such a loss would, with most of us, also mean the loss of our farms. We are not willing to give any group of labor agitators the power to destroy us at will—and we are not going to do it. If the American Federation of Labor, as at present constituted, could control farm unions the matter would be debatable; but even if that organization should form such unions, the chances are that the foreign or native-born radicals would sooner or later get control of them, just as they did with the longshoremen's union.

How, Indeed?

In the second place, we and our families live at our production plants; and we will not willingly submit to having twenty or thirty automobile loads of so-called peaceful (?) picketers parading up and down in front of our homes, jeering, threatening and intimidating, and even blocking the highways and the entrances to our farms. Just how would you have felt if you and your families had had to live in unprotected cottages on the Embarradero throughout the longshoremen's strike?

In the third place, if we paid union wages it would easily double our production costs and we should immediately have to increase our receipts 100 per cent, or go out of business. How many

of you in this hall who applauded Mr. Lubin's attack on the Imperial Valley farmers would be willing to pay us double the present prices for all your milk, butter, eggs, meat, fruit, vegetables and practically everything you eat as well as most of what you wear?

Prevailing Farm Wage

In our district the prevailing farm wage is 25 cents per hour. You may say that this is too low, and I freely admit that we should all prefer to be able to pay 40 cents or 50 cents an hour, as we used to do when we were getting good prices; but, unlike some of the brain trusters at Washington, we aren't able to keep going while paying out two dollars for every dollar we take in. In my own case, which I believe to be typical, our labor bill, even for the last five years of low wages, has averaged 54.4 per cent of our total expenses, the remaining 45.6 per cent representing the cost of spray materials, seed, fertilizers, electricity, blacksmithing, taxes, interest on our mortgage, and about twenty other items. Admittedly, we are paying low wages to our workmen, but you city people are paying us still lower prices for our farm products—and even now you are complaining of the high cost of living. Just what would you say if this cost were doubled overnight? Your answer would probably be: "We simply can't stand it." My answer to you is the same.

Twenty-five cents an hour may seem very little to you; but to grow, at prevailing prices, 25 cents' worth of farm products per hour of labor requires hard work, strict economy and skillful management.

Amazing Economies

Not only the farmer but the farmer's wife and children often

have to economize to an extent that would amaze many of you. As illustrative of this I might tell you of an incident, the accuracy of which I can not absolutely swear to but which is probably true: That of a thrifty farmer's widow, childless and ill, who, realizing that death was approaching, called her faithful niece to her bedside and said: "I know that the Lord is going to take me soon, and when He does I want you to lay me out in my black silk dress; but before doing so I want you to cut out the back of it, so that you can make something useful for yourself out of that fine material." The niece that she naturally protested, and as a final argument said: "I couldn't, Aunt Sally, for when judgment day comes and you and Uncle Eben walk arm-in-arm up the golden stairs, I just couldn't bear to think of all the angels staring at you, with the whole back out of your dress." To which the aunt replied: "Oh, they won't be looking at me, they'll all be looking at your Uncle Eben. I buried him without his pants."

Not Complaining

Now, I don't want you to think that we farmers are complaining of our lot or looking for sympathy. We're simply looking for a square deal—rather than for too much New Deal. I would rather be a farmer and live a farmer's out-of-doors life, simply and economically as most of us do, than be president of the largest corporation in California; and when the end finally comes, I shall be perfectly willing to be buried without my pants. If the good Lord and the agitators will only let me keep them that long. Perhaps some similar preference for the country on the part of the farm laborers explains why, when left to themselves, they have been

no happy and contented with their present lot.

Pay All Traffic Will Bear

In spite of the lamentable ignorance of many city dwellers, the vast majority of farm laborers know that we farmers have, in wages all that the traffic would bear; that, in fact, many farmers have been forced to deprive themselves and their families of the bare necessities of life in order to meet their payrolls, and in the end have lost their farms in their efforts to do so. The laborers know that even in good times no farmer became rotten rich. I can not recall a single instance in the last thirty years in which a man has become a millionaire through farming in California. There have, of course, been instances of the improper exploitation of farm labor; but it is no farther to condemn, because of these exceptional cases, the entire farm labor setup, than it would be to condemn the institution of marriage, because of certain much more frequent abuses of that relationship.

Are Farmers Simple?

I think we farmers must be sort of simple, for there are some things we just can't get through our heads. One is why, when our best and most industrious workers are glad to earn 25 cents per hour at honest work. Mr. Harry Hopkins has for the last two years been paying the poorer and less efficient workers 60 cents an hour for relief work. Some of the more fortunate relief workers have been receiving as much as \$1.10 an hour—presumably for skilled work in connection with such jobs or for bossing the gangs. Pictures don't misunderstand me. I am in no wise blaming the

men on these relief jobs. Many have their families to support and they simply can't afford to pass up this easy money.

An Almost Extinct Species!

From what I have heretofore said, you may have correctly suspected that I am a survivor of that almost extinct species—a Republican. Well, after two years, our good President, whom we are all trying to support in this emergency, regardless of party, discovered that the way to get men off the relief rolls was to pay them less, rather than more, than the going wages of industry in their communities—and he sent a message to Congress requesting such legislation. Then the members of my grand old party got together and said that they would put patriotism above politics, for once, and would support the President, now that he had at last come out for a sound economic principle; I say they took this patriotic stand, did they not? They did not. All but two of the Republicans in the United States Senate, who had been loudly condemning for two years the extravagance and wastefulness of the Administration, joined with the Huey Longs, the Wheelers and the other radical Democrats, with the Farmer-Laborites, the La Follettes and the other radical "ites"—all but two of these Republicans voted to give those on relief this premium for staying on relief, at an estimated additional cost to their over-burdened country of over two billion dollars, and by so doing they almost defeated the President's bill. Apparently, the only reason we farmers are still able to get men to work for us at wages we can afford to pay is that our laborers have either more sense or more patriotism than our politicians. It looks to me as if our great Republican leaders are doing their very best to make

President Roosevelt's re-election next year unanimous.

As to Starvation Wages

In the case of our own farm, many of our harvest hands have been coming clear from Southern California, year after year. These men generally travel with their families and camping equipments in their own automobiles or trucks and they regard "their jobs," as they call them, as very definite assets. We have men who have worked for us ten, fifteen and even twenty years. These men want a job and are perfectly willing to work for the wage the farmers are able to pay them. They also know that we'll pay more just as soon as we can, as a class, afford to do so—for we always have in the past. So much for our so-called starvation wages!

Enter Professional Communist

Into groups of such men as these the professional Communist agitators inject themselves. If they can find a condition where the employees have, or think they have, a grievance, so much the easier for them; but, if not, they try to establish cells of discontent in an otherwise happy and contented group. Human nature being what it is, it is always much easier to tear down than to build up, to make a poor workman think that his troubles are caused by his employer rather than by his own shortcomings, to make people count their hardships and ills rather than their blessings. Moreover, these professional agitators are smart and highly-trained—many of them are graduates of regular Communist schools. Some of the more rabid and dangerous are attractive and educated women. They usually know just how far they can go without being sent to jail, and just what arguments to use with each class they deal with. They are generally adept in touching the parlor

pinks for large contributions or gleaming a few dimes from the hard-earned wages of the laborer; and they never lose sight of the real end in view—that of disrupting by force our American governmental and social order. They are not trying to get the laborer higher wages or better living conditions; they set their demands so high that they know the farmers can't afford to meet them; for the last thing they want is to have the farmers end the strikes by raising wages.

They Are Not Farm Laborers

I hope you understand that these men and women are not farm laborers. They do not, as a rule, demean themselves by physical work, except sometimes temporarily for the purpose of boring into, and spreading their poison throughout a peaceful group. The same names and faces may appear as, and the same technique is used by, the down-trodden representatives of the Imperial Valley cantaloupe pickers, the Salinas lettuce pickers, the Santa Maria carrot pickers, the Santa Clara cherry pickers, the Alameda County pea pickers, the Brentwood apricot pickers, the Marysville peach pickers and the San Joaquin Valley cotton pickers. In fact, the Communist leaders openly boasted, the winter before last, that the crops of California, beginning with those of the Imperial Valley, would not be harvested—this before any question of wages had arisen—and they started to make good their boast. You may recall the serious trouble they caused in one locality early another, all spring and early summer—in fact, until just before the general strike in San Francisco was called. They then evidently concluded that their long-hopped-for revolution was starting and they wanted to be in on the killing—in more senses

that one he that as if may, from the day bloodshed started in San Francisco, we saw no more Communist agitators in our part of the country and did not have a single labor dispute on any of our farms. These agitators have been described as "trouble makers pure and simple." I would respectfully suggest omitting the last two qualifications—for they are certainly anything but simple.

Communist Propaganda

If I attempted to tell you how far the Communists have proceeded in this country, and what they are planning to do, I know that a number of you would use the stock parlor pink argument that I was growing hysterical; so I shall read you words to which you will have to listen with respect: those of William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, in his report to President Roosevelt, entitled "Report on Communist Propaganda in America." This pamphlet is published by the American Federation of Labor at Washington, D. C., and I would advise everyone who cares more for his own country than for Russia to get a copy and read it. On page 7 Mr. Green states:

"When Moscow orders: 'Forward, march!' the Communists in the United States execute the command, like so many disciplined troops. All over the Communist world the disciplined companies do likewise. For those who do not obey there is excommunication and sometimes the sentence of death.

Follow Orders from Moscow

"That the Communists of America follow the orders of Moscow was more clearly and candidly announced by William Z. Foster, then principal leader of Communism in the United States, when he stated before the commission presided over by the Hon.

Hamilton Fish, by authority of Congress."

After giving Mr. Foster's verbatim testimony at considerable length, Mr. Green writes as follows:

"Translating the passage read by Foster we observe that since those people that have, and believe in, democracy will fight to defend their freedom and democracy, just as they fought heroically to achieve it, they must be exterminated by the terrorism of the Red hosts. Because they defend their homes they must be slaughtered."

Remember, my friends, these are the words of the hard-headed and experienced president of the American Federation of Labor, not those of an hysterical farmer; and if any body of men knows exactly what the Communists are doing, and how they should be fought, it is the members and officers of the American Federation of Labor.

On page 9 Mr. Green states: "Communism is not a sect; it is not a local political party, nor a national political party. It is a world revolutionary organization, unified on one plan, knit around one philosophy, headed toward a single goal.

"When the Communists say revolution they mean precisely that and nothing else. They do not mean a national election, such as tore the American Government away from the Republican party and gave it to the Democratic party; when you, Mr. Roosevelt, succeeded Mr. Hoover. Nor do they even, as we have seen, mean such an election as might tear the national Government away from you, Mr. President, and give it to Mr. Foster."

Potential Assassination

At the bottom of this same page Mr. Green observes: "To have potential assassination in

our midst is not consoling, to say the least, quite apart from the Communist-instigated strikes, under which our wage earners and their families have suffered privation and untold misery."

On page 23 Mr. Green quotes from a speech made by the Communist leader, J. Louis Engdahl, when the latter declared: "We workers say: Hail to mutiny in the United States Army. Hail to mutiny in the United States Navy. Hail to mutiny in the United States Air Forces."

And on page 29 Mr. Green states: "The Communists enter a strike situation not to win, but to disrupt. They employ two methods always: the first is to discredit regular leaders, while the second is to increase the demands to the point of impossibility, and thus to keep them at a point where they never can be met."

Strange Attitude of the Metropolitan Press

Owing to the strange attitude of most of our metropolitan press, you heard a great deal about Mr. Lubin's report on the Imperial Valley situation, while probably most of you heard nothing of the subsequent detailed report made by the Special Investigating Committee composed of Dean C. B. Hutchinson of the College of Agriculture, University of California; Mr. W. C. Jacobsen, administrative assistant of the State Department of Agriculture; and Assemblyman John Phillips, all of whom went down to Imperial Valley in April, 1934, to learn the true state of affairs. They found that this so-called strike was organized by out-and-out Communists and not by down-trodden toilers. I have time to give you only two extracts from this report. On page 7 the report states:

"In general, reductions in wage scales in the valley, as outlined in a previous paragraph, are reflection of decreased returns to growers and occurred following seasons of low prices. These reductions are apparently fully justified in view of the low returns to growers, though some question may arise as to the justifiable amount of drop, particularly during the months of April to June, 1933. Careful analysis of the wage scales prevailing during the period from 1929 to date indicates that during this period wages have, on the whole, been as high as growers could afford to pay and in some seasons have been higher than their returns justified."

A Subsidiary of Red International of Labor Unions

On pages 13 and 14, we read: "The Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union is a subsidiary of the Trade Union Unity League. This is stated on its own membership application cards. The latter organization, in turn, is a subsidiary of the Red International of Labor Unions. This is stated on its literature and there is no attempt at concealment. The Red International of Labor Unions is an integral part of the world revolutionary movement directed by the Communist International. The directing heads of this movement, and its leaders and organizers in its subsidiaries throughout the world, are members of the Communist party. The program of the Communist International, embodies the overthrow of the American form of government by force, the suppression of religion, and the establishment of a central control, or dictatorship, by the workers themselves. Evidence to support these statements and, hence, to connect the agricultural dis-

turbances in California with the Communist party, the Communist International or the world revolutionary movement are so abundant and are becoming so widely known that it seems unnecessary to add them to this report."

Many Communist Mailings

How many of you know, by the way, that there are published in this country no less than twelve Communist daily newspapers and thirty weekly and monthly Communist periodicals, making forty-two in all, which are distributed through the United States mails at the reduced second-class rates; in addition to fifteen more (three of them published in Moscow) which are regularly distributed throughout the country? Those distributed through our second-class mails have a circulation of about 250,000.

Credit Where Credit Is Due

I may have said some rather harsh things about the city dwellers who for the last two years have been aiding and abetting the Communists by their financial and moral support—if the word moral can properly be used in this connection. But I also want to give credit where credit is due—to those exceptions in the cities who have been consistently helping us in our good fight. A few outstanding individuals, such as Chief of Police Quinn of this city, Chief of Police James Davies of Los Angeles, and Father Feely of the University of San Francisco, have been constantly and efficiently helping us. During the last year by far the most effective newspaper support in Northern California has come from the San Francisco "Examiner," the "Daily Commercial News" and the "Daily Bulletin," and we farmers and all other patriotic Americans should thoroughly appreciate the splendid help they have given us. The

"Pacific Rural Press" also has unflinchingly supported our cause in this crisis, as it has in all others, and has been of great value in informing the farmers of one district exactly what the Communist agitators were doing in other districts.

The following organizations, among others, have been especially active and efficient in their fights against Communism: The American Legion, the American Federation of Labor, the Elks, the Knights of Columbus, the State Chamber of Commerce, the Native Sons of the Golden West, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Lions, the Eagles, the Cavaliers, the Crusaders, the California Peace Officers Association, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Disabled American Veterans and the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Associated Farmers Formed

In 1933—under the guidance of such splendid leaders as Col. Walter F. Garrison of Lodi and Mr. S. P. Frisselle of Fresno—the Associated Farmers of California was formed. We now have organizations of Associated Farmers in twenty-two of the principal counties of the State, all of which are run by local groups of farmers but are affiliated with the State organization. These groups have been instrumental in securing ordinances of anti-picketing and hope to have them passed in other counties this spring. They are co-operating with the various service organizations in their communities and are preparing to smother the Communists out. A chart seized by the police in one of their raids on Communist headquarters showed that over 65 California strikes, involving 50,000 workers and resulting in the loss of millions of dollars, were

organized and financed by the Communist party. The loss in the cotton strike alone was over a million dollars and in the lettuce strike in excess of \$250,000, the latter lasting only ten days. These strikes were proved to be a part of an organized Communist movement to tie up the vital industries of California, beginning with agriculture as the most vulnerable.

Can't Afford Strike Luxuries

You in San Francisco may not consider the loss of four or five million dollars through strikes as a very serious matter, when you were able to stand a two hundred million dollar waterfront strike, led by a radical alien and watched by a complaisant Secretary of Labor. We operate altogether too close to the line to be able to afford such luxuries. We hold that all such aliens should be fingerprinted and deported; and we hold that the calling out of the troops, which was deplored by that same Secretary of Labor, was the only action a self-respecting Governor could have taken. Alien radicals were being deported by scores under the former administration and we farmers are wondering why they have been treated so sympathetically by the present administration. Why have the deportations of alien Communists practically ceased?

Some Examples

A brief summary of the agricultural activities of the principal Communists recently convicted at Sacramento will show their connection with our farm strikes of the last two years:

Patrick E. Chambers: Alias John E. Williams; State leader of the Communist party; district organizer of the Communist Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union; very active in the San Joaquin Valley, the Santa

Clara Valley and the Imperial Valley strikes, as well as numerous others. He stated recently in Sacramento: "We will keep on calling strikes among the agricultural workers in California until we get better conditions. Unless we can get a settlement very soon, I am afraid it means violence."

Nora Conklin: Alias Lora Thornton; picketed in Yacaville fruit pickers' strike. Served ninety-day jail sentence.

Caroline Decker: A leader with Pat Chambers in the San Joaquin Valley strike; very active in the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union and other Communist organizations; took a leading part in Brentwood strike. She made a statement in Sacramento on June 28, 1934, in which she said: "If, in the process of getting better living and working conditions it is necessary for the working classes to overthrow the Government, then that means—overthrow the Government."

Albert Hougardy: Leader of the Yacaville pruners' strike. He was the third of the group to make a statement at Sacramento. He said: "We have nothing to hide. We are merely carrying out the details of a program prescribed by the Communist International to unseat the existing system of Government and substitute a control similar in principle and operation to that of Soviet Russia."

A Good Illustration

Last year's apricot pickers' strike of Brentwood, in my own county, furnishes a good illustration of the Communist tactics. The farmers of that district had, as usual, engaged most of their harvesters somewhat in advance and had all they could use; but, due to scarcity of employment elsewhere, about 1200 itinerants drifted in, looking for work. These

poor people concentrated in a camp, under miserable conditions but this was not the fault of the Brentwood farmers. They had not called for extra workers nor had they made any effort to get them. Such a situation was to the Communists just what a good hard frost—in some other section than our own—would be to us growers. They sent some of their most skilled professionalists into the district and soon a strike was called—not of the men employed by the farmers (for they were satisfied with their jobs). I repeat, not of the men employed— that of the 1200 unemployed—who proceeded to picket, harass and intimidate those who had jobs and wanted to keep them.

Model 'Camp' Termed "Stockade"

In this connection I want to call to your attention the fact that Ballour, Guthrie & Co. had, at a cost of \$35,000, established a model labor camp at Brentwood—with hot and cold showers, free electricity, a camp caretaker, seventy-five cottages supplied with free gas for cooking, tents with floors and frames connected with community kitchens supplied with free gas, a nursery and playground for the children, under the supervision of a nurse hired by the company. In short, one of the finest farm labor camps in the State. Yet, because of the very excellence of this camp, it was throughout the weeks of picketing the target for continual abuse and vilification on the part of the agitators. Because it was surrounded by a substantial fence surmounted by plenty of barbed wire, with the entrance guarded night and day, the agitators continually referred to it as a stockade, a cattle corral or a prison and its inhabitants as slaves and prisoners. Obviously, the fence and the guard were there not to keep the lawless element out, not to keep the

contented workmen in. The agitators recognized the protection thus afforded the latter and their wives and children; hence, it came in for that much more of their spleen and bitterness.

Lenin Still the Great Guide

As Mr. Green states on page 28 of the report already referred to: "Lenin remains the great guide in the development of all Communist policies in the United States as well as elsewhere. In a book published after his death, Lenin wrote: 'Whatever serves to advance class warfare is moral.' He also stated: 'We must know how to apply, at need, knavery, deceit, illegal methods, hiding truth by silence, in order to penetrate the very heart of the trade unions (in the United States), to remain there and to accomplish there the Communist task.'"

Undermining the Loyalty of Our Army and Navy

As you have probably heard before, the Communists are making a determined effort to undermine the loyalty of our army and navy, so that these will become less effective in event of the revolution. They board our warships as visitors, and while the pretty girls they use for contacts are making dates with the enlisted men—and you all know that it's mighty hard for a sailor to turn down a pretty girl—the men of the party secretly scatter Communist literature around the ship. When such Communists are arrested and taken ashore they are usually released, with a warning. I don't know how you feel about it but I believe that any man or woman who tampers with the loyalty of our army or our navy ought, if an alien, to be treated as a spy and if a native-born American as a traitor. This would also help solve the deportation problem. The parlor pink

have been constantly preaching that we ought to look for and adopt whatever is good in their beloved Soviet Government. Well, I'm willing to be broad-minded and I would begin by adopting their treatment of revolutionists who are trying to overthrow their government by treasonable methods.

Defy National Forces

The officers of our army and navy are doing all they can, under our present ineffective treatment of the situation, but Communists are becoming bold enough to defy our national forces. You perhaps recently read in the papers that Major Jones of the United States Army, who had been very active in weeding out the Communist members of the S. E. R. A. who were working in the Prosidlo, had received several anonymous threats and warnings to lay off his activities. Major Jones naturally continued to perform his duty and in a short time not Major Jones, but his young daughter was waylaid and beaten up.

Captain Chare, who had also been active protecting the Prosidlo against the Communists, was likewise attacked by thugs. How long, gentlemen, are you going to allow this disgraceful state of affairs to continue?

What Associated Farmers Intend

The Associated Farmers intend: First, to get laws and ordinances passed that will protect them as

far as possible against the Communists and; secondly, to see that these laws are rigidly enforced. We are not trying to beat down wages or to lower the position of the worker. We are not advocating the use of illegal force or terrorism; but, on the other hand, we are determined to prevent these agencies being successfully used against us; and we shall use our organized political strength to obtain our ends. We hold that the time has come for everyone to declare whether he or she stands for American institutions and government or for Communism and that we have no more place in this country for the parlor pink than we have for the out-and-out Communists themselves.

And in Conclusion

I don't know how some of you regard the situation but for my part I should consider that if we farmers meekly allowed a few hundred professional Communists, under any pretext whatever, to completely disorganize and wreck our entire industry, with the resultant misery to us and to the hundreds of thousands of honest, hard-working men that look to us for protection and employment, we would be a lot of pusillanimous morons and would deserve exactly what we would get.

Gentlemen, the farm workers of California are going to be protected and the farmers of California are going to harvest their crops!

Bancroft: California just as they got control of it in the Hawaiian Islands later on and just as they got control of the shipping interests. If the Communist group could get control of the shipping and could get control of the farming production, they were getting a lot of control. Of course, their idea was naturally to take control out of our hands and ultimately get the land. We began an intensive fight against them and also against the unionization of farm labor. We didn't have any quarrel with the unions so long as they behaved themselves, as far as the commercial and industrial interests were concerned, but we did have a very decided quarrel with them when they wanted to unionize farm labor. We felt that the farmers simply couldn't stand operating under union domination and survive as farmers. I don't know how a farm could operate if the union leader could call a strike at harvest time and make the farmer lose his entire crop. The farmer would simply have to meet whatever terms the labor leader laid down, and that was our situation.

Baum: Do you recall the Imperial Valley strike in January 1934?

Bancroft: Yes. The "Farmer and the Communist" talks about that.

Baum: There were three men, John Phillips, W.C. Jacobsen, and Claude Hutchison, who investigated that and they felt that it was due to agitation, and according to Dean Hutchison he felt that this was the beginning of the Associated Farmers and that the farmers recognized at that point the danger of agitators.

Bancroft: That was the very beginning. As a matter of fact, John Phillips was for years a very active member of our Associated Farmers after that.

Baum: He was a state assemblyman at that time, wasn't he?

Bancroft: I think so. And then he became congressman and he was a congressman for a number of years until he retired, and a very fine congressman, too.

Baum: I know at the time this investigation took place there was another investigation of the same thing in which Simon J. Lubin was involved, and they came out with the finding that it was due to the poor housing conditions, mainly.

Bancroft: The Simon Lubin group, they were just slanted the other way very definitely, and they blamed the farmers for everything down there in the Imperial Valley.

Baum: Well, is it your feeling that this 1934 strike was the beginning of the Associated Farmers?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, without any question.

Baum: I had read somewhere that already there had been concern back in 1933, especially in the Farm Bureau and the State Chamber of Commerce, that something ought to be done.

Bancroft: There probably was, but as far as I know there weren't any Associated Farmers then. I first heard of the Associated Farmers very early in 1935. We formed one here. We heard about what had been going on in the Imperial Valley and we worked from there on.

- Baum: Then you had nothing to do with the Associated Farmers until early 1935?
- Bancroft: Yes. I didn't have anything to do with the state organization until after I'd made this talk. I didn't even know them, but I knew of them and I knew just what had happened, and before I made it I studied up, learned just what the situation was all the way through. As I said in there, I waited for somebody to answer Simon Lubin, who had become a very strong radical by that time. He'd been a partner of Harris Weinstock, who was one of our Progressive leaders in the Hiram Johnson times. He was a member of Weinstock, Lubin & Co. of Sacramento. I never knew him personally. I may have met him, but I didn't know him. He'd become very radical in the meantime; he was one that split off on the Wilson side, not that Wilson was radical. Weinstock was a very different type of man, a very high-grade man. I think he was probably dead by that time.

Contra Costa Associated Farmers

- Baum: What about the Contra Costa group?
- Bancroft: We formed these associations of county Associated Farmer groups and they formed the Contra Costa Associated Farmers and I was elected president of it, and when I made my address I didn't make it as a member of the Associated Farmers of California but as president of the Associated

Bancroft: Farmers of Contra Costa County. Now, they had the Brentwood apricot strike, and that may have been in 1933.

Baum: I think that was in 1934.

Bancroft: Yes. But it was before I was a member of Associated Farmers.

Baum: Was that the impetus to the Associated Farmers in Contra Costa County?

Bancroft: Yes. Although I didn't have anything to do with Brentwood at that time, the first thing we did was to get the supervisors to pass what was called an anti-picketing ordinance, but it was an ordinance regulating picketing. The ordinance especially stated that nothing in there was to prohibit peaceful picketing, but we objected to forceful picketing or improper picketing, mass picketing and abuses of that kind. I referred in this talk to what had happened in Brentwood. From that time on it grew into a strong farm organization here.

You see, the Farm Bureau didn't want to take on a fight of that kind because it was so controversial, in the sense that it had to make a good many enemies; they had union labor members in the Farm Bureau who were also farmers, you know. So we had to have an organization of men who were willing to get out and meet these fellows on the firing line and protect our interests and our rights.

Baum: Were most of the men in the Contra Costa Associated Farmers also in the Farm Bureau?

Bancroft: I would think that most of them were.

Baum: Were most of the Farm Bureau members in the Associated Farmers?

Bancroft: No. I'd say only a portion of them, and we had Grange members and so on. It would mostly be representative farmers. You see, a lot of the farmers in the Farm Bureau are people who have regular jobs in the cities or towns and do a little farming on the side. I would say about a third of the members are that type, not the farmers who are devoting their entire time to farming, and perhaps two-thirds are devoting their entire time, but that's just a rough estimate.

Baum: These part-time farmers wouldn't be in the Associated Farmers?

Bancroft: Most of them would not, no.

Baum: Would men who had very small farms?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, we had a lot of small farmers.

Baum: I suppose it would depend in part on whether they hired labor and how much. Don't some of the small farmers manage most of their work alone?

Bancroft: Very few. The fruit farmers, almost none, because if you're -- When I say small farmers I'm talking about men who are really farmers, who are depending for their livelihood on farming. In order to raise enough to support your family you have to have help at harvest time. This idea of a family farm with just a small amount of land and just doing the work that you can do yourself, it will not provide a decent living for a man. He has to have enough production in order to have a reasonable income, and to do that he has to hire men to do

Bancroft: a large part of his work, especially in harvest time.

We also have another peak time, pruning time, and then if you're raising peaches or apricots, another peak time is the thinning time, but you have to have those men at that particular time. Now they're trying to pick fruit by machinery and so on, but I don't know how they're going to pick pears by machinery because you have to go around and pick each pear according to its size.

Baum: I guess man is still a little more intelligent than the machine. Getting back at this Brentwood apricot strike: that didn't affect you, you had no apricots?

Bancroft: No. We had a few apricots up here, but it didn't affect us at all. As a matter of fact, with all the fighting I've done against the organization and unionization of farm labor, I've never had a strike of any kind or any kind of labor disturbance. I've expected to have them try it on me several times but I've never had it.

Baum: Were you and the other farmers around here locally who were not directly affected alert to this Brentwood strike? Did any of you go down there to see what was going on?

Bancroft: No, but as I remember it was right after that or about that time that we got the so-called anti-picketing ordinance through the board of supervisors. That's the one thing the unions always held very much against me because I had led the fight on that.

Baum: This was before the Associated Farmers was organized here?

Bancroft: No, it was contemporary with the organization. Of course, we had the industrial crowd backing us, without telling us about it, you know, but they used all the influence they could use to get it through.

Baum: It was my understanding that it was particularly difficult to get that through in Contra Costa because of the many union labor people here.

Bancroft: Oh, it was really quite a thing to get through. Of course, the Brentwood people were working with us on the thing, but Contra Costa County with all the industrial groups has been very strong union labor and very strong, well, very strongly Democratic from the start. We also had a lot of Communists in here. We judge that by the number of people who took the Western Worker, or whatever they called it at that time -- they changed their name once or twice -- but took the Communist paper. We were able to get the number that took it in the county. It was quite a surprising number.

Baum: How did you get that anti-picketing ordinance through?

Bancroft: At that time the supervisors were a good deal more influenced by farmers than they are now because the farmers represented quite a bloc. In other words, we held the balance of power and we could usually beat a supervisor who was dead against us on anything in all of these districts out here.

The situation that had been going on over there in Brentwood

Bancroft: was outrageous, the way they were treated. For instance, in the strike out there it wasn't the men that were working that were striking, making the trouble, it was the men from the outside who flocked in there looking for jobs, and there weren't any jobs for them. They were in a very unfortunate position, and then these agitators came in and harangued them. Of course, they claimed that the farmers had been agitating to get a whole lot of people in there, more than they needed and all that, which was not true, because that's the kind of action that's apt to make trouble and the farmers weren't looking for trouble, they were just looking for people to harvest their crops. But times were tough then and they'd hear, "Well, there's going to be a lot of men needed picking apricots over in the Brentwood district. You'd better go up there." A person down at Merced or someplace like that, he and his family would come up. It's the way the farm labor used to come to us. We'd very seldom have to work to find farm laborers. There were a lot of them floating around at that time.

Baum: I believe the sheriff was Sheriff Veale, and he was replaced the following year by Sheriff John Miller. Was this because of dissatisfaction with the way things went?

Bancroft: No. Veale upheld the law and he was very cooperative, and he just --

Baum: I believe you have a letter of commendation to him in your

Baum: correspondence files, not for this situation but for another.

Bancroft: Well, he did several things in there. He was a politician from A to Z and I think he'd been sheriff longer than any sheriff in the state, something like that. He was an old-timer and a very successful politician, but in this, all through this, he stood up very well. He tried not to antagonize union labor. You know, we all realize that it's necessary for the laboring men to have their unions. I've always said that if I were a mechanic or working as a laboring man I would certainly join the labor union, just as working as a farmer I joined the farmers organizations. But what we object to is when they go too far, when they usurp power, do illegal things, or when they get so coercive that they threaten to ruin a person's business. As I've always said, you can't trust businessmen to treat the labor unions fairly if there's no control over the businessmen, and therefore you need the labor unions. But you can't trust the labor unions to be fair to business or to the farmers or anybody unless there's some kind of control over them, and the labor unions want business controlled all right, but they don't want any control on them.

Baum: Were you active in organizing the Associated Farmers, then, after the Brentwood strike?

Bancroft: Well, I was active in getting the farmers in this part of the county to join, just as the farmers over in the Brentwood

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Bancroft: Well, I was active in getting the farmers in this part of the county to join, just as the farmers over in the Brentwood

Bancroft: area were joining up, too.

Baum: Were you the first president?

Bancroft: Yes, I think so.

Baum: You must have been, because it was April 1935. Who were some of your associates in gathering the group together?

Bancroft: One of them here was Grant Burton.

Baum: Were these men on the executive committee?

Bancroft: If you want to get the names, I can look it up. I'd rather do that.

Baum: I just wondered if there were some who stood out in your mind as being especially active.

Bancroft: One of the main men over in the Brentwood area was Charles Weeks. He was, I would say, the leader over there. I'd rather look them up, though, because otherwise I'm bound to leave out a number of men that did a lot of good work. They were a very fine crowd. [See Appendix for list of leading members of the Associated Farmers of Contra Costa County.]

Baum: I read about the Brentwood plan. Did that operate in this part of the county, too? It was a plan that Sheriff Miller devised: he had 15 representatives who would set wages for the area and I guess they were a group prepared for any problems.

Bancroft: Well, after Sheriff Veale didn't run again -- as I remember he just decided not to run -- Sheriff Miller was elected, and he was backed pretty much by the union labor crowd when

Bancroft: he got in there, but we went to him and explained the situation and he did a very good job for us. I don't mean that we used undue influence on him or anything, but we explained our position and he could see that we -- we said all we wanted to do was to have the law enforced as it was from illegal actions by the other side and we wanted to do what was right. He suggested or somebody suggested this plan and of course we let it go as entirely his, gave him all the credit for it, and he did a very good job. He moved his headquarters down to Brentwood during the trouble, during the rush of the harvest season, and then he didn't have any trouble at all. That was the next year.

Baum: His plan was to register every worker before the worker took a job, and that way they could keep track of all the pickers.

Bancroft: [Laughing] Yes, and that's a thing that the agitators didn't like, you know.

Baum: Did they do that up around here, too, or was that mainly in the apricot area?

Bancroft: That was in the Brentwood area. We didn't have to here. We worked very closely with the sheriff on those things, on his plan, and backed him up in every possible way. So we had no trouble there.

I think it was under Sheriff Miller that we instituted the plan of getting the prisoners in the county jail, what you might call the desirable prisoners, fellows that were in

Bancroft: there for being drunk, driving drunk, and things of that kind, men that were not vicious or anything of that kind. They let these fellows work to get just about the regular wages -- I think it's \$1.10 now, something like that. As farm wages go up their wages go up. They pay for their board while they're doing it and I imagine they get better board than they get otherwise, and they're out of doors working. And part of their wages go to their families and part is given to them when they leave jail, and the result is that it takes a large group off the relief load, gives these men something to do, and it gets them out of jail in very much better shape than they'd be in if they'd stayed in jail all the time. They're out of doors working all the time. It's worked very well. It was carried on also by the next sheriff, Sheriff Long, and is still being carried on.

Baum: Are they desirable employees?

Bancroft: I've never had any, but I would say that they do about as good a job as you could expect. They have to hire a guard to go along with them and so on. The men that have employed them have found them a good deal more satisfactory than the men that they're apt to hire when they have to send to Stockton and Sacramento and take the men off skid row. It's worked out very well all around. Just lately the union labor crowd tried to block it.

Baum: Yes, I know they were against convict labor.

Following page:

Philip Bancroft and
his favorite dog.

"We called her Willie."



Bancroft: Well, now, if you're using convict labor as strictly convict labor where men are in chain gangs and things of that kind, it's one thing.

Baum: Well, they're opposed to the competition for jobs; that's their main objection.

Bancroft: Yes, but the point is we haven't enough men who are willing to do farm work to supply the need of the work.

Organization and Work of the Associated Farmers

Baum: Some money was raised for the Associated Farmers by people in San Francisco. One of those who started to do this was Colbert Coldwell; he started out to try to raise money for the Associated Farmers, the state organization, in San Francisco. I don't think he was too successful in that endeavor, but I wondered if other people made any contribution to the Contra Costa organizing costs. Before you get started, really, it is hard to get money for organization.

Bancroft: We did our own organizing; for our local we didn't have any help from the outside at all.

Baum: So, did you need much money to organize?

Bancroft: No, we didn't. We just went out and talked to the farmers. They didn't need much talking to, either, after what had happened at Brentwood. Colbert Coldwell was a very influential man, still is, in San Francisco. He's pretty old now, but he's been a marvelous public-spirited citizen there.

Bancroft: A number of organizations did help out the Associated Farmers in Contra Costa County, but they were almost all of them organizations that had a direct interest and a direct income from farm groups, like the railroads and the PG&E and the oil companies and so on.

Baum: Well, I could see a direct relationship of a lot of groups that did contribute, such as the railroads, as you say, but Colbert Coldwell was a real estate agent, wasn't he?

Bancroft: Yes. He was later president of the chamber of commerce, I believe. But I think he was doing it just as a public-spirited citizen. I didn't know that he had tried --

Baum: Yes, he took on raising money in the beginning and then he didn't do so well and I believe it was Leonard Wood of Calpak who took over and did a better job of raising money.

Bancroft: Well, you know more about it than I do, because you see I wasn't with the state organization at that time, but I do know that General Leonard Wood and his successor as president of Calpak -- I'll mention his name in a couple of minutes -- they were very influential in helping to raise money for the Associated Farmers. They were directly concerned and they were very loyal backers of the Associated Farmers, but the idea was put forth that the farmers themselves weren't doing anything and that is an entirely mistaken idea because the farmers for years and years raised thousands and thousands of dollars to do the work, and yet we never had enough money

Bancroft: to do what we would like to have done in organizing. Then the Associated Farmers in the state were all this time working very hard against the Communist influence and we had at one time one of the best files in the United States of Communists and their activities. We kept that up through World War II.

Baum: How did you get these records?

Bancroft: From what we'd read from the papers and hear and so on.

Baum: You kept clipping files?

Bancroft: Yes. I mean reading papers and clipping everything we found out about a Communist or about an agitator. Now, all these firms that were hiring men in airplane industries and industries of that kind, they wanted very much to be sure that they wouldn't be getting men that would be saboteurs, and of course before Germany attacked Russia the Communists were all for Germany and they were working against us and they had to be very careful in whom they employed. The day that Germany turned around to attack Russia, then the Communists stopped being openly against us, but we never trusted them at all, and if Roosevelt and his crowd hadn't trusted them we'd be a lot better off now.

Baum: I keep running across the name Colonel Walter E. Garrison. He was at one time your president, I think. I just wondered what his background was.

Bancroft: He was a farmer up at Lodi, and I think he was in the National Guard. I don't know what his military training was or anything

Bancroft: but I think he started out as a major or a captain and he finally became a colonel in World War I.

Baum: Was he a grape grower?

Bancroft: Yes. He was a very able and forceful man and he was our president for some time. I think S. Parker Frisselle was our first president, Walter Garrison our second. It was either that or the other way around in our state organization.

Baum: Did they have much to do with your local unit?

Bancroft: No, the local units ran themselves, but we had a great deal to do with them.

Baum: In what way did the state and local units cooperate?

Bancroft: Well, the state unit was just formed of local units. The membership, for instance, was all in the local units, and it was like a federation.

Baum: I wondered what the function of the state unit was, because I guess most of the work was done in the local unit, wasn't it?

Bancroft: No, a large part of it was done in the state unit, the general direction. For instance, when we had a dispute where we needed legal help the state organization would have it; when we had a strike in the farm industry the state would send its trouble shooters and so on, men that were making a specialty of handling these things; and they would also be coordinating what one local unit did with another. You see, the board of directors of the state organization all came from the local units, and the state organization was very important for that reason.

100. Baum: Would the state organization send you somebody to assist you
in case of a dispute, aside from legal assistance?

110. Bancroft: If we needed it, yes. We never needed it in Contra Costa
120. County. After we got organized and got our picketing ordinance
through and so on -- well, they threatened at the time, the
union legal representatives, that they'd fill the jails of
Contra Costa County if we got this law through. Well, we
never had to use it, we never had to bring a case under the
anti-picketing ordinance. We had quite an active organiza-
130. tion here and they didn't want to buck it. They felt they'd
rather try in other districts, I guess.

140. Baum: You were on the executive committee of the Associated Farmers
for a number of years.

150. Bancroft: Oh, yes, for a great many years.

160. Baum: I was wondering what kind of problems you dealt with in that
capacity.

170. Bancroft: We had a great deal of work in connection with problems that
would come up. For instance, we had strikes here and there.
They had a great deal of trouble in the dairy industry for
quite a while and a lot of the dairymen formed an organiza-
180. tion in Marin County and in the north here to take care of
their own milk that they couldn't sell. You see, when they
got boycotted or had a strike against them they couldn't
send their milk to a concern like Borden's or anything of
that kind, so they had to get a dairy or two of their own.

Bancroft: Now, the Associated Farmers didn't actually run that part of it but they cooperated with it to have what they called the milk producers' association, or something of that kind, so that where they struck a dairy they could have some place to send their milk, they wouldn't just have to lose the whole product. But usually they'd have to use it for butter or cheese and those people don't make as much money as the people who sell their milk for distribution as fluid milk.

Then we had questions coming up -- We tried to improve bad situations on farms. Not all farmers are noble tillers of the soil that are working just for the benefit of humanity. You'll find a few tough ones and a few that try to cut corners and give their workers a poor deal, and we always try to talk to those fellows and get them to improve conditions, because we couldn't help them out if they had a strike if it was their fault. We've been constantly trying to get them to improve housing conditions and everything as they gradually can do it. You can't do it all at once.

Now, for instance, in a camp, in the summertime, the workers would come in here and a lot of them just camp out in tents; we supply the tents and beds and things of that kind, but we couldn't supply houses for all of them, it just couldn't be, but we gradually got to where we got floors for their tents and got running water close to the tents, you

Bancroft: know, and showers -- we've had them for a long time, hot and cold water and so on -- all those different things we try to encourage the farmers to introduce. Now they've got all sorts of laws; some of them go altogether too far.

But it used to be that some camps were in very bad condition and we would feel that if a man was a member of the Associated Farmers we'd tell him he ought to keep his camp up in any kind of shape and if he wasn't a member and he had trouble we'd say, "Well, if you haven't been paying the going wage or if you've been chiseling on your men, we can't do anything for you." And that way we tried to get conditions better all the time and that in turn results in less danger of strikes and trouble and gives the Communists nothing to talk about. They will always pick on any trouble, any deficiency in working conditions or anything else, and a great many times they would claim them when there was nothing the matter at all. Like in the Brentwood area, Balfour Guthrie had a very fine camp there, and they had guards there to prevent people coming in and making trouble for the workers that were in the camp. Well, the agitators said that they had a stockade there and were forcing the workers to live inside the stockade, keeping them as virtual prisoners. Yet it's one of the best camps, probably one of the best in the county, but that doesn't deter the agitators, you know. They're never troubled by facts or by the truth of

Bancroft: conditions, and they claimed all sorts of things about the Balfour Guthrie camp, which was really a very fine camp.

Baum: I think the Associated Farmers on the whole have opposed federal and state camps.

Bancroft: Yes, because they get them and they immediately encourage the unionization of the men in the camps and then they get the state or federal officials down fussing around and making a lot of unnecessary trouble.

We also oppose improper laws, now that they're gone so far in what they require in the camps. For instance, we always put oilcloth on and we usually put new oilcloth on the kitchen table of one of the cookhouses here each year, and they've come around and said, "No, you can't use just oilcloth. You have to use a hard-finish surface like formica, you can't use oilcloth." Well, if you can't use oilcloth on a farm dining room table or a kitchen table I don't know what we're coming to. We use it in our own home.

And they required us to close down all our privies and put in flush toilets. Well, they're apt to be worse when you get a gang of men in, you're apt to have very much worse conditions than you have with privies because a lot of them, you know, don't pay any attention to the way they ought to use them, stuff anything down them and they can plug them up and all that sort of business. But the point is, they've

Bancroft: got a lot of those regulations.

I know one case where they made a farmer take out a bathtub that he had because they said that he had to supply his workers with showers and a bathtub wouldn't do. He said, "Well, a bath does much better than a shower."

"Well, we can't help it; the law says you must have the showers, hot and cold water, and here you have a bathtub with hot and cold water and that will have to come out."

They're doing a lot of things like that where they've gone altogether too far. We try to block these regulations before they're made into law, but a lot of them slip through.

Baum: I was wondering if there were any camps in the state other than the Balfour Guthrie that stood out in your mind as especially good.

Bancroft: Well, the Balfour Guthrie was one of the best, and the di Giorgio Company, run by Joseph di Giorgio and owned by him -- and he always had a very fine lot of accommodations for his men.

Baum: Was that down by Madera?

Bancroft: He had several places. He had one near Marysville, and the biggest one was near Arvin.

Baum: Did you see those camps?

Bancroft: Oh, yes. Never to inspect them critically, but I had seen them and been through them, seen the living quarters and everything.

Baum: Both of these that you mentioned are large corporations. Was this the pattern of the large farm, that they would have better accommodations than the farms that were smaller?

Bancroft: They could afford it usually. They had a good deal more money behind them. You know, it's a difficult thing to give good accommodations to men that will be working for only anywhere from three to six weeks for a person or a farm. With the Balfour Guthrie Company and also the di Giorgio farms, they had a series of crops, so they could keep their workers a good deal longer.

A good many farms had very scanty accommodations for their men and a number of them didn't have any accommodations at all. They figured on hiring local workers. I've always maintained that if a man was having a farm he should have some kind of livable accommodations for his men because he couldn't expect, as his crops grew larger, to just pick up men around the neighborhood. When they set out an orchard usually, in a new district especially, or in a district that was new as far as fruit was concerned, they needed very few men until they began producing fairly heavily. Then year after year -- I'm speaking now of fruit production -- the trees would increase their crops very rapidly, and a place that might have needed twenty men at harvest time at the beginning might need 150 or 200. Well, a good many times the farmers would get caught short for accommodations, and

Bancroft: as I say, some places they would just depend on getting local help and then they wouldn't be getting that. Then there was no question but what in some places the accommodations were very poor, but as a rule they were very much better than those who were criticizing the farmers represented them to be. In other words, anyone criticizing the farmers would pick out the worst places he could and exploit those as representative.

The Associated Farmers realized that it was necessary to provide the workers with reasonable accommodations and they always recommended to their members to make accommodations just as good as they could afford to make them. But that doesn't mean that they would put up a house for each man or anything of that kind. Those crops that were harvested during the summertime were very often harvested from camps where there were just regular camps, where people camped out in tents. That's the way we ran our place for a great many years, and we're running it still that way. At least half of the men that work for us live in tents during the harvest season. They come with their families and they expect to camp out. Some of them bring trailers, and they all bring their camping equipment, and so on. A number of them that are single men, they live in the boarding house.

Baum: Do you have a boarding house here, a bunk house?

Bancroft: Oh, yes. Practically all the farms have bunk houses, but most of these workers would come with their families, and they wouldn't, of course, live in the bunk houses.

- Baum: I guess most of the criticisms I have read were of inadequate living conditions, and I think the thing people were mostly concerned with was pure water and bathing facilities and sanitary facilities, not necessarily a house.
- Bancroft: Yes. We always took pains to have that. In all of our experience here we never had a disease start and spread, we never had anything, even the measles.
- Baum: I was wondering if the Associated Farmers put any extreme pressure on their members to be assured that facilities were at least clean.
- Bancroft: No. We weren't autocratic or dictatorial. All we could do would be to recommend to our members. We had no way of going in and policing them.
- Baum: You couldn't kick them out of the Associated Farmers?
- Bancroft: No, but we could refuse to help them if they got into trouble from their own fault.
- Baum: Was there ever any consideration of the farmers joining together to make a central camp that they might be able to support jointly but they couldn't support singly?
- Bancroft: Yes, they did that at a number of places.
- Baum: How did that work out?
- Bancroft: It worked out very well as a rule. They'd have camps where they'd have two or three hundred cabins or something of that kind, and in those camps they'd try to keep families in them first at work on one place and then at work on another and

Bancroft: so on. They did that particularly up and down the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys.

Baum: Another problem I read about are medical facilities, that there weren't any clinics or anything that these people could go to if they were ill. Was there anything the farmers could do about that?

Bancroft: No, except we could see to it that if a man got sick he had medical attention, but we couldn't run clinics. You can't run clinics and things of that kind for a group that are only going to be present for from three to six weeks.

Now, when it came to accidents or workmen's compensation for injuries or anything of that kind, then the farmers had a very distinct and definite liability and obligation because that was their fault or, if not their fault, it was incident to the work of raising their crops. As I mentioned once before, farming is a dangerous occupation and men who are engaged in it are taking a risk. We recognize that the risk should be borne as part of the cost of production and that the farmers should take care of their men that are injured or have any disability due to the work they are doing. With them we would take them right in to the doctor's and they would be taken care of. As I said once before, the farmers were excluded from the requirements of workmen's compensation for most of the time we were farming, but in our own case just as soon as the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed

Bancroft: which was done under Hiram Johnson and which we backed at the time, it was permissible for farmers to insure under it and we came under it right away.

Baum: This was you personally. What about most of the farmers you worked with, were they favorable to workmen's compensation?

Bancroft: Well, they became accustomed to it and when they saw the way it worked I would say a good many of them were favorable to it right from the start. You didn't see any great resistance to it; a lot of them didn't insure at first, but gradually almost all the farmers that were what we'd call representative farmers did insure under it and recognized its worth.

Baum: What about social security? Were they in favor of the men coming under social security?

Bancroft: No. That was a New Deal idea, and neither social security nor unemployment insurance -- they've always objected to being subjected to unemployment insurance. Now, we had social security on our farm, but --

Baum: Do all of your workers come under social security?

Bancroft: All of our workers that make more than \$150.

Baum: That's quite recent, isn't it?

Bancroft: Yes, that was passed recently. The reason we don't believe in social security is that it's utterly unsound the way it's run. It's not built on a sound actuarial basis.

Baum: Would this idea that it's unsound represent the average farmer's view?

Bancroft: Well, probably the average farmer was just "agin it" -- he'd just figure it was another tax on him.

Baum: He was just against an additional tax.

Bancroft: But in regard to social security I can tell you a very good illustration, and that's in my own case. There was a company they were trying to straighten out that had some farm land, and I was asked if I would be president of it at about \$100 a month. This was, say, about 1936, around in there. We would have to meet one day a month. They wanted my advice, and so I said I would do it, and we proceeded to meet once a month and I would draw \$100 a month for that.

At that time the social security tax on me was \$1, 1 %, and after about two and a half years I told the directors I'd got the thing straightened out and I didn't think there was any need of my drawing down \$100 a month any more for our monthly meeting and I suggested that they fire me. I could see that they were rather relieved. I think they'd come to the same conclusion but hadn't wanted to tell me, so one of them said, "Well, how about reducing your salary to \$50 a month?"

And I said, "No, the government is taking over half of what I earn anyhow now, and that would be \$25 a month that I would get and it isn't worth my time, my time's worth more than \$25 a day to me, so I wouldn't want to do it for \$50 a month and I don't think it's worth \$100 a month to your company."

Bancroft: So I quit. And, you see, in that time, in two and a half years, I'd paid in about \$30 in taxes, and my employers had paid in \$30 in taxes. As soon as I got to be 65 years old I began drawing \$30 a month for what I'd paid in, and my total pay-in was only \$30 besides the \$30 the others had paid in. And that was bad enough.

And then when I became president of the West American Finance Company I was drawing \$500 a month for perhaps three years and the tax then was perhaps \$5 or \$10 from me and \$5 or \$10 from the company, \$10 or \$20 a month, and then when I left that my social security jumped. I forget whether I was drawing social security during that time, it depends on how old I was. I think I was over 70 and so could draw it, but anyhow, when I left my social security jumped to \$84 a month.

But there again the total amount I'd paid in was only a few dollars compared to what I was drawing. Mrs. Bancroft said to me one time, "Well, oughtn't I to get half of that because of community income?"

And I said, "I think you could under the new regulations."

So I asked them at the social security place and they said, "Yes, she's entitled to half of what you're getting."

But she said, "I won't take it" first -- that was when I was getting \$30 a month -- "I won't take it, it'd be against my conscience." But when I began to draw \$84 a month and she could get \$42 I persuaded her that it was all right for

Bancroft: her to take it because it was only getting back a very small portion of the taxes she was paying, so she took it and she began drawing \$42 a month, so the two of us were getting \$126 a month.

Then I came under the compulsory self-employment social security. That came under Eisenhower, and I said to people who said, "Well, Eisenhower backed that," I said, "If I was against a thing under Roosevelt I'm jst as much against it under Eisenhower. It wasn't a matter of party politics that made me against it, it was because it was utterly unsound."

Well, anyhow, to cut a long story short, my social security jumped to \$120 a month and that's because I paid about \$120 per year for about four years, and Mrs. Bancroft's jumped to \$60 a month. Now that's \$180 a month, and it's not right at all, because why should a person just because he's old and pays a few years' premiums, earning a big salary, why should he be getting for the rest of his life a large income? It's unsound, it's unfair, and it's making the young fellows that start in at twenty and pay all their lives, they pay all that, and then they get to be 65 when they can commence collecting it, or now it'd be 62, the money won't be there.

Baum: I think you're on the losing side of this battle.

Bancroft: I'm not having any battle, I'm just collecting my social security, but I'm not entitled to it and I wouldn't collect

Bancroft: it except for the fact that I'm only getting back a very small part of the tremendous taxes that I'm paying, a large part of which is being utterly wasted.

Baum: You didn't pay for it in social security tax but you have paid for it in income taxes.

Bancroft: I paid for it in income tax and in capital gains tax and in every other thing. That's another thing about the social security, this \$180 that we're getting a month is exempt from taxes so it's worth about \$360 a month to us. We shouldn't be getting that for the few dollars I put in.

Baum: It worked out profitably for you, if not logically.

Bancroft: Well, it's not right.

Baum: I wanted to ask you about relief payments to migratory workers during times when they were unemployed. What was the policy of the Associated Farmers toward those relief payments? This would be usually when they didn't have anything to live on, subsistence.

Bancroft: Well, we didn't have anything to do about that. If they were destitute they were naturally to be fed.

Baum: I think a lot of this came out of county funds, didn't it, which came out of the farmers' tax loads?

Bancroft: Yes, but I never heard of any objection to their getting enough to live on. I did hear a great deal of objection to the WPA proposition where they'd pay 60¢ or 80¢ an hour while our farm workers who were working hard were getting only 25¢

Bancroft: an hour. It wasn't a fair deal, giving these fellows who were just leaning on shovel handles that they had to make extra strong so they wouldn't break from their leaning on them, that they should be getting two or three times as much, per hour, as the fellows who were doing hard, constructive work. But for giving the unemployed enough to eat, I never heard any objection whatever. There was one objection -- I heard people speaking about the fact that it would have been much better to have given them the food and things of that kind than to give them money which they could spend in drink and in other things and getting automobiles and gasoline and so on, scattering it around. But for relief when they needed relief, I never heard of any objection to that. They did object to having people come in in great hordes from other states, because in California we were much more liberal in what they gave than in the Southern states, for instance.

Baum: I think there was objection to paying relief during harvest seasons.

Bancroft: Yes. Oh, any time they were paying relief when men wouldn't work there was plenty of objection.

Baum: Now, I think at some time there was objection that people were drawing relief when they weren't working because there were strikes on.

Bancroft: Yes, there was plenty of objection to that. And there was also objection to their drawing relief and getting jobs besides.

Baum: I read that at first the policy in California had been to give relief to people whether there were jobs available or not, if they were not working, and then Harold Pomeroy stiffened that up a little; he didn't give relief if it was harvest season and there were jobs available. Did you know Mr. Pomeroy?

Bancroft: Yes, but I didn't know about that incident.

Baum: He later became active in the Associated Farmers, didn't he?

Bancroft: Yes. He was what they would now call liberal in his tendencies, but he was quite an able administrator.

Baum: You think he would have been called liberal?

Bancroft: I don't know, they might have called him radical then.

Baum: It sounded like he was the opposite of liberal when he was administrator of the state relief administration.

Bancroft: Well, it was subject to serious abuse at that time. You asked me about the county administration: the county administrations were much more carefully run, I think, than the state had been. It's closer to the people. The closer you are to the people the more they scrutinize expenditures and so on.

Officers of the Associated Farmers

Baum: I think Pomeroy became the executive secretary in the Associated Farmers about 1938. And Holmes Bishop at that time became president, and before that Colonel Garrison had been

Baum: president. Did this represent a change in the Associated Farmers' policies?

Bancroft: No, it was just that after a man had been president usually two terms we'd elect another man president. First it was the man whose name I mentioned to you last week, S. Parker Frisselle, and he was president, I think, for two years; and then Garrison was president for two years, I don't think he was president for more than two years; then we shifted the presidency to Southern California. We usually tried to alternate from then on between Northern and Southern California.

Baum: Who was Holmes Bishop?

Bancroft: He was president of the Associated Farmers of Orange County. There was no repudiation or anything of Colonel Garrison; he didn't cease to be president from any complaint. He made a very good and competent president of the Associated Farmers.

Baum: You don't think that this indicates any shift in policy or emphasis?

Bancroft: No, not at all.

Baum: I believe you were on the executive committee all this time.

Bancroft: Yes, and I would have known about it if there had been anything of that kind, but I will say that as usual Southern California was very insistent that the next president should come from Southern California, just to have Southern California recognized. Southern California's always been much more insistent on being recognized than Northern California in things of that kind. They're very particular about wanting to -- if

Bancroft: there are two men in any two jobs they'll want the one from Southern California always, even if the best two are in Northern California. And in Northern California I don't think we have that fear or feeling nearly so much.

Baum: I know that's true in the University of California.

Bancroft: Is it?

Baum: UCLA and UCB are in a constant little struggle. Who was Stuart Strathman?

Bancroft: I think he had been executive secretary of the Associated Farmers of Orange County. The Associated Farmers of Orange County was the best, the strongest single county unit in the state and there was no reason why they shouldn't have been entitled to a president of the state organization. They had done a very fine and very complete job in Orange County and they still are a very strong and effective organization, although Orange County now is turning into a suburban county. I met a man just the other day from Orange County who told me it had a larger population now than San Francisco, the city and county of San Francisco. That's the overflow from Los Angeles, a suburb of Los Angeles.

Arthur McFadden was another very prominent member from Orange County. He later became a regent of the University of California and he, by the way, is a man you ought to get in touch with. He was president of the State Chamber of

Bancroft: Commerce and he was president -- I'm not sure whether he was president, but he was a very active director of the California Walnut Growers' Association and was very active in the Sunkist citrus fruit. He's been working in farm work and he could tell you a lot about James Irvine. He'd worked very closely with James Irvine, you know, who's dead, who was the largest, well, I would say he was the largest farmer in California, mostly in Southern California, but he also owned several thousand acres in Moraga. But that was just incidental. He owned thousands of acres between Santa Ana and San Diego. Very possibly they've already interviewed McFadden, but if not they ought to do it by all means because he's getting along, too, he's about the same age as I am. There are very few men who could tell about James Irvine as he can. He knows about the whole transformation of the land from the very large holdings they had in Southern California on account of the Spanish grants, and how this man Irvine developed it and changed it from cattle-raising to citrus and other crop raising.

Baum: Getting back to the Associated Farmers, I had read somewhere that in 1940 Holmes Bishop stopped being president and Harold Pomeroy resigned, and this book said, in quotes, "He resigned in disillusionment," and it said that the policy changed at that time from reconciliation and education to more direct action. "It was led by Garrison, Frisselle and Bancroft."

Baum: What was that about?

Bancroft: Well, we were disillusioned with Pomeroy. I would say that that was probably the reason he resigned. I think his resignation was asked for.

Baum: Why were you disillusioned with him?

Bancroft: Well, he did a number of things that we didn't like, and I don't care to go into it too much, because some of them were of a nature that didn't have anything to do with the Associated Farmers or farming.

Baum: Was there anything in his policies that you objected to?

Bancroft: Well, in his life in the office, and so on. Yes, in his policies. For instance, we thought he was getting us into difficulties; he said that we would welcome an investigation by the LaFollette Committee. Well, we didn't want any investigation by the LaFollette Committee, we didn't see any reason why we should be investigated. It made it a very expensive, long-drawn-out investigation when the LaFollette Committee came out here. We thought he was working altogether too much in conjunction with elements that were opposed to what we were interested in.

Baum: Such as? What elements were you thinking of? The federal or state authorities?

Bancroft: No. I don't mean to accuse him of betraying us or anything of that kind, but we felt his work was not to our best interests.

Baum: I gather you thought some of his ideas were too radical.

Bancroft: Yes, we did. We didn't think his ideas were what the Associated Farmers had stood for. Mr. Bishop objected to him a good deal on account of his personal conduct in the office.

Baum: So it was the personal relations as well as his policies.

Bancroft: Well, I would say with the rest of us it was more his policies. He was not a farmer and we didn't think he had the farmers' proper point of view.

Baum: In Clark Chambers' book on farm organizations he discusses the Associated Farmers and the Farm Bureau and the Grange primarily --

Bancroft: What does he say about the Grange as compared with the Farm Bureau?

Baum: Well, I think he described it as a much more radical organization and in their points of view differing completely.

Bancroft: Which is true.

Baum: And I think he had a little bit about that Farmers' Union that you belonged to, and he said that they lost their charter because the national thought they were too conservative; they went out of business. So he pretty much said what you said.

But he felt that in 1940 there was a shift in policy of the Associated Farmers.

Bancroft: No, there'd been a shift under Pomeroy, when he was active as executive secretary. I said right at the beginning that he

Bancroft: was sort of radical, and he tried to shift us a great deal, but I would say we didn't shift at all, though he would like to have shifted us.

Baum: Well, temporarily you were out of gear for a little while while he was speaking for you, but not actually.

Bancroft: He would say things that we didn't think were consistent with our policy, and so on. He was more inclined to want us to accept unionization of farm labor and things of that kind, to give in to the radicals and the people who were not conservative. You know, farmers as a rule are quite a conservative class, and he was more anxious to have us, we felt, give in on our principles or our policies, and we didn't want to change them.

Baum: Were there any other men on the executive board that agreed with Pomeroy?

Bancroft: No, I don't know of a single one.

Baum: So you feel as a whole the executive board stood pretty well together?

Bancroft: Oh, yes. I never remember, all the time that we worked, that we had any kind of disagreement. Of course, a great many times we had a disagreement as to what we might or should do in a certain case, but we never had any disagreement on principles, or we didn't have factions that developed. We had too much of a fight against the labor organizers and the racketeers to be able to afford the luxury of a fight among ourselves.

Baum: Who was John Watson?

Bancroft: He was president of the Associated Farmers after Holmes Bishop was, as I remember.

Baum: He came in in 1940, is that right?

Bancroft: When Holmes went out.

Baum: He's in Northern California, isn't he, in Petaluma?

Bancroft: Yes, Southern California and then we went back to Northern California. He was a dairyman and quite a successful dairyman. He was very active in the fight when they were trying to unionize the dairymen, which they did to quite an extent, but then they tried to shut off all the dairymen that would not join the unions, tried to block them, and he was very active in organizing this Sonoma dairy association, the Marin-Sonoma Dairy Association, which bought a creamery or two to process the milk when they couldn't deliver it to concerns like Borden. Concerns like Borden would shy off anything that even smelled like a labor dispute. Most of them would not touch the milk, and then the farmers would either be left with no place to dispose of it at all or have to sell it at a very much lower rate.

Baum: John Watson's ideas were similar to those of the other men on the executive board?

Bancroft: Yes, they were absolutely in accord all the time he was having that fight, but later on -- he'd always been a Democrat and he'd bring it up quite often, but he'd always be voting and

Bancroft: standing for the Republicans, the Republican candidates, because he couldn't stomach the Democratic candidates, but he finally switched over, and of all the times to take for switching over, it was in 1950 when he backed the Brannan Plan and went around with Brannan touring the state, backing Stevenson. So he lost out. First he lost out politically by having had the Democrats elected that he had been opposing for campaign after campaign, and then he lost out backing Stevenson for two terms. I presume he backed Kennedy this last time, and Brown. But he's over in the other camp politically now. He's backing men who stood for exactly the opposite of what he and we had been standing for all these years. We're still very good personal friends, but we don't see eye to eye any more on policy matters, except that he isn't in favor of unionizing farm labor, I don't think. He hasn't gone that far. But nobody can understand why he did it unless, being a Democrat, he wanted to be on the winning side for once. Chose just the wrong time, after years of being against them.

AFofL Tries to Organize Farm Laborers, 1935-1936

Baum: Speaking of union labor, I believe in 1935 and 1936 the AFof L was making their so-called march inland to try and organize farm labor.

Bancroft: Yes, it was, but it was Harry Bridges, who was then a member of the AFofL, his gang of goons from the Longshoremen made a determined march, the "inland march," as they called it.

Baum: Yes. There was a big meeting in Stockton in 1936 and they agreed -- I wasn't sure, was that the one Harry Bridges was at? I think this was an AFofL convention -- and they agreed that their big drive would be to unionize the San Joaquin Valley, I think, and it failed.

Bancroft: Well, they marched inland -- yes, Harry Bridges was very active in that and the longshoremen were going to be the musclemen that were going to handle it, and they marched in to Stockton and the farmers sent out a call and they got something like 3,000 farmers from all over the state. They went in from Sacramento and from Yolo County and Monterey County and so on, and they all converged in Stockton and a lot of them got deputized and got up on top of the cannery. The union men weren't going to allow the produce to be brought into the cannery to be canned, and the farmers claimed they had a perfect right to use the streets to bring it in.

So the farmers, with the sheriff's officers, got up on top of the roof of the cannery and began peppering away with shotguns and teargas on the strikers down below that were trying to block the entrance to the cannery, and then Garrison had some reserves, about 500 of them, in the park,

ancroft: and they came in and tried to make an entrance into the cannery, but they were having quite a hard time. It was being reported on the radio just the way a baseball game would be reported. I wasn't there, I was here, and I was listening, because I hadn't been involved in that. It was very interesting, hearing about how they were coming up and how they were trying to gain entrance and all that sort of thing. One interesting incident was that the state legislature was in session then and Merriam was governor, and one of the senators who was also a farmer -- I don't mean a farmer, but he had farm land, he was a wealthy man, I'll think of his name in a minute -- some of the farmers' friends up there at the state legislature said to him, "You ought to go in to see Governor Merriam, get him to call out the militia, because these fellows are having a regular mob scene."

This state senator -- his name was something like Senator McCormick, he came from a rural county near Sacramento -- he said, "Oh, it won't do those fellows any harm to have a little fight up there. I don't think they ought to call out the militia."

And one of them said, "Well, you know, Senator, your son Tom is up on the roof of that cannery."

"My God, let's go see the Governor right away, this has got to stop!" I'm not sure his first name was Tom, but his

Bancroft: son was a farmer and naturally his sympathies were with the farmers, and as I say, they came from all over for that.

Well, after a very short time things cooled down and the Longshoremen went back. We never had any further inland march and we heard that at one place about four of them were returning to San Francisco and they stopped at a service station and the service station man said, "Well, are you fellows going back?" And one of the Longshoremen said, "Why, those damn fool farmers haven't sense enough not to shoot. We're not going to stay there."

Baum: Colonel Garrison was on hand usually when there was some trouble, wasn't he?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, he was a very good member, very able and very unselfish in his work.

Baum: Edward Vandeleur was president of the state federation of labor at that time, 1935 to 1936, and I noticed in your papers there was a letter indicating that Vandeleur had spoken to one of your friends, I gather, and said that the AFofL was not going to try to unionize agricultural workers, and then a very short time later occurred this march inland, and he was at the meeting, and he might have just possibly been dragged along by the impetus.

Bancroft: Yes. I always said that he was as good a labor leader and as good a man as could be elected and retain his office as head of the state AFofL. I always liked him. We were

Bancroft: friends even after he was quite strongly pushed along on the other side --

Baum: You felt that he was pushed along, rather than that he wanted to go.

Bancroft: Yes, I felt he was very sound. He recognized that farm labor was in a different situation, and it was on account of the fact that we couldn't stand a strike at harvest time.

Baum: Would you say that as far as you knew Vandeleur was actually against organizing farm labor?

Bancroft: Well, he said he was at that time.

Baum: Well, he was against it he said to some people, but then he went along with it with others

Bancroft: But I think that was later, and I think that Scharrenberg before that was against it. I think they recognized just what we claimed all along. But the radical element in the unions kept insisting on it, you know, and those fellows had to yield to the majority in their organization, and then, of course, they never could admit after that that they'd disapproved of the organizing of farm labor. But I think you'll find that Meany feels a good deal the same way now. In other words, unless you're an out and out radical, I don't see how you can believe that a group of men who've never done a single darn thing to help the farmers or to produce the crops or to do anything about it should be allowed to go in there and ruin the life work of the farmers, and that's just what it amounts to.

sum: Well, I think that in actuality Vandeleur refused to charter unions of field and packing house workers. He refused to issue them charters for one reason or another, which would seem to indicate that he was actually against their organization although he didn't say so.

Work of the Legislative Committee

sum: I know an important part of the work of the Associated Farmers was to try to defeat legislation they felt would be detrimental to farming.

ancroft: Oh, yes, we had a great many very radical and tough bills introduced in the legislature trying to beat us, and in 1937 I was made chairman of the legislative committee of the Associated Farmers and we would examine all of the bills that came up that had anything to do with agriculture and see those that were objectionable and oppose them. In the 1937 legislature we had several hundred bills that we discussed and analyzed, but we picked out 40 that we considered very dangerous and undesirable and opposed them and by the time the session had ended -- Governor Merriam was governor then and he wasn't very much interested in the farmers' interests, he was more interested in trying to please union labor, so we didn't dare let the bills get up to him -- not a single bill passed the legislature, both houses. We beat them in one or the other, all those 40.

am: Well, I've never heard Merriam characterized as anti-farmer before.

ancroft: No, he wasn't, but when it came to a dispute between the farmers and unions we couldn't rely on him at all. That's the reason we had to work so hard to prevent all those being passed.

Then in 1938 -- that was the year when the EPICs, End Poverty in California, made their fight, and Culbert Olson, who headed the radical group in the state senate, was elected governor -- these fellows came up in 1939 with literally a swarm of radical bills and we picked out about 140 that we had to oppose, and again I was chosen as chairman of the legislative committee and we would get farmers up there from all over whenever these bills came up and at the end of the session not a single one of those bills had passed both houses. Governor Olson said on several occasions that his legislative program had been defeated by the Associated Farmers, and we considered that the highest compliment that it was possible to pay us and we spread it all over the state.

I've got lists of the type of bills they tried to get through. For instance, they tried to impose a little Wagner Act on California, and they tried to make it apply to agriculture. Well, even the regular Wagner Act doesn't apply to agriculture. Well, we made a big fight against it and they

Bancroft: made this statement," and then I quoted it.

Well, when we got up to Sacramento and we were arguing at all these different committee meetings on different labor matters we got to where he used to sit next to me almost always and we'd have a regular conversation. I enjoyed talking with him because he was bright and smart, which some of them weren't. A bill establishing a minimum farm wage of 25¢ an hour was before the committee. He'd been advocating there a bill establishing a minimum wage for farm labor at 38¢ an hour -- this was at a time when we were paying 25¢ an hour, one time we had paid only 15¢ an hour, but that was when we were all losing money. We kept raising wages after we got to where we could afford to raise them, but even then the farmers weren't making as much as the hired men were making. I argued against the bill because I argued on principle that there shouldn't be a minimum wage, that it would just simply make unemployment if it was established because many farmers couldn't pay that much for a great many jobs that were done. Well, Fred West argued that 25¢ was too low, it ought to be at least 38¢, and so he opposed the bill, and the next week when we came back before the labor committee we were in the elevator together and he said, "Bancroft, you know, my people gave me hell for standing on the same side that you stood on that bill" -- he being against it because it was too low and I being against it because it was too high

McCroft: and because we didn't want any legal minimum wage. [Laughing]

I got along always very well with most of those fellows. One time we, for instance, had a discussion to see if we could compromise on a bill, a bill that we were objecting to, and that they were advocating very strongly, and their spokesman said, "Well, two of our men and two of yours, you go into a room and see if you can't thrash it out," or it might have been four of ours and four of theirs, something like that, "See if you can't come to some agreement."

Well, we'd go in and we'd have a very pleasant time, and they'd say so and so and make remarks like "Yes, that was pretty tough, but we have to back it up because our people want it." We'd say, "Well, we are going to oppose it" and this and that. But it'd be as friendly as could be. We'd get out before the committee in the legislature and they'd call me all sorts of names, because they knew that I would not betray them in what they'd said in private conversation, and they respect that, and as I say, there were a lot of them that I liked.

One time Fred West said to me, in speaking of the farm strikes, "Well, you know, we're coming down to see you. You're just about next on the list." And I said, "Well, I'll be very glad to have you come but I hope when you come you'll be making a social call and not a professional one." We remained very good friends all the time. And, as I say,

ancroft: Vandeleur, I was a very good friend of his right up to the time of his death. I've often thought that those men respected a fellow more who'd stand up and fight for what he thought was right than they did the fellows that would compromise.

As a matter of fact, at one time the Teamsters' men -- they were having a strike up in the Winters district, and a bunch of Teamsters' men came in there and they said, "If you'll just sign up with us we'll police this situation." They were picketing some of the farms. And one of our executive committee said, "Well, what do you mean by police?"

"Oh, we'll keep the roads open and we'll see that your trucks get through."

Hank Strobel, our committeeman, said, "Well, we farmers can do our own policing. We'll see that our trucks get through."

I said to one of those men -- they were fine-looking, athletic fellows, tough guys, but very nice-looking fellows -- I said to him, "How do you fellows claim that you've got a right to say who's going to travel on the roads and who's not?"

"Well, if people are fools enough to let us stop them, that's their regard."

So I thought that most of them realized that we were ready for a fight, if necessary, and they rather appreciated a person who would fight them. And they never did come down.

Ton Bancroft: I always expected we'd have trouble down here on our farm, but we've never had any trouble. We did have trouble when Communists came and burned our barn down one night, but that was not during any labor dispute, that was when we were going after the Communists pretty strong.

Baum: When the Associated Farmers was going strong?

Bancroft: No, when I was. It was before I ran for senator.

Baum: You got along well in Sacramento personally with the opposition. How about with the legislators?

Bancroft: Well, they didn't pass a single bill we were opposing in either the 1937 or the 1939 session of the legislature. It was probably the most successful fight against radical bills that's ever been put on. That wasn't just my doing, of course, it was our whole group, but I was chairman of the legislative committee.

Baum: Who were the other members?

Bancroft: Hank Strobel of Salinas was my right-hand man, but there were oh, about six or seven on the committee.

Baum: I don't know where I got this from: John Watson and R.J. McClain --

Bancroft: Yes, they were both on it.

Baum: What did you gentlemen do, go up there and take a hotel room and stay during the session?

Bancroft: We'd go and take a hotel room for the night. We'd go up from here or up from Salinas. The best fighter of the group

ancroft: was Hank Strobel, my best helper. Then we had members of local legislative committees, the local groups, and when a bill came up if we found that a legislator, say a fellow from around Madera, was not taking the farmers' point of view, we would telegraph around to have his friends bring pressure on him and they would scurry around the countryside and a lot of telegrams would come in to him. The legislators are very susceptible to letters and telegrams. We wouldn't do that except on important bills or on a bill when one or two key men were not cooperating with us.

aum: I noticed in your report on your work that you thanked the members of the Associated Farmers for their letters and telegrams to the legislators when you asked them to send them.

ancroft: Yes, at times 500 letters would come, but not so many telegrams.

aum: Did you have some kind of a system, some leg men?

ancroft: Yes, all volunteers.

aum: It seems like there were so many bills, and I don't see how you and the rest of your committee could keep up with them.

ancroft: Well, in the first place there was an association of cooperatives, known as the agricultural council, under Ralph Taylor, that used to get out a pamphlet giving a digest of all the bills that affected agriculture. Then we would go over that digest. There might be five or six hundred bills in the pamphlet, and we would go over that at our monthly meetings of the Associated Farmers in San Francisco or Los Angeles

ancroft: and analyze them. By reading the digest of a bill we could tell pretty much what it stood for. Then we would get the printed bills themselves as they were being put through the legislature and study them. We could keep cutting down in numbers; we'd find a lot of them weren't making any headway, so we wouldn't be bothering about them, we'd just go after those that were up at the time. You'd have to take it piece-meal, but it was an awful lot of work.

Baum: You had to go to meetings in Los Angeles and San Francisco?

ancroft: Well, the Associated Farmers themselves would meet once a month, the executive board, sometimes the board of directors, and then in addition to that -- we didn't have very many meetings of our legislative committee, we'd decide what bills we were opposing and then I would direct how we would handle the different ones.

Baum: This must have taken an awful lot of your time.

ancroft: It did, but it was terribly important. A lot of those bills, if they'd gone through, they'd have just ham-strung us.

Baum: Was your son able to help you on the farm at that time?

ancroft: Yes, and then we had a foreman at that time. Around 1937 my son had finished college and he'd been working on the farm ever since he was a boy, on his vacations and so on. And then, as I say, we had a foreman, which we haven't now; my son's just running the whole thing now.

Baum: Apparently you were fairly successful up there. I was

Stor... :m
Baum: wondering how it was to be an amateur lobbyist among professionals. It seems like a tremendous job to set out to lobby something when you haven't built up your techniques the way most of those people have -- they're there permanently and they have their staff and they've worked at it for years and years and years.

Stor... :m
Bancroft: As a matter of fact, I've built up a better technique than almost any of them had because I had this group of farmers, almost all of whom I knew personally, and I knew their interests and I had them wholeheartedly behind me, and of course with volunteers, it's hard to get volunteers to working hard, but when you do get them working hard they're much more effective in a way than professionals. You go to a man and he knows you're giving your time and your efforts to be defeating a bill and you're in the same line of endeavor that he is; he knows you're not doing it from any ulterior motive or you're not doing it for pay. It was rather remarkably successful; we never expected to be able to defeat every single bill that came up, but it was a matter of desperation.

Stor... :m
Baum: It was 1939 and 1940 that the LaFollette Committee came out here and a lot of the Associated Farmers testified.

Stor... :m
Bancroft: Before we get to that, I might tell you about the time that I was told that we wouldn't be allowed to haul our fruit down to our packing house, right down here. I would say that was about 1936, around in there. I said we'd get it

McCroft: down there, but I sent to Montgomery Ward for six shotguns and I built a rack and put them up on the office wall, right in the end of the office, and naturally everybody that came in said, "What have you got those shotguns for?"

"Well, we've got one for each truck. We're going to haul our fruit down to our packing house and we've got plenty of buckshot."

"Who's going to ride on your trucks?"

"Well," I said, "I'm going to ride on one and my son's going to ride on another, and we've got about 20 men that are just aching for the other four jobs. We've got the right to use the roads and we're going to use them. We're not going to be stopped." And then it just so happened that I was very interested in revolver shooting, and always had been -- when I was at college I was on the revolver team -- and we put up a revolver range along the road and we used to go out there and practice every Sunday, and passers-by, of course, being right along the road, would see it, and we never had any trouble at all in hauling our fruit down to the packing house, never once were stopped. All of our men, they'd come up and want to have a shot and we'd let them shoot. We wouldn't have done that if we hadn't been in the right and within our rights.

One time a man that looked as if he'd come from the scums of Russia or some such place said to me, "Well, wouldn't you

Bancroft: let us go into your place and talk to your men in regard to unionism?"

And I said, "No, I would not."

"Why wouldn't you?"

"Well, I don't care to have you go in there and urge them to be striking against me."

"Oh, we don't do that. We just want to go in and tell them the advantages that we can give them if they unionize."

And I said, "I don't think you can give them any advantages at all that we don't give them, and certainly we won't permit you to come into our place and use our premises for agitating against us."

Of course, if a fellow tries to do that in industry they have got the upper hand and they can't stop men from doing things like that, but on the farm you can. But this fellow looked like just the type you'd think, the pictures the cartoonists make of a nihilist or an anarchist ready to throw a bomb. He was short, dark, greasy-looking.

Threatened Boycott of San Francisco, 1937-1938

Baum: They tried to stop the farmers' trucks going into San Francisco then in 1937, 1938.

Bancroft: Yes. It was not so much going into San Francisco as unloading. They would insist that the farmers couldn't have their trucks unloaded at all, or if they did have them unloaded they would have to be unloaded by union men and pay them an

10.
ancroft: outrageous amount to unload them, and that's where we started the threat to boycott San Francisco. That made a merry time.

am: This was a threat not to buy in San Francisco, is that right?

ancroft: Yes. I was the one that started that, and that was not just Associated Farmers. I brought that up at a Farm Bureau convention, and a young fellow by the name of Grant Burton backed me up very strongly in it. He was always ready for a scrap. We wanted to have it put in the resolution, but we weren't either one of us on the resolutions committee, and the resolutions committee wouldn't pass it. They thought it was too radical. Our resolution said that if the officials of San Francisco did not arrange matters so that we could be permitted to haul our produce into San Francisco without interference that we would consider the advisability of declaring a farmers' boycott against all of San Francisco. We didn't say we'd do it, but we said we'd consider it. But of course the papers took it up that we were attempting to boycott San Francisco, and of course we were.

Well, the committee on resolutions turned it down, so it came to the meeting. They offer their resolutions and they're voted on by the group, and then any member on the floor can offer any resolution he wants, and it's always voted down. So I offered this resolution, and Grant Burton backed me up in the thing and I began talking about it and explaining why and so on. As I say, the Farm Bureau didn't

ancroft: want to be put in that position.

am: They try to keep out of any controversial things.

ancroft: Yes, so they tried to block it. We had a fight there for almost an hour, arguing back and forth and calling them pussy-footers and so on, but we finally got it through the whole convention. The more we talked about it the more interested the whole convention got in it. Well, of course, that was nuts to the newspapers, and especially -- this was some place like Modesto -- and out of town they especially were tickled to death to have something on San Francisco. One of the men said, "Well, if they've got the same situation in Los Angeles, why are you just threatening to boycott San Francisco?"

I said, "Well, we're not discussing Los Angeles. We can discuss that later if we want to. We're discussing San Francisco."

They said, "What's your idea of boycotting?"

"It's just the same type that the unions spring on us, and the boycott if carried to its logical conclusion would be to boycott San Francisco in our own purchases, to boycott any goods that are bought in San Francisco, and to boycott any firm or store out in the country that buys its goods from San Francisco."

Well, that, of course, started it, and then from then on

ancroft: we had our meeting first with about 100 businessmen in San Francisco and, of course, a lot of the businessmen in San Francisco were tickled to death to have a group that would take that stand. But they didn't say so openly or anything. They had this meeting of businessmen in the Merchants Exchange Building where we brought in farmers from all over, and they had me act as master of ceremonies to introduce the different farmers, and we'd state what the unions had done to us in different places and how the papers of San Francisco, with the exception of the Examiner, were not giving us any kind of fair deal.

Baum: Was this the meeting at which the mayor was?

ancroft: No. We had that meeting first, and then they arranged a meeting with us and the mayor at City Hall, and then we went through the same thing over again, only stronger than before.

Baum: I have a note that you spoke to a unit of Pro-America, in March of 1938. Was that before the big meeting or after?

ancroft: That was after, because soon after that I started my campaign for the Senate.

Baum: You were dealing with a group of San Francisco businessmen who called themselves the Committee of Forty-three; I think they were all representative businessmen from San Francisco who were going to try to handle this problem with the farmers.

ancroft: Yes. But our real opposition was the city administration and the unions. The city administration was acquiescing in that

Bancroft: and not giving us protection. We accused them of pussy-footing and they'd say, "Well, what can we do?" "You can enforce the laws and the laws give us permission to enter and unload and if you can't prevent your men in San Francisco from boycotting a place that accepts goods from us or if the men in the stores will not accept our goods that are brought in by the farmers, well, we can refuse to accept any goods that come from San Francisco. As a matter of fact, San Francisco can't get along without the support of the farmers, and we farmers can get along very well without any support from San Francisco. We can just turn all our trade and everything down to Los Angeles." That didn't sit very well with them.

Baum: It was on April 7, 1938, that you spoke; there was a meeting with Mayor Rossi and you suggested that he abdicate if he wasn't going to enforce the laws, which made the mayor very angry, I believe.

Bancroft: He didn't like it.

Baum: How were your relations with him after that?

Bancroft: Well, it's a funny thing. I met him after the primaries -- I ran for the Senate right after that and got the nomination and he was down there at a meeting where I was, some of my friends brought us together, and they said, "Well, now you are going to vote for him, aren't you, Mayor Rossi?" He didn't say anything. [Laughing] They were having a grand time. I said something about none of the administration

ancroft: showed any guts in handling the situation and he said, "Do you mean to say I haven't any guts?" I said, "Well, I haven't seen any sign of any." But I didn't say anything more than that. I wasn't abusive or anything, I was just stating the case. The idea of their not allowing us to bring our produce into San Francisco! Well, that brought them around.

baum: I believe an agreement was worked out that farmers could drive their own trucks in and unload their own trucks, but they couldn't carry produce for other farmers.

ancroft: Yes, something like that. We weren't claiming that we could go into the trucking business.

baum: I think Roger Lapham was -- did you meet Roger Lapham?

ancroft: Oh, yes, I knew him well.

baum: I think he had a lot of problems with the unions in his own shipping business.

ancroft: Yes, but then later on he was mayor, you know.

baum: Then you ran for the Senate and I believe you resigned from the Associated Farmers during the time you were campaigning.

ancroft: I resigned from the executive board, yes, and I also resigned from the Walnut Growers', the board of directors.

baum: Did you feel that your membership in the Associated Farmers had anything to do with your losing the election?

ancroft: Oh, heavens, no. I didn't resign for that reason. I just didn't want to embarrass the Associated Farmers.

baum: I know you didn't want to make anyone feel they were endorsing you necessarily.

ancroft: I figured that the principal thing that made me lose the election was the Ham-and-Eggs campaign, and also, next to that, was Proposition No. 1, which was similar to the right-to-work bill.

LaFollette Committee Investigation, December 1939

baum: After the election you went back on the executive committee, and it was not too long after that that the LaFollette Committee came out here.

ancroft: No, after that I was on the executive committee and also chairman of the 1939 legislative committee that we elected.

baum: So you had a busy year in 1939 in Sacramento, then it was December 1939 that the LaFollette Committee came out, and I read that it was the LaFollette Committee hearings that wrecked the reputation of the Associated Farmers. Do you think that's true?

ancroft: No, not at all. As a matter of fact, a number of the people in the LaFollette Committee's investigation were Communists, definitely Communists.

baum: On the staff?

ancroft: Yes. LaFollette wasn't a Communist, young LaFollette, but later on those men turned against LaFollette, the Communists

ancroft: did, and they practically wrecked him. No, they didn't wreck the Associated Farmers. We're still going now.

um: I know they didn't wreck the Associated Farmers, but at least this book claimed that the Associated Farmers lost a lot of their favorable reputation as a result of the LaFollette Committee hearings.

ancroft: I will say this: our enemies used the LaFollette Committee here for all they were worth. For instance, in papers that were against us the publicity would be bad. In some of the others it would be all right. I know in the case of our -- in the first place, the LaFollette Committee group thought that they could get a whole lot of terrible things against the Associated Farmers, and were rather amazed that they didn't get them.

They subpoenaed the president of the Contra Costa Associated Farmers and he was worried to death about it, and I went along with him as his attorney. His name was Harold Butcher. Well, they subpoenaed all the records and so on. We hadn't kept any minutes. That was one of the first things they asked us for, the minutes, and we said we did not have any, and they said, "Well, don't you know that a corporation has to keep minutes?" He asked if he could have counsel and they agreed. He said, "No," he didn't know anything about what they had to have. I told him just to play dumb when they began asking him questions. Well,

McCroft: they wanted to see our records, so we took them our financial records, and they expected to see a lot of rich corporations, you know, backing us, and they were amazed to see the number of small farmers that contributed \$5 or \$10.

These fellows said, "Well, where are the other contributions?"

"There aren't any others."

"All these small ones, are they all genuine?" and all that kind of stuff.

And I said, "Yes." They started to ask me something and then they dropped me like a hot potato, and I asked Senator LaFollette if I could make a statement, and he said, "Yes." And I said, "I have been a great admirer of your father's, and I appreciate very much the efforts he made to keep us out of World War I and the efforts you've made to keep us out of the present world war, but I can't understand why you have come here to lend your aid and comfort to the Communist effort to upset the Associated Farmers, who have always opposed communism." And I got that out before they stopped me. And that made the front page of the papers. The Associated Farmers had an attorney but I hadn't appealed to him or told him what I was going to say or anything because I knew he'd tell me not to. Then LaFollette made quite a long statement, thanked me for what I'd said about his father, said they were not giving any aid and comfort to the Communists and so on and so on.

ancroft: Down south, there were several farmers that came up and gave the committee quite a stiff talking-to. One fellow that came from the Imperial Valley, one of our men had been brought there by subpoena -- And they had another senator there, a fellow from Utah who, I believe, was taking charge of the meeting. I wasn't down there, but they asked this man, they said, "It has been sworn to that after a certain meeting was over on a certain day after you came out on the courthouse steps, you punched so-and-so in the nose and knocked him down. Is that true?"

And the farmer said, "Yes, Senator, that's true."

"Can you justify that?"

And he said, "Well, when I got out on the steps this so-and-so turned to me and he called me a red-baiting son of a bitch, and I hit him as hard as I could, and I'd do the same thing to you, Senator, if you'd called me that."

But where they got in most of their harm was emphasizing over and over again the fact that we got contributions from the Southern Pacific and the PG&E and the Standard Oil and so on, which we'd never denied or questioned in any way. They tried to minimize the fact of the large amount that was subscribed by farmers, but they just acted as if the whole thing was supported, called us the Montgomery Street farmers, and all that sort of stuff. And, of course, they had most of the writers and so on with them, so that any

Bancroft: investigation of that kind was bound to have an adverse public relations effect upon us.

Debate on the Grapes of Wrath, 1940

Baum: I understand you debated with Carey McWilliams on the Grapes of Wrath before the Commonwealth Club. How did that come about?

Bancroft: Well, before that I had this discussion at the Town Meeting of the Air in New York, under nationwide broadcast.

Baum: As I recall it was March 7, 1940.

Bancroft: Yes, and that was called "What Should We Do for the Joads?" or something of that kind. They had four men on there. One of them was Rexford Tugwell --

Baum: Philip Bancroft, Carey McWilliams, and Hugh Bennett. Who was Hugh Bennett? The introduction has you listed as a member of the executive committee of the Associated Farmers and then Mr. Hugh Bennett, chief of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

Bancroft: Yes, he was a government employee. All three of those men were against me on the thing.

Baum: You were the only representative of the California farmers?

Bancroft: Yes, so they had three-quarters of the time, and the subject was what should California do for the Joads -- something like that -- rather than whether Grapes of Wrath was a proper

ancroft: description of conditions in California or the conditions that the migrants were subject to. And I objected to that, and we finally got down into a dispute between Carey McWilliams and myself. After that the papers played it up a good deal and the Commonwealth Club officers suggested having this debate between Carey McWilliams and myself. One of the officials said to me that he thought it would be a fine thing, he said, "unless you're afraid to meet him." I told him I wasn't afraid to meet anybody when I had the right on my side, but I wanted the subject to be something along the line of "Does Grapes of Wrath Present a True Picture of the Situation in California?" or the situation of the migrants? and so they gave it a proper heading and we had our debate.

It was in that debate, as I told you, that they had the largest attendance they'd ever had at any Commonwealth Club debate. They'd had a number of debates at different times at the Commonwealth Club. The large banquet room was filled to overflowing, and practically everyone said that I came out ahead, although I had never had any experience as a debater, but I had the facts and that was what seemed to count.

After that, Carey McWilliams, who'd been used very prominently as a speaker for the radical left-wingers and was called by the Associated Farmers "The Farmers' Enemy Number One in California" -- for a long time we didn't hear anything



Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bancroft
at an Associated Farmers
Convention, about 1950

Bancroft: about him at all. In other words, I think that the Communist-led organizations pulled him down on account of his having been upset by a farmer in a debate.

Baum: So he was eclipsed in this debate?

Bancroft: Well, everybody said so, and we didn't hear any more -- he had been making us a lot of trouble in his speeches around the state, making misrepresentations and so on, and as I say he was a very fluent speaker. Personally I never had any quarrels with him, he was just representing the very radical left-wing side.

Baum: We'll include the text of your debate in our file of materials.

Strike Insurance

Baum: The Associated Farmers is still going strong, is that right?

Bancroft: Oh, yes.

Baum: You don't hear about them very much.

Bancroft: Well, I'll tell you, the Associated Farmers has never been working the line of public relations. A great many people think that's our weakness, and we don't know but what it may be a weakness, but on the other hand we have a job to do and we figure on doing it. Now, if we're working along some line and somebody else wants to take the credit for it, and they do part of the work, we don't in any way object to that as long as the work is done.

Baum: What are you working on now?

ancroft: I'll tell you one thing, they're working on legislation, but now our executive secretary does it instead of having our committee, because as you say, work like that is a tremendous burden on a bunch of private individuals, as it was in those years, and we haven't been keeping that up. You could not keep it up unless you had somebody who was willing to devote his time to it the way I was willing to devote mine, and I couldn't afford to do it indefinitely.

One of the things we did was to -- that's when I was the president of the Associated Farmers -- work up a plan to organize and create an insurance company to insure farmers against the loss of their investment by strike. We got the company all organized and ready to go, and then we found we couldn't get the farmers to insure because we'd done such a good job of fighting the unions that each man would say, "Oh, that's a fine idea, but I don't need it, but it's a fine idea for those who do." Well, of course, unless the insurance is quite general it isn't going to work. It's like fire insurance; if the people whose buildings were in a dangerous location or bad risks were the only ones who were insured it wouldn't work either. But right now that has been revived and it is probably the strongest protection that the farmers have against having their men organized and against strikes. The company has been revived and they're going to do it.

ncroft: It's been revived by another association and the Associated Farmers aren't getting the credit for it, but it was on account of their having started it and the support they're giving it now that it is progressing, and that is what is going to have more effect than almost anything else in blocking the unionization of the farms, because if the unions can pick off one farm at a time and go to that farmer and tell him, "If you don't unionize we won't let you harvest your crop," the farmer just simply can't afford to stand out against them. But if he's insured he can say, "Go ahead, I will fight it out." And then if he loses he won't get his profit that he would otherwise make, but he won't lose his farm. As I say, I think that would do more than almost anything that has been done in recent years to protect the farmers. I said once that that thing wouldn't work, what we needed to make it work was one or two years of good strikes.



Philip Bancroft

MORE POLITICS

Comments on the Governors, Senator Johnson, and President
Franklin D. Roosevelt

Baum: Let's get back to what you had been doing politically all these years. I know from your letters that in every election you were chipping in a little money for C.C. Young.

Bancroft: Yes, I put in quite a little for Young.

Baum: Both before he won the governorship, in the 1926 election when he became governor, and then I believe in 1934 when he ran again.

Bancroft: Yes, when he was running against Merriam. You know, we carried Contra Costa County for Young, and Contra Costa County was supposed to be very strongly for Merriam and there was no chance of our carrying it, and yet we did. I ran across a letter from our friend up at Stockton, Irving Martin, in which he said it was one of the most remarkable results of the campaign, the fact that we carried Contra Costa County. He was kind enough to say he thought that was due to me, and it was to quite an extent. But of course that didn't endear me to Mr. Merriam. C.C. Young was a very fine governor.

Baum: Were you a personal friend of his?

Bancroft: A political friend, for years. I followed his work ever

Bancroft: since he was speaker of the assembly up there, and as I say he made a very fine governor. Then he'd been out for quite a while, and he started to get into the campaign while Merriam was lieutenant governor, and everything was going very well until Jim Rolph died and then Merriam became governor and when he started to run again he was running as governor, and that gave him a great advantage. That was why he beat out Young in the primary, but up to the time that James Rolph died Young would have had a very good chance to be elected governor.

Baum: Why did you like Young as governor?

Bancroft: Because he made a very good governor. He was honest and very square in everything he did, and he gave the state a very good administration. He never did anything for me because I never asked him, but I think he would have because we were always very friendly.

Baum: How did Rolph compare as a governor?

Bancroft: Rolph was just Sunny Jim. He was a glad hander, he wasn't a very good governor, he was a very likeable man, and had lots and lots of friends.

Baum: Your support of Young, you think, lost you Merriam's official friendship.

Bancroft: Well, I wouldn't say it lost me his friendship, because I was always friendly enough with him, you know in politics you don't have to support a man every time in order to be friendly

Bancroft: with him, but I didn't regard him with admiration. He was sort of a wishy-washy governor. You couldn't tell whether in any dispute -- for instance, where the labor unions were involved or any pressure group was involved -- you couldn't tell which way Merriam would act, because I don't think he'd know himself until he figured which way would get him the most votes. Young would vote on principle on a thing like that.

Baum: I know you were afraid that if bills you opposed got as far as Merriam, he would sign them.

Bancroft: He would when the pressure was strong by the labor unions.

Baum: I don't need to ask you, I think, what you thought of Olson?

Bancroft: No, you don't. Anybody who was heading the EPIC plan ("End Poverty in California"), you'd know what I would think of them.

Baum: I don't think Olson went along with a lot of those things once he was elected.

Bancroft: He tried to put them through. That's why he was so bitterly opposed to the Associated Farmers, because he said we blocked his program.

Baum: I think he tried to prevent the election on Ham-and-Eggs, didn't he? Because he thought it was economically unsound.

Bancroft: Well, a lot of the other things he was backing were equally unsound. I think he did it because he thought if he backed it he would be apt to lose out on it. Downey thought that if he backed it it would get him votes, and it did.

Baum: Of course, I don't think Downey backed it either, once he was elected.

Bancroft: Oh, no. Nobody who was wise to the situation thought he would. What Downey tried to do was to back it when he was with the Ham-and-Eggers and then soft-pedal it outside, and that's why I kept referring to it in my final campaign as the Downey Ham-and-Eggs plan, you see, to tie Downey to it. It was quite a while before we could show up Downey in this connection. He hadn't put it in writing that he was backing it, and he would just go to these Ham-and-Eggs meetings, the big conventions and things, and make speeches in favor of it, but not get himself in writing on it, until finally we got hold of some statements that he'd made that he couldn't get out of, but we always referred to it as the so-called Downey Ham-and-Eggs plan.

I never saw any sign of Olson's trying to block any of these crackpot measures after he got in, and that's the reason we didn't dare let any of them get through to him. With both Olson and Merriam we figured we had to stop them in the legislature. Now, we wouldn't have had to with Young, because with Young after they got to him he might not always agree with us, but he would at least give us a hearing on it and decide as to what he considered right on principle.

Baum: There weren't any Associated Farmers at the time Young was governor; you weren't working in an organized group, were you?

Bancroft: Not until 1934, no.

Baum: In 1932 you were backing Hoover. That's when Johnson was backing Roosevelt, and I believe you were working with Irving Martin and Chester Rowell on that. Were there many Progressives supporting Hoover?

Bancroft: Oh, yes, a great many.

Baum: Were there many Progressives supporting Roosevelt?

Bancroft: Quite a few that had been Progressives, in fact almost all that had been Democrats before they were Progressives were supporting Roosevelt, and then quite a few of the ardent Johnson supporters followed him and opposed Hoover, so they supported Roosevelt.

Baum: What about those people that followed Johnson into the Roosevelt camp? Did they go out of the Roosevelt camp again, or did they remain?

Bancroft: Most of them were out of it, and of course Johnson was very strongly out of it before he was through. In other words, he felt that Roosevelt had promised all these things and betrayed the people. He opposed him very much when Roosevelt was getting us into World War II -- because Roosevelt didn't regard his promises to individuals or his promises to the public as anything at all. You remember that speech that he made several times, "I've told you again and again and again that never will an American boy have to fight and die on foreign soil," something of that kind.

Bancroft: But he reiterated that "again and again and again" [lengthening "a's" in imitation], making it as strong as it was possible to make it, and at that very time he was making all his plans to get us into the war and he was committing acts of war against Germany. He was also forcing Japan into a position where Japan was bound to attack us sooner or later. That was clear.

It was so clear that after he had his secretary of state give an ultimatum to Japan, telling it that it had to get out of China, I said to Mrs. Bancroft, "Well, that means war, we'd better get ready for it," and I went out and bought two years' supply of tires for all our trucks and cars. By reading those demands as I was following them then, it was clear to me; it wasn't clear to the people generally because they weren't following them, and also they were believing his assurances that he was going to keep us out of war.

Baum: In 1934 you were supporting Johnson again for senator, and I wondered if in the interim, between 1932 and 1934, Johnson had already regretted his swing to the New Deal?

Bancroft: He didn't swing definitely to the New Deal, he just came out against Hoover.

Baum: He didn't come out for Roosevelt, just against Hoover?

Bancroft: Well, he came out for Roosevelt in that election, but not for the whole New Deal or anything of that kind.

Baum: Well, do you feel that his 1932 stand was more against Hoover than it was for Roosevelt?

McCroft: Yes, I felt so at the time and if you read his speech, and if you'd heard it as we did over the radio, the vindictiveness in his voice and everything, you couldn't help feeling that it was more vindictiveness against Hoover than it was enthusiasm for the New Deal. He didn't change his principles on the question of politics or the New Deal. For instance, I know one of the things he kept harping on, that things could be worse or something like that, that Hoover had said once, and then he'd talk about the destitution, people selling apples and things of that kind, and he'd [Johnson] say, "Well, it could be worse," in a very sarcastic manner. His whole speech was, I would say, a good deal more of an attack on Hoover than it was whooping it up for Roosevelt, but it was for Roosevelt, definitely.

His friends said, which I think was perfectly true, that he admired Roosevelt's courage tremendously. Of course, he knew Roosevelt's condition physically and the way Roosevelt fought against that. I think we all admire his courage, but Johnson admired it particularly, and he thought everything had been sort of soft and easy for Hoover and here was a man fighting against him with everything against him physically and so on. Johnson was very much for the underdog, other things being equal, and I always regarded the whole thing as more of a personal fight against Hoover than being a fight on principle. I never saw that Johnson changed his principles

- Bancroft: even when he went for Roosevelt or when he came out against what Roosevelt was doing, because I could have followed Roosevelt perfectly if I'd believed, in the first place, if I hadn't had a sincere belief in Hoover, and also if I had believed half of what Roosevelt promised to do.
- Baum: Were you able to swing farmer support to Senator Johnson, or were most of the farmers already in support of Senator Johnson in 1934?
- Bancroft: I would say they were mostly in support of him. A lot of them were against Mr. Hoover, not a majority, but a lot of them, because we had the depression and they had to blame somebody and the easiest person to blame is the fellow that is in power.
- Baum: In 1936 you were a delegate at the Republican convention. Could you tell about that?
- Bancroft: That's where Landon was nominated.
- Baum: Wasn't he a dark horse?
- Bancroft: Not so much so. I know, of course, some people wanted to nominate Hoover. Now, I didn't want to nominate Hoover, I was for Landon when we went there, simply because I knew that with the blasting that Hoover had taken that he couldn't be elected if we nominated him. We'd just be throwing away our chance, and I thought that especially with this pamphlet of "Promise and Performance" that we had a good chance of electing Landon.

Philip

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Chairman R. M. ...

*Cordially yours
Philip Bancroft*

ancroft: But the vote turned out to show that we didn't have a chance in the world of electing anybody against Roosevelt at that time.

aum: That's what I wondered, if they just put up Landon because they didn't think they could win at all.

ancroft: No, they thought they had a good chance, the delegates did.

Primary Race for the Senatorial Nomination, 1938

aum: By 1936, you were back in politics pretty actively, then? It's quite a privilege to be nominated to go to the convention.

ancroft: It's considered so, yes.

aum: So that must have meant that you'd been actively working.

ancroft: I was very active in the farm groups then, and was what would be called one of the main farm leaders, and then I never soft-pedaled my opposition to Roosevelt and the New Deal, so it was quite natural that I was chosen as one of the few farmers on the delegation.

aum: Were you thinking of political office at that time?

ancroft: No.

aum: When did the idea of political office begin to occur to you?

ancroft: Well, soon after that, but when I decided to run it wasn't until 1938.

aum: You were engaged in these negotiations about the boycott,

baum: and then it was shortly after all that took place that you ran for senator.

ancroft: Yes, but it was before that that I got interested in the thing.

baum: You already had the idea before the boycott.

ancroft: Well, I had been taking a very active part in the farmer activities, in cooperative movements, and in the Associated Farmers and in the legislative committee in 1937, and, now, Governor Merriam was up for re-nomination. That would be, say, early in 1938. George J. Hatfield, who had been lieutenant governor, ran against Merriam for the Republican nomination. They were running against each other, and a young man came to me that I'd known politically, working with the Young Republicans, his name was Bert Levit, and he told me, much to my surprise, that a group down in Los Angeles, headed by Harry Chandler, whom the Johnson forces had always fought bitterly, that group and a group in San Francisco of leading businessmen had met and decided that they'd like to have me run for governor, that they weren't satisfied with either Merriam or Hatfield as they thought the latter couldn't get elected, and were willing to back me if I'd run for governor, and they would provide the finances for the campaign. At that time I was pretty hard up, the farmers had been having about twenty years of hard times. I said, "No," I didn't want to run for governor, and

ancroft: I thought the campaign was too far along, that too many men were already pledged.

Then at a meeting about that same time I heard Ray Riley speak before a farmers' group down at San Jose or some place like that. It was a big meeting. He came as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, a Republican candidate. He had been state controller for a number of years, he had a very strong organization composed of appraisers, who are named in each county, inheritance tax appraisers, and he'd appointed those men, most of whom were prominent attorneys, and politically inclined, so he had a very strong organization and he had been winning both the Republican and Democratic nominations as a matter of course, getting about 1,600,000 votes at the final election to almost nothing in opposition, and he was considered a cinch to get the nomination and nobody was opposing him.

baum: McAdoo and Downey were racing for the Democratic nomination.

ancroft: McAdoo, Downey, and Pierson Hall.

baum: Where did you come in?

ancroft: Well, I heard Ray Riley speak at this convention, and he did not say one word that was controversial in any way about anything. He didn't say anything against the New Deal or anything against what the Democrats were doing in Washington and all that business, because he didn't want to raise any

Bancroft: antagonisms. I thought if that's the best that we can put up for a senator, running as a Republican, that I'd like to go in there and tell him a few home truths. So I decided that I'd be interested to run for senator if this same crowd would back me, so I went back to one of the men. One of the men up here was A.C. Mattei, president of the Honolulu Oil Company, who worked very closely with the group down in Los Angeles and he worked with a group of businessmen up here in San Francisco.

Baum: Who were some of the other men in that group?

Bancroft: Mr. Alexander was a very prominent man in it, Wallace Alexander. He was from the Hawaiian Islands originally, they had very large interests there, and I think he had a large interest in the Honolulu Oil Company. Then there were others that I didn't even know or meet, and as I say, they didn't make any conditions or ask anything of me, no pledges or anything.

Baum: Were these men prominent in the Republican Party?

Bancroft: No, they were prominent businessmen and also they had a great deal to do in shaping the political conduct of the party.

Baum: Then they were active in the party, you think. They weren't outside men who were dissatisfied with the party.

Bancroft: Oh, no. They were Harry Chandler and his crowd, those Los Angeles men who were considered the backbone of the Republican Party in Southern California, and up here they were considered

Bancroft: the strong backers of the Republican Party. I didn't bother to find out who they were because they weren't asking my pledge or anything from me, they just wanted me to run.

So I said if they wanted me to run for senator and would back me, that I'd be willing to make the race, but that I would want to write out my own platform and be absolutely free to say exactly what I thought on every question that came up. Then they appointed a committee of three, including Percy V. Long, former city attorney of San Francisco, and I wrote out the platform that I have here which was published, wrote it out entirely myself, didn't show it to anybody until I got it all finished, and then I handed it over to this committee and I said if they were satisfied with that, that's what I'd like to run on. They read it over and said they were, so it was arranged that I was to go into the fight, and from there on I began. I'd been making speeches all the time on these other subjects, and all this time we'd been having this fight in San Francisco on the labor proposition and so on, the boycott, and they arranged to have the opening address before the Pro-America state organization which had agreed to endorse me.

Baum: Tell me about Pro-America.

Bancroft: It was an organization of quite prominent Republican women from all over the state. They had groups in each city. They thought it was time for the women to be taking an active

Bancroft: part in politics, not with idea of running for office but just as good citizens. It was a very active organization at that time.

Baum: Was it in national politics, or were they mainly concerned with international affairs?

Bancroft: It was mainly concerned with state politics here in California and then, of course, they were in other states, too.

Baum: I wondered if they were opposed to getting into foreign affairs, if they were opposed to our increasing participation in European affairs and countries.

Bancroft: You're thinking of America First. That was an organization that was opposed to our getting into World War II, and by the way, I took a very active part in that.

Baum: But this group was mainly state politics, within each state?

Bancroft: Yes. Mrs. Bert Mattei was president of it at that time. So they had me make my opening address in Long Beach. Then I went to Los Angeles and Mr. Harry Chandler arranged a luncheon for about twenty of its leading businessmen, and he introduced me as the man he was recommending for the Republican nomination for the Senate. So we met there and sat around and had lunch and then they had me make them a little talk, and then the campaign was fully launched.

I began making these talks over the radio every week, taking up one phase of the program at each talk, and I found that I wasn't getting very strong support. At the meeting

McCroft: in Los Angeles they were all very nice to me, wished me luck and so on, but I found I wasn't getting very much support from them as the campaign went on, not even from the Times and the other papers. I would ask some of my friends about it, and they would say, "Well, you know, the papers have been on the losing side so many times that they hate to be on the losing side again. Their advisors tell them that you haven't a chance, that Riley's altogether too strong and you can't possibly win the nomination." So I kept going around in the back country and making speeches wherever I had a chance and there was quite a little request for my talks, so I made three or four a day, and would see the country newspaper editors and so on.

I began getting extremely favorable notices from the papers all through the farming districts and the country districts everywhere, and that had its effect on the city papers and they finally decided I had a chance, and then when they decided I had a chance, then they came out in full support of me, newspapers like the Times -- Harry Chandler did everything possible for me, and the Times was the most influential paper by far in Southern California. The Examiner had always done very well for the farmers and for our point of view, and it also gave me very good backing. The Chronicle wasn't so keen about my candidacy because in this boycott business and our attacks on what the city had

Bancroft: done I pointed out the fact that the Examiner and one little paper, the Commercial Daily News, I believe it was, were the only papers that were giving the farmers any kind of support. The others had all been giving it to the labor unions and against the farmers, and of course that meant the Chronicle and the News and so on.

Baum: Weren't you going out on a limb to insult the Chronicle at a time when you knew that you were going to be running for office?

Bancroft: Well, I'd done that before. An interesting episode occurred on that very point. After I got the nomination, some friends took me around to see the owner or publisher of the Chronicle, Mr. George T. Cameron. Paul Smith was editor, and he was quite over on the left wing side, you know, whooping it up for the labor unions and everything. So they had me meet Paul Smith and Mr. Cameron to try to get the support of the Chronicle. After we'd started we had a perfectly pleasant meeting, but he wasn't warming up at all, and one of my friends said, "Well, you know, Phil stands for exactly the same things that you do on all these points."

"Well," he said, "I don't like to back a fellow that hasn't good sense, and I don't think Phil has good sense, because he attacked me down at that meeting."

And I said, "I didn't attack you, Mr. Cameron, I merely attacked the Chronicle."

ancroft: "Well, I am the Chronicle."

"Well, I didn't know you were the Chronicle. I knew you owned it. But in any case it wasn't from lack of sense that I attacked it, because I made the statement down there at that big meeting that no one who was smart would attack a newspaper like the Chronicle, but that I was going to tell the truth." Then I turned to Paul Smith and I said, "You know, I can't help it if I'm not smart, but it wasn't through any stupidity that I attacked the Chronicle. You know perfectly well why I attacked the Chronicle -- because I was just calling the shots as they came."

And Paul Smith said, "Oh, I don't think you're not smart. I think you are. But I don't believe in your philosophy."

And then I turned to Mr. Cameron and I said, "Well, now, if it's a question of my philosophy, if you believe more in what these radicals are urging than what I'm urging, that's all right. I can't expect your support. But if you believe in the principles I'm standing for, then I would expect your support even though you don't consider me smart."

Paul Smith said, "Forget the smart business, I don't want to put it on that basis."

Before we got through Mr. Cameron grudgingly promised to support me and he gave me pretty good support after that. But it was a funny situation having those two there, one opposing me on one ground, and the other, he couldn't oppose

ancroft: me on that ground because he believed in the same things that I was backing, so he had to do it on the ground that I wasn't smart. But anyhow, the reports came in so well from the back country -- with the Chronicle, I didn't get their real support until after I'd won the Republican nomination, but the Examiner was giving me fine support and the Times came out whole-heartedly for me.

The day before election the Riley people were betting two to one that they'd win the nomination; they were prophesying that they would carry counties like Alameda County by two to one. As a matter of fact I carried Los Angeles, San Francisco, Alameda, and San Diego counties, in all of which I had been able to get my message over to the people. The election was very close, and it took something like sixteen days before we were sure. I was leading for quite a while but they were cutting the lead down by getting returns from places I hadn't been to at all, and they had Riley something like about 2,000 votes ahead, and we met once or twice. The party would hold meetings saying that they couldn't tell which had the nomination, so when there'd be a Republican meeting we'd both be invited.

I remember they had one up at Sacramento, and Riley got up -- they wanted us each to say we'd support the other if he got the nomination -- and Riley said he'd promise one

ancroft: thing on account of the lateness of the count -- there were still quite a few thousand to count -- that he would agree not to contest the election whichever way the preliminary vote came out. Well, I thought that was queer, so when I got up to speak I said if Mr. Riley won the nomination I would unhesitatingly support him, but I left out the matter of contesting because I didn't know why he'd brought that up. Well, within two days or so, when they thought everything was settled, that Riley had won by a thousand or so votes, they found that there'd been a miscount of about three or four thousand in Sacramento County and I had about 4,000 better than the Sacramento County figures showed, so I won the nomination. Now, I never questioned Mr. Riley's honesty or anything, but I've always wondered why he brought up the question of not contesting if some of his friends hadn't told him that he'd better bring that up.

aum: You think he wanted you to make the same pledge?

ancroft: Oh, I know he wanted me to make the same pledge.

Then all through the final election he would never support me. It was a terrible blow to him, you know. It wouldn't have been any terrible blow to me if I'd been licked, because here I was just a farmer getting off and running, but he was considered the most popular vote-getter in the state, and having an unknown beat him was humiliating. Somebody said I got off my manure pile and went and beat him, and it just

Bancroft: finished him politically. He never ran for anything after that because they'd say, "Well, if an old farmer who never ran for office before can beat you, we're not interested in your candidacy." And then the fact that he didn't support me hurt his chances too, because there was no reason why he shouldn't have supported me, just as I would have supported him if he'd won the nomination.

And I think unquestionably some of his friends must have said to him, "Well, we won't go into particulars, but you ought to make the point that you're not going to contest the election and get Bancroft to say the same thing, so we can go right ahead with our work." Some of his supporters had undoubtedly arranged things that way.

Baum: When you first entered the campaign to get the nomination, did you think you could win?

Bancroft: I thought I could win the nomination, because I didn't see how anybody who wouldn't come out on principle against the New Deal could expect to get a majority of the Republican votes. I didn't think I had any real chance of getting elected, but I thought that somebody ought to be saying those things about the New Deal, and this would be a marvelous opportunity. I got very good results from all my radio talks, and here was a chance to talk once a week and tell those home truths that nobody was telling. I just enjoyed that chance.

ancroft: Well, sometimes people said, "Well, what are you afraid of?" Or "Why did you hesitate about running? Were you afraid you'd get beaten?"

"No, I was afraid I might get elected. I'd hate to give up farming and have to spend the rest of my life in Washington with those New Dealers all around. I think it would take ten years off of my life." And I still think it would have. I think I'd be dead today if I'd been elected, because of seeing what a mess they're making --

aum: In 1938 you thought you could win the nomination, but you didn't think you could win the election?

ancroft: It was because there were about 850,000 more Democrats in the state than Republicans, and they'd been voting Democratic in the national elections. In Roosevelt's time, Hiram Johnson was the only Republican that was able to beat that for a long time. Then besides that, McAdoo was senator, he was a son-in-law of President Wilson, and they had a Democratic senator in. I had no machinery, no political organization behind me.

aum: I'm surprised that you could win the nomination.

ancroft: Well, everybody was.

aum: It was a surprise that McAdoo lost the nomination, too.

ancroft: It was Ham-and-Eggs that lost it for him, same thing lost it for me. But here's what happened: Pierson Hall and Downey and McAdoo were running for the Democratic nomination. Well,

Bancroft: Pierson Hall and Downey decided that the way it was going, just a comparatively short time before the primaries, say the last month, they decided that they were splitting the vote, the opposition to McAdoo, and if they didn't look out by splitting the vote McAdoo would get the nomination. So they agreed -- I don't know how they decided which one would stay in, maybe they tossed a coin for it -- but they decided that one of them would stay in and the other would back him and Downey stayed in and Pierson Hall backed him and was given the first appointment as a federal judge, a very good appointment, afterwards, as a reward for his loyal backing of Downey, which was perfectly all right, that was the deal. Then when it was just Downey against McAdoo, it was the Ham-and-Eggers and the opposition to McAdoo, there was a better chance. Then I wasn't at all surprised to see Downey win, but at the beginning it was just assumed that McAdoo would be the candidate.

Baum: Did this group that had come to you at first finance your campaign?

Bancroft: I would say that they gave a token. I don't want to put it that way, some of them gave very liberally, but as a whole they didn't give anywhere near what I expected they were going to. Some of them, like Mr. Alexander and Mr. Mattei -- and Mr. Harry Chandler, I never knew how much he gave,

Bancroft: but the support he gave me was enough -- did everything that I could have expected of them, but most of them didn't. Most of them did very little because they thought I was going to lose. They're willing to back a winner, but they don't like to back a loser with money. We ran the campaign on about \$30,000 or \$35,000, which --

Baum: This was up to your nomination?

Bancroft: Yes. It made it necessary for me to appeal for funds all the way through, because I didn't have much money then, not much income. One of the things I was concerned about was how I would be able to live in Washington within my income, including whatever I would get from being senator, for losing what I would otherwise make on the farm, or at least quite a part of it. But I didn't have to bother about that because I didn't get elected, so that part was all right. After I lost the election I decided, "I'm not going to leave myself in that position again," and I started in working hard to make money, which was the only time in my life I'd ever tried to make a fortune; I'd always been able to make a reasonable amount, I never tried to make a lot, but I tried to make it pretty hard after that and was very successful.

Baum: You say you appealed for funds. Was this appeal to your supporters or to the public at large?

Bancroft: To the public at large. In every radio address pretty nearly,

Bancroft: as we went along. And when the money didn't come in we would have to ask for contributions. I'd get a great many letters praising the radio talks. I had each one of these talks printed as I went along, and here's the original opening address. Then each subject, like relief --

Sum: This is Long Beach. "The Initial Campaign Address by Philip Bancroft Before Pro-America Banquet Meeting, Long Beach, California, June 15, 1938." Then you asked for small contributions from the public. Was that the method for raising your money?

Bancroft: If you asked for small contributions they would send in from one to twenty dollars, but you have to get an awful lot of them to make it up. Then we opened a headquarters in San Francisco, we had another headquarters here on the farm in this house. There was nobody living in this house then, and my daughter Anne ran it as local headquarters.

The Final Election Lost

Sum: After your nomination did the regular party get behind you?

Bancroft: They got behind me with support, but not with finances. We had to raise our own finances, but the finances came in pretty well after that, because I was their fairhaired boy for a while, having done what they considered impossible. Then a lot of them figured that I was going to get elected and, as I say, it's very easy to get funds when you're on the winning side of anything.

Bancroft: Here's a pamphlet on the Ham-and-Eggs plan.

Baum: "The So-called Downey Ham-and-Eggs Plan," an address by Philip Bancroft, October 10, 1938.

Bancroft: Had you ever seen this pamphlet that the farm labor agitators put out? This isn't the one I gave you before. That also was in connection with our farm labor troubles.

Baum: This isn't the one you showed me, but I think it's got some of the same words in it.

Bancroft: It's just to show what those fellows were doing. This was way back in 1934-1935.

Baum: I saw a letter from Jack Neylan to you, just before the November elections, and he asked you to make one more radio address and send him the bill, because he thought that possibly you had a chance to win. Was he one of your chief supporters or was that --

Bancroft: He was the man, I told you, at the beginning of the campaign he said, "You know, you haven't one chance in a million of winning." He congratulated me on my program and the fact that I'd come out, and he said, "You know you haven't one chance in a million of winning, but more luck to you, and here's a check for \$500 for you to apply on campaign expenses." And then a few days before the primary election he called me up on the telephone and said that it' looked as if a miracle might happen. And he told me to make one more radio talk at his expense because they were having very good results. I

Following picture:

"Hats off to Elkdom for its campaign of real 'Americanism'" Philip Bancroft, California's farmer candidate for the United States Senate told Los Angeles Elks recently when leaders of BPOE lodge No. 99 invited him to the Elks Temple for an informal chat.

Left to right: L.E. Lampton, county clerk; Charles Son, state industrial accident commissioner; Wm. J. Hanlon, Frank S. Hutton (back of Hanlon), past exalted ruler No. 99; Dr. E. Brady, Bancroft, Louis J. Euler, another past exalted ruler of No. 99; Fred Hall, Harry Reynolds, 'Smoky' Rhodes, U.S. Naval Inspector and Francis Patrick Shanley.



Following picture:

Released by: Bancroft for Senator Publicity Division
Rooms 1219-20
No. 5 Third Street, San Francisco

For Release Wednesday, Nov.2, and thereafter

Two "Good Fighters" -- In a historic conference at San Francisco on November 1, U.S. Senator Hiram W. Johnson congratulated Philip Bancroft, "fighting farmer" from Walnut Creek on his militant campaign to the Senate at next Tuesday's general election. Said Senator Johnson: "I congratulate you on your courageous manly campaign. You are making a bully fight. It seems like old times to be standing side by side with you."

Johnson, California's senior Senator and progressive leader, previously made a ringing endorsement of Bancroft's candidacy for the office of California's junior senator.





Following picture:

Release from Bancroft headquarters in San Diego:

"I've been a life long Democrat, but I'm going to vote for you on November 8th because I admire your outspoken principles," H. Barlow, 70-year-old National City, Calif. retired postmaster, at left above, tells Philip Bancroft, militant candidate for U.S. senator on his recent campaign tour of San Diego County. Barlow added that intelligent Democrats will not accept certain crackpot schemes being advocated by nominees of the Bourbon party.



Following picture:

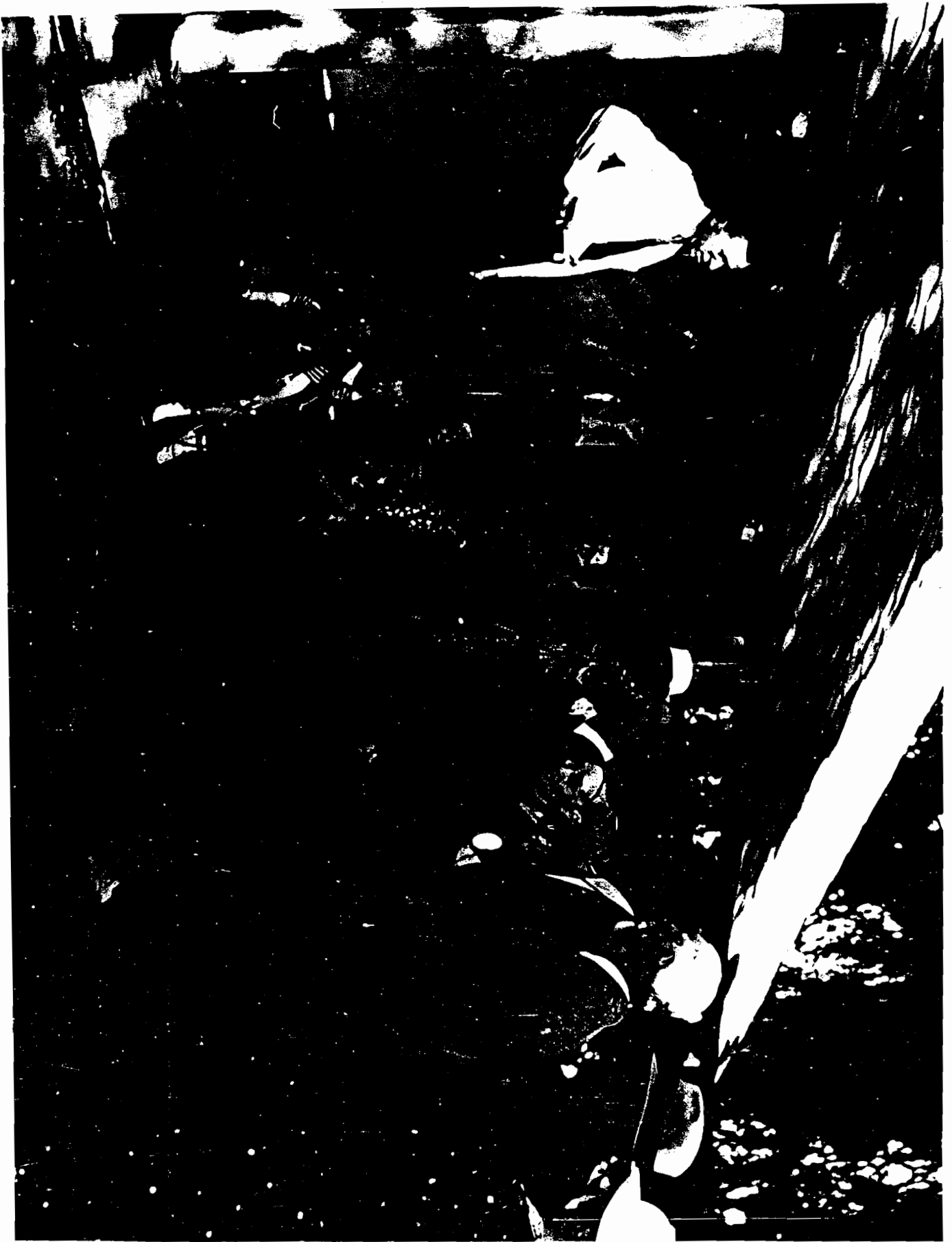
Philip Bancroft with Leo Carrillo on his right. The 1938 senatorial campaign in Los Angeles.



Following picture:

Release from Bancroft headquarters in San Diego:

"I spent some of the happiest days of my life in this old ranch home," Philip Bancroft, outspoken candidate for U.S. senator, at left, is telling his former neighbors and friends of Spring Valley in the above picture. Mr. Bancroft was given a cordial welcome by many of his boyhood friends when he re-visited his old Spring Valley, California, home last week.

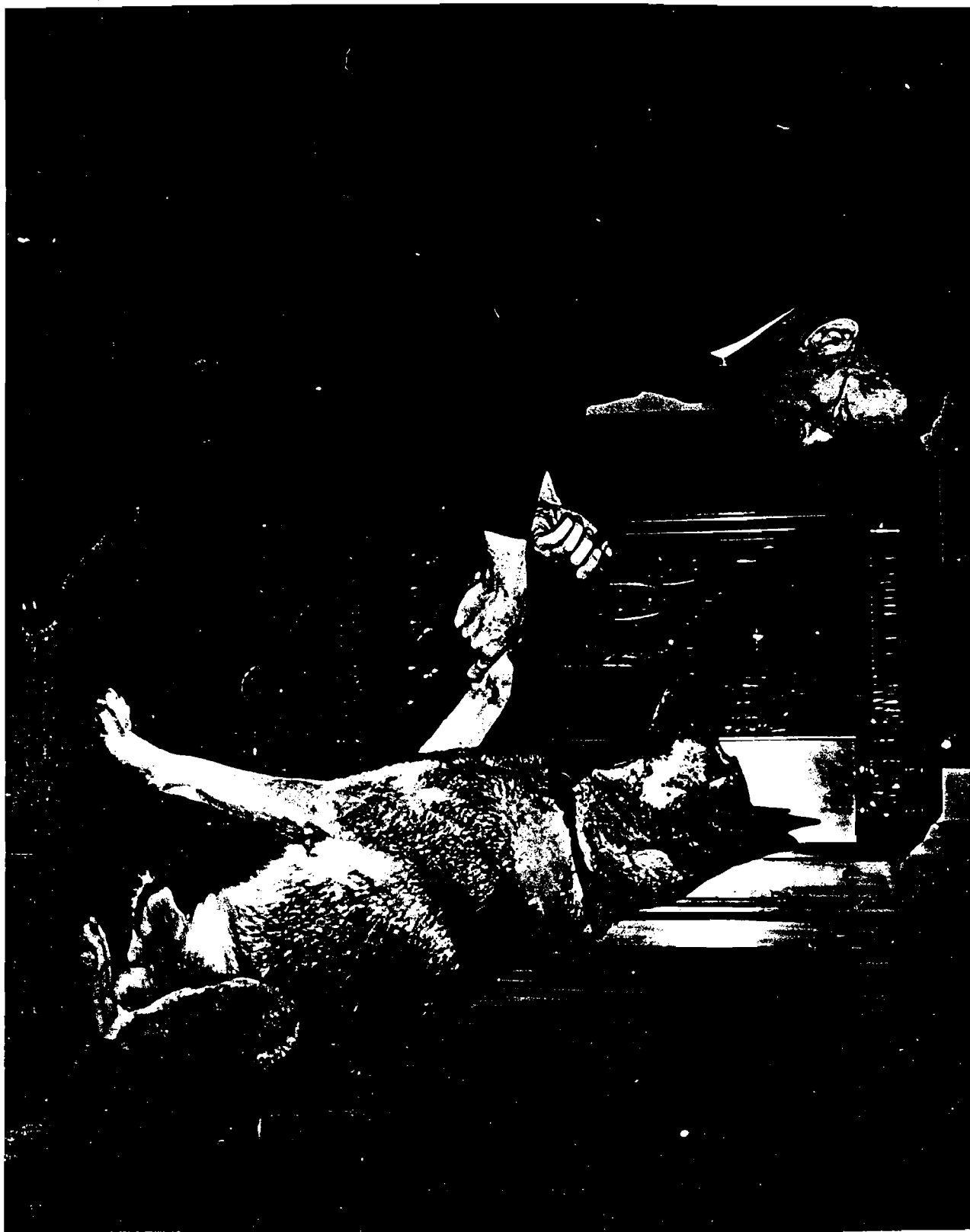


Following picture:

Acme Newspictures, San Francisco Bureau

To the Victor? Candidate's Pet Shakes Hands

Walnut Creek, Calif---"I'm a ranchman, and I'll hear the returns at my ranch home". Philip Bancroft, Republican candidate for U.S. Senator announced. And here he is, in the Bancroft home, with Ozzie, his police-dog pal, offering a sincere handshake as the Downey and Bancroft votes are reported.
11-8-39



ncroft: made it and that probably did make the difference in getting the extra votes to just put me over. It was remarkable for him to have had it figured out as closely as that.

um: I think he was an astute politician, or an astute observer of politics.

ncroft: Another thing that helped tip the scales in my favor was a published statement by Samuel G. Blythe which came as a most welcome surprise just a few days before the primary election. As you know, he had for many years been recognized as the dean of writers and correspondents on national political affairs in the United States, and the following commentary was sent to papers all over the state and was printed on the front pages of many of them:

The Primary Campaign in California which ends on Tuesday next, has been lively and interesting in a routine sort of way. The same kind of politicians have played the same kind of politics with which, as an observer of and writer about that most important phase of American life, I have been familiar for fifty years.

There has been the usual amount of hokum, bunkum and hoey which are the inevitable by-products of such a struggle and the usual rounds of claim and counter-claim, of attack and defense, of assertion and denial, and of loud cheers by each candidate for himself.

Naturally, because of my long experience with this sort of theory and because I am now a Californian I have studied the candidates for the various offices not only in my usual manner for impartial written comment and analysis of what they stood for and who and why they are, but also with the direct personal interest of a voter whose political fortunes

are to be handled by a certain number of these candidates who shall, first, be selected in the primaries, and second, in the November elections. The results of these investigations have not moved me to any great enthusiasms except one, for mostly the candidates are merely politicians, and hack politicians at that, who either seek to remain on the payroll or get on it - a typical and not very exalting or hope-inspiring lot. They are a dull set, with little vision beyond the usual political objectives and in many cases small ability even to attain these.

Of course, all government is politics which condition has always and everywhere obtained and has resulted here in what we now have in the way of control, direction, and administration of our public affairs. Politicians run them and other politicians seek to run them. It is a see-saw game with the public acting as the horse. Consequently, when, as sometimes happens, a chance is presented to make a definite movement towards lightening that load, and make at least one unit, and a most important one, of our governmental structure less political and more representative the response to that chance should be immediate and overwhelming.

I refer to the candidacy of Philip Bancroft for the Republican nomination for United States Senator. This candidacy is as politically unique as it is significant and worthy of support for these reasons:

He is a real farmer and not a political farmer and has a wide and sympathetic understanding of the agrarian problems of California and the proper and workable remedies for them.

He is a business man who has a wide knowledge of our business difficulties, of our economic distresses and their causes, that is not complicated by beliefs in any of the prevalent nostrums, and is based on sound economic policies and practical means to regain and retain prosperity and progress.

He is a sane, clear-thinking, courageous citizen and not a trimmer, a timesaver, or a pussyfooter. It

is a long time since a candidate for high office in California has announced himself with so straightforward, courageous, well-considered and forceful a platform as Bancroft's which was typical of the man. Nor has any radio speaker in the primary campaign been so clear and direct, so definite as to what he seeks to do, so contemptuous of the usual political humbug and hypocrisy. No voter needs misunderstand what Bancroft stands for. He means what he says and says what he means without subterfuge or evasion.

He has ability, character and courage.

He is sanely and steadfastly American.

He understands the needs of California in every line of California endeavor, and his understanding is not complicated with theory, ism, nor panacea proposals.

He is young, vigorous, a forceful and factful speaker.

What more can Californians ask or require?

Samuel G. Blythe

aum: You mentioned your worry about how you would manage to get along in Washington, financially. Were you glad you'd lost the election?

ancroft: Oh, no. After you get into a fight, you know, you want to win it. It had gone so much better than I expected. I enjoyed it thoroughly toward the end. I didn't enjoy it when we were having too much financial trouble in raising the money, because I didn't have it and I could see that if we had had a little more we'd have had a much better chance

ancroft: of winning. For instance, if I could have put advertisements in the papers, just little announcements that I was speaking over the radio. That's where I was reaching most of the people, although I made a trip clear around to almost every county in the state. But when I could see that if we'd had adequate finances, I expected that they'd raise at least \$100,000 for the campaign, which would have been a small amount, and to have to run it on \$35,000 for the primary was an awful drudge.

But in the final election the money poured in very well. You asked if they all came to my support, and I would say they did very well except that I didn't have any organization behind me at all. For instance, I had practically every Republican governor, and that was every living ex-governor in the state -- Governor Pardee, Governor Young, Governor Richardson, Governor Johnson -- and I had James Rolph III, son of former governor Rolph, and also James N. Gillett, son of former governor Gillett. Then I also had Alden Anderson, who'd been always fighting against us Johnson followers, as Richardson had, and he'd been lieutenant governor. A number of the old-line politicians we'd been opposing from time to time, those fellows were backing us handsomely.

I had almost all the newspapers in the state, excepting, of course, the strong New Deal papers, but even a number of Democratic papers, like Tom Storke's Santa Barbara paper

Bancroft: and Mr. Paul R. Leake's paper at Woodland and several other papers that had been strong McAdoo papers, they supported me, and men like state senator James B. Holahan of Santa Cruz, who was a very prominent Democratic politician, and a number of state senators and members of the legislature who were Democrats who had seen the work we had done up there with the legislative committee of the Associated Farmers, supported me, and so I had a lot of support, but I just couldn't overcome the Ham-and-Eggers combined with the opposition to the amendment for what they called the hot cargo or the right-to-work bill, the same thing that was beaten here so badly a while back.

Baum: What role did Mrs. Bancroft play in your election?

Bancroft: Well, she wasn't very well at the time. I really think that was when she first had her heart attacks, although the doctors didn't diagnose it as that, and so she didn't take any very active part, or any part except to make things comfortable for me in the few days that I'd spend at home during the campaign, and she went down to Los Angeles to meet with various women down there who'd been active in my campaign. But my daughter Anne took charge of the headquarters here on the farm and did a very good job, very active.

Baum: You didn't lose that election by very much.

Bancroft: Well, I lost it by enough. A loss is a loss. I'm not one of those people who call it a moral victory when you lose. I had the advantage of being able to tell about these different things, and it did help to wake up the Republicans to quite an extent, and I was never sorry that I'd made the effort. I wasn't too disappointed. You asked if I wanted to win. Well, you get into any kind of a fight and you want to win, and I was disappointed not to have; I had gone into it with the idea that I didn't have a chance of winning, but as the campaign went along I thought I had a very good chance.

Oh, another interesting thing. It was the only campaign that I know of in which Mr. Hoover and Hiram Johnson and Harry Chandler and the different groups in the Republican Party were all backing the same man.

Baum: I think Ham-and-Eggs may have lost you the popular vote but it certainly won you the leaders.

Bancroft: I had all their support before the Ham-and-Eggs was such a definite issue.

America First

Baum: After this was over, the next thing you did politically was in the America First.

Bancroft: Well, next thing I did was in 1939 to oppose a horde of EPICs that were elected up at the legislature, to try to block those bills.

Baum: That's when you had your great success in legislation.

Bancroft: Yes, we had it in 1937 and then we had it in 1939 again under much more difficult conditions.

Baum: I think you've discussed that. So you were certainly getting political experience; whether elected or not you were working.

I know you'd always opposed getting into World War II and that you supported Johnson's efforts to maintain neutrality.

Bancroft: Yes, and then when America First was organized I naturally joined that and did everything I could. They had me as one of their speakers at the big mass meeting they had in Oakland and they had me preside at a large luncheon that was given for Lindbergh another time, because by that time the proponents of getting into the war had made things so hot that apparently they couldn't get any prominent public man in Oakland to head the Lindbergh lunch, so they called out here to get me. And I knew it was political dynamite, but it was what I believed in, so I went in there with Mrs. Bancroft and we got some friends to go in, had a very nice meeting of about 150. Mrs. Lindbergh was there.

Baum: I think the Lindberghs were close friends of Kathleen Norris'.

Bancroft: Oh, were they? She wasn't there at that luncheon. But there was a very representative group there. They were perfectly willing to go to the luncheon, but they didn't want

Bancroft: to stick their necks out. It was held very much against me subsequently, politically, you know, after we got into the war. And then in the America First meeting, General Wood, who was the president of America First, the national organization, had been --

Baum: Was this the Wood who was president of Calpak?

Bancroft: No, that was Leonard Wood. This was General Robert E. Wood. He'd been president of Sears Roebuck. Well, this General Wood was dedicated to keeping us out of war, and they had a very big meeting in Oakland, and there one of the things they had to be very careful about was not to let the Communists come in. The Communists were trying to horn in and get official positions and so on in it, because at that time they were on Germany's side and they wanted us to keep out of the war. But in this meeting we wouldn't let them stand outside with their banners or anything of that kind. The sponsors of the meeting told them they'd arrest them, which they didn't have any right to do, but they got rid of them. And they had Joe Scott up from Los Angeles as a speaker, and myself, in addition to General Wood.

And then the Lindbergh meeting -- I don't remember whether that was before or after, but I think it was after. He impressed all of us very favorably. So did General Wood. And, of course, Lindbergh was treated shamefully by the Roosevelt crowd during the war. He did everything possible

Bancroft: to help and he was appreciated very much by the air force, by the officers and so on, but he was treated miserably. He wasn't a political candidate or anything. A man who was treated politically disgracefully by the same bunch was Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., because they got out an order that his name should never be mentioned in any dispatches from the war front. Knowing him as well as I knew him, I never knew that he had made such a wonderful record in the war until I later learned of all he had done, that he'd taken extreme personal risks and been very effective among his men and all that, I never heard a word about it. Here they'd talk about Elliot Roosevelt and all that, but never a word about Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. His name was just blocked. It was too bad, because he died before the war was over and when he got the Congressional Medal of Honor I didn't even hear of that.

Primary Election, 1944

Baum: In 1944 you had ideas about running for senator again.

Bancroft: Yes, I did run again.

Baum: You ran again for the nomination.

Bancroft: But at that time -- some people had wanted me to run earlier but of course I wouldn't run against Hiram Johnson.

Baum: He came up in 1940, didn't he?

Bancroft: Yes. I wouldn't have thought of running against him.

aum: I think there were some letters from you encouraging him to announce his candidacy so that other people wouldn't get into the race.

ancroft: Well, I wouldn't be surprised, because I did everything I could for him, naturally. I waited six years. Well, they'd offered me the nomination for the board of equalization; the Republican nominee, the man who'd won the primaries, had died, and so the Republican state central committee had the chance to offer it, but I told them I wasn't interested in that. They said, well, it would keep my name before the public. I said I wasn't interested. It was the liquor licenses and things, it was quite a strong political post. I said I'd only gone into the other fight on account of the principles involved, and so on, and then Frederick F. Houser, who was lieutenant governor, hadn't decided for quite a while that he'd go into it. The candidates for the Republican nomination were Charles G. Johnson, "Gus" Johnson he was called, he was state treasurer, and he had quite a following; there was Justus F. Craemer, state railroad commissioner from Southern California; and Bonelli, and Fred Houser and myself.

aum: Pretty well split.

ancroft: Yes. But the trouble was that before the election, the inside of that was that Joseph R. Knowland didn't want to have me as senator because he knew his son Bill Knowland was anxious to become senator. They couldn't have had a senator from

aneroft: Contra Costa County and a senator from Alameda County. He wanted anybody away from Alameda County, and for that same reason he hadn't supported me in the 1938 campaign until after I got the Republican nomination. Then he gave me rather lukewarm support. He gave me enough support so you couldn't say he wasn't supporting me. But he didn't want to see me get elected, for which I never blamed him because he was working in the interests of his son and he was a very astute politician. He'd been a congressman and a candidate for the United States Senate himself, years before. So he worked things up to where he kept telling the people in Southern California that they ought to have a senator, they oughtn't to have two senators from Northern California, and also that there was danger of Downey getting the Republican nomination as well as the Democratic if we had this five-way split.

So when we started out, Houser being lieutenant governor had that advantage over me, but all the straw votes and everything, as Houser himself said, showed that he and I were running neck and neck for the job. Without that support that he was getting I would have been running ahead of Fred Houser, but nevertheless they worked it to where they said, "Now, we've got to concentrate on one man, because if we don't Downey's apt to walk off with the Republican nomination as well as the Democratic, and so let's all concentrate on Houser," and he was clever enough and able enough to get the

Bancroft: swing that way, so that's what they did. Even men that were friendly to me said, "Well, we're sorry, but we've all got to support Houser." And so Houser got the nomination. But then, of course, I supported Houser as strongly as I could, but he didn't have much chance against Downey either. He was beaten and then that was the end of that. Downey went in for another six years.

Baum: I don't think Downey at that point was nearly as radical as he'd been.

Bancroft: I was going to say, Downey had made a very much better senator than any of us thought he would, but for the same reason the radical elements were very sore against him and six years later, Helen Gahagan Douglas announced her candidacy against him, and he was pretty sick at that time. It was an interesting thing; one of the things they made in my fight against Downey was that my health was so poor, which it wasn't, and I was so old that I probably wouldn't last out the job, and they needed a strong, vigorous man. Well, poor old Downey had to give up his fight because he was in such poor health when Helen Gahagan Douglas was running. He could see that with her having all the radical support that he'd have a fight on his hands, so he withdrew.

Baum: Was this your last fling at active politics, 1944?

Bancroft: Oh, there was one time in between, when I was offered a position as delegate to the national convention. That was

Bancroft: the year after 1938 -- 1940. I was named, but I withdrew, because we were threatened with a farm strike then and I wanted to be on hand if we had strikes. I didn't want to be away at a time when the radicals would be striking. I could probably have been later on except that I didn't want to be on the delegation that was backing Warren for the Presidency.

Baum: You didn't like Warren?

Bancroft: Not at that time. I didn't like what he had done. Originally I was very strong for Warren, but there again he changed over after he got in [the governorship], went completely over to the labor union crowd, and the radical element, as he has done on the Supreme Court since. So I didn't want to go on a delegation that was pledged to him, and I've never tried to be on a delegation since. I could have been on this one that nominated Nixon without any great difficulty, but there again it wouldn't have been any contest. There was nothing to the convention. Everybody knew it was cut and dried. So I haven't been taking any part in politics since then, except the local politics and contributing and so on.

Supporting Richard Nixon

Baum: You worked on Richard Nixon's senatorial campaign in 1948.

Bancroft: I worked on his senatorial campaign and organized the

ancroft: farmers in Northern California for Nixon, and also on the Eisenhower-Nixon campaign four years later, and then the second time they ran, too.

baum: He was congressman, I believe, in Southern California, and then he decided to run for the Senate against Helen Gahagan Douglas.

ancroft: Yes, and she was either a Communist or a strong fellow-traveler, as was her husband, Melvin Douglas. They were both very radical. I never accused her of being a Communist; all I accused her of doing was voting the way the Communists did on practically every issue that came up and every stand that came up. I also put an ad under my personal name in the paper saying that every Communist that would go to the polls on election day would vote for Helen Gahagan Douglas. Then I asked, "How are you going to vote?"

baum: Was this in campaign material that you composed?

ancroft: Yes.

baum: Exactly what did the farmers do in that election? What part did they play?

ancroft: Well, they just backed Nixon very strongly.

baum: I wondered how active a part they played.

ancroft: Well, as farmers they just acted as citizens, mostly, but they put advertisements in the farm papers that they paid for themselves, backing Nixon.

baum: What farm groups participated in this?

Bancroft: These were all individual farmers, both Republicans and Democrats.

Baum: Were they organized in any way?

Bancroft: Well, we had just the Farmers for Nixon. We had a president and a secretary. I think the first time we had Bill Camp, who was a Democrat from Bakersfield, as president, and I was secretary as I remember it the first time. I'm not sure that one of those times I didn't act as president of it, but in any case I organized it, and twice Bill Camp acted as president, once for Nixon when he ran for the Senate and then for Nixon and Eisenhower when they ran in 1952.

Baum: Who took the initiative in getting the farmers together?

Bancroft: I did.

Baum: Did you get together with them through your contacts in the Associated Farmers or through some of your growers' associations?

Bancroft: I knew practically all of the leading farmers of California, but I just took the northern half, from Bakersfield up.

Baum: How did you get a group together? Did you write them personal letters?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: You would write the top farmers letters to find out if they wanted to cooperate?

Bancroft: Yes, and if they needed any persuasion we'd tell them why we believed we should be for Nixon, but they didn't need much

- Bancroft: persuasion. This was after Nixon had exposed Hiss, you know, and the farmers were very strongly anti-Communist, so they naturally would have been for him if they hadn't been for him before.
- Baum: You think they were for him mainly on his anti-Communist policy rather than his domestic policy in other fields?
- Bancroft: Yes, I think they were for him on his anti-Communist policy and also his domestic policy, but not nearly so much on his foreign policy. There was a great deal of dispute about all that and a good deal of thought that he was too internationally inclined on foreign policy.
- Baum: Then these farmers gathered in a Farmers for Nixon group, of which Mr. Camp was president and you were secretary at this time. How did they decide on what kind of material to put in the papers?
- Bancroft: That was left mostly to me. [Laughing] And Bill Camp, too, but I'd write it up and he'd approve and away we'd go.
- Baum: Then the farmers contributed the money and you put the advertisements in the papers?
- Bancroft: Yes, in the Pacific Rural Press, which was the leading farm paper of the state, and also, as I remember it, in the Farm Bureau Federation publication.
- Baum: Did you print any broadsheets or throwaways?
- Bancroft: No.
- Baum: Just advertisements in the papers. And you were the author

Baum: of most of that material?

Bancroft: They had to have somebody write it up. But I would always submit it. Then it would have to be passed by the Nixon headquarters here in Northern California.

Baum: They wanted to look at it before you published it, is that right? Did Nixon himself also look at the material?

Bancroft: Well, I guess so, because in some of the releases they thought I was going too strong and I said, "Pass it up to Mr. Nixon and see what he thinks about it." They went through all right afterwards.

Baum: So you think Nixon did see most of that material?

Bancroft: Yes.

Baum: I wondered how much of a part he played in this campaign himself or how much he delegated to his campaign headquarters.

Bancroft: Well, he delegated a great deal, you have to, but I think nevertheless he saw quite a little of it. Whether he saw it before or after it was published -- later on I said that we were contributing and we were organizing and we wanted to say what we felt as farmers. We didn't want too much supervision.

Baum: That's always a problem. You don't want too much supervision, but on the other hand the candidate wants to know what's --

Bancroft: You want to be very careful not to pull any serious boners.

Baum: I guess some boners have lost people elections.

Bancroft: Yes, there are lots of elections lost that way.

Baum: And then you supported Nixon and Eisenhower in 1952?

Bancroft: Yes, and in 1956.

Baum: Was this again from farmers' groups?

Bancroft: Yes, we had another one then which I organized.

Baum: Was Mr. Camp in both of those?

Bancroft: I'm not sure about the 1956 one, but the 1952 one he was, and he was in it more because he favored Nixon rather than -- he didn't think so much of Eisenhower as he did of Nixon. I didn't either, as a matter of fact. I was for Taft and I thought Taft ought to have had the nomination, but nevertheless I did everything I could for Eisenhower, because I thought he was infinitely better than Stevenson. But I thought they were giving us too much of an international setup where we had to go along trying to support the whole world against communism, and I thought what we ought to do was to clean out our own United States, the Communists out of there, and not try to buy friendship or support for our cause by the billions of dollars we were sending abroad. In other words, if a nation took the attitude, "Well, if you don't send me a billion dollars I'll go Communist," I'd say, "Well, go Communist."

Baum: I was asking you about Mr. Camp because we'd like to interview him, except that he lives so far away.

Bancroft: He came out here as a representative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and you can get some very interesting information from him. I remember years ago he told me, "There's

bancroft: a hunchback in Wallace's office who is a Communist, and he's working to make Wallace President of the United States. Unless something is done about it, he's apt to succeed," and that was way back there.

But Mr. Camp came out here and he was largely responsible, I think probably definitely the one man that was responsible for getting a single variety of cotton in California and enabling California through legislation to have only that type of cotton and thus get a decided benefit in the value of the cotton raised. He did that when he was an employee of the Department of Agriculture, but since that time he's become a very large and successful farmer, and he started with nothing and built it up by his energy and his knowledge, his skill, and he not only became a large farmer in California, but he went back to his native North or South Carolina and became a very prominent farmer there. I think he owns several thousand acres in each state. And he introduced the practices there that have been used in California of irrigating and so on, and he did a great deal for the farmers of his native state, and he has continued to do that. He has gone back and forth between the two states, and if you could get him, he's really a man that is well worth recording and putting his work down on record. He has his headquarters in Bakersfield, and as I say he's over on the Atlantic coast a

ancroft: large part of the time, maybe a third or something of that kind. You might mention that I recommended him and urged you to get in touch with him to get information from him and the history of what he's done here in California. He was very close to Mr. DiGiorgio, too. You never got Mr. DiGiorgio?

aum: No, he passed away before --

ancroft: He can tell you more about Mr. DiGiorgio than almost anybody. They lived down in the same region.

Criticism of Harvard University

aum: Another subject I thought we ought to put a little bit down on is your criticism of Harvard University.

ancroft: Yes. I felt that they were very soft on communism, and to my mind a great many of the colleges are, but to see Harvard turn that way was a very great disappointment to me. Harvard has refused to discharge teachers who had taken advantage of the Fifth Amendment when they were asked if they were Communists, or had been Communists, and they refused to answer on the ground that to answer would incriminate them. I would say that anybody who would take that attitude should not be allowed to instruct our young people, and certainly I would not contribute to an organization that was doing that. Yet I'd been a very enthusiastic Harvard man and Harvard graduate.

Baum: Then after a certain point you stopped sending money to the alumni fund?

Bancroft: Yes. I wouldn't send them a cent, and I wouldn't advise any young man to go to Harvard unless I was sure that he could go there without being contaminated, because I've seen the sons of some men who were fine men themselves who went to Harvard and came back practically Communists. As a matter of fact, I kept getting requests for contributions, and last time I asked them why they didn't, feeling as they did about these instructors and members of the faculty, allowing them to remain on the faculty, why they didn't remove the statue of John Harvard and put up one to Benedict Arnold in its place. And since that time I haven't been importuned any more.

Baum: Is there a Harvard alumni club out here to which you belong?

Bancroft: A Harvard Club, yes. I belong to that, because the Harvard men of my generation wouldn't have put up with that sort of stuff for a minute. A lot of them feel that, well, all the colleges have it so let's not hold it against Harvard, and let's go ahead and help them out. But some of the men feel the other way, and feel just as I do about it.

Baum: You wrote a lot of letters regarding your stand on Harvard, and I hope someday you'll put those in Bancroft Library along with your other papers, or some at least that are representative.

BANCROFT
LIBRARY

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BANCROFT
 LIBRARY

October 17, 1962

Mrs. Willa Baum
 % Regional Cultural History Project
 Room 486, General Library
 University of California
 Berkeley 4, California

Dear Mrs. Baum:

In answer to your inquiries regarding my children and my grandchildren, I want to say that I consider myself particularly fortunate in the fact that not one of my three children or my six grandchildren has given me the slightest worry or caused me the slightest trouble. Each of my children has lost one child, which naturally caused all of us sorrow, but life can't always be a bed of roses.

My daughter Anne, born in 1907, graduated from Stanford in due course. She has always been intensely interested in historical matters and is now serving on the ~~Board~~ of ^{Council} of the Friends of the Bancroft Library (you can fill in the exact name of the board). She is living on a ranch near Santa Rosa which produces more wildlife than profitable livestock. I might mention that on her permanent pasture plot of about two acres, I counted twenty-four deer at one time and that one large buck became so tame that it would eat watermelon off a fork held by her. Her son, Thomas Bancroft Graham, born in 1940, is now acting assistant manager of our farm property in Contra Costa County.

My daughter Lucy, born in 1909, after graduation from Stanford spent a year at Columbia Teachers' College and taught at the Alameda High School for a year or two. She then married John Alden Redfield, who has been with the Bankers Trust Company of New York for over twenty years. They live at Tenafly, New Jersey, where he was formerly a member of the board of trustees of the school district, she is now a member of that same board. Of their two sons, Charles Eldred Redfield, born in 1939, spent a year or two at Wheaton College and is now serving his term in the Army. Alden Redfield, born in 1941, intends to become an archeologist. He spent two years at the University of Arizona studying archaeology and then took a leave of absence to work on an important project of the museum of archaeology (I believe it is known as the Metropolitan) of New York.*

My son, Philip Bancroft, Jr., born in 1911, received his A.B. from Harvard. He worked on our farm during his summer vacations from the time he was twelve years old and after his graduation from

*"American Museum of Natural History (of New York)...is where he has been doing his...work -- not the Metropolitan Museum of Archaeology, which is probably non-existent." [Letter received from P.B. 10/21/62]

Mrs. W.B. 10/17/62

#2

college, he worked full-time on the farm and for a number of years past has managed it--and most successfully. During this time he has served as Foreman of the Contra Costa County Grand Jury, has taken an active interest in Farm Bureau work, and is President of the Acalanes Community Concert Association. He married Miss Ruth Petersson, one of the charming daughters of Mrs. Ruth Petersson of Berkeley. Of their three children, Peter Bancroft, born in 1944, after graduating from high school has this year entered the Harvey Mudd College of Pomona. He also has worked on this farm during his last three summer vacations. Nina Ruth Bancroft, born in 1946, is a junior at the local high school, where her grades have been quite satisfactory. She is devoted to horses and riding, and has a very nice horse of her own of which she takes complete care. Kathy Bancroft, born in 1952, is attending the local grammar school. She is interested in her pigeons, bantam chickens, etc., and boys. I shall be surprised if she doesn't turn out to be exceedingly popular when she grows up.

I have tried to answer your questions in considerable detail and probably more fully than you will want, but you can cut my answers down as much as you please.

Very sincerely yours,

Philip Bancroft
Philip Bancroft

PB:RH



Wyman E. Graham (Mr. Bancroft's son-in-law),
Philip Bancroft, Sr., and Philip Bancroft, Jr.

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369 PINE STREET • SAN FRANCISCO • YUKON 2188
Grass Valley, Cal., March 14, 1948

Hon. Philip Bancroft,
Walnut Creek, California.

My dear Phil:

Have been up here since January. My wife is afflicted with sinus trouble and we are going to stay here for a year to try and cure it. I have given up active work with Pacific Employers, other than if anything occurs along legislative lines at Sacramento, I will handle it.

I am very grateful for your letter. I tried at the book-store here (a good one) and at the Public Library, but neither had Cleland's book.

Like you, I believe Judge Luce's letter is splendid, especially forceful because written by a man of unquestionably high character on matters of personal knowledge.

I have written him, sending you a copy, and will see Theodore Roche on my first trip to the City, which will be soon. I am sorry there is so much of me in my letter to Luce, but it is all illustrative of Johnson's activities as principal while I was with him as Secretary.

With very best to you, Mrs. Bancroft and your children from my wife and myself,

Sincerely,

BANCROFT
LIBRARY

Grass Valley, Cal., March 12, 1948

Hon. Edgar A. Luce,
San Diego, California

My dear Judge:-

Permit me first to compliment you, and as a friend of Hiram Johnson, to thank you for your splendid letter to Cleland. I know nothing of him, but it would seem natural to me that any capable or fair author before nastily criticising any public man (particularly a man who had been chosen to the two highest offices to be voted for by the people of his State -- twice Governor and five times United States Senator -- a man chiefly responsible for the people's regaining governmental control of California from the Southern Pacific political machine which had been absolute master for 30 years) would make an impartial and fair inquiry as to the character and accomplishments of such a public man. If he then wanted to decry him, he should state fairly and honestly his reasons. I state, without fear of intelligent contradiction, that if any upright man made such an investigation, he could not possibly have written the statements quoted and so tellingly responded to by you.

Johnson had his political enemies, many of them, but he fought them before the voting public -- not once, not twice, but many, many times, and each time in California won, and won by increasing majorities. Johnson not only was highly regarded, but, in the public sense, really loved by the great majority of the people of California. Nationally he had devoted followers, and in the United States Senate he was not only highly respected but affectionately regarded. Anyone who attended his funeral in San Francisco and talked to his Senatorial comrades present at that funeral and then doubted it, would have to be a very bitter enemy indeed.

Edgar A. Luce

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But back to Cleland's attack: My first close association with Hiram Johnson was when I was in District Attorney Langdon's office during the San Francisco graft prosecution in 1906. Toward the end of the prosecution when Frank Heney was shot Johnson took over and sent Abe Ruef to San Quentin. In 1910 I promised my wife to get out of politics and was waiting for the completion of the St. Francis Hospital building for I had been chosen general manager of the Hospital. Early in that year Johnson consented to make the race for Governor in an endeavor to oust the Southern Pacific from State control. Of course all his friends immediately got interested. In the early Spring I happened to be in Stockton on some matters pertaining to a ranch I owned and Johnson was billed to speak there that night. Having some spare time before my train left, I called on one Democratic leader after another to find out how the people generally were standing as to Johnson and Theodore Bell, the Democratic candidate, (I knew a number as I had been Secretary of the Democratic State Committee in the Lane campaign for Governor) The Democrats were happy because a fight was occurring between the dry forces headed by Irving Martin, editor of the leading paper, and Charles Neumiller, Frankfurter and others of the wet forces. I changed my plans and stayed overnight, attended Johnson's meeting and saw him afterwards at the Stockton Hotel, and told him of the situation. He asked me to appear the next morning before the two factions and give them the exact dope I had collected the day before, which I did, and they then got together so far as the Johnson fight was concerned. At that meeting I, for the first time, met Ed Dickson, who was travelling in the Johnson party. A month later I called at Johnson's office in San Francisco to give him a favorable report of conditions in Fresno, which I had just visited. He thanked me but showed me his desk which was entirely covered with stacked-up, unanswered letters, and told me he could not ultimately win because when he was South his campaign was neglected in the North, and vice versa. I told him I would be glad to help but I had promised my wife to stay out of politics, though the Hospital was not completed and I had the time. He rang up my wife and she consented that I do everything I could for him. I at once organized the Hiram Johnson Central Club of which Curtis H. Lindley, California's great mining lawyer (the man who gave Herbert Hoover his start) was Chairman, and Henry Eickhoff, an outstanding Democrat, was Vice-Chairman, and Robert D. Duke was Secretary. All mail was at once answered, the mountain counties which he could not visit closely canvassed by letter, and the

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hottest campaign possible pursued. Johnson easily won the primary receiving almost as many votes as all his opponents -- Anderson, Curry, Stanton and Ellery combined.

Then the election campaign was on. Meyer Lissner was made Chairman of the Republican State Committee, and an able Chairman he was. The Southern Pacific, always theretofore Republican, switched to supporting Theodore Bell, the Democratic candidate. They put everything they had behind Theodore Bell and the result was close, Johnson winning by a little more than twenty thousand. Over objections of many Johnson made me his Private Secretary. That position I held while he was Governor, traveled with him all around the East when Theodore Roosevelt and he were the Progressive candidates for President and Vice-President. Thereafter I was his closest agent in all his campaigns -- first for Governor, then for Senator, then for President, then each of his Senatorial fights, 1922, 1928, 1934, and 1940. I recite all of this not to boost myself but as evidence of my close relation to him, and my opportunity to know his character, his affections and dislikes, and the reasons for them. In summary in this behalf -- there never was a more high-purposed man in public life, and never a more honest and true friend. Mistakes are made by everybody but Johnson made very few, far fewer than the average, and far fewer than any public man I have closely read about.

Now down to Dickson and Stimson:

While, frankly, I do not now respect Dickson, I have reached the age, 75, where political bickering has no appeal, and where facts and facts alone count. In the 1910 primary and election campaigns the man that employed and directed Dickson and Dickson's adherents and activities, was E. T. Earl, Los Angeles publisher. Earl was a wealthy, dictatorial man. He was fighting for newspaper control in Los Angeles, and was urgently, earnestly working for Johnson's victory. Dickson accompanied Johnson and did everything he could for him. After the primary victory, Meyer Lissner, as I have before stated, was made Chairman of the Republican State Committee. Lissner was an absolutely upright man with unusual political talent. In Los Angeles, Earl's paper put up a magnificent scrap. Dickson was active and earnest in that fight. So was Marshall Stimson. You will recall that a solid legislative delegation, friendly to Johnson, was chosen in Los Angeles County. The Legislature was organized. Johnson made a notable

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inaugural address and soon won overwhelming domination of the Legislature. Earl visited Sacramento, was insistent on many things, but Johnson got along well with him. The Hearst papers which had fought Johnson's election, became friendly, but the San Francisco Call then a morning paper, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times were very bitter in their opposition. This was to Earl's advantage in Los Angeles and Dickson went right along.

In 1912 Johnson was head of the California Republican delegation to the Chicago National Convention at Chicago. There the Convention was controlled by the Taft forces, and they unfairly and ruthlessly threw out enough Roosevelt delegates (Bancroft particularly will remember) to nominate Taft. A special meeting of Roosevelt forces was then called for Orchestra Hall and the Progressive Party formed. Six weeks later at the Progressive National Convention, Roosevelt and Johnson were nominated. Johnson campaigned in the East throughout September and October, and the Progressives got in the election 88 votes and the Republicans 8 for Taft. The California result, though, was too close to please Johnson.

In 1914, for Governor, Johnson did not have any opposition in the Progressive party in the primary, and in the general election he defeated Fredericks, Republican, and Curtin, Democrat, by a couple hundred thousand votes. Jack Eshleman was elected Lieutenant Governor.

When Eshleman died, William D. Stephens was appointed Lieutenant Governor to succeed him. Before discussing the Stephens difficulties at the 1917 session, though, permit a description of Johnson's Eastern activities, both in 1912 and in 1919.

First, as to Johnson's capacity in governmental matters: On his way East in the 1912 campaign, Johnson's first speeches were those prepared before leaving, stating and advocating nationally some of the things he had fought for and accomplished in California. In Denver he received from Theodore Roosevelt a statement of his proposed speeches, and indicating that Johnson should follow that lead. In Topeka, Kansas, he asked Senator Capper, then Governor, William Allen White and Henry Allen to closely listen to his speech, and if they agreed with it to so notify Roosevelt. In Kansas City he asked the great editor, Nelson, the same. When Nelson heard it he ran it in full and wired

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Roosevelt. In Chicago, Medill McCormick, who was in charge, wired Roosevelt. In Columbus, Ohio, where Johnson talked to a State Convention, Walter Brown who was Chairman of the Convention (afterwards Postmaster General under Harding) and others there wired Roosevelt. After all this Roosevelt altered his speech, including several of the new things advocated by Johnson. Johnson talked at Syracuse, New York, at the State Convention. There was a bitter fight on there as to who would be the Progressive gubernatorial candidate. The great philanthropist, Strauss, was chairman of the Convention. Johnson, in talking to the scrappers, suggested Strauss as the candidate, and he was overwhelmingly chosen. Toward the end of the campaign, Roosevelt was shot in Milwaukee, and Johnson had to take over his finishing campaign in New York. In thus doing, he had to talk the second time in several places. In Buffalo, the audience remembering his previous speech, cheered him for ten minutes, and I mean ten minutes, before he was permitted to speak. As a result he made one of his really great speeches, remembered there for years. Roosevelt recovered sufficiently to appear at the closing meeting at Madison Square Meeting in New York City, crowded to the last inch, and Johnson there made the closing address, being cheered, cheered and cheered.

In 1919 Johnson did not decided on the League of Nations until he got the pact and studied it most carefully. Then he went the route. I happened to be in Washington on my road to Hartford, Conn., to attend a National Convention of Insurance Commissioners, when a central meeting of the opposing Senators was to be held in Lodge's office to organize an opposition to Wilson in his nation-wide tour. Originally the expenses of such opposition were to be financed by a group headed by a Boston shoe manufacturer named Coolidge (a cousin of the subsequent President) and a news publisher named Williams. At the Lodge meeting, attended by Lodge, Borah, Johnson, McCormick, Reed, Knox and others, Coolidge reported that after close investigation they found it impossible to effectively follow Wilson on his national trip, as he would be received everywhere as the President, and had three A.P. men with him, besides special correspondents from all big newspapers, etc. This report blasted the meeting. The Senators went to lunch depressed and dismayed. At lunch I received a wire that Hearst was sending me five thousand dollars to help pay expenses of meetings and speakers for every place Wilson spoke. (Reed who was close to Hearst was responsible for that.) Then

they commenced raising money in Washington. McCormick, Pinchot and others contributed heavily, and around fifty thousand dollars was raised in a couple of hours. The first meeting was set for Chicago (where Wilson did not dare speak) and at Chicago Medill McCormick presided and Borah and Johnson spoke. Three outside meetings were held and addressed by all in addition to Illinois notables. The speaking hall had been packed by six o'clock, the box holders couldn't get their seats, and in all the crowd was estimated at fifty thousand. The meeting was a flaring success. The following is an incident, too, that I shall always remember. The next morning, as Johnson was to talk that night in Indianapolis, we rang up the A.P. head offices and asked them who, if anyone, they were sending with Johnson for his meeting there. We had asked for the head man and they said he was busy, and the next in charge answered. He said they had offices at Indianapolis. We asked how many A.P. men had accompanied Wilson and he said three. We asked if he had paid any attention to the anti-League meeting in Chicago the night before, and he said yes, it was the biggest meeting that had ever been held there. We then said Wilson, who is advocating the League would have three men, but the speakers opposing the League would have none. He said to wait a minute and he would put the Chief on the line and let him answer. The Chicago chief was an old San Francisco man. We went over the same ground with him, and he took the same position. We said very well, that we wanted to know authoritatively, and he then asked us to wait fifteen minutes. We said we would. He then rang up and said an A.P. man would accompany us. On the train I got in touch with the A.P. man, and was he sore! He had been assigned to cover the world series ball games and was replaced, he was definitely for the League and didn't like the fellows fighting Wilson, and was just sour all the way through. He was a capable man. I went to Johnson's drawing room and told him about him. I then escorted the A.P. man there. In an hour I heard him laughing his head off, as was Johnson, and then went up and listened myself. In half an hour I told him to get out as Johnson had to prepare his advance copy.

That night Johnson made one of the greatest speeches of his career. Wilson had been there just a week before. The hall was the largest in the City and was packed to the doors by a pro-Wilson crowd. The Republican newspapers were pro-Wilson and pro-League. The audience was in some measure waiting to hiss Johnson. He therefore opened up with an attack on newspapers that did not give

the whole truth, dared them to print his speech, and then opened up with statements of Clemenceau, Lloyd George, the Italian and Australian representatives on the League, and asked if they ever had read or heard them before, and if not why not? Whether as American citizens they were entitled to a full knowledge of all the facts. His opening lasted about ten minutes at Johnson's best, and then he stopped. The audience cheered and cheered, and the A.P. man in the press row was on his feet yelling his head off. Johnson, having started on high, had to finish even more eloquently, and he certainly did. The crowd, coming to hiss, left either enthusiastically in opposition to the League, or sadly puzzled. Johnson had at least 90 per cent of the audience with him when he closed. I went to the A.P. man and asked if he now wanted to go along with Johnson, if so, I would handle his tickets for him and he replied, "Hell, I would go with him on this trip if I had to pay my own expenses". That trip was truly a remarkable one but I will not describe it further, except for San Francisco. Wilson had made a special effort there and had been unusually successful. Johnson was billed for the Commonwealth Club and a big night meeting. Before the Commonwealth Club meeting, Ned Hamilton of the Examiner, who was devoted to Johnson, told me he was scared to death. I told him he needn't worry, that Johnson had three contradictory statements made by Wilson on his tour, that he personally felt so earnestly right and besides he would give them his all in his home town. He did, and after the meeting Hamilton was in the highest spirits I had ever seen him. The Commonwealth crowd, that had been adverse or doubtful, were converted. The Los Angeles meeting was likewise a tremendous success.

Now, back to the Stephens matter: As Jack Eshleman was from the South, when it came to appointing his successor, of course the man should be from the South. After consultations and close examination of Stephens' record, Stephens was appointed. Everything was tops so far as I can recall until the first of the year 1917. Then at Sacramento Stephens wanted to take over at the beginning of the year. Johnson who had campaigned and won the Senatorship during 1916, wanted to get several matters well started in the 1917 session, and that was all. He was prepared to leave, had been careful to have all Gubernatorial support finances carefully apportioned, etc. Stephens was personally anxious and was secretly pressed by some friends to get on the top job. Stephens personally was a well dispositioned and absolutely honest man. These so-called warm friends were pressing him to demand instant

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occupation of the office. The man chiefly responsible for this was Dickson, concealing his activities, however. As you know, when Johnson got mad he usually got damn mad. It was a bad situation where his own appointee and a man whom he had regarded highly, was starting and persisting in that sort of thing. It kept getting worse instead of better, when one day I had the good fortune to meet on my way from the Sacramento Hotel to the Capitol, a chap who had come up to see Stephens, a close Masonic friend of his, and I took a chance and stopped him. I told him what my job was, that I liked Stephens but that he was pressing things the wrong way. I told him to ask me any questions he thought pertinent and if I couldn't answer I would tell him so. We talked for half an hour, I answering every question he asked me, and pointing out that Stephens had two years to act as Governor in a State where Johnson was highly esteemed, and starting out fighting Johnson was plainly asinine. After we had finished our talk he turned around and went back to the Capitol. The next day Stephens called on Johnson and nothing further happened. I think the chap did much to straighten Stephens out. Stephens and Johnson were never again good friends, but so far as I know neither ever referred to the other publicly in anything but respectful fashion.

My personal relations with Stephens became more and more cordial. One of Stephens' announced policies was to permit no raise of salaries. As Insurance Commissioner, my salary was four thousand a year, less than I had been earning as Private Secretary. I went to the Governor and told him there was a bill already introduced, raising it to six thousand. I asked him if he would sign it if I got it passed. I told him I knew that Governors would not tell in advance what they would do with bills and that I would forget it if he said so. He told me to go ahead. When he wanted to get some particular thing over he would send for me and I would help. Our relations were ever cordial. In 1918 Rolph won the Democratic nomination, but as he was registered Republican he could not take the Democratic nomination. Theodore Bell then ran as an Independent, but Stephens won by a hundred thousand.

In 1922 I was offered a position which doubled my salary. I told the Governor of it and told him I would leave on May 1. He asked me who I would want as my successor -- that he would name him. I told him that I would investigate and let him know. Johnson's first term as Senator was up in 1922. I heard they were asking C.C. Moore, President of the 1915 Fair to become a candidate against

him. I went to Max Kuhl, Moore's attorney, and asked him if Moore was a candidate. He said he was sure not but would ask him. He told me next day that Moore had been asked but did not want to run, and had arranged to go to Hawaii to get out of the way. No one else announced opposition until the last day to file. Around 11 o'clock that day Ned Hamilton rang me up and told me that a delegation from Los Angeles headed by Ed Dickson and Marshal Stimson, had arrived that morning on the Lark to see Moore and persuade him to run. I immediately got in touch with Kuhl who told me that Moore had returned from Hawaii the day before, but was in no sense a candidate and would not run. I asked him to see Moore and he said he would. Kuhl was a strong Johnson man. He saw Moore at the noon hour and Moore assured him that he would not go but of course had to treat the Los Angeles delegation courteously. He did of course decline and was bidding the delegation good bye when Andy Lawrence showed up with the front page of "The Voice", his newspaper, announcing Moore's candidacy and giving him a magnificent write-up. Moore read it and said alright if the newspapers had it, he would run. Of course the sheet was a phoney, specially prepared I was told by Lawrence and Dickson. Whether Dickson helped in it I cannot say for sure.

The campaign was on. I went to my new employer and asked him if I could postpone acceptance of his position until after election. He consented. I then went to Governor Stephens and said I would at once resign or remain until after election, just as he wanted. I told him that in the campaign I would devote myself wholly to Johnson. He said O.K., and asked me to hold my job until after election. The fight was on. In Los Angeles Senator Flint and Frank Doherty had charge of Johnson's fight. About a week before the primary I was in Los Angeles to get the result of a poll which I had given Bob Baines a thousand dollars to take. Baines, you will remember, was the heavy San Francisco bettor, and a very real friend of mine. While waiting for him in my office, I was looking out my window and the Los Angeles headquarters for Stephens was in the building across the street, on the ground floor. I noticed two pictures of Moore in the window and none of Johnson. I then telephoned Grace Stoermer (now head woman for the Bank of America) who was in charge of the headquarters, calling her attention to the two pictures of Moore and none of Johnson. She said the two pictures were put in by Dickson and over her protest no Johnson pictures were allowed. As it was close to election day I let it go at that.

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Baines then came in. The poll was of course a Johnson poll but to cover up the poll was for United States Senator, for Governor and for one other local official. Baines had gone over the polls and was pleased to death. I ran over them quickly, looking only at the Johnson-Moore figures. The result was far better than I expected and relieved any doubt of Johnson's election. Baines then called my attention to the Stephens-Richardson figures. I went over them and added them up, as he had done, and they showed Richardson slightly ahead. I was startled as I thought, without any close knowledge of his campaign, that he would beat Richardson by at least a hundred thousand. I immediately rang up the Governor's office, in the same building, and Stephens was there. I got him on the phone and asked if I could slip into his office without anyone seeing me, that it was important that I at once see him. He said yes, and told me how to come. When I got in I laid before him the poll, telling him he could be sure of its accuracy, and he had a week to get busy and get results. He looked through the polls carefully and then told me they were of no value, telling me of locality after locality where they were wrong, and to forget them. I tried again to convince him of their correctness, but he waived [sic] them aside. I returned to San Francisco and on the Saturday before election in front of the Crocker Building I ran into Moore. I knew Moore well and he stopped me and said he was glad to meet me so we could compare notes. He told me he had enjoyed his campaign. I asked him what he thought would be the result, and he said when he started out he was very doubtful but that now he was sure -- sure that he would win by a good margin. He then asked my views. I told him I would be equally candid, and that he would be beaten by about seventy thousand. We separated good naturedly. He was actually beaten by about 72,000, and afterwards rang me up and asked me how in hell I had figured it that close. He and I were close friends up to his death.

On election night I was at the Johnson headquarters on Market Street. Around eight Johnson, Matt Sullivan, Rolph, Eustace Cullinan and a couple of others were in the private room where I was taken the returns. The returns were coming both by wire and phone. I was paying no attention to anything but Johnson returns, but after a half hour or so, when it was sure Johnson was chosen, Rolph called attention to the Stephens-Richardson returns which he had added up, showing Richardson slightly ahead. I then spent a half hour getting the Governor vote in various big Counties. Just then Mrs. Albright rang up from Los Angeles and asked the San Francisco vote for

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Governor. I gave her the San Francisco and Alameda County figures and asked her estimate of the Los Angeles County result. She said it didn't look good and he probably would lose Los Angeles (he did by about twenty thousand) and asked me to get the State result, County by County, for her. I told her I would, and did. I rang her back between twelve and one and told her that Stephens had lost by about fifteen thousand. I asked her what the Governor thought about it and she told me she had not talked to him and was afraid to. I told her it was her duty and she couldn't avoid it. She said, however, she wouldn't. She was crying, so I asked her where the Governor was, and his phone number. He was at Santa Monica. I rang and got him and went over the figures with him. I told him he had better prepare a statement so that if the figures turned out as they looked he could make a proper announcement. He said he was then considering that very thing, and thanked me very genuinely for calling him.

Now as to Dickson and my personal knowledge of him and his relations with Johnson. As I have written, the first time I met him was at Stockton. I saw him many times during the primary and election campaigns and our relations were always cordial. One story, though, I must not forget. As Private Secretary, I made out all certificates of appointment. One day, after I had been out of the office for a few minutes, I found on my desk a certificate appointing Edward A. Dickson as a Regent of the University of California. I looked at it and thought it was a joke of some kind, so I took it into the Governor's private office and asked about it. The Governor smiled and said it was a regular appointment and he meant it. The Governor was a U.C. man and very proud of it, so I took the liberty of asking why he was appointing a man of Dickson's lack of standing, lack of genuine ability, to such a high post. The Governor responded that Dickson was proud of his U.C. graduation and would be devoted to the University; that he had been with him from the start of his campaign, and that this was the highest honor that could be paid him. I told him that was just the point, it was too high for a man that did not rank it. However, he put it through. Dickson, at Sacramento, always had close contact with the Governor's office and every one in it was always cordial to him. When and why he broke I do not know and did not suspect until the opening of the 1917 legislative session and the Stephens episodes which I have described. With the breakdown of the Earl papers in Los Angeles I have been told that Dickson then got close to Harry Chandler of the Times and with him made considerable money in some sort of a real estate

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development in Los Angeles. I do not personally know whether that is true or not as I have not seen nor had any contact with him for over 24 years.

As to Stimson, I got to know him well in 1911 and always liked him. Johnson appointed him a member of the Panama Pacific International Exposition Commission in 1915, where, with him, Matt Sullivan, Chester Rowell and Arthur Arlett were active. He spent quite a lot of time there, and so far as I know always did a good job. Just when he switched I don't know, nor why. He was active and intense to get Moore to run, but that was entirely his privilege as he might have been against Johnson on the League of Nations matter. Since that time I have no actual knowledge of him. I do not blame him as I do Dickson, who was sneaky, insincere and a plain double-crosser.

As I have before stated, all this is in the past and would have been forgotten were it not for the Cleland article. The statements as to Dickson, while bitter, are mere recitals of actual occurrences and permit of no other conclusions. He never has done me personally either good or harm and except for his actions toward Johnson he means nothing to me one way or the other. I haven't thought of him or heard his name in years.

This letter is unconscionably long, but as it refers to Johnson, a man I not only admired but loved, and of Stephens, whom I got to know well and regard highly, I wanted to give you full, pertinent details of my knowledge and association with them.

With very genuine good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

[Signed] A. McCabe

As you will observe, this has been typed by a very poor performer, namely myself. It is the first time I have tried the type-writer in many, many years.

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February 11, 1953

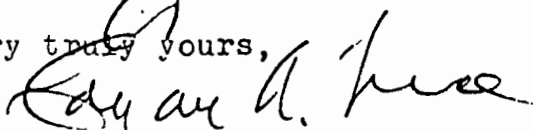
Mr. Philip Bancroft
Walnut Creek
California

Dear Phil:

I thought perhaps you would be interested in a copy of a letter which I have written to Professor Mowry. The letter explains itself.

I get terribly mad when I read the articles and books of these newcomers who get most of their information from Ed Dickson and who did not know Johnson and, consequently, give a very unfair picture of him. Somehow I think his memory should be preserved and its true worth set down. I wish I had the time and the ability to write a real story of the Progressive movement in California beginning in San Diego in 1906. I have four scrapbooks that are very interesting and my memory is pretty clear of those days.

Very truly yours,


EAL:gfg
Enc.

Law Offices

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Suite 1220 San Diego Trust & Savings Building
San Diego 1, California

February 7, 1953

Professor George E. Mowry
University of California at Los Angeles
History Department
Los Angeles, California

Dear Professor Mowry:

I have not had the pleasure of your acquaintance personally, but have just read "The California Progressives" and for the reasons that will appear hereafter, I am impelled to write you a letter which will contain some friendly criticism of the views expressed in your work. I lived through that period and was very close to the events which you set out in your book, and knew intimately all of the characters.

I was quite young at the time, and the Progressive Movement was very close to my heart, and my memory of the events related is still very clear. My great affection and admiration for Hiram Johnson would also prevent me from remaining silent where I felt that an inference or implication unfair to his memory was in print. Therefore, I make bold to write you this letter and I hope that you will receive it in a friendly spirit, as I feel friendly towards anyone who has taken the trouble to develop the facts of the California Progressive Movement as you have.

In my opinion, the facts set out in your book are correct. I only take issue with you on your estimate of the character, personality and ideals of Hiram Johnson. I also take issue with you in ending your fine work without a better and clearer statement of the great accomplishments

of Governor Johnson.

Before giving you my views, I think it only natural that I should give you my background and experience so that you can judge as to whether my sources of information are reliable.

Even before I had graduated from Stanford University, I was taking part in a rapidly developing local movement directed against the local city boss, Charles Hardy, and the Southern Pacific political machine in the state. This was under the tutelage of my father, Judge M.A. Luce, and his partner, Judge W.A. Sloane. Right here, I must pause to record that Judge W.A. Sloane was a very able and high-principled lawyer in San Diego who fought the local machines for years, and saw three successive political machines go up and down with him tangling with them all the way. I am very glad that I had the experience of deposing political bosses and corruption under his leadership.

In 1906, Judge Sloane, assisted by me, organized the Roosevelt Republican Club in San Diego, dedicated to the overthrow of the political machine and boss in San Diego and the Southern Pacific machine in this state. A good start was made and in the first convention in 1906 we captured one-third of the delegates and a lively convention was the result. I mention this start for the purpose of emphasizing that at that time no help whatsoever or any advance was sought or given by any of the political leaders that afterwards became strong in the Progressive Movement. They had not as yet shown up.

In 1907 when the Lincoln-Roosevelt League was founded, we simply added the name "Lincoln" to our name and continued with our organization. We overthrew the machine in 1909, elected all the city offices including the mayor, and the machine was never again reorganized. It was no longer a factor locally, although some of its elements, including the Spreckels interests, continued to oppose us.

Therefore, in 1909 and 1910 when the Lincoln-Roosevelt was being organized in the state, we were already a thorough-going concern, and when Johnson opened his campaign in San Diego in March 1910, the mayor and the entire city government supported him. On March 1, 1910, Hiram Johnson opened his statewide campaign in San Diego and I alone met him at the early morning train. I have always thought that he must have taken one look at a boy 28 years old who looked to be about 20, and thought that the Movement in San Diego was very juvenile indeed. However, I took him to the University Club where breakfast

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was had, attended by prominent citizens and local public officials, and we made quite an impressive showing.

I'll never forget this instance. I left early to complete arrangements for his speeches, and Johnson followed me out onto the porch and said to me (and these were his exact words): "I do not want you to be under any misapprehension as to my campaign, as I intend to call a spade a spade and to strike straight from the shoulder." He was giving me my chance to run. His remarks, however, inspired me, and I said to him that he need not worry, for that was exactly what we wanted. In fact, it was the answer to our prayer, as we had for years wanted a leader who would do that very thing. That night when Hiram Johnson made his first speech of that great campaign, I was tremendously inspired, as were a great part of the audience. I never failed from that time on to look upon him as a great inspirational leader. He certainly did a tremendous job in that campaign in arousing a lethargic people to fight for high ideals.

From that time on, I met Johnson at every visit to San Diego and managed every one of his campaigns in San Diego up to the last, including two campaigns in the Democratic Party to obtain the Democratic nomination for senator. May I also add that I managed every campaign for Progressive candidates in San Diego, without compensation of course, including those for Governor C.C. Young, Mayor John L. Bacon and Congressman Phil D. Swing. I took either prominent part or managed all other campaigns in San Diego which had as their goal decent government locally. I was a devoted Progressive as long as there was a Progressive Movement.

I attended the 1912 Republican Convention as an alternate for Judge Sloane, and was greatly aroused by the proceedings. That was the birth of the Progressive Party as you know, and we were ready for it. I approved wholeheartedly of all Johnson and Theodore Roosevelt did at that convention. You have doubtless forgotten, as has nearly everybody else, that Johnson was the only delegate to bolt the convention. That took a high degree of courage as well as idealism, particularly when you remember that he was then governor of the state and in control of a strong Republican organization.

In 1914, being unable to prevail upon anyone else to run and with no encouragement whatsoever except from my father, I ran for state senator on the Progressive

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ticket and did not even file in the Republican primary. The Democrats did give me a write-in nomination, although at that time their registration was very low. I was elected to the state senate and still am rather proud of the distinction that I am the only man that ever defeated a Republican for the state senate, in San Diego County. I was rather prominent in the Progressive Movement in the state senate and I believe that Senators Jones, Benson, Kehoe, Carr and myself were known as the leaders of those sessions.

I served in the sessions of 1915 and 1917 and I believe made a near-perfect record for Progressive and Labor votes. The others of that time beside those mentioned were Senators Breed, Thompson, Cogswell, Benedict, Chandler, and others.

With this background, let me proceed with the discussion. I believe that no one knew Hiram Johnson better than I did. I was always with him in San Diego; frequently at his home in Sacramento; was frequently called upon by him to present and put through his favorite legislation; and always in his confidence. I may not have been as much involved in the shaping of policies as were Lissner, Dickson, Stimson, and Rowell, but I was very intimate with these men, met with them on numerous occasions, and assisted in the drafting of the platform of the 1910 Republican Convention. I was almost constantly in touch with Meyer Lissner, perhaps less closely in touch with the others. I believe that the four men mentioned here were a great team of politicians in the better sense of the word; that they were men of great courage and ability and with a great sense of practical politics. I am also ready to say that their contribution to the Progressive cause cannot be over-estimated. When the break came in this solid front, which I will discuss later, no one regretted it more than I did, as all of these men were my close personal friends. May I also say that in my opinion Meyer Lissner was the most constant and loyal of all and continued in his great friendship and support of Johnson until the time of his death. Chester Rowell was an equally great and able supporter. He and Johnson drew apart over the issue of the League of Nations, an issue upon which honest men could readily differ. Undoubtedly Rowell regretted this as much as any. I did not, however, so much admire his later attitude when he became a columnist with a decidedly conservative point of view and seemed to lose his fire after that issue which had broken up the Progressive Movement.

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Both Dickson and Stimson quarreled out with Johnson over issues that were not so creditable and although Marshall Stimson was my friend up to his death and I frequently visited with him, I do not believe either he or Dickson were justified in that later animosity toward Johnson, and I will mention this later.

I can sincerely commend your book for its splendid statement of the facts, showing great research. Your account of the Hughes-Johnson incident is the best I have ever read and is factually correct as I heard it at the time from the lips of Johnson, and read it in the white book published by Rowell. Where I must disagree with you is in your estimate of the character and personality of Hiram Johnson and your omission to properly evaluate his great idealism and his great accomplishments in the state of California. Let me be more specific.

At pages 113 to 116, you give a summary of the faults of Johnson. With most of this I disagree very strongly. I will mention a few instances. On page 115 you say "Johnson was described by some of his contemporaries as a profoundly self-centered man, egotistical in the extreme, enormously ambitious and without a shred of loyalty to his friends and supporters." While you do not fully support this view, you give it to a great extent your blessing. I do not know who these contemporaries may be, for, of course, you could have found that opinion expressed by his enemies; but not by his friends. I believe that it is wholly false, unfair, and unjustified. It is also not true that Johnson was of such an intensely jealous nature, as you state on that page, that he hated to see others emerging unless they followed him abjectly. This, I repeat, is wholly false.

John M. Eshleman at that time was emerging rapidly as a great leader in the Movement. There could not have been a closer relationship of affection and respect than existed between those two. I have heard them disagree on legislation in my presence, without the slightest personal feeling or loss of their intimacy. I could name many other instances. In fact, I know of nothing to justify the charge made in your book.

You mention also on page 115 that he sometimes signed his letters to political subordinates "the boss". I do not think this true at all. I never heard of such an instance. I know of no one who ever received such a

letter, and I don't believe such a one was ever written. Likewise, I do not believe that Johnson disliked Heney because he saw him as a possible rival. These two great characters clashed as they were bound to over important issues. I believe they understood each other pretty well, and that the cause of their conflict was not Johnson's jealousy. The instance you mention on page 115 of Johnson turning the picture of Pardee to the wall is a new one to me. I never heard of it before. I know that Johnson was very friendly with Pardee after Johnson became Governor, and frequently conferred with him. If the picture was taken from the wall, it was for some good reason and not because of any personal feeling.

On this page you also state that "One historian of California has written that those of Johnson's friends who had sacrificed their own political ambitions, later found that it was safer to trust a broken reed than to rely on Johnson's loyalty, for the man's self-interest was too highly developed to leave a sense of gratitude." The "historian" you rely upon is Professor Cleland. That is truly leaning on "a broken reed". I believe that his book is mostly unfair and untrue and I wrote him a long letter to that effect some time ago. Certainly he is not a reliable authority. I think this statement is particularly undeserved. In my experience with public men over a lifetime, I have never known a man who had more gratitude and appreciation for what was done for him than Johnson. I will probably enlarge on this statement later. You do state on that page that those words are probably somewhat unfair, but I think that is too mild a comment.

Later, on page 116 and 117, you pay a pretty high tribute to Johnson, which I think is well-merited and deserved. I only regret that these other things have been said which in my opinion mar an otherwise fine work.

The charges seem to have been made by Professor Cleland and by yourself that Johnson was disloyal to his friends and supporters. I believe that I knew him very intimately, as I have said, and I found him to be very warm-hearted, appreciative, and extremely loyal to his friends and supporters. He never failed to send me a telegram and a letter after every campaign, thanking me for what I had done. He always expressed to me in many ways his appreciation for my loyalty. I do not believe a greater libel could be printed than to say that Hiram Johnson was disloyal to his friends and supporters.

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Let me here make a statement which I do rather sorrowfully, but which I believe in all justice should be made. I am of the opinion that both you and Professor Cleland relied too much for your information upon personal interviews with Eddie Dickson. When Dickson quarreled out with Johnson, his hatred was so great that from that time on he aligned himself with the reactionary elements and supported their candidates, such as C.C. Moore. He was so bitter that he planned little tricks to embarrass Johnson at his meetings and other places when Johnson was on his campaigns. I do not believe that Mr. Dickson, in spite of his early contributions to this cause, could ever be depended upon to give a fair picture of Johnson. I believe that you have fallen in error in relying upon his statements. Unfortunately there are a great many others in the state whom you did not interview who would have given you an entirely different picture. I know that the defection of Dickson was his fault entirely and ought not in any way be blamed upon Johnson. This I will discuss later when I refer to the Stephens-Johnson quarrel.

In a few words, I believe that it is fair to say that Johnson was a very courageous and truly great fighter. He was devoted to the highest possible political principles, and was very intense. He could not and did not compromise. Had he compromised, he would have been President of the United States, as I know that the Vice-Presidency was offered to him by Harding if he would deliver his delegates to Harding. I am also sure that men could differ with him politically without arousing his hatred. I am also sure that he could not stand disloyalty and ingratitude, and became very bitter towards former friends who lined up with his enemies and could be heard barking at him from the woods while running with the coyotes.

Let me give an instance: My partner, Judge W.A. Sloane, disagreed with Johnson on the League of Nations issue. He wrote Johnson a letter explaining his position and the necessity of his expressing himself in disagreement. He received in return a very friendly and tolerant letter from Johnson and the two remained good friends and Johnson assisted Judge Sloane greatly in his campaign for Justice of the Supreme Court. I could give other instances. Of course, he was sensitive, perhaps, unduly so, and resented deeply the disloyalty of men who joined up publicly with his enemies after having received great favors from him.

The League of Nations was a big issue and pretty well ended the Progressive Movement in California. It

seemed to divide the Progressive Party in the middle. It brought to Johnson's support many of the old reactionary Republicans and caused an entirely different line-up in this state. I believe it was all due to Johnson's sincere opposition to the League. He naturally had to accept support from the conservative wing of the Party who agreed with him. This was unfortunate and was probably not enjoyed by Johnson, but I don't believe it should reflect on him at all.

It must be quite obvious that no one could have had as bad a disposition or personality as you paint, and certainly could not have been disloyal to his friends and supporters, and yet have had such a great group of loyal and steadfast friends who supported him in all of his campaigns. The result was that he was the only man in history who was twice elected United States Senator as the nominee of all major parties. Certainly no man disloyal to his friends could have done this. In fact, as I know, the great majority of his close friends remained true to him to the last and got into all of these campaigns and helped him tremendously.

It is quite true that Johnson would become irascible at times, due, as you correctly say, to the pressure upon him and his lack of sleep, as he suffered considerably from insomnia. Those who knew him well made allowances. I have known him to apologize for his hasty remarks. Any man with the qualities of a great fighter is bound to have some collateral glaring faults. Like Johnson, any intense fighter was almost sure to be emotional, temperamental, sensitive and quick-tempered. These faults, of course, Johnson had. How would you ever expect to have a great fighting character like Johnson with a soft and mild disposition, phlegmatic, unemotional, even-tempered, and slow to act. They just do not go together.

I happen to have been very close to Stephens and Johnson at the time of the misunderstanding in January 1917, and I know exactly what happened. You will recall that Johnson had appointed Stephens Lieutenant Governor with the idea in mind that he, Johnson, would be elected United States Senator and that Stephens would succeed him as Governor. This was an unusual situation in that the Governor was actually appointing his successor.

When the legislature convened on January 1, 1917, and Stephens came to Sacramento as Lieutenant Governor, Johnson remained as Governor in order, as he said and his friends agreed, to organize the Legislature. It was his

idea to remain in office for part of January 1917 in order to get the program going well for Stephens, all being in the friendliest attitude.

Stephens brought with him to Sacramento a friend named Naftzger who knew nothing whatsoever about politics, and who had not been prominent in any known political movement, but who immediately attempted to become the brains of the Stephens administration. To the astonishment of everybody, Stephens started some kind of a campaign to force Johnson to resign as Governor so that he, Stephens, could take office. Stephens asked my opinion as to whether or not I thought Johnson should resign, and in this conversation he told me that he had a legal opinion that Johnson was ineligible to hold the office of Governor any longer. I talked very frankly and rather sharply to the Lieutenant Governor at that time and disagreed wholeheartedly with him. I stated that I saw no reason why the Governor should resign until he was ready, and that I certainly did not believe that any friend would contemplate legal action to remove him. I had a similar conversation with Naftzger which broke up with harsh words. Governor Johnson told me that he had intended to resign in January, and that even Mrs. Johnson had prepared the Governor's Mansion for Mrs. Stephens, and that he felt bitterly hurt by the actions of Stephens, and that he certainly could not resign in the face of that pressure. Johnson also believed that he had made Stephens Governor and that Stephens was now showing the height of ingratitude. Naturally, he was angry, and who wouldn't be. Could you imagine a more ungrateful and stupid thing to do than for Stephens to try to force Johnson, who had appointed him, out of office so that he, Stephens, could go in. It would all have taken care of itself easily had Stephens tended to his business and not listened to poor advice. It still remains in my mind as one of the most stupid and ungrateful things that a public official ever did.

The calling of a special session of Congress and Johnson's resignation so as to attend that session ended the controversy. Naturally, this caused bitterness between the two men. Let me say to the credit of both of them that they did not seem to take their bitterness out on the supporters of the other. Stephens knew exactly how I stood, but he was always a gracious friend to me, and appointed me Judge. I likewise always supported him.

This is where the break between Dickson and Johnson occurred. Johnson believed that Dickson was urging

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Stephens from behind the scenes to force Johnson out of the Governor's office and to take it over himself. At the time Dickson was occupying the office of Tax Commissioner, to which he had been appointed by Johnson. After all the relations between these two, can you wonder that Johnson felt bitter and hurt when he believed that Dickson had not only deserted him, but was under cover supporting his opposition. I do not know how anyone can blame Johnson for this feeling. Quite naturally everything was ended between Dickson and Johnson, but not through any fault of Johnson, in my opinion. How could he have forgiven Dickson? I believe he thought and probably correctly, that Dickson was the head and brains of the whole movement, including the one to get a legal opinion perhaps so as to start a lawsuit. Could you imagine anything more stupid than to even contemplate a lawsuit under these circumstances?

Let me give one more incident of a falling out of two great friends. Heney and Johnson split up after Heney was defeated for United States Senator. He felt that Johnson had not spoken for him from the stump vigorously enough. This is a common source of trouble between candidates for Governor and Senator. Personally, I think there could have been a more vigorous campaign made by Johnson in support of Heney, but Johnson was wrapped up in his own campaign and could hardly be expected to make Heney's campaign for him. However, most of the trouble was engendered by the friends of both of these men, tattling about the remarks of each. I tried my best to stop them, and heard several instances of these remarks. Personally, I always felt this division greatly, because Heney was my hero as a young lawyer; I knew him very well; was very fond of him and admired him greatly. It was just one of those breaks that so often occur between two temperamental, high strung, sensitive fighting men. It probably was inevitable, but very regrettable.

I hope you will bear with me a little longer, as this letter has grown beyond all reason, but there is so much on my mind that I must express it, and I believe you will understand me and not feel bored. Senator Johnson made a great Senator. He carried his isolationism a little too far, but I believe he was recognized by his contemporaries in the Senate as a very able Senator. In his old age he might have become irascible, though I saw no signs of it.

I have always held Hiram Johnson in the closest possible respect and affection. He always showed great appreciation for what I did politically. I do not retract

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one single thing that I have ever said in admiration and praise of Johnson. I believe him to have been a very great Governor, and he was a great administrator and certainly accomplished great things in the way of political reform for his state and nation. Theodore Roosevelt was our great inspiration, but Hiram Johnson kept the fire going. I do not believe that in my time, at least, there have been any statesmen as inspiring as these two. They are the only ones that have ever given me a real thrill in politics. Johnson was the true friend of the underprivileged, and a true Progressive. I have reason to know his great tendency in this respect as I handled some of his bills.

It should never be forgotten that Johnson destroyed a powerful political machine which never again functioned; that the great victory was due principally to the great ability and character of Hiram Johnson. No leader of moderate abilities could have done it. The high ideals expressed by him in that campaign were steadfastly maintained by him during his Governorship. He fully redeemed every single pledge of his campaign. As I heard E.W. Scripps say: "You can put his pledges on one side and his accomplishments on the other, and you will see that every pledge is redeemed. You just cannot fail to support such a man."

Also in all fairness, every chronicler of that period should record that Governor Johnson was a great administrator, that he picked men of excellent ability for all administrative posts and that he appointed the highest type of lawyers to judgeships, many of whom went on to high places in the State Judiciary. His incumbency marked a tremendous change in the government of California and brought about the golden days of enlightened, vigorous and honest state government. I challenge anyone to deny that.

Let me also add at the risk of being considered contentious, that a history in itself could be written of the battle which was conducted in San Diego. I do believe that both you and Mr. Cleland could have enlarged your information and done a better job of portraying Johnson had you interviewed me and some others. Miss Rose spent three days in San Diego and thought that my four scrap-books were the finest source of material which she had up to that time found. There are many others in California from whom you might have profited by interviewing: Senator Herbert Jones, Senator William J. Carr, Phil Bancroft, Jack Neylan, Max Thelen, Phil D. Swing who was the head of

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the Johnson forces in Imperial County and later a Congressman, and many others. I believe that you have confined your history too much to the story of Los Angeles and Ed Dickson rather than to have examined the larger picture and interviewed a wider range of Progressives.

Some day I hope that someone will write a complete history of Hiram Johnson and will portray his character truly to the people. I am concerned about the way the writings of today seem to be going. I cannot but believe that it is due to too much interviewing of my friend Eddie Dickson. I hope that in the future writers will set down the real characters of these men in the interest of history and the Progressive Movement in California. I believe that the Progressive Movement in California was a very great Movement of Honest Citizens that rid their state and city governments of corruption and bosses. A great job was done and the men involved were actuated by almost a religious fervor. The true picture has not as yet been presented.

Johnson was a controversial figure. At that time you could start a violent argument any time by the mere mention of his name. He made strong friends and enemies; engendered deep loyalties and bitter hates; all depending upon the depth and sincerity of one's devotion to the Progressive principles of that day.

More proof of his well deserved popularity and his fine personality was, may I repeat, that in spite of that early bitterness his support continued to grow until it was well nigh unanimous, believe it or not, as shown by his ever increasing majorities over a period of thirty years until he was elected United States Senator practically unanimously as the candidate of all parties, not once, but twice. Where can you match that? What better proof of an appealing personality could you find.

Let me apologize to you for this extended and repetitious dissertation, but I could not do otherwise. I hope you'll take it in the friendliest attitude and will realize that I'm only trying to see justice done to a man for whom I had and still have the greatest admiration and affection.

Yours very truly,

Edgar A. Luce

EAL:sme

MT. DIABLO FRUIT FARM
 WALNUT CREEK, CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
 POST OFFICE BOX 695 - YELLOWSTONE 4-2075

April 3, 1962

Mrs. Willa Baum
 * Regional Cultural History Project
 Room 486, General Library
 University of California
 Berkeley 4, California

Dear Mrs. Baum:

I am returning herewith Chapter Eight with comparatively few changes.

The leading members of the Associated Farmers of Contra Costa County over the years were:

E. A. Smith	Concord
Arthur H. Honegger	Oakley
Harold A. Butcher	Brentwood
Charles B. Weeks	Brentwood
Neil Harrison	Danville
Fred C. Wiedemann	San Ramon
Frank Rutherford	San Ramon
Edward R. Rowland	Lafayette
Frank Straight	Concord
H. H. Hale	Concord
Grant Burton	Walnut Creek
Fred W. Houston	Danville
W. R. Meese	San Ramon
Tomas S. Vanasek	Concord
Millard Diffin	Brentwood
R. R. Houston	Byron
Lawrence Olsen	Concord
Dr. Irving Bailey	Brentwood
D. D. Watson	Brentwood
Robert H. Wallace	Brentwood

Charles B. Weeks active as Treasurer for most of the time and Arthur H. Honegger succeeded Harold A. Butcher as President. You can insert this information, if you want it, in its proper place.

The further I go in this reviewing the more I appreciate your skill as an interviewer and your genuine knowledge of the subject.

Very sincerely yours

Philip Bancroft
 Philip Bancroft

PB:RH
 Encl-

AGRICULTURAL LABOR

(6) In the case of agricultural workers, owing to the perishable nature of the crops, the farmers' inability to pass on increased labor costs to the consumers, and other reasons which I have explained many times in the past and shall explain again during this campaign, the unionization of farm labor under present conditions and leadership would be disastrous to the workers and absolutely ruinous to the farmers.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

(7) The laws of this nation, of this state and of all its subdivisions should be rigidly and impartially enforced upon all alike. The present illegal super-governments existing in many of our large cities should be cleaned up.

SIT-DOWN STRIKES

(8) Sit-down strikes, which everyone except the Secretary of Labor knows to be unlawful and un-American, should be permanently and effectively banned from the United States.

RELIEF

(9) While of course no man, woman or child should be allowed to suffer from lack of food, nevertheless the present system of relief should be drastically altered, so that it will be restricted as far as possible to taking care of our own deserving and needy citizens and to helping men to get off the relief rolls rather than to acquire vested rights in them. To this end the

Philip Bancroft's Platform

PLATFORM

I am a candidate for the Republican nomination for United States Senator from California because I believe that there ought to be one candidate standing squarely on the following principles:

CAUSE OF PRESENT DEPRESSION

(1) The immediate cause of the present depression was the epidemic of labor disturbances and consequent losses from unemployment and destruction of confidence, which started with the sit-down strikes of the Middle West and which spread throughout the entire country.

(2) These sit-down strikes were encouraged by the sympathetic attitude of the Secretary of Labor, and by the pussy-footing of the entire Administration.

NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT

(3) The National Labor Relations Act and its radical offspring, the National Labor Relations Board, have been the means employed by the Secretary of Labor for throwing the whole weight of her powerful office against the employers, against the A. F. of L., and in favor of the C. I. O. The National Labor Relations Board has appointed Communists to important positions and has allowed them to try cases in such an outrageously unfair manner as to have constituted a mockery of justice and a disgrace to our National government. The National Labor Relations Board has acted simultaneously

as inquisitor, prosecutor, judge and jury—and as scandalously unfair ones at that—with the result that innocent employers have suffered staggering losses, business confidence has been shattered, the conservative A. F. of L. unions who had kicked the Communists out of their ranks have been penalized in case after case in favor of communistically-controlled C. I. O. unions, and the war between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., which would otherwise have been settled long ago in favor of the A. F. of L., has been intensified and prolonged.

REGULATION OF UNIONS

(4) While in these days of huge corporations and modern industry labor unions and collective bargaining are often necessary to protect the workers from exploitation by unscrupulous employers, it is likewise just as necessary to protect the employers from exploitation by unscrupulous labor union officials.

(5) Therefore, in the interests of the employers, the employes and the general public, laws should be passed requiring all labor unions to incorporate or otherwise to become as responsible for their acts and their contracts as are the employers. Labor unions should also be required to keep complete records of all their financial transactions, and their books should be subject to the same inspection by government officials and by their members as are the books of business or industrial corporations.

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BIOGRAPHICAL

Phillip Bancroft, who is a candidate for the Republican nomination for United States Senator, is a farmer of Walnut Creek, California. He has been a militant leader among California farmers for many years and is greatly respected by them.

A son of Hubert Howe Bancroft the historian, Phillip Bancroft was born in San Francisco in 1881. He is a graduate of Harvard College, Harvard Law School and Hastings College of the Law, University of California, but for the last twenty years he has been a practical farmer, living on his farm and running it successfully himself.

He is a former president of the Associated Farmers of Contra Costa County and a former vice president of the Associated Farmers of California, Chairman of the California Dried Fruit Stabilization Committee, former chairman of the Deciduous Fruit Department of the California Farm Bureau Federation, director of the Contra Costa Walnut Growers' Association, and for seventeen years has been a director of the Cali-

fornia Pear Growers' Association. He is a member of the Pomona Grange and the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union.

He was one of the organizers of the American Legion in California. He entered the first officers' training camp on May 12, 1917, and served overseas until after the armistice, retiring as a first lieutenant.

Although always active in politics when issues were at stake, he has never before been a candidate for public office. He was one of the original California progressives, having been a pioneer in the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. In 1908 he was one of the two progressive Republicans who broke the machine slate and went to the national convention as delegates. Again in 1912 he was elected a member of the Republican National Convention and became a member of the Progressive National Convention that same year under the banner of Theodore Roosevelt and Hiram W. Johnson. In 1936 he was again a California delegate to the Republican National Convention.

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
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SAN DIEGO HEADQUARTERS
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San Diego
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eligible to an old age pension until he or she shall have resided here for at least 15 years. Moreover, we should not hold out to our old people false hopes of greatly increased pensions which cannot possibly be realized.

PROTECTIVE TARIFF

(11) In order to maintain the American standards of wages and of living, the American markets should be protected for the American producers, agricultural as well as industrial. To accomplish this we need in many cases higher, rather than lower, tariffs.


(12) No agricultural products which displace or compete with home-grown farm products should be allowed to enter this country without paying duties sufficient to balance the higher labor and other production costs of this country, or which would reduce the prices of any American-grown farm product below a figure that would allow the American farmers their costs of production plus a reasonable profit.

RECIPROCAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

(13) The Reciprocal Trade Agreements are gradually reducing our protective tariffs all along the line, with resulting loss of profits for our producers and of jobs for our workers, and accordingly the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act should be either drastically amended or repealed.

Philip Bancroft's Platform

Philip Bancroft
THE CANDID CANDIDATE
FOR
UNITED STATES SENATOR



**PHILIP
BANCROFT**

GENERAL ELECTION
NOVEMBER 8, 1938

BANCROFT ON THE AIR!
N. B. C.—Every Monday Night at
Six o'Clock
Tune In! . . . Tell Your Friends!

13

Philip Bancroft's Platform

following changes, among others, should be made:

(a) No person who comes into this state should be entitled to state or county relief until he has resided here for at least five years;

(b) No person should be entitled to relief who has voluntarily left his job, whether because of strikes or otherwise and who refuses to accept employment when available. In other words, neither the national government nor the state should continue to finance strikes and strikers with the taxpayers' money;

(c) Relief administration should be so changed that it will henceforth be more desirable to work than to loaf, and so that a man taking his ease on a relief job will no longer draw down twice as much per hour as a man doing hard productive work on a farm;

(d) We should prevent the W. P. A. and other relief agencies from doing work that would ordinarily be done by private contractors employing regular workers who have kept off the relief rolls;

(e) Those who work and earn the money contributed to relief, rather than those who receive it, should control its expenditure.

OLD AGE PENSIONS

(10) Our aged citizens should be given as liberal pensions as our state or nation can afford to pay them, but in order to protect our California citizens no person hereafter coming into this state from outside its borders should be

eligible to an old age pension until he or she shall have resided here for at least 15 years. Moreover, we should not hold out to our old people false hopes of greatly increased pensions which cannot possibly be realized.

PROTECTIVE TARIFF

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SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES

(14) Every possible effort should be made to combat those who are trying to overthrow our American form of government by force and violence, and in this connection laws should be passed which would:

(a) Prohibit any Communist from holding office in, or drawing a salary from, any labor union (the A. F. of L. is conscientiously attempting to do this, but the C. I. O. has adopted exactly the opposite policy);

(b) Prohibit aliens illegally in this country from being given government relief or aid other than enough to send them out of the country—at least so long as we have worthy unemployed Americans who need help.

SILVER PURCHASE

(15) The expenditure of hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars for the purchase of silver from all over the world at prices of from two to three times its normal value, thus making millions for the silver speculators of every country but our own, was not only immoral but stupid—it was altogether too high a price to pay for the votes of a few mountain states.

GAGGING FREE SPEECH

(16) The use of inquisitorial bodies under the guise of "investigating committees" for the purpose of throttling free criticism of the New Deal Administration must be stopped.

HAMSTRINGING OUR G-MEN

(17) While the budget should unquestionably be balanced, the attempt to cut down the appropriation for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, thus hampering the efficiency of that organization in protecting our families and ourselves against kidnapers and gangsters, was a poor way in which to provide a little extra money with which to buy votes in the coming elections.

LEGALIZED EMBEZZLEMENT

(18) The so-called "Social Security Tax" is nothing more nor less than a tax on payrolls, which sooner or later will have to be paid "in the sweat of every man who labors." Moreover the moneys so collected, which should be treated as trust funds, are being frittered away as running expenses by an extravagant horde of jobholders. This is nothing short of legalized embezzlement. If the president of an insurance company should so use the trust funds of his policyholders he would quite properly be sent to the penitentiary.

RAISING OUR STANDARD OF LIVING

(19) Since our national standard of living is directly dependent upon the amount and the efficiency of our production, we should once and for all abandon the idea that we can become more prosperous by working less and producing less, and realize that we cannot possibly improve our standard of living permanently unless we as a people work more and produce more.

PHILIP BANCROFT.

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