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University of California
Berkeley, California

George Bolton, III:
Oakland Army Base Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Lisa Rubens
in 2008

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Interview #1: March 10, 2008

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01-00:00:17

Rubens: Hello. It's so nice to meet you. Please tell me your name.

01-00:00:25

Bolton: George Bolton.

01-00:00:45

Rubens: And you are George Bolton, the third.

01-00:00:49:

Bolton: Yes. My family is very original. They used the same name over and over again.

01-00:00:56

Rubens: Tell me briefly, where your family hails from.

01-00:01:00

Bolton: Oklahoma. They come from Guthrie, Oklahoma. but originally the family came from Tennessee, then came to Texas. In fact, they walked here -walked to Oklahoma and Texas from Tennessee just before the emancipation.

01-00:01:21

Rubens: Do you have records?

01-00:01:23

Bolton: Of that? Oh, I have some relatives that do. My cousins and aunts do, that show where they came from, to the extent that the name was changed, and I don't know if it was for southern reasons or what. It was also Broden, but it's Bolton, B-O-L-T-O-N, but Broden, B-R-O-D-E-N is the name.

01-00:02:25

Rubens: So the third came to—first, started out at Tennessee.

01-00:02:31

Bolton: Yeah.

01-00:02:33

Rubens: Just after emancipation or before?

01-00:02:35

Bolton: Just before, when they came from Tennessee, walked from Tennessee to Texas and Oklahoma. That's where my grandfather had, we had—and he ultimately wound up being a contractor and a farmer in Oklahoma. He married Eliza Ghoston and that's how we kind of got to where we are. She was Indian, Kiowa Indian.

01-00:03:09

Rubens: And what year are we talking about? This is your grandfather.

01-00:03:12
Bolton: Oh, this is—when was this?

01-00:03:16
Rubens: 1863 is emancipation, a generation in the eighties. Maybe some time in the nineties.

01-00:03:22
Bolton: Yes, because he was—I don't know what it was. I'd have to go back and look at some stuff, and find out how old he was when he died. That was many, many, many years before, and I'm sixty-three now so.

01-00:03:36
Rubens: Your father is born in Oklahoma?

01-00:03:37
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:03:39
Rubens: And meets your mother.

01-00:03:40
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:03:41
Rubens: Who is? Her name is?

01-00:03:43
Bolton: The last name is Turner. Gertrude Turner.

01-00:03:46
Rubens: And they come to California when you're three?

01-00:03:49
Bolton: Yes, about three years old.

01-00:03:50
Rubens: How does that happen? Why Oakland?

01-00:03:53
Bolton: Well the reason they—well, they originally came to Richmond, and one of the reasons they came, it had to do with my father and something that he got into with the person who was, I guess at that point, the Governor of Oklahoma's son, and they had asked, well the governor's people literally asked my grandfather to have my father leave because they didn't want—they revered him, believe me. My grandfather was a contractor and as well, as I say, a farmer, and he had built—if you look in Oklahoma now, you'd find a lot of the brick bridges or the stone bridges that are in Oklahoma, what you'll find is his name on them, with those little stones that they had.

01-00:04:41
Rubens: That's George Bolton.

01-00:04:42

Bolton:

Yes, senior. So they asked that he kind of like get my father away. So my father wound up coming to Richmond, California, and he worked there in the shipyards and some other things for a while. Then one of my other uncles came out and then my mom came out, and she brought myself and two of my brothers, and we have been here in this area since.

01-00:05:09

Rubens:

What were the brothers, younger or older?

01-00:05:11

Bolton:

Older, there are two older. One is about a year and a half and the other is three.

01-00:05:17

Rubens:

Just before we get to Oakland, I have to go back to ask about an African American contractor builds bridges?

01-00:05:24

Bolton:

Bridges, yes. Stone bridges, like the little bridges.

01-00:05:30

Rubens:

Made a good living?

01-00:05:31

Bolton:

He made a good enough living. He had also a farm there.

01-00:05:38

Rubens:

What kind of farming?

01-00:05:40

Bolton:

We farmed just like vegetables that were there. At a point there was even cotton sometimes, but right behind the farm was what was called the "Black Jack Woods", which is some old blackberries and these woods that were in the back, but he did farming there, and it was primarily for family, but he would, he did that. All of my uncles lived on that farm until they were old enough to leave.

01-00:06:05

Rubens:

He was the one with six kids.

01-00:06:08

Bolton:

Well he had more than that. I think he had eight, because he had the sons, and then he had two daughters. One of the younger sons died in an accident, but he had the two daughters and the six sons.

01-00:06:22

Rubens:

I assume your father was the oldest?

01-00:06:25

Bolton: No. He was the third. He was named after his father, and then I had two uncles that were older than him. And he was the third one and then he had, there were the other ones.

01-00:06:41

Rubens: But his name was George.

01-00:06:42

Bolton: Yes.

01-00:06:44

Rubens: I just presumed the first would be George.

01-00:06:46

Bolton: Well, that should have been my brother but it wasn't, it was me instead. My brother John, who is the oldest, should have been named George.

01-00:06:52

Rubens: Well, but your father George was not the oldest, so there's some tradition there.

01-00:06:57

Bolton: But they didn't have to do that. To me, it should have been my brother, not me. [laughs]

01-00:07:00

Rubens: Why?

01-00:07:02

Bolton: Because he's my father. They were so much alike, as a matter of fact, and it should have been him because he was the oldest, and not necessarily me.

01-00:07:12

Rubens: The bridge building, was it a big operation? Not so much machinery then?

01-00:07:18

Bolton: No, no, because what he had is, there were a couple of mules that he had, and some equipment, because he did a lot of the—some of the farm stuff. One of the things that he did is he seriously believed in everyone in the family knowing how to do something. If you were a member of that family and you were his son, you either learned something about carpentry or you learned something about plumbing, to deal with some of the plumbing stuff, or you dealt with masonry. And they all learned that. They learned a number of things as a trade that they knew, and one of the people said, if in fact you learned a trade, if you do get to the point, because higher education is a whole different kind of program, that if you do get to the point where you can finally achieve some degree of higher education, you can't have a trade taken away from you. So if you knew how to do something, you could always make a living doing something.

01-00:08:15

Rubens: Was he formally trained?

01-00:08:17

Bolton: No, but he was a mason, as am I. That's what he did. That's what he told you to do and you did what he told you to do, and that happened until they were old enough then even had families and ultimately left the farm, but they were—you know, that's the way it was.

01-00:08:35

Rubens: How long did the farm stay in the family?

01-00:08:39

Bolton: Part of it is still in the family.

01-00:08:41

Rubens: Did you go back as a young boy and visit?

01-00:08:43

Bolton: Yes. I go back. My brother is older.

01-00:08:47

Rubens: But as a young boy growing up?

01-00:08:48

Bolton: Oh yes, oh yes. I mean you had to, especially as long as my grandfather was alive. You had to because he commanded it so, and that's the way it was. So we did. My brothers, my father, my uncles, everyone, and what you would do is he said, and you would.

01-00:09:05

Rubens: Christmas, Easter, summers?

01-00:09:10

Bolton: He was more what my grandmother would call a heathen than anything else, because he didn't get into holidays. He wasn't that, let's say almost emotional about that kind of stuff, holidays, but it was something that you did. It was like a reverence that you paid to the family and to him, because he did the same thing for his father. I remember when I was very, very small, literally before—in terms of a memory. I talked to my mom about it as well as my father about it and they said yes it was true, because they had photographs, very old photographs of my grandfather, of my great grandfather. He was a very small man.

01-00:09:52

Rubens: The great grandfather must have been in slavery?

01-00:09:55

Bolton: But he was a different kind of person, because I remember quite distinctly, him coming—he would come to the farm and when he would, he would come on a horse that he would be on. He used to always wear gloves, and they

would bring out this almost like a chair, to get him off, because he was a slight person, for him to get off the horse, to get down. That was the way it was.

01-00:10:22

Rubens: Where did he live?

01-00:10:23

Bolton: He lived in Oklahoma, and he also went back and forth to Texas because he had several sons that lived in Texas as well. But he was the kind of person that you never, ever had your head above his head, I remember that. Until the day the man died, you never ever rose up, because he was very short and you just didn't do that. He didn't look up at anybody and that was just the way it was. So it was like it's almost a reverence for the man.

01-00:10:51

Rubens: How old were you when he died, about?

01-00:10:56

Bolton: Just about ten.

01-00:10:57

Rubens: So you knew him.

01-00:11:00

Bolton: Yes. So he was a different kind of guy.

01-00:11:00

Rubens: Let me ask one more question because your family is so fascinating, I think more should be done on it, but we have a task at hand. The community that your father left to come work I assume, in the shipyards?

01-00:11:15

Bolton: Yes, in Richmond.

01-00:11:17

Rubens: I didn't quite get why he was asked to leave or your grandfather wanted him to leave? What was going on?

01-00:11:27

Bolton: It was more for his safety. He got into an altercation.

01-00:11:29

Rubens: Ah, a personal issue.

01-00:11:30

Bolton: Right. As opposed to him being hung, lynched, or something done to him, my grandfather was asked to have him to where he would be safe.

01-00:11:42

Rubens: And your grandfather had contacts.

01-00:11:44

Bolton:

Yes. In fact, they had been familiar with what happens, like in Oklahoma, but in funerals. That's one of the places that I've always seen. If there was a funeral, people would literally stop their vehicles, get out, and if you were covered, then you uncover yourself as the funeral procession goes by. When my grandfather died, there were so many people that were there at his funeral that I never even know that this man had been, I guess revered by so many people.

01-00:12:16

Rubens:

How old were you when he died?

01-00:12:18

Bolton:

About fifteen, sixteen.

01-00:12:22

Rubens:

One last question, and then we can come back and look at that. How would you describe the community? I know that you're saying that they lived on a farm, but in terms of the density and the racial composition, what was the world like?

01-00:12:39

Bolton:

In Oklahoma?

01-00:12:39

Rubens:

Yes, that your father and mother left, that your grandfather—

01-00:12:43

Bolton:

The world that we were in, it was almost relatives, because there were uncles and aunts and cousins and everybody else, because they all tended to live right there. So that was you know, you can see what is happening in the rest of the city, but Guthrie is not like Oklahoma City. Guthrie is more of a rural place, and so there was that kind—well, it just, it was family.

01-00:13:09

Rubens:

But they owned their land.

01-00:13:10

Bolton:

Yes. Everybody there was just family. So you know.

01-00:13:14

Rubens:

And they owned their land. Had they lived well enough with the white community that was spread out in other areas?

01-00:13:26

Bolton:

Yes.

01-00:13:26

Rubens:

People made their peace.

01-00:13:28

Bolton: Yes. There was no—I mean in terms of what was happening, my grandpa was always referred to as Mr. Bolton, period.

01-00:13:35

Rubens: He had a trade, he did his trade, he supplied his family.

01-00:13:39

Bolton: And all of his sons were trained to do something, so they all were, I guess viable members of the community that did something. So that was just the way it was. I didn't ever really see what could be called any kind of like discrimination or disrespect or much of any of that at all. I heard more about that growing up here than there.

01-00:14:05

Rubens: So let's get to that. Where did you first live?

01-00:14:11

Bolton: First we were in Richmond, and then we moved to Oakland.

01-00:14:14

Rubens: And where in Oakland?

01-00:14:16

Bolton: Well the first place we lived in Oakland was on 27th Street, just down the block from what was Grove Street. That's called Martin Luther King now but it was Grove Street, and we lived there for—that's one of the first places I can remember.

01-00:14:31

Rubens: Was that a house?

01-00:14:31

Bolton: Yes, it was a house. It was a two story, there was upstairs and downstairs, and it was just the three of us. Then suddenly one day my brother appeared, my younger appeared. It was just like oh, another child. So they got another {inaudible}.

01-00:14:51

Rubens: So when you said the three of us, you meant the three boys.

01-00:14:53

Bolton: Yes, it was the three of us, the older three. Then my younger brother appeared, which was interesting, and then we moved to a house on I guess it was 32nd Street. No, no, no. Before that we moved to 17th Street, where another member of our family, a cousin, owned a house that was I guess a triplex at the time, and we moved there. We lived there for a while and then we moved to 32nd Street and got another house on 32nd Street, and then my sister appeared almost out of nowhere. Then we went from there to West 26th Street and West, and then back – no, no, let me back up. We went to 27th Street.

01-00:15:48
Rubens: After 32nd and your sister?

01-00:15:49
Bolton: After 32nd there was a house on the same block that we lived on before, on 27th Street. Then ultimately we went to 2614 West Street, right after the church.

01-00:16:02
Rubens: Was that the end of the fertile years? The fertile years, did it end up being five?

01-00:16:09
Bolton: No, because then I had—I wound up with a twin brother and sister.

01-00:16:12
Rubens: So seven kids.

01-00:16:13
Bolton: Yes, so it was like okay. So it was from there that I went to—I think we were all, with the exception of my older brother, we were all drafted into the military. That was like one at a time they picked us off.

01-00:16:28
Rubens: The moving about. Was that for more space?

01-00:16:33
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:16:34
Rubens: A little bit moving up in stature?

01-00:16:36
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:16:37
Rubens: At what point did they own?

01-00:16:39
Bolton: No. They didn't own anything because at that point my mother and father separated. And then after that—

01-00:16:47
Rubens: After seven kids they separated?

01-00:16:49
Bolton: Yes. I guess the irony of that is although they separated, they never lived more than a half a mile away from each other, to the extent that sometimes it was like living around the corner. So I never had what could be truly called the advantages of coming from a broken home, because it was always a matter of how's your dad and what's your dad doing, your dad said. My father was always telling me that you better mind what your mom says, you better do

what your mom says. You never got away with anybody because what she would do is she'd call him.

01-00:17:24

Rubens: What was your father's employment?

01-00:17:26

Bolton: He worked for a contractor. He worked for Oliver da Silva which was a grading construction company, and he was at a point, one of the first mortar grader operators. He was originally, I guess a laborer, and then he became a mortar grader operator for Oliver da Silva.

01-00:17:45

Rubens: Where was da Silva based?

01-00:17:47

Bolton: They were in Oakland. As a matter of fact they were out on what is it Davis Street? Right on the Oakland line, down by where the coliseum is. We used to wind up spending the—my brothers and I would spend the summer going out and paving roads with him for Oliver da Silva, and if you boys want to make some money for your summer and for your school clothes and you want the school clothes, you're going to go to work. So it was a matter of doing that. So we spent a large number of summers working, paving roads and the whole nine yards, in order to get some money to be able to buy clothing.

01-00:18:25

Rubens: Can you point to specific roads that were?

01-00:18:28

Bolton: A lot of the stuff we did was out like in Tracy or out in the far reaches, where they did a lot of roadwork. They did some roadwork in Oakland; they did some work by the freeway and some down where the old Cypress and things like that, but they did some paving roads up there. It was a matter of doing that all the time, but you learned to do that, you learned to earn some money.

01-00:18:53

Rubens: Can you remember what a salary was at that time?

01-00:18:56

Bolton: No. It was just you got some money. There was no salary. You know they paid you but it was never any real rule.

01-00:19:04

Rubens: What high school did you go to?

01-00:19:06

Bolton: I ultimately went to every high school in Oakland, because I went to McClymonds High School. I spent a large number of years in the West Oakland area, went to McClymonds, went to Oakland High, went to Tech. The last year I went to Skyline.

01-00:19:19

Rubens: Is this because you were moving around?

01-00:19:22

Bolton: No. The 15 bus used to stop on Grove Street, we'll just call it Martin Luther King. That 15 bus used to pass by a number of high schools, as well as it interconnected with the 40. The 40 would take you to Fremont, the 15 ultimately could take you to Skyline, and maybe you wanted to go into Tech and some other places. But the reason for doing that is I used to be an intercollegiate wrestler, and there were people that was what was called the notice meet, for all the novices when you enter school and you can wrestle. At that meet I was beaten by three different people, and those people went to three different high schools, and it became a purpose for me, to actually beat these people, so I went to the same schools that they went to in my senior year, to thrash them.

01-00:20:15

Rubens: It looks to me, for four years of high school you went to four different schools.

01-00:20:18

Bolton: No, no, no, that was just the senior year.

01-00:20:20

Rubens: Oh, in the senior year you went to all four?

01-00:20:23

Bolton: In senior year.

01-00:20:24

Rubens: But you entered ninth grade in?

01-00:20:27

Bolton: The end of ninth grade I was at Herbert Hoover Junior High School, which is on West Street.

01-00:20:35

Rubens: But high school, what was the first high school?

01-00:20:36

Bolton: McClymonds.

01-00:20:38

Rubens: I thought McClymonds was, or has it become a continuation school? Was it not at the time?

01-00:20:43

Bolton: No, no, no, it was a high school. It was a regular high school.

01-00:20:46

Rubens: So McClymonds you went to for three years. And then Oakland High, Oakland Tech and Skyline.

01-00:20:51

Bolton: Oakland High, Oakland Tech, Fremont and Skyline.

.

01-00:21:02

Rubens: How mixed was McClymonds?

01-00:21:06

Bolton: It was very in fact, because it was just a very mixed school, if you look at some of the people that came out of it. I don't know if you've ever heard of Billy Drummond, who used to teach? He went to McClymonds High School and was going there just before I got there. It was just a very mixed school. It was more mixed than it's ever been, and if you look at the faculty that was there, it was a quite mixed faculty. I believe, from what I saw over the years, is the instructors that were there, many of them wound up going to Skyline, they created Skyline, and some other schools. I mean they just were to me, very good instructors and they were take no nonsense, take no prisoners kind of people. You learned and you did what it was you were supposed to be doing, and that's the way it was, but it worked for me.

01-00:21:52

Rubens: So when you said you were drafted and your brothers were picked off, are you speaking of the Vietnam War?

01-00:21:57

Bolton: Yes.

01-00:21:59

Rubens: Okay. So let me just freeze for one second. Your father is a worker during World War II. He's not in the Army. Did your mother work in the shipyards or anything?

01-00:22:11

Bolton: No. What she did, is she would also do—what she tried to do some of is some kind of domestic stuff on occasions, and my dad was working. But she would do that because she wasn't going to just stay still. Period. And she cooked extraordinarily well and you can tell that by looking at the size of her kids. She was one of these spotless around the house people. You did what you were supposed to do and then after that was done then there were things. She wasn't going to just sit at home.

01-00:22:42

Rubens: So you're growing up in the sixties. I assume you were drafted around-

01-00:22:49
Bolton: I was drafted in 1963..

01-00:23:03
Rubens: When you're drafted where do you go?

01-00:23:06
Bolton: What base did I go to?

01-00:23:08
Rubens: Yes.

01-00:23:09
Bolton: Ultimately I wound up going to Pleiku Province, when they built the 4th Infantry Division base came in Pleiku. I was there. We built it literally. I think it was '63.

01-00:23:43
Rubens: Were you the first one in the family drafted?

01-00:23:44
Bolton: No, no, no. They took my brother that's just older than me first.

01-00:23:47
Rubens: His name is?

01-00:23:48
Bolton: Howard.

01-00:23:50
Rubens: And where did Howard go?

01-00:23:51
Bolton: Howard went to—he wound up being in Okinawa. He was in artillery and he went to missiles and artillery. He was in Okinawa. In fact, they drafted him. He was in Okinawa and I got drafted shortly thereafter. I went to Fort Hood then went to Fort Lewis and was the 4th Infantry Division, when they literally marched to the ship and went, were shipped to Vietnam. I had the opportunity, when we stopped in Okinawa, to visit with my brother a little bit, before they shipped me the rest of the way.

01-00:24:26
Rubens: So you had no comings and goings with the Oakland Army base?

01-00:24:31
Bolton: Other than them taking me through there before they took me away. And then when I came back, when I finally was discharged from the military, I got out of the military and Oakland Army Base was the last base I was on when I got out. That's where they transitioned people out, as well as where they tended to bring the bodies.

- 01-00:24:52
Rubens: When were you transitioned out?
- 01-00:24:55
Bolton: It was about '65. I went in and it was '63, because I know I was in the military for two years.
- 01-00:25:07
Rubens: You had graduated from high school. Were you drafted right out of high school?
- 01-00:25:13
Bolton: No, no. As a matter of fact I had gone to—I was in this architectural school in Laney [Community College] for almost two years. I was in the process of transferring and got a greetings.
- 01-00:25:29
Rubens: You were going to transfer to Berkeley?
- 01-00:25:31
Bolton: Yes, and I got a little greetings notice.
- 01-00:25:37
Rubens: I thought the draft status changed. College used to be a waiver.
- 01-00:25:45
Bolton: You could get a deferment.
- 01-00:25:48
Rubens: If you were married you could get a deferment too.
- 01-00:25:51
Bolton: Right, right, right.
- 01-00:25:54
Rubens: How is it that you were not able to exercise the deferment? Did you think this was what you needed to do and should do.
- 01-00:26:01
Bolton: My family and my father said no, you're serving your country, period. And the same thing was told to myself and my other brothers, is that's what it was, and it was an honorable thing to do, and you're not going to run from anything.
- 01-00:26:21
Rubens: Just before we get to the transition. So in those high school years, that must have been quite an experience, going to all those different schools. Skyline was pretty white by then, right? I mean that's kind of why—
- 01-00:26:34
Bolton: That's what it started out.

01-00:26:35

Rubens:

And then Laney College, wonderful Laney College, but we're talking about the years '57 let's say, to '60. The Fair Employment Practice Commission coming in, issues of the Grove Shafter Freeway, real changes in the political makeup of Oakland. Is that particularly affecting your family? Are they commenting on it? Are you aware of it?

01-00:27:00

Bolton:

We see it because one of the things that happened is with the Grove Shafter Freeway, as well as I guess it's the 580 extension that comes from—well that goes down MacArthur. At that time, the priest for my Episcopal church that we were married, he owned a house. His family lived in a house that was right next to the area that that freeway was going to come through. So it took out a number of people's houses that were right down there. We used to watch that freeway and then we saw the other part of it that cut through over by Tech, where they—the Shafter part, when they took that out. We knew about that because we spent a lot of time just back and forth in that area. We knew about it and it tended to take people out. I also, at that point, knew what was happening pretty much with what was going on with predevelopment that was beginning to happen right around the same time that was kind of dying down. As a matter of fact it was something that I looked at but didn't really think that it was something that I wanted to deal with.

01-00:28:05

Rubens:

7th Street was just being leveled.

01-00:28:07

Bolton:

Well 7th Street, it was still there. The post office tended to kind of level 7th Street, when they took the post office, you took out a lot of businesses. As a matter of fact, it was Jenkins Barbeque and a couple of other places were on the back side of that, that they took out when they did that and didn't replace it with anything, and it was kind of like they literally scalped the place so that nothing was left there. In terms of Grove Shafter, we saw people that were being displaced that were in the area. It started creating boundaries, we knew that, because if you lived on one side of the freeway, you lived on the other side of the freeway. So those boundaries were being created out there and we, by being able to go back and forth, you know you started seeing it, you started hearing it. That area over near the Grove Shafter was pretty much an Italian kind of community more than anything else; very few Portuguese but a lot of Italian in that area, specifically when you start to get into the area near Idora Park, where we started seeing that there was some reason that folks would not let you buy property over near Idora Park, what used to be, I guess many, many years ago it was an amusement park over there. So we knew that that was going on. You can feel it and you can see it, that there was a big separation.

01-00:29:25

Rubens:

But your family, as you described them basically as working class, middle?

01-00:29:32

Bolton: Yes.

01-00:29:33

Rubens: Rising into the middle class?

01-00:29:34

Bolton: No, just working class.

01-00:29:37

Rubens: Church going and fraternal associations or sororital associations?

01-00:29:42

Bolton: My dad was a mason. In terms of churchgoing, my dad was much like my grandfather. My mother would almost refer to him as being a heathen as well, because he didn't necessarily go to church. But if you parked your car in his driveway and you went to church, he would go into the church and hey, whoever's got that car move it. And so he was like that. We lived across the street from the church. My mom was Baptist and yet all four of my brothers and I became Episcopalians. My sister was like eh, neither here nor there. My other sister became kind of a Methodist, and this is as they were all relatively young people, and that had to do primarily with the fact that we lived across the street from St. Augustine's Church and became acolytes in the church. There was this priest named Baskerville, Father Baskerville, who was an institution when you consider St. Augustine Church. I don't know how much you know about the St. Augustine's Church, where Father Wallace was one of the first black priests in the Bay Area, and that church also was the church in which a number of Congress people—John Miller, the black, Byron Rumford, the Wilson family line, Wilson and some of these other people, were all members of this church. Josh Rhoads, one of the first black councilpersons in Oakland, was a member of this church. Mrs. Rhoads is my godmother. So we became involved with that church and we were religious to that extent. I mean you had to be—go to church.

01-00:31:22

Rubens: Well I'm asking also about the sense of community change and the genesis of the civil rights movement. This was not a period of militancy. This was a period of very strategic, careful, plotting out.

01-00:31:40

Bolton: Well not necessarily, because when you look at the history of St. Augustine's Church, St. Augustine's Church is where the Black Panthers had their first breakfast program. Before that there was what was referred to as the summer program, and it had all the children that were members of that church. I mean, you would come down there every summer. It wasn't like a free for all or anything, where you're just out there hanging out, but they got a program that would go on every summer. So you had, the children that were members of the church would come there every summer and there was this structured program for them to deal with all the time.

01-00:32:31

Rubens:

But I'm saying that you know, as contrasted to the party, when the Black Panther party emerges, you know the articulation of race issues. Byron Rumford's fair housing law is going to be '63. So prior to you going into the Army, that's what I'm trying to see. Is there a kind of climate of social change? You're seeing the physical change, you're seeing boundaries being created, but in terms of you know, I'm going to participate in community actions that are dealing with inequality.

01-00:33:04

Bolton:

It wasn't really happening. I know that the first times we started seeing some things that were happening, is that in the community there were people from literally every nation that there was, so that it wasn't a matter of it being let's say one homogenous community and was all black because that wasn't the case, because there were Japanese, there were Chinese, there were Korean, there were Indian, Italian. There were people from everywhere, and that's the way we grew up. I remember quite distinctly that a significant thing that happened to us is we were on the way, my brother Howard and I and Mark and who was it, Dennis, someone else. There were about five of us and we were on the way—we would go to what used to be the old Roxy Theater and then to what is the Charles Greene Library. We were walking to the library because our parents used to let us do that.

01-00:34:05

Rubens:

Where was the library?

01-00:34:07

Bolton:

Charles Greene. It's the one that's downtown.

01-00:34:10

Rubens:

On 14th?

01-00:34:11

Bolton:

14th, yes.

01-00:34:12

Rubens:

I didn't know what was called Charles Greene.

01-00:34:13

Bolton:

I think it was Charles Greene Library, that's right there. We would walk to the library and I remember these kids that were referred to as I guess pachucos, with the frescoes or whatever it is, and the chains, and I remember we were walking down the street and they called us a nigger. I didn't know—none of us really figured out or picked up on what it was they were saying.

01-00:34:38

Rubens:

You had not heard that word used?

01-00:34:40

Bolton:

Yes, we didn't. We didn't know what it was, so when we got back home and we had Dennis Shugamatzu, we had asked his—when we got back home we asked his father what was that, and he said it was a very derogatory term and people like that mean you no good. We never really dealt with it until that. It was like what and why? So you know, in terms of activism it was like well, we were still within our own I guess little bubble or little circle and it just didn't—there was no real activism.

01-00:35:18

Rubens:

It sounds to me like you're saying the boundaries hadn't closed you in.

01-00:35:26

Bolton:

No.

01-00:35:31

Rubens:

It sounds like you had been instructed in not just race pride but pride of self from grandfather on. Hold your head up, work hard, earn a living, church.

01-00:35:43

Bolton:

And be responsible. You were responsible for your own actions, period.

01-00:35:47

Rubens:

But in terms of that, there were people out there who didn't like African Americans.

01-00:35:52

Bolton:

Or Japanese or Chinese or Korean.

01-00:35:53

Rubens:

This was not something that was part of your education, to be a race man.

01-00:35:59

Bolton:

No it wasn't, because when we grew up in just the neighborhood, people who were they were, period, and it didn't have anything to do—they were the name that I knew. There was Dennis and there was Carlin, and that's who they were. They weren't a specific race. They looked different but that was it.

01-00:36:21

Rubens:

Were kids in and out of each others houses?

01-00:36:22

Bolton:

All the time, all the time. I remember having gone over to Sato's, Kenny's house, and his dad had a rather large garbage can that they kept rice in, and he was like showing off, and he went in and he grabbed a handful and put it in his mouth, and we did too. So we put a handful of rice in our mouth and then his dad comes in and sees it and his mom says no, don't. You're not going to spit that out, now swallow it. So to have a mouthful of dry rice is not a good thing, but that was you know, you never really see people who would have that much rice in a garbage can anyway, but it was just he was being smart, we were all being smart, but we learned that you don't do that. There were

things like that. You just did what you did but you didn't—it had no ethnical anything to it.

01-00:37:20

Rubens: What about the Army? So you're in the Army and you're there two years. Does your consciousness change in any way? How integrated was—

01-00:37:29

Bolton: While I was in the Army? Well, I went to Fort Hood, Texas. It's outside of Killeen, Texas.

01-00:37:36

Rubens: How did you get there?

01-00:37:38

Bolton: We flew down there, but we flew down there from here.

01-00:37:42

Rubens: Here meaning Oakland?

01-00:37:43

Bolton: Yes. Well we flew—we went to Monterey first and then they shipped us down. It's an interesting place, because you were in the middle of this place and they have these huge quadrangle in the middle of the barracks, and I recall it was snowing. We were down there and the people that were there, pretty much the people who were in the barracks we were in were from the Bay Area, and they had all come through the Oakland Induction Center. I remember running, and that's where I first met most of them, and we went down to Texas. Then we were all in Texas and we get down there and I remember there was one kid that was an Indonesian. His name was Baden Von Saxon Wiemer, a particularly young kid. He seemed like he was younger than the rest of us, and one of the things he did is he had a pet rat, and he carried the pet rat to Texas with him. Some of us knew he had it, a lot of people didn't know he had it, but he had a pet rat, so he takes it there. And there was another one named Govan who was from here. We were all there; Jesse, myself Govan Hawkins we were all there in this barracks there and we're all on the same floor, in the same unit.

One morning, and it was snowing, it had been snowing that night, it was snowing that morning, and there was this huge quadrangle that's right in this big area that's right in the middle that's probably about 150 long and about sixty or seventy feet wide, and there was nothing there but grass and then so there was snow over the whole thing. I remember looking out. I got up in the morning and before I got ready I looked out the window. Gary just told me, he said, "Don't look out the window." I was like why? And he says, "Those son of a bitches..." And I'm saying, "What?" So we looked out the window and it had a number of racial epitaphs written in the snow, about "Go Home!" So here we are and the people that were telling me—Gary was Caucasian and we were all in there and it's like, what is this they put us into? So we're there in

Texas and this is going on. It's not that we volunteered to do anything, we didn't volunteer to come here, and that's what happened. And the people that like I said were in the unit with me, they weren't all black. It was mixed, a whole group of mixed people and everybody became somewhat frightened by it, what was going on, because there were these other people that were drafted, that were in the military, that were there with us. In that set of barracks there were at least 400 people, and they're coming from all over the country and there are some that are coming out of the south, and here are these kids who are here and they come from an area like this, and you were not really confronted with that kind of stuff and then you get there and then you see it, then it's like what do you do? We're alone, you know, we're here with this kind of stuff.

01-00:41:05

Rubens:

What did you do?

01-00:41:07

Bolton:

We banded together. We just stayed together. We didn't really do anything that was separating. We got the point where we became very protective of each other and just didn't allow it to happen. We weren't going to allow people just to run over us and to mistreat any of us, and so we watched what was happening and we took care of ourselves. We didn't get into any real tussles of any sort but we made it known that if it should start happening... In the barracks, there were a couple of guys that were there who said well what we're going to do is—one of the guys that was really very kind of I guess timid about it and was nervous about it said, well what you do is you literally, you just take names because if we have to, we're going to go through here and clean out everybody that's in here, because they're not going to jump on us and they're not going to treat us this way. But we stayed together and out of that group of people, I think over half of them, we wound up going to Vietnam together. You know, when you see that—

01-00:42:13

Rubens:

It was a rude awakening.

01-00:42:14

Bolton:

Very much so.

01-00:42:16

Rubens:

Were there any officers of color?

01-00:42:19

Bolton:

Yes, but that was far in between. One, he was almost like a nerd, but that was about as far in between. In fact, he did not wind up going. He was in a training unit. He didn't wind up going with us to Vietnam, although he was there when he trained us. I saw him when I came back and he was on Fort Lewis, which was a training center, but he was on Fort Lewis and I was back, and he was going.

01-00:42:49
Rubens: You said some of the guys came through the Oakland Induction Center. You did not.

01-00:42:55
Bolton: Yes I did.

01-00:42:57
Rubens: Just say a little about the Oakland Induction—where is it literally?

01-00:43:00
Bolton: Well it's not there any more. If you look at where the State Building is right now, about at 15th or 16th or something like that on Clay. At one point in time there was this building there. The induction center used to be there. That's where they took you in and the draft board was there, and they took you in there and stripped you and did all the whole—

01-00:43:39
Rubens: This was the Army.

01-00:43:40
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:43:41
Rubens: But it was not on the Oakland Army Base?

01-00:43:43
Bolton: No. That base was used primarily as support for things that were happening on Pacific theater. What they would do is they would ship all the—the equipment and everything would come through—both that and naval supply. It was like army supply, naval supply, because all the equipment that was going over to anywhere in Pacific theater went through there. That's where all the army stuff was and ultimately, unfortunately, that's where they would ship the bodies back to.

01-00:44:15
Rubens: Well, I do not want to do short shift to your time in Vietnam, but my mission here is to get to the Oakland Army Base. So let's just say you're in Vietnam for two years. Are you in battle?

01-00:44:28
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:44:29
Rubens: You are in battle literally?

01-00:44:29
Bolton: Yes. Killing people and destroying things.

01-00:44:45
Rubens: That must have been tough.

01-00:44:44
Bolton: It's different, it's different.

01-00:44:50
Rubens: But you got through it.

01-00:44:53
Bolton: Yes. Well I didn't—I recall—I remember dealing with my parents before I went, and they knew where I was going, and it was the last leave I had before I was going to be shipped out. We were in Santa Cruz, at Alum Rock Park.

01-00:45:10
Rubens: - a family outing?

01-00:45:11
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:45:12
Rubens: You were not married.

01-00:45:13
Bolton: No. I was just off and my mom, there was something wrong and my dad says you know, "What's going on?" So I told him and I did not expect to return. You know, this was going to be and so that was the way it was going to be. So when I got there I didn't—at that point it's like you know, if you're going to be scared, you can probably get hurt a lot easier. So attack it, deal with it, and that's what I did.

01-00:45:48
Rubens: Did you see Oakland boys, your friends, die?

01-00:45:53
Bolton: Yes. Well, the people that weren't—some were and some weren't from Oakland but it happened, and to see them or to go through areas and to find their bodies that were laying there was—after a while you see it and you tend to toughen up.

01-00:46:17
Rubens: George, this is early in the war isn't it?

01-00:46:20
Bolton: Yes.

01-00:46:21
Rubens: Do you remember Kennedy's election?

01-00:46:24
Bolton: Yes. Well this is after Kennedy's election, because I was right over here at Laney College the day he was assassinated.

01-00:46:34
Rubens: That's '63.

01-00:46:35
Bolton: Yes. That's the day that I was in a classroom when he was assassinated.

01-00:47:01
Rubens: Were your parents Democrats, by the way?

01-00:47:11
Bolton: My dad was, my mom was, my brothers and sisters were. There were only two people in my family, that included my grandfather, that were Republicans, and then me.

01-00:47:28
Rubens: How about Roosevelt? Did people have any reverence for Roosevelt?

01-00:47:33
Bolton: Yes, yes there was a lot.

01-00:47:35
Rubens: And then also Earl Warren.

01-00:47:37
Bolton: Well Earl Warren, we kind of like knew Earl Warren when he was Governor here. As a matter of fact, I guess he used to live here. There were definite feelings my dad had. Politics was something that just like religion, those two things you really didn't want to discuss with him because he was a little bit different about that kind of stuff.

01-00:48:00
Rubens: And you too are not particularly political yet at this point?

01-00:48:07
Bolton: I am, I wouldn't say an ultra conservative person, but I do believe in conservative values.

01-00:48:13
Rubens: I don't mean—I'm not interrogating that.

01-00:48:16
Bolton: You mean getting political.

01-00:48:17
Rubens: Yes. Do you remember when you first voted?

01-00:48:20
Bolton: Yes. When I was nineteen years old. That's when I wanted to and I didn't get to vote because the vote wasn't at eighteen yet. I said I really wanted to, I remember that, but there was nothing I could do about it except have discussions. I remember the very first time my dad said you know, you'd better make sure you register to vote. So that was something you did.

01-00:48:41

Rubens: So '63. You remember Kennedy's death, you're at Laney College, the old Laney College, but it's across the street, in a way, from there.

01-00:48:50

Bolton: Right. In Harry Cole's architectural class.

01-00:48:55

Rubens: And then so you are then drafted and you go. When you come back, you come to the Oakland Army Base?

01-00:49:09

Bolton: Oakland Army Base.

01-00:49:09

Rubens: Let's just describe that. Let's do that, because that's the focus of this project.

01-00:49:14

Bolton: It was a warehouse, that's all it was. It was like just warehouses full of stuff and full of body bags is what it was, which is one of the things that really struck me when we came back here, is that it was just like a warehouse.

01-00:49:31

Rubens: Did you come back on a plane or a ship?

01-00:49:32

Bolton: When I came back, I came back by plane and I was at Fort Lewis, and then I left Fort Lewis. When I was getting out of the military I left Fort Lewis and came back through the Oakland Army Base. In the process of coming back through the Oakland Army Base, we took a plane flight from Seattle SeaTac to San Francisco. I remember being in the airport with this guy named Red K., and there were about six other guys. When I was in the military we were in what's called the Lone Range Reconnaissance Patrol together and we, as a group of people, like I say there were like eight of us that were doing this, we all came back except for one guy that we left there. We remember seeing him again. It wasn't time for him to rotate back yet when we left, and we sat in the San Francisco Airport and I was waiting for them to catch a connecting flight, because they were from Alabama; somebody named Red K. from Alabama. People had said if I went out with them that they were probably going to frag me or I'd be dead. We all came back and we were in San Francisco Airport, and we were sitting, waiting for them to catch a connecting flight, and then I was going to just catch a cab and then come from there to Oakland, to the army base, and sitting right in San Francisco Airport, a number of folks began to call me names and their names and spit on us.

01-00:51:07

Rubens: Because you were military?

01-00:51:08

Bolton: Right.

01-00:51:09

Rubens: Not because you were black but because you were—

01-00:51:11

Bolton: Well, they called me a couple of other terms. Redcay., this guy is about six four, probably close to at that point, because he wasn't fat, he was about 260 and began to pummel them and I said well no, don't.

01-00:51:28

Rubens: He was African American?

01-00:51:29

Bolton: No. He was what he would refer to as a genuine redneck from Alabama. We had lived together, we had listened to each other sleep, we had eaten together, we had cried together, we had been in the woods together, sometimes not even thinking we were ever going to get back here together, and we sat right in the San Francisco Airport when we got home and were called names and spat on.

01-00:51:53

Rubens: The world had changed.

01-00:51:54

Bolton: Yes, and it was like, what are you doing with that nigger? And it's like oh, okay, and that's the last time I saw them. I then came to Oakland Army Base and when I got to the Army Base, one of the first things that greeted me there was these carts that had body bags on them, and they just drove right in front of me.

01-00:52:15

Rubens: There was no question what it was?

01-00:52:17

Bolton: Oh I knew what they were. I had had to fill a couple, had to literally get people, pick up people and put them in a bag to bring them back. That ran right across in front of me as soon as I got back there. That's welcome home at the Oakland Army Base. That was different, quite different.

01-00:52:46

Rubens: Did you literally stay on the army base?

01-00:52:49

Bolton: No, because I lived not far from there and I was being discharged.

01-00:52:57

Rubens: So you didn't do anything on the army base?

01-00:52:59

Bolton: No.

01-00:53:01

Rubens: And as an institution, as a physical space, when you were kids growing up, was there any way that you would ever go onto it for any reason?

01-00:53:11

Bolton: We used to do that all the time. As kids when we were growing up, we did two things. One, this navigators park that is here wasn't called a navigators park then, but we used to go into the army base and into the navy base.

01-00:53:27

Rubens: Okay stop one second. I think we need to change tapes. Do you want to take a break?

01-00:53:34

Bolton: Yes, and see who this is calling me again.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 bolton_george2_03-10-08

02-00:00:02

Rubens: I was asking you if as kids, you had an egress or experiences on the—

02-00:00:15

Bolton: Well it wasn't let's say a legal egress, but we used to go down to the base to do two things. One, we would go down—underneath the pier there were pigeons. We used to raise pigeons in the area, so we would go down there and you could catch pigeons that were underneath the pier, go to the nest and get the pigeons, and we did that.

02-00:00:37

Rubens: How did you capture them?

02-00:00:38

Bolton: By doing some really kind of dangerous stuff; holding on to one side or having my brother hold on to me by the belt, and you swing out underneath the pier, and then you can reach right up over the top of the structure underneath there, and there were pigeons who were nesting there, so you could get them that way.

02-00:00:54

Rubens: You'd grab it literally with your hand or did you have a pillowcase?

02-00:00:57

Bolton: No, you grabbed the pigeon with your hand, especially if he got squashed, you'd grab them with your hand and then you put them in your shirt.

02-00:01:04

Rubens: You weren't scratched?

02-00:01:06

Bolton:

Well, you wouldn't get scratched but the net result of putting a pigeon inside of your shirt and you had more than one in there is when they get a little excited or frightened, then they tend to relieve themselves. So getting back home, you'd have to explain that to my mom.

02-00:01:20

Rubens:

How come you didn't use a net or a pillowcase?

02-00:01:22

Bolton:

We didn't have a net. You just used your hand, you just grabbed the pigeon and put it in there and that's the way it was. At the same time, we had noticed before that underneath that pier, you'd see these really large fish. That's when you could eat fish out of the bay, and we would go down there and we'd go fishing. So sneaking into that base, the naval supply, underneath the piers and into the army base was—it was a good place to go fishing that no people were really fishing, and you could catch pigeons around there and you don't have people crawling all over you all the time.

02-00:01:51

Rubens:

What kind of fish?

02-00:01:52

Bolton:

Stripers you'd find there and then you'd find perch that were down there underneath that thing, and some of them were these big yellow looking fish, not shiners but another fish, kingfish that would come in there. But they were pretty good size, and you would even see not lean cod but green ling, which were pretty good size, and some of those things were like fifteen pounds. So you'd catch some really good size fish there. We used to go down there, sneak down there and go fishing all the time.

02-00:02:18

Rubens:

Were people ever caught?

02-00:02:20

Bolton:

Going down there? Oh yeah, but when they caught you they made noise to let you know that they know you're down there, and it's like hey, nobody's supposed to be in here and you better not be in here. If I ever catch somebody in here... It was like okay, don't say anything, like they didn't know we were there. But we would do that.

02-00:02:34

Rubens:

And how about even friends you went to high school with? Did people get jobs on the base?

02-00:02:39

Bolton:

The naval supply, naval air and the Oakland Army Base were points of entry to let's say the job market or the working market, for many, many people that came out of high school. They would come out of high school, not only

McClymonds but Tech or Fremont, Oakland High. It was a place that you went. That's where literally, you would get your first kind of a job.

02-00:03:08

Rubens:

What kind of jobs? Did you know people who were hired?

02-00:03:12

Bolton:

Oh if you worked down there you could be either a materials handler down there, you could be a driver if you really got that far, where you would drive trucks for them, or you would work there as not a laborer necessarily, but because it was a supply depot, then you had a lot of materials going around and you had people that worked down there. That's what you would be doing, in supply, moving and handling supplies.

02-00:03:34

Rubens:

We're looking for some of those people to interview. We'll can talk more about that later. Did they recruit or did someone know you would go down, there was an employment office and you went down there.

02-00:03:42

Bolton:

There was an employment office, just like the post office, same thing. When you got out of high school, it was one of the first things you did, is you got a job. And when you got a job, one of the places that you would be able to do it is you would be able to go there, to the naval supply or army base, post office, all of those places you would go to and by getting a job there right out of school, and there are still some people that I know that have left there, that are still around here, that went to work eighteen, nineteen years old, that worked there until the base closed and then ultimately they wound up someplace else. But that's what you did and that's what, in great measure I think, caused the building and the development of Fremont and some of the other places, because after you got a stable job, you were able to get yourself some money together to buy yourself a house, and that was like moving up, is that you moved not necessarily out of Oakland, into a newer community and you got a job. You learned something. Everybody didn't go to some college or university. I mean, you would go to what was called a trade school at the time but that was it, and you came out of high school and that's what you were expected to do, and it happened for a lot of people here.

02-00:04:49

Rubens:

Women too?

02-00:05:00

Bolton:

Yes. I would say just about half of it, because that's where they would go.

.

02-00:05:12

Rubens:

When you were in Vietnam, were you receiving letters, news reports—I don't know if you ever phoned—that the climate was changing?

02-00:05:22

Bolton: Sure.

02-00:05:24

Rubens: That the war movement was growing, the Black Panther party was founded.

02-00:05:30

Bolton: You know, the Black Panther party, like I said was, the establishment of that took place, more than anything else, at least for their breakfast programs and some other stuff, at what was my church, at St. Augustine's Church. They had what had been called the religious minister or whatever it is, for the Black Panther party was Father Neil, who was a pastor or the priest at my church. I knew that was happening and I knew it was happening through them, and I used to see them because they would have meetings at my church, which was still kind of strange.

02-00:06:08

Rubens: But are we talking about meetings after you came back from—

02-00:06:12

Bolton: Right. And at the same time, one of the individuals that I used to have discussions with is Chester Talton, who was Bishop Talton, Suffragan Bishop for Los Angeles County. He was my neighbor, he was my friend. We went to that church together, we grew up in that church. As I said, he is the first black Episcopal bishop consecrated west of the Mississippi in the history of the world. We went to that church and we quite frequently or quite often would have discussions about who would you follow; would it be Martin Luther King or would it be Malcolm X? We would get into a lot of really kind of lively debates there and like I said, Father Neil was there. The religious minister for the Black Panther party was our priest at our church, so there was a lot of discussion about those things there at the time.

02-00:07:21

Rubens: Was he an Oakland boy?

02-00:07:23

Bolton: Yes. He went to school at Cal State here.

02-00:07:26

Rubens: Is he still around?

02-00:07:30

Bolton: Yes, he's still alive, very much so. He's in Pasadena. His office or his church is in Pasadena, but he is a Suffragan Bishop for the L.A. Diocese.

02-00:07:41

Rubens: I want to hear more about these meetings and these discussions, but I'd like to just finish up about getting information in Vietnam that Malcolm X had been assassinated, for example, or before that, when he left the Nation of Islam. Somehow the information is coming back that the anti-war movement is

growing. So when you came back—and then we'll get directly to this—did you have a job right away? What did you do?

02-00:08:23

Bolton:

When I came back, I went to work for Radcliffe, Slama & Cadwalader. It was an architectural firm that's in Berkeley, right on the border of Berkeley and Oakland, went right straight through that building.

02-00:08:37

Rubens:

How come you got the job?

02-00:08:39

Bolton:

I went and applied for it and I took in some of the work that I had done before. This is before—I don't think it had anything to do with any civil rights thing or anything else, but it was they liked the work that I had done.

02-00:08:55

Rubens:

Radcliffe was an old firm.

02-00:08:57

Bolton:

Radcliffe did, if you look at the press box on top of Memorial Stadium, I worked on that with them and as a matter of fact, did most of the drafting and everything else, and I think I'm probably on that placard for that press box. The extension to Highland Hospital, UOP, Cal Student Health Center. That's a building that I kind of like flipped upside down and they said oh, that works. Dameron Hospital in Stockton, graduate student housing on {Hay?} Street, University of California, Santa Cruz.

02-00:09:33

Rubens:

How long did you work for them?

02-00:09:35

Bolton:

I worked for them, I think about four years, three or four years.

02-00:09:37

Rubens:

UC Santa Cruz you worked on?

02-00:09:39

Bolton:

Yes. Graduate student housing.

02-00:09:46

Rubens:

Where did you live?

02-00:09:48

Bolton:

In Oakland, same place. At the time, I lived on 58th Street. I had an apartment that I got on 58th Street.

02-00:10:00

Rubens:

Let's do an overview just quick, about what your work was, and then we'll come back to this changing political climate. So after four years with Radcliffe, then-

02-00:10:10

Bolton:

Then I went—there was a number of people that I had met, that were studying for the state board, architectural board, and we formed Architectural Associates, which was a black group that was studying for the state board, and opened an office in Oakland, on Broadway near 40th Street. There was one guy named Jim that worked for the Redevelopment Agency and asked—I was still working for Radcliffe at the time. He said well you know, why don't you consider going to work at the Redevelopment Agency. So I was like the Redevelopment Agency, you've got to be kidding.

02-00:10:49

Rubens:

The enemy.

02-00:10:50

Bolton:

Yes. Well you get the opportunity to redesign houses and do some restoration and a whole lot of other stuff. So I just did that and then wound up going to work for the Redevelopment Agency in the Oak Center Project, which was like that fifty-two blocks of housing, all this kind of stuff. So I wound up working there as an architectural representative and then ultimately, I wound up being project coordinator when Eldridge Gonaway left, and I was the project coordinator for that project.

02-00:11:19

Rubens:

That project meaning?

02-00:11:20

Bolton:

The Oak Center Project, and that's fifty-two blocks of housing and commercial and all of this, so I did that, and then left there and went to work for the state, in the Division of Codes and Standards and Community Development.

02-00:11:36

Rubens:

What year is this?

02-00:11:38

Bolton:

Actually I can't even remember the year now, but I know I worked at the Redevelopment Agency for about eight years, then I went to Jeff McElroy. Sternberg was then director of the state office of housing and community development or whatever it was.

02-00:11:55

Rubens:

That Jerry Brown had created?

02-00:11:57

Bolton:

Yes.

02-00:11:58

Rubens:

Arnold Sternberg was the first head.

02-00:12:00

Bolton:

Oh yes.

02-00:12:01

Rubens: You went to work for them in Sacramento?

02-00:12:04

Bolton: Yes. In Sacramento. I used to commute back and forth to Sacramento on occasion but it was—the ABAG area had a responsibility for reviewing the general plan amendments and a bunch of other things for the ABAG area called the nine Bay Area counties, so that I was back down here a lot.

02-00:12:22

Rubens: Coordinating with ABAG, but you're working for the state.

02-00:12:24

Bolton: I'm working for the state. No, it's the ABAG area, it's every country and every city, and general planned them and they were getting redevelopment funds. It had to go through with that A-95 clearing process, A-95 review clearing process that deals with housing expected to reside figures of what they're doing with the redevelopment that they're doing. So I used to review those for this area.

02-00:12:49

Rubens: How long did you do that about?

02-00:12:51

Bolton: About four years. Arnold told Jerry Brown one day that for intents and purposes, he didn't know his butt from a hole in the ground about housing and he said, I expect your resignation and he resigned.

02-00:13:04

Rubens: Say it again.

02-00:13:05

Bolton: Sternberg told Jerry Brown in a meeting, that he just didn't think he knew that much about housing. Jerry said, could you hand me your resignation. And he said yes, and he did it in an interesting way.

02-00:13:28

Rubens: Were you there?

02-00:13:29

Bolton: Yes. So then he left.

02-00:13:35

Rubens: Where did Arnold go?

02-00:13:40

Bolton: Arnold's wife was from Texas oil, and so he just left, and Jeff McElroy, who was his deputy, went to Florida. You remember he had a brain aneurysm.

02-00:13:55

Rubens: I didn't. So he died?

- 02-00:13:57
Bolton: Well he did, but that wasn't that long ago. He lived for quite a while after the aneurysm.
- 02-00:14:03
Rubens: Where did you go?
- 02-00:14:04
Bolton: I worked with them for a while and then a friend of mine that I used to play football with down at the park all the time, asked me if I would consider going to work for the county. This was just through the winter, for some things that they had going on, and then that would be it. I said eh, because I was pretty much kind of handling my own business. So I said well maybe, okay, and then I did, and when I got there, they had a freeze, and I was only on a project basis, and it was supposed to end in January. Two people retired and then I was asked not to leave them, and that's twenty-five years ago.
- 02-00:14:47
Rubens: So for twenty-five years, you have worked for-
- 02-00:14:49
Bolton: The County of Alameda in Construction Management. So what happens, anything that's built in Alameda County, any construction that's done here, we deal with all of the construction of all the bridges. Alameda County bridges, roads, storm drain systems, now it's tracts and developments and things that go on, come through my department. So that's what I do.
- 02-00:15:19
Rubens: You have seen a lot.
- 02-00:15:23
Bolton: I don't know. It's not over.
- 02-00:15:24
Rubens: How come you look so good? Where are your wounds?
- 02-00:15:31
Bolton: They're there, they're there.
- 02-00:15:32
Rubens: When you said you had your own business, what do you mean?
- 02-00:15:37
Bolton: I used to design houses for folks, and I made a mistake of designing houses for relatives, which never ends, and consult with contractors.
- 02-00:15:45
Rubens: You made a career turn at some point. You could have become an architect. You formed Architectural Associates?

02-00:16:00
Bolton: Yes, Inc.

02-00:16:02
Rubens: Could you give me a couple of names of people who worked there.

02-00:16:05
Bolton: Maurice Dawson was in there. Who else was there? Frank Clark III, who was the City of Oakland's architect for many years. Horace Gilford.

02-00:16:29
Rubens: Did that group hold together for a while?

02-00:16:31
Bolton: For a while it did and then Jim Stevens was the person that literally got me to leave there, to leave Radcliffe to go to work with the Redevelopment Agency.

02-00:16:40
Rubens: Was this a group trying to pass the architectural licensing exam? You never took that exam?

02-00:16:47
Bolton: No. I got to the point where I could have but it was like. eh. But other things were more fun. My great hero was Burns Cadwalader.

02-00:17:06
Rubens: Who is he?

02-00:17:07
Bolton: He used to be with Radcliffe, Slama & Cadwalader. He was the only partner that just came. He came to work with them and he had no real formal education. The guy put together everything and then wound up passing the state board, and he was offered a fellowship with AIA and he rejected it.

02-00:17:29
Rubens: Why?

02-00:17:30
Bolton: He didn't want it. He didn't think that was important. Murray Slama, who was the other partner, felt that he was more political, so he would deal with that. Out of that same office came Peter Scott, who used to be a commissioner for the port.

02-00:17:45
Rubens: Which port?

02-00:17:46
Bolton: The Port of Oakland. Sandy Pollock, and there was, what was the other guy? Sied or Seid, but I forget his last name. That place was almost like the United Nation; it had people from everywhere. Bob Radcliffe's father had founded Radcliffe Architects in Canada, and he owned his controlling interest.

- 02-00:18:16
Rubens: You mentioned a name right after Sandy Pollock, the Sied?
- 02-00:18:20
Bolton: Sied. I can't remember his last name, but I know if you go to look at the plaque on Alameda County Building down here, you'll see his name is on there.
- 02-00:18:29
Rubens: Did they have any licensed African Americans?
- 02-00:18:31
Bolton: No. They wanted and they tried, but I left.
- 02-00:18:42
Rubens: You kept in touch with these people?
- 02-00:18:44
Bolton: Yes.
- 02-00:18:45
Rubens: Cadwalder Burns, he was a hero because?
- 02-00:18:58
Bolton: To me, he was a pure architect. It wasn't about any of the entrapments or all the other little stuff that you want to deal with. It was about the purity of design and the fact that he didn't—he wasn't one who was just into just simply designing, but it's how it went together, if it went together. I mean, he was concerned about the way your corners met.
- 02-00:19:26
Rubens: Give me an example. Is there an outstanding building in Oakland?
- 02-00:19:31
Bolton: Do you know the AAA building that's on MacArthur that's upside down?
- 02-00:19:36
Rubens: What do you mean by upside down?
- 02-00:19:38
Bolton: It's upside down. That building, originally when it was designed, it was the other way over. That's only the first building in which you look at the way the building meets the ground. Most of them just meet flat and that's it. This one curves. The brick literally grows out of the ground, up the wall.
- 02-00:19:56
Rubens: I almost can see that. You mentioned something yourself, that you had turned something upside down.
- 02-00:20:01
Bolton: The UOP [University of the Pacific] Cowell Student Health Center in Sacramento, which is essentially that building but it has a top. Burns was one

of the very few people who used to come in and spend some time, if you were on the board. That's when you literally had a board and you weren't dealing with the computers or a machine. Someone would spend the time to deal with what you did in terms of details, when you did details. It was the presentation of how it looks and how it works, how it reads. You know the texture and lines when you draw something, whether or not the width of a line that really accentuates certain things or not, you know the lettering, you know how that is put together. The way you form the words. It was that kind of thing that he was just to me the architects' architect.

02-00:21:36

Rubens: Did you, at that point, start looking at buildings and seeing what you liked and didn't like?

02-00:21:41

Bolton: Yes.

02-00:21:43

Rubens: Would you characterize a style that you liked and didn't like?

02-00:21:48

Bolton: I can tell you what I don't like. What I didn't like and I don't like now is what I see with most of the buildings that you see around here now, specifically those that are in Oakland, that have this really perverted looking roof that just goes up in the air. It slopes up in the air and then this—the way they are, there's a building that's—I don't know what the name of it is. It used to be where the old Jack London whatever it is, lodge or whatever it was, in Oakland, right on the corner of Broadway, right next to the freeway. It's Broadway and whatever the street is right next to the freeway. There's a real tall gray building, it's new, they just finished it. That building. If you look at the style, it almost looks gothic in certain respects, but if you look at the style of that building, and it's a building with style. It's not just some slab that's thrown up there with some windows protruding out of it. It goes somewhere when it gets to the top. It doesn't just—

02-00:22:38

Rubens: You do like it or don't?

02-00:22:40

Bolton: I do like it. But when you look at the rest of the stuff that's around here, it's—

02-00:22:44

Rubens: What did you think of the Kaiser Center when it went in? When did that go in?

02-00:22:49

Bolton: The first one?

02-00:22:50

Rubens: The curved structure.

02-00:22:51

Bolton:

Oh, Jesus. I know it went in when I was—because I remember when it wasn't there. I used to go to the lake, when the farmhouse was there. And the Snow Museum was on the other side, right in that little park where you find the little putting green, the Snow Museum used to be there, and right where the Kaiser Center is right now was a guy's farm and sometimes his animals used to get out and come over to the lake, right across the road, and then they built that Kaiser building, that giant Kaiser monstrosity there.

02-00:23:24

Rubens:

We are not going to be able to get enough done in one interview. We will come back to this. I guess we ought to just outline, and then we will come back to how you got involved with the conversion of the Oakland Army Base. Let's outline that story.

02-00:23:45

Bolton:

That's my accident.

02-00:23:45

Rubens:

I mean, there's twenty-five years of your work life that we have to talk about, and the growth and development of Oakland. But I do want to finish up regarding the debates you observed in the African American community: Your friend and the whole development of watching the development of the Black Panther party, the Black Panther party support of Wilson, the real dramatic change that took place in Oakland in your early years, in your early career.

02-00:24:31

Bolton:

You see those debates that we had, it wasn't just with Chester, it was with my brothers as well, because my older brother, who was an interesting person, and my cousin Johnny. These guys were the older guys that went around and they literally had their little gang. It was interesting, they kind of protected the community, their gang, because he was several years older than me.

02-00:25:01

Rubens:

Was this more teenage stuff as opposed to Black Panther watching?

02-00:25:05

Bolton:

No, this is beyond the Black Panthers. It's not a matter of any great social anything. It was just that's the way it was. They were the older guys in the neighborhood and they kind of like did what they, not necessarily what they wanted to because they'd get in trouble, because my parents would be all over him for doing it, as well as some of the other neighbors, the other adults in the neighborhood would be all over them if they got completely out of line. We would quite frequently have discussions about that. My brother, who is the opposite in most instances, he was the opposite of me. He's the guy that when he took the same exams that I did in the military, what he qualified for was, it would have been for him to go to the engineering school for architecture or something like that, but he wound up being in artillery. What I, at some point

qualified for would have been the electrical, the artillery types of stuff, which was the opposite. Well he's always had an opposite view of things that I've had, although we're very close in age. He's always had an opposite view. He thinks one way and I think another way. You know he deals with—I think Ward Connelly is an interesting guy and what they did, that proposition was the way it should be, but he thought it was really, really bad. So we'd have these discussions.

02-00:26:32

Rubens:

He's the one you thought should have been named George?

02-00:26:34

Bolton:

No, no, no, that's my oldest brother John, the one who was—how do you explain him? He was just the guy that kind of protected the community.

02-00:26:44

Rubens:

You were talking about Howard, who was in Okinawa.

02-00:26:51

Bolton:

Yes, he was in Okinawa, as well as my younger brother Chuck was in Okinawa. When I came back from Vietnam, he was there and I stayed a little bit longer because I didn't want him to wind up going to Vietnam. But Howard and I never—we always seemed—if you see him, you would think that if you put the two of us together, you would think that he was the one with let's say an extreme conservative bend, but he is very liberal.

02-00:27:16

Rubens:

What did he end up doing?

02-00:27:18

Bolton:

He was with the FAA. He was head of that TRACON Center that's in Oakland. All the airplanes that come from let's say from Hawaii, that come into this country, and I think they release them to someplace like Colorado or Denver, they come through this radar center or TRACON, which is out at the Oakland Airport. That has to—if you go into this area where they have all of these huge scopes that show each airplane that is moving through this area, that's coming on the west coast, they will show the plane and you can just take a little cursor and put it on there to tell you what it is.

02-00:27:59

Rubens:

He basically had an aeronautic-

02-00:28:02

Bolton:

All of the electrical, everything that goes through that thing, he was responsible for.

02-00:28:07

Rubens:

But you and he are having these discussions about what's going on.

02-00:28:10

Bolton:

And my older brother was saying, “Malcolm X is the way to go” and I’d say, “Yeah, right.” And Howard is saying, “No. Martin Luther King is a far more superior person, and that’s the way to do it.” And I’m saying, “Hey. I don’t know about you guys, but I think you’re both kind of off a little bit.” But we would have these discussions all the time, and at the church we would have these discussions. Chester is there and Fred, who was Chester’s brother, and we would constantly have these discussions about what is right for minority people. It just took place over a period of time and we have seen, I guess how it has ultimately shook out, I mean what tends to be—how extreme you could take it and what will happen, how people have come to the point. We’ve had some discussions not long ago, when Chester was here when his wife died, that you look at all of the things that were fought for and that people were getting bludgeoned for and the treatment they received, and then you look at what happened, let’s say the next ten years after going through this, and there was just this huge insurgency of black males that were attending colleges and universities. Then now when you look at it, they’re not there any more and so what has happened that’s caused them to just drop right off the radar? I still believe there’s too much assimilation into this other lifestyle, that they can just, it’s always somebody’s fault and it’s not my fault, and there’s the desire not to even go and do anything any more. You know it’s either, I’m going to get it, I’m going to make it and I’m going to make it without doing anything. There’s no such thing as a work ethic or anything else. But we’ve had those discussions about what happens with that, and it continues.

02-00:30:02

Rubens:

So would you say you supported Lionel Wilson?

02-00:30:10

Bolton:

Lionel Wilson, when he became Mayor, it was a matter of supporting him because he’s a black male. In terms of his ability as a Judge, which was somewhat different from just back to the guy is black, because he was a Judge, period. And when you deal with being a Judge, it’s a matter of basically an interpretation of the law, and this is what it’s about, but in terms of him being a manager of this city and providing some direction for this city, I didn’t think that it was there. I don’t think that he provided that because he was a Judge, and then when it came to dealing with Elihu Harris, who had let’s say never really had a real job, and he used to work for John Miller. So he had been into the government thing for a long time, so that there was no real there, there in terms of the direction, and I watched him because at the beginning of this base, when we start talking about the conversion of the base, he was there, he was the Mayor at that time and he pretty much allowed or would deal with the community organization that was there, which was mandated by law to have this community organization with this transitioning of his base. He would let us pretty much do what it was we were supposed to do, hands off. He didn’t get that involved with it. So his direction was an entirely different kind of thing. I think he wanted to do things but he just didn’t. It was a matter more of politics than anything else.

- 02-00:31:51
Rubens: Where did he literally come from?
- 02-00:31:54
Bolton: Well he used to work for John Miller.
- 02-00:31:56
Rubens: Is he an Oakland boy?
- 02-00:31:57
Bolton: Yes. His father is—Harris Funeral Home, that's his father. He grew up here and went to school here and lived in Berkeley, but he grew up here.
- 02-00:32:13
Rubens: So how do you become involved with the conversion of the base?
- 02-00:32:19
Bolton: By accident. Well maybe not necessarily by accident. What happened is first, we were dealing with the extension of the freeway that goes across Adeline, into Market Street.
- 02-00:32:32
Rubens: After the 1989 earthquake?
- 02-00:32:33
Bolton: Yes, they're rebuilding this freeway.
- 02-00:32:41
Rubens: There is a big community outpouring about that.
- 02-00:32:43
Bolton: Yes, in what they were doing, but the other thing that happens is if you remember when the earthquake took place, it was the same day I was—I had been in San Francisco with the county and I was at a seminar, the one in Barcadero. I'm on the way back, and when I'm getting on the freeway and I'm trying to get on the last on-ramp, and I see the cops are just stopping people because there's only one person per car, and you're supposed to have more than one. So I have to go around. So I go around, all the way around, get up on the bridge, and I'm coming back across the bridge, and when I thought I had a flat tire wasn't, the bridge fell. If you look at the bus and you look at two cars behind the bus, I'm the third car behind the bus, and I was trying to get around the bus because of the fumes, on the day-
- 02-00:33:27
Rubens: The first car was the woman whose car fell into the break?
- 02-00:33:29
Bolton: No, no, no. You look at the bus, the bridge collapsed right in front of the—what you see is a picture of a bus, and the bridge is collapsed right in front of it. Then there's a second car, and then the third car, and the third car is my car. I'm in the third car and I was trying to get around the bus, a guy on a

motorcycle stopped me and then this woman in her car wouldn't keep moving, and then I was getting away from the bus fumes, but it crashed right there.

02-00:33:51

Rubens: And when did the woman go in? There was only one car that went in.

02-00:33:55

Bolton: She was on the top.. She was going in the wrong direction.

02-00:34:02

Rubens: So it looks to me like, had you been able to get onto the freeway earlier—

02-00:34:05

Bolton: I would have been right—and had I been able to get around the bus, I would have then either right there when it collapsed on it, because the engineers that I was with over there, that went to this thing, had just crossed that section of the Cypress and it had dropped right behind them, in their car, and I was going to—the part that dropped is right on 14th Street. That is the ramp I get off to go home. So it's like—

02-00:34:28

Rubens: Someone was looking out for you. Okay, that's '89.

02-00:34:32

Bolton: Right. As a result of that, they started building this freeway, and they were going to build that section and eliminate the ramp that comes off on Market Street, and when they were going to eliminate it, they were just going to hold it at the skyway and then come down on Adeline. What had happened is because there are a number of people—I belong to the Oak Center Neighborhood Association—were saying, you know they shouldn't do this, because what you do is you're going to take out some of the businesses that are right there on Market, and why are you going to take this ramp down? I looked at it, and knowing how Caltrans designs things because of what I do with the county, I looked at it and said well you know, that's not necessarily the case, you know you don't have to get rid of that. You don't have to hold it up and then take it further down the street. We had lots of discussions with them, and there is a section of Caltrans' own manual that says that basically, they will do no harm, and if certain things can be done a certain way in order to accommodate communities they will do it. So that, I got involved with that and assisted in causing them to leave that ramp there where it was, which saved them something like, I think about \$15 million, which they never turned into anything. They never gave anything to the community or did anything else for the community as a result of that, but they just did it.

02-00:35:48

Rubens: Let me just be clear. You're having conversations with Caltrans.

02-00:35:52

Bolton: Right.

02-00:35:55

Rubens: In a way, advocating the Oak Center's point of view?

02-00:35:58

Bolton: To keep the ramp. Right, but the port didn't want them to have the ramp apparently, so Caltrans was saying, we're doing what the port wants.

02-00:36:07

Rubens: Why didn't the port want that?

02-00:36:09

Bolton: It would have given them a longer area to cue up trucks. coming off the—and it would put an off ramp right on Adeline, which would mean that they had to make a left turn to go right on Maritime, because that's where Maritime starts. Adeline ends and Maritime starts at the same place. Right underneath the freeway, that's where one starts and the other stops. So the trucks would have come down and then made the left if they had come down there, but as it was, no you don't have to do that, because if you were concerned about the cueing up of traffic, that street between Adeline and Market, there's nothing on it anyway, so if trucks cue up there, you'd have at least three lanes, as opposed to one. And they said well, maybe you're right, so that they did it and they left it where it was, and it saved them money but they never gave anything to the community. After that, I was then asked about working that. That's when Nancy Nadel was not a councilperson, before she became a councilperson. So I was asked then, to consider working with or getting involved with the army base, which was this big undertaking, and they had some sixty or seventy people that they were talking about being members of this committee, the West Oakland Community Advisory Group [WOCAG]. I attended a meeting that was at the church, it was about a block from my house.

02-00:37:37

Rubens: What church is that?

02-00:37:38

Bolton: I can't remember. It's not Pleasant Grove, but it's about a block around the corner from there. I attended a meeting there and they were at a point where they were going to elect the people who would serve as the vice chair. The vice chair came from the community, the chair came from the OBRA. They would appoint the person that was going to be the chair, who was, at that time—I can't remember this guy's name right now, but they were going to appoint somebody to become the chair.

02-00:38:09

Rubens: The vice chair. The chair would be elected by the community?

02-00:38:12

Bolton: No, no. The vice chair would be elected by the community, but the chair was going to be appointed by the OBRA. That's the way that it was structured, is the OBRA would have the chair and the vice chair would be the community person. So they had a person that they were going to appoint already to the

chair, an attorney that lived in Oakland, and they were going to elect a vice chair. I just sat there. I don't think, out of about sixty people that were there, I don't think more than ten of them knew me or knew anything about me. The person that was wanting to or desirously become the vice chair, was there with the support of a number of groups that were there with him. They had been planning what they wanted to do, but I think there was a sufficient number of people who did not like him. Monsa Nitoto. There were people who didn't necessarily like him, so what happens, when they put names in nomination, they had his name in nomination, which was fine with me. I had heard of the guy but I never really dealt with him, but then I was asked by Mrs. Parkinson, Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson, to actually go ahead and let my name be placed in nomination. But it was and before the election took place, he came and asked me if we could just run together and serve as co vice chair, which I thought was odd, because I didn't think that I would win anything anyway. So he asked me and I said well you know, it really doesn't matter to me. Then they held the election and right before they announced anything, he had told them we would serve as co vice chairs. They didn't really announce it, but then I found out what it was. Of the maybe ten people that knew me, out of about sixty people over there, I think I had something like forty some odd votes, and they didn't even know me.

02-00:40:30

Rubens: Well they knew him obviously.

02-00:40:31

Bolton: Oh, yes.

02-00:40:32

Rubens: How do you just describe him, in the sense—

02-00:40:34

Bolton: Activist, very much an activist. In fact he came—

02-00:40:38

Rubens: Lived in the area?

02-00:40:39

Bolton: Yeah.

02-00:40:40

Rubens: Where were you living at the time?

02-00:40:41

Bolton: Same place, the same area. I was living in the same place I've always lived. I designed and built my own house there, which was more than twenty eight years ago, almost thirty years ago. On Union Street.

02-00:40:53

Rubens: So you're in that very neighborhood. And who is Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson?

02-00:41:00

Bolton:

She is like a senior statesperson for the Oak Center Neighborhood Association, and for the Oak Center neighborhood, she has been for years, when the redevelopment began, became a redevelopment district, she lives in the same area. She lives a couple of blocks from me, and she has been there and knows the community and knows this area, and she has just been there forever.

02-00:41:19

Rubens:

And you said that Nadel was of course not a city councilperson.

02-00:41:28

Bolton:

She lived in the Clausen area, which is further north.

02-00:41:36

Rubens:

And she was a community activist.

02-00:41:37

Bolton:

Yes.

02-00:41:39

Rubens:

And she was part of this sixty people who were forming WOCAG?

02-00:41:44

Bolton:

Yes, but she got elected right after they started forming the WOCAG, so she became a councilperson and she never really attended any of them.

02-00:41:53

Rubens:

Okay. What was the mission? You were a vice-chair?

02-00:42:00

Bolton:

I was co vice chair with Mr. Natodo.

02-00:42:03

Rubens:

The mission is-

02-00:42:09

Bolton:

-is that we would advise the OBRA on the disposition of the base, in terms of the uses that would be provided, a plan. We would prepare a plan for the assumption or disposal of the base and at that time, you had people coming in for different types of conveyances. There's an economic development conveyance, which is the property is to be used for some economic reasons. The city can do that. Then there would be a conveyance that would have gone normally to the sanitary district, which would have given them the opportunity to do an addition. There was a conveyance that I think one would go to the park services or somebody like that, and then there was another one that went to—I forget what it's called now, some sort of labor thing that they were dealing with, where you would literally, they would be able to get a sponsorship by some federal entity that would sponsor them, for them getting a portion of that base for some sort of development that they would do.

Ultimately what happened is that they wound up with an economic development going to the City of Oakland. The way it started, the land that is west of Maritime, the port said that they needed that for the expansion of the port and in fact, they would expand Berth 21. All the land that was on the east side, which is where the barracks were, all of the residential and everything else was over there, that land was going to be part of this conveyance. So you had these labor groups, you had the housing consortium, United Indian Nations, the Labor Collaborative. You have a number of these groups that wanted parts of that base, and that's what they wanted to do. They had really formed these kind of groups that they had and had people on the WOCAG, and they were also serving as advisors to the WOCAG. They had people on the WOCAG, and this was their sole purpose. So you had these people with their own agendas for what they wanted, to the extent that they came together and got involved with the design firm of Levine-Fricke, who were engineers, and they were putting together their own proposal to deal with the base and the way that they were going to cut it up.

02-00:44:26

Rubens: Where did Levine-Fricke come from?

02-00:44:30

Bolton: Levine-Fricke came from this collaboratives, when these people got together, the housing collaborative, the United Indian Nations and this other labor force. All these people, they came together. These people, the same people worked on the naval air station in Alameda and were able to get some things going where they literally got property over there, and at the same time you had what they call—the whole group with the homeless collaborative. They are the same people who got the money from the City of Oakland for the homeless thing up in Oak Knoll, and they settled this thing with the city and the city gave them the money prior to the time they had even got the base, they got the Oak Knoll base. So they got the money and then it was a question now, where do we get the money back since we can't get the base now. Well they formed—they had a group and they were doing the exact same thing on the army base.

02-00:45:26

Rubens: They had a trial run. They had already done it.

02-00:45:30

Bolton: They had done it.

02-00:45:31

Rubens: For the naval supply station?

02-00:45:34

Bolton: No. They had done it for Oak Knoll, which is a navy hospital in that area up there. They had done it for that, the Oak Knoll. You can see it, it's up on the hill. It used to be the old navy hospital and grounds.

02-00:45:49

Rubens: Let me just get this straight. Levine-Fricke, designed-

02-00:45:55

Bolton: Levine-Fricke didn't design anything. What they did is they were talking about the base, and they were coming up with their plan for developing the base. They were working in unison with the collaborative.

02-00:46:11

Rubens: How do you characterize Levine-Fricke

Bolton:

It's a civil engineering firm in Emeryville, right on Powell Street, but what they did is they got together with these people before -this was before WOCAG really got set up- and started putting together their plan to literally divide what was going to be there. So they had a plan separate from anything that we were doing, that we were supposed to be doing at the time, and they would try to push that agenda.

02-00:46:44

Rubens: And what happened?

02-00:46:45

Bolton: Well they tried to push their agenda, and as we put together the very first plan for that base and we were going to send it back to the Department of the Army in order to get it transferred over, we had heard about this BCDC {Bay Area Conservation and Development District} plan, throughput plan that they were working on, that they hadn't completed.

02-00:47:09

Rubens: Would you describe the hroughput, I don't quite get that.

02-00:47:10

Bolton: A throughput is for the Port of Oakland. They were estimating the amount of cargo that would literally be coming through the port, and so that you had, they were developing a plan showing this is how much would be coming through in the future, and so you need more development in order to do it. So we knew this was going on, but the guy who was then director of the OBRA just left it off to one side and never said anything. So we put together this plan and the thing is all bound and ready to be sent, and they kind of send it back to the Washington, Department of the Army and it says oops no, you can't do that.

02-00:47:48

Rubens: Who says that?

02-00:47:49

Bolton: The Department of the Army, because BCDC and everyone else says well, there's a throughput plan and you can't do what you're talking about doing, so they kicked it back.

02-00:47:58

Rubens: Is there a copy of that original plan?

02-00:48:00

Bolton: They have it downtown I think. But they took this plan, they took the one we had, that none of the council people other than those that were on the OBRA had said anything about it, and they endorsed this.

02-00:48:14

Rubens: Everyone had seen it, they knew.

02-00:48:16

Bolton: Yes, and they endorsed it. Then this thing comes up and says well no you can't do that. So you have the port now jockeying, so then they flip and take the east side of the base, what's east of Maritime, they now take that.

02-00:48:32

Rubens: Who's they?

02-00:48:33

Bolton: The port. So now the city says okay what we're going to wind up with is the west side, which is right next to Berkeley, which shrinks drastically, the area that they were supposed to be getting in the first place. And now you get rid of all the housing and now you get rid of everything else that was on the base, and then you have this little piece over there. So that they decide, okay this is what you have to deal with. The area that is north of the freeway, which is referred to as the Subaru site. That's one thing, which is right adjacent to East Bay MUD, to the sanitation plant. Next to that, heading west, is an army reserve area.

02-00:49:18

Rubens: Yes.

02-00:49:19

Bolton: Okay. That area had not been BRAC'd by the Army, so it was not something that was for sale. It belonged to someone else and it wasn't something for sale. There was an area that is on the other side, that belonged to the reserve, that was going to be bracked, but they had to buy them out. So the city buys the north side. We had already agreed as a committee, that that Subaru area should go to East Bay MUD for the plant expansion, which made sense; it's right next to it. But they decided no, if in fact East Bay MUD wants the land, then East Bay MUD should buy the land that's adjacent to it on the west end, from the reserve, and then they could have that for the expansion, but they weren't going to get this piece from the city, that was their decision. So the next thing that happens, the city gets into negotiations, they now get the

Subaru lot, not bracked, and then they buy the land from the reserve on the other end, which also was not bracked. So what they say to us or to the committee and OBRA, well hands off of that, you can't touch that because they're not bracked. So we will make the decision on what we're going to do with our land on that side, so that was away from us. We're not forced into this little piece on the west side. The east side is gone, the port has that. That's where the railroad tracks and everything else is. So that's gone away and we're sitting with this little piece of land. Now that we have this little piece of land and the port has the other bigger piece on the other side, it becomes a matter of what are we going to do with it. We put together another plan and ultimately it goes to the Economic Development Committee and the Economic Development Committee says oh forget it, we want to have flex uses on this base. Flex is like smoke; it's nothing defined, it's just going to be a flexible use. Flexible use to do what? A flexible use that is going to provide jobs.

02-00:51:15

Rubens: There is a copy of this second plan?

02-00:51:16

Bolton: Oh yes.

02-00:51:18

Rubens: It goes to who?

02-00:51:20

Bolton: The Economic Development Committee, the City of Oakland, because ultimately, once the land, once it is given over through the OBRA, it goes to the Redevelopment Agency for development of the disposal. Since the Redevelopment Agency and the City Council are literally the same, the Economic Development Committee is one who weighs in on it and makes the decision as to what they want to do with it, irrespective of what you have as the report. So that's what they've done. You know they, well we're going to decide what we're going to do with it. These very same people now, after they decide what they're going to do with it, the first thing they do is they take the area that is north again, where the Subaru lot is and the reserve is, and then they want to go in and they want to deal with Costco, but Costco says we want you to write the land out. So they said well no, they're not going to really deal with it. So there's a whole lot of things that Costco wants that they go back and forth vacillating about.

02-00:52:17

Rubens: What does that mean, write the land out?

02-00:52:20

Bolton: The price. They want almost to just give us the land for you know, a dollar an acre. This is what is done, we're going to develop it. Well the city didn't necessarily want to deal with that, and then they had all kinds of other conditions. The fact that it is sitting right next to the sewage treatment plant

becomes a bit of a detractor for some people. So that happens, then Costco just fades away. The land is still there. Now, the WOCAG is trying to weigh in on both of these things; the north part plus the part that's on the south, the southwest side, to see about some development. All of a sudden, now we have a change in the leadership with the director's office.

02-00:53:00

Rubens: Director's office of what?

02-00:53:02

Bolton: The director of CEDA [Community Economic Development Agency] It goes from Paul Nahn to Aliza Gallo She then becomes the person who is going to be the director. So we're looking at this base and we have this change in leadership, so all of a sudden out of nowhere, and this is about a year ago now, maybe a year and a half ago. All of a sudden out of nowhere, they're going to put in the auto dealers, who were never, ever considered in the equation originally. They were on Broadway. They had spent millions of dollars refurbishing the stuff on Broadway in order to get these auto dealers there, but what's happen, even through the state, is that I guess it's not the dealer but the manufacturers had made some sort of deal with someone that says that they would only provide vehicles for sale for people, but you have to be located near a freeway. So what they now have done is that these auto dealers have decided to dictate land uses. They said it has to be near a freeway, or else we're not going to provide any kind of dealership. So that leaves Broadway the way it is.

02-00:54:08

Rubens: Do you believe that? That the auto dealers are dictating that?

02-00:54:12

Bolton: I believe that. I think they've done it because they're running them out of Alameda, and all of them will have to be located somewhere near a freeway, which doesn't make a lot of sense. So that's happening. But they decide that now the auto dealers are going to move in, they didn't want to solicit people from other places to come into the area. Well all of these auto dealers that they originally started with, if you look at what's on Broadway, the dealerships that are there, they're primarily being owned by one guy or one company. It's the Connell Group that owns just about all of that stuff, so that that doesn't fit. They went to get BMW and BMW says—they're in Emeryville already and they're going into other areas. They say one thing and then they say another, we're going to come then we're not going to come. Then General Motors comes with their cars saying well we're high end, so instead of taking the area that's adjacent to the sewer treatment plan, we want to move further to the south. All of this dancing is going on with them, and they're getting away with this. The city is allowing them to have it, and these people were never part of the equation. While this takes place, we have the balance of the base that's sitting there and out of the blue comes the Wayans proposal, while we're supposed to be putting this thing together and there's supposed to be

some development out there that's going to provide jobs and employment and tax revenue for the City of Oakland. The Wayans proposal comes in through whatever the councilperson's name is out there—and he comes and they push this thing, and all of a sudden, for a year and a half, almost two years, the Wayans proposal, which is not on any piece of paper; there's no documented parameters for anything, nothing, that sits there and then they renew it.

02-00:55:55

Rubens:

Who's they?

02-00:55:56

Bolton:

The city. This is the Economic Development Committee. So all of a sudden this thing is there and you've had the Wayans brothers float into town and you've got all these people out there, who all want to be a movie star.

02-00:56:10

Rubens:

Because they're from Los Angeles?

02-00:56:12

Bolton:

Right. So they set this thing aside. They don't come up with anything after a year and a half of this kind of stuff. Now after this takes place, now what you have is you have the Economic Development Committee weighing in on this thing that they never even really looked at before. So they each have their own little thing that they want to do. The car dealers that are out there, that they're dealing with on one side, that has a direct relationship with [Ignacio] De La Fuente. Then you start talking about some of this other stuff and what you have is Jane Brunner, who wants to jockey this thing around. Councilperson Reid, the one thing that he says, that he comes up with is oh, I want to shop. Well up until October of last year, he had never been out on that base. Jane Brunner didn't go out on that base until some time around September or October of last year. They had never been there and when they get there, all of them said oh, I see all the traffic and all the trucks out here, this may not be a good fit for some of these things. So that they don't do anything with that but yet, it's locked up so that you can't do any development out there.

One of the things that happened from the beginning, when the WOCAG weighed in on this and started putting together a plan, and OBRA approved it, was that businesses that existed within the City of Oakland right now, that were being pushed out, would have an opportunity to relocate on that base. We looked at it and if you look at the produce merchants that exist right now, that are getting pushed out of Jack London Square, we asked them, a long time ago, that they be allowed an opportunity to move on the base.

02-00:58:03

Rubens:

This was in the plan.

02-00:58:05

Bolton:

Yes. The original plan the Army did not approve because it didn't deal with this BCDC throughout. So they flipped that [land] around. What happened is

because it was on one side, so that they flipped it over and then, once they flipped it over and moved the port to the inside, where they had this inner yard that's supposed to be developed. When they did that, then the whole thing got approved by the Army for disposal as an economic development conveyance, which has been expired a couple of years, which is going to be another interesting thing. If they don't do anything in a couple of years this thing expires, and then what do you do? Does the Army take the property back?

02-00:59:04

Rubens: Can you afford just a few more minutes of questions?

02-00:59:06

Bolton: Certainly.

02-00:59:10

Rubens: I'm going to just change the tape.

[End Audio File 2]

Begin Audio File 3 bolton_george3_03-10-08

03-00:00:03

Rubens: What we have not discussed is if you had a position or were involved at all, when the whole decommission business starts by Dellums.

03-00:00:14

Bolton: That first meeting that we had, when everybody was there. We had no involvement with anything that had to do back in D.C., but in the first meeting that we had and he was there.

03-00:00:25

Rubens: At the first WOCAG meeting?

03-00:00:28

Bolton: No, no, just this first general kind of membership meeting, Dellums was there and made certain promises, type of promises that would benefit the community and that there would be—the community was going to be on this base.

03-00:01:01

Rubens: This was fourteen years ago or so. Do you have anything to say now, looking back, whether Dellums should or shouldn't have done this decommission here in this area? The army base was the last piece to be—

03-00:01:28

Bolton: It's the last one to literally be rolled over let's say. And I think that that is more a function of let's say the ineptitude of dealing with the city, because one of the first ones was I guess, supposed to be Oak Knoll, and then there are

other places, that the notion that all of the military bases that have been just decommissioned have been in his district, Ron Dellums' district, which harkens back to him being, to me, he was such a dove on a whole lot of stuff. They didn't want the battleship in San Francisco, they didn't—the Bay Area has lost more bases, which were primary modes of employment for so many people coming with kids coming out of school and everything else. It's gone now.

03-00:02:21

Rubens:

Could you explain? Do you think it was his anti-war politics that drove that?

03-00:02:28

Bolton:

I think that had something to do with it, yes.

03-00:02:29

Rubens:

Was it not also tempered by his thought that there could be alternative development, economic development?

03-00:02:38

Bolton:

I do not believe that in any way, that was any consideration, for any economic development. I don't think that was the case at all, because he was not one and still is not one, who really dealt with economic development of anything. That has not happened.

03-00:02:57

Rubens:

Did anyone fight him from California and or Oakland?

03-00:03:00

Bolton:

For what?

03-00:03:02

Rubens:

Against that decommissioning.

03-00:03:04

Bolton:

No. People that were here, there were some people here who were saying no, you shouldn't do that, that you should not take these bases out, but there was no big fight about it. I mean he was, this is it, Ron Dellums, period, and it would have been him.

03-00:03:19

Rubens:

Our local boy makes good.

03-00:03:21

Bolton:

Right. He would have had to be the person that would have fought for us there.

03-00:03:26

Rubens:

John George died. Would he have been...?

03-00:03:30

Bolton:

The one who fought for it?

- 03-00:03:32
Rubens: Fought against it.
- 03-00:03:32
Bolton: I don't think so. I mean, he may have made some statements, but I don't think he would have fought against it, not at all.
- 03-00:03:39
Rubens: There was nobody here fighting against it?
- 03-00:03:40
Bolton: No. Because of the almost the kind of attitude—if you look at the attitude that comes out of Berkeley, San Francisco, kind of the Bay Area, which has always been an anti-war, anti kind of establishment and defense thing. It's always been that way.
- 03-00:04:00
Rubens: There were no unions, work organizations?
- 03-00:04:05
Bolton: No.
- 03-00:04:07
Rubens: I did read one study. There was a workforce coordinator for the East Bay Conversion and Reinvestment Commission, and they did do some statistical analysis that said well—
- 03-00:04:23
Bolton: What are you going to lose, about what you're going to lose.
- 03-00:04:27
Rubens: And that it turned out that most of the workforce by the end, did not live in Oakland. They were coming from Vallejo or-
- 03-00:04:33
Bolton: Fremont and Vallejo. Like I said before, that's what happened, is when people worked on these places, they moved—they had steady employment. They moved to other areas. They moved out of Oakland and they moved into other newly developing areas. That's what happened, but they did not look at it in terms of it literally being the incubator that allowed people to make that kind of move, to achieve that sort of thing, to get gainful employment in order to be able to do that, but they never looked at it.
- 03-00:05:05
Rubens: But had those functions been displaced or weaned because of changes in the militarization of the Pacific?
- 03-00:05:17
Bolton: No.

03-00:05:18

Rubens: You think it could have endured.

03-00:05:20

Bolton: Yes. If you look at the naval air station in Alameda, that is the only electronic—was the only electronic rework place on the west coast.

03-00:05:30

Rubens: What does that mean?

03-00:05:31

Bolton: For airplanes, for these big ships, the electronics over there. That's all that place was, the naval air station over there. If you came into anything that was being electrical, that had to do with planes or ships, they did it right over at the naval air station.

03-00:05:47

Rubens: So that one should have kept for sure.

03-00:05:48

Bolton: It should have stayed.

03-00:05:50

Rubens: What was going on at the Oakland Army Base?

03-00:05:51

Bolton: Naval supply supplied all of the east, that whole theater out there, Pacific Theater. They supplied everything for them, for the ships that were out there, but other bases on the other side, they supplied all of that. The army base did the same thing for the Army.

03-00:06:11

Rubens: It was functioning, it could have endured, there were jobs.

03-00:06:14

Bolton: That's why it was called supply, because what they did is everything—the Oakland Army Base was a supply base, that's what it was. And the navy base was a supply base. Both of them were, and then the rework facility was at the naval air station.

It was a rework facility for anything electrical that you deal with. That's what they did. They provided that kind of service. Now if you would take the people that were going to school, the kids that were going to school, those are the people who started that. They may have moved someplace, but that's where they started, that's where the job was.

03-00:06:54

Rubens: And other Oakland kids could have come in at entry level.

03-00:06:59

Bolton: Same thing.

03-00:07:00

Rubens: You think there could have been jobs there too.

03-00:07:01

Bolton: Yes, because the other ones were retiring and they were going away.

03-00:07:05

Rubens: There was nobody in the community who was pushing that, who was saying this is about jobs now?

03-00:07:13

Bolton: Oh yes there were, there were, but it's not being heard.

03-00:07:16

Rubens: Okay. Who would have represented that?

03-00:07:18

Bolton: Ellen Parkinson. There are a number of people that lived in West Oakland.

03-00:07:21

Rubens: Before WOCAG, individual community people.

03-00:07:26

Bolton: They weren't really—I don't think it was that big an organization. There were people that still lived here, that were told either they were going to wind up, when the base was going to be closed, when they heard about it, that they were going to either go ahead and retire then. There were other people that would then try to find other jobs, but they just left.

03-00:07:44

Rubens: Dellums is operating at a national level. He's got his office here of course, but he's in D.C. So maybe people—is that your point, Elihu isn't watching it that carefully. Elihu could have—if anyone could have, the mayor could have. It wasn't a strong mayor. Jerry Brown made it a stronger mayor.

03-00:08:08

Bolton: But look at Jerry Brown. Jerry Brown was one of these people who weren't into the war apparatus or anything anyway. None of them were. Elihu Harris wasn't. Elihu Harris was almost pure politician. Jerry Brown was like an anti, anti, anti. He's not going to deal with that in terms of the war apparatus, it's a war structure, and that's what they consider these bases, is the war structure, so that they're not going to support it and they don't look at the jobs because people that were working on these jobs just didn't go out there and make it known, didn't vote that way. I mean they would vote for the most liberal people that they can find, and that's what tended to happen, and then they just—it's like go along and get along. If you belong to a union, it was the union's way you dealt with that. If you belonged to any other organization it's like hey you know, the union says you vote for this guy, he's a Democrat or he's a laborer, or he belongs to the labor union or he is a strong supporter of the labor union. Look at what happens with all of the council people, and even

the members of the Board of Supervisors here. It's if the labor supports them, that's what they are. Why is it that the only—and if you can name for me one more Republican that ever existed on the city council, was Dick Spees, period.

03-00:09:22

Rubens: What happened to Dick Spees?

03-00:09:23

Bolton: He retired. He was formerly the dean of the city council, and he retires. He came from Clorox many, many, many years ago, but that's what tends to happen, and the people that are here, you look at the city council here and they're very social oriented.

03-00:09:41

Rubens: So there was no *Tribune* newspaper any more. It had at one time had political influence when William Knowland owned and ran it. Then Robert Maynard, the first African American to own a major newspaper ran it.

03-00:09:45

Bolton: That's right. Yes, he died, and so I mean, the tribune just went.

So what happens is that the people that want to get into the great social experiment and we're going to provide all this for you and we're going to do all this for you, these are the people who sat there and made a decision. To them it's yeah okay it's good.

03-00:10:22

Rubens: Would you clarify what OBRA was.

03-00:10:32

Bolton: The Oakland Army Base Reuse Authority. That was a body mandated by the government in order to dispose of that base, so it would work for the conversion of that base. It was to be composed of. It was council people, I think there were three councilmen in it. There was one person from the Board of Supervisors, Keith Carson was on it. Then you had, for what reason, they had a, I think a city councilperson from the City of Alameda on it, and there was one other business kind of person that was on it.

03-00:11:10

Rubens: Not community reps?

03-00:11:12

Bolton: No, not on OBRA, because the community component was the WOCAG. You have to have a community component, and that was the WOCAG.

03-00:11:30

Rubens: And then BRAC.

03-00:11:32

Bolton:

That's the Base or the Reuse Authority, whatever they called themselves, but it was a federal government component. OBRA, the people there are all. Then the BRAC were the government, the Base Reuse Commission.

03-00:12:10

Rubens:

They're feds.

03-00:12:12

Bolton:

Right, that's what they are.

03-00:12:13

Rubens:

They're professionals.

03-00:12:14

Bolton:

Right.

03-00:12:14

Rubens:

The way these entities are set up seems to play a role in fragmentizing and pitting interests against each other.

03-00:12:24

Bolton:

Yes. But see, the BRAC people did what they did, which was simply say this is the process you follow to get to where you need to get to. The politicians were there and like I say in the beginning, they didn't really weigh in on it. They let it—the community was doing what it needed to do and making recommendations to them, which is what they were supposed to do, and they let it go. They would agree with the community had to say and then they would have their little things that they're going to say about it, but they did not get to the point where they knocked anything back or down that the community—it never did. They allowed it, they looked at it, they accepted the reports, they accepted recommendations that we made. That's the way it worked but then after the base finally is converted over, and then it's supposed to go to the Redevelopment Agency and OBRA goes out of business. What OBRA didn't do is OBRA didn't say okay, we're going out of business and we're going to take the WOCAG out of business too. OBRA said no, they should stay, and the city administrator, to their credit, they said no, the WOCAG stays and they're going to continue, because they are the advisory group that we have. Well the Economic Development Committee, i.e. Mrs. Brunner, De La Fuente and some of the others, did not necessarily like that, because they wanted to make that decision, which they're doing, in terms of what is going to happen and what is not going to happen, and they don't care what anybody else says. They're going to do what it is that they wanted to do.

So if the community says this is what you said, what we said we were going to do, this is what OBRA agreed we were going to do, this is what we're going to do in terms of creating and producing jobs, this is how the land is going to be done, this is the planning that is going to take place and that took place because the WOCAG did, with the assistance of all the consultants that they

gave us, planned the base. There is an absence of planning, and if you look at what comes out of the Economic Development Committee, it is not planning, it is a shotgun. It is for the cause du jour. It's for whatever they—whoever is trying to influence them one way or the other, to do whatever it is they want to do. If the automobile guys want to get on there, which are falling apart, then what they'll do is yeah, we'll get the automobile dealers in here.

Bay Area Kenworth, which is another business, that's at the base of Market, right on 7th Street. Bay Area Kenworth had never, ever submitted a request or anything else, to plan to get on this base. They had never done it. The City of Oakland puts out an RFP to deal with fifteen acres that they had to set aside based on BCDC, for trucking related stuff to go on that base, to get something out of the community. Bay Area Kenworth puts in a proposal. It's knocked away because they can't do anything. As a result of that meeting, and I'm sitting there so I know what happened, as a result of that meeting, Bay Area Kenworth, although rejected for a development proposal, they said well we should not allow—this is a business that exists in Oakland and if they leave, the tax revenues go and the jobs leave. We should not allow this to happen to them. We need to allow them to get on the base. They turn around and in one month, the Bay Area Kenworth has now got a place that they're talking about developing on the base. Why haven't they done that with the produce merchants, and why did they wait until the last minute, and they turn around and let someone else come onto the base, but they don't allow the produce merchants that we asked for a long time ago, who are also displaced, to come on the base. They had the same reason. The produce merchants are being pushed out of Jack London Square, they're being pushed out of Oakland.

03-00:16:04

Rubens:

Let me be devil's advocate. Will they tell you that Kenworth will generate more money, tax revenue?

03-00:16:10

Bolton:

They don't. Other than trucks, they knew that all the time. And see the produce merchants, see Bay Area Kenworth sells more than just Kenworth trucks. They're the only dealer for these trucks that is right here in the Bay Area, west of Sacramento, the only one. So they deal with a lot of different trucks, but if you talk about their—their revenue is not going to increase, their employment is not going to increase. The produce merchants, who will increase and who have also asked, a long time ago, to be on that base, and they were told, Councilperson Nadel, told them—first they wanted to go to the train station, they were going to buy that. She said no, because we're going to look at you going on the base. So they get kicked away from the train station, who is also being bought by someone else, who is some San Francisco politician's relative that's developing that, so they get pushed away from there to go onto the base. They attempt to go onto the base and then they are told not to go into the Subaru lot, and so now they're pushed out of the way. Now this is a business that exists in Oakland, has existed in Oakland since before I

was born. They are being shoved out of Jack London Square and one of the main purposes was to make sure that businesses that existed, that were being pushed out, would have a place to go. They used that excuse to get Kenworth on, but then they don't use the same statement that we made years ago, to allow the produce merchants to move on.

03-00:17:39

Rubens:

I thought that in fact, the train station was already a done deal; they have some big development—

03-00:17:44

Bolton:

It wasn't at the time that this happened. When it happened, the produce merchants were going to buy it. Nancy Nadel is the councilperson for that district, and the way they act is like there are little fiefdoms in here in their district, and the councilperson will say well no, no, no, no, don't do that because somebody else wants to develop it. So when you deal with that, so they said well okay, then the base. Then they get ready to go on the base and then no, you can't do this, and then they tell them to back off. So now you have this group of produce merchants, which was I think about fifteen of them, and they're beginning to fracture because they're getting kicked out of Jack London Square. They're beginning to try to look at other places, but we still have a nucleus of them here and we have said, twelve years ago, give them an opportunity, it's a displaced business. This base is an opportunity for not just new stuff, but the people who are being displaced, to be able to thrive.

03-00:18:40

Rubens:

So who's driving this? Is it the fiefdom, is it that and developers?

03-00:18:46

Bolton:

Well, it's not developers because the produce merchants would be developing this themselves.

03-00:18:50

Rubens:

What about Nancy Nadel?

03-00:18:58

Bolton:

Well she stopped them then but now, it's at a point where it's in the hands of the Economic Development Committee, who doesn't care. They do what it is that they want to do, and so they're not going to let these guys come in there.

03-00:19:09

Rubens:

The development is a reflection of what or who these council people are and represent?

03-00:19:13

Bolton:

Right.

03-00:19:14

Rubens:

Now I'm asking, underneath these council people, what's driving it? What group was awarded reworking the train station?

03-00:19:26

Bolton: I can't remember this guy's name, but he's literally from San Francisco and he's related to somebody over there.

03-00:19:29

Rubens: Okay. It's not an African American firm?

03-00:19:31

Bolton: No, no. What is it? What they do is this guy was from Feinstein's—related to them, but they also have this Chinese Unity Council or something. I forget how they do it, but they make these little alliances, but it's still him. He takes it and then he makes these little alliances to get the thing approved.

03-00:20:04

Rubens: Does Curt Smalls have an interest in any of this?

03-00:20:07

Bolton: Curt Smalls, that's another very interesting person, that Curt Smalls, the way he shows up. He's shown up with the United Indian Nations, which was never recognized by the BIA. The Bureau of Indian Affairs never recognizes the United Indian Nation, and yet they've been able to illicit money, they got money out of this base.

03-00:20:28

Rubens: What is Curt Smalls going for?

03-00:20:29

Bolton: Curt Smalls is like a consultant to these folks, so he just, he gets—

03-00:20:35

Rubens: Is he a developer?

03-00:20:36

Bolton: No. He can't develop anything. He'll take a developer that may be out there, and he will get to be almost like their, kind of like their spokesperson or something. But he will show up, and he literally puts a black face on it, see? So what happens is he shows up and he makes the noise and he's like oh, he's with this group of people, and that's supposed to take some sway on what takes place.

03-00:21:00

Rubens: Didn't he come from the military? He's a lawyer.

03-00:21:02

Bolton: Yes.

03-00:21:02

Rubens: He's made a lot of money.

03-00:21:03

Bolton:

He worked in Sacramento for a while. He's done a lot of stuff, and he came from the military but he's, it's—When you look at the history of what he has done, you can't find that.

03-00:21:17

Rubens:

Well I didn't even mean just him. I mean this whole thing.

03-00:21:19

Bolton:

They're all like that. Look at Tagami. Phil Tagami is another one, who has already said that he's going to do his thing with the—he is the only one. Now he's going to—they're going to put in a proposal, and RFD. The City of Oakland, and we have told them before, don't do that. You don't put together an RFI and an RFP together. If you're going to put together a request for information for something, RFQ more importantly, a request for qualification to show that you're qualified to be able to, a development, you ask for that. You don't ask for an RFP. You're going to ask for a request for qualifications and a request for proposals at the same time. They tried this before and it created a problem. He used to be a commissioner with the board. And he also was with the Fox Theater down here, got involved with that thing, and thinks he is the only developer, and he had a great tie with once again, Don Perata, a big funder for Don Perata.

03-00:22:28

Rubens:

Don Perata, he did not oppose the end of the bases?

03-00:22:37

Bolton:

The bases no, no.

03-00:22:41

Rubens:

He was in the state legislature.

03-00:22:42

Bolton:

Yes, but he's a pure politician. He used to be a member of the Board of Supervisors. I used to deal with him when he was a member of the Board of Supervisors, all the time, a pure politician. And what he does is there are people that he knows, and when you look at it you can see it. All you have to do is just look back a little bit and you find him and those people tied together somewhere. Either they are helping to put together a committee for him, supporting, or something, but it's always a tie.

03-00:23:10

Rubens:

How come Oakland can't develop an Emeryville? There is Jack London Square north of that the group of businesses by Cost Plus and Bed Bath & Beyond

03-00:23:32

Bolton:

But see what happens, that's not—it's the absence of planning. They do not plan anything. Everything happens by happenstance. Perata's good buddies are the ones who got Jack London Square, period, and the land down there for

development. It's a game and what they're going to do is they're going to make it—eventually they're going to plan this thing and it's going to be something that's really going to attract people and it's going to really draw the money. This has been going on for six years.

03-00:23:59

Rubens: There was Jack London Village.

03-00:24:02

Bolton: Right over here, Jack London Village. But see what happens is that they do this, and it's always interconnected friends. They do this stuff and then what happens is they don't plan anything. They just make these little ties and little allegiances, and then they do what they're going to do.

03-00:24:23

Rubens: Were you thinking of Rick Holliday?

03-00:24:24

Bolton: That's the one who has the train station. Rick Holliday is related to the Feinsteins.

03-00:24:34

Rubens: You know, I think I'm going to have to stop now for this to sink into my brain. I'm so appreciative of your time and font of information. Are there other people you suggest I interview? For instance, Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson

[break in discussion.]

03-00:26:23

Bolton: Yes, but with Ellen, it's a matter of dealing with what her desires are for it, and here desires are, it's like at one time it was—well the port, she just had it period, and forget it. And then the next time it's we are going to do, we can do certain things that we need to do in order to give everybody the opportunity. But it depends upon where she is and right now she's at a point where, to hell with it. No matter what we do, no matter how we do it, you know, they're going to do what they want to do down there.

03-00:26:58

Rubens: How old is she about?

03-00:26:59

Bolton: Ellen's got to be in her seventies or eighties.

03-00:27:02

Rubens: All right. Who is Queen Thurston?

03-00:27:08

Bolton: Yes, she can tell you. Queen Thurston has been there—I saw her the other night too, but she's on the board as well. Queen Thurston has been here and about this place for so long it is not even funny.

03-00:27:20

Rubens: So do you think I should go to her?

03-00:27:21

Bolton: Yes, because she is a very articulate person and she is not prone to go off into other stuff.

03-00:27:28

Rubens: Okay. And Aliza Gallo?

03-00:28:17

Bolton: Alisa Gallo, she used to be—

03-00:28:19

Rubens: Former OBRA executive.

03-00:28:20

Bolton: Yes, that's the one I was talking about before. That was a De La Fuente appointment to the board who, this building right here, that we were talking about keeping because it was a historical building, she is responsible, with De La Fuente, for tearing this building down and saying oh, it has some contaminated material. We told her, from the reports, like she said oh, we couldn't read them, that the contaminated material you're talking about is in the ground, it's in the parking lot, and all you have to do is map it and get rid of it. Oh no you can't do that, you can't do that. The building has got to be torn—what they want to do is clear the site. The building has got to be torn down.

03-00:28:58

Rubens: Why do they want to clear the site?

03-00:29:00

Bolton: Because they wanted to clear a site, and the Historical Society in Oakland, everybody was saying don't tear this building down. They went out and first they came up with this stuff where it's contaminated. They hired this guy named {Clue}, who is—the other guy's name is Clue too, but they hired this guy who was supposed to be an environmentalist and he said he went underneath the building and found this ooze. They give us a copy of the reports as though they didn't think we would be able to discern what these things meant, and you could read it, I could see what it meant, because I'm also responsible in the county, for anybody who puts any wells in there and gets rid of any contaminated material. So it comes across my desk. And I'm looking at this thing saying no, you could actually treat this in the ground. No, no, you can't do it. They ripped down the building, they say they have to dig out all the material. This building has been down for about five or six years, to

date, not a spoonful of dirt has come out of there. This is under Aliza Gallo's watch, because she was the director at the time. She has also disposed of, because under her watch while she was the deputy director, they spent millions of dollars in contracts and they've got nothing for it to show. I mean millions of dollars. She was constantly giving out contracts.

03-00:30:14

Rubens: Where is she now?

03-00:30:15

Bolton: Well she's with the City of Oakland. They pushed her over in the economic development firm where she came from before and she's, it's been—

03-00:30:26

Rubens: Paul Nahn.

03-00:30:27

Bolton: He used to be the director before Aliza Gallo. She backdoored him and they were friends before. He lives in San Leandro, and he is also, was the director at the time when the BCDC proposal was being put together, and he didn't really—he said it but he didn't really say anything about it and he didn't give us any guidance in terms of dealing with it, and so it was under his watch that we wound up getting the whole report that was put together dumped, and that's one of the reasons he wound up leaving.

03-00:30:57

Rubens: What is his background, that he was even executive director?

03-00:31:01

Bolton: He was involved with the naval air station, the disposal of the naval air station.

03-00:31:07

Rubens: Was he the director of the Joint Apprenticeship Training Program?

03-00:31:09

Bolton: The Joint Apprenticeship Training Program is what—he affiliated with them after he left the base, and now he is supposed to be their mouthpiece, trying to get some property on the base, to relocate, or money, which is the same thing that's happened with everybody else. They bought off United Indian Nations, they bought off the Homeless Collaborative.

03-00:31:27

Rubens: Who's they?

03-00:31:28

Bolton: The city. They give them money.

03-00:31:30

Rubens: You said bought off?

03-00:31:32
Bolton: Yes, so that they will just not ask for anything, any claim to the base or portions of it, and so they just give them money.

03-00:31:39
Rubens: What about Arthur O'Neal?.

03-00:31:40
Bolton: Arthur O'Neil, he passed recently. He worked on the base but he died recently. He was also on the WOCAG.

03-00:32:01
Rubens: Christine Saed, who was the branch manager of the West Oakland Library. I don't know if she knows anything.

03-00:32:05
Bolton: No she doesn't.

03-00:32:10
Rubens: Richard Nevelin.

03-00:32:12
Bolton: Richard Nevelin is a political gadfly. He's from Alameda and one of the things he does, he likes transportation as an issue point and he'll deal with that. I haven't seen him recently. I hope he's doing well, but I haven't seen him recently.

03-00:32:29
Rubens: What do you mean by likes transportation?

03-00:32:30
Bolton: He attends, would attend all of like the AC transit things, and he deals with the transportation.

03-00:32:53
Rubens: I hope to interview Ron Dellums, Sandre Swanson and Bob Brauer

03-00:33:03
Bolton: Brauer? Bob Brauer? I know there was a John Brauer.

03-00:33:12
Rubens: John is his son. John is Bob's son.

03-00:33:15
Bolton: Oh that's very interesting, because John Brauer was with the Homeless Collaborative.

03-00:33:18
Rubens: That's exactly right.

03-00:33:19

Bolton:

And John was the one who, they got their money and now they're gone. They are the same people who got money on Oak Knoll, that the city blew big time because the city proved their inability to deal with negotiations when they dealt with the Navy on Oak Knoll. They thought they were only going to pay the Navy a couple of million dollars for the land and the Navy said forget you, we'll put it on the market. They put it on the market and they got something like \$40 million for the base, and one of the first things that De La Fuente turns around and says well, they're going to have hell developing it because it has to come through the city and we're not going to let them do it. They blew it on Oak Knoll.

03-00:33:58

Rubens:

Let me just—I'll have to listen again. You're saying they were offered \$40 million for it?

03-00:34:03

Bolton:

Oh yeah.

03-00:34:05

Rubens:

And they didn't take it?

03-00:34:06

Bolton:

No, no, no. The city was only willing to give them a couple of million dollars for the base, the Navy, and they said that's all they were going to get it for. Then the Navy says no, it's worth more than that. So the Navy says what we'll do is we're not going to deal with any negotiating with you guys any more on anything. They put it up on the market and they got millions for it.

03-00:34:26

Rubens:

The Navy sold it?

03-00:34:28

Bolton:

Yes. And so now their sitting there, the city is sitting there. They gave the Homeless Collaborative a couple of million dollars. They didn't get the base. They were trying to ask for the couple of million dollars back and the Homeless Collaborative said hey. And that's Brauer.

03-00:34:43

Rubens:

Right. It is John Brauer. His father, Bob Brauer, worked for Dellums for years and then is now Dellums' government liaison person. He was an economic consultant of some sort.

03-00:35:05

Bolton:

I know who you're talking about, but he's—in terms of involvement with the base, no. His only involvement had to be back through the other side.

03-00:35:17

Rubens: I would like to interview Lee Halterman, because he was Dellums' man in D.C.. He now has a consulting firm, I think it's called Marstel-Day that advises, I don't know, about green development on former military land all over the country.

03-00:35:50

Bolton: I know who you're talking about, because in seeing them or hearing from them, which is—he never shows up to deal with any of this stuff.

03-00:35:57

Rubens: No, no, he's not in this area. .

03-00:36:01

Bolton: Dellums has this other committee. He has several shadow committees that are sitting out there, that don't report to anybody but him maybe, that make decisions about things. He has a group that's sitting there, weighing in on the base.

03-00:36:14

Rubens: Who does?

03-00:36:15

Bolton: Dellums does. In fact, the guy that used to work for him—what is his name—who is now head of the Economic Development Office for the City of Oakland, used to work for Dellums up until about a month ago, and now he's head of Economic Development. What the devil is his name? He still works for Dellums. He still reports to him, but he is on—he's down in the city right now. Let's see, is this guy's name on here?

03-00:36:56

Rubens: How about Barbara Lee? Is she going to have any contesting view on this?

03-00:37:00

Bolton: No. Barbara Lee is Barbara Lee. The only thing Barbara Lee has done is, she's out there away from us.

03-00:37:06

Rubens: Who is {Edson Simmons?}, foreign maintenance supervisor for ORB, under J.A. Jones firm, previously same function at ORB, with EFA West.

03-00:37:17

Bolton: No that's out there, some people that work on the base.

03-00:37:19

Rubens: So that would be good?

03-00:37:20

Bolton: Well they work out there. They do some maintenance stuff for them now.

03-00:37:23
Rubens: Now.

03-00:37:24
Bolton: Yeah.

03-00:37:25
Rubens: They're not telling anything about how the base won?

03-00:37:28
Bolton: No, no.

03-00:37:29
Rubens: And who is Eloise Thornton?

03-00:37:31
Bolton: Eloise Thornton used to be a planner. She still is a planner, but she used to be out there on that—she was an advisor to Dan Lindheim is the guy who is the CEDA director now that works for Dellums, still works for Dellums, but now he's the CEDA director, Community and Economic Development Agency. He's the director. But he's going to be Dellums' point of view. He's the CEDA director, he's a city staff person now, and he is the one who recognizes that there has never been any planning, and that they do it. He recognizes that there is no planning, there is not really a planning effort. It's a catch as catch can kind of thing, they just throw up something. We had that conversation at the last meeting and he says that's a fact, there is no planning going on, people are just doing what they do.

03-00:38:39
Rubens: Oh okay, someone else from our project is talking to this person. I think there's some relationship to Janice Adam.

03-00:38:46
Bolton: Janice Adam used to work—she lived in the community.

03-00:38:50
Rubens: She was a part of the Oakland Army Base?

03-00:38:52
Bolton: And then she worked for the port.

03-00:38:54
Rubens: I think that's the person I'm talking about.

03-00:38:56
Bolton: Yes, she worked for the port and now she's gone to AC Transit and she works with Mary King, who formerly was a member of the Board of Supervisors.

03-00:39:08
Rubens: Marsha Peterson, a labor counsel and deputy staff judge advocate, workforce issues.

03-00:39:14

Bolton: Now that has to do with the labor years ago, when we were dealing with the labor workforce.

03-00:39:20

Rubens: Okay and we definitely want to talk to Lynn Kriegbaum.

03-00:39:29

Bolton: I just talked to Lynn. She was at a meeting the other day. She was in with the BRAC office. Lynn knows a lot.

03-00:39:49

Rubens: Lynn's good?

03-00:39:50

Bolton: Yes. But now, what Lynn is doing is Lynn is working now—the guy that was their counsel, and they're getting ready to put in a development proposal. She's the one who knows that they had only two years, which I wish she hadn't said anything about at our last meeting, but she knows that the two years is about to expire. She knows a lot of the history.

03-00:40:35

Rubens: What I am particularly looking for is people who still are in the area and can just talk about life on the base. I don't know what happened with Bill Toohey, he was a pilot driver or something like that.

03-00:40:51

Bolton: Yes. Bill Toohey a long, long time ago, and Bill Toohey used to work there, and I think he worked around Lynn. Lynn was working with this guy.

03-00:41:14

Rubens: Is there anything else we should discuss?

Break in interview

03-00:53:02

Bolton: I also served on the committee that created that park out there, Port View Park that's out at the end of 57th Street. I was in the committee that developed that park.

03-00:53:18

Rubens: Was that much later?

03-00:53:20

Bolton: Not really, and the reason I say that is because Port View Park that sits out at the end, I was on that committee, Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson was on that committee and what is her name? She's on the port now, a black woman that's on the port now. Margaret Gordon. We were all on that committee and every regulatory agency that deals with water and fish and game in, it seemed like the nation, had representatives on that committee. When they got that base, when the port got that base from the Department of the Navy, they had to have

a citizen's component and an open area that they dealt with. That was part of one of the conditions that they had. That's the reason why that little bay that used to port, the hospital ship Mercy used to park in there all the time, they used to dock it inside it. We're talking about that development. They came to the community first, and they started talking about doing something down there. Many people—Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson, God bless her soul, was talking about filling it in and making a golf course. There was Ralph, but I forget what Ralph's last name is. He was talking about going out there and building an amusement park. So we went through all of these things about what was happening out there in that area. We also started looking at what would happen out there if it ended being a park, and a non-structured park, because every kid that lives in West Oakland and anyplace else, is not going to grow up to be Michael Jordan. You're not going to be Joe Morgan, you're not going to be one of these great athletes, so why take an area and structure it so that you can only do sports in it, that was used for the very few? And you didn't want to bring a whole lot of lights down there to have people down there, because then it would be uncontrollable. So we looked at a park going in there. We knew how deep it was. It was through the community that at the same time we recognized, we knew, that Levine-Fricke again, the engineer firm that's in Emeryville, one of those big tall buildings. Levine-Fricke owned land up near Fairfield, in the Suisun area. They were going to have—the port was going to take their dredge spoils and they were going to buy them from the port to put in the land near Suisun. That's what was going to happen with it, with the spoils. What the community said, and we did it at a meeting of all these regulatory—now I don't remember this lady. I don't know who she worked for at the time either, but at this meeting that we had with all the regulatory agencies, the question came up and I asked the question, why would you take this material to Suisun or someplace else, when you really didn't have the money, and at the same time we know the depth of the bottom of this little inlet down here, why can't you use that to bring it up? They spoke with—

03-00:56:19

Rubens:

Bring it up means what?

03-00:56:20

Bolton:

Bring up the flow line of that area, to literally build it up. So you have a park, but you could also bring up the water level so that it was higher than the regular channel and it had an opportunity for not only the little kids but fish to be able to grow into this thing.

03-00:56:38

Rubens:

And you think about what you were doing when you were a kid.

03-00:56:40

Bolton:

Right. So there was an opportunity to do that and they just sit there and looked at it, and we had the people from—well BCDC were there. We had Sierra Club people there, we had a whole bunch of us like, well what are you talking

about? Who do you work for? I said well I'm a member of the community, and so what I'm looking at is you know, being able to get something out of this stuff you're taking from here, and if you have to put it on barges of transport, what you were saying, there's nothing that says you can't just put it right over here, so we bring up the bottom. That's how that happened.

03-00:57:08

Rubens:

And this is before, kind of simultaneous? It's around the Cypress Freeway time?

03-00:57:13

Bolton:

No, no, no, this is afterwards, this is after. They had already had the dredging, and in fact when it came to the—there was two letters that we wrote, that went to the government, about them getting the dredging project. In addition to that, when we had a meeting, when BCDC had their meeting right over here, at the ABAG headquarters. BCDC had their big meeting over there, and I remember being there and speaking to that issue as one of the people that was in favor, that was not only that but from the community, was in favor of and recommending and asking that they in fact let us do that or let the port do that. And at that point they thought we were crazy. It's like you're a community person and you're talking about this? When all the material that went into the park came out of there, that came out of the community.

03-00:58:08

Rubens:

I hear you completely..

03-00:58:12

Bolton:

We didn't get any benefit out of it. We didn't get any money out of that either. Nothing flowed back to the—

03-00:58:17

Rubens:

Into the community.

03-00:58:18

Bolton:

No. Nothing flowed back into the community. The community is saying hey do this, save money, so that you don't have to be paying all this money, and then you can work on the improvements to the port and improvements to the park, but nothing happened. They did it but nothing happened..

03-00:58:35

Rubens:

Let's turn the camera off while we look at a map of the area.

[End of Interview]