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WARREN HINCKLE: JOURNALIST, EDITOR, PUBLISHER, ICONOCLAST

Interviews conducted by
Lisa Rubens
in 2009-2012

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Warren Hinckle and Bentley

Table of Contents — WARREN HINCKLE

Preface by Kevin Starr	xvi
Interview History by Lisa Rubens	xxv
Interview 1: October 4, 2009	
In which Hinckle reflects on his lineage, the adventures and misadventures of his youth in San Francisco and finds himself a logophile and devotee of typography.	
Audio File 1	1
Birth in San Francisco 1938 and Family background — Paternal Grandfather's friendship with Sunny Jim Rolph — Hinckle's introduction to bar life in San Francisco — Mother and father's courtship; social life in Irish-Catholic networks — Family structure — Early interest in newspapers	
Audio File 2	22
A Catholic elementary and high school education — Reflecting on the Hinckle household and life in San Francisco in the forties and fifties — Losing an eye; gaining a personalized education — Producing a hectograph newspaper at age 13 — Becoming Warren Hinckle III	
Interview 2: October 18, 2009	
In which Hinckle provides a robust account of 16 years of Catholic schooling and his evolution as a newshound.	
Audio File 3	37
Reflecting on innate love for newspapers; haunting antique bookstores and international newspaper shops — High school and college experience on newspapers — Reflecting on sixteen years of Catholic education — Social life and drinking culture — Putting out the <i>Crusader</i> at Riordan High School — Participating in debate and drama at high school — Stirring things up: high school high jinks — Producing a literary magazine — Summer jobs — Entering USF and becoming a <i>Foghorn</i> cub reporter	
Audio File 4	56
Reflecting on the experience of being in plays and infatuation with the movie <i>Deadline USA</i> — Observations about USF — A major in philosophy; a minor in English — Observations on the USF faculty — Assuming responsibilities at the <i>Foghorn</i> ; forming enduring friendships — Becoming a newspaper junkie — Writing columns; engaging in hijinks; producing a more sophisticated journal — Establishing a writer's style and	

philosophy — Covering the 1960 Winter Olympics — A hit piece on *SF Chronicle's* columnist, Count Marco

Audio File 5

75

Expansionist plans at USF: The *Foghorn* goes daily; creating a public interest journal; consolidating printing; putting out a summer edition of the *Foghorn* — Developing a habit of writing in bars — Wrangling with USF authorities — Covering civil rights and other political issues — Receiving journalist awards — A stint at yearbook editor: visions of what a university can be — Dispirited conclusion regarding USF in the 1960s

Interview 3: November 16, 2009

Consisting of narratives about post-college life in which a variety of enterprises are undertaken, a life-changing mentor-friendship is formed and a career in journalism and political crusades is forged.

Audio File 6

89

An aside on correcting the record about sexism at *Ramparts* — Graduating college; working for the JFK presidential campaign — Cultural tastes in 1960 — Waiting to write for *The Examiner* — Creating a public relations firm — Opening Station J nightclub — Reflecting on advertising innovator Howard Gossage — Applying to work for the *San Francisco Chronicle* — Meeting Scott Newhall

Audio File 7

108

Assigned to the *SF Chronicle's* crime beat in Oakland — Working in the Oakland Press Room; encountering institutional racism — Temporary assignment to San Francisco City Hall; drinking with Mayor Jack Shelly — Running for San Francisco County Supervisor on a platform to tear down the Embarcadero Freeway — Recalling writing for *The Progress* — Aside on affinity for unions

Interview 4: November 22, 2009

In which this journalist hones his skills, has a fortuitous meeting with the publisher of a Catholic literary magazine and reflects on the trials and tribulations of Catholicism in American life and in publishing.

Audio File 8

123

Reassigned to San Francisco as a *Chronicle* cub reporter — Becoming more politically conscious — Observations on the practice of journalism — Discusses San Francisco bar culture and its source for many stories — Writing feature articles; developing sources — Co-Chairing a committee to stop freeway expansion leads to a *Chronicle* crusade — More on Station J — A long view of the San Francisco Freeway Revolt

Audio File 9

140

Wrecking a car; Cookie Picetti forestalls arrest — Marrying Denise Libarle — Reflecting on cultural divides at the *Chronicle* — Reflections on editor-in-chief Scott Newhall — Writing publicity for a liberal Catholic theater group — Introduction to Edward Keating and *Ramparts* magazine — The background to producing a magazine critical of Catholic education — Defending a story; strategizing *Ramparts* national debut — Reflections on Edward Keating — More political lessons: Jews collaborating with Catholics

Interview 5: February 11, 2010

Being an account of rescuing *Ramparts* magazine from a death by anemia, of transforming the publication into the first radical slick, go-to journal for ahead-of-the- curve information about and insight into culture and politics in the U.S. and around the world.

Audio File 10

157

Pre-interview conversation considering new column for *S.F. Chronicle* — The current status of the *Argonaut* — Impact of *The Deputy* controversy on *Ramparts*: new writers; new focus — Recalling the infamous press conference to publicize *Ramparts*' story on *The Deputy* — Becomes Executive Editor of *Ramparts* — Covering Civil Rights and a riot in Harlem — An aside on continuities of Catholic duplicity: The issue of canonizing Pius XII — Developing a new format for *Ramparts*; moving towards a “radical slick” magazine — Increasing circulation — Former FBI agent William Turner and Fred Cook join *Ramparts* — Recruiting Robert Scheer — Moving *Ramparts* to San Francisco — The importance of Howard Gossage: finding Dugald Stermer — More on a new look for *Ramparts*

Audio File 11

178

Ramparts' style of labor intensive group journalism — Hinckle's job as editor; rewriting most of the stories — Research a hallmark of *Ramparts* — The imperative and perils of raising money — Howard Gossage and Gerald Feign's Generalists Inc. and its influence on *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's* — Spending time in New York — Developing a business plan — Securing more donors

Interview 6: February 12, 2010

An exegesis on vicissitudes at *Ramparts* which include the trials and tribulations of amazing and talented associates, the perennial problem of funding, successive bombshell articles, the rampage of a monkey and the culture and context of a high-profile investigative journal

Audio File 12

195

The widening web of people associated with *Ramparts* — Keating solicits and interviews Hugh Hefner — Aside comparing Hinckle's and Robert Scheer's view on Robert

Kennedy — Martin Peretz and Richard Russell establish a secure financial base and stabilize *Ramparts* — Countering charges *Ramparts* spent too much money — Working out a creative business plan with Richard Russell and restructuring *Ramparts* — The left becomes anti-Israel over the 1967 Six Days War; *Ramparts* wrestles with a balanced position — Peretz and Russell end their investment in *Ramparts* over Robert Scheer's article on Egypt — Reflections on the life and death of *Sunday Ramparts Newspaper* — Assessing the value of *Ramparts'* book series

Audio File 13

213

The *Ramparts* poster — Publishing the Che Guevara diaries and involvement with Cuba — Aside on Keating's commercial printing business — Mark Stone and *Ramparts'* New York office — Reflecting on the San Francisco crowd of intellectuals, lefties, private investigators and mystery writers — *Ramparts* as a touchstone for writers — Distinguishing social types circulating in and around *Ramparts* — The important role of private detective Hal Lipset — A death threat to Robert Scheer — Investigating a scandalous, unreported side to the Charles Manson murders — *Ramparts* as a forum for whistleblowers — Assessing Eldridge Cleaver; Eldridge Cleaver writes for *Ramparts*; Hinckle stands up for and keeps up with Cleaver — Considering *Ramparts* topics yet to be discussed

Interview7: March 23, 2010

In which the true story of events at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party Convention is discussed and the role of *Ramparts* magazine in dissecting and revealing hot topics is told.

Audio File 14

231

Ramparts at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party Convention — Conceiving of a daily news wall poster — Bringing in a wide range of reporters — LBJ's command post at the convention in case Humphrey is dumped — Problems producing and distributing the wall poster — The role of Tom Hayden as provocateur — Reckoning with the hotel Ambassador bill — On the politics of *Ramparts'* convention coverage — Producing the convention issue of *Ramparts* — Reflecting on Sol Sterns' later critique of *Ramparts'* convention coverage due to his changed politics — On Eldridge Cleaver's campaign for president

Audio File 15

251

On *Ramparts'* role in creating a national forum for Cleaver and later the Black Panther Party — Betty Shabaz's visit to *Ramparts* and defusing a shoot-out between the Black Panther Party and SFPD — Impact of intensity of life and changing social values in and around *Ramparts* — Writing the "Social History of Hippies," the importance of and political conflict with Ralph Gleason; on Timothy Leary — More on publishing Che Guevera's diaries — Missed funding opportunities for *Ramparts* leads to seed-money for *Scanlan's Monthly* — The end of the road for Hinckle and *Ramparts*: going bi-monthly;

generating more subscriptions and newsstand sales — Enlisting Roy Cohn who finds a potential financial bailout for *Ramparts* from a jailed assassin

Audio File 16 272

A Hail-Mary plan to save *Ramparts* — *Ramparts* staff will not agree to a bankruptcy — Hinckle resigns and establishes *Scanlan's Monthly* — Comparing *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's* — Overview of *Ramparts'* and *Scanlan's* fate

Interview 8: May 2, 2010

Herein lay tales of the birth of Gonzo Journalism in *Scanlan's* magazine, of vile schemes and cloak-and-dagger conspiracy theories and of personages of influence in the world of advertising and newspapers.

Audio File 17 279

Reviewing the transition from *Ramparts* to *Scanlan's* — More on the role of Howard Gossage and his belief that advertising diluted magazines' independence — Origin of the name *Scanlan's* — Hiring a staff; creating a look; advertising in national markets — Assessing the readership — Hijinks with advertisers — Hinckle publishes Hunter Thompson's groundbreaking story: "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved" — Reflecting on the origin of Gonzo Journalism — On *Scanlan's* coverage of the counter culture

Audio File 18 298

Assessing *Scanlan's* reporting — On quirky journalism and men of genius: Howard Gossage, Scott Newhall and their interest in the Free Republic of Anguilla — Reflecting on the strength of the *San Francisco Chronicle* under Scott Newhall's leadership and his influence on *Scanlan's* — *Scanlan's* emphasis on environmentalism — Why the Nixon administration hated *Scanlan's* — On the suppressed "Guerilla Warfare" issue of *Scanlan's* — The death throes of *Scanlan's* — Reflecting on conspiracy theories: an aside on the Kennedy assassination; a dirty business in Los Angeles involving the Manson gang, the L.A. Police and Hollywood high society — Writing a book with William Turner: *The Ten Second Jailbreak*

Interview 9: May 15, 2010

Illuminating the inner workings of running a journal at once literary and political, with attention to details of design and the underground culture that both nurtures and is nurtured by *Scanlan's* magazine.

Audio File 19 319

Scanlan's as first U.S. publisher of *Tintin* comics — Reflection on various writers at *Scanlan's* — Naming the editorial column — Organizing a new magazine: lining up the

money; paying writers and artists well — Why Hinckle likes the school of Robert Crumb comics — Interest in and significance of low brow culture — A magazine first: breaking a Vietnam atrocity story published on a vinyl record that was part of the magazine — More on the suppressed issue “Guerilla Warfare in the U.S.” — Need for financial stability to ensure more serious and left journalism — Specific attention to the look of *Scanlan’s*

Audio File 20 339

Weed and outsider culture exhibited through *Scanlan’s* — More on *The Ten Second Jailbreak* — Writing an autobiography

Interview 10: May 23, 2010

Wherein our narrator delineates the world of news gathering in San Francisco, evoking the boundless energy of writers and publishers, including the ambitions and schemes of Will Hearst as he steers his grandfather’s *San Francisco Examiner* to surpass the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Audio File 21 357

Reflecting on a golden age of creativity in San Francisco — Role of “branding” phenom Walter Landor — The social scene around *Scanlan’s* — Envisioning a Hunter Thompson series on revered American cultural events — Thompson’s appeal to Jann Wenner to save *Scanlan’s* — Reflecting on Hunter Thompson as an artist and magazine critic — The Mitchell Brothers and their O’Farrell Theatre as a cultural wellspring and watering hole — Reflecting on a close and long friendship with Hunter Thompson — An aside on *Sundance* and *New West* magazines

Audio File 22 377

On the San Francisco sojourn of *Saturday Review of Literature* — More on Scott Newhall — Situating *Ramparts* and *Scanlan’s* in the context the 19th century West, journalism, New Journalism and Gonzo Journalism — More on editing *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved* — An overview of Hinckle’s investigative and celebrated articles in the *Chronicle* — Reflections on Will Hearst and his vision for *The San Francisco Examiner* — Hinckle recruited to *The Examiner* as an associate editor; lobbies for hiring Hunter Thompson — Reflections on Thompson’s *Examiner* column — On Thompson’s assessment of *Ramparts* and *Scanlan’s* — Palling around with Thompson

Interview 11: June 12, 2010

Recounting the many provocative and radical stories published in *City Magazine* about San Francisco culture and lifestyle, and offering further reflections on the vagaries of a film maker turned publisher.

Audio File 23

395

Francis Ford Coppola's vision for *City Magazine* — Invited by Coppola to be a guest editor — Finding talented writers on a walk through North Beach — *City Magazine* takes off with Susan Berman's sensational article "Why Women Can't Get Laid in San Francisco" — Becomes permanent editor just as Coppola's costs for *Apocalypse Now* become astronomical — Trimming costs and working with Eleanor Coppola — Putting out *City* weekly like taming a bucking bronco — Publishing interesting writers: love letters between Angela Davis and Jonathan Jackson; Robert Scheer on Cuba — Writing about San Francisco politico John Barbegalata

Audio File 24

412

Reflecting on the cultural and geo-politics underlying the 1975 mayoral race between George Moscone and John Barbegalata — Working with Francis Coppola — Gerald Feigen's "Proctologist's Guide to Gay Sex" — More on Susan Berman — Reviewing special topics: Patricia Hearst and the SLA; Dashiell Hammett; The Pacific Rim — Plans for content if *City* hadn't folded — Special *City* issues on the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition and the Bohemian Club — On other writers: Marjorie Leland's coverage of city hall; Scott Newhall; Margot Patterson Doss, Paul Krassner — On the importance of writing about local history

Interview 12: June 20, 2010

Being additional accounts of the vicissitudes of editing a metropolitan weekly and then turning to a gold mine of book projects while burrowing further into the dark world of political intrigue and conspiracy.

Audio File 25

427

Coppola's initial consultation with Hinckle on *City Magazine* — Reflecting on Coppola's visions for producing *City* — Cutting costs and asserting Hinckle's own vision for *City* — Comparing *City*'s circulation to other U.S. magazines — *City* the victim of Coppola's losses from film *Apocalypse Now*; shutting the magazine February 1976 — Free lance magazine writing and pursuing book projects: *The Richest Place on Earth: the Story of Virginia City and the Heyday of the Comstock Lode* — Friendship with Lucius Beebe — Considering putting out a newspaper — Observations about mining, Virginia City and the source of 19th century San Francisco wealth — Writing *The Fish is Red* and its update *Deadly Secrets* — Working with Bill Turner — Reflections on conspiracy theorists — First iteration of JFK assassination conspiracy theories in *Ramparts*

Audio File 26

448

Observing the intersection of government, business and criminal operations from presidents JFK to George [H.W.] Bush — Answering critics — On the prejudice and limitations of the mainstream press — Hinckle's unique take on politics

Interview 13: July 25, 2010

Here our narrator discourses on the curious subjects of his beloved and widely read column, “Hinckle’s Journal,” and exposes the twisted mind and hideous deeds of San Francisco’s most notorious murderer.

Audio File 27

465

More on Howard Gossage — Becoming a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 1978 — Working arrangements with the *Chronicle* — Writing about old San Francisco characters — A legendary prank on a Reno cab-driver becomes a *Chronicle* epic — Writing a film treatment on the life of Allen Funt and staging an elaborate hoax

Audio File 28

482

Going after Dianne Feinstein in the *Chronicle* for bilking renters — Reflections on Jim Jones and the stolen mayoral election of 1975 — Why supervisor Dan White got away with murder — Interviewing people in Dan White’s district for the *New York Times* — Writing *Gayslayer: The Story of How Dan White Killed Harvey Milk* — Founding Silver Dollar Books

Interview 14: November 14, 2010

Doth tosseth his hat into the political arena and runs for mayor of the fair city of San Francisco at the behest of a newspaper scion and continues to dissect the fault lines of campaigns, administrations and hot button issues.

Audio File 29

497

An unreconstructed radical comments on extending the Bush tax cuts and the similarities of the two major political parties — Reflecting on change in the economic base of San Francisco in the 1980s — Hinckle’s 1988 campaign for mayor: criticizing no growth housing policies; progressives as reactionaries; initial idea of the *Examiner*; support from the Mitchell brothers; Jack Davis, campaign manager; suing the League of Women Voters to participate in a candidates’ debate; voting outcome and making the run-off — Conflict between non-profit housing institutions and other politicos and residents of older San Francisco neighborhoods — Reflections on political campaign managers Clint Reilly and Jack Davis — The Irish and bar communities support Hinckle’s mayoral campaign — Return to the *Examiner*, hammering Art Agnos — Recounting rank and file police held hostage to Agnos’ politics — The political use of an expanded mayoral administrative staff — Censored by Will Hearst for a 1990 column opposing the first

Gulf War; resigning from the *Examiner* — Joining John Fang’s *Independent*, with the largest circulation in San Francisco; continuing to attack Agnos — Initiating Frank Jordan’s campaign for Mayor — Agnos’ retaliation against Fang

Audio File 30

515

The politics of building a new ball park — Hosting a KQED TV interview program from San Francisco bars — Attacking Agnos for blocking San Francisco’s bid for the 1996 Olympics and the conflict over Gay Games — Attacking Agnos’ opposition to home-porting the USS Missouri and naval fleet — More on leaving the *Examiner*: underlying causes; reflection on Will Hearst — Restructuring the *Examiner*’s Sunday magazine: producing *Image* — Putting out the centennial edition of the *Examiner*

Interview 15: November 20, 2010

More on the exigencies of journalism in San Francisco and accounts of writing about larger than life personalities, of launching madcap schemes and becoming a bi-coastal reporter.

Audio File 31

527

More on putting out the centennial edition: sleuthing the guarded vaults of the Hearst Corporation; soliciting writers; the return of Dugald Stermer as an art director; producing sequential sections; soliciting ads — Reflecting on the advertising policies of the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* — An aside on labor leader Joe Mazzolla and more on home-porting the USS Missouri — More on Hinckle’s mayoral campaign; Hunter S. Thompson as political coach — Writing special features for the *Examiner* — More on beef with Art Agnos — Taking a band of rogues to Ireland and dogging Dianne Feinstein — Shaking up the Irish establishment in San Francisco — Campaign to change the official song of San Francisco — Keeping up research, travel and reporting on Cuba

Audio File 32

545

Reporting from New York City — Relationship with Susan Cheever — Reportage that leads to medical reform — Reflections on John Maher and the founding of Delancey Street — Meeting Sal Rosselli

Interview 16: November 28, 2010

In which a gripping tale of backroom deals and mayoral king-making illuminates the nature of power in San Francisco and how a Chinese immigrant builds a powerhouse newspaper in a city that historically demonized the “oriental.”

Audio File 33

555

More on the role of political consultants in San Francisco politics — The Fang family’s involvement in San Francisco politics — Going after and defeating “Red” Art Agnos through the *Independent* — How John Fang built his business — More on the *Chronicle*

and *Examiner* rivalry — Both papers compete with the *Independent* for advertising revenue — Turning the *Independent* into a political powerhouse — The *Independent's* campaign to buy the *Examiner* — Reviving the *Argonaut*

Audio File 34

572

The economics and politics of stopping the Hearst *Chronicle* from undercutting the *Independent* — A political strategy to oppose the merger of the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* — Reviewing Frank Jordan's election as mayor; Hinckle's and Davis' refusal to back Jordan's campaign for a second term; selecting Willie Brown to run for mayor — The political influence of Willie Brown on the Department of Justice prevents the newspaper merger — The Department of Justice makes a ruling tailor-made for the Fangs to purchase the *Examiner* — Reflection on working with Ted Fang — The Fangs take over the *Examiner*

Interview 17: December 5, 2010

Concerning the place of nerve-center bars and restaurants in great cities, the personal relations with gossip columnists and officers of the law and recounting more on the life and death of the first Chinese owned major metropolitan daily and San Francisco politics.

Audio File 35

587

Remembering Elaine Kaufman and recounting the socio-political scene at Elaine's in New York; a *Ramparts'* hangout; a mayoral benefit and engagement party; Elaine's business practices — Discussing high profile watering holes in San Francisco — A send-off for beloved Basset Hound Melman at Stars — Reflecting on "pub culture" and the antipathy of the left to it — Hinckle's mayoral campaign plank to put casinos on Alcatraz — More on the politics of Hinckle's mayoral campaign — Herb Caen's fascination with Hinckle — Hijinks around town — Campaign to curtail the vice squad; friendship with Richard Hongisto — Friendship with writer and publisher Bob Callahan — The *Village Voice* considers Hinckle to be its editor — More on re-conceiving and editing *Image Magazine* for the *Examiner* — Tangling with Herb Caen

Audio File 36

607

Writing a column for the *Independent* a year after the Fangs sold paper to Phil Anshutz — Reflecting on Anshutz's strategy for his papers — Describes the Fangs putting out the *Independent* sharing staff and space with the *Examiner* — Talking Willie Brown into running for mayor — Long lived beef with the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* — Campaign against S.F. Planning Department's policy of restricting building in the neighborhoods and the scams by non-profit housing builders

Interview 18: January 9, 2011

Wherein our narrator continues his tales about and provides insider accounts of the rise and fall of the Fang-owned San Francisco *Examiner*.

Audio File 37

625

Comparing Florence Fang and Rose Pak — Reflecting on working with Florence Fang and the Fangs' ambitions in San Francisco — More on the Fang's acquiring and running the *San Francisco Examiner*; the tradition of for-profit-newspaper publishing — The potential of the first Chinese-American owned major newspaper — Hinckle's vision for a Pacific Rim-oriented newspaper and enlisting Francis Ford Coppola — Florence Fang's misguided building investment — Ted Fang's wrong-headed strategy for running the newspaper — Hiring Roger Black, renowned graphic designer — More on Hinckle's vision for the *Examiner* — A conflict between Ted Fang and Jack Davis

Audio File 38

641

David Burgin brought in as *S.F. Examiner* editor; one more stop-gap — The *Examiner* becomes a tabloid — More on the offices at the Fang's *Examiner* — Florence Fang fires her son as publisher — Philip Anschutz buys the *S.F Examiner* — Reflecting on the sorry fate of the first Asian-American owned major daily newspaper — Brief discussion of Hinckle's files

Interview 19: January 30, 2011

While explaining the origin and his revival of the *Argonaut*, a venerable journal now dedicated to “Low Brow Culture and Contrarian Politics in the Capital of the West Coast,” our narrator is joined by his younger daughter and together they regale the reader with rollicking stories about strange characters and manic milestones in their history.

Audio File 39

653

More on *City* magazine: A feature article on Bob Patterson, the real Mr. San Francisco; a proposal to drain Hetch Hetchy Valley and current environmental campaigns in the *Argonaut* — Envisioning the *Argonaut*; finding office space; hiring daughter Pia Hinckle to be managing editor; revisiting the dilemma of selling advertising — Reflections on the dearth of literary and political journals in the Bay Area — Down-sizing the *Argonaut* — Maintaining a unique niche in journalism

Audio File 40

672

Pia Hinckle joins the discussion and narrates her version of being fired from the *Argonaut* — Pia's assessment of the *Argonaut* — On the vicissitudes of publishing without selling advertisements — Pia's journalism trajectory post *Argonaut*, including a stint at *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, *San Francisco Examiner* and Charles Schwab — An aside on the success of Politico.com's print edition and the pitfalls of the *Bay Citizen* — Reflecting on the collapse of progressives' politics in San Francisco's Democratic Party — Remembering “loonies” who passed through the Hinckle household — Pia's twenty-first birthday party at the Mitchell Brothers' O'Farrell Theatre — Pia's version of her dad's marriage to Susan Cheever — Teaching at Urban School — A family trip to Cuba

— An aside on U.S. foreign policy — On finishing the book *Who Killed Hunter Thompson* and other potential stories — Discussing Julian Assange's Wiki leaks and the profit derived by the *New York Times* — Remembering a trip to Ireland with daughters Pia and Hilary — The fight to save The Dovre Club in San Francisco — A cursory discussion about the Irish, Catholic Church and KDFC FM radio station in San Francisco

Interview 20: February 6, 2011

Being a compendium of studied opinions on certain celebrated events and notorious personages and a taxonomy of liberalism.

Audio File 41

701

San Franciscans oppose public financing of athletic stadiums — Jack Davis' infamous birthday party — Hinckle's 60th birthday party on Treasure Island — Speculating on the fate of the San Francisco Forty Niners — Reflections on the politics of Willie Brown and Gavin Newsom — The limits of liberal politics and city planning in San Francisco; the horrors of Redevelopment — Editing the *Argonaut*; continuing to muckrake issues in San Francisco — Assessing current news websites: *Bay Citizen* and *Politico* — Picking up loose ends from previous interviews: on the death of Hunter Thompson; more on finishing *Who Killed Hunter S. Thompson*

Audio File 42

719

More on friendship with the Mitchell Brothers: Jim Mitchell's trial for the death of brother Artie; killing a book written with Susan Cheever — Reflecting on topics yet to be discussed in this oral history

Interview 21: May 2, 2012

Imbibing a mug of brew in the infamous Tosca Café, our narrator discusses events that transpired and personages who frequented this establishment, and holds forth on the sorry disappearance of San Francisco bars and bar culture, on the seamy side and intricacies of local politics and on his future projects.

Audio File 43

729

Importance of Tosca Café as a San Francisco gathering place — Editing Hunter Thompson's *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved* in the café — Reflecting on Tosca's proprietor, Jeanette Etheredge — Tosca as an epicenter for film directors — Meeting, working and close friendship with Emile de Antonio: assessing "De's" career; writing a book on the Bush family and conceiving a magazine — Problems in San Francisco's Democratic Central Council and Hinckle's current election campaign to be a representative — Reflecting on San Francisco electoral politics; more on going after Mayor Art Agnos and Frank Jordan; persuading Willie Brown to run in Tosca's pool room — Working with and the art of political consultant Jack Davis — Reflecting on the

disappearance of bars and bar culture in San Francisco and the effort to save the Gold Dust—Discusses future projects

End of Interview

Images

745

Preface

To read this rambling, discursive, opinionated, outrageous, and thoroughly brilliant first-person evocation of the life and times of Warren Hinckle III provided me a return to the past. To borrow the title of Dean Acheson's memoir, I was present at the creation of Warren Hinckle III as public persona. With certain important differences (my parents were divorced and I spent time in a Catholic orphanage in Ukiah), I came from the same world as Warren Hinckle, Catholic San Francisco. I experienced it as thoroughly as he did, struggled with its limitations, as he did, and was, as he was, empowered by its ethnic energy and provincial desire for escape. Hinckle refuses to sentimentalize this world in his oral history, which is the correct decision as far as establishing the record is concerned and also suggests that surge of skepticism that was part of his personality since boyhood and, all things considered, has made him an acerbic but effective commentator on diverse modes of chicanery and misbehavior, especially in political circles, as well as more mundane failures of big shots to practice what they preached.

In his evocation of Irish and German Catholic life in the Sunset district of San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s Hinckle evokes the hyper-localism and laconic stoicism of Catholic San Franciscans in that era. Indeed, as is typical of Warren Hinckle, he exaggerates it, suggesting a level of emotional and intellectual bleakness that existed in his mind as a rebellious and hell-raising youngster but which others, looking in from outside the culture, might see as mere evidence of second and third generation working and/or lower-middle-class immigrant life.

Right from the beginning, Hinckle wanted out, and he saw as his vehicle of escape the adoption of a persona of Peck's Bad Boy: not really bad, mind you, in the sense of juvenile delinquency, but skeptical and rebellious when it came to toeing the line. In this regard, his descriptions of his relatives and his relationship to his pastor at St. Cecilia's, Monsignor Harold Collins, suggest the duality of Hinckle's youthful, indeed lifetime, response to the world of his boyhood and adolescence. For all of his refusal to praise his relatives, Hinckle admires their stolidity and hard work. For all his efforts to depict Monsignor Collins as an emblem of oppression, he admires the good monsignor as a local chieftain with first-rate connections to City Hall and Downtown, and a fair-minded way of administering justice and perks.

I first met Warren Hinckle III in 1958 at the University of San Francisco when he was serving as an editor of the *Foghorn*, the award-winning student newspaper. By this time, as Hinckle outlines in this oral history, he had become enamored of and thoroughly knowledgeable in the intricacies of journalistic practice, type face and graphic design: a strong San Francisco tradition since the mid-19th century. He had also discovered while at Riordan High School and the University of San Francisco Brooks Brothers, whose tailoring he featured, and he had somehow managed to acquire a passing acquaintance with a number of authors on the Catholic Index of Forbidden Books. He was, in short, the rebel as dandy, a young Disraeli, perhaps, in that his dandyism constituted a fusion of Left and Right: right in his tailoring and concern for graphics, left in his developing politics, his identification with working people, and his growing awareness of various watering holes around town.

On one memorable evening, Warren and his sidekick Philip Hughes -- a Georgetown PhD candidate intermittently working on a dissertation regarding German diplomacy during the Spanish Civil War, currently living at home with his mother in St. Francis Wood and working as

a public relations officer for the University of San Francisco – took me, age eighteen, to the Pied Piper bar at the Palace Hotel for drinks, followed by dinner at Gino’s restaurant at Front and Clay in the produce district, a fine establishment (along with Jack’s on Sacramento, Solari’s on Geary, Sam’s on Bush) redolent of nineteenth century San Francisco but later, alas, razed to the ground to create the Golden Gateway complex. Until that evening, I had rarely heard such wonderful talk – writers, Georgetown, travel in Europe, worker-priests, New York jazz joints – by sophisticated men of the world who wore button-down shirts and emanated that sense of urban sophistication recently depicted in the television series “Mad Men.” As Hinckle relates in this history, he and Hughes and a largely invisible partner founded a public relations firm handling, among other clients, Citizens for Kennedy and a wonderful new nightclub, Station J, in a former PG&E substation in the Financial District, where the over-sized dance band was comprised of San Francisco Symphony orchestra players who provided a steady diet of Lester Lanin and Anson Weeks music, the kind that *Esquire* columnist George Fraser once remarked made life seem like a perpetual debutante ball.

To work for Warren when he was editor of the *Foghorn*, as I did, was to experience the total truth of what he would later chronicle in his autobiography *If You Have a Lemon*: a mélange of deadlines and madcap misadventures in a movie about college journalism. The University of San Francisco depicted by Warren in this oral history is a strictly personal vision. The University I experienced, by contrast, was scholarly, caring, and fun. The Dean of the College, the Reverend Edmond Smythe, SJ, personally guided the progress of promising students – such as Warren Hinckle chose not to be – and facilitated their entrance into professional and graduate schools on scholarship. But by this time Warren Hinckle had to rebel, and so why not rebel against USF? On the other hand, even in the midst of his rebellion, he was dating the niece of the Jesuit president, with whom he had a friendly relationship and who was heroically long-suffering when it came to his niece’s boyfriend.

Following graduation, Warren became, temporarily, even more Catholic, albeit Catholic Left, when he assumed the editorship of *Ramparts*, which was initially a magazine of Catholic arts and culture connected to Blackfriars Cultural Center at St. Dominic’s parish, an elegant English Gothic structure and the church of choice for both the black Catholics of the Fillmore and the Catholic establishment of Pacific Heights.

Quite soon, as this oral history chronicles in mesmerizing details, *Ramparts* morphed into a now legendary radical magazine of the civil rights and ant-Vietnam era. The only evidence of the onetime Disraeli dandy during these *Ramparts* years was, if I read things correctly, Hinckle’s addition of black patent leather dancing pumps to his Brooks Brothers couture, which would eventually feature as well the constant companionship of a long-suffering Basset Hound by the name of Bentley.

Having been in the US Army and a graduate student at Harvard during these years of Warren Hinckle’s coming out as a radical, I missed out on much of the story in this period, much to my wife’s relief. I rejoined the Hinckle saga, however, in the mid-1970s when Warren was serving as editor of Francis Ford Coppola’s *City* magazine and, a few years later, I worked with and for him again at the *San Francisco Examiner*, where he was editing the Sunday magazine. As a columnist and editor, I truly believe – whether in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (which he left to run for supervisor with the slogan “Save What’s Left of San Francisco”), the *San Francisco*

Examiner (where he formed a lifelong friendship with its dynamic young editor William Randolph Hearst III), or the other local papers he has worked on, including his own *The Argonaut* – Hinckle has remained a lively and entertaining writer: a throwback into the 21st century to the Front Page era in its last years when he joined the *Chronicle* in the early 1960s.

For many of these years, Hinckle was living as much in New York City as he was in San Francisco, and this too underscores the fundamental duality – left and right, East and West, workingmen's bars and Brooks Brothers, Roman Catholicism and a hell-raising leftism anchored in hell-raising performance – that has characterized Warren Hinckle's life and has conferred creative tension on his talent and the performing persona his talent requires to find expression and release.

For this, after all, is what Warren Hinckle most fundamentally is: a showman, a performer, an actor, this identity building upon a deeper self, energized by a rage for action, propelled forward by indignation, tempted constantly by the spectacular gesture verging on stunt, but a talent, a body of writing, so frequently on the mark, hitting the target at just the right angle. In the *Front Page* era, there were many such figures on the journalistic landscape as Warren Hinckle III. Now such figures are few and far between if they exist at all. But as someone who drank with Warren at the Pied Piper bar and at Cookie Pacetti's near the Hall of Justice and Red's in Chinatown, who worked under his anarcho-conservative direction at the *Foghorn*, *City* magazine, and the *Examiner*, I feel grateful for the period of apprenticeship during which I was under his influence and tutelage. Warren Hinckle III knew in the San Francisco I knew and lamented its passing: a City lost now, true, but surviving in memory and – in all of its outrageous complexity, its humor and chaos, its intrusion into history – surviving in these recollections as well.

Kevin Starr
California State Librarian Emeritus

Interview History

Born and raised in San Francisco, Warren Hinckle made his legendary career in journalism and politics first in his home town. As editor of *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's* magazines, he then rose to prominence nationally. The Regional Oral History Office interview with Hinckle was conducted over the span of three years, from 2010 through 2013. When all was said and done, we recorded over forty hours of dialog, discussion, and digression, making this interview a fitting testament to the wide-ranging interests and passionate commitments of its subject: Warren Hinckle.

Perched high on Cathedral Hill, with floor-to-ceiling glass windows extending its entire length and providing expansive views of San Francisco, Warren Hinckle's apartment, which he shares with long-time companion Linda Corso, provided a fitting setting for this sprawling and detailed life history. We met on Sunday mornings, sitting first at the long dining room table where we'd have a drink and review what we had discussed in the previous interview and map out what we would talk about next. The day's newspapers, the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among others, were stacked neatly at one end and often we'd schmooze about the latest local political intrigue, Hinckle's voice rising with indignation. Then we'd move to the living room—banked with couches and comfortable chairs and bookcases overflowing with recent biographies, studies of American culture, classic and contemporary novels, and eye catching collections of cartoons, etchings, photographs—where I set up my camera. Ever present in the room is Tobias, Hinckle's current Basset Hound, seemingly unperturbed as Linda's Yorkshire terrier, Delilah, tears in and out of the room.

Our sessions covered a lot of territory, from Hinckle's upbringing in the "lace curtain" Irish Catholic community in the Sunset District to his ascendancy on the national stage of investigative journalism; from the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s police beat in Oakland to the editorial suites of the *Chronicle* and then the *Examiner*; from a saloon in Nevada City where he considered reviving a 19th century newspaper to a palace in Cuba where he waited to interview Fidel Castro. Hinckle is also candid about his personal life. He talks about his family in San Francisco. (For one interview his daughter Pia joins the conversation, offering particularly delicious insights into Hinckle's role as editor of *City* magazine, a literary and political gem financed by Frances Ford Coppola.) He also recalls the highs and lows of a bi-coastal life while married to Susan Cheever.

Hinckle refuses to be pigeonholed. He is of the political left, committed to social justice, but is dismissive of ideologues. He is extraordinarily well read, catholic in his breadth of interests and vision. And he is profane, irreverent, an iconoclast prone to hijinks and pranks. Perhaps above all he is a masterful wordsmith, with a deep love for language, the craft of design and printing, and especially the process of publication. He describes his role transforming *Ramparts* magazine from a Catholic literary magazine to a mass circulation "radical slick" that changed American journalism and culture with as much brio as he discusses his career as a columnist for the San Francisco *Examiner* when it was owned by the Fang family. He is sophisticated and cosmopolitan, but repeatedly circles back to the specificity of San Francisco people, culture, and politics. We hear him reveal the back room politics of selecting mayoral candidates, as well his own quixotic campaigns for supervisor and mayor. We see him take up crusades, for example to

have the spirited song “San Francisco” replace “I Left My Heart in San Francisco” as the city’s official tune, or, with greater effect, to block the re-election of two successive mayors..

The last interview was recorded, fittingly, in Tosca Café, the North Beach watering hole where nearly forty years earlier Hinckle had turned Hunter S. Thompson’s brilliant but disorganized rant on the Kentucky Derby into publishable prose, thereby midwifing the birth of gonzo journalism. It was at Tosca, as well, that Hinckle would meet with San Francisco politicos to discuss the fate of the city. The interview is a coda to an oral history providing insight to some of the most important cultural and political events of the past half century.

Lisa Rubens
Historian
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

Interview 1: October 4, 2009

In which our narrator reflects on his lineage and upbringing, the adventures and misadventures of his youth in San Francisco and finds himself a logophile and devotee of typography.

Begin Audio File 1

01-00:00:00

Rubens: Good morning, Warren. It's October 4, 2009 and we're sitting—

01-00:00:07

Hinckle: Top of the day.

01-00:00:09

Rubens: —in your apartment and we're here to begin your oral history for the Bancroft Library at the University of California and it's a pleasure. It's really an honor to be here.

01-00:00:19

Hinckle: Excellent.

01-00:00:21

Rubens: I'd like to start with your family background. If you would first tell me when and where you were born and then back up and find out why you're Warren Hinckle the Third.

01-00:00:36

Hinckle: Well, I was an accident of history. But born at Saint Mary's Hospital in San Francisco. That was 1938. Then there were sixteen years of Catholic schools in San Francisco. My father was a machinist. He was Warren Hinckle, same name.

01-00:01:11

Rubens: Who was the first Warren Hinckle?

01-00:01:13

Hinckle: Oh, my grandfather, Warren Hinckle. Had the same name. His family were Germans, but German Irish from the north of Ireland. Protestants. Then the other main side of the family, my mother's side, is straight Irish from the—

01-00:01:43

Rubens: Which we'll get to them in a minute. So Warren Hinckle the first, is the first to come to San Francisco. How does he get here?

01-00:01:51

Hinckle: He gets here as a quartermaster sergeant in the army after the Spanish American War. He had been in the Philippines and ends up landing in San Francisco and stays. But he's born in the United States, in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania. German Irish Dutch.

01-00:02:23

Rubens: Okay. And is he the first generation that's born in the U.S.?

01-00:02:27

Hinckle: I believe he was the second. I'm a little unclear about that myself. But he was certainly born in the United States in Pennsylvania.

01-00:02:36

Rubens: So there are three generations of Warren Hinckles.

01-00:02:44

Hinckle: Well, it's four now because my son is also named Warren Hinckle, the poor bastard. He has to put "the fourth" on Facebook so he doesn't get all of my stuff.

01-00:02:57

Rubens: Do you know anything specific about your grandfather's background? Were his people farmers?

01-00:03:04

Hinckle: No. He was just in the army at that period of the Spanish War. My family's always been fairly vague on their family history. I got to be great friends with him when he was like in a nursing home. He was quite a character in San Francisco. He was an architect.

01-00:03:38

Rubens: Do you know where he studied or did he apprentice with someone?

01-00:03:40

Hinckle: I always tried to get details out of him over the years and he'd fudge a little bit, so I don't know. Maybe they were somehow on the shady side of things in Pennsylvania. I don't know. But he was in the army. He was a master sergeant in the quartermaster corps and he came to San Francisco as part of cleaning up and continuing to dispatch supplies, I guess, from the Embarcadero, from the Presidio, back and forth, military supplies for the Philippines occupation. And then when he quit the army, he became an architect. I think he told me he went to Cal, to UC. But I've never checked that out and I don't know. But he was an architect, a practicing architect.

01-00:04:37

Rubens: But he fell in love with the Bay Area? He wasn't going to go back to—

01-00:04:39

Hinckle: He didn't go back. He liked the drinking and the action here much better. It was the Barbary Coast era. Got through all that, met my grandmother, May Boyle, who was a dance girl on the Barbary Coast joints. I don't think she was old enough at the time to be in the pre-earthquake Barbary Coast. But one of the things that came back in the city fastest, I am told, from what I've read immediately after the earthquake, really fast came back, the strip joints and the bars and the restaurants.

- 01-00:05:28
Rubens: The dance halls.
- 01-00:05:28
Hinckle: They came back fast, yes. There was a demand for that. He married her.
- 01-00:05:39
Rubens: Was he much older?
- 01-00:05:41
Hinckle: Yes. He was maybe ten years older, ten, fifteen years older and he lived for years in the Mission District with his wife and her maiden sister. Her name was Annie Boyle. And Annie Boyle was, for forty-two years, the switchboard operator at the water department, San Francisco Water Department, precursor of what the PUC is. Did their switchboard. They had an office, a little building which is still there, on—it's either Powell or one of those streets that cuts in there right above the financial district. And that was the three story headquarters of the San Francisco Water Department back in the twenties, thirties, forties, and she was the switchboard operator.
- 01-00:06:48
Rubens: Did you know her?
- 01-00:06:50
Hinckle: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yes. And my grandmother was just sort of indulged and they wore a lot of furs and things like that. They had a brother, Billy Boyle, who sort of brought money into the family. My mother has often argued with me about this point, but I've heard from police, guys who were in the department around the time he was—he was a sergeant in the police department in the Mission District. And he was the secretary treasurer of the Widows and Orphans Fund. And at a certain point in time, a large amount of money, or what amounted to a large amount of money back in the forties, disappeared from the accounts of the Widows and Orphans Fund and there was quite a to do. It was widely believed that he stole the money but he was never charged or indicted and remained a police sergeant, active police sergeant, up until his death.
- 01-00:07:58
Rubens: This is your great uncle?
- 01-00:08:00
Hinckle: This is on the Irish side. Boyle. Yes, Billy Boyle. And I remember this vividly because as about a seven year old, my father took me over to one of his flats. All of a sudden, this guy on a sergeant's salary ends up owning three or four apartment buildings in the Mission. Flats. So you have to ask yourself—my mother always said, "He did not steal that money." I said, "Well, on a sergeant's salary, how could he get all this money to buy all these flats that everybody lived in, for Christ's sake?" And they didn't just live there. He rented them out. So as a seven year old, my father said, "We got to go over to Uncle Billy's place," and he had died. Heart attack or something. And he was

sort of a miser, collected string. You could see the balls. One of those type of guys. And lived quite frugally but had a lot of property. I'll never forget this, as a little kid going in and seeing the entire flat was just bare. All the wallpaper had been torn off the walls, the eaves were exposed. Every piece of furniture was ripped open. The floorboard planks were pulled up. Because whether it was true or not, the cops believed that he had gotten away with the money in the Widows and Orphans Funds.

01-00:09:25

Rubens: And they were looking for it.

01-00:09:26

Hinckle: So it was a day or two before his death was duly reported to the coroner and the other authorities because the police apparently wanted to spend some time there.

01-00:09:38

Rubens: Did he have a family? Did he have children?

01-00:09:40

Hinckle: No, he was a bachelor.

01-00:09:43

Rubens: So who got—did he leave any inheritance?

01-00:09:45

Hinckle: He was a bachelor. Well, his sisters inherited his property. So even though Aunt Annie Boyle never left the employ of the water department until her sixty-fifth or sixty-eighth year when she decided it was time to retire, the ladies inherited a hunk of money and they proceeded to spend it widely.

01-00:10:10

Rubens: So you remember when there was this infusion? You're seven, eight years old?

01-00:10:13

Hinckle: No, I had no idea when the money came in. I knew they bought my parents their first house out in the West Portal area back in the early forties, that sort of thing. That's when houses went for like three thousand or six thousand dollars apiece. And it was the house where I grew up all my life. Same house.

01-00:10:38

Rubens: What's the address?

01-00:10:39

Hinckle: 2567 Fourteenth Avenue. My sister still lives there. My mother died about two years ago at 101.

- 01-00:10:47
Rubens: Oh, that must have been hard. Well, let's back up and just get the Boyle side. We were talking about your grandfather meeting May when she was a dance hall girl.
- 01-00:11:06
Hinckle: Or recently retired there from. He met her in a dance hall, though. She was an active dancer, yes, for a while.
- 01-00:11:10
Rubens: Was she a San Francisco girl?
- 01-00:11:13
Hinckle: Yes, she was born here.
- 01-00:11:14
Rubens: And how far back did her family go?
- 01-00:11:16
Hinckle: They've always been very vague like that. The police sergeant, Billy Boyle and the two women were all born in San Francisco, so their family was here. Right. And some of the Irish are terrible about this stuff. Like my family, it took me years until I met a cousin from Kentucky or something like, the Noonans, to find out what part of Ireland they came from. Some people are like deracinated about that. They're so happy to be out of poverty or whatever that they don't think that way. I guess more middle class Irish do, like, "What county am I from?" That's very important. "That's my family's lineage."
- 01-00:12:03
Rubens: Well, the second generation often are—
- 01-00:12:04
Hinckle: That era, a lot of them, they didn't care. Never even thought to them to look it up. Yes.
- 01-00:12:11
Rubens: So Annie and Warren then have your father. Is that right?
- 01-00:12:19
Hinckle: Yes, they have two kids. My father and my aunt. And she becomes quite a dancer. Had obviously no relationship. She carried on her mother's tradition and took it one step further and became a very leggy dancer. This is now far beyond the time of traditional Barbary Coast and married my uncle, a guy named Ed Pacheco, who was a pioneer Italian family here. They owned the California Meat Company, which was the first big meat distributor, wholesaler in the city.
- 01-00:13:03
Rubens: What was her name?

01-00:13:04

Hinckle:

Vera. Vera Hinckle, then Pacheco. She was quite a beauty and married into this Italian meat family. I guess that's about the only way you could describe them. And so that was sort of the circle growing up. The Irish ladies had the money, had money, but they just spent it every year. For a while they were living in a flat in the Sunset and you'd go over there as early as February—early meaning in terms of Christmas presents—and by February and March the entire dining room area—you know, one of these old traditional flats, a big huge dining room—the Christmas presents were lined up halfway high to the walls, already wrapped for the forthcoming Christmas. All they did was go downtown and go shopping.

When the last of them died, when they cleared out that place, they had dozens of gifts from department stores, like O'Connor Moffat, things like that, that had been out of business for twelve years or more. They were just shoppers.

01-00:14:22

Rubens:

And they hadn't been opened or given?

01-00:14:23

Hinckle:

No, they just never got around to giving them. They bought so darned many presents. So we were kind of spoiled as kids. Christmas, if you didn't get fifteen presents, something was wrong.

01-00:14:32

Rubens:

I am interested in this background, because I want to look at the antecedents of your joie de vivre, of your expansiveness: If you can't get a decent cab that's going to take you from the airport, you're going to fly to another city. If you can't get first class, you're going to—

01-00:14:50

Hinckle:

There was a strike. We can get to that. It's a pretty good story.

01-00:14:57

Rubens:

We will get to it. Yes. So let's back up now and spend a little bit more time on your grandfather, the architect, because my understanding is that he was a drinking buddy of—

01-00:15:11

Hinckle:

Of Jimmy Rolph, Sunny Jim, the mayor and governor.

01-00:15:13

Rubens:

And that there was a photograph of him in the—

01-00:15:16

Hinckle:

There was a photograph of him, with a bunch of his crowd, in the Palace Hotel. Not the Pied Piper room but right off the lobby there was a very old traditional San Francisco bar. I can't think of the name right now but that's all right. And there was always a picture of him and he'd take me in there at times. "Hey, see this? That's me and this buddy and that buddy."

- 01-00:15:52
Rubens: So how did they come to know each other? And what kind of architect was he?
- 01-00:15:55
Hinckle: He did mostly ornamental stuff. He would do the filigree on the outside of buildings. He did a lot of the public school buildings in Oakland. Did a lot of buildings in the city.
- 01-00:16:08
Rubens: So the facades?
- 01-00:16:09
Hinckle: Yes. An engineer had to design the insides of the building so it wouldn't fall down, but he made it look classy, look elegant. He did that sort of architecture and became quite a crony of Jimmy Rolph when he was mayor of San Francisco and then he went on to become governor.
- 01-00:16:30
Rubens: He was mayor a long time, from around 1912 up to 1930.
- 01-00:16:37
Hinckle: You'd have to look up the exact years. But he was quite a colorful mayor, Jimmy Rolph. Great guy.
- 01-00:16:49
Rubens: So he came to know him because—
- 01-00:16:50
Hinckle: They were drinking buddies, card playing stuff, like cronies. Cronies in the sense of the way politics in the older days of political stories were. All these guys had their buddies and hung out and played poker together and went drinking together and did various things. One guy was an architect. I'm sure he got some city contracts out of it. Another guy was the mayor. Another guy owned a bunch of grocery stores. Another guy's in insurance. Yes, they were just guys. They hung out.
- 01-00:17:27
Rubens: And what about his political involvement? Was he politically active in the—
- 01-00:17:28
Hinckle: Nothing significantly other than being a buddy of the mayor's.
- 01-00:17:36
Rubens: And was he a practicing Catholic? Is he the Protestant?
- 01-00:17:41
Hinckle: Oh he didn't give too much of it. He felt all religion was very foolish, so he wasn't practicing anything.

01-00:17:48

Rubens: And did his wife try to—

01-00:17:49

Hinckle: Oh, yes. They always went to mass every Sunday. Oh, sure.

01-00:17:51

Rubens: Yes. Keep the family in the fold.

01-00:17:52

Hinckle: Yes, yes. Oh, god, he'd come home and sometimes would make my father sleep in bed between the two ladies, getting older to be ladies. The two sisters. "You get in there. I want your bed." Because he would come home with the heat on. "I don't want to be around those people. I got to sleep. I got to be by myself." Pretty frightening. Freudian implications there, but anyway, that was how times were.

But when Rolph became the governor, he gave him a political patronage job. There's no other way to describe it. And it was the Commissioner of Unincorporated Territories. I still have the card somewhere. I had it for years. He gave it to me. He said, "Oh, here's my card," when he was doing that stuff. He had a car and a driver and his assignment was to travel around the state to areas where the county and outlying lands hadn't incorporated yet and decide what should be incorporated, what the state legislature should involve itself in, in creating a new county, let's say, and that sort of thing.

01-00:19:11

Rubens: Because Rolph becomes governor in 1931. He's right before Merriam. So this is right when the Depression starts to deepen.

01-00:19:16

Hinckle: He's right before Frank Merriam. Yes. But he had a job—Depression or not, that was his job.

01-00:19:24

Rubens: Sounds like a plum of a job.

01-00:19:26

Hinckle: Yes, he had it good. And then, just after that, went back to being an architect, private practice, doing what he was doing. But he'd take me drinking a couple of times at this place, the House of Shields, which is a legendary bar on New Montgomery Street, right across from the carriage entrance to the Palace Hotel. And I was still in high school then. And he introduced me to the House of Shields, which became of interest journalistically later on because that was the Examiner bar. This was when the *Examiner* was the paper in the city. The *Chronicle* was the second, smaller morning paper. And the *Examiner* just ruled the roost. I got to know some of the *Examiner* guys and this was true when I got into college. Known them from my grandfather bringing me, said, "Hey, you should know this place if you're going to know anything." I mean,

it had no stools, no clocks. No stools. You stood at the bar. One of those old trough urinals, so if a guy's standing at the bar, they can just pee at the bar.

There was a lot of those types of bars in San Francisco back in that period. And the House of Shields was one of the legendary ones. It's still there. It, for years, remained a big businessmen's bar. All the railroad companies that had an executive and a secretary here, because the Arkansas B&B and the guy would have a desk and a secretary and he'd check whatever little shipping stuff they did in San Francisco and then come in here, spend an hour, go to lunch, have four or five drinks, come back for an hour to the office, go back to the bar and then get on the train to go down to the peninsula at 5:30 to 6:00 o'clock. These guys didn't work very hard. They were all in the Monadnock Building on Market Street. It's a beautiful building. I got to know a lot of those guys, too. So you kind of got a picture at an early age, whether you're in high school or in college doing your usual college stuff, of sort of how the town worked. It was kind of lazy and corrupt and heavy drinking. This was just an introduction to the town.

01-00:21:38

Rubens:

So let's freeze that for just one moment and now go back and pick up your father. Your father and then your mother. So Warren Hinckle the second is born. Is he the first of the birth order or is his sister? Another—

01-00:21:57

Hinckle:

He was senior to her. She was the second child.

01-00:22:02

Rubens:

Okay. And what's life for him like, no doubt under the shadow of such an imposing father?

01-00:22:09

Hinckle:

My grandfather didn't like him. He thought he was a wimp and wasn't successful and early on there was a conflict. Not a conflict in the family but it was—

01-00:22:19

Rubens:

Was he a momma's boy?

01-00:22:22

Hinckle:

No. He just didn't like him very much. He felt he hadn't gone out and achieved anything. He tried various jobs and became a machinist and he thought, "That's not what a son of mine does," sort of thing. Myself, I don't see anything wrong with being a machinist or any union member, but that was my grandfather's attitude.

He didn't think too much of him. And I got away. I remember I sort of excelled at an early age. I was, for instance, the valedictorian of high school, I remember my mother telling me, "Your grandfather, the buttons were popping off his ugly old vest, he was so proud." That's the type of achievement I guess

he thought a son or somebody, a grandson, that's what they should be doing, "My boys," and my father never achieved that level of com—

01-00:23:26

Rubens: Was your father bitter about that or what did he—

01-00:23:27

Hinckle: Oh, I think he was psychologically hurt by it because it was pretty clear that his father didn't care much about him. What is this, a psychological history we're doing here? He certainly, favored his grandson over his own son.

01-00:23:46

Rubens: You.

01-00:23:47

Hinckle: Yes. My grandfather thought, "Hey, he's like me," and said, "Hey, I'm going to show you the world. I'm going to take you around this town." He did do that up until he was hit by a Muni bus or the bus caught him or his leg or some damn thing like that. Then he was in a series of nursing homes. I was about the only one in the family who'd go over to see him. He was kind of autocratic. He presided over Thanksgiving dinner and would bring his own set of cutlery. I still have some of his original bone knives. He'd do the carving on the turkey and sort of decide who got to talk at the Thanksgiving table. And if somebody made the mistake of asking him, "What did you say," or, "What was that you said?" he would say, "I don't chew my cabbage twice. If you aren't listening to me attentively, I'm not going to waste my breath explaining something else to you again," that sort of thing.

01-00:24:42

Rubens: Sounds like it'd be hard to be the son of that man.

01-00:24:46

Hinckle: Yes. I think it was a little rough.

01-00:24:48

Rubens: I imagine he tried to get your father positions or he had access to people who could help him get a job. Or did he just write him off at some point?

01-00:24:55

Hinckle: You'd think so. Must have just written him off at some point. It wasn't a very healthy situation.

01-00:25:01

Rubens: But your father manages to—

01-00:25:03

Hinckle: He went on, and he became a Red Cross instructor and taught a lot of lifesaving classes and things like that. I remember when I was in college at USF, I'd like bring some friends home, some guys, or we'd all have a date and we'd come over. "Well, come on over my house first before we're going

wherever we're going." He'd come out. "Oh, people are over here, good." So he'd come up and he'd bring this big giant pink doll that he used in lifesaving instructions in his Red Cross classes, right. "Oh, now, here, let me show you this doll. See, this is where this thing goes and that's—." And everybody would go, "Oh, my god, what's that?" I just laughed and said, "Well, you know, welcome to my crazy family. That's how we all are."

01-00:25:51

Rubens: I wasn't trying to do a psychological history as much as to get a cultural and sociological understanding of the influences in your life. Was he also a drinker and kind of a good spirited person? Because it's funny-

01-00:26:04

Hinckle: No, he was pretty grouchy. He hit the neighborhood bar. He died in a bar. He fell off the barstool at Philosopher's Bar at West Port, a famous little bar. I was doing *Ramparts*, then. .

01-00:26:17

Rubens: Oh, so you were a grown man.

01-00:26:18

Hinckle: I was in my late twenties.

01-00:26:20

Rubens: Yes. Well, let's just fill in the picture a bit more. How did he meet your mother, who is she, and where did she come from?

01-00:26:31

Hinckle: She was born in San Francisco. Her father was an accountant. And everybody in the family—My mother later became and sort of made money—because my father wasn't making that much money—as a bookkeeper and then kind of the general manager and the head of an advertising agency. The head in the sense of the woman who really knew the office and the two partners asked her about her opinion about everything and that sort of thing for almost twenty years. Called Wenger Michael. It was an ad company. Did a lot of department store, smaller department clothing stores, advertising. They did fairly well for them sometimes. I got to know both those guys who were her bosses pretty well, particularly when I was putting out *Rampart's* and there was all these newspaper stories about it and there'd be a story in *Time* and they'd call him and say, "That's your son in *Time Magazine*. What's going on here? He must be some crazy lefty."

01-00:27:37

Rubens: She must have had some influence on you, do you think, since the first thing you did when you graduated from college was to create an advertising business. Wasn't that what you did straight out of—

01-00:27:44

Hinckle: Well, when I got out of USF, I wanted to go to work for the *Examiner*, which was still the great afternoon paper—and I knew a lot of those guys from the

House of Shields, naturally. So I went to see the city editor and was told that there's a six month waiting period. I had been the editor of the *Foghorn* at USF, somewhat infamously, by some accounts, which we'll talk about.

There was a six month waiting period at the *Examiner*. So then the guy who was the PR man for the university, the public information guy, a guy named Bill Hughes—he was a Brooks Brothers vest wearing type, Stanford MA in history, very smart guy, but was part of the then underground gay culture in the city. He said he had to leave the university's employ. I didn't realize that at the time but I found out later that he had been caught in one of those sexual situations. The whole gay scene was not then, in the early sixties, at the beginning of the sixties, what it is now, needless to say. So he said, "I'm going to start a business with two guys, friends of mine, John Barth who's an old UPI reporter and International Red Cross PR director forever, and this other Bill, Billy Upton. He's quite a guy. He does theater publicity and travels with shows and everything. So he started that. And I didn't have anything to do for six months because I was waiting for the job at the *Examiner*. So instead I just started this company and I went down to Lawton Kennedy, a great influence on me and my life. A fine arts printer in San Francisco who has done most of the Book Club of California books over the years. He specialized in hot type, things that looked like they'd been printed two centuries ago. Beautiful jobs of printing and did it all the traditional way. None of these computers.

01-00:30:06

Rubens: How did you know to go to him?

01-00:30:08

Hinckle: I started writing for the *Progress*, which was a giveaway paper, a predecessor to the later *Independent*. But it was a throwaway on the door steps of the city.

01-00:30:23

Rubens: See, this isn't in your autobiography. It's such a great title: *If You Have a Lemon, Make Lemonade: An Essential Memoir of a Lunatic Decade*.

01-00:30:25

Hinckle: No, that's too much detail. And I started writing a column for them. You didn't get paid, but hey, it was a paper and I was just in high school. I started writing in high school.

01-00:30:36

Rubens: We'll get into all this in more detail. But I'd like to continue asking about your mother. Did she work the whole time she had children?

01-00:31:06

Hinckle: Yes, she worked the whole time.

01-00:31:06

Rubens: Tell me about the other siblings.

01-00:31:13

Hinckle:

My brother Bob was the middle child; then there was my sister Marianne. They had a kid about every three years.

01-00:31:24

Rubens:

Sometimes you refer to your sister as Vampira, where does that name come from?

01-00:31:28

Hinckle:

Yes, well, there was a woman on late night television, this is back in the early sixties, and her name was Vampira and she kind of looked like my sister. So I had my sister working at the time for *Ramparts*. It became her nickname. And she also worked for this short-lived PR agency, Barth, Hughes and Hinckle. She had to go get ice and stuff like that; dodge the bill collectors and the summons guys. But that company was interesting because as much as my grandfather got me knowledgeable, let's say, in this way of the traditions of old town San Francisco—you know, men of power. These weren't United States senators or anything but these were business owners and politicians. Their style and their sense of what the town was and their sense of empowerment, whatever you want to say, was very attractive and influential.

Then this brief Barth, Hughes and Hinckle period gave me another kind of introduction to the town. It was the then gay culture of the town because all these guys were gay, except for this guy John Barth wasn't gay. I wasn't gay. But everybody kind of connected with the firm and all Hughes' friends were and most of the clients that the firm had come from gay guys. Like one guy would be from the Japan Society and the other guy had the Oakland Opera Association. But they were part of the gay subculture. So all of a sudden, all of our clients were professional gay guys and you got sort of introduced.

"Come on to this party." Like Terrence O'Flaherty was the TV critic for the *Chronicle* for many, many decades. He was a famously closeted gay guy who had one of the great houses, pads on Telegraph Hill and gave parties all the time. And I'd get invited to those parties. It'd be all these guys. I was less than twenty-one or just twenty-one or around there. So between meeting all my grandfather's friends and those connections back when I was in high school and just getting into college, and this brief and absurd period, I had an incredible exposure and education. There were guys whose families owned ranches everywhere. There was John Dodds, a great guy, who published my autobiography. Became a big editor at Putnam. Married Vivian Vance, who became a good friend of mine. But he was part of their orbit, because he was a gay guy, too, but then he went to a shrink and decided when he married Vivian he'd get out of it. Anyway, from an early period, all these complications of the culture and the people in the city and this style and that. I got introduced to at the earliest possible level. So had kind of a different picture of the world.

01-00:34:27

Rubens: This is a very male world. What about your sense of women? Now your mother worked.

01-00:34:32

Hinckle: Yes. Oh, yes. And she was very good with a dime. She was a bookkeeper a businesswoman. But the old ladies who inherited money, they just—hey, nothing—they had to spend all the money every year. They just had to spend it.

01-00:34:59

Rubens: How do you talk about your household? So there's three kids, a working mother, a father who is a machinist. How did you think of yourselves in terms of class?

01-00:35:20

Hinckle: Well, we didn't think in terms of class then. It was the Sunset white ghetto and I guess we thought we were middle class because people had jobs and we had a car and everybody lived on the same block and all the houses looked alike. It's interesting. When I first started going to New York, I was just stunned to find anti-Semitism. And even more disturbing, I found the anti-Semitism among Jews; talk about self-hating Jews. I mean, that was quite an introduction to culture, too. Boy, oh, boy, because in San Francisco, that innocent period of the fifties, growing up in it, everybody had their area. The Irish had the fire department and the police department and a lot of the judges and became lawyers or this and that and whatever. But basically they had the fire and the police department and a hunk of city government. The Jews, in our view growing up, were these great people who were the financiers or the contributors. That's why we had an opera and a symphony and they owned the best stores, like the big department stores and the ones that sold fancy stuff. They were great people. They were admired. And the Protestants, who because we were Catholic, you'd say, "Oh, Protestants." But the Protestants were the ones talking care of business and making a lot of money. They generally run the stuff that wasn't left to the Irish and the more culturally inventive nicer guys, Jews.

I never even saw, I'm sure, hardly ever a black person. Until I was going to USF and there were blacks on the basketball team. And then when they were such winners, we said, hey, they're great. Look at this. They're winning all these games for our school. And we were so innocent. I remember when I was a kid, I was helping my brother at one of those after school jobs; we made a little money. So we decided, all right, we'll get a television. We didn't have a television set yet, our family, and this would have been the middle fifties. The butcher across the street had a television set, the dentist up the street had one. So we went over to the Fillmore where there were a lot of appliance stores then. This is before the whole area was decimated by redevelopment and got a little twelve inch big bulky thing on a sale or something like that for 130 bucks. Bought the TV. We had also brought our dog along and the dog was

black. And without thinking, because it wasn't prejudiced because we didn't have any opinions to form prejudices, rather innocently called the dog Nigger, right? We didn't think about it. Our parents didn't say anything. It was like that was his name. So anyway, we're over in the Fillmore, buying the television. It was still a largely black area and the dog wandered off or something like that. So it was the first time I became conscious. Wait a minute, this isn't too cool, is it? So we had to go around the street yelling for the dog. "Hey, Nigger, Nigger, where'd you go?" that sort of thing. So I said, "Maybe we better call him Cigger or something like that." So that was the first time I ever thought, "Wait a minute. You shouldn't call people things like that." First time I ever became aware of it.

01-00:38:54

Rubens: Did anyone from the neighborhood yell at you or take a swing at you?

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: So let me pull you back just a little bit more because these are wonderful observations about how culture works and the meaning of culture and how it suffuses your sensibility and you don't necessarily know that it has another meaning. We were talking earlier about a book on the culture of the thirties and I think about the song the bees do it, the birds do it. I mean, they used to say the Jews do it. I think they say the niggers do it.

01-00:39:20

Hinckle: Cole Porter song. And it was a long time later we found out Cole Porter was gay and there was a subtext to all those songs. That strange love. I mean, it's a wonderfully complicated world when you get to know this stuff and you laugh about it. It's great. It's rich.

01-00:39:34

Rubens: Yes, and he used those words. Those were in the original lyrics.

01-00:39:41

Hinckle: Yes. Exactly. He was an anti-Semitic fag but he was a great songwriter.

01-00:39:48

Rubens: Let me fill in. Did I get your mother's name?

01-00:39:50

Hinckle: Angela. Angela Devere. Her maiden name was Devere.

01-00:39:55

Rubens: How did your parents meet?

01-00:39:57

Hinckle: They met on the Irish Catholic social circuit. High school type stuff. My father went to Mission High School. My mother's family moved down to San Mateo after the earthquake, the 1906 earthquake.

- 01-00:40:18
Rubens: So they had been generations in San Francisco.
- 01-00:40:20
Hinckle: They were here before. Yes.
- 01-00:40:21
Rubens: Catholics?
- 01-00:40:22
Hinckle: Catholics. Yes. And moved down there. Well, Devere, no. The father was a Protestant. Her mother was Catholic, I think she told me, because the Devers were Irish Protestant Catholics and there was a part of that with the Hinckle family, too, out of Pennsylvania. And most of them were from Belfast and from Limerick. I remember going over to Ireland one of the first times and being down in Limerick, and sure enough, there's all these tombstones with the name Devere on them.
- 01-00:41:03
Rubens: They were descendants?
- 01-00:41:03
Hinckle: Yes. But it never would have occurred to my mother or anybody else in their family to even go to Ireland, certainly not to look for your ancestors or check out a cemetery. They didn't think that way.
- 01-00:41:15
Rubens: So she's raised down in the Peninsula?
- 01-00:41:20
Hinckle: She went to high school down there, San Mateo High School. And immediately after the move, her father died of a heart attack. So she went to work at like fifteen. Lied about her age. And would take the train to San Francisco every day to work at the Southern Pacific. And she still got her Southern Pacific pension, long after she worked elsewhere.
- 01-00:41:43
Rubens: And we're talking in the early thirties?
- 01-00:41:46
Hinckle: No, we're talking in the twenties, teens. When she was growing up, I guess, it was the twenties. So she got married late. So it was late twenties, early thirties when she got married.
- 01-00:42:00
Rubens: What is the Irish Catholic social scene where they met?
- 01-00:42:02
Hinckle: Well, it was the post-school dances. At that time in the city, there were a lot of cultural clubs in the neighborhoods and they didn't have too much culture. They were mostly about boys meeting girls and that sort of thing and they

were famous. They were all over the city in the Excelsior and in the Mission. Every area in town had their social clubs and they would have weekend dances and that's where people would go to meet or hookup and that sort of thing. Around the Prohibition period or right afterwards.

01-00:42:38

Rubens: I was just going to ask you. Did your parents have stories about bucking Prohibition or—?

01-00:42:44

Hinckle: No, not really. Guess it wasn't an issue.

01-00:42:47

Rubens: They found liquor? It didn't poison them, blind them, as legend would have it?

01-00:42:52

Hinckle: Apparently wasn't an issue. And no great speakeasy stories, anything like that.

01-00:42:57

Rubens: So Angela and Warren II meet each other.

01-00:43:00

Hinckle: Yes, and they go out for quite a few years.

01-00:43:03

Rubens: Are they about the same age?

01-00:43:04

Hinckle: He's a little older than her. He's maybe eight, ten years older.

01-00:43:08

Rubens: He's already a machinist.

01-00:43:10

Hinckle: Yes. I think he was a machinist at that time. He was also working at the time for the Southern Pacific. He later became a machinist. But not the office boy job. Just trying to get your first job sort of thing. And then started going to all these social clubs and a lot of them were connected to the parish churches and some of them were totally secular, let us say. But they're famous things. I once did a book—it has nothing to do with this interview. It's the story of Pete Pianezzi, who was one of the great old town guys. Bill Newsom, Gavin's father, got him out of jail. He was unjustly sentenced for a murder that he didn't have anything to do with. He has a wonderful man.

You'd like this book; it's a social history about that period of San Francisco, how everything interconnected and social clubs and how they tied a little bit into underground activity like liquor and things like that. But it wasn't like an exposé; it was just fabulous reminiscences of that period of the city. It's *The Bum Rap Kid: The Autobiography of Pete Pianezzi*, published by Silver Dollar

Press. We published it in 1985, just because at the time I was publishing some other books. We'd started a little business with a printer. Actually, that was a book I was writing, when I met you, when we were doing that book for the ILWU. That was the press we used to print that book.

01-00:45:03

Rubens:

Oh sure, I wrote a short piece on photography, in *Strike*, which you wrote for the fiftieth anniversary of the ILWU [International Longshoreman's and Warehouseman's Union] in 1984.

01-00:45:05

Hinckle:

We did this book for Pete Pianezzi, too, and a couple of others, basically because Dan Hickey had a printing shop. He was a drinking buddy at the Dovre Club, this famous Irish bar in the city which figures in a lot of other stories later on in the narrative. But he had a presence and he had downtime and he was doing really, really well. "Let's publish some stuff. I got the type, I got the paper." "Okay."

01-00:45:34

Rubens:

So let's do just about ten more minutes on this and then we'll take a break. I'll change the tape and we'll finally get to focus on you. But I want to stay with your mother and father just a little bit more because; and fascinating stories emerge on the social, cultural history of San Francisco. So they meet. Do you think they meet at the Southern Pacific?.

01-00:45:49

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. I hadn't thought back on this period, but yes, they did meet at the Southern Pacific, yes.

01-00:45:54

Rubens:

And then participated in this Irish Catholic social network.

01-00:45:57

Hinckle:

But there was a social set which would go to all these social clubs and weekend dances.

01-00:45:49

Rubens:

And they dated for a while?

01-00:46:00

Hinckle:

Dated for almost ten years. Long time.

01-00:46:04

Rubens:

Their courtship takes place during the heart of Depression and New Deal. This had to have affected their lives. You, their first born, comes along in thirty-eight.

01-00:46:12

Hinckle:

And so they were married sometime in thirty-six, thirty-five. I don't know.

01-00:46:18

Rubens: And how Catholic was she, Angela?

01-00:46:24

Hinckle: She was Catholic. Went to mass. Had a reasonably realistic view of the church. It wasn't perfect. She didn't expect it to bring any miracles in to her life but she was raised Catholic and that's what you were and she went to mass.

01-00:46:42

Rubens: And the kids were going to go to Catholic school. Is that automatic?

01-00:46:46

Hinckle: Oh, that was quite a fight in my family because my father, if I had to be an amateur shrink, I'd say, was asserting his independence or something like that. He became very anti-Catholic. "That goddamn Catholic church and this and that."

01-00:47:03

Rubens: Plus it sounds like the grandfather was not-

01-00:47:06

Hinckle: He didn't care. My father became very anti-Catholic. So I was the oldest and it became a big issue when it was time to go to high school. We went to Saint Cecilia's, which is where I grew up. Became very friendly with the pastor, Monsignor Collins, who's quite a character in the city's history. And I'll tell you later, if you want to ask me, about the time where he got me out of a scandal where the parish was going to be dissolved and we were all in trouble and he was going to get canned and I had to make a confession. It was kind of like Jesus conceding to power but he says, "I'll take care of you on the other side of the deal. Just trust me." And I trusted him and he did. It was nothing. I'll tell you very quickly. Collins became not a mentor, but he made me wise early. This was in grammar school.

01-00:48:16

Rubens: Was this a co-ed elementary school?

01-00:48:18

Hinckle: No co-eds. No, no, no. Girls and boys. Got to be segregated. Now I was putting out a little paper in the school, a little hectograph paper.

01-00:48:28

Rubens: In grade school?

01-00:48:30

Hinckle: Yes. If I end up in the nut house, I'll put out a paper in the nut house. I just keep doing it. But I was putting out a paper in the seventh and eighth grade for the school. It didn't have a paper, of course. Most grammar schools don't.

Anyway, so we decided to throw a party after graduation, which in this case was for both the boys and girls. Now I was kind of into forms. Not forms for the sake of bureaucracy, but how things looked. So I decided, well, now we're going to have to rent a bus and do this stuff. So what if somebody gets hurt, what if somebody gets sued. I was thinking way ahead of my time. Said, "Hey, we're going to have to have everybody sign this form absolving the picnic committee of responsibility." I had no idea what that meant but it sounded like something you should do. So I copied some forms, put on this thing and gave them out with a copy of the paper to all the kids in the eighth grade and that was the graduating class.

01-00:49:38

Rubens:

This is just *sui generis*, something that just comes out of you?

01-00:49:40

Hinckle:

Yes. Because that's what those forms looked like and you heard of things like that. If we got a committee, hey, everybody should sign off on this. Not our fault if somebody drowns in the swimming pool or something like that. I don't know. Something I heard or read or saw on television. Anyway, it just seemed like an adult thing to do. So I typed up the form. I was more interested in how the form looked than anything. Oh, see, this looks professional. Who says we're kids? And the mother's club was meeting that afternoon in the school auditorium and we were handing them out during lunchtime in the school yard and somehow a copy of this form blew in the winds or some fink took it down to the mother's club, which was then meeting, and somebody read it and reacted in horror. "What? What are they doing? And they want the parents to sign this thing? They can't have parties anyway." Then they came into legalisms like, "Well, yes we can because we're having a party after graduation, so the rules about separate classes don't apply. What are you talking about?" Well, if you can believe this, it split the damn parish and my mother was getting constant phone calls from people yelling at her. And then some women were taking the other side and saying, "This is ridiculous. Who are these biddies saying that they can't do that? These kids, they've graduated by then. If they want to have a party together, boys and the girls, why can't they? They even said they'd have chaperones. Goodness sakes." And people said, "No, they can't. Look what they're doing. This is scandalous." And it became a huge, huge thing. And the nuns, the order of nuns took sides and some of the nuns thought that was fine and some of the nuns said that's horrible and the nuns were going to break up.

So Harry Collins invites me over to his office, the Monsignor, in the rectory. And he's a great guy. He was wealthy before he became a priest. He was a stockbroker in Los Angeles before he even became a priest. He worked with this guy McIntyre who ruled the Los Angeles diocese for decades. Very rich and powerful man in his own right, the cardinal down there. And he decided to become a priest and he got in with this guy when he was first a priest. I don't know how but he did. Maybe because he was a stockbroker before he

became a priest. And he was world wise. And he calls me up and he says, "Look, we got a real problem here." Sit down. I'll never forget this. He gave me a drink. Took out a little brandy thing, poured a little brandy. "We're men together here, boy," and said, "I got to ask you a favor. This has gotten so bad now I've got a call from the mother superior of the order. They think they may have to withdraw the order from here. These nuns are fighting each other."

The archdiocese is just totally upset. The whole parish is calling them and other people are calling them. He said, "It's just blown all out into complete hysteria." And he says, "I'm afraid now. They're talking of me coming down there. And the neighboring parish, Saint Brendan's, they have eyes on us and they'd like to extend their parish lines. They have to build a new church and they could end up—" because he'd just built a magnificent church because he knew how to raise money. "They could end up taking over our church and calling it Saint Brendan's, these people." Because they don't even have a decent—

01-00:53:17

Rubens: What did this play into?

01-00:53:19

Hinckle: Well, they were right up the hill, and I guess there was some kind of turf war.

So he says, "Here's what I want to ask you." He says, "I want you to call off the picnic." And he says, "I know that's saying that these people—I agree that they're nuts about these objections." He says, "But we're going to lose the parish or we'll lose the nuns." He says, "It's too much." And he says, "I promise you. I'm telling you man to man, I will make it whole. You will have your picnic, I promise you, and it won't cost anybody a cent. You won't have to collect any money. It will be done." But he says, "You've got to announce that you're going to cancel the picnic so I can stop this civil social insurrection that's causing so much havoc." So I did. I trusted him. I just said, "Yes, you make it sound—" I don't know what I said.

01-00:54:22

Rubens: Must have made a case somehow.

01-00:54:22

Hinckle: I did. I was the head of it. I said, "No, okay, sorry guys. We're canceling it but we're going to have it anyway. I'll tell you in a couple of weeks. We'll be able to do this but right now we got to cancel it." Everybody's yelling at me. "You're giving in." No, that's what we're going to do. Well, we did and about three weeks later he says, "Get on the phone. Call everybody. They'll be two buses at 8:00 in the morning. I've already booked a place down in La Honda. You guys are going down there. All the food, everything's on me. I'm sending somebody to cook, sending you a couple of chaperones so that they won't yell at you about that but they'll look the other way." And I never forgot this. He had two cases of Country Club ale stuck under the seats. Now, Country Club

at that time was one of these high powered beers. I mean, a little more alcoholic content than just a beer. And people, "Oh, you're drinking Country Club. You're really going to get stoned," that sort of thing. It was a high powered beer. And he secreted two cases of this under the seats where I was sitting and there was a note. "Hey, use them wisely."

01-00:55:39

Rubens: So what a lesson.

01-00:55:40

Hinckle: We were eighth graders. It was like a lesson. Some people you can trust.

01-00:55:45

Rubens: That was a lesson in the art of compromise and trusting people and what power can do and style.

01-00:55:50

Hinckle: Yes, style. It was more of a style. I said, "This guy's got class." He was a good guy.

01-00:55:56

Rubens: This is a great story. How about if we take a break for just five minutes.

01-00:55:59

Hinckle: Yes. That's enough of this stuff anyway.

Begin Audio File 2

02-00:00:00

Rubens: Warren, I want to wrap up a few loose threads here. Your mother won the argument in your household over going to Catholic school?

02-00:00:24

Hinckle: My father became anti-Catholic. And I was the oldest. So I went to Saint Cecilia's. Now for the parish school, the Catholic school, you paid one or two dollars a month for tuition, whatever the hell it was. Right. But then it was time to go to high school. So my mother said, "Well, where do you want to go?" And I said, "Well, either Saint Ignatius or Riordan, I guess." There was three Catholic boys schools—it was all still segregated, boys and girls, then—in the city. And he would say, "No, nobody's going to Catholic high school. We're not paying for it. Goddamn Catholics," that sort of stuff. So it was quite an object of tension and I ended up going to Catholic high school but he became so persistent that my brother and my sister after me did not. She had to concede to whatever peace in the family and said, "Okay, they'll go to public school, high school."

02-00:01:21

Rubens: But they had gone to Catholic elementary schools?

02-00:01:24

Hinckle: Yes. We went to the same elementary school.

02-00:01:24

Rubens: And how did you end up going to Riordan? Was that a compromise?

02-00:01:27

Hinckle: Well, that's part of the innocence of this period. SI is definitely the superior college prep school in the city, no question about it. It's the premier school. And then there are two other schools: Sacred Heart, which is college prep but not as much. It's more associated with the fire department and the police department than it is with kids just getting ahead to get the best grades to get into good colleges. And then there's Riordan, which was an accidental school that sprung up. It was named after an archbishop who got killed by a train. Literally run over by a train in a car on the train tracks. I always thought there had to be some weird element to that story that was never told. But anyway. And that was sort of the Catholic reform school in town.

02-00:02:23

Rubens: Literally?

02-00:02:24

Hinckle: Yes, it was. I knew friends of mine at Gino and Carlos who went to SI calls it—one of the owners over there at the bar, Gino and Carlos of North Beach—calls it, "Riordan, that's Mission with tuition." Like a public high full of rough people. But the test for the two schools, Riordan and SI, were on the same day at the same time. And my friend Gerry Davalos, who was a lifelong friend, lived two doors from me on Fourteenth Avenue. His father was a cop at the Ingleside police station. And he was going to work that day and the police station was right by Riordan High School. And so we could get a ride to the Riordan test but we would have to get on two buses to take the SI test, so we took the easy way and took the Riordan test.

02-00:03:26

Rubens: So that kind of cultural—

02-00:03:27

Hinckle: That cultural innocence.

02-00:03:27

Rubens: Or the idea of social mobility depending on one high school or the other, this was not something that your mother pushed?

02-00:03:33

Hinckle: No, no.

02-00:03:34

Rubens: This was up to you?

- 02-00:03:35
 Hinckle: Or else they would have said, "No, you're going to SI, for Christ's sake." No, they didn't even think of it. No, my mother wasn't like, "Oh, no, you've got to go to that because you'll do better in college and get in." No.
- 02-00:03:47
 Rubens: How did your parents respond to the whole brouhaha about the picnic? Were they proud of you?
- 02-00:03:53
 Hinckle: Well, it was just a pain in the ass to my father, I guess. But my mother was just—she got her Irish up. She said, "You can do this and that and tell me about it but don't you start criticizing my son. He didn't do any wrong." She more or less took my side, but saying, "Why did you cause all this trouble?"
- 02-00:04:10
 Rubens: At the same time.
- 02-00:04:12
 Hinckle: At the same time.
- 02-00:04:13
 Rubens: I want to ask you a few more questions about your mother. How did she manage three kids and work? Who took care of the kids in the early days?
- 02-00:04:22
 Hinckle: She started working when they started the company and the guy had a job somewhere else, this guy Lee Wenger who first started it. And she answered an ad in the *Progress*, which was then the neighborhood paper and worked like two or three days a week for three hours a day in his home basement, helping him start to do filing and setting up his books and that sort of thing. And then he kind of became—it became a bigger thing and by that time we were older. She was there a long time, almost ten years.
- 02-00:05:07
 Rubens: So she managed? She worked around the kids' schedule?
- 02-00:05:11
 Hinckle: She would only work during hours that we were in grammar school or kindergarten. But it worked out with the way that this guy was starting his business at home. He had a home office and he had another job and he was starting up his own business. And she did it for so long and by the time he became larger and had a successful ad business, I was in college and my brother and sister were in public high school two blocks up the street from our house and could take care of themselves after school. They were already sophomores or juniors or something like that and I was in college. It just lucked out for her. As the business expanded, she had to start going downtown to work and then it became bigger and she was much more involved. It became a full-time job. It coincided with us being older, so it didn't become a conflict, like, "Do I have to leave the kids?"

- 02-00:06:10
Rubens: Let's evoke what that household was just a little bit. Were they politically or socially conscious? Did they read newspapers?
- 02-00:06:24
Hinckle: No.
- 02-00:06:25
Rubens: None?
- 02-00:06:26
Hinckle: The only books in the house I brought in. I joined book clubs at an early age when I had a few bucks, working for a little job. The butcher across the street hired me on Saturdays to clean up the sawdust and stuff. There I also saw how sausages were made and things like—I know it's an old joke, but I actually saw them being made. And hotdogs. I never had a hotdog again for a long time.
- 02-00:06:50
Rubens: Something out of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*? Did you see dog tails?
- 02-00:06:55
Hinckle: No, but you'd sort of see inside. Boy. A lot of things people don't see on the outside.
- 02-00:07:02
Rubens: The meat inspection act may not be enforced.
- 02-00:07:03
Hinckle: Yes. But that always got me. I've had criticism and arguments with people over the years about putting out magazines. Said, "No, this isn't any good. We're going to hold it up. If we got to air freight it, we'll air freight it, but we ain't going to put this stuff in, that stuff, because you only live every day and that'll be stale later." No, this is the way we're doing it. I don't care. And I've had books that I've been years late because I didn't get around to finishing them. So what. What's the big deal? It's a goddamn book. The only reason you really finish them is you want the next payment. Everybody writes for money. It comes down to that.
- 02-00:07:42
Rubens: But what's the link here? Is there a link?
- 02-00:07:43
Hinckle: Yes. It has to do with seeing inside, how a butcher shop works or inside the machine shop. We had to go to Christmas parties a lot where my father was. I saw how dirty and messy and screwed up it was. But when the fire hydrant or something comes out or the elevator, it looks all clean. So I always thought, "Hey, it's never a mistake until it's done." And you are so crazy to compromise and put out something that is crap or boring or a hotdog that—"I mean, the finished product is different from the messy ways of getting to it.

When you get to it, that's what you're judged on. And if you go ahead just for the sake of convenience or orthodoxy or whatever and say, "Well, okay, we better go ahead and do this right now because that's what we're supposed to do." Why? I mean, that's just nuts because you end up with something mediocre or you're embarrassed by and/or sued because you didn't do enough. Whatever. And I don't like time very much anyway. I've always been habitually late. Me and Hunter Thompson share that quality. I just never bought the thing. Once it's printed, then that's what you're stuck with. Once the deal is done, the book's out, the product's done, whatever you want to call it, the end product, the end game, then people are going to read that. And they don't care if you had a tough time. They don't care if everybody's screaming at you because if it came out bad, then you take all the crap for that, right.

02-00:09:30

Rubens: Yes, or they wouldn't read it.

02-00:09:32

Hinckle: Or they wouldn't read it at all.

02-00:09:32

Rubens: So let me just stay with your family a little bit more. There's a great line in *Lemonade* when you're talking about courting wealthy people in New York for *Ramparts*, dining at fancy restaurants, that you had never been in a cafeteria in your life and I wanted to know about family meals and family vacations and any aspirations for going to the "good" places in San Francisco.

02-00:09:53

Hinckle: No, no.

02-00:09:55

Rubens: What did it mean you never were in a cafeteria? Did that mean your family had higher standards or-

02-00:09:58

Hinckle: Oh, we brought our lunches to school.

02-00:10:00

Rubens: Oh, that's what you're referring to.

02-00:10:02

Hinckle: In high school, yes. You always had bagged lunches. And you might go sit in the cafeteria and eat it and maybe get a thing of milk or something like that. But you didn't like waste money and buy your food, which was crappy food anyway, from the cafeteria. Not that my mother was a gourmet sandwich maker or gourmet cook. She was the opposite.

02-00:10:24

Rubens: Just a proletarian, get it done?

- 02-00:10:26
 Hinckle: Yes, yes. But I don't know if that's thrift or part of the culture then. But you brought your lunches to school. That's what you did. So you didn't spend money.
- 02-00:10:36
 Rubens: Family vacations?
- 02-00:10:40
 Hinckle: Traditional Sunset, the Russian River, two weeks a year, Monte Rio, places like that. Rent a cabin.
- 02-00:10:47
 Rubens: And what kind of car? Was that a measure of any kind of class or status?
- 02-00:10:53
 Hinckle: No. I guess it was a new car. I guess it was okay but it wasn't like a Cadillac or something. It was Ford, stuff like that. It wasn't a name expensive brand car.
- 02-00:11:10
 Rubens: And the impact of World War II. I wanted to pick this up earlier. The two threads I want to follow by asking this question. We were talking a little bit about if prejudice and discrimination was something that you learned or was it inherent in the culture. And when you said there was a certain position the Jews held in the cultural landscape of the city—you said you saw no blacks.
- 02-00:11:31
 Hinckle: I grew up utterly without prejudice.
- 02-00:11:33
 Rubens: And what about the Japanese who had lived in the Fillmore and interred during the war?
- 02-00:11:45
 Hinckle: Until I was out of college and long into doing professional journalism, I didn't even know what they did to the Japanese in California.
- 02-00:11:53
 Rubens: Nothing your family talked about? Didn't have an impact?
- 02-00:11:56
 Hinckle: No. Not at all. No.
- The Japanese were the enemy, of course, and we had air raids. I remember as a very, very little kid sitting in the backyard here and everybody talking on the radio about Pearl Harbor. One of my earliest memories, like at two or three, I don't know what year it was. But I remember talking about it. Somehow it stayed. There were air raids all the time so you had to have these blackout curtains; you always had to pull them down. A guy on our block, Eddie Straeho was the block captain. Everybody had a block captain. And he was a

great guy and a good drinker and he'd be over at my house all the time, my parent's house and having a few beers. Throwing back booze. And basically, he was in charge of our block security. But I thought "He's smashed most of the time. How's he going to keep the Japs from hitting us?" This is like seeing inside the organization where you go, "Hmm."

02-00:13:09

Rubens: But you were afraid? You were a young kid.

02-00:13:13

Hinckle: Well, mostly it was like they might bomb you, but it wasn't like they talked about it all the time at the dinner table or anything like that. It was just one of those things.

02-00:13:20

Rubens: Did you listen to the radio?

02-00:13:23

Hinckle: No, no.

02-00:13:24

Rubens: And the family didn't? No opera or music hall theater?

02-00:13:29

Hinckle: No. When I lost my eye, I started listening to things. Serials. "I love a Mystery." Those sort of radio serials at night.

Now the guy across the street was an electrician. Till Molinari. He was a real sweetheart of a guy. He made up a thing for me to circumvent my mother, who would say, "No, eight o'clock you're going to sleep. I don't care if the episode of the Lone Ranger is on." This is all radio. This is when you get to stay up to 8:30 to listen to because they're showing who—the mask is coming off. She was pretty firm, "No, those are the rules." So I was over there complaining to him one day. "I can fix this up for you, kid." He says, "Bring the radio over." So he fixed it up. He unscrewed the bulb that showed it was on. And he got an old receiver from a handset phone, like in the thirties movies where the phone dangles down and you dial the thing. You hold it like this and you speak into the mouthpiece. And he soldered something and plugged it into my radio. He says, "So here's what you do. You press this thing and then if they look in the room they can't see if the light is on. And you put this under your pillow, this big bulky thing and you can listen all night long and they won't know the difference." So I kind of learned to skirt the rules, and that there's always good guys around to help you do things.

02-00:15:06

Rubens: You've always found them. Did you have your own room, by the way? Or did you share with your brother?

- 02-00:15:13
Hinckle: No. We had our own room until my sister was born and then they moved us downstairs where we shared a room because they redid the family rec room, whatever they called that, as a bedroom. When I had my own room and wanted to be a disc jockey or something. I had to get records or tape things or pretend I was talking in the receiver to be on the radio. It was all radio then, even though some neighbors had a television.
- 02-00:15:43
Rubens: Do you know if your family had listened to the FDR fireside chats?
- 02-00:15:50
Hinckle: There wasn't a left thought in that family.
- 02-00:15:53
Rubens: Well, I don't mean left thought but maybe even just keeping up with the political issues of the day?
- 02-00:15:56
Hinckle: No. No information whatsoever.
- 02-00:15:58
Rubens: You had no newspapers in the house?
- 02-00:16:00
Hinckle: The only thing that was influential was my mother was very independent minded and very fair minded. And even if she didn't quite approve of what I got myself involved in, she'd make a judgment and would usually back me up. Almost always back me up. But on a judgmental basis, saying, "They're really being unreasonable on what they're mad at you for." So it got her mad. But it didn't mean that she wanted to let me totally off the hook. "You didn't have to do that in the first place maybe."
- 02-00:16:40
Rubens: You mentioned that this fellow, this neighbor helped you get the radio rigged up so you could listen to it after you'd lost your eye. Tell me about when did that happen. How old were you?
- 02-00:16:53
Hinckle: Oh, I was seven or eight or nine.
- 02-00:16:57
Rubens: Well, that's a big range.
- 02-00:16:59
Hinckle: I'm not sure. I don't know.
- 02-00:17:03
Rubens: How did it happen?

02-00:17:06

Hinckle:

My father had the heat on. And he always had this obsession. We had to go out and see the Christmas tree lights in these neighborhoods in the deep Sunset, where people organized a whole damn block and lit up the houses, that sort of thing. So there we had to go. And we had the two old ladies with us, my grandmother and Annie Boyle from the water company, and my mother and I guess my brother was there too. Anyway, he was making a turn off Park Presidio, Sunset Boulevard, going down towards the zoo to go look at one of these places that are all lit up with stuff and some guy hit the car making the turn. And he was drunk and they never noticed my father had too many drinks. But he was smashed. And there were a lot of operations. Glass came in the eye, is what it comes down to. One or two of those women were injured, too. Not tragic injuries, all basic glass cuts and crap and maybe one of them shattered an arm, the car was just rammed right into the side of the car when it was making a turn. Big street.

And then there were a lot of operations over the years after that, they were trying to save the eye, etcetera. Finally, when I got into college, it was useless, so I said, "Hey, put in a glass eye." Too many operations. I had that for a long time. This eye patch only came about because I was then doing *Ramparts*. There was a lot of stuff going on. It was like back to New York for a press conference, some big huge flight, and I was supposed to go in for an operation because they figured out if we put some sort of brass plate in your head it'll hold—because the glass eye kept falling out. Techniques weren't perfected at that time. It was funny because I'd be drinking with some cops or something like that and the glass eye would fall out in the drink. That was an object of great merriment. And we'd all laugh about it. But it became a pain in the butt to try and keep this glass eye so you could have cosmetic looks. And I was supposed to schedule for this thing, for the plate. And I finally said, "Wait a minute. I'm in this huge fight right now. I can't go do the fight because they're going to put a brass plate in my head." I didn't have to go to Vietnam because I only got one eye. I got out of that. And these guys are coming back from the war with brass plates in their head because they got shot in the head and I got to have an operation just for a stupid thing like this? Forget it. I'd rather have a fucking bandage. They just put a patch on it and I just—screw it. I never thought about it afterwards again. The hell with it.

02-00:20:26

Rubens:

It's quite a story. I didn't know you were struggling with so many years about whether the eye was going to be saved. Did vision ever return to that eye?

02-00:20:36

Hinckle:

No, but it was partially there and it deteriorated, as I recall. So naturally they're not going to say, "Hey, rip out the eye." It was like doctors who said "Maybe we can get this back."

02-00:20:47

Rubens:

It must have been a very traumatic experience in your life. Painful?

02-00:20:52

Hinckle:

It was great. It was great because I got out of school for almost two years and I had a home teacher who really taught me a lot of stuff I never would have got in Saint Cecilia's grammar school. She knew I kind of liked graphics and things like that, so she had me cutting out magazines and making up my own versions of the world, or writing something about specific geographies. She brought me big giant books and stuff, and would have me go over to her place sometimes. She lived out in the Marina, by Balboa High and it made me kind of independent. It was like school. She gave me a lot of things to learn that never would have been on the reading list, not that there was a reading list at Saint Cecilia's grammar school. And she got me ahead a couple of years in education by home schooling. Now she had narcolepsy. So she'd be over at our house sometimes for dinner or she'd say, "Oh, come over to my place this afternoon." I got the bus routes down. You'd go down Van Ness. And she'd pass out once in a while. I'd have to figure out what to do with her. She passed out. She also had a few drinks.

02-00:22:05

Rubens:

How could you tell the difference?

02-00:22:08

Hinckle:

When she had these episodes at our house, you didn't really know. And I didn't think that much about it. Everybody drank. It wasn't like she's drunk. "Oh, god, she's having one of these things," which she did all the time. She'd just have these—she'd fall asleep.

02-00:22:27

Rubens:

She was a home-school teacher through the parish or through the—

02-00:22:30

Hinckle:

Through the public school system, which provided for somebody who had to be at home because they were injured and couldn't go to school.

02-00:22:38

Rubens:

Yes, so this went on for two years?

02-00:22:39

Hinckle:

For about a year and a half, yes. Almost two years. Fourth grade and fifth grade, something like that. Or fifth grade and sixth grade.

02-00:22:47

Rubens:

So you learned the meaning of the phrase, "When handed a lemon, make lemonade."

02-00:22:53

Hinckle:

No. Howard Gossage gave me that one.

02-00:22:55

Rubens:

I understand that but you're saying it could have been the worst time in your life. You could have been—

02-00:22:58

Hinckle:

Yes, but it was the best. It was great. I mean, somebody actually encouraged whatever stupid talent I might have had and really advanced my education. I only had one teacher for almost a couple of years in a mediocre, no criticism of the Catholic school system, grammar school at that time. But hey, it wasn't exactly prep school.

02-00:23:23

Rubens:

And so this was at a young enough age that you weren't so conscious of yourself?

02-00:23:26

Hinckle:

Wasn't conscious of it, no.

02-00:23:30

Rubens:

Embarrassment over your appearance or—

02-00:23:31

Hinckle:

No, no. It was like, "Oh, okay. I got this thing in my eye and now I got Miss Birdwell. I won't go to school for a year and a half. This is better than school. This is actually kind of interesting." I was probably smarter than some of the nuns who were teaching us. I knew a little bit more about some of the subjects for the sixth grade.

02-00:24:02

Rubens:

And you now had the skills to do that newspaper. What did you call the newspaper that you did in grammar school when you were thirteen?

02-00:24:20

Hinckle:

Oh, what the hell did we call that thing? It didn't come out that often.

02-00:24:27

Rubens:

What was a hectograph?

02-00:24:28

Hinckle:

It hadn't even advanced to mimeograph. I've done some mimeograph papers later on. But compared to this, mimeograph was pretty advanced. That's where you got kind of a blue filmy thing and you'd take the ribbon off the typewriter and it cuts through. You type right onto the sheet and it cuts through the film and then you put it on a drum and it prints out black ink but you can actually put separate ink and wash the thing and put colors on. And you can do fairly advanced work and I was always into using typewriters, because that's all you had, was a typewriter. I wanted these things to look more like newspapers. How do you stack capitals and put a deck on it so it looks like a real newspaper in typewriter type.

02-00:25:17

Rubens:

Are you saying in part you had already had an interest in this and this home school teacher really is teaching you some skills about how to paste things up?

- 02-00:25:23
 Hinckle: No. She didn't really have anything to do with the newspaper part, but she got me into organizing and drawing and logically saying, "Okay, here's the geography of Africa. That's what we have to learn about. But why don't you go to all the magazines you can find and cut out every image and things like that, and now let's make a timeline and let's see what we got to learn about. What countries and what articles relate to them and you organize these pages so the stuff you paste in goes with that and so you understand."
- 02-00:25:56
 Rubens: Your writing skills and your eye were trained.
- 02-00:26:00
 Hinckle: Yes. Yes.
- 02-00:26:01
 Rubens: And then at thirteen, where does the idea come from? What kind of newspaper is it?
- 02-00:26:07
 Hinckle: What, that high school paper? It was nothing. I forget what we called it. Class United or something like that.
- 02-00:26:13
 Rubens: But it was just telling stories about—
- 02-00:26:14
 Hinckle: Yes, it was. When you say hectograph, that is really low—mimeograph was top of the art. Hectograph, it was just a blue film sheet with a white paper on it and you could draw on it or you could type on it and you run through a messy drum or something and it could only print in ugly blue.
- 02-00:26:35
 Rubens: I'm just trying to get a sense of, at thirteen, what's driving you to—
- 02-00:26:38
 Hinckle: Well, I was looking at it and said, "No, geez, we want to go to mimeograph. We don't want to stay in this hectograph crap."
- 02-00:26:42
 Rubens: So it's the technology that grabs you. What of literally the writing?
- 02-00:26:44
 Hinckle: I was really hot to go to mimeograph.
- 02-00:26:46
 Rubens: Oh. So it is the mechanics, the technology that's really interesting you as opposed to—

02-00:26:50

Hinckle:

Well, early, I just saw these as crap. Look at these things. There's other things. Mimeograph, you take the ribbon out and it cuts it in and it actually prints more precisely. You're still using only a typewriter but you can see the difference. Obviously, that was better. You learn how to do that, so you lobby to get a mimeograph machine.

02-00:27:09

Rubens:

I'm trying to get at if there is some kind of compensatory urge driving you because you lost an eye

02-00:27:20

Hinckle:

Oh, I'd leave that to the shrinks. I have no idea. You wanted to do a newspaper because that's what you wanted to do. That made sense to do it but what they had to do it with was this really blurry crappy thing. And then you'd see stuff. I remember my mother used to cut the stencils for the Young Ladies Catholic Action League or something. There was the YLI [Young Ladies' Institute], which she was involved with forever and ever. She drove until she was almost ninety and she finally stopped driving because she did most of her driving to take the other old ladies to funerals, and finally they all died out. So she said, "After the last funeral, no sense driving anymore. That's all I ever drive for, is to take these people to our funerals." But they did it on mimeograph. And I'm just saying, "What is that? How come if I try to do this little paper in the sixth grade, seventh grade, whatever it is, it's all blurry and blue?" She says, "Well, that's the hectograph, that's what they have at school." I said, "That's ugly. Your thing is really nice. You cut through this little blue stencil and boy, it prints nice. I want to get one of those." It was just obvious. You wanted to go to the next stage.

02-00:28:51

Rubens:

Wow, what great stories. Now we've been going at this for quite a while; we talked extensively before we began recording. Do you think maybe we ought to call it a day for today.

02-00:28:59

Hinckle:

Yes, let's end this.

02-00:29:00

Rubens:

Ok. Is there anything else you want to say about your family?

02-00:29:02

Hinckle:

No, not particularly. But the third thing, as in Warren Hinckle III, only came about because when I was working in summer jobs, during high school stuff, I decided, "Okay, you got to get a bank account because now you got your own money." My mother used to always piece me off with a little extra dough here and there. "Oh, you don't have enough money to do what you're doing." And my father had a bank account at that bank and he wasn't like Warren Hinckle the Second, but he had the same name. So it was like how do you distinguish? "What's this? You're getting the same mail as me from the bank." And so I

said, "What do we put? Junior?" But he was already junior, which I guess is the equivalent of second. His name was Warren Hinckle, Junior. So I had to put the third so he wouldn't get my mail and bitch about it from the bank. And it was on my checks for a while when I had checks and stuff as a kid. And then I took it off. Said, "This is ridiculous." But somebody saw it or my sister knew. So when we all of a sudden had to be raising money for *Ramparts*, which she didn't know anything about or how to do anything like that, it was like, "Well, yes. Weren't you the Third?" Well, yes, I was, but got rid of those checks. Got a little ridiculous. So somebody at *Rampart's* accounting said, "Well, let's be the third now. People think we got money or something." So that's why I put it on there.

02-00:30:39

Rubens: Yes, I get it, embellishing your status when appealing to potential, rich donors. The story also says something about your relationship to your father.

02-00:30:49

Hinckle: Yes, it wasn't a great relationship.

02-00:30:52

Rubens: How did your grandfather like your mother? Did he think that was a good marriage?

02-00:30:59

Hinckle: He respected her because she told him off. Nobody else in the family would tell him off. But he didn't like her because she told him off. But he had respect for her, so he kept his distance, as you'd say. So she said, "We've made a tolerable understanding." She also said, "I don't know why your father won't speak up to him. Nobody else will." She called him "That pompous old bore. He comes in here and tries to take over Thanksgiving and organize everything." She'd add, "And I just told him, 'You are just one big fat drunk old drone. I don't give a goddamn what you think you're going to run. This is my table.'" But nobody ever crossed him in that family. In that sense, she stood up to him and told me the stories. I said, "Oh, boy."

02-00:31:44

Rubens: She was formidable.

02-00:31:47

Hinckle: Yes, yes. He said, "I don't believe it." She said, "He packed up his stuff." Said, "I'm leaving this house and never coming back if you're going to talk to me that way." She said, "He packed them up." And she said, "You know what? He never went down the door and left. So then we had a respectable truce."

02-00:32:08

Rubens: Let's make this the last question. In terms of the tone of the household, did your mother and father get along? Did they love each other?

02-00:32:26

Hinckle:

Well, they had three kids. He was infantile in a lot of ways. He would get violent. He didn't beat her up or anything like that but he'd get violent and threatening and if she cooked something he didn't like, he'd like spit it out in front of the kids and say, "This is crap." You remember that stuff. So you kind of didn't like the guy. I said, "That's no way to behave." Even if you didn't grow up in a place that taught you manners, you just knew that was wrong. And her idea was that she probably never should have married him. Over the years she'd talk about it. I'd ask her. I said, "Why the hell did you ever stay married to this asshole?" And she said, "You got kids. You get married, you get married for life. That's your lot. You just can't try and change the deal if you didn't like it, and particularly now you got kids, you got a family. You're just going to have to learn to suffer with it and get along." Very realistic, tough Irish lady.

02-00:33:37

Rubens:

Let's call it a day with that.

02-00:33:39

Hinckle:

Yes.

02-00:33:40

Rubens:

This was. terrific. Thank you.

Interview 2: October 18, 2009

In which Hinckle provides a robust account of 16 years of Catholic schooling and his evolution as a newshound

Begin Audio File 3

03-00:00:00

Rubens: I thought we'd start with both the sociology and the theology of Riordan High School. It was a pretty new school yes?

03-00:00:34

Hinckle: It was brand new. It was brand new. I guess that ours was the first graduating class, first four year class out of there. There was a very traditional San Francisco school called Saint James, which was a parish out in the Mission and it had a high school. And then they shut it down and put whoever was left in that into Riordan and then started taking new students. Sacred Heart and Saint Ignatius were basically overflowing in terms of the availability for students, so I guess the archdiocese thought they had to make a new school, make some money, and indoctrinate people. So they built Riordan. But because Saint Ignatius had the brains and the money and Sacred Heart had the football and the police and the fire department, Riordan got the leftovers, which was catch as catch can. So I used to always call it reform school, the Catholic reform school.

03-00:01:50

Rubens: And so by the time you got there, you had already put out a hectograph newsletter?

03-00:01:58

Hinckle: Oh, stuff like that in grammar school. Yes, yes.

03-00:02:01

Rubens: You already had a strong interest in journalism. Was there a newspaper there already established that you are aspiring to join? How do you characterize what drove you to be a journalist? I know your home-school teacher played an important role in your education. What about your high school classes?

03-00:02:14

Hinckle: Well, I don't think it has anything to do with schooling. I don't know. Some people want to be fishermen when they grow up, some want to be cops, some want to be doctors. I always wanted to be a newspaper guy. I don't know why. Got very early interested in print. What little money I had when I was a kid, I would always go down to the out of town newspaper stores and buy papers and look at them and went to second hand bookstores and bought books, back even before I got into high school. Stupid textbooks about newspaper makeup and crap like that. Where do you get the first interest? I simply don't know. It was there. It was there. And then you get into the culture and the romance of newspapers, good guys versus bad guys, whatever. The city room, bar room

bonhomie, that sort of stuff that you see in old movies and things. And it looked like a lot of fun and, in fact, when I got into it, it was a lot of fun. It's a good thing to do and particularly when you don't do it through the prism or the rigor of a journalism education or school, so it all comes sort of naturally. You're either interested in it or not.

That's why the *Foghorn* over at USF was an interesting paper because there was no such thing as journalism classes or even one class at USF. And some of the more active students—there weren't that many active at USF. It was get through there and get the hell out. It was a streetcar college basically. Some of them got into the military ROTC sort of thing and formed a clique. Right away you see power cliques start and the way institutions work. The ROTC guys were called the Pershing Rifles—military guys and they liked to wear boots on campus and they had little uniforms.

03-00:04:28

Rubens:

Pershing for the—

03-00:04:30

Hinckle:

Pershing Rifles. Yes, for General Pershing, I assume. And they had their own clubhouse. And the *Foghorn* had its own little clubhouse and so I guess maybe the non-military types at USF, Kevin Starr, Brendan Newsom, Gavin's uncle, Bill's brother, myself, we gravitated to the school paper.

03-00:05:24

Rubens:

Just to stay with the chronology of your development, could you flesh out a bit more about your induction into journalism, when in high school -was there a kind of clique in Riordan? Was this a way also to find a social group—not only a feature of your romance with newspaper.

03-00:05:33

Hinckle:

At Riordan? No.

03-00:05:37

Rubens:

The school newspaper was called the Crusader?

03-00:05:40

Hinckle:

I think that's the school motto; the name-for-the-football team sort of stuff. And somebody made it up because it was a brand new school. Wasn't like they had a tradition. So they had to have a school song and a motto and that's what they called it.

03-00:05:57

Rubens:

How did you come to write a column at Riordan?

03-00:05:59

Hinckle:

Well, I went to the paper when I first started there. It wasn't much. It only came out once in a while and basically I did it all four years and more or less put it out, had a couple of buddies. One guy sold ads and then a couple of

people wrote. It was smart. There were no classes. It was all total volunteer activity. As it was at USF.

03-00:06:24

Rubens: You had a teacher advisor?

03-00:06:25

Hinckle: Yes. Basically, you got to do what you wanted because nobody wanted to do it. And if nobody wants to do it and the school's supposed to have a paper and some idiot comes along and says, "Oh, could I work on this?" and then you do all the work, they're going to say, "Oh, this is good," right, until you start causing trouble and then they're going to say, "Oh, Jesus, now what do you think you're doing?"

03-00:06:43

Rubens: Now, the byline often says War' Hinckle. What accounted for that byline?

03-00:06:51

Hinckle: Oh, I think that that plant, Garrett Press, the printing plant, only had this typeface. I think it was Bodoni ultra-bold something in thirty-six point. They only had it in one font and it was too big. And I had some stupid idea that all the column headlines would be in this type and my name didn't fit, so I had to shorten it. That's why. No other reason.

03-00:07:21

Rubens: But it had a little elan to it. It kind of added a little snappy—

03-00:07:26

Hinckle: Yes, but we were not subject to interpretation in those days. It just didn't fit so that made it fit.

03-00:07:34

Rubens: This was a school run by the Maronites. What was the character of that religious order? You've written or been quoted about the scars that people take with them all their lives from a Jesuit education. How do you talk about the theology there? Did you go to mass every morning?

03-00:07:51

Hinckle: No. You had to go to certain things and you did. Almost everyone I've gone through sixteen years of Catholic schools with in San Francisco are not particularly religious. And not particularly political. If anything, they're sort of stuffy to conservative with old town values type stuff, however you want to define those. But came from working class to middle class affluent families. Families weren't particularly well-educated. It wasn't like your friend's parents went to any of the East Coast big colleges or anything like that. Probably somebody's father went to Stanford, wow, that was like going to Harvard. The horizons were very limited. It was a very insular culture.

03-00:08:58

Rubens: Any teachers that were outstanding or memorable?

- 03-00:09:00
Hinckle: Yes, there's always teachers that are outstanding. The Marionist order is an odd bunch. They have very few priests. They're almost all brothers who sort of take all the vows: poverty, chastity and that stuff, and then instead of becoming a priest—you would figure that, hey, if you're going to go through all that trouble, you might as well be a goddamn priest. But that is mostly an order of brothers. So I'll leave that to a shrink.
- 03-00:09:38
Rubens: No nuns?
- 03-00:09:40
Hinckle: No nuns as far as I knew. I don't think they ever had an order of nuns. They might have somewhere.
- 03-00:09:43
Rubens: So you didn't have women teachers?
- 03-00:09:47
Hinckle: Oh, no. Lordy no. No, no. This is a boys' school. No way. Not even a nurse. Not even a nurse.
- 03-00:09:56
Rubens: What was the social life of that period like for you? This is 1952 to 1956.
- 03-00:10:05
Hinckle: American pie. It was that period.
- 03-00:10:07
Rubens: But a lot of drinking?
- 03-00:10:17
Hinckle: Yes. Everybody drank beer. That was the thing.
- 03-00:10:21
Rubens: How'd you get it? Was it hard to get?
- 03-00:10:23
Hinckle: Yes. Stole it from your parents or somebody knew somebody that was older and got it. It wasn't like a bunch of alcoholics. And I recall in high school we used to go to weddings all the time. You'd find out where a wedding is and a lot of the weddings in our culture were in the parish and there were a couple of banquet halls where people came after the church ceremony. Some people would go to the Olympic Club but most of them would go to these banquet halls in the deep Sunset—from Taravel Street out toward the beach or Irving Street. All further out in the sand dune areas. And there everybody would have a whole bunch of drinks and there'd be a party and then they'd all sit down and give the stupid usual speeches. And sometimes they'd have a band that's after.

So one of the things we learned to do as kids—all kids do this sort of stuff one way or the other, from sneaking into the ballgame to whatever else—we'd find out, "Oh, there's this wedding now," and so you'd go and put on your only coat and maybe only tie and pretend to be a friend of the family of the bride or the groom and not get caught. And you never did. "Hey, who do you know?" blah, blah, blah, right, and get a bunch of drinks and eat.

03-00:11:45

Rubens: Like in the movies.

03-00:11:46

Hinckle: That was part of the culture. Yes, you could make a funny movie about stuff like that. That's what kids did.

03-00:11:51

Rubens: And so how did you think of yourself? Were you starting to invent yourself in the sense of how you wore your clothes, if you thought you were attracted to women, if you were an intellectual?

03-00:12:04

Hinckle: No.

03-00:12:02

Rubens: Any of that to comment on?

03-00:12:06

Hinckle: It was a completely innocent time, no goals, in the sense of bettering your social surroundings. Just because you read more books than some of your friends, you just read them because you were interested in them but you didn't particularly feel that, "Hey, I'm smarter than that guy," or "What's the matter with these people." You didn't think about it that way. You just read because you wanted to. But you didn't feel like that made you anything special.

03-00:12:36

Rubens: Or conversely that it made you geeky? That it made you not in line with—?

03-00:12:40

Hinckle: Well, no. What would make you geeky would be not going around to guys, getting in trouble after school and stuff like that. That would make you a geek, like weird.

03-00:12:53

Rubens: So even though it was called the "reform school," that was a slur by kids going to or went to the other Catholic high schools. This was more working class and not college preparatory—

03-00:13:00

Hinckle: But there was a social code and you were either with it or you weren't.

03-00:13:05

Rubens: Did you wear jacket and ties?

- 03-00:13:06
Hinckle: Jacket and ties, no. No.
- 03-00:13:08
Rubens: Okay. Casual.
- 03-00:13:09
Hinckle: Yes.
- 03-00:13:11
Rubens: Had to carry a handkerchief? I know a lot of Catholic schools used to have a handkerchief check to make sure boys had one in their pockets.
- 03-00:13:17
Hinckle: Never had that. Never that. Now handkerchiefs are for gay signals.
- 03-00:13:24
Rubens: Well, I was going to ask you—it's become such a to-do in the last ten or more years about the priests misbehavior with young men. Were you ever aware of anything like that or any—
- 03-00:13:34
Hinckle: Yes. But it was never serious and we all laughed at it. There were a couple of brothers, I think his name was Boglitz, one of the teachers at Riordan High, who was famous for coming down, sitting at your desk with you or something, and would like put his hand on your leg, or his leg, or something like that, and try to roll down your sock, something weird like that. And the kids would go, "Get out of here," right, and everybody would laugh about it. But it wasn't like something you'd go tell the principal. I was never aware of any actual sexual assaults in today's terms. There were just some of these brothers—they were all kind of strange in their way. Like I say, you'd say, "Well, why would you be a brother when you could be a priest? What's the matter with you? You didn't want to take an extra three years of study?" I still don't understand that idea. Yes. Everybody was aware that there were weirdo priests and they would like to try and put their hand on your leg or something like that and it was an object of mirth. It wasn't a sense of menace.
- 03-00:14:40
Rubens: No revelations that have happened over the last years in the light of all of the recovered memories and suits?
- 03-00:14:49
Hinckle: Yes, well, I have some dispute with the recovered memory syndrome. But no. Did it surprise me—it didn't surprise me the church was covering that up. Did it surprise me it's going on, it went on? No, but I'd defend the church on that a bit. I don't think that there's any more so called sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, as such, then there is in Protestant sects or there is by rabbis. A lot of my friends in my later life were Jews. I never knew a Jew in San Francisco. We didn't know them. They were rich and good people, but we didn't know them. But the stories of Rabbinical abuse, sexual abuse, are huge, particularly

in the more fundamental sects. This is not a rant about Jews or other religions, but I'm saying I think the Catholic Church got a bit of an unfair rap for identifying sexual abuse with the Catholic priests, because I think it goes on in every damn religion. I know it goes on in every religion. And that said, they got their just desserts because the culture of the church is secrecy and the cover-up is always worse than the crime, they say. In that case, I don't know. Probably the crime was much worse than the cover-up but the cover-up's what got them in trouble down the line. And somehow, those things were handled as they went along within the rabbis, particularly in the more fundamental sects, they took care of these situations themselves, one way or the other. And Protestants have managed to handle it. Catholic Church bottled it up and put it in part of its secrets compartment and then it blew up and came back in its face. I don't think it's a particularly Catholic thing or unique to Roman Catholic priests, the sexual abuse stuff. I don't think it's unique to Catholics.

03-00:17:04

Rubens:

All right. But you're saying there was a certain kind of tension among—some of these brothers were, as you say, weird, which meant familiar or sexually interested in boys.

03-00:17:09

Hinckle:

Well, yes. There's always some guy who walks along the street and laughs and talks to himself. Guys are jerks. People were well aware of it and we laugh about it. It wasn't a thing of fear. It was funny and something you'd make fun of.

03-00:17:25

Rubens:

Something you'd stand up to?

03-00:17:25

Hinckle:

You'd make fun of it.

03-00:17:26

Rubens:

So anything else? I don't want to belabor this. You liked philosophy better than history? You studied Catholic theology of course.

03-00:17:38

Hinckle:

Well, you had to study Catholic theology. That was required in Catholic school. You didn't pay much attention to it. First thing that kind of got me aware of how goofy the whole thing was when I'd see people reading the Bible, when I began to know people who weren't just Catholics. I'd say, "Oh, you read the Bible?" and he'd say, "Well, yes, yes." Catholics could never read the Bible. You had Bible histories in grammar school and you had them in high school and they had the equivalent in college. The church decided it wanted to interpret what the Bible said and you would be hard put, except in the library, to find a Bible. God knows, not the Protestant version, but to find the Catholic version of the damn Bible in a Catholic school? You'd find Bible histories where they'd tell you what the Bible said. I ended up majoring in philosophy when I went to USF as a purely defensive thing because there

were all these books that were on the index. Right away you want to read that book. What's wrong with that one? Ooh. But you couldn't read them unless you were a philosophy major. So okay, game, let's do that.

03-00:19:03

Rubens: How about your accessibility to San Francisco in your high school years? Were you going to North Beach? You're in high school during the great infusion of Beat poets and writers.

03-00:19:16

Hinckle: Totally. But you most stayed around the neighborhood.

03-00:19:18

Rubens: How'd you get to high school?

03-00:19:20

Hinckle: You went by street car. Fortunately, that was another reason to go to Riordan. One street car line ran right from where I lived, boom, right down Ocean Avenue to Riordan. So that was one ride, and that was good. But the city was completely accessible by Muni. I don't mean to sound like a Muni advocate. And it was a much more seemingly efficient system than it appears to me now. But you could go just about anywhere. You hop in the streetcar, you're downtown. Transfer to a bus, you're in North Beach.

03-00:19:58

Rubens: Were kids traveling the city? Checking out downtown, going to North Beach?

03-00:20:02

Hinckle: To go somewhere they would. If there was a dance or an event or they'd go to the movies or to somebody's house who lived in a different part of town for a party or something, you would, but the city was readily accessible. Would you go and look at the sites? No. You knew the Golden Gate Bridge was there. You knew all that stuff. But did you marvel at the wonderful natural surroundings you grew up in or, wow, is this library really good or hey, should we go down to see the museum because they got a great show? Nobody thought those things. You took all those things for granted—you lived in a cocoon and that was part of the decoration of the cocoon.

03-00:20:46

Rubens: So when you were going to these antique bookstores, the international newspaper shops, you're going by yourself? This is something that is just your *sui generis* interest?

03-00:20:59

Hinckle: Yes. There weren't that many of them, but there were enough. And then you got to like type, really, too. You got an understanding of what a—if you want to call it an old or a classical book was. You started to look at them. You'd say, "Well, this looks like Hell," and this doesn't and then you began to learn why they had page margins and what typefaces could do and that sort of stuff.

- 03-00:21:23
Rubens: So how often did the *Crusader* newspaper come out?
- 03-00:21:29
Hinckle: It came out about, on average, I'd say every two months.
- 03-00:21:35
Rubens: And then were you literally going down to the print shop and overseeing its production?
- 03-00:21:40
Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yes.
- 03-00:21:40
Rubens: Talk about that a little bit. Was that part of the romance of becoming a—
- 03-00:21:43
Hinckle: Yes. It's like your first newspaper printing shop and it was a big job operation. They had a two story rotary press to print newspapers, tabloid shoppers.
- 03-00:21:58
Rubens: Where was it located?
- 03-00:21:59
Hinckle: Right behind the *Chronicle* on Natoma Street. It was a major job shop. Printed a lot of high school, college publications, neighborhood things, shoppers, neighborhood newspapers, advertising catalogues, that stuff. So you got to know the guys who owned it and the foremen who swore all the time and this and that—he was gruff. But he treated you nicely when he thought you were really interested and would let you use the linotype machine when nobody was looking to see how it worked. So you got to know the place. I would have gone to school back east. I got a few scholarship offers, as I recall. I didn't want to go anywhere but to USF because the USF newspaper was printed out of the same printing shop. I wanted to keep working with those guys.
- 03-00:22:54
Rubens: Well, then we should move on to talking about USF. Anything else more to say about putting the paper to bed? How long would that take?
- 03-00:23:17
Hinckle: You'd lay it out. But you learned right away that, hey, it doesn't come back right. Even if you don't know what you're doing, you can see it as not coming out as you planned. Wait for the stuff to come back and send it back again. So you know you got to go down there and tell them to move this around. "Oh, that's too low. All right, cut." You do it right there. They give you proofs and you take them downstairs to a little office area. Then you'd cut the stuff and rewrite the headlines and go back upstairs and put them back and then stand there watching the guys—an old cold type plate or hot type plate—putting the paper together. And that was fun. You learned an awful lot.

03-00:23:55

Rubens: Did you leave school to do this or is this done at night? On the weekends?

03-00:24:00

Hinckle: Yes, you'd go down to the printing plant in the afternoons. A lot of times it went into the evening. Yes.

03-00:24:07

Rubens: How many were being printed?

03-00:24:10

Hinckle: Well, I started expansionist thinking a little early. I decided that we should give the paper to all the Catholic girls schools, our paper, and not to the two other boys schools, but to the Catholic girls schools. And we did and I think we printed about 5,000 of them. There were only 800 kids at Riordan. But we ended up printing four or 5,000 copies of the paper and got it around to advertisers and the girls school, so that took care of 2,000 copies. I don't know where the hell the other ones went. But we ran them off. One of the reasons was that they had a flatbed press there, a regular, "chuk, chuk, chuk," flatbed press. And you'd use that for a small run, as they call them in the printing business. And if you were printing any more than like a thousand, it was more economical and a hell of a lot faster to use the big press. So right away I wanted to get on the big press. So I began to look for reasons to print more copies so we'd get off that really old, slow, "Chuk, chuk, chuk," press and onto the big one that looked like a newspaper. So I found some rationales for that.

03-00:25:36

Rubens: Did you have any meetings with other high schools editors? Later on, you're going to sponsor a conference at USF that's for a gathering of high school editors. Was there anything else that brought high schoolers together?

03-00:25:51

Hinckle: Well, we did a lot of that. At Riordan, the drama department was actually good. It was a guy named Jim Lindland. A very creative guy. Died of leukemia very early in life. But he put on these larger than life spectacles, panoramic musicals, the story of San Francisco or South Pacific or some crazy religious themed spectacle. It had thousands of students and invited students from other schools to join the cast. It was quite a show and it was a new school so it had a very modern auditorium. And I was quite involved in that. I did a lot of so called high school acting and stuff. And there was also a debate squad. All this was like volunteer stuff. But you get on that. And then you'd go to other high schools to debate. To Tracy, great places like that. Folsom, Lodi. You'd have statewide contests and stuff.

03-00:26:52

Rubens: So you had a partner that you debated with and you had a topic that was—

03-00:26:58

Hinckle: Yes. You'd research a topic.

- 03-00:27:00
 Rubens: Do you remember any of the topics that you debated.
- 03-00:27:41
 Hinckle: Oh, resolve that Gamal Abdel Nasser is an enemy of the United States, right, and then sometimes you'd get assigned the opposite. So you'd have to read through all the right wing literature of the day and try and find reasons why he wasn't the enemy because you had to take the opposite side. So I'd say debate is good for every kid in certainly high school because not only does it teach you to learn how to run your mouth and formulate—you don't have to take a course in logic to get the idea you got to formulate your arguments. But you're forced to take both sides, so that's good. And particularly if you're going to a Catholic school, you don't hear the other side that much.
- 03-00:27:47
 Rubens: So debate and drama. You were really a thespian.
- 03-00:27:51
 Hinckle: Yes.
- 03-00:27:52
 Rubens: Is that where you learned to project your voice? Have you always had a kind of resonant booming voice?
- 03-00:27:56
 Hinckle: I don't know. Probably acting in high school. I didn't do much of that in college. I did other stuff.
- 03-00:28:02
 Rubens: You talked about your mother and her spiritedness, and since I've seen you, I've read your mother's obituary. That woman lived to be, what, a hundred and—
- 03-00:28:13
 Hinckle: Oh, she was like 101.
- 03-00:28:14
 Rubens: An article about you in *Focus* claims your mother says that you used to be a shy, thin kid previous to your eye accident. And afterwards, you became someone who really liked to stir things up and she didn't know if it had to do with your accident –stirring things up.
- 03-00:28:48
 Hinckle: Well, god bless her. Maybe she read an article in *Popular Psychology* and was trying to figure out what sort of a monster she created.
- 03-00:28:57
 Rubens: In a column you wrote in the *Foghorn* you said that your parents were disappointed because they wanted a child. I wonder if the implication was that you had more of an adult sensibility.

- 03-00:29:13
Hinckle: I probably meant human being.
- 03-00:29:16
Rubens: But stirring things up. Is that something you would say is characteristic of—
- 03-00:29:23
Hinckle: It came naturally. Yes.
- 03-00:29:24
Rubens: So in high school, any high jinks you want to particularly point to? Your college years were filled with them —many to make good stories for the *Foghorn*.
- 03-00:29:29
Hinckle: Oh, god. Yes, but they're not that interesting. But there was always a controversy and you were always in the middle of it or you'd be organizing a plot. Like there was one guy who was a real asshole, a brother, and he was like a fitness nut. He'd come into class and it'd be freezing cold and raining. "Oh, let's get the windows open here, gentlemen." It had these stupid tiered windows, a classroom twice the size of this room. It was pretty large. And boom, boom, boom, he'd open them all. He in other ways was not a very likeable guy. So we'd made a plan. I'd say, "Let's get this guy." A guy says, "You know, my father's got all these tools." And he said, "What do you say?" I said, "Let's do that." So I said, "Okay, here's what we do." And then you got to get everybody organized to do it. Anyway, we got there early and took out all the screws in the window frames that held these three tiered windows in. So if somebody even pushed them, they'd fall down two floors to the courtyard below. And so sure enough, when he showed up and he started opening the windows, pop, pop, pop, and I swear the idiot got to halfway down the wall, about seven rows of windows out of 12 before he realized they were all falling out. And we would have already organized everybody. All the kids knew something was going on. I had to get everybody together and say, "Now, everybody play dumb. First guy who talks, we're all screwed." So you'd organize things like that. Pranks.
- 03-00:31:10
Rubens: How could this guy not know what was happening?
- 03-00:31:17
Hinckle: He was just an idiot. Maybe he was a fitness nut. That's what he did all the time and everybody was always freezing.
- 03-00:31:24
Rubens: I just wondered how he didn't notice that they had fallen out.
- 03-00:31:30
Hinckle: Because he was full of himself and went and moved so fast. He didn't open it and look. He just boom, boom, boom, boom. It's like forced march real fast down the thing. Maybe take him twenty seconds it'd take somebody a minute

and a half to walk. And by the time he realized they were all falling out, they were falling out.

03-00:31:49

Rubens: What about the anti-communist hysteria or the McCarthy hearings. In grade school there was *My Weekly Reader*; I remember graphic maps with red arrows coming out of the Soviet Union and advancing through Europe.

03-00:32:17

Hinckle: Yes, yes. There was a *Catholic Messenger*. The Catholic papers were always making a hero, for instance, of Joe McCarthy because he was a Catholic. And so he was the brave senator and you'd see that propaganda. And did you question it? Not really. It wasn't a very political school.

03-00:32:44

Rubens: Were people listening to the hearings on television? Did your family look at it or did you wind up—

03-00:32:47

Hinckle: No, I don't think—

03-00:32:50

Rubens: Do you remember watching it?

03-00:32:51

Hinckle: No, no, I didn't. San Francisco was really insular and they had good red meat, those schools, because people weren't that curious. I think I started to get curious because you'd read the other high school newspapers and I, of course, read all the college newspapers. They'd send them to the high school for some reason and you'd get them from Ohio and places like that. And you'd see all the stuff going on and you'd see what stood for an op-ed page or arguments or some lecture or something in the reports of another college or even another high school. Mostly it was the college papers but I read them when I was in high school. Wait a minute. That's not what the Junior Catholic Messenger told us. So I became aware early that there was more than what we were being told but it didn't really bother me. It wasn't my problem but it didn't sound—

03-00:33:56

Rubens: Not something you took up in the newspaper?

03-00:33:58

Hinckle: Not particularly. I think we tried to copy—that'd be the best word—some of the college papers and put think articles in. And believe me, the last thing anybody did in a school like Riordan was think. And so we'd have a couple of pages of like op-ed pages with things about the future of higher education or stuff like that. And the kids could care less about it. I think that came more from going around the state in debate courses and hearing arguments about national issues and being engaged in them and having to take both sides. I'm sure I got much more of a so-called education out of that then I ever did about what they taught in classes in high school.

- 03-00:34:47
 Rubens: Yes, I'm sure. Your first position at the *Foghorn* is as a sports writer Are you interested in sports during high school?
- 03-00:34:55
 Hinckle: Not at all.
- 03-00:34:56
 Rubens: And don't cover it —that's not something—
- 03-00:34:58
 Hinckle: No.
- 03-00:34:59
 Rubens: Did you even attend games?
- 03-00:35:00
 Hinckle: Well, you go to games because kids went to games. You'd go to root, there'd be parties, somehow there's beer, that sort of stuff. Everybody went to the games. Yes, that was part of the social club.
- 03-00:35:13
 Rubens: And what about the literary magazine you showed me?
- 03-00:35:18
 Hinckle: Oh, the one in high school. Well, it's about deal making. I think we were talking about this guy Monsignor Collins. He kind of taught me a little bit about looking back at it, about deal making. Well, there's always stuff. Like there was a teacher there, Cappy Levin. He was the basketball coach, I think, or the track coach. Big guy. He was a big star athlete in college. A Catholic guy. A sweetheart of a guy. And he lived in the suburbs and we didn't know too many people who lived—he was a lay teacher, obviously. Married, kids and everything. He lived in Alexandria Fell and he had me over his house sometimes for dinner with a couple of other kids and his family. He was one of those guys that took an interest in kids that he thought were, I don't know, bright or something, which I think is pretty good. If you're going to spend your time teaching high school, I guess it's part of the job or why you want to do it, is to nurture. I imagine if I was stuck—I use the word stuck because it's not something I would like to do—teaching high school classes, if I saw something in a kid that was distinctive or I thought could really develop, I think I would be inclined to spend some time with them and say, "Hey, come on. Let's go over and have a cup of coffee. Let me take you to a bar. I'll get you a beer," that sort of thing, and sort of bring them along and get them involved in stuff. And that happened to me a lot. I don't know why. But I was lucky that way.
- Anyway, he ran into some money and I was putting out the paper because nobody else would put it out, so I got to put it out and he said, "What do you say we do a literary magazine?" He taught English. The reason he wanted to do a literary magazine is because he found out about some grant money

somewhere. So he couldn't start a literary magazine. Because he had a story, some big philosophical dialogue, platonic type dialogue that he wanted to get printed in a quarterly because he wanted to. And so he knew this grant money and he said, "What do you say we do a literary magazine?" I said, "Oh, why not. Jesus Christ. Okay." He said, "Well, how are you—" "No, no, no," he said, "I'm good. I'll make the application. We'll call it the *Criteria* and that's a name from Fields of Life."

03-00:37:57

Rubens: He named it?

03-00:37:58

Hinckle: Yes, he had the name. I said, "Okay. You get some kids to write and I'll get some of my friends to write." So I think he wrote two articles in there, one under his own name, one under a phony. Had some professor type friends of his write in there and we had two or three kids. I wrote some stupid thing and a couple of other kids wrote stuff. But he had the grant money. He showed me a whole bunch of college literary magazines and English regular literary magazines. He said, "We want to look like this, right?" I said, "Oh, yes, that's what they should look like." So it was ugly but it looked like a literary magazine. It was stitched and bound and there was all this stuff in it. But looking back on it, he wanted to get his stuff printed and I was a willing agent for that. "Hey, we got a newspaper. Why shouldn't we have a literary magazine." Made sense to me.

03-00:38:50

Rubens: Was this your senior year?

03-00:38:54

Hinckle: Yes, and I think it was the only one. I don't think it went on after that.

03-00:38:56

Rubens: Well, any other teachers you want to point to who did take an interest in you or is that going to be later on?

03-00:39:04

Hinckle: There was a couple evil ones. Dan O'Neill, the cartoonist, who's quite a crazy guy, someone I've worked with for decades. He went to Riordan and earlier went to another Maronites school in Alameda City and transferred over to Riordan, something like that. And it was a brother who taught there. His name was Nunes, N-U-N-E-S, and he was always taking hits off a Vicks Inhaler. I don't know what was in it, if it was Vicks or not. He was always snorting up off that inhaler and he had kind of a droll attitude. He was a little more worldly or cynical and accepting of pranks, let's put it that way, and misbehavior than a lot of the other brothers.

And both he and this guy, the eventual famous cartoonist Dan O'Neill, we became pretty friendly with him and he gave us a little latitude to play some

games that we might not have got away with otherwise. Every time I see O'Neill, he's like, "Oh, you ever hear from Brother Nunes?"

03-00:40:14

Rubens: And did you keep in touch with the literary sponsor?

03-00:40:18

Hinckle: Cap Lavin? No, not really.

03-00:40:22

Rubens: Sounded like someone who could have written for *Ramparts* in the early days.

03-00:40:28

Hinckle: He could have. I don't recall. I probably should have called him and said, "Hey, we got a Catholic magazine now. You want to write for it? But that was quite a few years after high school."

03-00:40:42

Rubens: All right. So anything else we should say about high school in those years? Fifty-two, Eisenhower. We talked about McCarthy a little, didn't make very much impression.

03-00:40:55

Hinckle: Well, it was a very nonpolitical thing. You didn't learn much in school at all, but because it was a new school and the institutions weren't really formed, if you were naturally aggressive—aggressive isn't the right word. But having a tendency—

03-00:41:22

Rubens: Ambitious.

03-00:46237

Hinckle: —to want to do things.

03-00:41:25

Rubens: Yes. Energetic.

03-00:41:25

Hinckle: And there was a vacuum because it was a brand new school. So it wasn't like you had to fight your way through the debate team because people had been there and they were seniors and you couldn't get to say anything until you were a junior or senior. The paper they'd had or they started one, but it was like, "What's this?" and nobody wanted to work on it. So it's hard to form this. It was easy to be a star. It was easy to be a star. I ended up being valedictorian. I can imagine my grandfather's so happy. And there were a couple of teachers there who sort of nurtured that and would let you go and there wasn't enough institutional tradition or even organization to stop you. So if you had some tools, you got to play with them.

03-00:42:21

Rubens: But you might be modest. You were doing well. You took the opportunity and made something of it.

03-00:42:28

Hinckle: Well, hey, if all of a sudden you can use the printing press and you got enough money to run things off and all you got to do is write it all yourself if you have to, if you're inclined that way you're going to do it. Yes.

03-00:42:40

Rubens: So it comes time to go to college. You're going to graduate and you said you had some scholarships. Were you being recruited for anyplace?

03-00:42:52

Hinckle: I'd say ask my mother but of course you can't now. I think I applied to a couple of other schools. I think I applied to B.U. [Boston University] Oh, I did, because they told me once that when they were trying to get my papers, they said "We almost had you as a student. I said, "You did? I don't even remember that." "Yes, we offered you a scholarship." I don't even remember that. Because I didn't want to go anywhere but USF because I wanted to put out the paper, work on the paper and go back to that printing plant. That was the height of my ambitions.

03-00:43:29

Rubens: Well, not a bad ambition.

03-00:43:31

Hinckle: I liked it. I liked it there.

03-00:43:34

Rubens: You start USF in September 1956; and that year you're on the masthead of the *Foghorn* as a staff sports reporter. How did you get that position?

03-00:43:49

Hinckle: Probably I walked in the *Foghorn* during the summer and said, "Hi." I didn't know anybody.

03-00:43:57

Rubens: I meant to ask you if you'd worked during the summers?

03-00:44:00

Hinckle: I did. Yes, stupid jobs. I remember one I was a stamper in a chopstick factory. You sit there all day, stamping red plastic stuff -names of a company or something like that. They come in a machine. There were always some sort of weird jobs.

03-00:44:33

Rubens: How'd you get to the job?

Hinckle:

You'd hop in the streetcar and there you were

Rubens: Any other stories?

03-00:44:38

Hinckle:

None unique. I had some during college, too. But they were just odd jobs. Working the post office in the sorting department for three months in the summer because you knew somebody. The best one used to crack my mother up. It's a true story. I had an uncle who was an ILWU dispatcher and he said, "Well, I'll tell you what." This is like a chance summer job. He said, "Well, come down." Bill—I'm trying to get his last name—he says, "All right, here's the place. You could get there every morning by 5:30 and by the next week or so and I'll see what I can do." So I did. So finally he calls my name. Says, "All right. We got a job for you at this meat packing plant." He said, "Here's the place," gives me a slip, and "here's the papers you need." I went down to the meat packing plant. So the guy's there in the smock and all the meat's going around and around and around. Big huge place. And the guy's at like a lectern yelling things over a microphone to people. Huge place. All this noise and everything going around. And he said, "All right, kid. See that guy way down there? Oh, wait a minute," he says. I go, "What?" He said, "Oh, I forgot. You got to have a physical. We got an old doctor. He does all the physicals. He's down there about three blocks on Townsend Street." He said, "Just go down there. He never has any business. Just go up to the office. Here's the forms and he'll check you out. And then come back with the forms filled out. I'll see you in a while. You go down there first." So I go down there.

It's by the old SP Depot [Southern Pacific]. And you walk up the stairs and it was a kind of creaky, dusty place and it's like this very elderly woman—it seemed to me elderly—and she's there and she looks at the stuff and she says, "Go in that room and see the doctor." She said, "Go in that room and take off your clothes." So I go in. I couldn't believe what she said. What do you mean, take off my clothes? I'm not taking off my clothes. So I kind of stand around there and this doctor comes in. And he's really old and he looked really, really old to me. And he says, "Take off your pants." He's yelling. I go, "What?" I mean, I was shocked he was yelling at me. And he screamed, "Take off your pants." I go, "Jesus Christ." So I take down my pants and he starts, "Take off your shirt." And he says, "Bend over." I go, "What?" He says, "Bend over." I go, "Huh?" "Bend over," and he says, "Spread your cheeks." And I didn't know what the hell he was saying. I said, "What?" "Spread your cheeks." Everything he says, he's yelling at me. I said, "What?" I think I was in high school, whatever it was, and I thought he was looking for acne around your, you know. So I turned around and I go like this and he grabs my paper and he writes deaf on it. I didn't know that. I was just so glad to get out of there.

I go back down the three blocks to the meat packing plant. There's the guy. "Okay, all right." I say here's the papers. "Okay," he says, "now you go way down there. He'll give you a smock and tell you what to do." And I guess he's looking at the papers, putting them away, and he sees scrawled all over it,

"Deaf," right? So I'm halfway down this big place with all this noise and he yells at me, "Hey, kid?" And I go, "What?" "Hey, kid?" I go, "Yes?" "Hey, kid?" And he comes back and he says, "Jesus, kid, I didn't know you were deaf." And I said, "What?" He said, "I didn't know [laughter]." So the next thing, "I'm sorry but there's things that's dangerous around here if you can't hear." "But I'm not deaf."

So I go home, get in the streetcar and go home. Now it's like 10:30, 11:00 o'clock in the morning. My mother's sitting in the dining room and I come home and she says, "What happened? I thought you got a job." I said, "I didn't get the job." So I go up the little stairs. We had a little stairs in my house. Up to my room and she says, "Well, what happened?" I said, "I didn't get the job." And she says, "Well, why?" And I said, "Because I'm deaf." And she said, "What?" And I yell, "I'm deaf." I did. It was like a vaudeville routine. It's a hundred percent true story. She told that story years and years later.

03-00:49:38

Rubens:

So you hadn't had any of those indignities in high school? I remember the boys talking about "Dr. Cough," who would always check for hernias and enlarged prostrate.

03-00:49:47

Hinckle:

Yes. Well, if I did they weren't traumatic. And that wasn't even traumatic. I didn't understand what he was saying. I really thought he was looking. That's what I thought.

03-00:50:00

Rubens:

Yes. So that's the only place you're going to go, USF. Did you have a lot of friends who went there as well?

03-00:50:09

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. Not that many guys from Riordan.

03-00:50:12

Rubens:

You're the first in your family? Did you have cousins who had already gone to college or you were really the first in your family at this point?

03-00:50:18

Hinckle:

I had a cousin who went to Stanford, Ed Bacciocco. My father's sister married into the Bacciocco family. They're sort of meat barons in San Francisco. He's still in the California Meat Company. It wasn't their place I was sent for the job, that was a competitor. They had twins and this guy and we became friendly.

03-00:50:53

Rubens:

Much older than you?

03-00:50:55

Hinckle:

He was an intellectual. Later became a college professor. Didn't want to go into the family meatpacking business. His father kept yelling at him and beating him rhetorically and otherwise humiliating him and they had these slightly Navy SEAL type pair of twins, brothers, who were happy to go into the family meatpacking business and join the Navy SEALS. And he was the intellectual, so he sort of bonded with me in that family arrangement. In fact, he was Jackie Speiers' first husband. I don't know if they ever did get married, but I think they did. And they were both on the San Mateo Board of Supervisors at the same time. He went into politics a little bit.

He was a few years older than me. Four or five years older than me, I'd say. When I was in high school, he was in college.

03-00:51:56

Rubens:

Did you ever consider Stanford seriously? Because I have in my notes that you went down there a few times; I think that in a year book you were quoted as saying you were going to Stanford when you graduated.

03-00:52:03

Hinckle:

Well, I had a job down there. Yes. And was on the college debating team, too. But not that much because I spent almost all my time at the *Foghorn* in college.

03-00:52:15

Rubens:

All right. So should we fully move onto USF. And after we change the tape why don't we begin with a sociology of it.

Begin Audio File 4

04-00:00:00

Rubens:

I'm impressed with how well you handled the loss of your eye, what to other people would be a real disability and inhibit your sociability.

04-00:00:01

Hinckle:

As a kid, you notice that stuff. Later I didn't give a goddamn. But you get a so-called more sophisticated, if that's the word, view of the world. You realize there's a much larger world and everybody looks at different things. But those things loom large when you're a kid and it's like everybody else has got two eyes and you've got sort of a blurry mess and the lids kind of drooping, so you feel a little bit like Quasimodo or something.

04-00:00:25

Rubens:

And so you were just mentioning when we switched tapes that you think being in the theater gave you a certain kind of élan, a certain kind of confidence of being in the light?

04-00:00:42

Hinckle:

Debating and being in high school debate and theater stuff certainly gave you a feeling that you could do things in the world that you didn't have to be

ashamed of yourself or you could handle it or people wouldn't look at you weird. If you focus on the fact you had one blurry eye, that might inhibit you. Now I'm doing the pop psychology, but I'd say that helped you overcome it because you could debate as well as everybody else and nobody paid any attention. And if you just sort of got in the streetcar and went to class and came home and read your stuff and did everything and sat in the closet all the time, I don't think you'd have that same—

04-00:01:33

Rubens: Or kept yourself locked in the newspaper office.

04-00:01:34

Hinckle: You'd dwell more on what is basically an inconsequential injury.

04-00:01:40

Rubens: All right. And you were just recalling some of the plays that you were in. *You Can't Take It With You*. Any others that are memorable?

04-00:01:52

Hinckle: I think they did stock things. Like I think we did the *Twelve Angry Men*. We did *You Can't Take It With You*. Those are two I remember I was in. I was Mr. De Pinna in *You Can't Take It With You* and I forget what juror I was in *Twelve Angry Men*. But all that stuff stays with you from being a kid. I suspect your life is the same. Sometime you see some old thing on television or something like that and it reminds you of something. Might have been a play you were in when you were a kid or something you remember from a long time ago and you're more likely to turn that on, on television, than you are a random other thing else, because something strikes a chord.

My favorite, what really got me into journalism, was this movie *Deadline USA*. My absolute favorite movie. And you cannot find it. It's not even a DVD. It's lost somewhere in the mists of time. And it was a fifties movie and it was Ethyl Barrymore and Humphrey Bogart and a stalwart female performer. Kim Hunter. But one of the stock good-looking brunettes but not a sex bomb star from the fifties. And it's about the last three days of a newspaper and the newspaper's called *The Day* in an unnamed northern city. And it is sold. The great guy who started it dies, and then the kids want money and so they decide to sell the paper. And Ethel Barrymore is the widow. So she ends up going along and then joining with Humphrey Bogart to try and save the paper. But they can't. The court rules no, even though you're doing this great stuff, and they expose the mafia guy who's really operating the business in town and the showgirl that he killed because she kept a diary and that sort of stuff.

And they get the diary and every character stereotype in the newspaper business is in there. The tough sportswriter, the gossip columnist. A lot of great character actors are in that movie. But everybody works, even though there's no sense to working for the paper because it's over with. They only

have three issues to go. Still, they take down the guy and they finally publish the stuff and there is a dramatic scene in the courtroom and Bogart pleads for the paper and the judge says, "I used to deliver that paper as a kid and I cry as I make this decision, but the law is the law and it's going to get sold to some cheesy tabloid that puts horses on the front page," stuff like that. It's just a dynamite melodramatic soapy newspaper movie. Bogart plays the managing editor, bowties untied and all. It's a wonderful, wonderful movie. And the last scenes are about that somehow the sportswriter finds the guy hidden away. The brother of the showgirl who got murdered, he had the diary and he gets them in the place and they're transcribing this thing to prove all the stuff. These phony cops come in, because the city's corrupt, they're in uniforms, and they take him away. "Wait, wait. You got to let him sign this." "Come on." And he realizes the cops are hoods and so he tries to escape and he goes across the top of the presses and they shoot him and he falls in the presses and the presses gobble him up. It's just great.

And so the very last scene in the movie is the mobster, who is on the phone to Bogart and it's the last issue they'll put out, that's it, and they're printing the diary and they've got this guy nailed. He's going to jail. And he said, "You print that story and you're a dead man." You see his lawyer in back saying, "Don't say that, don't say that in the phone." You see the press guys standing around, looking at the clock, looking at Bogey: "Boss, time to print it." And he nods. "Print it." And he holds up the phone so that the bad guy can hear the clanging of the machinery, and he says something like "what's that noise?" "It's the presses, rolling, you can kill me, baby, but you can't kill a newspaper." It is so corny. That wasn't exactly what he said but it was that good.

04-00:06:11

Rubens:

And you remember seeing it so vividly.

04-00:06:13

Hinckle:

Oh, I've seen it twenty times, first in high school and then in college. Oh, I loved that movie. I'd stop in the middle of the street if I saw it playing. "Hey, come on," whoever I'm with, "we're going to go see this movie." It's a great movie. It's everything you want to say about the spirit of journalism. What else would you want to do but that? And it's hopeless. They're not going to get anywhere by putting out the last edition of this paper.

04-00:06:51

Rubens:

So let's talk just a little bit about the sociology of USF. Who's going to USF and do you feel like you're in a university and part of college life?

04-00:07:03

Hinckle:

No. It was a satire on Catholic education and the Jesuits. It was the rejects of the Jesuits who were either in trouble for drinking or incompetence or sexual abuse or whatever and they didn't want to let them loose on society and they didn't want to spend the money to put them on a priest reservation. So most of

them were assigned to teach the mandatory theology and other basic classes at USF. It was a joke institution. I saw that at the time, not that I was wise enough to compare it to other colleges because I obviously didn't attend other colleges. But you could see that the entire thing was a hoot.

To top it off, the campus at that time, in the late fifties to the early sixties, was still half a graveyard. All of the Lone Mountain area originally in San Francisco in the late 1800s, 1880s, nineties, was a giant graveyard. And as the city expanded, they had to move all the graves. So they dug out, and where Lone Mountain is today, and USF and down to Geary Street, that entire area was all huge cemeteries. It was a huge hunk of the city. It was one big graveyard. And to expand the city in that direction, they dug up these graves and moved a lot of them down to where they are now in the Colma area, etcetera.

But at USF, the USF part of the graveyard, they never quite finished getting all the graves out. So you would be going to class and they had a big church. The church was big. They built a basketball gym. They had some dorms. They had a library. Library is actually a great place because a guy named Gleeson ran it and he was a scholar and a good man. He became quite a good friend of mine, he's a Jesuit, much later, and he was actually a scholar. Most of the Jesuits weren't scholars. They were politicians or they were busy handling the screw-ups of a bunch of misfit priests they had to have on their staff and juggling the finances of a school with the name of San Francisco on it and no honor or glory to it except for a great football team in one period after the Second World War and a couple of world championship basketball teams. Other than that, it is like the most undistinguished college in the universe.

It was a dreadful school. It was a fraud on the tuition that parents paid, but it got you through and they have an alumni of guys in business, people who stayed in San Francisco. A lot of San Francisco Catholics went there. Too bad for them. The ones who went to Cal were much better off. Well, SH, Sacred Heart, got more of the cops and firemen, but they have their share of that. But a lot of judges went to USF. A lot of people in the city bureaucracy went to USF.

04-00:11:12

Rubens:

There was a fairly respected law school and a nursing school.

04-00:11:16

Hinckle:

Well, the nursing school was the main source of income and it was still a segregated campus but there were women on campus because the nurses, to go to nursing school, took courses also at USF. They were tied to Saint Mary's Hospital, which was basically adjoining, by Golden Gate Park. But it was a hilarious experience. You could do yourself well writing a satirical or humor type book about a college like USF in a famous town which was so

utterly, utterly third rate. I'm using third rate deliberately. Not second rate. It was third rate.

04-00:12:00

Rubens: But you went through a seeming rigorous course of study you were a philosophy major, I think.

04-00:12:06

Hinckle: I didn't pay any attention to it. I went through it. Only thing I got out of it is I minored in English and I only took philosophy as a defensive thing because then you could read the books on the index, otherwise you couldn't read those books. And that forced me to do a lot of reading. Most of the classic English novels, hunk of the Russian novels that I never would have read, because all of a sudden I got really, really busy when I got out of school. And the things you regret when you look back about school, or at least I do, and I tell my kids, is do the damn reading when you've got the time, when you're being paid to do it, because you may want to have done it later on ten or twenty years later, and you don't have the time to do it. Reading a lot is how you learn to write, how you get anywhere in math. Not that I know anything about math. But by immersing yourself in it and soaking in a warm bathtub of it, if you'll allow that sort of an analogy, it doesn't pay off right away but it sinks into your bones. And if you got any ability in any of those fields, that early immersion is obviously greatly helpful and then you make something different out of it if you're going to contribute anything to whatever dumb field you're in.

04-00:13:35

Rubens: You've got a wonderful couple of pages in *Lemonade* about some of the courses that you took. You talked about becoming enlightened on Christian sex.

04-00:13:54

Hinckle: Brendan Newsom and I took most of those courses together and we would just laugh. There was something about black marbles in the oven, I think it was. That was Father Mootz. He taught ethics. All you had to do was memorize the phrase black marbles in the oven, which had something to do, I think, with abortion. It was important to use that phrase in an essay. If you did, you got an A. He used that phrase for everything.

04-00:14:25

Rubens: This is page eight from *Lemonade*. You said, "Jesuit college education was a continuing congress of wonders, at times approaching the delirium of a mushroom sect." I love it. You talk about being exposed to a little known theory of Justinian's, that homosexuality caused earthquakes.

04-00:14:46

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yes. Now, they didn't teach that, but you learned that when you were a philosophy major, you had to study all these theories. And they certainly pointed it out. But I may have given an unfair impression there. That wasn't

like the introduction to all students, "Justinian tells us," because they didn't think much of Justinian. You only ran into Justinian if you were a philosophy major. But it was definitely pointed out that Justinian had this theory with equanimity. Not with derision and not with applause, but he had this theory.

04-00:15:21

Rubens:

When Albert Camus died you wrote an article for the *Foghorn*, and you talk about Existential philosophy. You had read a French paleontologist who was also a theologian.

04-00:15:39

Hinckle:

Teilhard de Chardin.

04-00:15:40

Rubens:

Yes, who reconciled science and—

04-00:15:44

Hinckle:

He was the rebel Jesuit. The great thing about the Jesuit order, and there are great things about the damn order, is that when they're good, they're very, very good. When they're bad, they tolerate mediocrity and enforce the dictates of the Papacy. And when they rebel against them, and often they don't rebel against them, they get around them or twist them and put them in a more effective, if you will, if you're a Catholic, direction. Jesuits are very interesting guys. I just regret that I certainly wasn't exposed to the top tier of their ranks at USF because they weren't there. The few who were, Carlo Rossi from the wine family, Rossi's wines, his family gave the school so much money. He had his own little building on a little hill on campus. He taught romance languages. Portuguese, French, that sort of stuff. And I liked the guy so much I kept taking language courses but I've got a blind eye for languages. I'm dumb and deaf. Could never pronounce them right and certainly can't pass a vocabulary test. So I got A's in everything, except so many Fs in language. Somehow I got through school. But he was an aristocratic guy and I got to admire him and I said, "Now, this is what Jesuits are like." And he told me, he says, "I want you to read something," and it's this guy Teilhard de Chardin, who became later a fairly well-known name in the literature about Peking-man-type bones; an anthropologist; spent a lot of time in China. But basically he was a thinker. He's known for his philosophical essays, which are more into humanity and anthropology, part of it, than they are the science of archeology, if you will.

04-00:17:50

Rubens:

So you were exposed to—

04-00:17:52

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Somehow you met the rebels or the standouts among the fatso crowd at the drive-in, right?

04-00:18:03

Rubens:

Any others you want to point to?

04-00:18:06

Hinckle:

Oh, Willis Egan was a great guy. He's the brother of the Egan, traditional fifties, sixties standard movie star Richard Egan, who was in every Doris Day movie, light dramas. Willis Egan was the Jesuit. He ran the drama department.

04-00:18:40

Rubens:

Did you act at SFU?

04-00:18:40

Hinckle:

I didn't do much in drama. I was too damn busy putting out the newspaper and doing whatever else you'd do. I got my stuff out of drama. I knew I wasn't going to be an actor, because it takes a lot of time and time starts to fill up fast. So you make your decisions. But he just became a friend because he was a worldly guy. From his standpoint or some of the few other sharp people at that school, the student body wasn't particularly distinguished. It isn't like you're teaching at Yale or something, where you look at the freshman and sophomore crop and you got your pick of the better families of the East Coast who got into the school. So you got pretty promising students and some of them may stand out. At USF, if anybody stood out at all who could say a sentence without having to memorize it, basically you were a distinctive student. You might not be a very good student but I think a lot of the guys who were lonely, who were sharp on the faculty at USF, not lonely for a companionship—

04-00:20:14

Rubens:

No, but intellectually.

04-00:20:15

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. There was nobody to talk to. They couldn't talk to their fellow teachers. They were idiots. Once in a while you'd run into a student, or a group of students, who were Catholic-educated kids, who were bright and they were energetic and they read a lot and they kind of cared, unlike most of the people who were just plodding along and didn't give a damn. So I'd say it was pretty lonely to be a priest or a teacher at USF, at least in that period, and I know the place has advanced a lot and changed a lot. But it's never gotten above "C-."

04-00:21:07

Rubens:

Most of the professors were in the Society? They were Jesuits?

04-00:20:11

Hinckle:

No, no. Most of the Jesuits who were there were there because they didn't know what else to do with them, so they gave them all the routine, mechanical courses. Some of the Jesuits are there because they got to run their department, like Egan because he wanted to run his own drama department, so he'd do what he wanted to do. So, A, you got a theater, get me some money, I'll run that and leave me alone. So he could do what he wanted. That made sense. But it wasn't like a place you would go to if you wanted to enrich your

academic career by being surrounded by smart people in similar disciplines or across disciplines. That was not the place you were going to go.

04-00:22:04

Rubens: Right. So for you, the real life of those four years was being at the *Foghorn*?

04-00:22:09

Hinckle: Yes.

04-00:22:10

Rubens: Now, the *Foghorn*, not until your last year did it have its own building. There was something called the Lodge?

04-00:22:14

Hinckle: Oh, no, it had its own building. But these buildings, they were Quonset huts. Yes, it was described in the campus because you'd walk across the sundial left over from a tombstone memorial and it was while tombstones still were here and there. In World War II, they had a lot of army stuff there. And so the campus was the big church, the library that got built, a gym, some residence halls, an administration building and a couple of little buildings, and then tiers and tiers of Quonset huts from World War II. And that's where most of the classes were held. And a couple of the disciplines—I mean, we're talking about sociology—that had their own hut, if you want to call it that as opposed to just a classroom where you took your class. The newspaper had one and the military society had one, the Pershing Rifles, remember them earlier? So in a way, the newspaper and the military group were like the not elite but the only functioning institutional part of the college, because it didn't have that rich tradition that so many schools do of fraternities, sororities, distinguished departments. No masters who lived with the students. All that stuff. This was a street car school. Almost everybody drove to school or took the streetcar.

04-00:24:06

Rubens: So the only kind of affiliations are sort of interest groups or these clubs? Clubs dominate so much of the news of the *Foghorn*.

04-00:24:14

Hinckle: Yes. That's the only thing that happened, that come from the school or from its intellectual happenings. And the two dominant ones, it was a student government group, people ran for office and that stuff, and there was the newspaper. Which was interesting, because it was always a leadership position at that school because it was all volunteer and you had to have some interest in politics or something like that.

04-00:24:43

Rubens: Nobody was paid?

04-00:24:45

Hinckle: Paid? No, no classes, no credits, no pay.

04-00:24:47

Rubens: But an advisor?

04-00:24:50

Hinckle: Oh, yes, there were advisors.

04-00:24:54

Rubens: They had to advance the money and put in a budget? It seemed like you had a lot of free rein, however, and there was a lot of turn-over and room to advance. You went from a sports reporter your first semester to regular reporting.

04-00:25:11

Hinckle: Oh, I don't know. I don't even recall that, but I'm sure I walked in there and said, "Hey, I worked in my high school paper. Could I work on the *Foghorn*?" and somebody said, "Well, we'll make you a sports reporter." It was like that. It wasn't like a beehive of activity where everybody's running around busy and doing stuff.

04-00:25:33

Rubens: But within six months, less than six months—by January, you're on the feature staff.

04-00:25:41

Hinckle: Well, I hung around the office and I liked it and I early on started doing the page layouts because nobody had an idea how you put out a newspaper. Because I knew the printing plant, I was the guy that said, "No, I'll go down there. That's okay. I'll put the paper together for you," that sort of thing, "Oh, you will?" "Yes, sure." I knew that. "I put out my high school paper. I know all those guys down there." So I spent an inordinate amount of time at the print shop. I'm surprised I even got through four years of school. I spent most of my time on the paper.

04-00:26:13

Rubens: It was a weekly, but by your senior year, you've turned it into a daily, which is basically three times a week.

04-00:26:28

Hinckle: Well, yes. It was a daily by Ayer's Newspaper Directory criterion. And the guy who was the editor before me, a Chinese guy, really nice guy named Don Halog, and a good friend of mine. Died very, very early of cancer. He was an editor when I was a sophomore. Sweetheart of a guy. Still know his wife really, really well. Again, it's Irish Catholic old bound San Francisco middle class society. Good people. And a lot of us have stuck together over the years for that stuff. Some of them think my politics got a little strange but that's always forgiven as long as you're part of the culture. Every culture's got its parameters, boundaries. A little this way, a little that way. But the culture is pretty elastic in what it'll allow. As long as you don't go around and set off a bomb at City Hall or something like that. There's a lot of elasticity in embracing middle class Catholic culture in San Francisco and it still remains

very solid. I run into people every day of my existence that I knew from high school, college, or here or there. Where'd you go to school? It's amazing to me that the *Chronicle* is defining this stuff. I've been having some conversations with them about this. And I said, "Well, how many of your subscribers are old subscribers for ten, twenty years?" And somebody said to me, "Well, I don't know." "How can you not know? How do you know who you're going to hold onto, who you're editing the paper for, if you don't know who the hell is reading it?" Interesting. But San Francisco is not as much a changed town as legend has it. The old town is very, very much intact within the bigger modern part.

04-00:28:41

Rubens:

So let's talk about your evolution. It's quite remarkable the amount of freedom you seem to have and the amount of responsibility that you assume. You become a regular staff reporter, you have a column very early on. You have a by-line. "Prospectives." I think I read almost every one of them.

04-00:29:14

Hinckle:

You did more than I have. I don't know if I could suffer through reading all that stuff again.

04-00:29:20

Rubens:

They were terrific. In reading them, I could see the kind of humor and simile, the attention to detail and interest in character portrayal, the turns of phrases that became the hallmark of your writing. Now you also had a column called "Dear People."

04-00:29:21

Hinckle:

I think so. Yes. Something like that.

04-00:29:25

Rubens:

What I'm trying to get at is that it seems that you're taking on more and more. You climb the pecking order of management. You become city editor, managing editor, and then editor in chief.

04-00:29:34

Hinckle:

Oh, I was basically putting out the paper for the last three years. The guys who were editors before me were friends and really nice guys. You call the shots, you're the editor, but I basically did the work and I put the paper together, put it out.

04-00:29:54

Rubens:

But more than the work, there's also the energy and aspiration, the vision of doing more with the paper. Where does this vision come from, especially to write columns? Were you emulating anyone? Were you reading Herb Caen? Were you keeping track of the other three dailies in San Francisco?

04-00:30:10

Hinckle:

Well, sure. San Francisco has always been a columnist town. It's getting away from that, except for the sports section of the *Chronicle*. In my opinion, it

remains pretty good. But it's getting away from that. But that was Scott Newhall's main thing. He created more columns because he didn't have any money to make a real paper, like a so-called *New York Times*. But he could create stuff that would reflect the city and make people who didn't live in the city interested to read the paper, to understand what's going on so they could talk about it and laugh about it—reflect its diversity and craziness. And he did very well at that. And that culture, I think, is still in the city among people who've lived here for several generations, who grew up here and stayed here and raised their kids here, that sort of stuff.

04-00:31:10

Rubens: Of course he hired you after college and then you became close to him.

04-00:31:12

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yes.

04-00:31:15

Rubens: At the *Foghorn*, you were bringing in writers. Nolte who still writes for the *Chronicle*.

04-00:31:25

Hinckle: Well, Carl was on the *Foghorn*. Yes.

04-00:31:27

Rubens: Yes. And then he was a PR person or working for the dean's offices?

04-00:31:32

Hinckle: Oh, we still argue about that.

04-00:31:34

Rubens: So who are you reading? We know you're reading Count Marco.

04-00:31:46

Hinckle: Well, Count Marco was in the *Chronicle*. But I guess reading other newspapers. I was an out-of-town newspaper junkie. Whatever little money I made as a kid, doing summer jobs and things like that, money my mother gave me to walk around with and stuff, I'd get in the streetcar and go downtown to Seventh and Market to the out-of-town town newspaper stands and I was very distressed when they moved it from Seventh and Market up to Geary Street because then you had to walk all the way up the hill or get a transfer or something. It was very easy before. You buy a bunch of stupid looking papers that were moldy, four or five days old. You didn't care what they were.

I remember once going through Europe with this friend, certainly a mentor. Howard Gossage. He was an advertising genius. We were training it and every time the train would pull in somewhere and stop for twenty minutes, something like that, I'd get off and run out and grab all the newspapers. He'd come back and we'd be in a club car. European trains are great to travel on, with all these papers. And Gossage would just say—he always stutters, "H-hi-Hinckle, wha-wha-what the fuck? Wh-why you getting the newspapers?"

You-you-you can't re-read the language." Right. I said, "I don't care about the language. I want to see the type."

04-00:33:15

Rubens: There's a great story in *Lemonade* where you talk about—was it some *Examiner* sportswriters that would let you hang out with them?

04-00:33:27

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, yes.

04-00:33:29

Rubens: When is this happening? Is this starting in college, as well?

04-00:33:33

Hinckle: This is in college. Yes. Jim Clifford, he was the sports editor of the *Examiner*, we used to go down and hang out with the sports department at the *Examiner*.

04-00:33:39

Rubens: And the story is that there's some picture of a woman with a pretty revealing chest and isn't this magnificent and you saying, "It certainly is." But you're looking at the type?

04-00:33:50

Hinckle: Oh, no. It was extraordinary. It was some bulldog edition they were putting out and they used to use this Cheltenham [serif typeface] very, very well and it was like this huge italic Cheltenham thing and they had sort of a cheesecake picture on the front page to fill up this page of the early Sunday edition. It went up to the boonies. They'd throw anything on that. It was this giant red Cheltenham. Huge point. Eighty point. Wow, I'd never seen anything like that. So Cliff was looking at the broad's tits and I'm looking at the goddamn type. I say, "Have you ever seen anything like that?" He says, "Well, that's pretty, oh the type? What are you talking about?" I says, "Yes, look at that." You'd never seen it used that way.

04-00:34:30

Rubens: This is what you're getting by hanging out, though. You're getting the kind of smell and feel of journalism; certainly an eye for layout. But who were the other columnists that you're reading? Herb Caen, surely.

04-00:34:41

Hinckle: Oh, sure. Everybody read Caen. We later became friends. You get to know people after time. But also, it's odd to say because you break a lot of rules, so called. You don't really break them. Most of the schools I went to were so tradition-less. I don't mean USF in the sense that it had its football tradition and its basketball. I don't mean it's a vacuum. But they really didn't have any distinction. Riordan was brand new. USF, certainly the *Foghorn* and nobody raised hell there or trouble there. Everybody kind of went along. So you could do things because nobody else wanted to do them.

- 04-00:35:42
Rubens: But you wanted to do columns specifically You have a succession of differently named columns in the *Foghorn*. .
- 04-00:35:46
Hinckle: Well, it made sense. Yes.
- 04-00:35:47
Rubens: Why? What was it that made sense?
- 04-00:35:52
Hinckle: Well, first of all, there was no news as such. Nothing ever happened at that school that you would call news.
- 04-00:36:00
Rubens: You're beginning to introduce more and more coverage of national news.
- 04-00:36:01
Hinckle: Well, yes. You learned you have to create the news after a while. There's a well told story the Newsom family tells when Brendan Newsom and I one time burned down this guardhouse on campus. It was like where you go to park and they keep all the parking tickets that they give to the students and everything. And it was a particularly slow month. Nothing was happening. This wasn't the year I was putting out the paper. The year before as a junior. And Jesus, we're sitting around and I said, "I don't know what the hell we're going to throw in this damn paper this week." And we got a couple of beers and things. Anyway, we went down. It was about two in the morning and we stole some stuff from the ROTC people and burned down this shack that held all the tickets for the students. And it burned to the ground. It wasn't a very big structure.
- 04-00:36:57
Rubens: This is just high spirited hijinks?
- 04-00:36:59
Hinckle: Well, we burned it down because it was full of tickets and then it created a story. Vandals destroyed building, student parking tickets gone. Nobody would have to pay fines. I forgot what the story actually said. And immediately, the dean of students suspected us but he could never quite lay a finger on us. But we stole a bell one time from Santa Clara. Just stuff like that. But that's almost regular college stuff. Anybody goes to college, if you get involved in stuff, there's stuff between fraternities. There's always stuff that goes on at college.
- 04-00:37:40
Rubens: Like stealing the Halloween edition of S.F. State's newspaper?
- 04-00:37:42
Hinckle: Yes, stuff like that. To me that was just traditional. That's what you do when you're in college. And it was fun anyway. But there wasn't that much of that

at USF. You almost had to create it because it didn't have enough of the traditions. Well, a street car college versus a real college. Most of the people got in, got out.

04-00:38:05

Rubens: But the columns did let you talk about different things. You talked about middle class mediocrity. You wrote several articles about some of the current fads in party games. There was a word game, something in which you doubled a name mentioned in a song or movie title, for instance. Let me see if I can find the reference in my notes.

04-00:38:33

Hinckle: Beats the hell out of me.

04-00:38:34

Rubens: I saw it mentioned several times in your "Dear People" column. Do you remember coming up with these titles for columns? "Dear People, A Perspective?"

04-00:38:44

Hinckle: Well, I probably saw them somewhere. There's nothing original under the sun and I probably saw them in adult newspapers, regular newspapers. One of the things I've always, always thought was if you're a student newspaper or a small town paper, why can't you be as good or look just like and be just like the big guys? No reason not to if you got the picture.

04-00:39:13

Rubens: That paper is increasingly more sophisticated: there are colored headline banners, color that goes around boxed front-page stories. In your senior year, *Life* magazine picks the *Foghorn* to evaluate the magazine.

04-00:39:36

Hinckle: That was a sponsored ad. They did it in every college paper. And I think they gave you a big thirty bucks or something like that.

04-00:39:46

Rubens: But you have your own take on providing a kind of "expose:"

04-00:39:51

Hinckle: It was a sponsored ad and you're supposed to write something about *Life* or whatever.

04-00:39:54

Rubens: You wrote about a feature on James Thurber. But you're also talking about how the *Nation* got its knickers in a twist over the fact that you were being paid—it was like payola, they claimed, college editors being paid to write about *Life*. You wrote, "Oh, for goodness sakes, if you give me twenty-five dollars, I have a typewriter and I'll travel." What's the big deal?"

You have a sardonic, kind of a Lenny Bruce/Mort Sahl kind of humor. Were you seeing these people at all? Were you reading Paul Krassner and the *Realist*? It wasn't published yet, was it?

04-00:40:50

Hinckle: No.

04-00:40:50

Rubens: Later on you hired Krassner to write for *Ramparts*.

04-00:40:52

Hinckle: We were friends later on but I don't think he'd started the *Realist*.

04-00:40:54

Rubens: Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl, are these guys that you're seeing when they come to San Francisco?

04-00:41:00

Hinckle: Well, Mort Sahl's been a friend for years, but I didn't really know Lenny Bruce. I think I only met him once. But I knew of him when I was at USF and I didn't see anything wrong with his humor. Let me put it that way. I didn't hop in a cab and go across town to catch him at the Hungry i. But he certainly fit in with my perspective of what a town should be. Hey, this guy's fun. He's funny.

04-00:41:30

Rubens: Many of your pieces then are just beautifully written. The outlines of your talent, the key components of being witty, of being succinct, of engaging in hijinks, of having certain target or hit pieces. You say in your last editorial of the *Foghorn* in 1960 that newspapers have to create controversy; that the *Foghorn* has stepped on more toes than its share of toes and roasted more sacred cows.

04-00:42:04

Hinckle: Yes. I probably used that cliché a million times. Yes.

04-00:42:06

Rubens: And you say, "If a college daily, freed as it is from most of the pressures dulling the spontaneity of its professional counterpart, is not in the position to raise a little hell, then Socrates died for nothing and the gadfly is of little more in value than a housefly."

04-00:42:26

Hinckle: Well, that's probably true. In fact, I think I lifted that from something I wrote in high school. That sounds familiar to something I wrote about the high school paper. I used to read all the stuff. I used to read the *New Statesman*, British journal on the left liberal, certainly Labor Party left. I started reading that, I don't know why, in high school. I saw something. I liked the type. It was old Times Roman. Started reading it and I'd read the opinion journals. I guess from being in debate classes where you had to do research and you were

somewhat limited in your research. So you're sort of left to *US News and World Report* and *Time* and *Newsweek* and a few foreign journals which would get referenced two or three years later in what you could look up for an index in the library and what was available physically in a library to copy out and put in your research file. But that introduced you to magazines that you wouldn't normally run into growing up in San Francisco or going to Catholic schools in San Francisco.

I remember reading, in bound volumes, every edition of the *Rambler*, Samuel Johnson's, just because I said, "Well, this was a magazine. Let's see how that worked." You could see that. I appreciated the English wit. I'm sort of antediluvian Irish in criticism of the English but the drollness of understated humor had an effect on me. I said, "Hey, this is pretty good writing. These guys are making a point." It's to a willing audience, granted, but it's pretty darn good. So anyway, I guess if you read enough of that stuff, it seeps into your own style at some point. Whatever becomes your style.

04-00:44:48

Rubens:

You can see in the *Foghorn* a kind of evolution of moving away from a sophomoric kind of humor to a much more reportorial hard-hitting—not so much editorial but news oriented—

04-00:45:04

Hinckle:

Well, my mother used to say that every day you learn something.

04-00:45:06

Rubens:

So let's talk just a little bit about the news coverage that was innovative. Firstly, whose idea was it to cover the Olympics?

04-00:45:18

Hinckle:

Oh, that was a swindle. Well, once I took over the paper, they said, "You're really putting it out. You should run for editor your junior year and break tradition." And I didn't think that was right. I guess I had a premature respect for tradition or for institutions that didn't really exist, at least at that school. But the *Foghorn* was an institution. There were good guys that worked on it. It was all volunteer. They were all pretty damn good people and it just seemed right to me that the editor—I didn't give a damn if I worked day and night on the paper for the three years before and nobody really cared about putting it out except for me, and that sort of thing. But it was like, "No, no. You should wait until you're a senior to be editor." So it wasn't inquisitiveness or grabbing power in that sense of the word, because I'm sure if I wanted, I could have probably—I could have held them for ransom. Said, "Screw you. Unless I get to be editor early I'm not going to put this thing out for you anymore." But it didn't enter my head. Didn't enter my head.

04-00:46:33

Rubens:

So what's the swindle?

04-00:46:35

Hinckle:

Oh. Now I'm officially the editor. So right away I started a summer paper. The summer *Foghorn*. Went down and had Lawton Kennedy, my old friend, the classic printer, set the logo and then we had a summer paper and the Olympics were going on. And this guy, who, maybe he'd just been canned. I can't remember what year he got canned. A guy, in the six month period, went into the PR business with Bill Hughes. I think one of his buddies or he did have a gig at the Olympics in Squaw Valley. And the Newsom family owned the Squaw Valley facility or most of the stuff up there. So he said, "Hey, come on up here. It's really great here," and stuff like that. I think he was still in the employ of the university. Maybe it was a buddy of his. Had something going at the Olympics, whether it was a private company or a job with the Olympics. I forget. So between the Newsoms having facilities and things like that, I said, "Hey, we're going to cover the Olympics. It started that summer and then the plans were laid to do the winter Olympics."

04-00:48:08

Rubens:

Yes, that's when you were phoning in the stories from Squaw Valley?

04-00:48:09

Hinckle:

But the machinations went on during the summer. So I didn't tell anybody but it was like, "Okay, we can do this thing." And I got a job up there doing something. I forget what it was. Rewriting press releases or doing something. I forget what it was; it wasn't much. But there's a million things happening when you got an Olympics going in a small town. For months, there's this crush of activity to get ready. Everybody's got something to do. So I said, "Hey, we're going to cover them." Most people at USF said, "What the hell's that about?" They couldn't care about the winter Olympics at USF but too bad. I was there and I was interested and we were going to cover them.

04-00:49:03

Rubens:

Well it made a big splash, it looked good on the front page!

04-00:49:04

Hinckle:

Hey, it's an old idiom of the newspaper game. Newhall taught me this later or I observed it and certainly learned it from Scott. That what you say is news becomes news. News is what you make it.

04-00:49:24

Rubens:

All right. Let's push on, I don't want to bog you down in this ancient history. But we need to talk about how did the Count Marco story come about? It's just a wonderful hit piece, really. It had to have come from somewhere. Count Marco couldn't have been someone you simply decide to take on.

04-00:50:01

Hinckle:

Well, here's where it came from. My grandfather introduced me to the House of Shields, then being the *Examiner* bar. The *Examiner* was then at Third and Market; House of Shields was across from the Palace Hotel, right there in that Third and Market area. And I was going down in both high school and college

to the House of Shields—because that was the big newspaper then—to hang out if I could. A big thrill for kids to hang out where they're actually putting out the paper and stuff like that. I was putting out the *Foghorn* then and Ed Montgomery, who I think I mentioned a couple of times in the *Lemonade* book, was a great total red meat, kill the Commies, expose them, police reporter. He was in the movie, the Susan Hayward movie about the first woman executed.

04-00:51:12

Rubens: *I Want to Live?*

04-00:51:13

Hinckle: *I Want to Live*, yes. And Ed Montgomery played himself. Even with his hat on and his press tag. Anyway, he came up to me and said, "You know, this Count Marco guy, I want to talk to you about it. There's a story about him that the *Examiner* won't let me print." Count Marco was a *Chronicle* sex columnist who was a hairdresser named Henry Spinelli. And Newhall had found him god knows where and created him, gave him a name, Count Marco, and told him how to give women advice about how to get men, attract men, whatever; how to take a bath, how to get into the bathtub. That was a famous, scandalous column of his. How to get into the bathtub when your husband isn't looking, or something like that. He did stuff like that. Topical, crazy for his time.

04-00:52:25

Rubens: A bit sensationalist.

04-00:52:29

Hinckle: Yes. So it was a subject of some sermons from the parish churches, such stuff in the *Chronicle* and that sort of thing. And so Ed pulls me aside at the bar and says, "You know, I got the goods on this guy and the paper won't let me print it." And I said, "Well, what are the goods." And he says, "Well, the guy's a fag." I'm talking to Montgomery now. "The guy's a fag and they caught him in the Union Square john with a bunch of guys and they busted him but the *Chronicle* kept it quiet and now they got him down covering the big trial in L.A." I think it was the Finch-Tregoff murder trial. It's a big sixties sensational murder trial in Los Angeles.

And the *Chronicle* then owned KRON, and the station was promoting every day, Count Marco going to the trial and quoting from his coverage and his coverage was on the front page. And he says, "He's not even writing that. He can't go to L.A. because of bail restrictions." And he says, "I wrote the whole stories and these publishers, these guys, they just got their heads up each other's butts and they won't do anything. I don't know what's the matter with them. It's a great, great story." He was really excited and pissed. He says, "And they won't let me print it." I said, "Jesus." He says, "But I'll tell you what. I got it, I got it. I'll give you the whole thing, the police reports, the files, the story, and you got the paper there. You can print it." I said, "Well, sure. You want me to put your byline?" "No, no. You can't say you got this

from me. They'll fire me. They told me not to print it. Go on, just use it." And I said, "Well, what do we do with it?" And so sitting there drinking with us is this Guy Daniels who was the classified ad manager of the *Examiner*, which at that time, that was a title better than publisher because *the* classified pages were the great revenue producers. Well before Craig's List, etcetera. They were the revenue generators. A full page Macy's ad might net you \$3,000. A page of classifieds would net you \$37,000.

And *the Examiner* was just forty pages on a Sunday of classified ads. And that was also the period when the home rentals were geographically represented by parishes. Saint Gabriel's Parish, Saint Cecilia's Parish, Saint Brendan's Parish. No kidding. That's how parochial the city was. That's how they did it. Guy Daniels was there and he says, "Well, we could use a few extra copies of what you print if you're going to do this." So anyway, he says, "I'll meet you here tomorrow or whatever and give you stuff." So Guy's there; he gives me this pile of stuff, the police reports, and sure enough it was all true. And Guy says, "Well, what do you think you can do with it?" So I says, "We'll sure as hell use it. I'll have to check for libel and stuff like that because I got to keep Ed out of it. But I'll say I got the police reports, I'll figure out this and that." And he says, "It would be great if there were a lot of copies of that, what you write, around." I said, "Well, we only print about 3,000 copies of the *Foghorn*." He says, "Well, I'll tell you what." Hands me this envelope full of cash. He says, "What I'd like you to do is to get that around more. And it'd be great if you had some of those Catholic kids out there in front of the *Chronicle* holding the thing up."

Now I had gone after Count Marco satirically or something before. That's what brought Montgomery up to talk to me. He said, "Well, you think he's bad, we got really something for you." I really didn't think he was bad, it was just fun to go after the guy. So I said, "What? This is a lot of money, Guy." He said, "Well, there's a few grand there." I forget how much was there. But he said, "Just run extra copies and pay the kids, whatever you want to do. Hand them out, raise some hell. Do that stuff. That would be a good shot." I wasn't alien to that at all. Newspapers, if you read their early history in New York, let alone the West Coast, did that stuff all the time. Brazen promotion and extreme antagonism to each other and they bribe people to do this and that. It sounded like normal to me. Okay, this is fun. And I said, "Well, geez, it doesn't matter, Guy. I haven't counted this, but there's got to be three or five grand here. I don't know what the hell—it's too much money." Maybe we can spend half or two-thirds of this." He says, "Don't worry about that. Have fun and do it. Stick the rest in your pocket. Give it to charity. I don't care. Give it to the nuns." It was like, "Oh, wow. This is the real world."

Begin Audio File 5

05-00:00:00

Rubens: Did the rest of your staff know about this, because at some point, the first day of the exposé, there's a little squibbet in the newspaper that says, "Mandatory *Foghorn* meeting. Everyone has to come." And then you say, "Count Marco will be there and he's going to speak on motherhood."

05-00:00:21

Hinckle: Well, I may have made that a little tongue and cheekish.

05-00:00:27

Rubens: So what did you do with the money?

05-00:00:30

Hinckle: I don't know. We printed a bunch more copies and everybody on the staff I gave a hundred bucks to or something. We never had money before. And paid kids to march around and hand them out. I don't know. To this day, I don't remember how much. I doubt I ever put any of it in the bank. We spent it. We spent it well. I remember taking everybody out to dinners and things like that and bought cases of beer for the *Foghorn*. We spent it.

05-00:01:05

Rubens: Is there anything more to—

05-00:01:07

Hinckle: Well, no. There was a libel question there. I forget. I'd have to look back at the actual article. I knew the guy had been arrested but these issues were at that time much more sensitive than they are now. Gays, johns, Union Square, it sounds normal these days, but then it was like, "Hmm." And it was the *Chronicle*'s big guy, their promotion and everything. So I remember going down to see Jake Ehrlich about it. I'd got to know Jake when I was a kid, when I was in high school or when I started college. I was writing a column for this throwaway called the *Progress*. They'd let me write because I'd won a little contest for writing or something. They advertised. And they didn't pay me but they'd let me print my stuff, so I wrote for them. Anything to get your name in print when you're a kid who wants to be a journalist. And I'd done something on Jake Ehrlich then I don't remember what it was exactly. Once in a while he'd invite me down to lunch and he'd have a rough day and he'd tell me about some of his stories going on. "You want the petrale or you want a steak, kid? Go on, have a martini. You should learn to drink martinis." Anyway, I got to know this guy early and he saved my life at the end at USF when they wouldn't let me graduate because they wanted to charge me with the alleged *Foghorn* deficit, another story.

And I went to him and he says, "Well, be sly about it. Let them know that you know and ridicule the hell out of them and let them try and make a move on you. And then you've got the documents, right?" And he says, "If they make the move, you'll kill them, because then you've got whatever excuse,

whatever legal reason there was to reveal. Otherwise you might be doing it out of malice or something like that and that wouldn't be so good." So anyway, I took Jake's advice and sort of taunted him. Why wasn't he there? How did this happen? So it drove the *Chronicle* nuts. And then there are all these Catholic kids out front picketing and doing shit. Jesus Christ. So the story ends there except later on, not that much later, when I applied for a job at the *Chronicle*, the editor asked, "Are you nuts?" They didn't know what to do about me.

05-00:03:44

Rubens: So the editor sends you right to Newhall?

05-00:03:45

Hinckle: Yes. Abe Mellinkoff. He says, "I want you to go down and talk to Newhall. Look what you did to his story. You're applying for a job here." He was like rubbing his hands. He ended up hiring me.

05-00:03:58

Rubens: Had the *Chronicle* covered it all?

05-00:04:01

Hinckle: Oh, of course not. Why would they? Never help the enemy. No, no, no.

05-00:04:10

Rubens: So I don't want to do short shrift to that.

05-00:04:11

Hinckle: Catholic students picket *Chronicle*? Big picture. I don't think so.

05-00:04:13

Rubens: I'm wondering if you use any of the money to start a journal. I read something in the *Foghorn* in which you promoted the idea that there be another journal on campus, sponsored by the publication's council, in addition to a literary journal. I don't think I ever saw a name for it and I don't know that an edition was ever produced. You were making an argument about efficiency and what made economic sense. I think it would have been a political, public interest journal, not a full coverage. Do you remember that?

05-00:05:16

Hinckle: Could have been. Well, the Jesuits didn't want me to even go daily. At least the dean of students then, who was also the advisor, money man of the paper didn't want it. And when he found out about it courtesy of Carle Nolte, who was pr guy at USF at the time, he tried to stop it. And then I had to sort of preempt him. I think I sent 500 telegrams, or quite a few, to everybody in every big business in San Francisco and every elected official and everything like that.

05-00:05:47

Rubens: You're talking about when you're—

- 05-00:05:48
Hinckle: When we started the *Foghorn*, yes.
- 05-00:05:50
Rubens: The daily.
- 05-00:05:50
Hinckle: Going daily. Yes. Because he said, "No, you're not going to do this." And I said, "Well, how did you even know I was going to do it?" and I found out I'd been ratted out. But then everybody showed up at this big banquet party and all these congratulatory telegrams came back and pro forma stuff. "Oh, yes, congratulations on being the first Catholic college daily," and all that crap.
- 05-00:06:14
Rubens: And was there really one from Nixon and—
- 05-00:06:16
Hinckle: Yes. Well, yes. You send those things to elected officials, somebody in the office might send some stupid thing back. Yes. But you got it. That's what it came from. And big daily. The paper was a six page standard. One page in the middle, four pages around, and all I did was turn it sideways and make four pages, which is the same amount of paper. But that fit the equivalent of a daily because I was like thinking first Catholic college. No Catholic college has got a daily. I looked at Ayer's Newspaper Directory. They said college newspapers, dailies. A lot of the dailies only came out three, four times a week. I said, "Three we can make if we just chop the sucker this way." So that's what we did.
- 05-00:07:00
Rubens: And you also put in a masthead—
- 05-00:07:02
Hinckle: Oh, yes. Damn right.
- 05-00:07:03
Rubens: "San Francisco's fourth daily."
- 05-00:07:05
Hinckle: Yes. Well, it was.
- 05-00:07:07
Rubens: Well, it was. So you don't have a memory of this other journal that you were trying to create?
- 05-00:07:12
Hinckle: No. No. I'm sure we had some ongoing ideas that maybe USF could generate some lasting journalism or contribute to the city more than its insular stuff did. No, I don't remember any details of it. But I'm sure I had some goofy idea like that.

05-00:07:30

Rubens:

Yes. Well there's just so much more to say but I don't want to keep you too long. You write that you developed a habit of writing in bars. Were there bars near the campus? Or were there—

05-00:07:45

Hinckle:

Yes. there was the Embers, which was a bar on Geary then. It subsequently moved up to the inner Sunset. But it was on Geary. And I hung around there, got to know the guy who owned it and put in an extension from the switchboard, the Jesuit switchboard at USF, down in the bar. So you'd call the *Foghorn* and it rang and, "Oh, it's that line," and he'd give me the phone. And the Jesuits found out about that, caused a bit of a flap.

05-00:08:26

Rubens:

They paid for it?

05-00:08:26

Hinckle:

I smoothed it. Well, yes, we had a budget. It's my right to spend the budget the way I wanted to. That's what I wanted to do. Hey, I'm doing all this work for you for nothing. I want to do it down there. What's the business of yours? Paper's coming out and what the hell is your problem? They didn't like it. But at the time, I got to know the guy who was the president of the university, nice guy, John Connolly and I was going out with his niece, who was a nursing student at USF, and got to know him kind of well because I'd be over at family dinners on Sunday and stuff like that. That was like my junior and senior year.

And then a couple of issues came up where I got into real trouble. They fired me once. Some issues came out and they didn't want the story out so they let me come back. There was a few other things like that where I'd have to go in his office and he'd just shake his head. Because he knew me on a social—like the mother of the girlfriend I had was his sister. So he happened to be president of the university. He'd just go over there and take off his collar, pour himself a big bourbon and say, "Sit down and talk." Anyway, so it was like, "Hmm." But it just happened that I knew the guy anyway and I remember they fired me once and my mother got the registered letter.

05-00:10:04

Rubens:

What was it over? Do you remember?

05-00:10:07

Hinckle:

Oh, he just wanted to shut me down. I think he tried to shut us down over money or something like that. This is the dean of students, who later went over the hill and ran away from the Jesuits and the church. But he was kind of a stern—

05-00:10:24

Rubens:

Must have cost you plenty. In the year you were editor, you had signed up with AP. You now had—

05-00:10:33

Hinckle:

Oh, that. Yes, yes. I remember he had questioned that when I first did it. It was just a little state wire, a little tiny machine, put out these small rolls of the state wire from the AP and some stuff. And he said, "Why do you need that machine?" I said, "Well, Father, you got to remember, sometimes when you're a kid and you know you have to go to the bathroom to pee and for some reason you can't pee?" And I remember him staring at me. And I said, "Then you turn on the water and you let the water run in the sink and the water runs in the sink and all of a sudden you're able to pee." I said, "I don't know how it works but having that machine, see, we type fast."

05-00:11:24

Rubens:

So that wasn't the issue you were going to be fired over?

05-00:11:26

Hinckle:

No, no. I forget what. He cooked up something. Basically, that was the issue about graduation and the so-called *Foghorn* debt, which is now in legend. "You spend a half a million dollars."

05-00:11:42

Rubens:

Let's set the record straight.

05-00:11:43

Hinckle:

It grows and grows. Hey, why fight it? It's urban legend. It's good. Basically, student fees for activities, athletics gets so much money, yearbook gets so much, tennis club gets—that sort of stuff. Well, the newspaper gets so much money. So the student fees were paid in the beginning of the year. Well, first semester went by. Second semester begins in January. All of a sudden this guy tells me, "Well, you're going to have to stop putting out this paper all the time. Maybe you can put out two or three more sheets before the end of the year." It's like February. "What are you talking about?" He says, "Well, you don't have any money." "What do you mean we don't have any money? We got the student fees. And look at us. We're selling ads and we're doing fine." It's coming out.

05-00:12:26

Rubens:

There were a lot of cigarette ads. You had a deal with *Life*.

05-00:12:30

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. We beat the hell out of them. Yes. He says, "No, no, no. The budget's been changed and you don't have any money." I said, "Well, that's not right. We got the money in the beginning of the year. We have our allotment. We haven't overspent it." "No, you don't have it. It's been changed so you can't publish the paper unless you can sell enough ads to keep doing it the way you are without any money from the university."

Well, a friend of mine worked in the bursar's office, whatever the administrative office was. So I had her lift the requisition book. Because I had one. What you do is the printer's bill—it was the same printer all the time.

The bill would come in and you'd stack them. You'd sign it and you'd send it over to them by campus mail and they'd send them a check. Requisition. Regular university type, business type stuff. So I got the requisition book and just kept going on with business as usual and he thought he had shut me up. Then he figured that somehow that bastard is selling enough ads. How could he keep it going out? It was still coming out and driving him nuts. He thought he'd shut it down but it was still coming out. Well, he didn't realize I'd stolen the requisition book and the university was still paying the bills, as they should have, because it was our budgeted money. It was just an act of censorship. So he finally wised up at the end or somebody finally told him. When you want to get your grades, at least at USF, a lot of schools are this way, too, you got to pay your fees or fines sometimes to get your grades. Like your library fines. So the library fine was whatever it was, thirty-two dollars. This was like, I don't know, \$7,800 or something like that. \$8,100. It was under twenty but it was a figure. *Foghorn* debt. You got to pay that. That's when I went to Jake Ehrlich.

05-00:14:38

Rubens: You had to go to—

05-00:14:38

Hinckle: Yes. "Jake, I got a problem."

05-00:14:40

Rubens: So the figure has grown over the years.

05-00:14:42

Hinckle: Yes, it's grown greatly. Yes.

05-00:14:43

Rubens: I'm just so conscious of how long I've kept you going today. I've got to ask you about politics - we haven't talked about what was your political sensibility. It seems to me that it wasn't just muckraking stories. You were opposed to ROTC, you wrote an editorial about—

05-00:15:01

Hinckle: Didn't like those guys.

05-00:15:02

Rubens: You wrote an editorial against capital punishment, this arose over the Caryl Chessman case.

05-00:15:08

Hinckle: Yes. Well, that was a big deal then, around that time.

05-00:15:10

Rubens: Huge. That's May of your senior year. You retired or you graduated before the HUAC periods in San Francisco. That's not covered under your period. But civil rights.

05-00:15:24

Hinckle: I think so, yes.

05-00:15:25

Rubens: I want to ask you just one thing about civil rights. There was some position you had taken about the nursing school, about not keeping the nursing school students separate from the general curriculum.

05-00:15:41

Hinckle: Well, I guess that—

05-00:15:41

Rubens: You created a women's page? Was this a civil rights issue for you?.

05-00:15:46

Hinckle: Yes. That probably went back to that beef in Catholic grade school where we wanted to merge the boys and girls picnics. I got into a lot of trouble. Yes. It was just the right thing to do. This is crazy stuff. Yes.

05-00:15:58

Rubens: But the only coverage of the actual civil rights movement that I saw was about the lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville, Tennessee.

05-00:16:06

Hinckle: Yes. I think there was some stuff. Like Brendan Newsom was involved in the Czechoslovakian thing. There were a lot of students there.

05-00:16:16

Rubens: Yes, there is quite a bit of coverage of the Hungarian uprising.

05-00:16:17

Hinckle: The Hungary thing. All that stuff. So we'd go to demonstrations about that. But that wasn't against the United States, that was against the Russians.

05-00:16:27

Rubens: Yes, of course. I don't think you write about it. But you do initiate an exclusive with [Orval] Faubus. Your city editor is on the phone with Governor Faubus, of Arkansas.

05-00:16:44

Hinckle: Yes. We called him up.

05-00:16:45

Rubens: Would you tell that story? I just want to make sure we've got your politics here.

05-00:16:57

Hinckle: He said, "It's your dime," as I recall. Yes. "You're paying for the phone call." Yes.

- 05-00:17:02
 Rubens: Yes. So you just called him up and you wanted to know why they were such reactionary bastards?
- 05-00:17:07
 Hinckle: Yes, yes. It didn't seem right. It wasn't because of any great exposure to interracial sensibilities or anything like that. Black guys played basketball. I didn't really know any black people or people in the civil rights movement until I got involved with liberal Catholicism. I was into that when I started doing *Ramparts* and stuff like that.
- 05-00:17:35
 Rubens: So what was that?
- 05-00:17:36
 Hinckle: Then you really got to know people. But some stuff's wrong and some stuff's right. That didn't sound right.
- 05-00:17:42
 Rubens: It didn't seem like it was a special focus of yours but it was something that was part of the muckraking-
- 05-00:17:52
 Hinckle: It was also something that was absent from the classes. You would think that the Caryl Chessman debate over capital punishment was dominant in the Bay Area around that time. Obviously the civil rights stuff had begun. It hadn't really begun its momentum until a bit later in the sixties, but it was starting to go. But if you walked into a typical political science class or anything like that or the lunch room chatter at that school, you wouldn't hear a word about it. It was some disassociation from the streetcar college with issues that kind of bothered me. It was like, hey, if anybody's going to yell about it, it should be the darn newspaper because it wasn't there. It wasn't like you had a lot of activist professors sounding off, saying, "Hey, you kids should understand this. Do you know what's going on in this country?" Nothing like that. The whole place was tone deaf.
- 05-00:18:58
 Rubens: So there seemed to be no student organizations that were—
- 05-00:19:01
 Hinckle: Tone deaf.
- 05-00:19:01
 Rubens: There was a national organization called the Collegiate Press News Service. I don't think that any west coast colleges belonged to it; were you aware of it or is it possible you belonged to it?
- 05-00:19:13
 Hinckle: Oh, probably.

- 05-00:19:14
 Rubens: I think it had been created to facilitate and coordinate information about the civil rights movement.
- 05-00:19:21
 Hinckle: I don't know about that in particular. The *Foghorn*, we, used to always get awards because it was at least a coherent looking newspaper, at least in the years I worked on it, so it would win university press awards.
- 05-00:19:34
 Rubens: Yes, awards from the American Collegiate Press Association.
- 05-00:19:37
 Hinckle: Because compared to other college papers its size, it at least somewhat looked like a real paper or a together paper. But all those schools had journalism departments, for god's sake, and advisors that worked full-time and students who took the courses and got credits. We had nothing. This was all volunteer.
- 05-00:19:59
 Rubens: Well, for as raggedy as the ending seemed to be for you in terms of not your achievements, but what the university was doing to you, trying to fire you and that also—
- 05-00:20:14
 Hinckle: Oh, it was awful. I remember my mother giving me the registered letter. "It looks like they got you this time."
- 05-00:20:18
 Rubens: But you got, when you graduated, the first annual Eddie Quaid Memorial Medal. It was awarded unanimously by the publication council of the *Foghorn*. It was named for an early editor of the paper.
- 05-00:20:32
 Hinckle: Well, that's probably because I still controlled the publications council. That didn't come from the Jesuits. Although the time that they did fire me, I think it was because I held back a story. And the story is about a guy named Father Semenaria. And Father Semenaria was a Jesuit who was very close to the patrons of the arts in town and their favorite priest. And there was a room at the campus called the Semenaria Room. It was named after him. And that's where the student council met and other meetings were held. It was that sort of a room. And they'd always have events this week and that sort. Special events. The Semenaria Room, 3:00 pm, this and that. So one day I get this notice from this particular dean, Father Moore, who I had all of my controversies with. And he says, "You have another error in the newspaper, and the error was that it's not the Semenaria Room, it's the Seminar Room." And I said, "Well, what do you mean? It's always been the Semenaria Room forever." "What do you mean? No, the name is the Seminar Room." "Well, when was it changed and why didn't you tell us? What are you talking about?" "Well, it was changed whenever and you're in error. It's the Seminar

Room not the Semenaria Room." So I go, "What the hell is going on here?" So I asked a few people around here. "Who remembers this guy?"

Anyway, found out through a friend or a relative of his, the guy had jumped ship and he was a Mormon missionary in Arizona and he'd faked drowning on the beach and was a huge civic funeral, a huge funeral at Saint Ignatius because he was a big society darling. His clothes were folded, he'd gone in swimming and he drowned. Well, he didn't drown. He faked it. Nobody knew that then. And this was maybe ten years prior. So somehow they'd found out and in typical Jesuit Catholic Church way, shut it up. They took his name off the room and changed it to that.

So instead of telling me, that, "Hey, we changed the room to Seminar Room," he said, "You got another error." So that pissed me off. And I just said, "Hmm, I think I'll put this one in my pocket. Maybe I'll print it in the last issue when I leave." I didn't know why. But something just told me, "Don't need another fight right now. This is very, very interesting stuff but let's just sit on this one for a while." So then I got fired and so I had to go see the president and he said, "Jesus, I don't know what we can do this time." He's in his office. He's very uncomfortable. He didn't like the whole idea. He wasn't that comfortable I was going out with his niece anyway and causing all this trouble. He was a nice guy. He wasn't like a censor or anything like that. He just didn't want this trouble. It's trouble. Oy, who needs it. I said, "Here's what maybe you could tell them, Father. Here's a story on Father Semenaria." He took this piece of paper out. He said, "Father Semenaria?" He said, "You know about Father Semenaria?" I said, "Yes, I do." I said, "And in respect for the university and its traditions and its reputation, I have never printed this story and here is the story. Now, if I am fired, I will resign from the university and I will take this story down to the *Examiner*, where I have some friends, and I will tell them I am fired and the reason I was fired is because of this story. You can convey that to the dean of students. You can tell everybody on the council, whoever you have to deal with, but that's it. If I'm not reinstated, I am not only fired, I quit. I resign the school and this story about Father Semenaria is going to be the reason. And it is the reason because I was decent enough not to print it and this insane man that you're protecting is trying to throw me out for this sort of stuff. No way. But this gives you cover, if you wish to cover my butt on this one." That was it. I never did print the story. Didn't even leave and shove it in their face. I went, "Okay." But it teaches you, sometimes it's good to hold things back.

05-00:25:08

Rubens:

So that was a lesson you took from that. All right. You think we should call it a day? I didn't ever ask you about being the editor of the yearbook, in your sophomore year.

- 05-00:25:20
Hinckle: The yearbook was nothing. The guy just sat there all year and didn't do it and all of a sudden it's like six weeks to go. The yearbook's supposed to be out and no pictures, nothing.
- 05-00:25:35
Rubens: The story appears in the *Foghorn* somewhere in January or February of that school year.
- 05-00:25:40
Hinckle: We had six weeks to put it out. I don't know how long it takes to get printed and out by the end of the year.
- 05-00:25:46
Rubens: Did you do the layout for it? It was a very modern, clean layout. I actually compared that one to your own graduation yearbook.
- 05-00:25:54
Hinckle: Yes, I did the layout for that. Anyway, it was just like a job. It's like, "Christ, we got a disaster." And I don't know who asked me. It must have been the guy who was the editor of the *Foghorn* at the time. Because I was the only guy who spent time around doing stuff there. And he says, "Jesus." It was like six weeks. Maybe it was eight weeks. But you had to have it done and you had to have all the pics. Then it took whatever time, a month or two months for it to get printed and it had to be out by the end of the year. So I don't remember exactly. But it was like six or eight weeks. Six weeks somehow sticks in my head.
- 05-00:26:27
Rubens: I thought the aesthetics were striking; it's not a text driven production and I ask about it because in grade school you became interested in design and layout.
- 05-00:26:34
Hinckle: Oh, I was like, "Hey, I get to design a yearbook." It wasn't that great looking. What that printer had. I used it. And we put a lot of goofy things in it.
- 05-00:26:48
Rubens: You had a poetic piece This is the city, this is the university and then a thoughtful paragraph about what a university could be –a cross roads, a part of the metropolitan. Maybe you were saying this is what the university is.
- 05-00:27:02
Hinckle: Maybe I was.
- 05-00:27:04
Rubens: Yet what you were saying earlier in our conversation –that one of the reasons you were covering civil rights to the extent you were was because there was no discussion of this stuff in classes. And yet what you spoke about, you had this wonderful paragraph about the myriad of experiences, the university

giving an inquiring mind and an open heart, allowing for intellectual energy. It seemed—

05-00:27:27

Hinckle: I don't know why they didn't like me. Sounds like I was nice to them.

05-00:27:28

Rubens: Nice PR, yes, but also a nice vision of what a university should be.

05-00:27:32

Hinckle: It's what it should have been.

05-00:27:34

Rubens: Yes. I thought to myself that language kind of anticipated what was going to be talked about in the Free Speech Movement [at UC Berkeley] years later.

05-00:27:40

Hinckle: Well, they just did a terrible job of tying themselves to the city which they took the name of. It was a streetcar college and it was a money maker for the Jesuits and a disposal for Jesuits they didn't know what to do with, unfortunately.

05-00:27:57

Rubens: All right. So shall we call it a day?

05-00:28:00

Hinckle: Yes. That about takes care of USF anyway. Jesus, what else can you say about that place.

05-00:28:06

Rubens: Well, there's your—

05-00:28:07

Hinckle: Although one time I was talking to [Pierre] Salinger. Kennedy's press secretary was the senator for a while.

05-00:28:15

Rubens: He had been on the *Foghorn* before.

05-00:28:17

Hinckle: Yes.

05-00:28:18

Rubens: Not with you?

05-00:28:17

Hinckle: No, no. He was twenty years before me but I met him. I think it was in Paris. It was in some damn thing. Anyway, because I went up to him and I said, "You were on that damn *Foghorn*." I did that sort of thing. He was some big poobah then and I don't know what I was doing. Something with *Ramparts*. Maybe it was even after *Ramparts*, the scandals. I don't recall. Anyway, I was in Paris and saw him at something and then we got into this great discussion

about USF and he says, "That school, they always kill their young." He said, "Boy, I had so many fights with them and afterwards I never went back and they don't even want to talk to me." He says, "I had the same experience." He says, "There's something about that school. If you do anything, they're afraid of you." That was Salinger's take.

05-00:29:15

Rubens: By the way, I think Kevin Starr comes in as editor after you. But was Kevin Starr a roommate of yours during that period?

05-00:29:23

Hinckle: Well, we weren't roommates but we were all streetcar kids.

05-00:29:32

Rubens: There's a byline of him but I don't find his name on the masthead.

05-00:29:35

Hinckle: No, I don't know if Kevin ever was the editor of the *Foghorn*. He was on it the whole time and we wrote a lot of things together. Oh, he wrote for it all the time and I had him do a lot of things. I can't remember who was the editor after me. No, it wasn't Kevin.

I don't know if we were like in the same class together or if we were a junior and a senior. I was a senior and he was a junior. But we went to the four years of that school, in my memory, together. Or three years of it anyway. But I don't think Kevin did the *Foghorn* formally. He wrote for it. He hung around with me when we were doing it and wrote quite a few things over the years, but I don't remember him ever being in an editorial position. I may have stuck his name on the masthead for some reason. I don't recall.

05-00:30:31

Rubens: And there's one other name who's by-line is on news stories, but not in the masthead, Charles Fracchia.

05-00:30:40

Hinckle: Ah, the plagiarist.

05-00:30:41

Rubens: Speaking about historians.

05-00:30:43

Hinckle: The plagiarist. You know that story about Fracchia.

05-00:30:45

Rubens: Why don't you tell the story.

05-00:30:47

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Major, major lifting of an academic paper. This was when he was married to the I. Magnin daughter. Oh, yes. Yes, So much trouble that I forget if he was canned or rebuked or something like that. If you google Fracchia it

got in the papers it was such a scandal. It wasn't like one of those things that you know about inside. He stole somebody's paper and stuck his name on it.

05-00:31:24

Rubens: That's too bad. The reason I mentioned him is because he's been involved for such a long time in creating a San Francisco historical society; it was a history piece he wrote for the *Foghorn*.

05-00:31:38

Hinckle: Yes, he wasn't a friend of mine. I was a little bit involved with the California Historical Society as such and this old printer friend of mine, Lawton Kennedy and some stalwarts of it didn't approve of the modernistic expansionist version, let me put it that way, of the California Historical Society that Fracchia had. They felt it was, and I shared their opinion, that it was more of a social climbing, ambitious, too broadening, getting away from what they thought should be its more scholarly purpose. There was quite a bit of dissension over a period of fifteen, twenty years, and Fracchia ultimately prevailed and merged it into this and that and has got the Mint building. But it wasn't without a lot of opposition and I was always on the other side of Fracchia on that one.

05-00:32:42

Rubens: I think we ought to call it a day.

05-00:32:42

Hinckle: Yes.

Interview 3: November 16, 2009

Consisting of narratives about post-college life in which a variety of enterprises are undertaken, a life-changing mentor-friendship is formed and a career in journalism and political crusades is forged.

Begin Audio File 6

6-00:00:00

Hinckle: There was a beef about *Ramparts*, it was discussed and you see it in most stories, about *Ramparts*, that it had a sexist bent to it, didn't treat women—which is total bullshit. And the interesting thing is that there was, we got caught up in supporting feminist thinking, groups that thought women had a right to do what they want with their bodies, that prostitution and anything like that was okay, and those that thought it was all oppression by society. And that became a huge thing, started in the sixties, huge thing in the seventies. *City Magazine* got caught up in that, too. There was an infamous story about how you can't get laid in San Francisco, a cover story, but at *Ramparts* it was more interesting because it was the—like there was an issue we had which a woman in a slightly low cut dress with a Jeannette Rankin for President button—and I cut off her head, right, I thought clearly making the satirical and political point, that's what society does. They sell ads by looking at tits, that sort of thing.

That issue had a whole bunch of lefty women who participated in writing it. Bob Scheer's wife, Anne Weills—maybe five or six women who were very strong New Left women, whatever you want to call them at the time. And they were inside doing this thing on the women in left politics and how they were assuming big roles and making changes and all that stuff. And they posed, it was their idea, in not sexy outfits but very—they were all good looking broads, and they posed here dressed in short skirts, that sort of stuff. Here was like these four or five pages of these very left women saying this good left stuff, and that photo went with this article. Well, they were part of a group of women who thought, "Hey, that was a very funny juxtaposition" And there was this ridiculous, I thought, backlash that said "Oh, look at this outrageously sexist cover." It was interesting. I thought, doesn't anybody get any of the irony?

Rubens: Because on this cover weren't you designated chauvinist of the month by the National Organization of Women?

6-00:02:36

Hinckle: Yeah. Shit like that. Jesus, it was great.

Rubens: Warren, it's the sixteenth of November, 2009 and this is our third interview and we've covered your history up to 1960. And we still didn't do everything we should have—You graduated in May of 1960 just before the

demonstrations against HUAC happened at San Francisco's city hall, four months before the Kennedy election. So I want to ask you, what did the world look like to you then? Do you have a specific idea about what you're going to do once you graduate—we did talk about Jake Ehrlich securing your diploma for you. To begin with, what did the world look like to you in May of 1960?

6-00:03:36

Hinckle: It was just folks. It didn't come out of the college newspaper and the battles with the administration and that sort of thing. It came out with a liberal perspective. Where did you get that? I don't know. Probably reading you did from high school on, standard Orwell stuff and things like that. Basically, probably oddly enough reading the op-ed pages of college papers who said things in exchange, always wrapped a small little thing. You had to rip the paper off to open them. And a lot of them were basically kind of liberal. You say, what are these guys writing about, that sort of stuff. So you came out from a conservative city with kind of a, I guess you'd call it, I know San Francisco was supposed to be the craziest place in the world, but it wasn't and isn't. It remains a hybrid town where certainly the old order type of thing. It's Brooks Brothers versus prayer beads. Brooks Brothers gets almost half the action, culture. Love the culture of this town.

Rubens: This is from your perspective. Are you paying attention to politics at all? Christopher is the mayor, but—

6-00:05:21

Hinckle: I got to know George later after he was the mayor. He was tired, so he got in a big beef defending his wife when this guy Art Agnos was mayor, who has many battles with, he came on his side and got involved in that, but that's not the question you're asking. It was just business as usual. It was natural I worked a little bit as a volunteer on the Kennedy campaign.

Rubens: You did?

6-00:05:52

Hinckle: Yes. That just seemed normal. It wouldn't have seemed normal to be a Republican. But that's true of almost all my friends, but they all were, I guess, more conservative or ended up more conservative, or stayed more in the conservative tradition in San Francisco, not that it's a Republican tradition, it's more social and cultural conservatism than it is left/right political conservatism. So you didn't think much about politics. It was natural to go for Kennedy and—

Rubens: Well, this must have been some pretty big ballyhoo with him being a Catholic and—

6-00:06:44

Hinckle: Yes. That was, of course, a huge deal.

Rubens: It's not covered in the *Foghorn* under you. I didn't see anything about Kennedy really, but you leave in May—

6-00:06:54

Hinckle: Yes. That really got going.

Rubens: It's the convention that will set him up as a national figure.

6-00:06:58

Hinckle: The convention was the summit, yes. So all that was after college for me, from my perspective.

Rubens: How about Pat Brown's successive campaigns. Here's a good Catholic coming out of San Francisco. Was your family behind Brown? Did you do any work for him?

6-00:07:18

Hinckle: No. I had issues with Pat Brown from early on which weren't because of ideology or anything like that, but he was very much in defense or in denial about the death penalty, for instance. And that sort of was a mark against him, and then got into, Reagan later topped him, but still I got into quite a few beefs with UC Berkeley and with the university system from sort of a, you have to call it a very conservative or reactionary approach. So Pat Brown didn't get too high marks from me, which later played out in *Ramparts* when we were doing that because we came with a famous issue of *Ramparts* which infuriated a lot of people. Strong liberals and strong Democratic Party people were I think the conclusion was kind of an amorphous. This guy is so bad, how bad can this clown Reagan be? That was about it. Our mistake was to underestimate the power of the liberal center and intelligence and the liberal part of the Democratic Party and its tendency to melt down the principles of whatever you want to call them. And then Reagan went on.

Our kind of presumption was he'd be a clown and like Si [Simon] Casady who at the time was head of the Democratic Party, was a former newspaper publisher from San Diego and was an early friend of mine and a very progressive Democrat. He was at odds with a lot of the party, and he wouldn't support, except in nominal lip service, Pat Brown. There was a great disappointment with the guy, even though he was a San Francisco, you know—

Rubens: Yes. Had your parents been enthusiastic about his—

6-00:09:37

Hinckle: No. I don't think there's any political enthusiasm in my family at all for one thing or the other.

Rubens: What did you literally do when you volunteered for JFK?

6-00:09:48

Hinckle: Worked for the campaign, the Northern California whatever organizational thing it was.

Rubens: Going door to door or writing stuff or—

6-00:09:59

Hinckle: I don't know, doing a bunch of stuff down in Monterey County I remember for a while, and I guess wandering in and out of headquarters, not doing anything particularly significant or dramatic.

Rubens: Something that transformed you or gave you insight into—

6-00:10:15

Hinckle: Well, it gave me insight into Teddy Kennedy. I saw him a lot, being a wild man and a playboy. He was supposed to be the head of the Northern California, maybe it was the whole of California, I don't know, Kennedy campaign, and he spent most of his time shacked up down in Carmel and partying down, right? Which was the talk of, of course, the campaign workers and everything. So you picked that up, so you saw, you know, all is not perfect in Bethlehem in terms of the Kennedy family or the, not that I objected somebody going around screwing around having a good time, but he was like MIA in terms of his role in the campaign.

Rubens: Did you pay attention to a piece Norman Mailer writes for *Look* after the convention in Los Angeles in which he talks about Kennedy being an existential hero, a kind of superman for a button-down alienated era. That article is identified by some as the beginning of new journalism.

6-00:11:38

Hinckle: I don't remember reading the *Look* piece, but I remember, at the time. I don't know, he seemed pretty much, Kennedy was important at least from my perspective because of the Catholicism issue. How tough he was on that, and the fact that he won as a Catholic. That was a big deal to us. So naturally we were really for Kennedy, and nobody that I knew or in my world was ever a Nixon fan. He seemed like sort of a grim critter just from the style thing. You'd have to be for Kennedy politically. You'd say "Hey, look at this guy. He's young. He's fun. He's this. He's that." So it was politics as usual. That was a tough convention, brokered convention.

Rubens: Did you go?

6-00:12:44

Hinckle: No. I didn't go to that.

Rubens: Anything more on what the world looked like for you after May of 1960, the second half of the opening year of the decade, for a young graduate?

6-00:13:00

Hinckle: It looked the way it looks now. People screw it up. Things not always being what they seem—

Rubens:

But just in terms of what, a sense of opening of the culture at all. Did you feel like this was now your time? What is it that you wanted to do, by the way. Your yearbook says that you were going to go to graduate school in political science at Stanford.

6-00:13:24

Hinckle: It did, did it? Oh, yeah? Well—

Rubens:

Yes. Did you particularly have aspirations to do that or is that something you said because it would look good in your senior yearbook?

6-00:13:42

Hinckle: Probably because I didn't know what I was going to do next. I wanted to get a job on the *Examiner*, which was then the dominant paper, but then I didn't know if I'd get one, so I probably at the time, I don't recall saying that. Well, if I can't get a decent job on the paper right away, might as well go to graduate school, yes.

Rubens:

So you already had a certain kind of political, sociological sensitivity.

6-00:14:10

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens:

Did Stanford have a graduate journalism program?

6-00:14:13

Hinckle: No. I don't think so. They might have, but the last place I'd go would be to journalism school. I knew all about that.

Rubens:

Sure, of course.

One of the things we haven't discussed is your affinity or not for The Beats. Jake Ehrlich is your lawyer to help you get out of college—

6-00:14:31

Hinckle: Good old Jake.

Rubens:

And he was the lawyer for the [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti and [Allen] Ginsberg trial about whether "Howl" was obscene or not. Had you become a fan in any way of the beatniks?

6-00:14:48

Hinckle: No.

Rubens:

Had you read their poetry, gone to hear any of their readings?

6-00:14:53

Hinckle: No. I was totally culturally unaware, wasn't averse to, like goings on in North Beach, but was never into poetry readings, the coffee house stuff, and only read beatnik stuff a little later on in terms of analyzing or making points in writing about the culture and what was going on.

Rubens:

Your wonderful piece for *Ramparts* on the hippies really takes a look at the roots of a kind of mentality that comes out of the beatniks.

6-00:15:30

Hinckle: Yes, which was certainly, when you compare it to the mentality, if you want to call it a mentality, that came out of the hippies, there were just two strains of the beatniks. One was somewhat fascistic if you want to put it that way, and the other was pacifist. But they were certainly recognizable in the town. You knew something was going on because they were breaking with convention. And from my point of view, which wasn't that sophisticated, anything that broke with convention, literary or political, was interesting and probably something you'd be in favor of.

Rubens:

That's exactly what I was trying to get at. So you're aware of them. You're not particularly drawn to them. What kind of music are you listening to?

6-00:16:18

Hinckle: I've never been that much into music.

Rubens:

Okay. There seems to be a lot of attention to jazz, or jazz concerts, in the *Foghorn*. There's a jazz concert—

6-00:16:29

Hinckle: You give people what they want.

Rubens:

You at some point—I think say—that you weren't interested in Top 40, that you didn't like folk music and you didn't like rock and roll.

6-00:16:39

Hinckle: I did? I don't know.

Rubens:

I wanted to know if that kind of cultural phenomenon was a part of your world.

6-00:16:44

Hinckle: I'm sure I said I didn't like rock and roll. I was a conservative Catholic kid, and that just didn't fit in.

Rubens:

Couple of other things I want to run by you: the Cuban revolution. Do you remember, I didn't see any coverage of that in the *Foghorn*, either, and when I think about what is going to be so identifiable about your politics during *Ramparts*, commitment to the civil rights movement, taking a look at Oakland

as a beleaguered city, anti-war, counter culture, or—and then publishing Che's diaries and your own travel to and writing on Cuba—

6-00:17:24

Hinckle: Most of those politics were doing what comes naturally, and what you became involved with is something you could deal with. I mean the civil rights movement interest came from the Catholic Church, from learning about how the church segregated communion rails in the South, and that sort of stuff. So a lot of this there was national or political issues I got drawn into or became drawn into from Catholic issues. You know, liberal resistant Catholics versus the establishment of the church which went along and basically was a civil right violator big time and racist.

Rubens:

Although again that's a religion that's very divided. I mean it's just an amazing liberal tradition even here in San Francisco of Jews and Catholics who are part of a civic unity league who were trying to get more hires for African Americans and who support the early days of the civil rights movement.

6-00:18:31

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens:

But you're saying coming out of SFU was mainly conservative and—

6-00:18:38

Hinckle: I became involved in *Ramparts* right away. Actually, it was a college English professor of mine at USF, a guy named Harry Steele, got me involved in *Ramparts* because he was a poet, a functioning poet. He wrote books, and he wasn't just an ethereal poet. Big fan of Hart Crane. He got me reading a lot of that stuff, and he had a certain interest in the beatniks.

Rubens:

He got you reading while you were at college.

6-00:19:13

Hinckle: Yes. He had a certain interest in the beats in terms of style and approach, and yeah. He got me in that sense a little bit interested in them, but it wasn't to the extent that I'd be going down to North Beach and hanging around in the coffee houses at that time.

Rubens:

And the Cuban revolution, that interest comes later, then, from *Ramparts* and Bill Turner—you ended up writing a book on the CIA and Castro with him.

6-00:19:34

Hinckle: Yes. You get involved in these things sort of step by step, I guess, as it happens.

Rubens:

So you're not drawn to—covering or paying attention to—the Cuban Revolution?

6-00:19:52

Hinckle: No. It sounded like the right guy wanting Cuba, but I didn't pay any special attention, I came from a very insular world. And as issues opened up, the beginning of opening up of issue politics came from things that were originally Catholic issues. Liberal Catholics say, "Our own church is one of the worst racial offenders. Look what we do in this area and this area."

Rubens:

You soon write about segregated Catholic churches, in Los Angeles, there's a African American barber, who you quote.

6-00:20:31

Hinckle: Yes. Leon Aubrey.

Rubens:

How do you get to Los Angeles? When is that—

6-00:20:35

Hinckle: That's *Ramparts*.

Rubens:

Oh it is. Okay.

6-00:20:38

Hinckle: All of *Ramparts* came out of liberal Catholics in revolt against church policy. It started out as a group of liberal lay Catholics. And those issues led to the same beefs they had with the church, found you had with the larger society, that's civil society.

Rubens:

That's a very articulate way of saying it.

6-00:21:05

Hinckle: But it didn't come from political awareness. You get out of school and say, "Wow, Kennedy's going to change the world." This is what politics really is. You're going to come out all bright and shiny and thrilled, going on a crusade. It was like what's the next thing?

Rubens:

So, by the way, why did the *Examiner* have a six-month hold period? And then the second question is why is it the *Examiner* that you wanted to go to work for?

6-00:21:37

Hinckle: First of all, it was the dominant paper. The *Chronicle* was more the society paper, I guess you'd call it, more light and liberal paper at the time when I was in college, but I just always, from being in grammar school, the *Examiner* was the paper period.

Rubens:

Is it the guy you knew at the House of Shields early on?

6-00:22:09

Hinckle: I knew the guys, that sort of thing. I ended up working for the *Chronicle* and becoming best friends with Scott Newhall, the editor, but that was by the

happenstance of things as time went on. It was all within a relatively brief period of a couple of years.

But the *Examiner* was the place I wanted to go to work and, as usual, it's pretty hard to get a job anyway, to get right out of school in a newspaper. I knew some people there, but it was like, "Well, maybe six months from now we'll have an opening." They weren't going to part the waves for you just because you'd been a student journalist.

Rubens: So then you get involved in, do you help create this business?

6-00:22:50

Hinckle: Oh this crazy business, yes.

Rubens: This just seems like a wonderful business. You mentioned in the first interview that it came out of a public relations person at USF, Bill Hughes. He was the PR guy, or community relations—

6-00:23:17

Hinckle: Community, whatever it is, yes. That thing, and was there, and he sort of disappeared in the middle of my senior year. And they quietly hushed it up, and I found out quickly, because he told me, that he was canned for being gay. I had no idea he was gay. He was a big Stanford history grad, wore vests all the time, he was the most conservative, horned rimmed glasses, most conservative looking guy I've ever seen. I said, "Jesus Christ, what are these gays like?" I didn't know any of this stuff. It was all new.

So I was like, "Well, maybe I'll go to graduate school." You've got to do something while I wait. And I remember he had gotten me a job during one summer, this was when he was at USF. And I became friends with, I guess, some of the more liberal or a couple of the loose Jesuits like Louis Egan, who was Richard Egan, the movie actor's brother who ran the theater department, and a few others who were not of the usual Jesuit stripe as the pack was put together at USF. And this guy paid attention to me. I didn't know he was gay. Now I'm kind of, "Wait a minute, maybe that's why this guy's paying attention to me." But anyway, he got me a job one summer before my senior year began to Stanford Medical Center in the PR department, something like that, putting out their newsletters or something, which is fine, that was fine.

Rubens: This is the same summer you're putting out a summer edition of the *Foghorn*.

6-00:25:12

Hinckle: Yeah, I was putting out a summer edition of the paper, too. And I just couldn't wait to start publishing it. Went to my old printer friend Lawton Kennedy and got him to set a mast head called the *Summer Foghorn*. There it was. We put them out. No sense waiting. Anyway, he asked what I do. I was kind of marking time trying to decide what to do, and he says to me, "Well, I'm starting up this business. Why don't you come work for the business as long

as you're going to, you know, can't go to work for one of the papers right away, the *Examiner* right away." And I said, "What is it?" "Well, I go in partnership with this guy called John Barts. He's a great old pro. He was the PR director for the American Red Cross in the Second World War, and he used to be a foreign correspondent for Scripps-Howard, or something, and he's a world traveler and old newspaper man and a really experienced guy. And we'll start this business, and, what the hell, it would be fun. You got nothing to do right now. Why don't you join it?" And I said, "Well, why not?"

So I did. It became Barth, Hughes and Hinckle. Another logo, down to Lawton Kennedy, "We need a logo." Wonderful looking letterheads, very classy. Very distinctive. Old fashioned type.

Rubens: Did this involve literally business papers with lawyers setting up—

6-00:26:48

Hinckle: Yes. It was a business. I guess. It didn't pay much. I'd never been in business before, but it was a PR, a publicity company. And all of a sudden it was clients right away.

Rubens: Where did you have offices?

6-00:27:00

Hinckle: I got to pick this. They said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "A place closest to the House of Shields." So many decisions are made by, and so the Monadnock Building, which is right before the Palace Hotel on Market Street, the Market Street part of the Palace Hotel. It's a great, great old building, and that's where the Short Line Railroads had their offices. And the House of Shields was peopled by these railroad executives who'd generally come up from the train from the peninsula. They would have a one-room office handling freight matters and this and that for whichever line. And they come up on the train and get to work around 10:30 or so, talk to their secretary for a while and have them do something, go over to the House of Shields by 11:30 and have a couple of hours of drinks and some lunch and get back to work for an hour and a half at 2:30 or 3:00, go back to the House of Shields, have another five or six drinks, get back on the train to go back down to the peninsula. But it was a mainstay of the House of Shields business, along with the newspaper guys. So I thought that was a nice place, so there we were in the Monadnock Building.

Rubens: Who put up the money for this? Is this Barth and—

6-00:28:19

Hinckle: Yes. I didn't put up any money. I didn't have any money. I guess it didn't take much money to put up the business because we had clients right away.

Rubens: Who were they?

6:00:28:26

Hinckle:

And they would pay retainers. There was the Japan Society of San Francisco, where we did the brochures. And I did, both of these guys John Barth was, you know, old newspaper, crusty veteran World War II reporter through the mills of the corporate PR on the East Coast, and his was kind of a history professor intellectual type, but none of them knew anything about like design or doing a brochure or anything like that.

6:00:29:07

Hinckle:

Yes, that stuff. So all these things needed, so that was most of the part I did. They all needed a brochure, a pamphlet, or they have a mailing for an event, that sort of thing. Back to my old printer friend, Lawton Kennedy, "Okay, we got some business for you finally."

6:00:29:31

Hinckle:

We do all this stuff, no, I didn't work hard at all. It wasn't very hard to do those things, and mostly it was event promotion and that sort of thing.

Rubens:

Did you have to work pretty hard?

6:00:29:42

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. There were a lot of them. They were all on these boards, like the Oakland Spring Opera, was another one. Gradually I don't know how it gradually dawned on me, it didn't make any difference in terms of the business, but I found that we got all these clients because of the gay underground, the executive directors or the whatever, not the boards, but most of these non-profit groups that we all of a sudden had clients, who I guess they didn't have to raise much money for a business because all of a sudden you got three or four people paying you monthly retainers in advance, and you know there was business. But then we began to realize there is this, all these guys are gay, and this is a connection, and this is partly how the world works. This is interesting.

Rubens:

And nobody had an axe to grind with your taking on, or outing, Count Marco?

6:00:30:36

Hinckle:

Oh, no. That was hilarious. That was funny.

Rubens:

You felt he deserved it. You exposed him, but it was his pomposity. It wasn't because he was gay.

6:00:30:49

Hinckle:

I've known the gay culture from early on from that period. It says there's a fabulous sense of humor, and I think most things are justifiably funny, and there aren't that many serious ideologues where you can't make fun of

themselves. Most of the time they've got their own lingo. They'll call each other faggots, right? "Oh, you silly faggot." You know that sort of thing. It's a wonderful light-hearted culture. I always enjoyed those guys and do to this day. I love going to gay bars.

Rubens: Although serious consequences.

6-00:31:28

Hinckle: I feel totally comfortable in that culture. Not the heavy leather drumbeat bars at night where that you've got to say, "That's just too much stuff." But in the daytime or something like that for drinks or neighborhood bars that happen to be gay, what do I care? It's like why do you hire women? Why not?

Rubens: You're aware there is a civil rights issue as well. I mean here Bill Hughes loses his job because he—

6-00:31:57

Hinckle: Yes. Like Count Marco

Rubens: Exactly.

6-00:32:03

Hinckle: That was a bit of an education.

Rubens: So any other particular organizations that you want to point to—

6-00:32:07

Hinckle: Well, I got into a bit of trouble. There was one client, it was P & O Orient Lines, and they had a big ship, a new ship come into San Francisco for the first time to dock that thing, coming from Australia, the Canberra, I think it was. The job was to promote the arrival of the Canberra.

Rubens: Canberra was the name of the ship.

6-00:32:40

Hinckle: C-A-N-B-E-R-R-A, I'm almost certain, I've still got the literature. So it did all these hilarious things, promoted these long nineteenth century handbills and handed them out all over the city. I had the brilliant, in retrospect not so smart, idea of hiring a calliope to go around, I knew a guy who hung out at the House of Shields. A guy named Gary Booker, who was an old carnival guy, and he had a calliope down in, I think it was Gilroy. He'd bring it to county fairs and had a business with this big old steam calliope. You could hear it like two miles away. I mean, really high powered up. So the idea was "Hey, we'll have this calliope go around and give free concerts and go to all the towns in the Bay Area with big signs that said the ship USS Canberra is arriving, and we'd have hired people to go pass out literature in the town and the calliope concert's at two o'clock, whatever."

Rubens: Classic—

6-00:33:43

Hinckle: Stuff like that. Old fashioned P. T. Barnum type promotion. Unfortunately, the calliope visited Petaluma and drove through the main street and out the highway and to go around and come back and give its concert, and it passed the chicken hatchery. Apparently the decibels of the calliope drove thousands of poor little chickens crazy, and they smashed their heads against the wall or whatever, and it was decimation of the current crop of chicken growing population. There were all these sort of large law suits against P & O Orient Lines.

Rubens:

Really?

6-00:34:23

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. You send this God damned calliope through town and destroy our chickens—You can see from their point of view, that wasn't exactly a nuisance you anticipated and expect a calliope coming down the street blasting away at that decibel.

Rubens:

Did Jake Ehrlich come in again?

6-00:34:46

Hinckle: No. We just got sued, and it was funny as hell, what are we going to do about it? We probably got sued, I'm sure we did, but I don't even remember that as much as the P & O Orient Lines got sued. They weren't too happy about that one. They, of course, had to pay. There was no question of proximate cause there. Around that time it was getting too nuts, and the business started to unravel. John Barth had run off, taken a hike. He disappeared.

Rubens:

He's older?

6-00:35:16

Hinckle: Yes. And all of a sudden he was gone, and there was Hughes, and he was like then decided he was kind of after me. I said, "Oh, my God." I had my sister working for us. She had to go get ice for drinks and stuff like that. There was a guy named Bill Denton, nice guy, he promoted Broadway shows when they came to town.

Rubens:

Denton? Because I thought there was a guy named Bill Upton you had mentioned before, maybe I misheard that.

6-00:35:41

Hinckle: Bill Upton was his boyfriend, who was the manager of the book store in the City of Paris.

Rubens:

Was he involved in the business?

6-00:35:51

Hinckle: Not in the business, but Denton was. He managed a side office in our thing and the guy was involved in promoting some of these shows.

Rubens: And so it had a natural—

6-00:36:04

Hinckle: Yes. It was like time to get out of there. This was a crazy business anyway. He just was like smashed all the time and sort of beginning to kind of, in the vernacular, kind of chase me around the office. I said, "Oh, Jesus." And we had a night club, big night club called Station J, which we opened, which was great.

Rubens: We? The business opened a night club?

6-00:36:23

Hinckle: Well, just about. There was these two guys, two gay guys again, who had this idea of getting one of the old P.G. & E. giant power houses.

Rubens: The substations?

6-00:36:38

Hinckle: Substations, yes. This one was down on Sacramento Street, abandoned. Opening a night club there, and I knew a guy named Al White, who had the Al White's Masters of Melody. He played at the Palace Hotel all the time for tea dances, he had symphony musicians, and he put together orchestras for things, and he had a weekly radio show called "Masters of Melody," and it was Philip Morris sponsored. It was a big San Francisco radio show at the time, may have gone national for all I remember. So, got him together with these guys and he said, "Hey, let's use the symphony orchestra for dancing." This place was huge, and open this fabulous night club called Station J. And did all the literature for that, promoted it—

Rubens: Are you even drinking age yet?

6-00:37:39

Hinckle: Well, I drank. I was twenty, twenty one. Maybe somewhere in between there, yes. Everybody thought I was.

Rubens: This was really your baby?

6-00:37:50

Hinckle: Yes. It was a lot of fun.

Rubens: How long did it run?

6-00:37:54

Hinckle: Two or three years. Until they got nailed for not paying payroll taxes or one of those things, you know, that happens. The business didn't have any active hand—

Rubens: You're there when it opens up and—

6-00:38:06

Hinckle: Yes. I put it together and opened it, and used to hang out there the first six months and that sort of thing. Then it was going strong, and still go down there every once in a while.

Rubens: So you're really learning—

6-00:38:17

Hinckle: Learned a lot of stuff.

Rubens: Promotion, booking entertainment —

6-00:38:29

Hinckle: A lot of promotion. It just sort of came naturally, I figured it out.

Rubens: So how do you get to the *Chronicle*? Do you keep checking in with the *Examiner*?

6-00:38:41

Hinckle: Yes, I'm checking with the *Examiner*, and still no job. At the time there were a couple of other law suits that had come, maybe they said "bar Hinckle," and I said, "You know, I think it's time to get out of this place."

Rubens: Where were you living, by the way. You had always lived at home up through college, right, your four years of college?

6-00:39:00

Hinckle: Yes. I was still living at home.

Rubens: And are you driving in the—

6-00:39:03

Hinckle: Yes. I still lived at home for the first couple of years when I got out of school. I think I lived at home until I got married at like twenty two or something like that, twenty three, yeah.

Rubens: That was the thing to do—

6-00:39:20

Hinckle: Well, I was in San Francisco, and I didn't even think about it.

Rubens: So you had a car, and that's how you got down to Stanford when you worked at the Medical Center that summer before.

6-00:39:33

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: What kind of car did you have, by the way?

6-00:39:37

Hinckle:

Fifty-something, like a '54 or '56 Ford, and then I had a Chevy convertible. Later I was making some money, got some money from that eye injury that I had, this eye accident, and had a Jaguar convertible, you know, that sort of thing. I had a little Sprite convertible, drive around town. Spent most of my time in bars and restaurants and activities—never got around to think about getting my own pad until I got married. I said, "Oops, time to get a place."

Rubens:

So are these guys introducing you to a better life? I mean, is this where you're learning to have—

6-00:40:27

Hinckle:

Yes. No question about it. I mean it was like doing what comes naturally. Always threw parties at USF, famously when—

Rubens:

You were called the Elsa Maxwell of USF, I forgot to get that in.

6-00:40:47

Hinckle:

Yes. I was always throwing parties at USF. I don't know why, for the *Foghorn*. Because why not? Because we had a budget or a reason or we were promoting something, and it started off with it just seems that's what you do, you use parties, cocktail parties, or organizing a dinner, inviting a lot of people together as a promotional tool to do something or for cover, like when the dean of students then said, "No, you're not going to make the *Foghorn* a ridiculous daily, I forbid you to do it." When I was ratted out by Carl Nolte I was planning to do that, so I just immediately went ahead and invited everybody in town to a big dinner party thing to announce it.

Rubens:

To launch it.

6-00:41:53

Hinckle:

Yes. By the time the guy heard about it everybody was there and it was this big dinner, and it was, "Congratulations," and things like that, and telegrams were pouring in from Vice President Nixon, and everybody was sent telegrams inviting everybody to the party and knew they wouldn't come, but you'd know that every public office as they get invitations, something always comes back and if it's an event like the hundredth anniversary of whatever, whatever it is, somebody will quickly, congratulations on your you know just automatic, not that they really cared what you did, but it was part of their job. So almost every lawmaker and everybody in a position of whatever were already congratulating the paper on launching itself, and everybody was there with a big, huge cocktail party and a dinner. You're our guest, we took it out of the *Foghorn* budget, what the hell.

Rubens:

Where would you hold these things?

6-00:42:49

Hinckle:

At USF.

Rubens: Just bring a caterer in—

6-00:42:53

Hinckle: Sometimes I'd do things in bars, not on the campus, but this one was just right there, right under their nose. Too bad. It came hard to say, "You ain't doing this now, "When the whole town was there applauding that you're doing it. A fait accompli sort of thing. You wouldn't have had a fait accompli if you hadn't made it so public and had a big party.

Rubens: Right. So this was a technique that you learned early on.

6-00:43:16

Hinckle: Yes. I don't know where it came from, but it was—

Rubens: I meant to ask you if during your PR business, did you meet Howard Gossage? Did you know who he was?

6-00:43:30

Hinckle: I sure as hell knew who he was, but no, I didn't know Gossage until I became involved with *Ramparts*.

Rubens: But he had set some standard you knew by even then, in 1960s—

6-00:43:42

Hinckle: Oh, I knew his ads. I loved his ads. Read all his ads in the *New Yorker*, an early subscriber to the *New Yorker*, and as a kid I always subscribed to some of the literary books clubs, not so much high tone literary, but not the mystery book clubs, but the Authors Guild or some of those where you'd get the new edition of *Ulysses* as a pick each month as opposed to just novels, that sort of thing. So I did a lot of reading because they just came all the time every month, oops, better start reading this stuff. I've always read the *New Yorker* as a kid, and—

Rubens: And that's where his ads were?

6-00:44:25

Hinckle: Most of Gossage's ads were in the *New Yorker*. And you knew you were reading something different.

Rubens: Say just a few things about what was different.

6-00:44:32

Hinckle: Well, they broke with total with form, they were all conversational, very witty. They were texted like the Irish whiskey ads. They were just chatty. They were beautifully designed. They were like three columns of type and, and they had coupons in them. Vote here if you want to change the name of Irish whiskey. He would do crazy things like he'd have a full page ad and say continued on next column, which you've never seen in an ad, and you'd look, "What the hell." You'd turn the page—Then he would buy just one column of

type to just arbitrarily over swamp the text just to make it fun. And I recognized stuff like that early on so, "Hey, this is how you do things here." This is good. Gossage always taught me later when I knew him, but he famously said, at least famously to me, that people don't read advertising. They read what interests them, and sometimes it's an ad. So if you're selling something, as long as you can do something interesting you're probably going to get people involved.

Rubens: Right. So I derailed you a little bit. You're checking in with the *Examiner*, you're—

6-00:45:55

Hinckle: Oh, yes. So I brought my stuff down to the *Chronicle*--I hadn't tried them, and the *Examiner* was taking too long.

Rubens: It was time to get out of your PR business.

6-00:46:04

Hinckle: And it was time to get out of that business. Law suits were packing up, and the behavior was getting erratic. Not that I'm a stern moralist, but it was really nuts. Okay, this is a lot of fun, but this is getting crazy. Time to get out of this one. So I brought my stuff. I said, "Ah, I'll give it a try." Somebody said, "Why don't you go ahead, try the *Chronicle*. They'll probably hate your guts," whatever. See Abe Mellinkoff, who was the city editor. I came in as you usually do with a book of clippings. Of course, they were all clippings from the USF paper, what else did I have? I had written in high school and college for this community paper, *The Progress*. That's how I got to know Jake Ehrlich and everything. I wrote a column about him once. So I had some columns from that and, of course, the whole Count Marco thing, the *Foghorn* exposé. That's another thing where we used promotion, had printed all these extra copies, courtesy of the *Examiner* slipping some dough. Threw a big couple of parties for everybody. We had a bunch of cash. It just seemed natural, why not?

Rubens: So you take this portfolio down—

6-00:47:18

Hinckle: So I took it down there and somebody says, "You're the guy who did that crazy Count Marco stuff?" Because there were pickets in front of the damn *Chronicle* and everything when that happened. I said, "Yeah." He says, "Yeah, and you're applying for a job here?" He's laughing, he says, "Just a minute." He comes back and he says, "You know, I don't even want to deal with this one. I think it would be interesting for you. I want you to go down the hall and meet Scott Newhall, the editor, and you could bring your little book of clippings along with them, and show him about Count Marco and everything, and tell him why you want to work for this paper." They were like, "Who is this guy? Newhall will eat him alive." I think it was a prankish thought, right? Instead of just saying, "Just get out of here." That Newhall will

just kill this guy. So I did. And Dolly Ree, who was his secretary, was just fabulously non-conforming Korean woman who swore better than anybody I've ever encountered in my life. Every other word was fuck and God damn it and motherfucker and stuff like that. She was wild. And she smoked cigars all day long. She was Scott's secretary and sat in the same room with him. Everything that went on, he wanted to know. Scott was a very wise guy in terms of office politics and everything else. It was a fabulous office. the *Chronicle*'s a typical drab place of the sixties, newsroom and you know. It wasn't exactly a distinguished building for a newspaper office. His office, however, because he was one of the richest guys on the planet, far wealthier than the publisher of the *Chronicle*, Charlie [Charles de Young] Thieriot. And he'd been doing great things. The *Chronicle* had become so much fun that Count Marco was fun. It became a fun paper.

I didn't apply for it at first because it was like, "Geez, those guys would never hire me. Look what I did to them." And I had this sort of institutional old Irish Catholic, old newspaper, this was the big paper always read, in connection with the *Examiner*, or I thought I did. Anyway, but his office was fabulous and it was like he had a great maritime interest, and it was like stepping into a ship's captain's office, this chandelier, chandlery stuff, ships chandlery stuff everywhere, and sextants, and beautifully appointed office. Had to be in another world from the crazy drab *Chronicle*. And this crazy swearing, smoking Korean secretary. "What do you want, God damn it?"

Rubens: Did everybody smoke in those days, by the way? Were you smoking?

6-00:50:18

Hinckle: No. I never smoked.

Rubens: How about your PR business partners –certainly the people at the night club?

6-00:50:24

Hinckle: I don't remember, yes, I think those guys—John Barth certainly smoked. I think they all smoked. I don't think we'd be sitting here having this conversation if I smoked. I certainly took care of the drinking enough over the years, but if I were smoking at the same time I don't think I would have quite made it this far.

Rubens: Plus you were around it. So anyway so there he is—you knew who Newhall was, of course, and you had read his—

6-00:50:50

Hinckle: Oh, yes. He was doing great, I mean the paper was gradually creeping up on the *Examiner*.

Rubens: It would overtake the—

6-00:50:58

Hinckle:

—the *Examiner*, which had always been the dominant paper. Anyway, so he looks through this stuff, and he says, "You've caused all that Count Marco trouble." I said, "Yeah, as you know." And he says, "Would you just tell me, I'm curious, why you think I should give you a job at the *Chronicle* when you attacked the *Chronicle* and pulled all this stuff and made such complications for our columnists?" And I said, "Well, which side do you want me on?" I don't know why, he told me I said that later. I don't even remember saying it. And he said, "Take your stuff, go back down to the city desk, see Abe Mellinkoff again." I guess he picked up the phone and said, "Give this kid a job." I went down, and he was just, "I don't know what happened in there," he says, "but you're going to be hired temporarily." You're always a temp, you know.

Rubens:

When you're starting out?

6-00:52:11

Hinckle:

Yes. You start out, you're six months or a year until you get permanent. So that was it.

Rubens:

So what was the first assignment? Were you sent to the Oakland bureau?

6-00:52:22

Hinckle:

Yes, well the first one, I was—

Rubens:

Or do you want to take a break just for a minute and I'll change the tape.

Begin Audio File 7

7-00:00:05

Hinckle:

I can discuss very quickly the Oakland press room and why I got sent there, and how I loved it. There was one other big story before I really got going at the *Chronicle*. I hid in Oakland for a year and a half. When you're first on a daily paper, and of course it was always the dream of my life ever since I saw that movie *Deadline USA*, to work for a daily paper. I couldn't think of anything more desirable to do in the world. Work on a newspaper, a daily paper. When you're a cub, when you first start out, one of the things that happens is when guys go on vacation, they've got to fill in for something like that. The first thing I remember that happened to me—I was just there a couple of weeks—and I got assigned to city hall for two weeks because the city hall reporter had gone on vacation. So I'm walking around city hall, didn't know much but there's a list of stuff you do. You stop in this office, that office, and every morning around 10 o'clock you stop in the mayor's office and they'll tell you if anything's happening today. I walked into the mayor's office and said, "Anything going on today?" The guy from the *Chronicle*, Jack Shelley was the mayor then. He happened to be walking out into—you know that huge antique room of the mayor's suite of offices on the second floor of city hall? But when you first walk in, there's the double doors

and the series of desks, but it's a huge, fancy, ornate room that could hold two hundred people at a press conference, that sort of big room. There's always some cops there for security, and some aides just doing whatever at the desk. That's the way it's always been from the time I remember and it still is now. Shelley had me wandering through and he says, "Ah, you're from the *Chronicle*." And I said, "Yes, Mr. Mayor. Actually, I'm the summer substitute here for Mel Wax. He's on vacation." "Ah, well," he says, "Come back, I want to talk to you for a minute." I said, "Oh, of course." So I go back and he takes me to the mayor's office, which is down a series of rooms—the layout hasn't changed in all these years. And I've known every mayor since Jack Shelley.

Rubens: So this is in 1964? Because Shelley comes in—

7-00:03:02

Hinckle: I don't know what year it was, but Shelley was the mayor.

Rubens: [George] Christopher is through 1964. Is it that late?

7-00:03:09

Hinckle: Yes, well, I went to work for the *Chronicle* -then my chronology is off. This must have been in the Oakland press room period, which I think was 1962 or 1963.

Rubens: Well, finish the story. Anyway, it's a great story.

7-00:03:24

Hinckle: Anyway, I was not the city hall reporter, but I'd been sent for two weeks to do that stuff. He says, "Come back here," and takes me back to—there's this little ante-room off the mayor's office, sort of a private sit down for small conversations. Where George Moscone was killed. So he says, "Come on in here. We'll talk in here." He says, "You like Manhattans, kid?" And I said, "Oh, yes, sir. Yes, of course, Mr. Mayor." I'll never forget this. He pulls out this big thermos jug, pulls out two glasses, and pours out these Manhattans. It's 10:30 in the morning or something. Not that I objected. "Alright, now tell me about yourself." He was just like in a chatty mood. "What school did you go to?" I mean typical old fashioned San Francisco pol. He wanted to know about Riordan. "Oh, you went to Riordan. Do you know so and so?" I mean, smart San Francisco pol, whom I assume had a few moments, I don't think he was entranced by me, just wanted to have a drink, and had to have somebody to have a reason to talk to. And so we were there until somebody finally comes in and yanks him out and says, "Mr. Mayor, you got to—" it's like noon. Went through a couple of Manhattans. He says, "Don't call me—call me Jack." And I don't know why that struck me so well. I mean Jake Ehrlich was the first famous guy I ever met, and he said, "Call me Jake." And I got in the habit of always calling people—I don't care how famous they are or if I've ever met them—and some people say it's arrogant or something like that—I

just never thought about it that way. I just automatically call people by their first name.

Rubens: How did Shelley handle his liquor by the way? Did he seem—?

7-00:05:34

Hinckle: Fabulously. Fabulously. I was smashed. He was great.

Rubens: I had meant to ask you at what point do you learn to handle it? You'd been drinking pretty steadily for a long time.

7-00:05:50

Hinckle: Fifty years.

Rubens: Yes, but you started maybe in high school.

7-00:05:54

Hinckle: Yes, that's why it's fifty years. Some people have a tolerance for it and some people don't. I think it's genetic or something like that. If you can't drink, you shouldn't drink. It's crazy. You shouldn't get drunk or you can't function.

Rubens: Let's clean up the chronology just a little bit because I think—

7-00:06:16

Hinckle: Well, you'll have to assist me on that.

Rubens: You're probably telling me the story about meeting Shelley when you come back from Oakland to the San Francisco beat.

7-00:06:26

Hinckle: That could well be. I haven't looked through my Chronicle clips or anything like that. I knew I was at the *Chronicle* in, I think, 1962. I'm pretty sure. I was certainly there during the Kennedy assassination. I'd been at the *Chronicle*, working for the *Chronicle*.

Rubens: Were you in Oakland or were you in San Francisco?

7-00:06:48

Hinckle: I was back in San Francisco by then. I'd got called back from Oakland. Roughly, the first year or year and a half at my time at the *Chronicle*, they sent me to Oakland because you had to fill in on the crime beat. And then the Oakland bureau was a big bureau. There's like three people on the Oakland bureau. I've written about this in the *Lemonade* book and a few magazine articles. It was like my ideal of a newspaper. It was there. Wow! What fun! These great guys and all they did was drink and every hour they'd do the beat, and nobody had any competition. There were maybe eleven newspapers, combination newspaper/radio stations in this press room in Oakland. Some of the guys were really great guys. Some of them kind of studied, other guys went around and screwed around, just had a good time, but basically nobody

really worked. They all shared the information. No such thing as stabbing your buddy in the back. I wasn't like some hot, competitive kid who wanted the exclusive on some crappy murder in Oakland. So okay, this is fun! That's what we did. There was a pool for booze in the press room, and that was financed because every time they called a beat, that means everybody split up and you had to call the hospitals, the police, the this the that in all the surrounding East Bay counties. They say, "Anything going on in this, that—" So that everybody didn't have to do the same boring thing all the time, you'd split up the work. You'd say, "Okay, anybody got anything?" And then that'd be it. Share it.

Rubens: And these were both phone calls and literally going out to these places?

7-00:08:44

Hinckle: Yes, you called the beat. There's a list of numbers of the hospitals, police departments, city halls, because you didn't have people in all these small town city halls, and who to call and that stuff. There were many editions of daily papers then and there were many papers. Automatically, the papers—there were all the East Bay papers, and of course the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, and they would all get dumped off, all the editions, so there were always piles of papers in the press room. So the dean of the press room is a guy named Augy Sairanen. Great guy. Always wore bow ties, tough, Greek I think he was. Loved Augy. And he'd been there a million years.

Rubens: He was a *Chron* man?

7-00:09:36

Hinckle: The *Chronicle*, yes. But he was there, by seniority, he was dean of the Oakland press room. And it looked like something out of Freud's couch—there were all these couches guys slept on. There were wooden phone booths inside it. It was this cluttered mess. It was wonderful. Everybody had little desks. It was great. You would religiously—then everybody would line up at the water cooler and they'd pour a big shot of rye whiskey into the little paper cups—but go back to doing nothing. And then you'd go out to lunch.

Rubens: But you had to do something.

7-00:10:14

Hinckle: You had to, you had to.

Rubens: And you're typing on these old Remington typewriters and someone's senior—

7-00:10:17

Hinckle: There were typewriters there, yes. But mostly it was dictation. You'd just call into a rewrite man, and you say, "We got a fatality here," or "There was a bank robbery," or something like that. You basically dictate. There wasn't much writing ever happened in the Oakland press room. Rarely. Newspapers

then had a system of rewrite guys, so a lot of people would go out and do a story and for deadline purposes would call it in. I was rewrite many times myself at the *Chronicle*. You take the information and anything else that came over the news wires or whatever else was available and the rival publications if they had a story too, you could add it. And you'd write the story. Most of them were un-bylined. Or you'd put the person that called in byline on it. I got where it sort of never bothered me. It was like part of making a newspaper, it's what you did. Made sense. But the way the social fund for the press room was financed was that everybody—it's the only thing they really had to do there—had to unfold all the newspapers there and stack them up on a big table, flattened out. Barely a tabloid existed then. They were all big broadsheet papers then. Stack them up until they got about yea-high. And you had to pull out any colored ads or anything like that because—and Augy would supervise this very seriously. Then he would ceremoniously bring out this big ball of string and tie it up and lift it. They sold it to the wholesale florist who wrap flowers. And all the papers came in free.

Rubens: Oh, that's fabulous.

7-00:12:12

Hinckle: But that made the fund. That was our party fund. That was sort of the main activity in the Oakland press room. I loved it there so much and some of the characters were great. There was one guy, the Swede. He made his own homemade brew and he brought it in, and his pickled herring for lunch. Society guy, Ed Dougery was a relatively wealthy guy, but he liked the news business. And Bob Popp was a friend of mine who was a crime reporter. P-O-P-P in San Francisco. Great guys. These were fabulous guys and they were in the newspaper business and all we were doing was having fun. We were in a newspaper office. It was like heaven. It was like nobody wanted to go to the Oakland press room. It was like Mark Twain painting a fence. You don't want to paint that fence? So you had to go for a two or three week vacation period and somehow I found out who had the next one. So I said, "Oh, I'll take that." You have to leave town? "Yeah, I gotta go to Oakland." "I'll take it for you." So that went on for well over a year. Once in a while they'd have me in the city for a week or so and I'd written a couple of stories. One about the Fox Theater and some guy who was haunting it before they ripped it down. "The Phantom of The Fox" was the big headline. First so-called big story I ever wrote for the *Chronicle*. Somebody wised up and said, "Hey, he likes it over there too much, right?"

Rubens: Get him out of there.

7-00:13:47

Hinckle: Yes, and I'd written a few stories. So probably in chronology, what you're saying, the Jack Shelley thing is probably when I was finally yanked back to San Francisco. I wasn't the city hall reporter, so it must have been a replacement.

Rubens: Any stories that you remember particularly about Oakland? It's sort of portentous, within three years the Black Panther Party for Self Defense will be founded there and once at *Ramparts* you're going to do so much with and on them.

7-00:14:14
Hinckle: Well, I got to know a lot about Oakland hanging out with these guys. I recall *Ramparts* did a big thing on Oakland.

Rubens: It was a take-off of the game Monopoly.

7-00:14:30
Hinckle: I ended up writing it. I've still got a book *Best Magazine Articles of 1966* or something ridiculous or whatever the hell the date was in which the article appeared.

Rubens: 1966. The article is torn out of UC Berkeley's bound collection of *Rampart!*

7-00:14:48
Hinckle: But I kind of knew a lot about Oakland. You didn't sit there all day. There'd be something you had to go to. To a bishop's press conference or this or that. But mostly you sat there all day. But you got to know a lot about the town. The guys would sit around and tell tall tales about Bill Know land and how corrupt the place was.

Rubens: They had a famous DA who had done the Burton Abbott kidnap-murder case.

7-00:15:16
Hinckle: Oh, a real prick. Yes.

Rubens: Not Houlihan. I can't think of his name right now. [Frank Coakley]

7-00:15:24
Hinckle: I know his name very well. Now I've got one of those lapses—if you hadn't said Houlihan, I would have told you his name. Houlihan was the mayor, who later went down in flames. I spent enough time—normally you wouldn't spend much time in Oakland—I kind of knew the territory.

Rubens: Did you drive around then? How did you get there?

7-00:15:42
Hinckle: Yes, you drive back and forth. Got to know the place. And got to know a little bit. Met some young priest who at some press conference the church had over there. I said, "Hey, come down some time. I've got to have dinner." A lot of times I worked the night shift, so you'd get an hour, but you could take two hours. I said, "Come on, we'll go out somewhere." So you go to one of those steakhouses in Oakland. I say, "Hey, I'll put it on the expense account. Let's have a couple of drinks." And he'd sort of—just a nice guy—he'd be telling me stories—Jesus, this is before I became professionally interested in the

corruption, or lack of idealism let's say, of the structural church. Kind of knew it existed among the Jesuits, but wasn't like I'm now going out, "Now, I'm going to expose the Catholic Church." It was just coincidental I became friendly with this guy, and he got a chance to get out of the rectory. He'd be talking his business, which was mostly bitching as with any business, about bishops doing this and that. He was an idealistic young guy.

Rubens: What was his name?

7-00:16:59

Hinckle: I totally forget. I cannot to this day remember his name. I was talking about him the other day. What was that guy's name? Don't remember. Never wrote about him or anything like that. And wasn't like storing of notes. And never wrote an article about it. It was just conversation. But it reinforced my view, what I knew about the church from grammar school and dealing with the Jesuits, and the other view. Then you learned the racism. Black on black didn't count. There was a rule, if it was black on black, you don't report it. If it's black on white, you report it. If it's white on black, you report it but let's everybody agree on how we're going to report this.

Rubens: So this is discussed?

7-00:17:52

Hinckle: Oh, yes. It was like operating standards. Because nobody wanted the place to be competitive because everybody would have to work then. You know? You shared everything. But it was the rules. And the rules were that if it was all black people who were dead and there was like a freeway crash, you didn't even bother to sell it. They call it selling it when you call over from outside the city desk—sell the stories is the idea. You wouldn't even bother trying to sell the story unless there was at least three dead, if it was all black. And if it was four dead, you better tell them about the story. But often four dead would be like—"All black?" "Yeah." "You're bothering us with that?" Yeah, yeah.

Rubens: Wow.

7-00:18:45

Hinckle: Yeah. That's how it was. That's how it was.

Rubens: Any stories that do stand out in your mind at all? You're not doing police scandal or politics?

7-00:18:58

Hinckle: Absolutely not.

Rubens: Just regular—

7-00:18:59

Hinckle: No, it's all background. It was the institutionalized racism, clearly. You didn't have to be a screaming liberal to say, "Black people killed and it doesn't

matter.” Then you’d be embarrassed—jeez, I better tell them about this one, like four people died. And they ask you, “All black?” And you’d say, “Yeah.” You’d have the police report. “Jesus Christ. What the hell. It’s already six o’clock. Why you got to screw around here? What are you wasting time with a story like that for? Give me five.” Click. That sort of stuff. So it kind of stays in your mind. You say, “Wait a minute.”

Rubens: So you didn’t write any stories?

7-00:19:38

Hinckle: Never wrote a single story about Oakland. That was the glory of it. You didn’t have to write.

Rubens: I had begun the interview by asking how do you talk about your political consciousness. And you’re talking about the evolution of a sensibility.

7-00:19:55

Hinckle: It was almost like Topsy.

Rubens: But you did run for county supervisor of San Francisco.

7-00:19:59

Hinckle: Yes, but that had nothing to do with political consciousness. It was more of—

Rubens: And it didn’t have to do with a beat cover. I didn’t understand that.

7-00:20:08

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: You weren’t covering—

7-00:20:12

Hinckle: I wasn’t on the *Chronicle*. I was out of school and I was working for these guys in that PR business for that year or so, whatever period of time it was. It was like a lark to do—“Why don’t you run because you’d be the youngest guy to run?” This guy, John Barth, who was the senior partner in this business, talked me into it, “Might get some publicity for the business, kid. We’ll all have some fun.” Charles McCabe, who was also then a famous *Chronicle* columnist over the years, I got to know quite well through extended periods of time, but I knew him from the House of Shields. This all sounds very bar orientated, but I think a lot of things—I mean if you read Ben Hecht’s memoirs, just to pick one—almost all newspaper stories and a lot of political stories are bar-orientated. That’s where you get the news, somebody blabs—not every story—but a hell of a lot of them. I remember reading Ben Hecht’s memoirs, which is one of the greatest books ever written, *Child of the Century*. It’s a fabulous, fabulous book. Fabulous book. He was blacklisted by Hollywood Jews. *Front Page*, and one of the great screenwriters of all time. Great, great writer. He was blacklisted by the Hollywood Jewish producers because he supported the Irgun and the American Jewish establishment

decided we don't want to push that hard. Of course there is a controversy with Judaism that the American Jews sort of turned their back on the European Jews because it was too much trouble for the Jews here to bring them all here. That's no tale out of school. That's an established controversy, a lot of books have been written about it. I'm leaping ahead in time here because I didn't know anything about this sort of stuff then.

So McCabe says, "I'll tell you. Good idea," we're standing around the bar at the House of Shields; he says, "Why don't you run? And here, I'm going to write a series of columns about repealing the 19th amendment that granted women's suffrage. He says, "Make that one of your campaign planks and I'll guarantee you three columns." McCabe had a goofy thing about eliminating the Nineteenth Amendment. Fancied himself an old style male chauvinist. He says, "I'll get you some ink if you write about it." So hey, The deal was done.

Rubens: So you filed papers.

7-00:23:06

Hinckle: Yes, I ran for office.

Rubens: You get Lawton Kennedy to print up some campaign literature.

7-00:23:10

Hinckle: Oh, yes. "A young man of courage and stamina," a big fancy picture.

Rubens: Did you have a no growth plank too?

7-00:23:17

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: I thought the organizing principle was to stop the freeway going through the panhandle?

7-00:23:27

Hinckle: In that campaign for supervisor, which was hardly a serious run, that was to rip down the Embarcadero Freeway which at the time had been built and then there was freeway revolt in the mid fifties in San Francisco, sort of managed by Harry Collins, the head of the parish at St. Cecilia's who gave me a worldly education early on, too. It ended, it abutted right about, roughly North Beach, and just sort of hung in the air. Was in front of the Ferry Building. It was an ugly son of a bitch.

Rubens: Which the earthquake took down in 1989.

7-00:24:06

Hinckle: Well, finally, after some vacillation on Art Agnos' part. But it took the earthquake to knock it down, yes. The idea was to tear down the freeway, that was the main plank.

Rubens: I see. So it didn't have to do with stopping the one that was going to go through Golden Gate Park and go through—

7-00:24:21

Hinckle: No, that was here. That was three years later.

Rubens: The business gave some money to finance this, whatever it took wasn't that much—

7-00:24:29

Hinckle: Oh, I don't know. We had some parties, raised money.

Rubens: And how'd you do? Were you campaigning in your neighborhood, your family all campaigning for you?

7-00:24:40

Hinckle: I don't think I took it that seriously. We had a lot of parties and things like that. It was—

Rubens: It was an occasion.

7-00:24:46

Hinckle: It was a lark. I didn't think I was going to get elected supervisor. But it was fun.

Rubens: Do you know how many votes you did get?

7-00:24:52

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: Don't remember?

7-00:24:56

Hinckle: I could have come in last, but I probably came in—if there were twenty seven people running, twenty two or something like that.

Rubens: Do you think Newhall knew about this when he hired you, or probably not something that you presented to him?

7-00:25:10

Hinckle: Well, I don't think I got much coverage in the *Chronicle* for it, so I don't know how he'd know about it. But it wouldn't have bothered him. He was a bit of a showman himself. Things like that didn't bother him.

Rubens: Yes, he would have loved that. Let me ask you a couple of things that are sort of leftovers that I wanted to make sure that I got. You had mentioned this column for *The Progress*. How long did you write that column? That was a volunteer—what kind of things were you writing about?

7-00:25:43

Hinckle:

I think I started doing it in high school. Every institution I've been involved with, be it Catholic or a journalistic institution, I've always been sort of an in-house entrepreneur. Saying, "Hey, let's start doing this. Why aren't we doing this? We'll get more circulation or we'll make some money or we'll advance the cause if we do this. Why are we—?" Always coming up with some sort of scheme or idea or proposal to move things forward and get something going, aside from the ordinary flow of stuff within the structure of whatever institution it was. I was involved in a high school journalism organization or something like that, and became the head of that because nobody would go to the meetings—I don't know. Somehow got to know whoever owned *The Progress*, which was the throwaway paper.

Rubens:

It was an advertising vehicle.

7-00:26:59

Hinckle:

It presaged the Fangs' paper, where the *Examiner* came out of and everything. But it was an institution. San Francisco had two throwaway papers going from the forties, I would assume, not being an historian I haven't looked up the dates of that period—but it was the *Shopping News*, which was a paper that all the stores combined to put their ads and their specials in when they didn't want to pay to put ads in one of the four dailies. There were four dailies back in that period, the fifties and sixties. That got thrown on every door, and almost every kid in school had a route on one paper or the other, or one of the daily papers. Then there was *The Progress*, which was a weekly—I think it came out twice a week—which was supposed to have news in it. And it did have news to a sort, mostly press releases and stuff on the front page. It was just full of ads and they made an attempt to cover high school sports more than the daily papers did. But not really because they didn't want to spend any money. So it wasn't too hard—

Rubens:

So what was your column? You must have had some name for it, because that's one of your fortés, creating names for columns at the *Foghorn*.

7-00:28:18

Hinckle:

I don't remember, but I did write a lot for it because it was like, hey, it was the high school paper, then it was the college paper. But here you are in a school paper but now you can get your byline and nobody's giving you any trouble what you write because they'll take anything.

Rubens:

So you didn't have an editor?

7-00:28:39

Hinckle:

No. They printed press releases. "Hey, some jerk from high school. He got an award or something. He wants to write a column." If it said, "Screw the pope," I'm sure they would have noticed that.

Rubens:

So what kinds of things did you write about?

7-00:28:52

Hinckle:

Well, I don't know. It was mostly nice stuff, profiles, things like that. I wasn't really out to muckrake or cause trouble. It was exercising writing. Go interview people sometimes. That's how I got to meet Jake Ehrlich. I called up and it was some trial—I don't remember what trial it was. All he had was famous trials so it's redundant to say one of his famous trials. And he said, "Come on down. Call me Jake. Come on, let's not sit around the office. Come on, I'll take you to lunch." That sort of thing. "Do you drink martinis?" That's the whole world I grew up in. And all of a sudden you see how it works and you get to know people who are already established and famous or whatever. Somehow you get in their fold or, you tend to treat them as equals, we're all doing our thing—or they treat you as an equal, I guess maybe that it's it. Maybe I was just fortunate.

Rubens:

Let me ask you one, I think, closing question. I can't believe that I didn't ask this when you were talking about your father and your family background. He was a machinist. Was he in the union?

7-00:30:04

Hinckle:

Yes. He was a union guy.

Rubens:

What was his sensibility, attitude towards unions?

7-00:30:10

Hinckle:

Unions are good.

Rubens:

Was he active?

7-00:30:11

Hinckle:

In union politics? No. He wasn't active in most anything, except Red Cross instruction.

Rubens:

Why Red Cross instruction?

7-00:30:23

Hinckle:

Yes, later when he was always in and out of a job, and I remember going to Christmas parties, I think it was the Otis elevator company somewhere south of Market. I guess they made elevators. Stuff like that. But yeah, he was a union guy, and one of my uncles was a union guy. He was a dispatcher for the warehouseman's union. Got me my first job. I think I talked to you about that one time, about spread your cheeks.

Rubens:

Yes. That's who it was.

7-00:30:52

Hinckle:

The guy across the street was a butcher, a great guy and I worked summers for him sometimes, cleaning up the shop and everything. Val White. He was a butcher, but he was in the union—I mean most guys were in the union. Unions were good.

Rubens: And then USF had a labor center, an institute—

7-00:31:14

Hinckle: If they did, I didn't notice it.

Rubens: You weren't tied in with that, okay.

7-00:31:19

Hinckle: No, it wasn't that you were an activist in union politics or pro-union as opposed to pro-business. It was that unions were good. We were working class, middle class, whatever you want to call it, Sunset district people. And almost everybody—there weren't that many bankers and lawyers in the blocks that we lived on. Most people had jobs and most of them were in unions, and unions were good things.

Rubens: It was just expected. So what does that mean about the Newspaper Guild? Do you join that when you first start working for the *Chronicle*?

7-00:31:56

Hinckle: Yeah, sure. I stayed with it the whole time I was at *Ramparts*. Well, this thing's going to fold some day pretty soon, better keep my Guild membership up. That was a disappointment, the Newspaper Guild. They didn't have, in the vernacular, balls. You could see how bad they were. As you read a little bit of history—I've read a little bit of labor history, and books about journalism and how things develop—Heywood Broun started the Newspaper Guild. It was basically a craftsman skill, I mean it was for writers. When it became a big union, they expanded to include everybody they could get: ad salesmen, janitors, elevator operators. They get more bargaining power, whatever. This may be a reactionary view, but it's mine. It took sort of the purpose out of that union. And then it was just another union. And in bargaining, and in things they give up on, the necessity to defend First Amendment issues and go to bat on and confront publishers—it was watered down because they had such a bigger canvas. So from Heywood Broun's ideal of a craftsmen's guild for writers in daily papers against these monstrous owners, so they'd stand up for equality and not be able to screw you over as much as they would normally do in the capitalist mode. You got to say, "Yeah, darn right." You'd stick up for that. When it became something that you thought was lazy union politics, and you saw your professional interests, not so much about salaries as such. The purpose of it wasn't to—they'd call it a strike over the janitors or over the ad salesmen. I mean, God bless 'em, I have every sympathy for the janitors and the ad salesmen, but I didn't have any solidarity with them. That wasn't what I did, right? If I wanted to be in a union, I wanted to be in the one that was, "Hey, this is what we're here for." So the Newspaper Guild has become, over the years, demonstrably disastrous.

Rubens: —but by the way, I never asked the question in background of—there was the big newspaper strike in San Francisco that gave rise to the TV program on local public television, "Newsroom of the Air."

7-00:34:45

Hinckle: Yes, that's in 1967. *Ramparts* put out a daily paper then. I've got the bound volumes if you want. You won't find those in the library. The strike started on Friday, whatever the first day was, we were out the next morning with the paper. I think it started on a Friday and we had a Saturday paper.

Rubens: You had some wind it was coming.

7-00:35:12

Hinckle: We published the whole thing and of course at the time it was a busy year. 1967 or 1968, whatever the year the strike was, but I think it was the same year as the Democratic Convention. And so there's a lot of things going on at *Ramparts* then. We published that daily through to the bitter end and learned a lot about deals that are made between the publishers and the advertisers. Basically, they didn't want a paper, they'd rather have the strike and no papers. And Scott Newhall felt the same way. He was furious about it. Too many things were compromised from the standpoint of romantic, but it's also a business standpoint—hey, it's the newspaper we're talking about here. You can't just not publish the paper just to make more money or bust a union. There weren't a lot of brave actors in that. I just thought we had to put out a paper. It wasn't very provident to do financially. It wasn't the right thing to do because we were a huge national lefty publication which was tilting on the edge of disaster anyway. But regardless, we put out a daily paper for the duration of that strike.

Rubens: How many days was that?

7-00:36:42

Hinckle: It lasted a couple of months.

Rubens: We'll talk about that more in a later interview.

Interview 4: November 22, 2009

In which this journalist hones his skills, has a fortuitous meeting with the publisher of a Catholic literary magazine and reflects on the trials and tribulations of Catholicism in American life and in publishing.

Begin Audio File 8

08-00:00:20

Rubens: Today, let's talk a little bit more about coming back to San Francisco and being a Chronicle reporter. Did you have a favorite bar in Oakland, by the way?

08-00:01:14

Hinckle: No, because you didn't really have to go out to a bar because they drank in the press room. You got to hit the college bars just to go to a real bar in Oakland.

08-00:01:29

Rubens: Right. So when you come back to San Francisco, what's your assignment? How do you know what you're going to do every day?

08-00:01:36

Hinckle: Oh, daily newspapers all work the same. You get whatever your time for your shift is and you wait around and they give you something to do. Say, "Okay, you're going to go to this press conference," or this is happening. You get assigned. City desk tells you something to do and if you've got a story you think you want to do, then you go up and say, "Hey, I want to go do a story on this old lady who broke her leg fourteen times in the same house because somebody wouldn't fix the stairs." That sort of thing. And they'd say, "Well, we're short handed today. You better stay around here. You can do it on a slow day." That sort of stuff. They want so many people available if something happens.

08-00:02:28

Rubens: Were you covering [the civil rights demonstrations on] Auto Row, or the sit-in at the Sheraton Palace Hotel in 1962 and 1963?

08-00:02:34

Hinckle: No. No, I didn't write about any of those things but all of my friends, the Hallinans and various other people were intimately involved in those early demonstrations on Auto Row and the hotels. Civil rights stuff pre-Selma. That was when like Terrence Hallinan, who later became the district attorney, was, of course, a leader in those things.

08-00:03:05

Rubens: Did you know him from—

08-00:03:06

Hinckle: Terrence? From that period? Yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

08-00:03:13

Rubens: How had you met him?

08-00:03:17

Hinckle: Probably lefty stuff, union, all that socializing, rallies.

08-00:03:26

Rubens: So you're becoming more politically conscious. That's what I'm trying to get at. This is also a turn that the public is being assaulted really, or confronted, continually, whether it was from the HUAC hearings through this rise in the civil rights coalition.

08-00:03:45

Hinckle: Yes. Yes. It doesn't take long to figure out that there's institutionalized racism in society and in various parts of San Francisco, in its commercial structures, the police department in its composition, in its attitudes. That becomes pretty clear pretty early, particularly if you're a reporter at all, have any friends who get involved, as many young kids do, in demonstrations or causes. Most of my friends from high school and college didn't, but friends like Hallinan and many others did.

08-00:04:39

Rubens: Was this stuff you asked to write about, or did they have more senior people that they're assigning to that?

08-00:04:47

Hinckle: It's the luck of the draw. Depends what time of the day you're coming in. If there's a demonstration at night, sit-in at the Palace Hotel and you're working the day, early day beat, you got to be at 8:00 in the morning, you're off at four o'clock. So if somebody's working. So the *Chronicle* didn't really have anybody. They had a labor reporter who did a lot of that, Dick Meister, who's still writing away at labor issues. He's very left minded. And has been critical of backwards tactics in unions. He's written a lot just the last couple of years about this fight between Sal Rosseli and Andy Stern in the SEIU, for instance. He was the labor person at the *Chronicle* at that time.

At the time, San Francisco traditionally had a labor reporter, labor editor. Each paper had one. That tradition was still intact in the early sixties when I went to work at the *Chronicle*. By the seventies, it had vanished and labor became less and less of a beat story when it had to be covered. Somebody regularly assigned to it. More and more into oblivion land. But certainly from the great waves of the general strike onward through the fifties and at least into the sixties, San Francisco newspapers covered labor as a beat topic and most of them had at least one reporter assigned to it. And, of course, it was a working class town, so many people who took the paper were in labor unions. And the *Examiner* was extremely reactionary and very anti-union bias in its coverage the Scripps-Howard paper, the *San Francisco News*, was the most favorable to labor in its coverage. And the *Chronicle* was either disinterested

or didn't go out of its way, except back in the general strike days, to go after the unions.

08-00:07:13

Rubens: So you're watching this kind of development taking place in San Francisco, this sort of increased political sensibility.

08-00:07:20

Hinckle: It was in the sixties. Yes, you couldn't —was hard to miss it. And you're reading stuff. Early on I became a subscriber, when I was in high school, I think, to like the *Reporter*. Looking back in time, I describe it as kind of a mushy Cold War liberal—but liberal—periodical. But you read stuff and you know people who are your contemporaries who get involved in issues and you either have no interest in it at all or if you're a writer or a journalist, you pay attention. Education that way comes pretty quickly.

08-00:08:08

Rubens: So I thought that in your autobiography you said that you had covered the Auto Row demonstrations.

08-00:08:19

Hinckle: Oh, I'm sure off and on, during the periods of the Auto Row strikes I was a reporter, and may have phoned in. I think I did phone in a couple of stories. At that time, both the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* had part of the working day assignments. People were assigned to something called the rewrite desk and that meant that one reporter would go out, or two, depending on what was going on at a particular event and cover it and then they would not rush back to the paper and write it themselves. They'd call in to somebody on rewrite, a job I did many times at the *Chronicle*. And you'd sit there all day and somebody'd call in and either roughly dictate a story or give you their notes and a bunch of quotes and then tell you what happened, and then you would write the story.

08-00:09:18

Rubens: So is this really your schooling? Is this where you are put through the hoops, kind of learning how to write quickly? You'd been writing for years, I know that, but it seemed to me that not many people were—you were *sui generis*. Is this where you were being constrained and are you learning?

08-00:09:40

Hinckle: You learn. Working for a daily paper, those are much more real deadlines than in a college paper, whatever, you could stay up all night and get it done as you want. But the paper has got to come out in the morning. The trucks have to leave at a certain time, that sort of thing. It's a shock of recognition to come up against real deadlines where if you don't get it written by eight o'clock it's not going to get in the paper. And if you're too slow, they're not going to give you a story like that -go write a feature, take your time and turn it in tomorrow sort of thing. So you learn to write on deadline. It's a learned skill.

08-00:10:32

Rubens:

Did you have anyone blue penciling or red penciling any of your work or turning it back to you?

08-00:10:37

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. You have this constant war. Regular newspaper, the operation, the city desk first goes over your copy and could ask you questions for reasons of libel or accuracy or who said this, what's the name of the guy, we got to have his name, that sort of thing. And then it goes to the copy desk, where those guys sit around all day and scratch their butt, and they can really mess with what you write. So I for years would have wars with those guys about, "Wait a minute. You're rewriting my stuff. You changed this lead. Screw you. That's my story. You can't do that." And a lot of arguments like that.

08-00:11:25

Rubens:

But even this second year as a cub reporter? Are you still called a cub reporter your second year or are you a regular?

08-00:11:30

Hinckle:

No, you're a reporter. For six months you're a temporary. You're a temporary reporter. And then the newspaper union would add a deal that after so many number of months you got to make this guy a permanent employee subject to union dues, you got to join the union, or let him go. And they also would beef over the number of correspondents or piece writers who could get stuff into the paper. The goal of the union was to get as many salaried employees as possible who were paying dues to the union. And if the paper is able to fill its pages, albeit with much more interesting copy, by having somebody write something once or twice a week or a month there was management/union struggle going on constantly of how many of those people we'll allow. Okay. "You're going to have to hire that person. They just can't keep writing that many articles for seventy-five bucks," or something like that. Yes.

08-00:12:51

Rubens:

So who were the people that were active in the union? Were you going to meetings?

08-00:12:56

Hinckle:

Only to bitch. I didn't think that they were tough enough on a lot of craft—it's what happens to unions. I think I said last time that as the newspaper guild became larger its focus became watered down from its original writerly and First Amendment, if you like, orientation.

And I thought they were pretty cowardly and should stand up more for stories that got spiked or held back for obvious political reasons and other things happened. Anybody that says there's objective journalism is kidding themselves. Value considerations go into everything from how long a story is allowed to run to how it's placed and played to how the headline is written and the slant, how it's edited, to whether it's in the paper at all. So the whole idea that there's objective journalism and non-objective journalism is a canard

that was very serviceable in the sixties when you had papers like the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* who were cheerleaders, supporters and defenders of the Vietnam War. It's crazy. And that was an issue you'd expect the union to get up in a lather over and you couldn't get the management of the union really interested in position issues like that because what did the ad salesmen or the janitors care about that? They cared about wages and hours. So the union got watered down and I found it kind of useless. I didn't see any real reason to have it. Newspaper union has existed but once I became familiar with it, it wasn't the type of thing that interested me and I thought it was pretty mushy.

08-00:16:27

Rubens:

What's your relationship with Scott Newhall then? He was the one who had hired you. You feel he was the one who brought you back to San Francisco, as well? Or was it—

08-00:16:44

Hinckle:

Well, probably Scott was busy doing things. And you'd do your duty in terms of its hierarchy and you keep your head low and shut-up your first year or so on the paper and don't be a smart-ass, just like any organization. Just because you walk in the door doesn't mean you're hot stuff. And I kept my head low for as long as I could because I enjoyed keeping it low in the Oakland press room. But it became obvious to the city desk that somehow I was Mark Twain painting the fence.

"Wait a minute, this guy. How long he's been over there? He likes it over there. Get his ass over here." And then I started to write some stories for the *Chronicle* that became front page stories or got attention that were writerly stories or investigative stories that you dig up on your own. One was about a slave who got wealthy, a black guy, and then he adopted slaves himself and adopted some and made others indentured servants. It was really a strange, strange story. A left-wing lawyer told me about it, it was a friend of mine. I said, "Wow, that's a wild story." So I wrote that story and that became kind of a two day wonder. It was a very bizarre story.

And an example is they were going to tear down the old Fox Theatre, terrible thing to do. The one they left up in Oakland is a gem now. And they had emptied the theater but there was a guy living up in the rafters and they were pretty big rafters. So I went up there to find the guy, thinking this would be a good guy to interview. The cops could never catch him, people would get glimpses of him, construction gets getting ready to rip the place down. It's a long process because it was such a huge building. And the cops would scratch, saying, "Well, how are we going to get this guy out of there before they actually start ripping it down?" but nobody could catch him. So I actually went up there and crawled into the rafters and lugger a six pack of beer with me and somehow found where the guy was camping up out there and had a long chat with him. Anyway, it ended up as a big front page story in the

Chronicle. Front page headline that said, "The Phantom Over the Fox," right, and it was a picture of the guy. Somehow I got him to come down long enough to get a picture of him. Told his bizarre story of why he wanted to live up there and stay up there.

So I started actually producing stories as opposed to actually hiding out and enjoying newspaper life. Because one of the great enjoyments of newspaper life, if you do it right, is you don't have to work.

08-00:19:59

Rubens:

What do you mean by that?

08-00:20:01

Hinckle:

Well, you don't have to work. There's no real competition. You pick up a lot of buddies and you spend as long as possible going to stupid press conferences where they have lunch and drinks and stuff like that. And half the time the story's just a caption on a photo, something that has to be covered because the hotel is opening, that sort of thing. Big society event. And it's not really a story. There's no real writing, just busy work.

08-00:20:36

Rubens:

And you wanted to write? Are you keeping—

08-00:20:38

Hinckle:

Well, I didn't mind writing but I also didn't mind that part of the business where you just basically screwed off and met a lot of characters who have been in the news business a long time and spent their time goofing off and drinking and telling old war stories. And it was a great environment. It's what you always imagine newspapers were like. So the romantic part of that business, not the crusading part of it, but the old fashioned cynical romantic part of it I really enjoyed.

08-00:21:08

Rubens:

Is this when you met Cookie Picetti? Is this when you started hanging out at his bar?

08-00:21:13

Hinckle:

Yes. Well, I'd been hanging out there before I went to work for the *Chronicle*, but yes. And, of course, going back to this bar, the House, the Shields, which was an *Examiner* bar. A lot of newspaper guys came in there –Cookie's. It was cops and newspaper guys, judges, bail bondsmen. It was Jake Ehrlich, a legendary lawyer in San Francisco; he was always there. It was his favorite bar, too, because it was right next to the old Hall of Justice. So the clerks and everybody who were there worked right next door, so everybody hung out in that place. It was at Kearny and Clay. Where the Chinatown Holiday Inn is now was the old Hall of Justice, which is on a couple of TV programs. I think it was a Raymond Burr one. *Ironside*, I think that was it. A guy inspector in a wheelchair or something. That was basically shot inside the Hall of Justice, as they called it then. Misnomer, perhaps, but that's what they called it. It was

police headquarters and all the courts were there. Old San Francisco stuff. And old San Francisco stuff is fun.

08-00:22:31

Rubens: You're talking about not wanting to write at the paper and spending a lot of time in bars, keeping track of stories, coming up with stories. Do you have a notebook? What is your writing style?

08-00:22:45

Hinckle: I've never used a notebook.

08-00:22:47

Rubens: You just have a prodigious memory?

08-00:22:49

Hinckle: They had notebooks and you could take them out, but it seemed kind of sissy to me to have a notebook. They had stacks of copy paper which was basically newsprint chopped up to like eight and a half by eleven size. In those early days of the sixties, there were things called copy books, where you'd roll it into the typewriters, and would make like four or five carbons or dupes, they called them. And the copy boys would take one big long piece of paper and they'd stick pieces of copy paper, carbon in there, and individual sheets so you had a book. So you'd roll this whole thing into the typewriter and you'd type on it, and then when it got turned in, one copy would go to AP, another copy would go to the copy desk. So there was always a record of many copies. We'd always just take a stack of loose paper like that, eight and a half by eleven paper like that, and kind of fold it in half, stick it in my pocket and it was fine for taking notes.

08-00:24:07

Rubens: Get somebody's telephone number or the name of this ex-slave.

08-00:24:09

Hinckle: Oh, yes, quotes. You mean when you came across stories? You'd write down on something in your pocket. "Gees, that's interesting. How do I get a hold of that guy?" So you would begin to develop a list of stories you thought you'd do if they gave you the time and let you do it.

08-00:24:34

Rubens: And then so you had these haunts, you had these certain bars that you would go to—

08-00:24:38

Hinckle: Yes. It's like old town San Francisco stuff if you go to those places. But this was the beginning of a period where the newspaper business became a lot of pipe smokers and guys with university clothes and tweed jackets and the chinos and loafers that were polished and thought they were hot shit because they were a reporter and would never go out and hang out places in the neighborhoods or anything like that. And would live in the suburbs, would tend to live in the suburbs, not in the city. They'd come in on the bus or on the

train and after work, instead of going out on the town or places where it would actually hear about stories, restaurants, bars, anywhere like that, things were happening, they would get out of town. So an awful lot of stories I came up with over the years in the newspaper business [came from] just hanging around, just places I normally go. Cop bars and neighborhood bars.

08-00:26:06

Rubens: You were even out in Hunter's Point, right?

08-00:26:08

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Hung around Hunter's Point a lot. Sam Jordan became a good friend of mine. He's a black guy; had a legendary bar and barbecue place out there. They're just places you go. A lot of the Irish guys went out there and you start to go to hang out in Irish bars and come very early on involved in sort of IRA stuff. If you have a considered opinion about the English doing crap to Ireland you tended to get, or at least I did, quite involved in that, and then you meet people who were very active in it. And other stories, too, not just about Irish issues. So if you hang out in the town and grow up in the town and you're old town, put it that way, and not a self-satisfied suburban living reporter for a daily paper, you're bound to run into more stories and generate more stories than somebody who treats it as a 9:00 to 5:00 job and comes in, goes to work, and goes back.

And you also find a lot of stories, I got so many stories, a lot of them for *Ramparts* and other publications I did, but a hell of a lot for the *Chronicle* just by reading the ethnic and the small press. Like I'd read the black newspaper, the *Sun Reporter*. You pick it up when you see it in a liquor store or market somewhere. Read the Chinese press, the few papers that were in English. The Filipino paper, when they started to develop the gay papers. An astonishing amount of information is in those papers that's not in the newspaper, the daily newspaper, and you'd say, "Jesus Christ. How come nobody's doing that story?" And you just run that down and say, "Sure enough, this stuff is going on," and so all of a sudden pretty quickly you got a lot of story ideas and things you want to cover that you say, "Wait, let's do this and that."

So I generated quite a few stories like that from those sort of sources, old town and things, and things like Phantom of the Fox. Scott Newhall, because he was a great sensationalist editor, liked something like that. He loved that sort of story. And so I got really involved with him because there was a newspaper war between the *Examiner* and the *Chronicle* over the proposal to build a freeway through Golden Gate Park, to connect the freeway system to the bridge. And it was quite a civic controversy, as you might imagine. And I was involved in it already because I lived up in Russian Hill at the time and had some friends in the preservationist movement who I had met through Lawton Kennedy, this printer who I'd known since high school days. And became very much against the idea of putting a freeway through the park, open cut park and put the freeway and then replant the park and there would be smoke

exhaust things popping up among the trees. It sounds bizarre. It was a huge fight and it only lost by one vote at the end of the day. So the unions, of course, were all for it, the trade unions, because it was work. It was stuff to build. Just as they were for high rises because it was jobs. It makes sense. So the unions were all for this thing and the *Examiner* was all for it for its own reasons.

And so because the *Examiner* was gung ho for seeing the freeway built, automatically the *Chronicle* was against it. And so Scott enlisted me and said, "Okay, you're involved." He said, "Hey, I understand that you're chairman or something to some committee to stop that freeway." I said, "Oh, yes. That fucking thing. Yes. God damn. Yes, we have meetings at my house and things." He says, "Okay, I want you to do it. Let's go after these guys. Let's go after the *Examiner* and see if you can start cranking up a crusade and a story a day. We'll run them on the front page. Embarrass those guys as much as you can. Dig this up and dig that up."

And so we started quite a crusade about it and it led to a couple of embarrassing incidents. One was, as in my off-duty role as co-chairman of the committee to stop the freeway in the park, I had called a press conference for all the television stations and papers. A couple of scientists had come forward and said that the method, the open cut method they were going to use to build the freeway would create great sandstorms, because the winds in that part of the city—it's basically out in the Sunset because you're closer to the beach and that whole area, of course, was all sand dunes originally. That there would be ferocious sand storms for years while they were ripping up the park and digging all this stuff up and it would have a bad effect not just on the environment but on kids going to school and that sort of stuff. So that was pretty good. That's good stuff. So we'd done a story for it. I'd done a story on the front page of the *Chronicle*. "Scientists Predict Giant Windstorms from Freeway Digging" or something. "Park Freeway Digging Will Create Sandstorms." And it ended up as almost like a front page story every day. It was a crusade. It was a fight leading up to a vote of the Board of Supervisors on the freeway. So the *Chronicle* had already done that story. I'd already written it, but then with my other hat as the—

08-00:32:43

Rubens:

The activist.

08-00:32:43

Hinckle:

—head of the committee, I called a press conference for TV and other things, all the other papers, everybody, for these scientists to say what they were going to say. So I was in at work early that morning. I was spending a lot of time. Newhall just said, "Do whatever you want. I'm telling the city desk to let you loose." But anyway, that particular morning of the press conference I was going to go out to it just to make sure that it went all right and didn't get messed up or anything and as I look to the guy who was the day city editor

then, "Hey, I got to go out to this press conference. Who do you got covering it? My committee's giving it." He says, "No, we're short today. We got no guys," or something like that. He said, "Well, you're going to be there. You cover it." I said, "Well, I can't really cover it." The guy's name was Carl. He was a great guy. Not Carl Nolte. And old tough newspaper guy. And he said, "Well, we don't have anybody to go. Scott Newhall is going to want the story covered even though I know you already wrote it. But they'll want it covered anyway. So I'm sending a photographer and you cover it. You write well." So I said, "Yes, but I'll be speaking at it, introducing these guys and everything. I can't." He says, "What, you can't accurately report what you said? You won't remember what you said? What are you trying to tell me? We don't have anybody. You write it." And so it was oh god.

So I went out there and introduced the scientists and there was a lot of TV and all the other dailies were there and the *Chronicle* had its photographer. And I did introductions on someone, he's going to talk about this, and then he'd be talking and some people would be taking notes and TV would be filming whoever's speaking and some reporters would write down what he's saying and I would take my stuff and write down what he was saying because we had to put quotes, whatever that guy said that day for a story in the paper. And the guy from the *Examiner* comes up to me and says, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I'm taking notes of what this guy's saying." He says, "You mean you're covering this thing? It's your press conference. You're covering it for the paper?" I said, "Well, it's a little weird, I know." I said, "Give me a break. They didn't have anybody to go and all we need is the quotes." I knew it was a ridiculous situation but there it was.

08-00:35:25

Rubens: You're finessing this.

08-00:35:26

Hinckle: Yes. So the next day, sure enough, the *Examiner* had a great story, very funny. "*Chronicle Reporter Covers Own Press Conference*". You couldn't blame them. I would have done the same thing.

08-00:35:39

Rubens: This is where there's some story about you. I don't know if it's the Save the Park Committee that Malvina Reynolds had written a song for.

08-00:35:48

Hinckle: Oh, yes, yes. Lot of stuff came out of that. I got to know Malvina pretty well in that period.

08-00:35:54

Rubens: How did you—

08-00:35:55

Hinckle: You get involved in something and you meet these activists. Then they got other causes and they have friends and you become social friends with them

and you go to dinners or start hanging out and they know stuff that's going on in things other than just their particular fields. And most of the stuff isn't covered by the papers as a regular thing. So it's pretty easy to find stories because the papers don't cover it much.

08-00:36:19

Rubens: And how were you enlisted in this, to become co-chair? Was this left over from people you knew when you had run for supervisor?

08-00:36:26

Hinckle: No, this was people in my neighborhood, just living up in Russian Hill. Some of the preservationist people I'd met through being in the California Historical Society. They were clients of the short-lived PR company that I had when I went to work for the newspaper. Knew a lot of historical society people and a lot of people who were early green-type people.

08-00:36:57

Rubens: This is Sue Bierman?

08-00:36:57

Hinckle: Yes, Sue Bierman, who was a supervisor for years, was very involved in these issues. She lived along the pan-handle where it was going to get ripped up in the park. I don't know how it happened. We had a meeting at my house one night. I said, "Well, we can have it at my house." We get a steering committee together, get a group, that sort of thing. So I ended up being, along with a guy named Al Meakin, who's an early environmental guy, an artist down on Mission Street, but he was quite an early greenie. And so we ended up getting named the co-chairs, probably because we were the saps people thought would do the work. So there you go. You're stuck. What are you going to do? And Malvina Reynolds came along. So the *Chronicle* decided to have the day before the vote, the Sunday before the climatic vote of the Board of Supervisors, Scott Newhall says, "Well, let's get something really going and have a big rally. Get all the speakers you can, everybody you can and we'll promote the hell out of it." So for a week leading up to it, there were front page stories I wrote in the *Chronicle* saying, "Tens of thousands coming to great rally in the park and Malvina Reynolds to sing and so and so to speak and that sort of stuff." Blatant promotion, pushing this big rally for the cause the *Examiner* was against. It was a good cause. She wrote a song for the rally, which became the song *Little Boxes, Little Boxes*.

08-00:38:50

Rubens: Oh, really? That was the occasion?

08-00:38:50

Hinckle: Yes. She wrote that song for the rally. "Little boxes, little boxes all in a row" about the suburban houses.

08-00:38:58

Rubens: Yes, yes, about the conformity and the expansion.

08-00:39:00

Hinckle: Conformity and chopping down trees to make all these same houses. So that song came out at that rally and it was a great newspaper competition showdown or whatever you want to call it because not that many people showed up at the rally. Maybe there was 20,000. I wrote a story predicting 100,000 to gather. But not that many. It was a good crowd. It was out at the polo fields. It was a good crowd but it wasn't a hundred thousand.

08-00:39:32

Rubens: And then the next day the supervisors—

08-00:39:33

Hinckle: Well, the next day was the vote. This was on a Sunday afternoon. And the Examiner hired a helicopter to go over the park and they had to go over the park late in the day when most of the entertainment was over. And all kinds of people had left. It was getting shadowy, it was late afternoon. And took aerial photos of the thing and the *Chronicle* had photos of the crowds. The next day—both papers were daily papers—so the front page of the Chronicle has a freeway protest rally huge success, tens of thousands strong to park and a close cropped picture of a huge crowd but cropped in close so you couldn't see there were any empty parts in the stands. And the *Examiner* ran, on its front page, "Park Protest Rally Flops," and ran an aerial photograph of an almost empty polo fields. You picked up both papers, you say, "Well, which one was it?" It was kind of funny. And it was by one vote that that freeway was defeated. It was very close.

08-00:40:52

Rubens: So that was your last foray into politics until you run for mayor later on, right?

08-00:40:59

Hinckle: Oh, yes, when I was at the *Examiner*. It was later. Yes. Yes. That's another nightmare.

08-00:41:03

Rubens: All right. Well, we'll get to that. You're talking about living on Russian Hill. One of the things I wanted to just pick up and flesh out was that you had been a nightclub impresario. Did you have a sense of yourself [as that]? We didn't get a real sense of who was coming to that nightclub and was it—

08-00:41:24

Hinckle: No, that was a promotion job for a nightclub called Station J. We found a band and these guys, two guys, wanted to start a big nightclub and they were looking at sites. Part of the job was to help them find a site. One of them was this abandoned PG&E power station on Sacramento Street with huge ceilings and a big balcony where the turbines were in the center and the workers would watch. The balcony would be high around. The turbines would go down to the ground. Some guys would be on the ground, other guys do stuff higher up, so there was this big mezzanine thing around it. And it was classic architecture in the front, PG&E architecture of that period and inside was this beautiful

cavernous space. We got this band I mentioned before, led by Albert White who had a radio show "Masters of Melody." And he did mostly early Lawrence Welk type music. But all the guys in his band were symphony musicians. They were really good players and he did a lot of swing, too. And I've known him previously. Well, he hung out at this place, the House of Shields, the origin of many crimes, which wasn't anywhere a center of source for stories as, in later years, the pro-IRA Dovre Club and the many pranks that came out of that. Astonishing amount of old San Francisco stories. That was in my second tour of duty at the *Chronicle* some years later after *Ramparts* and everything.

Anyway, so this nightclub came together. These two guys that lived in Tiburon, they had twin Rolls Royces they drove around in; had a bunch of dough; launched this great nightclub. It was quite successful for a couple of years, called Station J.

08-00:43:54

Rubens: So it did last for a while. Did you go to it?

08-00:43:58

Hinckle: Oh, yes. It was great.

08-00:44:00

Rubens: This is during the San Francisco period, too? Once you're back from Oakland it's still going?

08-00:44:03

Hinckle: This is before I worked for the *Chronicle*.

08-00:44:07

Rubens: Yes. I know that's when you started out but you said it lasted for a couple of years.

08-00:44:09

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I'd always go there. It was great. You knew the management and all the bartenders and everybody and the band was on every night. It's a great place to go. You could bring your—

08-00:44:18

Rubens: So you didn't have a role in running it? It wasn't that you were—

08-00:44:21

Hinckle: No. Set it up and came up with a theme and that sort of thing, and did all the advertising and promotion for it and got into policy discussions like is it worth the thing to have a twenty-six piece orchestra or should we cut it down to fourteen to save money? "No, no, it's got to be twenty-six. It's got to be this great swing band. That's what people came for."

08-00:44:46

Rubens:

What was the cover charge? Did the cover charge take care of it or were these guys losing money on this?

08-00:44:54

Hinckle:

No, they were making money. The place was a huge success. Finally we shut down because they had a huge success going because we had a lot of society events there, various charities, things like that. So the place was packed from day one with events and that sort of introduced people to the place. You'd say, "Hey, you guys take all the money, just bring all your people and have a great time, your charity can make money." But automatically you got all kinds of people from different walks of life in town into the place. It was really a lot of fun. It was great dancing and the drinks were reasonably priced and they had food. They had a restaurant in the mezzanine. It was a great place.

08-00:45:42

Rubens:

And so it lasted until when?

08-00:45:43

Hinckle:

It was about 1960 to maybe—I think it finally got in trouble around sixty-two or so. Lasted at least a couple of years. I'd gone on to other things then but I would still go there. I went to work at the *Chronicle*, for instance. But the guys just didn't pay any withholding. They'd take the huge amount of money coming in and they speculated on other ventures, real estate deals here and there, and didn't pay their withholding. Finally one day the feds came in, and the state, and nailed them and shut the place down. One of those deals.

08-00:46:21

Rubens:

Because I wanted to ask you just a little bit about your lifestyle then. I didn't know if you saw yourself as a kind of Rick out of *Casablanca* running this thing or sort of Sam Spade.

08-00:46:38

Hinckle:

You didn't think about it. It was like, "Hey, it was fun," and you go there and you knew everybody. In the beginning, at least, you were part management almost and you'd drag all your friends there and say, "Hey, meet me over at Station J. We'll have dinner tonight and that sort of thing." We designed the menus. I designed the menus. We had somebody paint the old façade of the PG&E substation structure with its giant vaulted doors and curlicue Romanesque sort of architecture they had for power stations way back. And had somebody hand paint it and then die cut it and then made a menu on heavy cardboard but the menu was inside. You had to open the menu and split the thick—so the menu was the front of the place. Very nice architectural painting, rendering. Not impressionistic at all. Got somebody who was a severe architectural designer/painter to draw this thing to scale as much as you can so it looks just like it's supposed to. And the menu would be the front of the place but it was split down the middle so you'd open it and inside was the menu and one side was the wine list.

- 08-00:47:59
Rubens: Does someone have a copy of these? Did you save one?
- 08-00:48:02
Hinckle: I've probably still got that somewhere in boxes down in my files. I probably do, yes. It was a great looking menu. Anyway, the place was an instant hit and did very well. Then I got out of that PR business but I still hung around that place often. Would take dates.
- 08-00:48:19
Rubens: That's what I was trying to link up. Even when you came back to San Francisco, now you're a reporter in San Francisco, was it still going? Were you going to it?
- 08-00:48:26
Hinckle: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes. It lasted at least two years. Maybe it was three.
- 08-00:48:31
Rubens: So tell me now just a little bit. How do you just characterize your lifestyle? We've talked about the evolution of a political consciousness, of trying to be an investigative reporter, of honing some of your skills of writing. You had mentioned last week, two weeks ago when we met, that you drove a Jaguar. How could you as a reporter afford a Jaguar?
- 08-00:48:52
Hinckle: Oh, that's because I got a settlement. I was in an automobile accident as a kid. A lot of glass went in my eye.
- 08-00:49:05
Rubens: Oh yes, you talked about it.
- 08-00:49:05
Hinckle: And over the years I had all these operations and finally it just didn't work. But for a while there was vague sight and that sort of thing and I'd have another operation and then they were trying to put in glass eyes but they kept falling out. Technology wasn't that great in those days.
- 08-00:49:26
Rubens: So when you're twenty-one—
- 08-00:49:26
Hinckle: I guess it was twenty-one, I got some money. There was a lawsuit. Actually, because I had two hands that were also injured in the accident. Some family lawyer, was a lawyer for the family for wills and whatever, sued them. Only lawyer we knew, the family knew, and there was no question what had happened, so it was just a matter of how much money everybody got. And it wasn't a lot of money. But I guess it must have been when I was twenty-one I came into, whatever you want to call it, a sum like seven or \$9,000 or \$13,000. I have no memory, right. But it was a hunk of money for the early sixties.

08-00:50:16

Rubens: For a young man.

08-00:50:18

Hinckle: Yes. And so I immediately went out and bought a Jaguar convertible. That seemed like the thing to do. I certainly didn't put it in the bank. And otherwise spent it. And I remember from British Motors there was a guy named Sidney Smith who was the general manager of British Motors for a long time. And previously I had a car, a Sprite, which are very sort of small, low to the ground convertibles. They were made by British Motors but they were like a very, very cheap sports car. So somehow I got a Sprite. And I didn't treat it very well and banged it up pretty bad. And I remember bringing it in to buy the Jaguar, which they were very happy to sell me a Jaguar mostly cash. Very happy to sell me that. But Sidney Smith sat me down and he says, "Now, Warren," he says, "this is a beautiful machine you're buying, a Jaguar, and I just want to tell you one thing. You cannot treat a Jaguar like a Sprite," because I turned in this car all bent up and danged up. I was, "Oh, no, no. I would never do that, Sir."

08-00:51:38

Rubens: And, in fact, what happened to that? Isn't there a great story about the Jaguar needing repairs and—?

08-00:51:46

Hinckle: Oh, it was a nightmare. Yes, Cookie Picetti's. Yes. So much of this town operates out of not social clubs as such, but neighborhood bars or events. In my case it was a lot of Irish events. Then if you worked for a newspaper, it becomes intertwined. So it's all one big thing. You don't go out and find something for an eight hour period when you're working. You're hearing about things all the time. Everything's sort of wrapped together and you learn how power works and how things can corrupt and who knows who. I think we talked very early on about this Monsignor Collins who had talked me into—this was another freeway fight, not through the park, but this one was going to go through the entire Sunset District. Collins opposed that because it came too close to his church. He wasn't going to let his parishioners' homes be knocked down.

There was this great freeway revolt in San Francisco in the early sixties because the engineers in Sacramento had just drawn straight lines through towns. And here they wiped out much of what is the Excelsior District today, like what they did on the way to the airport on each side of the Mission. Just ripped out all the homes, cut a swathe through it. And then they had plans going around the waterfront, the freeways, connecting to the Bay Bridge. Then they had this double-decker Embarcadero Freeway built and that became an issue by the late fifties. People just said, "Stop building these damn freeways." The waterfront's blocked off, homes are being ripped out and they were planning to continue the freeway system to connect to the Golden Gate Bridge. They got it to the Bay Bridge but they didn't connect with the Golden

Gate Bridge. So there were many schemes to connect it to the Golden Gate Bridge, traffic coming up from the Peninsula. One of them was the freeway through the park to connect Park Presidio Boulevard to downtown, which was going to be a double-decker boulevard, a concrete double-decker boulevard when the tunnel came out of the park. This was real stuff. They meant it and it almost happened.

Earlier when they got squelched by Harry Collins, this monsignor we talked about earlier who gave me quite a lesson in how power works, he was going to stop that damn freeway. That plan was to come up from the peninsula and cut through the entire flatlands of the Sunset District out towards what is essentially now 19th Avenue—going through the park and going to the Golden Gate Bridge. That was the first plan and that was squashed. So these freeway revolts were going on. This is when I was in grammar school. And you early on became sort of anti-freeway because, “Hey, they’re going to rip down our house,” a maybe sort of thing. What are they doing?” It was part of old San Francisco that weren’t for these freeways at all.

And I know when I became friends years later with John Barbagelata, the conservative Republican realtor from West Portola where I grew up, we shared this anti-free way sensibility. Very conservative guy, very Republican. We became very, very close friends. But we didn’t agree on anything politically. He was really a conservative Republican, right wing, but just a great guy and he was a very fair guy. One of the reasons he hated government so much was that his family house, and they had a lot of orchards and things, was taken by eminent domain and ripped down by the state when they built the approach to the Golden Gate Bridge, when they were building the Golden Gate Bridge. To get to the Golden Gate Bridge, they had to take a lot of property, what became Doyle Drive, to get to the bridge. And a lot of property was taken in the Marina. And his family’s little farm and house was among the properties that went. And he remembered as a little kid seeing the walnut orchards and all the fruit trees and everything ripped down and part of it having to be moved and the bulldozers —and that was the state doing that. So that enhanced his conservatism.

And I could really understand that. I said, “Yes, I’m with you, John,” but that doesn’t mean that everything the government does is—sometimes you need these guys to take care of people. That was just wrong. That was crazy. At any rate, so anti-freeway sentiment is embedded very much in San Francisco. You don’t have to be a liberal or a conservative or a green. It’s a deep rooted old San Francisco sentiment. Nobody wanted things being ripped down and these huge freeways cutting through. It’s one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

08-00:57:23

Rubens:

So were you going to link this part of the story up to Cookie Picetti and the Jaguar?

08-00:57:27

Hinckle: Yes. We got to talk about that. The Jaguar got messed up. I didn't keep my promise to Sidney Smith, regrettably, and one night I was coming over from Tiburon after a night over at Sam's in Tiburon and swerved—

08-00:57:51

Rubens: I'm going to lose this if I don't stop. Let's stop and we'll switch tapes.

08-00:57:56

Hinckle: Oh, sure.

Begin Audio File 9

09-00:00:00

Hinckle: The stories you find that become a part of your life, your existence, it isn't something you come in on the train to write about and then go back to somewhere else. So if you're living the city life, and particularly if you've been here a long time and went to school, your life, particularly in my case, you knew so many people, or so it seemed. And everybody knew what was going on, knew what was going on in City Hall, who was there. So it led to newspaper stories.

But the Jaguar story. I'd kind of wrecked the Jaguar. I was driving too fast, came through the tunnel from the Golden Gate Bridge and somehow climbed up on the divider strip. Because I'd had a few too many drinks in Sam's in Tiburon. Ripped the bottom of the car. Somehow managed to get off it and scoot on the wrong side of the street. Thank god it was about 3:00 in the morning. Nobody was around very much. And I said, "Oh, boy, am I going to be in trouble," and thank god it wasn't a real wreck. And sort of lurked on the side street for an hour or two. I figured somebody would be chasing me but nobody did. But the car was really screwed up. So I took it to some repair shop out by 19th Avenue in the Sunset and the guy said, "Oh, this is really a mess." Anyway, they fixed the car and it was like \$1,800 or \$2,800. Two thousand something dollars, whatever it was. They had to put in a new fuel tank. They had to do this, they had to do that. So I paid the guy because he'd fixed it. Wrote him a check and was driving down along the park on Lincoln Way. I got about twelve blocks from the repair shop and all of a sudden the engine fell out of the car, collapsed out of the car and the car stopped, of course. It was a disaster. Called AAA and said, "Where do we take it?" and they said, "Well, we'll take it the quickest place. It's smoking." They took it to some garage right where it collapsed. And so I come there a couple of days later and I said, "What happened to it?" He said, "The car's totaled." He said, "Some idiot left metal filings in the gas tank. It looks like you just had a new gas tank put in. The filings got into the engine and they've destroyed the engine and it was about to explode and it shook its mountings and dropped down." So I said, "Son of a bitch." So I was just teed. So I said, "It's not going to do any good arguing with the guy." I was not in the mood to sue. I just didn't care at the time. Oh, Christ. Because I was relatively flush.

09-00:03:15

Rubens: You didn't stop payment on the check?

09-00:03:15

Hinckle: Yes, I stopped payment on the check, yes. Had to call him up and yell at him. I said, "You crazy bastard. You're lucky I'm not going to sue you. Blah, blah, blah," yell back, "Screw you. Cancel your check. You're lucky you don't get a lawsuit." So I guess the guy then went to—not guess, he did—the district attorney's office and claimed he had a mechanic's lien and I defrauded him. I guess they sent me letters to my home address and I didn't pay any attention to the letters. "This bastard," just threw them away. I tend to do that with things. Lot of times I don't open mail just because somebody sends you a letter, I don't believe that puts any obligation on the recipient to open it. You've a constitutional right to invest in a stamp and an envelope, but just because you send it to somebody does not mean they have to read it. "Hey, did you get my letter?" And it's like then you have an obligation. You're supposed to open the letter and read it. Well, what if you don't feel like it? What if you're busy? Some people, "Oh, my god, I got a letter. I got to open it." I'm kind of well-known for that, as people who've lived with me over the years will tell you. Stacks of mail goes unopened. How can you do that?

Anyway, I didn't pay attention to it and a warrant was issued in the due course of time. And a guy would come. This is before I went to work for the Chronicle, right before, and I still had that PR business. And an inspector would leave his card because I was rarely at the office, PR office, and say, "You better call me. There's a warrant for you on this repair bill." So I called him. That got my attention. And I said, "Well, you know what the bastard did? The car got ruined. Shavings." He said, "Look, that's not my business. You didn't answer things. My job is to serve the warrant." Now, I can keep looking for you, find where you hang out, do this, do that, or you can just go down to the DAs office. I'll meet you down there. You're going to have to surrender on this warrant, I'll book you, and then you can do whatever you want and you can get it erased. But you got to do that now. You're in the mill."

So I felt terrible about that and I go into Cookie Picetti's bar where I hung out regularly, which was this cop bar, bail bondsmen, everybody, lawyers bar, and he said, "What's the matter, kid?" I'll never forget this. And I said, "Oh, nothing." "No, what's the matter? You look like hell." I said, "Aw, geez, Cookie, I'm going to get arrested." "What? What do you mean you're going to get arrested?" I said, "Well, this guy ruined the car and then I stopped the check on him and the motor fell out and I didn't bother to sue him and I guess they sent me letters I didn't pay any attention to." "Who's going to arrest you? Who's the guy?" I said, "The cops are after me." "Well, who's the guy?" And I found the guy's card. I said, "Here, it is. Inspector Cook." "Bill Cook? Bill Cook? Bill Cook's not going to arrest you. Give me that card. Jesus." He goes over to the wall phone. He says, "Okay." He says, "He ain't going to arrest you." He says, "Here's what you do." You bring a case of Old Crow to the bar

next week. That's Bill's favorite whiskey. Just leave it here. I'll make sure he gets it. He says he'll rip up the copies of the warrant and without the thing," and he says, "But then the guy'll go down and complain." He says, "You screwed yourself, you dumb kid." He said, "You get a cashier's check or something like that and take it over to the guy who wrecked your car."

09-00:07:12

Rubens: The mechanic.

09-00:07:14

Hinckle: Right. Yes. And just say, "Hey, you want this? Drop it." It'll be dropped. He says, "In the meantime, nobody's going to arrest you because he already threw everything down the toilet. Pay the guy because you shouldn't have done it." I said, "Okay." I was so happy just to—

09-00:07:33

Rubens: Not be arrested.

09-00:07:35

Hinckle: So I did and that was that. By the time he goes down there and they put out new warrants for you, it'll be three or four months, but you're going to have to fix it in the meantime. He says, "You better pay the guy. If you want to sue him, that's your business. But you better pay him first." So that was it.

09-00:07:51

Rubens: So you did that. You gave Cook the booze?

09-00:07:53

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. That's how stuff works. It's who you know.

09-00:07:58

Rubens: And then you wrote about it later. I read it in one of your *Chronicle* stories.

09-00:08:00

Hinckle: Oh, years later I was doing a very long profile of Cookie Picetti for the *Chronicle* in my second tour of duty at the *Chronicle*. I had a big sort of column, I could write what I want then. Long, great piece. I think it was a great piece.

09-00:08:19

Rubens: So I was just trying to get this picture of what your life was like just prior to when you meet Ed Keating and get involved with *Ramparts*. When did you get married? You had said you lived at home until you were married.

09-00:08:36

Hinckle: Yes.

09-00:08:37

Rubens: And now you're talking about living on Russian Hill. So were you married when you lived on Russian Hill?

09-00:08:41

Hinckle: Yes. Yes.

09-00:08:44

Rubens: Because I hope this isn't impolitic. But I think people today would be surprised since you generate that incredible story about "How to Get Laid in San Francisco."

09-00:08:53

Hinckle: When I was doing that magazine for Francis Coppola's *City Magazine*. That was Susan Berman who wrote the story. It was a funny story for *City Magazine* when I took it over that became a little scandalous on that thing. But yes, she worked for the *Examiner*. She was a great writer. Then quit the *Examiner*, couldn't stand it. I was putting out *City Magazine* for Francis.

09-00:09:35

Rubens: What I was trying to get at is that people would be surprised today to read that someone like you, this bon vivant, this entrepreneur, this sort of man about town is living at home until he's married. Young people, what were they, going to motels or going in the back of cars? How were they getting laid?

09-00:10:02

Hinckle: Cars and a lot of women you went out with had apartments. I wasn't home very much and all through college and when I started six months or so this PR business and then went to work for the *Chronicle*, I started out, and then I was going out with my first wife at that time. Took her to Station J, for instance, a lot, that sort of stuff. All these stories, how do you find this stuff, it's like all social connection. Her friend was Anne Weills who at the time was Bob Scheer's girlfriend. And that's how I met Scheer, when I had just started out doing *Ramparts*. But I met him because these two women knew each other.

09-00:11:07

Rubens: So tell us just quickly. Let's have it for the historical record. How did you meet Denise? What is Denise's last name and where do you meet her? Isn't that also a San Francisco bar story?

09-00:11:17

Hinckle: Yes. She worked in the Financial District and it was a bar in the Financial District called Shanty Malone's. Great old San Francisco bar and I got to know Shanty quite well. Had a lot of my early campaign for supervisor events there. There's a great Shanty story, unless I've already told it to you, where it was like, "Well, who are we going to get to vote? We got to do mailings and stuff like that." Shanty was a thirties guy. He had bars all over town during Prohibition and this one was on Clay Street, right near when Tadich Grill was then on Clay Street, right in the heart of the Financial District then, the four edges of the Financial District. This was in the very early sixties. I said, "Hey, Shanty, you got a list of guys?" Of course, he had so many customers over the years, maybe we could get their names. "Oh, yes, come on upstairs." We went upstairs to his mezzanine and he dusted off these stacks of cards. He says,

“Oh, yes, let me get them out for you. Oh, this guy, oh, no, he’s dead. He died.” The majority of them were long deceased, his customers. But she was working for an import/export, something like that, company right by that area in the financial district and she and girlfriends would go this bar, Shanty Malone’s. It was one of the places I hung out. Met her at the bar.

- 09-00:13:07
Rubens: What was her maiden name
- 09-00:13:08
Hinckle: Denise Libarle. L-I-B-A-R-L-E.
- 09-00:13:13
Rubens: And where was she from?
- 09-00:13:14
Hinckle: She was from Petaluma. Her parents had a laundry in Petaluma, industrial laundry. And went to Mills, that sort of stuff.
- 09-00:13:26
Rubens: How long did you date about? You knew her—
- 09-00:13:30
Hinckle: I was working for the *Chronicle* for about a year maybe. And so we got married and took a flat on Russian Hill.
- 09-00:13:44
Rubens: And when did she go to work for the brokerage?
- 09-00:13:51
Hinckle: Probably when she got out of college. It was just a job. It wasn’t a brokerage. I think she did clerical work. It was like some sort of import/export firm where you got bills of lading and that sort of—
- 09-00:14:06
Rubens: And that’s literally where she met Anne Weills?
- 09-00:14:08
Hinckle: Yes. Or maybe Anne worked for a brokerage and they met at a coffee shop or a lunch or something. But they were all down in the Financial District. And my uncle owned a California meat company, which was right there, too, which is where the Transamerica Pyramid Building is now, which was a big wholesaler butcher for all of the restaurants and things like that. And I was always there as a kid and his kids all worked there and we were always together for holidays and Thanksgiving and often we’d go out for drinks and meet at Shanty Malone’s because that was right on the street. There was that one little area. And this bar you were just talking about, Cookie Picetti’s was just another block up the street next to the Bastille. The Hall of Justice, jail and the courts and everything were right up there. It was all within about a

three block area. It was right adjacent to North Beach. It was like two blocks up you were up in North Beach.

09-00:15:24

Rubens: You mentioned earlier the garb of many San Francisco *Chronicle* reporters how you'd make a distinction between the out of town ones and the local ones. When do you get to your sort of more flamboyant lifestyle appearance? I was wondering if it came out of the nightclub? You're known for wearing patent leather shoes, later on white linen suits.

09-00:15:49

Hinckle: Always wear patent. That was Howard Gossage's idea.

09-00:15:55

Rubens: You haven't met him yet?

09-00:15:55

Hinckle: Like I didn't take care of my cars very well, I didn't shine my shoes very well and Gossage was an impeccable dresser. When we got to be friends he always stammered, "Hey, hey, hey, Hinckle." He says, "It's h-h-hopeless with you." A lot of times there were formal events in San Francisco, so you had Brooks Brothers patent leather dancing pumps. Certainly had them at Station J because there was nothing but dancing at Station J. It was a big thing. Always wore them. And I had taken to just wearing them in the daytime because you could just slip into them, it was easy, broken in, they were comfortable and I didn't care much about what shoes I wore. So he just said, "Hey, you wear those all the time because you don't take care of your shoes. So those you can't screw up. When you scuff them, just get a new pair. So if you just wear those all the time, we won't have to be embarrassed by having you around the office and over for dinner." That's going to be a little bit later.

09-00:17:05

Rubens: Well, let's just get up to that point. And then we've done a good hour and a half today just getting to the Ramparts era. Anything more to say about what life was like at the *Chronicle* then?

09-00:17:21

Hinckle: Well, there was definitely a class or cultural divide at the *Chronicle*. There were the suburban type of reporter I mentioned to you. Class and cultural divide. Not necessarily political divide. I'd say almost everybody there, almost everybody in San Francisco, were on the liberal side of things. But class and cultural things were different. There was a bohemian or conservative wild person or conservative old time, hey, the job of a newspaper guy is to go drink as much as he can on management's money and on his own afterward and hang out around the town because that's how you find stories and that's what you do. So there were a lot of people at the *Chronicle* who became friends of mine who shared that, if you want to call it lifestyle, it's a lifestyle. There were others who didn't, who left immediately and went to the suburbs. And a lot of those people, the ones who were of that mindset, became friends.

It's like anything else. Some people you connect to, some people you don't. George Draper, who was a great favorite of Scott Newhall's, became a good friend of mine.

09-00:18:53

Rubens: He was a bit older?

09-00:18:54

Hinckle: Very "U" [upper-class] as the Mitfords would say, "U" and "non-U" stuff. He was very casual, well-tanned, sort of droll guy. Always wore pink Brooks Brothers shirts and he lived in Sausalito. No, he lived in the lower Nob Hill in this unbelievably decadent apartment. Had wild, wild society parties there. He was quite a guy. And there was guys like the jazz critic, music critic then. He was a great guy. Wasserman. His name was Wasserman.

And he lived above a nightclub on Bush Street. He had a fabulous pad above that. And I had rented a pretty decent house on Russian Hill. It was a set of flats and the guy actually who lived above me was the day city editor of the *Chronicle*. I said, "My god, you live here?" that sort of thing. Where you live and how you hang out creates cultural sets. It's just like flowing into water. You're just doing what comes naturally. It seems natural. You do it in high school, you do it in college. That's what you do. The newspaper business, the journalism business, is a twenty-four hour a day business. It all has to do with what you see as a story and when you write it. That's why I've never really cared much about hours and wages and things like that. It's like if you're going to do this stuff, you do it. Do it under whatever confines. It becomes much easier to do the way you want if you've got your own publication. That's for sure.

09-00:21:02

Rubens: Yes, sure. Yes.

09-00:21:02

Hinckle: Right. And I was lucky for a long time at the *Chronicle*, at least when I started there, to have a guy like Scott Newhall, who indulged eccentricities or flamboyance or whatever in his writers.

09-00:21:19

Rubens: And you're saying even in this period leading up to when you'll join *Ramparts*, Newhall is someone who you become friends with?

09-00:21:28

Hinckle: Yes. Well, friends. Co-conspirators with. I mean, not friends. Once in a while he'd invite me up to the Pacific Union Club for a drink. Scott never drank. That's interesting. But he hired me, I guess, counter-intuitively because I criticized some of his columns earlier. But I was certainly a useful tool to him. I mean that in the kindest way. I got what he wanted to do and I did the same sort of thing and I liked it.

09-00:22:04

Rubens: So it wasn't that you were sitting down regularly with him and talking.

09-00:22:09

Hinckle: No. All he had to do is say, "Hey, let's screw the *Examiner*. You're already doing that stuff. Start a crusade. Come up with all kinds of things. We'll kill them. Go out and get stuff. I'll tell those guys to take you off daily stuff." We never even basically had to talk about it again, except a couple of times. He said, "You run it. You just do it. You know what to do."

09-00:22:28

Rubens: Any other stories like that before *Ramparts*?

09-00:22:34

Hinckle: No.

09-00:22:34

Rubens: You're going to start doing the PR for *Ramparts* pretty soon. So should we just lead into that and then we'll talk about how we'll talk about *Ramparts*. But how do you get connected with Keating, your old friend from—

09-00:22:48

Hinckle: Well, when I was in college I became connected through Catholicism and becoming critical of some parts of Catholicism, which I was in college, and finding that some of these guys are real lemons and learning a little bit more about the history of the church than you knew when you were early growing up. And it's not a very pretty story. And there was a group called the Black Friars of the West, which as an English order. Not an order but they had a big literary tradition. They were Catholics in England. A chapter or something got started in San Francisco out of St. Dominic's Church and they put on theatrical productions there, things like that.

Anyway, I became involved with the Black Friars of the West and a guy named Ernie Lonner, who was a Vietnamese immigrant, and helped them publicize: put on their productions and things and did their programs. He was a Jewish guy but he worked for a Catholic group and theater. And they were very liberal and he learned a lot of things from them. This is when I was in college. A lot of times in my college years and then go into USF. But I got involved with them. And an English professor at USF, Harry Steele, was a poet, a pretty good poet, called me one day. This is when I was working at the *Chronicle* but I knew him through this Black Friars of the West group, sort of off campus, you might say. He'd go to some of their productions and things. It's a little bit activism but it's not so much like traditional militant sit-in activism. It's just doing stuff and then you get to know people and gradually you find out more things that you didn't know were going on before.

So he said, "You should meet this guy." He asked me to be the editor. He's a convert. Very, very zealous convert to Catholicism and he wants to start a magazine, a liberal Catholic magazine to counter all the conservative stuff in

the church and to help out the people who are trying to help out the church, reform the church, whatever you want to call it." I said, "Oh, start a magazine?" He said, "Yes, yes. His name's Ed Keating and he lives down the peninsula." He said, "He's going to have a dinner at his house. Why don't you come down to it. I'll get you invited. I told him about you." I was working at the *Chronicle* then. He said, "You helped out the Black Friars, you got us going, the shows were very well attended. You understand everything about the theater and the ideas and everything and you put out the newspaper. He doesn't know anything about publishing. I think you'd be really helpful because this guy wants to launch this thing and he's got a lot of money." I go, "Well, fine by me," and so I went down to meet this guy Keating and that's when he was in the development stage of starting to think about *Ramparts* and that's how that started. This is in 1962.

09-00:27:09

Rubens:

So maybe what we should do is just think about now how we want to talk about the next few years as you take on more responsibility at *Ramparts*.

09-00:27:20

Hinckle:

Well, I don't know. One of the things you were asking is how did stuff happen or how do you get these stories or how does your lifestyle develop. It's really all one. It's not that San Francisco is a magic town or anything like that but a lot of guys I went to school with, high school and college with, stayed living insular San Francisco lives, socially very conservative. A few college pranks, little high school drinking, that sort of stuff, but basically stayed on the cultural straight and narrow. I guess I didn't. But all the things that you learned about, whether it's stories or things you became involved in, one thing leads to another thing. It just happened naturally.

09-00:28:20

Rubens:

Yes. But this is going to then just catapult you into a whole new—

09-00:28:24

Hinckle:

Yes. But it's the same thing with newspaper stories and other things. You start doing stuff and it leads you to doing other stuff and things happen. You don't so much change your mind about things as you get a mind about things because you hadn't thought about these things before really if you're growing up insular San Francisco. Yes. It's not exactly a left-wing upbringing.

09-00:28:53

Rubens:

You didn't remember, but when I asked you about the end of your career at USF, you were considering writing a magazine, there was some discussion of it in the *Foghorn*.

09-00:29:05

Hinckle:

Yes, we did one which was a big insert to the *Foghorn*, which was very critical of a Catholic college education. The Jesuits were really mad that I printed it but I somehow got it printed and stuffed it in the *Foghorn*. I don't know if I still have copies of that thing. It was no big magazine but it was a

magazine and took a very critical look at Catholic—just focused on Catholic college education, anti-intellectual repressive this, that, contrary to the Saint Thomas Aquinas tradition of blah, blah, blah. That sort of stuff.

09-00:29:45

Rubens: And so you're willing to go along for the first couple of years, although you're arguing with Keating about it [*Ramparts*] being a literary magazine. One of the first issues is a symposium —you write about Salinger.

09-00:29:59

Hinckle: Yes. Keating hated Salinger. Thought he was dirty. Well, that was another cultural divide. We're all liberal Catholics but some of them were exceedingly politically and culturally conservative to the point of anti-Semitism. And he would let these guys write. I said, "You can't let these idiots write for this thing. I don't care if they're a liberal Catholic. They're goddamn anti-Semetics. This is nuts."

09-00:30:31

Rubens: Is he the one who brings in Max Geismar? Is that how you meet Geismar, through Keating?

09-00:30:38

Hinckle: Yes. Because as soon as we got *Ramparts* going, it was doing—right away it got involved in this fight over *The Deputy*. And that happened because of Judy Stone, Izzy [I.F.] Stone's sister, who was working at the *Chronicle* when I was working at the *Chronicle* and she'd just had this interview. She'd been in Germany with the author of the play and had been rejected by *Look* magazine and she told me this. I said, "Judy, before you send that out again, give it to me. There's this Catholic magazine, it's going to be really cool, they got me working for it and this guy doesn't quite know what he's doing and I think I can get it in there. But not just get it in there. This guy's got a lot of money and we'll go crazy and raise the ramparts about it and do all this thing. He's got money. How much are you looking to pay you for this thing?" She said, "I'd take about \$800." "I'm going to tell him \$1,500." She said, "Well, will you print it right away because the play's going to open and it has to come out in a timely basis." I said, "We'll just scrap the publication schedule. Just give me it. Guarantee you you'll get a big fat check and everybody will—"

09-00:31:51

Rubens: You just knew this was a winner?

09-00:31:53

Hinckle: It was a winner, especially in a Catholic magazine. Automatically. You're defending the critic of the Pope and the rest of the Catholics.

09-00:32:01

Rubens: Yes. The fiction of the story, the play, was that—

09-00:32:06

Hinckle:

Oh, it was that anti-Semitism applies, as well. And historic Catholic anti-Semitism of the church but it was all about Pius XII. A real prick, yes.

09-00:32:19

Rubens:

Who had not blown the whistle, really, on what was taking place in the Holocaust.

09-00:32:23

Hinckle:

Yes. Well, even before he became Pope, he was in the early concordant with the Nazis. He was some functionary job, Vatican secretary of state or something like that. Have to check my references. But he was a big deal. He later became Pope in the Vatican and he was instrumental in the concordant that the church made with the Nazis before World War II. And when it became clear to some people that the anti-Semitism, not just the anti-Semitism, which was obvious, but had gone beyond pogroms to something like extermination, and beginning grabbing the property of the Jews and taking it and giving it to German bankers and that sort of stuff, some bishops and others in the church said, "Hey, what is going on? We can't allow this." And he refused to break it because the church was getting a hell of a lot of money from the German government.

They had a concordant and he wouldn't break. It was a horrible, horrible story and so this guy, Rolf Hochhuth made a play about it and put it in dramatic form. About trying to bring some conscious, some acts of conscious to the pope over this historical anti-Semitism, particularly the extermination of the Jews in the Second World War and the events leading up to it. That's what that play was about.

09-00:34:00

Rubens:

So then your whole architecting of how *Ramparts* is going to go national, how you're going to go to New York and hold a press conference—

09-00:34:10

Hinckle:

All came from that. All came from a chance meeting in the mailroom. She's picking up her mail and saying, "Oh, shit, they rejected it."

09-00:34:18

Rubens:

Just amazing. Amazing. So is that where we should pick up next week?

09-00:34:23

Hinckle:

Yes.

09-00:34:24

Rubens:

And I think rather than just going year by year, although we've got to get your relationship established with Keating. Keating just seemed like a wild man, like someone who's—

09-00:34:40

Hinckle:

Yes, he was a wild man. He was very idealistic and he was a wild man. He was willing to do anything to make things happen and he enjoyed, once he got into it, the limelight and everything like that and he was willing to do anything.

09-00:35:00

Rubens:

Very opinionated, right?

09-00:35:02

Hinckle:

But he was politically—the circle of people he came into, Catholicism, the converts, converts are always terrible, no matter what religion it is. They're more Catholic than the Pope, these converts, and much more serious in their stuff. At any rate, we had definite differences of opinion about some of these people that he had writing for the magazine. But one of them, who sent something in right away—because this was after *The Deputy* fuss in New York—was Max Geismar who was a great literary critic. Very left-wing guy. Wonderful man. Became one of my closest, closest friends. He just like sent in a piece because he heard it was a Catholic magazine taking on the Jews, trying to side with the Catholics to suppress this play saying the Pope is a bastard and this is all New York stuff. He thought that was just so good so he just sent an article in. He was a well-established author and just came in the door. Keating said, "Oh, my god. A Jew wants to write for us. He's famous. He's written books." So it was like let's go meet this guy. I want you to go to New York. That led to a whole circle of things and articles.

09-00:36:31

Rubens:

Is that how Leslie Fiedler gets involved in it?

09-00:36:32

Hinckle:

Yes, Leslie Fiedler and those guys. Leslie Fiedler was another wing nut, as far as I was concerned. There was John Beecher, from THE Beecher family, who moved to Mississippi. A decent guy. I liked him. There were the Berrigan brothers and other people. There was a network of these guys. The whole story of the involvement of *Ramparts* is the back door of the Catholic Church meeting on Catholic issues about the war or anti-Semitism or segregation involving the church, leading to larger political issues on the same topics. So it was like topics just sort of developed naturally.

09-00:37:11

Rubens:

I don't quite get why are the Jews collaborating with the Catholics? Why do they want this story suppressed?

09-00:37:22

Hinckle:

It's New York politics. I came to learn it very, very well very quickly. It sounds impossible but the groups that opposed *The Deputy* opening on Broadway—I went to New York, first time I was there I sat down with this guy Herman Shumlin. He was a big Broadway producer. He was telling me these stories of going through the *New York Times*, every issue, during the

Second World War. "Why didn't I see these articles? There were hardly any. Why weren't they in there?" This is true, it's true. And he was a major Broadway producer but he was so shocked, and he was Jewish, at the truth of this. And not just the Catholic Church, but Roosevelt. The biggest enemy of the Jews was Roosevelt. But then you have American Jews that didn't want the European Jews here, that's a pretty well-known fact of contemporary history because they'd rock the boat too much. They're too left-wing. Hurt our assimilation. Many people have written books about this stuff, they have different theories, but that was a matter of fact. And Ben Hecht was blacklisted by Goldwyn and Jewish producers in Hollywood. Ben Hecht was a champion of the Irgun and the Stern Gang and the creation of Israel and what you have to do to create a Jewish state. He was censored as a screenwriter—he was one of the greatest screenwriters of all time—by the Jews, by the Jewish establishment. There's no question of that. It's not even debatable. There's been now many, many books written about this. Not that I think it's sunk deeply into the popular cultural mind, but this is what it was. And in New York there was this maintaining power alliance where the three religions, the Jews, the Protestants and the Catholics, more or less, worked things out. They kept a lid on everything.

So here there's this meshuggeneh guy in Germany. He's critical of everything anyway. He writes this play, this left-wing Jew wants to bring it to Broadway, the Catholic Church doesn't want to do it. They want to picket it. Catholic war veterans. So the Jewish Veterans of Foreign Wars and another big Jewish group say, "We'll help you out." And the Protestants says, "We'll help you out," and the archbishop of New York and rabbi or something or other, they all form an alliance to say that Deputy is a vicious hate spewing division making thing and it shouldn't be allowed to play on Broadway. It's an indecent thing. It's taking people apart rather than bringing people together. It's dividing religions. It's doing this stuff, right. But on a very practical level, it's like precinct politics. You scratch my back and then you got a problem. I'll take care of yours. So we'll help out the Catholics then this week.

09-00:40:43

Rubens:

Sure, yes. Just made to order for creating a—

09-00:40:49

Hinckle:

Oh, it was perfect. So I raised a lot of hell over that and Max Geismar noticed that and just sent something in. "What's the address of that magazine?" Here. "Let me send you guys one of my articles. I'd love to be printed by you," that sort of thing, because he understood well all these things but had never seen any Catholic actually blow it all up.

09-00:41:17

Rubens:

And by then you're full-time? You spent two years doing publicity?

- 09-00:41:26
 Hinckle: Yes, I think I was. I was on the masthead as that but I was doing a lot of the editorial, bringing guys in.
- 09-00:41:37
 Rubens: Already?
- 09-00:41:38
 Hinckle: Oh, yes, yes. And helping. The design was a disaster. Everything was wrong. Had to bring it to Lawton Kennedy. It was a quarterly, it was so square. We had to fix it up. Yes.
- 09-00:41:51
 Rubens: He called it a laundry list style?
- 09-00:41:55
 Hinckle: Yes, laundry list.
- 09-00:41:56
 Rubens: But you didn't win that battle in the beginning with—
- 09-00:42:00
 Hinckle: No. I gradually won it. Then he fired me for a while and then had to get me back for whatever reason. We had some fights over content. And then became so much more involved through all these contexts, through Keating and this guy. He loved meeting all these guys. Keating loved meeting Louis Lomax. Louis Lomax. —bit of a self-promoter and a blowhard in the early black power movement. Not a bad guy. He's a good guy. But he was a show boater and he had a story about who really killed the three civil rights workers. So I said, "Well, if that's true we should put out an extra about it." And then we went to a printing plant in Washington, stayed up days and nights, three days, we put all this stuff together and printed 400,000 copies or something, of this special issue of *Ramparts*. It was just to become a monthly.
- So as his horizon broadened, he jettisoned these very early conservative anti-Semitic guys. And got into the fun of hanging out with the Berrigans [Daniel and Philip Berrigan] and civil rights guys like Louis Lomax and others. He was into that stuff, Keating, and we always got along because he was a big drinker, too. Go down to Menlo Park. Get down there. "Well, okay, now we've had our meeting. Let's go over to lunch," and go to these horrible, not topless, but almost like topless dives. These horrible peninsula super expensive ridiculous restaurants, indecorously dressed waitresses. I was like, "This is a fucking Catholic magazine? This is like crazy. This guy is nuts."
- 09-00:44:02
 Rubens: Wait. What was that about? What was that sensibility that he took you to those kinds of places?
- 09-00:44:05
 Hinckle: Well, that's where he went.

- 09-00:44:08
Rubens: He liked that kind of thing?
- 09-00:44:10
Hinckle: Drinking, spending money, hanging out in fancy places and probably was because he had a magazine now. I don't think his wife Helen would have let him do it if he was just sitting around trying to practice a little bit of law.
- 09-00:44:23
Rubens: Yes. He had been teaching.
- 09-00:44:24
Hinckle: But now he had to take people out and do things and that's—
- 09-00:44:28
Rubens: He had been teaching at Santa Clara?
- 09-00:44:30
Hinckle: Yes, yes.
- 09-00:44:31
Rubens: Where Stiehl was also teaching, right?
- 09-00:44:34
Hinckle: Stiehl was teaching at Santa Clara, too. Part-time, yes, poetry. He was on the faculty of both USF and Santa Clara where he met Keating, yes.
- 09-00:44:44
Rubens: So we'll pick it up next week with the expansion of *Ramparts*, yes? Just then going to what's your vision?
- 09-00:44:53
Hinckle: Yes. I guess on that thing you're talking about, the liberal Catholicism of that period and how it expanded into broader political issues rather than just Catholic issues.
- 09-00:45:08
Rubens: Right, right. That's the story.
- 09-00:45:09
Hinckle: Yes. That's the story.
- 09-00:45:10
Rubens: That's what happens. And that's really your doing.
- 09-00:45:13
Hinckle: Yes. And it happened very fast. It was happening so fast it didn't take one conversation to tell Keating, "We can't stay quarterly." I remember we had to break the publishing schedule to get this Deputy thing in. "We had to come all the way off your stupid quarterly schedule. Now look at this stuff. This guy's got this. We got to go monthly. This is crazy, Ed." "Monthly. Yes. Maybe we

should.” His favorite word was breakthrough. He says, “That would be a breakthrough.” He was always having breakthroughs.

09-00:45:45

Rubens: And then also he used the word ‘bomb’? That would be a bomb, that would be a great story, is that—

09-00:45:50

Hinckle: He could. Well may have. Yes. I don’t recall him doing that but it sounds like he—yes.

09-00:45:56

Rubens: Because it’s *Time* that then coined the phrase, “*Ramparts* has a bomb in every issue.”

09-00:46:01

Hinckle: I’m sure he said, “This is a bomb.” He was always running in the door saying, “Oh, my god, this thing.” And I said, “Oh, god. Let’s hope he forgets about that one sort of thing.”

09-00:46:11

Rubens: He was more centered on the literary, on the Catholic—

09-00:46:15

Hinckle: In the beginning but then quickly got into the political and went from working with the church— He was always having priests at his house and taking them out to lunch, conservative and liberal Catholics. His interest in the beginning was literary. But once he got to know people things broadened pretty fast. It wasn’t much trouble to have jettisoned people who were basically nuts. Anti-Semitic and so conservative they can’t be here. This doesn’t make sense.

09-00:47:00

Rubens: And then you just start bringing in people.

09-00:47:01

Hinckle: Yes.

09-00:47:04

Rubens: And then who is it who knows Howard Gossage? He was friends with Newhall, wasn’t he? How did—

09-00:47:10

Hinckle: Yes. Was friends with Scott Newhall. I don’t know how I first met Howard. I can’t remember. I think I just moved *Ramparts* up to San Francisco.

09-00:47:28

Rubens: So not until then?

09-00:47:29

Hinckle: Not until then. I think it was Alvin Duskin. I think he was doing the advertising for Duskin’s anti-Manhattanization ads and I knew Alvin Duskin

from stuff and Alvin was one of the originators of the early fashion industry, shirtwaist dress and all that stuff, and he was a lefty. Very active environmentalist, early environmentalist, Alvin.

09-00:47:58

Rubens: He had a proposition to curtail the height limit of new buildings in San Francisco.

09-00:48:01

Hinckle: Oh, yes. He had stuff on the state ballot, stuff on the city ballot. He was a very, very activist guy and used his money made from—

09-00:48:11

Rubens: It was from the first sweater dresses.

09-00:48:11

Hinckle: —sweater dresses, yes. The democratization of fashion, if you want to call it like that. He didn't use sweat factories and he made fashion available to a much broader range. Pre-pre-pre Gap and that stuff now.

09-00:48:33

Rubens: So that was the connection? So you knew about his role—

09-00:48:36

Hinckle: I'm not certain. I really have to think how I first met Howard, because I ran into somebody who knew Sally Gossage the other day, Howard's widow. One of her kids or somebody called me and I said, "Give me your mother's number. I've got to call her up now. I got a pile of stuff for her." This is about a month ago. She's living in New York. She's remarried.

Before I know it, Gossage called me up and said, "G-g-g—because he fancied himself a genius guy. Not that I was supposed to be a genius. He'd find guys who were making things happen. He'd go out and mold them and make them happen better. Introduced [Marshall] McLuhan to the world, spent a fortune doing it and just loved stirring the pot. So once *Ramparts* moved to San Francisco and was actually boom, boom, boom, it was doing stuff, it was just almost immediate and I literally don't recall—all I know is I was summoned to the firehouse, where his office was, by someone. Duskin was a mutual friend. Gossage did a lot of ads for Duskin's causes and that's probably how it happened. I just don't recall. It would be just like Howard to pick up the phone and, "Where's this guy Hinckle? I want to talk to him."

09-00:50:22

Rubens: Great story. Okay, so should we call it a day?

09-00:50:24

Hinckle: Yes, I think so.

Interview 5: February 11, 2010

Being an account of rescuing *Ramparts* magazine from a death by anemia, of transforming the publication into the first radical slick, go-to journal for ahead-of-the-curve information about and insight into culture and politics in the U.S. and around the world.

Begin Audio File 10

Rubens: The *Chronicle* wants you to have a regular column?

10-00:01:16

Hinckle: Well, we've been talking about it for a year or so, I'm just too busy doing other stuff.

Rubens: So will you write occasional pieces, about what appeals to you and—

10-00:01:26

Hinckle: No, I don't want to do that because it's ridiculous. If they want a regular column, they can go ahead. I've dealt with those guys enough over the years, and everybody else. I've been on both sides—publisher and writer. So if they want a column, want to make a big deal about it, then they're going to have to pay money for it, so the lawyer gets involved.

Rubens: How demanding is the Argonaut of your time?

10-00:01:50

Hinckle: Well, we've just rebuilt the website over the holidays, so it's kind of lying fallow. We're getting a bunch of content for it now, so we're going to sort of get it going again, the website. And then the magazine's coming out, there's a big issue coming out before the June election on San Francisco's finances. It's almost a book; it's huge. And another one coming out. It'll come out probably three, four times a year in print, and the website's the thing that'll keep it going. But that just took—it just wasn't strong enough to get—When people wrote for it, it just didn't connect all over the country, so I was like, screw it; why bother? But we rebuilt that, so now we're going to start playing with that again.

Rubens: All right. Okay, so shall we start formally? It's the eleventh of February, 2010. I haven't seen you for a while, Warren. When we left off, we were talking about your joining *Ramparts*. We talked about notoriety around the play, *The Deputy* and *Ramparts* really going national, as a result of that.

10-00:03:09

Hinckle: Yes. That's right, so if it wasn't a Catholic magazine, nobody would've paid attention; but because it was a Catholic magazine, it became huge.

Rubens: And that you took on both the Jews and the Catholics.

10-00:03:21

Hinckle: Oh, well, yeah, they were in lockstep to calm things down; that's how establishments work.

Rubens:

So that's when Geismar writes to contribute—

10-00:03:30

Hinckle: Yes. And then I brought in a whole bunch of Jews. [laughs] And that sort of immediately started to broaden its horizons.

Rubens:

Now, the last thing we talked about is that you're still identified [on the mast head] as publicity director. But in fact, you were saying that you were bringing in writers, you were doing editorial, you were—

10-00:03:50

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, I was doing all that stuff.

Rubens:

So it's not until—

10-00:03:53

Hinckle: Well, that was Keating he wanted—That was fine. He was always hiring and firing in those first quarterly issues. It was like—[laughs] It was okay.

Rubens:

What's driving that? What's driving him to do that? He doesn't have the clearest vision of what it was he wanted to do?

10-00:04:12

Hinckle: Well, he wanted a nice Catholic literary journal, as a convert to Catholicism, where it intellectualizes the church and would be a little more liberal on some issues, but start a dialog within the church to improve it. Only a convert's dream. Born-and-raised Catholics are a little more cynical about the chances of changing the church from within, from the layman exercising—

Rubens:

Was it already a done deal, the symposium on Catholic education that was in motion when you came on? Or did you argue with him about that?

10-00:04:51

Hinckle: Yes, I told him he was having some people who shouldn't be associated with the magazine he once started, but—There was one guy, particularly—I think his name was Bowen, who was a right wing guy. Keating thought he was brilliant. I did some op, opposition research on him. Found out he was a Bircher and anti-Semite. Somebody jumped on the fact, once that issue came out, of his associations, which were far to the radically right, in terms of the early sixties, and anti-Semitic writings or connections with anti-Semitic groups. And I had heard of the guy and said, "You don't want this guy." "Oh, no, no. He's a good guy." But yes, Keating gradually got an education and a disillusionment in how you're going to, from a layman's standpoint, be able to influence the church structure, both on a parish level individually, and on a national level, let alone try Rome. But oddly enough, at that point in history

was just when a lot of priests were kicking up their heels, Civil Rights stuff was really beginning, and the sixties caught fire in the church itself. And a movement, having nothing to do with *Ramparts*, sprung up, of parishioners saying, wait a minute, we're going to get together; and we want a say in how the parish is run. And some priests would be quite outspoken on religious and political issues. And when the Vietnam War started to really heat up, that became part of the mix, just from the priests' standpoint. So rebellious priests, or priests who were censored or sat on by their bishops or their pastors, that phenomenon was happening all over the country, just coincidentally with the time that *Ramparts* started its quarterly. So naturally, those people gravitated to it, too, once they read about, here's some small new Catholic magazine, but it defended *The Deputy* to be played. And so those priests got in contact. And so did writers who were Catholics, like John Howard Griffin, the—

Rubens: That's how that came about? He got in touch with—

10-00:07:10

Hinckle: Yes, all from—Nobody had heard of the damn thing before *The Deputy*.

Rubens: But these weren't necessarily people that Keating knew or that you had a network into. These were people who—

10-00:07:18

Hinckle: No, they all came from hearing that, hey, there's this magazine that's actually doing something. Which wasn't the symposiums, it was the big fight over *The Deputy*, which attracted attention.

Rubens: Right. Although just to finish off with the symposiums, so there's this one symposium on Catholic education; then there was supposed to be a second in the dialog, and they refused to participate.

10-00:07:42

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: And it seems like the gloves were off after that. That was when—

10-00:07:46

Hinckle: Well, yes, then Keating got all, well, if that's the way they're going to be—I said, "Well, I told you that's how they're going to be." [laughs] And Keating was a big Catholic. Harry Stiehl, who was the first editor of *Ramparts*, was a professor of mine at USF, which is how I got into the damn thing in the first place, because Keating didn't know anything about publishing. Not that I knew that much, I was just a kid. I put out the college newspaper, but— And then was working as a cub reporter for the *Chronicle*. But I knew more than he did. [laughs] And he had his network of friends, poets, and Catholic intellectuals, and he brought a lot of them in. Keating, as a convert, didn't really know many people, right? Because he hadn't been involved in the church, but Harry Stiehl had. And he was an interesting player in that. And

John Howard Griffin certainly is one of the very first to be involved. And John Beecher—I believe he was a Catholic; he certainly wrote about Catholic issues—is a big civil rights writer, one of the Harriet Beecher Stowe type families.

Rubens: Really? Direct lineage?

10-00:09:01

Hinckle: Descendant, yes. And he had a lot of early pieces there. And those pieces were—Well, John Howard Griffin was civil rights, of course, and very much into Catholic issues. And he famously did *Black Like Me*, where he dyed himself to be black, to see how society treated him, and then wrote about it in that famous book. Or it was famous in the sixties. I don't know if people remember it at all now. It was quite a landmark book then. And he had a network of people. And Beecher had a network of people. So very early on, we started publishing articles about quashing outspoken priests, and segregation and communion rails in Mississippi churches, Catholic churches, and things like that. So it happened pretty fast. It was just an accident of history that this guy started this quarterly and it got to be known and it got quickly out from under the rather academic to conservatively academic to the naïve idea that a few laymen, and not very well vetted, and the church establishment would engage in dialog. [laughs] That was his sort of view. And he quickly wised up to that.

And all the various facets of everything else that was happening in the church at that time were attracted to *Ramparts*. Where were they going to write? *Commonweal*, which was the established liberal Catholic magazine, which is about as stuffy as a cork in a bottle, very, very scared—scared is the appropriate word—of its relationships with the church, even though they weren't an official church magazine. I've never understood their timidity. It was typical liberal scaredy-cat-ness. And *America* was the Jesuit magazine, which was a little advanced for a Jesuit magazine. And there was a Catholic magazine called *Jubilee*, which was more of a photography and art magazine but it was very free thinking for the church, another layman's magazine. But to use the analogy of left magazines—politically left magazines, not Catholic ones—they had their own audiences and spoke to their own groups, and didn't go beyond that. And so *Ramparts* became the first one, by the accident of this big beef over *The Deputy*, to sort of involve itself in the fray, in the domain of, or in the larger secular world of publishing—Not so much publishing, but criticizing the church, and not afraid to criticize it and take sides, where everybody else was proscribed by their relationships with the church or their natural timidity.

Rubens: What about the press conference you held for *The Deputy*—that's a *Ramparts* seminal story.

10-00:12:34

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah, that was just one of those things. I think to me, I thought it would be a story because it was a Catholic magazine joining to defend a controversial play about a situation with the church and the Jews. It was trying to be kept off Broadway by the ecclesiastical establishment. And really kept off. There were pickets from the Catholic Veterans of Foreign Wars and there were pickets of the Jewish something-or-other. It was nuts. And nobody just expected that sort of something to come out of nowhere. But still, you didn't know if the New York press—I'd never been to—first time I'd ever been to New York, right? I didn't know how they worked.

Rubens:

You and Keating go together. You tell him, "We're going to do this press conference, and let's go"?

10-00:13:28

Hinckle:

Yeah, I said, "Get your ass to New York and we'll do a press conference. I'll set it up and—We've got to get in this fight."

Rubens:

It's his taste, to stay at the Waldorf Astoria?

10-00:13:38

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens:

Yes, he liked the—

10-00:13:40

Hinckle:

We all liked the hotels there. We shared, but I don't think it was at the Waldorf, it was at the Commodore, actually. [laughs]

Rubens:

Oh, okay. All right.

10-00:13:53

Hinckle:

The one over by Grand Central Station. But I didn't know anything about the press in New York. I didn't know anybody, I didn't know what was what. I knew what we paid attention to in San Francisco, but I just didn't know. So what I did was took a cab and went around, dropped copies in—a press release saying this is going on—in just every media thing I could think of in New York. I didn't even know enough to call a message service. And then sent out telegrams, which was the basic form of communication back in the earlier sixties to get somebody's attention. And just went through the Yellow Pages, the New York, Manhattan Yellow Pages, and sent a telegram to just about every goddamn publication that existed. [laughs] What did I know? And so Keating was extremely nervous and we packed a big room with drinks. He said, "Are you going to serve drinks?" I said, "Yeah, you've got to give the guys drinks when they come."

Rubens:

And this was a ten o'clock press conference, it's not something—

10-00:14:58

Hinckle:

I forget the time; it was ten or eleven. Yeah, it was a morning press conference. And in the beginning, nobody showed up so he got *extremely* nervous. And I said, "Well, I guess that didn't work. So much for New York." And all of a sudden people started coming, then it became huge. The thing was packed. There was television stations and all kinds of cameras, and Keating was in his glory. All of a sudden, wow. This is heaven. He liked that. Well, I guess who didn't? He was putting a lot of dough into this little magazine, all of a sudden people are coming around saying, boy, we're interested in what you've got to say. And he liked to fight. So that got it going.

Rubens:

It's been claimed that this was a \$50,000 press conference. Is it possible that thing cost that much?

10-00:15:44

Hinckle:

Well, I don't know. \$50,000 press conference? Well, I don't know. There was a big bill for the telegrams, that came a couple months later, [laughs] and he just about died about that. Not a *big* bill; it was \$800 or \$1200. He thought it was a big bill. It wasn't a budget buster. And I said, "Well, you were happy *then*." How the hell'd we know? But that worked. And it was off to the races then.

Rubens:

And so what did that mean? At this point, are you turning to him? What is the conversation about how you're going to become editor? And are you shaping a vision of what you think is—

10-00:16:26

Hinckle:

In the beginning, it's just I helped him get the magazine, get it in the first issue, and I think wrote something for it.

Rubens:

So it's after this *Deputy* success.

10-00:16:42

Hinckle:

Yes, it all changed, I guess, after the—And then he fired me, sent me a letter to the *Chronicle*. "I don't need you." I said, "Fine." I didn't care. I thought he was a little nuts anyway, and didn't think it would probably go very far, though he had good intentions, because he was just too—Didn't make any sense.

Rubens:

Was there anything specific that he was—

10-00:17:04

Hinckle:

No, he just liked to hire and fire people. You've read about publishers doing that. Some publishers do. Yeah. That was fine. But then Harry Stiehl came over, he said, "Hey, he wants you to come back down. We can figure out this and that." And at the same time, I ran into Judy Stone, as we discussed earlier, and had this article in my hand. I snagged it from her, but I told her that we'd

pay. And he's, "Woo, woo, woo," and he got all excited. And so I had to put it in. And then he said, "Well, why don't you just come back and work."

And then I got to know everybody like the Geismars. I went out to see Max [Maxwell] in Westchester when I was still in New York, I believe, and just fell in love with Max and Ann Geismar, and became fabulous friends. And his network of writers—He was a very radical, brilliant literary critic. Radical in the sense that he was very critical of the literary establishment itself and its politics. Leslie Fiedler and others. And he was a Twain expert and he wrote a very great book on Mark Twain, where he took apart [Justin] Kaplan and all the others, the major Twain experts, for basically cutting the balls off Mark Twain, for de-politicizing him to make him a brilliant humorist, but totally ignoring the radical, very radical critiques of American society and prejudice, in his works. And all of his writings—his fulminations, his polemics—it's very strong writing against late nineteenth century American imperialism, the beginning of imperialism beyond the continent. Like adventure in the Philippines, for example. He wrote many, many things about the Philippine—the atrocities. Basically, the genocide America was trying to pull off then.

Rubens: So you're talking to Geismar. You have kind of a national forum. You're in the company of writers of a—

10-00:19:17

Hinckle: Well, I was just here. We just had this little Catholic magazine and we'd done *The Deputy* thing, and he loved that. And he introduced me to a whole circle of writers and people who were all—Well, some were literary. But their approach to literature was a planet, eons apart from Keating's—the original, first couple issues of that quarterly, which were extremely, from the standpoint of literary criticism, the topics, conservative and very, very stuffy, academic, and not at all issue-oriented.

Rubens: Well, that's what I'm really asking. Where is the idea coming from, let's go national, let's take on much more contemporary—

10-00:20:03

Hinckle: Well, for me, it's just boring. And you look at what happened. Now, we could've sold a lot more if we didn't have this quarterly. After *The Deputy*, then things were coming in, and then Keating met a couple of people through all these connections. John Howard Griffin was one of them, and he thought he was a great guy. And Louie Lomax, who was a bit of a promoter, another—or sixties black writer, mostly journalist. And this was around the time of the Mississippi murders, and he ended up—Lomax thought he cold name the murderers. And so we ended up, I told him, I said, "Well, we might as well, if he's got that story, why don't we just do a special edition?" Right?

And so we did that. A thing called "Mississippi Eyewitness," which we put out over a weekend, in hotel rooms in New York and a Washington printing plant.

Rubens: And why New York? Because that's where the people were, that's where you were getting the money, that's where the—

10-00:21:05

Hinckle: Well, no. We had Keating's dough then. I don't know, he was in New York, and I went there and we hired a quick designer and just worked all weekend. It was like a rush to get it out, because it was like the scoop. It was kind of mad. And printed a huge amount of copies, half-a-million copies, at some printing plant in the D.C. suburbs. And it was a hilarious, hilarious night of that printing. [laughs] And brought copies around to black bars. We should've been shot, white people walking in there, "Hey, look at this, this is—" [laughs] And it's amazing we weren't shot. But anyway, this happened all very fast, and I was just saying, "This is nuts. This costs you so much to print and bind these quarterlies. Look what's happening. Look at all these people we know and the manuscripts that are coming in. This is great— We can't do this. We've got to go for a better format, and come out more often." And he said, "All right, all right, do it. You get the guys together and let's do it."

Rubens: So he makes you executive editor.

10-00:22:14

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah.

Rubens: You have this conversation, you say, "I need to have—"

10-00:22:17

Hinckle: Yeah, I said, "Well, okay, if you're going to do it." So then I told the *Chronicle*, "All right—" I'd been doing all this just while I was working at the *Chronicle*. So I took a leave of absence, which ended up lasting quite a few years, until the mid-seventies, [laughs] when I went back to work for the *Chronicle*, after a couple of other magazines and books and things. But anyway, I took a leave of absence and made it a monthly.

Rubens: And so literally, is that when you move the offices from Palo Alto up here?

10-00:22:49

Hinckle: No, that was—

Rubens: Did that take you—

10-00:22:51

Hinckle: —a little later in the game, yeah. I was like, why are we driving down to Palo Alto all the time. And Keating owned the office building. It was like, well, this is a great place for an office, but—I gradually convinced him or

whatever, or held enough sway, that he reluctantly agreed to moving the offices to San Francisco.

Rubens: That's after Scheer's on board and—

10-00:23:16

Hinckle: Oh, yes. I brought everybody. I just kept bringing more. I said, "These people ain't going to come down here all the time. They're going to miss things," et cetera, et cetera. It's just no-goddamn-place. We're a real magazine now, we can't publish out of two rooms in Menlo Park.

Rubens: Are there discussions about editorial policy? How do you come up with the next special in November—it's going to be all devoted to Goldwater—how does that come about?

10-00:23:46

Hinckle: Well, that was Keating. He liked symposiums, so let's do one on Gold— Of course, we were against Goldwater. "Do one on Goldwater."

Rubens: They were still in that symposium mode.

10-00:23:54

Hinckle: Yes, he still had symposium things. He was the publisher so okay, [laughs] we'll do *some* things you want.

Rubens: You said the cover, though, it's just arresting. It's Barry Goldwater with—

10-00:24:05

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, that was an artist friend of mine I knew from Mendocino. Justin Murray. Great guy. He was legally blind. He was a drummer in a jazz band, and this great, great artist. I thought he was a great caricaturist. He wasn't Al Hirschfeld, who did caricatures in the *New York Times* or anything like that, but he was great. Did fine line drawings. And so he did several of the early covers of *Ramparts*, because Keating had an art director named Peter Keep, who was the art director at the quarterly. And we clashed quite a bit because I'd say, "Man, this looks like hell." So gradually, we began to look a little bit more like a publication. And the first issue happened— The Harlem riots occurred right then. And I had run into, through Max Geismar, a black civil right lawyer named Conrad Lynn, who became a very, very close friend, *quite*, quite a guy. Very, very funny, very, very radical guy, involved in the early black Civil Rights Movement, and critical of the establishment, NAACP leadership, the accommodation with— that sort of stuff. He was over on the rad side. But he was one of the funnier men I've ever known. Smart as hell.

Rubens: New York based?

10-00:25:36

Hinckle:

Conrad? Oh, yeah. He had a law firm up in Harlem. Yeah. And a big, prominent Civil Rights attorney, all kinds of suits against cities and counties in the South, and quite involved in black politics, and generally against the black establishment, which was a little more timid moving forward. And at that time, there was a radicalization in black politics itself, as Malcolm X came up and other things, and more activist Civil Rights organizations like SNCC, which was a mixture of black and white, popped up and there was pressure, more and more pressure on the establishment of the NAACP and the established black organizations. And new ones sprang up, which were a little more militant and on the street for demonstrations and, we'll take these guys. But again, all this happened in a very quick period. [laughs] Things were happening fast then, in the sixties. Society was really starting to percolate on almost every level. And it's just by an accident of history that *Ramparts* got thrown in the middle of it. I guess because it was just like, okay, it's like another college paper to put out; now we'll put out a magazine. It's just like you do what you do, right? Made sense. You got the writers—

Rubens:

Well, you were energetic, you were able to capitalize on this stuff.

10-00:26:59

Hinckle:

Yes. We just made a magazine. It didn't seem like a big deal to me. That's what you do. We had some money, [laughs] we started getting writers, started expanding real quick, and made it into a thing.

Rubens:

So the next issue was a little more timid. Maybe not timid; it's not as sensational. Although you have a story about the war behind the scenes in *The Deputy*; there's something on Gandhi; there's something on John Quincy Adams. It's not until January 1965 that you take on Vietnam.

10-00:27:53

Hinckle:

Just before we get off the Catholic stuff, let me say, here it is now, thirty-plus years later, forty years later, whatever the hell it is, and you'd think, well, things change, huh? Uh-uh. What's going on right now but the current pope, the Nazi pope, as I call him, is pushing ahead, rushing ahead to canonize Pius XII, who was a bad guy in *The Deputy* and a bad guy in most historiography about the Second World War and what the church did or did not do to help Jews, save Jews. They *certainly* didn't do anything to help gays that [laughs] the Nazis were exterminating. God forbid. Nobody even raises that one. And Pius XII is the center of that controversy, because of his dealings as secretary of state, his accommodation to the Germans. I mean, you think about it. You've got a church—you've got a pretty good deal. The church has to be on both sides of that war, because there's Catholics in all these countries. How do you balance that? What's a just war? It's like some serious considerations for the Vatican, if they took their theology seriously. But they don't; they take it conveniently.

Rubens:

So is anyone taking this on now?

10-00:29:23

Hinckle: What?

Rubens: This rush to canonization.

10-00:29:27

Hinckle: Well, only the Jewish organizations, yeah. And I haven't seen a squeal—I haven't looked at *Commonweal*; that's still publishing. They may be clearing their throat about it, but I haven't seen them make much of anything about it. And I don't know what the Jesuit magazine *America* has said. It probably—whatever they have to worry about politically, because every once in a while, every decade or so, or century or so, the Jesuits get kicked out of Rome or purged, so they've got to watch their game. But it's like nothing's changed. I was reading those stories, I say, that—all the stuff—the stuff, meaning the Vatican archives and the things that the Jewish organizations have requested for odd number of years, going on over a decade or so—be open to scholars to settle this question—or hopefully, attempt to settle it—about what he did or didn't do. That would be Pius XII. It's pretty clear from the record of history and the church's classic anti-Semitism that he clearly had a sin of omission. And the real question is how much of the sin was one of commission? Right? But that's from the critical standpoint of him. But anyway, in the face of this, to rush forward without the history being available to settle the question, and to canonize this pope in a hurry at this time, you just have to say, what's new?

And poor Ed Keating. I can tell you where he'd be on that one. He'd say, "They shouldn't canonize that guy right now."

Rubens: All right. So tell me about how you start bringing in people to work for *Ramparts*? You're saying that *The Deputy* really opens the door, and you're on the East Coast and it's—

10-00:31:32

Hinckle: Well, a lot of people came in through Max Geismar and people I met in—

Rubens: New York.

10-00:31:37

Hinckle: In New York. Right away. Right after *The Deputy*. I stayed there for a while. I think I went back again and said, "Hey, these guys are great; let's meet with them. And they've really got good contacts." This is to Ed Keating. He says, "Well, yeah, okay." And then he'd love meeting people, and all of a sudden—He likes expanding his horizon, too. He started out very square, if you'd put it that way, and remained a little square, but was open to and kind of got it. Oh, boy, this is the real world. He quickly changed from the idea that we'll just have a nice little Catholic quarterly and engage in an interview dialog to, hey, this is fun. And he was energized by the issues, was certainly on the right side of all the issues, particularly civil rights.

Rubens: Are you coming up with the term radical slick yet? You're thinking—

10-00:32:28

Hinckle: Well, it started to— Yeah, yeah. That's clearly what it was, even these early issues. A little before Howard Gossage found Dugald Stermer to redesign it to its classic look, it was between this sort of British art director who I kept fighting with and me, trying to say, no, no, you've got to make the covers look like this, and that face looks like that. And I found a few cover artists, like Justin Murray. But it was on slick paper and it was a magazine-y type format, from its first issue. And the first one, I ended up going to Harlem with Conrad Lynn. And this was in the middle of the Harlem riots. And there was a conference there in the offices of one of the groups that was fomenting the rioting. And all the parties to it, where he says, "I think I can get you in." This is like reporter stuff. I said, "Yeah?" So we went up there—it was a great Saturday morning—in his convertible. We buzzed up, his little Karmann Ghia. And got to Harlem and it was nuts. The entire area was just shut down.

Rubens: Wow.

10-00:33:40

Hinckle: There were cops on every rooftop, barricades at every street corner. It was empty, vacant, right? Because the riots had been going on for two nights and in the daytime, everybody ducked for cover. And cops and snipers everywhere. So we went up to this thing, and I was kind of sitting in the back room of this kind of beat up place, and these guys were fighting about their tactics, what was going to happen next. And finally some guy sees me and says, "Who's that white guy here?" Right? [laughs] And Conrad's, "Well, that's okay, he's with me. He's okay." And there was a big flap, a to-do and uproar. He got dragged over in a corner and he comes to me, "Hey, I'm sorry," he says. "These guys, they're going to kick you out. There's no way. They've overpowered me and they say the meeting won't even go on if you're here," and this and that. So I said, "Well, okay. Tell them sorry, guys." So I went downstairs and I said, shit, where am I? [laughs] It was like eleven, twelve noon, whatever it was, and a hot day, and there were no cabs. There was nothing except cops everywhere on the rooftops and streets all barricaded. I said, "What the hell?" I was way up at 126th and Amsterdam or somewhere like that.

So I started hoofing it down the street saying, this is a sorry state of affairs. And every business was shut. Walked past some little bar, and I heard music. And clearly, there were people inside. So I went up to the bar and tried the door. It was locked. But there's people inside, goddamn it. And I could use a drink anyway. [laughs] Thought, I'll go for a beer.. It was hot. And I said, "Well, they're inside there." So I wasn't thinking much, I just pounded on the door, fat, dumb and happy. Finally, a guy opens the door, he says, "Yeah?" So they actually thought it was a cop, some white guy. And he said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want to get a drink. I want to get a goddamn beer." So I

just kind of pushed my way in. But he's just standing there, "What?" He just couldn't believe that some white person would walk into the middle of this riot. "What are you doing up here, anyway? How'd you get here, man? You must be— What?" And I went over to that bar and just ordered a drink, and ordered another one, said, "Get these guys a drink, if they want," as if I was in any Irish bar. I didn't pay much attention. These guys are just all looking at me. And finally it dawned on him that I just wanted a drink. [laughs] And guys came up and said, "What are you doing up here?" And I says, "Well, this guy Conrad Lynn, he's got an office up the street. But I know the guy and we were in a hotel in New York last night having dinner, and he told me he could get me into this big meeting where they're planning the demonstrations tonight. So I've got to write for this magazine and I work for the *Chronicle*, this newspaper. So he took me up there and then they just kicked me out. Now here I am stuck up here. I can't even get a cab. You guys are the only place open. Thank God you're open. Here, let me buy everybody a drink." I made fabulous friends in that bar, [laughs] that remained friends for thirty years. I still get Christmas cards and things from people.

I didn't go back up, because that was of the moment. And did meet a few individuals who stayed good friends. But it was one of those things where you're just sort of fat, dumb and happy, and they can't believe you are what you say. And they find that he is what he says. And it's funny how that stuff happens.

Anyway, but out of that, there was one kid I met who was like— First-person for him, I wrote a piece about the riots. And we had a couple of writers we'd come across, and ripped out whatever was planned for that first issue and slapped a cover together—pretty ugly cover—but that was the story of the Harlem riots. Now if that was the first issue. It was very journalistically solid; certainly, not the literary approach to stuff.

Rubens: So are letters to the editor starting to pour in? Are you getting—

10:00:37:40

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Later on, I was reading some of them—

10:00:37:44

Hinckle: Well, of course, the original *Ramparts* had so few subscribers. We only had a couple of thousand, at most, circulation—2- 3,000 max—when it was a quarterly.

Rubens: And are you selling on the streets, too? It's not just subscription, it's—

10:00:38:00

Hinckle: Oh, it immediately went to— put it out on newsstands, but through a small distributor.

Rubens: In New York and—

10-00:38:07

Hinckle: In New York. Well, no, nationally. But it was a very low-rung distributor. Who wants a new magazine nobody's hardly ever heard of? But I had some clippings from all *The Deputy* coverage and this and that. Anyway, talked the guys into doing it. They charged an arm and a leg. I learned a lot about the distribution business there, my time in the magazine world. And eventually, within about a year, I was able to get *Ramparts*, through a lot of hook and crook and times at conventions with guys who owned these big distributing companies, and dealing with some of the big owners directly, and a little bit with the Mafia, because they had a big hand in this, managed to get *Ramparts* a major national distribution, and it became one of the main sellers on the newsstands for the next three, four years. But if you don't get out there and get space, you ain't going to sell, that's the problem.

Rubens: What's the point of the Mafia connection? I don't—

10-00:39:05

Hinckle: The mob?

Rubens: Yeah.

10-00:39:06

Hinckle: Oh, in certain cities—certain boroughs in New York, in Philadelphia, in a few other cities around the country—they control the Teamsters and various other unions. Sometimes have ownership in the actual distribution companies—not to name any names—and have a lot to say. So because of its nature being controversial and against the war and this and that, some individual, even if he had a national distributor, the local guy, say in Philly, can say, "I'm not taking this rag. Don't bring it to me." And in almost every city, it's a monopoly situation. There are, in large cities, a couple of smaller, second-, third rung distributors who try and put stuff somewhere. But basically, there's one big distributor in each city, and if you don't go through them, you ain't anywhere. You ain't at the airports, you ain't anywhere, basically. So a couple of these cities, you had to be vouched for [laughs] by somebody who had some—

Rubens: So are you expanding your staff at this point, too?

10-00:40:17

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: I mean you're bringing on people who are going to deal just with the distribution and with the advertising, with the—

10-00:40:29

Hinckle: Well, yeah, there wasn't much with the distribution. There was young Australian guy who's supposed to watch that stuff. But most of what he did was the deal making. And the rest of it, you just have it shipped.

Rubens: So tell me about bringing on Robert Scheer. He represented a significant change.

10-00:40:44

Hinckle: Yes, I'd say it was first, Max Geismar, John Howard Griffin, Catholic intellectual early civil rights writers and activists, literary and otherwise, on the left, and dissenting, both against the church and against authority or the authorities in general, particularly on civil rights issues. And the second one was the peer people relationships that came. It started coming, people came in out of the woodwork, anyway. Like Bill Turner was around before—

Rubens: Before Bob Scheer—

10-00:41:22

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, yeah. He decided he wanted to write a piece for the magazine, so I read about it. Read about *The Deputy* and saw something else, saw copies on the newsstand and—

Rubens: And for the record, just say who Bill Turner is.

10-00:41:34

Hinckle: Oh, Bill Turner's the first of the career turn-arounds of *Ramparts*, FBI guy, ex-FBI, who then became a big critic of Hoover and wrote books about the FBI, and became a major guy in *Ramparts*, and then actually in *Scanlan*'s. And he and I went on to do two or three books afterwards. But he's an FBI guy who was critical of Hoover for—He defended a black agent Hoover exiled, and Hoover got on his case and did it to him. And he protested, and Hoover tried to squelch him and fire him. And he hired Edward Bennett Williams, who sued the FBI for him. And then he started to write books and articles about Hoover. And he brought some of those immediately to *Ramparts*, and I said, "Hey." So I started assigning him to write articles, aside from just stuff on the FBI.

Rubens: Pretty soon *Ramparts* will take on the conspiracy over the assassination of John Kennedy.

10-00:42:39

Hinckle: Kennedy assassination, yeah.

Rubens: And that'll be a kind of running thread.

10-00:42:40

Hinckle: There was a very level-headed approach to that. He was just an FBI guy checking out the facts.

Rubens: So Turner comes on and he's living in Marin County, he's—

10-00:42:53

Hinckle: Yes, San Rafael. He *still* lives there. Mark Twain Avenue. [laughs]

- Rubens: And you become pretty good friends and—
- 10-00:43:00 Hinckle: Oh, yes.
- Rubens: And so are you talking over, also the style of the magazine, or are you—
- 10-00:43:05 Hinckle: Yes, he's got ideas for stories, he's got another guy who knows this about the FBI. Fred Cook was a guy he knew. And Fred Cook started writing stories—Fred Cook is a major, over the years, writer for *The Nation* magazine and sort of *the establishment* or the peer, the left establishment—major critic of the FBI.
- Rubens: Where was he based?
- 10-00:43:32 Hinckle: Fred Cook? In New York. Yes. So right away, a lot of this was out of New York, and a lot of it was out of the Bay Area. But there were a lot of people connected to that. And right away, the whole tone of the magazine, particularly when it went monthly, changed; it was much more journalistic and—
- Rubens: And you're writing the editorials, you're writing the marginalia, you kind of have your hand on all—
- 10-00:43:56 Hinckle: No, you see, tell Keating to write those, somebody else. He'd write things, and we'd edit them. Sometimes I wrote some of them, but I didn't really—That was just like—I felt he—He wanted to write stuff; I thought, it's good for him to write. I was much more concerned with the journalistic content that was going in. It was turning into a real magazine.
- Rubens: Okay. So it depended on what you were—
- 10-00:44:25 Hinckle: On what the editorials said. At that point, nobody particularly cared [laughs] what *Ramparts* view on this and that was.
- Rubens: Yes, because these aren't signed. That's what I was wondering. In March of '65, there's something on the lesson of Berkeley, about the Free Speech Movement. I don't know if that's you or—
- 10-00:44:40 Hinckle: No, it was probably Solly [Sol] Stern, one of those guys who came in from Berkeley. There was a crowd that came in from Berkeley, that Bob Scheer knew.
- Rubens: Yeah, so let's talk about that. Talk about how did you bring in Bob Scheer?

10-00:44:52

Hinckle: Well, our wives—

Rubens: And why.

10-00:44:55

Hinckle: —worked together and knew each other, and both of them were working in the financial district. And they had become friends over lunch or something like that, however you meet people at work. And Anne Weils remains a friend of mine; I just saw her recently. She's a lawyer in Berkeley now. A leftwing lawyer, naturally. And she was telling Denise, my wife then, about her boyfriend who wrote all this stuff. And he was writing a paper about how he'd gotten to Vietnam for the Center for Democratic Institutions, down in Santa Barbara. And he had all this fabulous research. And so she told me and I said, "Yeah? Jesus, have him—Come on, invite them over for dinner." And that's how it started.

Scheer had written this pamphlet or was finishing up writing it, and I said, "Jesus, that's—" And part of the research involved Cardinal Spellman in his role of getting us into the war and keeping it in there, and I was just like, *whoa!*

Rubens: So tell me about the chemistry between you and Scheer. Was it a pretty easy division of labor? He had ideas, but you were assigning—

10-00:46:10

Hinckle: Yes. Well, Scheer was— How do you describe Scheer? His mother Ida once told me this. She says, "You know, the trouble with Bobby is," she says, "When we grew up in the Bronx, he says he always wanted an animal. And we couldn't have an animal, so you had to go to the Bronx Zoo to see the animals. But they charged you to pet the animals." And she says, "You know, he never got over that, and he always wanted an animal of his own, and never got over the idea that you get charged to pet the animals, so he's always been a little insecure." [laughs] That's what she told me. And Scheer always was a little insecure. He saw plots everywhere. A lot of that, I think, comes from growing up in the conspiracy canyons of left politics in Berkeley. Everybody on the left is competitive, they hate everybody else. So if they don't hate them, besides there's groups, there's gossip. There's stuff. But he clearly saw *Ramparts* as something— This is before Keating ran out of money, and then we had to raise it. But hey, here was a place—I said, "Scheer, that's great stuff, shit. Come on. Come on down, if you can stand it. We'll get a lunch down in Menlo Park and meet this guy Keating. We'll buy this stuff from you. We'll rewrite this stuff, this research you've been doing, and put it in this magazine and go after Cardinal Spellman." So anyway, I ended up with him and we rewrote a lot of his research, and we did some more interviews and things and wrote a big cover story in *Ramparts* about how we got into the Vietnam War. There was a few other pieces.

Rubens: Then he travels to Vietnam.

10-00:48:01

Hinckle: Oh, Yes, we sent him to Vietnam. I started sending him there. And anyway, but with Scheer came, as with the early Catholic leftwing journalists and intellectuals and Jewish literary critics and leftwing writers that immediately came because of this *Deputy* thing, it was—There were different circles. And Bill Turner, he was a freelancer, but he knew guys who were journalists and critics of the FBI, but they wrote other things. And all of a sudden, the pool of contacts and writers began to immediately expand. And expanded, of course, further, with Scheer's friends. A lot of them were academics that had been in teaching positions at Berkeley, after going to school there and associated schools, City College in New York. So they all knew each other. And a lot of them were brought on to *Ramparts*. Scheer was hired as the editor, and then Sol Stern was one of them. The circles began to widen. And so then the job of putting the magazine together began to pick from—

Rubens: Your choice.

10-00:49:20

Hinckle: —the contents of all these pools of people and circles. So it became a magazine, but not just the one thing, the Catholic thing or just the Vietnam thing, or just the civil rights thing.

Rubens: Right. Did you see Scheer as a window into, or a door into any financial pools? So I don't quite get the picture of when does Keating—There's a legendary story about Keating saying: "I've got to talk to you. I'm down to my last shopping mall. When was this?"

10-00:49:58

Hinckle: I don't think we had published more than three issues of the monthly. And I had hired a staff and brought these people on. We were still in—I think that's how the move to San Francisco ended, because when I had to start raising money, it was like, that's it. We're moving this sucker to San Francisco. I'm not going to drive down here, two and a half hours a day.

Rubens: That must be in March of '65. There's the Chaplain cover, the Victorian Tramp—this is the first time you're listed as associate publisher, as well as executive editor.

10-00:50:36

Hinckle: Well, that'd be because of the money-raising part, yeah.

Rubens: By the way, it's the following issue, April of '65, that you've added the III to Warren Hinckle. Our very first interview, I asked you to tell me how you got to be III.

10-00:50:51

Hinckle: I think that was Keating's idea, as I recall.

- Rubens: To make it look good for potential funders?
- 10-00:50:56
Hinckle: Yes, I used to have it on my checks because—
- Rubens: So you move up to San Francisco. And you picked the—
- 10-00:51:20
Hinckle: First thing I did once I took over, I had to raise the money, I said, “That’s it. We’re moving this thing to San Francisco.”
- Rubens: And by then, are you working with Gossage?
- 10-00:51:29
Hinckle: Yes.
- Rubens: Don’t you locate your offices near him?
- 10-00:51:33
Hinckle: Well, that was another influence, *huge* influence on the magazine, Howard Gossage, because he finds Stermer. I was saying, “Howard, this magazine, it looks like shit.” And he said, “Well, God, yeah. You know, I was down at a conference down in Texas a month ago. There’s a really good young guy down there. I was really impressed by his work. I got his name. Let me call him up.” Anyway, that’s how we got Stermer as art director.
- Rubens: Does he have any hesitation about coming?
- 10-00:52:02
Hinckle: Yes. He says, “Well, how long have you got to live?” I said, “Hey, the guy just told me he’s broke, and now we just raise some money, and now we’ve got to raise the money and put it out. But you can see we’re doomed. But it looks like hell, and so it really needs a haircut and a shave, and you’ve got to clean up this damn thing.” And I said, “Well, I can guarantee—” I forgot whether it was two or four issues. But then he moved his family up and came up and took a shot.
- Rubens: What’s his first issue? Is it Lyndon Johnson holding the donkey in the air by its ears?
- 10-00:52:42
Hinckle: No, I think that was Justin Murray. His first one was the one that looked like—I think it had some ridiculous ice cubes on it or some jingle bells cover. I gave him a little rope when he came in. He wanted to do kind of artsy covers. And I think one was about a still with Humphrey Bogart on it. It was some stuff about Christmas. It didn’t exactly turn me on. But I said, “Hey, the guy just came aboard. He’s taking a chance. He wants to do it that cover, hey, let him put it on. [laughs] Give him a little bit before we’ve really got to start producing good stuff.

Rubens: I guess his most sensational cover, the one that you got the most notoriety from, was the one of Madame Nhu as a cheerleader, and the exposé of the—

10-00:53:33

Hinckle: Yes. Well, all these guys—Stermer was able to—as the magazine's quick reputation, then the story started getting picked up by the *New York Times*. And so he could just call up guys, and he kind of knew them a little bit—he was beginning to develop himself a reputation—some of the better commercial illustrators, and later on famous guys like Ben Shahn, who were honored to be asked to do a cover for *Ramparts*. Not honored in that sense, but they were willing to do it for basically no money. They were commanding huge commercial sums for their work. But they knew this was a crazy new publication, it was really causing all this hell. And all of a sudden they were in good company, because a lot of those illustrators and photographers, they just fit—This whole look developed. And that's what we used, because that fit with the feeling I always had that it should look better than *Esquire*; it should be a real magazine. It shouldn't look like a leftwing magazine, it should be sharp as hell. So it all worked.

Rubens: When you said have a certain look, you meant

10-00:54:42

Hinckle: It should have the look of a big commercial magazine.

Rubens: A gloss. A glossy, a slick?

10-00:54:45

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Before we have to change the tape, I want to just finish one train of thought. Did you pick your office on Broadway in part to be near Gossage? What was it about the area where you chose?

10-00:55:02

Hinckle: We were looking for something—We wanted to be—As long as we're going to move to San Francisco, who wants to put *Ramparts* in the financial district? [laughs] We basically wanted to be in North Beach. And it was kind of hard to find space of any size. By then, we had a staff of over twenty, twenty to thirty people we had to feed every week, [laughs] with no money. And so that was like, where are we going to move? And that space popped up. It was an old government building. And it was big enough. And it was right—

Rubens: What was the address on Broadway?

10-00:55:35

Hinckle: I think it was 300 Broadway, if memory serves. But it was right on Broadway and Sansome, where the freeway used to come up. It's torn down now. But it was out there at the foot of Broadway and the top of the strip and all the clubs. So that was close enough.

Rubens: The bar that served as an office for you sometimes, Cookie Picetti's?

10-00:55:51

Hinckle: It wasn't far away. It was maybe about five, six blocks away. And Gossage's office was a block away, down the street on Pacific. But it was in North Beach, it was close—But in North Beach proper, you try and find a lot of office space, right in the middle of North Beach—it just isn't there. There's all these SROs and apartments. And the people, Italians and Chinese, have been there forever. And not too many—You've got to go way up to Telegraph Hill to find sizeable houses. And even those are squished in. So I said, "Where are you going to move a big operation in North Beach?"

Rubens: All right, so one more question, just about the character of the operation. When and why did the monkey, Henry Luce arrive?

10-00:56:44

Hinckle: Oh, I don't know. I had the monkey at home, and it caused all kinds of trouble. I think we had cats then, too. Somehow I got the monkey for Christmas or bought him; I don't know. Anyway, I had a monkey. And it didn't work out at the house. It was a disaster. It was crapping over—hopping around. The dogs and cats were chasing it. It was awful. So I took it down—

Rubens: Once you got this office, is that when the monkey came, from the beginning?

10-00:57:14

Hinckle: Oh, Yes, Yes. The monkey was there. I called it Henry Luce. There is a famous story about Henry Luce hearing about that. Some guy who interviewed him once for some other article told me—A guy who works for the *Times*, John Kifner says, "I was interviewing Luce and he says, 'Do you know these guys in San Francisco?' He says, 'Oh, yeah, I know Hinckle.' He says, 'Well, is it true? Does he have a monkey they named after me?' He says, 'Yeah. Yeah, it's in the office. He's got a big cage in the back of the—And the monkey's in there and everybody calls it Henry.'" [laughs] And Luce was shaking his head. I must say, I got a little bit of satisfaction out of that. [laughs] I don't know why. Particularly because *Time* was such a critic of *Ramparts*.

Rubens: Critic, but kept your name in print.

10-00:58:04

Hinckle: Well, yeah. The *New York Times* really did that. But two or three weeks didn't go by, or certainly, five weeks didn't go by that *Time* wouldn't find another reason to take a hit at *Ramparts*.

Rubens: Time gave you, *Ramparts* that great description, of having "a bomb in every issue," which Peter Richardson used for the title of his book on *Ramparts*.

10-00:58:24

Hinckle: Yes. Yes. And I can see why they were pissed, because basically, *Ramparts* did the group journalism that *Time* did. I mean, group journalism, it was like news magazine work.

Rubens: What's the word you're using?

10-00:58:39

Hinckle: Group journalism. You assign sixteen people, correspondents to a story. And you guys go out and interview everybody, and then write memos and write as much color in as you can—what the people look like; their houses were like this, da-da. Anything to write from, and everything they say. And do this, and file every file. And then I'd take all this stuff and talk to a few of the people myself, who were interviewed, and a few other people, and then rewrite it as a cover story. And nobody on the left had ever done anything like that. It was all one-name story. No, it was like group journalism. It was *Time*. That's the way *Time* did things. And *Time* would then rewrite, from all these files, with their Cold War or whatever slant. And always a literary and a very well-written flair. And that's what *Ramparts* did.

Rubens: Absolutely. We've got to stop. We're going to run out. Let's change the tape and we'll pick it up with this.

Begin Audio File 11

Rubens: So we're rolling with tape two of the eleventh of February. And you were recalling that the old rewrite school of journalism, it was really intensive work.

11-00:00:10

Hinckle: *Time* style journalism, group journalism.

Rubens: So you're spending a lot of time literally line editing, copy re-write—

11-00:00:20

Hinckle: Well, most of the first couple of years in—well, almost the whole time—the big stories, I wrote the lead story, whatever it was. Or wrote it, in the sense of rewriting it. Take all the files and go out and talk to the people I could, and then I'd ask questions of the guys who'd done the interview and say, "Well, what's— And what's the line on that? Why does that really piss off the left academics in this field with this stuff?" And they'd come up with more stuff they forgot to put there. But anyway, then you got the thing and you just lock yourself up for a day and a night, or two days and a night, and write something.

Rubens: This isn't computers, either, this is typewriter, right?

11-00:01:02

Hinckle: Oh, no, this is typewriters.

Rubens: This is cut and paste and labor intensive, time intensive.

11-00:01:09

Hinckle: Well, the amazing thing about research then—*Ramparts* research group was terrific. Bob Avakian later went on to become political leader of his own party, the Revolutionary Communist Party, is now living in exile in Paris. Terrific left researcher. Reese Ehrlich, David Kolodney, a whole schools of guys. They were dynamite. And they just pulled off wonders. I'd say, "Hey, we've got to nail these guys, we've got to find out this." But they would not only pick up the stuff—clippings from the *Times*, other magazines, foreign publications and get them translated, and pull all this together—but they would—I'd say, "Well, give me the two lines of thought on this. State the rightwing one or whatever, and tell me the two different leftwing approaches to this theory and why, and what is the concern, and how's this fit in with where we want to go on this?" And they would write very concise political-intellectual memos. Right? Very good stuff. Now, this was done without benefit—This is pre-Google, pre-any internet search capacities.. [laughs] You had to go to the library and get the *Times* index, and literally go to every copy of the paper. Well, anybody who's done research for a term paper or anything back before the age of the internet, which really didn't dawn, I guess, until the eighties?

Rubens: Yes, then you had computers and shortly thereafter, you had email; but you really didn't have Google and the research capacity until—

11-00:03:01

Hinckle: No, you didn't have the ability to get all that stuff.

Rubens: —late nineties, really.

11-00:03:05

Hinckle: Yes, it was in the nineties, then. Well, I really think one of the things that *Ramparts* did was it had—it's like one of these winning football teams. The forward line doesn't—[laughs] They wouldn't have the team if it wasn't because of whatever, forward line or defense. Those guys did a fantastic job of pulling this stuff out of the academic world or the lost world. Because there was no way to get it.

Rubens: So in other words, just some kind of intensity at that office, just some kind of—

11-00:03:38

Hinckle: Well, we just had smart people. And it's like if they were doing their term paper, they would've put the same intensity into it. Because they wanted to get an A.

Rubens: So you're doing all this, but at the same time you're raising money. Tell me a little bit about what that—

11-00:03:53

Hinckle: Oh, Yes, shit.

Rubens:

I know that you had a kind of dog and pony show. You have a description in *Lemonade* about a flip chart that you took to a New York matron, an heiress of the Gimbel fortune.

11-00:04:10

Hinckle: What, Eleanor? Oh, she was a sweetheart.

Rubens:

I think there was just a horrible story about a tiny fluffy dog she has that you step on?

11-00:04:24

Hinckle: Yes. Oh, that story was in Peter Richardson's book.

Rubens:

Yes, yes, that's right. Exactly.

11-00:04:29

Hinckle: Yes, he said something like I killed the dog.

Rubens:

Is that a true story?

11-00:04:32

Hinckle: Well, no! She did have a bunch of dogs running around. And I was having lunch with Richardson the other day, I said, "You know, [laughs] that story. Hey, if I killed the dog—

Rubens:

Let's get the story.

11-00:04:44

Hinckle: He said I killed one of her dogs. Not true. It was just she had all these dogs running around, and I was doing whatever you do in the living room, making the pitch standing up, whatever. And the dogs are running around, and I accidentally kind of move around to pick up something, stepped on one or came too close to it. And it went, [yowls]. I said, "Oh, sorry." Because I was kind of a dog lover, in a big way. But anyway, somehow it came out, and people recall things in a different way, Peter's book on *Ramparts*, that I had killed the dog and picked up the dead little dog and put it in my pocket and went on. Well, that's great cinematically, but— [laughs]

Rubens:

Not the story.

11-00:05:22

Hinckle: Yes, Yes. And I kind of wish it wouldn't have happened that way, except that—I wouldn't want it to happen with the dog, [laughs] if it didn't happen with the dog.

Rubens:

All right, I'm glad to get the record straight on that.

11-00:05:34

Hinckle: But it was, because it was kind of hard to give the pitch because there was like five or six of these little dogs jumping up and they were sort of—

Rubens: So what was the pitch? Keating tells you that he's down to his last shopping center.

11-00:05:49

Hinckle: Yes, he had—I've told that story. He started to cry, and I say, what are you crying about? And he says, "I'm broke." And it's like, "What do you mean you're broke? You're the publisher. We just hired everybody, got trucks and everything, a big special issue came out. We're doing all this stuff." And he said, "No, no. This is mostly my wife's money, and it's all gone." And I said, "What? You don't have anything left? He says, "No, no," he says, "We're down to—there's one shopping center that isn't fully mortgaged." And I said, "Well, what do you mean when you're out of money?" Because rich people get out of money—People who live check to check, when they say they're out of money, they mean they're out of money. [laughs] Right? They're going to have to worry about bouncing this little check or something. Now, with rich people, when they say they're out of money, they're worried about they've only got a million dollars, and I should have eight in my account—that sort of thing, right? Big difference in saying you're out of money, for rich people. But he was out of money. So I said, "Well, I don't know what—" Da-da-da. I said, "I don't know, we'll try and see what we can do to raise some dough, but you're going to have to scratch something together to cover it for the next couple months. We just hired all those people who did all these things, and we'll go out next week and try and see what we can do." That sort of thing. So somehow he got a bridge loan or something like that. But it was like he had to have new money coming in or that was the end of it.

Rubens: So is Gossage helping you work up a flip chart that you can take to people to show their—

11-00:07:32

Hinckle: I don't think Howard ever did a flip chart. Could be; I don't think so. Well, it's a different story because Howard and Gerry Feigen, the proctologist, has this business called The Generalists. And Howard had the ad agency; with Gerry Feigen who was the proctologist, a leading one in the city, and a writer and a world traveler. Quite a guy, quite a character—I loved Gerry. They were extraordinary. And they're widely credited, by Tom Wolfe and others, with inventing Marshall McLuhan. Nobody could understand what the hell Marshall McLuhan meant, but they translated it for him and brought him around the country and gave fabulous parties for him in New York and basically—They presented him to the world and translated him, and Gossage would have parties at his firehouse, invite all the big writers and people, and everybody'd say, oh, this is McLuhan. See, now, he's explaining what media really means to us, right?

Rubens: Were you at any of those?

11-00:08:35

Hinckle: Oh yes, I knew Marshall very well. Later went out with his daughter; that was a nightmare. But that's another story. And so they had this business called The Generalists. And the idea of The Generalists was that consultants are basically wrong in all the advice they give because they're specialists. And Feigen's line about that always was that you ask a consultant the time of day, and he'll tell you the history of wristwatches. And so their idea was, we're generalists; we're not specialists in anything. We step back and look at your situation, your problem, from any variety of disciplines, from totally different disciplines. You may not need a new business partner or product, you may need a divorce. [laughs] That sort of stuff. We come up with the different point of view and the different things. And they did it quite very well. They sort of tied a lot of it with his ad agency. Things from the *New Yorker* to *Scientific American* to Eagle Shirts to all kinds of famous accounts and promotions, were involved in both the ad agency and The Generalists business. So I met him through, I think, Decca Mitford or something like that, Howard Gossage.

Rubens: Actually, you were saying the other day maybe you'd met him through Alvin Duskin. Did you say you'd been in touch with Gossage's widow?

11-00:10:28

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Sally. She just sent me her phone number in New York. I hadn't heard from her for years.

Rubens: I'm sorry, I interrupted you.

11-00:10:47

Hinckle: Well, the magazine was already going. It had already moved to San Francisco and it had—Well, in the process of moving to San Francisco. Obviously, I knew Howard before because he was the one who said, "You've got to move into San Francisco." I said, "I know." And so they thought of this as a good job for The Generalists, right? If we can explain Marshall McLuhan to the world, we can figure out how to take this crazy magazine, which is now broke, and figure out how to help it out. Which didn't necessarily involve, to them, help with fundraising; it involved the ideas that would create fund-raising. Anyway, they had this great oblique take on everything. And so every problem that came along with *Ramparts*—So we became very, very close friends with Gossage's, sort of fell under his wing. And he became definitely a mentor to me. He was intimately involved in—And as time went on, when *Ramparts* eventually folded and *Scanlan's* came around, he was instrumental in the publishing philosophy that *Scanlan's* adopted, which was that you've got to pay as you go; you can't count on advertising. He hated advertising. Famous advertising man, but he hated advertising. Thought it ruined publications by encouraging mediocrity and subsidizing boredom and spoiling readers, because they gave it away to them just to get numbers for the most

common denominator, and watered down the editorial product to appeal to big numbers to reach the advertisers. And that wasn't why the publications exist in the first place. It exists because it has its ideas and its identity. That sort of critique.

Rubens: So is he helping you strategize then? I had started by asking you about the literal—did you have a flip chart that you were taking around?

11-00:13:04
Hinckle: No. Well, the fundraising started—So I got back from New York. I remember thinking, boy, I hope I've still got my return ticket here, when Keating tells me, he says, "I'm broke," and he's crying. What am I supposed to do?

Rubens: Oh, this is in New York, where he's telling you this.

11-00:13:17
Hinckle: Yes. We were sitting in the Algonquin lobby.

Rubens: How often would you go to New York?

11-00:13:24
Hinckle: Quite a bit. Quite a bit. Because so much of the developing editorial and content. This is before I knew that we didn't have any money. But there was all this stuff. And we decided we had a magazine, we should try and get some advertising. And Gossage knew some guys in New York, so we'd go see them.

Rubens: Pan Am was in New York.

11-00:13:51
Hinckle: Yes. Most of those were ads we garnered in on the sly, through this or that. But you wanted to make it look like a magazine, so you did anything you could to get real ads in there, as opposed to stuff. Anyway, so Keating told me this, and I came back to San Francisco. So this great guy, Joe Ippolito, he was Keating's accountant. He was an accountant in San Jose, and Keating was one of his clients. And so when he started *Ramparts*, he became the accountant for *Ramparts*. And so I go to see Joe and I say—And I think we made him the controller, when it became monthly. Magazine has to have something, a business manager, controller, something like that. "Well, okay. I guess, yeah." He was just a great, down-to-earth Italian guy. *Really* good guy. "Joe," I said, "Come on. Let's go out to lunch. We've got to have a couple of drinks. And I've got a few things to go over with you." "Okay." So I tell him the story. He says, "Well, geez. Yeah," he says, "He's been going through it pretty fast. I didn't know, because—She's got her own stuff, so I didn't really know. I just do his accounting. But boy, if that's what he says, ooh, boy." So I said, "Well, hey, we've got to raise this money. What are we going to do? He's run out of dough." He says, "I don't know." So he says, "Let's get a book. Let's find out how to raise money." So he goes to a bookstore and gets a book about

magazine publishing. [laughs] And so we sit down, eagerly go through it. This is actually what we did.

Rubens: But you're not calling up Geismar and you're not calling up your folks in New York?

11-00:15:51

Hinckle: Well, eventually, we called *everybody*, got *everybody* involved in the act, which eventually was pretty quick. I mean, I knew enough that you have to, if you're going to ask people for money, you've got to have some figures. So we had to have some—

Rubens: A business plan.

11-00:16:05

Hinckle: —accounting, some sort of a plan, Yes. But we didn't know. So anyway, so we got this book on how you publish a magazine, and went through some histories and things. And one of the things that struck Joe, he says, "Well, look at this chapter. It says that a lot of these magazines, their big investors, especially in their early years, become their printers because they all owe this money to the printer. And then they can't pay them and the printer kind of goes on, keeps them going. And then they become these great successes. See? This happened to *Life* here, it happened to some other magazine." Well, I said, "Oh, yeah?" So we go to the printer, George Gambella So this is this guy in Long Island City, in New York. George Gambella this wild, wonderful guy, who had this big Web shop over in Long Island. And he was printing *Ramparts* when we meant monthly from the quarterly thing. And so I said, "Well, we ought to call George. "I said, "Let's start with him, then." He says, "Yeah, I guess that's what they all do." So he says, "When do we see him?" I said, "We've got to see him tomorrow." [laughs] So I call him. I say, "Hey, George. Hey, let me see you, Friday or something like that. Let's get together for lunch." "Oh, okay. Well, you changing the date of publishing—" "Oh, no, no, no. We just want to get together with you, say hello." So he sounded a little wary. So we get a little room in the Algonquin. We always stayed at the Algonquin. Fell in love with that hotel. And Waldorf Astoria wasn't my taste. Keating liked it, but I—

Rubens: Was *not* your taste.

11-00:17:39

Hinckle: No. The Algonquin had that literary reputation.

Rubens: The literary, leftie, arty—

11-00:17:42

Hinckle: It's a little, tiny—Artists painted there and the entire lobby was overstuffed furniture and little cocktail tables. And the rooms are crappy and small, but who cared? You don't go to New York to sit in a hotel room. So we got a little

room at this hotel, the Algonquin Hotel, like a little conference room that hotels have, and they have lunch brought up. So now he's really wary. And we say, "George, here's the deal." Right? "We read in this book [laughs] that these magazines— So here's what we want you to do. We've got to raise dough. But we can't raise dough, they tell you, because you've got to tell everybody that somebody else already invested, because nobody wants to be the first. So here's the printing bill. We owe you this and that. We want you to print two more issues, because we're not going to have the money to pay you anyway, for the back ones, so you might as well print this. We're just leveling with you." "Fuck." Because he swore. He swore better than anybody I've ever known. Every other word was fucking this. [laughs] And he would say, "By the way, what the mother fucking [laughs] He just talked like that, just a blue streak. Great guy. Very, very funny. He says, "What? You want me to—" "Yeah, yeah, yeah, George." So we kind of chased him around the table, and he finally agreed. "Okay, all right, all right."

Rubens: And what kind of money are we talking about? What did it cost, about, to—

11-00:19:00

Hinckle: It was about \$25 grand an issue to print 150,000 or so copies.

Rubens: You're behind a couple of months, fifty, and you're asking for another couple of months.

11-00:19:11

Hinckle: Yes, another two months.

Rubens:

So you're talking about \$150,000, \$200,000.

11-00:19:14

Hinckle: Yes, we worked out a deal. "Hey, what we'll do is we'll pay you for the two times back, so we'll only be one month back. Then you add two. And then we'll take it out of the subscription money, so you're not too much more off than you are now. But you've got to give us two." So that way, we've raised \$50,000. So he finally got it and he said, "Well, all right," but he said, "*Well, all right, all right. All right!* All right, goddamn it, I'll do it." So we went down there said, "All right, we just raised \$50,000." [laughs] So we went back and said, "All right. We raised \$50,000. Now, then—" If you've read this stuff about raising money. Then you've got to get somebody to match it. So that's what you say. So I said, "Okay." So we started to ask around, who can we get for 50,000 bucks, to match the \$50,000 we got from the printer? Which wasn't actually 50,000 cash, but it was \$50,000, goddamn it. It had to get printed. So we found this guy Irving Laucks, down in Santa Barbara. He was known to some of the people I knew socially in San Francisco. And June Degnan came on our board of directors, who was a big early McCarthy backer. She basically financed part of his campaign.

Rubens:

Who was that?

11-00:20:29

Hinckle: June Degnan. Her brother was a poet, very good poet. So she's on the board—

Rubens: Laucks' money had come from plywood, I think. But what about Degnan?

11-00:20:44

Hinckle: Yes, I think so. Yes. And he was very interested in—

Rubens: He was linked to the Center for Democratic Study?

11-00:20:49

Hinckle: A big donor to the center. Stanley Sheinbaum may have been writing for us by then, because he knew him. Anyway, I went down to see him a couple of times, and he came up with the dough. He matched it. And he was very interested in spiritualism. A lot of these guys I went to see in the early period, they were elderly at that point in their life, and were interested in spiritualism and research into afterlife. And you can't blame them. [laughs] So Yes, I had to get fairly esoteric about that and show an interest in it. Well, it is kind of interesting. There is a lot of stuff about it. By the way, you always end up chatting about that stuff, this and that. Anyway, so he actually put in, he wrote a check for twenty-five or thirty, then he gave us another one, said, "Okay, I'll match that fifty. You boys are doing good work. I like what you're doing." And we started raising money. And it was enough to keep it going for a month or two. Plus Keating had borrowed a little dough and some mortgages and stuff. And then I had to call in the troops and say, "Hey, we're broke. Keating says we've got enough dough to go on for two or three months. Maybe we can make a fourth issue, but we've really got to raise dough." And following the book, Ippolito got a guy who had a computer, early computer, and then we made projections, and we had to do mailings. And we'd already started doing mailings. I'd worked early on, when it was still a quarterly. That was one of the things I did, was to do a mailing. Found a direct mail guy in New York, Bert Garmise, who became a friend. He was very much a pro in the—

Rubens: Say his name one more time.

11-00:22:39

Hinckle: Bert Garmise. And he was with *Ramparts* the whole time. And we ended up doing a lot of mailing. And I wrote sort of the standard letter, which had a blindfolded Eagle on it, which was an early cover of the quarterly. And just sat down one night and wrote it, and it became the standard fundraising letter. Did very, very well. We got much higher returns. But then you've got to raise the money to send out the mailing. And then you get the dough in. But basically, you've got to fulfill the copies, so circulation starts to grow. Anyway, so we got an early computer genius, a guy named Hank Marchman. And we got projections on a computer. In those days, it was—You had to carry around a big pad of crap. Turn the pages and—But it showed that if we had this amount of money, \$400,000 or something like that, and did these mailings and continued on this; and the newsstands would bring this and the

mailings would bring that; and this would be that; and the staff would be this—and it all squared out. And then the next year, da. First year would be negative in accounting, but cash would be okay. And the second year, this would happen and that. Typical projections. Business plan stuff. But we got that done quick, within like a couple weeks.

So then it was like calling everybody, “Okay. Put the word out. Who’s everybody know? Off to the races. Everybody’s got to raise money, in terms of—I’ll go see them and close them, but everybody’s got to find out who’s got dough. Whose parents are really rich, [laughs] who’s giving dough to this and that.” Because it wasn’t very likely we could go to a bank. As became clear, after another year of publishing, that we couldn’t go to a bank because of the positions the magazine took politically. Which was the difference, I think, between the early *Ramparts* and *Time* and *Life*. Not to say that *Ramparts* was going to become a *Time* or a *Life*, but its growth became dramatic. Just grew hugely, almost every month. As stories became known and publicized, and newsstand sales just grew—We kept printing more for the newsstands, and they were selling very well. And we’d scraped up enough dough to make a mailing, the subscriptions poured in. And all of a sudden it was up, up. Circulation kept booming. All of a sudden we really had a circulation of over 150-, 200,000, going up. It’s like, geez. But then you had to pay the printing bills and everything, and the distribution, and keep sending the copies to subscribers, so it was like big. And meanwhile, you had to keep putting out the magazine. [laughs] So it was quite a juggling act.

Rubens: And so what are you selling? You’re selling that they’re going to get a return on their investment?

11-00:25:42

Hinckle: No. Well, Yes, you’d say, “There’s a reasonable—if all this happens, and the government doesn’t put us out of business, there’s a chance that this thing will go.” But you have to tell—I mean—Everybody was sophisticated. Almost everybody who put any money in *Ramparts* was a sophisticated donor to left causes.

Rubens: These were true believers, in a certain sense.

11-00:26:10

Hinckle: Yes. They’re the only people you could go to. So it wasn’t like, yeah, sure, I’m going to get my money back. That would be good. If I do, I’ll [laughs] give it to somebody else who’s going to lose it. So it was like that. But Yes, people want to be told a story, as much as they like the thing. They want to know that there’s some rationality to what’s going on. Most of them had had experience in their investments and businesses. And most people—Because *Ramparts* wasn’t nonprofit. And I refused to make it nonprofit. We’re not going to be nonprofit. We’ll just go out of business or not; we’re not going to turn into a foundation and a board of directors, da-da, saying what you can

print and not and what's safe. No, no. We're going to stay a commercial thing, and if we fold, we fold. So if you're not asking for a tax deductible donation, then you're having a different piece to somebody who's got experience investing money. So they're going to say, well, what's the business plan? So we made one. And actually, it was a fairly decent—Based on what was happening, it was a reasonable business plan. Although you had to be nuts to think that you'd get your money back or make a bunch of money out of this. But it happened before with bizarre investments, *Playboy* and things like that. But no. And that was before the political climate darkened in the middle to later sixties, and things got very, very gloomy on the left, and in the country as a whole.

Rubens: So your next big guy that comes in—Does Honig come in before Fred Mitchell?

11-00:27:51

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Mitchell was never that big a donor. Mitchell put in a hundred grand. I'll tell you a Mitchell story in a minute. But Bill Honig came in early. I don't know where I had known Bill Honig from. It was before Howard.

Rubens: He's also an advertiser.

11-00:28:08

Hinckle: He owned a fairly big advertising agency in San Francisco. And he was a liberal guy. Maybe June Degnan knew him. This was the early Gene McCarthy-type circle. And he ran in the same—He was a liberal and horrified that we wouldn't back Pat Brown for a second time as governor. We wrote a long story that mocked and rocked liberal politics of the Democratic Party. How bad could Reagan be? Turned out he was pretty bad.

Anyway, I went to him for help. I said, "Hey, we need ads for the damn thing, and we need somebody who knows about business, and how we get ads and business. Because we were just starting out and this guy went broke." And he's a great guy, Bill. Close friend. Family became very close to me. And he went right on the board of directors, balls out guy. And he was the toughest one of all. He honed up that business plan. He says, "Look," he says, "I'll put in—" It was \$75- or \$100,000. He says, "I'll invest that." He says, "But you've got to be able to show me—And I want to work with you. I want to see the figures. I want a business plan that—I know I'm not going to get my money back and I know I'm not going to make any money, but I want to be able to believe there's a shot." And he ran a big agency, so that was really, really helpful. And almost made a businessman out of me. [laughs]

Rubens: Okay. How long did he stay in?

11-00:29:24

Hinckle: Bill? The whole way. He was a good guy. Good, solid guy.

Rubens: So he's on the board of directors. You have to meet with him fairly regularly?

11-00:29:35

Hinckle: Well, whenever there's the board— Well, I met with him all the time because he was helping strategizing on advertising guys he knew, who knew other agencies. Come on, give these guys an ad, and that sort of— Feigen knew him, that's how. He was a client of Feigen's. Patient of Feigen's, the proctologist. And he says, "I know this guy Bill Honig, right? And he owns an ad agency. I know him good. He's a good lefty, he's a big liberal. He does all this stuff." And right away, they were—

Rubens: Is he related to the Honig who was—

11-00:30:10

Hinckle: Yes. Who was secretary of education? Yes, that's his son. And his son's got a little winery now or something. Okay, now we think we know what we're doing. If we can do it. But it took dough. So Honig was the next guy who put in a serious chunk of money.

Rubens: And then came along Mitchell?

11-00:30:45

Hinckle: Hundred grand. Okay, a few others came here and there. June Degnan put in money, \$25- or \$50,000—raised some money out of New York here and there, but there were some more—

Rubens: Did Eleanor Gimbel ever come through?

11-00:30:58

Hinckle: No, no, no. Oh, I can't begin to tell you about the people we went to, and the stories are funny.

Rubens: Did you come—

11-00:31:05

Hinckle: But also there was a cash flow thing that it was growing, but money was coming in. All of a sudden, when you go from 20,000 people that are subscribing or paying for you to over 100,000, there's dough coming in. So here it was like managing that and seeing where we needed to do more direct mail, and then how we're going to fulfill these new subscriptions. Because once you take the money and spent it, you've still got to print the copies and deliver them to all the people for the rest of the year, and then renew them and all that stuff, right? So we learned that pretty fast.

Rubens: So it's in early '66 that it's really starting to grow. The Madame Nhu cover and the story or the exposé of the Michigan State University's involvement with training Vietnamese police, that's in April of '66.

11-00:32:04

Hinckle: Oh, Yes. Yes, but most of the stuff we're talking about was done in '65.

Rubens: In '65. That's when it's really taking off.

11-00:32:12

Hinckle: It got a look and was starting to have a rep and was a magazine, but it hadn't become the huge national deal it became the next year. And it wouldn't have had, if we hadn't these early investors and raised this money.

Rubens: Exactly. So any other names that we want to point to?

11-00:32:32

Hinckle: No. Mitchell was funny. We were sitting around one day, and Joe Ippolito had this thing; if we found somebody to raise money, he'd call Denise, my wife then, and say, "You can put the meat in the spaghetti sauce tonight."

Rubens: This is a true story?

11-00:32:48

Hinckle: Yes, Yes. "Put the meat in the spaghetti sauce." And we'd sit around. And Mitchell had been calling, leaving messages at the office, saying something like, I'd like to help or I'd like to invest money or something to help you out. And I guess nobody had returned them. Anyway, we were sitting around, geez, what do we do now? Where are we at this point? Me and Ippolito. And he said, "Well, what are these messages from this guy? Some guy in Berkeley?" I said, "I don't know. Anybody calls up, says he wants to give you money, how many times—Probably some nut." So he says, "Well, maybe you should call him back. What if he isn't a nut?" I said, "Well, okay." So I call him up, "Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, I'm teaching." "Yeah?" "Well, yeah. Come on over. I love to see people." So we went over and he says, "Well, I really would like to invest something. You really find some—Just, I'd like to invest some money." And he says, "Well, what type of investments are you looking at? What are you thinking of doing?" I said, "Well, right now, we need a hundred grand to stabilize this thing and get it through most of the next year, because it's really starting to grow and we've got to cover this growth and add staff. And that's what we need. And here's the figures." And he said, "Okay, I'll do that." It was like—fell off—"You will?" [laughs] "Yeah." So I said, "Well, then, you better get involved and watch your dough, guy." So he sort of came on as an editor. He's a very smart guy. And his wife [Margareta Mitchell] is an excellent photographer, and had a little—not vanity press, but he published photography books on the side. And he was originally in Kansas. He taught at the University of Kansas. So he came in then. And then I remember when *Ramparts* started to go—I knew it was going to go under. And Stermer rushed to him. I think he was on a tutorial or somewhere in Kansas. Maybe his house. His family's from Kansas. And I said, "Don't—" They said, "We'll go, we'll get more money from Mitchell." I said, "Don't do that. The guy doesn't have that much money. He's going to go down the

drain. We've got to do something really radical or this thing's just going to fold. Don't hit up that guy again." And they went and did it. They got another fifty grand or something. They said, "Hey, we got Mitchell." I said, "No! It's criminal. What's the matter with you guys?" Anyway, that's the Mitchell story.

Rubens: So those are some of the biggest names or the biggest donors. In New York?

11-00:35:14

Hinckle: Well, no. That doesn't get into the Marty Peretz, Dick Russell thing, which is where the real money came from. And that all just kept it going while it started to grow. Then with Marty Peretz and Dick Russell, you're going to get into the Israeli politics. It gets very sticky. All the complicated financial vehicles they created. I think if you're going to do another one tomorrow—

Rubens: Let's do that tomorrow.

11-00:35:43

Hinckle: Yes, that's a lot of—it's interesting. Basically, Dick Russell's one of the smartest business guys I've ever known. Just—geez.

Rubens: Who knew him? How did he—

11-00:35:52

Hinckle: He was a co-investor with Marty Peretz, in things like—Liberal stuff. Right? And Marty's money was Anne Farnsworth, Singer sewing machine money, right? And they were stalwart proponents of Israel, and gave a lot of money to Israel. So it's impossible to discuss that, because that was the stabilizing investment in *Ramparts*. It was growing so big—Well, I'd mentioned *Time* and *Life* earlier. Luce—*Time* was a success. And when he started *Life*, as you read the biographies of Luce or the history of those magazines, it became such a success. Unexpected. Took off almost like *Ramparts*-like. And that wasn't in their business plan. And they didn't have the dough to cover this explosion of people who wanted *Life* magazine. Got so big. But Luce was able to go to establishment Protestant bankers, who shared his heritage and his bloodlines and his politics, and make a rational case and get commercial financing. That was not an avenue that was open to *Ramparts*, as '66 came around and things began to harden. Not a chance. So we were left with—And it was getting to be such a big operation, it had to have some sort of ownership or investment that wasn't, every two weeks, running back to put out an issue, re-write it, rip it apart; run out again, find—[laughs] And that was what it was for the first year and a half. So they provided the stabilizing financing. But that is a story in itself.

Rubens: And they're coming along after Laucks and Honig and Mitchell and—

11-00:37:35

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: And so are little bits [of money] being put in? Is Mitford—Are people sort of giving—

11-00:37:43

Hinckle: Oh, occasionally. Occasionally, there'd be—

Rubens:

—a level of a couple thousand or—

11-00:37:47

Hinckle: No. Never. I wouldn't even consider an investment that wasn't at least \$25,000. Because somebody'd say, "Well, can I give you ten?" I'd say no. [laughs]

Rubens:

Really?

11-00:37:58

Hinckle: Yes. It'd be a waste of time. It's not worth the trouble.

Rubens:

All right. So no other New York people are giving twenty-five or small—

11-00:38:05

Hinckle: Oh, all kinds of them were approached. Jerry [Gerard] Piel was very helpful, too, in structuring the financing of—

Rubens:

Piel is—

11-00:38:12

Hinckle: *Scientific American*. His wife Eleanor, they were big people on the left. And she's a civil rights, left civil rights attorney. Became a very close friend. And Jerry was a brilliant publisher. And he created *Scientific American*. He thought that *Ramparts* was—He told me, he said, "I think you're the best editor, the most natural editor I've ever met. If you knew anything about science," he says, "I'd steal you for *Scientific American*." But he was very good about that. And they would put us in contact with a lot of left-type investors. But it became tougher and tougher, if you were—One, if you weren't nonprofits, so it couldn't be tax deductible. And two, because of the politics, as they tighten.

Rubens:

So we'll just pick that up tomorrow?

11-00:39:05

Hinckle: Yes. Because if you're going to talk about those two guys, then you've got to tell this whole story—

Rubens:

Then we start with the editorial—

11-00:39:10

Hinckle: —about Israel and the politics in the left on that and stuff. I mean, it's interesting but it's a chat. All right.

Rubens: Thanks. All right, we'll call it a day.

Interview 6: February 12, 2010

An exegesis on vicissitudes at *Ramparts* which include the trials and tribulations of amazing and talented associates, the perennial problem of funding, successive bombshell articles, the rampage of a monkey and the culture and context of a high profile investigative journal.

Begin Audio File 12

Rubens: Let's focus on fundraising and stabilizing the magazine. I want to just mention a couple of other names. Judson Chrisney?

12-00:02:14

Hinckle: Disaster. But no, he was a guy who sold Keating a bill of goods that he'd had some job at the Atlantic Council as president or—he's been establishment pedigree, a fundraiser, "oh, he can help out to be a publisher and help—

Rubens: What about Arthur Cohen and William Stringfellow, those are editorial advisors as opposed to—

12-00:02:57

Hinckle: Well, those were, I fell in love with Max Geismar, and so Keating thought in his spirit of "ecumenality" that he should get theologians, or I mean Geismar wasn't one of those, but well he's still in the theology period. It took him a while to understand that that wasn't what the world is about. So those were two—

Rubens: These aren't money guys at all.

12-00:03:23

Hinckle: No. They were useless. I mean, you know, they were decent people. One was a Protestant, one was a Jew, and you know they had to write their books, they had their academic careers, but that was what was left of Keating's early vision of this quarterly.

Rubens: Okay. Sandy Levinson, we didn't talk about the—

12-00:03:46

Hinckle: Well Sandy's great. Sandy was the main connection to Cuba.

Rubens: But was she hired originally as a fundraiser?

12-00:04:00

Hinckle: No. She was in love, she was a girlfriend of Fidel Castro at one point, and was a Stanford poli sci major, if I'm correct. And then spent a lot of time in Cuba, still has an apartment there. I see her a lot of the time every time I'm down there. And started the Cuban, I forgot what exactly they called it, Institute something or other, it's on West 43rd around, I don't know. It's sort of downtown Manhattan. And fought all the battles of travel and artists and bringing in troops and art and stuff like that, and publishing books and she

commuted to Cuba. She fell basically fell in love with Fidel and the Cuban Revolution, literally fell in love with Fidel. That didn't last that long, but none of his girlfriends do. But she stayed with it. She's a great, great woman, very good friend of mine, nothing to do with fundraising. Almost none of those people had to do, only one had to do with fundraising, he turned out to be a good guy anyway, was Adam Hochschild because he's rich as shit because his father was the an ambassador, or whatever they call it; had diamond mines in South Africa, right? Somebody suggested him, a Berkeley guy, I forget who. Well they said, "Well you know his father's the diamond guy, and he's been doing good writing and stuff," and I said, "Hey, we need another guy to have copy, hire him, he can write, too. And maybe we'll get some money out of the fucking diamonds."

Rubens: And did you?

12-00:05:59

Hinckle: No! Hey, he took notes at *Ramparts*, he toured and compared, and he saw where it was going to go financially and he figured, he's a guy of some inheritance entitlement, I guess he figured he wanted to do his own thing. Hey, fine. It's all right. He was the guy who put up all the dough for *Mother Jones*, and he did a good job there, was a solid writer, solid thinker, he was fine.

Rubens: Good. Decca Truehaft, that is Jessica Mitford, when did she come on?

12-00:06:43

Hinckle: Early, very early.

Rubens: Is this a friend of Gossage's. Is this how—

12-00:06:47

Hinckle: Yes. I think I met her at a party at Howard's, I think.

Rubens: You knew her as a writer or knew her writing.

12-00:06:53

Hinckle: Well, I certainly knew of her, but I hadn't met her until around that period. And we sort of fell in together because she was very cynical and I'm a little cynical.

Rubens: Oh, it sounds like a great collaboration.

12-00:07:08

Hinckle: And she was such a tough broad.

Rubens: She gives you the name Hinck III.

12-00:07:11

Hinckle: Hinck "three". She thought that was very funny.

Rubens: And she referred to you and Robert Scheer as a kind of dynamic duo –her moniker was “Hinck-Scheer.”

12-00:07:15

Hinckle: Yes. Well then later I tried to explain the time we had to throw out Keating because he went bananas. When I wrote that *Lemonade* book, I just beat up everybody pretty well, so I asked Decca: “Do you mind if I print that goddamn letter [you wrote] to Howard? I don’t want to write this crap.” She said, “Oh, that would be jolly.” I said, “I’m not going to say a word. That will be the account of it”, and it was.

Rubens: We can get to that in a while, but what I wanted to ask you about a point you make in *Lemonade* that she did contribute money to the magazine when she sold an island in the Hebrides?

12-00:07:59

Hinckle: If it said sold that was a misprint. We tried to sell. I can show you—

Rubens: Do you want me to stop?

12-00:08:07

Hinckle: No, I was just going to show you the ad because I just replaced some back thing in some fold out in this Hunter Thompson book which was that big cover of the eight birds, the aviary, that famous *Ramparts* cover. And the back of it was the first ad we had for Decca’s island. She inherited that with her sisters, anyway they were going to sell it and nobody wanted to buy it. And so it sounded like a potential money maker, and I started to think “advertisorials”, which we made up stealing a page from Gossage, which was issue-oriented ads. We said we’ll sell the fucking island for you.

Well, there were some nibbles. I don’t believe there ever was a buyer. Something else happened to it. Anyway, we energetically tried to sell it because we weren’t getting any commercial ads anyway. It was fun. So we did try to sell it. If I said sold I, somebody misspoke. I don’t believe it was ever sold.

Rubens: So she wasn’t a—

12-00:09:15

Hinckle: So maybe when I wrote that book people were still trying to buy it in the ad, so that was, the *Lemonade* book was first written in whatever, early 70s. So if it said sold, I don’t believe it was ever sold through the *Ramparts* ad. And I had serious nibbles, but I don’t—

Rubens: Was she the source of any money?

12-00:09:37

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: So how did the stabilizers come about? How do you get Martin Peretz? You spent a lot of time, went on a lot of fundraising trips with Scheer.

12-00:09:54

Hinckle: Well everybody, I mean the younger guys on the staff, now we were all in our late twenties, some of them in their early thirties, but that was like the age range. And then there were younger guys on the staff. Younger meaning like early twenties, and so everybody had a job. My brother-in-law, Mark Libarle did some work for us. He's now a lawyer in San Francisco. And he was assigned his job, and everybody was assigned jobs. The youngest guys, not to be sexist, but the youngest guys, we were almost cracking thirty and some of us were over it, like Scheer. "You guys are assigned to find rich chicks that got an inheritance." I mean that was it. It was like all out blitz. We got no money, we're not going to get any from anybody with any sense. It has to be, so who do we find people who have got a bunch of money and like crazy things like *Ramparts* and don't mind throwing some money at it. And that's a broad scatter shot, but it narrows down to some people, you eventually find some people, but you don't know how to find them. I mean you don't put an ad out. So everybody go, that was it. So everybody got dragged—

Rubens: Who came up with the idea about going to *Playboy*?

12-00:11:21

Hinckle: Keating. He was in love with Hefner, I mean thought he was a soul mate. He was doing—

Rubens: He had met him somewhere?

12-00:11:33

Hinckle: No. He was just—called him up. But anyway, he wanted to interview, he called him up and said, "I want to interview you, I'm the Catholic magazine that you know written about in the paper," so Hefner loved that and became a problem in the magazine at the time because the interview came in, it was a difficult interview. The questions weren't exactly original, and the answers were really stupid. And it was like, Oh my God. And it was like a big production, hey, the publishers—

Rubens: Was Keating who actually did the—

12-00:12:13

Hinckle: Yes. Keating interviewed Hef. He was in love with it. So I was like, "Crap. What am I going to do with this?" You know, you got a boss. The guy owned the thing. We've got to print it, but you know, it was a big deal. And so I hit upon this fiendish idea, which was my friend Lawton Kennedy told me a lot about topography and the old fashioned nineteenth century printers still using modern methods in San Francisco. This was very close to me.

So I went down to his shop and I said, "Hey, you got that old English font you used to do the title pages on?" He said, "Oh yeah." "I want you to set this whole interview in that font."

Rubens: Like an illuminated manuscript.

12-00:13:01

Hinckle: Yes. It made it look like a medieval, you know. "Okay. It's kind of hard to read, how much lead you want?" "No lead. I don't want it to be read. I want it to look like a medieval manuscript. Make it hard to read. It's embarrassing."

Rubens: It is hard to read, I wondered why.

12-00:13:22

Hinckle: It's perfect. We put the questions in red or something, dadada, and with the fold out, that was Keating's idea.

Rubens: Was the interview done during the time that you were waiting a few days to try and meet with him and try to get him to give money, or—

12-00:13:38

Hinckle: Oh, no. No, that was afterwards.

Rubens: So was there ever any real potential that—

12-00:13:45

Hinckle: No. Well, sure we tried. It was one of Keating's ideas, "I always wanted to do this interview with Hef," and now we're doing it, so that will provide. Yeah, okay, well we tried. But no, he wasn't interested at all, nor did I think he'd be, but you try everything when you don't know what's going to happen.

Rubens: —they hung out at the headquarters—

12-00:14:08

Hinckle: Yes, it was nuts. I remember a plane, we were in New York and we had a series of fundraising meetings or something and had to get on the last plane, just 11:00 o'clock or something, to Chicago to meet with Hefner's money people the next day. We had some revised spread sheets or something, and Joe Ippolito great guy, the accountant had and we were like, he said, Well, we need room. We've got to revise all this stuff." So anyway, and it was a storm driven plane. It bounced around, there were drinks on the table. He was trying to take these sort of greenish yellow, one of those big color sheets that accountants have, it's kind of greenish, but it's not solid green, maybe light green, that they do their stuff in.

And trying to revise this with the big computer printouts there, and the guy was going to print out something else in the morning, and he was with us, and he was like a four hundred pound guy, Hank Marshman, because he could testify to the accuracy of these printouts, whose assumptions were perhaps

ridiculous, but he could testify to the accuracy of the printouts. Then we had to take this whole section of first class on this flight, so Marshman took two seats. Just think of that. Then we had this table, and the storm, it was a lightening storm, the thing, drinks were rolling over the thing, and the big guy's sitting there with his computer stuff, swizzling down scotch. I remember thinking to myself, "This is madness."

Rubens: And Scheer was part of this, he had a great time, as you write in *Lemonade*.

12-00:16:02

Hinckle: Oh, Yes. I mean Scheer loved that stuff. Of course, he never liked to be reminded about it. I mean Scheer had a different relationship with power than I never did. He really liked stories like hanging around with Bobby Kennedy and with the Rockefellers and being assigned those things. When he went on he really stayed as close as he could as a left wing journalist, I mean stated objectivity to people of power. He was really attracted to that, and I don't know, I was never, if I didn't like the person, I didn't care. I never liked Bobby Kennedy. I thought he was just terrible on civil liberties stuff, and what he did to the mob I couldn't understand. He went to law school. It's outrageous. I didn't like the guy personally when we met. We met one night for dinner. He tried to talk me into something, turned the conversation into who they think killed his brother.

Rubens: This was after you had gotten into the conspiracy—

12-00:17:09

Hinckle: Yes, it was during that period, but the meeting was called by him and it wasn't to discuss that, it was to discuss changing the magazine's views on Vietnam. He was a hawk. The Kennedys were both hawks. In my view they were murderers. They sanctioned assassinations. The imperial presidency, all these guys keep writing about Bush and this guy and that guy. Hey, it started with Kennedy. They had no regard for the law whatsoever. It was Kennedy justice, and Kennedy power.

Rubens: We'll pick that up when we talk about the 1968 convention because you had a pretty strong opinion of his contention for the nomination. *Ramparts* devoted a lot of copy to him.

Hinckle: Yes, well he was gone by the convention. McCarthy was another thing. We backed McCarthy.

Rubens: So how do we get to Peretz and Dick Russell—whom you refer to as the stabilizers?

12-00:18:26

Hinckle: Well, we go through these piecemeal infusions of funds, and meanwhile the magazine had been unbelievably successful on commercial contemporary terms. But we had no base, we had no funding. We started out, I think it was

in, I don't know, two million dollars in debt when Keating said, "I'm broke." I don't know where the two million went, I didn't have anything to do with that. But it was nuts, so you have to look at *Ramparts*. I know a lot of people say of *Ramparts*, "Well, it didn't make it because it just recklessly spent money and it did this and it did that." It acted like *Sports Illustrated* or *Time* magazine or any commercial magazine would. That's what made it happen. It didn't spend money any more ridiculously or wastefully in terms of people, staff, and travel than any magazine did. It took thirty of forty million and ten years for *Sports Illustrated* to become successful. It takes a long, long time for magazines to get, I remember Jerry [Gerard] Piel, the *Scientific American* guy tell me one night, he says, "You know, it's going to be a long haul because even if you make it and you can keep from being corrupted by the money you're going to get, it's going to take you ten years to build this into a lasting institution because even if you're riding a wave, things come and go. That's what it takes to build a magazine."

So on commercial terms, *Ramparts* may have lost four or five million bucks at the end of the day. Lost after two million was already in—we didn't lose that much money. But because of left and liberal sensibilities acting like—to use the black ghetto language—we acted like white people. We went to the same parties, we bought drinks, we did this, we went to hotels, we were lavish. We traveled—

Rubens: So first class, big deal. That doesn't break the magazine?

12-00:20:38

Hinckle:

No. It's not going to break the magazine. Not everybody flew first class, and I didn't think that was a big issue. But if I was telling guys, work six weeks out of the year, and you're supposed to be an editor four weeks and now you've got to be at a fundraiser three weeks, and you got to be here tomorrow morning, *AND* you're taking the red eye. I'm going to put him in first class. I don't want him wiped out. You know, let the guys do whatever they're going to do. But that's what commercial operations do. The point I wanted to make was that what *Ramparts* did that was so unusual, made it successful because it was the first thing on the left that was successful, but it was the point of all the criticism later, over the years, it was like written in stone that, well, *Ramparts* spent too much money. Hey, it didn't spend enough money, you know? On commercial terms, an investment of whatever loss it ultimately was, it was a pittance, what it takes to build a national magazine. It was way ahead of the game in terms of circulation and success. But to keep going that way requires a bankroll, a *Time/Life* behind you, a major publisher behind you, a very, very wealthy guy who wants to make a magazine go, to hold out for the time it takes to build a magazine.

That was the problem that *Ramparts* had, and we patched it here and there and the growth came and with the growth came enormous more cost that we had to replace as it kept growing. It became clear to me that if we didn't get

stabilized by somebody, that had to come from the liberal side, because nobody else would do that. It wasn't that we wouldn't be able to withstand it because we just—. It worked for a few years, but running back and forth, running back and forth, eventually everybody gets burned out and you can't go on. So we needed some big investor type people to say, "Okay, here's the plan. Everybody can calm down now. You don't have to run around everywhere. Nobody has to stay up five weeks out of four in the month, and do it right." So that's where Marty Peretz and Dick Russell came in.

Rubens: Who knew these people? What was the entré to them and—

12-00:22:59

Hinckle: Well, Marty was very prominent in the community. Abby Rockefeller introduced me to him. Abby is a sweet person. I liked Abby a lot.

Rubens: How did you meet her?

12-00:23:09

Hinckle: Sandy Levinson knew her. These left wing circles are pretty tight, once you start playing, everybody kind of knows everybody, and they know you're looking for investors. She's one of the Rockefellers, maybe she could help. She says, "Gee, let's see if I could get my father, they only let us—" Then you find out about trust funds and how much these kids have access to, it's fun. Abby was like an early green, and she was a good person. I spent a lot of time with her. She was helpful.

But Marty was poobahing around Harvard and flaunting his, not flaunting, that's an unfair word, but it was well known that he had a lot of money because of his wife's money. Very sweet person. Singer Sewing Machine Co. He was interested in playing around in publishing on the left. So he became an obvious guy to talk to, "Hey, Marty." He certainly knew what *Ramparts* was because it was the biggest seller in the Harvard Square on the news stand. So that's how we—

Rubens: So it's Marty and Dick Russell —was Russell Marty's brother in law?.

12-00:24:25

Hinckle: Dick Russell was his partner. I don't know that there was any relationship at all. I never knew that.

Rubens: Because I thought Dick Russell Singer Sewing Machine money.

12-00:24:33

Hinckle: No. Singer Sewing Machines was Ann Farnsworth, Marty's wife. Marty's long suffering wife I might add.

Dick was an Israeli advocate, a genius business man out of Connecticut and an artist. He was a very interesting sculptor and all around good guy. He, I guess

in some liberal causes, benefits, assisted Marty, who was an academic, in structuring how the money would go in, Ann's money, to be best used, that sort of stuff. They'd met over Israeli issues because they both were big Israel partisans. So they came—

Rubens: And Russell's money, what was it from?

12-00:25:29

Hinckle: He had a very successful string of car dealerships in Connecticut, and then they kind of spread into Massachusetts and other parts of New England, and then he had other investments around. He was a very successful businessman and very bright, very, very nice guy. The one thing I regret about the split with Marty Peretz, which I didn't particularly have much regret, was, I mean personally, because Marty was trouble. His ego was bigger than his loyalty to the ideological political positions he propounded. I could see kind of trouble coming there, but on the other hand, hey, if this stabilizes things, personality conflicts, I'll take them if that comes with whatever it is.

Rubens: Let's proceed through that just a bit. So you're introduced to him—

12-00:26:32

Hinckle: Yes, Marty and I met. I spent a couple of times with him up in Boston. Anyway, I say, "This thing's getting too goddamn big, and we got to have an investment in a business structure that makes this magazine on a rational business basis. We've got everybody, the art director, the foreword editor, me running around two weeks out of the month trying to grab money to throw in the pot to keep paying the printer's bills, keep paying the growth, and to keep doing the journalism. It won't sustain itself."

Rubens: So was it a hard sell?

12-00:27:08

Hinckle: No. It wasn't a hard sell. It was one famous moment when Dick Russell, he had an office in Hartford, and so Joe Ippolito the accountant guy I mentioned. We get the newest bunch of printouts from this foreign impounded computer guy, Hank Marshman. They were big old machines. So we just got on the plane, it was a red eye to New York with a transfer in Hartford from New York, I think we had to transfer to Hartford, made the trip even more unpleasant. We had this thing and the printout, rushing to get the planes— Didn't even look at it, had a couple of drinks, crashed.

Made the trip there, get in, and Dick Russell had a meeting in his conference room of his business. He had his accountants and other guys—he was a businessman—there. We had this pile of stuff, two suitcases full of these printouts which we hadn't even looked at, had all the new protections and stuff in it. So everybody got a big pile of stuff. So we're sitting around with six or eight people around this conference table. So Dick says this is or that. "Well, so Warren, why don't you tell us how you think on a business level,

this proposition is sustainable if we invest this amount of money?" I think we were talking something like half a million at first and then a million and then, something like that that fit kind of our projections to stabilize the thing.

Rubens: And this is both of them.

12-00:29:08

Hinckle: No. Marty wasn't there. This is just Dick. It was like Dick tortured these guys a little bit. I think Marty wanted to do it because he wanted to be in the middle of it. But he said, "We'll let Dick torture them," Dick was like—he wanted to see if he thought it was worth throwing the money in, otherwise he would go to other things. And there was always Israel, which needed money, so it was like conflict. So that was fair enough to me.

So anyway, what I started to say, well, here's how it started and here's what happened, and this and that, and then we finally got a business plan. We didn't know what we were doing. We read the book. I told him the whole spiel, which is all true. And this and that. And meanwhile there's some guy down the end of the table, he's flipping through the things. I'm talking about twenty minutes, still half asleep, and he says, "Excuse me." I said, "Oh, here comes trouble." He's looking through the stuff. We never looked at it. And he says, "Well, I've been adding this up," he's got a little thing there, "adding this up, and you say here that the conversion of subscribers to this will be that and that this will be that, but when you add it up, your conclusion is this, that it leads in two years to profit. But it doesn't add up that way by your own figures and what they lead to is that for five years it'll lead to a minus thing because your figures contradict each other."

So everybody goes, "Oh, oh." So we hauled in all this stuff so now all of a sudden the game is if this stuff is, right? And I said, "Huh? No. What?" He said, "Well it's right here on page 750" of this giant goddamn thing. So I said, "What?" And I kind of pick up this thing and I just throw it down. I threw it on the floor. I said, "I don't care what it says on page 750. I don't care what your goddamn calculator says, what he says." I remember it to this day. "I never asked for this job. I never got in this business on purpose. All this stuff happened, and I gradually learned from the bottom how it works. You know, you get the news stand sales, then they start to come in, you've got the figures. We got the goddamn news stands up. You got the subscribers. You send out the letters. You've got to have the money to pay the printers They come in. You renew them. The renewal rates. Look at the goddamn renewal rates, you've seen that. They're good, This goes, that goes. If some freak made a mistake punching in the computer, I don't even fucking want to know about it. Don't bother me with that sort of stuff. You guys going to put the goddamn money in this thing or not?"

Rubens: And?

12-00:31:58

Hinckle: They put it in. It was like one of those moments, like Jesus—

Rubens: So let me just get this clear, though. Is Russell speaking for Peretz, or do you dare—

12-00:32:09

Hinckle: Oh Yes.

Rubens: Okay, so between the two of them they put in—

12-00:32:12

Hinckle: Well, Dick didn't put in that much personal money, but he figured it out. And what Dick figured out was that *Ramparts* actually had an asset, and the asset was our loss. This may sound conventional now in terms of deficit financing, and all the scandals and everything we're all used to, but that was like a light bulb. "Huh?"

He said, "Yeah." We can take—this is not the same meeting. He sat down with me afterwards with, showed me some of his sculptures, he had a great personal art collection. I spent a couple of days with him, a very, very nice man.

Rubens: And that's where you were saying you regret, in the end—

12-00:32:52

Hinckle: Oh, Yes. I really liked Dick Russell. He explained the whole thing, he says, "Here's what we can do." He says, "We can have the magazine purchase profit making entities." He said, "There's a list of them, some of them people I know own, but we'll find some others." We ended up owning strings of nursing homes and outpatient hospitals and gas stations. I don't know, we owned all kinds of crap. Structured this thing.

And then because they have this carry forward, I think that's the phrase of art, tax loss, they, instead of paying taxes, there will be this money, and he figured out some convoluted way that would turn into cash for the magazine. While he did that, Marty and Ann would put up cash to keep the thing going and more if it needed to be, but in the meanwhile this should, until the losses started to really decline, and it didn't look like they would decline rapidly in the next couple of years if we kept growing at the rate we were growing.

So I said, "We probably got a couple of good years out of this without having to you know—"

Rubens: With Peretz' infusion?

12-00:34:22

Hinckle: —and it couldn't be done without Marty's, I think he had to put up a half a million bucks or something like that. But he says we'll basically be using the

government's money, and what you're out is to beat up the government, so this is a pretty good situation. I said, "It sounds right to me." It was really smart.

At that's what we did. So we became intricately linked, lots of lawyers, accountants. I trusted Dick to set it up. It made sense.

Rubens: So how long did that last?

12-00:34:56

Hinckle: About a year or so. A year or so until the 1967 war.

Rubens: So we might as well tell the story here and wrap that story.

12-00:35:05

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Did Israel come up as a precondition? Peretz went on the editorial board.

12-00:35:19

Hinckle: Oh, Yes, he wanted to be and he should be. He's a major investor. Why shouldn't he be on the editorial board? And he was an intellectual and a writer, I mean there's no reason why not. He wasn't a secret investor. No, if there was a precondition, we wouldn't have had the conversation. Basically, everybody was pro-Israel. Then the 1967 war came up. Everybody wasn't anti-Arab. But everybody was, from Dick Russell, who had family, was completely committed to Israel, too. Marty, who was very much pro-Israel, but in a political way, as everybody seemed with the *New Republic* which became sort of the mouthpiece for the Israeli lobby when he finally bought it. Everybody was kind of on the same page, it wasn't like, are you against the Vietnam War? It wasn't an issue.

Then the 1967 war came up, and this madness on the left started. And that scared a lot of Jews. I learned to speak easily about Jews because I never knew a Jew in my life growing up in San Francisco. I was in the ghetto, white ghetto.

Rubens: You said that in a previous interview.

12-00:36:39

Hinckle: But quickly I learned almost around the same time that *Ramparts*, and I then became friends with and an eventual partner in Scanlan's with Sidney Zion, right? He's the toughest Jew you ever met. No only the hardest drinking Jew, but the toughest one. He was full of stories of Jewish conspiracies and interfaith fights and this and that and rat bastards here and there, that sounded so much like Catholicism to me, I was like, "Wow!" I never knew this stuff went on.

So anyway I got fairly familiar with the politics of this stuff quickly. It was a very quick education, but it so resonated with my own Catholic infighting and upbringing. I thought the same stuff is going on with the Jews. I thought, "Okay, got that." But the left position had become extreme and after the 1967 war or as of the 1967 war became insane.

Rubens: But what happened literally within *Ramparts*? I mean is there—

12-00:37:44

Hinckle: Well, that's where *Ramparts* broke with that. That's the interesting thing. I'd say SNCC, almost every quasi-institution on the left and a lot of the black power types and the theoretical white professors on the left almost universally after the 1967 war assumed an anti-Israel position. Sort of consensus was that Israel was an outlaw state and didn't have the right to exist as a state.

Rubens: So it's not a question of just having grabbed the territories and whether they give it back, but it was—

12-00:38:31

Hinckle: No, it was like totally—

Rubens: A turn.

12-00:38:33

Hinckle: It was a turn. It was a turn. And the left was so hardened, the general American left against Israel.

Rubens: So you're watching this. This is before your editorial comes out, you've seeing this turn.

12-00:38:46

Hinckle: Oh, Yes. It was heavy. So it was like now what are you going to print about this and that, so we hammered out a position on Israel which I thought was more than sensible. It was pro-Israeli. It defended the right of Israel to exist as a state, as a country, which believe it or not in this time was a controversial position to take because we were a leading magazine, at least in circulation, of the left. And said that, as I always felt the little bit I'd read of that history that there were faults on both sides in the Palestinian situation. I wouldn't say it's fifty-fifty, but you could argue it's fifty-fifty because the Arabs wouldn't take Palestinians; they said screw 'em, that Israel's problem, and Israel behaved badly in that situation. But it was like, hey, come on, fault on both sides, and that wasn't widely recognized. Anyway, we didn't get into the refugee situation, or Palestine, so we just said, "But, there will never be sense or peace in the Middle East if Israel keeps the territories it has grabbed." They're just going to have to figure a way.

Rubens: So you had both things. You were arguing for the defense of an Israeli state, but saying—

12-00:40:22

Hinckle: It was said they're going to have to go back to the original boundary lines or negotiate something that people can accept, because it'll never stop.

Rubens:

In your mind did you think this was going to produce any kind of to do amongst your investors?

12-00:40:36

Hinckle: That wasn't what produced it. That wasn't what produced it. The editorial, there was some, they didn't think it was strongly Israel enough. Dick Russell told me that. He said, "I know you're right, but to me Israel has to be the number one thing." But that wasn't it. It was an article that Bob Scheer did, which I think ran in the same issue. I'd have to look if that was in the same issue, but I think it was, as the editorial. The editorial was controversial with him because Marty wanted to be a triumphalist on the Israel side, not a practical [position] whatever: "Hey, we won the war, but we got to accommodate now to the realities of the Middle East." He wanted to be a triumphalist. And Dick's heart was in Israel, and everything had to go to Israel first.

But the editorial they could handle, but there was an article that Bob wrote; he had spent time in Egypt and came back with a piece about Nasser and pan-Arab politics and Israel, that questioned some widely held assumptions. And I felt it sort of neglected Nasser gassing the people of the Arabs in Yemen and quite a few of his dictatorial—it wasn't exactly freedom of the press if you like in Egypt. But that wasn't why you let people write. He would say, "Hey, I don't agree with you." He spent a lot of time there, he thought about it; he had what he thought was a Kissinger type, he'd almost vomit to hear that description of his thinking, but he thought he had a geopolitical Kissinger type thing that without Nasser it's all going to fall apart, and this is going to happen, and that's going to happen in Israel, and Nasser wasn't really responsible for this because some radio messages he found in Egypt, which I always thought Egyptian intelligence probably fed to him, showed that this didn't happen the way the Israelis said it did. And that set off a spark. Either he sent that article, and I read it and I said, "You know, Scheer" it wasn't a question of censoring an article, I wouldn't do that to a guy who was a major part of the magazine. And he had written a lot about foreign affairs, had written his own books, and that's the way he sees it. He's one of our guys. That's how he saw it, that's how he saw it. I didn't particularly agree with it myself, but on the other hand, I wasn't over there spending a lot of time in Egypt and everywhere. So that's how he saw it, okay.

We print it. I see you know this is really going to piss off Peretz and Russell. "What do you mean?" So I think he sent it to them, I know I didn't send it to them. Anyway, they got the article, and gave me a call. It was Marty I think. "You print that fucking thing," this and that. "This is all over", and I said, "Well, you know I can't you know, the article's in. Scheer wrote it, if you've

got a difference with it, talk to Scheer, write a counter article, do whatever you want, but just because you've got a bunch of money in the magazine, you're not going to tell me not to print an article, even though I don't wholly agree with it. That's not the way you can run a magazine, Marty. Can't do it."

So then, an almost comedic period ensued where I told Scheer, "Hey, I think this is curtains for the Peretz money." He's really flipping out. What? So Scheer kind of got nervous about that. "Well, maybe we should, I should make some—" "Well, no, Scheer, come on it's already in type, the thing's going to press in two days, it's done. That's where you are. Don't tell me you changed your fucking mind, don't tell me that." "Well, no." "Well, then, that's it. You know I'm not going to be told—if the goddamn magazine folds, it folds—but I'm not going to be told by investors what we're going to print."

Rubens: Nor apologize for it, or give a flag to it in an editorial or marginalia?

12-00:44:51

Hinckle: No. So the night it was going to press I got a call from the printer. This was in, we were printing in Denver. Some guy calls me at three or four in the morning, and he says, "Well, I got a call from the managing editor." I said, "What?" He says to stop the presses, we've got to take an article out. It was Scheer. He was panicking that we were going to lose the money. He wants to take the goddamn article out. I couldn't believe it. I said, "No. Nothing's changing. Print the goddamn thing. Jesus Christ." Anyway, that ended up, had a very heartfelt conversation with Dick Russell about it.

Rubens: Is this a face-to-face?

12-00:45:42

Hinckle: Oh, Yes. Dick was a great guy. I mean he was the guy when Keating would try to do his overthrow of me and whatever, he called Dick Russell because they were then putting all the money in, and I was the first guy when he got off the phone with Keating, Dick Russell called me and says, "Hey, you've got a problem out there. This guy's nuts." He was a good guy, a friend. And we went through it and he said, "I understand your position entirely, and I understand that what you've done on the left is very brave, but this is not a hundred percent Israel, and right now with the perils Israel faces, all my energies have to go—" I said, "Dick, I understand that, I really, really do." We had a totally civilized conversation about it. I mean I figured it was the end of the magazine, which eventually it was. But, it was, "Hey, that's how stuff is." I don't know, I guess a lot more people—

Rubens: Did he give you a time frame, or did he say this is it, I'm stopping now?

12-00:46:39

Hinckle: Well, we had a lot of unraveling to do, all this crap.

Rubens: The complicated tax structure; owning all these businesses—

12-00:46:50

Hinckle:

Yes. And meanwhile circulation was still growing and there was cash flow coming in, although I couldn't see without a bank or some big publishing operation, which would then control it, taking over—I figured this thing is probably in a tailspin. We're probably not going to make it. But I had a much more fatalistic or cavalier, I don't know what you want to call it, attitude. I just thought, "Hey, the thing was an accident in the first place. If it stays true to what it stood for and it goes out of business, so what? A lot of magazines have, it didn't have to last forever. Everybody go on and do something else, and what the hell?"

Rubens:

Did you ever have a confrontation with Peretz?

12-00:47:30

Hinckle:

Oh, Yes. We had one on the phone. And we had another one. I said, "Screw you, Marty." I'm not going to be here. Go buy your own goddamn magazine.

Rubens:

Which he did.

12-00:47:39

Hinckle:

Which he did. Then he bought *The New Republic*, which in many people's estimation degraded its century old reputation by turning into something that only took the Israeli version of issues. And I said that as a pro-Israeli guy. It's just the truth and how these things work. I just think you lose your credibility as an advocate for your cause if you only do rote things. Even the best government, its political and propaganda agencies, and everybody's got those, don't always do the right job.

Rubens:

I couldn't help but thinking about *Tikkun Magazine* and Michael Lerner while you were talking about the fate over Israel, because of course he worked at Ramparts—I guess Scheer brought him in for a while—I don't know if this was at this period?

12-00:48:38

Hinckle:

Well, Scheer brought a lot of guys into the business. Scheer was a networker.

Rubens:

I think Lerner went on a couple of fundraising trips with you guys, too.

12-00:48:47

Hinckle:

Not with me. Maybe with Scheer.

Rubens:

Okay. Maybe down to the Center for—

12-00:48:50

Hinckle:

Maybe we'll find some Jewish money.

Rubens:

I think he credits some of the style of his magazine *Tikkun* to *Ramparts*.

12-00:48:58

Hinckle: He picked up the design a little bit, Yes. He was an independent minded—

Rubens: Yes, and a pro-Israeli—

12-00:49:08

Hinckle: Pro-Israeli, but not uncritical.

Rubens: But critical of Israeli policy.

12-00:49:08

Hinckle: Yes. And what knocks me out is you have people in America, writers, something like that, if you're critical of the government in Washington and some of its policies, nobody calls you anti-American.

Rubens: Well, they do. I mean, right?

Hinckle: Yes. Well, some Republicans and others do.

Rubens: Well, and that's your friend Bobby Kennedy, right. Isn't that where they start looking into, who is it who orders the investigation into—oh, no, no.

12-00:49:40

Hinckle: It wasn't Bobby, no. Well, Johnson's Justice Department and the CIA.

Rubens: Yes, and of course when Nixon comes in, it's John Dean—

12-00:49:51

Hinckle: Well, that was *Scanlan's*. The magazines I did in that period had a bumpy ride with a couple of administrations.

Rubens: Yes. All right. I'm losing the thread there with the investigations. So just to back up a bit, how long does it take to unwind in terms of—or let's put it conversely: what compensatory steps are you taking at that point? Here is the question I wanted to ask. Were you already engaged in, did you have contracts for publishing books? And were you at the same time doing the Sunday *Ramparts*? And were those two things ever seen as money makers?

12-00:50:29

Hinckle: Well, one of the things—no, they were never seen as money makers. They were for fun. And one of the things Dick Russell made me do when they put the money in was he made me kill the Sunday *Ramparts*, which I really liked. And that was—

Rubens: I couldn't figure out how long Sunday *Ramparts*—

12-00:50:44

Hinckle: It was only put out for a year or so.

Rubens: That long?

12-00:50:44

Hinckle: Yes. It was a cute thing. It only came out every two weeks. It was an eight-page standard. But it was nice, it's basically scraps left over from *Ramparts*, and everybody had much more to write than we could put in a monthly, and it was tough. San Francisco journalism was so bad at the time, and it took a little pressure off [Dugald] Stermer and me and a couple of guys just to say, "Hey, let's take an afternoon, go to the bar, and design a magazine, I mean a newspaper, and we'll put that out."

Rubens: So it was Bay Area circulation?

12-00:51:23

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: About how big was the circulation?

12-00:51:31

Hinckle: I don't know. I think we printed five, ten thousand copies. Sold most of them, then we printed more. It wasn't a big deal, but it was there. It was nice.

Rubens: I haven't seen it. It's not collected at Berkeley.

12-00:51:42

Hinckle: Oh, no. Fred Gardner's got a full set of it. You could ask him. Well maybe he doesn't. Anyway, I've got a lot of copies of it, but it was just nice. That wasn't the newspaper printed during the newspaper strike.

Rubens: Well, then you revive it I think in 1967.

12-00:52:01

Hinckle: No, that was a newspaper strike. We put out a daily. That was a different thing. Sunday *Ramparts* was just an aside, an artifact, a literary thing. It was fun.

Rubens: You think about a year it was coming out?

12-00:52:10

Hinckle: Yes, it was about a year. One of the things that Dick Russell, who was the business heavy in this thing, said to me, he said, "Now, Warren, now you're going to be, we're investing a lot of money and a lot of commitments to this company and so you're the person who runs the company and is responsible for it." I said, "Dick, I don't know crap about businesses." "I know, but you have a good instinct for it. All you've got to do is provide the growth, we'll take care of the controls. Don't you worry about that any more. You can just relax now. You do what you do." He says, "But, I want you to concentrate solely on *Ramparts* magazine. But—this Sunday paper you're putting out, it's very nice and I know it probably doesn't take you that much time to put it out,

but to divert your energy from the primary thing. So before we go ahead, and we're going ahead, but I want you to stop publishing that."

Rubens: Alright. What the heck.

12-00:53:05

Hinckle: So I said, "I see what you mean. I don't like it, Dick, Jesus." He said, "I know, but that's what I want you to do." So I did. So we had a big party and an empty coffin and printed an eight-page issue all blank with black borders around it, a little obituary notice in the middle of the empty page. My friend Fred [Frederic] Hobbs, the artist, did a lot of work for us those years. We made a couple of movies together. He said to me, saw that thing and we had a party at the bar up the street from *Ramparts*, burying the newspaper, and he said, "Hinckle, you're a conceptual artist." I said, "What do you mean, conceptual artist?" He said, "You have a drama. You printed a blank newspaper with black borders, you had a coffin, you had candles, you had singers." "Oh, yeah?"

Rubens: Yes, but that had gone back to your Elsa Maxwell days at USF. You'd always had—or Station J, you always had this kind of stuff.

12-00:54:04

Hinckle: Well, you always have a party. Why not, one might say.

Rubens: All right. So let's change the tape. Hold that for one minute while we do this story. I was asking if the book business was ever money?

12-00:54:25

Hinckle: Not particularly. I did make a very good deal with Random House. I said we'll start *Ramparts* subtitle for books, and I actually was too much concentrated with other things I was doing. We published [Eldridge] Cleaver's book. We gave that to Random House and that became a best seller. And we had several others in line and I think a couple of them got published. There was one on Catholic priests and nuns or something like that. That was just nothing, but it sold. But the actual income, of course nobody knew that *Soul on Ice* was going to be a blockbuster. But I gave a lot of money to Eldridge and to—I didn't make a very good business deal on that one. So we didn't make a substantial amount of money to count for beans from the publishing operation because it didn't last that long, and we only had two or three titles, and the other things overwhelmed it. If we kept it up for ten years, it would have been a separate deal. But it was never an, it was there and it did publish one big best seller, *Soul on Ice*. But in terms of income, it couldn't have made a hundred grand for *Ramparts* which over years didn't count for much.

Begin Audio File 13

Rubens: Tell me about the *Ramparts* poster?

13-00:00:00

Hinckle: Some Haight-Ashbury guys made that poster. It's a psychedelic poster. Great poster.

Rubens:

This was in March of 1967.

13-00:00:10

Hinckle: Yes. Why not?

Rubens:

So while you're distributing it primarily in the Bay Area, you're advertising it through the magazine, so there must have been some national distribution of the—

13-00:00:21

Hinckle: Oh, some people subscribed. I mean we stuck that in because why not?

Rubens:

Yes, sure. Now the Che Guevara book—

13-00:00:35

Hinckle: Oh, ho, ho, that's a whole other story.

Rubens:

But that wasn't a *Ramparts*—

13-00:00:40

Hinckle: Well, yes it was, but that wasn't the Random House deal that we made. That was, that's quite a story. That's a lot of spies and international politics and publishing crazies. It was a race to print the Che Guevara diaries, and one was the CIA doctored version, and one was from the Cubans. And Castro had it given to Scheer on one of his many trips down there because he was always trying to get the big interview with Fidel, but he never got it. There were different versions, then the publishers got greedy and it was a question about the copyright, and the Cubans changed their mind about the copyright convention, and there's a whole chapter in that *Lemonade* book. It's just nuts.

Rubens:

Yes.

13-00:02:02

Hinckle: It was kind of a crazy period. Anyway, we won. But it was like, it wasn't easy.

Rubens:

But under whose auspices is it published? Did *Ramparts* get any break out of this?

13-00:02:20

Hinckle: No. Oh, no. We got a hunk of money from Bantam, from the paperback edition.

Rubens:

You did?

13-00:02:27

Hinckle: Oh Yes.

Rubens:

Okay. Was that on the same order as *Soul on Ice*?

13-00:02:34

Hinckle: *Soul on Ice* we never made that much money on. I gave a lot to Cleaver, and I gave some to Kathleen in royalties, and we made our standard. I made a lousy deal. I didn't know that much about publishing, and I learned a lot more afterward. I should have made a stronger deal. But we didn't expect to have a best seller.

Rubens:

With *Soul on Ice*, but had you learned your lesson by the time that Che Guevara comes along?

13-00:02:58

Hinckle: Yes. I negotiated a much tougher deal. But that was an extraordinary set of circumstances. But no, we got a decent hunk of money out of Bantam for the paperback book.

Rubens:

Do you know roughly what that was?

13-00:03:14

Hinckle: No, I'd have to look back. It could have been twenty five, it could have been a hundred, maybe fifty. It was a hunk of dough. And then there were residuals later, but it wasn't earth changing. If the title hadn't been challenged and there weren't all the legal problems and this and that, we could have commanded a lot more money for it, but as it was it was a miracle to get any money out of them at all since they could have been sued and the whole thing could have been contaminated. I mean a lot of complications with that. But it was one of those things we just kept at it and the Cubans bent at the last minute and gave us the copyright, and that stopped something there.

Rubens:

By the way, was it mainly Scheer going there? Were you actually brokering any of this, were you directly involved or—

13-00:04:01

Hinckle: Yes. I sent Scheer down to Cuba. He'd been to Cuba a lot before. He wrote a book, an early book about Cuba.

Rubens:

When did you first go to Cuba?

13-00:04:12

Hinckle: I started going a lot after, I think I went down there maybe once. I was too busy to go—

Rubens:

Yes, during *Ramparts*. Did you go during *Ramparts* at all?

13-00:04:23

Hinckle: I don't think so. I think I may have gone down there once. I just don't think so. I started going there a lot in the 1970s and 1980s. A lot, a lot.

Rubens: When you write that incredible series.

13-00:04:37

Hinckle: Doing some books and some other stuff.

Rubens: All right, so we'll get to that.

13-00:04:41

Hinckle: But, yes. I spent a lot of time in Cuba, but you know it was like Scheer had already written a book about it. Why should I go there? We just wanted to get the big interview with Fidel, that was the deal. So keep going every month Scheer until we nail the bastard.

Rubens: I meant to ask you earlier about a printing press Keating owned –I was wondering about why Ramparts didn't print its own stuff; but I guess it was closed by the time you worked out the first deal with the printer in New York.

13-00:05:22

Hinckle: That's almost a non thing. If he had a printing press, he couldn't print a magazine. You certainly couldn't print a big magazine.

Rubens: It was called Moltex. He had built a printing plant, but that's out of the picture by the time—

13-00:05:44

Hinckle: I remember that. Yes, he had that. It was mostly a commercial printing plant. It didn't have a rotary press, I don't think. It was a sheet fed plant, it did a lot of short-term jobs. He may or may not have, I actually don't recall, used it to print the sheets for the quarterly and I don't think they even had a bindery, so they had to send it out to get it bound. But it was a commercial printing operation, it wasn't a newspaper or magazine printing plant.

Rubens: Got it. When did Mark Stone open your New York office?

13-00:06:28

Hinckle: Oh, Mark Stone's such a wonderful story. I love Mark. He was always exasperated.

Rubens: So this is Judy's brother along with I.F. Izzy Stone.

13-00:06:46

Hinckle: I came to know that family very, very well.

Rubens: Well, tell the story of Mark Stone. And what's the New York office? Do you literally rent space?

13-00:06:55

Hinckle:

Mark had an office. He had a PR business, and we made that the, I met him, of course, through Izzy and met Izzy through all the town hall meetings and at various left cocktail parties. You know, all that stuff you get involved in when you're publishing things like that. Mark was there, and I said, "Well, great, then you can be the New York office. You've got an office." Then we put the address on the masthead. You can do the presses, do the PR. I don't think he did advertising. He had a PR something business and promotion business, I guess, products and stuff. So I said, "Yeah, hey, you become the New York office and see what you can do about selling advertisers, we get anything." So he was aboard from almost the beginning. His son Peter later came around. I mean later on in various other things. The Stone family, I could write a story about them.

Rubens:

Anything more you want to say here about—

13-00:08:17

Hinckle:

What? Mark? Oh, he's a great guy. Mark was an old left guy. The New Left was ideologically whatever separate because they wouldn't have bothered calling it the New Left, but they couldn't figure out what it was. They meaning the academics and the political science types. But the old left guys were fairly set in their ways. They grew up with *PM* and the *Compass* and the left dailies in New York City and where the heritage of the masses and traditional serious left publications. They were never comfortable with the free-wheeling commercial/from their standpoint left, which was very, very conservative and everything—irresponsible antics of something like *Ramparts*. It just didn't fit the old left point of view. But Mark rode it out very well. He was extremely—

Rubens:

Was he about your age, or was he—

13-00:09:25

Hinckle:

Who, Mark? No, he was older than me. I was in my late, middle to late twenties when I did *Ramparts*, and Mark was—he seemed old to me. He's looked the same ever since I've known him. I've known him for quite a few years until he died, which wasn't that long ago. So he always looked old. But he was probably forty or fifty. He was just one of those guys who looked old, sort of worn down by the world, harried.

But he was very helpful because he would go over to the *Times* and said, "Did you get the things about the *Ramparts* story?" Mark was a hustler. He was very, very good.

Rubens:

How did Sidney Zion come along? At what point did he come in? He was a reporter for the *New York Times*.

13-00:10:20

Hinckle:

Yes. He was a legal reporter then. We met in a bar. We both loved the bar life and both had sort of the same style and approach to publishing and to life. We met through some mutual friend, and we never could figure out who, at the old Toots Shor in New York back in this middle sixties before all the Chicago madness and this and that. We instantly became friends. He didn't think too much of *Ramparts*. He thought it was kind of interesting, but Sidney was a much more conservative guy and as an Israeli partisan, he made Marty Peretz look like an Arab. I mean take the name, Sidney Zion. Anyway, we became instant friends. We had a complete same interest in journalism as fun end product and screwed up by the bureaucracies that befuddle it and the same sort of interest in the First Amendment. He was a lawyer, had been a prosecutor in New Jersey, and wrote the legal stuff for the *New York Times* and was constantly frustrated by what they'd let in and wouldn't. I soon became acquainted with his circle of friends. Fred Rodell was a genius, probably the greatest law professor Yale Law School ever had. Also a very dirty mind. He wrote two books of limericks which were absolutely filthy.

Rubens:

Say his name again.

13-00:11:59

Hinckle:

Fred Rodell, R-O-D-E-L-L. A terrific guy. He's written some of the finest books on the First Amendment Constitutional law. We'd drink at Frankie and Johnny's Steak House in New York and other hidden away bars, and he'd tell stories. Anyway, he helped to expand my education considerably. But this was during the time of *Ramparts* and actually had no association with the usual *Ramparts* intellectuals or left crap. This was like, I don't know, First Amendment fanatics.

Rubens:

Did you put him on the editorial board, though? Did Zion go on?

13-00:12:36

Hinckle:

Sidney? He started to write. I said, "Hey, would you write a couple of pieces for us?" And he did. I don't recall if I put him on the so called editorial board. The story about the *Ramparts* masthead is a whole other story. It got to the point I had to lock up—we didn't have a safe, but we had a thing, in the office because people would sneak in the office at night because they knew where the so-called paste up went off to the printer the next day when the issue was finished. They would sneak in there and change the masthead, change our titles. Titles became a coin of the realm, so I negotiated them sometimes for money we didn't have. I said, "You want a better title? You got it."

Scheer always was ambitious, so it was like, "Well, Scheer, hey, we'll make you managing editor." Later on in the tumult of the last year or so, I said, "Well, Scheer, here's what I'm going to do. You hang in with this thing and keep running around trying to raise money for this thing. I'll make you editor. I'll just become editorial director and publisher or president or something like that." So I say then, "You got the title, Scheer." It was stuff like that. Well, so

what? What's a title? But the masthead became a fascination for these guys. It was funny as hell.

Rubens: I wanted to ask you about other people that you're bringing in who are consulting editors. There's Paul Jacobs—

13-00:14:07

Hinckle: Oh Paul's a great guy.

Rubens: Did you literally recruit him or—

13-00:14:10

Hinckle: Yes. I knew Paul from just around town, I guess. There was a left intellectual circle around, well, not left in that sense, but there were a lot of leftists in it who were—

Rubens: Progressives.

13-00:14:25

Hinckle: No, who were cocktail party type drinkers. Serious writers, some of them, but on the left side. But they liked the San Francisco social cultural life. A lot of that evolved around, well Decca was an example; and Howard Gossage and those people; and Walter Landor, who was a designer of products and office buildings, not architects, but looking at packaging, how you'd make a box of Cheer laundry soap or something like that.

Rubens: Landor?

13-00:15:11

Hinckle: Walt L-A-N-D-O-R. He was another major San Francisco player in that period. This was the middle sixties. And Scott Newhall was the *Chronicle* editor, and he was part of it. And I became part of that crowd. So there were a lot of people, and Paul was one of them. He's a ferociously tough guy, who went through the wars of the communist hierarchy and the switches the changes in the—

Rubens: He had been a Trotskyite, hadn't he?

13-00:15:43

Hinckle: He had been a Trot. And he knew all the "Nemechkavites" and the "Dadaites" and this and that—

Rubens: He was married to a wonderful lawyer.

13-00:15:56

Hinckle: Ruth. She was a great person. Good people.

Rubens: How much did he do for you? He was a consulting editor?

13-00:16:09

Hinckle: Oh, I brought him in. All of a sudden this thing was going. I said, "Jesus, start writing stuff." He would write stuff, and then I gave him Cleaver. I said, "Why don't you go see the son of a bitch and start figuring him out. He's in jail." He got into that.

Rubens:

That's probably a story we should talk about, right? We could get to Cleaver—

13-00:16:28

Hinckle: Yes. The Cleaver and the Panthers and the whole left thing is, to me, it's more interesting than the details of *Ramparts*. That stuff still resonates today.

Rubens:

Well, why don't we end with that today. But before, I want to ask you about one other person that you brought in as a consulting editor, and that's Hal Lipset.

13-00:16:55

Hinckle: Oh Hal, old friend.

Rubens:

Tell about how you met him and what I really am trying to get at is something I've never asked you about is your penchant for, or your love of mystery novels. For instance, Stout, he's the one who writes—

13-00:17:09

Hinckle: Rex Stout. Yes. Nero Wolfe is his main character. He actually wrote a couple of pieces, he was a lefty guy. I'm a mystery novel addict. His fan club—

Rubens:

Does that go way back?

13-00:17:26

Hinckle: Way back.

And it's amazing who comes to you or seeks you out when you become visible, standing up for things that people really believe in. It may be left principles, may be First Amendment, may be this and that. And all of a sudden—and the climate is so bad and quiet—and all of a sudden you stand up, and people get so happy that somebody's doing something that they believe in, it's very easy to make friends.

Rubens:

So Stout, you had him write for you?

13-00:18:09

Hinckle: Yes, there was a piece in the, I don't think it was in the quarterly, but it was in certainly the early monthlies of *Ramparts*. He wrote one or two pieces and then I think he—

Rubens:

And so you must have, did you seek him out?

13-00:18:25

Hinckle: As I recall, the first piece he sent in he just mailed it in. And then I called him up. I said, "You know—"

Rubens:

This is a hero of yours.

13-00:18:34

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens:

I interrupted you. You called him up and—

13-00:18:38

Hinckle: Well, I just said, "Hey, thanks, and I want you to know [I'm a fan]." Well he didn't care about that, asked: "Are you going to print the piece?" I said, "Yeah, and I'll see you next time back east."

Rubens:

And did you? Did you look him up? I was thinking about you in New York, your first trip being for *The Deputy*, and then you become quite a habitué, you even lived there—

13-00:19:00

Hinckle: Second town, know it backwards and forwards. I lived there for, I mean traveled there all the time all those years. Lived there for sixteen years through Cheever and raising a kid there. I commuted here all the time, but had an apartment there. Yes, I know the town.

Rubens:

So back to Hal Lipset just for one minute.

13-00:19:30

Hinckle: Well, I knew Hal from years before. I knew him from early when I was first on the *Chronicle* maybe because he was a prominent private eye. I don't even remember when I met him. Hal was also part of the—he's a friend of Howard's—he was always at Decca's parties. This is a party set. You say well how did you meet somebody? You met him in a bar. So much of this stuff centers around, oddly enough, social life. But then so much of what the New Left was, and the ex or just recently ex-academic types that are—their life didn't center around that sort of culture. It was like a divide. They couldn't understand that. Right? They could understand sitting around the coffee shop or going out for Chinese and long conversations, but they couldn't understand this mix of people. Some of them were right wingers and this and that. So it was like making *Ramparts* like kind of mixing all this stuff together.

Rubens:

But maybe the mix wasn't so much there, I mean it was you and a coterie of some and then the rest seemed to be this younger generation.

13-00:20:48

Hinckle: Well, you took what you could get from everybody and threw it into the pot of the magazine.

Rubens: So what did Hal Lipset do, literally?

13-00:20:55

Hinckle: Ah, well, a lot of fun things, but well he debugged the office. He did that at *Scanlan's*—Made sure—swept it regularly. We had legitimate reasons to think that it might be bugged, as it turned out. He told me, he says, “Just never say—I'll make sure this is clean, but never say anything on the phone you don't want somebody hearing. Go outside.”

Rubens: So was it he, or he and Turner? You had a mail drop at some point—

13-00:21:32

Hinckle: Oh, yes. He had an interesting setup. He advised on quite a few things up through the Manson murders which I started to investigate also. He was just a buddy. We had mutual friends in town, old guys we took care of and did things for. We had a great time, one time when Scheer had a death threat. I mean there were always threats coming in to *Ramparts*. So Scheer was—Scheer wouldn't like this story, but it's true. He decided that he was in trouble, so I said, “Well, Scheer I tell you what; we'll go to Lipset's for dinner tonight.” He had a big mansion, very big house, on Pacific Street, in Pacific Heights, and ran his business out of part of it and lived in the house. He had a secure room in there, locked down, safe type thing that you could breathe in and everything. He had a lot of strange clients. He was a big guy. He was on the board of Interpol, international stuff. Hal was a wonderful guy.

So I said, “Well Scheer, come on over to Lipset's. We'll figure out if he can figure out how to deal with these threats to you,” which I actually didn't take quite seriously because they came in all the time. But for whatever reasons Scheer was on edge about it. So we go over to Lipset's and we're sitting around having some drinks; there were some other people there, and I say: “Lipset, Scheer is really freaked out and he wants, you know, I told him this would be safe here.” And Scheer says: “We're staying here aren't we, we're staying here. In the threat he said ‘we're going to kill them at midnight,’” something like that. But it was a specific time, you're going to die.

Now we wanted to go to someplace in North Beach that had just opened for dinner, but it seemed we couldn't go because Scheer was freaked out. Then Hal says: “I know what to do. Bob, come on.” He gets a bottle of wine from his wine cellar, brings him down to his secure room and says, “Now see that? That's the phone that goes to my pager. We've got to go out to dinner. But this, if they're following you, I don't know, but this is the only place you're going to be safe. So, here's a bottle of wine, here's the phone and when I lock this door, we'll be back after the time, and we'll open the door, but there's no way they can get you here.” And he shuts the door literally locked him in. We went off the North Beach.

Rubens: Wow. And you came back after—

13-00:24:24

Hinckle: Oh, yes. We came back and let him out. He was happy.

Rubens:

He was happy. Happy enough he was alive—

13-00:24:28

Hinckle: Well, he was like—Scheer was kind of, “Were these guys screwing around with me?” Kind of—

Rubens:

I was going to ask you that about your own self. I mean did you have threats? Were there threats against your family?

13-00:24:49

Hinckle: No, I had more threats when I was working for the *Chronicle* and other papers here—

Rubens:

What were they over?

13-00:24:58

Hinckle: I have no memory. But the one to Scheer said: “This time 10 p.m.,” or midnight—I actually forgot the exact time, but it was at night. You’re going to be a dead man. Came in on the switchboard at *Ramparts* and it freaked him out for whatever reason. Maybe he had good reason to think about it.

Rubens:

But a good Hal Lipset story.

13-00:25:22

Hinckle: One of the many Hal Lipset stories

Rubens:

Any more you want to tell now or—

13-00:25:24

Hinckle: As I say, you could write a book about Hal Lipset.

This is skipping too far out of the frame of this, but he became involved with a story I was later on doing at *Scanlan's*. This was something that started at *Ramparts*. It’s out of these things that leads to other things, that’s what they say on TV shows, but they do. It’s about the Manson murders and I can talk about that later. [Discussed in audio file 18.]

Hal did bring in a desk to—he found some old little roll top desks—to the *Scanlan's* office, which is in Howard Gossage’s old fire house on Pacific Street. It was on the ground floor, there was a garden outside. They had a rabbit that ate the cords to the typewriters. And he brought this desk in. He said, “This is fully bugged.” He says, “Any conversation you have, you don’t have to touch a button, anything. Anybody sits within thirty inches of you, it’s all recorded.” He says, “This is the state of the art desk.” “How much, Hal?” “Only two grand, two thousand.” “Hal, Sidney’s going to scream in New

York.” “All right, why don’t you pay me for services, \$500 a month.” “Okay, good.”

Rubens: All right, so we’ll pick up some of that. Well, just in the time remaining, what about the career switchers, whom you referred to in the last interview. Do we want to just make an overview statement about that?

13-00:29:04

Hinckle: Yes. It’s not a big deal. It’s a stigmatic thing, it’s quite interesting. I was reminded, I saw an article somewhere by a guy who had just seen *Avatar*, the James Cameron science fiction movie that just came out. I haven’t seen it but what I read is that the hero is a Marine or something who is injured. Then he goes to another planet to be healed, or whatever, and then the planet gets attacked by whether it’s other Marines, or the same type—anyway, he changes from being the Marine or the former Marine to siding with the people on the planet and fighting back.

Rubens: He turns against his own government.

13-00:29:56

Hinckle: Some story like that. And that struck me. I said, “You know, that’s the story of so many of the people who became big stories in *Ramparts* and the culture that we sort of automatically generated. And that includes Don Duncan, the career Marine hero, well decorated Marine officer, who turned around almost the discussion of the Vietnam War with that *Ramparts* cover that says, “I quit,” with all his medals and everything. Had to take them out of hock. Duncan asked, “Do I have to put my uniform on?” “Yes, you do. That’s the picture we’ve got to have, Duncan.” But he remained a Marine at heart. He had to stop himself. I immediately hired him here on the staff after that. “Duncan, you keep following this Vietnam stuff and the military stuff,” which he did very well. But he said, “I had to stop myself from saluting when I came in the office.” He had followed his stuff.

By the way, the Duncan story was not a *Ramparts* scoop. It was told to millions of listeners and in front of 70,000 people in Berkeley stadium with all the press, national, local, everybody there.

Rubens: At the teach-in.

13-00:31:22

Hinckle: At a teach-in, and nobody listened. I said, “Where does he come from? Find this Duncan?” Nobody had listened. So I took it—and he had already said it—and put it on the cover and said, “I quit,” and worked on a narrative with him and developed it, and that became a book. That was another *Ramparts* book, Duncan’s book. Presented this way, all of a sudden, it shook everybody up. It changed the discussion about the Vietnam War. Here was a hero saying, “No, this screws. It’s terrible.” So he was someone who changed his point of view, but he remained what he was. He used his learned skills to investigate and

oppose the war *and* he couldn't break away from the character, the person that he was. He remained that essential person.

Another was Bill Turner, the FBI agent, ex-FBI agent. We talked a little about him earlier, who later became a critic of Hoover because he defended a black agent and got in trouble for it, and went on and became the chief investigator for *Ramparts*. But he remained an FBI guy. It was like he didn't become an ideologue. He wasn't like, "I know who killed Kennedy." "What are the facts? Do the interviews. Write them down. See where the contradictions are."

Amazing, in other words, Stanley Sheinbaum, an academic who turned, right? Who was part of the Michigan State University mission to Vietnam, where they assisted in setting up a phony government and seeing all the CIA involvement and the obvious disasters coming with the university just because it's getting big funding enabling the government under its academic cover, they'd say, academic shield, to do these things in a neutral way when they were creating and tearing apart the Vietnamese society by favoring one faction over the other and almost ensuring American goals would never be met in their country.

Rubens: Specifically, they were training police and—

13-00:33:53

Hinckle: Yes, but Sheinbaum remained an academic. He researched stuff, he did stuff, he went on the other side. It's like, it was almost like a theme. These guys would somehow be attracted or whatever way they come across, and we were able to—enable is the wrong word—but to allow them, I guess, to take off one set of clothes and put on civilian clothes, but basically they remained the same type. It's very, very American. It's kind of a thrilling thought that people can remain just what they are and say, "The people I was working for were doing was wrong, but what I was doing wasn't necessarily wrong. My profession wasn't wrong."

Rubens: Yes. What about someone like Cleaver, that might be too—there's certainly a switch in terms of moving from a self justifying rapist into a—

13-00:34:59

Hinckle: Well, self-just—he never apologized about his attitudes towards women, towards rape. I read some very interesting—I remained friends with him over the years.

Rubens: Do we have time? Should we tell the Eldridge Cleaver story now and then call it a day—

13-00:35:18

Hinckle: You want to do Eldridge, sure.

Rubens: Yes, let's just do that, and then we'll have really—not only did you remain friends with him, but you put up bail for him, right?

13-00:35:33

Hinckle:

Yes. Well, Cleaver was first of all a criminal rapist, and there's no question about it. And he wrote about it. He was a great, natural born writer, and saw society, it's one that's very well— In his letters, which we published, it was just raw power there. Paul Jacobs was very instrumental in that. He was the first guy to start visiting Eldridge in prison.

Rubens:

Is that right? Was that before Beverly Axelrod, or with Beverly—

13-00:36:02

Hinckle:

Yes. I'm sure we learned about him through Beverly. It was part of the Berkeley left lawyer's circuit. But there was no question that this was an original voice and talent, however tortured. We got Eldridge out of—to short cut things—got him bailed out. He began to write for *Ramparts*.

Rubens:

There's a wonderful picture of him sitting in the *Ramparts*' office.

13-00:36:36

Hinckle:

Yes. We don't have time to go into the whole story of the Panthers right now, but there were some machinations with the Panthers, but just to stay with Eldridge for a minute. Eldridge just loved the sun of attention and it both mellowed and heightened his powers, both of expression and activity, I'd say. Not rapist activity. At any rate, when the Black Panthers situation became quite complicated and everything, Eldridge managed to get out of the country, and that was enabled—well helped out one way or the other, it was like the Underground Railroad. Anyway, he got out, and then he wanted to come back years later after getting a little weird hanging around in Cuba for awhile and not being comfortable in the society there. And going to Africa and hanging around with Leary and not being too comfortable with LSD and other things, and decided he wanted to come back to the United States. I was like gob smacked by my friends at *Ramparts* and the general left reaction because he had then become kind of crazy. He was inventing pants with cod pieces; he was doing this and that. He was doing all kinds of crazy stuff.

Rubens:

He became Christian, didn't he?

13-00:38:32

Hinckle:

He became Christian and various things. I couldn't understand that. I just couldn't understand it because the charges he was accused of were for when he was with the Black Panthers when they were, in fact, under assault by the Oakland Police Department. They were being murdered by the Oakland cops. Panthers were being murdered in Chicago and other places. Written stories about it in various magazines. I've done it, and fairly well, it's not too controversial. That was what was going on, and there was a big federal government COINTEL program to disrupt the Panthers and put people in there and destabilize them and put nuts in there and do this and that. Not that they didn't need much encouragement, some of the guys who were there. But the very idea that he was coming back to surrender on charges that when there

was no question that this is what was going on, it was a police situation. It was Oakland at the time. And the Panthers—*Ramparts* defended their right to—I did—to bear arms. It was a very brave thing to do. It was a Constitutional right. They did it in the open. They didn't shoot anybody in the open. Then they went up to Sacramento with their guns. It was the right Constitutional statement. It was the correct Constitutional—and the cops were picking them off and selectively going after them. It was a very clear issue, the Black Panthers, and *Ramparts'* support of them. And Cleaver was a great writer, no question about it. That's been questioned years later. Peter Richards' book about *Ramparts* came out and David Horowitz had a fixation with this issue.

It was like, what are you talking about? David had a thing for a bookkeeper at *Ramparts*. It was a part-time bookkeeper for us, and I remember recommending her. The Panthers asked me who's trustworthy that won't be a government spy. I said, "What do you guys want a bookkeeper for anyway?" But anyway they did. So I said, "Well, yeah, she's okay." Anyway, she ended up getting bumped off clearly by the Panthers because they turned about a year later into a shake down organization, shaking down their own people in the ghetto and doing this and that. Huey Newton had gone totally off the planet into whacko drugs and every other damn thing he could do. Cleaver had taken a hike from the country. It was over.

That wasn't a period that *Ramparts* supported the Panthers. So I find it extraordinary in that book that Horowitz has freaked out because that was his light-that-failed moment. Where a big leftist who had been Bertrand Russell's private secretary and was a serious Marxist, all of a sudden changes, becomes the opposite, becomes a right winger.

Rubens: You see that as the conversion moment.

13-00:41:40

Hinckle: Oh, yes. When he found out who killed her. Clearly the Panthers did. And it just freaked him out. I said, "Well, what do you expect them to do? She knew too much. They'd turned into thugs by then." But it freaked him out. Anyway, it was like this discussion that the Panthers were a big part of—you know it was like, hey, it was a thing and I felt it should have been promoted and defended at the time because what they were doing was right. Controversial as hell, but goddamn right. The cops were killing them; they had the right to bear arms.

Rubens: Did you know that Cleaver was going to skip?

13-00:42:21

Hinckle: Yes. I didn't ask any details. It wasn't my business.

Rubens: And you were just willing to—five of you put up money for his bail.

13-00:42:28

Hinckle:

Well, no. When he came back, anyway, so that was the Panthers, the discussion of Horowitz's stuff going on about them later. That wasn't what we were talking about in those brief one and a half years when *Ramparts* wrote about them. They stood for something that was interesting.

So Cleaver comes back, and the general reaction among the left guys I knew, the New Left guys, was that "Well, he belongs in jail. He's gone over to the other side." And what does that have to do with anything? His charge was going back when this was going on, the cops were—what the hell, who cares what he thinks now? You're going to incarcerate a guy because he's changed his thinking? That's not exactly what I think would be left thinking. But that was left thinking. Really teed me off, and as I recall the only guys we signed are probably Paul Jacobs, Keating, and myself, to put up this bond when he came back. It was really one of the hypocrisies, if not hypocrisies, contradictions of the left that I've always had trouble with.

Rubens:

You just thought that was the right thing to do? He wasn't going to get money from anybody else. I mean you couldn't have been that flush.

13-00:43:52

Hinckle:

They didn't want him to come back.

Rubens:

But I'm asking about putting up the money for his bail.

13-00:43:54

Hinckle:

He was going to jail. He had to get bond. He needed some security for the bond. I always thought the left was about—

Rubens:

You kept up with him.

13-00:44:11

Hinckle:

Eldridge? Constantly.

Rubens:

Once he came back you still—

13-00:44:16

Hinckle:

Well, yes. He became a character in a lot of the columns I wrote for the *Chronicle* in the 70s and 80s. His various experiments with fashion design and other things and his religion and his business enterprises. I remained pretty friendly with him because he was just an interesting cat. "You're kind of crazy now, Eldridge, but you were crazy then, too." But he's an interesting guy and I just don't think you hold people to judgment or curse them for changing their politics.

Rubens:

Was there any debate going on at *Ramparts* while he was sitting there writing his book—?

13-00:45:05

Hinckle: No.

Rubens:

Did Betty Shabazz come to *Ramparts* because of him?

13-00:45:25

Hinckle: Well, then *Ramparts* became well known as a Panther friendly place. But that was a visit that could have been a disaster, but it wasn't. It's a good San Francisco story what happened there. [This story is told in audio file 15.]

Rubens:

There are a lot of stories to be told. We also want to get to the untold stories, to *Scanlan's* and to *City* magazines. I don't know how we're going to do this.

13-00:51:52

Hinckle: Maybe just leave out all the San Francisco journalism crap.

Rubens:

Well, we'll make generalizations about it, right? So tell me what your thoughts are about covering *Ramparts*? It seems to me that we do need to talk about the conspiracy theories, and then we have to talk about the events in Chicago.

13-00:52:12

Hinckle: Well, that's pretty well known, that stuff.

Rubens:

You think so, okay.

13-00:52:14

Hinckle: I think we can do that in passing, more in the general sense of a couple of funny stories I can tell, but in the general sense of what do you do with some huge controversial issue as a journalist and all of this is descending upon you and everybody's got all these whacko ideas, but some of them might be sensible, and how do you separate this from that? And even though you question the general premise that they're involved in, you know a lot of them are stone cold nuts.

Rubens:

Okay, so we'll do that, and I think we have to do the Chicago convention. And then the denouement; how you leave *Ramparts*.

13-00:53:04

Hinckle: Yes, there's a lot of that left stuff in there and the shift from *Ramparts* —well, we already had the money for the next magazine.

Interview 7: March 23, 2010

In which the true story of events at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party Convention is discussed and the role of *Ramparts* magazine in dissecting and revealing hot topics is colorfully told.

Begin Audio File 14

Rubens: Warren, this is a chance for you to set the story straight about your role with *Ramparts* and *Ramparts'* role in the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention. Tell me about—

14-00:01:07

Hinckle: Nothing was straight about the 1968 Democratic Convention.

Rubens: In Peter Richardson's book on *Ramparts*, he claims that you at first weren't going to go, that it was Fred Gardner that had been asked by Tom Hayden to put out a daily leaflet, and when he asked you for a leave, he said on the spot, you thought, "Hey, we're going to go and we're going to put out a wall poster."

14-00:01:31

Hinckle: No. We were always going to go, I just wasn't sure what to do. The New Left guys wanted to put out a daily thing, and *Ramparts* was the only magazine—even though we were basically in a death spiral ourselves at the time—that could put out anything on the left that would have the ability—the finances or whatever—to put out a daily publication for the convention, which I thought was kind of a ridiculous idea because everybody knew it was going to be chaos in the streets. It was pretty clear weeks before that it was going to be nothing but bloodshed and madness, so it's not a great time for reading. But, anyway, they wanted us to put it out so I said we would and then the format became a question. What do we do? I said, "Nobody's going to sit around and read a sixteen page tabloid full of stuff," when it's going to be obviously chaos in the streets. So then I had this whacko—one of those—whaaaaa—ideas that we do a wall poster like Mao and all the Chinese revolution stuff, and that's how they communicated. That you could even slap up on the wall if you had to if everybody was running, and that sort of stuff. So that's what we decided to do and—

Rubens: Well was the thought that you put them up around Grant Park or literally out at the convention, or—

14-00:03:04

Hinckle: Well, we were going to print it and make a wall poster out of it. It was part publishing. It was a fun idea. And could if there was something to fix them on, paste them up on the walls. And then later I came to laugh because it ended up we put almost all the long analytical stuff on the back of the wall poster where the face would go. That wasn't the actual original intent, but it was pretty

funny. And I said, "Just make it a wall poster." Freddie wanted to do that, so I said, "Well, great, he'd do it. Freddie's a good guy." He got his staff together and everything.

Meanwhile, the convention was like, oh Christ, we forgot about it. It was like next week, and oh, who the hell are we going to have cover that? And it wasn't the usual *Ramparts* job of researching and digging, because obviously it was just all going to happen there. So I recruited, aside from a whole bunch of the usual staff and a lot of left guys and Hunter [Thompson], and everybody, it was like one big crew of people. Who knows how we were going to process what was going to come out of it, but as long as we were going to do it, we might as well have as many people as we could. And also just brought in a lot of regular—

Rubens: You brought in Pete Hamill, didn't you?

14:00:04:44

Hinckle: Hamill was there for a while. I don't know if he might have been—some of these guys were working for other magazines, too, on a longer piece later on. They were sort of in and out of our operation and were handed stuff and say what's going on, that sort of thing. Some pros, Sydney Schanberg of the *New York Times*, he was in the Albany bureau, chief. He was a friend of mine from New York. He didn't get sent to the convention by the *Times*, so he was a little miffed. He later won the Pulitzer Prize for stuff in Cambodia, when he went to *Newsday*. And Sidney Zion, my friend, and he was legal editor for the *Times*. The *Times* was inclined to send him to the convention.

Rubens: And was Tom Hayden literally working for *Ramparts*, or were you just—

14:00:05:39

Hinckle: Hayden wrote pieces for *Ramparts*.

Rubens: But I mean had you brought him there to cover the—?

14:00:05:44

Hinckle: No, Hayden was like a major domo of the left theorizing and everything for the convention, the whole SDS movement, that part of the left.

Rubens: The counter convention.

14:00:05:55

Hinckle: Yes. Hayden wrote quite a few pieces over the years for *Ramparts*. He and I never got along personally, and to this day don't.

Rubens: What was that about?

14:00:06:08

Hinckle: I just didn't like the guy. I thought he was a bit of a, oh, the word on the left is opportunist. But not from as much an ideological point of view as—he was

kind of slimy and edgy and groping for, and then there was a lot of the Uriah Heep in Hayden. And the same problem with a lot of his stuff on Ireland and the way he dealt with that. It was more about him than it was about the cause, if you want to put it that way. That sort of thing. Some people can get away with that and you still kind of like them. Or if you totally like them, you forgive him that sin—showboating or making it about them, or something like that, because they're solid enough.

Hayden didn't have that grace in my estimation, so we didn't get along well.

Rubens: Did you have concern that he was going to be a provocateur?

14-00:07:13

Hinckle: Is that's what somebody said in Richardson's book that—what did they say? I forget.

Rubens: Sol Stern claimed that the story that was really missed by *Ramparts* at the convention, at the protest, was that there had already been news in the air that they were going to be provocative, that heads were going to roll, that there was going to be violence. And so who are the key instigators?

14-00:07:44

Hinckle: Oh, that's hindsight. Well, of course there was going to be violence. They were flying troops in, the National Guard and everything, days and days in advance of the convention, and putting armed camps up there and preparing to arrest vast numbers of people. We knew that much. Everybody knew that. But I brought in quite a few professional reporters, too. Jake McCarthy, who was a great guy, who was an old hand from the Gibbons of the Teamsters, and he was the editor of the Teamster newspaper out of St. Louis. It was then one of the only—Gibbons was on the left in the Teamsters versus Hoffa. It was a very progressive labor paper at a time when a lot of labor—particularly the Teamsters—were corrupt as hell. I guess everybody remembers the deals with Nixon and the Teamsters, that's sort of part of history. But Jake was one of the main guys of their force, but he came from a newspaper background, too. A real pro.. And then there were all the New Left guys, and then a few people like Hunter and others. We had quite a mismatch. It was like, "Hey, we'll throw everybody in there and we'll see what comes out of it. Then we'll figure out what we'll make out it in terms of the magazine in the end. In the meanwhile, we'll put out this stupid wallpaper."

Rubens: Now did you have a base? Was there some place—where did you rent offices? The Wallpaper had offices in a YMCA I understand, but you were headquartered at the Ambassador Hotel.

14-00:09:14

Hinckle: Yes. We had a bunch of rooms at the Ambassador in a big sort of suite area which was like I don't know. Then we had a bar—almost like a place does at a convention. It was a convention. We had a big place for people to come

hang around, bullshit and gossip and tell us what's going on. Delegates, people like that, other press guys, and a much criticized nightly table at the Pump Room. But the same stuff was going on.

Rubens: Criticized because?

14-00:09:45

Hinckle: Oh, the usual criticism. *Ramparts* was the left and it spent money. That's what it did.

Rubens: What was your rationalization?

14-00:09:58

Hinckle: We had thirty people. We were going to make that investment, even though it was a foolish investment from the financial standpoint, in putting out the daily thing for the convention and gathering all this information and adding more people. I knew we had to make an issue out of it, and presumably the issue would sell commercially. Who knows? Maybe we could make a book out of it. I don't know what we'd do until I saw the stuff, until we saw what happened and what we had, so the more, the merrier. Just collect everything and maybe we'd be real lucky and come up with an angle or enough thoroughness, or craziness, or a take on it because we knew so much stuff that even though it was well covered in the world—needless to say, the events of the day—that for a monthly magazine we could come up with something. Indeed, books and other things were written and used after about that convention.

That's why we had such a huge group of people because I wasn't sure what the hell we were going to do, and I certainly didn't see the value in having a New Left critique of what went on. It was pretty clear it was going to be a violent clash between the sort of police state of Mayor Daley and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. They were going to try and push Humphrey in. Then there was the possibility of a revolt to get Humphrey out and to get a lefty in, and as we learned during the convention, there was a secret plot by LBJ to plot a comeback even though he had said he wasn't going to run again.

Rubens: How did you learn about that? That's one of the claims of Richardson, that there was a fight between Gardner and you where you're calling from the Pump Room and saying, "Hold the presses, don't put out the wall poster tonight. I've got this news about—"

14-00:11:47

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Tell me how you learn about the alleged plot.

14-00:11:49

Hinckle:

Oh, we got a spy. One of the guys who hung around us then later became completely involved in my life over the years and was quite involved in, *Scanlan's* was an ex-CIA operative named Oswald LeWinter. Oswald was an extraordinary guy. He was a very good poet. I've got stuff about, we printed some of his poetry in the Argonaut in this biographical thing about him. Anyway, he went from being a leader, activist, radical in the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley to a CIA operative or a freelance CIA operative, to a very, very murky thing to stints with Israeli intelligence, to international con man and ties with the mob. The guy is a novel in himself, and very bright guy, quite an inventive mind. At the time of the convention he was a speech writer for Hubert Humphrey.

Rubens:

Had you known him before?

14-00:13:07

Hinckle:

Oh, Oswald, yes. He was at the convention as a speech writer for Humphrey. So he was there, and we inveigled him because he was kind of on the inside of the Humphrey camp. He was telling me the story, one night, he was reluctant to part with this information, typical this sort of thing famous *Ramparts* story, so Sidney Zion knew the guy who was the PR man for the Ambassador Hotel chain, I think it was Loews that owned it, I'm not sure, I'd have to look that up. But, anyway, so we get the guy down at the bar one night and say, "Look, we've got to get this guy—a source. We've got to get him laid." That's what he's saying, and is there a way, can the hotel figure out how do we do that. Nobody really knows Chicago, where the whorehouses are, how do you get, that sort of thing. Chaos, there's war on the streets. And he says, "Think nothing of it. I'll be back in a bit." So we're standing at the bar, etc. He comes back and hands me a room key, and he says, "In exactly one hour one of the most beautiful women in Chicago will be between the sheets in this room." And I go, "Oh, no, it's not for me." He said, "Yeah."

Rubens:

Who is the hotel operative who—

14-00:14:46

Hinckle:

The PR guy for the hotel, Ambassador chain. So I say, "Okay, how do we pay for this? What do I do?" "No problem," he says, "Just, it'll be on your bill as cash paid out, or something like that." And I say, "Oh, goods on a bill?" "Okay." That was nice. So I give the key to—

Rubens:

But it didn't say one prostitute, it was supposed to be cash paid out, or some kind of cover.

14-00:15:22

Hinckle:

Yes. Cash paid out. So I give the key to Oswald, I say, "Oswald, in one hour the most beautiful woman in Chicago." So we're down at the Pump Room, I guess, and an hour or so later Oswald comes back and he's looking all gloomy and everything like that. I said, "Oswald, hey, how'd it go?" He says, "I

couldn't do anything. I didn't do anything." I said, "What?" He says, "Yeah. I don't know. She reminded me of my mother." And I sat there and we were like, [laughs] there were howls and howls.

Meanwhile, Hayden's next door trying to convince everybody that some huge document's got to be signed, another left proclamation sort of thing. All that stuff was going on at once in Chicago. I remember Hunter was there when this thing went on. He just thought it was one of the funniest things he'd ever seen. Hunter Thompson.

Well, anyway, Oswald comes up with the story and had a memo that the Humphrey guys were concerned and then actually found a room and some former Johnson operatives in it, at a room in the Grant Hotel, part of the hotel away from most of the convention delegates' rooms, which was sort of a secret command post of Johnson's where he was monitoring what was going on, and people were coming back and reporting, and doing things, and they had guys on the floor. And he had an alternate plan for a comeback if this happened and that happened with Humphrey and the McCarthy forces blocked Humphrey, typical Democratic Convention stuff, which goes on often. Sad to say not so much these days, but it used to go on all the time at Democratic Conventions. They were pretty dramatic. So—sometimes at Republican Conventions. They're pretty well scripted now, but then it was like hey, things could happen. So he had an alternate plan to come back and he had a command post for it.

Rubens: And you think this was—you're just convinced this was real. This is what LeWinter said, and this was really, this was happening.

14-00:17:47

Hinckle: Well, yes. We checked out the hotel. We had the room numbers, and the guys were White House guys, and they had an operation going in there. There was no question about it. And Oswald had found some sort of a memo, well the Humphrey guys, they had drafted a memo saying we think these guys are up to this, and here we had some of their names, and we got to be wary of this because if they align with some McCarthy, McCarthy people go their way just to spite us and stuff like that. They were seriously concerned about it. So it wasn't just a rumor, it was a fact. The reality of it actually coming to fruition I always thought was very small, but a story is a story and in that atmosphere it was pretty damn interesting that Johnson had his own operation which when you think about it, it makes sense. He was the President. His own party was in revolt. Who the hell knows what was going to happen and be said and everything else, and he wanted his guy Humphrey to get in, and there was a big challenge to Humphrey from the left. On the other hand, he didn't want McCarthy to get it or somebody else. And you never know, the horse might fly. It might end up, although it seemed highly unlikely in any scenario in history, but that's what they were thinking about. They were looking at all their options and monitoring things, and they had a place where the Humphrey

people were quite concerned about it. They thought it might be a Trojan Horse and they do something to make a deal to screw Humphrey at the last minute to Johnson's advantage. There was a lot of paranoia. These things go on, particularly in an atmosphere like Chicago, they're crazy.

Rubens: Constant horse-trading.

14-00:19:38

Hinckle: Yes, and plots, and it always is, read the stories—for instance about when Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. It reads like a goddamn Roman drama.

Rubens: You, of course, were at the convention?

14-00:19:51

Hinckle: Oh, yes, I was there the whole time. I remember the plane I came in on from San Francisco, the pilot was bitching, clearly a Republican guy, and he says, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid our plane is going to be delayed. We've just been told we have to hold off for forty five minutes or something like that because of the unprecedented and unannounced arrival of troop loads of planes being landed in Chicago to bring troops to cover this convention, and this is your taxpayers' money, and you should be outraged." The pilot was furious, right? So I said, "Oh, that's a good start."

Rubens: And did you meet with people like Phil Burton at all? Did you talk to him to find out what was going on? He played quite a role at that convention.

14-00:20:47

Hinckle: Yes. Oh, I had a drink or so with Phil. We had a lot of guys—

Rubens: You said that they were covering.

14-00:20:53

Hinckle: Yes. Sandy, Sandra was running around. We had Hamill doing some stuff as I recall.

Rubens: But it's not your job to actually do the reporting, but I was wondering if you literally were there watching things, getting a sense of it.

14-00:21:08

Hinckle: You get a sense by everybody's coming in and out and you're out there and you're on the streets or at the convention, you're at the riots, and you saw these people twenty-four hours a day.

Rubens: So you weren't in the Pump Room the whole time.

14-00:21:21

Hinckle: No, just at night for a couple hours.

Rubens: So what happens with this, there is though a notorious story about you call and say hold the presses, we're not doing the wall poster as had been agreed on earlier. We're going to run this LBJ story, and Gardner said I'm not going to do it.

14-00:21:44

Hinckle: Probably. I remember I fired Freddie, but that was over a production issue. I think that's out of sequence in time. What happened was Freddie went ahead and found a printer and it was like, "How are we going to find a printer in Chicago and get to something like this in this atmosphere, very military combative crazed atmosphere, and get this thing out?" And he found a printer and he had done some left tabloids and papers, probably a big plant, and set up a little operation. He got some rooms somewhere, it was the Y or some place. I'm not sure what the hell it was. I was over there once, we don't need this

Anyway, so the first day the thing came out like four in the afternoon. It was like already over and it was supposed to have, among other things, the maps and the things like that. But the thing that pissed me off about it was that it was a wall poster and it was all full of little type stories in the front page. And I said, "Fred, for Christ's sake, you can't do that, it's a wall poster. You've got to have a big image on the front page." Put all that small type on the back, for God's sakes. Then the second one it was about the same problem, they just couldn't get it out. So by that second time I just said I'd had it. I said, "Hell with you guys," and it could well have been that LBJ story. I said, "Hey, we finally got a story for this thing," rip this stuff out. They said, "No, we can't do that." I said, "You guys are all fired."

So I sent over the, well Jack McCarthy put out the weekly Teamster paper, and he was a pro. I said, "Take over this Goddamn thing. Let's get it out on time, and we'll find some content for it." And whatever they got, put it in and have those whoever's to the left still around there, give us all their stuff and we'll get it in, but this is ridiculous.

Rubens: I think it was the LBJ story then, I think that's what ran.

14-00:23:52

Hinckle: It did run. LBJ's secret command post. It was one of the wall posts. But the first one was, I thought—

Rubens: No, I was talking about the third one, not the first one.

14-00:24:04

Hinckle: I forget, anyway, it's unimportant, but that well could have happened. I don't recall. I did fire Freddie and the staff because they didn't get the goddamn thing out, and I was furious, and it didn't look like a wall poster, which really esthetically drove me nuts. What do we make those goofy formats for if we're

going to have all these crazy little crappy looking design small print stories on the front page of a thing called a wall poster. No, it's a wall poster.

The combination was there, I said, "You guys are out, and Jake, take over this goddamn thing." And they got Schanberg and Zion and I said, "Hey, let's get some stories for this thing so maybe we can get the rest of the stupid people who go to this convention to pick it up, too, and but we'll keep all the left stuff in there so they get their analysis and stuff out, but let's fix this thing up, this is ridiculous, we've got half a convention to go, and it's nuts. So that's what happened. It was just a typical professional versus left conflict.

Rubens: But how many came out?

14:00:25:03

Hinckle: I don't know. Freddie's got a whole set of them. It must have been four or five.

Rubens: I haven't seen one.

14:00:25:08

Hinckle: I guess they got out one day before, and there's four days of the convention. I think I've got one buried around here somewhere. There's some printed in the Hunter Thompson book, at least the one—. But anyway the most famous one, the one that totally drove the left guys crazy was the— It was one night when all the tear gas that was going on, anyway, the tear gas came into the Pump Room, and all these fancy people in the Pump Room all of a sudden windows were broken or the tear gas was coming in, and then they were coughing and crying and puking, and I'm going, "My God, this is heaven. The revolution has finally come." There's tear gas in the Pump Room. All these people—they thought their eyes were burning from this. They didn't care if those people got beat on the streets. Now they're eating tear gas, this is it.

So to me that was, "Hey, the revolution's here guys." So we put out this wall poster with just giant headlines: "Tear gas in the Pump Room." I'll show you the, I've got that. That's reprinted in the Hunter Thompson book.

Rubens: Oh, good.

14:00:26:15

Hinckle: And then, as you know, Hunter went on, loved the wall poster idea, and then went on to create his own wall poster in Aspen when he ran for Sheriff. He got the idea. The front was art.

Rubens: And so were you criticized by the New Left guys for that tongue in cheek—

14:00:26:34

Hinckle: Oh, they gave us sewer service, which meant refused to distribute it, that sort of, because we had these New Left distributors running around. It was a very

difficult distribution job because the streets were in chaos and people were constantly on the move, so you basically had to leave it at all the various hotels and other places, but everything was in such a shuffle that it wasn't like going to a drug store and buy a copy of the papers. So we worked that out. So they kind of gave that issue sewer service. Anyway, that's what happened. I put the newspaper pros in charge of putting out the wall poster, and there was a lot of analytical articles and everything like that weren't printed and the information about meetings and stuff like that, but it came out on time, because having that information out at four or five in the afternoon didn't really do anybody any good. It was supposed to be out at six in the morning, so—

Rubens: So you knew what was happening that day.

14:00:27:37

Hinckle: When the riots started. There was a typical division in *Ramparts* between, not that Freddie was, Freddie's a very competent guy, I think it was just chaos, he had all these volunteers, the printer was a jerk, he was charging the hell out of this, and they had production problems, I guess. Anyway, they couldn't get it out.

Rubens: The other thing I was going to ask you, everything at the Ambassador was basically on a tab, but for the printing you had cash, you had accounts that you could draw on, the money was there.

14:00:28:06

Hinckle: Yes. We had to pay for it. I think it cost us about, I forget, probably a good fifteen thousand bucks for that wall poster if not more.

Yes, the Ambassador was on a tab. There's a very funny story about that.

Rubens: We'll get to that.

14:00:28:22

Hinckle: Anyway, hey, there was an issue with Hayden, but I guess maybe because I fired most of the New Left guys, although I don't think many of them knew that because I only learned that after the convention itself. But Hayden had set up loudspeakers and gave a speech I believe it was supposed to be from the Hilton, I think it was the Hilton, I'd have to look back at the articles we wrote at the time, but it was, I think it was the Hilton, basically telling everybody massed at Grant Park to charge the hotel or attack the oppressors, or something like that, right, in this big, fiery revolutionary speech which at the time I thought it was kind of crazy, Jesus, Hayden, typical Hayden grandstanding, you're going to cause a riot, these goddamn troops to shoot people, it's crazy enough out here. But it later turned out that Hayden had recorded this and had a broadcast in some sort of loudspeaker they'd set up somehow into the park, but he wasn't like standing in front of the crowds saying, "Lead the charge." He was somewhere else, the bastard. Believe me, if

I'd known that at the time, that would have been the wall poster because I couldn't stand Hayden. That was like a perfect example of why I didn't like Hayden.

But we didn't discover that until after the convention. So that's Solly Stern. It probably came from Solly. It sounds like Solly. It sounds like the Horowitz *Ramparts* line, too—after I left the magazine. There was no—

Rubens: Now were those guys there too? Was Scheer at the convention?

14:00:30:16

Hinckle: Yes. Scheer was there. Everybody was there. We couldn't be the leading magazine on the left, the only big magazine on the left and not be at the convention, as if that doesn't matter, and then therefore not cover it. And then we were asked to put out this damn publication; so one thing led to the other so it was like in for a dime, in for a dollar, and there we were. So that was the Hayden story.

Rubens: Now when you say asked to put out the publication, what are you referring to?

14:00:30:48

Hinckle: The wall poster. What became the wall poster. They wanted us to put out a daily paper for the convention. The SDS crowd. Those guys asked us.

Rubens: I didn't know they asked you as *Ramparts*. I thought that it had been that they had asked Gardner as someone who would come and take a break from *Ramparts* and do it. So I thought then it had become your idea and you took it over really and it became your own, but it was in concert with—

14:00:31:27

Hinckle: Yes. Freddie may well have come to me and said, "Hey, they want us to put a paper." I volunteered to do it. I talked subsequently around the same time to Hayden about it and to a couple of people, but Freddie could have well then come and said to me, and he was a trusted editor and a good guy, and I said, "Well, Geez that's going to be a pain in the butt." Then I was kind of not reluctant, but not too happy about the idea of doing it. Who the hell's going to read something, a big paper like that to the left in that mess because everybody would be, and then the wall poster idea popped up, and then I felt better about that. Ah, at least it will be immediate, this is like something I can—This sounds like *Ramparts*, to do a wall poster.

Rubens: Right, exactly. I didn't know if this became a *Ramparts* initiative. I understand that the story started with Hayden and with Gardner, but I thought that it was something that then becomes your own, that it's a *Ramparts*—

14:00:32:17

Hinckle: Yes, we put it out. We paid the bills and published it. It was a *Ramparts* wall poster.

Rubens: That's right. When you said they, it's not as if you were representing an interest or whatever—

14-00:32:29

Hinckle: No. But the New Left guys wanted to, they were a big part of the staff. Todd Gitlin and all of those guys then, Hayden. All of them wrote off and on for *Ramparts*.

Rubens: Did you have any argument with Scheer over this?

14-00:32:42

Hinckle: Argument? No, nobody opposed the idea of doing it. It was like, "Yeah, we should do that."

Rubens: No, but what about once you let the New Left guys go?

14-00:32:50

Hinckle: No, Scheer didn't care about that.

Rubens: Okay. That's why I asked you if Scheer was there. I didn't even know.

14-00:32:53

Hinckle: He didn't care about it.

Rubens: Scheer had been at the, he had interviewed Bobby just before he had been killed, isn't that right?

14-00:33:01

Hinckle: Yes. I'm positive Scheer was at the convention. At the moment I can't place him there, any conversation with him. Sure he was there and we had to shape the issue afterwards, and we had all kinds of discussions about how we approach it and all the stuff we got and it was pretty good—

Rubens: Let's get to that. Let's just finish up the story about the bill, about how you get out of Chicago.

14-00:33:23

Hinckle: So anyway, so then we finally bail out of Chicago, comes the end. I think it was Solly said to me, "Hey, I called down to room service and ordered some breakfast or something like that, and they said we'd have to pay cash. I said, "Oh-oh, sounds to me like it's time to leave, guys. Everybody pack up and get ready to get out of here. It was the last day of the convention, the end of it. The wall poster had already come out that morning. I said, "Time to leave, guys. Everybody, let's go." And so a month or so later the bill came from the Ambassador East, and Bob Kaldenbach who was controller, long suffering guy, good guy, he comes up to me and he says, "Oh, God, we're just about under. Now I've got this huge bill from Chicago. What are we going to do? How are we going to pay this? It was a very thick bill, about two inches, a

million charges, all kinds of guys were in the rooms and were calling up to order drinks and food and stuff, it was a big bill.

I said, "Let me see that." Well, we were going to plow through the bill, and sure enough, here is this item, "Paid out, four hundred dollars or something like that, I forget the exact amount." So I circled the item, and I said, "Here, you send this back to the hotel and tell them we will pay this bill in full upon documentation for this paid out charge."

Rubens: So it doesn't say that it's for a call girl, just as they agreed they would.

14:00:34:57

Hinckle: Yes, cash paid out. Went back and forth to them, and I said, "Kaldenbach, here's the story." I guess the controller called them and said, "What do you mean?" I told him the story. He goes, "Oh." So I don't know if the Ambassador East Hotel wants it known that you can put hookers on the, charge it to your room at the hotel. And if need be, we'd get depositions of everybody who was there, the legal editor of the *New York Times*, the Humphrey speech writer we got the hooker for. All these guys, we'll name everybody, and they can sue us for the bill. You tell them that, but our defense is going to be that we don't even need a defense.

Rubens: So that's a true story. That's a legendary story.

14:00:35:41

Hinckle: That's an absolutely true story. We never paid a cent of that.

Rubens: And they didn't sue you.

14:00:35:46

Hinckle: Absolutely not. They forgot, they ran from it so fast.

Rubens: They just took their losses. That was lucky. Had you had money, you probably would have paid it?

14:00:35:55

Hinckle: Probably not. But I would have done the same thing.

Rubens: You were a party to the arrangement.

14:00:36:03

Hinckle: Who cares about those guys? We had other worries.

Rubens: Yes, you had big worries.

14:00:36:06

Hinckle: It certainly would have been the bottom of the pile. It would have been on the very slow pay file if we had plenty of money.

Rubens: But you didn't go there with the intent of doing that.

14:00:36:19

Hinckle: No. I had no idea I was going to get some guy a hooker and they'd say put it on the room bill.

Rubens: Yes, and that would be your leverage—

14:00:36:27

Hinckle: When you go into something like that you just never quite know what's going to happen. I think that the issue that came out was pretty damn good. I remember I wrote most of the thing at the end, but it was one of those "By the Staff." Did a pretty good job with the politics.

Rubens: Where do you do this? You go to New York and you all convene—

14:00:36:48

Hinckle: Fled Chicago, went immediately to New York, and locked ourselves up in the Algonquin. Sterner the art director came in, and we actually set the whole thing in type in New York, wrote it and set it in type over three or four days, and we pasted it up and put the rest of the issue except for the cover and that, put it together and sent it to the printer from there where, bingo, it's done.

Rubens: And then it comes out September 28th with Humphrey on the cover in a trash can.

14:00:37:33

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Let me hand it to you to show the camera. Give us a critique of that. Do you have a hand in—turn it around, just show it to the camera for a second. What is the critique of it? What are we saying it's saying, that we're through with him?

14:00:37:58

Hinckle: Yes. It was the typical *Ramparts* analysis. Not typical, but the same way as the Reagan/Pat Brown race in California, so I took the position: what's the difference? There's no difference between Reagan and Pat Brown, was basically our conclusion. There's no difference between Nixon and Humphrey, they'll both be as bad. The *Ramparts* position was always, that was the New Left part of the magazine, that you can't accept the lesser alternative, that failed liberalism and sold out liberalism can't stand, represent the Democratic Party, and the corruption and the accommodation with power of the military, continuation of the wars, that sort of thing was just not acceptable and you shouldn't be blackmailed into saying you're much better off, it's sort of the politics of catastrophe, you're much better off having some horrible right-winger come in and try and put everybody in prison camps when it comes to that, and then have a real revolution, than you are going along with this gradual drift of, you know—

Rubens: But that was a New Left analysis, wasn't it?

14-00:39:31

Hinckle: I'd say that was serious—

Rubens: And you shared that? Was that you?

14-00:39:37

Hinckle: Absolutely. Yes, don't go along with these bastards. *Ramparts* did that all along, but we didn't like to write editorials and preach about it. It was a big story early in *Ramparts* I started doing it about the California governor's race. Whereas basically we took that position, it infuriated a lot of liberals in the California Democratic Party. Burton. Si Casady was then the editor of it, they were screaming at me, some of our investors at the time. Bill [Louis] Honig particularly, advertising guy, was a big Democrat. "How can you do this to the Party? You can't say that." "Well, that's just the way we see it." Pat Brown is just as bad on the university as Reagan ever would be, he's terrible on the death penalty, there were all these issues. It was a disaster, so why the hell should we be panicked into supporting him? It wasn't like we hung a sign out the window that said vote for the right wing. It was that we wrote rather lengthy reportorial type essays that just analyzed it and said, "Hey, there's no difference here." These guys are corrupt. They're useless. We can't go this way.

Rubens: Did you send a delegation of people to cover Eldridge Cleaver's run for the Peace and Freedom—

14-00:41:03

Hinckle: Delegation? Well, no.

Rubens: Did anyone go to cover—the convention was in Ann Arbor.

14-00:41:11

Hinckle: No, we didn't—

Rubens: This was your editor, right? Running for President of the United States on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket—he beat out Dick Gregory for the—

14-00:41:19

Hinckle: Yeah. I didn't want to get in an intramural fight between Dick and Eldridge, but hey, if a guy wants to run for President, then why not? Scheer ran for Congress, Eldridge wanted to run for President, what the hell?

Rubens: But this wasn't covered in *Ramparts*.

14-00:41:36

Hinckle: No. Cleaver may have written about it. I don't recall.

Rubens: I don't think it was in the magazine.

14-00:41:44

Hinckle: Probably not. It was probably ads saying buy buttons for him, stuff like that. It wasn't like a realistic run. But, hey nothing wrong with running to make points—

Rubens: I just wondered if anybody at *Ramparts* had an investment in one of their editors. The book had come out. The book was—

14-00:42:15

Hinckle: Well, we had a great investment in Eldridge. Took quite a few risks for him in various areas and supported him throughout that period, but in terms of getting a magazine out front because he's running for the Peace and Freedom Party, no.

Rubens: One of my questions, my leftovers, let's just stay with the September 28th 1968 edition.

14-00:42:43

Hinckle: Oh, Solly Stern, you want to get—

Rubens: Yeah, let's finish up with Solly Stern, whose claim I guess we said off camera was that *Ramparts* had made a decision not to cover the big story [at the convention], which was "how a relatively small group of American radicals had made common cause with the enemy and was leading the left toward self-destruction and nihilism."

14-00:43:03

Hinckle: That's poetry. It's pure poetry. That's the post left going to the right Solly Stern speaking.

Rubens: I was reading a quote of his in Peter Richardson's book, *A Bomb in Every Issue*.

14-00:43:18

Hinckle: Yeah, but that's his point of view now. It wasn't his point of view then. Two things about that. One is that in reality there was no attempt to declare a revolution in America. It was absolute chaos, except for a provocative speech by Hayden like charge the barricades sort of thing. There was no plot for bombs or Weathermen or anything like that. Believe me, history would have, and the FBI, would have found that out in time if there was. In fact, there wasn't any organized left violence at the convention except for Yippee type violence and provocative stuff and people running around screaming, and violence was all from the state. So that is complete ideological fantasy looking back from the right wing prospective if somebody was embarrassed to have been part of the left. Same view that Horowitz, to an extent Peter Collier have, but that's ideological hindsight, that's ridiculous.

The story that we did miss because nobody found out about it until later was that this phony Hayden had recorded this sort of provocative call to charge,

call to arms, great revolutionary gift to pigs rhetoric and wasn't standing there himself giving it. Boy, I wish I'd known that, didn't find that out until much later.

But Solly Stern is a great story because it's typical of the *Ramparts* guys and the ones that later would change ideologically. So Solly worked for me at *Scanlan's*. Solly, for a leftist I felt, had an inordinate respect for property rights. One time we had some extra rented cars at *Ramparts*, and he had a car, he was out from New York. He was living in New York and writing for *New York* magazine then. I had one from somewhere, I don't know why I had a car here, but anyway, I had a rented car. So he had his rental car, and we had been out to the office bar and—we were down somewhere a couple blocks from the office and he was getting his car. I sort of, "Solly watch out there I'm going to get your door," and I took the car I was driving up and bent the door back on his car, and he's screaming, "Oh, my God, you're going to break the door, you're going to break the door," and sure enough, plop, the door flipped over the other side. He couldn't get in. I said, "Aw, leave the thing here, Solly, I'll give you a ride." "Well, you wrecked the car, you wrecked the car, what'll the insurance company say, we'll get in trouble." "Tell them somebody tried to vandalize the car, don't tell them anything. I'll have the office call them. We'll have it towed away, it's a rented car, so what?" That sort of thing, I had sort of a cavalier attitude, and I wasn't a leftist. I just had a rather cavalier attitude that way towards property. And Solly was absolutely destroyed. He says, "Yes, but you hurt the car. That's going to cheat the insurance company." I said, "What do you care? You're the big leftist. You're not supposed to believe in private property."

Rubens: So what is this on your part?

14:00:46:44

Hinckle: "What's the matter with you, Solly?"

Rubens: It's not a drunken moment. It's just hijinks. It's one of your—

14:00:46:50

Hinckle: Hijinks. Yeah. Big deal. You know how much money we spend at the rental car company every year? So I bent the door on one of them, big deal. That's the way I look at it. That's what insurance is for. How crooked is the insurance industry? When you start to think about it, you could build a case to go around breaking things. It's just too much trouble to do it. It's more instructive about Solly than I think it is about me. I didn't have a pattern of going around breaking car doors; I think that was the only incident. But Solly, I said, "Jesus, Solly where are you coming from, man." He was like, the next day he was completely shook up. "I had to lie." I said, "Geez will you forget about it? I already had so and so at the office call and they took the car away. Don't worry about it." But he did, he was like—

Rubens: So then we finished—

14-00:47:53

Hinckle:

No, no, I've got to tell this story about Solly Stern. So he comes in about a year later and then we're doing a *Scanlan's*, and my friend and partner Sidney Zion, and we'd put out a few, and he said, "You know, I think I should go to Israel and report what the hell's going on." Well, Sidney, needless to say, was a great Israeli partisan and was involved in intramural Israeli politics from the side more of the Irgun and the Stern gangs and Begin and those guys and were quite critical of a lot of the accommodationists in Israel. That's a raging debate and has been for some time in Israel, as people who are familiar with Israeli politics know. But anyway, that was the side Sidney was on and he really always had the inside gossip and skinny on that, and I must say I did come to meet quite a few of those Irgun guys who were still going in the sixties with Sidney. Pretty impressive characters, pretty impressive people. They also had like a, if you want to call it, a New Left attitude. They were unrelenting in their breaking away from the British, going after the British, not going along with anything. The Irgun broke away from any deal and went around bumping off British soldiers like the IRA, and there always was a link up between the IRA guys and the Irgun and some of the Stern guys because their tactics were much the same against the British, and we're going to get them out no matter what.

So Sidney's going and I said, "Oh, boy, went through this with one magazine, took the reasonable and sensible submissions supporting Israel, but it wasn't enough for the investors, so that we got all that crap from the Israel right." I said, "Now, what am I going to do?" Sidney goes, "It's a perfect right, he's a partner, he's the owner of the Max—, I know he's going to write. It'll be great to read. It'll be good reporting, but we're going to get whacked for being unsympathetic from the left." Oy yo! what to do? What a quandary because he's my friend and we're equal owners, and he has every right to go do what he's going to do. And probably I would agree with most of what he wrote. It's like, "Oh, God."

So then I thought I had this bright idea. I said, "Solly Stern." I'll send Solly because he'd written a couple of pieces already for *Scanlan's*. He wrote the piece we did on Altamont, which was so critical of The Rolling Stones, and the ultimate collapse of hippies and the politics of love and non-political stuff. It's a big critique I made in *Ramparts* of the hippies' culture and The Rolling Stones, etc. and then we carried that on into *Scanlan's* and Solly wrote that article about the disaster at Altamont, where the Hell's Angels wiped out people and everything.

But Solly was the most anti-Israel guy on the *Ramparts* staff in the debate over what's our position on Israel. In all of this we had to make a call about *Ramparts*. It's one thing at two in the morning to break a car door and laugh about it. But it's another thing to say, hey, this was the first major large

circulation serious magazine on the left. We were right in most of our analyses and pretty open minded. It had different views from the left prospective about issues, and it had a leadership position as a journalistic thing. You couldn't duck these issues. We certainly had to take a position on Israel when the rest of the left was condemning Israel saying it didn't have a right to exist. And that is true of most of the rest of the left at that time. It's extraordinary when you look back that that was what people were saying and writing, no question about it. But Solly was like the most anti-Israel guy because his father was a Sabra. He drove a cab in Tel Aviv, Solly grew up there, but he just was the biggest anti-Israel critic we had among the entire New Left crew at *Ramparts*.

Sidney liked Solly, just as a guy. He liked him, and they got along on all kinds of things because Solly immediately started being conservative and Sidney's conservative on a lot of issues. And I said, "Well, Sidney, why don't you take Solly with you when you go to Israel?" Great, because I was thinking maybe he whatever, whatever his critiques were, once he got over there and grew up there, I told Sidney, "This and that," they'd hang around and it might tempt for that maybe Solly' write something, too, I didn't know. It was the only thing I could think of to maybe—so Solly was over there, they come back. Solly had turned, he made Zion look like an Arab. He had completely gone the other way, he's like, "Kill all the Arabs." I thought, "Oh, my God."

Anyway, Solly became a conservative scholar at the Manhattan Institute. He may still be there, I believe he is. But we've remained socially friendly over the years in New York.

Rubens: Israel was his turning point.

14-00:53:34

Hinckle: Yeah. And definitely not as hysterical in self-promoting as Horowitz is about it, etc. But definitely went from left to right, so no question about it. So that remark in the *Ramparts* book about the missed story or hiding the story that there was a secret revolution on the left to ferment, what, revolution in the country? Violence, SDS, what are you talking about?

Rubens: Well, and I think he's talking about found transcripts of statements that Hayden had made in Vietnam or about the Viet Cong which argued that the Americans should be supporting the Viet Cong and not the troops.

14-00:54:17

Hinckle: Yeah. That's merging of the issues from a right wing perspective that had nothing to do with what's going on in Chicago.

Rubens: At the time.

14-00:54:26

Hinckle: Yeah, well the left at the time, so that's just looking back from a right wing perspective.

Rubens: I wanted to ask you, we had talked about Eldridge Cleaver and his jumping bail, and I did come across the reference that said, Kathleen Cleaver says that she does pay back. It's you and Jacobs, Paul Jacobs, and—

14-00:54:50

Hinckle: And Keating.

Rubens: Keating, who had put up money.

14-00:54:54

Hinckle: Well, we didn't put up money, we put up property.

Rubens: Okay, as backing for the bail.

14-00:54:59

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Yeah, so when he jumped ship, they didn't come, it was \$50,000, so you must have each put up, there were like six people, you must have put up \$10,000 worth using your property as collateral.

14-00:55:11

Hinckle: We all signed papers and put up houses and other property for his bail.

Rubens: Yeah, then Kathleen Cleaver says that she started raising money to pay back those investors, but, so no one came and took your property?

14-00:55:25

Hinckle: No. She may have paid me back. I don't remember writing a check for \$10,000, but it could have happened.

Rubens: Okay.

14-00:55:37

Hinckle: I just had drinks with her a couple of, a year and a half ago now in New York. She had a problem with copyrighting one of Eldridge's things and called me in New York. And I said, "Come on down," I took her down to Players Club. She looks terrific. All these old actors, players, I walked in, she walks in the bar down there, and they go, "Wow," like royalty, treated her like royalty.

Rubens: Yeah.

14-00:55:56

Hinckle: Very smart woman. And then she had all those troubles with Eldridge. I knew them both very well and, of course, in subsequent years knew Eldridge very well—

Rubens: Well, you write about him later in your *Chronicle* columns—

14-00:56:08

Hinckle: A character I wrote about. He became a character. This is after he came back to this country. The issue with his bail was a left issue. It was like the left had abandoned Cleaver because he changed his ideology. And it was like—Paul Jacobs was the same say. They said you can't do that. This guy is out of the country, is going to go to jail if he doesn't get bail, on charges stemming from when the governor was out to kill all the Panthers and waging war on black people in Oakland, for God's sakes. And that was then, and that's what happened and that's why these charges are against him, and you can't say, "Oh, let him rot in hell in jail," because he's coming back to America because he's changed his politics now. That's not right.

Rubens: So hold on, we've got to change the tape.

Begin Audio File 15

Rubens: So you're saying there's a legitimate claim that he represented, that he was part of, the jailing of him on his return was—

15-00:00:10

Hinckle: It was the time of COINTELPRO. Cops, forget the Oakland cops which are famous assassins, but the entire FBI had a division operating just to create divisions in the black community to get cops to get into situations where they could assassinate black leaders, to start fights, COINTELPRO they were actively out to destroy any independent black party movement and didn't mind killing people along the way, the government. Much as I just did now with this Acorn thing in the present time, where the entire media went along with a ridiculous phony charge, and they've taken down the entire anti-poverty operation that was doing overall fabulous work, and most of those charges have been shown to be absolutely false, investigations of Acorn by, I think it was just more recently the Bronx or Brooklyn District Attorney's Office that said: "No, there's no pattern of crime or anything like that on the part of this thing. A couple of people may have said something at a school among their volunteers," but on the other hand, this tape was edited, it was a phony, the one that Fox promoted. The rest of the media, including the *New York Times*, bought it. If *Ramparts* were publishing right now, that would have been a story we would have taken apart big time right from the beginning. And Acorn might still be around.

Rubens: *Ramparts* of course played a critical role in introducing Eldridge Cleaver to the nation, and then bringing the Black Panther Party to national attention as serious political players. Do you think, looking back, was there a kind of romance that *Ramparts* and the New Left had with the Black Panther Party, or was that it had represented—

15-00:02:05

Hinckle: Well, it wasn't the New Left. A lot of people in the New Left didn't like Cleaver. It started out because he was a great writer.

Rubens: Yes.

15-00:02:15

Hinckle: Paul Jacobs basically discovered him, some letters came in the office. We started to go to see him in prison, got some of his writings, we began to publish them. He was a great writer, a terrific original voice. We helped to get him out of jail and started printing his writing because, then he became involved in the Black Panthers. *Ramparts'* involvement in the Black Panthers lasted about two years I would say from '67, '68, maybe some of it was in '66 for a while, but basically it started with Cleaver as a great writer and then his involvement in the Black Panthers. They had a fabulous constitutional principle considering the war that was going on against the black activists conducted by local police and, everybody subsequently learned, coordinated by J. Edgar Hoover and the entire FBI to wipe out black activists, that COINTELPRO operation. Nobody knew the details of that, and it was pretty obvious from the streets what the hell was going on, assassinations here and there, cops busting in, guys bumped off. There was war on the streets, and the cops were at war when they could be, particularly in Oakland, against the black community. The idea of taking up arms openly under the constitutional right to bear arms in the second amendment was a brilliant stroke.

Rubens: For self defense.

15-00:03:57

Hinckle: For self defense openly, yes. And the Black Panthers go into Sacramento carrying their guns out in the open. They called themselves Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Huey Newton, who went into a rapid decline shortly after this period and became a druggie and drug dealer and gangster, was at the time a brilliant theoretician and the idea of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, taking your constitutional rights and shoving it in the face of the media and the liberals and everybody who reacted with horror at blacks with guns. Well, they have as much a right as a militia does to carry guns, they're registered, they have a right to wear them. Why shouldn't they? And it made all the right points. So he energetically defended and wrote about the Black Panther Party and about the subsequent attacks on them. There was an element always in the Party of, the Oakland part of the Party, of raising money and probably a little bit of shakedowns here and there, but in that period of 1968 there was no, it wasn't what they were about.

Rubens: Did you ever—

15-00:05:17

Hinckle: And then it accelerated into a full time extortion gang against their own people and a drug gang, but that was after the period *Ramparts* defended them. I noticed that in Peter Richardson's book there's much made about Black Panther Party and maybe it's Horowitz. I think Horowitz is hysterical about that. He had a personal involvement because he had the hots for this bookkeeper Betty, I forgot her last name, who was a part-time bookkeeper for

Ramparts and worked for the Panthers, who was bumped off because she knew too much.

And that sort of sent Horowitz over the ideological edge. They found out about that. It's basically hysteria. It's not an unrealistic view of history to say there can be a few years where people are acting well, and then they either go crazy or get corrupt or become gangsters, something like that, the power goes to their heads, whatever you want to call it. It certainly happens in the white community. They just send them to jail.

Rubens: Did you ever personally have any fear that the FBI was going to attack *Ramparts* in any way?

15-00:06:33

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: Did you have any fear for your family or for yourself personally in terms of—

15-00:06:39

Hinckle: No. Scheer always did. He was always worried. Paranoid about stuff. No, you don't do that to Irish Catholics.

Rubens: I wouldn't call it paranoia, but because of your experience at *Ramparts* and then when you started delving into the Kennedy assassination, met Jim Garrison, you became even more convinced of the capacity of what the government can do as you're saying to the Black Panther Party.

15-00:07:09

Hinckle: Well, they can try and do what they try and do. There was a famous incident at *Ramparts* that got cooled out just because a cop and I were friends. [editors note: Hinckle discusses this incident on audio tape 13. That telling is combined with the following account.]

Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow, was visiting San Francisco, and the Panthers went to pick her up at the airport. They were armed with their usual guns, and they were really into it, getting kind of nutty then. This was late 1967-68. They brought her from the airport to the *Ramparts* offices on lower Broadway Street in North Beach. It was a big corner building and it had windows all around the front that opened, tall windows, on the street level floor. So they came and brought her and all of a sudden these cop cars appeared; I guess the cops were following them. The Panthers were an armed escort for her. I guess they were a little uptight.

Anyway, Eldridge Cleaver was going to interview her –and I think Bobby Seale was there too; he was hustling his cookbook and he wanted us to publish it. So they were in the office and this armed guard of Panthers brought Shabazz into the office and then took up positions at the window; they had opened the windows stood there with their guns out, which is kind of nuts. All

of a sudden there was an armada of police cars parked outside –must have been at least twelve, maybe eighteen cars. They blocked off Broadway, between Sansome and Montgomery. I had just come back from somewhere and here were all these cops and cop cars and I say, “What the hell is this?” I went into the office and asked, “What the hell is going on here?” And they said, “Well, the cops followed us and are saying we’ve got to put down the guns but they won’t put down their guns.” I said, “Well, great. This is a great morning.”

And then more cop cars kept coming. It was like a scene, major scene, right? And if one cop had shot, I’m sure they would have shot back and you never know if a crazy cop’s going to shoot. Jesus! So I said, “Everybody calm down, let me go out and talk to the cops. And will you tell these guys,” Bobby Seal was there, David [Hilliard]; I knew Bobby pretty well. I said, “Tell them to put down the guns, stop sticking the goddamn guns out the window.” Right? “Tell them to stop that. Some crazy guy could take a shot and everybody’s going to get killed in here for Christ’s sake. Let me go talk to the cops, see if I can get them to cool out.”

So I go out and fortunately, the guy who was in charge that day was a police captain named Bill Conroy, who was a good friend of mine, a great Irish guy I’ve known all my life. His daughter, Anne Marie Conway is a close friend of mine. She was a supervisor in San Francisco for a long time and now works for the government as a crime investigator or something and just a close family friend. This is one of the wonderful things about San Francisco, it’s such a small town. Bill was just a buddy, a close friend, a drinking buddy, one of the most brilliant guys in the police department and was always at odds with the hard noses in the San Francisco Police Department. They were always fighting his life style and his intellectuality. He was a lawyer five times smarter than anybody and just too smart for the San Francisco Police Department. But he was a great cop and a good guy and he was in charge that day. That stopped the disaster, I think.

So I said to Bill, “Captain Conroy, good morning sir.” “Good morning Mr. Hinckle, top of the day to you.” I say, “Well, I see we have what they call a situation here.” He says, “It would appear so. Yes, you could say that, yes.” I say, “Well, I have asked them to kind of cool it out inside the building. These people are escorting the widow of Malcolm X. You know he was assassinated. They need their own protection. That’s why they have their guns. They’re not using them. But let’s, I suggest we repair, not into the office here, let’s go up the street and have a conversation and see if we can work out this situation.” He says, “Excellent idea.” Told the guys, you guys stay here. We walk up the street to the bar and have a couple of drinks. This was Andre’s, which was an office bar for *Ramparts* right at the same block. So we talked and I said, “Jesus Christ, Bill, this things could be bloody today.” He says, “Yeah, it’s not a great situation.” I said, “Look, what do you suggest?” He says, “Well, first they should shut the windows so they can’t stick their guns out. You get them

to do that and then I'll get half the cars to leave. And then the best thing to do since it's so tense now would be that if you've got somebody that wants to interview her, he should go with her. Just leave the building, go to Oakland, wherever they want to go and that would be that. I'll be here with a few cars and when they come out with her, then they'll go and the rest of the cars will go and it'll be over with." I said, "All right." So I went back and told that. I said, "Look, here's what we're going to do. You're going to do the interview, not in this place. You guys are going to leave because look at the scene and these cops could go nuts on us, so you leave, you take her." So that's what they did.

And Conroy sent away most of the cop cars, but he kept a few in case the Panthers started shooting, which of course they didn't. They came out with their guns on their shoulders and got in their cars and left, and that was it.

Rubens: The situation was defused.

15-00:12:45

Hinckle: Yes, and Conroy and I went out to lunch.

Rubens: And then did you publish the interview?

15-00:12:54

Hinckle: I don't recall. We were publishing a lot of stuff on the Panthers and by Eldridge. I'd have to look back at the specific pieces Eldridge wrote. He wanted to interview her, but for all I know—

Rubens: I don't think it happened. It wasn't published.

15-00:13:08

Hinckle: I think he told me that what they discussed wasn't stuff that should be in print; probably had to do with internal politics and who really tipped off and was involved in the murder of her husband; I think she went into stuff like that. So it was stuff that he didn't want to write at the time, and I said, "Hey, cool, man." He wanted to meet her, talk to her, he did.

Rubens: So what was going on in the office while your discussion with Conway is taking place? Betty is of course holed up there.

13-00:50:24

Hinckle: Well they were trying not to go crazy. I never did get to talk to her. What would I say, "Hi, Betty. Let me see if I can get you out of here alive."

Rubens: Well that just seems like an almost grandstand event. But it was hair trigger.

13-00:50:40

Hinckle: Well, it's been over exaggerated, but it was a pretty tense situation. If Conway hadn't been there—if there had been an idiot in charge of the SFPD that day, I don't know what would have happened. His long-term nemesis in the police

department, a guy named Jeremiah Taylor was the hard hat, always charged in situations like that. He charged and burned down the White Panthers headquarters on Haight Street later on in the 1970s and killed people, just because he was a nutty cop; a by-the-rule cop. And that can happen; crazy stuff can happen by wrong command decisions and then you can't cool it out. Conway was a cool-it-out guy and it was a lucky day, that's all I could say.

Rubens: Right. When you think about the most threatening dangerous situation during the *Ramparts* period, that was no question, that and I suppose being in Chicago.

15-00:13:41

Hinckle: Well, it was the most visible. Chicago wasn't dangerous. Nobody fortunately—

Rubens: Could have been.

15-00:13:47

Hinckle: Oh, yes. There were troops, there were guns everywhere. A lot of people got roughed up, but nobody got killed in Chicago.

Rubens: I meant to ask you, and I don't know that this is a segue, but other consequences on people's lives during the *Ramparts* period. It was so intense. Some friendships fell apart. Marriages fell apart. I know that when Scheer is pursuing the Che Guevara diaries, he gets involved with the reporter—

15-00:14:21

Hinckle: No, that was Michele Ray. That was separate from the diaries. That was during the coverage of the Che murder, which was a big story we did. The whole diaries was a total whacko story, and then we published a piece by this French journalist called Michele Ray, who spent a lot of time in Bolivia and elsewhere tracking down the CIA and the American government's involvement in the entrapment and murder of Che Guevara.

Rubens: Oh yes, she was trying to find the body.

15-00:15:04

Hinckle: Yes, and the whole issue about the body—

Rubens: Well, I don't mean this on a gossipy level, although it sounds like it, but the level and the intensity with which people were working, it had to play havoc on people's marriages and people's lives.

15-00:15:22

Hinckle: Well, I don't know.

Rubens: Did it do that to you?

15-00:15:27

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: Okay. *Ramparts* is not where you—

15-00:15:31

Hinckle: It was a wild time. Nothing wrong with it. Scheer's marital problems specifically came about with the communal policies of the Red Family, where it was supposed to be a share deal or something like that, share the women and men, something like that, and Scheer—

Rubens: The Red Family was a political commune in Berkeley

15-00:16:00

Hinckle: Yes, the bourgeois in Scheer came out, and he thought there should be doors in the rooms and didn't believe in that, and there was a conflict between Scheer and Hayden over that in the Red family. That's all Berkeley history.

Rubens: Did Scheer proselytize for any of that social leveling? What I'm trying to ask about is if the kind of value systems that people represented were brought into this caldron of *Ramparts*. Did it have an impact on the sensibility of the people who worked there, on working relations. You talked earlier about some of the New Left being cut out as a result of, because of competency really, not so much the ideology, of the convention in '68.

15-00:16:53

Hinckle: Well, they weren't cut out. Their stuff was printed with the old analysis. I wrote the final draft of the piece that *Ramparts* did on it. But it was a very left analysis, nothing was cut out, that's the technical issue—

Rubens: Yes, I meant of them being sent home because of not getting the issues out in time and—

15-00:17:17

Hinckle: Well, a couple of guys, Freddie and, if you guys can't get the damn thing out, I'll send in some pros—

Rubens: But did I interrupt you? There were certain cultural divides. I mean some people believed in communal living if you're—

15-00:17:34

Hinckle: Well, *Ramparts* was a big stew. People brought to it what they were, except for the people that went from left to right eventually. I don't think anybody changed that much. One of the hallmarks of *Ramparts* was the guys who came to that like, Bill Turner, the FBI guy, Don Duncan, a Green Beret hero, people like that who came with their stories and their own backgrounds, but their characters, they switched ideological sides if you like their political side, but they remained who they were. Duncan remained a soldier. Turner remained a serious thorough FBI Catholic-boy mentality. That didn't change.

Rubens: Well, I guess what I'm trying to get to, and maybe we should focus our attention to the counter culture. You wrote that piece on the social history of the hippies in '67. I don't know how many of the people that you hired were "hippies."

15-00:18:54

Hinckle: Well, none of them were hippies because hippies didn't work.

Rubens:

Okay, so did any of them smoke dope at the office?

15-00:19:02

Hinckle: I wouldn't let them smoke dope at the office. That was more, Scheer and Solly Stern were particularly hard on that. They were paranoid about it. They said for sure that somehow they'd entrap us to cops. And send somebody in to light up a joint. So they had a strict no smoking dope, no drugs in the office policy. I said, "Yeah, that's what you want to do." I was a little more laissez-faire about it, but considering the likelihood of somebody setting it up, plus it made sense. I wasn't enthusiastic about it. I probably would have said, "Eh, so what?" But the bar was always open.

Rubens:

So there was that cultural divide. And you wrote in *Lemonade*, a wonderful description of how you approached the article on the social history of hippies.

15-00:19:58

Hinckle: Well, the New Left guys never changed their lifestyles. They hated the way I ran the thing and couldn't understand why people had to go to hotels and fly around in planes and act like *Time* magazine or something like that. So there was a lot of criticism of *Ramparts* from the left guys, but they got to do their work and got their point of view across, and had the resources, got paid to actually do what they wanted to do, which was dig out stuff that was really important, and they did. But they had a little bit of conflict because the style was not the communal, non-authoritarian—

Rubens:

Collective?

15-00:20:46

Hinckle: Collective approach to things, and it certainly wasn't the laid back Berkeley time of Chinese restaurants and sort of a modest lifestyle, sort of a graduate student lifestyle I guess you'd call it.

Rubens:

So tell me how Ralph Gleason fits into this. We're jumping back a little bit in history, but how present was he literally? Did he actually do his writing at *Ramparts*? He was at the *Chronicle*, of course.

15-00:21:20

Hinckle: He was at the *Chronicle*, yeah. Ralph was a very important guy at *Ramparts*. He was at the *Chronicle*, but he wrote all his columns, he loved the hippies, he loved the coming of the counter culture, and Bob Dylan, he was just totally into everything. He became a pied piper almost for that period and wrote a lot

of important stuff for the *Chronicle* at that time and sort of popularized that counter cultural point of view, both in music and in lifestyle.

Rubens: So how is it that you came to write the article on the social history of the hippies. Had he ever been considered—

15-00:21:58

Hinckle: Because Ralph was a propagandist. He was a close friend of mine, but I couldn't let him, we'd have another paean to the same type of columns he was writing in the *Chronicle*. I took, I guess you'd call a New Left view on that; that this idea that music in itself was being non-political, tune in, drop out picture the non-political nature of the hippies later promoted very much by *Rolling Stone*, Tim Leary and these guys who made a fortune and made their professional careers in a mercantile way off of the commercialization and the blossoming of this ethos, if you want to call it that.

Rubens: This what?

15-00:22:49

Hinckle: Ethos. I guess, look at the world that way. They were happy to make a fortune over it, but they didn't look at what we felt were the political consequences or inconsequences of adopting no politics as a rule, you don't need them. Gleason wrote a famous piece about how the music will make you free, don't need a program, eventually it will come. Ralph was getting prematurely youthful.

Rubens: So there was never a question that he would write this piece because you didn't want a propaganda piece. You write it, and—

15-00:23:25

Hinckle: Yeah, I knew he was going to be furious at it, but that's—

Rubens: Did you prepare him or tell him ahead of time?

15-00:23:34

Hinckle: Probably not. Well, I knew he knew I was writing it. I told him I was writing it, say how did you get a hold of that guy you write about, so and so, this piece on the hippies. But he was much more into—he was furious at the piece—because it dinged everybody. But he was much more into music as opposed to just the origins of the drug culture, and this and that, but the—

Rubens: So he quits over this, right? This becomes a—

15-00:24:00

Hinckle: Yeah, he became furious.

Rubens: And does Decca defend you or does she think that there is some merit in his claim?

15-00:24:13

Hinckle:

Well, she always thought that I tended to ride a little roughshod over some people. She thought it had its charms, but it had its drawbacks and she had no hesitation in saying so and writing about it. In fact, one of those big events where my activities could be called into question, certainly criticized, was when we had the upheaval at *Ramparts* and I threw out Keating and all that stuff. There was a lot of things that could be said about myself and about Scheer. That's certainly could be well founded, were well founded, perhaps, criticism. Anyway, but I came to write about that when I was writing the *Lemonade* book. Decca had written a long account of it, which was quite objective. And I said, "Rather than get into this, why don't we just print Decca's account of this whole thing," where she beat up myself and Scheer quite a little bit. A long memo she'd sent to Howard Gossage about—

Rubens:

Just to summarize it, she's beating you up for and what are you claiming that you may be culpable for?

15-00:25:11

Hinckle:

Oh, we do tend to trample over people a little bit and not listen to them, and there's a certain arrogance about them, etc. But on the other hand, the whole thing wouldn't be there if this weren't being done, and you've got to balance one against the other. That happens in organizations and sometimes one wishes they would be a trifle little more gentle to people. Well, she says, "I do find them charming and their company's always amusing to me." That sort of balance. But she laid it out.

Rubens:

But Gleason leaving *Ramparts* certainly wasn't a huge to do of that order.

15-00:25:55

Hinckle:

I was sorry Ralph did, but I wasn't—he was very, very helpful, very instrumental in getting the magazine going, and then he did well for himself, went off and helped Wenner get *Rolling Stone* going and then hung around there for a few years. He was much happier there because everybody agreed with him.

Rubens:

Is it true that Gleason had recruited Wenner to come to, he was at Berkeley, but to come over and work on the Sunday *Ramparts*?

15-00:26:21

Hinckle:

I don't recall. I know Wenner got a job there. I didn't discover him. He was just a copy boy, when we put out the Sunday *Ramparts* he did some music reviews for it. But who suggested him originally to hire him and Jane, his wife—she worked in the business department, I don't recall.

Rubens:

I think it was Gleason.

15-00:26:42

Hinckle:

Probably was. I wouldn't be surprised.

Rubens: Anything to say about Leary? You and Leary pal around together when you're writing that piece. He had come out for the "Meeting of the Tribes" and—

15-00:26:57

Hinckle: Oh, I didn't have any use for Leary whatsoever. I was very critical of Leary and Bill Graham.

Rubens: How much time did you spend with him?

15-00:27:05

Hinckle: Leary? Not that much. I spent time off and on over four or five years—

Rubens: No, when you were writing that piece, though, in '67 he—

15-00:27:15

Hinckle: Hardly any time at all. Most of what was written about him in that piece was from his own writings and other things he'd said and in interviews he did.

Rubens: Did he lean on you hard? Did he say you haven't tuned in, you haven't turned on—

15-00:27:29

Hinckle: He was too stoned to notice.

Rubens: So he's not suggesting that you trip together—

15-00:27:36

Hinckle: Leary didn't pay attention. Leary had a famous thing he said, where did I read that the other day in somebody's book. Anyway, he said, "I turned on one million people and only one hundred thousand of them thanked me." Something like that. It's a great lie.

Rubens: So you were not one of the people that he turned on? You didn't spend much time with him?

15-00:27:58

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: So I, because you quote him quite a bit, I thought that you took him—

15-00:28:03

Hinckle: No, I think he's a hustler.

Rubens: A hustler?

15-00:28:04

Hinckle: Well, he was a hustler, the gospel of LSD, and quite a promoter of it and made a career out of it, let's put it that way. He was a careerist and embraced the whole politics don't matter ethic. You can love your way out of a situation, and that quietism is kind of a scary thing. I wrote that essay. It's been in a

bunch of anthologies, which was a critique of the hippie and the love culture and—

Rubens: That's the social history of—

15-00:28:47

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Did you literally attend the “Meeting of the Tribes”? Were you in on a cover as a reporter, or any of those planning meetings?

15-00:28:53

Hinckle: Nah. I talked to a lot of people in the Haight and in the East Village about the growth of the drug culture and the LSD society and came to understand how all that grew up and covered a lot of the ground that Ken Kesey did, talked to Kesey a lot about this stuff, too. Had a pretty good understanding of it and then we had a lot, assigned a lot of people to interview just about everybody we could find in depth and were able to cull from more people than I could ever get to talk to and were able to cull from thirty or forty interviews, really covered where this culture came from, more on what its philosophy was and what was this game about the music can make you free, you don't need politics.

Rubens: So all this is background to that article, that was all for the construction—

15-00:29:54

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: That's wonderful. You haven't mentioned that elsewhere. That isn't common knowledge that that much research went into that.

15-00:30:01

Hinckle: Oh, a lot of research, yeah.

Rubens: And were you literally at the Human Be In, in Golden Gate Park or what I've been referring to as the “Meeting of the Tribes”?

15-00:30:11

Hinckle: Oh, I think I went over there. It's like the New Left guys didn't like hanging around bars. I was never, I was too Irish Catholic. “Hey, go do it. That's fine.” Yeah, I would go to areas of those things in the park, etc., drop by, see what's happening. But it wasn't like I was among that crowd that would go there and hang out all day and listen to the music and get carried away.

Rubens: I know you have a wonderful line in your *Lemonade* book where you talk about the *Chronicle* society editor writing about what the fashion was of the women at the Be In.

15-00:30:56

Hinckle: The women at the Be In. I don't remember them.

Rubens:

Is there anything more to say on this topic of the social history of hippies do you think? We may not have done so much, but I think that's been covered well in *Lemonade* and in Richardson's book.

15-00:31:07

Hinckle: Well, if you want, I'll look, trust that I'll have all these proofs by the end of the week finally. You can look at the, there's a recapitulation of a lot of *Ramparts* stuff with many—a lot of new stuff in it, and the old *Scanlan's* story and a lot of other things in the Hunter Thompson book that's coming out. If I think of anything that should be added to this, we can put it in, splice it in.

Rubens:

Shall we take just a couple more minutes, or do you want to call it a day for now?

15-00:31:44

Hinckle: No, it's okay.

[Extraneous talk removed]

Rubens:

All right. Let's just do ten more minutes. I wanted to ask you about *Ramparts'* literary agent. There was a woman named Cyrilly Abels?

15-00:32:10

Hinckle: Oh, Cyrilly. Oh, I love Cyrilly Abels.

Rubens:

Where did she come from? She was your literary agent—

15-00:32:36

Hinckle: She was my agent and I don't know how I originally met her actually, met her in New York, wonderful woman—

Rubens:

This had to do with the Che Guevara diaries, right? She bargained with Random for—

15-00:32:58

Hinckle: Yeah, I had her negotiating on that stuff too, yeah. It came down to there was only one publisher involved for all kinds of complicated reasons, so it wasn't like shopping around. It wasn't your usual publishing deal. There was political tug of war between one CIA version of a book being rushed to press by one publishing house willing to cooperate with the CIA and a big commercial publisher who had commercial and legal issues with some of the strings attached to the Cuban version that *Ramparts* had. And it was over- coming those legal and commercial issues with Bantam publishers that sooner or later we decided to publish because they had the fastest turnaround for a paperback house and there was no time to go shopping this thing because it had time

bombs in it. There were problems attended with the copyright, with the government attacking the thing and perhaps even challenging its authenticity with the other guy getting there first and then you couldn't sell that many. It was a classic publishing problem and race, yeah.

Rubens: So it turned out that Bantam did publish it?

15-00:34:30

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: And you guys get a pretty significant advance and did you make—

15-00:34:34

Hinckle: Not as much as we should have.

Rubens: Did you make money off of it?

15-00:34:38

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Okay, so now you've got *Soul on Ice*, you've got Che Guevara's diaries, you know I didn't—

15-00:34:43

Hinckle: We never made much money off of *Soul on Ice*.

Rubens: You didn't? But then there was, right when I meant to add—

15-00:34:47

Hinckle: Well, it became a best seller, but I didn't set up that publishing operation right. We split the royalties with the authors, and we should have taken an overriding chunk as a proprietor.

[tape interruption]

Rubens: Regarding the story of getting the diaries?

15-00:35:07

Hinckle: We could do that. That takes a while to tell, depending on how much you want to go into it, pretty detailed version of it in the *Ramparts* book, yeah.

Rubens: Well, there is a pretty detailed version of it in the *Lemonade* book. Not that I don't want to cover it because there's a couple of other things going on at the same time—

15-00:35:30

Hinckle: There's always a couple of other things going on at the same time.

Rubens: The same time that you're negotiating, you're being asked to come pick up the manuscript at the UN, and you're supposed to have dinner with some big bank

roller that you're courting, and that's what I was going to ask you, who was it that you almost got but you didn't? Do you remember—

- 15-00:35:51
Hinckle: I don't remember. Did I say in the *Lemonade* book? I don't recall.
- Rubens: No. You don't say the name.
- 15-00:35:56
Hinckle: Maybe I took mercy on them.
- Rubens: You write that you're at the St. Regis bar, you're meeting with a Chivas drinking Cuban diplomat who leaves you with the bill and makes you meet him later at the UN. And then once you go to the UN, you're late for a \$25,000 fund raising tete-a-tete, which you didn't get. And I'm asking who is that?
- 15-00:36:25
Hinckle: I don't recall.
- Rubens: One of the things I've got to ask you, were any of these people that you were trying to hit up for *Ramparts* and didn't come through, were they later people who supported you at *Scanlan's*?
- 15-00:36:40
Hinckle: Well, didn't have to because *Scanlan's* was a public stock issue.
- Rubens: Oh, okay.
- 15-00:36:44
Hinckle: All we had to do was scrape up the seed money, which is like buy us the original five percent of the shares, something like that, which leaves relatives and friends and that sort of thing for Sidney and I. And then the underwriter took it public. Which was the deal, oddly enough, the deal that we could have done that for *Ramparts*.
- Rubens: Why didn't that happen?
- 15-00:37:19
Hinckle: No, it was a failure of nerves on part of the New Left guys. They finally were, their wrinkles got taken out of their belly for quite a few years. The magazine was on a daredevil existence. We managed to pull it off, and had pulled every trick in the book financially, including selling all the future tax losses and everything like that. I remember we went to see—Zion knew these bankruptcy attorneys in New Jersey called Raven and Raven, Hank and Morris Raven, I'll never forget it, two brothers. Bankruptcy with Raven and Raven, just fabulous. So I said, "I think *Ramparts* is about over, I'm going to

have to fold it," or something like that, to Sidney as a friend. He was still working for the *Times*.

Rubens: We're talking now in the—

15-00:38:14

Hinckle: Sixty-eight, late sixty-eight, late fall. I said it was the end of the road as far as I could see it, and I think that's what we're going to have to do. And he said, "Well, I know just the guys." Man of the world, the legal world. He said, "I know the best bankruptcy lawyers there are, Raven and Raven." "Yeah?" He said, "Yeah, yeah. Get whatever stuff you got and I'll call them." He says, "I knew them, I grew up when I was in Passaic in Jersey. We went to school together. This must be the best if you're going to run for some trouble like that, then you've got to talk to these guys." I said, "Okay," so I went over there and had lunch with them and they pored through all this stuff. I'll never forget that, we're sitting there, and he's looking through all the summaries of the balance sheets and all the stuff that happened in the last three or four years. And I remember this guy, one of them says to me, "Congratulations. This is the most stripped carcass I've ever seen. You have absolutely nothing left, not a dime for any creditors, there's nothing." He says, "This is so well done. Where did you learn how to do this?" I said, "I don't know, it just happens."

Rubens: You had just kept going. So how soon there after that meeting are you gone?

15-00:39:49

Hinckle: It was the end of the year. Then I said, "Well, I think we're going to have to"—Well two things happened in that period. One was that I was asking everybody—First I went to Roy Cohn for money because you have to not forget that for these political magazines, *Ramparts* was a political magazine, commercially it was a fabulous success. We had over four thousand circulation at the height then, and it lost maybe three million bucks. That's nothing. It took like twenty-five million dollars to even get *Sports Illustrated* to do a break even point in ten-fifteen years, with an entire Time-Life organization behind it. So in terms of the amount of money actually spent and the circulation it gained, it was like an extraordinary publishing story, but you couldn't—

Rubens: But you say something like five million, but what's accounting for the difference between three million and five million, because that's a big number?

15-00:41:03

Hinckle: Three million, five million, it doesn't make any you know. I guess, well, if you count Keating's losses, because it was basically broke when I took it over, that was another couple of million.

Rubens: Okay. There you go.

15-00:41:13

Hinckle:

He went through a couple million. For four thousand circulation, we got more bang for the buck, that's all I can say. But you couldn't take that to the bank, particularly the climate by 1968, the sixties at that time you were saying earlier, wow, the things that were happening, all the assassinations and the polarizing politics, Israel, the Black Panthers, things that *Ramparts* took positions on. It was just no climate for your typical liberal investor. You had to really have somebody who was kind of nuts or very independent-minded, or just didn't care. We had actually gone through quite a few of those.

Rubens:

Well, and you got close to people. There was the long story about Weiss that I don't know.

15-00:42:10

Hinckle:

Oh, God, Stanley Weiss. We tried everything, yeah. Stanley Weiss was very close, and he melted into a fetal ball. Gossage and I had to chase him to Switzerland, to Stadt because he welched on a deal and he was just—

Rubens:

Did he welch on the fifty thousand he had promised—

15-00:42:28

Hinckle:

Yeah, he welched on the fifty thousand, yeah.

Rubens:

Even though all ten of you were down there and—

15-00:42:29

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah. He welched on the deal, yeah, because Erich Fromm got all pissed off at Scheer.

Rubens:

All ten of you were down to see Fromm at his place in Mexico—

15-00:42:39

Hinckle:

Yeah, and Gerry Feigen the proctologist thought Erich Fromm was a big phony and Stanley loved this guy Erich Fromm, the greatest intellectual he ever met. Erich Fromm was the most anal retentive person you could ever possibly imagine, and he hated us, he just hated the, we were not his style, let's certainly put it that way.

Rubens:

Stanley should have figured that out.

15-00:43:03

Hinckle:

Yeah.

Rubens:

So I cut you off. You were going to Roy Cohn. He was your last—

15-00:43:09

Hinckle:

Well, Stanley was the last big guy, for a commercial guy he was kind of aye he could have done it, he could have picked up the ball for the Israelis and seemed to want to. Basically, Gossage found him. Gossage and Feigen. As

they were working on this thing, too, like where are we going to go? We've got to do something about this thing. We need capital investment, and unlike Henry Luce when *Life* magazine got too big, grew so fast. Early *Time* magazine just about went under, too. But he could go to the blue blood Protestant banks because of his politics and his pedigree and get financing, right? And *Rolling Stone*. Max Palevsky bailed out the first year and a half. Wenner started to get some circulation and get going, but he had been broke. And Max Palevsky, a Montgomery Street investor, liberal guy, bailed out Jann. And if Max hadn't done that, *Rolling Stone* would have been under. You need capital, and you need people who either believe or do it as a risk balance investment. Nothing new, it's done all the time in Silicon Valley. But it's a big boy's game.

Rubens: Finish the Roy Cohn story, and then we'll—

15-00:44:28

Hinckle:

Well, anyway, so Stanley Weiss could have replaced the Israeli money which stabilized *Ramparts*. I say Israeli money. They were American. Marty Peretz and those guys, they were American partisans of Israel. When that was gone, there went stability, so I bought us some time by punting and turning the magazine into a bi-weekly. All of a sudden it was—it went to twice a month from once a month, and a lot of people thought that was really nuts. Well, it was really nuts. However, the strongest income stream that we had was the newsstand sales because the publishing business, when you get a subscription from somebody and they send you the twenty bucks, in those years it was like twelve bucks. Anyway, you get the money, you put it in the bank, right? Then you spend it, keep on publishing, but you have to send them the subscription for the whole twelve months so you've got to print them, which is simple enough. But when all of a sudden you're talking about a hundred, two hundred, two hundred and fifty thousand subscriptions, and you already took the money and spent it to get more subscriptions just to sustain yourself or what you're doing, adding staff, paying the printing bill, mailing out the copies, fulfilling it. Then you got to keep getting more subscriptions and as you get more subscriptions, you've got to have money to put out more direct mail to get new subscriptions. It's a churn, it's a mill. So you have to keep churning capital because basically you have to finance, unless you're completely stable financially, and a growing publication never is, you have to finance for a year the subscribers you get because usually if for no other reason you use their money to mail to get more subscribers. And you've got to pay for those mailings because they only have a two-three-four percent return. The rest of it's thrown away money. But you make money off of it.

However, the newsstands were strong for *Ramparts*, very strong. I engineered a good business deal on the newsstands.

Rubens: You're only paying the distributors.

15-00:46:45

Hinckle:

Well, yeah, you're getting back fifty percent more or less, a little less than that, for you but you're getting a steady stream of income from, and you're getting advances from the national distributor. You can say, "Okay, we've got a new issue coming up, send me half of the estimated sales." So in terms of cash for keeping a growing organization, a lot of newsstands are very important.

So when the Peretz thing fell apart it was like, okay a desperate dash to try and find people to replace it, but the political climate was really rough. I didn't know where we were going to find them between the issues that the magazine was involved in and you could only go to liberal investors, obviously, and couldn't go to Wall Street, too. So it was tough. So then I said, "Well, might as well go all in and we'll buy ourselves about six months in cash flow if we go twice a month." Sounded totally insane, Larry Bensky, who came in as managing editor, said, "Now what are you crazy?" I said, "No, we'll put out two issues, we'll get more staff." "We can't hire any more staff." "We'll just have to figure it out, come on, we'll do it." Because that meant that there was about the same overhead but there was double the fresh cash that came in from the newsstand sales. So when you look at it that way, it wasn't so insane. But it wasn't a long term fulfilling thing because eventually you probably wouldn't keep selling all those copies twice a month. In the beginning, we did. They were very strong, but you couldn't like budget for two years as if this would save you, but it did definitely buy some time and kept the cash flow and kept this thing alive while I desperately scrambled around to see who we could find. So it was like really bottom of the barrel.

So the first thing is, we went to see Roy Cohn, court of all last resorts, right? And Roy is, I knew him in New York. Sidney knew all these tough guys. He knew every wonderful crook and guy, and everybody on the Jewish side of the scene who was anybody, right, left or in between there, Sidney knew them, right?

Rubens:

Cohn was known as a fixer, too.

15-00:49:04

Hinckle:

Well, yeah. And Roy was a notorious fixer, and he was certainly no ideologue. He collected markers. He'd do a favor for one guy, and then they owe him, and then he throw it back for another guy, and then used it to get himself out of trouble, for political power and appointments and money and law clients, and—

Rubens:

What was he going to do for you?

15-00:49:35

Hinckle:

Well, it wasn't what he was going to do, it was what I wanted him to do. It was like, we went out on his boat, and I said, "Hey, Roy, here's the deal." You could be the savior, "Well I don't want my name involved in it, but let me see

what I can, let me talk to some guys.” And he couldn’t do it. He says, “I can’t do it.” He says, “But,” he says, “there’s a couple of mob guys, a couple of them crazy enough they might be interested.” I said, “Yup.”

So one of them is this guy named Kayo Konigsberg. I’ll give you the spelling of his name later. Kayo was a big Israeli Mossad. He wasn’t a Mossad, but they’d bring him in for deals. Assassinating was a major activity, that was because he was a big Israeli, but he spent most of his time loan sharking and in major mob stuff and collecting debts. He was a very scary guy. And he bumped off people. He was at the time locked up at the federal medical center in Springfield, Missouri. So one thing and the other, I arranged to go. But he always had a interest in publishing, Roy said. I said, “Jesus, Roy, what am I going to do? How am I going to explain to these guys that we got a mobster, a notorious killer, even if he did it.” He said, “Well, come clean about it.” He says, “wouldn’t that be fabulous?” He says, “Just say, “Hey, you hate Johnson.” He says, “You say, hey, look at all the people we kill every day, and this guy only kills one guy at a time.” I said, “You’re right, we could get away with that.”

So I went to see Kayo, and that was an experience. It was very, very locked up. Springfield, Missouri is not the, the clink there is not the easiest place to get to, isn’t exactly the suburbs of St. Louis. And after various negotiations with a very sleazy lawyer, we were always meeting at Sardi’s and the Amber, Bar at Sardi’s, and I went to see him and he says, “Now, memorize this.” I said, “Well, Kayo,” I said, “Well, let me explain this to you.” “Yeah, yeah, yeah, first I want you to memorize this, I want you to tell the name of this lawyer. Tell this and that and tell X should happen next month, and tell him that Dorothy should do this. You got that memorized, give it back to me.” I said, “Yeah, I got it memorized.” “Okay,” he says, “How much you want?” I said, “We need a million bucks, a million bucks for the magazine.” He said, “Well, where are you on Israel?” I said, “Hey, we just had some guys who took out their dough because it wasn’t Israel enough, and I told him to be good for the Jews, you’ve got to be a little independent, you can’t sound Israeli.” He says, “Well, what did you say?” “I said these lefties were crazy, that Israel had a right to exist, and we had to defend their right to exist, and the Arabs couldn’t invade them again and take them over again.” “That’s fine, that’s all you got to say, I’m with you.” All right, okay, I said, “Good, so a million bucks okay. Tell him he’ll work it out.

So anyway, I’m scratching my head, I say, “This can’t really be happening.” So a couple meetings with this lawyer again, and he was drawing up stuff like that and then he gives me this thing he said, “Hey.” And I told him I said, “But here’s the deal, you can’t be on the board of directors. We can only issue you new class stock, it has to be non voting stock because you’re a notorious killer and assassin and hoodlum.” And so we have to say that as a gesture to the faith in the country you made this investment, but you don’t have any

voting control over your money. That you have to agree to— “Yeah, I see why you’d say that. Yeah, that’s okay. I agree to that.” So it’s fine. It’s insane.

Rubens: It’s lining up.

15-00:53:47

Hinckle: Serious negotiation. I meet with this guy, his lawyer again, and, in New York, back in New York, and he says, “Here’s the stuff Kayo sent. He wants you to print this stuff.” What are you talking about? I told him he couldn’t have anything to do editorial with the magazine. You drafted the thing yourself, and said he has non-voting stock, he had no editorial,” He said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, but the main thing is he wants this stuff printed.” I said, “Well, what is it?” I look at the stuff, totally insane thing, all text scribbling about some guy in prison and a beef about something, and it was like nuts, right? Nuts, and it was like, “Oh, my God, now what am I going to do?” So I took it and tell the guy, “Meet me again.” I said, “Here, here’s the thing, write out of your petty cash account, write a \$3,000 check for advertising.” I said, “Tell him this is the only time I’m doing this, but I’ll print this letter as a paid ad, but I’ve got to have the check so it’s a real paid ad.” Because he had signed it Kayo Konisberg. I said, “But I want the check now, take it out of whatever your lawyer account is and it’ll say ad above it, and you could tell him we did it, but that’s it. Tell him never send anything like that again. We can’t do this. That was the deal. That’s the deal you drafted.”

So that got out, and there was this insane ad that appears somewhere in one of those issues in *Ramparts*, so considering that we just about got the whole thing drafted, the papers drawn, the guys prepared, the dough, you get five hundred thousand and you get this and that.

And he says, “Oh here, Kayo sent this stuff, and he wants this done and that done.” And I said, “Oh, God, this is not going to work. He is crazy.” Of course, he was crazy. So that was the one time I actually was in fear of my personal safety. I thought this guy’s going to think I’m going to have to call off this deal. This is insane. And we had gone so far as to have a guy on our board, Jersey Dugrut, who was a member of the Banker’s Club in New York. I had told him the deal, and he goes, “Oh, that’s great.” He says, “We’ll have the press conference at the Banker’s Club. It’ll drive them crazy. You’re taking a million dollars from the most famous assassin and mobster in the country. He kills more people than [Lyndon]Johnson. Jesus, what—” This guy’s a big Wall Street guy, but he just thought it was fabulous. “Why not? It’s business.”

Anyway, I had to call it off because obviously this wasn’t going to work. And then it was uh-oh, what are we going to do now? How am I going to tell this guy it’s no deal? He could come kill me, get somebody to shoot us. That’s the way the guy was. So finally I finagled out of it by telling this lawyer buddy of his, “Hey, I talked to this guy Zion and two other guys, two Irgun guys that

Sidney knew, knew their names, this guy knew, and they thought about it and thought about it and because he, Kayo, was such a well known partisan of Israel, which he wasn't. He actually stole the atomic bomb for them. He did; he told me the story and he told Zion the story, went in and killed some guys at a place in Europe and stole the stuff for Israel that was the beginnings of their atomic bomb —murdered a bunch of people, got the stuff; he gave it to them. He did stuff like that. Anyway, but he was a secretive guy but in his mind he wasn't, so since you're such a big partisan, well known as that, and these guys —and he knew their names, Peter Madison was one of them, a couple of other guys, Irgun guys who were still around, were friends at the time. So I pulled that card on him. I said, "They all discussed it and they discussed it with me. They said this would be bad for Israel." Right?

Rubens: And he bought it?

15-00:58:07

Hinckle: Well, Jesus, if those guys said it's bad for Israel, then we won't do it. And that was the end of it. And that was the end of that last million bucks.

Rubens: Now the tape is running out. Have you ever talk to him again?

Begin Audio File 16

16-00:00:02

Hinckle: Well, Zion was always interviewing him off and on because he wanted Zion to do his biography.

Rubens: Ah. But did you ever have anything to do with him again?

16-00:00:08

Hinckle: No. Once I got out and escaped his—But when I got married to [Susan] Cheever, he sent a big telegram to the wedding and it was read at the wedding from Kayo Konigsberg, saying this and that, very flowery, went on and on. But it was a telegram. It was definitely read. Didn't want to get Kayo t'd off.

Rubens: So you never got any money from him for any of the other enterprises [magazines and books] you undertook?

16-00:00:42

Hinckle: Well, no. It was just this one bizarre thing. It was a Hail Mary, but it was almost there. Until it became—when he sent more stuff to print, I just saw—and fortunately, was able to get out of it through the way I described. That was Kayo.

But then I came up with a plan. I said, "Okay, here's the deal." And then Zion said, "Well, Jeez, let's see if we can save the thing." So we're going around and he says, "Well, I know a couple of guys." Bob Arum is a guy—I'd known him for a few years. He was a partner at Louis Nizer's. He became later one of

the big fight promoters in the country. Still is. Bob Arum, he's very famous. He has all the biggest boxers. And he stopped being a lawyer and became just a fight promoter. He made so goddamn much money out of it. Anyway, I knew him pretty well when he was in the Nizer firm. His clients at the time mostly were underwriters. So, Zion and I say, "Let's see what he thinks of this thing." So I describe the *Ramparts* situation. This is after seeing Raven and Raven, the bankruptcy attorneys. They're going, "Oh boy, this is pickling" And he says, "Well, what's the debt?" And I say, "Oh Christ. I don't know." Even if we wiped out the investors, but then there's all these problems because Dick Russell, one of the Israel guys, the businessman, had gotten us into all these tax loss forward deals, where on paper the magazine owned all this property. There were nursing homes and car dealerships. We owned all kinds of stuff.

Rubens: That had been left over from the Peretz-Russell structuring—.

16:00:02:36

Hinckle: Yeah, because we'd made all the deals. We'd already taken—the cash had always come to us. But on paper we owned all these damned things. So it was really a complex—plus you're running debts of, easy on an average month, a million, a million and a half bucks. Subscriptions that you owed the subscribers forward. The thing. It would take a million bucks just to keep it going, to stabilize for a year or so and to keep growing. Probably another four or five to calm it down and put in management, and plan for growth. You know, business stuff. It couldn't sustain itself forever, what it was doing. But that was the sixties and that's what happened up to that point.

So Arum says, "Nobody will go into this deal. Guys, we can get money from the stock market for that." He says, "But nobody's going to buy all this wreckage. All this debt and garbage and history and stuff you own and this and that. Investors and whatever—whether they're going to say they don't want their money back or not. You guys got all these creditors, estates, all that. It's got to be wiped clean. If you can start with a clean slate, we can go public. But you've got to bankrupt the magazine and start clean." So I talked to a couple of lawyers about it and they say, "Well, the only way you can do that is you'd have to start a new magazine because people could say—if you kept calling it *Ramparts*, then you could say that the debt's attached—it might be challenged by creditors. It might be this, it might be that. You'd have to somehow just pull off a thing, call it something close to *Ramparts*, but not *Ramparts*. It'd just be too open to attack." This is the start of public stock issue. "But if you kept all the staff and everything like that," he said, "For sure, they'll sue you." That's me, Hinckle. He says, "But at worst to worst, you could declare personal bankruptcy or something like that." He says, "They couldn't put you in jail or anything. But if you took the whole staff and the thing and put another name on it, and had the public stock issue, you'd be okay to start clean and you could put out the next issue almost the same time you wanted to. Sue them and you got the issue out of the stock market before

you had to stop publishing." So that's the deal I had to sell these guys. "Look, here's what we've got to do. We've got to wipe out the staff."

Rubens: Sell the guys, meaning your staff?

16-00:05:30

Hinckle: The staff. The whole New Left staff, which at the time was freaking. Saw the end might be nigh. There were problems, you know, everything. Even though it was still coming out, there was absolute panic and guys were worried about their careers. "What are we going to do? We never should have been so big." All that stuff. All that was going on. So I said, "Look. Guys, here's the deal. We've got to bankrupt the thing, fold it." And then guys are going, "What about the people who put money in it?" I said, "They lost their money." They said, "Yeah, but that's not—what about—?" I said, "Hey, it doesn't matter. No matter what happens, they lost their money. If it goes on, they lost their money because they'll never get it back. If we fold and go into bankruptcy, they lost their money because it's over with. They lost their money" "What about the printer and the—?" I said, "Hey, that happens all the time. Publishing companies do it forever. You work out an arrangement with them. You take so much on the dollar and it goes on to the next thing. That's it." And there was a big moral objection from a large part of the staff.

Rubens: So is this just staff? Or is it also the editorial board and—?

16-00:06:40

Hinckle: No, the staff. They didn't get to a vote of the board of directors. I'm sure the directors would have checked their legal liabilities in terms of the transfer to another title and, "Hey, could they sue us?" But we didn't get that far because first the staff had to say, "Okay, we'll go for this," right? We're going to fold the goddamn thing and move across the street and continue publishing with public money. Because I can get the money. Well, it was all these moral objections. "It's just wrong. People will lose their money." I said, "Hey, it's over with. Don't you understand? It's what happens in business. I regret it, but that's it. Sorry guys. So we got to do this thing." And the only guy who stood up and defended it was Horowitz. I'll never forget that. He says, "No, corporations do not have souls. They are not people." Right? He had this great leftist, Marxist analysis of it. "If to continue political work requires killing a corporation, then that's what should be done. There's nothing wrong with that." Right? But that certainly wasn't the consensus. I said, "Look, you guys gotta go along—I gotta say I have the staff with me or else I've got to start all over again and I'll just take the goddamn money and start a new magazine." I'm sure some of them thought I was nuts and they didn't believe me. I had the deal from Arum, that's what he did. If he said, "Hey, we'll get you a million bucks," he could get us a million bucks. That's what they did. It was IPO. 1970s. Stuff was happening all the time. It was before the collapse.

Rubens: This is taking place at the end of '68, going into 1969.

16-00:08:22

Hinckle: Yeah, '69. In '70, the market went down. But right then, it was at the height of it, the IPO market. And this guy, Charlie [Charles] Plohn, the guy who gave us [*Scanlan's*] our money, was churning 'em out, two, three million a week. There was nothing to it. I mean we actually had the dough. I mean I knew we had the dough, but these guys couldn't quite believe it, or thought it was wrong, or all that stuff. So I said, "Alright then. I'll quit. I resign. I quit. You guys do what you want, but you're going to have to end up bankrupting the magazine anyway, I'm telling you. I've taken it to everybody and there's nothing that can be done. You're going to have to fold, to bankrupt the magazine. And whatever your saying's going to happen to people is going to happen to them anyways." And that's of course what they ended up doing, and then they all started fighting amongst themselves, and the thing gradually went downhill.

Rubens:

So that was it? So where was this taking place?

16-00:09:17

Hinckle: This was a staff meeting at Beach Street then.

Rubens:

That's the office that was near Fisherman's Wharf.

16-00:09:22

Hinckle: Yeah, it was a climactic—it was a nighttime meeting. I'd just come back from New York. I felt pretty good. I said, "Hey, I can get the money for this damn thing."

Rubens:

So it's a vote of no confidence really. Is that right?

16-00:09:37

Hinckle: No, I quit. I'd written a big speech or a letter. I said, "You guys got to go for this. If you don't, I'm out. I got to quit. Because it ain't gonna go on. I'm out then you guys do what you want. Or this is how we can continue the magazine; it's a little controversial, but we'll be able to do—we've always been controversial."

Rubens:

So you walked out of there and that was it.

16-00:10:01

Hinckle: That was it. Never looked back.

Rubens:

You never met with the board?

16-00:10:08

Hinckle: Well I told everybody on the board about it. Dick Russell and Peretz and those guys were off. So I told Howard about it and he said, "Good, good, good."

Rubens:

One of the things we haven't talked about is that Howard had already been diagnosed—he was sick.

- 16-00:10:23
Hinckle: Oh, yeah.
- Rubens: I don't know if you'd already been traveling with him.
- 16-00:10:29
Hinckle: Well, we chased Stanley Weiss all over Europe.
- Rubens: Yeah, well, we don't have that story. We'll get that story next time.
- 16-00:10:36
Hinckle: So that gets you to the point where—
- Rubens: So now things are in place to set up *Scanlan's*.
- 16-00:10:42
Hinckle: Yeah.
- Rubens: So you could have used the name Barricade?
- 16-00:10:42
Hinckle: Well, that's what I was going to call it, but then Gossage goes, "Don't do that. Everybody—it's going to remind them of *Ramparts* and then they'll say you did this terrible thing. No, get a totally different name." Oddly enough, we ended up doing the same sort of stuff, even crazier and just as left—*Scanlan's* in some ways was more left—some of those articles in *Scanlan's*—*Ramparts* had a lot of the same staff and the same attitude.
- Rubens: Did you try to bring Bob Scheer with you? I know you brought him onto *City* magazine later.
- 16-00:11:19
Hinckle: No, Scheer stayed. Scheer and Stermer stayed on to put out *Ramparts*. They always thought they could have done it better than me anyway. And they ended up folding it, I mean bankrupting it. Scheer was a little imperious, apparently, to the staff. Because it was a commune. I wasn't imperious. I just said, "No, we're not doing that." Or "We are doing that." But it wasn't imperious. It was like yes and no. So they threw him out over some beef.
- Rubens: Then it's Horowitz and Collier.
- 16-00:11:51
Hinckle: And then Stermer quit in a huff over something. And then Horowitz and Collier took it over for awhile.
- Rubens: Moved it to Berkeley.
- 16-00:12:03
Hinckle: Yeah, and they downsized it and made a smaller magazine. They had a couple of stories, but it was—

Rubens: It was over.

16-00:12:10

Hinckle: It was obvious. It was over with.

Rubens: So that's it. That's how *Scanlan's* comes along. That's how you have the whole structure for it right away.

16-00:12:17

Hinckle: Yeah. And there were an awful lot of *Ramparts* people, including Solly Stern. Don Duncan. Bill Turner, working for *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: Just came right with you. And where was the office?

16-00:12:29

Hinckle: *Scanlan's* office was in Gossage's fire house, in San Francisco. And it was in New York—and that was one of the conflicts built into *Scanlan's* because we had Sidney and me. Sidney was in New York and I was in San Francisco because we both were so, "No, you're never going to move to New York. I'm never going to move to San Francisco. Why don't we put 'em out in both places?" Okay. We've got a million bucks, we'll put 'em out in both places. What the hell? And there are stories from both places. It was okay. Created tensions along the way, but it worked. But that's the story of how you get to *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: Okay, so we'll wrap it for today.

Interview 8: May 2, 2010

Herein lay tales of the birth of Gonzo Journalism in *Scanlan's* magazine, of vile schemes and cloak-and-dagger conspiracy theories and of personages of influence in the world of advertising and newspapers.

Begin Audio File 17

Rubens: It's May 2. The focus today is *Scanlan's* monthly. Let's go back to those gritty years. During the last interview you told the story of coming up with a public stock plan to save *Ramparts* that became the IPO that launched *Scanlan's*

17-00:00:58

Hinckle: Well, *Scanlan's* is probably the shortest lived publication, national publication, in American history, I guess. Jesus, it really only lasted a little more than a year. It took us a year to crank it up and get it going. And we were signing a lot of stuff and doing things, but from when it came out to when it got sort of arrested in Canada.

Rubens: The November 1970 issue had been confiscated and then you printed in Canada.

17-00:01:27

Hinckle: Yeah. We only published eight issues.

Rubens: So let's just start with the name. How did you come up with the name *Scanlan's*? You maybe were going to use the name *Barricades*, if you restructured *Ramparts*.

17-00:01:57

Hinckle: Yeah. Howard Gossage, the advertising guy, was the anti-advertising advertising man in San Francisco in the sixties. He died really young, like fifty-one or something, of leukemia, when they didn't know how to deal with it. And this was 1969 or '70 or something.

Rubens: Do you remember him dying before *Scanlan's* first issue—he's listed on the mast head as "Chairman: The Late Howard Gossage".

17-00:02:23

Hinckle: Well, no, he was very instrumental in *Ramparts*. He was on the board of *Ramparts*. And so was the traveling proctologist, Gerry Feigen. And they had this consulting business. They were full of money and energy, and they did things like—Oh, they not created people but found people. Marshall McLuhan is the most famous example.

Rubens: Right. We've talked about that previously.

17-00:02:44

Hinckle:

They created McLuhan. And Howard had so much to do with *Ramparts*. And then he told me—which he did to everybody—He took everybody to lunch, one at a time, and said, “Guess what? I’ve got a fatal disease. I’m going to be dead.” And then it was like, you should really get out of that *Ramparts*. You’ve done enough there, right? And I said, “Well, maybe we can save the thing. I may be able to do this or that, but I don’t know if we can.” And he said, “No, no, we’ve got to go here and there. I want you to go on this trip to Europe with me. And we have to talk about things and about newspapers and stuff.” He was like one of those magnetic persons. And his wife’s a great person, still, a good friend of mine, Sally Kemp. She was—well she still is an actress. She’s living in New York. But Gossage had a lot to do with *Ramparts*. And some of his friends. We wouldn’t have had any ads in *Ramparts* if it weren’t for Howard and Carl Ally, who’s another very major advertising guy. A-L-L-Y, Carl. He died a few years ago. Everybody’s dying. Jesus! All these guys are dead. And Stan Freberg, the sort of radio funny-man. And then Gossage got him into advertising. He’s still going. Stan’s in his early eighties, I guess now, and he’s doing well. He called me the other day about something. He’s very funny. Well, he’s professionally, a very funny guy. But between them all, there were real ads in *Ramparts* until it became like, wait a minute; what is this crazy magazine in the middle of all these controversies about not only the war, but the Black Panthers and all that stuff. So that largesse could only go so far when the owners of the companies or the boards say, “What the hell were you putting ads in *that* magazine for?” Yeah, well, sorry.

Rubens:

So I want to just focus this discussion. There was a public stock issue that had been proposed as a way to restructure *Ramparts*, but the *Ramparts* staff wouldn’t agree to declare the magazine bankrupt which was a precondition.

17-00:04:52

Hinckle:

Well, no, it wasn’t that coherent.

Rubens:

Bob Arum’s the one—

17-00:04:59

Hinckle:

Yeah, Bob Arum. Yeah, the fight promoter guy.

Rubens:

He’s the one who’s helping you set this up.

17-00:05:01

Hinckle:

Yeah, he was a partner with Louis Nizer. And he was—

Rubens:

And you said one other guy, Charlie Plohn. There’s a copy of a \$675,000 check on the cover of the first edition of *Scanlan’s*, March 1970, written on his account to Scanlan’s Literary House, Inc.

17-00:05:09

Hinckle: Charlie Plohn, yeah. He was one of the big over-the-counter, new issue IPO guys in the—

Rubens: In New York.

17-00:05:15

Hinckle: Yeah, in New York, in the late sixties, early seventies. And they were throwing those things out like popcorn. Amazing things. So we were sitting around one day. I guess at the upstairs bar at Sardi's is where a lot conspiracies have hatched. And it was like, well, hey, we could save that—We could get money for that thing, but not with all this wreckage in the balance sheet—which everybody said. So you've got to wipe the thing out. It'd be better if you just started a new one, put another name on it. You can keep the same guys together. You make it happen, so who cares? Well, we could launch a magazine, but we can't get the market to buy one with so much baggage and so much—I think we went through that, about David Horowitz was the only guy who supported the idea. He said, "A corporation's not a person. You can bankrupt a corporation." I guess bankruptcy scared the others. I said, "We've got to fold the thing, basically." Well, people lose their money. Guess what? They already lost it. Nobody invested in this to make a profit in the first place.

Rubens: So did you just walk out of the meeting and know you were done? Did you go to Gossage's office and say, okay, let's use this IPO to launch our own magazine?

17-00:06:40

Hinckle: Oh, I figured that everybody had had it. And the IPO was a fairly good move, because I knew these guys could do it. I mean, that's what they did. And we had a good conversation. Bob Arum was certainly a major Jewish guy, as Zion, my buddy was. But they were okay with the *Ramparts* position on Israel, which is that—Well, we talked about that. Which was controversial on the left then, that they had a right to exist. Can you imagine that, that that was an issue? It was a *huge* issue then. It was craziness.

So I was like, hey, we can do it, but we're going to have to change the name. And then probably they'll go after me, because I'll be a bridge person. And there were some printing bills and stuff like that; I thought they'll come after me. But that's okay, it won't affect everybody else. And we'll change the name, and we can just go across the street, and we can put out the next issue. And it was just too much for these New Left guys, who hated the *Ramparts*—not lifestyle, but—I mean, they liked what was happening politically and the way the magazine looked and that stuff, but they thought the communal way or organizing was better. And I didn't go for communes very well. So anyway, so everybody said, "No, no, no. We're not going to do that." The extreme lefty Horowitz argued, "Well, there's nothing wrong with that." Anyway. So I said, "Well, okay."

Rubens: I quit.

17-00:08:19

Hinckle: “You guys go do what you want.” [chuckles] And that was that. So then we started *Scanlan’s*. And Gossage was the chairman of the board. By the time the first issue came out, it listed on the masthead, chairman of the board, the late Howard Gossage.

Rubens: So he had died by the time the first issue appeared.

17-00:08:38

Hinckle: Right, yeah. And that was an extraordinary stock prospectus, even before the IPO, in those kind of wild days, because we called it Scanlan’s Literary House. The red herring, the thing you print up to give to investors. The underwriters take it, they assess it. You warn everybody about all the bad things. You’re legally required to do that. And this was like, there is almost no possibility this thing will ever make any money. Nothing’s that’s been a literary publication’s ever made any dough. We just went overboard on the negative points of it. And what was interesting about *Scanlan’s* is that we adopted Gossage’s publishing philosophy, which was that if the reader doesn’t pay enough money for the publication—that is, if he’s subsidized by advertising—Advertising was Howard’s big thing. And he felt that advertising had basically ruined most publications, because they wanted more audience, so they watered down what they were doing, to reach more people, et cetera. And then, of course, they all sank. That would be the big magazines in the sixties—the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, *Life*, those magazines—with huge, millions and millions of subscribers. But then advertising kind of went to television. The same thing’s happening today, with going to the internet. Although people are not making that much money on the internet advertising as publications are. Everybody thought they would, but it didn’t work out that way.

Anyway, so Gossage’s thing was that the reader loses his own freedom of the press, his own publication, if he’s subsidized, whether it’s by advertising or whatever. And he preached that. He took out an ad bitching at the *New York Times* when they folded their western edition, sometime in the 1960s, because they didn’t ask the readers’ permission to fold it. Right? He says, “Hey, the readers may have been willing to pay more.” And if there’s a publication you like, is that worth as much as a pack of cigarettes or a six-pack of beer, or isn’t it? Let them decide. That was his thing. And the implications of subsidizing from advertising, et cetera, he thought ruined and took the vitality out of most publications.

Rubens: Then the point was you were going to get money for operating the magazine from stockholders.

17-00:11:27

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we got it.

- Rubens: Did you have close to that million dollars?
- 17-00:11:30 Hinckle: We got a million bucks, which was a lot of money in those days.
- Rubens: And how many investors did you have? Was it a scramble to get the investors?
- 17-00:11:44 Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Well, then you learn the game about IPOs. You have to come up with enough original people, relatives and people like that, who will buy so much, and then they keep raising the ante a little bit. But that's normal. Anybody's who's gone through an IPO—
- Rubens: Is it you who's doing this?
- 17-00:12:02 Hinckle: Yeah, myself, Zion, a bunch of guys. Yeah, we did it. But it's not like raising money; it's like saying, hey, will you buy this many shares. Which is like 10 or 8 percent of the shares. Then they say, okay, we've got a base. And then we'll release it to all our companies, guys who sell this stuff around. And so it's not that complicated, it's just a laborious and expensive process. But you get the million bucks. And you have 600,000 shareholders or something like that.
- Rubens: Really? That many?
- 17-00:12:37 Hinckle: I forget the exact—I'd have to look. But yeah, you get a bunch. And they were warned that we probably will never make any money.
- Rubens: And how did you come up with the name Scanlan's. Did Gossage come up with it? Tell the story about it.
- 17-00:12:51 Hinckle: No, the name was originally—I just said, "Well, we'll call it *Barricades*, I guess, because it's going to be, in one way or the other a continuation of *Ramparts*. And Gossage says—and he used to stammer—"No. No-no-no-no! Hinckle no, no, no, no, no. It will remind them of *Ramparts*. They'll say you killed it. No, no, no! It'll get boring, and then you'll be blamed for it. No. No, no, don't call it anything like that." So it's like, well, that made sense, I guess. So it was like, what do we call it? And Zion—I think it was my thirtieth birthday. We took our wives; we went over to Ireland to get—
- Rubens: That was the first time you'd gone to Ireland?
- 17-00:13:27 Hinckle: No, it wasn't the first time I'd gone to Ireland, but it was a good time, something good to do for your thirtieth birthday, it sounded like. And we went

over there and saw a bunch of people. Paul O'Dwyer, the great New York politician. A great civil libertarian, fantastic guy. Just people. But we were taken to a dinner—Paul O'Dwyer took us down to—in a suburb of Dublin. He said, “You've got to see this one.” And these guys were toasting to the death, I mean celebrating the death, which had happened some many years before, of a guy named John Scanlan, who was the most disliked man in the county. He was a terrible person. He never paid his bar bills, he had illegitimate children, he didn't take care of them. He was a farmer, but he let his crops rot. Almost everything about a human being that was bad was John Scanlan. [laughs] And he was widely, widely disliked. But he was so disliked that this crowd got together every year to have a great party and celebrate again, the fact that he was dead. [laughs] They had these little mass cards there, Catholic stuff that they give out. The anniversary of John Scanlan's death and the prayer is on the back. And I looked at it, I said, “Jesus!” I said, “What a thing. Imagine [laughs] if we named a magazine after that.” And Zion says, “Why don't we? What a great name! Nobody knows who it is. He's a terrible person. It'll be fabulous.”

Rubens: So there we have it.

17-00:15:04

Hinckle: Well, then we have it. Yeah. So we called it *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: With the little American flag used as the apostrophe.

17-00:15:09

Hinckle: Oh, that was Bobbie [Barbara] Stauffacher, the designer, head designer's idea. Then the other thing about that magazine was that I didn't want it to look like *Ramparts*. It wasn't so much—Because that went on. Everybody knew us for four or five years, but it kept getting more dour, I'd say, and whatever. But it still had that look. But that look had been copied. That was Dugald Stermer's look, using Times Roman and the color photos and the graphics.. But that look of it, since then, has been copied by most magazines. *Harper's* redesigned, *Atlantic* redesigned, *Evergreen Review*, which was then a big publication—Anyway, it's like everybody looked like that. It was all the same. They all looked like *Ramparts*. Said, “Geez, we don't want to look like that.” So Barbara Stauffacher, who's a San Francisco architect, landscape architect, and designer, typographer, was an expert—she gave lectures every year in Switzerland—on a sort of harsh, stark Swiss design. Very simple, clean sort of stuff. She'd never done a magazine before but I thought, what the hell? Why don't you do one? So she did that. And it was her idea to stick the American flag as the apostrophe thing.

Rubens: So you got the money, you get a name, and then you start putting together a staff. Who picked Bobbie Stauffacher?

17-00:16:36

Hinckle: I did.

Rubens: You knew her. You knew what her work was.

17-00:16:37

Hinckle: Yeah. Yeah.

Rubens: Donald Goddard was your managing editor. Who was he?

17-00:16:44

Hinckle: He came from the *Times*. [chuckles] He's a *New York Times* guy. He'd been the travel editor or some—He'd been a sub-editor at many English publications. He came to New York, went to work for the *Times*, as what they call in England, a sub-editor, like assistant managing editor of this or that, of sections and stuff. You shuffle the stuff, you make it conform to style, you do it. He was a pro at, I guess you'd call it, getting out a magazine. And he knew that stuff. And he was a nice guy, I like Don.

Rubens: So the vision was it wasn't going to look like *Ramparts*. You got Stauffacher to get its own special look. But how did you envision the coherence of the magazine? What was this going to be a magazine about?

17-00:17:29

Hinckle: It was *Ramparts*. It was just a continuation of *Ramparts*.

Rubens: Investigative—

17-00:17:34

Hinckle: Most of those issues. Investigative, hell-raising. And Zion was of the same opinion; most magazines were boring. *Ramparts* was the only one that was half way interesting in the country. And just no rules. And we got enough money to do what we want. No advertisers, because we couldn't get them anyway.

Rubens: So what was that, a joke on the back? That ad for the German airline.

17-00:18:06

Hinckle: The faux Lufthansa ad. That was great. Since we couldn't get ads, even if we were a calm, reasonable, news magazine—And this was a national publication. We had a major national distributor. It was on newsstands all over the country. There was a big launch. It was written up. It was a big, new magazine.

Rubens: Yes. You took out ads in the *Times*.

17-00:18:28

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We took out full-page ads in the *Times*, and they were written by this guy Dan Greenburg, who's a comic writer of novels and stuff. Extremely funny guy. He did for most copywriting what Stan Freberg did in radio, brought humor to it. So he did these subscription ads, which we took out as full-page ads in the *New York Times*, and occasionally in the

Washington Post. And they brought in subscribers; you couldn't believe it. It was wild! And then there were pull-out cards in the magazine. But all of a sudden, within three, four months, we had over 100,000 subscribers. And it was like, Jesus, this is amazing. We were doing pretty well. And it was growing up towards around 180,000, close to 200,000. The guys that calculated stuff said, "Hey, you guys will actually make money." I said, "That ain't never going to happen with this thing." But they said, "No, no, no. Look at the way it's going. These things are pouring in." We were getting a lot of publicity for articles written about the articles that we wrote. Just like *Ramparts*. We had half the *Ramparts* writers. Don Duncan, the military guy, Sol Stern. All kinds of guys were also writing—They wrote for *Scanlan's*. And there wasn't that much difference. If anything, I'd say, looking back over those old issues, it was a little more—not radical, but a little more to the left, in some of the articles, than it had been in *Ramparts*, because I kind of toned down *Ramparts* a little bit, because they said, "Hey, we are getting so out there, you guys. We're doing fine, but let's not push it all the way to Karl Marx this year." [laughs]

Rubens: You did a lot of political investigating pieces. A lot about California—

17-00:20:23

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Rubens: You wrote a long piece on the law firm, O'Melveny and Myers.

17-00:20:28

Hinckle: Yeah, the political firm down in L.A.

Rubens: That was a terrific piece of journalism. How did that come about? Had you had that in your stable?

17-00:20:33

Hinckle: Yeah, that was one of the stories we were going to do for *Ramparts*, yeah. Well, it's a case study of the politically powerful law firm that basically backs both sides. And they hedged their bets and they had both sides, and they raised money for both sides. And they were very instrumental in lobbying, without being lobbyists. They were a powerful law firm.

Rubens: By the way, were you advertising in the *L.A. Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as well? Or did you concentrate your money on the East Coast?

17-00:21:10

Hinckle: Yeah. I think maybe we put one in the *Chronicle* once. But you pick the papers with a national readership and a fairly intelligent audience. Because at that time, those ads were \$15,000 or 20,000 bucks, something like that, right? Now, they're like 100,000. But you wanted to be fairly sure you might have a shot at getting your dough back. So you keep churning and keep doing it. And

they were very successful ads. So the thing was going along. That magazine was going along fine.

Rubens: Who do you think the readership was? Were they people who were also reading *Ramparts*? Or were you generating—I didn't see letters to the editor. You had a policy about that; you're not going to—

17-00:21:56

Hinckle: Oh, if you want to write a letter to the editor, we're going to charge you. It encouraged brevity.

Rubens: I didn't get a sense of who your readership was. Did you ever do surveys?

17-00:22:08

Hinckle: No, we never did a survey. Oh, you could tell from the subscriber list. But they were all over the country. And I'd say it was basically a *Ramparts* audience. But it was a little broader spread than *Ramparts*. I'd say we poached a lot of the *New York Times* readership, people who were a little more intellectually curious or whatever you want to say.

Rubens: Yes, or also willing to read more—Many of the articles were long, went into more depth than *Ramparts'* stories.

17-00:22:38

Hinckle: Well, it was obviously—The ads made fun of the thing. And it was pretty clear the type of the articles—that this was not your *Saturday Evening Post*. It was like a wild magazine.

Rubens: I'm sorry I interrupted you earlier.

17-00:22:54

Hinckle: Oh, you had asked about that one ad about Lufthansa. So Dan Greenburg, who'd written these ads for us, he said, "Hey, you guys pay for ads? You saying that's your policy?" "Yeah. That's what we do." We saw an ad we liked, we'd call—usually from a small ad agency—we'd call them up and say, "Guess what? We're going to print your ad and we'll pay you \$300 to print your ad for your client because we like the ad." And he says, "Okay, I've got one I'll sell you." And Lufthansa Airlines, in cooperation with the German tourist board, was running a very extensive national advertising campaign, almost in every slick print magazine in the country. And it was to encourage tourism to Germany. And they had pictures of serving girls on the Rhine and Bavarian castles and beautiful forests and like that. A full-color, one-page magazine ad. But the tagline or the theme line on the ad was, "Next time, think twice about Germany." It was like, I guess, next time you're planning a vacation, think about Germany. Well, we saw that. Greenburg's point was, well we'll just fix this ad and I'll sell it to you for 500 bucks. And all we were doing was just taking the exact ad they had. And there were like four dominant beautiful pictures on the ad. And he took two of them out and

replaced them with black and white photos of Nazi guys saluting and one of the German soldiers, somebody beating a naked woman and things like—Just pasted them in there, black and white, into this beautiful, otherwise great looking ad, and we just ran it. Put it on the back cover, ran it as an ad. Left the same coupon thing, their address, everything.

And went a little bit further than that; went after South Africa and got the—in that same issue, we stole the newsletter of the consulate of South Africa. It was before South Africa changed a little bit. I don't really know how much it's changed itself now. It gets a good rep, but I don't know about that.

Anyway, and that same issue, we printed their newsletter with their banner—Just what it looked like. But the copy, as you might suspect, had changed. But we had stolen the mailing list, so we actually printed the thing and mailed it to all the people getting the usual feel-good propaganda newsletter from the South African consulate, and it went out in the mail to them.

Rubens: How'd that come about?

17-00:25:50

Hinckle: We just did it.

Rubens: Somebody knew somebody?

17-00:25:51

Hinckle: Well, we lucked out. Somebody who worked there, who got the list. Somebody's having a drink one night and said, "You can get that? Why don't you see if you can get all the names. And bring us the one copy of it and we'll fix it up." So that was journalistic pranksdom, but it's part of what makes journalism always, in my sense—Papers in the nineteenth century did that sort of stuff all the time. And then as journalism became more corporate and boring and responsible, that thing went out of it. That's good fun. And it makes a point. It certainly made a point about South Africa, and it certainly made a point about Germany. Because they, of course, threatened to sue. And Sid Zion, who was a former federal prosecutor in New Jersey, lawyer guy, he was just like, "Let them sue. I'm just waiting. They sue, wait, wait. It'll be in New York. And a New York jury, 50 percent are bound to be Jews. They can't exclude all the Jews from the jury. They'll never get a conviction, so I'm just dying for them to sue us." Right? So I guess that after a while, it kind of dawned on these guys. There was a lot of hoopla about it in the advertising trade publications, and most everybody was kind of laughing and smiling. These guys kind of look silly now. And it ended up they dropped the whole campaign. Dropped the ad, and that was that. But it was one of those things.

Rubens: So I want to talk about three big stories. And the first one is Hunter Thompson. You had brought Hunter Thompson to Chicago to cover the convention for *Ramparts*; but I don't think otherwise, he wrote for *Ramparts*. Right?

17-00:27:33

Hinckle: No. I was always talking to Hunter about writing for *Ramparts*. He worked for a while; we were going to give him a column. And Peter Collier, when the editors and them was working on trying to develop themes and ideas and—They just never—Everybody was busy and Hunter was doing other stuff. It just never happened. And a lot of books say Hunter Thompson wrote for *Ramparts*. No, he was a friend of mine and he loved *Ramparts*, he loved the magazine, hung around a lot. But he just never got it together that quite much. If *Ramparts* had gone one, he *definitely* would've been writing for it, but—

Rubens:

How did the Kentucky Derby article come about? Was it an idea he had? Did you suggest it?

17-00:28:14

Hinckle: Well, we finally got the offices set up and, okay, got a printer, we were ready. Let's start publishing.

Rubens:

You had offices in San Francisco at Gossage's and then—

17-00:28:28

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah.

Rubens:

And then Zion had one in New York.

17-00:28:30

Hinckle: Yeah, we had an insane office in New York, above an Irish bar, which was an old ballroom. And there were Mafia guys who were friends of Zion's, a jailhouse lawyer named Israel Schwartz. He was something else. He was great. And he was the office manager. And there were guys walking in and out of there, with fancy jewelry and stuff. [laughs] It was hysterical. It was out of Damon Runyon. And then the office in San Francisco had all the leftwing counterculture types in San Francisco hanging around there. But it was a beautiful office on the garden floor of Gossage's firehouse. It was a very proper setting for a bunch of nutty people. And in New York, it was just insane.

Rubens:

Were you spending a lot of time in New York with Zion?

17-00:29:20

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was a nutty idea for a business, because you have two offices for a magazine? Well, what for? I mean, big magazines have bureaus and offices everywhere, of course, but we didn't need that. But a lot of stuff came out of New York. Well, like this Greenburg thing we were just discussing and other stories and guys. But the mix turned out to be a good mix. On a rational basis, you wouldn't think it would work; you got two guys who own the magazine and each one's got his own office and they go back and forth between each other, and they keep their stuff. You'd say that doesn't make sense. Well, it didn't make sense, but it worked.

Rubens: It worked, yes. You put out these rich, thick journals. So I interrupted you. How did the Hunter Thompson thing come about?

17-00:30:14

Hinckle: Oh, Hunter. Well, I called Hunter. I said, "Hey, we're finally cranking up." He was always asking me about it. *Scanlan's*. "What have you got and what can you do?" And he says, "Well, the motherfuckers at *Playboy*, they've got this piece. They assigned me to do this thing, and I got the most insulting letter I've ever got, a rejection." I said, "Well, send it to me, for Christ's sake." I said, "You mean it's done? You already wrote it?" [laughs] He said, "Well, yeah. I wrote it for the bastards and—" So he sent it to me. It was a great piece. He was assigned to do a portrait of this guy Jean-Claude Killy, who was a famous skier who got into promotion of merchandise. Sort of the beginning of—which is now so prominent—Tiger Woods, et cetera, et cetera, of athletes backing products or sponsoring them. And it turned out to be just a rip. He made this guy not look very good at all. And when the piece got turned into *Playboy*, they just freaked out at it because it was like insulting some of their major advertisers and some of the ones they wanted to get. And that thing was rejected so—

Rubens: Soundly?

17-00:31:40

Hinckle: —energetically, right. It was just like, wow. So I said, "Well, okay. The *Playboy* reject. Let's just run that." [laughs] What the hell? And then Hunter got all teed off at me because he thought it was cutting into his space—because the article was quite long; I had to cut it down about a third or something like that—because I put the letter to him from *Playboy*, of rejection, in the front of the article. [laughs] Because it was a classic. They just laid out all their values and insulted the hell out of him. It was fabulous. And he said, "What did you—" I told him I was going to do it and he thought it was going—But then he saw it in the galley and said, "No, no, no. You had to cut it anyway. I don't want that to distract people from my stuff." I said, "No, not that many people give a damn about some skier named Jean-Claude Killy. But if they read this rejection letter, even if they hate sports they're going to read it." He said, "Why? What did you do?" And he still bitched about it. We had a good strong fight about that.

Rubens: So that was the first piece that you actually published of his.

17-00:32:47

Hinckle: Yeah, the *Playboy* reject. There it was; why not? And then the Kentucky Derby came about—Well, it was Hunter, almost naturally. The phone rang, three, four in the morning, a typical time for Hunter to call. And he says, "Goddamn it!" He always said goddamn it. "Goddamn it! Kentucky Derby's Saturday." This was the middle of the week; I don't know, Wednesday night or—I don't know what night it was, around the middle of the week. "And we've got to cover the Kentucky Derby, goddamn it." I asked: "You want to

go to the Kentucky Derby?" "Yeah, goddamn it! We've got to do it. We've got to do it." I said, "Oh, God. All right. Well, okay. If you'll go, we'll do it." And he says, "Well, we need somebody to illustrate it." I said, "Yeah, I guess we do. Why? You got somebody?" And he says, "Well—" Some photographer he knew. "We'll, try him," he says. And that guy didn't work out the next morning, when I talked to him. We sent him some—"Okay, here's your plane tickets, so you go to the Kentucky Derby. But who's going to illustrate it?" And he wanted this guy Pat Oliphant, who was a cartoonist for the *Denver Post*, who's a Pulitzer Prize winning editorial cartoonist. He's a good guy. And Hunter knew him kind of casually from being around Aspen, where he lived. And he said, "Try him." So we tried him, and Hunter called him, also about three, four in the morning, got him all teed off. "No, I'm not going. What are you talking, next Friday? No, we're going tomorrow" So it was a very short window of time to figure out who the hell's going to, whatever, photograph or illustrate this thing. And I suddenly thought of Ralph Steadman, who I didn't know, but his work I always admired. I have a quirk. I've been a subscriber to *Private Eye*, the English sort of very irreverent, but politically muckraking, also—it causes a lot of trouble in English political life and corporate life. It really digs up some solid stories. But mostly it making fun of people in the press, makes fun of them, gives everybody funny nicknames, has funny cartoons all the way through it. It's unique, one of the admirable things of British life. *Private Eye*'s a great publication. And Steadman, I knew his work because he'd been doing drawings for them. And then he'd actually been promoted a little bit, or whatever you want to call it; I think the *Sunday Times* had taken him on as a major illustrator of things. So we were able to track down Steadman. It turns out that *Scanlan's* had—We called him the art editor, who hung around the art world a lot. And he was kind of a rich guy. He was an Egyptian named Surez. Very funny guy. I liked him a lot. And he knew a lot of artists, because he bought paintings and knew everybody, and knew the New York art scene and stuff, and the European art scene. And for his contacts, he was really a good guy for a new magazine, because he knew all these people because he bought their stuff and things. His father owned a Coca-Cola franchise in Egypt or something, till they threw everybody out of Egypt.

Rubens: So you knew him through the New York scene?

17-00:36:20

Hinckle: He knew the art world very, very well. Don't even ask me how I ran into him, but I did, in New York. And I said, "Hey, we're starting this magazine. Come on, help us get great, crazy artists to offer stuff for this unknown magazine." That sort of thing. So he did. And so I called him and said, "Hey, do you have any idea where Steadman is right now? I just thought of him. Hunter Thompson's going to the Derby and I don't know who to send, because we've only got two days and we've got to find somebody." And he says, "He's in Long Island. I just know somebody who talked to him. He's trying to get a job with the *Times*, the *New York Times*, and he's staying at this guy's house in

Long Island.” “Can you get ahold of him?” “Well, yeah. I’ll call my friend. He’s staying at his house.” Bingo. So we got Steadman. “All right, Steadman, you go to—” They’d never met; barely had even heard of each other.

Rubens: In the piece, he writes about not knowing what he looked like, how were they going to meet up-

17-00:37:10

Hinckle: Yeah. Yeah, that’s part of the piece.

Rubens: And I was wondering if the phrase fear and loathing—Is that the first time Thompson uses that phrase, which becomes a signature one for him. Because he says Steadman wasn’t well received, people didn’t like his manner.

17-00:37:22

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. He was always beating him. That went on through the rest of their lives together. He was always beating up Steadman. And Steadman, at the end, I think, kind of resented it. He wrote a book about Hunter, which came out about three years ago. And when I read it, it was kind of embittered in a lot of ways. Like some guy who’d been slagged as they say in British terminology; that is made fun of or stuff like that in barroom conversations or whatever. But Hunter did that constantly to him. And it was part of their thing. It was like a Mutt and Jeff act. And so everybody thought, hey, that’s the way they are. But look, when Steadman finally wrote his own book, you could tell he had some residual resentment from being made the clown all these years by Hunter, and made an object of his writing. And Steadman became a character and did this and that, people didn’t like him. Funny enough, the same thing happened to Hunter because Garry Trudeau made him a character in his *Doonesbury*, in his comic strip. The character Uncle Duke is Hunter Thompson all the way through. And Hunter got furious at that. He constantly was calling me and saying, “Who can we get to sue Trudeau?” I said, “You don’t sue Trudeau.” I mean, Christ. “No, no, no. I’ve got to right to my personality, and he’s appropriated it for commercial uses.” I said, “Yeah, that’s true, but I think it’s fair use. You can’t say you’re not exactly an outgoing person and you don’t display your personality all over the country everywhere, so how the hell are you going to say— Because you’re using it for corporate benefit, too, for yourself. You’re identified with your books and the way you act. And so if he picks you, stop it.” No, he wouldn’t give up. He really wanted his—He was teed off at Trudeau.

Rubens: So tell me about the response to that piece. You weren’t his editor for that piece, were you? Did you have a hand in it?

17-00:39:27

Hinckle: Editor? There was no editor to that piece. We pulled it out of him. He got back from the Derby; he had his notebook, we stuck him in the Royalton Hotel across the street from the Algonquin, where I always hung out. And he sat in a bathtub full of ice water for two days, kind of get the pieces. Well, he couldn’t

write; he had a writing block. Finally we started taking the pages piece by piece.

Rubens: So you were there, Warren? You're literally there doing this?

17-00:40:01

Hinckle: No, I sent a friend of mine. Harvey Cohen was working for us in New York. And Hunter there. I said, "Hunter." He said, "Well, I'm working on it. I'm working on it. Arghhhh." He always mumbled. So I said, "Harvey, just get the notes from him. Get the stuff. Right? And just bring it down." The office of *Scanlan's* in New York was down the street about a block. "And bring it down." And it was all wet. The pages were dripping wet because he was constantly in a bathtub. We kept a large supply of booze and beer there. And it was a heat wave and that hotel didn't have much air conditioning. So everything was kind of damp. [laughs] And so this guy Goddard, who we discussed, who was the—

Rubens: Managing editor.

17-00:40:45

Hinckle: —very appropriate Brit editor. He sort of got him dried out and steamed down, so we could photocopy pieces, to see what we got. And they kept piling up. And he sort of associated it to—part was a fantasy about science fiction, and part of this, [laughs] and part was about the Derby, part was about Steadman. Kind of piled up the Derby parts and got them dried out and sort of sorted them kind of chronologically—maybe a third of what he'd written, because he'd scribbled all kinds of stuff, a lot of it having nothing to do with the Derby. It was like, hey, this is how we focus this article on the Derby. And just sent them—We had a machine then, which was an early fax. We called it the Mojo. Hunter loved that machine. And it was a drum-type device. This was 1970, and it sounds like we're talking 150 years ago. But faxes weren't that prominent then. And to send things that you wanted the image on, it was like the old AP wire photos. That's how they would come to newspapers, on this slow revolving drum. And then they'd print out on the other end, and there would be the caption underneath them and you could copy it. And so I said, "Well, send the actual pages." So he stacked them up one way; then I restacked them a little bit, took them off, went to a bar in North Beach and—Trying to reorganize them a little bit again, and started writing little subheads about, Derby day three, this happened, and blah-blah-blah, that sort of stuff. And then Steadman's drawings came in about the same time, thank God. And they were just brilliant. And the copy was brilliant. It was just raw. It was what became Gonzo Journalism. That's how Gonzo Journalism started.

Rubens: How fast did that happen? I read the piece recently; I hadn't read it in a long time—it's relatively tame. It's a relatively coherent piece.

17-00:42:52

Hinckle:

Well, it was unheard of at its time, for a national magazine to publish what most editors would call gibberish or something, right? But no, when you read it now you say, well, what's so wild about that? Right? Because everybody started doing it. And Hunter went on and did it in many, many ways, and became more phantasmagorical, in his stuff about Las Vegas and things like that, and everybody started copying the style. But it was like making yourself the center of the story, which—They called it New Journalism. Tom Wolfe is a brilliant practitioner of that, where you make a lot of personal comments and you're very funny and you make sweeping judgments about things. It was not your traditional writing or reporting. So that was what was called New Journalism. Gonzo Journalism was different from that, in that it was much more of a throwback to nineteenth century journalism, which was incredibly personal and full of everything from scatology to science fiction interludes, and a lot of personal duals. And that became the sort of, I guess in the history of journalism, the difference between what was called New Journalism—Gonzo Journalism was the outrageous version of it. You know, then we smoked a bunch of drugs, and then we saw things; everything looked green. That sort of thing. And then we could see Nixon is evil because that's what—All that stuff thrown together, completely outrageous personal part of reporting, and quite a verve-ish verve, in the sense of really boom, boom, boom, pounding away, moving stuff. That became gonzo. And gonzo's now in the standard English dictionary—it says gonzo.

Rubens:

Supposedly, the *Boston Globe* magazine editor, Bill Cardoso, when he was describing the piece, used the word gonzo for the first time. Is that your—

17-00:45:09

Hinckle:

He came up with the word. Because he read the Kentucky Derby piece. He was a friend of Hunter's. He'd known him from covering things here and there. And Cardoso was also a writer for *Scanlan's*. And of course, he was very slow, never got anything written. Finally a couple pieces he was writing for *Scanlan's*, I published four years later, in this magazine I did for Francis Coppola, called *City Magazine*.

Rubens:

We're going to get to that.

17-00:45:33

Hinckle:

Our editor was a little slow at getting stuff done. Great guy. Anyway, he wrote Hunter a note and just said, "I read that Kentucky Derby piece. Brilliant." He says, "That's gonzo. Goddamn it, that's gonzo." And gonzo was a Puerto Rican derivative term that was used in the Boston Irish ghetto, if you want, for something that was way out there or outrageous, man, or something like that. It was slang. And he knew that from his hanging around Boston. And the term, he believes, had that derivative, somewhere Puerto Rican or Spanish, called gonzo. I could dig up his exact declamation of it somewhere, because he was asked about that years later and became known as the guy who applied gonzo to this style.

Rubens: Is this in your Hunter Thompson book, as well?

17-00:46:33

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah, there's quite a bit.

Rubens: Okay. So we'll make a reference to that. It sounds like you had a big hand in shaping his piece, then. So you were literally doing subheads and kind of stringing the thing together?

17-00:46:44

Hinckle: Well, yeah. And I was shaping it. It was all these notebook pages, just as he had scribbled them down. And you had to make sure that you could read the writing. Most of it was hand written; some of it he would bang out on a typewriter. Really rough. And a lot of it was just, we went off to somewhere else. There was great stuff in there. A couple of researchers have asked me over the years, does anybody ever know what happened to the lost parts of the Kentucky Derby article? And I always say, "No. [laughs] I had no idea they were—"

Rubens: It was striking to me how coherent a piece it was. He doesn't have actual reporting on the race, because he then ends up saying, during the race, "I was so wasted I couldn't do it." But he—

17-00:47:33

Hinckle: Well, the thing that made that noticed was that it didn't pay any attention to the race. It paid attention to the spectators and the social stuff and the piggishness of it and the absurdity of it all.

Rubens: And then the kind of turn, where at the end he says, we were a part of it, we were really pigs, too.

17-00:47:53

Hinckle: Yeah. Oh, yeah. And he ends up literally bashing Steadman.

Rubens: Yes, exactly. And then the last paragraph of the piece is about Cambodia and the events that are going on at Kent State. And I wondered if that was really you, instead of him--

17-00:48:09

Hinckle: No, no. That was all in Hunter's notebooks. It was just what we kept, to fit within the confines of trying to make it more or less about the Kentucky Derby.

Rubens: But was he going to end the piece with news about Cambodia and Kent State?

17-00:48:26

Hinckle: No, he ends with throwing Steadman out of the car and saying, "We don't need the likes of you in Kentucky."

Rubens: Exactly. But not before—That's the very last line. But he segued away from the radio news bulletin that says the National Guard is massacring students at Kent State.

17-00:48:43

Hinckle: Well, he starts out in the article, he meets some fan in the bar, and he gives the guy a line of bull that he's from *Playboy* magazine or something. Buying him drinks. And there's references then to the headlines in the *Courier-Journal* or whatever that day. This was all his stuff. We left a lot of it in. And probably would've left a lot more in, if we—Because things were pretty late. We were now coming out as a monthly. So it was on the edge. Steadman's art came in just in time. Had Hunter's stuff, and there was only this much space for it. So that's really—

Rubens: So did you know you had something unusual when you were finished working on that?

17-00:49:27

Hinckle: Well, I thought it was terrific, yeah. It was just funny as hell. And it turned the sports writing convention upside-down. Because you go to the race and instead you're talking about anything but the race. So that was uniquely done.

Rubens: How soon before, then, ripples were pooling out in the country about that? Did *Scanlan's* get a boost?

17-00:49:52

Hinckle: Almost immediately. In this business, sometimes you have newsstand issues that will sell out because they get a lot of publicity or people are trying to find them and stuff. But we have to recall, in this period we're discussing, this was before the internet. Right? Research wasn't the same then. It was really hard to find stuff. You had to go through the bound volumes of newspapers in libraries, things like that. You had to dig everything out. Listen, there was no Goggle[sic]. [laughs] It was a different world. It was hard work then, to dig up facts that supported what you were doing. So that was one of the remarkable things about *Ramparts*, and *Scanlan's* did the same thing. We put a lot of researchers to work on a story.

Rubens: All right. Well, I want to get to a research story you're doing in just a minute. But just to finish out this. So was there a boost in the ratings, the coverage of, and then the sale of *Scanlan's*? Did it happen pretty soon, or did it take a while?

17-00:51:00

Hinckle: Oh, everybody started to write Hunter. And Tom Wolfe was the first who said, "This is brilliant. This is the greatest thing ever published." And Wolfe was also an early fan. The first piece that Hunter wrote in *Scanlan's*, the one that *Playboy* had rejected, Wolfe loved that piece. And he immediately called Hunter and called me up and said, "Jesus Christ, that was great. I'm glad you

published that letter. You made those guys look so bad, those fools at *Playboy*." Journalism can be fun if you throw off the reins and kind of do what makes sense to you. It's just that most publications don't have the freedom to do that.

Rubens: Sure.

17-00:51:47

Hinckle: They're too constrained by editorial standards or advertising standards or something like that. But when you're having fun, everybody notices it. And the Kentucky Derby thing just went—Word of mouth in the professional circles was just instant, almost, in America. It became a very famous piece fast because what you might call the writing class of people obviously kind of helped form public opinion, because they're the prominent writers of their time. The Jimmy Breslins and the Tom Wolfes, those people, that's all they were talking about, was that piece. You crazy bastards, look what you did!

Rubens: So are people now writing to you and saying they want to write for *Scanlan's*?

17-00:52:33

Hinckle: Oh, yeah! Oh, then everybody wanted to write like that. Yeah.

Rubens: And by the way, did Wolfe ever publish in *Scanlan's*?

17-00:52:39

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: I didn't think I ever saw him, and not in *Ramparts* either, right?

17-00:52:43

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: But he's a fan.

17-00:52:44

Hinckle: No, but he was a friend. He's a good friend of—I met him through—

Rubens: Friend and a fan.

17-00:52:48

Hinckle: —Gossage. He was always part of Gossage's seminars in San Francisco. He liked *Ramparts* a lot. In fact, he gave me a few tips on writing stories. Wolfe, they did their own revolutionary stuff with *New York* magazine, which had come out of the *Herald-Tribune* supplement. And his style of writing really did—Terry Southern will argue that he started before Tom did. But that was what was called new journalism.

Gonzo was different because it took new journalism and it made it psychedelic and profane, and so intensely personal that it was a different part of the genre.

Rubens: And so you did publish stuff on the hippies. In one issue you have a photo spread on psychedelic culture—in *Scanlan's*.

17-00:53:36

Hinckle: Yeah, we continue the *Ramparts* critique of the hippies and the commercialization of the culture, which included everybody from Jan Wenner to Timothy Leary to Bill Graham—who I was quite a critic of for basically making money off of what started as free music and free love and free style and commercializing it; which immediately got picked up by American culture, because it absorbs everything really fast and turns it into a buck. And so that trend I was very, very critical of. Then we were critical of it politically. There was a big article in *Scanlan's* about Altamont, what happened at Altamont, which continues that critique. Which wasn't popular in a lot of areas in the culture because it seemed a little stern. But the political part of it was that basically, you can't tell people to tune in and drop out and you're going to find—the truth will come out of the music. Hey, nothing wrong with music but that has nothing to do with politics. You still have a Nixon or a Bush or somebody coming. And just sitting around stoning out and listening to music, and being told that's a good thing to do with your life. Don't get involved. Tune in, drop out, Timothy Leary's thing. We were very critical of that.

Rubens: *Scanlan's* seems to be more hard hitting politically, whether it's local stories on California—You have a story about Jane Fonda with native Americans decrying the spoiling of Pyramid Lake.

17-00:55:30

Hinckle: Yeah, we did some of the early environmental stuff in *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: *Scanlan's* seems to be continuing the range of coverage you had in *Ramparts*, but the articles are less popular in style, or rather there seems to be more in-depth pieces. Maybe it's because it's not a slick that the pieces seem to be more hard hitting politically. Of course you're competing with *Ramparts*.

Well, let me change the tape and I can get your response.

Begin Audio File 18

Rubens: You were saying off tape that there is more room in *Scanlan's* to do these in-depth pieces because—

18-00:00:02

Hinckle: It's not full of ads. The ads that were in there were for fun.

Rubens: The articles are very politically oriented; they're also very rich.

18-00:00:14

Hinckle: Yes, it's a serious magazine. But it's hard to define a magazine when it's just in the first year, it's just like almost shaking out. Then you kind of decide, where you're going. It was basically a continuation of *Ramparts*, without having to have a lot of staff meetings.

Rubens: How did you divide up your editorial responsibilities, Sidney and you?

18-00:01:33

Hinckle: [laughs] We didn't. It just happened. We were putting out a magazine. For less than a year of—Eight issues is not much. It was richer and more coherent than a magazine might normally be. I don't know if it was that coherent, but it was kind of eccentric as a justification stories. But it was interesting reading. You could pick it up—it's like, I guess, I don't know, if you pick up a *Reader's Digest* from 1937, and you can still read it in the dentist's office, because there's enough stuff in there. You could pick up those old *Scanlan's* issues if it's laying around today, you start looking at it and, God, it's thirty-four years ago, and it's pretty interesting stuff. It's like *The American Mercury*. You can read *The American Mercury* now. I read it all the time. I've got a lot of old issues of *American Mercury*, when Mencken was doing it. It's a damn interesting magazine! So what, it was 1920-something. The pieces are damn interesting. They have a—

Rubens: Do you want to just say something quickly about the story from *Scanlan's* on the Republic of Anguilla? The *San Francisco Chronicle* recently reissued the story, or reported on it?

18-00:03:13

Hinckle: Yeah, the current editor didn't know that it happened. I said, "Oh, yes, it did." [laughs] I wrote the story and they stuck it in the Sunday paper.

Rubens: Oh, it's your story. Why don't you tell it. In *Scanlan's* it was "The Log of the Anguilla Free Trade and Charter Company." The foreword is by Herb Gold, and there are sections that are written by Gossage, Feigen and Scott Newhall.

18-00:03:39

Hinckle: Well, we had the tapes. Howard kept the tapes of— It was quite an adventure.

Previously, Gossage had basically found, discovered, whatever you want to call it, and merchandised, introduced them to Tom Wolfe, who wrote an article about him—Marshall McLuhan, that is—and brought him to New York and introduced him to all the advertising people. Anyway, McLuhan became famous almost entirely because of Howard Gossage. And Gossage was a genius scout. He was always looking for people who were unusual and bright and great. And not to make dough; he was just a wild man who was really interested in ideas and everything.

And so the next person that he found, stumbled across, was a guy named Leopold Kohr, K-O-H-R, who was a professor at the College of Wales at Aberystwyth or however you pronounce it correctly, in Wales. And he was writing about smallness. He was a philosopher of smallness. And his basic thing—he'd written many little books about it but nobody had ever seen him—he was saying, which has become a pretty standard critique now, that when things get too big, they don't function well anymore, be it government or a corporation. Too big. Almost like the banks, too big to fail. But the bigger it gets, it becomes out of scale and it doesn't function. Therefore, it's better to have city-states, the way Italy used to be, than to have Italy as a country because it doesn't function. Well, I think that's pretty self-evident. [laughs] And Gossage would always have these seminars, great lunches, bring everybody from all over the country. And John Steinbeck would be there and Tom Wolfe would come. Okay. Now, Leopold, tell them about smallness. Right? And he'd say, "Well, if you get too big—" [laughs] That sort of thing, right? And this island of Anguilla, in the Caribbean, had just recently declared independence from the federation it was in, of—

Rubens: The British Empire.

18-00:06:21

Hinckle: —British control, yeah. So he saw that, he said, "Oh, now, that would be a great example. We could help them become independent and small." Because they're very small. And we could show how things, when they're small, can work. Great idea. Everybody got into it. And Scott Newhall, who was the editor of the *Chronicle* at the time—a great, great editor, a great man—loved ideas, also. And of course, one of his ideas—he was somewhat of an antiestablishmentarian; somewhat, quite an antiestablishmentarian himself—was that San Francisco shouldn't have anything to do with the rest of California. Certainly, not Southern California, and he wasn't even so sure about the rest of north California. He said, "We should become a city-state." He loved that idea of San Francisco being a city-state. And so he got into it, and the *Chronicle*, as— What happens when you have a strong editor, a great editor who just tells the corporate bosses, this is what I'm doing, or doesn't pay any attention to them, does what he wants, things happen. And mostly, you don't have strong editors. You just don't. They go along, they do their best. Some of them are very brave. Over time, some have fought for civil rights and liberties and have written well. But basically, it's a guy who'll just say something like, hey, I'm a newspaper in San Francisco and I'm going to let this island Anguilla [chuckles] become free and independent and small, and we'll find a way to finance it, because that would be an example to San Francisco about why we should be a city-state. Now, that doesn't happen too much in professional journalism. [laughs]

Rubens: And they were going to *finance* it?

18-00:08:08

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, because how are you going to—You've got to finance it. So they got Gossage's advertising agency and some marketing guys in, and they figured, well, we didn't want to be just tourists, but we could finance it by selling—Newhall was a big coin collector, avid coin collector. And so he bought up a bunch of old Spanish dollars or whatever, coins, and decided that they'd double-stamp them, which makes them more valuable or attractive, whatever it is in the coin collecting world, as "Aguilla free liberty dollars". And he got a coin stamping press and they set that up in the basement of the *Chronicle* and had copy boys down there stamping the goddamn coins. And then Gossage took out, as his usual style, a full-page ad in the *New York Times*. It had become evident that for many of these ventures or adventures, we kind of used the *New York Times* [chuckles] to great purpose, because it had the most literate national audience. Which probably is not saying much for America or for the *Times*, but that's what there was. And for that purpose, it worked pretty well. So they had this pronouncement: Anguilla does not want to be a nation of busboys. Or: is it silly that Anguilla does not want to be a nation of busboys? Meaning that a typical place, casinos, would move in, or big hotels and things like that, and all the populace would just be working in these menial jobs, and big people—corporations or whatever, even the mob from the outside would come in and run it. And they'd just all have their little jobs and get basically screwed over and not be a real part of their country, would just be workers. So they didn't want to be busboys, was Gossage's idea. So they do this ad and they say, you can help Anguilla. Here, they have these coins. If you're a coin collector, you get them. You can get an Anguillan passport. They created the passports, right? You can buy an Anguillan flag. [laughs] Right? And then they scraped together 50,000 bucks or something, stuck it in the Anguilla treasury—they didn't have a treasury—to get the bank going.

Rubens:

Are they meeting with anybody on—

18-00:10:31

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah! They were down there seeing the Anguillan leaders, essentially. And then they were flown to San Francisco for meetings, and back and forth. Wined and dined here and there. I remember Gerry Feigen, the proctologist, who was one of the thinkers of this group about, let's get new ideas out there—a very funny guy—he had a collection of something like 3,000 scatological jokes, categorized by topic or punch line. He had them on recipe cards, on 3 x 5 cards. And he's got a great pad in North Beach, on the edge of Telegraph Hill. [laughs] And he had all these same old jokes, in every language. Very funny guy, Feigen. And they just got it going. And they'd bring these guys out here. But Feigen was bitching one time because they ordered something like, I don't know, \$289 dollars' worth of lamb chops for lunch. [laughs] And when he got the bill—They paid for all this. They just did it. They thought, well, let's help these guys out. Well, the story ended badly because the Anguillans, or at least the pioneers of the country at the time,

were more interested in the offers from casinos and everybody, other people, free love clinics and cancer cure things. A lot of people decided the island—because all of a sudden this name popped up; nobody'd ever heard of it before—might be a place to do things, money-making ventures. Which was not their idea. The idea was they'd become self-sustaining on a small basis. So anyway, the Anguillans became greedy or whatever you want to call it, and sort of succumbed to the entreaties. And then stories began popping up in the English press about the casinos and the organized crime influences coming into Anguilla. Enough to give the British, who'd like to invade because they don't have too many things to do these days—Their days of invading countries were long over by that time, in the twentieth century. In they come with paratroopers and the whole thing, and land and take over Anguilla. [chuckles] And that was the—

Rubens: And that's the end of that.

18-00:12:49

Hinckle: That was the end of that experiment in smallness, yes.

Rubens: So did you have a follow-up to that, or was this—Of course, you only have seven, six more issues.

18-00:12:57

Hinckle: Well, basically, how they had done all these—Everybody sat with a tape recorder and sort of gave their recollections. So we had it transcribed, because they were just tapes.

Rubens: Yes, I see Ruth Newhall and your sister did the transcribing. [laughs]

18-00:13:12

Hinckle: Did the transcribing, yeah. And just edited them down—like Hunter's stuff almost, right?—into a narrative. At least if you'd have enough patience to read seven, eight pages of it, you got this amazing sort of wacko story. It's really *The Mouse That Roared*, right, that movie. Well, this was *The Mouse That Roared*; it actually happened.

Rubens: And you got Herb Gold to write—

18-00:13:36

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Well, Herb Gold was part of Gossage's stable of friends. And Herb must've gone to Haiti more times than airplanes have gone there. I think he's gone to Haiti eighty or ninety times. And he likes that part of the world. And he couldn't wait to get down there and see what was going on.

Rubens: Did that get a lot of press? Was that story—

18-00:14:00

Hinckle: Well, when the British invaded it, did. Until then, it was only the readers of the *Chronicle* who would say, "the nation of Anguilla today"—These front-

page stories in the *Chronicle*. People would say, "What the hell is this about?" But people loved the *Chronicle* in those days because it would do these quirky things. It was fun. So you went along with it. Said, okay. now they're suddenly interested in Anguilla. Newhall sent Art Hoppe, I think it was, one time to Africa to—There was a tribe there who had found some way to wind so many rubber bands that they could propel a human being or something into flight. It was some story like that. And he sent him all the way to Africa to work out, how many rubber bands would we need? And how can we make this happen? That was the *Chronicle* then. It was a great paper. It was also the first major daily that came out against the Vietnam War.

Rubens: Is that right?

18-00:15:02

Hinckle: Yeah. It was engaged in exposing as well as great crusading fights about, the water issues in California and what Los Angeles was doing, from the *Chronicle*'s point of view, to the north.

Rubens: So did you take some of your direction from—Did the *Chronicle* give you some ideas about stuff you were going to write? Because you did a three-part series on the California Water Plan in *Scanlan's*.

18-00:15:24

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Were you close with Newhall at this point? Later you became closer and you wrote a piece on him for *New West* magazine [1978].

18-00:15:29

Hinckle: Yeah. Well, later, I became much closer. When he left the *Chronicle* and was running his own paper, in his own county, down in Newhall, California. But no, I was fairly close with Scott at the time, because I'd met him through Howard. And he was right there in the *Chronicle*, and that was the time *Ramparts* was like, hey, this is a big magazine in San Francisco. So we got along very well.

One of the things that—I guess I hadn't thought about that, but the earliest environmental articles, as a theme for environmental articles, had to have first appeared in *Scanlan's*. There was quite a series of them. And we had a device called what if we didn't do it? Like what if we don't build the Alaska pipeline? What if we didn't build the SST, whatever, plane, to pollute the atmosphere. Very green issues at the time. And there were a lot of environmental articles about issues in California that were—I'm just trying to think. I don't want to claim that *Scanlan's*, in that brief existence, started environmental reporting. It certainly didn't start environmental reporting. But I think it was probably the first publication that emphasized it. A lot.

Rubens: And every issue there's something. You have articles from Friends of the Earth.

18-00:17:00

Hinckle: Yeah, well, that's because David Brower was a good friend and was part of a stable of a goofy San Francisco intellectuals, whatever you want to call them, troublemakers, at that time. And he was operating out of the firehouse. And so we found out a lot of stuff from him, that was going on. Said, whoa, I didn't know that. Well, we better do something about that. It's just kind of natural. Find out stuff.

Rubens: Yeah. Segueing away, you had Studs Terkel. You had an incredible stable of people who wrote for you. I don't know how you got them all.

18-00:17:31

Hinckle: Well, Studs was a good friend. He liked *Ramparts* a lot. And I got to know him pretty well. He was a good guy. Sweetheart, friend.

Rubens: He wrote on the conspiracy women, women who were the mates of the Chicago 7. That was an interesting article. So much attention had gone on the men.

18-00:17:43

Hinckle: Yeah, one of the women was Bob Scheer's wife, Anne. She's still going strong. I just saw her. I spend a lot of time down at this trial of the small union that the SEIU national is trying to squash. I'm writing a piece for Harper's.

Rubens: That involves Sal Rosseli, who has created a new national union of healthcare workers.

18-00:18:06

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah. It's a break-away from—Well, he had a very successful part of SEIU, but they differed on management techniques. He felt SEIU was too willing to trade away what the workers wanted, from the way he saw it, to get permission from management to organize more places with more mild demands, so they could get more numbers. And he felt that worker democracies had the say, that this is what the people want. And it's going to be harder bargaining, but that's what we're going to do. And so what if we don't get really big and wide and powerful as a union, as long as we can do the right thing for the people we're representing. Became a bitter argument with Andy Stern, who headed SEIU.

18-00:18:57

Hinckle: Well, Anne's a lawyer now. She got a degree, a couple of husbands later.

Rubens: She's married to Dan Seigel, isn't she?

18-00:19:02

Hinckle: It's a Dan, yeah. And he's the lawyer for Sal Rosselli's union. So it was like old home day [laughs] down at that trial for a little while.

Rubens:

Yeah. Well, tell me—There's a lot to say about *Scanlan's*. Are there any other major stories that stick out in your mind? I want to get to the one on how Spiro Agnew might interrupt the 1972 elections. Seemed like a kind of echo of the plot that was afoot at the '68 convention.

18-00:19:41

Hinckle: That's a very long story. It involves a rogue CIA agent who is a big trouble maker. And a friend of mine, Oswald LeWinter—a great poet, a very good poet—was the leader of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, who then went underground and popped up here and there, as a speech writer for Humphrey and at gigs, in and out of formal service with the CIA and Israeli intelligence, and is quite a character, quite a character. And he was well known to me and Sidney Zion. We loved Oswald. You never knew what trouble he was going to come up with. Quite a rogue guy. And he came up with this letter. It wasn't a letter, it was a page, this one lost page, of what purported to be a four-page memo from—Spiro Agnew was then vice president, before he was later indicted and all that stuff. There was no way to really find out what the other three pages said, or if they in fact existed. But we'd been in a couple of fights with the Nixon administration and they'd got the hardhats to picket in front of the *Scanlan's* office, for God's sake, and things like that. One of the things that got them mad was that we published an article—that's when the New York/West Coast thing actually worked, because here was Hunter Thompson and the fairly well-known elements of stuff in San Francisco and the West Coast and that style of people in writing and art; and then there was the old, tough, nitty-gritty in New York. And we published this article about the hardhat union leaders, the construction guys—

Rubens:

In New York.

18-00:21:57

Hinckle: Yeah. We had a picture of them meeting with Nixon for tea or something, at the White House, and pointed out that of the seven or nine people at the meeting, the majority of them were under indictment or investigation; or by going to Washington without asking permission of their parole officers; they had violated their travel ban. So Nixon was basically meeting with a bunch of already established crooks or suspected crooks, as under investigation. Goonies. So it was like Nixon and the goonies. And we just published the thing and said—we had listed all the investigations and the convictions and things, pointed out that they violated travel restrictions to go to the White House. Of course, the hardhats were then out on the streets—their unions were; I don't mean the individuals but, you guys go out there—demonstrating very much in favor of Nixon bombing Cambodia and this and that, and the kids were on the street throwing stuff at them. But they became sort of a juggernaut. And there was Nixon meeting with these guys, hey, good going,

guys. And we said, "Wait, these guys are a bunch of bums. [laughs] They're crooks." So that got us in a bit of trouble. People really didn't like that. That's one of the things John Dean talked about in his book, when his memoirs came out.

Rubens: That specifically, where—

18-00:23:17

Hinckle: The Nixon White House hated *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: And they wanted to go after your tax records.

18-00:23:23

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Well, that's almost normal. They did that to *Ramparts*. I mean, they didn't; Nixon wasn't there then. The Johnson administration did that to *Ramparts*. But they got a little more aggressive with—The Nixon guys were tougher than that earlier sixties crowd. Anyway, we didn't know all this, of course, till later on, till you read people's memoirs. But they were really disturbed by some of the stuff that *Scanlan's* was doing. You have to remember, this was actually—We did have a million dollars. It came out to \$787,000, by the time everybody grabbed their money from the underwriter's fees. But that was a lot of money in 1970. And we had no restrictions on what we published. We didn't care. And we had a very strong national distributor, because the national distributor guys liked me from *Ramparts*. Not that they necessarily liked *Ramparts*, but they made a lot of money off of *Ramparts*, as we managed to break through on the newsstands and it was really a big newsstand seller, so they could make money. So they figured this magazine was going to be the same sort of stuff, in their minds. Okay, so they gave us a really good distribution. So *Scanlan's* was everywhere. It was already picking up airports. It was there. So I guess when those type of our unrestrained-criticism type articles, which normally would take months of caution for, say a *New York Times* to publish and research and think about, and then they'd put it in guided, sort of measured ways. But we just said, Hey, these guys are a bunch of bums and they're meeting with Nixon. And they should be in jail for parole violations. It was a little blunt. And it was noticed. At least by the White House.

Rubens: All right, so the story about the page that's found from—

18-00:25:20

Hinckle: Yeah, well, so we weren't sure about it. I'm pretty sure, to this day, that Oswald made it up. He was a great—But you couldn't tell; it was brilliantly done. He was brilliant about that stuff.

Rubens: And so what was on it?

18-00:25:35

Hinckle:

Oh, it was talking about stuff that they were actually considering, which I didn't really know they were at the time, but it sounded plausible. And its been in books since, which have gone into COINTELPRO, the FBI operation and things like that, they were considering things like detainment camps, where to corral a bunch of protesters if they got too bad; suspension in some ways, if a national emergency came about, they'd be prepared for suspending certain civil liberties, without having to declare martial law. But the irony of those things is that they actually have happened in recent years. There's John Yoo at Berkeley rationalizing Guantanamo Bay, suspending things; the president can do this if he wants to. There *was* thinking like that. And the papers that have come out about COINTELPRO, and other books in the last twenty years—that's what they were thinking. So I wasn't sure if Oswald, because he was a very canny insider guy—And he was a good con man, too. So I was never sure if he just made that up. [laughs] But he was right on.

Rubens:

What was Turner's take on that? Were you running this by Turner?

18-00:27:08

Hinckle:

Yeah, I showed it to Turner. He just scratched his head, "Well, where'd it come from?" "He says he got it from his secretary; he found it on the machine. And she just works in the office, and we can't find anybody. And they denied that that page of a memo ever did exist." He said, "Well, of course, they'd deny that." So it was like one of those things: hm. So we didn't make an article about it at all. We just stuck it on a blank right-hand page, when you start opening the magazine. And it had no introduction, it had nothing; it just said, "A page from a memo from—" And it had "the office of the vice president"—it was his stationery—on the thing. Didn't say anything about it. They went nuts. They went absolutely nuts. He called a press conference. Who the hell noticed it? We didn't take out an ad, we didn't say, you better read this, we didn't do a bit article. I said, "Well, let's just stick it on the wall and see if it flies." See what happens. Maybe it'll be news. They went crazy. Agnew denounced it. "This wasn't my year's stationery; this was last year's stationery. We wouldn't have written a memo," and this and that. What are you bothering about this for? So that sort of led you to say, Jesus! [laughs]

Rubens:

What's going on?

18-00:28:19

Hinckle:

What's going on here? Why are they so upset? And then, of course—as usual we go, again, full-page ads in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the famous Agnew memo. [laughs] Right? And more press conferences attacking it. And circulation soared. They should've just ignored it.

Rubens:

So what are the repercussions that you learned about later? What was it that the administration was doing, specifically? Did you learn?

18-00:28:52

Hinckle: Well, once we were shut down we learned, yeah.

Rubens: Okay. So is the shutting down specifically related to this?

18-00:28:58

Hinckle: Oh, sure. You know this from Dean—it's in a couple of his books—and some other stuff's been published. And there's a guy up in Oregon who's a graduate student; he's doing his thesis on this thing. I think he's dug up a lot more memos from the Labor Department and people here and there.

Rubens: So it's this specific story he's doing a thesis on?

18-00:29:17

Hinckle: No, he's doing it on *Scanlan's* being suppressed by the Nixon administration.

And we made a big tactical mistake, when we did this issue on guerrilla warfare, which is one of my bugaboos. So anyway, I said, "Okay, you do that. You beat up the Jews in Pompidou. And I think it's good reading anyway. Some people won't understand it, but who cares?" It was an eclectic magazine; it was all right. And I was on a thing—because I knew guys who were doing it—that there was all these bombings and attacks and things going on in the country, against ROTC installations, against this, against that, against local police stations. There was kind of a war going on. And you couldn't find it reported anywhere in the newspapers. And the administration, the Nixon administration, would not allow that anything like that was going on. So we spent a whole issue, put all of these researched accounts. And we dug out every instance of a politically connected bombing or explosion or attack or whatever. Anything that could be tied to a political thing. Political meaning some of them, people had been arrested, it was very clear. Others, they just happened; but why would you set fire to an ROTC? Obviously, you had a reason. It wasn't a 7-Eleven store. And we printed this unbelievable—I think it was twenty-four pages of agate type, of the instances of this stuff going on all over the country. And then we had stuff about what they were doing. We interviewed some of the guys that were bombing things.

Rubens: Who's the reporter on this?

18-00:31:27

Hinckle: There was a bunch of New Left guys, guys I knew. I mean, I wrote the issue. But there was a lot of individual pieces about guys who'd been in the military. It talked about what military guys were doing to go after their officers, for this reason and that, when they got out. There was a lot happening in the country in that period. But the point to make was not that it was good or bad. Like, hey, right on, revolution. It was that it was happening and it was being ignored. And Washington, at that time, conveniently, wanted to ignore it. And if papers didn't get it, nobody would bother to put it all together that this was happening all over the damn country.

Rubens: And *Ramparts* isn't doing it, at this point.

18-00:32:13

Hinckle: No. No, they wouldn't do anything like that. Yeah. They didn't have a staff. [laughs]It takes money to put out these damn things. They don't happen without dough. So that was that issue. But then the printer in New York wouldn't print it. We were printing, at that time, in New York City. And the guys in the Lithographers Union saw the issue and said—Oh, for instance, four pages were a bombing manual

Rubens: Was that unusual, that a printer would make that kind of—

18-00:32:49

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: —decision?

18-00:32:51

Hinckle: Well, maybe it's happened before, but—Yeah, it was like they basically told us, no, we can't print it because the workers are in rebellion. I think this had to do with our prior attacks on the hardhat unions in New York, and we had kind of a bad name, anyway. But there was stuff in there that was quite controversial. Like there was four pages about the bombing manuals that were widely distributed, how to make a bomb. Now, I thought I was being very responsible or something, because I said, "Hey, this is what they do and what they get." You can get that in an encyclopedia. But left out the last-stage, the last part of how you'd make it into an actual explosive device. So I thought that was enough. We're not telling people how to make bombs, but this is what's being widely distributed, and that's why so many damn bombs are going off.

Rubens: This had to have influenced *Ramparts* later, because didn't they have how to do a Molotov cocktail on the cover a couple years later?

18-00:33:48

Hinckle: I don't know. Maybe they did. I didn't read it after that, to tell you the truth.

Rubens: All right. So you're trying to be responsible. You're trying to anticipate—

18-00:33:58

Hinckle: Well, I think if you actually told them how to make a bomb and you could copy everything there and you'd blow up somebody, that wasn't cool. But if you showed them the literature that was widely available and that was connected to all these explosive devices going off around the country, and the outlets that were printing it, and how you could get it so easily, and where it was everywhere, that that would—if you didn't put in how you could actually do the last step, right? It was like Kansas City. You get some Clorox and you get some stuff. Well, anybody knows that. So the question is, now what do you do to make it go off? So that part, we left out. So I thought that was

enough. Well, it wasn't enough. [laughs] They went nuts. And anyway, they refused to print the whole damn issue, because it was called "Guerilla War in the United States." And so Sidney, being a prosecutor, is a very tough lawyer, very smart lawyer, and a tough guy. He said, "Well, fuck them. We'll sue their ass off. Right? Not printing us? That's constitu—" This and that, right? Well, it sounded like a good idea at the time. So yeah, good, let's sue them. Big story at the time. We sued the printers union, wouldn't print an issue. But we had to print it. So we started this incredible trek around the country to this place—And I must've gone to eleven different printing plants.

Rubens:

You didn't have a place out here that would've done it?

18:00:35:36

Hinckle:

Well, we went to all kinds of places, but they were all in the Lithographers Union, because they were big plants. It was a big run. We had to run 250,000 copies. It was a big magazine. You couldn't do it in a small printing plant. They'd be printing a little 30,000 circulation tabloid. Then you have to chop the paper down. We had to go to the big plants. All the same union, and another sister union jurisdiction. And they stuck together. And we were turned down. Went around with certified checks, this sort of thing. *Time* magazine did an article about it. They didn't like us very much. But they said, yeah, Jesus, these guys are going around with cash, and they can't get this thing printed. Because the unions got really—The reaction was pretty strong. And then now a month had gone by, a month and a half. It's like, Jesus, we're a monthly magazine, what are we going to do? So a brother-in-law of Sidney's, Al Landau. He had a publishing business; published comic book stuff, in Canada, in Montreal. And he says, "Geez, I think my printer would do it for you." They were a big, huge printer. So by that point, I said, "Geez, let's get the goddamn thing printed somewhere." So we printed it in Canada. Another mistake. [laughs] Because Canada at the time, because of the Quebec and French language situation, was then under martial law. It didn't mean much to me. That's their beef, I said. "Well, we'll just go to the printing plant, get this thing printed." Well, then we learned later, after the fact, from Dean's memoirs and from other books and research that's been done, that the Nixon guys called up, basically, the Canadian authorities and said, "Bust these people." And they did. That's what happened.

Rubens:

And so bust them meant—

18:00:37:21

Hinckle:

They confiscated, they seized the issue, they beat up the—it wasn't the printing plant; we'd already printed it—they beat up the people in the bindery. Broke in. The Mounties came in, kicked the shit out of people.

Rubens:

So it actually got printed, but they wouldn't let it be distributed, and they confiscated it.

18-00:37:32

Hinckle:

We got it printed; it was in a warehouse where the roof leaked. And by the time we got lawyers up there and this and that and everything went back and forth—There were articles in the press about it. But the roof leaked, very conveniently; the entire press run was wiped out. Soggy paper. We printed one. My friend Lou Swift out here was a distributor of—A very brave guy. Distributed all the controversial journals. He wasn't like a big distributor. He took the small stuff and almost all the left wing stuff. So I went to him, because we were screwed. And he put up the dough, got the copies. We went to some printing plant. It was terrible printing on just rough newsprint. It wasn't even bound right. But we were able to print about 30,000 copies of it.

Rubens:

And so were those distributed? You kept some, you got them out?

18-00:38:34

Hinckle:

Yeah, we kept some. Yeah, he put them out and he sent them to other guys around the country. But the thing had happened in October or November. By the time we got that out, it was December or January. And a small thing, and the world had gone on to other stuff. And we had a lawsuit against the Lithographers Union. And we were like, forget about doing normal business. And all the subscriptions stopped and we couldn't mail to subscribers, so we were out of business.

Rubens:

Okay. Just per force. You knew that.

18-00:39:05

Hinckle:

Per force, yeah. And we had a second issue scheduled on our stock issue, which I don't know if they would've actually gone ahead and done it, because of this controversy, but the market had crashed for IPOs. And so what was like free money a year and a half ago was now—it's like today. All of a sudden things are booming for the housing industry, and everything collapses so you can't do these things anymore. Five years later, they start being done again. So it was a confluence of events, and that was that.

Rubens:

And so the juice had just gone out of you at that point? You don't have Gossage around to—

18-00:39:43

Hinckle:

Well, yeah, Howard had died. And then I was like, we should go on with this publication. Here we've got 150,000 or more subscribers. But we've got to scrape up the dough to mail it to them because we weren't taking anymore ads. It was like just everything stopped when we had this stupid battle. Right? Because we didn't have great—And we did have a lot of money to start the magazine, but we weren't Time Life. We didn't have—

Rubens:

You didn't have reserves.

18-00:40:10

Hinckle:

We didn't have an overall publisher who could keep the thing going for us.

Rubens: Had Stauffacher stayed with you the whole time?

18-00:40:16

Hinckle: Oh, yeah,, she was the art director.

Rubens: And Goddard?

18-00:40:21

Hinckle: No. Goddard finally went back to—Another guy came in. He'd had enough of the chaos. And the New York office was a little crazy. There were stolen watches and things like that in it. [laughs] We'll get to that.

Rubens: So who came in? Should we identify?

18-00:40:34

Hinckle: Guy named Tom Humber. He was a pro, magazine pro. He later went on to be a lobbyist, I think, for the tobacco companies. He was a nice guy.

Rubens: And so these people are just cooling their heels, too, in these months while you're waiting?

18-00:40:54

Hinckle: By the time one thing happened, the next thing happened. And somebody'd say, "Okay, we'll print you." And then they say, "No, we decided we can't print you. We've been threatened. They won't publish any of our publications." But it was one by one by one, these plants. And you said, Jesus Christ. Now, looking back on it, I wouldn't have sued the Lithographers Union, but it sounded like the right thing to do at the time.

Rubens: Well, you were pissed off. This just seemed like a real cause.

18-00:41:21

Hinckle: Yeah. If we were a division of a big publishing company, if they didn't get too nervous, we could've got through it. But we were left to our own devices. It cost a lot of money to print the issues, to deliver them to subscribers. And we kept growing in circulation. We were in a growth spurt. And that costs dough, to sustain the subscriptions you got because they pay for the year. And you have to give them a few issues until they finally pay you, and then you've got to give them the issues for the rest of the year. Well, it doesn't sound like a big deal, except when you start talking about 150-, 180,000 copies. You've got to be able to mail those things and print them. And as long as you've got new ads—And we were without advertising as a secondary source of income, because we wouldn't take it. So we were particularly vulnerable to a shut down.

Rubens: This was the eighth issue.

18-00:42:24

Hinckle: Yeah. We only published eight issues.

Rubens: And that was it. And that was it.

18-00:42:26

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Were you guys sued by any subscribers who didn't get their full run?

18-00:42:31

Hinckle: No, we weren't sued. We finally folded the magazine. Sidney thought there was some deal to be made; we could sell it for a tax loss; we'd both make a few bucks or something like that. I didn't want to do that. I thought we should try and somehow keep it going. Well, I'll get somebody to print it and we'll do this. So we had kind of a personal fight about that. We didn't talk for a while. And he got in a controversy because he found out that Dan Ellsberg had been the guy who had leaked the Pentagon Papers. And he announced it, but we didn't have a publication. I don't know what we would've done with that story.

Rubens: Oh, no kidding. There was a chance you could've had that?

18-00:43:10

Hinckle: Oh, we had it. Sidney had it. And I don't know. We didn't make that decision because the magazine had already basically stopped publishing then. So Sidney just went on a radio show and announced it, as a reporter. He's a good reporter. And then he got a lot of attacks on the left. I think Humber and I got a letter saying, "We don't know why Sidney did this." Because everybody thought Ellsberg would be real trouble, because times were mean then. They could shut down a magazine; they could throw somebody in jail. These were—

Rubens: These were scary times.

18-00:43:44

Hinckle: These were bums. These were really tough, murderous guys in the government. Not that there aren't now, [laughs] but they were—

Rubens: So how are you sort of steeling yourself through this period? You're still drawing a salary? I assume you had a backlog of stuff that was going to be going into the ninth, tenth issue.

18-00:44:03

Hinckle: Well, yeah. The next issue was ready. We had a bit piece of Hunter's that eventually went into *Rolling Stone*. Then his next piece went into *Rolling Stone*. It was a piece about this guy Oscar Acosta, who was a Latino journalist in Los Angeles who was killed by the Los Angeles police because they didn't like what he was writing. And Hunter wanted to do that story. I said, "Get down there. Let's do it." And that one was written. And in fact, that's in some of his books of letters. And so he said, "Well, man, what are we going to do?" In fact, that story was supposed to be in the guerrilla warfare issue. And then

when we couldn't get it printed, we had to shrink the size of the damn thing to fit whatever little presses were available for the small run three months later, that we did on the West Coast. So that piece didn't go in. He says, "Well, what am I going to do with my goddamn article" I said, "Well, give it Jann Wenner. What am I going to tell you?"

Rubens: You're talking about that 30,000 that got printed on newsprint?

18-00:45:01

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Basically distributed in the West Coast?

18-00:45:04

Hinckle: Yeah. And some got around the country, but—

Rubens: There aren't a lot of *Scanlan's* around, it's not in libraries—UC doesn't have a run.

18-00:45:08

Hinckle: Oh, you can't get it. It wasn't around long enough to get in the libraries. You can't get the damn thing. You can buy some old copies.

Rubens: I saw four issues on Amazon for about \$1500, \$2,000.

We have about fifteen more minutes on this tape, and I don't know how you're faring. Are there any other *Scanlan's* stories that you really want to point to, that you think are worth identifying? You said you really got into the conspiracy theory stuff, what was that about.

18-00:45:44

Hinckle: Well, that's story we didn't do. We probably would've done. Oh, it wasn't the Kennedy assassination conspiracy. That was in *Ramparts*. And the only thing *Ramparts* did different about the Kennedy assassination was that books had been—Mark Lane had done his books, other people had done—it wasn't like a secret that there was something wrong with the Warren Commission, or supposedly wrong with the Warren Commission's conclusions. There was a lot of stuff out. But even though the books sold fairly well, Mark Lane's and a few other books, saying hell no, this thing was a conspiracy—which it clearly was—it was out of the media. They were selling. I think Mark Lane's books got on the best seller list, somewhere down sixth and seventh. But it wasn't like a big review in the *New York Times*; it was like disreputable stuff. And you have to remember that at the time, Tom Wicker, who was a fairly good friend of mine at the time, was a *New York Times* guy, editor, long term. He wrote the introduction to the *New York Times* edition of the Warren Commission report. And I remember sitting with him one night at Elaine's. I said, "Tom, how could you write that shit? These guys were, this report is wrong?" "Well," he said—He didn't really have an answer. He said, "Well,

they asked me to write it. I talked to the Warren Commission; I described who the guys were." I said, "Yeah, but the *Times* had no business publishing that. It was a lying document." "Well, probably so." It was like a big money maker for the *Times*. They published it in the paper, the text. And then they published a big fat paperback of it. Much in the way *Ramparts* did to Che Guevara's diaries. Right? And we sold a lot of those and made money off of it. And the *Times* did that. But it's two different approaches to things.

Rubens: But you referred earlier to some other conspiracy story, not about Kennedy.

18-00:48:17

Hinckle: Well, Hal Lipset, who was a friend of mine—A lot of these guys are friends of mine, who worked on these things. This had to do with—how can I phrase this?—the law enforcement connections, and the uses of the Charles Manson gang, which is the opposite of Vince Bugliosi's big Manson book, which alleges Manson was alone. Well, Manson was off and on, a government operative; was paid by them. They allowed him to do all kinds of things. He worked with the DEA, setting up people and drug deals, this and that, intelligence things. The Los Angeles Police Department was particularly corrupt in this time, and knew a lot of—Anyway, suffice it to say that the horrendous Manson murders certainly occurred; that happened. But what was shushed up was the history of Manson and other people and the uses that law enforcement had put them to. Which is quite scandalous, considering what they did in one wild night. And they abetted and encouraged them. And then other aspects of it has to do with the societal—high society, let's say—allowed drug business in Los Angeles, in the higher echelons of the Hollywood life. Which a lot of the Manson people were quite involved in that, as was the Los Angeles Police Department. When I first heard this stuff, I said, "Oh, that can't be."

Rubens: So this during the *Scanlan*'s period?

18-00:50:45

Hinckle: This is during *Scanlan*'s. We were going to do the story. A guy just came and interviewed me a couple months ago, that's doing a book on the same thing. Has been working on it for twelve years now, for Penguin. It's quite a shocking story. And one aspect of it, which was most bizarre but connected to the same thing, was the heir to Barbie dolls, one of the Mattel family moneyed people, who was a real weirdo. And this involves the coffee family from San Francisco, the Folger family and Abby Folger. And her father didn't want any of this stuff coming out. Anyway, they had strange parties. And I don't care what kind of parties people have or go to; what the hell. But these were strange parties, and they were connected with the whole underground drug trade and the law enforcement uses of it. And one aspect of these parties was that they were into necrophilia. And they had an arrangement with an undertaker somewhere in the Hollywood area. I used to have the guy's name. I talked to him once. He said, "Yeah, well." That they would bring bodies up

there. These were big parties. There were 800 people there, all-night party. But one aspect of which nobody talked about unless you knew, [chuckles] was you could go in and—how should I put this?—fuck a body, fuck a dead body. That's what they were doing. And it wasn't the sensational part of something like that going on that was of interest; it was the whole interwoven thing and what the Los Angeles Police Department, in their overall operations and their connections with the federal government allowed to go on and happen. And one of the blips on their radar screen became the Manson disaster. So anyway, that was—

Rubens: So nobody was reporting on this and this came to you?

18-00:53:07

Hinckle: Yeah. Well, they heard about it; they didn't believe it. And then I asked Lipset, who's a very solid guy and one of the members of the board of directors for Interpol and everything. And he said, "Well, let me ask some of my L.A. guys. Let's see what they say." Nothing shocked Hal. And he said, "Jesus Christ. You're onto something." He said, "Not only that," he says, "There's pictures. There's pictures that are worth a fortune—they're being bought up—blackmail pictures of this and that, and some of these cops are making *millions* off it."

Rubens: So did you do any initial work on it, or was there something written up?

18-00:53:48

Hinckle: Paul Krasner wrote about that a bit in some book of memoirs he published. He says, "Hinckle was onto this crazy thing, and then I got into it. Jesus, it was true." But he didn't get that far in the investigative work on it. But it wasn't a scandal for the sensational reasons; it was the interwoven connections of all this stuff and the ongoing allowing of everything for whatever purposes. And the private profiteering of cops and government officials. They were making private fortunes off of this stuff, too. It's dirty. Anyway, so maybe at the end of the day, if we'd finished getting into that story and—Certainly wouldn't have printed that without everything tacked down. Maybe it wouldn't have been a printable story. Maybe it wasn't that much. But there was something.

Rubens: Wow. So how long a period do you have before you're completely through with *Scanlan's*. You must have had to let go of the staff.

18-00:55:07

Hinckle: Oh, that was all over. We were fighting to get it printed. And then when we finally did, in Canada this thing happened, and there was a lot of news stories about it. But it's like then what are you going to do? And then Sidney said, "Well, let's cut a deal because we can do something with tax loss carried forward. We'll both make fifty grand." And I didn't want to do that, so we had kind of a fight about it. And we became good friends again later, when his daughter died in some weird circumstances. Killed by the hospital.

Rubens: Well, do we pick up the story next, then, with *City Magazine*? How much down time is there before you are talking to Coppola?

18-00:55:46

Hinckle: Well, it's hard to say. There's a continuation. We spent about two years—Before I did *City Magazine*, Bill Turner and I, had another story we were working on, which started at *Ramparts*—We hadn't got around to doing it. And then we were going to it in *Scanlan's*. We were working on it. Which had to do with J.M. Kaplan, the sugar baron, and his connections to the CIA and some murders in Mexico, and then his nephew being imprisoned in Mexico. Anyway, it ended up that it was the first helicopter prison breakout.

Rubens: Oh! This is your book *The Ten Second Jailbreak*; and you turn it into a film.

18-00:56:27

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah. But that was stories, stuff that we'd started digging into at *Ramparts* and then it was definitely on the list at *Scanlan's*. We were, okay, let's get this one finally out. Anyway, so the guy escaped from the jail and Mel Belli was one of the attorneys. I knew Mel quite well. We ended up writing all this in book form. Which became a movie with Charlie Bronson in it. That took up a couple of years. The movie's called *Breakout*.

Rubens: So this is the next story. This is what we should pick up next.

18-00:57:09

Hinckle: Well, that was interesting stuff. I don't know *how* interesting it is, but it's [laughs] quite a wacko tail. At the same time I was writing this memoir, I was writing *Jailbreak* with Turner. And Turner is this great guy. I love Bill Turner. He's written many books. And he's a great investigator. But he's not a stylist. He's an FBI guy; he writes the reports, he gets the stuff. And so it was like we had to do this book, we were in the middle of it, and I was trying to finish the *Ramparts* memoir. The two at the same time. That ate up two and a half years, getting these books out of the way and done. I had to bring another writer in to help get out the *Jailbreak* book because we needed some help there with style. I brought in a guy who did movies, because it was obviously a movie story. So he structured it like a movie. And as I said, that ate up two or three years, before I did *City Magazine*.

Rubens: All right. So I've got to do a little more research and read *Jailbreak*, and we'll go on from there next time.

Interview 9: May 15, 2010

Illuminating the inner workings of running a journal at once literary and political, with attention to details of design and the underground culture that both nurtures and is nurtured by *Scanlan's* magazine.

Begin Audio File 19

Rubens: I have to find *Compassionate Conservatism for Dummies*, by Marley Roberts. You wrote a foreword for this 2000 publication.

19-00:00:31

Hinckle: Oh, that was one of Turner's books. Yeah, it was a long thing about—

Rubens: The wit and wisdom of George W. Bush?

19-00:00:40

Hinckle: Yeah, it was a book of stupid George Bush quotations, is basically what it was. I was going to do a book with [Emeil] De Antonio. We were working on a book about the Bush family and all its connections and all that stuff. And he died and I never bothered finishing the goddamn book. And there was a lot of that stuff and I sort of recycled it and gave it to Turner for an introduction—it's a long introduction; but the rest of the book is all just George Bush stupid quotations.

[Extraneous talk removed]

Rubens: Ok. But I do have a couple of questions. I think it's quite an irony that the very first issue of *Scanlan's* starts with an editorial that's promoting freedom of the press. It's on the justice department subpoenaing reporters to testify at grand juries. And it's about movement activists being—

19-00:03:13

Hinckle: Yeah, well, Sid Zion and I were both great William Douglas-type first amendment guys.

Rubens: But then you're shut down in what can only be called an abuse of free speech. There's an irony about it. It's just one of those accidents of history, but you're closed for the very—

19-00:03:24

Hinckle: Well, it started with including *Tintin* [*The Adventures of Tintin*], the comic strip. I think that's where we had *Tintin*, until somebody wrote in and said, didn't you know this guy was cooperating with the Germans and supposed to be an anti-Semite or something like that? And so Sidney went nuts. And I said, "I don't know about that." But then I found out that it was kind of true. Not that he was an anti-Semite, as much as that he had the whole Belgian

attitude towards blacks and the caricatures were terrible. I think it was in the first issue. Maybe I put it all in the back.

Rubens: Yes, it's in the back. I wondered how much you had to pay for that. That must've been a pretty penny.

19-00:04:02

Hinckle: Well, they weren't so popular then. Those books weren't even published in the United States yet. It was popular in Europe. Yeah. I picked it up a couple trips there and said, "Oh, this thing is great." And they were just getting ready—Now they're maniacs on—So we put it all in the back. I thought I wrapped it around, but I didn't. Now that movie's going to come out. Spielberg's finally doing the movie of *Tintin*.

I'll probably stick one of these panels in a book, see if they go crazy and try and sue us. It's freaking small enough that nobody ever would make out exactly what it is, so I don't see how they could get too—Because they become nuts. The guy who married Georges Remi's widow is some English guy. And he started running the business, taking it all over. And some people argue he was running it into the ground or whatever. There's a controversy about that in Belgium. But he's become an insane copyright maven. Any reference to *Tintin*, anything like that, they go crazy on and waste a lot of money on lawyers. And somebody is reviewing a book about something and they put a *Tintin* image, that's not—it's like Walt Disney insanity, with the Mickey Mouse character. Nuts.

So I did stick it on. I was wondering that. I couldn't remember if I wrapped it around or stuck it in the back. Well, it was in the back. Yeah, well, that was the first and last publication of *Tintin* in the United States for a while, [laughs] because then we stopped it on the—Not having time to investigate if he was in fact a Nazi.

Rubens: So is someone claiming—

19-00:05:56

Hinckle: Oh, it's true. There's scholarship now, there's books on it. But what it is, he just kept doing the *Tintin* strip, which started out for a Boy Scout magazine or something like that. And then one of the dailies in Belgium started printing *The Adventures of Tintin* before they started getting collected as books. And he just kept doing it. And when the Germans came in, it didn't bother this crazy cartoonist, they didn't bother him. So he just kept doing his strip. He worked during the occupation and by continuing to do his comic strip, he was subject to the criticism that, you cooperated with blah-blah-blah.

Rubens: Sure, that he was a collaborator.

19-00:06:43

Hinckle: Yes, that claim.

Rubens: So what was your attraction to it?

19-00:06:46

Hinckle: It was great!

Rubens: Just because [laughs] it hadn't been done.

19-00:06:49

Hinckle: It was fabulous! Well, it's just a great thing. It was in book form in Europe and they started printing it in England. I picked up a copy there in English. And most of them were published in France and in Belgium, in hardcover, by the early seventies. And they were the rage in Europe, and nobody had even heard of the goddamn thing in the United States. So you knew it was going to be coming here. So it wasn't a big deal then to get some rights to start serializing. Nobody asked him before.

Rubens: And so did you get positive response from it, do you remember? Why is it you didn't do more?

19-00:07:29

Hinckle: Because the complaints that, hey, didn't you guys know this guy's a Nazi and a collaborator, and—

Rubens: Got it. That's what you were saying earlier.

19-00:07:34

Hinckle: —by implication, an anti-Semite. Later, we did a big thing with *The Argonaut* about him. Big, long photo essay about Tintin. And basically, he had Belgian colonial attitudes towards Africa. The blacks were really stupid and watermelon-y and slobbery, and Snowy the dog was the king of the blacks. [laughs] It was pretty bad. That sort of stuff. But there was no anti-Semitism. Now that everybody's examined it. A couple of books have come out in the last ten years about Hergé, and anti-Semitism is not an issue. But in fact, he did continue to draw the strip during the German occupation in Belgium. So that's what he did.

Rubens: And so Zion didn't have any particular—

19-00:08:37

Hinckle: Oh, he went bananas. He's an anti-Semite! What the fuck are we printing this stuff for?" He wasn't in love with the cartoon, anyway. [laughs]

Rubens: How long did it take to put out that first issue? Did you spend much time talking to each other about what was going to be in it

19-00:08:53

Hinckle: Well, yeah. Took about three months to get it together.

Rubens: I saw that your friend Geismar is in that first issue.

19-00:08:58

Hinckle: Oh yes, Max.

Rubens:

The editorial that you call “What Obtains,” it looked to me like that came from a review of a book titled *What Obtains: A Cop Telling People The Truth About the Mafia*.

19-00:09:13

Hinckle: Yeah, it was a phrase that we used every day. Came from this guy Israel Schwartzenberg who was a jailhouse lawyer who was [laughs] the office manager of the magazine and old friend of Sidney’s.

Rubens:

So this is you reviewing his book about the mob?

19-00:09:30

Hinckle: I think he reviewed books about the mob for us. But the expression “what obtains” was like a sort of Lower East Side, Ratner’s Delicatessen, half mob, half translated from the Yiddish one. Like, “what obtains?” And we’d always say it to each other. “Well, what obtains?” What’s new?

Rubens:

So that became the name of your editorial, “What Obtains.”

19-00:09:53

Hinckle: Yeah. Not that many people got what obtains, but it makes sense. What obtains, question mark. Well, what’s that about? You read it.

Rubens:

Absolutely. I thought it was charming. Also, you brought in a few people from *Ramparts* to write for *Scanlan's*. Collier reviewed a book for you.

19-00:10:11

Hinckle: Yeah. And Solly Stern did a couple pieces for us.

Rubens:

Right. We talked about him, about his piece on Israel. That was a great story, about his conversion.

19-00:10:25

Hinckle: You mean the time that Sidney was taking a group to Israel and he said, “Oh, God. We’re going to get the other side of this thing.” [laughs] The controversy I had before, I sent Solly with him because he was so anti-Israel, as a Jew. [laughs] And then came back and made Zion look like Malcolm X. [laughs]

Rubens:

Tell me, also about Arnold Passman.

19-00:10:48

Hinckle: Arnie.

Rubens:

He’s called the staff historian of *Scanlan's*.

- 19-00:10:50
 Hinckle: He's still around.
- Rubens: But then he writes one editorial on ethnic radio and white ownership.
- 19-00:10:55
 Hinckle: Yes. He's the historian of disk jockeys. He finally published a book, I think. He's still living in Berkeley.
- Rubens: There's a note after his story that says he disappeared and is presumed lost. Did you know he wasn't going to write for you anymore? What was the purpose of that note?
- 19-00:11:11
 Hinckle: No, that's just an internal mocking. What happened when we finally pasted up the first issue, we did it in New York, it was kind of a messy thing. And the printer was out here, San Jose. And it was like getting on him, come on, Passman, you're coming. I sort of kidnapped him, because he was living in New York at the time. He's a very big guy, basically. And just, "Come on, we've got to get all this shit to the plane," That sort of thing. So there's all these big flat paste-up boards and stuff we're carrying getting on the plane. Didn't bother with trying to air express it or anything like that, it was like we'd just finished pasting the thing. "Come on, we've got to have it there tomorrow. We're on the late plane, let's go." "No, no, no. We're not putting it in cargo. We're taking it. We've got an extra seat, two extra seats, and we've got to get this—" You know they weren't on disk then, and cute; it was like big, giant paste-up boards.
- Passman says "Well, I'm going to get off the plane." "No, no. You've got hold these things. Come on, you're going to San Francisco." So I kidnapped him. And then he didn't get out of San Francisco. I don't think he *ever* got back to New York. [laughs] Ended up going back to his Berkeley roots.
- Rubens: I don't think he ever wrote for you again.
- 19-00:12:21
 Hinckle: Oh, he wrote things off and on. He was the guy who sent in that famous letter about Ralph Gleason. I don't remember if that came up in prior conversations, but that was when I was having this dispute with Gleason over the virtues of the hippies and love music lyrics and making peace in politics and everything. And so Passman wrote in a letter to *Ramparts* and said he was trying to figure out whether Ralph Gleason was four fourteen-year-olds or three seventeen-year-old or something like that, right? [laughs]
- Rubens: Oh, sure. And I see an article by him in *Scanlan's* number five. "The Bastard Children of Cecil B. DeMille: Making Films in San Francisco," by Arnold Passman.

19-00:13:09

Hinckle: Arnie, yes. Oh, he's still around. I saw him at a party a couple weeks ago.

Rubens:

So this was just having fun, when you add an editorial comment by his name, that "he's presumed lost and disappeared."

19-00:13:15

Hinckle:

Well, yeah, he did get kidnapped; wasn't exactly planning to go to San Francisco that night, but he had to. He was my friend, a buddy of mine, [Frederic] Hobbs. We wrote this piece about filmmakers there. Fred Hobbs, a lot of his films were in that. And Passman did all the research and dug it up and did all that stuff. He didn't do much writing. He wrote his book, but he wasn't exactly what you'd call a stylist, Passman.

Rubens:

So that's a piece you edited?

19-00:13:47

Hinckle:

No, I just wrote it.

Rubens:

Okay. Even though you give him the by-line.

19-00:13:49

Hinckle:

Yeah, he did all the—he talked to everybody. He did all the interviews. Said, "Give me this stuff." [laughs]

Rubens:

So that's what I'm trying to get a picture of. At *Ramparts*, it's not by the seat of your pants, but you're just moving from fire to fire. Things are happening so quickly. What was the tenor of the months that you were at *Scanlan's*? You had a backlog of stuff, some left over from *Ramparts*, other stuff in which you're responding to current stories.

19-00:14:18

Hinckle:

It was sort of a continuum of *Ramparts*. But then there's trying to organize a new magazine. We had to wait till the stock issue actually got out, and that took eight or nine months from the beginning to the end, till it finally got out. And we had an office in New York and one here. But we're just sort of, okay. It's like waiting-to-get-out-of-the-gate sort of thing. And it was ups and downs, and they delayed another month, and that sort of thing. And when it did happen, then it was, okay. It was like, well, we've got to set a date to come out, and we picked March. And it was already the late fall; November or December, I forget. Then it was like a race to get it together and hire people. Because we didn't want to hire a whole bunch of people or start paying people to write until we had the equivalent of a million bucks in those days, but until we had the dough. We had some money to operate on and stuff like that, but we had to do a little planning. But we weren't going to go full bore and sign printing contracts and do all that stuff until we had the dough.

Rubens:

Well, you got the check, which was reproduced on the cover of the first issue.

19-00:15:35

Hinckle: Yeah. We were happy to get that check, so we put it on the cover.

Rubens:

More money came in after that initial check. Are you saying that the \$675,000 is equivalent of—

19-00:15:46

Hinckle: Well, that was a *lot* of money in those days. In 1970, it was a lot of money.

Rubens:

Exactly. So does more money keep coming in after that? Does it get up to a million dollars?

19-00:15:52

Hinckle: No, there was supposed to be a—No. It was a million dollars or whatever, on the market, by the time the underwriter and everybody connected with it, and the lawyers. And there's a line of guys. It was like a receiving line to see the queen. When you're getting the check from the underwriter, all these guys are lined up, and they've already got the checks all cut. And the lawyers all make sure they get theirs. This guy did this and this guy did that; don't matter. Hand them their check and leave, thank you, thank you, thank you. So a million dollars came down to 675 [\$675,000]. [laughs] Which is plenty of money.

Rubens:

That kept you going. Did you have to pay these writers very much when you started?

19-00:16:37

Hinckle: Yeah, we paid very well. We paid \$1,000 an article and \$1500 for Hunter's stuff and other people, and sent people on trips. We spent money. I particularly wanted to pay well, because *Ramparts* officially, in its last year or two, we had so many ups and downs that a lot of times payments were delayed to writers and this and that. And so we wanted to clean up. Now that we had the actual money in the bank, we had some stability for a foreseeable future. And I was like, hey, we're going to pay a reasonable price to everybody. And pay them in advance, because this stuff—I didn't want any of that feeling from the chaos of *Ramparts*, because a lot of people got paid late; and a lot of people subscribed, and because it was so screwed up, off and on, didn't get subscriptions for a month or two. It was stuff that went with being perennially under-funded and frantic.

Rubens:

And then going from a small run to such a large run.

19-00:17:45

Hinckle: Yeah, all the stuff. So it was a chance to sort of make it orderly, because it was—

Rubens:

But are people knocking on your door, wanting to write? For instance, you had this—

19-00:17:55

Hinckle: Oh, there was no problem.

Rubens:

—wonderful piece by Susan Griffin, the poet, the feminist, about— She's interviewing women who've had abortions.

19-00:18:03

Hinckle: Yeah, she worked for *Ramparts*, too.

Rubens:

And one of your big stories that gets news coverage is “The Rotten Truth About Cookbooks,” Hyman Goldberg, [laughs] alias Prudence Penny.

19-00:18:15

Hinckle: Oh, yeah.

Rubens:

Did you commission that? Did they come to you?

19-00:18:20

Hinckle: No, that was from his book. It was a book he had coming out. And we bought the rights to it before it came out. And stuck [Robert] Crumb illustrations on. It's very funny.

Rubens:

You've always been interested in cartoonists, right?

19-00:18:37

Hinckle: Yeah. Well, the Crumb-type school, yeah.

Rubens:

How do you characterize that? What does that mean to you?

19-00:18:45

Hinckle: Oh, it's a school of dirty comics made into art. [laughs] It's kind of down and dirty, wild stuff. It's somewhere between populist and political art, and sort of way out there stuff that'd be considered comic form avant-garde, sort of ahead of its period. And well, Crumb has become certainly the key figure in that group. And Crumb's really well established as a—

Rubens:

Oh, there's a movie about his life and he's part of the—

19-00:19:26

Hinckle: Yeah, and his books; he just did the Bible. A big, hardcover book. Became quite famous. But *Scanlan's* was the first magazine—He never appeared at all in *Ramparts*. But *Scanlan's*, we had him on the cover. We used him for a lot of stuff.

Rubens:

I'm glad we got that in. The other thing you and I talked about at the end of the session last time, but it's not in the interview, is that you literally had a vinyl record in the second issue, that went with a Don Duncan story.

19-00:19:59

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Rubens: Now, tell me about that. Whoever had a record in a magazine before? How did that idea come about?

19-00:20:07

Hinckle: Well, it was a controversial story. It was a My Lai type story.

Rubens: It had already broken?

19-00:20:18

Hinckle: No. No, it was first written about in this issue.

Rubens: You broke the story.

19-00:20:21

Hinckle: Yeah. But the guy had said, "Hey, this is what happened. We killed all these people," that sort of thing, in Vietnam. And Duncan not only had the transcript of the guy's thing, but he had a tape recording of it, right? And so there was no question that this was it. So of course, how do you make that real to somebody? We had the recording, so I said, "Well, we'll put in a record."

Rubens: You just said it.

19-00:20:50

Hinckle: Yeah, it seemed automatic.

Rubens: The most natural or obvious would be to transcribe it, like you did the revolution in Anguilla.

19-00:20:59

Hinckle: Well, that went on forever. And it was so shocking that if you could actually hear it, it wasn't for comedy, like the Anguilla stuff was just funny. And there were so many people that went and on that it wouldn't do. But this thing we said, "Hey, you could do a very short record and somebody can actually hear this guy saying, 'Yeah, that's what we did,' and being asked about what happened."

Rubens: What was the speed of the record?

19-00:21:25

Hinckle: It was a forty-five.

Rubens: I didn't have anything to play it on so I couldn't—

19-00:21:30

Hinckle: Yeah, I don't know how you could play that damn thing now. It was forty-five RPM. It wasn't new technology. I think they'd been used at the time in some—I think I saw it in a greeting card or something like that or a press ad. Maybe it was an advertising presentation or something, where it was printed really thin. But these forty-five players, you could put anything in the middle. They were very small. And you'd put it on the needle, with some other

records underneath and that was the top one, and it didn't matter if it was printed on plastic; it would play fine. And I'd seen it before. Ad agencies using it or something like that.

Rubens: But you hadn't seen it in a magazine.

19-00:22:22

Hinckle: It hadn't been used editorially, but I didn't see any reason why not. It was just a technical problem of how can you bind this thing in, and finding somebody who did that stuff. And that wasn't hard to find. I found it through some ad agency or something.

Rubens: They could produce it.

19-00:22:38

Hinckle: Yeah. And you just bind it in.

Rubens: Just it was really novel.

19-00:22:42

Hinckle: Well, it was a way—You'd heard of atrocities before and you heard about—My Lai, the story had already gone, and this was a very distinctive advancement or upping of the My Lai story. But it was like, ho-hum, another atrocity, almost. So how do you make it real? And the record made it real and solidified the facts. Then you put an image of a record on the cover [laughs] and say, "you can hear the atrocity if you don't believe us."

Rubens: So to your knowledge, people did play it? Did people you know play it?

19-00:23:17

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah, a lot of people did that. Got a kick out of it. But forty-fives went the way the Edsel went or the Kelvinator. I don't think there's any forty-five record players around. You could shift gears. There was thirty-three and seventy-eight and forty-five. It was really common in models. And the thirty-threes and I think the seventy-eights—I sound like a music jock, which I'm not—but came off—they put the regular thing on. But to play forty-five, you had to have this big squat plug. You put that on it, you'd make the spindle wider, the thing that holds the records from being spun off. These records had a big, wide hole in it.

Rubens: So anyone who had a record player would have that, could play it.

19-00:24:16

Hinckle: All the record players at that time, you could—it was like shifting gears in a car. You could play seventy-eight or you could play thirty-three or you could play forty-five.

Rubens: So were there any thoughts of producing another recorded story?

19-00:24:30

Hinckle:

No, that was a one-shot thing. It made sense editorially to do that and to go to the trouble of putting it in. And it was like, what do you do for a second issue? We got the first issue out. And it was a news story, but it was almost a continuation of the stuff that *Ramparts* had broken and the antiwar stuff. And by that time, 1970 or so, the big ferocious battle about Vietnam, I think, was kind of over by then. The country was still totally divided, of course. Now, hardhats were strong for Nixon and Nixon was expanding the war. It wasn't like the war was over, but there was a certain, oh, I've heard that story setting in journalistically, at least the type of stuff I'd done. So it was like, hey, it's this story that's been done in this genre before, and how are we going to get people to pay attention? And that just made sense.

Rubens:

Well, the story that hadn't been done that was really pretty amazing is that last issue, the suppressed issue on guerrilla warfare in the US. I read it pretty carefully. And I was just really amazed, almost shocked with the kind of interviews that you had. You had an interview with someone who bombed Bank of America in Santa Barbara. You had interviews with underground Weather people [Weather Underground]. You interviewed one of the three civilians who bombed a military police headquarters in San Francisco.

19-00:26:08

Hinckle:

Yeah. Well, guys were doing that all over the country, but these guys happened to do it in San Francisco. They were just regular people. They weren't even freaks. They were just almost college student types. But they were into going around bombing MP stations.

Rubens:

Who did these interviews?

19-00:26:22

Hinckle:

We hired a whole bevy of leftwing freak guys—

Rubens:

Where'd they come from?

19-00:26:31

Hinckle:

—and researchers. From the underground.

Rubens:

Oh, okay. Okay. You had your contacts?

19-00:26:38

Hinckle:

Yeah. And people know people and it's, "hey, they want to interview you; they're actually doing a straight thing, won't be screwing around with you. No cops will be around, it'll be square." Word gets around and—

Rubens:

Were there any repercussions? I understand that the issue of *Scanlan's* was suppressed, but did anyone ever come after you for testimony, to give names, say who these people are or where they are?

19-00:27:06

Hinckle: No, they had better sense than that. I wouldn't tell them. And a lot of them, I made a point of not asking—It was clear who they were. I did several of those interviews myself. There's no question they were—[laughs]

Rubens: The real—

19-00:27:22

Hinckle: —doing their stuff and making bombs. It was just that's what they did. I didn't really want their name, rank and serial number, because if I ever did get called before a grand jury—And here they live. I didn't want to know. I didn't need that, journalistically; only a prosecutor would need that.

Rubens: Well, you must've known you were walking on a tightrope there, because it's a really provocative issue. It's a hard hitting, very—

19-00:27:58

Hinckle: Yeah, it caused enough trouble not to get printed. Which was the tenor of the times. What I was just saying earlier, that people were getting a little used to hearing about atrocities. But the war fever—That was from my sort of jaded, I guess, journalistic look. Jesus, I've got to print another atrocity story; I'd better find a pretty good way to present it, out of the pack, just for journalistic reasons. But the war fever of the period, when Nixon was expanding to Cambodia and the war was—The idea was he was supposed to stop the war. Well, he didn't. And then he started expanding it.

And then the country was aflame. It died down a little bit when everybody kind of took sides, after Dr. Spock and everybody got arrested, and all of a sudden it was clear that it was trouble. And Nixon said, hey, I'm going to fix this thing. So there was always an expectation. So it was almost a relaxation, I'd say, of the general, not the specific anti-war activists that were almost full-time on this, but sort of the general support for it was like, oh, God, finally this thing's going to be over, maybe. And then turned around, it got bigger. He expanded it. So that sort of got everything going again, and the support for it and the opposition to it. So that period was quite intense, in terms of— Like the hardhat guys who were all beating up protesters and stuff like that.

Rubens: So this seemed to be really upping the ante, to interview bomb throwers. There was a long statement from Stokely Carmichael, making the distinction between being a nationalist and an internationalist, and seeing himself as a revolutionary.

19-00:30:12

Hinckle: Yeah, he went kind of way out, yeah. Well, the thing in there, the most impressive interview in that issue, to me, was the one of a war amputee who became very radicalized. And there was a picture of him, which he wanted in—I wouldn't have put it in otherwise; privacy and stuff like that. But he wanted a picture of him in his wheelchair, without his legs. And he was one

among many, many who'd been disfigured and sort of screwed over by the VA and the government, and forgotten. And many of them had become active in the violent part of the antiwar movement. So I thought that was a pretty significant interview. Because all this stuff was going on, it's just that nobody was writing about—

Rubens: Paying attention to it.

19-00:31:07

Hinckle: —or even admitting it. Which was the trouble of putting this whole thing together with boring—sixteen pages or so, whatever it was, of small type—detailing every goddamn thing that's going on, so nobody could deny this stuff was happening. Like six months of research went into this thing, to dig all this stuff out.

Rubens: There were maps and columns of symbols to indicate what kind of action had taken place..

19-00:31:29

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, that was a little nuts.

Rubens: Is this a Bobbie Stauffacher layout?

19-00:31:32

Hinckle: Yeah, she made up the symbols and stuff like that. [laughs]

Rubens: Very classy. The symbols are to indicate bombs or dynamite, time bombs, arson—

19-00:31:43

Hinckle: Yes, the type of thing they used and the targets they went against, because it's bad enough to print a bunch of pages of small type, like an almanac or something, detailing facts. That's pretty boring. So how do you jazz that up, without a bunch of stupid pictures that don't really apply?

Rubens: Well, it's clever.

19-00:32:03

Hinckle: So she came up with that thing. And of course, at the time, the computers weren't quite up to that, so we had to paste those things in by hand, the symbols. And we were pasting them up here and production was done in San Francisco, over at Bobbie's, actually at her place. Down in the bottom part of Telegraph Hill, she had a big art studio, production place. And one of the guys who was over one night—it was many nights of pasting those damn little symbols [laughs] on this agate type, between lines that— Oh, okay, this is what goes there. And Hunter Thompson was over one night, said, "Oh, how we doing on this thing? Well, I'll help out with that," and kind of stepped on a few of them. [laughs]

Rubens: Just in his sort of slothful, out-there kind of way?

19-00:32:57

Hinckle: Yeah. But he did. He worked on—got these little things, was pasting them in. Quite a discipline for Hunter.

Rubens: Was there talk of Simon and Schuster publishing a Pocket Book of this edition?

19-00:33:13

Hinckle: Yeah. It was basically the text of this. And I think I added some more theoretical stuff. And whatever happened in the battles when we shut down *Scanlan's*—The book was done. I did put it together, added a lot of material as a book. This is after we stopped doing *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: And did you call it *Guerilla*—

19-00:33:41

Hinckle: It was supposed to come out. And Simon and Schuster was doing it. Or Pocket Books was; it was a Pocket Book. Yeah, I think it was called *Guerilla War in the United States*. And they sold the rights to somebody in Germany; there was another edition in Netherlands, and there's one in France. And so it came out. But somehow, the American edition never got printed.

Rubens: Why?

19-00:34:03

Hinckle: I don't think it had anything to do with censorship, just with money or— Maybe it was tied up in the bankruptcy court proceedings to do with *Scanlan's*. By that time, I was in the middle of two other books and I just wasn't paying that much attention to it.

Rubens: Is your name on it as editor on those foreign editions?

19-00:34:20

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. It's by me, yeah. I've still got copies of the German edition and the French somewhere. [laughs]

Rubens: So you got some royalties from that, or an advance from it?

19-00:34:31

Hinckle: I don't even recall. If we got any money, advances for it, it was from Simon and Schuster, and that just would've been put in a pile of *Scanlan's* money, what was left of it, because we weren't going to go on. We had, whatever, bankruptcy stuff with creditors. But I don't think I ever saw a royalty check from those four editions. I don't even know.

Rubens: But you didn't—

19-00:34:55

Hinckle: They've never sent them.

Rubens:

—push pretty hard to get it published in the US? I'm surprised there was never an English version.

19-00:35:13

Hinckle: They never got around—I don't think they sold it to England. But I recall specifically a French and a German one.

Rubens:

But you just didn't have the heart or the time or the—

19-00:35:25

Hinckle: I was in the middle of writing two other books, three months later. I wasn't really paying that much attention.

Rubens:

It just seemed like it would've been a natural book here.

19-00:35:40

Hinckle: Yeah, it should've come out in the United States. I think it was somebody sued or something to do with the bankruptcy court proceedings. And—

Rubens:

There was a roadblock.

19-00:35:53

Hinckle: —they never went ahead and did the American edition. But meanwhile, the book had been done and it had already been printed or was being printed in a couple of European companies.

Rubens:

I haven't received a copy yet of what you've written about *Scanlan's* in your forthcoming book, *Who Killed Hunter S. Thompson*. But can you just cast your mind over what you think you may have written. I'll take a look at what you've just handed me today, but are there any other stories that you want to particularly point to? How did you personally feel during its start-up? Is exhilarating. Is there an equivalent to *Rampart's* high life that you enjoyed with the magazine?

19-00:36:41

Hinckle: Well, it was journalism as usual, yeah.

Rubens:

Yeah? But exciting? You really felt like you had something here that was—

19-00:36:47

Hinckle: Well, *Scanlan's* was a little—its layout was unusual for the times. I wanted to make it look so different from *Ramparts*—

Rubens:

Right. You talked about that.

19-00:36:58

Hinckle:

—and that format had been copied everywhere. So it was kind of an unusual layout. And it had no ads because we didn't want any ads, or we knew we weren't going to get them. But I was able to concentrate more. I must've spent half to sometimes two-thirds of my time dealing with the money problems at *Ramparts*, and running around the country raising dough and dealing with the problems of growing and being under-financed, to say the least. But for this period, I didn't have any money concerns. So I wrote quite a bit of things for *Scanlan's* and was really concentrating, for a change, on doing journalism, without spending most of your time running around getting the money to do it.

Rubens:

Right, which involved a lot of those high-society parties and meetings at Sardi's and—

19-00:37:57

Hinckle:

Oh, everything. Yeah, yeah.

Rubens:

How much of your time were you in New York?

19-00:38:10

Hinckle:

Well, yeah, because we were—

Rubens:

You were a bi-coastal publication.

19-00:38:13

Hinckle:

And so was *Ramparts*. *Ramparts* was definitely out of San Francisco, as was the main editorial part of this; but the New York office was—A lot of material came out of there. The mix between Zion's culture and mine, the two things, made an interesting mix of journalism. A little crazy. But it was a good tonic. You get a little too set in your ways, when you've got Hunter Thompson and you've got the whole West Coast, San Francisco thing, and everybody kind of thinks alike. And it was good to have some of that old-fashioned vertical East Coast journalistic toughness, which showed up in this magazine. So it made an interesting mix. It was a fairly strong, quite a strong magazine, editorially.

Rubens:

It was a very serious magazine.

19-00:39:15

Hinckle:

And it was just getting going. Yeah, it's heavy stuff. It was really, in a way, a little more left than *Ramparts* was.

Rubens:

And dense. Definitely dense. There are very few short, little—You'll have three pages of Tintin or you'll have a photo spread on hippies in—

19-00:39:31

Hinckle:

Yeah, there were a lot of layouts. But it was text heavy. And it was purposefully not slick. I didn't want it to look slick, because everybody was looking slick; we'd just be another one of the pack. So we printed it on non-glossy stock and went to a sort of severe Swiss type Helvetica design that

differentiated it from most of the publications that *Ramparts* had spawned, or the styles or look that everybody was copying then. But it was very—You're right; dense is the word. We didn't cram the type on the page. It wasn't big, wide margins. There were plenty of pictures and big layouts. And then some that'd just go on for pages of—Yeah, okay, now we'll put the text there. People can read it. If they don't want to read it, they go on to the next thing. And it was a very sort of—it wasn't radical, but it was purposefully a break from the way that *Ramparts* had so changed the look of opinion magazines in the country. I felt it had to look different. And it did. So that way, it was—dense is the right word. It had a feeling of, boy there's a lot of stuff in this.

Rubens: Substance, there was a lot of substance.

19:00:40:48

Hinckle: And there *was* a lot of stuff. There wasn't any ads. And it was a lot of articles, and most of them were fairly serious, except for the dirty kitchens of New York and I think there was a couple Irish things I did in there. They were mostly political articles, and there was a lot of European writers in there. Jean Lacouture and, Jesus, quite a few European heavyweights were in this thing. In its way, it was, in some ways, a continuation of *Ramparts*; but it was much more of a, I guess, sort of—it's hard to say European seriousness, but it was a definite different intellectual bent. *Ramparts* was much more kind of New Left, contrary to some of the things I did in it once in a while to lighten it up and this sort of stuff. But this thing was much more serious, I guess. Actually, we had a little more time to think about what we were doing.

Rubens: Right. And you really hunkered into it. So was this *Guerrilla* issue your idea?

19:00:42:15

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, yeah. Sidney was not enamored of it. "What've we got to do that for?" I said, "Well, nobody else has done it, so we've got to do it." So that took months. So we hired good people to work on that. Three, four months before this thing was ready to come out.

Rubens: And where do these intellectual heavyweights come from? People that you'd been reading, that you were paying attention to?

19:00:42:35

Hinckle: Yeah. People I'd been reading in the European press and in opinion magazines. Well, most of the people wrote books more than magazine articles. Jean Lacouture is one example; he is fairly well known. But there was a lot of stuff. And now that you mention it, it was kind of dense.

Rubens: Well, I meant it just descriptively. I mean there was substance.

19:00:43:05

Hinckle: Yeah. There was a lot of substance.

Rubens: Are there any other of these European intellectuals you want to point to? I didn't know that name, Lacouture. And I'm looking here on the—I just have three. Well, of course, you had Frantz Fanon; Geismar wrote about that.

19-00:43:33

Hinckle: Yeah, it wasn't the *Partisan Review* or anything like that. It was a pretty wild magazine that caused an awful lot of trouble. Yeah, but things like doing—we did eight or ten pages on Latin American revolution poetry. Now, who prints pages of poetry in a magazine? Particularly political poetry. You wouldn't have read those poems in *The New Yorker*, and they were popular, well read in both book form and magazine form. And this was the time of liberation theology and beyond beginning in Latin America and the church was trying to crack down on it. And there was just a sort of explosion of writing going on in Latin America. Nobody in America was paying any attention to that. I'm sure if this thing had kept publishing, we would've really gone a lot stronger in that vein. It was significant.

Rubens: Some real intellectual heft, as well as diversity of—

19-00:44:48

Hinckle: Yeah, it was probably *too* damn serious. [Laughs] It didn't look that serious, but it was kind of serious.

Rubens: Well, so how much did you have in the till that you were—I don't mean financially, I mean just ready to publish, when you knew this was coming to an end, you were going to have to hold it. Did you have writers you had to inform, hey, we're not going to be able to publish this?

19-00:45:12

Hinckle: No, that happened so fast. Well, we had a whole issue ready to go. Hunter had a big piece on the L.A. cops killing Ruben Salazar, an *L.A. Times* reporter. And that ended up getting printed in *Rolling Stone*. It was in this guerrilla warfare issue. It was the only other piece in there. But when we finally had them printed in an ersatz form afterward, the presses that we had, we could barely get just the guerrilla warfare stuff in. And so those pages that were slightly off some other copy didn't make it. And one was Hunter's thing. But there was a whole issue ready to go. We were monthly, so—[laughs] Somewhere buried away, I've got the galleys of all that stuff.

Rubens: So I just want to make sure for this oral history, that you've pointed to enough about how much effort and novelty and intellectual heft went into *Scanlan's*? So are there any other stories that we should be pointing to?

19-00:46:45

Hinckle: I don't know.

Rubens: We can come back.

19-00:46:48

Hinckle: We'd have to go back.

Rubens:

Okay. Nothing that you've been thinking about lately, in light of our conversations or what you've been writing about.

19-00:47:01

Hinckle:

No, it was basically a continuation of *Ramparts*, but it was a little more thoughtful, in that we were concentrating on what's going in the magazine a little bit—*much* more, maybe 50 or 60 percent more than I'd been able to do with *Ramparts*. At *Ramparts* famously there were times when people had worked on an issue, there'd be this and that, and I'd say, "No, this is terrible." Right? It'd be six days before it's supposed to go to press. Out, out, out. And people did their best, but sometimes your best isn't good enough. And then something else would say, "No, we're going to do this instead, and we just have to do it over tonight and the next three days; we'll get this done." And there was a lot of that, which sort of made a lot of staff kind of not too happy with me, famously, at *Ramparts*. But hey, that was the price of having to spend most of your time raising money. [laughs]

Rubens:

Right, exactly. Well, so I think we addressed that. I had left off—I had this little note about in '67, that you hosted for *Ramparts*, a rock dance environment happening. A benefit in honor of Citizens for Interplanetary Activity. It just seemed like—

19-00:48:17

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah. Now, that one escapes me. I may have. [laughs]

Rubens:

Just God knows where I got that little bit. I must've gotten it out of a newspaper somewhere. But it doesn't sound like there were as many kinds of crazy hijinks undertakings that were going on in cooperation with *Scanlan's*. Probably largely because you weren't fundraising, because you were really editing a more serious magazine and getting it out every month.

19-00:48:49

Hinckle:

Well, it was insane because the New York office was wild. Why don't we talk about the culture of the San Francisco office and the New York office a little bit. It was just crazy. Izzy Schwartzberg, this famous jailhouse lawyer, who was an old buddy of Sidney's—and you had to love the guy; I loved him. But he was a criminal. [laughs] He was kind of bullying people, and ran a hot wristwatch business and some other hot stuff out of the office, at the same time. [laughs] And the office was in, oh, an abandoned ballroom, with sort of red fluff wallpaper and things like that, above an Irish bar right off Times Square. And we never did get around to fixing the place up right. There were desks in it and things like that, but it was a little bit chaotic, let's say. It appeared chaotic and it was chaotic. It was a very difficult environment to work in. That was compared to the San Francisco offices, which were in Gossage's firehouse, which had very nice furniture and open space and a big

garden outside. It was still a crazy magazine with all kinds of West Coast late sixties, seventies hangers on and lunatics, from the City Lights crowd to Big Sur guys to North Beach poets. And all these people were hanging around in part of—But the office was classy. And New York was crazy, and there was an atmosphere of absolute chaos in there.

Rubens: Did you have a bookkeeper?

19:00:50:59

Hinckle: Well, yeah, we had bookkeepers who came in and out. Zion wrote a memoir and said, “Hinckle got a lot of blame for the money at *Ramparts*; but I must say, I didn’t turn out to be too good on the administration and organization myself.” [laughs] And yeah, that was true. Working in New York and San Francisco was a stretch. We’ll do editorial out of here and we’ll do the business part of the magazine out of here. Bookkeeping, administration and that sort of stuff. And the bookkeeping—had a couple of pretty crazy characters in there off and on doing the business part of it, business management, bookkeeping. And it was an absolutely chaotic atmosphere with guys walking in with hot watches and [laughs] carrying them in and out and stolen hi-fis off and on. This sort of decaying old ballroom with desks here and there, stuff heaped up on it, and the Irish bar downstairs and the music playing. It was a contrast in environments, I guess, between the office in San Francisco and the one in New York.

Rubens: Did Gossage basically will his office to you or to *Scanlan’s*? How is it after he died, you were able to keep it for *Scanlan’s*?

19:00:52:29

Hinckle: We just rented it from—his company was still around, while they were shutting it down and figuring what to do and everything. And we rented it and sublet part of it to—well, David Brower’s group, Friends of the Earth, which was a break off from the Sierra Club when the Sierra Club went after Brower for their own reasons of ego and administration and eco-politics rivalries, and basically threw Brower out, who made the Sierra Club. The modern Sierra Club, anyway. And he started this organization called Friends of the Earth, which was much more direct and his type of Sierra Club. And they were in the office there, too, yeah. Yeah.

Rubens: I saw articles of his in *Scanlan’s*.

19:00:53:22

Hinckle: Yeah, that’s where a lot of the environmental stuff came from that was in *Scanlan’s*.

Rubens: We talked about that.

19:00:53:27

Hinckle: There were a lot of theoretical, both feminists like Susan Griffin. Because that stuff just wasn't around at that time, in the beginning of the seventies. That wasn't in national magazines, that sort of stuff. It just wasn't—That conversation hadn't gone there yet. It was well known to people and maybe in some small little publication, but this is a national magazine. It was like, boy. And that early feminism stuff or that period feminism, it was represented in *Scanlan's*. And there was the environmental stuff, which was very strong, and there was the much heavier emphasis on cartoons and cartoonists, from *Tintin* to Crumb to those sorts of strips and people.

Rubens:

Did Stauffacher make an intellectual contribution? Did she have opinions about the direction of the magazine or the content of the magazine?

19:00:54:29

Hinckle: No, she called the writing—Bobbie is a fabulous intellectual. She's written two of the best books on California history, and designed them herself. Very extraordinarily smart woman. But her idea of designing was to look different and *Ramparts* to look neat, we used the Swiss type, that sort of thing. So we used to laugh about it. She called the type stuff. She says, "Okay. Okay, then we'll have six pages of stuff there." [laughs] Right?

Rubens:

So the content wasn't what she was looking at.

19:00:55:01

Hinckle: No. Her first husband was quite a left guy, a poet and film historian, Frank Stauffacher. And she's a lefty person. But it wasn't like she was—This is just a design job, and she did her own stuff, thinking and writing. Loved most of this stuff, but she wasn't going to start worrying about what the article was saying or anything like that; she trusted me to do that.

Rubens:

Or pushing a feminist line or anything like that.

19:00:55:30

Hinckle: No. No. The stuff in here was far enough out, anyway. It was little further in a lot of those areas than *Ramparts* had gone.

Rubens:

Yeah. I was trying to think if there were other women's issues, particularly, that we should talk about. But let's change the tape first.

Begin Audio File 20

Rubens:

Who is John Leo? His name is on the masthead.

20:00:00:04

Hinckle: He was sort of a *Commonweal* conservative but also liberal Catholic intellectual, and—Conservative. He was very liberal, but conservative in a strange way. I think we just scared the hell out of him. [laughs] And there wouldn't have been much room for his sort of tempered, on-the-other-hand,

this-and-that viewpoints in this thing, because both Zion and I were like, hey, what's tough and what can really shake things up and is different? And he wasn't exactly coming out of that box, to say the least.

Rubens: So it wasn't a fit.

20-00:00:55

Hinckle: He wanted to do something that was mostly a book review, sort of in competition with the *New York Review of Books*. But a much more comprehensive one, as opposed to the line that they have. More like the *Times Literary Supplement*, a weekly that just covers everything. It's a wonderful thing; it's the best publication. Oh, that's wonderful. It's like a comprehensive every week of every book in every field that's coming out. And that was basically what he was going to do for us, because he'd done a lot of book reviewing.

Rubens: Is that why it was called *Scanlan's Literary House*?

20-00:01:54

Hinckle: Yes. That was why.

Rubens: So you had this serious literary orientation, serious heavy politics, and then—

20-00:02:22

Hinckle: Oh, it was a quite eccentric mix of stuff. It was heavy, but it was pranksterish, too.

Rubens: Kind of irreverent. Well, you had said in one of your editorials, you vowed to take a whack at anyone, of whatever persuasion, “if we think he deserved one.”

20-00:02:39

Hinckle: Yeah. Of course, that's easy to say, and a lot of people say it, but we actually did it. [laughs] We got in pretty much trouble for it.

Rubens: Then you had articles such as: “How to Counterfeit Credit Cards and Get Away With It.” And “A Guide to Smuggling Pot.”

20-00:02:58

Hinckle: And there was a lot of stuff that came into *Scanlan's* that just wasn't printed by the other papers. Like this was a piece by John Kifner, who's still at the *Times*, a foreign correspondent mostly, now. A really good guy. And he was working out of Chicago for the *Times* and the cops were going around—They were basically assassinating Black Panther leaders in Chicago at the time. And he'd prepared a big series for the *Times*, and they wouldn't print it. So we asked if he would give it to us and boil it down to a long magazine article and print it in *Scanlan's*. Because the *Times* wasn't going to touch that one, even though they'd spent months assigning their own people to do it. For the cover I got the illustrator who did the Nixon punched-in-the-face illustration. I just

like his stuff. It's very kind of sick-o and bizarre-o. He's a Frenchy. Very bad.
That was the illustration for—

Rubens: Socking it to the Black Panthers?

20-00:04:12

Hinckle: Yeah. I didn't want to put a bunch of pictures of people in Chicago dead and the cops trying to shoot them. Of course, there were no pictures of it actually happening. So I went the other way, surrealistic sort of thing.

Rubens: Surrealistic?

20-00:04:28

Hinckle: There was this mix of heaviness and kind of intellectual stuff and serious stuff and old-fashioned muckraking, investigative stuff. I think the severity of the difference in the design, from what almost everybody looked like, and the fact there was no ads in it, added to the impression of heaviness. Not that the articles weren't.

I know somebody's preparing a book—just on Gonzo Journalism and gonzo writing and that sort of stuff.

Rubens: Well, we did talk about the Kentucky Derby piece and your role in it and what Gonzo Journalism is, last time.

20-00:05:27

Hinckle: Oayk. Did we go into the whole weed culture part of *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: No, we did not. I was trying to establish that the cultural divides didn't seem as strong amongst *Scanlan's* because you had a smaller staff and you weren't—

20-00:06:24

Hinckle: Well, the cultural divides were East Coast/West Coast, not New Left, internal politics. But *Scanlan's* had had conflicts, built-in conflicts, that made it certainly a more crazy way to run a magazine. But every magazine that's any good is crazy. [laughs] I've never known one that wasn't nuts, that was good to start with.

Rubens: So what's the weed conflict?

20-00:06:50

Hinckle: Well, pretty clearly, when you look at issues of *Ramparts* of that period when I was doing it, the context of the sixties, the hippie culture, the music—it was in that whole time in San Francisco that all that stuff was going on. And there's a lot of that that *Ramparts* covered and a lot of that it also, somewhat controversially, criticized. Not as music criticism, but as political criticism.

Like dropping out. You can't be involved if you only listen to music and think that'll make the revolution. So that was an element of the culture diffusing throughout *Ramparts'* tone and coverage. It was there. It was part of the world it was in the middle of. And that was where things that were interesting were happening. And most of the things that were interesting in the country at that time were kind of filtered through, happening around, or at least tangentially connected with, as a magazine, *Ramparts*. Now, in *Scanlan's*, another strain of the culture came into the magazine, which I can only summarize—I'd have to call it the weed culture. And that's where the pot wars really began and Kansas, the State of Kansas, became a hotbed, around Lawrence and other parts of Kansas, of pot consuming, pot growing. Not that people didn't smoke pot before; it's not like that. It begins in the Jazz Age, for Christ's sake. Not smoking pot. It's the culture that grows up around pot, as there was a culture that grew up around the hippies and had its influence on fashion, on music, fused and diffused with politics. There was, I can only call it, the weed culture, which has been strong and dominant for the last twenty years or more, going on, which is—it's about the culture of pot more than just the smoking of pot. It's the necessity to be in business outside the law, as opposed to just opposing the government. You can blow up a police station, you can [chuckles] sit in, you can get arrested, you can have mass things, you can protest. Even up to almost violent protest or we're all going to jail. That's opposing the government. But what I call the weed culture, and the art and a lot of the fashion and everything came in, which was really a dominant, very strong element in the approach and maverick part of *Scanlan's* was the necessity of doing business outside the government. It was like a moonshine culture. You had to grow this stuff. If you didn't grow it, you had to find a way to get it in and to sell it—pot, in general, that is. It centers around pot. It's not that much around heavy, heavy drug stuff.

Rubens: So how does this manifest itself?

20-00:10:44

Hinckle:

Well, it manifests itself in that most of the writers and artists of the times that grew out of the early seventies—late sixties, early seventies—you might say were part of this weed culture attitude, which was no interest in authority, or the necessity of not being able to exist with authority, to function outside of it.

Rubens: Who are you talking about?

20-00:11:15

Hinckle:

Well, I'm talking about everybody from Hunter Thompson, on a journalistic end, and all his imitators—and there were many of them—and followers, to an artist like Crumb—who's become a mainstream artist now—and the cartoonist culture that came out of that, and their particular brand of art. And by later on in the century, it had sort of developed into something that is now almost generally known as Outsider art, where you had people in insane asylums and things doing art, and all of a sudden there was shows about it and

it was recognized. It was break-away stuff. Anyway, this sort of weed culture, if you like, influenced fashion in the same way the hippie culture influenced fashion and commerce; influenced a big part of the art world and the collecting world. Car detailers, for instance. Now, that became a serious art. Not just hip hop guys going around in a neighborhood, but car detailing, the art books that are devoted to that and the artists that came out of that are mainstream sellers. And it affected a lot of—I just have to call it commerce in the country. It affected a lot of design. It was an outgrowth of the culture, the same way that the hippie thing affected the culture.

And *Scanlan's*— This was just beginning to evolve as part of the culture, this dope-orientated, pot-orientated, outlaw, maverick, cartoonist-orientated, new sort of forms of art stuff. And those writers and those artists and people connected with them, which went to— This was about the same time that the environmental movement was beginning to get militant and break away from its John Muir—you wouldn't call him establishment; he was a madman who strapped himself to trees and [laughs] would give nothing to any opponent on his issues. But the mainstream cartoonist culture, the mainstream political break-away culture, it got away from the hippie type period and the *New left* type period, and then going into something else that was more of a mix of culture and business and art. And if you look through the issues of *Scanlan's* for over a year there, you'll see all kinds of articles and stories and artists that were coming out of this group. And it's the first time there ever was sort of assembled in one place. And it did give a sort of tone. From tricky things like legally, how to counterfeit credit cards, four pages in color; illustrations of how you paste a thing over the card and laminate it again. And how to smuggle dope in from Mexico. You go to this guy, you get this and that. Not just so much dope-related articles.

And the cartoonists, there were many others, and artists aside from Crumb, who sort of became the head of the school. But that was a big part of the *Scanlan's* tone, if you like. And I think it's interesting the way a magazine can pick up on the edges of, or in the middle of a cultural change, or the things that come out of a cultural change, the things that affect the larger society. One of the things that's wrong with most commercial magazines—The thing about at least *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's* is they were commercial magazines. They sold well. They were all over the newsstands. You could go to an airport; there they were. But most magazines, they wait till that part of a development in a culture gets homogenized, I guess, [chuckles] and becomes sort of ground through and gets to a more final commercial form, before they—

Rubens: Or mainstream.

20-00:16:11

Hinckle:

—mainstream—before they hear about it or get it. So one of the interesting things about *Scanlan's* was the artists and the mentality of the people. You

could only call it the developing weed culture. Which soon enough, within five years or so, was relatively mainstream. Almost everything in America gets assimilated. It's part of the way the thing works.

Rubens: Or appropriated, yeah.

20-00:16:41

Hinckle: Yeah, there's an assimilation of everything that's new, including the most radical things you can find. And it pops up one way or the other, making money for people. Because it's so widespread that— People haven't noticed it before, but when they start to notice it, they figure a way to co-opt it, assimilate it, and make dough off of it, because it is so widespread.

Rubens: So you're talking about more than what you're covering.

20-00:17:05

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: Sol Stern covers the Altamont debacle. "The Woodstock Nation's Pearl Harbor," he calls it.

20-00:17:13

Hinckle: Yeah, well, that's a continuation of the *Ramparts* criticism of the hippies, yeah.

Rubens: Right. But you're saying there's a sort of new phenomenon. It's not a matter of that people in your office are smoking dope or that—

20-00:17:30

Hinckle: It doesn't have so much to do with smoking dope as it has with the business of dope and the outlaw culture around it being a business.

Rubens: Yes. Okay.

20-00:17:38

Hinckle: Which manifested itself in an explosion of cartoonists. Which then sort of evolved itself into a looser, edgier form of art, which is called Outsider art and various new forms of underground art, which are now—Those works and paintings are selling for millions of dollars apiece.

Rubens: So are there other artists that you can point to? Because I didn't pick that up. I think that's an important insight about this magazine.

20-00:18:20

Hinckle: Well, we were just starting to go with it. It was there. And it was picked up. But then you don't see it dominant in any magazine later on. You see pieces of it pop up here and there.

Rubens: Well, you're going to pull it into *City*, too, aren't you?

20-00:18:39

Hinckle:

Yeah, a lot of that went on in *City*, yeah. There were its own influences in *City*, too, but yeah. Yeah. But I just thought that was a true point about the difference between just a commercial magazine that waits until something is completely developed and assimilated or co-opted or whatever, in some way or the other—But by the time that happens and appears in magazines, mass circulation magazines, if you like, it's already been popular with the people. It's already working. That's what everybody's talking about. Today, you go around the Mission District in San Francisco at night, it is booming. It's like Havana in 1958. Everything is going. There's a profusion of art galleries, shows, parties all the time. Places are packed. There's hardly any coverage of that in, well, like the *Chronicle*. They don't even seem to know that it's going on. They still send guys to review the opera. [laughs] These things, you know? Well, there's nothing wrong with reviewing the opera, but this is not what's happening in the city. That's what has been happening for a century, will probably continue to happen. But what's happening now is what's going on in the Mission, as one compacted district. A huge thing on the culture fusion of both Latin stuff and the new drink culture of just fancy cocktails and no more old-fashioned bars to new styles of fashion and—

Rubens:

The phenomenon of mixology.

20-00:20:22

Hinckle:

Yes. But that's something that's happening.

Rubens:

And would that have shown up in issue nine of *Scanlan's*? That was something that you were conscious about, that you wanted to cover, that you were going to bring in these artists and—

20-00:20:35

Hinckle:

Yeah. All of them were getting on the hook. I would say, "Hey, this is interesting stuff because it's—"

Rubens:

What's attuning you to this? It's percolating in the culture. Hunter and Crumb? And are there others that you—

20-00:20:50

Hinckle:

Well, I don't know. For a guy with one eye, you have to say my ear. But when you see that—you see it's going on, and it's not just something to write about, it's something to—The people who are involved in it and the attitudes, the cultural attitudes that are coming out of it are ones that are going to lead, be dominant for a long time, in long strains in the American culture. And it's unusual for magazines to pick up on that, until they're almost over. It's unusual for it to become part of the editorial process, I guess that's what I'm saying.

Rubens:

I think that's very clear. The guerrilla issue was the most political manifestation of that, but the how to do a credit card—

20:00:21:37

Hinckle:

Well, that was the practical—So yeah, how to counterfeit credit cards, how to smuggle in pot. Not that it was a *Consumer Reports* about how to do that stuff. But that was sort of making fun. Making fun of things was also part of that openness. In other words, if you have to live outside the law to do your art and do your business, whether it's censorship or taxation or being arrested—And you have to also have a normal life and have kids—And it's not an isolated thing in one county and one state of the country, but it's really all over the country, but nobody notices it. And it gradually pops up in certain artists, and it gradually pops up in fashion, and it gradually pops up our attitude, which is fundamentally political, in the end. So, hey, the government's the enemy; we're just going to have to ignore these guys. But it's not revolutionary in the traditional sense of a political revolution.

Rubens:

It's not about demonstrations and protest.

20:00:22:47

Hinckle:

Yeah. Yeah. We'll take over this political party. We'll change the system. No, it's just, a leave-us-alone system.

Rubens:

Right. And then you're shut down by that system. Did you feel amputated in some way? I'm trying to make a segue into when you say, okay, I'll write books. Did you take up writing *Lemonade* once you knew the magazine was not going to be revived?

20:00:23:30

Hinckle:

Well, the jailbreak book [*The 10-second Jailbreak*], even though it was material we'd been long involved with, following developments for some time, only happened because something happened. All of a sudden the guy—it's on the front pages everywhere—he breaks out of prison in Mexico, in a helicopter. So it was like, wait a minute. This is a big story. We already know all about this. Right? We know the other lawyer that he went to, right? So you say, wait a minute! This is a big deal. And we already got this story. And so then it's just straight journalism. The instincts of the journalist jugular set in. You say, wait a minute, let's get on this story, magazine or not. [chuckles]

Rubens:

In your preface, you say a really provocative thing. You went to see his sister, in Marin.

20:00:24:43

Hinckle:

To Judy, yeah. She lived in Sausalito.

Rubens:

I'm reading from the preface of the book: "Hinckle approached his sister in the fall of '70. Meetings were held. Hinckle even involved Hal Lipset, and the escape plans were hatched." Now, you don't have yourself in that role in the body of the book; but I thought in that preface, that's—

20:00:24:59

Hinckle:

Well, it's a three-person book.

- Rubens: Did Hal, you or Belli give him the idea?
- 20-00:25:09
Hinckle: No. No, there were constantly escape plans being evolved for this guy, some of them quite bizarre.
- Rubens: He's spending a fortune bribing people, right?
- 20-00:25:20
Hinckle: Yeah, he's spending a fortune.. And in the end, this one worked, which was almost a last-minute idea by this crazy pilot smuggler guy.
- Rubens: The pilot had the ah-ha idea.
- 20-00:25:32
Hinckle: Yeah, yeah. He didn't like me very much. We didn't get along too well. But we had to do business together, so we sort of—
- Rubens: He meaning the pilot or meaning the—
- 20-00:25:43
Hinckle: Oh, yeah, Vic Statter, yeah. Had to go down and meet him because this guy was hidden away in some dusty place in the outskirts of Los Angeles, some suburban thing.
- Rubens: Joel is hired?
- 20-00:25:57
Hinckle: Joel, yeah. But see we have to do the story, and worked it out. Belli was representing him, because some things that I knew and Bill Turner knew, just from the journalist work we'd been doing some time before, on eventually planning to do a story, but not around a helicopter escape but around the background story, right? The politics part of it.
- The use of the government, connected with foundations, and the CIA's uses of it, and putting down revolutions and other things that was part of American foreign policy, American intelligence, was key to the background of this family and its story. But it just so happened that the guy made this spectacular escape from prison.
- Rubens: This was in August of '71.
- 20-00:27:03
Hinckle: Yeah. That's about right.
- Rubens: Okay. So *Scanlan's* has already shut down.
- 20-00:27:09
Hinckle: Oh, yeah. But as Dr. Johnson said, some events concentrate the mind wonderfully, like if you're going to be hanged tomorrow. And you have to say

to yourself, as a journalist, wait a minute! We know all about this whole thing. This family, the people, we've been digging into this in all its permutations for years. And now this guy, who we've already had in our eyes and know everything about—Nobody ever heard of him before. This has happened. Hey, this is obviously going to be a big story. And we're just not going to let all this material go to waste, so we better go find this guy. And we knew enough that we could negotiate with him and say, hey, we know all this stuff; let's all get together and we'll tell this story. And then it was how much of the background would get left in the book, for various purposes.

Rubens: So it took about how long? It doesn't come out until '73, but at what point do you—Are you trying to market it in Hollywood? How does Charles Bronson and all those folks come into the picture?

20-00:28:28

Hinckle: Well, that was a very unusual movie deal.

Rubens: Did you think you had a movie when you were—

20-00:28:33

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, it was clear it was going to be a movie. And I brought in another writer, who had structured books for the movies—he'd done many of them that'd become movies—because I was in the middle of finishing up this autobiographical book about the sixties and *Ramparts* and everything else. The *Lemonade* book, *If You Have a Lemon, Make Lemonade*. And I was already late on that and still trying to get that done, and this thing just happened. Oh, we can't let that—So we started it. It was like juggling both. And clearly, this thing was a commercial book. Got as much of the politics in there as made sense and could be negotiated with the principles. But it was just, hey, time to make a deal here. And I brought in a third writer, between myself and Bill Turner. You finish pulling all this together, and structure it so it's like an adventure story, like a movie, rather than just a 150,000-word *Ramparts* or *Scanlan's* exposé of the politics.

Rubens: It is a page turner.

20-00:29:47

Hinckle: Yeah. Just get it done that way. And so we did. And then a very funny thing happened for a movie story. And everything had been done. The book had been published or was coming out—

Rubens: How'd you get— Is it a story about how you—

20-00:30:02

Hinckle: *Playboy* had printed a bit excerpt of it. It'd been written and done. Lawyers were everywhere. Everything signed, sealed, this deal, that deal. Everybody was making—There were the sources, and the pilot has saved him and flew him out, and there was the victim himself, and then there were the writers—

the usual elements of a movie deal or a big publishing-type-putting-together deal. And then I got a call from one of the producers, the original guys who bought the book for the movies. And he says, "There's a real crazy thing going on here. Sitting outside my office are the people in the book. There's that pilot guy and there's the guy who escaped from prison and there's his wife." I said, "Yeah? What do they want?" And he says, "Well, they say that the story's really their story and they want all the money for the movie because they're the people." And I said, "Well, they can't say that. We've already got the book published. It's done." I say, "It's a contract. They've already signed off everything. What the hell are they talking about?" Anyway, the characters walked out of the book. And so I just stayed up all night and sent telegrams to every person in Hollywood and every studio and said, "You are now on notice. If you touch this movie, you're going to be sued within an inch of your life." Well, something like that— Movies like everything nice and calm on the legal aspect before they go ahead with the movie. So that kind of set the movie part of it off for about a year, till everybody had to get back together. And it wasn't too friendly. This pilot particularly didn't like me. I always wore patent leather pumps. It's something Howard Gossage told me do, because I never took care of my shoes. He says, "Jus wear the shiny shoes; you can't screw them up." And he didn't think too much of those; he thought they were fairy shoes. And didn't think much at all of *Ramparts* or any of the politics I'd been involved with. He was right wing, Bush supporter.

Rubens: This is this Vic Statter?

20-00:32:21

Hinckle: Vic Statter, yeah. Very funny guy. And he always drank Old Smuggler scotch. And I said, "Was that on purpose, Vic?" Because he was a bush smuggler. He smuggled in monkeys and snakes and stuff.

Rubens: Capuchin monkeys, that's right.

20-00:32:38

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah. So anyways, we finally nailed it back together after the— It was just unusual that the characters walk out of a book. Doesn't happen that often. [laughs] Particularly when the book's already been published and that sort of thing. So it eventually became a movie.

Rubens: So did you get a boost out of—How did you get to Holt Rinehart? Did you have an agent, or did you know somebody?

20-00:33:04

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. I had my agent. The book was already being done before I brought in the third writer. Yeah.

Rubens: How did it sell?

20-00:33:17

Hinckle: Well, that book sold fairly well. And then the paperback came in and the movie came in that was—

Rubens:

Did you have anything to do with the movie at all? Were you down there on the set, or did they—

20-00:33:29

Hinckle: No. Nothing whatsoever.

Rubens:

They changed the story significantly.

20-00:33:34

Hinckle: Naturally. They always do it in the movies. Oh, once you get to the movies, you forget about the story.

Rubens:

So was that fun for you, though?

20-00:33:41

Hinckle: It was business as usual. It was an educating experience.

Rubens:

So you had already started *Lemonade*. Why don't we—

20-00:32:51

Hinckle: I was in the middle of it, yeah.

Rubens:

—close out with that. At what point do you start deciding that you're going to write a biography, an autobiography, a memoir?

20-00:34:01

Hinckle: Well, after it was clear that *Scanlan's* was dead, which became clear after a few months of battling the confiscated issue, there was no—

Rubens:

We're into early '71 now.

20-00:34:12

Hinckle: —chance of revising it. Yeah, the middle of '71 or so. And if you're a journalist, you're in the business of—Sometimes you're editing, sometimes you're publishing, sometimes you're writing.

But everybody writes books for money. Every writer does. Very few people write books just for artistic purpose. Almost every writer I know—and I know many, many of them, who are mostly pretty damn famous—they write for money. That's what they write for. Right? It's all part of the game. So you're always negotiating the deal and how much you're going to get paid when this part's done and that part's done. It's just endemic to being a writer in America. It's how it is. So I did that book to make money. I didn't have a magazine, didn't know if I wanted to go right back to the *Chronicle*. So I started writing the book.

Rubens: Were you looking around, also for other magazines? *City's* not going to come along for another—'75, right?

20-00:35:36

Hinckle: Yeah, yeah. Well, it's just I find it very hard, and always have, to work for an organized structure. It just doesn't work out too well.

Rubens: Had Howard Gossage, in the past, encouraged you to keep a journal or to write—

20-00:35:54

Hinckle: No. No, but he fully understood—He always kept his records in pretty good shape.

Rubens: Yeah, he must've been in your mind some when you sit down to write. Obviously, you take the title—

20-00:36:08

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. From him, from Gossage, yeah.

Rubens: So how do you do that? What was the work process, literally? Did you have an office?

20-00:36:18

Hinckle: Yeah, I rented a couple of places outside of my house, just because you're supposed to concentrate. And it took a few years, three or four years, but I finally got the book done.

Rubens: You did. It's a charming book. It's just a wonderful book. And what is your subtitle about an unruly decade?

20-00:36:40

Hinckle: Oh. Something like that, yeah.

Rubens: Yeah. I have the full title in the context of some of the transcriptions, but I just don't have it in my mind at the moment.

20-00:36:51

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: So anything you want to say about the writing of it? We've referred to it a lot. Anyone who's reading this oral history and wants to do further research has to—

20-00:37:02

Hinckle: Writing books is a form of slow death. It's a torturous process. Particularly if you've been an active journalist, where you meet and interview and discover people. So you're involved with people and talking to them and finding out stuff and things like that.

Rubens: Sure, yeah. Flying back and forth to New York and going out to Minnesota and meeting with one of the jailed FBI's most wanted.

20-00:37:33

Hinckle: Yeah. You're doing journalism. And if you're editing a magazine, sometimes you're writing yourself. I always wrote for my own magazines, also. But you're involved—It's a social process. It's an interconnection, one way or the other.

And if you write a book that's about you and stuff you've been involved in, except occasionally to call someone and say, hey, do you remember what actually happened there?, it's a solo process. It's hell. [chuckles] It's no fun.

Rubens: Is that when you get the dog? When do you get Bentley?

20-00:38:13

Hinckle: Oh, I've had Bassett hounds from time immemorial. So it's always the family dog.

Rubens: But you didn't take him to the office. It wasn't one of your trademark identities. Well, because I guess you were traveling so much, right? You were going to New York a lot; living a fast-paced life.

20-00:38:31

Hinckle: My first Bassett hound, yeah, I was traveling all the time. It was a she. She was just at home, because I was gone all the time. It was only when things slowed down enough that I went back to writing a column for the papers, and had a few other publications, things involved with offices, that I started taking the dog to the office. And then a terrible thing happened with one dog I had. A guy basically got into the house, came under the fence—and this dog was just a puppy; one of my dogs had just died—and socked it to death, because he was an angry reader, didn't like me. And so from that day on, I was like, if I ever have another dog—And then we end up having another one; my kids talked me into it, but still, I probably would've done it anyway. But I said, I'm never doing a thing if I—I'm not going to leave this dog at home, because he got killed at home. So I just take her with me. And I have ever since.

Rubens: When was that?

20-00:39:57

Hinckle: That was in the middle eighties.

Rubens: Okay. So when you were back at the *Chronicle*.

20-00:40:03

Hinckle: Yeah. Yeah.

Rubens: Yeah. Do you know what it was specifically that he was—Was that the only time that you—I'd asked you earlier, when you worked at *Ramparts*, if you'd ever had any direct threats or really been in the line of fire.

20-00:40:15

Hinckle: Well, I didn't consider that so much, the *Ramparts*, *Scanlan's* type of threats, because those were national magazines, and people who had politics and axes to grind, and intelligence agencies and whatever—So you could say, well, hey, these guys, that's a threat. But when you write local topics, you just get somebody mad at you just because whatever, right?

Rubens: Your position on the police or—

20-00:40:39

Hinckle: It's like a minor irritation. You can't say it's a threat that way, because anybody who's a nut can get a gun and shoot you. But I just never thought about local topic journalism in the same way as I did about fights you have on politics on a national level and journalism on a national level. It's a different element. Not that there's not nuts around everywhere, particularly in San Francisco, but [laughs] it's just—But that was a little too close to home. So then I decided to take the dog everywhere, and it became—People would say, where's the dog? And I just didn't go to restaurants or places that wouldn't let the dog. It didn't bother me. [chuckles] Plenty of places to go to. And every job I had, I did get along fairly well for a while with Will Hearst at the *Examiner* in the eighties. And one of the conditions on coming to work there was that the dog comes with.

And the dog always went with me to the *Chronicle*, when I was there for ten years. Wrote some of the major columns about him.

Rubens: Does *Lemonade* come out before *The 10-second Jailbreak*? Or does *The 10-second Jailbreak* come first? I was wondering if you remember parties for either; you've always had such celebratory stuff around what you do.

20-00:42:12

Hinckle: Usually have a party. I think *The 10-second Jailbreak* came out before. Probably should say; it's got a date on it.

Rubens: Well, no, they're both published in '73. They came out the same year.

20-00:42:29

Hinckle: I think *Jailbreak* came out before.

Rubens: And so *Lemonade* must've had a great splash. It was reviewed in the *New York Times*, and listed a couple of times as a notable book.

20-00:42:36

Hinckle: It got well-reviewed, yeah.

Rubens: Did you have a party for it?

20-00:42:38

Hinckle: Oh, a few. But it got decent reviews. John Dodds was the editor of that book. He was a friend of mine from knowing people in San Francisco. And he was married to Vivian Vance, of *I Love Lucy*. And they lived in Sausalito. In Tiburon. And he was a friend. Then he was in New York. I knew him both places, here and in New York. And [laughs] I kept fixing and changing the book, as I often do with books. Just like, I don't like it yet. Drive people crazy. But if you want to get it done right, you've got to— You're never satisfied at the end, anyway, but at least you want to get it so you can kind of live with it. So I said, "All right, now, Dodds, you've got to give me some more of that money." Whatever was going on at the time. He says, "Well, yeah, but you're supposed to be in the last part of the book." I said, "Well, here. I've got a hunk of it. I'll just send it to you and type the end, and then you can send me the money." He says, "Yeah, but what about all this other stuff?" I said, "Oh. That's okay, we'll just call it Insert A, and then I'll type Insert A." He insisted. I don't want that book to be published without all that stuff in there. And okay. So then I started to do Insert A; that took about another year or so because other things happened. But they had already—

Rubens: And what's Insert A?

20-00:44:36

Hinckle: Insert A was most of the stuff about *Ramparts*. A lot of stuff. It was a lot of stuff. It was a big hunk of the book, actually. [laughs] So they had already rushed ahead, precipitously, and designed the covers for the book and foolishly, printed them and sent out bound galleys. And so I said, "No, no, no. We haven't put Insert A in yet." Which ended up being about a third of the bulk of the book. So I said, "Dodds, you can't send out those galleys." So he didn't. But then he had to hide them from the owner of Putnam's because he had printed up these bound galleys and they were stacked in his office. And they were living up in Westchester at the time, Dodds and Vivian Vance. [laughs] And he used to sneak the bound galleys out of the office, like six or eight a night, and take them up there and put them for firewood and burn them all. So Walter Minton, quite an eccentric character who owned Putnam's at the time, found out that he printed these galleys, but they weren't going to be the ones that were going to go out because I hadn't written this big hunk of the book yet. And then when they finally got around to publishing it, they had to junk all the covers because they printed the covers too narrow because the book was a lot thicker when it finally got printed. But Insert A became an inside joke in the New York publishing industry for a few years there, [laughs] about the eccentricities of authors.

Rubens: All right. So anything else more we want to say about *Lemonade*? I think it speaks for itself. It's a terrific book.

20-00:46:29

Hinckle:

It's just there. Yeah. It never got into *Scanlan's* because it was time to end it, just zip it up. I never got around to writing the sequel to it, although a bit part of this Hunter Thompson book has now gone into that territory. But as it turns out, there's an extraordinary amount about Howard Gossage in there, because he was instrumental to both those magazines. We went over that. And they were part of Hunter's life in such a big way.

Hey, this is early gonzo—this is what it is. And of course, *Scanlan's* actually started gonzo, it's called. So so much of the Hunter story involves that. And so there's a lot more material in this book, which is about Hunter; but it's really about a lot of the changes in sixties and early seventies—mid-century, last century, journalism. The revolutions are fairly well covered. Everybody knows what happened in the sixties. But the change in journalism that *Ramparts* started, and with *Scanlan's*, with gonzo and this whole new approach to artists and culture, it just—That stuff hasn't registered as much as what everybody else knows about the sixties. Because it did change the whole face of opinion journalism. Only because—Anybody can do it if you've got your own little publication, this little publication. But these were big magazines. They were playing with the big boys. And once they stopped doing that, nobody tried to do that sort of stuff again.

Rubens:

All right. You've given me a copy of the Thompson book to read and I'm sure it will generate some questions for next time.

Interview 10: May 23, 2010

Wherein our narrator delineates the world of news gathering in San Francisco, evoking the boundless energy of writers and publishers, including the ambitions and schemes of Will Hearst as he steers his grandfather's *San Francisco Examiner* to surpass the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Begin Audio File 21

Rubens: It's the 23rd of May. Today I'd like to talk to you about Hunter Thompson and about your new book [*Who Killed Hunter S. Thompson*] on him which I've read since we last met. I want to carry your relationship with him all the way through from when you first met him. But I also don't want to let something go that I hadn't asked you about. I didn't realize that Walter Landor was a member of the board of *Ramparts*. You refer to board meetings on his chic office, which was a ferryboat. Now he was so important here in the West Coast as a brander. Did he come through Gossage—

21-00:00:54

Hinckle: Walter is a good friend, yeah and it was Gossage. That was sort of the golden age of San Francisco commercial art, if you want to call it that, in terms of Gossage in advertising and Walter in imaging and branding and all that stuff that developed. They were way ahead, certainly, in the creative level of their East Coast counterparts. And almost everybody who was involved in things that were fun or—Fun's the wrong word, but creative, I guess, in the general sense of the term, outside of academia and your usual poets—Not to denigrate poets or the usual Beat San Francisco culture, but that's sort of normal for a magazine. These were commercial people more or less. Or like Scott Newhall was a wonderful wild man who made the *Chronicle* absolutely a very interesting paper. And had decent politics. It was the first big paper to come out against the Vietnam War, in opposition. But there was this group of people—Jessica Mitford, people like that—we all became friends. It was a rapid acceleration. I wouldn't have known him at all if I hadn't been doing *Ramparts*. But all of a sudden *Ramparts* was coming out of San Francisco and it became the magazine that was going on. And these people were doing what they were doing, so everybody got to know everybody and hung out together. And there were creative things back and forth.

Rubens: You've talked so much about the direct influence of Gossage. And I just wonder, did Landor have any direct influence, in terms of branding and image and anything that you want to attribute to him or that you learned from him? And did he carry over to *Scanlan's*?

21-00:02:49

Hinckle: Well, the only thing I learned from Walter was watching him deal with clients, I learned a little bit about dealing with investors. [laughs] He had a

pretty good way of making them happy and getting what he wanted out of them.

Rubens: Just a particular—

21-00:03:06

Hinckle: Yeah. No, he didn't do any commercial work, as such, for *Ramparts*, he didn't design the logo or any—But he was always around. I don't know if he was officially on the board or not; I can't recall. You'd have to look at the masthead there. But he's part of the close-knit fraternity that was advising me on everything. Which again, I guess is unusual for a magazine which is *the* sort of big left wing, whatever you want to call it, magazine then. Because these guys weren't known as left wingers or they weren't ideologues, or they weren't even particularly political. It was just San Francisco and this is what was happening. Hey, let's make it happen.

Rubens: But Landor really had national influence. He was really big time.

21-00:03:52

Hinckle: He was the first big brander, yeah.

Rubens: Okay. But you had this memory of having board meetings on his ferryboat?

21-00:04:00

Hinckle: Yeah. Occasionally, we'd have a couple of them, yeah.

Rubens: Is that where his office was, as well?

21-00:04:03

Hinckle: Yeah. The whole office was on a ferryboat. I mean a converted ferryboat for an office. He had his office there and threw lots of parties there. A big party boat. It didn't go out in the bay, needless to say. And he had huge board rooms, so occasionally we'd use it for this and that.

Rubens: Okay. I wanted to make sure we got that in.

21-00:04:29

Hinckle: Well, it's interesting. I don't think there's a so-called left magazine in history, or dissenting magazine or whatever you want to call it, that had a lot of guys at the top of their form in the commercial business—advertising and Walter, people like that—connected with it. It was part of why it was so damn different.

Rubens: I also wanted to ask specifically about *Scanlan's*, about the whole gestalt around it. Because we've talked about the manic energy that was going on in the *Ramparts* office. And you'd talked about having editorial meetings at Cookie Picetti's.

- 21-00:05:15
 Hinckle: Well, not editorial meetings. I never liked offices that much, particularly when they were mine. And I always found a way to flee them, because so much time is wasted in offices. You get involved in everything, it has really nothing to do with what you're trying to figure out and do.
- Rubens: So Tosca served that role for *Scanlan's*? That what I picked up in your book.
- 21-00:04:37
 Hinckle: Yeah, Tosca. And Cookie's was still going in, too.
- Rubens: But would you still work there, or was your big hangout—Tosca's must've been near—
- 21-00:05:46
 Hinckle: Yeah, it was very close. It was a couple blocks down the street.
- Rubens: There's a line in your book that says that you literally edited the Derby piece later at Tosca's. You were sitting there putting pieces together.
- 21-00:06:09
 Hinckle: Well, a couple of nineteenth century Russian novelists adopted the thing—I remember reading about them in their biographies—of working in taverns. And people didn't have offices like that, if you were a writer or something. And why you should have an office if you're a writer, I don't know, but anyway. The idea of writers having offices to go to is kind of particularly abhorrent. Like Gogol always worked in taverns. He liked the noise around him, and he could shut it all out and he'd write. Have a few drinks, just going along, and he'd sit there for four or five hours and write—not unlike people hanging out with their laptops in coffeehouses. Today they've got internet connection.
- But that was the other century's equivalent. So I'm always editing stuff, putting out magazines, other things. I prefer to not sit around with a bunch of people in the office that drive me crazy, and go with a pile of stuff or with whatever I've got to figure out, and go to a bar. And if you go to decent ones, they don't bother you when you're working. Idiots don't come up and start trying to talk to you because they think you're in there to party. And it's a good place to work. I've just always found you can sort of concentrate and shut everything else out, but you're in a comfortable place, and you're not like in the office, where you're trapped.
- Rubens: Is it worth talking about the cultural difference between Tosca's and Cookie's
- 21-00:07:44
 Hinckle: Well, there was a difference, yes. Cookie's was this cop bar. Very down market cop bar. Very tiny bar, very ugly, broken tile, gas stains in front from the buses, dim light, nicotine stained ceiling from the smoking. A gang of lawyers, some famous lawyers and bail bondsmen and guys in the poultry

business. It was extremely cop orientated. Highway patrolmen would be in there drinking, post office guys were there. There was a famous story about Cookie Picetti's. The post office guys, they were in the special delivery unit. At the time, there was special delivery. And they had little motor scooters and you paid the extra stamp. They would get on their motor scooter and take your special delivery letter to wherever the hell it was supposed to go. And those guys spent every afternoon in there, playing checkers, I guess it was. Or Parcheesi or something. They had a game going, about six or eight of them, all afternoon. So the joke among the guys who hung out at the bar, that type of clientele, was never send anything special delivery. Mail it; it's faster. [laughs] Because we knew the guys sat there all afternoon.

Tosca was a traditional half-operatic, half-North Beach crowd for most of the last century. And then when Jeannette Etheredge took it over, her mother moved the ballet crowd from Bali's—Armen Balianz was her mother—and they started to come there. [Mikhail] Baryshnikov, people like that. And then Francis Coppola and other people, and the movie people started coming. And it was just the beginning, when she took it over in the seventies, late seventies and eighties, she took over the bar and it became, well, to the movie crowd in the Bay Area—Coppola, [George] Lucas, all those guys, and their crews and their people directed sound, all those people. That's their bar.

Rubens: So it's a more upscale—

21-00:10:25

Hinckle: And the movie festival—Oh, yeah. Yeah, definitely.

Rubens: The look was—

21-00:10:31

Hinckle: Well, it's a very beautiful old bar. Elegant, giant cappuccino steamer machines at each end of the bar, red leatherette booths, great old paintings. It's basically an operatic-looking bar. Cookie's looked like, I don't know, the extended toilet in San Quentin or something compared to that. There was a difference.

Rubens: So in terms of a kind of social scene or a sort energetic gathering of people, *Scanlan's* didn't seem to quite have that phenomenon associated with it, because you're traveling back and forth to New York, you don't have to meet with a board of directors, your staff is small.

21-00:11:19

Hinckle: There was a New York scene at *Scanlan's*, which was somewhere between Damon Runyon and Ben Hecht. It was really of another period. It was wonderful, in that sense. And this guy who was a famous basketball fixer, spent a lot of time in jail, friend of Sidney's—I came to love the guy—Israel Schwartzberg, we made him the office manager, and he reviewed books on the mafia for us. But he kind of terrorized the girls who were the secretaries

and sort of ran a stolen watch and other hot goods operation out of the office. And it was in an old ballroom that was kind of decayed, above an Irish bar, right off Times Square. And Zion's friends from New York were all sort of tough New York guys, lawyers and prosecutors and current and ex-criminals and Roy Cohn and that sort of crowd. So it was culturally a world apart from a lot of the editorial product of *Scanlan's*. But on the one hand, it was a good mix, at least for me, because it was an infusion of this old world Ben Hecht type journalism with this new culture stuff we were dealing with on the West Coast office, which was full of the usual—in a very elegant setting, in Gossage's firehouse, with a garden outside and a very beautiful office. But every North Beach poet and hanger on and gossip was hanging around that office and the whole City Lights crowd was hanging around there. And Hunter was always there, Thompson was always there when he was in town. And he was open to all the burgeoning, continuing, boiling cultural and political outcasts of San Francisco and the Bay Area. And so that was the crowd in that office. So the magazine was kind of a mix between those two cultures, and stories from both of them would pop up. Overall, the more general trend in the magazine was towards that newer West Coast culture, the tone of it.

Rubens: Well, so this is a perfect segue to talking about Thompson. You had met him, of course, during the *Ramparts* era. And you have wonderful stories about him leaving his knapsack at the office and the monkey getting into it, and you guys coming back and trashing the office.

21-00:14:13

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, that was legendary.

Rubens: After you printed the Kentucky Derby piece, the two of you really concocted some delicious schemes for beefing up your, not only circulation, but also doing ultimately a book called *The American Dream*, in which Hunter said, "We're going to rape all of the major cultural icons, like—"

21-00:14:45

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. The Kentucky Derby was the first time covering a sports event that the focus of the article was on the crowd, the sort of drooling, mass enthusiasm, ugly part of spectator sports. And he wanted to do that to every American institution. Yeah, the Super Bowl, the American Legion, the whole works.

Rubens: I think you considered Times Square on New Years Eve, Mardi Gras, the Masters Golf Tournament.

21-00:15:16

Hinckle: Savage everything, yeah. The unseemly underside of all those events. And he was developing the character Raoul Duke as a law enforcement person, gun fanatic, very strong NRA-type person. And he, for instance, wrote a wonderful, wonderful piece—I think it got reprinted in one of the books of

Hunter's, where he started to compile past writings—just savaging this *Police Chief Magazine*, which is the official organ, monthly magazine, of the National Association of Police Chiefs. And it was just so funny. It was satirical writing of the highest order. And he took the position that these police chiefs and their magazine were a bunch of wimps. They wouldn't go for strong enough weapons [laughs] and crowd control things, and wanted to get noise busters, which would break everybody's eardrums if they were protesting. And looked up, researched where you guy these things. And these chiefs won't do that; they're just sell-out wimps, and along that line. And it was very, very funny reading. And very educational.

Rubens: He takes the name from—

21:00:17:25

Hinckle: Well, part of it was John Wayne, whose nickname was Duke. And part of it was Castro's brother, Raoul. That's where Raoul Duke came from, who still is with us today, if I see the paper correctly, in the *Doonesbury* strip. That character's still going on.

Rubens: So then Gary Trudeau reads this magazine and copies the Duke character for *Doonbury*?

21:00:17:49

Hinckle: Yeah. Hunter used the name in a couple of letters and things, but he first started writing under Raoul Duke in *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: So did there end up being a column? He proposes to you—He had a lot of delicious schemes; not only the savaging of the American institutions or celebrations, but he wanted to have a regular gun column.

21:00:18:12

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah. He thought it would be a circulation base, yeah. You get all the gun freaks out there, there's a lot of them, as flipping ahead many, many years, what's going on now with the Tea Party and all that sort of stuff. Those people are out there. And he says, "We can capture them, goddamn it. Goddamn it, we'll capture them. They'll read this magazine just to know where to get the latest weapons and this sort of stuff. We'll rate the new explosives and—" I said, "Hey, that'd be fun. Why not?"

Rubens: How many columns did he do on this? Did he do a couple?

21:00:18:50

Hinckle: We just got going on that. I think he'd done two, yeah.

Rubens: The second I think was in the guerrilla issue that got confiscated.

21-00:19:02

Hinckle: Well, that was another article. I'd sent him down to Los Angeles, about the killing of this Latino reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* by the sheriff's department in L.A. because they didn't like what he was saying.

Rubens:

Ruben Salazar. We talked about that last time. But I wanted to be clear that he went to *Rolling Stone* with the article after *Scanlan's* closed?

21-00:19:27

Hinckle: Yeah, it was in type in that last issue of *Scanlan's*; it was done. But it didn't get in because the only place we could print it was at a smaller press, that we had to cut pages out of it to get the guerrilla warfare stuff in, which was most of it, anyway. And so that article didn't get in there, so he—Hey, a guy's got to write somewhere, so he gave it to the *Rolling Stone*.

Rubens:

Sure. Well, let's just finish the thing on the American Cup, because there's a hijinx story about you having drinks with the "office boy" who helped out at *Scanlan's*-

21-00:20:11

Hinckle: Oh, Harvey Cohen?

Rubens:

Yes

21-00:20:13

Hinckle: Harvey used to hang out at Cookie Picetti's, too. He was a friend of mine who did a lot of things. He finally got into the contracting business, later on. But he was working at *Ramparts* for a while and he worked on the guerrilla warfare issue and did a lot of stuff at *Scanlan's*. And he was living in New York at the time, so he became sort of a member of the staff in New York. But Harvey had very long hair. And his nickname was Indian because he kind of looked like a big guy a native American –had a big pony tail. And the phone at the bar rang one time and somebody asked for Harvey Cohen. And Cookie said—he had a big cigar in his mouth all the time—"Who the hell's that? Anybody here named Harvey Cohen? And Harvey says, "Yeah, yeah, that's me, And Cookie stepped back and he looked at him. He says, "I'll be goddamned. A Sioux Jew."

Rubens:

So there's a story where the two of you, you've sent Hunter up to Rhode Island, to the American Cup.

21-00:21:22

Hinckle: Hunter and Steadman, yeah, up there to savage the American Cup.

Rubens:

And you decide it's going to be funny to call up the airlines to halt his plane by reporting there's a bomb on the plane.

21-00:21:28

Hinckle: It seemed like a good idea at the time, yeah.

- Rubens: That must've been one of those drunken kind of—
- 21-00:21:32 Hinckle: Yeah, we were just sitting around. Hey, let's pull one on Hunter; he's always pulling them on everybody else.
- Rubens: Just giving him a hard time? How would he have known it was something you did?
- 21-00:21:43 Hinckle: Well, we'd tell him.
- Rubens: Did you ever find out what happened?
- 21-00:21:48 Hinckle: In the chaos of things that went on after that, I totally forgot about asking him if it worked, if they delayed the plane or not.
- Rubens: So what I really want to ask is what happened to that story? Did he ever write a story on the American Cup?
- 21-00:22:06 Hinckle: No, it never got written because he was sent up there to do it and Steadman was going to draw it. Right at that time, he was fiddling around with it, then he wanted to do Ruben Salazar real quick, because that was urgent. So I said, "Well, do that first, and then we'll do the American Cup and go on."
- Rubens: Got it. And then *Scanlan's* was through.
- 21-00:22:25 Hinckle: And then that was the—The magazine only lasted eight issues, so—
- Rubens: But what a wonderful idea. No one ever picked up this idea of the American dream, where he would just savage all of these key cultural events?
- 21-00:22:37 Hinckle: Well, he kept harping on that, not so much as a magazine series, but he tried to sell, in later years, Random House—Jim Silverstein there is a good guy—on it as a book for him to do, to go around, same idea, and do that. But it was a little too much, I think, for Random House to finance. A wild magazine could do it. And then they'd love to collect the stuff or have it all done. But—perhaps; I really don't know their internal thinking—to send a guy like Hunter around the country with the name of Random House, and funding it, and God knows what the consequences would've been and the trouble he would've got into, I don't know. But anyway, they didn't end up taking him up on it.
- Rubens: So when did *City*, and then later the *Argonaut*, it was not something that you turned back to; this was just not timely or didn't work out?

21-00:23:43

Hinckle: No, he'd worked that pretty heavily with—But, well, out of that stuff, came *Las Vegas [Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream]*. The famous *Las Vegas* book and the subsequent movies about it. Once Hunter got that out of his system and the *Vegas* book became legend, then he was more into—All of us, we sort of have a lot of brilliant ideas. And sometimes they happen; most of the time they don't. And that was one of them, yeah. Because then it was, hey, now I've got to do the elections, I'm going to cover these elections. I never got back into a mainstream way, particularly when his editor at Random House, wouldn't pick up the idea. And I think it was a little too much for *Rolling Stone*, which, for all its music record, is a very conservative magazine.

Rubens: Was Hunter's writing for *Rolling Stone* at the same time that he's also writing for *Scanlan's* or—

21-00:24:52

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: He turns to *Rolling Stone* after *Scanlan's* is over.

21-00:24:56

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Okay. You write in the Thompson book that when the issue was confiscated, that Hunter writes to Jann Wenner and explores the possibility of—I don't know what—a joint publication?

21-00:25:09

Hinckle: Oh, well, *Rolling Stone* got saved by a guy named Max Palevsky. I think it's P-A-L-E-V-S-K-Y. He just died about a month ago. And he was one of the earlier Silicon Valley type inventors, let's put it that way, in a couple of those big early companies, and was a big liberal guy. And he gave a ton of money to Gene McCarthy and two other liberal Democratic candidates. And he put up the dough, because Hunter had written him because the *Rolling Stone* was just sort of getting going, almost like *Scanlan's*. And we [*Ramparts*] helped him, gave him the office stuff to paste up their first issues, and they got it going and it was coming out. But it started to take—And they had a big money crisis, but that's endemic to magazines. If you don't have firm financing, you have a tough time. And Palevsky put up the dough to bail them out. And so Hunter was thinking, hey, well, I got him to do that; he bailed out the *Rolling Stone*. Now *Scanlan's* has been confiscated and all these terrible things happened, maybe we can merge them or do this or that. Jann Wenner didn't exactly like that. It was getting pretty crowded on his one investor. And so Hunter's idea was not taken up.

Rubens: Well, just to jump all the way forward, it sounds like Wenner's always been kind of proprietary and kept separate. He didn't want to contribute a piece to this—

21-00:26:39

Hinckle: He's the only friend of Hunter's who was asked, who wouldn't put material in this big book on Hunter Thompson that I produced. He said, "No, I've got to use it for my own book." I was like, *what?*

Rubens: Sort of says something about him.

21-00:26:52

Hinckle: Yeah. Well, I'd been pretty critical of *Rolling Stone*, not because of its journalism, but because of its basically temporizing its reviews of albums and music to keep on an even keel with its main source of advertising, which in the beginning was the record industry. So they weren't exactly out there on an independent limb. That's not an original criticism; it's been echoed by many guys who've worked for *Rolling Stone* in the past. And I think there's a couple of books, not about *Rolling Stone*, but about that period, where guys say basically, they had their stuff yanked because it was too critical of an album. And that's sort of the opposite of *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's*. It was cautious. And it was very commercial-minded. It got caught up in music and music made money, and they went along with it.

Rubens: Depended on advertising and—

21-00:27:53

Hinckle: And weren't going to bite any hands that fed it, where *Scanlan's* first issue was, we're going to bite the hand of every investor we have, if we know who they are. Completely different approaches.

Rubens: You have a wonderful passage in your book. You said, "Where usually Hunter wrote for publications where he was the crazy man who pushed the limits of the permissible and possible, now he was heavily invested in a magazine that itself pushed the boundaries." It seemed like a great match, you and—

21-00:28:23

Hinckle: Yeah, he was cautioning me. [laughs]

Rubens: Oh, was he? Watch out, you're going to—

21-00:28:29

Hinckle: Oh, in a sort of perverse way. But Hunter was a great magazine critic. He was a fabulous artist. I was trying to find a word, but I'd call him an artist.

Rubens: A conceptual artist?

21:00:28:45

Hinckle:

He came up with this idea of shotgun art, where he would take these pictures—usually photographs, occasionally drawings—of anybody from Ronald Reagan to Marilyn Monroe, Hemingway, whatever, and he would shoot them with a gun or further away, from a shotgun. And then he would get a can of paint and hang it above it and shoot that and have it drip down in a way—You could almost see that in an art gallery; it's conceptual art. So he did that a lot. And a lot of those—shotgun art, he called it—those shotgun art portraits are in this book about Hunter, the one that's about to come out.

And he was a fierce critic of magazine design. He thought he knew more than any art director and was always arguing with me, through magazine after magazine, about layouts and this and that. Particularly his stuff, which we'd go insane, about the artist should pick the illustrator or something, other than Steadman. Because Steadman, it was just an internal war. He was constantly making fun of and on Steadman's butt, as the saying goes. In fact, at the end of the period, their relationship, after Hunter killed himself, Ralph did a book about Hunter, which came out a couple years after his death. And it actually had what I would call a rather bitter tone to it. There were great stories in it, but it was like he was kind of resenting how much he'd been kicked around and stepped on and ridiculed, both in print and privately, in letters and conversations, by Hunter over the years. But Hunter's style was always to insult people, even his best friends. He would just say the most *outrageous* things to you. He was fearlessly outrageous and raffish. And I don't know anybody that ever took it seriously. He used to confront Tom Wolfe all the time and say, you lowlife fancy-pants, da-da-da-da-da. Right? While you're sitting around sucking diamonds, I'm here in the trenches. What the hell's the matter with you? But he didn't really mean it. The insult was a form of conversation with Hunter.

Rubens:

Well, in fact, he writes to your editor at Random House, isn't it, or to you directly, that he thought you were one of the most crazy-fabulous editors, who characterizes the sixties

21:00:31:31

Hinckle:

Oh, occasionally, he writes you a compliment, yeah. But that was not the norm. [laughs]

Rubens:

How do you talk about what the nature of your relationship was? Was it pretty intense? I know that later on, you're going to bring him here; you're going to broker a deal where he becomes a columnist, along with you, at the *Examiner*. But that's about ten years later, so just to move ahead, so in the mid-seventies—Oh, is it you who introduces him to the Mitchell brothers? When did you first become friends with the Mitchell brothers? Maybe I'm out of sync here in the story.

21:00:32:20

Hinckle:

Well, the Mitchell brothers was another San Francisco parlor. It was almost like that early—This would be the 1980s. And they began in the seventies, the beginning of the seventies, the same time as Ron Turner's publishing his books, who now has a large publishing company called Last Gasp Publishing. But he started publishing dirty comic books, for lack of a better descriptive term. And out of that came Robert Crumb and a lot of very famous artists now, mostly the comic drawing form of art. But that's developed into its own art form. Look at all these illustrated novels now, which have become—That was all burgeoning in San Francisco in the seventies and eighties. And a lot of those illustrators were used by *Scanlan's* in its short-lived period, because you could see these guys, something was going here.

So the Mitchells, it was a cultural institution, and they always had parties there. It evolved that their boardroom—it wasn't a boardroom, it was a big office with a pool table in it, and the office stuff was around it—became a meeting place in the city, much as Gossage's and Walter Landor's conference room and parties were in the sixties. So by the late seventies, early eighties, things that were really kind of interesting and happening were at the Mitchell brothers' theater, the big porno palace. But on the second floor, there was the office/pool room.

Rubens:

This was on the corner of O'Farrell and—

21:00:34:12

Hinckle:

O'Farrell and Polk. Polk and O'Farrell.

Rubens:

It was called the O'Farrell Theatre

21:00:34:17

Hinckle:

It still is, yeah. O'Farrell Street Theatre, yeah. And it was just natural. I must've been over there, met both of those brothers in the late seventies, early eighties.

Rubens:

All right, so it's post-*Scanlan's*.

21:00:34:31

Hinckle:

Post-*Scanlan's*, yeah. And Hunter was hanging around there—he became night manager, as we call it—in the middle 1980s, and was there, certainly, for the Democrat convention things that we had, many events. In fact, I was putting out a section of the *Chronicle* at the time from the Mitchell brothers' office/pool room, because it involved much of these underground artists. And I talked the *Chronicle* into having a little bit more than the usual boring convention coverage, and I'd write a sort of offbeat what's-going-on column about the convention. And the other half of the page would be these underground cartoonists and their views, and we'd cover the convention. Just give me a page; you take the rest of the paper with your usual boring coverage that nobody wants to read. And they finally agreed to that. But they didn't

want the cartoonists in the Chronicle Building. [laughs] They said “You can’t let them all in here; these people are crazy.” That sort of attitude, right? I said, “Well, yeah, I see what you mean.” So we had to have someplace for them all to assemble and draw and do their thing, so a natural place was the Mitchell brothers. And of course, they were immediately up for it and stocked the place with champagne and strawberries and everything else you can image. [laughs] Giant truffles. There was plenty of finger food and drink for these cartoonists. And then people with the convention heard about it, they started coming over. So during that convention—in 1984, I believe it was—almost half the Democratic senators in the country and other major political types were in and out of the Mitchell brothers, because there were parties all the time and this was—They’d come over after that and say, wow, here’s this crazy strip palace, where everybody’s drawing and working, producing stuff, covering the convention by crazy cartoonists. It was almost irresistible.

Rubens: I can imagine. So didn’t they incorporate the cartoonists into the show or their shows in the evening, where they could sketch people or they were sketching?

21-00:36:53

Hinckle: No, that was an idea that Jimmy Mitchell had at the end, right before he killed his brother, Artie.

Rubens: Oh, much later.

21-00:37:04

Hinckle: And we had another publication called *War News*, which I edited. And it came out of the first Gulf War, which we were much in opposition to. And then [President William] Clinton’s bombings in the Balkans, we were also opposed to. And that had almost all those type of major artists in it. And that was produced out of this theater, also. And like a million copies were printed. It was a standard size newspaper, size of the *New York Times*. It was a pretty wild paper, and it almost looked like the *New York Times*—very conservative layout, with all these wild drawings.

Rubens: This was your idea.

21-00:37:47

Hinckle: Yeah. But the Mitchells were all for it. They were bandits. They were entrepreneurs. They had pornographic gold. They made a lot of money with *Behind the Green Door* and other movies. But they weren’t your usual pornographers; they were into having helped change the culture and into being a part of San Francisco, and were up for almost anything that would sort of shake things up and be fun. And a lot of artists I don’t think would’ve had careers, if they hadn’t been subsidized by, given dough by the Mitchells.

Rubens: Really? No kidding.

21-00:38:31

Hinckle:

Oh, they were like the de' Medicis of San Francisco, in a real sense, in that period of the seventies through the eighties to the early nineties. They were major contributors to the arts, and to slightly off balance underground arts, which have produced some major names like—Well, Crumb is the most prominent example now. But they were major money guys for cultural adventurism.

Rubens:

So I've conflated this idea that the art—

21-00:39:02

Hinckle:

No. Jimmy Mitchell wanted to slightly get out of the porn business. He was getting tired of it, and they'd made their bones on it, and wanted to keep the theater going, let that go, but he thought we'd really make *War News* a publication. But he was an extremely inventive guy. He was a great friend of Hunter Thompson's, too. And he bought a nightclub in North Beach, an old nightclub that had shut down, and called it War News, and was in the process of installing video monitors and television screens, like a newsroom, and computers on the floor, plus a band area and cocktail tables everywhere. And the idea was we'd produce *War News* there, and everybody would be there drinking and carrying on and talking to people, at the same time. It was a wild idea. It might've even gone.

Rubens:

Brilliant idea.

21-00:40:01

Hinckle:

Yeah. And one of the things was that the cartoonists would assemble at various times, groups of them, and people would sit on the stage and people would say, draw me, or this or that, and they would, and get ten bucks or twenty bucks from them or something. He was spending quite a bit of dough remodeling this nightclub to be called War News, where we'd produce it.

Rubens:

Now, were you a consultant in this? Were you involved in this?

21-00:40:25

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Rubens:

It reminds me of your club J Street.

21-00:40:28

Hinckle:

Yeah, it was just crazy. But it was like, well, why not? [chuckles] You know? We'll put out a paper. And we don't have to go out to a bar because we've got the bar right here. And you'll let the people in, they'll pay you to do it and you'll make money. What the hell?

Rubens:

So what happened?

21-00:40:43

Hinckle:

It was hard to object to it. If it worked, it would've been fascinating.

Rubens: Sounds like it would've been a fabulous place to go to. So what happened?

21-00:40:50

Hinckle: There was a bad night and he killed Artie.

Rubens: His brother.

21-00:40:55

Hinckle: Yeah. And was in jail for the next four years.

Rubens: And that was just it. When he got out—

21-00:41:01

Hinckle: Yeah, he was in jail for a year and after his trial, and he ended up doing three years on the charge. So he was in jail for a total of four to five years, but it was like a year and a half before the actual trial.

Rubens: So that was it. By then, the lease had gone on the building and—

21-00:41:19

Hinckle: Oh, yeah.

Rubens: —the club idea went by the wayside. So this began with me asking if you introduced Hunter to the Mitchells. But it sounds like he had his own connection.

21-00:41:31

Hinckle: I don't even recall. We were both always there, for various parties, and it was a place to go. And I'd seen him there long before the period came, the *Examiner* period, when he started to write a column. I went to work for the *Examiner* and got him there. He knew both brothers and I knew both brothers. If I had to pinpoint the day when he first walked in there, I don't know.

Rubens: Well, I was asking when *you* first met them.

21-00:42:02

Hinckle: Oh, well, I'd be talking to them, they'd say, hey, this thing's going on at the Mitchell brothers; was really a riot yesterday. This crazy group was there. They're doing this insurrection nutty thing in San Francisco. So we were both there all the time. I think I started going there before, because basically, the police were always raiding them and I'd be writing stories about it. So I got to know them through that. And then I got arrested myself for walking my dog. And then I got really close with them because then we were both criminals. [laughs] Because I was defending them against some of these excessive police raids.

Rubens: Well, because they had arrested—

21:00:42:43

Hinckle:

Well, Marilyn Chambers, their star. There were thirty cops out there to take one unclothed woman off the stage and arrest her. Now, come on. You need thirty policemen for that? Stop. [laughs] It's ridiculous.

So I made fun of the cops, and then they found an old warrant for walking my dog without a leash. A cop gave me a ticket and I grumbled and crumpled it up and threw it away and never paid it, naturally, and it had gone to warrant. So they looked up and they said, hey, we can arrest him for an unpaid warrant. And they did. They took me out of the newspaper, police car outside, and that became quite a local story.

Rubens:

Right, that was a great local story. That was Thompsonesque. What I'm trying to get at is your relationship with him. It sounds like it was a constant. I don't know what's going on from the end of *Scanlan's* to—

21:00:43:34

Hinckle:

Well, Hunter and I would always talk on the phone about things, but he was on the road a lot. Started to cover the campaigns and things. And he was always where the action is. So the next place that we actually met up was in the Mitchell brothers. First it was through *Ramparts*, then it was at *Scanlan's*. in the very early seventies. And by the late seventies, there was action at the Mitchell brothers. And Hunter's second home was almost in San Francisco. He spent so much time here for the Hells Angels book and other things, spent a lot of time down in Big Sur. Had many, many friends here. So it really was his second city or a second home for him.

Rubens:

You mentioned an apartment that he had in Sausalito.

21:00:44:28

Hinckle:

Yeah, the Mitchells got him that apartment. Well, they didn't get it for him, but a photographer friend of mine, Matthew Nacongs, had that apartment and subleased it to Hunter. He was a friend of Hunter's.

Rubens:

And this is during the period when he is the night manager of the—

21:00:44:42

Hinckle:

Of the O'Farrell, yeah.

Rubens:

So the nature of your relationship. So it becomes more intense during that period when he's at the Mitchell brothers'? There was just some kind of cathexis between the two of you. Irreverence and hijinks—

21:00:44:55

Hinckle:

Yeah, whenever we were in a position to cause trouble or make journalism on the same set or together, we always ended up there. And after *Scanlan's*, that next happened out of the unlikely venue of the Mitchell brothers' O'Farrell Street Theatre, which was quite involved in culture and local goings on. And I was telling Hunter about the raids on these guys. I said, "I've been writing

about it." And he thought it was outrageous. And he came out, and that's when he wanted to join the Mitchell brothers. He said, "I want to help fight this thing, them trying to shut you down, these crazy police raids," which were constant. Two to three times a week, sometimes. And every single one of them would later be thrown out of court. It was just absolute harassment. A big First Amendment crazy issue.

Rubens: Who was defending the Mitchell brothers, by the way? Do you remember?

21:00:45:50

Hinckle: Well, early on, Michael Kennedy, a major New York lawyer, old friend of mine. He was also from San Francisco originally. Not from it, but his lawyering career started here. And he defended them early on, on some porn charges. And then there was a series of lawyers, after he moved to New York and became a big criminal defense lawyer of major mafia guys and other things in New York. And then he came back out to defend Jimmy in the murder trial against his brother. This is pretty circular, all this stuff. Everybody kind of knows each other a long time, in a lot of these things.

Rubens: Well, I think what's so wonderful about this oral history is that it speaks to San Francisco as a hub, as a cultural hearth, and that you really are drawing on it and turning it into a national story.

21:00:46:45

Hinckle: Yeah, national story, but this was—

Rubens: This is where it was.

21:00:46:49

Hinckle: They may have been having fun all the time, but they were talent. We're talking real talent. And you put it to use. Say, hey, this is great. But it would be very difficult for them to walk into, impossible to walk into *Time* magazine, probably impossible to walk into *Atlantic* or *Harpers* or—I can barely think of some where anybody can walk into. And certainly not your usual daily newspaper. That's why they're all what they are. They're not open to new creative people coming in and making a paper—I'm sure that some of these newspapers and magazines that have died recently, in current time, if they were more open culturally and editorially, I don't think that they would be, the economy notwithstanding, in the deep dive that they ended up in. They're just stuffy and convention-bound and stuck to formulas that people are no longer interested in.

Rubens: Right. I have in my notes two other magazines I just wanted to ask you about. You write about when *Scanlan's* began looking into Nixon's organized crime hookups, quote, "We were working with the brilliant Ken Kelley's short-lived *Sundance* magazine." Just say something of what that was about.

21-00:48:13

Hinckle:

Well, part of that colony, if you want, of artists and writers in San Francisco in the seventies and eighties—He was originally from Michigan. I believe it's Michigan. He came during the tumult of the mid-sixties to later sixties and early seventies. He got involved with the White Panther Party, which was John Sinclair and other people. They sort of adopted the Black Panther tactics of confrontation and this and that, but they were white so they called themselves the White Panther Party. And he was the minister of propaganda [chuckles] for the White Panther Party. Then he was a brilliant guy. Extremely frenetic, constantly on the move. He was an ex—

Rubens:

That was based in—

21-00:49:11

Hinckle:

In Detroit. Then he came to San Francisco. And simultaneously, had become sort of the chief interviewer for *Playboy* magazine. He was a great interviewer. Had a classic interview with Anita Bryant, back in the middle-or-so seventies, which sort of nailed the whole new right wing thing. This was the time of all the anti-gay things in Florida that she was involved in. It was really good stuff. And Kelley, he was a brilliant interviewer. Anyway, he did for years, many years, I'd say ten years, sort of mainstream interviews for *Playboy*. Five or six of them a year, big time. And then he and a bunch of interesting guys started a paper called *Sundance*, which was, as many magazines—it was a magazine, not a paper, but newsprint, sort of. And it was very advanced in its design. It sort of took a bunch of the Haight-Ashbury artists and got them involved in a real publication. So it was kind of wild looking. Colored print would be on—type wouldn't be black, it'd be in a green, and some of the pages would be pink. And there'd be drawings on it, too. But it was a lot of serious journalism. And a lot of underground radical journalists came around that nexus in San Francisco. And some of them had been involved and were hanging around *Scanlan's*, too and were beginning to focus on Nixon's serious, major connections to organized crime throughout his entire career, and did the actual pioneering investigation work about that. And I started to work with them. I said, "Hey, you guys have got something going here. We've been thinking about looking into that." Everybody'd heard rumors, but nobody had written anything about it. So we were actually working on that kind of together. And they'd done one issue, which was called "Nixon and Organized Crime" or something like that, before that publication stopped. And this was later picked up by *Newsday* on Long Island, the paper, which did a very brave series of articles on Nixon's connections to organized crime. Those articles came out, I'm almost certain, some time in the early to—I'm trying to figure what part of Nixon's—I'd have to take a look. But it was while Nixon was president. And turned it down because Bebe Rebozo, from used tires and selling to the army during World War II and afterward—Bebe Rebozo was Nixon's buddy, hang-out buddy. And the mafia banks that financed all of Nixon's real estate purchases, houses and things, including the Florida White House for Nixon's thing—Anyway, it's the major

daily on Long Island. *Newsday* took that up and did wonderful stuff about it. Needless to say, they didn't get a Pulitzer Prize for it, because the Pulitzer committee is so hidebound itself they wouldn't touch something like that. But they got the wrath of the Nixon administration, and IRS investigations of the paper and individual staff writers who'd written for these pieces.

Rubens: So this was more talking about what you were going to do, and then *Scanlan's* was over. And did *Sundance* go much longer? How long did *Sundance*—They were pretty short lived.

21-00:53:25

Hinckle: That didn't last as long as *Scanlan's*, I don't think. And they put out another issue right afterwards, yeah.

Rubens: It seemed to me, though, that *Sundance* was one of those heirs of *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's*—

21-00:53:40

Hinckle: It came out of the same pot.

Rubens: —cultural milieu.

21-00:53:43

Hinckle: Yeah, the same pot. All basically San Francisco. A lot of New York people were into the same stuff, too at that time.

Rubens: And how about *New West*? Later on in the seventies, you'll do a profile on Scott Newhall, that you'll publish in *New West*. I don't know when *New West* started. And is it also—

21-00:54:02

Hinckle: Well, *New West* was a commercial publication. It wasn't at all in the *Scanlan's* or *Sundance* or *Ramparts* genre. *New West* came out—My friend Clay Felker, who with Tom Wolfe, was one of the original guys who started *New York* magazine. *New York* magazine was sort of this New Journalism magazine, which came out of the Sunday supplement of the *New York Herald Tribune*, before that paper folded. And they sort of took that and raised money. And I remember at the time—this was in the late sixties—I helped Clay raise some money because there were people who wouldn't or just couldn't give money to invest in *Ramparts*, but kind of liked it. And I helped him get to a couple of them, to get the financing to make *New York* magazine a separate venture. Which it did, and it's still going today. Because it's a very commercial publication.

Rubens: It's on your coffee table today.

21-00:55:03

Hinckle: Yeah. It has some sophisticated political articles, but mostly it's sharp and on top of it culturally, it's a fine magazine. It was a great magazine when Clay

had it. That's when Tom Wolfe and other type writers began to flourish. And he later started a magazine called *New West*, like *New York* magazine, trying to do that out on the West—

Rubens: Based here?

21-00:55:34

Hinckle: It was based in Los Angeles when he did it, based on the West Coast. And then he lost control of *New York* magazine, or [Rupert] Murdoch bought it, or something happened; I'd have to check my memory book for that. I think it was Murdoch. Anyway, he lost control of the magazine after about eight years or so, and started *New West*. And then other people took that over; I think he got kind of forced out or something. Perhaps his style of journalism was a little too independent for them. And that went on for a period of time, eight or ten years—probably at least that much—as a publication out of Los Angeles. Which was okay. It did a reasonable job as a statewide publication, doing feature stories with an edge, on California characters and fashion and stuff. There was nothing objectionable to it at all; it was a fine commercial magazine.

Rubens: So regarding the Scott Newhall, did you propose to them that you'd do this piece?

21-00:56:43

Hinckle: I think I knew some of the people who were editors there then. I may have suggested it to them, maybe we were just hanging around having a drink one night or something.

Rubens: I wondered if it was a piece you had developed for *City Magazine*.

21-00:56:58

Hinckle: I don't actually recall. I ended up doing it for *New West*, but they wanted it. Said, "Oh, yeah, we want you to do Newhall for us." And of course, I was happy to do that because he's such a friend, I love to write about his antics and his journalism. It gave me an excuse to go down to see him a bunch of times, in his castle down in Southern California.

Rubens: He was putting out then the—He had left the *Chronicle* and he had gone down there to take over a newspaper.

21-00:57:37

Hinckle: He was putting out the *Newhall Signal*. Well, Scott was from a family that—We haven't talked about the *Chronicle*.

Rubens: No, we haven't gotten to your return to the *Chronicle*—We're going to go there soon.

21-00:57:46

Hinckle:

I'll discuss these things. But he had more money than the family, the de Youngs who owned the *Chronicle*. He was old money. Old California Land Grant money. The Newhall Land Company is still one of the largest landholders in the state. And from Berkeley to the Central Valley. Major, major landholders. And there's the town of Newhall California, which is where he put out the *Newhall Signal*.

Rubens:

My understanding is one of the reasons he comes to San Francisco, to the *Chronicle*, is to work is because during the Depression, the family had been selling land, they were really losing money and he couldn't afford to go east to college as most of the sons of that family had traditionally.

21-00:58:35

Hinckle:

I don't know, you'd have to check Scott's oral history. He worked for the *Chronicle* for a long time, from almost the late 1930s or sometime in the forties. So he was there a long, long time.

Rubens:

Let me stop to change the tape.

Begin Audio File 22

Rubens:

Tell me about publishing in *Saturday Review*.

22-00:00:08

Hinckle:

Well, of the magazines in San Francisco, basically, not too many outside of San Francisco and the Bay Area—In that period, in the sixties, there was, of course, the underground papers. *The Berkeley Barb* is the most famous of them, which lasted for quite a while. And then there was a few things out of the Haight-Ashbury in the hippie period. And out of that came the magazine *Sundance*, but it was a very political version of the Haight-Ashbury art, beginning in the late sixties, early seventies. And then the only other publications that were large circulation or of particular interest were, later, Coppola's attempt to make *City Magazine* into a huge example of what a city weekly should be. And the *Saturday Review*, oddly enough, for a time, came out here. It was after Norman Cousins, I guess, died. And it was purchased by an investment group. And they moved it out to San Francisco, on Pacific Street, basically right down the street from the *Scanlan*'s offices.

Rubens:

And it's right about that time? This is early seventies?

22-00:01:42

Hinckle:

It was right around that time, yeah. And remodeled the whole damn thing. Giant office, very Art Deco. And there was a weekly *Saturday Review of Literature* for a long, long time; from the late nineteenth century, anyway. And they had this idea to break it into four magazines, themed, one different one each week. So instead of just a weekly about *Saturday Review of Literature*, it'd be the *Saturday Review of Science*, the *Saturday Review of*

something else. [laughs] Anyway, that was the idea. I found it querulous, the idea, but that was their concept and they put a lot of money into it. And they published the *Saturday Review* from Pacific Street there for three to four years—certainly, two to four; I'd have to check the dates it lasted to—before that brave experiment in publishing also collapsed.

Rubens: We were talking during the break that you published a few pieces for them.

22-00:02:59

Hinckle: Well, yeah, they published a piece of mine, I think from the *Lemonade* book and something else. I think they published one or two pieces of mine. It may have all been from the *Lemonade* book or some other books I'd written. I don't think I wrote anything original for them. But I knew those guys. There were guys that were putting it out and hanging around North Beach, as they say, because that's where they worked. But we've covered most of the publications from the sixties on, anyway.

Rubens: Just before we changed tapes, we were finishing up on Scott Newhall. You were talking about the kind of family that he came from and why he came to San Francisco.

22-00:03:48

Hinckle: Well, he was a photographer, as I recall, in the beginning and then went to work for the *Chronicle*. He loved journalism. He was from a very landed family. And I don't know, sometimes, as in the current economy, it ain't so great to own all the land; things can go up and down in value. I'm sure the land is in pretty good shape for the last couple of decades, but—

Rubens: Well, it's now Valencia. It's this extraordinary suburban development that really is a bedroom community for Los Angeles.

22-00:04:27

Hinckle: Anyway, but Scott went to work for the *Chronicle* early on. I think he was there during the Second World War and of course, afterward. And eventually he saved the *Chronicle*, made the *Chronicle* the top paper in the city, besting its long-time rival the *Examiner*, where I got to know him when I went to work as a cub reporter, right out of college in the very beginning of the sixties.

Rubens: But you became closer to him when you—Well, with *Scanlan's*. He did that great piece on the Auguilla revolution.

22-00:05:03

Hinckle: Well, no, I became close to him because he was a friend of Hal Gossage and Walter Landor and those people. And I was doing *Ramparts* at the time, so I knew him after—I went to work at the *Chronicle* for only a few years, and then began doing *Ramparts*. I got to know him then. And then I met him, if you want to call it socially or creatively, as I was doing this magazine and he was doing the *Chronicle* and Gossage was doing his advertising and Walter

Landor was doing his design and Jessica Mitford was doing these books. I wouldn't go so far as to call it a salon, but it was a group of people that met together. John Steinbeck was around all the time, hanging out at Enrico's and coming up here to parties that we were giving.

Rubens: You did mention knowing Steinbeck through Howard Gossage.

22-00:05:54

Hinckle: Yes. Steinbeck, Decca Mitford. They were the crowd; everybody was around. I don't have anything to say particularly about Steinbeck. He did say to Gossage, when Gossage was sick and saying good-bye to everyone: "Well, if you are going to die, you'd better go ahead and do it."

Rubens: And so you were the young wunderkind of that crowd.

22-00:06:06

Hinckle: Yeah. Yeah. San Francisco's got a history of this stuff, of interesting people. The nineteenth century, it was a particularly rich period.

Rubens: Oh. Well, that can pull me back to theme, because you mentioned that *Scanlan's* was a throw-back to the phantasmagoric nineteenth century western journalism of the days of the code duello. What did you mean by that? I wasn't sure that I understood that.

22-00:06:38

Hinckle: Well, what's known as Gonzo—See, in the seventies and eighties, two streams of writing began to develop, outside of normal writing reportorial stuff, in newspapers and long-form magazine articles like the *New Yorker*. And the first of those was called the New Journalism. And that was Tom Wolfe and *New York* magazine, which we were just discussing a minute ago. And that was sort of putting the individual into the article or making the assignment the subject of the article or going beyond, in a looser style, the conventions of long-form reporting on a particular topic. To make a distinction, John Hersey's memorable pieces in the *New Yorker* on Hiroshima, the aftermath of Hiroshima, which were articles in the *New Yorker* and became a very famous book. I think it was called *Hiroshima*, by John Hersey. That was long-form journalism at its best. But in those articles, he wasn't talking about John Hersey meeting this survivor, and our interaction and what I felt, and how some government official tried to stop me from finding out that they didn't do to save people from radiation and cover this up afterward. It was just the horrible story, written from the third person, however you want to say it, standpoint. So New Journalism—Tom Wolfe's work is the prime example of that—involves the writer, one way or the other, in the story and a much more voluble, loose, picaresque almost style. Just spring bursting all over, all kinds of descriptions, melodic things, exclamation marks, stylistic things. And often—Not so much in Wolfe's case; he sort of got inside everybody's heads and would write about situations, but he wouldn't write about Tom Wolfe, I, Tom Wolfe, being the central character, in some ways, of

what I'm writing about. But that was New Journalism. It was involving the individual, great, freer description—

Rubens: Multiple perspectives.

22-00:09:25

Hinckle: —outside the bounds of conventional long-form narrative and newspaper reporting. So that became New Journalism. That came out of Clay Felker and *New York* magazine. And Tom. And there were many practitioners and people who copied that school and got into it, and it became almost a permanent style of writing in America since the late sixties, early seventies, which was *New York* magazine, where that came from. Now, oddly enough at the time, *Ramparts*, which was around at the same time, and that's not noted too much about *Ramparts*, but *Ramparts*, if you read a lot of the big stories in there, there was that sort of narrative description. It wasn't a leftist description of analyzing the facts and getting the politics in; many times, it was a wild, sweeping—either it was an exposé of, ah, this is horrible; or it would be a lot of personality and character and colorful writing. *Ramparts* also did New Journalism. It was just sort of endemic to its form. Anyway, there was New Journalism at this time. Now, that's when you come to Gonzo and Hunter Thompson and what happened with *Scanlan's*. And why the—Well, there were two things that happened with Hunter and Gonzo, which has become famous enough now that it's in every dictionary and it's a word. Everybody says, that's Gonzo. Well, what the hell does that mean? Okay. There was a piece that Hunter had written; it was in the first issue of *Scanlan's* and had been rejected by *Playboy* magazine, which I think we talked about.

Rubens: Right. We talked about that.

22-00:11:24

Hinckle: Well, in that piece, one of the reasons they rejected it was that Hunter put his own personal observations and himself, in part, in that story. Not as much where it was the primary point of view and topic of the Kentucky Derby article, but it was there. It was outside normal magazine conventions, aside from being offensive to *Playboy* because it beat up the object of portraiture, which would offend their advertising. But he couldn't get that piece printed. So we printed that. Then the second piece he did for *Ramparts* was the one on assignment to the Kentucky Derby, which started the genre now called Gonzo and the tradition called Gonzo. And to define that, it would be distinguish it from what's called New Journalism. And this is really for writing teachers and students of journalist history. But these distinctions are that it came out of these magazines in this period. And Gonzo made the participant, the writer, a major participant in his narrative, even though he was observing everything else. It went back to Defoe and other English novelists, where the same sort of thing was going on—*Tristram Shandy*—where they're rather risqué, they're raffish, but there're very personal discussions involved in the writing. That went all out after that part of the English tradition kind of died out, to be more

conventional or more traditional novel form. But—you asked about the Old West—the traditions of magazines in San Francisco and in, well, Virginia City, where Mark Twain wrote a lot for the *Territorial Enterprise* for a while—But you had magazines in San Francisco—*The Wasp*, the original *Argonaut*—you had daily newspapers printing what was basically science fiction. For instance, Mark Twain had a thing that has become famous in his writings. It was a story he wrote for the *Territorial Enterprise*. Of course, he wrote for every San Francisco magazine and newspaper, when he first came out west. You write for those who'll pay you something and print your stuff. But his journalism and the whole tradition of western journalism from that to the *Denver Post*, in its heyday in the nineteenth century, was the school of the fantastic. It was nothing to do a hoax or to basically write science fiction, and not to let the reader on. If they didn't get it, too bad for them. Newspapers in New York, like the *New York Sun*, which did a series that became wildly popular, reporting life on the moon. They made it up. The guy made it up. But people couldn't wait to buy the next installment. And they didn't say, hey, sorry guys, we just made this up. They just wrote it. We write it, you buy it. And all western journalism is personal. It's certainly between that and—And then New York newspapering in the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century was very personal. People would really insult each other. The things they said were terrible. And this is about what Gonzo is, is so much—And I'm saying it fits into a genre. The early newsletters and newspapers after the revolution were schools for scandal. They were *so* outrageous. And they just made up facts about the opposition and they wrote the most scurrilous things.

Rubens: But you're not making up stuff yet?

22-00:15:48

Hinckle: Yeah, it's so baldly making up things.

Rubens: No, I mean you at *Scanlan's*.

22-00:15:55

Hinckle: Well, there was certainly stuff made up. The difference between just this great old western journalism—Code duello means, you insulted me so much we're going to shoot it out. And that was the standard in nineteenth century journalism. Editors would sometimes shoot it out or shoot each other. One of the de Young brothers, of the early days of the *Chronicle*, was shot dead in a dual or shot by—I'd have to check my history. He was either shot in a dual or—I think a guy came up to him on the street and shot him dead, or in the office. I think it was in the office. But there were guns involved. This was really strong stuff. It was also just making stuff up. Mark Twain's story about the man who walked across the desert with an ice helmet. And he could walk across the desert from Nevada to Utah, wherever, because he invented this helmet, which was kind of a weird color. And inside it, he had enough ice that would both give him water and keep the heat from getting him. Well, that

never happened. He made it up. It was a great story. So that's spirit of western stuff.

Rubens: So what's the spirit that's—

22-00:17:10

Hinckle: So that re-pops up in what Hunter created, what we started to publish in *Scanlan's* as Gonzo Journalism, where the writer—I guess it was modernization of this type of writing, in the sense that it discussed psychedelics and other drugs affecting the writer. So sometimes you're seeing green frogs, but you write about that. [chuckles] At the same time, you're writing the story which you came to write about. All of that is intermixed. It is completely personal, outrageous, phantasmagorical, in the sense of going back another century in journalism, which was popular, wildly popular, and *was* journalism in the colonial period and in the first mass dailies on the East Coast; and western journalism from the *Denver Post*, which was really a circus newspaper of the wildest sort—talk about making things up; they'd do anything—to the San Francisco dailies and magazines of the nineteenth century. They all did this. And it was damn interesting reading, and everybody kind of knew that you were taken along for a ride and these guys are really out to get each other. But it's what everybody talked about and it was a popular sport.

Rubens: So are there examples in *Scanlan's* of stuff that's just totally made up?

22-00:18:42

Hinckle: Well, the Kentucky Derby story was—No. It picked up the genre of totally making things up, and replaced it with the effects of drugs or psychedelics, right?

Rubens: Okay.

22-00:18:57

Hinckle: So all of a sudden, things are going on and there's reaction to them that you don't know. If you read the whole of Hunter's *Las Vegas* book, it's infused with problems dealing with the effects of drugs.

Rubens: Yes, but I was just trying to get, when you talk about *Scanlan's* being this throwback, I—

22-00:19:17

Hinckle: Well, yeah, it was a throwback because it did hoaxes. Yeah, we did absolute hoaxes in *Scanlan's*. We took the newsletter of the—

Rubens: Oh, the South African—

22-00:19:29

Hinckle: —Republic of South Africa, and kept its masthead—and it was a four-page, typewritten newsletter—stole its subscriber list—didn't steal it, because

somebody made it available to us—reprinted it in the magazine with stuff that was totally embarrassing to South Africa at the time, in 1971, about racial things and various matters that were—Nazis living there and that sort of stuff. But in their official newsletter. Put it in the magazine without a word, just like it was an advertising insert, and then mailed it to their actual mailing list, so it looked just like their thing. Another example of that was that somewhat famous in the advertising industry, the Lufthansa Airline ad, which I think we talked about. We just took their ad and put these Nazis in the middle of it and put it on the back page. So in that sense, it's that journalistic daring, right?

And it's so obvious that it's made up. Half the people didn't believe there were men on the moon, but they wanted to read it anyway, in the New York—Did we explain that it was a phonied up ad? No. Did we explain we stole their newsletter, this isn't their real newsletter? No. We just did it. Go discover it yourself. So it's that sort of journalism. And in discussing what Gonzo made a difference from what's called New Journalism, is that Gonzo took the personal one big step further, and made, actually, the writer and whoever might be with him, like the hapless Steadman, to draw main characters and the things they encountered and their reactions and what they felt about each other, as part of the story—even though they're telling the story of these horrible boorish people and the type of spectator mob that goes to these big sporting events. Which could've been done in a totally different satirical or reportorial form, but it was done in that one.

And that advanced to what became so famous in the movie *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, which is basically about going to Las Vegas and a convention and all the usual things, while you're trying to get over the problems of taking more drugs to get through it all. Right? So that intensely personal reaction, inter-reaction. But also you're still telling a story. And it's hard to tell sometimes where that ends off and what doesn't. That is Gonzo, and that's what the Kentucky Derby piece did that started that genre, if you like. Okay?:

Rubens: By the way, did you title that story, “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved”?

22-00:22:27

Hinckle: Yeah.

Rubens: That was your title.

22-00:22:29

Hinckle: Yeah. Well, it was a phrase; I believe Hunter has it somewhere in the thing. Or I may have taken—he maybe didn't have it as a phrase, I don't remember, but it was—

Rubens: It was clear that's what it was.

22-00:22:40

Hinckle: It fit the—it was the statement that that's what the article was about.

Rubens:

I did want to clarify or amplify our discussion about editing Thompson. Because in your new book on Thompson, you write about editing it at Tosca Cafe. When we originally talked about it, you said all the editing was taking place in New York. How were you getting the manuscript in San Francisco, there weren't fax machines yet?

22-00:23:07

Hinckle: No. No.

Rubens:

No. So you actually did editing, you continued editing it when you came back to San Francisco.

22-00:23:13

Hinckle: No—I may have mentioned it earlier—we had these things called mojo machines, which were early fax, which were like drums. And you had to put the piece of paper on this drum and press a button, and the drum would whirl and transmit. And at the other end, a similar machine would take it, and out would come the piece of paper. Very clumsy, laborious process. Not your faxes that everybody came in a few years later and got quite used to.

But basically, there was a lot of extraneous material in Hunter's notebooks, where he would go off on almost another story and other things that—So that chaffing, taking the stuff out of the pile, was done in New York by Don Goddard who's a very good editor. I'd just say, "Hey, this is going to end up 80,000 words. Pull out all the stuff that is in anyway right about the Derby, and give me a little bit more of it." And he says, "Yeah, but it's in all different order. I kind of stacked it the way it came in. I moved it around a bit." I said, "Well, send it out here. And keep the other stuff, because we don't have any more than twenty pages or whatever." Usual editing decisions are about the space you have in a magazine. So I just then re-reassembled it and put subheads all the way through it, sort of guiding people through the madness, so it was kind of a little easier to follow, and put it in a form that at least kind of made sense. Because as Hunter has told the story many times himself, "They basically ripped it out of my notebook. And the pages were all wet because I was soaking in a bathtub." [laughs]

Rubens:

So you weren't in New York working with Goddard, you were out here?

22-00:25:11

Hinckle: I was out here. Because we set the type and that was the last story in the magazine, so it's like, they've got to get that. Wait for that to come in and edit it and get it into type and fit it in the pages and write the headlines and that sort of stuff—put it together. And then we hadn't had Steadman's drawings yet. And they came in air express. And I was also, by the way—I hadn't thought about this, but it was good for Steadman, in that sense. He was tough.

He said: "Well, of course, it's good for me. It should be." But it's the first time I know of that a magazine—in all this, we forget that *Scanlan's* was on the newsstands everywhere; it was a national magazine—that the author and the illustrator were given equal rank. Because it said, written under duress or something, by Hunter Thompson; illustrated with lipstick and pencil or something, by Ralph Steadman. And they both, on the spread of the title page, had equal weight. Because without Steadman's drawings, it would not have been the same thing. It wouldn't have been the same chemistry. It would not have had the same effect.

Rubens: Oh, that's important.

22-00:26:45

Hinckle: I think it later on, intrinsically bound them as a team, if you like, because it became that—You could almost not imagine seeing Hunter's stuff without seeing Steadman's crazy drawings.

Rubens: Well, and I had also asked you when we talked about this a couple interviews ago, that when Thompson refers to Steadman, he says that he created—he Steadman—created fear and loathing amongst the people he was introduced to. And I wondered if that was the first time that phrase was used.

22-00:27:19

Hinckle: I think it's the first time Hunter used that phrase in an article. He'd used it in letters before to me and to other people. I'd have to do extensive research to see if he'd used it in an article that was in print before that. I don't believe—

Rubens: Not in the Hells Angels piece.

22-00:27:39

Hinckle: —it was used in the Hells Angels piece. And between the Hells Angels book—After that, he was writing mostly for the *National Observer*, which was a weekly put out by the *Wall Street Journal*, which was sort of an attempt to do this sort of New Journalism; but nothing like Gonzo, nothing like as wild, if you like, as Tom Wolfe; but longer reporting, and to have some maverick sense of it. It was a weekly, like a Sunday paper, almost, without comics, put out by the *Wall Street Journal*. And it had a big national circulation, a million copies or something like that. And that lasted; that went on for four or five years. And they were sort of Hunter's beefsteak. He wrote for them and was given assignments for them in Latin America, all kinds of other places. Went up to see Hemingway's—the cabin where Hemingway shot himself—and stole an antler head from it. Which he still has in his house, his house in Woody Creek. But he worked for them. And I don't think, aside from letters to friends, and always trying to get assignments—he worked for *Cornet* magazine, he worked for this and that—any assignments that he could get—He was always bitching about money, Hunter. He lived the life of a freelancer; he was never happy or comfortable with anything.

Rubens: So the *Fear and Loathing* book didn't set him up financially?

22-00:29:16

Hinckle: Well, that article sort of got him going, and then he continued writing for the *Rolling Stone*, because they published the first article that didn't get published in *Scanlan's*. And part of that went to Las Vegas, which was sort of in the mode of taking on American institutions; now we'll destroy Las Vegas. And published those pieces in the same writing style, if you like, that was in the Gonzo piece, the Kentucky Derby piece in *Scanlan's*. So it just continued. And then that book became wildly famous, the book that came out of that.

Rubens: And did he make a lot of money off of that?

22-00:30:01

Hinckle: Not if you listen to Hunter. He was always battling with agents. It was one of the great things about him. He was fighting with agents. Any time there was a movie being made, they were stealing from him. Nobody was any good; they were all thieves and incompetents. And he was always having, as any friend of his—And most writers are this way anyway; Hunter was just a high example of it because everything he did was sort of a higher tone of distress and imagination at the same time.

Rubens: But because of that, because of the need for money, is that why he was willing to take the *Examiner* job?

22-00:30:39

Hinckle: Well, sure. It was a job. He got good dough. Yeah.

Rubens: So when is it that the idea comes to you, that you suggest Thompson become a columnist at the *Examiner*? You go there and—

22-00:30:53

Hinckle: All right, well, that was a situation where I was—Will Hearst became the publisher of the *Examiner*. His father was before him. But before then, Will had worked at different newspapers. So it was the first time he was actually, himself, publishing one of his family's newspapers. And Will was a modern guy, let's put it that way, a very smart guy. And he wanted to make the *Examiner* into something, as opposed to just another plodding afternoon newspaper, in second place in a two-newspaper city. So one of the first things he did was to try and get some novelists and guest writers, like Cynthia McFadden, for instance, from Marin County, this and that.

And at the time, I was writing kind of a raucous or controversial or conversation-making, I guess you'd put it, column for the *Chronicle*, which I'd been writing for quite a few years, and which was engaged in many civic crusades, got the town all riled up. Well, there was the incident when the cops arrested me for criticizing the police department for sending thirty guys to arrest Marilyn Chambers. And then they arrested me, and that became front

page stuff in our paper. And we found the police chief, who was actually a friend of mine and I'd been on his boat, we found his boat was illegally parked at Fisherman's Wharf, moored at Fisherman's Wharf, and was kind of loaded with hot items from the waterfront. He was buying the waterfront. And he had poker games all the time. Never took the boat out commercial fishing, which you have to do, by the rules, to park a fishing craft at the wharf itself, because that's for working fishermen. Well, I knew that; everybody knew that. I'd been to poker games and parties down there myself. He's a nice guy. But once they arrested me, now this is war. Right? So two days later, I had to go out and get some friends in the fishing business and asked: "Will you go down, find out exactly where that boat is? Anyway, we took a photo and the front page of the *Chronicle* had this giant picture, almost the entire top of the front page, of the chief trying to duck for cover from a photographer, inside his boat. And the *big* headline above it said, "The Floating Police Chief." And my article was something to the effect of, where does the police chief make these decisions, on his illegally docked boat—Oh, boy!

And it became quite raucous, and started just many crusades. Finding out that a lot of the hotels in the Tenderloin of San Francisco, how these very poor persons, run-down hotels, that they didn't have heat. Literally, some of them, they dismantled the boilers and sold them for profit, for scrap metal. That's how much they didn't have heat. [chuckles] And these old pensioners were sitting in there, literally shivering their ass off and dying. And went after the family that owned most of the motels then. It was a branch of the Patel family, which is famous in India. They're a very cultural family in one part of India. They're very big in commerce. But a branch of the family is in hotels and motels, mostly motels and smaller ones, on the East Coast of the United States, around New Jersey and a few areas. And they had a lot in California, and a big hunk of it in San Francisco. So that story caused quite a few reforms in the city. But it was like a big five days running, two weeks of front-page stories in the *Chronicle*. Got everybody in town upset and angry at these guys, and caused major reforms in the thing. They had new inspectors, they had to provide this and that. It was like an old-fashioned sort of exposé that was done with a lot—The *Chronicle* knew how to play a story and we did it well. So I remember thinking, boy! I may get the Pulitzer Prize for this one. This is a classic story. In the end, I got censured—C-E-N-S-U-R-E-D—for being anti-Indian, [laughs] right? Because these guys just happened to own this chain; I couldn't help that, if they were Indian. By some group out of New York. So I said, "Well, that's what good deeds get you."

So I had been a very visible presence at the *Chronicle*. So Will called me and said—We'd known each other. He'd worked at *Rolling Stone*.

Rubens:

Had he worked at *New West*?

22-00:36:05

Hinckle: He worked at *New West*. But mostly, he worked at an offshoot of *Rolling Stone* called—

Rubens: Oh, *Outside*.

22-00:36:12

Hinckle: *Outside*. Yeah, there we go. And worked quite a bit on that. And so he'd done his bones, he'd done his grunt work in journalism. So he was taking over as a publisher and he called me. We'd known each other socially and through journalism and other things over the years. And we had the usual confidential lunch and he asked basically, how much is it going to cost me to steal you from the *Chronicle*? Here's what I want to do with the *Examiner*. I want to make it interesting and this and that. So we discussed this and discussed money and various things. And I had two conditions. I said, "Well, one, I'll write two columns a week on the usual stuff I do and we'll do that. But on the editorial page of the Hearst newspaper, I want to write a column of all this research that myself and Emile de Antonio," who's another great friend of mine—De Antonio is the movie producer, movie maker, *Point of Order*, many, many famous left wing—

Rubens: *Zabriskie Point*.

22-00:37:19

Hinckle: Many famous left wing movies. And interesting movies about the art business. He knew stuff. Anyway, we were old-time friends from the sixties. And I liked him very much and we had affection for each other professionally, because he didn't get along very well with most of the leaders of the New Left or the left, as neither did I. Because we both sort of had disdain for what we thought was their out-for-themselves, their ego things, their whole style, everything. We just didn't like this crowd very much. And we were two fairly prominent guys on the left, in terms of producing things that were generally known as left wing—his movies and the journalism I'd been doing—and we didn't hold much truck with most of the people on the left. Not as individuals. Most of the guys had manufactured big names for themselves and were out to make a buck and attack each other and feed their egos. We knew their game. So we were sort of held by that bond. And we'd been doing some work investigating Nixon, the material we'd begun gathering for *Scanlan's*, following that into the Bush family. And we were going to do a big thing about the Bush family and their politics and where their money is, and we were going to start a magazine called *Smoking Gun*, he and I were going to do.

Rubens: When are we talking about?

22-00:38:54

Hinckle: When the hell were we doing that? I guess we actually started doing the *Smoking Gun* thing in the early nineties, is when we were working on that. At

any rate, we'd off and on, been talking about projects and doing some research and collecting stuff. We'd get together in New York—he lived in New York—and we'd talk; he say we should get into this and that; and maybe I should make a movie about that; and maybe we should do a book and stuff. We were friends. And we hadn't quite figured out the form we wanted to do it in yet. But we'd amassed a lot of this material on the Bush family. And prior to that, a lot of stuff about politics and things. Anyway, I told Will, "I want to write a Sunday column on the editorial page, where your father writes his column, with its usual Hearst positioning on everything, and where everybody else is a complete right winger. Give me my 800 words or whatever, to develop this sort of approach to material. It'll be a break from the Hearst tradition, but so what? You want to shake this paper up." And he agreed to that and he kept his word, let me write it. It was a very political column.

Rubens: So your column ran Monday, Thursday and Sunday?

22:00:40:15

Hinckle: Yeah, I wrote a Sunday column on politics, national politics. And the other thing was I said, "Well, look, I'm not going to be a very popular cat over there. It's a very conservative group of people you've got around that paper. Look how boring it is. And I don't think our styles are going to mesh. I've got to have a little bit of clout there. I want you to make me an editor, an associate editor of the paper, and it goes on the masthead." Right? So these guys, as we say in the vernacular, they'll be a little bit afraid to fuck with me. I just wanted a little bit more going in there than just, hey, he's writing a column, so they feel free to chop it and whatever. So he agreed to that. So then I said, "Okay, let's go. I'll move." And we did.

And one of the things I said was, "Okay, now let's figure who we should get in to liven this thing up," because I was an editor. So number one was Hunter. And he just couldn't have been—He *loved* Hunter. Read everything he'd ever written. Just thought it was a fabulous idea. And I said, "Well, you know, he's still the night manager at the Mitchell brothers, he's going to write about that." "Well, why *shouldn't* he? That'll make it more interesting." Will was very, very good that way. He was very Hearstian that way. That's what his father did. His father always let columnists write about their personal lives and things, and created stars. The early Hearst papers, it was all about the star-form of journalism. Yellow journalism, albeit, but stars, reporters as stars; columns very big; cartoonists. Also cartoonists were very big for Hearst in those papers around the country. From the early *Examiner*, when he took it over, completely changed the look of the newspaper. Giant drawings and things, and pictures, even, on the front page. Changed the style of headlines to display—He was quite an innovator, his grandfather. Certainly, created the modern American newspaper, for good or evil. So anyway, that was the *Examiner* spirit. And so then there came Hunter. So we were both writing for the paper.

Rubens: So Hunter's writing for the *Examiner* for about three years, from 1985 to 1988.

22-00:42:39

Hinckle: Yeah, he lasted over three years.

Rubens: He left in part because he no longer had his editorial assistant who had been with him for a long time—Maria Kahn

22-00:43:05

Hinckle: His girlfriend, yeah. At the time. But also edited him, and was really good at it. And if it hadn't been for her—It's the first time in his life that Hunter made publication deadlines every time.

Rubens: With the *Examiner*.

22-00:43:22

Hinckle: With the *Examiner*. For over three years, however the long period of that column, he never missed a column. Unheard of for him.

Rubens: His was a weekly column on cultural criticism?

22-00:43:34

Hinckle: Yeah, he was supposed to review the press, whatever he wanted to write about, really. It went all over the place. It was good.

Rubens: You have a wonderful piece of his from the *Examiner* excerpted in your Thompson book, about Nixon having an affair with a Chinese woman up in Locke.

22-00:43:54

Hinckle: Yeah, that was made up.

Rubens: Fabulous piece. Nixon flies in once a month on a helicopter.

22-00:43:59

Hinckle: It's just totally—He was sent up there to write about the escaped Whale—Humphrey, I think his name was—who got up on the delta. And he never got to see the whale, but he started to write about it, went into all kinds of things. Said, "Oh, then I met this Chinese woman." He was just—that's Gonzo.

Rubens: So he must've been paid pretty well. Maria is—

22-00:44:24

Hinckle: She edited every one of those columns. And if she hadn't been with him, it never, never, ever would've happened. And she quit. That was the end of the column. Because at the time, Will was trying to expand more, the people coming into the *Examiner*; he was talking about getting a friend of ours named Terry McDonell, who's now the editor of *Sports Illustrated*. He'd been managing editor, if that was his title, at *Newsweek*. And before that, he'd worked at, or had been one of the many editors who'd gone in and out trying

to deal with Wenner and the *Rolling Stone*. And everybody knew each other, and he was going to bring him. Said, "Why don't you oversee all these guys and bring in some new writers and do this and that?" That sort of conversation. And when Maria heard that, she got really teed off and said, "Hey, I'm not going to have someone over me. You know what I go through to get this column out of Hunter every week? And you're going to have somebody who thinks he's a friend of his actually deal with his copy and watch me and watch that? I'm out of here." Like that, Right? And everybody tried to talk her out of it and get her back. And, hey, sorry, we mess up. Will called her. "I didn't mean that." "No, no. Terry said no, he won't touch it. He doesn't want to deal with Hunter, anyway. No, no, no." But that was it. She'd had it. She quit. And the column ended then. Hunter didn't have any more fun doing it and couldn't do it. She literally got it out of him. Extraordinary stuff.

Rubens: She says that *Ramparts* magazine was Gonzo before the word Gonzo was invented. You have a quote from her to that effect in your book.

22-00:46:14

Hinckle: Oh, she thinks she told me Hunter said that, but Hunter said that later on to me, one time when we were sitting around. But I didn't think so. I thought *Ramparts* was old-fashioned crusade, muckraking journalism, and a bit of the—mixed with the new sensibility of advertising, like of Howard Gossage stuff and the sense of design that changed left wing journalism. Hunter said no, because of what you did scooping yourself on a couple of occasions, because otherwise the story would've been polluted, by taking out full-page ads saying, hey, I'm going to print this. That sort of thing. He thought that was Gonzo, this stepping up the ante. That's what he thought. I didn't think that. I thought Gonzo was pretty clearly what we started to do with him with *Scanlan's*.

Rubens: So while he was a columnist at the *Examiner*, were you closer in that period?

22-00:47:14

Hinckle: Well, yeah. Because he was out here half the time—not all the time—about the same way as always. And then sometimes I'd write about him doing some stuff, and sometimes I'd end up as a character in his column. And the Mitchell Brothers would be in there. It just was all one big thing. The readers loved it.

Rubens: Are you reproducing some of those columns in the—

22-00:47:41

Hinckle: In the Hunter Thompson book? I think there was one in there we reproduced, about when he took Maria—because he didn't have anything to write about—to get a tattoo. Now, that actually happened, by the way. And she explained to me, she said, "Well, I could never remember what eye you had your eye patch on. And so Hunter and I were talking, when I told him, 'I'll get a tattoo.' And Thompson says, 'Well, I want to put it on one shoulder, and then the next time we see Hinckle, we'll fucking—' I put it on the one—" because I was with

them having a couple drinks and talking about stuff earlier that evening, the famous tattooing night. And she says, "I know it was on his left side. So I'll put it on the left side, so the next time we see him I can check. And if it's on his right side, we'll know what he's doing." And so that was—

Rubens: Hunter ended up getting a tattoo, as well.

22-00:48:44

Hinckle: Well, that was interesting because he didn't say that, he didn't admit that in the column. He made himself look like a mean guy. Had to get his story. And the guy said, "You had—" He had a conversation with a bellman or something, when they came back from the tattoo parlor. And the guy said, "Well, you tattooed her? Well, goddamn it. You needed a story." But he didn't tell the reader, which would've made him look a little softer, and sort of a Southern gentleman, that he felt terrible her just getting a tattoo, so he got one, too. But he didn't put that in the column.

Rubens: That's just a great story. There are stories of you in wild limo rides going over to Berkeley because he had to give a lecture. He's always smoking a joint. Picking up Johnny Depp at the airport. Are there any outstanding, outrageous stories that you want to point to?

22-00:49:42

Hinckle: No, he made a lot of money and gave a lot of lectures. Again, for money. He had a big household to maintain and lived a pretty expensive lifestyle—though you'd never know to look at him. And he wasn't into material possessions or anything like that, it's just that it cost a lot of money. And he lectured at colleges a lot. But he always wanted a limo to pick him up and to take him here and there, and the hotel suites and the whole thing, right? And the same thing with his books. When he was on a book promotion tour, it was supposed to be, hey, these were the standing orders: limo, this that, my assistant comes with me, suites at the hotel, open expense account, whatever he spent there. This was like, if you want me for a lecture, if you want to put me on a book tour, this is part of what you're going to have to pay. And almost everybody did. That was it. So it was rare by then to be around him when he'd be on a motorcycle or going in somebody else's car. Usually when Hunter came into town, there were always limos. [laughs] That was just—that was the mode of transportation.

Rubens: And that was a way of spending time with him? He'd just pick you up and you'd—

22-00:51:12

Hinckle: Well, yeah. I'd be going somewhere, "That's good," he'd say. "I've got to go give a lecture tonight. We'll pick you up. You come on over here first, and then we'll go down, get something to eat; and then later on in the afternoon, I've got this goddamn lecture." That sort of stuff. Of course, he was invariably hours late for every lecture. People were always getting unsettled and

stomping on the floor and that sort of stuff. And there was a famous one he gave at a nightclub called The Stone, in San Francisco. And it was the night that Reagan was *re-elected*; I guess it was re-elected. Or elected. Anyway, he was talking on election night and he was supposed to analyze the results of the election. I'll have to look it up. I'll give you the date, whatever election it was. And so he was staying at the Japanese hotel, the Miyako. And he became enamored of a band, a Polynesian band. They were drinking in the bar with them. And Jimmy Mitchell and his brother were there. And they said, "Come on down. We're hanging out with Thompson." So I go down for a bit and chat. And he was saying, "I've got to get these guys. I want to bring to the—" So anyway, he talked Mitchell into giving them a grand. The Mitchell brothers always had a lot of cash on them. Cash business, the burlesque business. Cash was like no question. So he got them to—"Come on, come on. Let's sponsor these guys. Come on, Mitchell, you can do it." "All right! Here's a thousand," he said. And he brought them to the lecture. And he was late. We were all coming from somewhere, trying to get him out of the hotel or get to—He was waiting for the band. They were drummers. The Dancers of Doom, they called themselves. And they had big drums. Big, huge guys. Samoans. And so by the time we got there, the place was just in an uproar. Guys were throwing things. The place was packed. He was supposed to speak about the election. And then he came onto the stage, but I went backstage. [laughs] He came on the stage with the band; shoved these guys out and they all sit down. These big Samoans start pounding their drums and whistling with flutes or something like that. And the people are saying, what the hell's going on? Hunter comes out with a whole big, giant, double Jack Daniels in a big, tall glass, and looks at everybody who's screaming and says, "Hey, you guys should relax. Light up a joint, for Christ's sake. That's what I'm doing." That sort of thing, right? And then somebody threw a beer bottle at one of the Samoans or something. And it was a pretty unruly crowd, by that point. And so the guy got angry and jumped off the stage and started beating up the guys who had thrown it at him. And then a couple other Samoans jumped off the stage.

And I remember saying to Hunter, I said, "Hunter, I think it's time to get out of here." And he says, "The box office! The box office! We've got to get to the box office first." [laughs] And there's a guy sitting there. "Hey, give him \$3,000 or \$4,000." I forget exactly what it was. I think it was three grand. And, "No, no, I can't give it up, them sitting out there." "Well, yes, you are." And then Hunter and one of the guys with him took out a gun and shot up the ceiling and the ceiling fell down on—There was quite a little scene. And meanwhile, there was a full-scale riot and the cops were coming. The Samoans were all in the audience bashing these guys—back and forth. And finally, we found a bag and stuffed as much cash as we could find into it and it looked like what it should've been. And then we sort of ran outside to a waiting limo, which Jimmy Mitchell had hired, and got into it, as they say, by the hair of our teeth, and took off around the corner and zoomed over to Tosca and went inside. [laughs] And I remember Jeannette, the owner said to Hunter, "Well, how was the lecture?" He says, "Oh, it went fine." [laughs] I

don't know if he got enough for what he was supposed to be paid, but it didn't make sense to wait for the check to come in the mail.

Rubens: A quintessential Thompson story. Shall we stop for today?

22-00:55:50

Hinckle: Yeah, because people will be coming over soon.

Interview 11: June 12, 2010

Recounting the many provocative and radical stories published in *City Magazine* about San Francisco culture and lifestyle, and offering further reflections on the vagaries of a film maker turned publisher.

Begin Audio File 23

Rubens: I'd love to talk to you about *City Magazine*. We're talking about the years 1975 to 1976. How did Coppola, who was publishing *City*, get in touch with you?

23-00:06:00

Hinckle: He called me up. I was finishing a book or something. Anyway, I was at home. And he had started that magazine, I guess, a year or so previously, or it had been going and he bought it. I forgot the early history.

Rubens: He'd pumped some money into it in 1974, but in 1975 he basically bought it and redesigned it.

23-00:06:16

Hinckle: Yes, he had a staff and had already set them up above the Little Fox Theater there, which he had on Pacific Street at the time, and it was coming out. He had a grand plan for it, which was to be sort of the West Coast equivalent, more or less, of the *New Yorker*. Not a copy of it, but heavy on the cultural coverage and listings and events and art and cinema and general news. A big weekly. So I guess somewhere between *Life* magazine and the *New Yorker*. [laughs] I don't know what. So he had been publishing it for a period and then he had proposed a program of guest editors, where he'd have somebody come in, use their staff and edit the issue, with themes and whatever they were going to do with it. So I think I was the first guest editor. At any rate, I'd known Francis a little bit from time at the Tosca. He was pretty good friends with Jeannette Etheredge, who owns the Tosca, and she's an old friend of mine. But basically, I didn't really know him at all.

Rubens: Had you paid attention to the magazine before?

23-00:07:43

Hinckle: No. I didn't find it that interesting. But hey, anybody that wants to put out a magazine puts out their own magazine, so what the hell? So it was all right. It was kind of lumpy, was heavy.

Rubens: He gave it a larger format, eleven by fourteen.

23-00:08:01

Hinckle: It was a *Life* magazine type format, yes. At any rate, so I was at home and the phone rings. And he says, "Is this Warren Hinckle?" I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, this is Francis Coppola." I said, "Yeah, and I'm Santa Claus," or

something like that, right? And he says, "Come on." "I'm having a bad morning; I've got a terrible hangover. Whoever you are—" He says, "No, I want to talk to you about being guest editor of my publication." "Yeah, yeah, yeah." I said, "I just got off the phone with two jerks—" He stopped me, and said, "No, no, this is really Francis. I'm not kidding." [laughs] So it was a conversation like that. I said, "Yeah?" "Yeah," he says, "Well, can you come over to my offices and we'll talk about it. Tomorrow, maybe?" I said, "Well, yeah, I guess I could." So I did. And he explained his concept of guest editor. And I said, "Well, what's the editorial budget?" And I think the figure was around \$10,000 an issue, which is quite high for a magazine like that. And he had issues around, and it was this huge thing. It was like eighty, a hundred, 120 pages. It was thick and heavy, it was *Life* magazine size.

Rubens: Surely you'd paid a little attention to it, right? You had heard scuttlebutt about it.

23-00:09:17

Hinckle: Well, I had seen it on the newsstands. Yes, I knew it was around. And so I said, "Wow." I said, "That's a lot of money, Francis." Because it was a weekly. I said, "Jesus." I said, "Hey, you're way out of my league, that's not what I used to pay people, but okay." So he said, "Well, will you do it? And you'll get so much money." I can't remember what it was. \$5,000 or \$3,000 or something like that, for putting an issue out, right? For being the guest editor. So I said, "Okay, well, give me the money." And he explained the thing. "We have our staff, we have our art staff, we have our people there. And you can come over, I'll introduce you to the editor. But you'll be totally in charge of the content." He was very excited. The movie director was very excited about the idea, the way a movie director gets excited about things. And so he said, "Well, that's—" I said, "Well, I don't really need to know about—

Rubens: Did you know the editor, Michael Parrish who had done *San Francisco Monthly*?

23-00:10:34

Hinckle: Yes. He ended up, I believe, at the *L.A. Monthly*. I don't know what he did, but he worked on one of the magazines here, the *Monthly*. He'd been doing that. He's a nice guy, solid worker. He later became embroiled in a mini-scandal, which I guess I'll get to if we talk about this. Not of his making; of my making, unfortunately.

And so the first thing Francis says is, "Okay, well, how do you want to proceed?" I said, "What did you say the editorial budget was?" He says, "\$10,000," if that was the figure. And I said, "Well, okay. Give me half of it in cash." "What?" I said, "I want half of it in cash." He said, "Well, what are you going to do with it?" I said, "I'm going to spend it." He said, "Well, how do you propose to spend it?" I said, "Well, I'm going to go around North Beach and other places and—You don't know this town. These artists are all

starving. And if somebody goes around with cash—And I think I know people to find and to search for. And cash speaks. And they're going to have to drop everything and do it. And I'll stay within the budget, but I want to pay them cash." He says, "You mean you're going to walk around North Beach and the city and you're going to find people suitable, in a matter of days, to put great material into this issue of the magazine?" And I said, "Yeah. I don't have a doubt in my mind about it, but that's what I'm going to do." He says, "Well, can I come along?" I said, "Well, sure!" And he's like, "What?" He's fascinated by the idea. So I said, "Hey, that'd make it even better." [laughs]

Rubens: Did he give you a timeframe? How much time did you have?

23-00:12:20

Hinckle: I took a week or two or something like that.

Rubens: He wanted it fast.

23-00:12:24

Hinckle: Yes. Well, I guess the idea was you just go in there, you look through their manuscripts, you pick what you want, you assign a few other articles, you have a little theme, you ask people to write. Well, I didn't really want to do it that way. So he said, "No, you have absolute—You do whatever you want. Content's all yours." So I said, "Great." And he said, "Well, when are you going to start?" I said, "Well, we'll start tonight." "Tonight?" "Yeah." I said, "Well, people don't get up early in the morning, Francis, Jesus! This is not the movie business, where you've got to shoot in the morning." He said, "Okay." I said, "Well, meet me at Cookie Piccetti's bar." "Where is that?" Cookie Piccetti's, next to the Hall of Justice. "For God's sake, it's right around the corner from the Little Fox Theater on Pacific Street." I said, "Meet me there about five o'clock and we'll get going. I'm going to spend your money, I hope. I'm sure it's going to take two or three days. But we'll go out and see what happens tonight." Wow, it was like a movie, [laughs] I could just see him saying.

So we meet at the bar. Now, Cookie's as we discussed in earlier interviews, is the most rotten cop bar in the city, a very evil place. And so the first thing I do at Cookie's I say, "Cookie, who's the cop on the beat on Pacific Street?" Cookie being the proprietor of the bar. And he tells me his name, I forget what it is now. I said, "Yeah. He comes in here, doesn't he?" He said, "Yeah, yeah. In fact, he'll probably be in this afternoon. In fact, here he comes. Yeah, he's usually in here when he gets off work." Here's the guy. So I go over to him. Coppola's just watching this. I say, "Hey, sergeant, here's what I want to do. I've got to put out this goofy magazine, and I want to park a trailer in front of the Little Fox Theater. But we're going to have to work out something, because they'll want to tag it and tow it away because it'll be there for a week. So I just flip through my wad of cash and give him 500 bucks and say, "Can you arrange so there'll be a trailer there, there won't be any problems with it?"

It'll be part of movie production." Stuff like that. "But don't tell the officials. You take care of this." "Yeah. Yeah. That can be done." "Right, here's \$500. Go on." [laughs] Coppola asks, "What are you going to use the trailer for? You're going to put a trailer in front of my theater?" I said, "I'm going to put the magazine out of there." "But we have the offices upstairs." "I don't want to put it out of your offices, I want to put it out of my offices in the trailer. You said I could do what I want." "Yeah. Well, okay." "All right, now let's go on to North Beach." So we start out; we run into this person, this poet, this artist. I said, "Okay. All right. That one, you get 300 bucks for. Here's a hundred of it now. You get the other 200 when you finish. I want it in four days."

Rubens: You're asking people to write something specific?

23-00:15:38

Hinckle: Yes. I almost immediately could think of about ten, twelve people I knew who were hanging around the Beach, had stuff written, had great stuff. It was so easy. It was low-hanging fruit. [laughs] It was there. And then we run into Susan Berman, who's kind of a wild woman, and she had worked for a long time at the *Examiner*. And she'd been telling me this story previously, just at Gino and Carlo's or Specs or one of the bars in North Beach. I'm trying to think how to phrase this. San Francisco's famous for its—whatever you want to call it, from the Beats—Bohemian culture. There's all this culture, books and art and literature, world famous, and movements and stuff like that have come out of it, right? But the typical magazine or newspaper editor or publisher never goes out and gets down and dirty with those people who are actually producing the art. Doesn't even know them. Some agent may come in and say, "I've got this work," and through channels, they buy it and they'll publish it and this and that. Same thing applies to daily newspapers. They don't know what the hell's going on in town because they're never out in the streets. But if you accept the fact that North Beach is a pretty good collection—North Beach and Berkeley, in some of its aspects—of the active culture—writing, artists, movie makers, would be and accomplished—it's just right there. Right? So it's just like walking into a field full of wheat. You just walk into it. Hey. And a lot of people you know from this and that.

Rubens: But you were saying Sue Berman. Were you pulling her—

23-00:17:47

Hinckle: Oh, Susan, yes. She was telling me this story. It was hilarious; everybody's laughing about it. She says, "You can't get laid in San Francisco." She was telling me this thing, and this guy and that guy and that guy. And I said, "Jesus, that's a wild story. Why don't you write that for the *Examiner*?" "I've already quit the *Examiner*. I'm sick of them. They censored my copy. And they would never print that anyway." So in fact, I had called her. I said, "Hey, come on down to Specs," or wherever the hell I was with Coppola at that time. "And I want to talk to you, what you were talking about the other night."

So there she is. So I said, "Hey, you want to write that thing now? Now we can pay you money." "Yeah, yeah, how much?" "750 bucks, Susan." She didn't need money; one of the few people in North Beach who didn't need money, because she was a daughter of Moe Berman, a major mob hotel owner in Las Vegas. Later got shot—much later, quite a few years later—under very strange conditions. I think it had something to do with stuff she knew about her father's activities and things. She was murdered. This was about eight years later. Had nothing to do with what I'm talking about now.

Rubens: Her father had been killed, execution style as well?

23-00:19:06

Hinckle: Yes, he'd been bumped off. As I recall, I think he was bumped off, too. So I said, "Hey. So okay, here's what we're going to do." And I said, "So here, get some of your girlfriends. Here's a couple of hundred bucks. Take them out for drinks, get their stories down. That's your expenses in advance. We'll do the accounting later. But get going on this, because I want this in a few days." "What?" And anyhow, then we ran into a couple of poets, and we got through the whole night, and I said, "Well, I got pretty close to an issue now, Francis. Now I'm going to make a few phone calls tomorrow. I'll put the phone in the trailer." "Really, we've got a really nice office up there. And I've cleared space with the editors." "No, I don't want to go near the damn place," I said, "But I'll use the art department." Because Mike Salisbury was the art director. He was a very accomplished guy. I knew his work. He'd been one of the art directors at *Rolling Stone* during several manifestations, and I knew his work in Los Angeles. He's a very good art director, Mike, very fast. So I said, "I'll be up there when we're doing production and I'll work with Mike, because I know the guy and we'll be able to work, I think, quite well. But the rest of the staff, except for the proof readers and whosever editing copy, I don't want to hire those people out of this budget, because you're already paying them. I'm just using this for editorial." So on we went. So in two or three days, there was this issue. And the issue, it was so much, and I hadn't come anywhere near—including cash paid out, a trailer in front, bribing cops and everything—to barely denting the money he'd given me for one issue. I spent something like \$6,000 totally, for one issue. And when this issue came out, it created quite a splash, because the cover was "Why Women Can't Get Laid in San Francisco," right.

Rubens: So that's August 3, 1975 when that issue comes out. The first edition of the new format *City* was July 6, and then you're listed in July 13 as a contributing editor. And that's how you're continued to be listed. So there are another three issues, before your guest edited issue. Your daughter Hilary is listed in that same issue, as part of the editorial staff.

23-00:21:41

Hinckle: Probably. Oh, I brought a lot of people in there. Some of these people had worked for me at *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's*. And Liadain O'Donovan was

there. She was one of the best who worked for me both at *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's*. An old friend; daughter of Frank O'Connor; lived in San Francisco at the time. I said to her, "Hey, I'll pay you; you just back me up. Keep me sane for the next week," that sort of thing. She was my secretary, assistant.

Rubens: What was your daughter Hilary doing?

23-00:21:57

Hinckle: Oh, I think I just threw her on. She was a little kid then and I guess I had charge of her or something like that, the four or five days we were producing it. And I was spending all my time in the art department, laying out things with Salisbury and going through stuff. And so we gave her these colored grease crayons and all that stuff, and she was making money, coloring in the money with some other friends. So she was a kid. So that was just a fun thing.

Anyway, so that issue with Berman's article comes out and it just creates an uproar. Just sold off the stands. And *City* had never exactly made a splash before. And there was some leftwing material in there and it was a pretty good mix. And then part of the magazine was in the can, as you say, with the cultural listings; that took pages, many pages. And he had a serial going of some novel about Napa Valley, and it was the last installment, so we had to put that in because people were reading it as a weekly. That was fun. Anyway, so we get through—it's this whirlwind—it's just snapped off the stands and articles are written; people go nuts. And Francis, I said, "Well, okay, that was fun." He said, "Well, but you're going to do another issue." I said, "Well, I was guest editor for one issue, but we've got enough material to do, easy, two. You got two for the price of one." "Well, could you do another issue, then, if you've got all that stuff?" "Well, sure. Same deal, Francis." Of course, I never went into the trailer; it was more or less a symbol. [laughs]

Rubens: You literally had it, though; what did it symbolize?

23-00:23:43

Hinckle: Oh, yes. It was a big trailer, in front of Little Fox Theater. No, I wanted a trailer. But it was kind of a symbol like, what the hell's going on? There was a little bit of movie drama in it. But hey, if I've got to deal with some wild movie producer and he wants to spend money and I—

Rubens: Now, we should say for the record, he was just flush off of *The Godfather* and *The Conversation*.

23-00:24:09

Hinckle: Yes, he was spending a lot of dough on it. He had a lot of dough then, but that went soon because of the production disasters of *Apocalypse Now*, the Vietnam movie. It just about sunk Francis. And when it finally came out, it was a great movie. And I remember having an argument—I wouldn't even say it's an argument—about it. He was going over it with me, talking about the Philippines and the problems with location and the typhoons and this and that,

anticipating the problems, because that's where he wanted to shoot. And it was based on *Heart of Darkness*, the [Joseph] Conrad novel. And I said, "Well, Francis, why the hell are you going to all this trouble? I know it's boom-boom and the Vietnam War. But the point you're making is an anti-war point. Why don't you just keep it in the nineteenth century, for God's sake, and do the Conrad novel? You wouldn't have all this madness you're going into to." But that's Francis. That was a stupid suggestion to a movie producer because there'd be no Vietnam War and no boom-boom, bang-bang. And that movie was one of the first big movies that showed the realities of war, and it was spectacular, but also drained him financially.

Rubens: That came out a couple years later.

23-00:25:28

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: So he's working on it during this period that he's also so involved in the magazine.

23-00:25:31

Hinckle: He was just cranking out, starting to work on it. So I did a second issue. And about the middle of when we were producing that, he says, "Will you stay on and put this thing out for me?" And I said, "Well, I don't want to take Parrish's job." "No, no," he says, "I've talked to him. And he's getting a very generous amount of money and he'll remain as a consulting editor and I'll work things out there." I said, "I kind of feel bad about it, Francis, because of the incident with Susan." Now, that was part of the story of how you can't get laid. I guess we have to go into this.

During the course of that story, she's saying, I tried this with air force pilots and doctors and lots of guys, and they're just so uptight. It was sort of the high point, I guess, in the seventies, middle seventies, when the women's liberation movement kind of had become a liberal thing. Not just for women, but there were a lot of men who considered themselves, during that time period, sort of they too were feminists, right? And that had to do with a lot of people in the Bay Area, a lot of people in Berkeley, a lot of people in San Francisco. And so this was offensive to some feminists; other feminists thought it was great. Within the feminist ranks, there were two opinions, definitely. It was controversial work. And struck a hard core of reality at the time, because I guess if you add it up, between the gay population, which is a good hunk of the available men in San Francisco, and then the feminist males, who considered themselves feminists and they had obligations to their wives or their girlfriends, et cetera, and commitments—And it wasn't sort of a swinging singles—it wasn't Sweden. So when you put the whole situation together it was difficult.

And Susan Berman was crazy-looking, but she was crazy-looking in an attractive way. She was a force of nature. This is a very interesting woman. So I said to her, in the course of writing it, I said, "Well, Jesus, this is pretty interesting." I said, "What about Parrish?" Because he was still sitting in his office, his editor's office, and I was working out of the art department. I said, "Why don't you, when he comes by, 'Can I see the proofs, see what's going in?' 'Oh, sure. Oh, you want to see?'" And I said, "Why don't you go see if you can put the make on him. Let's see what happens. If he says yes, great; then we'll put it in. What a great end to the story. And if he says no, then it's another great story. [laughs] He's a schmuck. Here's another jerk. So she did. She did give it her best, as she described in the article, and went in there to seduce him. Sat on his lap, opened her blouse. "Oh, you're such an interesting person. I'd love to go out with you. What about tonight?" And stuff like that. And he started going on to her about, "Well, no, I'm in a committed relationship. Geez, I'd love to, Susan, but I'm committed," da-da-da. Well, of course—And Susan wrote as fast as a river after a hard rain. Everything came out of her typewriter pretty fast. So that's in the article.

So Parrish somehow he'd seen the proofs. They were all stacked up in a thing. And he comes to me—Because I never left the confines of the art department; never walked around, sat in his office or any of the rest of the offices; I didn't care about that. I was operating out of a couple of bars, theoretically the trailer, and the art department, cutting things and making this stuff, working with Salisbury, the art director. That's where he was, that's where I was. We didn't need separate rooms. [laughs] And so he comes to me, says, "Can I talk to you for a minute?" And I said, "Yeah, sure." He says, "There's this thing in there that Susan—" I said, "Oh, did she put that in?" Of course, I'd known she'd put it in. He says, "This is going to be terribly embarrassing to me personally and embarrassing, almost destructive, to the magazine. I know you're the editor for this issue and you have absolute authority of the content, but it's just so embarrassing. It'll be hurtful to our reputation and to my personal relations." And I said, "Why?" I said, "You didn't lay her, so what's the problem going to be?" "No, no, it's just going make it—Please. I'm just asking as a personal favor, could you cut that out of the article?" And I said, "Well, Jesus, Mike, I don't know. It's such a personal article by Susan that I have to ask her permission. I told her that whatever she wrote was going in, and it would be a professional violation on my part, of the terms under which she wrote the article, to do that, but I'll ask her." Right? He goes, "Oh, well, thank you, thank you, thank you." And he says, "Well, do you mind if I call her, too?" I said, "No, no, no. That's not right. I'll tell you what, I'll call her from your office, okay? And we'll put her on speakerphone, you can hear what she's—" Or something like that. So I said, "I'll see you down there in fifteen minutes or so."

So I immediately pick up the phone in the art department, I call Susan, I say, "Look, I've got to call you to take out that thing about trying to lay Parrish in the thing. Just say no, we're not taking it out." She says, "*Of course*, we're not

taking it out." I said, "Yeah, but he wants us to take it out. He's driving me crazy. So I'm going to go down to his office and call you, and you just say, no way. Right? And let him say it's because—I don't want the guy crying all over me, for Christ's sake." Okay. So I have to call her and she says, "No, no, absolutely. You can't yank it; the whole article needs to be published; that has to be in." Right? I said, "Hey, I tried, Mike. Sorry about that."

Then there was this embarrassing thing when there was a sequel to that. Then I started putting *City* out as a weekly. And barely ever moved out of the art director's office. Finally, I took the trailer away. We didn't need the trailer. And I was using the editor's office, but was moving around a lot; it wasn't like just a nice bureaucratic thing. And so I said, "Naturally, you've got to write a sequel." And there were letters and these people were furious and they were anguished. Particularly the letters from the men. They were torn about this and that. It was like this soppy, messy ideological personal angst that was going on at the time, in the seventies, about relationships and feminism and this and that.

Rubens: The article was a cultural bellwether?

23-00:33:17

Hinckle: It was just topical. And there were pages and pages of letters. And she wrote a sequel, a kind of follow-up. And at the end of the story. She writes, "Well, then I finally got laid." She says, "The old editor wouldn't, but the new editor laid me." That would be me. Which was true. So then I was like, oh, my God. And Salisbury the art director, says, "Warren, you can't print this." He knew my wife Denise; he'd been at our house many times. His kids and my kids had played. I said, "Jesus, Mike, I can't do it. I can't take it out because I made this big deal of embarrassing Parrish, the former editor, and how much hypocrisy can you stand in your life?" So now I admit this is a very difficult situation; I'm going to catch total hell. It's going to be a disaster with Denise, but I don't know—No, I can't do that. I couldn't have done that then. Hey, you're stuck by what you do you, by what your editorial decisions are. Can't do that." And then I was over with some people at Washington Square, and then Mike calls Denise, my wife, and tells her. "This thing is in, and Warren's so stubborn about it." So she calls me at the bar, at the Washbag [Washington Bar and Grill], as it's called, this popular lunch spot then for journalists and sports figures and such in North Beach. And she's quite upset, rightly so, and is crying. She says, "You have to take that out. You have to take that out." I said, "No, I can't. I can't do it." "Well, this is going to destroy our friends," this and that. I said, "Hey, I know. It's a terrible, terrible thing, but I can't take it out. I'm not going to take it out."

Rubens: So she's more upset about the publicity of it than the fact of it.

23-00:35:19

Hinckle:

Well, she didn't have time to deal with that part. Yeah, right. It was just like, what? This is going to press tomorrow and that's that, and they're saying, "What? Take that thing out." So at the last minute, the pages were made, went to press, Salisbury pinches the thing. Takes it out. I had no knowledge of it. It was done. I went off and said, "Oh, boy, the roof's going to cave in. This is going to be a disaster on all these levels." But I went down to Cookie's, and said, "I'm going to have a drink. Screw it." What am I going to do about this? Can't do anything else. But the proofs had gone out earlier. Coppola had a PR company for the magazine. He didn't need one for the "Can't Get Laid" issue, but they did regularly, like a movie thing, sent out things to go into the *Chron*'s "This Week" section, stuff like that. And so one of them went to Herb Caen. So Caen calls me. [laughs] And somehow, once I found out that it wasn't in there, somehow—as I knew Caen pretty well, and it was a pretty gossipy, delicious item, I must say, unfortunately—somehow I talked Herb out of running the item. And it wasn't in the issue. So Denise didn't have to go through all that. But it's one of those things that happen in a crazy whirl.

Rubens:

Do you want to talk about what the personal outcome was? Or was it just a difficult time? Later on, you get divorced. But is this something that sets that in motion?

23-00:37:14

Hinckle:

No, that was quite a few years. Well, that was the Susan Cheever period, which went on for quite a while. There was a lot of East Coast-West Coast stuff going on then. But no, the divorce did not result from that.

Rubens:

Good.

23-00:37:38

Hinckle:

It was a little rocky for a while, but divorce did not result from that. But the whole magazine was so nuts. So then Francis decides, because he's got all these problems with the movie, and he was the publisher, that he's going to make his wife Eleanor Coppola—He says, "I'm going to make her the publisher and she'll work with you on the budgets and stuff like that." And Francis was just beginning to run into these horrible problems. It was like one of those things. Hey, here's this big, fat magazine; you've got a guy with all the money in the world, it's like the ideal journalistic thing; all of a sudden we've changed it, it's starting to take off. Wow. What a deal.

Rubens:

How was the magazine faring? Subscriptions were up dramatically—from 20,000 to 40,000.

23-00:38:29

Hinckle:

Oh, they were pouring in! It was getting advertising.

Rubens:

Lots of advertising.

23-00:38:33

Hinckle:

We did a bunch of trips to New York to talk to the advertising guys and Francis would throw a big party at the Carlyle. There was a lot of promotion and stuff going on. I got a lot of publicity. *Newsweek* did a big full-page article on it. *Time* did a piece, they did several pieces on—All of a sudden *City Magazine* was news.

Rubens:

It was a beautiful, remarkably eclectic magazine.

23-00:39:09

Hinckle:

Yes, we did pretty well with it. But the situation with the way—it was like Hollywood puts out a magazine; it was nuts. It was so costly to produce. This was a weekly, a big, fat, *Life* magazine weekly. And he used three separate printers. And having put out *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's* as magazines, I knew a little bit about magazine production, to say the least, and what stuff costs and how you do it. And it was like, this is insane. Why do we have—somebody's printing the cover and these pages, and somebody's printing this part of it, and somebody else is printing this part of it, with all the listings that can be found in newspapers anyway. There were three different people and you've got to gather them. And you send the trucks to get them; it takes a whole day to put them together. I said, "This is insane, Francis. For Christ's sake." He says, "Well, I'm going to Vietnam. You work that out with Ellie." So she says, "I think there's going to be money troubles ahead." She said, "Let's see what we can do in the budgets." I said, "Hey, the first thing we do is cut the editorial budget in half, because I got two issues out of one for the old editorial budget. So there's no need to spend the type of money that was budgeted to give these middle-range novelists—You'd give them \$5,000, print an excerpt. Gee, forget about that. We don't need that stuff. We'll find young writers who are anxious to get their work in print, that we think is good, and we'll create a platform for people. So there's new stuff in there, but it's not going to cost big hunks of money like that." So we became fast friends and we really worked—It's the only publisher I've ever worked for. And we actually worked together. We became pretty darn good friends.

Rubens:

And Coppola's kind of taken a powder.

23-00:41:00

Hinckle:

Well, he's off in Vietnam a long time. And he was running into the disasters of making that movie. One guy was sick; there was typhoon after typhoon; this happened; helicopters—There's been books about what a disaster the making of that movie was. And it was bleeding him tens of millions of dollars.

Rubens:

He was quoted in *Time* as having put a million dollars into this magazine, after some initial investment of \$50,000 or maybe it became \$100,000.

23-00:41:25

Hinckle:

I don't know what he said he put in, but he had plenty of money; he just started doing it. And had a grandiose idea from its inception. He said, "We'll

make it a weekly. We'll make it this big thing." So we kept it a weekly. We produced it every week, produced it for a much shorter budget. And it's the only time I've ever done a publication that was actually within a budget. Most of them were kind of stopped abruptly, so the budget didn't matter, like *Scanlan's*. Or the budget was—there was no such thing, like *Ramparts*, because we were always running out every week to grab some more money back to meet the payroll. You couldn't even plan ahead. It was just staying alive for that period. So we did that. Actually, we brought the thing down so it was breaking even and making a little bit of money, when he had to fold it because they couldn't do anything else. Everything had to go to the movie. So Francis says, "Hey, you've got to tell everybody we have to do this thing." So I had to call the staff together and say, "Hey, guess what, guys. The issue we're putting together is going to be the last issue. Everybody's going to get a few bucks. Everything's going down the drain in Vietnam, making this movie about Vietnam, and Francis can't afford to put out the magazine anymore, and that's just how it is." So I said, "I get to tell them? What about you?" He said, "No, you're the editor. You tell them."

Rubens: The last issue is February 17.

23-00:42:56

Hinckle: Could well be, yes.

Rubens: And in your notes, in your editorial notes—

23-00:43:00

Hinckle: Yes, I put a little column in the front of it all the time.

Rubens: It was just *filled* with information, separate items, about national politics or local gossip.

23-00:43:06

Hinckle: Yes, well, sometimes it was a whole page or half a page. It wasn't like a Herb Caen type column, it wasn't dot-dot-dot, but it was paragraphs of stuff—and little incidents. And for San Francisco, it was relatively sophisticated, because there was a lot of sort of private-eye language and nicknames for people, and it would just as easily talk about an incident in publishing in New York as something that's going on, or politics in Washington that I found interesting or was something I'd just found out about. But if you had a sophisticated reader—San Francisco's a pretty sophisticated city—people could read that stuff. They're not dopes. They liked it.

Rubens: It was a sophisticated magazine.

23-00:43:55

Hinckle: Yes, considering we took off running and just did it that way, it was all right.

Rubens: You're not listed as editor until a few months before you close it down.

23-00:44:05

Hinckle:

Oh, I abolished the masthead. I thought it was a waste of space. They had a big mast head. And I stuck everybody's names, including Francis' and mine and everybody, in little tiny agate type, where they said, the postal rates are and everything, at the bottom. I said, "People don't need to get big-type names out of this thing. That's how we're doing it." I thought what have we got that big mast head for? It's a waste of space. Throw it out. So it was like, hey, we don't need names; we're just doing this thing.

Rubens:

That was so different than your experience at *Ramparts* where titles and descriptors changed routinely—sometimes as compensation for low salaries. And what about political editorials at *City*? Did Francis, or even Eleanor, have any vested interest in the politics of the magazine?

23-00:44:51

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, Francis was very into—He owned the magazine. He wanted *some* of his views in it, anyway. He was always scratching his head about what I was doing. It was sort of the-crazy-movie-maker-and-the-crazy-editor-can-they-get-along sort of stories were written about *City* during that period. *Newsweek* did one. That was their theme. Who knows how long Hinckle will last before Coppola fires him? Or actually, something like, who knows how long Francis is going to last before I fire him, because [laughs] he's messing with the magazine too much. Some people thought he should stop screwing around with magazines and make movies.

Rubens:

I read somewhere that Jann Wenner had made a bet that it wasn't going to last past Thanksgiving, and that you had a retort to him, I think in the magazine. Now I forget where that is.

23-00:45:37

Hinckle:

Oh, we may have.

Rubens:

He changed his format to eleven-by-fourteen. Was that influenced by *City Magazine*?

23-00:45:58

Hinckle:

Probably. It was a pretty strong influence. But it was almost insane, in the first place, to put out a weekly of that size. But that's what it was. It was like a bucking bronco. And then we tried to calm it down—not editorially as much as the costs—because it was nuts. The production situation and the costs were ridiculous. It was really like Hollywood makes a magazine. I think I said that before, but that's what it was. Didn't make any sense.

Rubens:

Now, you wrote a lot of stories for *City*. Besides writing the editorial notes, you had at least six separate articles. Some of the pieces may have been left over from *Scanlan*'s. One of your first pieces is on the silver mining era in Nevada.

23-00:46:40

Hinckle:

That was a book that Fred Hobbs and I were working on and we had some great stuff. It was about Virginia City and the old west and San Francisco. And there was some great artwork in it. So yes, let's throw a hunk of that in and put some material, some sort of leftwing political stuff of a book that Bill Turner , the ex-FBI guy from *Ramparts* and I had been working on. And then some of the people we knew while we were doing research—I had Turner, “Go interview that fly boy who lives down in San Bernardino and tell his story. We might or might not get around to putting that in the book, but it'd make a great magazine piece.” Knew a lot of stuff. So we just threw it all in there.

Rubens:

There was a piece on the public relations empire of Howard Hughes. That was an amazing, complicated story. That came out of your research on the CIA and its role in plotting the assassination of Fidel Castro.

23-00:47:31

Hinckle:

Yes, that came out of the Cuba book.

Rubens:

Right. Then you had a piece out of *Lemonade. Lemonade*, which is published right in '75. The article was called “Vespers for USF.”

23-00:47:47

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Then I had Kevin Starr, my friend from USF days and had become a city librarian, and later I got him doing a column for the *Examiner*, when I was working at the *Examiner*. But we went to school together. We're pretty old friends. And now he's written these fabulous books on California cultural history, social and cultural history.

Rubens:

But you had him writing a regular column for *City*, called “Cityscape” that featured different aspects of the history of San Francisco.

23-00:48:08

Hinckle:

He was writing a column and a lot of pieces for *City Magazine*.

Rubens:

You established as were listed in the magazine, “regular features:” in the Yours was S.F. Diary; Marjorie Leland wrote on city hall; Starr’s Cityscape. You brought in Robert Scheer.

23-00:48:15

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Sort of you've dipped into my stable of people that I liked. That's what a magazine is. If you know enough people and the people you know are interesting, that sort of changes the tone of what a magazine is. And that's what *City* became for that period that I was doing it. It was pretty interesting.

Rubens:

Also it had a strong political bent –covering electoral politics and social movements. Firstly, you got some letters of Angela Davis. I wanted to ask you about that particular story. These are the love letters between Angela Davis and Jonathan Jackson, George Jackson's brother.

23-00:48:46

Hinckle: Yes, that was very controversial, yes, whether to publish them or not.

Rubens: Why was that so controversial?

23-00:48:50

Hinckle: Well, Paul Avery had them. He was a reporter for the *Chronicle*, an old friend of mine and Margo St. James. She and Paul were a number at the time. Margo St. James is the founder of the whores union, COYOTE [Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics]. An old friend of mine. And I used a lot of my friends because they had good stuff. They know what's going on. And Paul had those letters.

Rubens: How did he get them?

23-00:49:30

Hinckle: He got them because he was interviewing Beverly Axelrod, and she came to him—She was the leftwing lawyer for Eldridge [Cleaver], and Eldridge, at the time, was having an affair with her. And then she found out what was going on with Angela Davis and somehow got the letters. You could do an interview on the gossip of the left and cultural personalities of the times. And a lot of this stuff is personal or personally connected. But anyway, Paul had them and didn't know what to do with them. So I just said, "Hey, how about some real money?" I'd read them. I said, "Wow. Let me publish those letters." Here's a thousand dollars.

Angela Davis had just fallen madly in love with Jonathan. They were fabulous letters. Fabulous. Wonderful. But that was quite controversial on the left because it was like, how dare you publish those things because they were so explicit. It was literature of the highest order, and took a person who had been subject of COINTEL, the FBI propaganda exercise, to blacken the names—if you'll pardon the expression blacken—of black militant leaders and to smear them up. And this made her a wonderfully expressive, beautiful woman. It was literature. It was great stuff.

Rubens: Well, it was also so dramatic. You included the observations of a guard when they met in the San Rafael jailhouse after a long absence –their twenty minute kiss..

23-00:52:20

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yes. And Avery wrote an introduction to it. It was quite a bit of material.

Rubens: And is that your decision, to run the letters on the cover of the magazine?

23-00:51:30

Hinckle: Yes. Yes.

Rubens: The whole front cover of the magazine is a part of a letter and then it continues in the body of the magazine, wherever the article picks up.

23-00:51:36

Hinckle: Yes, it was an all-type cover. That was quite a read.

Rubens:

In your editorial notes you write: “Editorial decisions are not made collectively.” That I guess you had had pressure on you to not run them?

23-00:51:53

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Everybody that worked there was screaming.. A lot of people were screaming. And I kept a lot of the staff—the copy staff and some of the people, the art department staff; they were all fine. Didn’t bring as many editors or people like that to replace people on Parrish’s old staff, because they were functioning perfectly well for editing, copy editing, doing that stuff; art department staff doing the layout. They were fine. Why replace them? But I didn’t bring in a lot of other editors just to be editors.

Rubens:

But you brought in Bob Scheer, who does an interview of Coppola when Coppola goes to Cuba.

23-00:52:37

Hinckle:

Yes. We did a couple issues on Cuba. And I introduced him to Scheer and Scheer said, “Hey, I’ll get some connections for you to get down there.”

Rubens:

And then Scheer stayed on.

23-00:52:49

Hinckle:

Yes. He started doing pieces. There was a lot of leftover, if you could call it, *Ramparts* leftovers in there.

Rubens:

City seemed pretty hard hitting. In fact, it’s getting more and more substantive as it goes along. You write two articles that are based on original research, one on Quentin Kopp and then one on Barbagelata. Big pieces. So those had to be—

23-00:53:11

Hinckle:

Well, the Barbagelata—I think you asked earlier, what about politics and Francis, and how’d you guys work that stuff out? Whatever that question was. Well, that was an interesting one because Francis—it was the mayoral election of 1975. George Moscone became mayor at that time, and took office in ’76 that would be. And his opponent was John Barbagelata, who was known as an extremely conservative Republican realtor from the west side of town, west of Twin Peaks. I happened to know, well, both Moscone and Barbagelata. I knew George quite well. A wonderful guy. I loved the guy. But I also knew Barbagelata quite well. And of course, everything I’d done in my politics—*Ramparts*, that sort of stuff—he couldn’t oppose more. And we argued. Completely opposite ends. “You’re complaining because—” “John, you are so out of it.” But I liked the guy. He had integrity, he was an old San Franciscan of the best order. Yes, he was a conservative Republican, but he was a great man. I really liked the guy a lot. And he was like the first guy that was actually fair to the unions. He was the only guy, for instance—He started

this thing of prevailing wages for the city unions, even thought he was a budget-cutting Republican. At that time in history, there were actually Republicans on the Board of Supervisors. Nobody can imagine that now in San Francisco, but there were. And John just had integrity. And he says, "These city workers, they should get a fair deal."

Rubens: This is because there had been a big strike in '74.

23-00:55:09

Hinckle: There'd been a big strike. And they blamed the plumbers for it, for sabotage and this and that. And my friend Joe Mazzola—actually, I'm writing a book on him right now, a biography of him—

Rubens: Oh, fabulous.

23-00:55:20

Hinckle: —who was the legendary head of the plumbers union and came out on the rails as an orphan, from New Jersey at fourteen, in the freight cars with his brother. And they ended up in L.A. in the middle of the Depression. And he finally became the head of the most successful plumbers' local in the United States, and a groundbreaker. All kinds of things and labor stuff. And then created the first workers' paradise, a place called Konocti, up by Clear Lake. And his idea was, hey, workers should get the same things that rich guys get in Tahoe. Why shouldn't they be able to? It was great. And he did it. He's a wonderful guy.

But anyway, Barbagelata said, "Hey, these city workers should get paid what other people get paid. We shouldn't pay them less and we shouldn't pay them more." So he established what they call prevailing wage. Now, that didn't sound like a cost-cutting Republican, but he says, "That's what's fair." He was a very fair-minded guy. And that later got—perverted would be the most useful term, into the system we have now, where city workers make *more* than people in private industry, by combining benefits and things like that, on average, which has insanely spiraled out. And San Francisco's on the edge of complete civic insolvency because of that. But at the time, it was a fair thing, that he did that. And then after the plumbers strike—Craft workers strike, they called it—the plumbers were just part of the union—the guys that work with their hands—gardeners, craft workers, carpenters, electricians, those people. They went on strike. And there was some sabotage. Johns were wrecked at the airport, there was some flooding; and things were kind of smashed up in Golden Gate Park; there was some water from water mains. It wasn't massive stuff. It wasn't bombs or anything. So they tried to blame Mazzola for it. "Hey, guys may have done something, but I didn't tell them to do it." So he was on the Airport Commission. And they said, "We're going to throw you off the Airport Commission." And he said, "No, you're not." Anyway, there was this trial, an extraordinary trial. The Board of Supervisors, in full session. It was a nighttime trial. It was televised on KQED every night for like five

nights running. Trial to expel the head of the plumbers union, to fire him from the Airport Commission, because there was a strike involving his union and some sabotage had gone on, and by inference, it had to be his fault. Well, it was outrageous. There was no proof of it, nothing, right? But sure enough, the Board of Supervisors then expelled Mazzola. And the only person voting against it was John Barbagelata. He said, "This isn't fair." Right?

Rubens: Just on moral grounds?

23-00:58:23

Hinckle: Yes. The most extreme conservative rightwing guy on the board. So that was—

Rubens: Now hold on, because I need to change the tape.

Begin Audio File 24

Rubens: You were talking about Barbagelata.

24-00:00:10

Hinckle: And that was an epochal mayor's race in San Francisco because—in the analysis I did at the time I wrote that story—the first time it defined sort of the golden triangle, whatever you want to call it, of the west side of town, which was oh, we'll say from the Excelsior, way out there towards San Mateo County—conservative Italian, mostly single-family homes—sweeping through Lake Merced in the west of Twin Peaks and the Sunset and the Richmond Districts, Pacific Heights and the outer Richmond and others which are more majority single-family homeowners, as opposed to let's say the east side of town, which was more renters. And gradually, renters were assumed to be a majority of the voting population in the city, but obviously, the rental areas were more compacted. But so it was this arc around sort of the west side of town, and then there was the—Market Street, you might call the dividing line—the South of Market, the Mission and those areas. So we made that analysis. Hey, this is the politics of—This town is going to divide in two, between those two areas. And this was the first election that actually, it was clear that that's what was going to happen in the politics in the future in San Francisco. And that still has happened, as any political consultant would go into. That was the reality of it. So we spelled it out; that article spelled it out.

And Francis says, "Look, we have to endorse George Moscone." I said, "Well, I see what you're saying. You own the goddamn thing. I love George. There's reasons that John shouldn't be mayor, because it would submit permanently to visions of town that lead to civil war or something like that. But I can't beat up John. I'll tell you what." I said, "Why don't you draft the editorial, 'We support Moscone for mayor,' and I'm going to do a cover story on John Barbagelata in that same issue, which is going to be quite sympathetic to Barbagelata and go into the politics of the town." Because one of the things about John was that he didn't understand or like those gays or those people

over there. Everybody's got their drawbacks; we all have. I certainly have mine. But one of his was he wouldn't cross Market Street and go talk to anybody over there. Well, you can't be mayor of the whole town if you don't talk to the rest of the town. So that piece, it was just an enormous—Anyway, so we had the oddity, I guess, of the magazine, short, terse, professional editorial saying, "Moscone for mayor." So Francis, you write that sucker.

Rubens: He didn't sign it, though, but you had him write it.

24-00:03:37

Hinckle: Yes. You dictate it to one of your secretaries. I may have rewritten it for him to make it a little better, but Francis is a great writer; some of his scripts are fabulous. Better he *should've* written all the time for the magazine. And by the way, he was a great owner; he was a great guy to work with. You can be as creative and combative as you want with him, and I found him a very open guy. If it's talent and it's a good idea, he was for it. He wasn't, just my way at all, which a lot of people are, both in the movie business and everything. Inside his movie making, maybe he was a little—took more command, no, this is what I want. But he didn't give me latitude, you got the latitude. And when there were issues that clearly we had to discuss, he was a very intelligent and open man about it. It was his money and his magazine, but he understood If he didn't understand, he just said, "Hey, you're right, but—" I said, "Yeah, you're right but—" We'd work it out.

So in this case, we endorsed Moscone, but did a cover story, which was enormously sympathetic to John Barbegalata, his opponent. In the issue, we endorse the guy; the cover, a giant picture, is his opponent. What's that about? And it was hardly an exposé of John Barbegalata; it was the opposite. Explaining him and making an analysis of these cultural divisions in the town and the single-family homes versus the renter vote and this and that. And then I think I ended up saying, "John is such a decent guy, I wish he would consider, for the sake of the city, almost, just dropping out of this race and saying stop it, because if he wins, because he won't go—He really doesn't like those people on the other side of town. Maybe in time, he'd get to know them, but he probably won't win this race because he *won't* cross Market Street. He won't go over there and talk to people." So that so put in concrete these divisions in the city, that he'd have nothing but conflict in his administration and this and that, and we'd have politics of conflict for a long time in the future. The article ended on something like that. But it was an analysis of city politics.

Rubens: You called him literally "the messiah to the beleaguered middleclass."

24-00:06:15

Hinckle: Yes. Yes, he was.

Rubens: That was a very insightful cultural and geo-political analysis.

24-00:06:18

Hinckle: Yes. That was some intelligent writing. I mean not just I wrote something, but some of it was pretty good.

Rubens:

When we took a break I asked about Gerry [Gerald] Feigen writing for *City*.

24-00:06:27

Hinckle: We talked about his partnership with Howard Gossage in Generalists, Inc. in previous conversations, about promoting Marshall McLuhan and finding geniuses and that sort of business.

Rubens:

He had been a force in *Ramparts*.

24-00:06:41

Hinckle: Oh, yes, a major force in *Ramparts*. And he was on the *Scanlan's* board, too. And the late Howard Gossage was the publisher, of course, of *Scanlan's*. But Feigen's business, his profession was that he was a proctologist. He was also a collector of bad jokes, and he had all these bad jokes cross-indexed. Most of them sexual in reference. He had about, oh, five or six deep catalog cabinets of joke cards, and he had collected them all and indexed them by dirty words, by cross-references, by standard lines, from the Yiddish, from this, from that. [laughs] Extraordinary, right? He had one of the best pads on Telegraph Hill.

Rubens:

What happened to that index?

24-00:07:32

Hinckle: I don't know. It went to his girlfriend at the time, I guess. And when he died, he died sadly, in a botched operation. For some dumb routine thing. And they screwed up the operation. And if anybody should've known better, it should've been Feigen You don't trust doctors.

Rubens:

When is this, about, do you know?

24-00:07:55

Hinckle: Sometime in the late eighties. He was outrageous. Anyway, his profession was a proctologist. He was very funny about it. And he would sort of dine out, telling stories. And a lot of his clientele, given the nature of the civic polity of San Francisco, was gay guys. And they'd come in there with problems like, oh, I don't know, a billiard ball stuffed up their ass. Or too many carrots. No, he was hysterical. You'd sit around, we'd be telling these stories at the Pacific Union Club. [laughs] These guys, all these rich old guys were cracking up. He could've been a professional comedian, Feigen. But he was speaking from his practice, speaking from life. I'll never forget one guy, he told me, was an Argentinian diplomat. And he came in walking very rigid, he described, to the office. And he said, "Well, sit down, counsel." "I'd like to, doctor, but I can't." "Well, you can't sit down? What's the problem?" "Well, that's why I've come to see you." The guy had a broomstick stuck up his butt. Gay sex at that time. Oh, my God. So I said, Feigen, because he told me all those stories, and then we're getting out of the city and I said, "Those are really interesting."

And he wasn't moralistic about it, he was physical about it. He says, "If you're going to do that stuff, there's a right way and a wrong way to do it, because you can really screw yourself up, your insides and this and that. But if you're going to practice that sort of sex, then this is what you have to know." Right? So I said, "That's fabulous, Gerry. Would you write that?" Because he loved to write. He always wrote, about his travels and other stuff. "Yeah," he said, "Would you print it?" I said, "You're damn right I would." So we printed that story. "A Proctologist's Guide to Gay Sex" or something. It was sort of a breakthrough article.

Rubens: What else did he write?

24-00:10:14

Hinckle: Oh, he'd written a couple of travel pieces and things for *City*, smaller pieces. I said, "Hey, you've been telling me these stories for years. It sounds like serious advice. In this town, obviously, there's a huge part of the population is gay, and if you'll pardon the expression, they don't know what the fuck they're doing. Right? So why don't you explain it to them?"

Rubens: And Susan Berman continued to write: on sex and old age, for instance.

24-00:10:44

Hinckle: Oh, yes. She was a staff writer; she was the fastest typewriter—There was a guy named Gene Marine who worked for *Ramparts*, a former KPFA guy, union guy out of New York. I used to call him the Magic Typewriter. He could crank out 40,000 words a week if he had to. Very intelligent stuff.. He was fast on the Selectric. And she was faster than him. She could go out and do a story, she'd be back in four hours, typed it up, perfectly readable, did the job, profiled the person, did the thing. "What's next? Got another one for me today?" Magazine quality, daily newspaper journalism, yes. She was very good.

Rubens: She ended up writing for *New York* magazine and wrote several novels.

24-00:11:26

Hinckle: Oh, she went on to do quite a few things, yes.

Rubens: There was an amazing cover—this is October 28, 1975—about the ideal Marin County girl. Just really provocative. A nubile young woman, wearing short shorts—

24-00:11:45

Hinckle: Well, sort of a crotch shot. Salisbury was living in Marin at the time, and that was his idea. Said, "Hey, look, I've got this picture; I want to use it. Can you make a story around it?" I said, "Yeah, we can probably around it."

Rubens: So you kept Salisbury despite what happened with his editing the Berman article?

- 24-00:12:08
 Hinckle: Oh yes, I was glad he did it, actually, [laughs] but I couldn't do it.
- Rubens: Okay. Let me just ask you about a couple other stories.
- 24-00:12:16
 Hinckle: There were some big stories on the SLA [Symbionese Liberation Army] in there. A couple of those long stories I wrote about the SLA.
- Rubens: And Susan Berman did a wonderful piece about whether Patty Hearst was guilty or not and what she might have done had she been in Patty's place.
- 24-00:12:30
 Hinckle: Patty Hearst, yes. And nobody had dealt with the ideological underpinnings of the SLA, after they got massacred in that incident down in Los Angeles. And of course, the SLA came out of San Francisco, Oakland. That was the origins of the SLA. And I had done that big study, "Guerrilla Warfare" in *Scanlan's*, so I knew sort of some of the theories these people were picking up. So I think we did one or two pieces. I remember one that I wrote, and I had a reporter-researcher work on it with me, who was into studying the ideological underpinnings and the personalities involved in this thing. And that was a big, long piece. And I think at the same time, Susan Berman's piece was in there, about Patty Hearst. And then we had the whole SLA story in there. There was some quite intelligent journalism in there.
- Rubens: Very. It certainly had a left valence.
- 24-00:13:00
 Hinckle: It was left leaning, yes. But there were a lot of commercial issues. We had some food issues—how you cook olives, not a whole issue, but the cover. There were advertising themes. It was a commercial publication.
- Rubens: So this was a seven-day-a-week job for you? This had to be a lot of pressure, to get this thing out.
- 24-00:13:52
 Hinckle: Yes, because there was little backlog and you sort of hit the ground running. But it wasn't that hard. There's so much stuff around. And if you know people and you're thinking, the stories are just waiting out there.
- Rubens: Now, also there's a big cover story, well really there's a special issue that you put out on Dashiell Hammett. And I read somewhere that you were going to write a book on Dashiell Hammett. Did you ever—
- 24-00:14:25
 Hinckle: No. No, some people wanted me to write; I didn't do it. But that was from a private eye who'd worked for Hal Lipset, who'd really got into it. And the guy who wrote the successor to the Hammett novels, another private eye—What the hell's his name? I think I've got his book around here somewhere. He

wrote the precursor book to *The Maltese Falcon*. I know the guy real well, I just can't think of his name at the moment..

Rubens: Is it Feshheimer?

24-00:15:00

Hinckle: Yes, David. And he came to me with it and said, "Hey—are you interested." What happens when you start publishing interesting stuff, people come to you with interesting stuff, right? If you're putting out the Sunday whatever or the daily paper, interesting people aren't even going to bother to call you up, because they think it's a waste of time. But once you start it, all of a sudden things start to come in. So yes, we did a whole issue on Hammett in San Francisco, a very historical issue. It was really good stuff. A mini-book, almost, as an issue.

And then we got into an issue which I always thought was strong. Really, years later, I was arguing with Will Hearst that he had to make this the orientation of the *Examiner*, when he was publishing it. This issue was about the Pacific Rim. And it first laid out the thing that San Francisco is a—Well, we called it the queen city of the Pacific Rim. But it took the view from all the geological literary researchers, who looked into the whole cross-section of the Pacific cultures, everything like that, that if you look at patterns of trade and culture and food and fashion and everything that sort of makes life go, the Pacific is actually one big basin. And one side holding up the basin is from Alaska down through the coast of California, down through South America, all the way. The other side is the Asian side of the Pacific Rim. And there are cross-currents. There've always been cross-currents. You didn't have to float a raft to see the current. And they were interconnected. They'd look at the population shifts and Asians moving to the United States. So it was like, hey, this is a reason for a publication or a special focus.

And that's what I was going to have *City* really begin to explore, if Francis didn't have to fold it, is saying, hey, wait a minute; San Francisco has a position in history. It started out accidentally that way; it had the first Chinese, who were leftover from working as railroad gangs building railroads and stuff. But the cultures are all interconnected. Everything is. And you have to look at this as if it's not a map of the United States. East Coast of the United States is facing towards Europe. We're facing towards Asia. And we are not just the United States coast of that, we are the South American coast of that, too. And on the other side—So if you look at it from that standpoint, it's pretty fascinating. And you could see the type of articles and analysis and things that would come from that. So we did an issue on that and we did an issue on the Panama-Pacific International Exposition 1915, which didn't have exactly that theme, but had kind of a theme like that.

Rubens: That was to celebrate the opening of the Panama canal and the linking of the East Coast and ultimately the Pacific.

24-00:18:28

Hinckle:

But there was a lot of that that was buried in that thing. And Donna Ewald, who was Herb Caen's girlfriend at the time, was a friend of mine. And she'd done this fabulous collection of stuff about—She has one of the best collections of that 1915 exposition. And so we did an issue. We did a lot of special issues.

Rubens:

You did one on the Bohemian Club.

24-00:18:52

Hinckle:

That was Kevin Starr's story, yes.

Rubens:

He had an article in it. And then his generated a lot of letters to the editor.

24-00:18:59

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Well, the letters to the editor got pretty filled in that thing. It was a provocative—if you put out an interesting publication, whether people agree with it or not, at least they're going to pick it up to see what they don't agree with or what they do. It's a reason to pick it up.

Rubens:

Well, plus you had just an extraordinary amount of advertising and classified ads. "Sell your soul" was a phrase used to solicit personal ads—I thought that might be one of your come-ons.

24-00:19:32

Hinckle:

No, I don't know where that one came from.

Rubens:

Tell me about Marjorie Land, who wrote a city hall column. Where had she come from?

24-00:19:44

Hinckle:

Yes, she was a city hall reporter. She was working for the *Progress* or the *Independent* at the time. And she was a very talented reporter. And I said, "Hey, you're going to write for us. And we have to cover city hall. [laughs] You know when to do it."

Rubens:

Let me just see who else do I want to ask you about?

24-00:20:17

Hinckle:

There was Bob Scheer's girlfriend at the time, Susan Lyne who had worked at *Ramparts*. She was on the staff of *City* when I got there. And I said, "Hey, Susan, how are you? Good thing you're here." I said, "Call Scheer up. Let's have dinner. He's got to have some stuff." Coppola loved Cuba and wanted to go there. And she said, "Oh, I'll fix that up." Stuff! It all interconnects. So she became a big publishing executive in New York, Susan. She'd been at *Premiere* magazine and then she did Martha Stewart's magazine when Martha Stewart went to jail. And now she's got another thing like that. I used to see her all the time. When I was living in New York with Susan Cheever, and her

kid was about the same age as mine and they'd hang out. Hey, stuff. People know each other.

Rubens: You published Scott Newhall; something on Gerald Ford—my notes aren't clear.

24-00:21:50
Hinckle: I probably told him to recycle some of the editorials he was writing in his own newspaper then, after the *Chronicle*, the *Newhall Signal*, which I liked.

Rubens: Well, this was a fantasy piece. And now I can't quite remember it—two short columns about Gerald Ford's throwing overboard his defense secretary, secretary of commerce, and then Kissinger?

24-00:22:08
Hinckle: I'm sure it was something that Scott had written already for his own paper, because he wrote wild, woolly, wonderful editorials on top of the front page, where editorials should be. And I'm sure I said, "Hey, Scott, will you recycle that and do a piece for this magazine?"

Rubens: You had Margot Patterson Doss and her walking tours. There was Paul Krassner interviewing Ken Kesey.

24-00:22:37
Hinckle: Oh, yes, Krassner and Kesey. And there's a lot of poets in there, Harold Norris and other poets. We published a lot of poetry in there, too.

Rubens: And then you had a really colorful theater issue, February '76. It's the second-to-last issue, that's called *Broadway's New Gig: The Theatrical Explosion of San Francisco's Wildest Street*. There is a cover banner, "Grover Sales on the Lenny Bruce years."

24-00:23:03
Hinckle: We did a lot of history. I'm a firm believer that you've got to tell people the history of where they live because some people know it backwards, but it's such a churning population in the Bay Area that—Look at San Francisco today. Probably 60 percent, 70 percent of the people here weren't here twenty years ago. And so what do they know about why this town is famous and why they came here? So I think it's always good journalism to retell, in a well-written, fun way, what you're about or what your heritage was and the history.

Rubens: Had Kevin Starr published his first book?

24-00:23:48
Hinckle: Maybe the first one had come out. He was working on those books. But I distracted him, got him to start writing some magazine articles.

Rubens: So a lot of people were at bay. Oh, and this incredible story on the TV character Mary Hartman, played by Louise Lasser.

24-00:24:03

Hinckle: Oh, we had fun with that, yes.

Rubens:

She was on the cover of your last issue.

24-00:24:05

Hinckle: We had fun with that. Well, *Mary Hartman* was quite a cultural phenomenon then. We had a lot of fun with that.

The story I loved the most in *City*, I think it was the second issue I did, it was about, forget Herb Caen, this is the real Mr. San Francisco. And it was this guy Bob Patterson, one of the most colorful, eccentric characters in the newspaper business. He was in and out of prison. He was also a prison journalist. He was just wild, Patterson. He was just a buccaneer, rogue journalist, and a great character in San Francisco. And he worked for the *Examiner* most of the time, when he wasn't in and out of jail, in the forties and fifties, and wrote a social column under the name of Freddie Francisco. And I befriended Patterson because he'd fallen a little bit on hard times, and I thought his stuff was great.

And so, well, here's what happened. In the inventory—they call it inventory—when I took over that magazine, there was a large amount of articles that they had purchased, for hideously expensive sums of money, I thought. And almost all of them were, from my standpoint, useless. I wouldn't print them. But there was one in there exposing this guy Freddie Francisco, who wrote the *Examiner*'s society column, *The This, The That*, and now he's back writing for them again. Freddie Francisco was a pen name for Bob Patterson. I liked Patterson, just had an affection for him as an old rogue, and got him back writing. And then he went to China. Was the first reporter into China, wrote a big bunch of articles for the *Examiner*, about being in China. But he never went to China. He got as far as Hong Kong and faked the whole thing, because he used every reporter in Shanghai in the thirties and kind of made it up. He was wonderful, Patterson. He was a classical, scurrilous journalist of that era, when journalism was a lot of fun. And a great writer. But anyway, here was a piece in it that had been commissioned. They paid a writer to expose him, to say what a terrible person he was. He had actually been in and out of prison; he had the prison magazines; he shook people down for blackmail; he put out a phony blackmail paper under another name, with a guy named Jimmy Tarritino, or Frattino, or something like that, in the fifties, who extorted all the people about their private lives. "We'll print this stuff if you don't do this." Very spotty history. And now he was back in the *Examiner* in the Patty Hearst kidnapping period, when Randy, her father, was the publisher. He was back as a prominent writer—going to China, doing these things. And so this was an exposé of him.

Well, I get a little bit upset. I'm not printing that. And so Susan Berman, who was a very energetic person, I said, "Susan, hey, let's find out where Patterson

lives. I think he lives out by Laguna Honda. I've been told." So we got his address. He lived in a house across the street from the Laguna Honda Home. And he said he won't answer any phone calls. I said, "You go out there and haunt that house. Just stay in front of it. He's got to come back some time; stay there day and night. He's been living there for twenty years off and on, when he's not in jail. And corner him and—" Because she's the only person that had the tenacity to do something like that. It was like an old-fashion newspaper movie. "And tell him that we have this manuscript and we're going to expose him. Here it is. He can read it. And his choice is we either print it or he exposes himself." [laughs] Right? Which would be a much better way to do it and he writes it whatever way he wants it. Well, he got interested in that idea. And then I spent a lot of time with the guy. He had the most fabulous stories. So there was an issue in there where we just told the story of the old *Examiner* and the old newspaper games, and he exposed himself. He did expose himself; big headlines. But the cover of that was this guy Patterson, with a sort of French little cap on his head, sitting at the bar at Washington Square, where Herb Caen had lunch a lot of times during the week. And it said, "Forget Herb Caen; this is the real Mr. San Francisco." And it was Patterson. And there was a picture in there of Caen and Patterson. And I said, "Herb, you've got to see—" Oh, he loved it. So there's a picture of them standing together, kind of hugging each other, [laughs] right?

Rubens: And the byline is Freddie Francisco.

24-00:29:06

Hinckle: Yes. That was his name; he exposed Bob Patterson. It was good stuff. Well, we spent more time on *City* than I thought we would, but it's interesting stuff. As of this day, there's a lot of things in that rushed weekly that you could reprint today in the original form and people would say, wow, that's interesting stuff.

Rubens: Oh, yes. Oh, it's a fascinating thing to read. I was lucky, someone gave me almost a complete edition of it, because you can't find it. It's not at the Berkeley library, and I'm not sure that the S.F. main branch has a full run of it.

24-00:30:17

Hinckle: Yes, well, that's true of a lot of magazines of mine, isn't it? You can't find *Scanlan*'s; it wasn't around long enough to get in the indexes.

Rubens: I mentioned Nan Blitman doing a piece on William Hamilton, the cartoonist. It's about what ever happened to romance. He was writing a book, on the same topic.

24-00:30:40

Hinckle: Yes, we did an issue on romance. Susan Berman writes some stuff. He was writing that. Yes, he was a friend. He was living in, I think, Tiburon, I'm not sure. He was living over there somewhere. And he hung—there were a lot of

guys who hung around there. Paul Erdman who wrote a lot of great economic books in the seventies, was a friend of mine. And he was preparing a couple—He was going to become the economics editor. He wrote *The Crash of '79*, the crash of this and that. He was a business and financial writer. He wrote financial exposés. He founded and was president of a bank in Switzerland. He went to jail there; there were some claims of fraud. He spent his time in jail writing about the whole system, and became a best-selling novelist. Paul Erdman. He's a sweetheart of a guy. He's a close friend. We'd have lunch together. He was a friend of Gordon Getty.

Rubens: You also had a wonderful cover of two San Francisco heiresses who just—Who would've known who they were?

24-00:31:29

Hinckle: Yes, that was a Susan Berman special.

Rubens: Just fascinating.

24-00:31:32

Hinckle: I think we had their faces split down the middle and part of one face and part of the other face. And Michael Salisbury and I had the good stuff. And he was very fast. It would take him fifteen minutes to figure something out. And I sort of move fast. "Okay, let's do this." "Okay." I remember one time—Salisbury is an art director, was the art director for *City*—we didn't know what to do for a cover; we were having a tough thing. And he pulls out his wallet and he unfolds this little, dinky piece of paper. Out comes this picture he ripped out of some magazine somewhere, of some person—some woman, I think—on a bike. And she had a biking helmet on her head. It was really strong, it was good. And he says, "Well, this would make a good cover." Because we're a weekly, we had so little backlog. We had to just make up stuff as we went along. I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, let's make that the cover. You figure out some—make a story to support it." "Oh, okay." [laughs] We did something about biking. It made a cover. It was a weekly. Bunch of articles in there, so what the hell?

Rubens: Right. Right. So what happened with the closing of it? You print a little notice that this is our last issues, that all subscribers will be made good.

24-00:32:47

Hinckle: That was Francis. I don't know what happened after that with that organization.

Rubens: The office just closed?

24-00:32:54

Hinckle: Everything went to the movie on Vietnam and that was it.

Rubens: What about any backlog there? You had inherited a backlog and must have generated one of your own, You didn't expect the magazine to close.

24-00:33:07

Hinckle: Oh, there were leftover articles, but he had to shut them down. Francis went broke on that movie. And then came back fabulously. But went broke on that movie, which just about destroyed him. He got out of the studio system and tried to do it independent and this and that. And it was too many disasters on an epic movie like that.

Rubens: The profile on him in *Time* said he also owned a San Francisco theater, an FM radio station.

24-00:33:45

Hinckle: Little Fox Theater. That's where his offices were. On Pacific Street. Oddly enough, right down the street from where the *Scanlan*'s offices were, Gossage's firehouse. I've spent a lot of time on that street.

Rubens: He had an FM radio station and various other local enterprises, and real estate.

24-00:34:01

Hinckle: Yes, well, he had great cultural—not ambitions, but interests. And he wanted to do it all. And he still has these going on. He's made a great success of the wine business, Coppola Wines and vineyard up there, restaurants.

Rubens: Did you remain friends with him? Is he someone you would see over the years?

24-00:34:19

Hinckle: Yes. Yes. Mostly, he was off making movies and I was doing other stuff, but we had mutual friends, like Jeannette Etheredge. So often I'd see him at the—His office is right down the street from Tosca, in the old Flatiron building, Boss Abe Reuf's old headquarters. That wonderful colored building with the decaying sort of greenish, copper-tinted color. Yes, it's a nice building.

Rubens: Well, I thought one of the stories that came out of this that was so interesting is how much freedom he gave Eleanor. So she seemed to, you say, really step up.

24-00:34:53

Hinckle: Oh, yes. She blossomed. Hey, Eleanor's a very, very intelligent, competent woman. And I think she did a book about the disaster, also, about the making of the *Apocalypse* movie. She kept a record of it all. But yes, that's a very good marriage, Francis and Eleanor.

Rubens: So anything else? Any other stories that we should tell about *City Magazine*?

24-00:35:19

Hinckle: God, that's more about *City Magazine* than has been said in quite a few years.
 [laughs]

Rubens:

I found very little written on *City Magazine*.

24-00:35:26

Hinckle: You know what you should do—not to art direct whatever The Bancroft does—but probably, you should find a way, when you do this typescript up, to include some of the covers or something of these things in it. I think it would be great.

Rubens:

I think you're absolutely right.

24-00:35:42

Hinckle: Just somebody's looking it up, either online—It's useful just to see—

Rubens:

Well, I'm going to ask my friend if he'll contribute this run of *City* to The Bancroft Library, also, so that they have a run of it. No talk about it being put up online? Isn't Alexander Street Press going to do for *Ramparts*, is that right?

24-00:36:04

Hinckle: Oh, that's online for *Ramparts*.

Rubens:

Is *City* a possibility?

24-00:36:11

Hinckle: No, I don't think *City*'s—You'd have to ask Francis; he owns all the rights. I don't know if Francis would agree to that. You *should* call him, and say "By the way, we want to do yours."

It was great to have him support that magazine. It's become so dry, this publishing business, that it's rare to find a publisher or the editor of a magazine or a daily paper or anything like that hanging out with everybody that's supposed to be the art part of town, except at certain elite parties.

Rubens:

All right, so we should talk about *Frisco* next. I haven't seen it.

24-00:37:13

Hinckle: Oh, that's nothing. That was a joke. I mean, not a joke, but it was—All we did was we were bored at the *Examiner* and a bunch of us got together and talked about taking over a magazine that was going broke.

Rubens:

Boulevards?

24-00:37:30

Hinckle: Yes, so we bought it from the guy and decided it'd be—All *Examiner* and *Chronicle* people—Tom Albright, Pam Brunner—managing editor at the *Examiner*, myself, other people. Dugald Stermer did the art; he had been the art director at *Ramparts*. We just said, "Hey, just for fun, let's buy this. If we

had to start one, we probably wouldn't have done it. Maybe we could buy this stupid little thing. And it's a monthly. Maybe we'll get together once a month and figure out what to do with it." It was something like that; that's all it was.

Rubens: Okay. And who put up the money for it? Did each of you put in? We'll have to talk about this next time.

Interview 12: June 20, 2010

Being additional accounts of the vicissitudes of editing a metropolitan weekly and then turning to a gold mine of book projects while also burrowing further into the dark world of political intrigue and conspiracy.

Begin Audio File 25

Rubens: I want to talk to you a little bit more about *City Magazine*. I don't want to contradict you, but I see that you were on the masthead as a contributing editor from the first edition on.

25-00:00:18

Hinckle: I'm nothing but the sum of my contradictions. I tried to abolish the masthead in that magazine, as I recall. I mean relegate it to the junk heap.

Rubens: But I just wanted to get in if you have any vague memory of being consulted about the magazine before its first edition. Coppola said in an interview that he spent about six months consulting with different magazine people. He took Michael Parrish and a few others on a plane trip to New York and then L.A., to speak with magazine publishers. So you must've had some conversations.

25-00:00:55

Hinckle: That sounds like Francis would do that, yes. No, I remember a conversation with him, now that you mention it. It was out at his house or it was at a party or it was Tosca; I forget. He took out some big ads in papers announcing it. So I encouraged him to dare everybody to watch for him to fall flat on his face. I think I said, "Everybody's expecting you to fall on your face on this one, so why don't you just say it." Something like that. And that's the only consulting I can remember prior to when he called me up and said, "Hey, do you want to be the first guest editor?"

Rubens: Okay. I also want to ask you about your influence on his plans –according to a *Newsweek* article—that once a week, when the magazine was going to bed, he would have it take place on a stage in his theater—whatever editorial meetings and discussions involved. It would be a performance of sorts for the public. We've discussed how that was an idea that you would have years later, for *War News*.

25-00:02:07

Hinckle: Well, it wasn't my idea, that was Jimmy Mitchell's idea, to have a nightclub and have the publication being done in the middle of the nightclub, with the cocktail tables around and guys working their computers, and poets or artists up onstage drawing people for money.

Rubens: I stand corrected. So Francis's idea, do you know if that was that ever done?

25-00:02:28

Hinckle:

Well, it's a typical movie producer's idea for a magazine. I certainly wouldn't have done it. I had all my editorial conferences in bars. The time I was running that thing, nobody ever sat down at a table for a meeting. It was all in motion.

Rubens:

Well, I bet there was a lot of hurried motion. Putting out something that large once a week must have been quite a strain; the issues were at least sixty and more often than not, hundred-page editions.

25-00:02:53

Hinckle:

It was a nightmare. It was like a broken freight train. It was very cumbersome and production was ridiculously slow and complicated. And it was all this stuff. The listings alone occupied about a third of the magazine. Nothing wrong with that; it's a service, it's good. But it was basically a service that was equaled or reproduced in the Sunday pink section in the *Chronicle*. And a lot of resources went into that. I often asked well, why are we bothering to do that when they're doing it? Why employ a bunch of people? Just Xerox theirs and add a few things to it. But we never got around to that point of reform. But he tried to create a certain kind of magazine from the beginning and then once it was going—but it was just boring. I think he got bored with it. Nobody would ask me in to be a guest editor if they weren't bored with what they were doing. [laughs]

Rubens:

Oh, I thought that was his vision from the beginning, that he would bring in guest editors.

25-00:03:51

Hinckle:

That was the vision. He had a vision, I guess, of editorial conferences—

Rubens:

He was going to have a Black Panther and a—

25-00:03:57

Hinckle:

—in public, so the people could sit in the theater and hear them. And I said, "Get out of here, Francis! That's the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard." Jesus! But that's okay. Francis is a big thinker. He wanted to—whatever—make it a dramatic production, not just a publication. He had a lot of movie-director ideas. Nothing wrong with them, just that nobody's going to do them.

Rubens:

So I just want to make sure that we document any of your ideas that you may have had for the magazine. Well, firstly, let's acknowledge that the *Newsweek* article says that you did do some cost-cutting measures, that you had reduced the editorial staff from fifteen to nine, that the cost per issue went down.

25-00:04:45

Hinckle:

Oh, yes, that was Ellie Coppola and myself. It was just absurd. This was before he even ran into—that the whole thing collapsed with the disaster of the movie in the Philippines, making *Apocalypse Now*. But it was Hollywood makes a magazine. It was insane. And so we completely dismantled the

production schedule and the staff was completely—It was useless. Everything they bought was unreadable. Basically cut the staff in half. Didn't need it. And the production costs were insane.

Rubens: You talked about consolidating the printing process.

25-00:05:24

Hinckle: Oh, it was just nuts. It was like Hollywood producers trying to make a magazine. It was like comedy, it was so unwieldy. So yes, we trimmed it down pretty wildly. In a major way. And at the same time, it became kind of crazy. It was a wild magazine. But before, it was big and fat and ponderous, the structure was unwieldy and expensive; the magazine was big and fat and ponderous to read. [laughs] So something had to be done.

Rubens: So your debut issue, December 9, had Susan Berman's article and supposedly, within a week, the circulation just doubled.

25-00:06:09

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: Did you have a target goal for circulation? It looks as if 100,000, 120,000 would've made it pay for itself. Do you remember that?

25-00:06:22

Hinckle: Well, the accounting figures were—well, Francis had projections. But they were as unreal as the production process was. We sort of had to go back to the beginning and say, geez, how are you going to make sense of this thing? While you're still putting it out every week. So it was a challenge in that way.

Rubens: He wanted the paper delivered on Sundays, something like the *New York Times* or the Sunday *Chronicle*.

25-00:06:52

Hinckle: That was a good idea. I thought that was a terrific idea. I thought we should change the format. I thought it should be Saturdays and not Sundays, but the idea of having a combination—People of San Francisco would recall that when the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* merged, the two morning dailies killed off, eventually, the remaining afternoon paper. But the merger was like two trucks had a head-on collision, a *Chronicle* truck and an *Examiner* collide: bam! And hunks of the Sunday papers fell all over the streets from the carnage of the crash, and some wino came along and picked up this section and that section and put them together, and that's what the Sunday paper looked like. And it never changed! It never, ever changed! In fact, to this day, it's a disaster, the Sunday edition.

Rubens: Really, say something more about that.

25-00:07:47

Hinckle: Well, take a look. But during that period, it was just completely absurd. Different staff were putting out different sections. And the way the wino reassembled the parts laying on the street never changed. And it's just this big, dull, almost incomprehensible thing on Sundays. So there was real room for something that came out on the weekend. with stuff to read and was a coherent editorial product.

Rubens: Tight and different—

25-00:08:18

Hinckle: Yes. So that was a good idea. Getting that thing to come out on the weekends, I thought was a very desirable goal.

Rubens: And did that happen?

25-00:08:27

Hinckle: We never got to that. I think it came out on Fridays, I forget what day now. But we were bound by some contracts; we broke a couple of them, but we were stuck to the old production schedule. If it kept going, we would've been fine. And it would've been a Sunday home delivery or Saturday thing so it's there for Sunday morning. Probably would've been delivered on Saturday, distributed on Saturday night.

Rubens: Do you know how large the circulation grew to? Was it about 100,000?

25-00:08:55

Hinckle: The newsstand sales jumped up considerably. They were selling, I don't know, eight, 10,000 copies, maybe less, on the newsstands. And newsstands went way up to 30,000 or 40,000 copies. But it wasn't distributed, for instance, in the East Bay at all; it wasn't distributed down the peninsula. It was like Hollywood made a magazine. They weren't thinking about basic magazine things. Then we began to add distribution into outlying parts of the city—I mean the burbs—just on the newsstands. And then at the same time, he was running a "take-a-subscription" campaign, which fell flat. And I think he had some direct mail going. So there was a bunch of subscribers. I have no memory now; might've been 30,000.

And then all of a sudden we got the newsstand circulation up higher than the subscriptions. So they did another mailing. So maybe it had 40 to 50,000 subscribers, when he finally had to pull the plug on it. And it certainly had 30, 40,000 newsstand sales. And somewhere was a production budget that made sense, that wasn't—that would not destroy it; was not confiscatory. A magazine like that, with advertising support and a 200,000 circulation—that kind of audience and what the advertisers paid for the ads—would have held it very, very well. So it was a doable thing. But I don't think they ever cracked much more.

There's only so many things you're going to sell on the newsstand. Nationally, for instance, I remember like *Time* magazine, which has always been a good newsstand seller, particularly back in that period in San Francisco, *Time* sold like 12,000, 18,000 copies. In Detroit, it would sell more, 25,000 copies. On newsstands, that is. So newsstands have never been a strong medium for national publications, traditionally, in San Francisco. They are in L.A., they are in most of the country. But for odd reasons.

Rubens: What do you think accounts for that?

25-00:11:21

Hinckle: People have the cash to buy magazines, aside from tourists and people coming in out of town. I think that people in San Francisco think they know more than anybody else.

Rubens: Is that part of the, quote, "old smugness" that Coppola said he's trying to slay.

25-00:11:36

Hinckle: Oh, you had mentioned that. I'd forgotten that. He had a letter in the first issue or something, a statement?

Rubens: Yes. He says his goal is to do away with "cosmopolitan boloney" and the "iness." He's talking about there being a smug, recent disenfranchised underground.

25-00:11:55

Hinckle: That's probably what some of his not former beatnik, but beatnik-like, pissed-off poet friends were telling him how it is. And the smugness is absolutely true. It was true then, it's true now. But historically, it's always been true. Kevin Starr has observed several times, when he's talking about San Francisco in his books on California, that San Francisco eats its geniuses, eats its creative people. You don't last long in this town if you're really doing something. Mark Twain got out of here as fast as he could; Bret Harte went off to [laughs] London, New York. Gone! Henry George, soon out of here, right? They couldn't stand the atmosphere. It is smug. It exults in being avant-garde or, we're great and this is a city that has everything and we're better than everybody else, intellectually and every other way. But the people who have that exultation aren't the creators of the stuff that they're proud of. They've inherited wealth or made wealth and society types, who it helps define their lives by having this attitude. But the people, at least historically, who've done anything creative, created the content if you want to call it that—art, controversy, anything like that—in this town have been drummed out. It's incredibly provincial. It's like French provincialism at its worst, San Francisco's so-called intellectual life.

Rubens: And so it was in that vein that *Ramparts*, *Scanlan's* and then even *City*—

25-00:14:00

Hinckle: Well, we broke through that stuff, yes. Because it was just bullshit. You just go to the people who are actually writing and you say, hey, let's do something.

25-00:14:20

Rubens: Well, did you have any sort of sense of being up against a wall, by the time he pulled the plug on the magazine?

25-00:14:21

Hinckle: No.

25-00:14:21

Rubens: Was that deflating to you?

Hinckle: It was an endless resource. Stories and things to do, and people would—No. Editorially, it was not a problem at all; it was a piece of cake. But it was like riding an old train that kept breaking down, in terms of the production process and the expense, which was built into putting this thing out. Which if you had a bunch of money—and Francis did—it would've worked out in time, very well. I think it probably would've remained a going publication.

25-00:14:58

Rubens: So were you resigned? You had a backlog of things you were going to do, you were already—

Hinckle: Well, we ran out of money. He went broke on *Apocalypse Now*. He almost went completely under, right?

25-00:15:06

Rubens: So how did you position—

Hinckle: His whole movie studio went down. [laughs] Everything. It was a disaster.

25-00:15:14

Rubens: So you just closed the door and left. You just were resigned.

Hinckle: That was it. It was his magazine. He said, “Shut it down,” I shut it down. Onto the next thing. What are you going to do?

25-00:15:40

Rubens: So I think it's time for us to move to the next thing. This is in February of '76. You don't go to the *Chronicle* till '78. And it looks to me like this is a period of really robust freelance journalism for you.

Hinckle: Probably. Yes, I've always written a lot of pieces for different magazines.

Rubens: I had a note that said that you were writing for *Saturday Review*, for *Harper's*; I saw book reviews that you had done in the *New York Times*. Did you have an agent? How were these things coming to you?

25-00:16:02

Hinckle: I had an agent, Cyrilly Abels. She's a great woman. She was Christina Stead's agent. She was a fabulous woman. Yes, but mostly it wasn't—Particularly magazines or for books, people asked me to write something or review something and I'd do it. Or I'd think of something to write and if I didn't have a magazine at the moment, I'd call somebody I knew at *Harper's* or something like that and say, hey, I'm going write this, and they'd say, oh, great; okay, do it.

Rubens: So in your mind, taking over another magazine or going to the *Chronicle*, this is not what you're considering?

25-00:16:33

Hinckle: Well, I had a couple book obligations.

Rubens: Yes, so let's talk about those.

25-00:16:37

Hinckle: I had to finish those up. And in between, I was writing pieces. I was busy enough.

Rubens: It looks to me like the Virginia City book is the next thing. And what a *wonderful, beautiful* book that is. *The Richest Place on Earth*.

25-00:16:51

Hinckle: Oh. Well, my friend Fred Hobbs the artist and I, we worked on that thing.

Rubens: Yes. Houghton Mifflin, a nice publisher; it's published in '78. Tell me how the book came about.

25-00:17:03

Hinckle: Well, Hobbs is one of those—I hate to use the word typical; most of my friends are fairly accomplished and fairly eccentric. Like de Antonio the documentary movie maker, one of my closest friends; Howard Gossage, we talked about him earlier, the anti-advertising advertising man. They produce, they're artists, they're great people; but they break out of their own molds. They just don't fit into the typical movie maker or advertising man or academic, whatever field they're in. And Hobbs is just a crazy artist, in the best sense of the word.

Rubens: Had he drawn for *Ramparts*? Had you published him in *Ramparts*? Or *Scanlan's*?

25-00:17:54

Hinckle: No, I didn't really know him during *Ramparts*. I met him around the time that we were doing *Scanlan's*. And we became fast friends. And he was a multi-disciplined artist. He was a sculptor, he was a very good fine-line, Rembrandt-type line-drawing-sketches artist, and very conceptual. And his work is in a lot of galleries and standard museums. But he was a madman in that he would

buy real estate and he'd reshape the houses and they looked like whales, and he would put skylights in them that had faces on them. He saw real estate as an art form. And automobiles.

Rubens: He made these animated—

25-00:18:40

Hinckle: He did the first movable, drivable sculptures. These crazy cars that you'd drive around in.

Rubens: He called it parade sculpture.

25-00:18:48

Hinckle: Yes, parade sculpture, right. So again, most artists are crazy; it's one of the definitions of being an artist, but—

Rubens: He had a motion picture production company in San Francisco?

25-00:18:57

Hinckle: Oh, yes, he made a lot of B-type movies. Which were pretty inventive. He did one in the basement of Earthquake McGoon's, which was a jazz club here, downtown. Turk Murphy and his band and those guys were best friends of Hobbs, and friends of mine. And then we got involved in Virginia City. He was always looking for real estate. And he decided, hey, come on, we're going to buy this hotel up in Virginia City. He knew guys; he'd hung out there. So he got me to start going up to Virginia City, which was a maddening drive, if you went with Hobbs, because he talks a mile a minute. His mind is always far ahead of the words that are coming out of his mouth. And if you're driving on interstate whatever the hell it is when you're going up to Nevada, going up to the snow country and Lake Tahoe, that area, to go over to Nevada, Hobbs just keeps talking. And the more he'd talk, the slower he'd start driving. So I would say, "Hobbs, for Christ's sake! You're going thirty miles an hour! Everybody's going a hundred. Hobbs, Jesus." But we went up there anyway, he had this hotel. And I said, "Hey, I love Virginia City," because I always wanted to revive Mark Twain's newspaper, the *Territorial Enterprise*. So I was into it. I said, "Hey, let's go up there and play. Let's see who owns the rights." Because it went through various owners over the years.

Rubens: Lucius Beebe.

25-00:20:27

Hinckle: We began to look at restarting it. Lucius Beebe had brilliantly restored it. Lucius Beebe's another guy who's a friend of mine.

Rubens: Well, I imagine you had known him when you worked at the *Chronicle*.

25-00:20:37

Hinckle: Well, no, I knew him mostly from going to friends of mine, who were gay. They'd have all these parties up there at Telegraph Hill. Terrence O'Flaherty's

place. He was a television critic for a long, long time in the fifties, sixties, seventies—I don't know when he died—and eighties, for the *Chronicle*. And he was part of the gay high society, before it became visible and well known, as it is today. It's commonplace today. But anyway, it wasn't closeted. Well, it was a little bit closeted then. And they were just folks to me. And John Dodds, my editor for a couple of books of mine, was part of that world. I met John through that. At the time, he was married to—always was married to Vivian Vance of *I Love Lucy*. They lived here and then in Tiburon; they had a place in Connecticut, went back and forth. They went everywhere. They were constantly going to shrinks about him being gay or not. [laughs] It was hysterical. And we'd all laugh about it. It was fun. We all were great friends. And of course, Beebe was high, high in that world. And I got to know him and his partner, Chuck Clegg pretty well. They were interesting.

Rubens: And this is while he was putting out that *Territorial Enterprise*?

25-00:22:00

Hinckle: It wasn't while. He'd had it for a long time and he stopped it sometime in the sixties. But he was putting it out for, I don't know, ten years, give or take four on either end of it. It was a great paper when he put it out. Had editorials attacking, oh, zippers in trousers and airline flights. [laughs] Beebe, famously, would only travel by train. And he had his own railway car, magnificently appointed, and he'd hook it to the prevailing train going wherever. And then he was always going to Virginia City. He retired that car in Virginia City.

Rubens: Well, he retired, right? He moved there.

25-00:22:43

Hinckle: He moved there. He went to Virginia City. He finally got tired of café society in New York and writing about it. And he and Clegg produced some of the most readable and knowledgeable books on railroading and on the Western railroads. There's a slew of them. There must've been eight or ten books they did over the years. Extremely knowledgeable. He was a railroad buff. But in his writing, he was a snob, a professional snob. Café society in New York, always taking it apart. And he finally got sick of that world, so he fled to the wilds of goofy Virginia City and set up his own sort of kingdom there, and went around back and forth on his rail—

Rubens: And was a real muckraker there. Kind of took on the Catholic Church.

25-00:23:23

Hinckle: Oh, he took on everything; he was great.

Rubens: He wanted to sort of memorialize—not memorialize, but make a landmark out of a brothel.

25-00:23:34

Hinckle: Yes. I think I've got a thing in the introduction to that book about Virginia City, talking about Beebe. And he had this line. I was at some cocktail party he was at one time, and this woman comes up to him and complains or has got some comment about something in the *Chronicle*. And he was very—He was snobbish. He was very arrogant and had an imperial bearing. And he looked at her as if she were an ant, and he said, "Madame, I write for the *Chronicle*, but I never read it. Don't ask *me* about *that*." Right?

Rubens: Yes. Scott Newhall had extended an offer to him to write any time he wanted to.

25-00:24:11

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Well, Scott knew great people. Scott was *the* genius at finding out-of-the-niche, contrary-niche, controversial writers and putting them in the *Chronicle*. Which is why everybody read the *Chronicle*. It was a fun paper to read when Scott was doing it.

Rubens: So by the time you're going to Virginia City, Lucius is—

25-00:24:35

Hinckle: Oh, he's long gone from there.

Rubens: So then no one had taken over the *Territorial Enterprise*?

25-00:24:39

Hinckle: No it was coming out. But then upon investigation, we found that there were like five or six claimants to title down the line, and a couple people had tried to put it out because it wasn't clear title. And all of a sudden, people came out of the woodworks of Minnesota and weird insurance companies and this and that. "No, we own it, we own it." So you're embroiled in a court mess. So it was like, well, forget that idea. Who needs that? And then for a while, I was thinking about—Then I started writing for the *Chronicle*, so I didn't have as much time. But I was thinking about using another title that wouldn't bite off all that trouble. And the one I settled on—we incorporated in Nevada—it was a wonderful name. It was a newspaper in Nevada in the 1880s, and it was called the *Daily Trespass*.

Rubens: Oh, wow.

25-00:25:28

Hinckle: Yes. From the well-known prayer. What a great title for a newspaper, the *Daily Trespass*. Brilliant. So I said, "Hey, we'll call it the *Daily Trespass*," published monthly or whatever. Just a great title.

Rubens: So this was something that you're concocting with Hobbs.

25-00:25:48

Hinckle:

Yes. We had this hotel up there. He always dragged me into his real estate deals. And we were making money on them, but somehow I always paid for lunch. "Hobbs, what is this?" It was just all stuff. It was, I don't know, real estate as art form.

Rubens:

But the book comes out, it seems, within a year's period, though, so you must've started working on it after *City*?

25-00:26:15

Hinckle:

Probably before. Probably had the book contract quite a while. I think that was in probably the middle seventies, well before I started, well at least a year or so, at *City* with Coppola. And Hobbs did all the drawings.

Rubens:

They're beautiful.

25-00:26:32

Hinckle:

In the time we're talking now, he would've had eight drawings done.

Rubens:

Oh, really? Fast.

25-00:26:36

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. And I guess I hadn't quite finished and Hobbs said, "Come on, we've got to finish the damn thing." And then he started writing the last four chapters because he was in a hurry to get it finished. So he only got four chapters to go at the end. "Come on now, Hinckle, come on. Come over to my house." I said, "No, Hobbs, it reads terrible, the style of this book." And it was a fairly well written book. And it was like, "No. Oh, give me this stuff. Jesus, Hobbs." So he drove me crazy. So I had to basically rewrite what he'd done. There's nothing really original in that book; there's some insights. But basically, I read all the literature, all the memoirs and all the other West histories, whatever, and just retold the tale. That's all.

Because it's a great story to tell. It's all about San Francisco and the growth of the West and industrialization. There's the illusion, even in public schools today, that the gold rush brought wealth and all these people and cowboys. The gold rush was a bust. There *wasn't* any gold. By the time people all came out here, it was gone, if there was any in the first place. And the thing that made San Francisco, made the stock market, made, really, wealth for the first time was deep mining in Nevada, in Virginia City, which was a combination of a silver and gold. But it wasn't like these little nuggets that you could pan for along the side of a river which started the gold rushing. Panning, you go down, you have a little sieve and you get the rocks and find some gold and then you get some more rocks. Surface mining.

But it was industrialization. You had the deep bore miners' rigs and a railway shaft going under the mountains, digging out, honeycombing mountains, and tunnels and stuff. Really digging. And then you had the transportation

problem of getting the steel and everything over the mountains in that period of time, in the 1860s, seventies, eighties. Good God! It wasn't easy. But they did it. But the industrialization and the deep shaft mining brought enormous wealth. It basically financed the Civil War.

Rubens: And as your title of the book notes, it was one of the richest places on earth.

25-00:28:47

Hinckle: And Virginia City, the town, was. That's why we called the book that. It was extravagant. And so was San Francisco. San Francisco lived the same way. I've often said the worst thing that ever happened to San Francisco was when the transcontinental railroad was connected. Because San Francisco's best period in creativity, in newspapers, in writing—And all the famous people, almost the entire town, except for some journalists in the twentieth century, came in the period when San Francisco was isolated. And the only way to get to San Francisco was you had to sail around the horn. Panama Canal wasn't there then. You had to go all the way down and around.

So it *was* the Paris of the Pacific. But all that stuff somehow got here—all the fine furniture and the paintings, the classical paintings and the silver. And these houses, the early Victorians, were mansions. Extraordinary. But that money basically did not come from gold panning; it came from Virginia City, from these mines and from mining stocks. And the stock money went to pay the costs of industrialization. So it's one of those myths of history that the gold rush is what built San Francisco. Uh-uh, no.

Rubens: But you have this great point—

25-00:30:12

Hinckle: And that's kind of explained pretty well in that book. But it's not an original insight, we just made more of a point of it because everybody's still, oh, the gold rush, and then San Francisco became this great city. No. There was a lot of broke people who came out here for the gold rush, and they had nothing to do. There was no gold.

Rubens: The introduction is just beautiful. You talk about life there as an American Camelot, devoted to the questionable art of conspicuous consumption.

25-00:30:40

Hinckle: Oh, that's Virginia City, for sure.

Rubens: And you talk about it being as productive as a sucked egg, since its silver mines petered out in the 1880s.

25-00:30:47

Hinckle: It was a Western ghost town. It's a wonderful place. The people are terrific, who live there now, and you get to love them, including ranchers and a few guys working in what's left of the mines. There was a big tailings business up

there. That is the residue from the old mines. It's toxic waste, almost. Just mounds of stuff in the mountains around. In the rush to get the real stuff out, they just haul this stuff and throw it aside. So a century later, people started looking at it and saying, hey, there's something valuable in those old piles of dirt. So there's a big industry going in the area, at that time in the seventies, and it's still going on now. You can buy stock in companies that are making—that are quite profitable, from taking these old piles of tailings, they call them—that was stuff dug out so they could get into the mine—and they're sifting them for lead, for silver, for gold. Recycling.

Rubens: So was there some thought that you'd invest in that, too?

25-00:31:51

Hinckle: No, never thought about it.

Rubens: It was just the hotel and the newspaper that you were interested in?

25-00:31:54

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Did you ever put any bid on the newspaper? Did the *Daily Trespass* ever come to—

25-00:32:02

Hinckle: No. I was going to do it. It just sounded like a really good idea to me. We were thinking about it, to produce a general West paper, distributed all over the West and that sort of thing. And then I ended up going to work for the *Chronicle* and sort of got—

Rubens: Sidetracked?

25-00:32:18

Hinckle: —misdirected from that. But I've still got the files of it. I always thought about it. Hey, that'd be a cool thing to do, huh? It's doable.

Rubens: How did the book sell? Did you have fun promoting the book? You must've done well with it.

25-00:32:42

Hinckle: Oh, yes, but I don't know how well it sold; it did all right. It's a coffee table book. It's an awkward sized book.

Rubens: The paper is gorgeous that it's printed on. Did you have any hand in choosing that? Or just you had a good editor at Houghton Mifflin?

25-00:32:57

Hinckle: Well, it was a fancy book. It was all that fine-line art, so you had to print it on something fairly decent. It was an eccentric book; it was very odd. Half the

book was, almost, drawings. The rest was sort of over-written text. The text is telling a wild story. Re-telling a wild story.

Rubens: It's dedicated to Dan DeQuille, is that how you say his name?

25-00:33:17

Hinckle: Yes, yes.

Rubens: And the muckers and powder monkeys of the Comstock lode. Written with your distinct flourish and flair.

25-00:33:23

Hinckle: There's great history up there. And nice people. It's a wonderful ghost town. It's pretty intoxicating to be in. Of course, it's over 5,000 feet. You're up, you're a mile high.

Rubens: So were you going up there quite a bit in that period, doing research and just scouting the town, deciding whether you were going to put out a newspaper.

25-00:33:47

Hinckle: Yes. It was a great place to hang out.

Rubens: Well, so at the same time, are you moving ahead with *The Fish Is Red*? Because that comes out in '81. A lot of that was stuff that has been generated by Bill Turner.

25-00:34:04

Hinckle: Well, around that time, we may have started on *The Fish Is Red*; but in the interval—I think we discussed that at some point earlier—there came this escape from prison story. And so we had to do that book immediately, we had to tell that story immediately, because we had all the—

Rubens: Right, because he had made the break.

25-00:34:29

Hinckle: —material. So that interfered. And then we went back, I guess, to working on *The Fish Is Red*.

Rubens: It came out in '81. And then it is reissued and expanded in '91, when you call it *Deadly Secrets*.

25-00:34:48

Hinckle: Yes. So much had happened in between, so much more was known—Senate hearings and things. Basically, the thesis that was proposed in that book turned out to be correct. At least it was substantiated by further developments, congressional investigations and people testifying under oath. There was a rich amount of stuff. And some of the villains in that book sort of assumed command positions if you like—not so visible, most of them, but important in the first George Bush administration. He was sort of the target. So that book

brought it up through the Bush presidency, the first Bush presidency. And about double the size; there was a lot more material. So basically, it was the old book updated, plus a hell of a lot of other stuff. So it was an old book, but it was a new book.

Rubens: What was your working relationship like with Turner? How did you literally turn out the chapters? Did you sit and work together? Did you share material?

25-00:35:55

Hinckle: Well, he's an FBI guy. Turner's great. These guys never change. Don Duncan always, the Green Beret, remained military bearing and Green Beret, even though he was a mile on the left in relation to the Vietnam War, a critic of the war. And Turner remains an FBI guy. Meticulously doing interviews, collecting notes, doing research, collecting files on the people involved. Extraordinary amount of research, yes. And he did probably 80 percent of the actual interviews for that book. I did a bunch of them myself. Another friend of mine, Mitch [Mitchell] WerBell, came. Now, a total, complete lunatic, madman. He had a private security company. He's a soldier of fortune, adventurer. He's an arms manufacturer, trader. He had a private shooting range at a place in Georgia, on the outskirts of Atlanta.

Rubens: What's his name?

25-00:36:59

Hinckle: Mitch WerBell, W-E-R-B-E-L-L. Wild, wildman, Mitch.

Rubens: I was looking at your acknowledgments in the first—

25-00:37:09

Hinckle: Well, I wouldn't put him in the acknowledgments; he'd shoot me. But he is in that book. Or at least he's in the second version. He was always invading Cuba, private invasions of Cuba, to get the Communists. He was not a civil libertarian. To me, he was a very likable guy; I found him quite charming and got along with him pretty well. But you'd go to his estate and it's surrounded—it's maybe thirty, forty, sixty acres, I don't know about a half hour out of Atlanta. And it's completely surrounded by barbed wire. It's a lot of space to surround by barbed wire. And he had explosives and training grounds out there. He trained paramilitary troops. He was into it—for foreign countries—and he was a security expert and he was an arms developer and manufacturer and weapons trader. And he had bomb testing ranges on his estate. The guys would be jogging around and these guys would be training them to go be commandos, soldiers of fortune in some Middle Eastern country or somewhere in South America. He did that sort of stuff. He would leave poisoned arrows around. He'd go in his study—He always wore kilts, played the bagpipe. And [laughs] he would say, "Now, watch out when you sit down over there. Don't touch that arrow; that's got curare on it," however you pronounce it, which is instant poison. And he'd have these guns that would shoot these poison arrows at people. It was like, hey, Mitch, how you doing

tonight? It was quite a place to stay overnight; you kept looking around and saying, what?

Anyway, I did a lot of interviews, met a lot of fairly interesting people. Haitian soldiers of fortune and that sort of thing. And wrote that book. But Turner, I would say, did about 80 percent of the interviews and that stuff. And then we both did research. We hired some researchers and sort of supported the interviews with the available research: be it newspaper articles—sort of, yes, this really did happen but it was kind of buried; you wouldn't know about it. Or varied parts of congressional testimony that came out in volumes and things nobody really read, the eighteen volumes of the hearings. But if you knew what you were looking for, there was gold in there.

So we supplanted that with the research that was available and the first-person interviews and a sort of historical understanding for doing journalism in that area during the period. What were these forces at work? From the mob to corporate privateers who wanted Castro out of Cuba, wanted Cuba to stay the way it was, and the many uses United States intelligence made of organized crime and of these same individuals, some of them very famous and quite wealthy, some of them rather shady. And then how all that got mixed up in the mess of the Kennedy assassination and its aftermath, and what disinformation the CIA put out to keep its hands off. I've never believed that the Kennedy assassination was ordered directly by the CIA itself or anything like that; but the one clear truth is that it would've been extremely embarrassing, maybe destructive, to the agency and to the government, if the extant knowledge of the connections of guys like Lee Harvey Oswald, this and that, to American intelligence became common fodder. So they had to mislead a happily misled Warren Commission. They had to cover their tracks. Not to cover ordering the exact assassination of a president, but the sloppy, careless, heedless way they proceeded with intelligence gathering and covert activities over several decades. And just the connections alone, without saying we found out who pulled the trigger, in the cliché, would've been devastating to the Central Intelligence Agency, other intelligence agencies, and to the government. And so that was to sort of try to piece together this maze of cover-up. Not so much we want to protect the guy who actually shot him, but just the whole milieu stunk. It just stunk.

Rubens:

Well, so you were pigeonholed a bit as a conspiracy theorist. And it seemed to me that—

25-00:42:15

Hinckle:

Yes, there's 49er fans and then there's 49er fans. [laughter] So we argued it was a conspiracy to cover up the government's reckless involvement in that, and to keep the truth from being known because they really liked the idea, which is a false idea, that Lee Harvey Oswald was a lone leftist. That was convenient. Everything else was too embarrassing. And I think Ken Jones, Jr. had found this out and said this. So many people have died so mysteriously.

And again, it doesn't mean that somebody's running the CIA, saying, kill those people. It's that people involved in the various activities say, hey, these guys, we can't let them go before the Warren Commission or something like that they know too much. Right? They'll take us down just by talking.

Rubens: Was it Garrison who tracked the—

25-00:43:13

Hinckle: Garrison. Garrison's investigation was principal in that. And we cooperated with Garrison a lot.

Rubens: Well, you had met him out here.

25-00:43:19

Hinckle: Oh, I *love* Garrison.

Rubens: Yes. Say just a little bit about meeting him. You meet him, as I recall, at Melvin—

25-00:43:24

Hinckle: Met him at Mel Belli's place.

Rubens: During the *Ramparts* period.

25-00:43:29

Hinckle: Yes. And he was—Well, yes.

Rubens: You were taken with his—

25-00:43:33

Hinckle: Well, I'd talked to him a lot, but I hadn't gotten down there yet. I did get down there to see him afterwards. But *Ramparts* is where we got involved in it, which I think we discussed, the mysterious deaths. Right?

Rubens: No, no, we didn't discuss that, actually.

25-00:43:48

Hinckle: We didn't discuss that?

Rubens: No, because we were going to sort of leave it for this part.

25-00:43:51

Hinckle: Goodness me. Okay. Well, yes. One of the first big *Ramparts* stories was a cover; it had a classic picture of President Kennedy. But superimposed on it was a jigsaw puzzle outline, and some of the pieces were taken out. I remember Ed Keating at the time was still the publisher. And he was in the art department one day. "What's that?" I said, "Oh, we're doing this thing on the Kennedy assassination." And, "Oh, a jigsaw puzzle. That's good." And the pieces that were taken out were sort of at the bottom of this chest-high portrait. One of the classic pictures of Kennedy. But we made it obvious it

was a jigsaw puzzle. And he said, "Oh, no. No, you've got to put the—Let's take some right out here, in his head; that's where they shot him." "No, Ed, we can't do that! Oh, no!" It's like, "Ed, no!"

Rubens: Just too obvious, too gross, too—

25-00:44:50

Hinckle: Yes, come on!

Rubens: All of the above, predictable.

25-00:44:52

Hinckle: It wasn't exactly subtle, doing the cover, anyway. That would've been ridiculous. But constraint, so we do have constraint. [laughter] In spite of what people say. But to me, it was a fabulous cover and story. It set off a discussion of conspiracy theory, but the *New York Times* never looked at it.

A friend of mine in Texas had told me about it—or maybe it was one of the conspiracy researchers—about this lone Texas country weekly editor named Penn Jones. And he'd been doing this series of editorials in the *Midlothian Mirror*, which was a city on the outskirts, oh, maybe an hour out of Dallas. A little country town in the oil country. And he'd stumbled across or got into this fact that all these people who'd been witnesses to the events around the time of the assassination—friends of Jack Ruby's, other people, witnesses here, Oswald's landlady in his rooming house, police officers who happened to whatever—the list goes on—attorneys who were involved in this. And it was clear they should be called as witnesses before the Warren Commission because of their direct and intimate involvement with known players, and trying to find out who killed the guy, what happened here. They had all died. It was a King Tut curse kind of thing.

And at the time we did that story, there were like ten or twelve of them that we found were actually dead. Maybe it was a bit more. And he'd been publishing these articles. And then he published a little paperback book, actually did two volumes of it, bound. And it was like an old-fashioned creaky press that was unwieldy and the covers were all stained and flappy. But it was editorials from the *Midlothian Mirror*. And sure enough, all these people were dead. I remember telling Turner, well, it's like this can't be true. But it must be true.

So I immediately got on a plane and went down to see the guy. I said, "This is just too good." Went to the little town of Midlothian, Texas, sat on his porch drinking bourbon and branch water. And he was showing me his little farm and stuff, and just rattling off these facts. And how did you get into this? I said, "This is a hell of a story." It doesn't prove anything, because he didn't really know what they were going to say because they were all dead. I mean mysteriously dead. Including newspaper guys. Heart attack, but no autopsy, break-in at the apartment. One guy was Jim Koethe, who was a reporter on

one of the Dallas papers, I believe. And another guy was a former Texan, Bill Hunter, who was covering the assassination and its aftermath for the Long Beach newspaper. And he went back to Texas, was doing reporting. And they died in a weird way. One of them got out of the shower and somebody was in his apartment and killed him with a karate chop to the head. Break-in type murder. But the only thing stolen were all his notes. Okay? Qualifies to me as a mysterious death. Another guy was in the Long Beach paper's press room, and some cops who had kind of a spotty record on the force came in. They were horsing around, as cops do sometimes, rough housing, and somebody's gun dropped and went off, and the bullet accidentally went through the head of the police reporter and killed him. A rare occurrence, that's all I can say. Right? Anyway, you start adding up these people, and all of a sudden now you've got more than dozen, fourteen of them, and they all had intimate knowledge and had to be called as witnesses before the Warren Commission. Well, they couldn't be called as witnesses because they were already dead. Right? It was like when you put them all together—

Rubens: So that's what set you off on this track of investigation?

25-00:49:09

Hinckle: It was a King Tut curse. Worse. It had nothing to do with anything, but it was the King Tut curse. Out of all these people that knew everybody, they'd killed themselves or been killed within a year. It was odd, to say to the least, right? But it was a great story because it's the King Tut curse. All old legends, old stories, there's a reason clichés are valuable; they fascinate people. And most of the stuff that had been published about the Warren Commission, critical—Mark Lane, his books, the so-called conspiratorialists—they were digging; there were these deep facts and other theories about who did it. Some of the books, like Lane's, they were big sellers, but wouldn't even be reviewed by the *New York Times*. They wouldn't even be reviewed by them. Wouldn't touch it. Crazy stuff.

Rubens: John Leonard reviews *The Fish Is Red* for the *New York Times*.

25-00:50:05

Hinckle: Oh. Oh, *The Fish Is Red*. Yes, I don't consider *The Fish Is Red*—No, I'm talking about the earlier period of the first conspiracy books. Before *Ramparts* got into the thing.

Rubens: Okay.

25-00:50:16

Hinckle: So we entered the fray. At the time, I did have some people working conspiracy theories, separating the least crazy from the other crazies. Because there were a lot of factual questions having to do with ballistics, how a single bullet could do all the stuff, and technical things that involved scientists and engineering and other investigations. So we had a bunch of those guys working in one room at *Ramparts* for about a year, and they were developing

this big thesis. It was kind of boring, put you to sleep; but it's true, the stuff. Anyway, so I kind of juked that when I heard about this King Tut curse guy. He didn't call it the King Tut curse, but I did. I went down to see him. Just a charming guy. I love the guy. And then just as a footnote, an aside about how these things continue personally. So a few years later, this became a huge national story, when that magazine came out—

Rubens: Right, with that cover.

25-00:51:13

Hinckle: Yes. Oh! It put *Ramparts* on—Not that—it was known for its criticism of the Vietnam War and everything, but it really put it on the map. You weren't going to get praised by national television for being against the Vietnam War. That's not so good. And being a publication, so what? But that thing, Huntley-Brinkley did two days of filming at *Ramparts* for the national evening news. Walter Cronkite went to Texas himself, to interview this guy Penn Jones, because *Walter Cronkite* couldn't believe—Are these people all—the same question I had—are they *all dead*? [laughs] Tell me that that's not the case. Come on. They can't all be dead. Yes, they were. So that story cracked the—I guess you'd call it mass media. All of a sudden the television networks were doing this story from *Ramparts* that this Texas editor found out. Because as a news guy, you can't resist that; it's too coincidental. It's crazy, right? Didn't answer at all who might've done it or anything like that; it just was. And it made a great story. Also it took the questioning of the Warren Commission out of sort of the conspiracy theorist ranks in the early period of questioning it, and brought it into mainstream journalism because it was just too irresistible a story. And so that's how *Ramparts* got into the game.

Rubens: And so you, too just became really magnetized to this kind of research or the following of this thread?

25-00:52:56

Hinckle: Well, we'd been doing that stuff, in different stories and everything, for quite some time.

Rubens: But particularly on the—

25-00:53:02

Hinckle: Well, the Kennedy assassination, you had to keep at it. And it wasn't so much the ballistics and proving this was impossible, the conclusion reached by the Warren Commission, because it was the intelligence connections and the back stories and the ongoing stuff and the other things that happened that created a picture of a national security apparatus and intelligence community completely out of control, into random profit making and alliances with organized crime and everything else. And no controls *whatsoever*. Anybody could've run off and done just about anything. And then if they did it, like a bad boy, they would have to hush it up because it could—Everybody'd have to go to jail. It was completely whacky. And at the same time, they were

evading the constitution, if you want. It was everywhere: from local police departments with red squads to the FBI; its COINTEL operation setting up the Black Panthers and other people; and leftists protesting this; and eavesdropping; planting evidence to fake—planting drugs, doing this and that. All this stuff was going on around the same period. And then a lot of the same players were connected to the background aspects of the Kennedy assassination investigation. So you had to say to yourself—

Rubens: What's going on?

25-00:54:21

Hinckle: —what the hell is going on? So that book came out of that.

Rubens: And I think then all the stories about Latin America that start coming out, the CIA's role in training counterrevolutionaries in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

25-00:54:41

Hinckle: Oh, sure It was shameless. And it wasn't—covered would be a ridiculous word to use.

Rubens: But the news—

25-00:54:52

Hinckle: It was not considered news or the proper thing for Washington journalism or investigative journalism to look at. It was criminal activities of government, both from a constitutional standpoint and from a commonsense standpoint. What are you doing training death squads in Latin America at the Army War College, and sending them back as commanders of death squads, wiping out people in Chile and Venezuela, political opponents of a dictator? What the hell is America doing, doing that? Why? And it inevitably comes back to United States' soil. When this guy Letelier—he was the Chilean ambassador to the United States. He was blown up in Washington, D.C. by some of these rightwing operatives who were on the CIA payroll from Latin America, who didn't like the guy because he was—

Rubens: Yes. That was what Saul Landau's book is about.

25-00:55:50

Hinckle: Yes, Saul Landau, yes. Another old friend of mine. And it's true. They did do it. And immediately, the government had to cover up all their connections to it. Now again, that's where I don't try to separate myself from the conspiracy enthusiasts. Anybody can find a conspiracy. But the question we were always asking was, what is going on here? And there's clearly covering up, and the press isn't even looking. This is outrageous, criminal, insane activity for the government to be funding. And inevitably, it's going to come back and bite you in the ass or shoot you in the forehead, as in the case of Kennedy.

It's going to snap around, because they're not controlling it. And all of a sudden people then just stop funding them and they get mad. But they've already got the armament and everything you gave them, and the connections to organized crime. And if you leave them alone to go on the playground by themselves, you don't know *what* these people are going to do. Right? And then the government's got to say, oh, my God, look what they did. Ssh. We've got to quiet this guy up. We'll all go to jail. Right? That's not the same thing as saying the government did it.

So that was the perspective of a lot of the *Ramparts* reporting, all the stuff I've done, and of that book. It was like, look at this mess. Here are the connections and here's what they did. And you can't come to a conclusion. We never came to a conclusion about who killed Kennedy. The only conclusion you'd come to, it sure as hell wasn't Oswald by himself. Period.

Rubens: So let's stop here and change the tape.

Begin Audio File 26

Rubens: Warren, I wanted to ask you specifically about Saul Landau. You had consulted with him before *The Fish Is Red* came out. But he reviews it for the *Nation*. He calls it Red Herring. It's a mixed review. It's basically a positive review. He says it adds a lot to the record and particularly for those who don't know the literature about the assassination and dirty tricks, it's going to be really useful. But he claims there are certain sources that you don't look at.

26-00:00:35

Hinckle: I'm sure there were. [laughs] I'm sure there were. No, if you write a book that is in the milieu of left criticism in the United States—Although this is pretty true in France, too, but it's just more out in the open in France and everybody understands it. Here, it's muddled because nobody understands what the left is, including the left. But basically, guys like Saul, who's a very smart guy, I have great respect for him, they do the—He did the best book on the Letelier assassination, for instance. *The classic*, the standard book on it. And he spent a lot of time in Cuba, much more time than I have. Started much earlier, way back, going to, I guess, pick cotton or pick sugar cane, whatever they do down there, in those early periods. I can only make the analogy about left criticism, anything that involves a left thesis, like oh, Cuba or the assassination of the president or something like that, it's almost like academia. So if you take a university department or a typical university, people have their own fields and there's specialties. And anybody who invades their field in any way, even if they're writing an overview thing that touches on their field, their first inclination is protection of your stake in research and things like that. Your first inclination is to look at what they missed in your field, or where they got it wrong. [laughs] So you'll find anybody from a left perspective will look at a book like *The Fish Is Red* or the *Deadly Secrets* book, which is a much greater compilation of that thesis, which is really about government misinformation

and the questions that will never be answered because of government actions to cover it up and their alliances—Because it doesn't reach conclusions in that way. And some people have an investment. Most people in the left have an investment in their sources, in their theses. It's like academia. You've got an investment in your field, your reputation. So it's natural for them—I'm sure in that review, he says—You mentioned he said something like, oh, their sources on the House assassination investigation committee, that he said something like, well, they didn't pay enough attention to these people or something like that. Well, that's true. We looked at what the sources were saying within this mass of years of research we did, and we didn't give it the same credence he did. And people I had come to know during my visits to Cuba and the people I'd known down there—Cubans are very cynical people. They're very smart. They were a trade winds nation, long before America was even thought of. It's a much more advanced civilization, much smarter than the so-called cosmopolitan mixed bag of America is. They're very, very cynical and shrewd and tough. And they have their own theories about who's right and who's wrong and who can be trusted in Cuba. And a lot of people tried to get their expertise used and known, and they would jump into something like the House investigation of the debauch of the Kennedy assassination and sort of thrust themselves onstage, let me put it that way. And some of those people, I didn't give the same credence to that others do.

Rubens: Are you thinking of anyone in particular? I don't know this literature well enough.

26-00:04:43

Hinckle: If he mentioned somebody in that review, I don't know; I don't think he did.

Rubens: No, he doesn't.

26-00:04:47

Hinckle: If he did, I'd have no idea what he's talking about. But in general, that's true of left criticism of a book that takes in left turf. It's specialists versus a generalist view. To use another word, the stuff I've done is more secular. Right? It's not religious. It's more secular and cynical, if you want. Much more interested in the interlappings [sic] of all these government and business and criminal operations and the cover-up of them that's happened. And where people like Peter Dale Scott, who's a genius in this field of investigative stuff—I don't agree with a lot of his conclusions. He *certainly* doesn't agree with mine, which says no, you can't really make a conclusion, because they were successful.

Rubens: But you say in your introduction that he read both books.

26-00:05:40

Hinckle: Oh, yes. No, he didn't disagree with the book, but I'm saying *his* books, I don't—His books went further than I was willing to go. Because I didn't know. His research has convinced him that what he says is true. I'm not

convinced, even though I've read all his books, that you can come to that firm a conclusion. Right? That's a fair difference of opinion. I respect the guy greatly. And I certainly asked him to read the manuscript of both books. Because he's more of an academic than a leftist. His original field was English literature, as you know, at Berkeley. And he's punctilious about everything, Peter. So if there's a factual error, he's going to tell you. But that doesn't keep other people on the left—Peter's certainly on the left, but his stuff is documented. He is not into theory; he's into what he thinks is fact. And then he takes all these facts and reaches a logical conclusion, to him, from those facts. Persuasive argument. Would it stand up in court? Probably not. Can anybody get indicted because of what he found? Does it make you very suspicious of everything? He's probably right. Yes. But that isn't the type of book that I wrote, that we wrote.

Rubens: You have extensive citations.

26-00:07:02

Hinckle: Oh, we have, yes, because all the facts are there. You just see, wow, wow, wow.

Rubens: Leonard accuses you of not documenting certain parts of it, the more interesting, original parts, I guess, he says.

26-00:07:19

Hinckle: Oh, that's like criticizing typos in a magazine.

Rubens: He calls you cowboys. He's upset about a journalistic kind of flair or looseness.

26-00:07:32

Hinckle: Oh, yes. I know John pretty well. This is a guy, a *New York Times* establishment reviewer, old lazybones, right? And the *Times* was the biggest defender of the Warren Commission that we're attacking. The last place to give any appraisal, or to review a book like we wrote, couldn't be in the *New York Times*. And he was the *Times* establishment reviewer then. Tom Wicker wrote the introduction to the Warren Commission. The *New York Times* published the goddamn Warren Commission, for Christ's sake, right? They were front-page defending it. They've smacked anybody who criticizes it over the years. So I don't expect John Leonard—I'm not demeaning his integrity or anything like that. He's part of the *Times* establishment. And they have a stake in keeping their support. They put their reputation on the line, that the Warren Commission was right. Right? Everything has shown that the Warren Commission wasn't right. But you can go to a used bookstore or anywhere and look back at the files of the *Times*; they were the biggest defender and promoter of the Warren Commission. Up to, in fact, as I just said, having Tom Wicker write the introduction to the *New York Times* best-selling paperback edition of the Warren Commission, out of which they made a fortune by putting their name, one of supposed integrity, on basically, a fraudulent,

incomplete document on an object of great national curiosity. That's what's wrong with what Spiro Agnew called the Eastern Seaboard establishment press. And so I wouldn't expect John Leonard to say, hey, there's typos in this book; they didn't document this. Probably the parts he didn't think we didn't document was saying the *New York Times* is a bunch of crazy bums on this thing. They ruined their reputation by putting their name on it. Because that criticism is made of the *Times*, in that book. So you don't expect the *New York Times* to heap praise on a book slashing the *New York Times*.

Rubens: Well, he doesn't slam it, but he was critical.

26-00:09:34

Hinckle: Yes. Well, that's how establishment reviewers slice. The method of criticism gives it objectivity. Which is a bunch of bullshit.

Rubens: It's ten years before you'll come out with the revised edition, and a lot happened. You must have kept an open file.

26-00:10:00

Hinckle: That's why we did it. No, I put more work into that revised edition, which is double the size of the book. And we added another ten years. Because basically, the intelligence community got their man in the White House, which would be George Bush I. And so that was kind of the culmination of this whole period. So it was really interesting to look at. And we just brought it up to date. It was like now they've got the presidency. And we detail how that came about and what he did there and what he's done in the past, and the phoniness of the war on drugs and what that was really used for. The *Deadly Secrets* is a pretty good book. There's a mass of information in there.

Rubens: And there's just a little bit of humor that's taken out of it. In your dedication, you don't thank Cookie Picetti as you had in Red Fish. It's a more serious set of acknowledgments.

26-00:11:00

Hinckle: Well, and doing those books— These left books are so humorless, so didactic. It's like the worst academic treatises. Just oh, my God. So I always try and make at least the writing interesting, even when you're dealing with a mass of detail. You try and not write over it, but write around it and sort of develop a few personalities; stuff that you can actually read, as opposed to having to pore through stacks of research and legal briefs, which a lot of these books are like. They are almost insufferable reading.

Rubens: Well, I just was remembering that Art Levine, in the *Washington Monthly*, says that key chapters read like a script out of Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

26-00:11:49

Hinckle: Well, that's hardly a compliment, from the *Washington Monthly*. But what they mean is Oliver Stone is nuts and so are we.

Rubens: Is that really what the implication is?

26-00:11:56

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: Oh, I thought he meant it was cinematic. I missed the valence.

26-00:12:01

Hinckle: Oh, no, no, that was a slam. Oh, Oliver Stone's considered a nut in official Washington circles. The *Washington Monthly* would take that view.

Rubens: Did you consult with him at all? Or did he consult with you?

26-00:12:12

Hinckle: No. No. Well, I did meet with him. And basically, that movie is based on Jim Garrison's case and on his research. And I championed Jim Garrison at *Ramparts*, and I've never—I will not apologize for championing Jim Garrison. I did counsel him. I said, "Jim, you're going to trial with this thing. You're going to blow it." My friend Sidney Zion was then working for the *Times*; we later started *Scanlan's* together. I said, "Hey, will you go down for a meeting, take a few days off from the *Times* and see Jim and take a look at this trial he's got going?" Because he was indicting a guy for the conspiracy to murder the president. I said, "I think he's gone off the deep end, going to trial on this thing." And one of the reasons, by the way, that Garrison was hobbled and ended up with his bad back and everything else, just getting a little whacko or extreme or whatever you want to call it towards the end of this period, it wasn't that he wasn't coming up with the right stuff; he was. But he was a DA, obviously. But he thought like a DA and it just drove him kind of nuts. He couldn't believe that in the normal case of a criminal investigation, he would subpoena a guy, send somebody to another state, arrest him; we have a warrant for him, right, bring him back. Here, here, you're in jail. You're going to testify in this thing. The federal government intervened and undercut his authority, wouldn't let him do—if it had been a bank robbery, there wouldn't have been any question. But because it was questioning the government, all of a sudden all of his apparatus as a law enforcement officer was cut off. That's pretty wild, when you think about it.

Rubens: Yes, what's going on here?

26-00:13:58

Hinckle: Garrison was hardly a leftwing raving guy. He was a rightwing guy.

Rubens: Yes, a law an order man.

26-00:14:06

Hinckle: A murder had been committed in his jurisdiction, had been plotted in his jurisdiction. There's no question about that, that the plotters—it came out of New Orleans. Right? That's fairly well documented in our book and in other books. And he just looked at it as another criminal case. What the hell was

this? That crazy Warren Commission, they didn't look at this; they covered it up, and we're going to nail these guys. Then he went after them and the government intervened to protect him. And he felt almost helpless. "I'm a DA, for God's sake." And then it was like we'd better take down the whole government. These guys, all these bums in Washington, they're all part of it. Why are they—I have the right to subpoena, I have the right to drag people across state lines; I do that all the time, in every case. All of a sudden I can't do it now because it involves this question? Well, you can see the frustration.

And it was pretty clear that a jury trial against Clay Shaw, who was clearly involved in all kinds of activities related to fronts for the assassination and this and that—Whether he was an active plotter, I'm still not sure. But it was certainly enough to be indictable, and if you could've had the witnesses to prove it, to put him in jail. Because there were ordinary, daily criminal activities involving smuggling and drugs and this and that, and murders for hire, things like that. Ordinary stuff, nothing to do with a presidential assassination, involved in all these activities. And a lot of them involved Cuban exiles who come to the United States, were funded and promised by the Kennedy administration that we'll send you back. The CIA gave them arms, allowed them to get into counterfeiting and all kinds of criminal activities, while they basically say: "Now, sit still for a year or so; we're going to have another invasion pretty soon." So idle minds, devil's playground. And they had all these connections, they had been working with the mob guys—they became criminals. I mean active criminals, in consortiums. And they let these guys run loose. And Clay Shaw was kind of involved in that. He was a front man for a lot of that stuff. But all those witnesses, he couldn't get to trial because the federal government wouldn't let him cross-examine them or bring them from where they fled. And ordinarily, a criminal trial like that, DAs—That's what happens. So that drove Garrison just batty, right? And I was afraid that the trial was going to not be—that he wouldn't succeed in that trial, because he couldn't get witnesses. And that's what happened. And Sidney went down and came back, he says, "Geez, I had the greatest time." He said, "What a guy. Oh, he's right. There's no question about that." Zion is hardly a leftwing guy himself, to say the least. He says, "But you're never going to win this trial." [laughs] His witnesses, can't get them, can't testify.

Rubens: So is he discredited after that?

26-00:17:07

Hinckle:

Sure. After the trial, he went into a depression. His back was killing him. He got desperate. "All this time, I spent all the state's money." And then they use that to help discredit the whole thing. Does that mean Jim Garrison was wrong? No, it doesn't. Does it mean that he was afraid? A rightwing DA, himself a little bit involved with the mob—just ordinary stuff like gambling and stuff, liquor—as everybody is in New Orleans and most of the Southern jurisdictions, for God's sake. This guy was no crazy leftist theorist. He was

after a crime they committed in his jurisdiction; it pissed him off. And that's the truth of Garrison.

Rubens: So Oliver Stone, you said he consulted with you?

26-00:17:51

Hinckle: Yeah, he got a lot of our files. And I met him a couple of times. But basically, the *JFK* movie is based on Garrison's investigation. The *JFK* movie of Stone's is a fabulous movie. That's the closest you're ever going to get to the truth about the Kennedy assassination, told—

Rubens: Does that come out before your book? Both are in '91, so it must've been—you must've been done with your book.

26-00:18:17

Hinckle: I don't remember when the *JFK* movie—

Rubens: It's '91, it's the same year that you publish *Deadly Secrets*. But I just couldn't tell—

26-00:18:24

Hinckle: There was no coordination, no. But his material was based on a lot of the material—Because we had access. Turner had done a lot of investigation for Garrison. Not as a side thing, but it was like, hey, here's our files and this and that. And he'd say, "Well, this is this guy we discovered." We cooperated with Garrison's investigation. From an FBI, find-the-facts mode.

Rubens: Well, and then you say in *Deadly Secrets* that the House assassination committee did look at your files.

26-00:18:53

Hinckle: Oh, yeah.

Rubens: Who had the files? Who's keeping those files? What are you going to do with those files?

26-00:18:58

Hinckle: Oh, I've still got them. I've got them down— Well, Turner's got them all in his basement, at his house over on Mark Twain Drive, in San Rafael. What a place to live for a writer.

Rubens: Has there ever been discussion of donating those papers to some archive?

26-00:19:20

Hinckle: I don't recall. I've got all this stuff, going back years. I've got to give it to someone.

Rubens: Yes, because Boston University—

26-00:19:26

Hinckle: Yes, Howard Gotleib at B.U. was always after me to give my papers there. But I've been too anal retentive. I thought, all right, I've got to go through them first, before—He said, "No, no. We'll copy them all and I'll send them back to you, we can index them, you can get them on demand. Don't worry, that's what we do for everybody." But I was a little slow and busy with other things

Rubens: Sure. Yes.

26-00:19:43

Hinckle: He was bugging me for ten years, Howard, to do it.

Rubens: Is that right?

26-00:19:46

Hinckle: Yes, because he is a great collector of archives. He's an aggressive collector at BU.

Rubens: And how did you know him? He just kept dogging you?

26-00:19:56

Hinckle: Oh, I don't know, I met him socially in New York or something and he got after me. He has Sidney Zion's files. And he was very—it's aggressive in the nice sense of the word. He was entrepreneurial and really after getting a great collection of archival material at Boston University. And he succeeded to get some of the best stuff in the country. But that's a very competitive field, as you know. It's like who's got whose archives and files, original stuff.

Rubens: Well, you also have to have money to process those files. You have to have some kind of angel that's going to support it, finance it.

26-00:20:37

Hinckle: Yes. Well, Nixon put a big dent in that. Used to be that you'd get a big tax break. Then Nixon ended that. That and the Newspaper Preservation Act are the two worst things Richard Nixon ever did. [laughs] Allowed newspaper monopolies to go along, collude; and knocking out the tax break for writers and things like that. He didn't like writers very much, Nixon. At least he didn't like us. I didn't take it personally. I don't think he was thinking of me when he did that.

Rubens: '81, the books comes out, but the writing must've been done by about '78. Now I have too much floating in my head. You go to the *Chronicle* in '78.

26-00:21:29

Hinckle: Well. I went to the *Chronicle* about a year after doing Francis' magazine. I was spending a lot of time up in Nevada around that time. We could've been screwing around with trying to start the *Territorial Enterprise* or the equivalent.

Rubens: In January of '78 is when your name shows up in the *Chronicle* index.

26-00:21:58

Hinckle: That would make sense.

Rubens: So that's why I'm figuring most of the churning out of *The Fish Is Red* must've happened in '77.

26-00:22:13

Hinckle: *The Fish Is Red*, yes. And then the expansion of it, the sequel of it, which was a much more complete book, much better. Basically, I rewrote the whole damn book, and then wrote these huge new sections about George Bush. And all this material was coming out that reinforced and sophisticated, if you want, the original research. Because when we wrote *The Fish Is Red*, we didn't know everything. We just knew as much as we could find out, and wrote it. And then there were subsequent government investigations and criminal cases and other things. The Kerry Commission, for instance, was fabulous, into drug trafficking. Went into all this stuff about the CIA. Those are invaluable records. And we got all their original records and investigations. And it made much fuller and richer the sort of rudimentary investigation we had, because that's what we knew at the time. Our thesis didn't basically change, but it was just so much richer. And we had finally the CIA getting, if you like, its man in the White House. It was sort of, okay, now we can put a ribbon on this thing.

Rubens: Now, in the original one, you also thank Susan Cheever. And I didn't know at what point—When do you meet her?

26-00:23:36

Hinckle: Knew her for years. We had an off and on again, East Coast-West Coast love affair, through various marriages.

Rubens: And so you met her when you first went east, during the *Ramparts*—

26-00:23:47

Hinckle: Well, yes. There's some irony in there because her husband at the time, Robert Crowley was the editor and the guy who gave the book advances for both *The Fish Is Red* and published the Virginia City book. We often laugh about that.

Rubens: Oh, so I asked that question at the right time.

26-00:24:04

Hinckle: I knew him through her, but we weren't going out at the time.

Rubens: *The Fish Is Red* is dedicated to Denise and Marge, who must be Turner's wife

26-00:24:18

Hinckle: Oh, that's because he wanted to dedicate one to his wife.

Rubens: And then the '91 version is dedicated to Bentley. [Hinckle's basset hound]. You also dedicated it to "and the men—dot, dot, dot—who are they?" What is the reference here?

26-00:24:54

Hinckle: That's probably all the soldiers of fortune and guys who—and we couldn't have their names in the book—provided all kinds of information, took some risk in talking to us, who remained active and they would take contracts from governments and things like that. But they were involved in a lot of these things, but their names could not surface. And we had to use their information sub rosa, by other interviews and digging out facts, things they told us or from finding an article here in the newspaper. "Oh, yes. See, that did happen." Something supporting what we wrote. Not to be overly dramatic, but certainly, their wellbeing, financial wellbeing, their careers and potentially, their lives would've been at risk because these guys— And they felt betrayed by the government in various ways. And so that's why they were willing to talk. But don't put my name on it. So that's probably what that elliptical reference is, to those guys.

Rubens: And do you think you and Turner ever suffered any direct investigation on the part of the CIA, or were there threats to you, as a result of this?

26-00:26:03

Hinckle: No. Well, we were just so upfront about it in *Ramparts*. Everything was so out in the open. There were the tax investigations and things—

Rubens: In *Scanlan's*.

26-00:26:12

Hinckle: —and the whole crazy thing with *Scanlan's*, but that was just Nixon being mean. I don't know. I just have a sort of dumb faith about that they aren't really going to—the government, at least; I mean, some lone nut can do in someone who thinks who are these bastards bothering my friends. But the government's not going to, if you're doing it out in the open and— If you're cranky and crazy and leftist enough, they're going to ignore you. Right? And when you have a big book or a big publishing operation or something like that, hey, go ahead and eavesdrop, we don't care. It doesn't matter. It's counterproductive, from a rational point of view, to go and try and arrest you or put you on trial or shoot you or something like that, right?

Rubens: All right, but you're documenting a lot of cases where—

26-00:27:05

Hinckle: You're documenting, but everything's out in the open. And you're visible. You're not like some researcher going off risking his existence because if they find out what I'm looking at, they'll know I'm going to get the secret and make a movie out of it, right? And then they'll chase me and—A couple of these spy movies, thriller movies have that thesis of somebody who's not—A

young lawyer, et cetera, some of the Grisham things. Then the bad guys are after you because you've got the file that's going to prove whatever, right?

Rubens: Right, right.

26-00:27:37

Hinckle: So yes. But if you're doing that out in the open and so visibly, and you have a career and a reputation of doing it, it's almost the last thing they want to do, is to mess with you in some way that brings attention to what you've been doing and enhances it.

Rubens: And so I think in this interview, you've sort of created a picture where you don't see yourself as a, quote, "conspiratorial theorist." You're really a member of the left who's critiquing these government connections and abuses of power in certain areas.

26-00:28:11

Hinckle: Well, remember, if the left was a club, it's one that I would never join, and would never accept me as a member inside. [laughs] I couldn't take the oaths and the deportment required to be a member of that club. My friend Emile de Antonio, we became fast friends because he had very little use for the left in all its forms, pretensions, snobbishness, phoniness and careerism.

Rubens: When do you meet him? Maybe that's a good way to bring the story full forward, because you're—

26-00:28:42

Hinckle: D.? Oh, I met D. all during the time I was doing *Ramparts*. We spent a lot of time in Paris together at various things. He was making his movies. The *Point of Order!* Is his most famous movie, on [Senator Joseph] McCarthy, but he's a brilliant documentary filmmaker. Expert in the art world. He did the best documentary on the art world, I think, that's ever been done. But he was a very independent radical thinker, that's what I would call D. And both of us had really little use and patience for most of the establishment left, what I would definitely call its careerism. It really is a parallel to academia in many ways. These people stake their reputations they're more interested in climbing, getting ahead, making money, doing this, doing that. They're almost puritan in their demands of a certain lifestyle, which is really hypocritical because they don't live that lifestyle. They really want to amass wealth and fame. Hate each other, criticize each other. De Antonio saw through that and so did I. We became fast friends because we had the same view of the left. A lot of it was full of—Some guys were doing really interesting, original work; some were actually good Marxist thinkers, their theories were interesting. Maybe not absolutely correct to a point, but hey, if you're a serious thinker, you're a serious thinker. If you're a climber and a careerist in a field as open as the American left, which nobody knows what it is—People know what it was; nobody knows what it is. At least now. It's a dirty game. It's a dirty game on the left, and a confused game. And it's almost opportunistic to a

point. Even its best parts seize on a moment, and people will gather around the moment. But then when you try and define the moment, be it Indian rights, women's rights, something like that, when you try and define it into a coherent view of society, how to structure society, how to make it a fairer society, how to make it a political party, or do this or do that, it falls apart.

Rubens: Okay. But you still speak of yourself, you sort of position yourself as a critic from the left.

26-00:31:07

Hinckle: Well, where else are you going to be? Certainly not in the middle. [laughs]

Rubens: But de Antonio and you at some point, I think after *Deadly Secrets*, are talking about a project.

26-00:31:22

Hinckle: Oh, well D and I were working on a book on the Bush family. And he was going to make a movie out of it. And we were going to start—We incorporated a company in New York called Smoking Gun. This is before the website came up with the name Smoking Gun, that finds all these documents. You can look it up today on the web; that's what they do. But we called it Smoking Gun. And we hired a bunch of researchers and we were looking into the Bush family and especially both presidents. And then D just dropped dead of a heart attack at an early age. And I lost another friend and said "Ah, the hell with it." I still have all the research.

And a lot of that research was used in the *Deadly Secrets*. A lot of the research we were actively doing was folded into the *Deadly Secrets* book, because it was active, ongoing. We were going to do a whole book on the Bush family and all its connections, going back to Prescott Bush and the connections between Wall Street firms and the intelligence community way back, and profits and this, and government secrets—the whole thing. That *Deadly Secrets* book had the advantage of some of the research that D and I were doing, because it filled in. Hey, it's not like—There's progress even in theology. They find out some new things about theories or they adjust their thinking about this and that. Even so, they are almost, you could say, as rigid as theology. So imagine investigations trying to support what you'd have to call leftist critique—it's certainly not a rightist critique—of government activities or something like that. Well, it's all done in time. And then time moves on and you find out other things. And either you fill in your thesis, make it solider and more complete, or you find out something and you repudiate your whole thesis. You know, goddamn it, I was wrong about that.

The further expansion of information and more research has not changed anything; it's just filled in, sort of, the areas that were staked out in that *The Fish Is Red* and then the *Deadly Secrets* book. I have seen nothing that would make you say, no, we had the wrong idea here. Not at all.

Rubens: Well, but you're making the clear point that you're not really saying who pulled the trigger for the assassination, you're just—

26-00:33:59

Hinckle: No, they killed it; you're not going to find out. You will not find out. It's pretty clear that there were several gunmen. That's clear from the ballistics. It's dead certain science. But who were they? I could name you some of them; it's pretty clear. But who hired them? Was it just the mob being teed off at the arrogance of the Kennedys? When Bobby Kennedy went after the mob, after the mob got his brother elected president and was bugging these guys on golf courses, they got really pissed off, right? Trying to deport Marcello down in New Orleans. Hey, we made a deal with you guys, with your father. We got you in. Leave us alone. It's like going back and not paying a gambling debt or something; it's wrong. You can see why the mob was pissed. Plus they're trying to throw them out, deport them, arrest them. Bobby Kennedy, the little bastard. I can see why they went after him. They hated the Kennedys then. It was like they went back on their word. We cut the deal for you guys, what are you—Jesus. I can see what they were thinking.

Was it just the mob? Did they just use some paramilitary people or something like that? Was the mob just cover for some berserk branch of American intelligence that was tied in with Cuban exiles and organized crime and all the profiteering and adventuring that comes from a government run amok, that allows these sort of activities with government funding, and it's not controlled or watch-dogged in any way? No one was ever going to answer that question. But a lot of people on the left get mad at you and say, oh, no, we can answer that. You're being too cautious. Well, fine. It's a difference of opinion. But did the government stink? Did all these things go on in the name of profit and adventuring and be covered up? And did the race to cover up what actually happened so the government wouldn't have been embarrassed or taken down about the Kennedy assassination, did that happen? Yes.

Rubens: So do you think these books had any impact? You think that you've added to the knowledge? But has there been any significant reining in of the CIA?

26-00:36:22

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Certainly, after Iran-Contra, there was—

26-00:36:27

Hinckle: There've been various reforms, but as we found out from *Ramparts*—I got to know some CIA guys pretty well over the years—we really put a—*Ramparts*, when they exposed that they were using the Boy Scouts and the labor unions, this and that, against the rules of they're not supposed to operate inside the country. They're supposed to be foreign spies. But what they did, guys told me later, CIA guys, boy, you really cost us a lot of money. Oh, God, you drove us crazy! But all they did was change the fronts and go back to the same

sort of—go back to it in a wiser way. So it's a constant—All those books tell is, don't believe anything the government tells you, and here are the signposts as to what, up to date—And we finally signed off on that last book. This is what they're up to. And they'll still be up to it—

Rubens: It keeps going.

26-00:37:20

Hinckle: Yes. And without some sort of a press—What's coming out of the Washington press corps, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* is not that sort of journalism. If there's one truth about Watergate, it was that it had nothing to do with investigative reporting. It was government handouts from the CIA to reporters on the *Washington Post*. I remember talking to [Carl] Bernstein about this one night when we were drinking years later. He said, "Well, yeah, that's kind of true." Because Nixon, in his maniacal ways, was out to—He couldn't control the CIA. He thought they were a bunch of Harvard educated, or ivy league elitists. He had class envy, Nixon. Very insecure. I think that fits with almost every standard biography of the guy. And the CIA was this, to him, elite, but he couldn't control these guys. And the FBI, he wasn't happy with at all, because Hoover's was tough on everybody. He couldn't control. So within the White House, the Nixon White House, they set up their own sort of super-operation, which eventually would've taken over all the powers of the CIA and the FBI. They would've had their own national security apparatus. It wasn't these bums, as Nixon would call them. And as every institution does naturally, when the CIA realized that this is what this maniac, from their view, in the White House was up to, they had to take him down. And they had their operatives involved in—I'm sure at the higher levels of the CIA, they had no idea that Howard Hunt, Baker and these guys, who had all kinds of activities evolving over the years—They're main figures in the books that I've written. But did somebody know that they were involving them? Probably not. But they found out soon enough. And how do you best take down the presidency? You provide this information. Deep Throat, so-called Deep Throat, was a CIA operation. Right?

Rubens: Right, right. That became public just before he died.

26-00:39:38

Hinckle: He was seen as a lone guy—Nonsense! It was government information being fed to the *Washington Post* for all these stories, because it was in the CIA's and other intelligence agencies' interest to take down and put a dent in Nixon's ambitions to take over their own empires and interfere with their work, the way they saw it. That's what Watergate was all about. It was spoon-fed journalist. One part of government going after the other part.

Rubens: That's a great story. And what about Iran-Contra? Is there anything you want to say about that, particularly?

26-00:40:15

Hinckle: Well, it's just part of the—

Rubens: Part of the whole picture?

26-00:40:17

Hinckle: Yes, you could say a lot about it. But it's just part of the story. Everybody involved in Iran-Contra is all involved in *The Fish Is Red* book and the *Deadly Secrets* book. Same players. Same kind of military operations in Latin America, same secret funding, same this, same banks. The same banks were used to arm and funnel money to Cuban exiles going after Castro. Same operation. Same M-O. Nothing new.

Rubens: What about President Clinton? So did Clinton get any kind of control over them?

26-00:40:59

Hinckle: No. No. I've never been a fan of the Clinton presidency for various reasons, from NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] to other things. From my point of view, which is an idiosyncratic one, I suppose, what Clinton did was almost traitorous. Basically, the NAFTA-type thinking and other things he did in tariffs and things destroyed the soul, the heartland of American industry and ceded that territory to international corporations, of which both he and his wife—And this is not a conspiracy theory, this is just a fact, right?

And now you have a rust land in America. And God forbid there ever is another something like a Third World War or something like that, where we have to mobilize industrial America for a legitimate purpose, because American's lost its manufacturing capacity. Of course, there are new industries—information—and things go on. But I think it was a traitorous and—I call it traitorous, a thing to allow international corporations, who are avoiding taxes in the United States, using exploitative labor outside the country, and come back and make profits here, putting American workers out of jobs. Now, does that mean you should be a strict isolationists and, no, we only make stuff in—No. I don't mean that. But the result of all that thinking, and nobody watching it—and the press is just hopeless on this thing—was that industrial America became a rust belt. Look at the tire industry. It's outrageous. It's just gone. No reason for it, except for international corporations' profits. No advancement for any social purpose for anybody. And the avoidance of taxes that we need to take care of people in the United States who need some taking care of.

Rubens: Now, this is the same kind of analysis that you're going to start making very clear when you're writing in the *Chronicle*, when you talk about the transformation of San Francisco, the closing of so many factories and the transformation to a financial capital or a tourist capital.

26-00:43:30

Hinckle: There's some of that in that analysis, yes. Well, everybody's got their way of looking at things; that's my way of looking at it.

Rubens:

I get it. I think it's very articulate. So is there anything more you want to say about this whole area of investigation? We've been taping for an hour and forty-five minutes and have a little more time.

26-00:43:49

Hinckle: Well, we could get into individuals and you get into stories, you sit for five hours on a stage going through this stuff.

Rubens:

Do you still collect information on it?

26-00:43:56

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens:

You pay attention to anything new; this is just one of the files you keep or channels in your head?

26-00:44:02

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens:

Anything that you think about writing again about it?

26-00:44:06

Hinckle: I don't know. I might. One of the things that a lot of people have realized about, well, every writer, just about every writer—Some people write a novel just because they want to write the novel. But writing, as Mark Twain's memoirs clearly makes clear—Writers write for money. That's what they do it for, right? So you have to have a—Okay, this will make a book now, and we have to spend a lot of time and research backing up another book in this area, for this reason and that. What publisher's going to put up the dough so we can do that in the right way? And that requires getting it together. Can that be done? Yes. Would I do another one like that? Possibly. Maybe even probably.

It's all time. If you end up writing a newspaper column or you're putting out other publications in other fields, as opposed to just what we were talking about, about government intelligence bollixes, that eats into your time. And so you've got to balance. Okay, am I going to stop doing this and go do that? It's just like anything else.

Rubens:

Turner's still a good friend, though?

26-00:45:23

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens:

Yes. Did he do other things?

26-00:45:30

Hinckle:

Yeah, he's written a bunch of books. Some of them, he self-published, and others he found a small publisher for. He wanted me to do a book about Bush, the recent Bush presidency. I said, "I collected all this stuff," I said, "But Bill, there's just no new stuff here. If we're going to do a book on that Bush, we're going to have to get a big publisher and get a pile of money and put a bunch of— We've got to come up with new stuff." And so I said, "No, I don't see much. We don't really know anything that a sophisticated reader of the papers and of left periodicals doesn't already know." It's out there. It's pretty clear. We put it all together—Anyway, so he did a book on that, something about Bush, with a small publisher up in Washington State or something like that. It's a nice book as a compilation of stuff, but it's like—

Rubens:

It didn't make waves.

26-00:46:25

Hinckle:

Well, if you're going to throw a stone in a pond, you want to make a lot of ripples; you just don't want it to sink. You've got to pick your weapons.

Rubens:

Did you make some money from *Deadly Secrets* and *The Fish Is Red*?

26-00:46:365

Hinckle:

Yeah, that book did pretty well. Well, it didn't become what they call a best seller, but it did well.

Rubens:

I didn't check if it stayed in print.

26-00:46:47

Hinckle:

I think it's still in print. It's still in copyright, but I think it's still in print.

Rubens:

All right, so do you think we did it for today?

26-00:46:55

Hinckle:

I think we did it. Yeah.

Rubens:

I think it's good. All right, so thanks so much.

26-00:46:59

Hinckle:

Sure.

Interview 13: July 25, 2010

Here our narrator discourses on the curious subjects of his beloved and widely read column, “Hinckle’s Journal,” and exposes the twisted mind and hideous deeds of San Francisco’s most notorious murderer.

Begin Audio File 27

[Conversation about advertisers and newspapers begins before recording]

27-00:00:00

Hinckle: Howard Gossage always used to say, newspapers should charge as much as a pack of cigarettes. You want it or not?

Rubens: By the way, I came across a reference to a Howard Gossage Society. Do you know when it was that started?

27-00:00:38

Hinckle: I don’t remember that. Well, there’s been quite a few memoirs on him. An ad agency now has the firehouse on Pacific Street there, where the *Scanlan’s* offices were; it had been Gossage’s office.

Rubens: What is the agency? Did it grow out of Gossage’s business?

27-00:00:51

Hinckle: A new advertising firm. They call themselves The Firehouse. And they had a party a few months ago. Some of Gossage’s old friends from back east, their admirers, were out to that thing. And people convene once in a while, but I don’t re—

Rubens: It wasn’t you who created it?

27-00:01:14

Hinckle: Oh, I think there was a Howard Gossage Society, which was fairly short lived.

Rubens: Okay. It’s not you, it’s not one of your—

27-00:01:20

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: So today we should talk about how you went back to the *Chronicle*. Your first column appears January 3, 1978. We’ve brought the chronology of your life up to 1977. You’d done the book on Virginia City, you’d done the book *Fish Is Red*.

27-00:01:56

Hinckle: That was relatively soon after Coppola’s magazine folded.

Rubens: Oh, yes, within the year. And we had some nice sessions on Coppola's magazine, so the question is how you join the *Chronicle*. In a profile on you in *Focus Magazine*, Liz Lufkin says that you were at a party where the *Chronicle* publisher is. I never know how to pronounce his name, Thieriot. And that you make an offhand comment about the *Chronicle* as a daily fish wrap. And he says, "Well, why don't you come and do something about it?" What's your memory about how you got to the *Chronicle*?

27-00:02:40

Hinckle: No, that's urban legend. That was Dick [Richard] Thieriot and he would've never said anything like that anyway. Although he was much looser than his father. His father was really a stiff. His father Charlie was the one who always wore little tiny black string ties. I remember his wife was telling me once that, "Charles is the only man I know," she said, who would— We go out to a restaurant, and it could be anywhere in the world; it's always a good restaurant. But we go out to a restaurant, he puts on his glasses, he studiously studies the menu for at least five minutes. He closes the menu and orders lamb chops." No, that one, I—

Rubens: Well, how does this come about?

27-00:03:36

Hinckle: Well, a girlfriend of mine at the time was encouraging me, you should call him up and you should write for him again. You've finished doing whatever you're doing. And so finally I did. I just called up Bill German, who was the long-time managing editor there, for thirty years or more. And I'd known him from the first time I was there, back in the sixties. And told him, let's meet for a drink. And we did, at the famous Cookie Picetti's cop bar. And we talked about it; he said, "Start writing." And that was it.

Rubens: Just as simple as that?

27-00:04:17

Hinckle: Just as simple as that.

Rubens: What was your vision of what you wanted to do? Or were you just—

27-00:04:24

Hinckle: I said that I'd just do one thing a week, and I wanted Saturdays. He said, "Why do you want Saturday?" And I said, "I think it's the only time anybody reads the paper." Right? Because the *Chronicle* wasn't— That was after the merger, so they didn't have control of the Sunday paper. The news section, that is. And that was that story where I was sitting in my house on Castro Street, right above Castro.

Rubens: You were in the heart of the Castro, just below Market.

27-00:04:59

Hinckle:

The heart of the Castro, a few blocks up the hill, an old Victorian. And talking on the phone to a friend of mine and just said—I was always staring out the window. And there's a girl who jumped through the window of an apartment house across the street. Glass shattered and she landed on the sidewalk. And I was on the phone with Fred Hobbs, who's an artist, movie producer friend of mine—

Rubens:

With whom you did the book on Virginia City.

27-00:05:33

Hinckle:

Yes. What a wonderful madman. And he talks quite a bit. You have to watch when you call him back because you need at least half an hour, because by the time he gets through telling you something, it's twenty minutes before you can raise the question you want to raise. And it took me about five minutes to get off the phone. I said, "Hobbs, I've got to go. Somebody just jumped out the window across the street and they're lying there on the sidewalk." "Oh, yeah, yeah. Let me just finish telling you about—" "No, no, Hobbs, I've got to go. I've got to call an ambulance and—" [laughs] That sort of thing. Crazy. So I went out and it was quite a little tale. I called an ambulance, of course. And there was her boyfriend at the time, who's since become a man, and who was an early San Francisco gay sexuality—Not early in the sense of it going on—it was well known the people in the gay world—but early in the sense of anybody writing about it in the regular newspapers. And it turned out that they were married. They were very young, in their late teens, early twenties. And they were married and went to parties and things, and he would pick up guys and she would pick up girls. But she was quite tormented. And he sketched—he was a sketcher. And he was sketching her and drew a sketch of her running across the apartment living room floor as she headed toward the window, and dove through the window. She died at the hospital; she killed herself.

Later he gave that sketch to me—we became friends. I went to the hospital with him, while we waited to see what was going to happen to her. And he told me the story of their life together. And so I wrote it. It was the first column I wrote for the *Chronicle* when I went back. I wrote it just the way it happened, with all the details of their lives and the sexuality and the trans-sexuality and things. And then a few weeks later, the doorbell rang at my house, because as I said, it was across the street. Just looking out my window across the street, just told it that way. Didn't take much writing. It was like, wow, this happened. And then you get into the lives of the people.

And there were some relatives from—I forget where. I think it was somewhere in the Midwest there. And they said, "Oh, we read your story and we just wanted to say hello, and we wanted to talk a little bit about Claudia." Her name was Claudia. And I said, "Wow. Okay." So we went down the street to one of the few straight bars that was left in the Castro. And it was very nice. A very sweet couple. And the guy was a typical redneck, but a very nice

person. And went through, I told them, as gently as I could, the whole story, everything. Wrote a column about that. And oddly enough, just a few days ago—this is what, 2010 now—I got an email from some relatives of hers who knew both of them, asking me if I would mind calling them. They’re back east somewhere, Michigan or somewhere there. And they just wanted to talk about it and anything else I remembered that I didn’t write in the article and stuff like that.

Rubens: So, thirty years later, it’s still so vivid.

27-00:09:42

Hinckle: Yes. If you had a speaker phone, I’d call them now and say, hey, what do you guys want to know? So that’s my first story. Anyway, it kind of kicked off that column, in a way that I didn’t plan.

Rubens: Well, it seemed to me, to generalize, that what you did that first year and then really what the column would be until you went to the *Examiner*, you had these human interest stories, you had—

27-00:10:08

Hinckle: Yes, a lot of San Francisco characters and human interest stories.

Rubens: You still had your investigative pieces. You were going to do the same kind of exposés, whether it was on a national level or at a city level.

27-00:10:25

Hinckle: Yes, you always do the same stuff.

Rubens: Well, you monitored those kinds of stories. And then you had public opinion, pieces, where you wrote about whatever was on your mind and also in the news. For instance, you wrote a review of a book on Alger Hiss. Allen Weinstein had done a book on the Alger Hiss case.

27-00:10:39

Hinckle: Oh, that was a terrible book. I did a piece about one of the McCarthy era survivors, a guy who lived in Santa Rosa and some of the things he’d gone through. And he’d been somewhat involved in or smeared or mis-categorized or—I forget; I’d have to look back at the column. And I went up to see him in Santa Rosa and became pretty good friends with him. He sort of shared his files and his memoirs with me from that period. And he went way back. He went back to the period—he remembered the General Strike; he remembered when Katharine Graham of the *Washington Post* was the labor reporter for the *San Francisco News*, which was one of our four dailies then. The *News* was the only one you could call relatively pro-labor, or at least kind of fair to labor. The other three papers, two were Hearst owned and then the *Chronicle*. They were just hopeless. This is around the time of the General Strike.

Rubens: Right, in the mid-thirties.

27-00:11:53

Hinckle: Yes, and thereafter, through the fifties. And the guy who told me about it, introduced me to him, was Sam Kagel, the arbiter, who was a great guy, a fabulous writer.

Rubens:

So how are you positioning yourself? How would you characterize how you thought of yourself as a columnist? Was San Francisco your main audience, as it had been for *City*? Of course you'd been editing magazines that had a national focus.

27-00:12:21

Hinckle: Well, I did a lot of leftie things that usually didn't get in the *Chronicle*. But in the guise—not the guise of, but usually there would be a reason to take it to something. Oh, some striking steelworkers came to town for some cause. There was something going on in California that they were upset about. This strike had gone on for quite a while. And I went and interviewed them and wrote an article about their national issues. But they happened to be in San Francisco to promote whatever they were doing. But that sort of stuff would generally never get in the *Chronicle*. There were some content limits on what I wrote.

Rubens:

Yes. Let's talk about your working relationship with the *Chronicle*. Did you have an editor?

27-00:13:17

Hinckle: Oh, yes. [laughter]

Rubens:

What was that like, after having been the editor of your own—

27-00:13:23

Hinckle: Well, a guy named Jim Hicks, a sweetheart of a guy. Nobody quite knew what to do with me because I was kind of a somewhat—I guess you could say, fairly or objectively, kind of—not antisocial to the *Chronicle* crowd. I hung around with everybody at the office bar and stuff like that and made some friends, had some friends on the staff, actually, that I'd known when I was there some years before, before I left for doing *Ramparts*. But I didn't have much regard for the newspaper etiquette and the editorial process and most of their values. I thought Scott Newhall made a great paper and I thought the *Chronicle* was in decline after he wasn't there anymore. And I made that opinion fairly well known. So editing was a little difficult process because I—well, basically, wouldn't let him edit me. And so a guy named Jim Hicks got that job. And he also handled Allan Temko, who was a brilliant, brilliant guy.

Rubens:

The architectural critic?

27-00:14:37

Hinckle: Yes. Wonderful. Allan was a great, great guy. And we became quite good friends over those years because we were the two troublesome writers, if you want to put it in that category, at the *Chronicle*. He always wrote too long and

was always late and got a little too obtuse and things, because he's brilliant. And I was whatever I was. So this poor guy Hicks had the two of us to—

Rubens: Did you have a desk?

27-00:15:07

Hinckle: No. I didn't want it. I'd just come in and say, who's not working today? And sit down at somebody's desk and type it into the system. There were computer systems then, but they still had typewriters, or they had early versions of computers, but it was a real pain in the butt if you didn't somehow type it into the—

Rubens: Into their main system.

27-00:15:34

Hinckle: Into their main system, yes. Particularly when it's something timely, because if you typed it, then they have to find somebody to retype it; then you'd have to go read it again. So I generally tried to get in there and type it in.

Rubens: It looks to me like you were usually on page four of the front section. Did you have some kind of agreement about—

27-00:15:52

Hinckle: No, that's just where they started putting stuff. And a lot of times, there were crusades. I'd start crusades, for instance about changing the city's song.

Rubens: That was after you'd been there awhile.

27-00:16:09

Hinckle: There were a few other things. And they'd end up serial articles for three or four days, on the front page, but the regular stuff, they generally just put a box around it and called it the "Hinckle's Journal" and dumped it—

Rubens: It's not until April, really, that I see the first iteration, "Hinckle's Journal." I'm talking about what's entered in the index. There's your column, the Hinckle column; there's an editorial on human rights, and then—

27-00:16:39

Hinckle: Well, the index, as with most indexes, is incorrect. From the first column, it said "Hinckle's Journal." It was a little ugly. But that first story I wrote about the girl who jumped out the window, that said "Hinckle's Journal."

Rubens: Okay.

27-00:17:02

Hinckle: Yes, these indexes are notoriously like credit bureaus; they never get anything right. [laughs]

Rubens: But you're quite prolific. You're doing at least three to four—I guess you're doing one every week; that was the—

27-00:17:15

Hinckle: I did one a week, but sometimes I'd do multiple ones because if there's a rolling story or it turned into a series or a crusade or what have you— It was fairly lively stuff. It was the old Newhall *Chronicle* type stuff.

Rubens: So maybe let's talk a little bit more about who was still there that you knew. Herb Caen was still there.

27-00:17:39

Hinckle: Oh, Herb was still there, sure.

Rubens: He had been someone who had written about *City Magazine*. He kept abreast of what you were doing.

27-00:17:46

Hinckle: Oh, yes. We'd often go to lunch, and I'd go to dinner parties at his house once in a while. And of course, I knew him from way back because he was a close friend of Howard Gossage. I got to know him then, when I was doing *Ramparts*. So I had known Herb for quite a while.

Rubens: And so when do you become friends with Albright? Thomas Albright was the art critic.

27-00:18:14

Hinckle: Yes. Well, I knew him—he was at the *Chronicle* when I was first at it; but we really became friends in this time period you're talking about, when I went back there and started writing the column.

Rubens: He was part of the group when you do the magazine *Frisco*. But that's not till '81. There's about twenty of you that—

27-00:18:37

Hinckle: Oh, that was just a lark.

Rubens: We'll get to that. But what I'm trying to get at is your working style. Do you basically think of yourself as having a beat? You're keeping files of ideas?

27-00:18:52

Hinckle: Yes. I would famously give them a story listing. They'd say, "Well, what do you think you're going to be writing?" I'd say, "I don't know." So I'd sit down and type up a list saying things I'm probably going to be writing about, et cetera, so don't get into these areas, or something like that. And the story list became quite famous among Chronicle people. You could run a whole paper out of it.

Rubens: And you're giving it to Jim Hicks so he knows what to expect.

27-00:19:20

Hinckle: Well, yes, and also stuff that I was trying to embargo; I'd say, "Hey, I'm going to be going into this so let me know if you're going to assign somebody so I'll do this earlier" or something like that.

Rubens:

You printed excerpts from *The Richest Place on Earth*; you do a journal article on a cab driver in Reno, Nevada. So I guess you still have your interest in the hotel and newspaper up there.

27-00:19:48

Hinckle: Well, those columns were— people still talk about some of those antics, because they were really old San Francisco style. It was the old town. And guys, cops, firemen, labor guys—

Rubens:

You wrote about the oldest Chinese lady in San Francisco.

27-00:20:07

Hinckle: Catholic schoolboys who grew up in town and still are around. Those sorts of people. Really old San Franciscans, third, fourth generation San Franciscans. And a lot of them are still here. Everybody says nobody was ever born and raised in the city; well, I see them all the time.

Now, people still talk about it. Like the cab driver was a great, great story. There's a bar called Gino and Carlo's, which is in the heart of North Beach. It was owned by a garbage man, by a family of guys that worked for the garbage company. And there was never a Gino nor a Carlo, but it was called Gino and Carlo's. And it still is the best bar in North Beach, and still in the family, and they've passed it down through generations. Old friends of mine, the family and the owners, just because you get to know them. It's really the best bar, the non-tourist bar, in North Beach, along with just a few other Specs, Vesuvio and a couple others. And Gino and Carlo's had a train to Reno, a gambling train, where they rented out a car or a couple cars and attached it to the regular train going to Reno. And so everybody met at the bar and then went to the train. And they would stock the train with booze and all that stuff, and food. And up to Reno on the train, we all went. And as with my friend Pat, Paddy Nolan, who owned the famous Dovre Club, which is a legendary Irish neighborhood bar in old San Francisco— And some hotel was part of the deal, or they found us hotels. So it was overnight and you had to be— the next day you're supposed to be at the train and go back.

Well, I forget where I ended up. Maybe I'd gone out to Virginia City or something like that. I'm not that much into gambling, myself. But at any rate, I missed the train. And I said, "Oh, God, everybody's gone. I missed the train." I'm trying to figure what the hell am I going to do? How much money do I have left from gambling, and that sort of thing. I phone, see when planes are going. It was the type of thing you think about. But still, I was not feeling great, for the hour of the morning it was, after a good, long Reno or Virginia City night.

So there was a little working people's bar in an alley off the hotel district, that somehow we found, where the employees of the hotels all went to drink on their breaks, have a beer and a smoke and that sort of stuff. They wouldn't drink in the casino where they worked. And so I went over there. At least I knew where that place was. And I said, I'll figure it out. And I'm kind of sitting in the bar looking at the papers saying, well, what am I going to do? And I look over and the door opens and this guy Paddy Nolan comes in. He just looks like hell. He's got his little plastic bag full of his possessions, and you could tell he'd had a rough night. Too much to drink. And he kind of tiptoes in and I see him and I'm watching him. He kind of shoves a couple of guys aside "Let me just sit down at the bar." And I'm watching him and watching him. All of a sudden I go, "Hey, Nolan!" And he almost shattered. I swear, if his hands could've fallen off his arms, they would've. He goes, "AHH! [laughs] What are you doing here?" I said, "I missed the train. What are you doing here?" "I missed the train!" So he comes over and he kind of rubs his hands. He was a gleeful guy, mischievous, mischievous person. And he says, "Okay," he says, "How much you got left?" I said, "I don't know." "Let let's see." He digs in his pocket, I dig in my pocket. Well, we've got about four-to five hundred bucks between us. He says, "Oh, boy! Let's go." So we do a little gambling. And then for some reason, go up the hill to Virginia City, and hang out there a little bit —I'd known that city from another period when Hobbs and I were doing that book and the hotel escapades we had up there. And we get back down and decide, hey, it's time to go. There's one last plane out of town at eleven-thirty, something like that. Last plane out. So we're in the line and Nolan gets into an argument with somebody in the line and they come over and tell us to step aside or something like that, and he punches the guy. Well, anyway, we get—

Rubens: You're thrown out of the airport.

27-00:25:03

Hinckle: Well, we got thrown out of the airport. So it's like what are going to do? We've got to get back. And it's like, well, let's take a cab. The hell with it. If we stay up here another day, it's going to cost us more than it would ever be to take a cab to the city; let's just get out of here. So we call a cab. And it turns out this guy's named Malcolm Eck, E-C-K; he always spelled it for you. And he was a large guy, 300 pounds or so. And he'd never been out of Reno in his life; never been to San Francisco; that was the big city. And he had to take the cab and he has to get another cab, because maybe the tires aren't good enough on this one. And we bring him down to the city.

Rubens: You negotiate a price?

27-00:25:54

Hinckle: Yes. And a few stops along the way, and pull up in front of the bar that we started the train trip at three days before. This is all recounted in the story. It's much funnier than the way I'm telling it. And it's about five-thirty or so in the

morning. And we get out, we pull up in front of Gino and Carlo's, the yellow checker cab from Reno. It says Reno Checker cab. And so I pound on the door; I know there's people inside there. And sure enough, a whole bunch of guys are in there. Been up all night or something, and they're playing cards and generally carrying on—before six in the morning. And so in we go. And I say to these guys, "Okay, one more bet. "I bet you a hundred bucks that I've got a Reno cab outside." "Get out of here!" I said, "No, no, no. Hundred bucks there's a Reno cab outside the door." "Bullshit." I said, "Well, take a—" This guy says, "I'm taking it. He doesn't have a Reno cab out there." So sure enough, there's a Reno cab out there. "Okay, give me my hundred dollars." And we bring Malcolm Eck in and say, "Malcolm, here, have a martini," at six in the morning. "Well, I never had a martini before." "Oh, you'll like it. It's a good thing." "Well, I've got to get back to Reno. Could I get my money now?" "Well, Malcolm," we started to prankster him, "we're going to have to wait till the bank opens. The bank doesn't open till eight o'clock or something, Malcolm. Have another martini. But we'll get you a fare back. This guy over there, he wants to go up to Reno." "Oh, a fare back." So to sort of hold him and restrain him, all these guys kept tripping down to the basement of the bar, and every twenty minutes or so they'd bring a random item—a battered, rusty suitcase that had been tossed, a broken lamp, things like that, [laughter] an old chair—put it in the back of the cab. Luggage. Then we go over to the bank and get him some money. And there were some other misadventures. And finally he's sent on his way back and I sort of write the story of this cabby and what had gone on and how we'd kind of pranked him and done these things to him, in the *Chronicle*. And people were just laughing, et cetera.

And then I kind of feel bad. "We never should've done that to the guy." And Nolan says, "Yeah, you're right." So we're standing around the bar at the Dovre Club. This is another story in the *Chronicle*. Because we decide to bring him to the city and give him the keys to the city and a medal of honor and that sort of stuff. And so I call him up and say, "Hey, Malcolm, it's Warren." "Oh, you guys, what you did. And then you put that thing in the paper." We had a picture of him. He said, "People are laughing at me." I said, "Look, I realize that. And honest to God, I'm sorry. We got too frivolous. But I want to make it up to you. We want to send you an airline ticket, and you're going to come down here and you're going to be the guest of the city, and you're going to get a proclamation in your honor from the mayor at city hall and stuff." He's very, very wary. And he says, "How do I know the mayor's going to give me a proclamation?" I said, "Well, he is. He will. It's settled." "I don't know about that. I want to check that out. You guys may be funning me again." "Okay." I said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you. Call him up." "Well, I'll call him." "Well, call the mayor's office and ask somebody there. You're on the schedule; you're getting a proclamation." "Well, what's his number?" So I look at the pay phone—I was calling from the pay phone in the bar—and I give him that number. I said, "Call him up and I'll call you back in ten minutes and then we'll get you the ticket and tell you where to go. "So I

get some woman who's sitting at the bar. I said, "Nobody else answer this phone." I said, "When the pay phone rings, answer it and say, mayor's office." [laughs]

Down he comes. And this is recounted at great length in the *Chronicle*. We have a welcoming committee for him there, of quite a few guys. And he's immediately taken to a bar, the funeral worker's bar in Colma, right? Malloy's, yes, famous for being in the middle of the cemeteries, a hang-out for grave diggers, right? And we're showing him around the cemetery a little bit. This guy pops out from behind a tombstone, he's got a mad hatter's hat on. Just outrageous screwball comedy type pranks. And then we take him to Sam Jordan's, a bar and barbecue place in Butchertown, all black people. And we have all these buxom black women come running, "Oh, Malcolm," just putting things around him. And it goes on from place to place. Everywhere, he's met by someone. And we did get him a proclamation. George Moscone hadn't been killed yet, and he was the mayor. And I call him up, I say, "George, hey, you've got to give—" "Was that the guy you wrote in the paper about?" "Yeah. And I already told him he's getting a proclamation." "Well, yeah, Christ, tell him to come by the office. I'll give him a typed-up form." So he did get a proclamation. And unfortunately, he was arrested because we arranged with the cops to sort of pick him up and—I said, "Well, somebody's got to get him outside of the bar." One of the stops was Nolan's bar, the Dovre Club. He went to about eleven places in the city. And each place was quite a funny story.

And that was a page and a half in the *Chronicle*. It was this epic tale of old-fashioned, bad-boy, old-town pranksters and a Reno cabbie. And I said, "Well, Nolan, somebody's going to have to get him out there." And then one of the cops pick him up, because a couple of cops we'd arranged, because we were friends, from the Mission Station, to do this thing. "You come by at exactly one-thirty and Nolan will be out there with the guy, talking on the sidewalk and you get the guy." Cop was named Charlie Anderson, another character I'd written about quite often in the *Chronicle*. Legendary beat patrolman in San Francisco. Great guy. Damon Runyon-esque. Wasn't as good as Damon Runyan's stuff, but it was Damon Runyon-type stories of San Francisco, started to fill the *Chronicle*, of these sort of tales of stuff going on. And so Nolan says, "Malcolm, what did you do here? You touched my leg." "What are you saying, Pat?" "You're a prevert, you're a prevert, Malcolm." "Nolan, how can you say anything like that to me?" Right then the cop car pulls up. "What's going on here?" "Officer, he's a prevert." "What's he saying to me? What's he saying to me?" [laughs] But I'd called the cop who was in the car and I say, "Hey, you know what? Take Nolan in, too." So both guys ended up in the can—it was a *really* hot day; it was in the nineties, in Mission Station, in the holding cells. And Nolan is fuming. And some guy's bumming cigarettes from him and spitting through the bars at them, and Malcolm Eck's sitting there, "How could you do this to me, Pat?" And Nolan's furious because we pranked him, too.

So I come down and say, "How did *you* get in the can, Nolan?" "You, I know what you did!" "All right, everybody's sprung. You're all out." So we go outside and there is an antique garbage truck, one that the Sunset Scavengers had long ago retired. It's like in a scavenger museum or something. You've got railings you've got to climb up to get in the cab. We said, "Okay, here's your ride, Malcolm. We're going on." He's got to climb up the ladder, into this old garbage truck. We ended up again at that Gino and Carlo's bar, where we had a big dinner for him in the back room, by one of the great chefs of North Beach, Mario Ascione, he was really famous. And Malcolm's eating the food, a very nice dinner that was made for him. And so the chef says, "Well, how's the pasta? How's the food, Malcolm?" And he sort of frowns and sort of spits part of it out and says, "It's better in Reno." So the chef grabs a carving knife and goes at him. And not planned. This was not planned. I was, oh, God. Right? And so Malcolm bolts, gets out the back room

Rubens: How old is Malcolm?

27-00:36:36

Hinckle: Malcolm's in his forties, I'd say. And the chef is like seriously mad at him, and chases him—he's got the big knife—through the bar and after Malcolm. Everybody kind of calms the chef down. We sort of stuff 500 bucks in Malcolm's hand, and he's got his ticket back. "Get this man to the airport." And he's back. And that was another big epic in the *Chronicle*. But that's typical of the type of prank stories I used to write about, about goings on in town that just never are written in the newspapers these days.

Rubens: I'm interested in your investigative stuff. There's an article on the rental property of Dianne Feinstein. And then she writes—

27-00:37:23

Hinckle: Oh, when she dropped a drink on my head.

Rubens: Yes.

27-00:37:26

Hinckle: Well, yes. Having fun and doing good or doing journalistic work are not incompatible. Maybe what's wrong with the quality of journalism in the last bunch of years is that people think they are. Right? And that's gone out of journalism, and it used to be part of it.

Rubens: So you're having a good time this first year?

27-00:37:53

Hinckle: Yes, I'm having a good time. Working on some book; I forget which one.

Rubens: Were you working on a book on Dashiell Hammett?

27-00:37:59

Hinckle: No, that was at *City Magazine*. That's when we did the special edition on Dashiell Hammett.

Rubens: Yes. But I thought there was a book for you in that.

27-00:38:09

Hinckle: No, I was thinking about doing a novel or something at the time.

Rubens: I also read somewhere that you were doing a film treatment on *Candid Camera*. That had been a popular television program with Allen Funt, no?

27-00:38:29

Hinckle: Oh, my God! That one! Oh, yes. Well, that never made it into the *Chronicle* because we were all under threat of lawsuit, as was the *Chronicle*, by Allen Funt. One day, the phone rings and some guys says to me, "Hey, are you Hinckle?" "Yeah." And he says, "Hey, well, this is Allen Funt." And I went, "Oh, yeah. Come on, you're not Allen Funt." "No, no, I am Allen Funt, and I want you to come down to see me in Carmel because I want you to work on a script, on a treatment of my life story."

Rubens: Oh, really? Oh, that's how it starts.

27-00:39:05

Hinckle: Yes, yes. And this one, I wish I could've written. But he was really—threatened to sue everybody and scared the hell out of KQED, the *Chronicle*, a couple of publishers who were involved, a couple of lawyers, Quentin Kopp, other people, because we hoaxed Allen Funt. We pulled his leg really, really bad. At any rate, so he sends the tickets and I go down. And I bring a friend with me, some girlfriend at the time. And actually, she worked for Feinstein, in Feinstein's office, which figures in the story later, because we used her office to hoax him. And he shows me all his clippings, we discuss all this. He has this magnificent mansion—I can only call it a mansion—but it's made entirely of logs, of timber, which he built on the Highlands above Carmel Heights, a little bit out of Carmel. Fabulous thing. And then he's got a house on the 17-Mile Drive there.

Rubens: Well, yes, everybody liked *Candid Camera*. He must've made money doing other productions.

27-00:40:43

Hinckle: Oh, yes. He's very rich. But it turned out that everybody hated him. His family hated him, everybody who worked for him hated him. Nobody liked the guy. He was a really miserable individual, human being. And in the two days of conversations with him, it becomes clear gradually, becomes clear talking to people who worked for him and some family members who were around, things like that, that this is like, I guess, a need; that is, it was a desperation effort. Because half a dozen people have tried to write a script and make a movie about—he wanted to make a movie about his life. And it

hadn't worked out; it was always rejected for this and that, even though he was Allen Funt. He was very frustrated because he couldn't get the right treatment of his life. So he says, "Well, here's the deal. You write this treatment of my life, and I'll pay you \$10,000 for the treatment." And he says, "Then I want to use that as the basis for a movie." And I'd been involved a little bit in movies. Charlie Bronson made this movie out of a book I'd written with Bill Turner.

Rubens: Right. *Jailbreak*.

27-00:42:12

Hinckle: Yes, I'd seen some of the stuff that goes on; I wasn't sophisticated about movies, but I knew enough to say, "Well, wait a minute, Allen." 10,000 bucks was a fair amount of money in the seventies, this was, or early eighties, I guess. I said, "But what about the script? That's where the real money is in movies. And what about a piece of the movie or what you get when a scriptwriter— That's the big dough. And what do I get? If I solve this problem for you that nobody's been able to do, what do I get out of it?" He says, "You get \$10,000." I said, "Allen, but what if I solve it?" He says, "Well, no, you don't understand. This is the way movies are. We'll want to get a bankable scriptwriter. The producers will want that. And I can't guarantee you— And he probably wouldn't want your name on it. And maybe. I'll try to get a word in for you." And this and that. I said, "Wait a minute." Said, "Everybody's reject— nobody's been able to solve this treatment of your life, and you want to pay me \$10,000 to do it, and if I'm successful and you get the movie made that you always wanted to be done. And nobody else could do it; that's why you came to me, that's all I get out of it is the \$10,000? No piece of the movie, no money out of helping write the script, nothing like that?" He says, "That's right. That's the deal. I'll do what I can for you, but that's the deal." And I just thought for a minute and I said, "Give me half." And he says, "Okay."

And so he writes out a check for \$5,000. I stick it in my pocket, we go to the plane, go back to San Francisco, go immediately to the Dovre Club, Nolan's place. And I give Nolan this check for \$5,000. I said, "Cash this check right now. We're drinking this money. Start and buy everybody in the house a drink." And we go through every bar we can find, buying everybody drinks. We just spent the money. Threw it away, basically. Right?

Rubens: What's animating this? Do you know you're just not going to get anything more out of this and so—

27-00:44:32

Hinckle: That he's a miserable bastard. I already found that out from everybody who knew him. It was like, wait a minute. You want me to solve this problem for not that much money? It was a hunk of money, but it wasn't really money. You want me to solve this problem that nobody can solve and then screw me.

Rubens: All right. So you're just going to have a good time.

27-00:44:55

Hinckle: Yes, maybe eventually I'm going to write the treatment, I don't know. I just want to drive him crazy. And to make sure we threw away the money, right? So I don't have to worry about it.

Rubens: So how long did it take?

27-00:46:07

Hinckle: It took about seven weeks. And he starts calling because he can't find me. He's calling the *Chronicle* and he's calling KQED. At the time, I was doing a show for KQED and he's calling them. And he's sniffing around town. He finds out I hang out at this place called the Dovre Club. So he calls and he gets Nolan on the phone. And of course, I was telling Nolan every— Oh, now he's looking for me. He goes, "Oh, this is good." And so he called Nolan, and Nolan says, "Oh, is this Allen?" "Oh, yes. Is this Pat Nolan?" Because he'd read some stuff I'd written about Pat Nolan. He says, "Yes, it is, Allen." He says, "Well, I'm looking for Warren. He was going to write a script for me, and I'm trying to find him." "Oh. Oh, Allen, it's very serious. It's very serious." "What is it, Pat? What happened? What happened?" He says, "Well, he was taken in by the FBI, we're not sure what branch of government yet, for mingling with the IRA terrorists." Right? "What? What? Pat, that can't be true." "Oh, it is, Allen. It just happened. And we can't find where he is, but everybody's working on it," and this and that.

Well, we set up this most elaborate hoax. We could've cornered the wheat market for futures, with the energy we put on this thing. He keeps looking for me and finding this and that. And Quentin Kopp, who was a supervisor at the time, later a state senator, then a judge, and ran for mayor; a formal figure in San Francisco conservative politics, and I knew him quite well. I said, "Quentin, you're my lawyer. This guy's going to call you." And he asks, "Do you expect me to lie? That's a violation of the bar." "Don't tell me that, Quentin, you're going to tell him that you're helping negotiate to get me out, and they grabbed me with a bunch of IRA people," and this and that, right?

And everywhere he'd call— Like for instance, he found out that some show I'd done for KQED had gone on the air. He found out everything. He was going to find me. He was going to find me and get that script. The show for KQED had gone on the air. And then he couldn't find— He says, "Well, how could he be kidnapped or held when he's on the air?" So he calls. I have to get the switchboard operator at KQED and the other people, right? And then something appears, a column or something in the *Chronicle*. And so I called the *Chronicle*. "What do you mean? He can't be, he was writing a column," right? So I got the switchboard operator at the *Chronicle* to lie and I get Jim Hicks, the editor at the *Chronicle*, to lie. Right? And he calls the mayor's office looking for me, right? And I've got this girlfriend of mine at the time

who is working for Feinstein. He leaves a message to be called back. But he calls back, calls back and he gets an actual person. And they say, "Well, yeah. The mayor's looking into this. Apparently, he's being—" This sort of thing, right?

He was completely, utterly fooled. Like he'd done to people on television. Right? Everybody he called was a real person, and they all confirmed the story. It was just wild. And Nolan is just in his glory. He says, "Oh, this is—" He just thought it was so damn funny. We've hoaxed Allen Funt. You hoaxed— That sort of thing. So finally, he kept calling and calling. I said, "Hey, this is enough of this." I said, "What are we going to do? Let's go down and I'll write some sort of a script or something or I'll give him his money back, whatever I've got to do. But let's get some guys to go down there and we'll figure it out." So I call him up and I said, "Allen, it's all right. I can't talk about what happened, but I'm out and I've been working on the script and I've got it. We're going to come down and we'll meet you down there." "Oh. Oh, my God, when?" "Well, two days from now," or something like that. He said, "Okay, well, meet me at this—" one of the big hotels, Del Mar or something like that in Pebble Beach. Okay, so we get a crew of characters and a couple cars and we had a van. And we get a prison suit from Mike Hennessey— Oh, that's another guy he called, Mike Hennessey, the sheriff. The sheriff was involved in this thing. He calls and gets the actual sheriff on the phone. And he says, "It's really hush-hush, but we're trying to get Hinckle out of this thing." Everybody he talked to was real. He was completely fooled.

Rubens: And so what's the upshot?

27-00:50:00

Hinckle: Well, down we go. I'm in a prison jumpsuit. We get a prison jumpsuit from Hennessey and we've got handcuffs on me. And on the way down in the van—we had a big van type thing, a table, and I brought a typewriter and I start writing the script, the treatment. And the treatment's all about how Allen Funt's really a regular guy and how he himself got fooled, hoaxed. How well he took it and stuff like that. Which he probably wouldn't have liked to read. But he got it. Anyway, so I'm writing it on the way down. I thought it was a pretty good treatment, actually. Probably the only movie that would've ever been made about him, because it was funny. Not idolatry, which is what he wanted. And we'd gone to Fairyland in Oakland. I don't remember why we went to Fairyland, but one of the guys who hung around, one of the Irish guys, knew somebody there who had guns. But we didn't want to take real guns down there, but we wanted to bring IRA guys with guns. And there was a guy who was the caretaker for Fairyland at the time, and he had lived in a cottage in Fairyland. I was over there because I had to get the guns from him. And he had a side business. He collected these antique and period rifles and things like that. Had a whole giant roomful of them. And he rented them to the opera and to theatrical productions when they needed guns. And they were totally realistic-looking, but they were all wooden, with thick seals, something like

that, right? So we had to go over there to get guns for the IRA guys and we had a couple cars and made a few stops, again, along the way down there. Met up with Malcolm. And we brought this wonderful drag queen. She was the best. She worked for the city, for the Muni. She was an accountant or something for the Muni. Very large woman. And she was along for the ride.

Rubens: Is this the way you end up writing about a drag queen?

27-00:52:14

Hinckle: No, that was another drag queen, the guy who put rice in his bra. So we go down with this woman, with these guys from the IRA, with these guns, me in a prison outfit and handcuffs. We rented a room at the— It was the Pebble Beach Lodge or the Del Mar Hotel, I don't recall. It was one of the better— *the*, probably the top hotel there. Because some Irish guys who came up once a year to San Francisco for St. Patrick's Day were in the pig raising business in the Carmel Valley, and they sold pigs to all the better restaurants. And so they knew the manager at the hotel, so they got us this room. And somehow we found a harpsichordist in the city and brought the harpsichordist down. And the harpsichordist was in the room playing the harp, and there're all these guys with their guns lined up, and there was me in the prison jumpsuit, with the handcuffs on, and Allen Funt comes in and sees this scene. "Warren, are you okay?" "Oh, yeah, Allen, I'm okay. And I've got the script for you. If they'd just un-handcuff me, I'll get it." And I only got through about seven pages of it. So I give him this thing and he starts to read it. The script's about how he'd been fooled. And it finally dawns on him. This is a giant hoax.

Rubens: Was anyone filming this, too?

27-00:53:55

Hinckle: Yes, Dan Cassidy was a filmmaker; he had some film of it. I don't know what happened to that film. We really threw this one away. Anyway, the next thing you know, he storms out. And within a day, everybody gets lawyers' letters, threats and things. Oh. *Everybody*. The mayor gets one, the *Chronicle* gets one. Every publisher who ever published a book of mine before gets a registered letter from Funt's Hollywood lawyers. "If he dares write anything about this," or this sort of thing, right? Scares the hell out of the *Chronicle*. KQED just about— "You will be immediately sued. You are notified that you are liable for this, if he mentions a word." He didn't want the story out that he'd been hoaxed, right? And that was about the end of it. I called him. He says, "I will never speak to you again. You are cruel and a terrible person. If you write one word about this, I am telling you, it is the end of you and anybody you know and are associated with." And I said, "Well, hey." I said, "Well, Allen, as far as I'm concerned, I gave you the script. That was the \$5,000 part of it. You want the other half, you just let me know." "*I never want to speak to you again!*" Click. [laughter] And that was the end of that. Nolan was always telling me, "Hinckle, we've got to write that story." But the *Chronicle* said, "Oh, no, don't go touching that one." And they kind of called

me in and said, "Hey. What did you do? You had our guys lie, our editors lie. You know, if he actually sued, how much trouble we'd be in?" Depositions and—

Rubens: So how long did this all take to unwind? You said about two months?

27-00:55:44

Hinckle: Oh, yes. It was an *elaborate* hoax. And so that's the story that I've never written. And so I kind of forgot and other things happened. And Nolan said, "Hey, we've got to write that story." I said, "I know we should. Remind me of some of those details, will you, Pat?" As years went on. And then Allen Funt died. I remember seeing in the *Daily News*. And Nolan says, "Oh, now we can really write the story, right?" Now he can't sue me; he died. But somehow, we never did.

Rubens: This was a great story. All right, we're going to stop to change tapes.

Begin Audio File 28

Rubens: Tell me what occasioned Dianne Feinstein throwing a drink at you? She was a supervisor at the time?

28-00:00:27

Hinckle: Well, I've been a persistent critic of hers over the years for this and that. On local issues. There's nothing wrong with her; she's been okay in the Senate, as far as I'm concerned. She'd just married Richard Blum. And he took advantage of Proposition 13, got the benefits of Proposition 13 on this Carlton Hotel, which she inherited from her first husband, who was a sweetheart of a man. I liked him a lot. And the first thing she did was —she was supposed to pass the benefits on to whatever was part of the reasons for Proposition 13, for the big benefits you got as an owner of a big property. And that very month that it passed, she raised the rents on all the old ladies in the Carlton Hotel. So I was really flipped, and I wrote a column about it, "Let's go Higher." And so that kind of got her mad.

Rubens: There's a story about you encountering her somewhere and she—

28-00:01:45

Hinckle: Oh, yes, there was some party for somebody at the old Presidio Officers' Club. She was there; she wasn't mayor at the time. She said, "Oh, you." And dumped a drink on me. And good for her. I liked her after that. I got to know her pretty well. I used to take her over to Gino and Carlo's and let her play pool with the guys. This is when she was a supervisor. Here's the thing. You're around this town long enough, you —I remember that there had been negotiations between her and Quentin Kopp.

Rubens: Yes, of course. You were writing about it in *City Magazine*.

28-00:02:55

Hinckle:

Yes. And he got suckered by her. The deal was that she'd support him for mayor and she could become president of the Board of Supervisors. And a deal, a verbal deal was made. Not unusual among politicians; it's very common. And then George got killed and all this stuff and Dianne became the mayor, by virtue of being president of the Board of Supervisors. And Kopp got left out in the cold and said, "Well, you're not going to run for reelection, are you? Because our deal was, sorry." [laughs] You can't blame her.

Rubens:

No, I guess not. Well, so why don't we just start this, as sort of an introduction to the political shake up that's going to happen in the wake of the killing of Moscone and Milk. Had you known much about Jim Jones? Where are you when you hear the story about the suicides in Guyana? I don't think you'd written anything on Jim Jones; I couldn't find anything.

28-00:04:08

Hinckle:

No. No. I think really, the first time I paid much attention to him was around then, although I guess I had observed he was kind of a nut. And a typical preacher that got on—I think he was on the Housing Authority or the board of the Housing Authority. And he was weird. And the temple was weird. But then a lot of religions are weird. And there was a guy named Lester Kinsolving, who was an Episcopalian priest at the time. He got a job as a reporter for the *Examiner*; wrote about religious issues. And he'd been writing articles about Jim Jones and being censored. And somebody had told me about it and I said, "Yeah, really?" And I called him up and I said, "What aren't they letting you print?" And he started telling me about the guy. I said, "Geez, it's worse than I thought." Kinsolving left the *Examiner* and he went to Washington D.C where he was a thorn in the press corps; became an Anglican minister.

So I just started to look into how nuts Jim Jones was. But what I really knew about him before was just the People's Temple and his stealing of the election in 1976. God, that sounds like a long time ago, doesn't it? But that was when the epochal division of one side of the town versus the other side of the town shaped the election. We talked about this when we were talking about *City* versus Moscone. And that election was like Chicago. It was stolen.

Rubens:

Really?

28-00:06:03

Hinckle:

Yes. At the time, the city had big bound voting books. And when you went to vote, they— There were a lot of runoff elections, which would usually happen in December. When you went to vote, you were given a slip of paper in case there was a runoff. You didn't have to go through everything all over again because you had your slip; you'd already voted in November. Well, in the runoff Moscone won by about a 4,000 vote margin. And my friend John

Maher and his people at Delancey Street were helping the city as part of their volunteer work: getting people to register; getting out the vote; doing this and that. Anyway, they had a bunch of these ballot books. Then the election came and George won by a three or four thousand-vote margin; I'd have to look it up. Significant enough to win an election by, but relatively small. It was definitely a clear win. But there were any number of ballot books not there, never turned back in. And they amounted to more than double the winning margin of the election.

And I remember Barbegalata's supporters went into the registrar of voters' offices after the election and had a sit-in. These are conservative guys; for them to have a sit-in was unthinkable. They were west side Catholics and it was not their style to engage in civil disobedience. But they were furious because a lot of ballots were missing and demanded that the voting rolls be turned over. And that was never done. But it's now been well documented that the People's Temple brought down buses and buses and buses of people to vote in that election, from somewhere up in Mendocino; I think it was Ukiah—where People's Temple had a compound with a lot of people. So they brought them down in buses, certainly in the high hundreds or maybe easily a thousand or more, or a couple of thousand. And groups of sailors from Oakland were also brought in. So there were all these slips floating around. You didn't have to show an ID, you didn't have to do anything because this was a runoff election. If you voted the first time, you had your little slip, a receipt on the bottom of the ballot that they tore off; in case there was a runoff; all you had to do was plop that down and go in and vote. Didn't have to sign anything, didn't have to do anything.

Rubens: So somehow they collected these things? They had these slips and passed them out?

28-00:09:46

Hinckle: Well, nobody knows. There was all kinds of— Obviously, the People's Temple people weren't registered to vote; they didn't live here. And they came in in droves. So anyway, that was— And I used to tell the *Chronicle*, "Hey, you guys have to do a story about that." This was during the Dan White period. They'd go, "Oh, no, that'll— God, we have to wait till after the trial; that'll affect the jury verdict," all this conservative newspaper stuff. "No."

Rubens: So who are the People's Temple supporting? Because this was the first district election.

28-00:10:23

Hinckle: Well, the Democratic machine then was the Burton machine, so it was George Moscone, it was Freitas, the district attorney, and Willie Brown in the Assembly. Willie laughs about this now; I've talked to him a lot. He said, "Yeah, it was pretty good, huh?" But it happened. Now, whether they actually stole the whole election by the whole 4,000 votes, nobody knows because

there were all these lost ballots. Except we do know that the People's Temple sent buses full of people from their compound up north. A lot of people.

This was the runoff for the mayor's race; it was a close enough race they had to have a second vote early in December. And that was the questionable election. But the scandal, if you want to call it a scandal, was that this guy who was imprisoning people and stealing their money and sexually abusing their families and every possible horrendous thing that an organized preacher could do—with the possible exception of the Catholic Church over the centuries—to his parishioners, was a political force in the city; who was in league with then the liberals, early progressives, whatever you want to call them. And they were all on that side. But he was an important cog in the electoral machine. And was rewarded or duly recognized for that by being appointed as a commissioner to, I think it was the Housing Authority. That's just how stuff went. That's okay.

Rubens: That was Alioto's particular forte, wasn't it, to appoint people who had supported him to the various city commissions.

28-00:12:46

Hinckle: Well, yes. Everybody does it, and there was nothing really wrong about it; it was just the thing that there was something wrong with Jim Jones. And it wouldn't become significant until what happened later. But it is of historical interest because it affected the trial of Dan White.

That was basically why Dan White got away with murder. Because the prosecution was compromised because brilliantly, Dan White's defense attorney, Doug Schmidt, subpoenaed more than a hundred city officials and dignitaries of that time to testify at the trial. They had absolutely no fathomable relationship to Dan White taking a gun to city hall and shooting two people, but they were subpoenaed. And they were subpoenaed because Schmidt was going to advance the theory—or said he would, to the district attorney's office—that the city was corrupt and its corruption was key to Jim Jones and the People's Temple being part of the political machine then—the Burton Democratic machine; and that People's Temple had helped elected everybody in office, including the current district attorney who had to try White for murder; and that any reasonable person of Dan White's upbringing, Catholic values, social understanding, conservative social sense of things, would be so outraged and shocked when they learned of this it could make him snap.

And basically, Doug Schmidt was going to put the city on trial. Sodom and Gomorrah. It was so evil that the new clean supervisor Dan White, when he came in and found about all this, had to quit. And then wanted to go back and try and fight them, but they wouldn't let him come back. And he knew all this and he just snapped. Because otherwise, he'd already confessed and it was just simple first-degree murder. No insanity plea, nothing like that was advanced.

So the whole issue in the trial was that he confessed to his best friend, Frank Falzon.

Rubens: Right. That's the policeman that—

28-00:15:28

Hinckle: Yes, a buddy of long standing. A very sympathetic confession. And everything was fine, from a prosecution standpoint. He did it; there was no question he did it, and he confessed that he did it. So he had to be guilty of something, unless you got off on an insanity plea. They didn't think about pleading insanity. So the question was, what was the motive? And first or second-degree murder, that sort of stuff, goes to motive.

And by subpoenaing all these city officials, past and present, for the Dan White trial, it was going to put every one of them on the stand and ask these questions about the relationship of the People's Temple to the political operations of the city, to this, to that, to every other possible thing. And embarrassed would be a very small word to use. Scandalizing. So the reaction of the district attorney's office and Joe Freitas, the district attorney who had been elected in that same questionable election where the ballot things were missing. And there was no question about his election being stolen or anything like that. It wasn't even close, in terms of— The mayor's race was close. But it was all wrapped up in one ugly mess. It wouldn't have been so ugly if it was routine, but then there was Jonestown. So that kind of raised the stakes really, really high.

Rubens: It's ten days before the assassinations; the city's reeling from it.

28-00:17:27

Hinckle: Yes. And so he knew that this all happened because these corrupt city officials were in league with Jones. Then Jones killed all these people and Dan White knew all these things. And we can prove he knew all these things, and all these things were going on. So it allowed the defense to make excuses.

Rubens: So Harvey Milk's just out of the picture in this analysis. This isn't—

28-00:17:48

Hinckle: Well, Dan White hated gays. That's part of the analysis. But it was the snapping; it was the motive point, that he had snapped. He knew this and that snapped him enough that you couldn't put him away for first-degree murder. Right? You could put him away maybe for manslaughter, for diminished capacity, something like that, but you couldn't convict him on first-degree murder. So to avoid having all these subpoenas carried out, there were negotiations between the DA's office and Doug Schmidt, Dan White's lawyer, where the DA's office agreed, because they had a confession—it wasn't crooked or anything; they had a confession—that they would only plead the facts. So he would quash the subpoenas and not raise this outside question of motive—I mean of shock at the state of the city and the Jonestown thing.

Now, that left the door open. Still it's the question of motive. And left the door open to the Twinkie defense.

Rubens: Why don't you explain that.

28-00:19:05

Hinckle: Martin Blinder, the forensic psychiatrist, came in with the claim that it was hypoglycemia; all the sugar, et cetera, in Twinkies; he ate too many of them and it made him nuts. And that became the famous Twinkie defense which was essentially diminished capacity. But that became the only thing the jury ever heard. Because otherwise, they had no motive. They didn't hear that he hated gays. And there were all kinds of witnesses. The *Chronicle* would not print a story of mine that became part of that case. Later printed it, after the verdict, where I had interviewed Jim Denman, the under-sheriff of the city. And he was at the jail the day of Dan White, and so the cops patted him on the back, et cetera. And I'd interviewed other people who saw Dan White's open hatred of gays, his smirks at them, his comments, et cetera. It just painted a portrait of how the police treated him as a hero, singing *Danny Boy* over the radio, after he shot Moscone and Milk. This tight world and this anti-gay world and Dan's White anti-gay thing, which also was motive.

Rubens: So the *Chronicle* literally censored you?

28-00:20:24

Hinckle: Yes. They said, "You can't print it because it's too close to the trial going on."

Rubens: You had gone out and interviewed people in the district.

28-00:20:32

Hinckle: Oh, I'd gone— Well, I hadn't done it for the *Chronicle*, I did it for the *New York Times Magazine*.

Rubens: Tell me about that?

28-00:20:38

Hinckle: Yes. They wanted a story on what was going on in San Francisco. So I'd interviewed everybody Dan White ever knew, and all the gays, and everybody that had any association with him, and all the cops. This was for the *New York Times*.

Rubens: And was that published?

28-00:20:54

Hinckle: No, I never finished writing it for the *Times*. But I used a big hunk of it as a piece for the *Chronicle*. That was published a week or so after the trial. It was written to be published before the trial; I wasn't going to wait to finish the *Times* story to put that stuff in, because I thought it was important. But they wouldn't, under the conservative journalistic theory that while you have a trial going on, you can't print anything that might influence the jury verdict, even

though they're told not to read the paper. Well, so that was the case. Anyway, all that stuff ended up in *Gay slayer*, and some of it ended up in the *Chronicle*, in various stories after the trial.

Rubens: Yes. April 23 is the first time I see it.

28-00:21:50

Hinckle: All that work was done not for the *Chronicle*, it was for a *New York Times Magazine*. So that's when I talked to just about everybody, and got a pretty clear picture of what was going on. At least on the anti-gay part. So basically, all the jury heard was what he confessed to. He went in there and brought his guns. And the criticism of the trial at the time was that Tom Norman, who was a prosecutor —he was an old pro, a decent guy. Criminal prosecutor. Just went straight by the book, pled the facts, and that was that. The only thing he was criticized for was things like not going after Dan White for saying that he reloaded, where he reloaded his gun. He said he thought he reloaded it in Moscone's office after he shot him. Reloaded, that is, to go shoot Harvey. And in his confession, if you read the whole taped confession, he said that he went back to his old supervisor's office and reloaded the gun there, which gave him time to think, after killing one person, to think about killing the other—which again goes highly to motive, first-degree murder. It wasn't all one act of instant rage, right? And also talking to other people about wanting to kill Carol Ruth Silver, who was a supervisor at the time. But none of this got—

Rubens: Willie Brown was—

28-00:23:41

Hinckle: Yes, and Willie was on his list, too. But none of this got into the trial, so Norman was criticized for that; why didn't he cross-examine White on that and bring that out; because reloading the gun later didn't make it a single act of rage. And he had a list of other people that he wanted to kill. So that kind of meant he thought about it; it just wasn't a snap explosion. It all meant, whether he spent twenty-five years to life or went to the electric chair or got off with some sort of reduced verdict, which he did, in the end. So basically, all the jury heard was the Twinkie defense, which said he snapped because he ate too much sugar. Right? So that's all they had to go on.

But my critique of that wasn't that. My critique was that they fixed or compromised the whole trial in the beginning by not going into the question of motive, which would be Dan White's political take on San Francisco; his and the cops' general feeling about gays; his specific feeling about gays—all these things played a part and were important.

Rubens: Well, also that there had been violence in his background. You write about that in your book about White, the murders and trial, *Gayslayer*. [*The Story of*

How Dan White Killed Harvey Milk and George Moscone and Got Away With Murder.]

28-00:25:01

Hinckle: Yes, plenty of witnesses that could've been called to make that case for the prosecution, that said, this is—

Rubens:

He had been kicked out of your old high school, Riordan.

28-00:25:09

Hinckle: Yes. This is a first degree murder case, it's not a snap. They didn't do that because they made a deal to squash all the subpoenas for all the city officials, so the defense couldn't question all them to prove this messy theory. So that's where my analysis of the trial was from. But from the straight legal standpoint, Tom Norman can say, look, we had a confession; he said he did what he did, he confessed to it. He went in and shot the two people; that's murder. Here you are; convict him. Right?

Rubens:

Gay Slayer offers the analysis, as well, that it's part of a history of vigilantism in San Francisco.

28-00:26:06

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Well, it's within that fabric. That's more pop sociology than mine, but it's a reasonable analysis, but limited.

Rubens:

Well, I think it's establishing an historical context. You're talking about paranoia on the part of the police system, and citizens who—

28-00:26:25

Hinckle: One of the ironies here is my friend Paul Krassner has pointed out—I recall one time he said, "Yeah, the shelf life of the Twinkie,"—because it was just poisonous crap — was something like six and a half, seven years, so you could still buy the damn things after Dan White got out of jail.

Rubens:

Yes, they lasted longer than Dan White served.

28-00:26:45

Hinckle: Than Dan White spent in jail. And then there are other questions; for instance the jury foreman worked for Bechtel. Bechtel was a financial contributor to Dan White's campaign for supervisor. A big corporation, supporting a conservative supervisor; why not? But normally, somebody might say, if you're the prosecution, this guy shouldn't be on a jury because he's an employee of a corporation that's a financial supporter of the defendant. Instead, that guy ended up foreman of the jury. Again, it's like, wait a minute. So there were many reasons to question that trial. But one that was raised in my book was the broader one, which went to motive, that he thought the city had gone to hell; that it was corrupted by the gay community; that liberals had taken over. And they could have proved that he was anti-gay, that he had political and other reasons to shoot everybody; he threatened to shoot other

people, had a history of violence, a temper—all that stuff. None of it came out.

Rubens: Had you known Dan White before? Did you ever meet him?

28-00:28:09

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Did you have a particular impression of him before this?

28-00:28:14

Hinckle: No, he was just a straight arrow, kind of boring. Didn't seem like that bad a guy. I never minded people being conservative, as long as they're not nuts.

Rubens: As a keen observer of San Francisco, you knew the district, he must have been a familiar type. And then you did all that interviewing.

28-00:28:32

Hinckle: Well, during that period when I was writing that thing, researching that thing for the *Times*, I spent a lot of time in that district. I talked to most of the people out there, just about everybody out there, and got a pretty clear picture of what a bad apple this guy is. And then of course, there's the whole thing that he campaigned against social de— He campaigned against gays. Campaigned against gays having influenced the city government. He called them social deviants. Didn't use the word gay, it was "queer." Talked about that whole political establishment being taken over by basically evil people, and they're destroying our town, its values, et cetera. The jury never heard any of that.

Rubens: The title *Gayslayer* —it just says it.

28-00:29:40

Hinckle: Yes, that was Jack Davis' idea, the political consultant.

Rubens: Oh, really?

28-00:29:44

Hinckle: Jack is a close friend of mine. He said call it *Gayslayer*. I said, "Yeah, that's a pretty wild title." "Well, that's what you're saying." "Yeah, that's it." A large part of that book goes into things, saying, hey, this guy hated gays.

Rubens: Right. Right. Well, since we're talking about the book, let's just— It's set up in such a wonderful way. You have then this alleged diary that he writes, his letters from—

28-00:30:15

Hinckle: Well, I made that part up. It's clear I did. It was like a—

Rubens: You say at some point that you made this up. But we don't see that acknowledgement in the beginning. You say if this is a fake, it's a good one. So you're raising the question.

28-00:30:30

Hinckle: I thought it was pretty clear. It was questions and him answering, and all the answers were taken from conversations with people about things he'd said and everything else. So I sort of reformulated them and put them in his mind; but those were his rationales and reasoning.

Rubens:

I thought it was very clever. And what about the nurse, the—

28-00:30:52

Hinckle: Well, that nurse, she contacted me and told me about her letters from Dan.

Rubens:

So this is true. There was literally this exchange.

28-00:31:00

Hinckle: Oh, yes. We produced—that was also printed in the book. We blanked her name out for privacy.

Rubens:

But she contacted you? She knew you were working on this and—

28-00:31:13

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens:

I thought that was just fabulous. So it's mostly your text. It's about a hundred-page manuscript. You said most of it was generated for—well, the beginning was generated for the *New York Times*.

28-00:31:31

Hinckle: It's a short book. Part of that book comes from—that's probably why there's different copyright dates—part of it comes from a piece I think I wrote for the *Los Angeles Times*, about the history of violence in California and in San Francisco and social things and stuff like that.

Rubens:

When was that done?

28-00:31:53

Hinckle: I don't recall. Maybe it was a long book review for the *Times* or an op-ed piece for them. I mean a long Sunday one, one of those things. But it was about violence in California and cults and crazy people and that sort of stuff. And how it fit in with this being the edge of the country and the last place you can go, then you fall into the sea; and how many crazy people came to California—Southern California and Northern California.

Rubens:

So when do you think you did this, roughly? Is this in this period of when you're writing—

28-00:32:36

Hinckle: It was probably a couple years before that. But I adapted— There was a lot of sociological analysis of California and violence and stuff like that. And I'm sure I incorporated that into that book. And then there was stuff from the *Chronicle* that was actually published, belatedly, in the *Chronicle*. And then there was all these lengthy interviews I'd done and research and everything, in Dan White's district, for this *Times* article I did; just never got around to finishing the thing. I got involved in other stuff.

Rubens:

Well, you're turning out a column.

28-00:33:23

Hinckle: Yes. And whatever. I just never finished the damn things for the *Times Magazine*. But bits and pieces of it dribbled out here or there. He was out on parole, when the book came out. And then I remember I went to his funeral. It was a four priest.

Rubens:

Of course, you write about the funeral in one of your columns.

28-00:33:48

Hinckle: I wasn't too welcome there. His friends all hated me.

Rubens:

Yes. And tell me about the publisher; it's done at Minutemen Press and called Silver Dollar Books.

28-00:34:12

Hinckle: Yes. This sounds like a history of journalism done out of bars, but a lot of journalism is. Dan Hickey was a patron of the Dovre Club, part of the old Irish Mafia. And the printer had a very large plant. Did all of Levi's International work. His press was on Potrero Hill. And I'm just sitting around drinking, talking. So we decide, hey, let's—"So I've got all the presses; why don't you get some stuff, we'll make some books?" So we did. And one of them was the book on the General Strike, the anniversary for the ILWU - called *Strike [The Big Strike: A Pictorial History of the 1934 San Francisco General Strike]*. It was an ode in some ways to Mike Quinn's famous book.

Rubens:

Wonderful photographs. You'd gathered these incredible—

28-00:35:05

Hinckle: Yes. I remember there was a pretty good photo researcher. [laughter] I had access to Al [Alessandro] Baccari's private collection. He had taken thousands of photographs for Eureka Savings and Loan –it's defunct now. He had a warehouse full. An extraordinary regional collection; photos from almost every county in California. He would do exhibitions at local Eureka banks. He's a great guy. Involved with preservation in North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf. He's still around.

Rubens:

So you'd done that. Was that the first thing you did with Silver Dollar Press?

- 28-00:35:22
 Hinckle: I believe so. They were thinking about what else are we going to do? I said, "Well, hang on. I'll pull all this Dan White stuff I got and put it together." And I spent some time on it and added this and that, but basically, pulled it all together and talked to Scott Smith, who I think was Dan White's secret boyfriend. I knew him from the Dovre Club. And he had all these great pictures of him, private pictures that— We put a big color section it. And that was the book. Except we didn't know anything about distributing.
- Rubens: How did you distribute?
- 28-00:35:53
 Hinckle: I don't know what we did with it. [laughter] I have no idea. He thought he had distributors.
- Rubens: I was looking for reviews. Mike Kazin wrote a review of *Strike* for the *Chronicle*.
- 28-00:36:01
 Hinckle: Oh, it's very hard to find.
- Rubens: You must have given *Gayslayer* to the *Chronicle*?
- 28-00:36:11
 Hinckle: I don't think so. Or if I did, they didn't review it. I don't recall. It was a pretty inflammatory topic.
- Rubens: You would think it would've been snapped up, once White committed suicide. Randy Shilts cites you a lot in *The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*.
- 28-00:36:35
 Hinckle: Yes, I knew Randy pretty well.
- Rubens: Tell me about Randy. He was freelancing at the *Chronicle*, is that right?
- 28-00:36:42
 Hinckle: No. He may have started freelancing, but he was the first openly gay reporter hired by a major metropolitan newspaper. We were friends. We'd all hang around the newspaper bar, this and that. I had a little lefty history with *Ramparts* and this and that; he was covering the gay stuff. Everybody else didn't really have much of an activist history. So we'd trade gossip and talk about this. He was a good guy, I liked him.
- Rubens: He was a good writer. *And The Band Played On* and—
- 28-00:37:27
 Hinckle: *The Band Played On* was an excellent book, and the military justice one was a very good book. Then he did the Harvey book, which is fine.

Rubens: He cites you quite a bit in that book. So you didn't have this store of books to distribute once he committed suicide, because that raised the whole thing again. So do I ask you, did you make money on these?

28-00:37:59
Hinckle: No. It didn't cost him anything to do. I just have no idea. Hickey said, "Well, I've got somebody who's going to distribute them." And I stupidly didn't pay any attention to that.

Rubens: So you're talking about reissuing it?

28-00:38:21
Hinckle: Oh, yes. I think it's being scanned now, and I'm talking to this guy Dan Nicoletta about his collection of photographs over the years. He knew Harvey from the camera shop and has gone on to photograph everything for the gay papers since that time, and has got a great collection of Harvey pictures and things. And I'm going to put some of them in there. I don't think I'm going to change the text because that's kind of unfair; I think it's just, hey, that's when it was written, that's what it said. Also I'm too lazy to go back. It'll be another book that'll take forever to get done if I try to open up the text. But the photographs, I think we can expand.

Rubens: I think there's only that one story in '79 in the *Chronicle* that you write about Dan White, and that's about the witness not being called.

28-00:39:31
Hinckle: Yes. That was the story that should've been printed before the book. It's pretty damning stuff.

Rubens: So it's interesting. That was '79; maybe that explains-- It looks like it's two columns a month. Certainly, in the beginning part of the year. And that must have been the time you were spending on the *New York Times* story.

28-00:39:57
Hinckle: Could've been. I usually wrote once a week for the *Chronicle*, but it was a pretty loose agreement because sometimes I'd write two or three articles in a row, if some topic got hot or something like that, and we'd make it into a series.

Rubens: Now, you wrote a piece on *Apocalypse Now*.

28-00:40:15
Hinckle: I did?

Rubens: Yes, you did. And I haven't read it. If the index is right, it reads: "Hinckle column on films, *Apocalypse Now* and *Northern Lights*.

28-00:40:28

Hinckle: Yes. A guy I knew was an indie filmmaker. And he did *Northern Lights*, which was a big, pretty good movie. I don't know what that had to do with *Apocalypse Now*. Maybe he worked on the film before he did *Northern Lights*. I remember writing a column about him. But it wasn't specifically about Francis or *Apocalypse Now*; maybe it just got mentioned for some reason.

Rubens:

I have too many notes and I don't know that I have more questions right now. So let's think about ending today.

28-00:41:12

Hinckle: Well you got a good slice of history about Dan White today. It's still a question: It's like how did the guy get away with five years? I mean, what? Huh? He killed two people. Forget that they're public figures.

Okay, now we're done.

Rubens:

Thank you.

Interview 14: November 14, 2010

Doth tosseth his hat into the political arena and runs for mayor of the fair city of San Francisco at the behest of a newspaper scion and continues to dissect the fault lines of campaigns, administrations and hot-button issues.

Begin Audio File 29

Rubens: Today is November 14, 2010. It's been awhile since I've seen you. Almost four months.

29-00:00:11

Hinckle: This seems to be a long-standing Bancroft project.

Rubens: Election time is always a high work period for you. And especially in light of much of the left's disillusionment with Obama, an op-ed that you wrote for the *New York Times* has current resonance.

29-00:00:26

Hinckle: Yeah?

Rubens: You talked about Ross Perot [in his 1992 campaign as an independent for president of the U.S.] being the hero of the counterculture. And what I love is you say that you are "considering myself an unreconstructed radical." You were giving Perot a left-handed compliment, because it was really hard to tell the difference between the Republican and the Democrats. You painted Perot as the heir of Ortega y Gasset, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, who feared that working class political authoritarianism would develop in individuals who are not attached to political institutions.

29-00:01:04

Hinckle: Yes, that would've have been a compliment. I've always been a big critic of Lipset and those people who are afraid of the masses. But I think that was meant as a critique of the two-party system, because they connive with each other and on major issues are basically the same. And therefore, to have even an eccentric Texan running a small campaign as a third-party candidate ceded the possibilities of anything a third-party— might have the possibility of keeping Democrats and Republicans a little more honest. But that's the same thing that's going on today.

Rubens: Yes, so just make a comment about—

29-00:01:52

Hinckle: Well, there's a column by Frank Rich in the *Times* this morning, the *New York Times*, just saying how incredibly chicken the Republicans and the Democrats are and how cowardly Obama has become, and the very obvious thing of not cutting these George W. Bush tax decreases for the wealthy. He makes the observation, made by many other writers these days, that the accumulation of

capital, wealth in America has gone to— just 1 percent of the country is basically raking in almost a third -certainly, 25 percent of the entire wealth of the country. And it didn't just start with the Republicans, it started under Clinton. He traces it back to Jimmy Carter's regime. But meanwhile, everybody else has seen their— The dollar's much less for them, their wages are less and the situation's more difficult. Well, at the same time that was happening over a long period for regular Americans, if you want to put it that way, who aren't millionaires—being millionaires is small change for these guys these days, these billionaires—while what was happening to them, this 1 percent of the country, who aren't producing anything—steel or toothpaste or advances in electronics or transportation or new green things to cut the use of oil, that sort of stuff— They're not producing anything, they're just making money off of money—hedge fund managers, bankers, those people—and they're the ones who just benefit obscenely from these tax cuts. And it's an obvious thing for the Democrats to jump up and down about it. But Obama's basically conceded that issue. And everybody's worried about the national debt. Some in congress aren't that worried about it; I kind of agree with them, I think. In a situation like this, you don't worry about the national debt so much; you take care of getting the country going.

Rubens: That's what [Paul] Krugman says.

29-00:04:12

Hinckle:

And then you deal with the national debt, I think he's right. But it's just jaw dropping to have the Democrats cave on this issue. It's astonishing, given the fact that these are people who aren't reinvesting in the country, aren't doing anything, don't even own businesses that produce anything, like they might hire some more people. They just keep making more and more money off of money. And a large amount of them, this administration certainly should have indicted. In the savings and loan scandal back in the seventies and eighties, my God, there must've been twenty people who went to jail, who were actually tried and went to jail. Because basically, what they did, they stole from the taxpayers and the guarantees. Aside from screwing over some depositors. And the same thing has happened in the current situation in the last three years. These guys just went ahead and made obscene billions for themselves, escaped completely clean, stuck it in their pockets, had the taxpayers bail them out, and they're back doing the same thing. And now—

Rubens: And some of them are in the administration.

29-00:05:35

Hinckle:

Yes, some of them are in the administration there now. But now the Republicans, as you'd expect them to do, are saying, oh, you can't restore their taxes to normal levels, these people who made these obscene amounts of money. But you wouldn't expect the Democrats to be saying that. But that's an example, part of what I was talking about in that Perot article, of the two parties working together. It's the two parties against the people. There's

been some excellent studies of congress and state legislatures over the years that show how basically, they trade off positions and deals and keep some parts of the state in the districting of congressional representatives safe for them. You take this, we'll take that. And basically, just cut deals on everything. And that's never changed. So when you look at the two parties that way, you can't blame some people for saying, well, what's the difference? That's why the disillusionment people have with Obama is so severe, because everybody thought, well, maybe things are going to be different. And they weren't different. He played politics as usual. I guess played it for the history books. He did advance healthcare; that was worthwhile. But the compromises were such that they'll get whittled down by the Republican majority, now that they're in. But what he had to do was deal in a severe way with the economy, and he didn't. He was chicken shit to put in too big a stimulus.

This is not original thinking. Many, Krugman and other economists pointed this out right from the beginning. It's not enough. It's not going to restore jobs. And it didn't. So now the Democrats are paying for it, for being chicken. And now they're being chicken again [laughter] by allowing these billionaire crooks, who really should be under investigation by the attorney general for stealing from the taxpayers—That's what happened during the savings and loan scandal. Charles Keating was one of McCain's original sponsors in Arizona. The guy went to jail. And a lot of others of them went to jail.

Rubens: Yes. And a lot of money was put in to bail many of those banks out. It was an incredible bailout.

29-00:07:46

Hinckle: Yes, it was the same thing. The same thing. And this one, not only has nobody been indicted, there's not even investigations. It's astonishing, for a Democratic administration.

Rubens: So is there a way we can segue to San Francisco politics and look at the eighties? One of the claims is that San Francisco had become a finance center, that all of the old industrial manufacturing had left the city. It was a tourist center, it was a financial capital, it was—

29-00:08:25

Hinckle: That's generally true, but basically, it's another issue of taxation. Most of those industries went to another state or moved over the county line to San Mateo. So if you can keep manufacturing in San Mateo County, and continue your manufacturing—steel tubing or whatever it is—because you had to move out of San Francisco—you might ask yourself, well, how can it work in San Mateo, twenty miles away, when they have to move out of San Francisco? It's because the politics of the city was such that the supervisors basically didn't want any growth, didn't want any of this stuff and zoned everything and reconstructed the city in such a way that they chased industry out.

And now there's a big fight in the city, in the Mission particularly. The current crop of supervisors is trying to say, oh, well, we can't let any homes be built there, we can't let any stores go in there, because we have to save this for small business and so it was still a working class city. Well, sorry you guys, you chased them all out.

Rubens: You wrote some wonderful series for the *Chronicle* on that, on the transformation of San Francisco economically.

29-00:09:54

Hinckle: Yes, but once you chase them out, they're gone. And there's not exactly great tax or other incentives for them to move back in. Well, Gavin Newsom did an admirable job in this. He did all he could to create tax incentives and other things for the high tech industry, so they'd come here. They're plenty happy in Silicon Valley; why don't we let them all stay there? But a reasonable percentage of the high tech industry and a lot of the new major start-ups—Twitter, for one—are all in San Francisco.

Rubens: Right, and many of them are going to Mission Bay, right? That whole new development.

29-00:10:33

Hinckle: Yes. Yes. But that's all because of planning policies that favor making it advantageous for them to come here. But the city hasn't gone far enough to do that. But what does that development do? It creates jobs, it creates income for the general fund, it helps out the overall situation. But the politics, usually, in this town are the opposite; they chase out business. There is no growth, there are no jobs. And the politicians who are doing that, both mayors and supervisors, claim to be the champions of the poor. They call themselves progressives. And that's what a lot of the discussion, when I ran for mayor back in the eighties, was about.

Rubens: Well, let's get to that, specifically, in 1988.

29-00:11:19

Hinckle: Yes. It's like, hey, progressives my butt. You're not really providing any housing for anybody. You've done all you can to chase jobs and job creation so people could have a job in the city and afford to live here. You won't allow any new housing to be built. This was some of the stuff I talked about in the mayoral campaign. You weren't allowing new housing to be built, basically. So what usually happens in many cities—San Diego's one classic example of this—is that the people move up the ladder. Older housing becomes available because it's cheaper, and some people will restore the property because they can get it cheap, because they're cheaper, but they're able to get it because people were going on to new housing. Well, the politicians in this town—Art Agnos was one of them, during his mayoralty and the supervisors—took the position, no, we're not going to have any housing built unless it's built by our nonprofits.

Rubens: Like Bridge Housing or—

29-00:12:33

Hinckle: Well, Bridge Housing is a bit of an exception to that. But I'm talking about things like Mission Housing Coalition—all the main non-coalition housing nonprofits. But they rarely build anything. They sort of land bank—they take the money and maybe buy some property, sit on it. When they do build it, it's so expensive to build they eat up the bond issue money and everything, all in the name of politics. Yet these large organizations that they have, largely funded by the city and bond issues, are political troops for their campaigns to get elected. It's a vicious cycle. So that was some of the stuff when I was in that brief campaign for mayor, which was done under rather comical circumstances anyway. But I was talking about saying, hey, this is all unreal. What's called progressives are really reactionaries, because they're not taking care or making life better for the people they say they're there to help. They're doing the opposite.

Rubens: I think that was your specific claim against Agnos. You called him an ideological liberal. He had been against the new baseball stadium, he was against the development in the waterfront, he was for tenant control of public housing, and then he moved on to vacancy control.

29-00:14:03

Hinckle: Yes, but he took those positions as a classic left wing guy, but—

Rubens: Once he was in power—

29-00:14:14

Hinckle: When he got into power, he did the opposite. He became a developer in sheep's clothing, pushing for all kinds of deals that were advantageous to him and his friends, both in Sacramento, where he came from, and in San Francisco; and used every aspect of both the economy and the politics in town to further his own political machine, for his own purposes of staying in power, not for what you would call classic liberal goals. And that was an awareness that became pretty clear to most of the voters, and which is ultimately why he failed to win a second term as mayor.

Rubens: But you're running against him in the first campaign.

29-00:15:00

Hinckle: Yes. That was a lark.

Rubens: Was it totally a lark?

29-00:15:04

Hinckle: Well, yeah.

Rubens: You're working for the *Examiner*, you're still with—

29-00:15:07

Hinckle: I was working for the *Examiner*, and we were on a retreat—management retreat, they call those goofy things—somewhere down in I think it was the Carmel Valley, where you kick around ideas and that sort of stuff.

Rubens: You're an associate editor.

29-00:15:21

Hinckle: Yes, which is like management. That's when I was putting out the magazine and the hundredth anniversary issue of the *Examiner* and writing columns still and doing stuff. But a lot of it was management stuff. Anyway, so I was part of management, for a change. And so we're down there and one of the items that popped up—I think it came from Frank McCulloch, the managing editor, who's as straight, old-fashioned, good, solid a news man as you can get—we were talking about the upcoming mayor's race. And he said, "Hey, maybe you should run, the way that Buckley [William F. Buckley, Jr.] did in New York, and that Jimmy Breslin did. You could run and write about it and poke fun at everybody and talk about the whole process." And everybody says, geez, that's not a bad idea. I said, "Oh, no. God, it would be a pain in the butt. Three months running for mayor?" And then we kept talking about it and finally, talk resumed the next day and everybody said, hey, now, this is really a good idea. It'd be great for the paper, you'd have a lot of fun. Come on. Let's do it. So I said, "Okay. All right. We'll do it. I'll give it a shot." It'd been done in New York.

Rubens: I read somewhere that you were considering running Bentley, your dog.

29-00:16:43

Hinckle: I don't know. I don't know where that came from. You'd have to remind me.

Rubens: Did they give you time off from the paper?

29-00:16:50

Hinckle: Oh. No, that wasn't the idea. The idea was I wouldn't have taken time off from the paper to run for mayor. The idea was not to run to win the mayoralty; the idea was to run to talk about the process of the campaign, throw out ideas that other candidates had to answer, see how they dealt with them; basically, have fun and tear apart a little bit the whole system, and sort of educate the readership and everybody on the game and have fun and write three columns a week about running for mayor. So I said, "Okay, let's do it. What the hell?" Well, no sooner did I announce that, okay, that I'm going to be running for mayor, that it immediately became, hey, you can't really write about it. What do you mean I can't write about it? That was what we had decided to do. Yes, but a lot of the staff is saying it wouldn't be fair, because it'd be like covering ourselves and this and that. So there was a staff revolt. And I wasn't too popular with the staff anyway, because I sort of did what I wanted to. They didn't like that.

Rubens: Well, staff means at what level?

29-00:18:12

Hinckle: The ranks, the reporters and the middle-range editors. And they revolt. And it scared the hell out of Will Hearst because —this just drove him crazy. So that was the first thing. They said, well, now, we guess that you just can't write about it. And then the second thing became, geez, the lawyers tell us that we can't pay you during this period; you're going to have to take time off, because otherwise it could be considered a contribution to the campaign, over the limits of legal contributions. And I'm like, "What? You guys got me into this, we've already announced I'm doing it, and now you're totally screwing me." That was about it. And so I said, "Well, I'm stuck. What am I going to do? I'll just have to go ahead and do it." So I did, with an ersatz crew of people. And it's very hard to find any stories about my campaign for mayor in the papers, because basically, there were none. The *Examiner* wouldn't put any in because that would be like plugging their own person from their silly newspaper ethics. And the *Chronicle* wouldn't cover me because I was an *Examiner* guy running, so why should they write stories about me? Right? So it was like I was an invisible candidate.

Rubens: There's very scant coverage; some mention of debates in which you participate; I did see the vote tally. So how did you get paid? Did you work something out with—

29-00:19:52

Hinckle: No. Didn't.

Rubens: Unbelievable.

29-00:19:54

Hinckle: We raised money for the campaign here and there. But if it hadn't been for the Mitchell brothers, who came to my aid— And they built a whole stage set, a building for the campaign headquarters, on Valencia Street. It's now a tattoo parlor. It was a former motorcycle sales shop. And they brought everybody over, the carpenters and set designers, over from the Mitchell brothers' burlesque house and built a replica of the mayor's office inside this building. Put television cameras in there, phones and things like that, and began to broadcast from there and have press conferences from there. It was hysterical.

Rubens: Any of those saved? Is there any way we could find those?

29-00:20:51

Hinckle: I don't know. If there's any tapes, they're still there, down at the O'Farrell Street Theatre. And then I went to all the candidates' nights—

Rubens: Some of those candidates' nights are noted in the *Chronicle*.

29-00:21:02

Hinckle:

—and tore the *hell* out of Art Agnos and other people running. John Molinari was one; Roger Boas, a very nice guy, was another one. And there was a famous poster that Jack Davis, my friend, the political consultant did. He later elected Frank Jordan, defeating Art Agnos, and then elected Willie Brown to defeat Frank Jordan. He shifted players a little bit. But he made a classic poster, which people still have—it sells on eBay for I don't know what—and it was called—Davis took pictures of his dog's crap, a whole bunch of piles of dog crap, put them on a plate, and then stuck the campaign buttons of the other three guys running for mayor in the dog crap. And the headline on the poster said, "Tired of the Same Old Crap?" And those went by the thousands. People took them because the humor was pretty good.

Rubens:

Do you have one of those?

29-00:22:16

Hinckle:

Yes, I've got one framed.

Rubens:

We'll take a shot of it.

29-00:22:20

Hinckle:

They're very, very funny.

Rubens:

How did you come to work with Jack Davis?

29-00:22:24

Hinckle:

We were friends.

Rubens:

He hasn't entered the story, our narrative here. Did you work with him on anything before this campaign?

29-00:22:32

Hinckle:

No, we were just friends. I knew him from this bar in the Mission, the Dovre Club, which I've written about often, through two newspapers. And after the owner, Pat Nolan, my friend, died, then Davis and I engaged in lawsuits with the Woman's Building, which owned the building that the bar was in, because they decided they wanted to close down the bar. And so we said, no, you're not. And so we kind of kept it open for another two years after he died, through a series of legal maneuvers we made. A story in itself.

But I just went to all those meetings. And then of course, the League of Women Voters wouldn't let me into the debate they sponsored. So I sued the League of Women Voters. Ephraim Margolin was the attorney, who's a great constitutional lawyer in San Francisco; he won libel cases against *The New Yorker*. He's a very sharp, sharp constitutional lawyer. He's not too high profile in the city, but he's known in the legal fraternity. He's a terror. He's very good. So we sued them and tried to pin them to the mat, but in the end, the court went on precedent and wouldn't let me into the League of Women Voters debate. And the *Independent* sponsored a debate. I was not yet working

for the *Independent*; that came subsequently. And they said, hey, you can be in our debate, because it was the last debate of the campaign. So I got in one debate against those guys and totally creamed them in that debate. And that was about that. We had raised enough money to take out, I think, one ad in the newspapers, and had fliers and buttons and the usual things and an ersatz crew of volunteers.

Rubens: Were you having fun?

29-00:24:43

Hinckle: Well, I was so damn mad about it when I finally got into it, I said, “Well, now we’re going to do it.” Never thought at all that we had a chance to win. Of course, we didn’t win. Because what happened is that people get afraid at the end of an election. And if they know it’s for a candidate they don’t think is likely to win, in the closing days, if they’re afraid—it’s a Republican versus a Democrat; if I give this other guy my vote, the Republican might win, that sort of thing, right? So you don’t really end up getting too many votes, at least in San Francisco, along those lines, if you don’t have a huge, high-powered campaign and the possibility of winning.

Rubens: There was actually a runoff, you came in fourth.

29-00:25:37

Hinckle: Yes, fourth out of—there were a bunch of candidates.

Rubens: About six. So the run-off is with Boas and Molinari and Art and yourself.

29-00:25:54

Hinckle: Yes. There were the three main candidates, and then there were a series of minor candidates who always run for mayor or run for something, who were also running. And then there was me, who’d set out to do a thing like Jimmy Breslin did in New York and make a big, fun deal out of it, but also take some punches at the system and that sort of thing, and write about it. And then I was blocked from writing about it. [laughs]

Rubens: Was it picked up by the *Times*? I couldn’t find it. I was looking in the *L.A. Times* and the *New York Times* about it, but I don’t—

29-00:26:33

Hinckle: I think the *L.A. Times* did a story towards the end of the campaign, if memory serves.

Rubens: And what about the *Bay Guardian*?

29-00:26:44

Hinckle: No, they wouldn’t mention me because we’re long-term enemies.

Rubens: Yes. Journalistic enemies, would you say?

29-00:26:49

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Yes, competitors in a way.

29-00:26:50

Hinckle: Yes, but it's the same sort of fight. The critique I was making earlier, when we first started talking about the San Francisco progressives and how essentially, they *aren't* progressives and they really exist to maintain their own machine; and they have all these great liberal stances, but they're really keeping people from getting housing and from getting jobs so they can stay in town; but enriching their own nonprofit operations, which basically don't do anything, or almost are shadow activities for city government functions—They duplicate a lot of city government functions. They do it on city money. But they become the shock troops, the ground troops for these candidates and for the political machines. From my point of view, it's very clear. It's outrageous. But not too many people have talked about that. I have, for years, and written about it. Although you find that in the neighborhoods—in the Sunset, the Excelsior, the Richmond, the Marina, North Beach, the older San Francisco neighborhoods—where there's not such a large churn of people.

Every three, four years, in a lot of neighborhoods—the Mission, other areas—you have turnover of the population. People come into town, they stay for a while, they may even keep their job here, but they'll move to the suburbs or something. Other people come in. But in the traditional neighborhoods of town, you have second and third-generation families still living in the same home or getting another home in the same area of town. And the son grows up or the daughter grows up, they get married, but they still live in the same neighborhood, right? Be it the Ingleside or Saint Francis Woods or wherever it might be, but these are older San Francisco families who have long memories. And they were very helpful in my campaign. And they respond, those families, to that sort of critique, because they have memories that go back generations.

Rubens: Sure. And you're a home-grown boy. You've done well.

29-00:29:33

Hinckle: And they're politically quite sophisticated. And they know phonies when they see them. We just had an election here, just last week. And Janet Reilly, who everybody thought was going to win, was defeated by the neighborhood boy, a guy named [Mark] Farrell. And nobody thought that he was going to win. All the political experts and newspapers said it was foregone that large labor unions, everybody— She got everybody's endorsement. All the politicians, all the big-name politicians endorsed her. And she was beaten soundly. I like to think it was because I opposed her in my magazine [*Argonaut*] and wrote quite a bit about her. But that would only reinforce what people already knew in the neighborhood. Right? They didn't trust her. They didn't trust her because she was too close to the current board of supervisors, whose politics

are too lefty and controversial for the older neighborhoods, let's put it that way. Well, the same people have no problem voting for legalizing pot, allowing it to be sold in the city. They aren't cultural conservatives. Let San Francisco be San Francisco. They just sort of have a take on what these politicians are up to.

Rubens: So getting back to '87 and your run for mayor, Jack Davis and [Clint] Reilly square off, they're sort of the contenders as leading political consultants then.

29-00:31:14

Hinckle: Yes. Yes. Davis started out working for Clint. And Clint sort of pioneered voter lists, I guess you'd call it, computerizing voters' names and then sending them campaign literature, direct mail. And he made a lot of money working for the insurance companies, some big campaigns for oil companies. But basically, he made a lot of dough by running direct mail and television campaigns on state ballot propositions, using these sophisticated lists and direct mail to defeat propositions which would've reined in the charges by the insurance companies. Things like that. Stuff you certainly wouldn't call progressive. And he did very well. They put out slate cards, Democratic slate cards, which was not the official Democratic Party; they just *called* them Democratic slate cards. But he'd get statewide candidates and lobbyists to put ads in for ballot propositions and for some statewide candidates. And then he'd go to the local county where people were running and say, okay, you want to be on the slate card that's coming out? Here it is, and you can bet on it for this much money. A fortune got paid by both sides. So that's how he got along and ran political campaigns, for congress, supervisors, things like that.

Rubens: Now he was not working for Agnos when you were running?

29-00:32:53

Hinckle: No, Clint did not run Art's campaign; Richie Ross ran his campaign.

Rubens: Oh, yes, Art knew Ross from his own state assembly campaign.

29-00:33:00

Hinckle: But Davis had worked for him on a couple of political campaigns and was sort of an acolyte of his for a long time. Then they became enemies and Davis became the supreme campaign manager in San Francisco. And he and Clint had been at odds, and Clint then ran for mayor himself, spending his own money, running against Willie Brown, who Davis was running —Willie Brown's campaign for mayor. And Davis just knocked Clint out of the running. Among other things, not only did he outplay him with his own campaign techniques, but he just whooped him by giving a press conference and telling the story of how Clint had severely beat up a girlfriend of his and a campaign worker. *Huge* stories in all the papers, front page stuff. And everybody in politics knew it, but nobody talked about it. So they really gave him a whap. So there's not too much love lost between them.

Rubens: That's in '92? I'm looking for my notes.

29-00:34:22

Hinckle: No, it would've been '96 or something like that. Art Agnos was in till about '91 or '2'; then Frank Jordan came in. He only served one term, and then it was Willie Brown. He went eight years.

Rubens: So wrapping up your campaign, is there anything— Did you have a succinct platform? You had this wonderful poster that said the rest is crap.

29-00:35:07

Hinckle: Yes. I had a platform that really had a lot to do with putting businesses back in the city and that sort of thing. Well, pretty much a critique along the lines we discussed when we first started discussing that piece in the *New York Times* — what is truly progressive stuff and what isn't; what helps people and what doesn't. So there was a platform. I'll have to find it for you. It was bandied in a couple of newspaper advertisements. It was pretty forward-looking, I think, for the times.

Rubens: And did you get support from the gay community? Agnos wasn't a shoo-in by them, by any means, because he had run against Harvey Milk. He had sabotaged Harry Britt's domestic partners' ordinance.

29-00:36:03

Hinckle: Oh, yes. No, he was no great fan of— wasn't beloved— But some parts of the gay community liked him. There's a right-left split in the gay community in the political structures in San Francisco. There's the Harvey Milk Club which is basically on the left; and there's a club called the Alice B. Toklas Club which is much more moderate, to the right. There's a left and a right. And so there's no unanimity of politics in the gay community in the city, except on strictly gay issues. Right? And they would both coalesce on a statewide ballot proposition or Anita Bryant or—

Rubens: So are there any communities you should point to, or people who were particular supporters of you?

29-00:37:03

Hinckle: Oh, I'd say probably the Irish and the bar communities [laughs], if it was a community. They had my signs up everywhere.

Rubens: You must have missed Howard Gossage, if he had been around what fun that would have been.

29-00:37:16

Hinckle: Yes. Oh, we would've done—

Rubens: Really done fun stuff.

29-00:37:20

Hinckle: Yes. The irony of all that, of course, is that I went back to the *Examiner* not particularly a happy camper, having been, from my point of view, totally screwed over by them. It was their idea to do it, then they crapped out and left me twisting—the famous phrase, twisting in the wind.

Rubens: *Slowly twisting*, yes. So I assume they didn't endorse a candidate for mayor?

29-00:37:51

Hinckle: I can't remember. I bet they endorsed Art. I think they endorsed Art Agnos. But then when I went back to the paper and Art was then mayor, I began hammering away at him. I nicknamed him Red Art, as a satirical thing that he was not really a progressive. He was a mean politician and a power broker and secretly doing things that a liberal wouldn't be doing, in the common understanding of that. The columns were very strong and they were relentless. Of course, I had gone after Feinstein continually, too, when she was mayor. So this was nothing new with me as a columnist going after mayors. That's what he does. And Will Hearst became quite friendly with Art Agnos. Art somehow convinced Will he was really a good guy. And Art would come by the paper and take him in his car and take him for rides around town in the hills or to the waterfront and say on this waterfront, I'm going to build this. and that stuff. And Will believed the guy. He said, "Geez, Warren, I don't know why you're so hard on him; he's really a good guy." I said, "Will, he's *not!* Goddamn it, look at this, and this and this." So my hammering away at Art was divergent, certainly, from the beliefs of Will as publisher.

Rubens: You were going after him for not supporting union issues and-

29-00:39:32

Hinckle: Consistently, yes. He was screwing over the police union, screwing over the fireman's union, screwing over most of the—

Rubens: The meter maids was a big issue.

29-00:39:43

Hinckle: The meter maids, screwing over the laborer's union. If you didn't go along with him and become part of his team, then you got screwed over. And that's how he played the game. The police department, the POA [Police Officer Association], if they didn't become loyal Agnos troops—and they wouldn't—then everything went. Their salaries went. Petty things, like cops would always get buttons free for their uniforms; an old San Francisco tradition, I guess, like nuns get on the streetcar free of charge, right? Doesn't really affect the business, there's not that many nuns. But that was always a San Francisco thing. Agnos just did everything he could to go after the cops; did the same thing to the firemen.

There was a famous issue, which I wrote about extensively, where there was a riot—I think it was nineteen-eighty—Oh, I can't remember the year now. But

there was a riot at the State Building. I'll have to look up the year, but there was a riot at the State Building in San Francisco. And it became quite a riot. And I think it had started out with a gay protest against the baseball park or another issue, but it was at the State Building. And it turned into a real riot. And a bunch of cops were trapped inside; there were still workers on the upper floors. The windows were broken, the building was set, or areas, on fire. It was a really dangerous situation. And the police inside were trapped. But the police brass wouldn't send the police to get these guys out, to save their butt. Highly controversial—any cop who's been around for a while will tell you about this story—because Art's lieutenant, who was one of the police captains, a guy named Harriman I think his name was, went down there to look. And somebody stole his hat and he went off chasing the guy for his hat and never came back. And the police did not respond because the official policy of Agnos' police chief was that those people inside there will be okay; we don't want to show up in force because it might start a much bigger riot. I don't know how you could have a riot any bigger than the building on fire, every window broken on the ground and guys smashing in with battering rams.

And the cops inside were taking the bullets out of their guns in case they got over run, the mob might get their guns and that sort of stuff. And so finally the San Francisco police trapped inside there had to call the California Highway Patrol to come and rescue them. And that literally happened. The CHP came in from outside, came into the city, broke up the rioters, saved all these cops that were trapped inside the building, before the rest of the San Francisco Police Department even bothered to do anything about it. Boy, did most of the rank and file in the police department, were they pissed off about that. And they saw that as just a, hey, we're not going to help you guys out anyway; you're all on the wrong side of me, the mayor; and I didn't want to get politically embarrassed if we had a gay riot, if that would affect my position on the ballpark or something like that, the issue was. So it was just, the hell with you. Those sorts of issues really made Art quite disliked. Happened in the neighborhoods, happened in the black community. I could go on about each individual issue, but any old San Franciscan, if you mention Art Agnos, they just shake their head.

Rubens: There certainly was a negative reaction to his effort to expand the bureaucracy in his own administration; you called the proposed cadre of assistant mayors the seven dwarfs.

29-00:43:57

Hinckle: Seven dwarfs. There were seven assistant mayors, or deputy, whatever he called them. Of course that was a tradition that Feinstein started, expanding the middle range, the higher range of government management, you see. And then Art expanded it to deputy mayors, at very nice salaries, all who had political agendas to make sure that everything that happened there went all right politically for Art. Really didn't have much to do with managing the

city. And I don't think that that tradition— They call them something different now. Each mayor structures it differently. But from Feinstein on, there's been enormous growth in the ranks of upper management in civil service. And one of the ironies of that is in San Francisco there's such a huge number of city employees compared to its population. San Jose has got a third of the city employees we have and they have a much larger population. But a large amount of those city employees are managers. They're bureaucrats. They aren't workers actually out there either drilling in the ground or typing or anything like that. So a restructuring of civil service, which is necessary— Every city and county in the country now has got the same crisis with pensions and other problems. Unless that's addressed, you're not really dealing seriously. You've got to slim the whole thing down. And just firing a bunch of small workers isn't going to affect the cost.

Anyway, but the irony of the Agnos thing was that I kept hammering him and hammering him for the first two years. And at the midterm the second year of his mayoralty, the *Examiner* put a giant picture on the front page of the Sunday edition with an article which I didn't write, that said he's basically unbeatable. In the opinion polls he was riding so high. Now Will thought he was a good guy. And I thought he was a terrible guy. And so that shortly came to a head. And the Gulf War started, I think it was '90. And I wrote a column severely critical of the first Gulf War. And the paper pulled it; they wouldn't print it. Will himself pulled it. And I said, "That's it. I'm out of here."

And I went to— These people who'd come to be friends of mine had put out this local free paper called the *Independent*. And there was a wonderful man, Chinese journalist, John Fang, whom I got to know very well. And I learned things about Chinatown and I'd have tea and dinner with him often, in previous years. And I came to him, I said, "I'm going to quit the *Examiner*. I've been censored; I won't take it." In fact, there was a big story in the socialist or the communist newspaper at the time. It said, "Hearst press censors Warren Hinckle." [laughter] Even the *Bay Guardian* wrote about that. Rarely has the *Bay Guardian* ever written anything affirmative about me, but even they wrote about that one because it was like, wow, he wrote a column opposing the war; that's odd. And John said to me, "Warren, think before you do this." I said, "I'm going to quit, John." And he said, "No, don't. You must think about it. It's a very high salary; we couldn't pay that salary. It's a good salary there. You know there's a pension and the Hearst Corporation does all these things that we can't; we're a small operation." I said, "No, I'm going to do it and I'm going to bring all my Agnos files with me and I'm going to go after this guy." And the Fangs were political opponents of Agnos. And he'd already been trying to go after them on tax issues and other things.

Rubens:

Who had they endorsed in the '88 election?

29-00:48:32

Hinckle:

I believe they endorsed Molinari. And Art never forgot that, went after them. And the irony of it is that the *Independent* then had the largest circulation of any paper in the city because it was delivered to every home. So it had a quarter-million circulation and everybody read it because it came free on your doorstep. And it had a lot of high school sports in it that weren't covered by the dailies, that didn't have room. Just a lot of local news. It wasn't the sharpest journalism in the world, but it was ok and it was free. And so everybody read the *Independent*. But you had to pay for the *Examiner* and the *Chronicle* so naturally their circulations weren't as large. So I began a series of columns in the *Independent*, which were pretty close to the top of the front page, going after Art Agnos. And spent a lot of time going after Art—not repeating stuff I'd written in the *Examiner*, new stuff going into every grievance against him. And as his campaign for reelection came on, we found—that would be Jack Davis and myself, and, well, the Fangs, the *Independent* paper owned by this Chinese family—we decided to run this guy, a cop, Frank Jordan, against him.

Now, we'll take a break for a second. But one other irony here, is that the reason Frank Jordan was in a position to run against Art Agnos is that I had written a column for the *Examiner*. It was a dead —what am I going to put in to fill Sunday. And Jack Davis was in trouble because Art Agnos had got him indicted for opposing his ballpark. Right? The ballpark Art wanted to build. He would oppose other people's, but he wanted to build one that was different. And got Davis and some other political consultants indicted for putting out a mailer. Did get him indicted. The district attorney Arlo Smith, indicted him. Smith at the time was running statewide for state attorney general. And I think Agnos told him, "I'll expose your offices overtime. You're not a good administrator." That sort of stuff. "I want these guys indicted." So they were.

So Davis wasn't really working then. He had a candidate for mayor or something in Oakland; he had somebody else. But he had to resign his candidates while he fought this indictment because the opponents of his candidates would say, "And his campaign manager is under indictment in San Francisco." And boy, that's not so cool. Right? So he wasn't doing anything at the time. So I said, "Hey, Davis, come on, let me take you out to dinner. I want to dope out who could possibly run against Agnos? He's so popular." So we talked about it. And Davis says, "Look, the only thing I can think of is this guy Frank Jordan. He's a cop who's never really carried a gun. He's done only community relations work and this and that. And nobody's mad at him and he's not part of—" The Agnos people were hated within the police department for being Art's little gang in the police department. The rank-and-file cops didn't like those guys.

Rubens:

Jordan was still chief of police.

29-00:52:07

Hinckle:

Yes, he was chief of police. And we went through it and I said, "Yeah, there's another possibility, there's this and that." Anyway, so I wrote a trial column. I never called Frank Jordan to say, hey, guess what? I just wrote it, it's a trial balloon; who can beat him? And I went through all the possible people and came to the conclusion, put a lot of it in Davis' mouth, that the only person who can beat him is Frank Jordan, the current police chief. And here's why: boom-boom-boom-boom-boom. Well, that column caused a little bit of talk but it was just another column. Jordan was called in the next day—this ran on a Sunday—by Agnos, who upbraided him and said, "What are you doing taking a run for mayor?" And this and that. "You won't be chief." And the guy said, "I didn't even know it was coming. He never talked to me. It wasn't my idea. No, I just want to be chief." Well, then Agnos didn't believe him. And Jordan had no intention of running for mayor. But then he went after him. He put spies in the department, he started bugging his phone calls. And people would call in—and Art would hear about it—would call and say, geez, we heard that you might be thinking of running. By this time, there was a widespread dislike against Agnos, growing, among the voters. And people would call in. And he said, "Well, no, I'm not really running, but Agnos is if you're one of his spies." Police guys with big ears would call him.

So Agnos called Jordan in again. And he finally said to him, "Now, I want you to take a firm oath, a sworn declaration," this and that, "that you will not run for public office ever. If you want to stay as police chief, you will do that." Well, that got Frank, who wasn't exactly a combative person. He was a very quiet, mild-mannered guy. That got his Irish up. And he says, "What, you want me to sign away my civil rights to retain my job? And now you're interfering with it and questioning things I'm doing? I tell you, I'm not running for mayor and you want me to sign something like this because you won't believe me? This is so outrageous. I won't." So Frank Jordan quits.

Rubens:

Had he been in touch with you since that first column had come out?

29-00:54:29

Hinckle:

Well, yes. We met at a bar and were laughing about it, right?

Rubens:

But he never said to you, how dare you?

29-00:54:34

Hinckle:

Then Art started taking him seriously; he went after him. And then it got serious. He was really going after the police chief, who had no intention of running. So basically, he put him in a position where, well, maybe I should. So I got him together with Davis. And Davis had just beaten that indictment. So they had no money and Davis slept on a futon in a little campaign office. And they started out with the *Independent*, with me writing these articles on Agnos, that went to every doorstep. Long and short of it is a lot of people came and raised a hell of a lot of money, because Art was widely disliked. The unions disliked him, most of the neighborhood groups disliked him—

Rubens: Yes, because he had vetoed—

29-00:55:16

Hinckle: The black community disliked him, the Chinese disliked him. He'd done mean things to everybody. He was mean. And he was stupid in being so mean. And we defeated him. Right? And the last thing that got him was the *Independent* took all the columns I had written and put them together in a little book. And Art had originally run for mayor by making a book about his vision for San Francisco. And he'd put it on every doorstep, which is a nice campaign trick. Made him sound very forward-looking.

Rubens: His book was *Getting Things Done*; yours was called *The Agnos Years*.

29-00:55:58

Hinckle: We called it *The Agnos Years*. Anyway, that booklet was put on every doorstep in town, the week before the election. But this was a book about Art Agnos, what a rat bastard he was. How he'd been going after every aspect of the community in detail.

Rubens: And how he'd become a millionaire. You showed—

29-00:56:17

Hinckle: Oh, we went into every aspect.

Rubens: How he was in the pocket of the developers.

29-00:56:20

Hinckle: Yes, yes. And Art lost the election. And then of course, his operatives on the ethics commission, whatever it is, enforcing laws, they went after the Fangs and said, well, this was a political contribution, this booklet. The Fangs took this, I'd say—they had a somewhat weak defense that said, no, no, that booklet was given to everybody in town as a circulation promotion for the *Independent*. It was a gift from us to everybody in town to promote the circulation of the *Independent*. And since the *Independent* was given away free to everybody anyway, that was a tough argument to win. So they got, at the end of the day, they got five eighty-something-grand for violating campaign laws. But meanwhile, Jordan had been the mayor for a year and they were out of their fight with Agnos. [laughter] And that's the end of that story.

Rubens: Well, not quite. And we'll stop here so that we can change the tape. This is just a great story. Some of it, I didn't know.

Begin Audio File 30

Rubens: I want to ask you just a couple leftovers about your campaign for mayor. Did you ever get in touch with Breslin or Buckley or even Norman Mailer?

30-00:00:25

Hinckle: Well, I knew Mailer. I didn't know him that well. I'd see him at social events. But Breslin, I knew quite well. So I called him and said— This is about three weeks before the election, I called Breslin and said, "Hey, I can't get any coverage, total blackout on this thing," and explained the circumstances. And I said, "Any chance you could get your ass out here and maybe we can get at least the television stations to cover it when they talk about the election." [laughter] And he said, [imitating Breslin's voice] "Well, it sounds to me like they're really screwing you." That's the way Breslin talks. "You got both papers against you, Ah, ha-ha." He laughs. That's how Jimmy is. But he was just heading off for some gig in Europe. He was gone for two or three weeks. So he didn't come out. I'm sure if he did, we would've got no coverage in those papers, [laughter] for the same reasons.

Rubens: Let's talk about the stadium campaigns in San Francisco. One of the chapters of your book, *The Agnos Years*, is devoted to that.

30-00:02:00

Hinckle: There were at least two previous campaigns. Finally, the ballpark was approved. But prior to that, there was at least two, there may have been three, attempts to get it approved by the voters.

Rubens: Starts with Dianne, right?

30-00:02:16

Hinckle: Oh, yes. It was *big* under Dianne.

Rubens: And you were opposed to it.

30-00:02:19

Hinckle: Yes. I was opposed to it for a, I guess, traditionally San Francisco neighborhood conservative reason, that people who own these professional sports teams make a pack of money, usually, off those teams. And it's a profit-making business. So the taxpayers shouldn't be taking money for parks or for community health centers or wherever money has to go for out of a general fund, to help build and finance a stadium for a profit-making business, that's all. And all the time in Feinstein's— She had one or two attempts. I'd really have to check. But there was one big one; I think there were two. And we defeated those each time, based on that. Basically, that was the issue, a taxpayer issue. Nobody was mad at the Giants; it had to do with financing the stadium. And then Art tried one. He made his own deals. And that one was basically almost single-handedly defeated by—that was when Bob Lurie owned the team I believe— by my friend Jack Davis, who got involved with

some other political consultants. Three of them were out of Sacramento. And they created a mail campaign against the Agnos ballpark. I believe he had previously been anti-ballparks, but when he was mayor, he decided he wanted to get his own.

Rubens: Two years earlier, he was against—

30-00:04:13

Hinckle: He wanted his own, yes.

Rubens: That's right. "He staked the future of his mayoralty on a stadium five blocks away from where the original—where Dianne's had been proposed." That's a quote from your book.

30-00:04:24

Hinckle: I'm sure that's true. But again, he caved on that issue and wanted the city to basically pay for the ballpark, or help pay for the ballpark. So that was opposed. Davis went big-time and opposed it. And Art became furious, and lost. And basically, I think he lost it over these mailers that Davis and these guys out of Sacramento put out. Davis' was pure spite; I don't know what their motives were. But it was very effective stuff. Davis sent out door hangers, I think, that had a hole in them. Light switch hangers, that was it. And it said, "turn off," with a picture of Lurie. And the light switch hole, where the light switch went through, was where Lurie's nose was. That was it. And it said, when you turn off the lights, turn off the ballpark, something like that. So Art was really mad at these guys and prevailed upon the district attorney at the time, Arlo Smith, to indict them for infractions of some totally ridiculous rule, which was eventually thrown out of court. But nonetheless, there was an indictment. I think we discussed that—

Rubens: We did.

30-00:06:05

Hinckle: —a little bit earlier. Yes. And that was the end of Art's attempt at building his own ballpark.

Rubens: When you opposed Dianne's plan, you followed her on a KQED TV journal, I think it was called Focus. There's some exchange between the two of you before you take the podium.

30-00:06:44

Hinckle: Well, I did a lot of stuff for KQED. I had a show there for about a year and a half.

Rubens: When did that start?

30-00:06:51

Hinckle: I couldn't—

- Rubens: We've got to put that in this interview
- 30-00:06:53 Hinckle: It was sometime in the eighties, I guess.
- Rubens: Well, do you see it before the mayoral campaign, as opposed to after?
- 30-00:07:01 Hinckle: I think that was before. It was about a year and a half, and I interviewed people. I said, "I'll only do it if you do it on location and in a bar." And we picked the House of Shields, this classical downtown bar with elks' antlers everywhere and a great Edwardian look to it. And the idea was that whoever I was interviewing, we'd both be at the bar, having a spirited conversation. That was the gimmick. It was called "Express," and aired on Wednesday nights, I think at 8:00 p.m.
- Rubens: So this was fun, this was extra pay, it was—
- 30-00:07:38 Hinckle: This was fun. Yes, it was interviewing people. But I'm not going to do that unless we have a fun setting. Let's do it in a bar. Nobody's ever done that before. It's where people discuss politics all the time, anyway. That was the idea.
- Rubens: How'd it come to an end?
- 30-00:07:55 Hinckle: It became too expensive. They said we've got to move it to the studio. Because they had to take a whole crew out and light the bar and film it and then edit it down, as opposed to sitting in a studio. And I didn't want to do anything in the studio.
- Rubens: Was there anything else we wanted to say about the election, about running for mayor or your last two years at the *Examiner*?
- 30-00:08:36 Hinckle: There were two big Agnos issues which created fights and big economic consequences for the city. One had to do with the Olympics coming to San Francisco in 1996. And there was a very good prospect that the Olympics could've come to San Francisco. Very good prospects. One of Art's old enemies, Quentin Kopp, had put together a big Olympics committee. They always have them and everybody's competing for them. But they really surveyed the Bay Area and the available stadiums and how much would have to be built, how much could be used of existing stuff, and had a very serious bid. And the bid would be a Bay Area Olympics, using facilities all over the Bay Area; it would've been, in almost everybody's view, a great thing. Certainly good for the city, for commerce, for everything. And Art put the city in a position of opposing the bid for the Olympics by the San Francisco Olympics Committee because of a dispute that the Olympics committee had

with an organization called the Gay Games. And that was started by a doctor prominent in the gay community in San Francisco, who basically wanted to have gay Olympics for everybody that was gay and show that gays are capable of sports and all that stuff, too. This was back at a time when the politics of being gay were still more controversial than they are now, and something like that would've been good for—

Rubens: And there was the model of the Special Olympics.

30-00:10:30

Hinckle: —the image of the gays. Yes, and there was the model of the Special Olympics. Anyway, the Olympics committee—which is a bunch of horrible people, probably the last of the aristocrats left on earth, who do things and are well known for being impossible to deal with in almost every aspect of what they do—they sued the gay group in San Francisco for using the word Olympics and made them eventually remove it. I think eventually, they had to call it the Gay Games. But when they won the lawsuit, they went after the doctor who was the head of the thing, for their legal fees or something like that—it was outrageous—and attached his house. They wanted him to sell his house to pay—it was just a terrible thing to do. It was awful. And Art took that as his reason to say, no, we don't want the Olympics here. But it was a political move by Art to make sure he had gay community support in his reelection bid, and thought he could solidify it with that; it wasn't really a heart-felt thing. But as a purely political move, it was stupid for the mayor of a city like San Francisco, in the center of the Bay Area, which was going to host the entire Olympics, to throw out an entire Olympics over a partisan-to-one-part-of-the-community issue like that. Now, if Art was a [Senator Robert] La Follette or something or some principled politician who always stood on the ideal, "I will never back off my ideals," then you'd have to say, well, it might be another conversation. But that was not his career. It was the opposite. It was just doing what was most opportunistic and the best for him. So he wasn't known as an independent, idealistic politician, this was a political maneuver. And it sunk the Olympics for the entire Bay Area. And I was quite critical of that, and quite a few other people in San Francisco were, too.

The other big one that had a commercial or serious effect for the Bay Area was the home porting of the USS Missouri here. And the Missouri, I believe, was nuclear armed.

Rubens: So it was an anti-nuclear as well as an anti-military opposition?

30-00:13:17

Hinckle: Yes. Well, in San Francisco, everything gets opposed, That's okay; it's part of the culture of the city. But Art went big on that. And the unions and, oh God, myself, in columns, and a large part of the business community, a good part of the city was for, hey, bring the damn ships here. We have the—

- Rubens: Because you said it wasn't just the Missouri, it was the whole fleet.
- 30-00:13:41 Hinckle: Oh, yes, it was the Missouri and a fleet. It was six, eight, half a dozen ships, in for dry dock repairs. *Huge*. It would've kept the port going and all this stuff. Huge job provider. And sailors come ashore, they spend money. San Francisco indulges fleet week. And we let the Blue Angels fly-over which I certainly object to. But I wouldn't take my personal tastes and say the Blue Angels can't fly over here. People like it—or a lot of people do—so okay. But Art jumped into that one and thought he could get points with the left, because he had been doing some things that upset the left a lot. And so going with the anti-nuclear movement and the peacenik part of the left, he said, no, the Missouri's not going to dock here. That was a *huge* fight, and it was a ballot issue. And the *Independent* just was all out for it. And we ran a very strong campaign and lost relatively narrowly. But it lost because it became like a big leftist issue in the city about military stuff and things like that, which I had to scratch my head about. Said, "Then why do we have fleet week, if we don't want them here?"
- Anyway, that was an issue that had huge consequences, and it was politically gainful for him to take that position because it helped him with left support, or certain aspects of left support, in his next election, he thought. But from a standpoint of the general health of the city and region, the economic health, jobs, all the things you're supposed to stand for as a progressive-or-whatever mayor, it was a disaster. It was the wrong thing to do, right?
- Rubens: So it contributed to a huge loss, right?
- 30-00:15:53 Hinckle: It was a huge loss.
- Rubens: Jordan won.
- 30-00:15:54 Hinckle: *Huge* loss.
- Rubens: So your collection of articles that ran in the *Independent* constituted *The Agnos Years* and was distributed during the 1992 mayoral campaign.
- 30-00:16:06 Hinckle: Yes, when Frank Jordan was running to defeat Agnos for a second term.
- Rubens: Any commentary on response to the book?
- 30-00:16:17 Hinckle: It went to every doorstep. Oh, it was well read and well received by people who were already critics of Art in the neighborhoods, in the black community, in the Chinese—in various communities in town. He'd pissed off just about everybody by his authoritarian, mean, calculating, aloof to everyone—He

rarely went into restaurants and glad-handed people, like politicians do. He was very narrow. He just got—Well, that's why he lost. I didn't create the anger against Art, he created it himself. I just wrote about it.

Rubens: Jimmy Herman, of the ILWU, was Agnos' supporter and champion. They were good friends.

30-00:16:55

Hinckle: Yes, they had a long-time relationship in the assembly and other things, yes.

Rubens: Jimmy Herman was for the development of the piers. I think this had to do with Proposition H, I forget what it was.

30-00:17:09

Hinckle: Who can keep track of all these San Francisco ballot propositions? Good lord.

Rubens: This was the no-growth, Sierra Club, environmentalists against any kind of development, and Jimmy and Art in alliance for development. Art's support of developers I gleaned from one of your articles, explains how he becomes a millionaire earlier when he's with Leo McCarthy and gets money from the developers.

30-00:17:33

Hinckle: Yes. And I don't mean this interview to be a critique of Art Agnos all the time, but his position was that he was a big liberal, progressive, anti-development; but his quiet history was that he made deals and made money off of them for himself, with developers.

Rubens: So to finish the story, when do you become a supporter of the downtown ballpark? What was it that happened that changed your mind?

30-00:18:02

Hinckle: Oh, that was under Willie Brown's mayoralty. And that one wasn't a problem because the Giants ownership paid for their own ballpark. And the only objection was not to the sports team, it was to the taxpayers funding something that was going to be a very profitable enterprise. Rarely, almost unheard of, do these franchises lose money. And they're always available to be sold for a good amount, because somebody else wants to own the team. So they're profit-making enterprises. But that wasn't the case in this last ballpark, which by the way, Jack Davis ran that campaign. Both he and Willie Brown they just basically told the Giants owners, look, you guys are going to have to eat it. We'll do anything we can for you, like help you out—because we have to fix the streets anyway—with the streets and put in extra streets and do that, and underground utilities and wiring—anything we can do, because we'd love to have the ballpark here. And we'll happily do that and any other things that give you some tax breaks on things for payroll and that sort of stuff, but we will not physically fund the building of the ballpark. That, you're going to

have to pay for. And that was hammered out and that was the core of the ballot issue. And when the main objection was gone, it won easily.

Rubens: So just to tie some of the loose threads up, what was the scene like when you said to Will Hearst, "I'm out of here"? You must've fought pretty hard to not have your piece censored. You never had had your articles censored before.

30-00:19:59

Hinckle: Well, it was an overnight deal. I wrote it and it didn't appear. He yanked it.

Rubens: And were you gone the next day?

30-00:20:07

Hinckle: No. No, we had words, and then I went to talk to John Fang; we've talked about that. And he advised me against quitting Hearst.

Rubens: But Will was just unrelenting. What did he say the reason was? He just didn't agree? He was for the war?

30-00:20:30

Hinckle: No, he wasn't particularly for the war. He was like, oh, I didn't realize they'd done that, or something like that. Because I had quite a few enemies. People just didn't like my style, et cetera—I understand that—on the editorial staff and the editors' bureaucracy.

Rubens: So it was an occasion—

30-00:20:53

Hinckle: So nobody wanted to put their fingerprints on it, but it happened. And there was an underlying issue with me and the *Examiner* anyway, because at the time, I was married to Susan Cheever and was commuting to New York, which I had been for years. And the staff didn't like the idea that I could write about San Francisco from New York. And I wrote three columns a week, and half of them, approximately, or many of them, ended up on the front page and were big stories. But these were local stories. There were some written purposely from Ireland or from Cuba or something like that. Those were different. Just these were local stories. And they had forty-five people on staff and I was constantly writing stories that they didn't know about or hadn't written about. And what the hell was I doing that from New York for? So I thought the answer was obvious. [laughs] If I could do it from New York, I could do it. Right? Why didn't *you* get these stories in?

Rubens: By then faxes and computers let you file a story anywhere.

30-00:22:10

Hinckle: Why don't you know about them? I just happened to know everybody in town and I'm here two weeks of the month anyway and I pick up the phone. Half the time, if I'm in San Francisco, I pick up the phone and call people I know. I don't go over to see each person I talk to, to put together a story; it'd take all

day and half of the next day. You know people for a long time, they tell you what's going on, you find out. You have people you trust, contacts. That's how a journalist works. But most journalists work on 90 percent of their stuff on the phone. Because you just don't want to talk to one person, you want to talk to seven or eight to make sure you've got it right, that sort of thing. So I didn't see any contradiction or problem in it, since I was producing. But that became a big issue and they were always going in protesting to Will, you've got to stop him, this has to stop, it's bad for morale. You can't cover San Francisco from New York. Well, that's absurd. A story's a story; doesn't matter where you got it from. But anyway, that was my side of it and that was that side. So Will had that pressure. And he was saying, you've got to really think about moving from New York and this and that. And I said, "Well, not at the moment. It's ridiculous, particularly on the part of these guys objecting like that. They've got forty-five people; why don't we have ninety stories a week like the three I put out? And they're all here, right? Why are *mine* the best stories and theirs are just blah or they don't know what the stories are. Forget about it, Will."

Will is a sweet guy. We remain friends to this day. I worked on a couple of projects with him since being at the *Examiner*. Will is an abstract thinker. His mind's in mathematics, often. It's in the thresholds of the technical, technological advances in the computer business, and he's been very, very active in that since—Well, even *while* he was publisher of the *Examiner*. And once he left there, he's major player now in Silicon Valley. And that's where his—He had the old newspaper heritage and instincts, and he wanted to make the *Examiner* a good paper. That's when we brought in Hunter Thompson and he stole me from the *Chronicle*. For a few years, that was really fun. And then I do believe that his other interests—He would much rather have a conversation about advanced mathematical theory than he would about some boring newsroom.

Rubens: You leave in—

30-00:24:56

Hinckle: It must've been '90 or '91, yes.

Rubens: By '92, you are at the *Independent*.

30-00:25:01

Hinckle: Yes, I went right to the *Independent*.

Rubens: You start the *Argonaut*, also in—

30-00:25:05

Hinckle: I started the *Argonaut* in the early nineties.

Rubens: Let's conclude this juncture by dipping back a bit to talk about the *Examiner* hundredth year edition. Is that a short story? Because we can talk about it next time as well.

30-00:25:22

Hinckle: Well, it's an amusing newspaper story. Will asked me to lunch at the Four Seasons, or one of the places he liked to go to. And I'd been at the *Examiner* for some time and I was putting out—redid their Sunday magazine, so they wouldn't lose Macy's as an advertiser and other things. And Roger Black, a designer, is a close friend of mine for many years, in national publications. So he and I redid that magazine and made quite a success of it. I mean a commercial success. There was pretty strong journalism in it, too. There were pieces about why Dan White really killed George Moscone and there was some tough journalism, but we had the fluff. We had the fashions and the furniture and the stuff, but—

Rubens: It was called—

30-00:26:11

Hinckle: It was called *Image*. We put a new name on it. And I spent a lot of time dealing with the advertisers, hanging out with the Macy's executives and other department store guys, trying to woo them back. Because for various reasons, they didn't look at the Sunday magazine anymore as the most effective place for them to advertise. And the *Examiner* got the Sunday magazine in the divorce when the *Chronicle* bested the traditionally leading morning paper, the *Examiner*. This deal was worked out where the *Chronicle* would go to the morning and the *Examiner* would go to the afternoon, and they could kill off the other papers, or the one other paper left in town. So there'd only be two papers, but the *Examiner* would get the Sunday paper.

Rubens: Okay. It wasn't a joint enterprise, it was the *Examiner* that had it.

30-00:27:11

Hinckle: The magazine part, yes. But the *Chronicle* will put in its own couple little sections in the Sunday paper.

Rubens: It was allegedly a joint publication.

30-00:27:18

Hinckle: The comics said, "Sunday *Examiner* and *Chronicle*," but all the news sections only said *Examiner*. But they also inherited the magazine as part of their turf, part of this split. And then it fell on shallow times. And so it fell to me naturally—because I worked for newspapers for many years, but I've put out national magazines. And Will knew the magazine business, too because he worked at *Outside* and *Rolling Stone*. So he said, "Hey, can you fix this?" Well, if Roger does it, we'll do it." And so we fixed that, put that out for a while.

And he asked me to lunch this one day and I said, "Uh-oh. What's going on? There's trouble. [laughter] You don't take the trouble to ask me to lunch? Why? What's up, Will?" And he said, "Well, next February" or something; it was within a five-month timeframe, four or five months from then—"is the hundredth anniversary of the Hearst Corporation." I said, "No shit. I didn't know that." I said, "Well, that's right. Going back, your grandfather started the thing. It was 1880. Oh, that's right, it would be." I said, "Yeah, great. Well, so?" He says, "Well, we have to put out a centennial edition to wrap up a hundred years of publishing history, because the board wants to come out here and have a big dinner and take over the de Young Museum. And everybody's going to be here, the entire family and all the members of the board and all our big people." I said, "Yeah, that sounds like a great idea for an occasion, yeah." He said, "But we have to put out the centennial." I said, "Well, yeah" I said, "Well, how far along is it?" You collect a lot of history in sections and stuff; I could see the type of thing to be done. "And who's working on it?" He said, "Well uh, nobody at present." I said, "Well, nobody? When is this damn thing? Well, Christ, that's four or five months away." And he says, "Yeah," he says, "But that's not really the problem. I think we can pull the history part together and the editorial," he says, "but I don't have any money to do it." I said, "How do you mean, Will?" He said, "Well, [clears throat a couple of times as indication of stuttering on the coming phrase] I neglected, last year, when we were doing the budgeting—I was at the board meeting in New York—somehow it escaped me that we had to put in for money to do the hundredth anniversary edition. And everybody would've said, whatever you want. This is a big deal for us, the whole Hearst Corporation—which has enormous holdings all over the United States, Canada, Mexico, in land, real estate, publishing, all other kinds of interests, books, came out of this newspaper in San Francisco. Naturally. But I said, "Well, Jesus, you better ask them for it fast." He says, "I can't."

Rubens: Hard to believe.

30-00:30:31

Hinckle: He says, "Some of those guys on the board still think I'm a hippie because I worked for *Rolling Stone* and this sort of stuff. And some of the Hearst people hate the newspaper side, cause we're one of the least important sides now of the giant Hearst Corporation." And I said, "Will, what are you trying to say?" Then I say: "Wait a minute. Let me tell you what you're trying to say. You wanted to figure out a way to put out a great hundredth anniversary edition without having to ask New York for any extra money for staff or anything, but still get the regular paper coming out and not paying for gold paper or anything like that, and do it within three or four months. Is that what you're trying to say, Will?" "Well, you summed it up, yeah. [laughter] Let's have a drink. Let's have another drink here." I said, "Who do you think is going to do that?" He said, "Well, I thought I'd talk to you about it first. I thought maybe you'd have some thoughts. Would you do it? Can you figure it out?" Jesus Christ.

So okay. I said, "I think we can do it." So we sat there at the table and I said, "Let me scope this out more. I'm going to need this person and that person taken off regular things. I need Pamela Brunderlin, one of the managing editors. She knows how to pull stuff together. I want to hire a good art director for it." I said, "Maybe we'll pull Stermer." He knew Stermer was the *Ramparts* art director way back. "He knows that old-fashioned type; he can make it look right. And then I'm going to need assignments from different writers. We'll hire some outside writers, but we'll take it out of the existing budget for hiring outside writers." We figured it out right at the table. He says, "But then there's the thing of how do we finish? You're going to want a big—These things are *huge*. They're thick. We'll get ads and everything, I guess, but you haven't had great success selling ads recently with this newspaper corporation, publishing company, because they favor the *Chronicle* and because there's a larger circulation and they don't try and sell the *Examiner* very hard. So we may have to work on getting the ads to support it. But I don't see how we're going to do it." I said, "Well, let's talk to Brunderlin." I kind of thought. I said, "Hey, here's what we do. Instead of putting it out in one paper, we put it out in seven papers throughout the week, and in thick sections, each covering one part of history or this or that. And we steal the newsprint that's allotted during that week for the regular papers. There's going to be six less pages in sports, there's going to be two less pages in business, there's going to be eight less pages in news. There's going to be this, there's going to be that. And that way, we'll collect enough pages out of the normal publishing budget to do it. And then we'll make a big deal out of announcing it and publish the sections each day, and then we'll gather them all up and make a magnificent package to put them in, and we'll say we planned it that way all along."

Rubens: And that's what happened.

30-00:33:44

Hinckle: That's what happened. But getting it done wasn't as easy as it sounds, but—

Rubens: You were released from your columns three days a week and—

30-00:33:50

Hinckle: No. No, I wasn't released. He said, "Well, you've got to stop writing your column, and we'll have somebody else take over the magazine." I said, "No." "I'm not going to do that. I know what we'll do with the magazine in the next four or five months anyway. I'll take it easy on writing for it myself, and I'm going to still write my column."

Rubens: What year does this come out?

30-00:34:14

Hinckle: This would have been—I'm trying to think of the dates. I'd have to look now. Anyway, the reason that it was in that period of time in the eighties had to do with some corporate reason that it made it a hundred years of the Hearst

Corporation, as opposed to being a hundred years of the *Examiner*. Because the *Examiner* was publishing in the 1860s here, and so was the *Chronicle*. So then they should've had the anniversary edition back in the—

Rubens: It's probably just before you're running for Mayor, before the fall, 1987.
[March, 1987]

30-00:35:13

Hinckle: At any rate, it was the hundredth anniversary of the Hearst Corporation—

Rubens: Were you happy with it when it came out?

30-00:35:22

Hinckle: It was brilliant.

Rubens: Yes.

30-00:35:24

Hinckle: Oh, everybody said it was brilliant. Well, it wasn't that easy, but we had— Then we had fights. Stermer wanted a figure to— It was like impossible; you've got to design a new typeface. Will actually chipped in, because he's a genius at computers, and sat down with Stermer and actually kind of designed— We made up a special centennial face, which would look like the old nineteenth century typefaces. And did other things to get a look for the thing, so it clearly would be a separate section of the paper. And each day we wrapped the news with a centennial section. And on Sunday, when it all started, we put a big section in. And that was coverage, no comics. Here's this paper, and it actually worked when we put it all together, because each section made logical sense for what it did. And you put it in a fabulously-looking package and wrapping. And they're sitting at the board meeting and sent their luminaries around the world, it really looked like we planned it that way. The Hearst Corporation, I'm sure, would've let it be printed on solid gold plate because it was such a big deal to them. But that was the official date that they had and that was the time we had to do it in, with no dough.

Rubens: It's just a great story, a great accomplishment. That's why it's so shocking that within no more than a couple of years, max, you're censored and there's no accommodation.

30-00:36:53

Hinckle: Well, the Irish have a phrase. Eaten bread is soon forgotten.

Rubens: Okay. So should we stop for today?

30-00:37:01

Hinckle: Yes. It was like what'd you do for me yesterday? What'd you do for me today? You did that for me yesterday; today, you're a pain in the ass. [laughs]

Interview 15: November 20, 2010

More on the exigencies of journalism in San Francisco and accounts of writing about larger-than-life personalities, of launching madcap schemes and becoming a bi-coastal reporter.

Begin Audio File 31

Rubens: Let's talk a little bit more about the centennial edition of the *Examiner*. It's just *gorgeous*. You had, what, a couple of months to put this together?

31-00:00:15

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: So how'd you do it? Did he give you some staff?

31-00:00:19

Hinckle: Well, basically, because there was no budget for it, we had to use what little promotional budget there was already in the budget. We hired a couple of people. I got an historian named Bob Callahan. He was a popular pop culture historian, big Irish history buff, and very big on Irish cartoonists and art. And of course, one of the main things that Hearst originated in newspapers was the use of illustrations, and particularly cartoonists, everybody from—

Rubens: Was he a local guy?

31-00:01:24

Hinckle: No, he's a Berkeley guy. Irish studies sort of guy. And everybody from Maynard Dixon to Thomas Nast, they all went through the Hearst stable. Most of them, or a lot of them, originally out of San Francisco, when he took over the *Examiner*. And Bob spent about a month outlining the cultural history of the paper as it evolved, particularly in the areas of sports coverage and cartoonists and artists—like Maynard Dixon—went on to become major players in the art world. And they all worked for the *Examiner*. One of the things that the guy did, I discovered in poring through everything—Of course, we immediately read all the books about Hearst, Hearst history, but it was like a crash project. So this one guy just did a big outline of the Hearst publication from the vantage point of pop culture, and how it started traditions that continue until the present and the history of it.

Rubens: So he helped pick the illustrations? This is a smart little thing [pointing to the mast head of the centennial edition].

31-00:02:49

Hinckle: Well, what happened is that he did the historical research in specific topic areas and a lot into the sports areas, too. And then I went back to New York. There was some trouble. The Hearst Corporation is fabulously secretive about its internal workings and itself, and they have huge archives of everything

they've ever published, every newspaper, every magazine, from forever, out in a warehouse somewhere out in Long Island. And so with two kind of armed guards from the Hearst Corporation—one guy who was the keeper of the keys, and another guy who was just to watch me to make sure that I didn't pocket any treasures or any private letters of Hearst—I went out and spent a couple of days prowling through the warehouse, pulling the old copies and the original copies of the *Examiner* and other artists and things that they published in their Sunday supplements, as the empire expanded to other newspapers. So we had a lot to begin with, once we got all that stuff. And I called my friend Bill Kennedy, William Kennedy, the Pulitzer Prize novelist.

Rubens: Did you know him through Hunter Thompson?

31-00:04:21

Hinckle: Yes, he and Hunter were old, old buddies; they'd been knocking around together since the late fifties.

Rubens: In San Juan, I guess.

31-00:04:32

Hinckle: Yes. Kennedy was editing the American language newspaper in San Juan and Hunter was hanging out there trying to get a job with him, and any other work he could get. And they became fast life-long friends. I have a *fabulous* correspondence back and forth, a lot of Hunter's letters. Hunter's volume of collected letters, a large amount of them are to Kennedy.

Rubens: So you were introduced to him—

31-00:05:01

Hinckle: Through that period. Yes. Got to know him in New York through Hunter. He lives in Albany and is sort of the local cultural historian and curator and—

Rubens: He's just a wonderful writer.

31-00:05:71

Hinckle: —creative incubator. And he's got a little writing institution and literary operation going on in Albany.

Rubens: So he was willing to write for this?

31-00:05:29

Hinckle: Yes, because he worked for a Hearst paper; I think it's the *Albany Times Union*. And so he wrote a piece about his Hearst days, because he started out as a newspaper guy. And so that started us out pretty well.

Rubens: You had a lot of San Francisco writers. You had Cyra McFadden and—

31-00:05:54

Hinckle:

Yes, anybody who'd worked for the paper, from the beginning up through the present, who was a recognizable contributor to literature and culture. And we made an arc and traced them all through —found their original writings in the paper. And I'd call them up and I'd say, will you write an original piece for this hundredth anniversary issue?

Rubens:

You had some budget? Could you pay these people?

31-00:06:30

Hinckle:

No, we didn't have a budget, so we had to steal a little money for individual articles and things like that, out of the—I think it was the promotion account. Because all this had to be done on the hush-hush so that the board in New York didn't know that we hadn't planned ahead, because we were responsible for producing the hundredth anniversary paper for the whole corporation. And it had to center around the *Examiner* because that's where everything started.

Rubens:

So this was one of your largest publications, in a way, in terms of—

31-00:07:02

Hinckle:

Oh, yes, this is a book or a magazine. This is huge. And then I raided the news staff for the people I thought were capable writers, and just borrowed them for individual articles or whatever, from their departments. Will gave me carte blanche, just raid anybody you want. If their editor bitches, tell them to call me. If you need them, take them. So we did that. And then I wanted Dugald Stermer, who was the art director of *Ramparts*. And we didn't get along together too well in the years after *Ramparts*, or even during it. I don't know, it's a very humorous thing. But one day I saw him sitting around reading a bunch of the manuscripts that people had submitted for *Ramparts* and I said, "Stermer, why aren't you drawing? What are you doing reading all this? What are we doing here?" And he had a Mao button on or something like that. He was getting ideology. And he says, "Well, I'm reading this." I said, "Don't bother reading that stuff. Make everything look great. I'll summarize in one sentence what stuff is about and then you can get the artist to do it." But no, he wanted — He said, "No, maybe we should have more of a commune-like approach to articles and get everybody together and vote on them," and that sort of sixties Berkeley leftie stuff. And a lot of the staff was, oh, yes, that's a good idea.

Rubens:

I think we talked about that proposal, but I didn't know it was Dugald.

31-00:08:41

Hinckle:

Yes, it was Dugald. It's like, no way. [laughs] That's not going to happen. We'll have plenty of conversations, but you can't run a magazine with a commune, as became evident when *Ramparts* continued to publish after I left and became— It kind of copied the old format for as long as it could, but it didn't have any life because it didn't have the contradictions that made *Ramparts* interesting, the commercial and the crass stuff and the non-political

stuff. And somehow, the mix of those contradictions made it a magazine that could appeal in a broad way to America, even though it was clearly a left magazine.

Rubens: So when it came time to have an art director for this series—

31-00:09:27

Hinckle: So I hadn't talked to Stermer in a few years because he got a little grouchy about everything. And I said, "Hey, will you do this? And he had to think about it, but then he said he would. Then I said, "Okay, this is a rush. You're going to have to take off whatever you're doing the next six to eight weeks, because we've only got two months to put this thing together. It's a huge project. So what do you want? And I'll get the money out of Will. We'll find some way." And so we came to a figure of \$25,000, which I thought was a very reasonable figure. And then Will started haggling; he didn't want to pay it. And he said, "No, no, no. Maybe eighteen," and that sort of nonsense. And I said, "Will, we don't have time to do this. I don't have patience for it. You work with him and help him out on the computers. So we had a huge wrangle over that, and I said, "Look, the whole project's going to be off. You told me to get who I need. This is what I need. I don't even like Stermer anymore; he hasn't talked to me in ten years; he's all grouchy about *Ramparts*; he thought he didn't get enough credit, all these things. But he's the best to do this. So let's get this over with." So finally, somehow, Will reached deep into his budgetary pocket and found a secret hole and we got the money for Stermer.

Rubens: And did he make a significant contribution?

31-00:11:18

Hinckle: Oh, huge. He designed this [pointing to a cartoon of Hearst sitting in a chair at the top of each day's edition].

Rubens: Will Hearst sitting in a chair and each day he's wearing something different or there are different artifacts next to him.

31-00:11:24

Hinckle: Each day, it changed with the topics –a bat and football when the topic was sports, for example.

Rubens: That's quite ingenious. And then you numbered each page sequentially, throughout the week. Did you think that it was going to come out as a book?

31-00:11:34

Hinckle: No, we had them numbered sequentially because we were robbing pages from the newspaper to put it out. So each department, during the week of publication—Sports had less pages and business had less pages and the news department had less pages; and together, we pulled those pages and stole them from the budget for the paper. That was the robbery I came up with, to do it without revealing that we did it on the sly.

And we published it in a separate section each day and it was folded in with the paper. And we took the conference room of the paper and closed it off for conference rooms, and put everybody in there to work on the centennial. We put desks and chairs in there and plastered the walls with things.

Rubens: The mockups and—

31-00:12:20

Hinckle: Reproductions and stats and all the historical stuff we could find.

Rubens: Must've been like a factory.

31-00:12:27

Hinckle: It *was* like a factory, yes. And somehow, it worked out fine.

Rubens: It came out beautifully. Just absolutely beautifully.

31-00:12:33

Hinckle: And when it was done, it really looked like we planned to do it that way all along. Actually, it wasn't a bad idea because big, fat, historical, lumpy things—

Rubens: Books?

31-00:12:45

Hinckle: No, I mean editions of a publication or something like that. If you put out a big—All kinds of ads saying congratulations. They're kind of heavy. Some people who are freaks, they'll keep them and put them away. But this way, it was like integrated with the daily life of the paper and—

Rubens: So people really read it.

31-00:13:01

Hinckle: —since it was known that it was going to come out, each day would be a different topic and section, from sports to labor to various parts of San Francisco in newspaper history, people who wanted to keep them kept them. And then we just assembled them all in a design-y package at the end. Put all the sections together inside a large envelope like a portfolio cover and people could buy them. And a lot of people bought them. There were thousands of people who bought them.

Anyway it worked. But then we had trouble selling ads because we figured that the advertising department would sell a reasonable amount of ads. It was not an unfair assumption; they're a full-time giant ad staff. But at the time, they were completely and utterly incompetent. It was a product of the merger of the papers, and it was under the Nixon newspaper preservation act [Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970]. And it was called the San Francisco Newspaper Printing Agency, I believe. And they sold the ads for both papers, for the *Chronicle* and for the *Examiner*. But they greatly favored the

Chronicle, which is the morning paper and of course, had the largest circulation. The irony of that situation in publishing was that the agreement gave a 50-50 split in advertising that was both in the *Chronicle* and in the *Examiner*. If an ad was just in the *Examiner*, then the *Examiner* got, I believe, 80 percent or some figure like that, of the revenue, and the other paper got much less. And the *Chronicle* the same. But most ad agencies, because if it cost you, oh, \$9,000 for a full-page ad in the *Chronicle* and \$9,700 to have both the *Chronicle* and the afternoon paper, the *Examiner*, 98 percent of the time, the buyer—be it a national ad or the local ad—would say, oh, hell, we'll take the extra 130,000 circulation in the afternoon, too, for that marginal extra price. But that meant, almost humorously, that the *Examiner*, with its much lower circulation than the morning paper, got 50 percent of all the advertising revenue. So the Hearsts were making, what we say in the business, a shit pile of money [laughs] out of the *Examiner*, even though it was the second paper, because they were getting half of the *Chronicle*'s ad revenues. And so that was what was going on. So the ad staff was not eager or culturally inclined to sell the *Examiner*.

So in the middle of this, I had to go out and sell advertising for the paper. And one of the things was that I wanted to do a labor section. But where were the ads going to come from to pay for that? So we just assumed that we'd get a reasonable amount of extra revenue for the centennial issue-type advertising. Congratulations and whatever.

Rubens: Yes, there is a lot of that.

31-00:16:33

Hinckle: Yes. So I went to see my friend Joe Mazzola, who's head of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union Local 38 and a great friend. And I said, "Hey, Joe, I've got a problem. We want to do a big section on labor and what's it's contributed to the city, from the General Strike back and forth and the whole damn thing, and do it right. But we've got to have some ad money to do that," I said. So he says, "Yeah, so?" I said, "Well, here's what I'm thinking. It's like six days of separate editions. Why don't you take out a series of ads on telling the story of the plumbers union, which is one of the great union success stories in the country, in terms of where it came from, the benefits achieved, the new ways of getting contracts, up to—" His greatest dream was to build a country club, a Tahoe-like club, for the working guy, which was—Konocti they called it—up in Clearlake. And he got that built, too. So he kind of thought about it; he liked it, said, "Well, if you help me write the stuff, we'll do it." So I helped him write this series of ads and we became quite close. And then I became involved in a later political battle in San Francisco, about home-porting the Missouri here, which we favored. I believe we discussed that a bit.

Rubens: Briefly.

31-00:18:03

Hinckle: Anyway, I'm now in the midst of writing his biography.

Rubens: Oh, that's terrific.

31-00:18:11

Hinckle: Yes. At his son's request. Apparently, they asked two or three people to write it and just nobody could get it done right. So I'm having, actually, a great time writing the story of Joe Mazzola's life.

Rubens: Now, we did mention the Missouri, but we didn't mention his interest in it. Of course it would provide a lots of jobs and—

31-00:18:30

Hinckle: Well, he took the civic leadership, he and Feinstein were like the co-heads of the committee, the political committee to raise the money for the ad campaigns—it was a ballot proposition—and put together the big dinners and—So he took the labor leadership to bring the Missouri here. And then I did a lot of articles for the *Examiner* at the time. Did a cover story in the Sunday weekly magazine, which I was also putting out. I was editing that also during the time we were doing the centennial.

Rubens: I would assume you'd been let off of everything to complete the centennial issue.

31-00:19:11

Hinckle: No. No, well, I didn't want to. Will said, "You can just stop doing all that." I said, "No. No, no, that's okay." And I said, "If I miss a column," because I was doing three columns a week, "I may miss one once in a while, but I still want to write the column and continue the magazine because otherwise it'll fall apart, because these people don't know how to do it." So somehow we got all that done in there.

Rubens: Amazing.

31-00:19:34

Hinckle: It was a busy period.

Rubens: So was Will beholden to you? Did you get any thanks or increase in pay or support?

31-00:19:45

Hinckle: No, I don't believe there was a bonus. Maybe it wasn't in the budget.

Rubens: Because this is 1987. Next you'll be running for mayor basically, as you said last week, at the suggestion of Will. He said, "Why don't you do it?"

31-00:20:00

Hinckle: Yes. Well, it wasn't Will's suggestion, but he was a willing participant in the decision. It was Frank McCulloch, the managing editor, a very tough old news professional. Used to be, I believe, the managing editor of *Time*, did great investigative journalism on Vietnam for *Time*, and bureau chief for several big newspaper chains in Vietnam and other—*Really* great guy, fabulous newspaper professional of the old school. But he liked the idea, and everybody said, hey, this is a great idea.

Rubens:

Because they thought it would sell papers.

31-00:20:31

Hinckle: Yes. It ended up me not being able to write anything about running for mayor, so you couldn't sell the papers.

Rubens:

On that, I had a few more questions about the mayoral campaign. I firstly wanted to know if Hunter Thompson helped you at all. Was he involved in it at all?

31-00:20:55

Hinckle: Yes, he came out a couple of times during the campaign.

Rubens:

So did he write stuff or give you suggestions?

31-00:21:03

Hinckle: No, there's no writing. Hunter loved politics and so he became sort of the political coach of the campaign. He'd call me and tell me—I remember him always telling me, whatever you do, don't bring that goddamn dog to meetings with you, because I'd always bring my dog everywhere I went, including when giving political speeches and at meetings.

Rubens:

Sure. Well, the reason I had learned that you were considering running Bentley was because when Bentley died, there was a proclamation from Willie Brown, and it said, "Whereas he was also considered" I think it was contender for mayor. So I'm just trying to get a sense of what's driving you or how you're playing with it. Who is cooking up campaign shenanigans?

31-00:22:03

Hinckle: Hunter was basically serving that role. And my friend Jack Davis, who ran a couple mayoral campaigns and would tell me how I was screwing up. But the original idea wasn't to become mayor, it was to, as we said, do a William Buckley-Jimmy Breslin type thing and run for mayor, and then write about the experience and critique the system in the process. And then absurdly, the *Examiner* management, I guess you could say, chickened out on the entire thing, for all kinds of reasons. Mostly staff jealousy, thinking that it was unprofessional and you couldn't write about yourself. It was the opposite of the way Hearst used to put out his newspapers, where he always had his main writers—let them do what they want. He created the idea of stars and bylines. He had the first women reporters and stars, who were featured and sent around

the world to cover the stories. He indulged talent to the extreme and promoted it to the extreme. And it communicated with the public very well, as history shows.

Rubens:

Well, the segue here is to point out that you were quite a star in the Hearst arena. In '87, you received the Mencken Award for journalism, and the *Examiner* has a box with a big border in which you are congratulated for that. You had had a huge role in promoting San Francisco at the '84 convention, which we really didn't talk about. And that was when you had come up with the campaign to change the song, the quote, "official song" of San Francisco. I thought we should tell that story. But I just wanted to say, you were a beloved, known figure in San Francisco. Did you enjoy the campaigning? Did you go around to different organizations and—

31-00:24:20

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Well, when we were stuck, after we'd already announced it and the whole deal, if you want, fell apart because of unbelievable bureaucratic nonsense from both the lawyers and the rest of the staff. And Will just didn't want to handle it. There were just too many people screaming at him. I don't blame him, in a way, because his interest always—Once he got the *Examiner* going and got me there and I got Hunter Thompson there, brought on some other writers, the paper was still basically what it was; it was cranking out the news in a not particularly distinguished fashion. But he let Hunter do what he wanted and let me do what I wanted. I went to Cuba and wrote a big series from Cuba; went to the Falkland Islands at the close of the war, because there was a San Francisco gold rush ship marooned down there, the last surviving ship that came out for the gold rush. Most of them had become wrecks and scraps for this and that and became saloons or pieces of houses and stuff. But the ships came out there in the gold rush fever and the crews jumped off and went to look for gold, and the ships just sat their rotting in the harbor. And many were pulled onto land and the carcass of the ship was salvaged. But there was one ship, the Vicar of Bray, got out of the harbor during that period and went back into regular service, if you like. And some years later, it was marooned, broke down in the Falkland Islands, because there was no Panama Canal at that time and you had to go all the way down to one end of South America and all the way back up, to get to San Francisco from wherever you might be coming from, from the East Coast. One can imagine the trip. And a lot of ships didn't make it. It was very difficult weather down there; it's right by the pole. And a lot of ships died there.

But the Vicar of Bray was there and—And a guy named Ed Zalinski, who was a successful painting contractor and historical buff, had discovered that this one last ship from the gold rush period was now stuck and rotting away, down in the Falkland Islands. So he was telling me about it, so I just said, "Hey, this is great." So we assembled an expedition of interested parties to go to the Falkland Islands and rescue the ship and get it back to San Francisco somehow.

Rubens: Great story.

31-00:27:27

Hinckle: Yeah! And down we went. And it made for a fascinating series of articles because along the way, we had to use British military transport. And there was a British major general who I got into some conversations with. He had fought in Ireland against the IRA. And I wrote many articles that were pro-IRA at the time, in both the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, unnerving a lot of people in San Francisco, who— It's almost like Israel. At the time, if it weren't for the Irgun and Stern gang and those types of guys, Israel would not become the state that it is today. And it wasn't pretty. And they made a business out of knocking off British soldiers in the area. And the same is true about the IRA's fights. They weren't pretty all the time. But war's ugly. It's a question of what are the politics involved. And I had quite spirited conversations, let us say, with this guy, on these long plane rides to the far end of South America. And wrote some, I thought, highly amusing and informative columns. Anyway, they were all duly front-paged—

Rubens: And so Hearst would pay for the—

31-00:29:25

Hinckle: —in the *Examiner*. Oh, yes. Yes, it was a job. He paid for all the costs associated with it. It was like it was back a little bit to the days of the old Hearst, to around the world, do what you want. But the same is true of the *Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* had an historical sense of—particularly under Scott Newhall, and even after Scott, who became a close friend of mine, who advocated leaving the news desk; maintained that tradition of sort of humor and display and promoting big stories, not being just your staid, usual newspaper. And so a lot of the things I did for the *Chronicle* were in series and played on the front page that way.

Rubens: I'm looking at a list of questions I've not asked. Back to the mayoral campaign, did you get union support?

31-00:30:58

Hinckle: Well, no, because Agnos had, at the time, the list of unions already sewed up. But my good friend at the Plumbers Union, Joe Mazzola, didn't like the guy very much. There was a lot of pressure on him to endorse Art. And so what he did was he endorsed my dog for mayor.

Rubens: Oh! Is that how that came about, that your dog was running?

31-00:31:22

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Oh, that's fabulous!

31-00:31:24

Hinckle: He endorsed Bentley for mayor.

Rubens: Another question: Will Hearst was a good friend of Agnos, and you were slamming Art, so I wonder how that figured in your leaving the *Examiner*?

31-00:31:33

Hinckle: My beef with Art began in the *Examiner*. And Art didn't like those columns, and I'm sure—I know—he would bitterly complain to Will. Your guy, look what he did to me today, sort of thing.

Rubens: And did Will ever say, tone it down?

31-00:32:05

Hinckle: No, he said, "Jesus, Art's yelling at me all the time. You're really rough on him." And I'd say, "Well, I *should* be rough on him." That sort of thing.

Rubens: And why'd you call him Red Art? Was that ironic?

31-00:32:19

Hinckle: Yes, I meant it ironically. But of course, in conservative San Francisco, they thought it was a great name for him, because they considered him a leftist. I considered him a phony leftist. So from my standpoint, it was an ironic label. But a lot of the town, at least the more conservative west side of town, took it as, yes, yes, Red Art, he's making fun of Red Art, that commie.

Rubens: You mentioned support from the Irish community. Were these organizations in your old neighborhood. How seriously did they take your campaign?

31-00:33:05

Hinckle: Well, we hadn't raised any money and then we had to raise some money, so we had a couple of events to raise dough. We didn't raise much money at all; maybe we raised thirty or forty-thousand. But then the Mitchell Brothers helped out a lot by building a set of the mayor's office and filming things and—

Rubens: They must've had a lot of fun with that.

31-00:33:29

Hinckle: Yes. Before the time of YouTube, et cetera. But just basically we created a platform and went through the mechanics of running.

Rubens: Here's a picture of you at a podium during a debate with the other major candidates.

31-00:33:41

Hinckle: Well, that was the *Independent* debate. We had sued the League of Women Voters and were finally denied the right to participate in the debate, although it was quite a classic lawsuit, on constitutional arguments. And yes, so this is one debate at the *Independent*, sponsored by my Chinese friends, who I later left the *Examiner* for, to continue the campaign against Art Agnos in another forum.

Rubens: All right, so just before we start talking about your working at the *Independent*, is there anything more to say about the mayoral campaign? When we talked about Hunter Thompson helping you, I realized that I forgot to ask you if you had helped him with his campaign for sheriff in Colorado.

31-00:34:25

Hinckle: That happened in 1970. I talked to him on the phone about it, but didn't do much more.

But Hunter's advice with my campaign was that, since he had run and almost won as sheriff in Colorado, he knew about running campaigns, goddamn it, as he would say. [laughter] So he was always giving me advice about what to do and not to do.

Rubens: Another period of your life we haven't discussed extensively is the 1984 Democratic convention held in San Francisco, and before that your campaign for a different song for San Francisco. That looks like it started in April, for the anniversary of the earthquake and perhaps anticipating the convention coming to town. You're at the *Chronicle*.

31-00:35:17

Hinckle: Yes, a lot of that was Feinstein. I have a long history, in any newspaper I've written for, to give Dianne a few jabs here or there. It started out when she—which I thought was great, what spunk it showed—dumped a drink on my head one night at the Officers Club. We got that story. And then when I was working for the *Examiner*, she had a state trip to Ireland, a sister city deal with Cork. And I don't know if we discussed that, but—

Rubens: No, we did not.

31-00:35:53

Hinckle: I took a band of rogues. The official delegation, two planes full of business people and traditional Irish heavies in town, were there on their official trip, and I went unofficially, with a couple of saloon owners and a cartoonist and a banjo player.

Rubens: So not representing the press.

31-00:36:21

Hinckle: Well, representing the *Examiner*. I followed her wherever she went and wrote daily front-page articles about it. Caused quite a ruckus. She was extremely upset about it. Got her into trouble because one speech she gave in Cork, to the Cork city luminaries, she basically said that San Francisco was going to provide a million bucks to help Cork along. And so it was reported in the Cork newspapers. And I remember at the time, I was at that speech and her husband, Dick Blum, just kind of looked down and shook his head, said, "Oh, my God, what is she saying?" I think maybe she had maybe an extra glass of Guinness or so. So I wrote a big article, Dianne's going to give Cork a million

dollars. Well, of course, the million dollars never came through. The supervisors, everybody would've gone nuts about it. But I sort of kept the theme up.

And then went back to Ireland and brought a politician named Bernie [Bernard] Murphy—this is on the *Examiner*'s nickel—to San Francisco. And he was a phenomenon in Irish politics because he could neither read nor write. And he was elected by the bookies, who made a fortune because he had no chance to win and they put a lot of money into his campaign, secretly, and cleaned up on everybody betting the other way, against Bernie Murphy. And I fell in love with the guy. He was a *fabulous* person. And he literally had no teeth. He says, "I gum my food,"—boiled potatoes and that sort of stuff, everything chopped up for him. And he not only couldn't read but he couldn't tell time. And he always had to have people look at a watch for him and tell the time. But I loved the guy because he was the exact opposite of the sophisticated, know-it-all politician. Hey, he couldn't read or write, and he made no bones about it. And he got elected twice in Cork.

Rubens: He was supported by the community?

31-00:38:52

Hinckle: Well, people just loved him, Bernie. Yes, it was funny as hell. And everybody got the joke in Ireland. Ireland gets a joke a lot faster than stuffy San Francisco does. But it wasn't just a joke, it was like take this to the regular political establishment, because who are you guys? And look what you're doing to us. I'd hesitate to make the parallel to Sarah Palin, but it was something like that. This was an unlettered person and he had more common sense on issues than a lot of the elected professional politicians did. And the political class hated him being there. And the Irish, who are a little bit stuffy in their ways, particularly successful Irish, couldn't stand the idea that he was in office and then came to America.

Rubens: So what'd you have him do?

31-00:39:41

Hinckle: Well, for one thing, he went everywhere. We got him an honorary degree from New College and filled the Irish Cultural Center with a sort of black-tie dinner. Which infuriated the board of the Irish Cultural Center, because they thought this was mocking them. And we got him teeth, because he didn't have any teeth. And the problem was that the Irish health service—they have, basically, socialized medicine in Ireland, like England does; you get everything from the health service. And it was like a two-year wait or more to get your dentures. So when he came here, I found a dentist on West Portal. A lot of people used him. He did a lot of gambling on the side. He was a good guy. Anyway, we took him to the Dovre Club, an Irish saloon here. Pat Nolan, the owner of the Dovre Club, was part of this group of people who had gone with me to Ireland to trail Feinstein, almost like a truth squad. So all this was

on the front page of the paper every day and with cartoons. And it was highly conversationally humorous, right? Feinstein didn't appreciate it, but the general public did. They saw the fun of it, right? And there was a lot of truth in it.

So because of the health service, he couldn't get his teeth, so we got him his teeth here. Measured him in the bar, at the Dovre Club. He sat up and the dentist came over there and measured him for his teeth and we got him a set during the week he was here. And he went back to Ireland; there was a big front-page picture in the Cork paper. And he came back and he said, "I got my teeth in San Francisco."

Rubens: I thought this was going to come back to your campaign to replace "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." So this happened after you had had that campaign.

31-00:41:40

Hinckle: This happened after the song fight. The song fight was another battle with Feinstein.

Rubens: How did that come about? What was her catalytic role?

31-00:41:50

Hinckle: Well, it was, as we say in the business, a slow news day, what are we going to do? This was in the category of prank as when my friend Brennan Newsom – who just died- and I burned down the *Foghorn* clubhouse when we were students at SF University. And so this was kind of in that genre. I always hated *I Left My Heart In San Francisco*. I thought it was smarmy and things like that. And loved the Jeanette MacDonald gold rush movie called *San Francisco*. "San Francisco, open your Golden Gate," that kind of spirited first line. So I started a campaign, just a big front-page thing in the *Chronicle*, because they knew how to display, they had that energy. It's lacking, in the last decade or so, in the *Chronicle*, that sort of mischievousness, I guess, willingness to crusade and get something going that the town loves, most people in town.

So we started out with just a front-page bash at Tony Bennett and this horrible song and these slurpy, stupid lyrics. And it was Feinstein's favorite song. And she had installed it as the official song, without passing legislation, of the city. And when she went on her sister city trips abroad, to Tokyo or wherever she might go, the dignitaries would come to greet her at the plane, and what they would play is, *I Left My Heart In San Francisco*. So I pointed that out, that this was not representative of the city at all or its spirit, and then wrote another front-page article calling Tony Bennett—an unfortunate turn of phrase—an over-the-hill Italian croaker. And that infuriated her! And then the politicians joined in. Quentin Kopp, who was her conservative opponent, both for mayor and serving on the board of supervisors—He had run for mayor against Dianne previously. He championed my side and put in a declaration to the

board saying to make the San Francisco song from Jeanette MacDonald's movie the official song of the city. All of this discourse is on the front page of the *Chronicle*. And unbelievably, the city response to something like that, that is quirksome or frolicsome, or certainly not serious in its essentials, but on the other hand, as Hunter Thompson says, goddamn it, we had to have an official song and it wasn't going to be that slurpy *I Left My Heart In San Francisco*. "Little cable cars climbing to the stars." Stop this.

So then it became a political issue. And Feinstein marched, with all her forces and energy, to defeat this move at the Board of Supervisors. And there was a fight of all time, and various radio stations joined in and took polls and they were playing both songs and people were voting—it swept the town. It became like a ten-day wonder.

Rubens: I think this is in April of '84.

31-00:45:38

Hinckle: I believe that was it.

Rubens: It's around the anniversary of the earthquake and before the convention.

31-00:45:42

Hinckle: Yes. So in sort of a fit of exuberance, wondering what we'll do tomorrow for another front page article, I said, "Hey, announce a gathering at city hall, a song challenge." So everybody, all the citizens were invited to come to city hall and hear both songs and vote. And then the management of the *Chronicle* called me in and said, "Hey, this sounds like the *Chronicle*'s sponsoring this thing. The lawyers tell me we can't sponsor it." I said, "Well, we are sponsoring it. We just announced it." He says, "No, no, no. They tell me if somebody slips and falls or something like that, then we'll be liable, and we can't pay any money for it." And I said, "Well, where are we going to get money for all the potty toilets? There's going to be thousands of people. The lines will be going for blocks, people trying to get into city hall. We ordered potty toilets. "I don't know," he says, "You're having a great time, but you'll figure it out, I guess." So it was like, oh God, now what do we do? So I went over, saw my friend Pat Nolan, the saloonkeeper at the Dovre Club. And Feinstein had attempted to deny us a permit to use city hall and we had to raise the money to get the permit, and we did that. But she tried to block the use of city hall, or citizens coming to vote on the thing. It was really ridiculously—became seriously political. But now there's a big crowd coming to city hall and we had to bring booze and food in and that sort of stuff.

Rubens: So Nolan put up some money for it.

31-00:47:35

Hinckle: We had bars and everything, but the *Chronicle* says we can't, the lawyers won't let us do that because then we'll be liable if there's any problems. So I

explained the situation to Nolan. I was kind of down in the dumps. I said, "I think we're really screwed here." He says, "Ah, that's not going to be a problem." He says, "Won't be a problem."

Oh, yes. The other thing she did was had the bureaucrats of this city hall deny us the right to sell booze during the party. Because that was one way—I said, "Well, we'll sell enough drinks and that'll pay for the cost of the potty toilets outside," and this and that, and the band." We had hired two bands. But then she made that move and you can't sell drinks there. So I said, "Hey, Pat, I think I'm really screwed on this one." And he says, "No." He says, "Don't worry about a thing." He says, "We'll give the drinks away." I said, "Well, great. Then how are we going to make any money if you're giving the drinks away to pay for all this junk?" And he says, "Because we'll have tip jars." So he called his friend, my friend John Maher, who's head of Delancey Street. And we'd done several mischievous things in the past together. And Maher organized all the Delancey Street ex-convicts and got them, in their suits and ties, behind the bars. And there was like six or seven huge bars set up in city hall. And at the end of the day, it was an *enormous* number of people and went around the block three times. There was four, six-thousand people—I have no idea how many—jammed into city hall and outside, because we had loud speakers blaring everything out. And sure enough, we gave all the drinks away, but the Delancey Street guys were standing at the edge of this, because everybody was saying, hey, give me two of this and one of those. And it was "Hey, the tip jar, put something in the tip jar." Well, we ended up with a profit of about \$1,800, after all the costs were paid, and we gave it to the nuns. It was great.

Rubens: So you had a great event. Did it change the song?

31-00:49:45

Hinckle:

No, what happened was there was then a political compromise. Feinstein wouldn't back down and there was a split vote. So Kopp had to engineer a compromise, where they made *San Francisco*, the gold rush movie song the official song of San Francisco and *I Left My Heart In San Francisco* the official ballad of San Francisco.

Rubens: Oh, I see. So that was a pretty good compromise.

31-00:50:18

Hinckle:

Yes. How ridiculous! All this time and energy spent legislatively. There were political undertones underneath it. But this city, San Francisco, loves this sort of stuff.

Rubens: Hijinks and—

31-00:50:32

Hinckle:

Hijinks and good fun, and people fighting it out just for the hell of it, because underneath, they don't like each other anyway. And so this is just another

battleground. Everybody got the picture. And so it was a good time. A good time was had by all. And in fact, *I Left My Heart In San Francisco* is no longer, it had been, the official song. It got demoted to ballad.

Rubens: But during the recent Giants playoffs, I never heard *San Francisco*, the gold rush song, played, did you?

31-00:51:05

Hinckle: They played it a couple of times.

Rubens: But they brought in Tony Bennett?

31-00:51:09

Hinckle: They brought in Tony Bennett to my great distress.

Rubens: I bet. Okay. I want to go a couple of directions, just to finish up some things. I don't know why you go to Cuba again. You'd been very involved with Cuba during the *Ramparts* era. And then in the mid-eighties, before you go to the *Examiner*, you wrote a series on Cuba for the *Chron* –and then for the *Examiner* too?

31-00:51:41

Hinckle: Yes, well, originally we had to get Cleaver out of the country and that was where we got him first. I was involved with the Cubans. I got to know them pretty well with the publishing of the Che Guevara diaries, which is a bit of espionage problems and publishing problems.

Rubens: But we're talking almost fifteen years later, right?

31-00:52:02

Hinckle: Yes, but I continued to keep up my contacts with the Cubans. Sandy Levinson, a close friend of mine who was a Stanford scholar in Cuba, became the head, and still is to this day, of the Cuban—not friendship committee, but she has an art gallery, a Cuban friendship operation in New York City, and she lives part of the year, has an apartment, in Havana. She lives down in the Village in New York and she lives in Havana. And I was doing a book with Bill Turner on aspects of the assassination attempts against Castro, which gave way to an investigation of the Kennedy assassination and what happened there.

Rubens: Right, we talked about that.

31-00:52:57

Hinckle: Yes. And so had gone to Cuba many times, doing research on this book. And it was just natural, when I went back to the *Chronicle*—I was going there anyway; they didn't have to—I was going to do the research for the book, but I wrote a series of articles for the *Chronicle*—which were front-page things.

Rubens: Not for the *Examiner*?

31-00:53:24

Hinckle: Yes, I did the same thing for the *Examiner*. Same thing, later on.

Rubens: So you just kept up your research?

31-00:53:29

Hinckle: Yes. And I was always still— We did two editions of that book. And there's a lot of stuff. Governments have a lot of stuff. They have secrets and they have access to other people's secrets. And if you work them hard enough, sometimes they'll let some of them go. Documentary stuff and things that you can use from a scholarly or from a book-writing, footnote-type perspective, to establish your point and argue it. So I had a lot of dealings with the government in various levels, to get that material. And since I was working for newspapers and I like Cuba, I would write for both the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, a series of articles just about life in Cuba. Some of them were quite humorous.

Rubens: Yes, I remember reading them then, they were wonderful. I used them in a class at Urban School.

31-00:54:22

Hinckle: Yes, the *Chronicle* banded them. It was our man in Havana, that sort of nonsense. But it sold papers and people read it and it gave another view of Cuba you didn't read in the average paper. It's a real place. What people don't understand about Cuba is that it was there a long time before America was. I may have mentioned this when we talked about it earlier. It's a trade winds country. They were there. That island was a major thing in the fifteenth century, sixteenth century, seventeenth century. And it was a place where ships coming from all parts of the world knew it was there. And it was trade in cargoes and barter and whatever economic systems were going around then. And built into the spirit of the people is this trade winds negotiating mentality. No matter whether the government is formally supposed to be communist or whether it's a crooked, Mafia-favored government under Batista. Basically, Cuba doesn't change. And the spirit is the same way. And they have a highly developed sense of humor, even of prankishness.

And I got to know a lot of people in the government there, and they're really good folks. And they're about as much communist as I am, in the sense of doctrinaire Stalinist stuff. They had to have severe security things and they've done some things that are certainly violative on any objective level of human rights standards.

Rubens: Free speech.

31-00:56:23

Hinckle: Yes. But you have to put that in the context of the United States, from the Eisenhower administration and Nixon as vice president on, was out to assassinate Castro and to overthrow the government. And we continually did

everything we could, not only to kill him, but to destroy the economy and anything else that would work there. And not just an embargo, but actively try and destroy it. The same thing happened in Chile, where the American intelligence basically took over the trucking operations and many of the unions and sabotaged [Salvador] Allende's economy, and ended up throwing him out. And Allende was the idealist who said, hey, we're going to have free elections and this sort of stuff and a free press. And then the free press was bought by the Americans and the free capitalist economy that he furthered and wanted was undermined by American intelligence and American businesses, to destroy him and knock him out. And he ended up with a machine gun in his hand, trying to defend his own palace, and got knocked off. Well, say what you will about Castro, Castro didn't make that mistake. He knew we were out to get him. And he couldn't afford what some of the lefties would call bourgeois civil liberties in that sense.

Rubens: Did you meet Fidel in these later trips?

31-00:58:05

Hinckle: Yes. Only once, but I did meet him. That was in the eighties sometime. I was down there for the *Examiner*. I thought we'd get a formal interview. That was one of the thoughts for the *Examiner*. And dealing with the Cubans, also they're very slow. And you wait and you wait and you wait. There's some famous stories about people waiting to interview Castro, this, that and the other thing, never shows up.

Rubens: Well, yes. That was true for Robert Scheer when he was at *Ramparts*.

31-00:58:37

Hinckle: I did meet him, but it was under circumstances where he says, "At this point in time, I do not want to have an interview published about the topics you want to discuss, because we're doing other things politically. But I wanted to meet you and I loved that book," and this and that. And we talked at length. But there was nothing to say but, well, okay. But at other times, he's granted published interviews to other American journalists. It's just at the time I was pushing for one for the *Examiner*, it wasn't in their political interest to put him on record on certain things.

Rubens: Okay, so let's take a break. I have to change the tape. And maybe we'll just go another fifteen minutes afterwards?

Begin Audio File 32

Rubens: Regarding your H.L. Mencken award in I think it's 1987, Larry Kramer is an editor at the *Examiner* who writes an appreciation of your recognition.

32-00:00:20

Hinckle: Yes, He was a very interesting guy, Larry. Will brought him in. Will knew him. And he was a very good guy. And he was sort of a protégé of the

Washington Post heiress, Katharine Graham. He worked at the *Post* and some other paper they had, and at the *Examiner*. And I guess he entered some of the stuff I'd written for that Mencken Award, and we got it.

Rubens: So it's nice. He says of you: "He writes with a passion and vitality that always generates a reaction from his readers. He loves to raise hell and he does it well."

32-00:01:24

Hinckle: Well, that's what you're supposed to do in the newspaper business.

Rubens: So anything to say about this award? Do you remember going to New York to receive it?

32-00:01:31

Hinckle: Well, no, Washington. At the time, Chris Matthews was working for the *Examiner*. He's gone on to be one of the MSNBC-type stars. And we hung out for a couple of days. He was the *Examiner*'s Washington correspondent and bureau chief. Well, by *Examiner* then, I mean the eighteen Hearst newspapers. And I had him do a couple of articles individually for the *Examiner* when I was putting out the Sunday magazine. He was another Irish Catholic brat, like me. So we get along pretty well.

Rubens: Yes, a populist, lefty. He's not so much a lefty, but he's certainly a populist.

32-00:02:15

Hinckle: Yes, well, he came out of the mill. Before going on to journalism, he was Tip O'Neill's aide. So he knows the game in Washington.

Rubens: Okay. Now, you mentioned John Maher. And one of the things that I noticed in some of your articles is that you have a New York dateline.

32-00:02:46

Hinckle: Well, I was living in New York half the time at the time, and I would write about stories that were going on in New York or the area, that I thought were interesting, relevant, or would make—The same way a paper would print an AP story about something that's going on in New York. If I was there and it was going on, I happened to be there—Oh, like when Mandela first came to the United States, after he got out of prison. I thought that was a notable story. And I went up to see him speak in Harlem and wrote about that, just because I happened to be there; they didn't have to send me. And there were other stories that I got involved with that were similarly—Your paper could've just pulled it off, as they say, off the wire, because it's covered because it's a national story. But if you've got your own person who happens to be there, well, of course, you just cover it.

Rubens: So let me ask you do you think that we should talk about why you're living in New York and how it is that you lead this bi-coastal life for, what, about ten years?

32-00:03:52

Hinckle: More than that. Well, shoot, not a problem at all.

Rubens:

All right. You had met Susan Cheever during the *Ramparts* days.

32-00:04:07

Hinckle: Yes. Yes.

Rubens:

And she writes—I've now forgotten where at the moment. I thought what she wrote about you was a bit muted, compared—I don't know if that's the word.

32-00:04:22

Hinckle: I honestly haven't read them because it's like, oh, gosh.

Rubens:

She writes that 1987 is when she moves out to San Francisco. And you were running for mayor at the time. And I think the book begins with a vignette about whether she's going to go join you in Cuba or not. Her kid is sick. Or maybe one of your kids is sick.

32-00:04:42

Hinckle: No, her kid was. I took my daughters and her down to Cuba, just for a trip. To Havana.

Rubens:

Well, just say something for the record about how you got together with Susan.

32-00:05:09

Hinckle: Well, it was back in the *Ramparts* days. And she occasionally would go with me out to Max Geismar's house in Westchester. In Mamaroneck is where they lived.

Rubens:

She was a writer.

32-00:05:26

Hinckle: Oh, yes, she was cranking away stuff. And of course, her father was John Cheever. And we had an off again-on again affair for decades, I guess you'd say. And I'd often be out at the Cheever house. And didn't particularly get along very well with their father.

Rubens:

Did he like you?

32-00:05:54

Hinckle: No. Not at all. [laughs] Not at all. Particularly once I went there and he wanted me to go help him chop wood. I'm not much of a wood chopper. All this he-man stuff is ridiculous.

Rubens: But both of them were big drinkers, right? They write about their drinking.

32-00:06:11

Hinckle: Oh, John was a *major* drinker, yes. A great closet alkie. Would keep the bottle in the closet and go back and chug it. I prefer to do my drinking in public.

Rubens: So the wash of alcohol didn't soften his opinion of you or—

32-00:06:28

Hinckle: No, I was certainly not his style, a San Francisco left wing crazy with an eye patch, politically anarchistic lefty. No, he didn't think much of me at all. And one time he did take me out wood chopping—it was at their house in Ossining, which is near Sing Sing; that always struck me as amusing—and I guess did what you'd call a pass at me. Like gay stuff. Because it's pretty well known now, his homosexuality and his bisexuality. Which all his children made an industry out of writing about. And I remember when Susan wrote her book, which is a *very* fine—finest book she's ever written, which is *Home Before Dark*, about her family and her father. It's a terrific book. But in it, she ended up talking about his homosexuality. And she had sent me the book. I often, sometimes when we were together, would go over and edit some of her stuff and make suggestions here and there, as people do. And I remember screaming at her. I said, "You can't do this. You can't out your father, Susan. Everybody's going to hate you for it." And she says, "Well, yeah, but there is a book coming out four months from now, a biography, where the guy's got all his stuff and he's going to do it anyway, and I want to get the scoop. I want to be the first, because it'll be at least from inside the family." I said, "No. No. No. No. It's my old friend Howard Gossage's law. It will violate the decent opinion of mankind. Leave it alone. Let somebody else out your father. And don't you do it. You have a fine, fine book as it is. Just don't do it because it'll come back and bite you." Well, she did it. And it did. And she was basically kind of ostracized for the next decade in the New York literary community.

Rubens: Really?

32-00:08:40

Hinckle: Oh, yes. People thought that was a totally incorrect thing to do. As one could've predicted.

Rubens: Did the book come out while you were still together? Did you basically live with her then?

32-00:08:52

Hinckle: Off and on, yes. And then we ultimately got married.

Rubens: And you have a son.

32-00:08:57

Hinckle: Yes. He's in college.

Rubens: Is that one of the reasons you kept going back to New York, to—

32-00:09:03

Hinckle: Oh, the son. Because I certainly couldn't be considered a fit-for-custody or whatever parent, because I have kind of a wild reputation. So I knew that there was no way I was going to have whatever—control or—over the growing up of that kid unless I was in New York, so I had to live in New York full-time.

Rubens: So it didn't work out here? Because she does write, at some point, that she comes out to San Francisco around the time of your mayoral campaign to try living here.

32-00:09:40

Hinckle: It was a visit. She didn't live here.

Rubens: She never made a serious effort to live here?

32-00:09:42

Hinckle: No, she lived here in an earlier period, when she was married to Rob Crowley. And he was an editor on the *Saturday Review* when they moved out here. So she was living here then.

Rubens: Never made a serious attempt to live out here with your son?

32-00:09:58

Hinckle: No, she couldn't stand San Francisco. Could not stand it.

Rubens: All right. So that must've been difficult, on the one hand, commuting; and on the other hand—

32-00:10:12

Hinckle: You get used to it.

Rubens: Well, you love New York. You had these incredible, contacts there, right?

32-00:10:16

Hinckle: Oh, great time there.

Rubens: Geismar and—

32-00:10:20

Hinckle: Well, my friend Sidney Zion who I did *Scanlan's* with.

Rubens: Any New York stories that you think during—Now we're talking about '87, '88, up to '90.

32-00:10:34

Hinckle: Well, the Sidney story about his daughter, which I made a—The *Examiner* was the only paper that covered that nationally, and I covered the trial, when his daughter was killed in a hospital, by a medical mistake.

Rubens: How old was she?

32-00:10:49

Hinckle: She was about twenty. Oh, maybe she was only eighteen or nineteen then. She was late teens or very early twenties.

Rubens: Was this the same age as your daughter?

32-00:10:58

Hinckle: She was exactly the same age as my daughter Hilary, yes. And years after that, Sidney kind of almost adopted Hilary. That was the lost daughter sort of thing.

Rubens: Was that the occasion of the rapprochement with Sidney, or had you—

32-00:11:15

Hinckle: Yes, that was when his daughter got killed. And I called him up and said, "Hey, what can we do to fight this thing?" Because all his friends had told him, don't go on a campaign about this, that is to reform the hospital system. You'll just look like an angry, bereaved whatever. And you're over the side on it anyway, you're just so upset. It's just going to hurt your reputation as an independent journalist and you're going to look like—this and that. No. Sidney enlisted everybody from [Mario] Cuomo, then the governor—the senior Cuomo—to Frank Sinatra, to put on benefit concerts to raise money for the trial when he sued the hospital.

Rubens: Did he prevail?

32-00:12:07

Hinckle: No, it was a mixed verdict on the jury on the civil suit; but he didn't sue for money to make money out of it, it was to establish the point. But where he did prevail was to reform the medical system in New York, and that spread to California. That is, to regulate or establish regulations for the hours that pre-med students work. There was this almost hazing system if you work in the emergency room on duty for thirty-six hours without sleep sort of thing. That's what makes you a real doctor. And those periods of sleepless stress and constant stuff inevitably, almost on an obviously reasonable basis, would lead to somebody, somehow, somewhere making a mistake. And there were a lot of mistakes. A lot of mistakes. And one of them was his daughter. Somebody didn't check the drugs and gave her a counter-acting drug. And then of course, the hospital's defense was that she'd once smoked marijuana or taken cocaine, as if that had *anything* to do with this, right? But it was a smear type of defense. And a commission was set up by Cuomo in New York and they completely changed the way New York medical school students—doctors then, but in their period as residents, the hours they worked and the conditions they worked under.

And then Jackie Speier, when I started writing about it, called me and became a champion of it in California, in the California legislature. She was then still a supervisor, but she got into it and has changed California law, fairly close to the New York law. You can work twelve hours straight or something like that. I'll check. But no longer can you work for a day and a half or two, forty-eight hours. You just can't, because nobody can. Under extraordinary battlefield conditions, of course, in a war or something, that stuff happens. But as a *regular thing*. Right? And basically, it was slave labor. Hospitals were making more money. And the older orthodoxy of the doctors was, well, we went through that, so all the kids coming up should go through that, too. That'd be good for them, sort of stuff. And then that got reformed by this case, by Sidney's fight against it.

Rubens: That's impressive.

32-00:14:55

Hinckle: And the *Examiner* was the only paper, because I wrote a *huge* series of articles about it. And went to the trial. And so in the *Examiner*, there's a big front-page story. It was like, what's this thing about? Well, it was about everybody, because you've got the same problem in the emergency rooms here.

Rubens: Good story. So any other New York stories? The one I picked up was John Maher. John Maher had dropped out of sight, and you ran into him in New York.

32-00:15:29

Hinckle: Oh, what happened to Delancey Street is just a horror story. It's a very sad San Francisco story. To this day, I will not go near Delancey Street, where a lot of politicians have their parties.

Rubens: Why?

32-00:15:44

Hinckle: Well, John *was* Delancey Street. He started it. He was a drunk and had his troubles with the law, et cetera, and came up with this idea. And he made it. And he was also a great Irish patriot. And certainly, we were very close, because we had the same views on the IRA and Irish politics. And he was a fearless champion of César Chávez and also of the IRA. Nothing bothered him. No type of criticism would touch him. And he was extremely politically effective in San Francisco during local campaigns, things like that, and had no hesitation to take the organization that became Delancey Street and put his troops into political battles. He thought that was the right thing to do because whatever the fight was, it was the right thing. Okay, now "youse" guys are going to go out there and picket this place. And he was very direct in his authority and his use of authority, let's say. Put it that way. And John basically fell off the wagon. And then his wife Mimi took over control of Delancey Street. And to my horror, they treated him like, okay, you get down

on the floor and grovel now. He'd built this entire organization. And basically, banished him and banished his name. It was like the Communist Party's writing of history; he didn't exist.

At one time, Nolan, and I, who was a great friend of John Maher's, we had commissioned a guy to build a statue of Maher, and we were going to sneak in at night and put it in front of Delancey Street, on the sidewalk, because they wouldn't allow the thing. You read the standard histories now, it's like you don't know about John Maher and you don't know about the political side, which was *very* lefty and progressive, in the real sense, at that time, in the period. And since then, the thing has been Democratic establishment left. Feinstein has parties there, John Burton has parties there; a lot of politicians have parties there.

Rubens: Jimmy Herman was really—

32-00:18:30

Hinckle: Jimmy Herman was very close to Mimi Silbert. The Democratic Party establishment used that place. But the politics have gone out of the organization. It became a real estate operation. And now they've got some investments and cornered a lot of property and built on the San Francisco waterfront, and did this and that, and still do their Christmas tree things. They still take care of their ex-cons. But the entire spirit and the lefty—I mean, *real lefty*—energy of Delancey Street went. And they left John to deal with his own problems in New York. He lived in New York and he would get drunk once in a while. But a friend of mine, a mutual friend, Paul O'Dwyer, who's one of the great civil libertarian politicians of the last century—Wonderful, wonderful man.

Rubens: He was a politician in New York.

32-00:19:32

Hinckle: Yes. He would get John gigs doing lobbying in the legislature and this and that. And I would see him often because I was in New York all the time. And we did our best to hang out with him and take care of him. And I think I was the only San Franciscan that went to his funeral, which was held in New York. Basically, he'd been written out or disgraced. And none of the Delancey Street establishment came. None of them. His mother was very bitter and strong about it. And I, to this day, am in condemnation of Delancey Street for trying to rewrite their history. One is rewriting history; two is forgetting about the political orientation. And it now is a coffee shop and a cocktail party place for establishment Democratic politicians to have gatherings. But it's no longer a driving force or a combative force on the left edge of politics.

Rubens: So it's just coming up on twelve. Let me just think if there was anything more to say about the mayoral campaign. I never got your number of votes. It was three percent, I think.

32-00:21:01

Hinckle: I'd have to look it up. Well, we never thought we were going to run; we just went through the motions after we—

Rubens: Why was Bentley with you in your picture that went with your column in the *Examiner* –he wasn't in the *Chronicle* .

Hinckle: They did some style—They wanted the columnist pictures, so I said, “I want to be taken with my dog.”

Rubens: I always have a lot of odds and ends to ask you. How did you know Sal Rosselli?

32-00:21:59

Hinckle: Well, I knew Sal Rosselli very well.

Rubens: Where did that start?

32-00:22:02

Hinckle: The Dovre Club. Sal Rosselli lived on an alley down from the Dovre Club, when he was then a nurse, I guess, just starting out and organizing in SEIU. And Jack Davis, the political operative, campaign manager, lived across the street from the Dovre Club. And I was a frequenter of the Dovre Club and would drop in there on my way to work down at the *Chronicle* or whatever paper it was. Sometimes would say, ah, the hell with it; I'm not going to the paper today, because there were more interesting stories going around in there. And that was the headquarters of union guys and intrigue and it was a good source of stories.

Rubens: He ended up being a critic of Agnos. That's where I pick him up and see him in your book on the Agnos years.

Okay. So let' stop for today and then we'll—I have a list of things we didn't cover.

32-00:23:16

Hinckle: Yes, well, if I ever looked over the transcripts of these interviews, I would be—

Rubens: There'll probably be more to add,

32-00:23:22

Hinckle: I'll add something on a tape or write it in for you. Like probably there'd be a paragraph I'd stick in, giving specific examples about Cuba that I've already written about before. But I'd have to look for them, look through and say— It just didn't come to mind

Rubens: All right. So I think where we're about to go is to the *Independent*, right?

32-00:23:44

Hinckle: The great newspaper wars and how they managed to become the first Chinese newspaper owners. [laughter] Which was all politics.

Interview 16: November 28, 2010

In which a gripping tale of backroom deals and mayoral king-making illuminates the nature of power in San Francisco and how a Chinese immigrant builds a powerhouse newspaper in a city that historically demonized the “oriental.”

Begin Audio File 33

Rubens: I wanted to follow up a discussion we had last time about political consultants. Is there a time in San Francisco politics when consultants became more critical in the political process? Because we talked about Jack Davis and your campaign. And of course, he's instrumental in getting Jordan elected.

33-00:00:29

Hinckle: And defeating Jordan. He elected him, defeated him, and elected Willie twice. He came out of Clint's camp, Clint Reilly. I'd say the age of consultants, probably there's a few people that could be brought into it if you're doing a history of it. But it used to be San Francisco politics were run by the machines. And consultants weren't quite as important to the machine that played the game, made the deals, and decided everything. Sometimes there were a couple of different parties that had their own machines, and they fought; but basically, it was machine-run. And there were so many sort of non-partisan business mayors, like, Elmer Robinson and George Christopher, those types. Then around the time of George Moscone coming into office, started the rise of consultants. And they've been very strong ever since at dominating ballot issues and the mayoral races. And now they're all over these individual little supervisor races in each tiny district. Which, incidentally, were created for, among other reasons, to save money, because by not having a runoff, you didn't go to the expense of having a runoff and it was a smaller area; therefore, people didn't have to contribute that much money for the candidate to— Well, no sooner than a couple of shots at district elections, more money is now spent politically on each district election; when you put them all together, it's one and a half times the money that used to be spent on citywide races for supervisors. So forget that reason. That's not our discussion. And then Clint Reilly really, I'd say, started the modern period of that. He pioneered taking voter rolls and putting them on computers. And from that, forging lists for statewide direct mail. He took the whole state and computerized it. And ran some very successful, monetarily for him— Most of them lost, but they were huge campaigns for not-very-nice people, from a progressive perspective—the insurance companies, et cetera. They were anti-consumer statewide ballot propositions, most of them.

As we said before, Clint pioneered the system of getting everybody's name on the voter rolls, finding out how to get them for direct mail campaigns. And that led to making it much easier for phone banking—not that he started phone banking; that had been done. But it all kind of fit together. So he really had an operation. And then he, parenthetically, had a wonderful money-

making operation called a Democratic slate card. And he ran that in, I think, every county in the state. It was not the official Democratic Party in each county slate card; it was something called a Democratic Party Slate Card. And he sort of bankrolled that and already, before he opened the gate, made a ton of money by having his statewide clients front the bill for him sending them to each county to push their propositions. Then he would sell statewide candidates, rivals for governor, lieutenant governor, whatever, all those offices. And then he'd send people to each county in the state, to all the local people running for offices and the propositions and say, hey, we've got the slate cards going to everybody, all this. Look at all the stuff that's in it. You'd better buy some space on this or you're not going to be in it. Everybody had to buy it. So he made three or four or five times over the cost of it, before anything, out the gate. And that went on for a period of years, maybe a decade.

Rubens: So we're talking about the eighties.

33-00:04:47

Hinckle: Yes, it was very influential in the eighties because there was a void. The Republican Party, in the 1980s, sued in federal court against the Democratic Party endorsing in local races.

Rubens: Oh really? I didn't know.

33-00:05:06

Hinckle: Yes. And that led to a cessation of endorsement in local races by the party structures. It all came out of San Francisco. They didn't want them endorsing because there were so damned many Democrats. [laughter] So that didn't do the Republicans any good, so they say maybe we can block them from being able to endorse in the name of the Democrats. And that lasted about ten years. Until about the nineties. And then there was a Supreme Court ruling, finally. It was decided here and appealed and— But it went on for a good ten years, almost all the eighties. And during that period, Clint entered the fray with the Democratic slate card. And then he continued to do it for a while, but then everybody started getting pissed off with him and saying, wait a minute; this is not the official Democratic Party slate card. What is this? This is a phony, et cetera. And so finally that petered out. But during that time, he made a fortune. Made a fortune.

Rubens: And then also the mayoral candidates could not run without having some kind of political consultant beyond the campaign manager.

33-00:06:15

Hinckle: Oh, that. Now, that's just Clint. He also ran a political consulting business, but the technology was at the base of it. That was his pioneering thing, to put all this stuff together on the old giant computer reels that used to exist back then in the eighties. He had a place on Bush Street then. It had two floors of giant machines, like early IBM. It was all these quarter-inch rolls. But he ran

political campaigns. He was a campaign manager, too, in addition to doing this stuff. And he did Feinstein and I believe—I'd have to check—I'm almost certain he once did Quentin Kopp in one of his runs. So maybe he didn't do Feinstein all the time. Did Dianne once or twice, and I have to— Well, if you're going to throw this in, I'll make a call. I'm just not sure when he ran Quentin or what happened there. Anyway, so basically, Clint Reilly had Feinstein and all this other stuff statewide. And Jack Davis worked for him for a while. He first elected Mike Hennessey sheriff, for almost the longest standing office holder in San Francisco history. I hesitate to say that because there may be somebody way back that beats it. But this goes from the middle seventies, and Hennessey's still in office. But that was his first campaign victory for Davis, and he was just sort of new to the game and had learned this stuff by working for Clint and other people. Right. And then they became rivals. Davis later whooped him on many occasions. Then Richie Ross from Sacramento ran Art Agnos' campaign, so that was sort of the end of Clint's role as political consultant. And then he ran himself and got humiliated, for mayor. And Davis exposed him beating up a girlfriend who worked for one of the campaigns and that really did him in.

Rubens: And his wife just lost for supervisor, didn't she?

33-00:08:36

Hinckle: Yes, for the second time around. Each time, the *Argonaut* went after her and told the history of Clint Reilly from various standpoints. Yes, this is the second one she's lost.

Rubens: So I'm asking you some of this because I know that Davis played a hand in your mayoral campaign.

33-00:08:53

Hinckle: Well, the whole history of the Fang family is tied in with Davis. And he would use San Francisco politics to the Fangs' financial advantage. And to all of our financial advantage, because we all rode the track on that rollercoaster, there's no question about it.

Rubens: I remember something about a Native American, an Apache ceremony. What was that about?

33-00:09:33

Hinckle: Oh, that was Jack Davis's birthday party. His fiftieth birthday party.

Rubens: It had nothing to do with an election.

33-00:09:39

Hinckle: No. But it became scandalous because every politician in town was there. It was at Linda's [Corso] building. At the top of her building, there's a big ballroom.

Rubens: Where's this?

33-00:09:49

Hinckle: The Furniture Mart. Well, it's no longer called the Furniture Mart, but it's at Ninth and Market. It takes the whole block. Giant building there. Used to be all the wholesale furniture stores. And they've since gone to Vegas and the building's undergoing other uses. But it was there. And it just became rather scandalous because a friend of mine, Ron Turner—who does a lot of Pop art in which he started publishing dirty comic books, back in the time of the Mitchell brothers—he got an act. There were many acts; the place was crowded. And Bill Graham's guys brought the sets from everywhere and they had fog drifting through the thing. There were many bands and all kinds of stuff. But one of the acts was an Apache memorial ceremony by a guy who went around preaching about everything the white men had done to the Indian, including get him dependent on booze and things like that. And so one of these acts was that the guy was sort of whipped and got bloody, and then an attendant shoved a bottle of Jack Daniels up the guy's ass. The Indian, right? The guy that did the ceremony. Well, immediately, word got around—every politician denied they were there—and it ended up on the front page of the *New York Times* and the front page of both daily papers here.

Rubens: Did you have any role in that? Was it your idea? You were there.

33-00:11:30

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Well, we wanted to put on a party for Davis. [laughs] Everybody was on the committee. And then I ended up having to defend Davis in the *Independent* at the time, which was the political power, king-making paper at the time, defending the purity of this religious ceremony and what was the matter with these people? And that sort of thing.

Rubens: Okay. Why don't we turn to your time at the *Independent*. How do you first meet the Fangs?

33-00:12:14

Hinckle: When I left the *Examiner* and went to the *Independent*. That was in 1990.

Rubens: And was there much lag time?

33-00:12:22

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: Had you been talking to them, or did it just seem—

33-00:12:26

Hinckle: Yes, we were friends. I met them through Davis. He'd known them and he'd run James Fang, one of the family sons, the first time for the BART board. And he's still on the BART board. He's the only Republican holding citywide office in San Francisco. And the Fangs were basically Republican, but John Fang, the patriarch of the family, had the vision for the paper. There were

many, a multiplicity of papers in Chinatown, as there still are. But they were all, of course, in Chinese, in the different dialects. And he had the idea there should be a paper in English about news not just about China, but of all of Asia, because the coming thing was everybody had to speak English. He had this sort of new age idea, we can't all keep speaking Chinese. So he started a paper called *AsianWeek*.

Rubens: I think that's in '79 is when he starts that.

33-00:13:31

Hinckle: Yes. He bought a small monthly out by Lake Merced, called the *Lake Merced Independent* at the time, and was publishing that and—

Rubens: Starting in 1980.

33-00:13:46

Hinckle: Would've been in the eighties, yes. He was doing it during the eighties.

Rubens: James was elected to the BART board in the eighties.

33-00:13:50

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: John dies in '92?

33-00:13:53

Hinckle: John died about 1992, yes. Anyway, he was a fine man. And I got to know him and the Fangs very well, because they were quite active in San Francisco politics and I would write about some things that they were involved in, and got to know them. And I got to know John Fang very well and became quite friendly with him. He was originally a newspaper guy, photographer, and he put out newspapers in Taiwan.

Rubens: Yes. I think he'd gone to Berkeley, didn't he, to the journalism school?

33-00:14:20

Hinckle: Yes, he went to Berkeley and I think he took journalism and photography or something. But in his native Taiwan he was involved in publishing papers and photography work and things like this. So it was in his blood. He was a very decent man. And he knew what he was doing. So I think we talked about this a little bit earlier, one session. I sat down with him when the *Examiner* thing came to a head with the staff issues. Some of the reporters were angry about my writing about San Francisco from New York and driving Will Hearst crazy on that. And then somebody spiking a column I wrote in opposition to the first Gulf War, George Bush's father's war.

Rubens: Spiking means—

33-00:15:15

Hinckle: Spiking. Not running. Censoring. It's an old copy desk thing. They're going to spike it. "We're not running it. You still got the story; it's lying over there. If someone wants to retrieve it, maybe we'll look at it again, but oh, just spike that thing."

Rubens: So was that just it for you?

33-00:15:44

Hinckle: Yes, I quit. And I went and talked to John Fang about it, because—And it also involved my incessant criticism of Art Agnos as mayor, who was then in about his mid-term almost, as mayor. I think he had another year to go, about 1990, when I left the *Examiner*. So I went to see John Fang and we talked about it and he advised me against doing it. He says, "Oh, these things come and go with newspapers. You've got a long career with the Hearsts, a very rich corporation." I think we discussed some of this.

Rubens: Yes, we did.

33-00:16:26

Hinckle: But basically, he advised me against doing it. Because who knows what will happen there? And they're very rich. You're a talented journalist; there are many things you could do with him. Look at all the things you've done there already. One little fight. And Art Agnos is very vindictive and he may win going after us—because they were already in a battle with Agnos. And I said, "No. No," I said, "I'm out of there. I'm not going to be censored, et cetera. The hell with this. And I'm going to get all my Art Agnos files and let's go to work." And that's what we did. That's what we did. And we defeated Agnos, through the *Independent*.

Rubens: Right. So you wrote a series of articles and then put them all together in a book, *The Agnos Years*, for the campaign. That was '92.

33-00:17:20

Hinckle: Well, not for the campaign. It came out the week before the election, on every doorstep of the city. But it was a compilation of all the columns I'd written. And they said it was a circulation promotion device, which was a little tough to defend as an explanation, since it was a free newspaper, the *Independent*, so why do you have to promote circulation for a free paper, some of the lawyers on the other side claimed. Anyway, they ended up getting fined. It was an FEPC violation. Big sore thumb. Big sore thumb. Should've been considered a campaign contribution, was the other side.

Rubens: But it's your paper taking the hit; you have nothing to do with—

33-00:18:10

Hinckle: I didn't take a hit on that one, no. But that didn't matter; they'd won. And they saved a lot more than \$85,000 by knocking off Art Agnos.

Rubens: What was your title at the *Independent*?

33-00:18:29

Hinckle: I never took a title at the *Independent*, I just wrote a front-page column once a week; and then more times a week as we were in various battles, then we increased the frequency from once a week to twice a week because a series of battles ensued.

I think it's important to just note that the reason the *Independent* was so powerful was John Fang had bought— He got started with this one little paper, and then I know he added, I just forgot their titles offhand—a couple of smaller neighborhood papers. Picked them up. And he also had a printing plant; he was a printer. Had a plant in Chinatown, eventually bought a bigger plant out in the Bayview.

Rubens: He printed all the legal notices for the city.

33-00:19:21

Hinckle: Oh, that became an enormous battle. That was a big political battle; we'll get to that. That was the first big political battle after Agnos. So he began building that plant up and then merged all the small papers into the *Independent*, and began to distribute that to everyone in town once a week. And because it went to everyone in town, and it didn't have— It wasn't a very sophisticated design, it's coverage wasn't completely thorough or sophisticated or professional, but it did a pretty good job—certainly, a better job than the two daily newspapers in San Francisco—of covering a lot of neighborhood news. City meetings and neighborhood groups and stuff like that just didn't usually make the papers. High school sports, a lot of high school sports. That sort of stuff. And the advertising rates were low. And they made neighborhood editions by area, so the merchants in those areas would get this free paper full of neighborhood and sports news, delivered on everybody's doorstep in the area. But instead of having to buy an ad in the *Chronicle*, let's say, to go all over the city, when their shop was really only in this part of town, the rate was low enough that it was a reasonable expenditure for them to get their advertising exposed. Well, of course, the newspapers noticed this. And this was after the papers had merged. Hearst owned two papers. The *Call Bulletin* and the *San Francisco News* had merged into the *News-Call Bulletin*. They were published in the afternoon and the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* were published in the morning.

Rubens: This is back in the—

33-00:21:32

Hinckle: Well, this is up through the seventies—into the eighties, yes. There were three papers in the seventies, still. There used to be four major dailies in San Francisco, the *Bulletin*, the *Call*, the *Examiner* and the *Chronicle*, from the turn of the century. Actually, there were five, the *News*. And the *News* was the only slightly pro-labor paper during the General Strike. And that was the

paper which Katherine Graham, later the publisher of the *Washington Post*, was an intern on; she was a young reporter on the *San Francisco News* during the 1934 General Strike. Kind of interesting stuff. And so gradually, the *News* and the *Call* and the *Bulletin* merged into one paper and went to the afternoon.

This is in the seventies, into Nixon's second term. The Newspaper Preservation Act got all the publisher's endorsements around the country. So he pushed through the congress, a thing called the Newspaper Preservation Act. And the theory of that was that a lot of newspapers would fail because the cost of competition, et cetera, was so high. So it allowed them to retain separate editorial identities, but merge against antitrust standard provisions—marketing, printing, and other type—back shop, if you want. Non-editorial operations. Advertising, sales, distribution. And that was a *huge* boon to publishers because they could fold things left and right and get rid of all this stuff and keep the title; but it overall, after the many years it went on, didn't really sustain any papers; it just made most publishers a lot more money.

But under the Newspaper Preservation Act, then sometime in the middle to late seventies—I'd have to check that; it was around that time—a deal was struck between the Thieriot family, which owned the *Chronicle*, and the Hearst family, which owned the *Examiner* and what was left of the *News-Call Bulletin*. Scripps Howard, the newspaper chain which owned the old *San Francisco News*, had a piece of the operation. That's why the *News* name was in there. But basically, Hearst was publishing that afternoon paper, also. So they merged all the papers, killed off the *News-Call Bulletin* in the afternoon. A lot of similar stuff went on in New York City.

Rubens: Oh, sure, and in Chicago, Los Angeles.

33-00:24:47

Hinckle:

Yes, many other cities. And he kept the papers. And around this time, shortly before then, my friend Scott Newhall, who I think we've discussed a little bit, he had bested the old *Examiner*, which was the dominant paper *always* in town in the morning. And with basically no money and just by journalistic smoke and mirrors and a lot of magic—great newspaper man—he beat the *Examiner*, and the *Chronicle* was the top circulating morning paper. And then Charlie Thieriot, who was then the publisher of the *Chronicle*, always felt a little rivalry with Scott, because Scott was immensely wealthier than he was. Scott Newhall didn't need to make a salary. His Newhall Land and Farming Company is well known. It owned large parts of Southern California, land in the Santa Clarita Valley, and just all kinds of land in the state. So I guess to feel his manhood, he was enthusiastic about this deal with the Hearsts. But their terms were that the *Examiner* had to become an afternoon newspaper. And the *Chronicle* had won, so we will stay in the morning. Scott Newhall *vigorously* fought that. He says, "We beat them. We got them down and we'll keep beating them and they'll have to go out of business or sell out to us and then you have the whole town." Whatever. Just old-fashioned newspaper war

stuff. But Thieriot wanted to do this because he'd done something; he'd made this deal. So he did. And then eventually, Scott quit and was forced out. He was just sick of the thing. And the only bone the *Examiner* got out of it was that they could put out the Sunday paper, the news part of the Sunday paper. The Sunday paper was a merger of the different sections of the Sunday *Examiner* and the Sunday *Chronicle*, and had the look of two delivery trucks from each paper hitting head-on and the bundles flying all over the street and some wino coming along and picking them up, putting the sections together. It was absolutely incoherent. It was the joke of the town for so many years.

Rubens: Really?

33-00:27:19

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. Still is, in many ways. [laughter] That isn't quite true, but it's a lot better than it was in those awkward years, fifteen, twenty years of looking that way. But the *Examiner* put out the Sunday news section. The *Examiner* was on the mast head. And when you opened the paper, it said *Examiner—Chronicle* on the front page, in front of the comics. But when you opened the paper, the front page would've said *Examiner*. Another section said *Chronicle*; then another section was the *Examiner*. It was nuts. But they maintained that, which was fortunate for me when I was at the *Examiner* because in addition to the other stuff I did, I wrote sort of a lefty editorial page column on the Sunday editorial page, along with the president of the Hearst Corporation, who did *not* have a lefty column. So that was kind of giving another little voice to the Hearst operation. And they printed that in some of their other papers around the country.

Okay, so but now these papers are in a joint operation. They have one newspaper sales company that sells ads for both the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*. And the *Independent* all of a sudden was full of neighborhood ads—supermarkets, full-page ads for their specials and things like that. And they had basically zoned the city—this was John Fang's idea—so the prices were reasonable. If you're the Cala supermarket and you're in one part of town and you don't have a Cala in the other three parts of town—you're not a big chain—why the hell do you want to advertise in the other parts of town? Didn't make any sense. So that made the *Independent*. A simple thing. And the emphasis on local coverage that the papers felt they didn't have room for or didn't provide.

The *Chronicle*'s goal, which was now the lead paper, the morning paper, was to be the dominant Northern California, greater Northern California newspaper. So then they engaged in a lot of repetitive, I guess you'd say, local coverage of Santa Clara County, Alameda County, other areas, and distributed to the greater part of Northern California and into Nevada. But had to sort of, they felt, cover the news in those areas enough so that people would want to buy it. Which was a mistake the *Chronicle*, in my opinion, maintains to this day. Because Scott Newhall, who made the *Chronicle* the success that it

became, he had a totally different theory. He felt that— Let's see, how did he explain it to me once? He says, "If you're from Orinda, any suburb of the Bay Area, and you're traveling in Europe and you're in France or somewhere, sitting around in a bar in Paris, and somebody asks you where you're from," he says, "You're not likely to say Orinda. You're more likely to say San Francisco." Right? Because *everybody* knows San Francisco. And his theory was that people who live in the suburbs, the greater Bay Area suburbs, many of them were families who had originally lived in San Francisco and moved out to go to the suburbs. Others were people who'd gone to the suburbs or whatever, moved from other parts of the country for work. But San Francisco was the center of the universe, so they sort of always felt a part of San Francisco. And he thought that the *Chronicle* would be the paper that would interpret, explain and make them enjoy the city, in all its craziness and its other things, that sort of stuff. And that was the reason for people to take the paper. Let's not bother trying to cover the city council in Lake Tahoe or in Richmond, because some paper there is already covering it. And the *Chronicle* would be a second buy. Because people liked it because it was livelier, packed with columnists, had all kinds of features that the local dailies didn't have, and was fun and gave a point of view. People knew what was going on in San Francisco and could debate about it and talk about it and laugh about it. We had a lot of emphasis on laughing about it; but also they got involved in some disputes and felt part of the game. That was contrary to the idea we have to be serious and provide news-intensive coverage of the entire greater Northern California.

And as part of the Thieriot takeover and Scott Newhall leaving, the *Chronicle* sort of adopted this thing with it: we will become the greater Northern California big daily and everyone will take us because we'll have the news of everything. To this day, even, the *Chronicle*'s now much, much improved under the new guy there, Ward Bushee, they sort of still follow that general policy of having to get all the news in from everywhere else. For instance, Matier and Ross, who do the political gossip column, they bitched to me for years about some of the restraints on them. I think it's been loosened a bit in recent years, but it used to be that they did three columns a week, and one to one and a half of them had to be about the East Bay and other parts of the Bay Area. And they were like, because we have to— People would want to read about their local stuff. And they're like, no they don't. They already know about their local stuff. Right? Why should we bother with it?

Rubens:

So you go to the *Independent* by about '91. John dies in '92. I want to talk about what you're writing in the seven years before the Hearst Corporation announces in '99 that it's going to buy the *Chronicle* and shut down the *Examiner*. And then the Fangs decided that they were going to buy the *Examiner*.

33-00:34:20

Hinckle:

That happened, but that wasn't how it happened.

Rubens: All right. But I don't want to just skip over, though, what you're doing. You have a nice ride for a while during the—

33-00:34:27

Hinckle: There's a progression to it. And when I was talking about how the *Independent* did these zoned, if you want to call them that, neighborhood editions so the advertisers could get in, well, soon the combined operation of the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* in the advertising—They weren't dumb. They took notice of that. So all of a sudden, soon the *Chronicle* started doing zoned editions. Right? As did the *Examiner*, because their ads were sold basically simultaneously. Almost every advertiser was in both papers. And the irony was, as I think we've discussed previously, that the deal was so poorly engineered by Thieriot from the *Chronicle*, from the *Chronicle* standpoint, that the smaller circulation *Examiner*, which cost less to put out, in terms of printing, tires, delivery costs and all that stuff, got half the *Chronicle*'s ad money, fifty percent of all the revenues, because the ads always appeared in the *Examiner*, which had a much lower rate. Nobody would go just into the *Examiner*. But almost every advertiser took both papers because there's an extra nut to going to both papers. So that was a fatal flaw in the merger strategy of Charlie Thieriot, because the Hearsts were just making a fortune, putting out a paper that cost them less to put out because it had a smaller circulation. But the *Examiner* and the *Chronicle* began to copy the Fangs' strategy of—Once a week they had this they called it a zoned edition.

And then the other thing that buoyed the *Independent*, in terms of advertising, was that it had most of the city official notices. Again, this is before the internet. And there was a law that notices about meetings and results and fictitious names and all the legal things that go into that, all that stuff, almost all of that was in the *Independent* because you had to bid for it each year. But the *Independent* always got it because they bid lowest and had the largest circulation. The logic for them to get it was because people are supposed to see these notices. Well, the *Chronicle* set out to undermine that and to change the rules of the game, to take away, for economic reasons, the public notice revenue from the Fangs, from the *Independent*.

At the same time, from about late 1990 on, whenever it was, I was writing for the *Independent* and it became a powerful political paper. Because I wrote a front-page column every issue, which was generally on a local political topic and raising hell about something or the other. And there it began with the crusade against Art Agnos and we increased the number of issues a week, up to three; home delivered them to every house, with the column screaming across the top, telling this story, one story after the other, about Art Agnos and how he had alienated this neighborhood or done this to a fireman or that to the cops, this to the labor unions and that to the blacks. Just whack, whack, whack, whack. And championed the unlikely candidacy of Frank Jordan, who was running against Art Agnos, who was considered invincible for a second term at the time. The *Examiner* had done, because it had the Sunday paper, a

big picture of Art on the front page, with polls, two years into his term, saying 87 percent approval rating, invincible mayor, will be here forever, unbeatable, this and that. Just kissing his butt. And of course, I'd write a column saying none of this is true, anybody can beat Art Agnos. Anyway, so I took all that to the *Independent*, and the *Independent* had its own economic reasons of not—I should say the Fang family, because they had not done Art's political bidding in the first part of his mayoralty. And some of the reporting in there had annoyed him greatly. And he went after them. They had a few real estate and some tax issues with the city that were certainly possible of construction from the city's viewpoint, that they could get a serious whacking on taxes and other things, and may have crossed a few lines. Right? Maybe the city attorney was looking at them; certainly, the city tax collector's office, maybe the treasurer's office. And Art let them know that and made it very clear that you hold the line or you may be in big trouble, the way you put your business together, assembled all this stuff, got your printing plant and the zoning things—all that stuff.

So they were already in a fight with Agnos because they kind of—They were smart. John Fang was smart. He said, "This guy is not going to give us a break. He's going to take us down if he can." Because that was his reputation. It was all me, or you get whacked. So we put all that together, increased the frequency of the paper. It became a political powerhouse. And because it went to every doorstep, with kind of a fat package—two big sections, all the sports and all that, all these neighborhood ads. The paid circulation of the *Chronicle* was maybe a third, in the city, of the *Independent*'s, which was free. It makes sense, if you think about it. Because if 60 percent or more, or at least 50 percent at that time, of the *Chronicle*'s circulation was outside San Francisco, because that was their circulation goal—And you had to pay by the month for it. Not everybody wants to pay for a newspaper every day, in *any* town, San Francisco included. There's only so many people who subscribe to the paper. But the *Independent* had the advantage of being free. It became the first large, free, mass-distribution newspaper in the country.

Rubens: In the country?

33-00:41:58

Hinckle:

Yes. Nobody had ever distributed that many copies free successfully. And it was able to do that because it started from this regional zoning strategy, then later stolen by the *Chronicle* in order to compete with the *Independent*, by charging less in certain areas.

Rubens: So is the advertising money paying for the distribution, or is it also—

33-00:42:18

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens: —there are other investments?

33-00:42:20

Hinckle: No. It was making money. And expanding. Expanding the printing plant, buying presses.

Rubens: And had they kept that contract—

33-00:42:32

Hinckle: Well, they bought a job printing plant. Job printing, in trade, means you don't put out one newspaper, you put out the high school paper, the labor paper, the Yugoslav news—all the ethnic papers, other Chinese papers, whatever it might be, all that stuff. And you print fliers and folders and advertising sections, whatever comes in. And so they expanded that into a plant to print the—They printed the *Independent* there, and gradually had to add presses and things like that, as it kept expanding. But a large part of their business remained printing other publications. So in that sense, that was its economic package. But without the legal advertisements revenue, they were in financial peril.

Rubens: They *did* lose that.

33-00:43:25

Hinckle: No. That became the next big fight. So we had the big fight over Art Agnos, right? Then the *Chronicle* approached members of the Board of Supervisors and said, in essence, hey, get something on the ballot that changes the way this public notice advertising is awarded. Change the criteria. And therefore, we can get the public notice, that will be a huge chunk of advertising, into the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* and take most of it away from the Fangs and knock them out of business. It was about that blunt. So Davis caught wind of this. Guys were calling up saying, hey, you know what's going on? They want to do this. So Jack Davis came up with this idea, *we'll* put something on the ballot. He'd just elected Frank Jordan and defeated Art Agnos. But now there was a move, a business move by the *Chronicle*, to knock out, all of a sudden, this growing power, this free paper all over town, the *Independent*. So the move was aimed at taking away this huge legal notice revenue, which to the *Independent* was huge; to the *Chronicle*, wasn't as huge, but it might weaken or kill off the *Independent*. Plus they'll be happy to have the extra revenue. But it wasn't life or death or a major stream of revenue to them. It *was* a major stream of revenue to the *Independent*.

Davis proposed, hey, now let's go on the offensive here. *We'll* put something on the ballot. We means the Fangs and our political allies. Right? And Davis wrote the proposition. It was called Proposition K. There ensued a *major* political battle in the city. A lot of the still-remaining political friends of Art Agnos, people who didn't like the *Independent* for this or that reason, people who wanted to curry favor with the *Chronicle*, politicians and others—Even the gay clubs were split on this. Political alliances went this way and that. And Davis wrote the proposition in this brilliantly crafty, Machiavellian way, so that if it passed, it favored the *Independent* and made it almost *impossible* for

anybody else to get the legal advertising, because it created a point system. And the point system went by total circulation, not paid circulation; it went by minority ownership; and it went by women-owned or operated business.

Rubens: By then John has died and his wife—

33-00:46:49

Hinckle: By then John has died. His wife Florence is publisher of the paper. It's a minority paper and it's given away free, has the largest circulation. *Chronicle* wanted to change the game to things like, I guess, paid circulation is more valuable than free because how do you know if anybody looks at a free paper? They had their arguments, right? So it became a political battle, *huge*. And it was a ballot proposition, it was a vote, and there were a lot of people against it, currying favors on each side. The sides were very clearly drawn. And we made a huge campaign for it. And I started to add pages of art and comics and things like that to the *Independent* to make it a campaign. Started a comics page with a lot of the underground comics and this, that. That comics page later became kind of controversial, with the fight over the merging of the papers. I did a comic strip on Phil Bronstein and his wife, but we can get to that one later on.

So Art Agnos was a big battle. In the meantime, the *Independent* is also endorsing other candidates, naturally, becomes a major political player in the city.

Rubens: Now, are you having any influence on them, in terms of who they endorse?

33-00:48:22

Hinckle: Yes, we'd always argue it out, yes.

Rubens: Now they were Republicans and you had—

33-00:48:24

Hinckle: And as part of my alliance, if you want, with them—They didn't have a lot of money to pay me as such, because it was a pretty tightly-run operation. They would've probably been knocked out of business if they lost this public notice hunk of dough, because the ad rates were quite low. It was full of ads, but they were quite low because they were neighborhood based. But as it became stronger and more established, then national advertisers start to look at it and say, hey, maybe we should put an ad in there for a car advertisement or something like that, or an AT&T ad. Wow, look at all the circulation, that sort of thing. But that took time because it was an upstart. So we made a very, very big, old-fashioned editorial campaign for that.

We won. Knocked them out of that, right? So this is more newspaper wars than it is political wars now. So then Hearst had announced that they wanted to buy the *Chronicle*.

Rubens: Right. This is '99.

33-00:49:49

Hinckle: Yes. But it took some time. They hadn't really made any moves that way. And then when they started to make the moves, it became clear that not only would they end up buying the *Chronicle*—They certainly had the money to do it, the Hearst Corporation. So they buy the *Chronicle* and it clearly would kill off the *Examiner*. No need for an afternoon paper, as such. Afternoon papers were dying, at that time, all over the country because the demographics and the work habits and everything had changed, and it's hard to—It used to be every big town had a morning paper and an afternoon paper, and the afternoon papers, everybody took them; they read them when they came home from work. And then as the suburbs began to grow and traffic and other things became an issue, and television coverage increases. All that stuff went on, right? So afternoon newspapers were on a serious decline, headed towards, basically, extinction, with a few notable exceptions, like *Newsday* on Long Island. From, say the seventies onward, it was clear what was going to happen. So it was clear that, hey, there goes the *Examiner* and there'll be just the *Chronicle*, a one newspaper town. Well, also in the Newspaper Preservation Act was a provision that the joint publisher of the two papers, the publisher, while you operate under the Newspaper Preservation Act, you could not publish a free-market distributed paper. In other words, a giveaway. But if the Newspaper Preservation Act no longer applied—in other words, if Hearst bought the *Chronicle* and they didn't need the Newspaper Preservation Act; they'd just fold the *Examiner* into the *Chronicle* and then they weren't under it anymore; they didn't have to operate under cover of that. Then they were free, legally, to publish a free-distribution, every-doorstep-in-town, once-a-week paper called the *Chronicle*, free. Which would've killed off the *Independent*. So when that became evident, a council of war was called in Florence Fang's office in the old family printing company on Sacramento Street, in Chinatown.

Rubens: A council of war?

33-00:52:47

Hinckle: Oh, yes. And Jack Davis was there, he called himself the family consigliere. And I was there and Florence Fang and her two sons, James and Ted. And there was a third son, who subsequently died of an illness, at an early age.

Rubens: Now, how do you know this is going on at the *Chronicle*? Are they talking about it publicly? Or you have your people who are telling you things.

33-00:53:29

Hinckle: Yes. We knew this was what was going to happen. And Darrell Solomon, who's a very smart lawyer, was a lawyer for the Fangs for a while. He used to head the Civil Service Commission in San Francisco; headed various firms he's had in private practice; and was the lawyer at the time for the Fangs. He read the whole thing, said, "Hey, this is what they're going to do to you. If

they are allowed to merge these papers and call it the *Examiner* and get out of that thing, they will within a year, obviously, start up doing the same thing at lower rates and flood the neighborhood. And despite all the *Independent*'s success, the *Chronicle* is a more recognizable thing —they'll kill you." So their meeting was, hey, they're going to wipe us out if the merger's allowed to go through, so we have to start a campaign to block the merger. And since it's life or death, we'll do everything, whatever we have to do. So I said, "Well, now it's war again." Because this is the third war. We had Agnos, we had the city notice issue and we've got this war. [laughs]

And I said, "Well, what we're going to have to do is go to old-fashioned crusading journalism, go after the entire Hearst Corporation, its history, this, that. Hire some people to go—let Davis orchestrate that part of it—to all the neighborhoods, the clubs, the ethnics, get them all on our side in this thing and show the harm this is going to do. And make the paper much more colorful, increase the comics that we started when we were having this Proposition K fight, to more. And we'll have to put the paper out, I guess, three times a week." See, it had to be put out three times a week because that was a provision to get the legal advertising. The city had changed that. So they put out a little paper on Thursday; just pressed the button, ran twelve pages, filled the requirement, because the *Chronicle* was going after that, too. No, you have to give away 300,000 copies of those twelve pages if you're going to keep the legal ads. So there was a lot of stuff that was up there. So anyway, I said, "Okay." So it became my portfolio to run the editorial campaign. And Davis took care of the political manipulations, and the strategy. We had to because it became a public campaign. And we called it "Stop the Merger; don't let San Francisco become a one-newspaper town."

Rubens:

So you did put some more writers on staff?

33-00:56:16

Hinckle:

Yes, I put in— Well, at the time, one of the reasons, and one of the benefits for me when I went to work for the Fangs, I said, "Look. I know you can't pay a salary anywhere near commensurate with what the Hearsts were paying me. So I want to take out some things in trade. You have printing presses; I'd like to use the printing presses." I wanted to print my own publication, which became the *Argonaut*, an old San Francisco publication from the 1880s. And so I restarted the *Argonaut*. I started in about 1992. And it was then in book form, quality sort of paperback book. It was a national publication. And then immediately, we started publishing sort of local editions for the election and using the Fang distribution system and the model of putting them on every doorstep. But to have a friend and close ally who owns a printing plant is a major thing, if you want to start a publication without owning— having a lot of shareholders, without raising a lot of capital—

Rubens:

Sure, all the stuff you had had to do putting out the other magazines you ran.

33-00:57:58

Hinckle:

—and all this stuff. Yes, I had to do before, putting out *Ramparts* and other magazines. I just didn't want to do that again. But that made it possible, from my perspective. I said, "Hey, in downtime at the printing plant, if you could use that nice, heavier paper that you use for the covers of some of these high school papers and things, and chop it down because we want to make about 200-page, bigger, quality-size paperbacks, and then we'll print the cover somewhere else and bring it in and then—they had a little old bindery there—bind it. And that's what we did.

Rubens:

Why the cover somewhere else? To get all the color?

33-00:58:35

Hinckle:

Because they didn't have the press. Their presses couldn't print a glossy, shiny cover. Well, in press terms, they have no drying equipment. So you've got to go to a flatbed press and run it through, then print the other side. They didn't have those presses at the time.

Rubens:

Now, you can do this because you're basically writing twice a week for the *Independent*? Did you have to write something for that third edition that was just the small—

33-00:59:03

Hinckle:

No. No, I didn't have to.

Rubens:

Okay. And then how often is the *Argonaut* coming out?

33-00:59:07

Hinckle:

The *Argonaut*, well, it came out—We were going to publish it quarterly. We put out about three editions for—We found out that it was a disaster with the distributor. A lot of the boxes had been unopened. Basically, the distributor had been advancing money. When you ship, they estimate how many you're going to sell. This happens in the book business, too. If you're publishing a book, the person who distributes your book, they'll give you an estimated amount of the sales that are going to eventually come in. And then if it's low, they'll deduct that from the next payment, when they sell some more. And if it's high, fine, but we'll work it out.

Part of the book business is what you call an advance when you ship, if you're the book publisher, from the distributor. Because the distributor collects the money. You give them the book. So basically, this was a book. So I was able to start the *Argonaut* on financing, by being able to print the book free.

Rubens:

So we'll talk about the *Argonaut*—

33-01:00:14

Hinckle:

Yes, later on.

Rubens:

But you're doing this throughout the nineties.

33-01:00:18

Hinckle:

We're doing all this at the same time, yes. And so the *Argonaut* became involved in many of these political wars. It acts like a— But I was doing that at the same time I was doing these— well, just writing the columns for the *Independent*, but we were really engulfed in these political life-and-death battles all the way along.

Rubens:

That must've been a good, fun time for you.

33-01:00:38

Hinckle:

It was a lot of fun time. And they said, "Hey, whatever you've got to do, do it." So we used the *Argonaut* offices, which were then down on the waterfront, because there was no editorial room in the *Independent* offices, and we sort of satellite produced the front page and the pages of comics and other material— background material, war material, propaganda material. We put writers in, artists, cartoonists in, and produced all this extra stuff and then transmitted it to them. And that was the front page, and that was the comics section, and here's the arguments section and that sort of thing.

Rubens:

So the technology facilitated this, too. You're now doing this by computer.

33-01:01:20

Hinckle:

Yes, we could just transmit it from our computers, yes, down on the waterfront. But that whole operation, for the battle part of it, was separate, so it allowed them to keep putting out the regular paper without changing the staff. And the sports coverage is the same and all the local meetings and the stuff that was in there were the same. And it was a hell of a battle. And that became a problem with me later on. It started a very bad relationship with Phil Bronstein, who was then the— at first, the editor of the *Examiner*, and then later became the editor at the *Chronicle*, when they successfully, eventually, were able to disentangle themselves from the *Examiner*. So one of the comic strips that I created was a comic strip called *Mr. Sharon Stone*.

Rubens:

Let me just change the tape.

Begin Audio File 34

Rubens:

So where we're moving towards is the *Independent* buying the *Examiner*. That's the story that we need to tell.

34-00:00:15

Hinckle:

Yes. There's a ways to go before we get to that. So the war council. Again, we're at the war council and then we go to war, something like that.

Rubens:

Well, we took a little sidestep into talking about the *Argonaut* that you created.

34-00:00:35

Hinckle:

Well, yes, I started it at the same time. One of the reasons I decided to dump the security [of being at the *Examiner*], Will and I had already got over that little tiff, but I sort of had had it and decided to just see what happens if you do your own stuff. But in all these conversations, one must remember that the Fangs were a conservative Chinese family. They were Republicans, not that that means anything one way or the other. But the Chinese culture, except for the sweep of Chinese history where there's a lot of *enormous* battles, rivalries, fights between parties — Chinese history notwithstanding, the culture of Chinese is business. Power, at least in Chinese Americans, at least in San Francisco, was not number one; it was maintaining business, was making a profit. It was getting their children to have an advantage. Many of them had come as immigrants. And John Fang, although a newspaper man, was not by nature a fighter. He would not go out and pick a battle just to make an editorial point or, in the routine phrase, to sell papers. That was not his nature. It was only when his back was against the wall economically and he was pressed with extinction, first by a vindictive mayor—extinction economically—that he would elect to fight, and he did.

Rubens:

That being Agnos.

34-00:02:52

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. This is in praise of John Fang. I'm saying he was not like some madman who just wanted to go out and make a name for myself, take down all these people. No, it was a simple matter of economics. He wouldn't survive if he didn't fight and defeat these people. And after the threat from Art Agnos, which ended in the defeat of Art Agnos, came the threat from the Hearst Corporation, one of the largest privately held publishing companies, certainly in America, one of the most powerful in the world. *Enormous* resources. And they, as they do—it's just business—all of a sudden this little paper in San Francisco was taking away advertising, gaining circulation, getting some national ads in there, undercutting them on rates. Well, they sell them cheaper. Well, man, we better do that, too. How did he do this stuff? Hey, it was something like, let's get rid of them if we can. It wasn't mean, just business. And people do it all the time. So he got into—we got in, the family got in—that fight for the same reason. You get over a political fight and now you're in a business fight. These guys are going to use the clout of their own daily newspapers to manipulate or get the politicians to do things that will put you out of business. Okay?

Rubens:

That was the Prop K.

34-00:04:19

Hinckle:

That was the Prop K. Again, a fight. Then okay, they're going to use the Newspaper Preservation Act, get out from under it; and by getting out from under it, stop having to publish the *Examiner*—economic advantage—and be able to put out a free paper once a week, which they were prohibited from doing for the previous twenty years or whatever. In short time, the

Independent would've been dead. Right? So we've got to stop them from being able to do that. And the council of war decided, okay, whatever it takes of the family resources, whatever we have to do, we'll do.

Rubens: The *Independent* is now Florence and Ted, right? John is long gone.

34-00:05:08

Hinckle: John's gone at that time. It's Florence, Ted and James, the older brother. And a couple of their white devil allies. [laughs] Jack Davis, Darrell Solomon, the lawyer, and me. So it was like a really tough fight, but I'm like, okay.

Rubens: Oh, you must've *loved* it.

34-00:05:33

Hinckle: Yes. Oh, it's like back to the nineteenth century. My much admired friend, who I've talked about often, Scott Newhall, who saved the *Chronicle* with almost no money— He just did it by great journalism and the city loved it, and it was so funny and enlightening and fun that he defeated the bigger paper. And so this was like, wow, I get to play with all those presses and bring in all these crazy cartoonists, the underground cartoonists and this and that, and actually do another nineteenth century editorial fight like you used to have in San Francisco all the time, a hundred years previously. Because wild west journalism was knock down and drag out. Boy! This'll be fun! And that's what we did. That's what we did.

Rubens: Yes. And so you won that campaign.

34-00:06:30

Hinckle: We won it, but we won it by going on two fronts. The journalistic front was all out. The front pages were covered with, "stop the merger," great looking cartoons of a big, fat publisher-type trying to squash a little newsboy. "Keep San Francisco a two-newspaper town." Our goal was to save the *Examiner*. That was our stated goal. My friend Howard Gossage, the advertising man, always said, "Never mistake the thing promoted for the thing itself." The thing promoted, our stated goal, was to save the *Examiner* and keep it a two-newspaper town. The actual goal was to raise so much hell and cause so much political trouble within the town by opposing the merger—because the Justice Department required, under the Newspaper Preservation Act, public testimony and this and that and those sort of things—that we could bring the Hearsts to the bargaining table and say, look, we'll stop all this, give the *Independent* a reasonable period of time to continue what it's doing as a free-circulation paper, and you stay out of that area. That was our goal. Give us twenty years, whatever we could get. Right? And we'll make sure we've got the best lawyers in the world submitting that, and then we'll start.

Rubens: Why would the *Examiner* agree to something like that?

34-00:08:12

Hinckle:

Because we did so well, both on the surface, agitating the public and getting everybody talking about it and laughing, doing old crusading journalism. And internally, Jack Davis was doing such a brilliant job of playing the politics within city hall. In the meantime, we had deposed Frank Jordan, whom we'd put in as mayor. And I wrote a front-page column, again, streamed across the top of the *Independent* saying, "Run, Willie run." Willie Brown, that is. And Davis ran his campaign. And Frank Jordan, whom we had clearly put into office, became a disappointment to many, many people. Became a society-oriented mayor. The idea was he'd run as a one-term mayor, independent citizen mayor, and make the reforms and the tough decisions—sounds like a cliché because it is, but that was the thought—that a two-term mayor couldn't make. So he'd do this. He'd take care of, redefine, the civil service classification, the growing size of government, the things which have now become the pensions problems. He would deal with that stuff and be a hero for saving the city by downsizing the size of city government, making a lot of rational decisions that mayors often, politically, can't afford to make. Well, somewhere along the way, he changed his mind and decided he wanted to be a two-term mayor, and began making the very concessions that we had fought against having made. So it came down to confronting Frank. I was very close to his wife, Wendy Paskin. And I said, "Wendy, you guys—" And she was like, "Oh, no, no. Frank's going to get a second term. Whatever is necessary, we're going to do it." I said, "But that wasn't the deal." "No, no. That's what we're going to do."

I called him, I remember, one night at home and I said, "Look, I'm going to have to come out and urge you publicly not to go for a second term and remind you that that's what you said you were going to do. And why don't you stay with it, and you'll be a hero and we'll do all this stuff," and da-da-da. And the answer was no. So then it was, "Run Willie run. And Davis ended up running Willie Brown's campaign. Davis, who had elected Frank Jordan. With no money. I believe we discussed in an earlier tape the irony that Frank Jordan's run for mayor came out of a column I wrote for the *Examiner*, just "hypothecating" who could possibly beat Art Agnos. I'm pretty sure we discussed that. And Jack Davis was then out of a job because he'd been indicted by Art Agnos for opposing his ballpark. Right? And even though the indictment was later thrown out, he couldn't run political campaigns because you couldn't say my opponent's campaign manager is under indictment for criminal charges. And we sat down and I said, "Hey, let me buy you dinner. You're not doing anything, why don't you figure out who could run?" We went through all the lists and I basically interviewed Davis. And it was supposedly against—So we finally came down to—I said something about, what about Frank Jordan? I see him all the time at this club we go to. And he said, "Well, now, there's one." He said, "That guy, he's never carried a gun. He's a cop without a gun. He's all community relations. He's very popular, doesn't have any enemies. Has no political history." He was the police chief then. He says, "Yeah, of all the list," he says, "Yeah. I think we could run

Frank Jordan and make a winning campaign against Art." So I wrote that column, just saying that. And I'd never talked to Jordan. I *swear* we got this on tape earlier.

Rubens: A great story, worth telling again.

34-00:12:34

Hinckle: I never talked to Frank about it, never called him saying, hey, I'm going to write a column about you. And he had the unpleasant experience of having Art Agnos call him up and saying, "What are you up to? Come into my office." And he's kind of at his best as a naïve, innocent Irish guy. Said, "I never talked to Hinckle. Of course, I know him, but he never talked to me. I'm the police chief, I don't want to run for mayor; that's not me." And then all of a sudden the calls started to come in to his office from people around town, because people were angry with Art Agnos. Community groups, black groups. The guy stepped on everybody's toes with his arrogant way, as almost anybody in San Francisco around that period will tell you. I didn't create the animosity towards Art Agnos; I examined it and explained it and reported on it. But I didn't create it. He created it himself.

And [laughter] so Jordan got called in again by the mayor, who had his spies in the police department, his favorite cops, because he had put a certain clique within the Police Officers Association that—I want the Police Officers Association to be part of my political machine. Some cops had opposed that, saying, hey, we're not that. And then they were rebuked, his particular lieutenants—Paul Chignall, C-H-I-G-N-A-L-L, and a couple of other guys—were sort of rebuked by the rank and file. And then Art went after the rank and file, doing various things to them, screwing around with them on raises or perks and things like that. Buttons for their clothes or something. I mean free buttons. At any rate, pissed off the cops. He pissed off the firemen by creating phony racial issues when there were none. There were plenty of racial issues in both the police department and the fire department at various times from the sixties through the nineties. They were under federal constraints because they were white clubs. There was a lot of racism in both departments, no question about it. But by the time Art was mayor, it had been largely settled. The first graduating class, whatever it was, of the fire department, which he addressed to attack racism in the fire department, was about 48 percent minority; had never been before. Used to be about 12 percent minority. All the reforms that the courts had insisted upon, then later let him lose because, okay, you complied, that had been done, was two-thirds underway, was far along. So for Art to try and bring the fire department political ranks under his thumb, he turned the clock back fifteen years and acted as if all the horrors—the bad things in the lockers of a black fireman, that sort of stuff—were going on right now, when there was no such things going on right now. It was the opposite. And it was that sort of politics that turned really ugly.

Rubens: So Jordan comes in to straighten things out and then decides to run for a second term.

34-00:16:12

Hinckle: Yes, and in my opinion and a lot of other people's opinions, went back to business as usual, politics as usual, which he wasn't as good at playing as other politicians have been. Certainly, not as good as Willie or an experienced politician, because he *wasn't* an experienced politician. And the only reason he ran was that Agnos got his Irish up because he insisted that he sign a paper, I guess signing away his civil rights, that he would never run for public office, would never do this, would never do that.

Rubens: Agnos, having *Jordan* sign that.

34-00:16:49

Hinckle: Yes. This guy's the police chief. Even, a mild-tempered, mild-mannered Irish guy like him, would say huh, what do you want me to do? That's *outrageous*. So then Art fires him. And he runs into Jack Davis and says, "Hey, were you serious about me running for mayor? I've been getting all these calls. Agnos has done all this stuff to me. He wanted me to sign this, I wouldn't do it, he's already fired me. And Davis says, "Well, yeah. We've just about beat this indictment that Art brought against me, but I've got no clients now." And so they started from nothing, in a motel room, just about, and Davis slept on a futon." And then the *Independent* came into it and said, hey, Frank Jordan. And there we went. And Frank Jordan beat Art Agnos.

So that's how that campaign came about. It's ironic. If Art hadn't been so mean, Jordan would've never been in the situation to run. But that's what happened. So then came the time that we couldn't back Jordan for another term. And it was Willie. We went through a lot of candidates. Tried to get Mike Hennessey, the sheriff. Davis approved. Almost everybody in town likes him; he has almost no enemies—he's amazing—after all these years. He didn't want to touch it. Looked here and there, and Willie was thinking about senator.

Rubens: He was termed out—

34-00:18:25

Hinckle: He was being termed out of the legislature, after running the whole state brilliantly all that time. This is right at the beginning, when term limits started to take their toll. And we got Willie in the back poolroom at Tosca, the café, the old Italian café, it's just big coffee machines at each end of the bar and operatic music; but it's a legendary old North Beach classic place. And a friend of mine, Jeannette Etheredge, and her mother owned that place.

Rubens: I think we talked about that.

34-00:19:00

Hinckle:

And a lot of political meetings were held in the backroom. It sounds like New York ward politics, but that's just how it happened. That's where Gavin Newsom made his decision electing to run for mayor. That's where Willie Brown, we all sat down with him and the decision was made. But we sit literally in the back room of—

Rubens:

You were literally there.

34-00:19:20

Hinckle:

Yes. Oh, yes. Of Tosca, which had a pool table in it and a lot of mementoes of famous movies, and had become Coppola's favorite place, right? So it was full of movie producers and stars and that sort of thing. It's an interesting San Francisco place, and remains to this day, just about that same clientele of movie people and old North Beach characters. It's a good place. If you have a town, you might as well be interested in places to go. What the hell? So we ran Willie, and that started with this big column I wrote, bannered across the top, "Run, Willie, Run." And Willie ran and Davis ran that campaign. And Willie won his first term and defeated Frank Jordan.

Rubens:

So now we're talking '96.

34-00:20:08

Hinckle:

I'd have to check the calendar, but it sounds just about right, yes. Coming up towards the late nineties. So Willie's in. And then this eminent threat to the existence of the *Independent* becomes apparent. So we start the editorial crusade, okay, we've got to go to war. I'm doing that from the satellite operation down at the pier, where the *Argonaut* is publishing. Because of my relation with the Fangs, I was able to get paper and things like that and work it out. So basically, I had a printer at my disposal, which is a very handy think in publishing, let me tell you. Not going through credit checks and this and that and demands for clearance for money, things like— Able to get your advertising money in first, before you've got to pay the printer. All those things are make or break for smaller publications. They just are.

So we were doing, on a public level, this, and then hired a couple of people to do community organizing, going to various clubs and merchants groups and this and that. No, we want to keep a two-paper town; we need that because then they'll raise the advertising to only one paper and all that stuff. And we won't have enough room for minority voices to be heard or coverage of minority— gay clubs and ethnic things. Orchestrated a pretty smart campaign that way in the community. And Davis sat down with Willie and said, "How are we going to swing this?" Because the whole deal was the United States Department of Justice, which made the decisions, under the Newspaper Preservation Act, which papers were qualified for it, which could get out from under it, whether it was okay to fold a paper in a town because the economic circumstances made it so clear. The Justice Department made those determinations. Now, if you were just a publisher yourself and weren't

operating with the tax and the other exemptions from antitrust law under the Newspaper Preservation Act, if you wanted to go ahead and fold your own damn paper, you go fold your paper. But not while you're operating under the Newspaper Preservation Act, where you've got all these enormous antitrust exemptions and other things that led to your profit, to your great profit. So until you got out from under that, you had to operate by its provisions, and you could not just stop publishing a paper under it, unless you proved this and that, that the community didn't have different options.

And this was still the Clinton administration. So Davis sat down with Willie and they worked out an approach. And an assistant US attorney in the Clinton administration, in the Justice Department part that was involved in overseeing Newspaper Preservation Act things, delivered all the adequate information. I'll have to call Jack Davis to get his name, but it's part of the historical record. And this is what happens. This was an enormous use of political power by a Democratic president that we, the newspaper, had supported and a mayor we had supported, with the connections that come with that, to stop a major international corporation, which had billions of dollars—and we were basically a small, little operation—from putting us out of business.

Rubens: So the Fangs had now supported Democrats—Willie Brown, Clinton.

34-00:24:04

Hinckle:

Yes. And they had traditionally been Republican. They supported a lot of Republican candidates individually, but John Fang was always smart enough—Because he had a big restaurant in Chinatown and they had a lot of political affairs there, so it always had equal affairs free for Democrats. It was smart

Rubens: What was the name of the restaurant?

34-00:24:21

Hinckle:

It was The Golden Palace. Golden Palace. Major political place.

Rubens: All right, so you have this representative from the Department of Justice—

34-00:24:31

Hinckle:

And so the issue was, how do we keep these guys from doing this? And what legal justification can there be to stop them from folding this paper? Because that will let them out from under this inability to do direct competition, throwing a free paper around town once a week, against the *Independent*. So that went back and forth for a while, while the heat of public battle continued. And the answer that came back from Justice surprised us. And the answer was that we're going to have to tell them that they can't just fold the *Examiner*. There's enough compelling economic arguments they've made that it makes no sense to, under the Newspaper Preservation Act, to fold the *Examiner*. If this had been a Republican administration, there would've been no question. Right? But this was still the Clinton administration, and Willie was very close

to the high players. And they were looking for a way for this paper, that supported them and their players in San Francisco, not to be wiped out. But they still had to figure, under the law— So the answer that came back was that, well, we're going to rule that the only way that they can stop publishing the *Examiner* is to allow some other local publisher, if one steps forward, to take over the newspaper, and to give that publisher enough money to have a real shot at it.

Rubens: To give them enough money?

34-00:26:42

Hinckle: Yes, to give them enough money, yes. So the ruling came down from Justice, because otherwise—

Rubens: You mean the money would have to come from Hearst buying the *Chronicle*—

34-00:26:50

Hinckle: Yes. Yes. To shut down the *Examiner*, you're going to have to give somebody else—if somebody steps forward to do. If nobody wants to publish it at all, you're gone. If somebody steps forward to do it, you have to give that party \$65 million. Right? To give them a head start. And it has to be a local institution; it can't be a chain. It can't be some rival of the Hearsts, it can't be this and that. A local group has to come forward, with a publishing history, and you've got to give them \$65 million.

Rubens: Guess who this is made for?

34-00:27:26

Hinckle: Well, yes, but the funny thing about that was that we didn't set out to get that. That was the last thing— All we wanted to do was to call a truce, negotiate something, and say, we'll call off the dogs. We'll let Justice let you go through with it, we'll stop attacking you, we'll stop agitating in the community. Give us twenty years, at least, license to keep publishing the way we have, and you stay out of that field. That's all we want. It's like straight business; this happens every day. In the *cotton* business, I'm sure stuff like this happens. It's not noble, it's not enlightening, it's not elevating, but it's business. It happens all the time. There's always politics mixed up in business. This is just an extraordinary example of it in San Francisco.

Rubens: I don't get what the Hearsts are going to get out of this, making this agreement.

34-00:28:17

Hinckle: They got to kill off the *Examiner* and buy the *Chronicle* for seven-hundred million dollars. And they got Justice approval. But Justice says, you're not going to be able to buy the *Chronicle* for \$700 million—Boy, was that price

overstated at the time; [laughter] they still rue that day—except you're going to have to offer, if somebody comes forward locally, a \$65 million subsidy.

Rubens: This is all Justice's figures.

34-00:28:48

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: And has anyone gotten to Justice? This is not part of the—

34-00:28:53

Hinckle: Not as to the figures; we don't know where they came up with—That came out of somewhere in Justice. So that was what they announced. Then it becomes some scrambling and this and that, and all of a sudden the only operation that fit the profile, that had a local base, a local publishing history, and had a reasonable chance—\$65 million is not enough to publish a daily newspaper with. And if you had to stop dead and cut out the *Examiner*, its existing staff, its presses, the whole thing—you couldn't be nobody; you had to have, know what you're doing. And \$65 million really wasn't a hell of a lot of money, when you look at it like that. Right? But the Hearsts could then buy the *Chronicle*, be free of those other costs, and have the bother of \$65 million had to be thrown into the pot, because that's the only way we can buy our self out of Justice, to get their approval. That's how it ended up. ‘

Rubens: You remember hearing this?

34-00:30:09

Hinckle: Yes, it was like shock. We were floored. *What?*

Rubens: So was it just obvious that the *Independent* would be the one?

34-00:30:17

Hinckle: Well, somebody else could've come forward, but really, when you thought about it, there wasn't really anybody in this town—

Rubens: Right. The *Bay Guardian* isn't—

34-00:30:24

Hinckle: It was local. Well, the *Guardian* could've. Yes. But they didn't.

Rubens: So this is published in the newspaper, announcements are made. If someone wanted to come forward, they could've.

34-00:30:35

Hinckle: Yes. And the Fangs, we didn't really know what else to do. Well, we might as well bid on the sucker. And quite a few meetings later and the lawyers looked at it, gee, I don't know if that's enough money; but on the other hand, if they get this thing without that, then they'll put us out of business anyway, because

they'll put this competition against us. So we might as well take the shot if we get the chance.

Rubens: So the whole, family's onboard with this?

34-00:31:01

Hinckle: They basically had no choice. So we had many meetings about it and chewed it through, but basically had no choice because if nobody took it, nobody took the \$65 million, then it was over anyway and the *Chronicle* would put the *Independent* out of business in short time.

Rubens: So was this exciting? Or was it a little hair-raising and—

34-00:31:26

Hinckle: It was a shock. Yes, and then it was like, hmm. \$65 million doesn't sound like a lot. But on the other hand, \$65 million; maybe if we look at it another way and publish an urban daily in the afternoon in the Bay Area, with all its intellectual capital, and have a real reason to publish it, and continue with the ad sales the way we've been doing it—because we had a going operation with the *Independent*—maybe it's worth \$65 million. But on the other hand, it was like, unless somebody else got it—and then we were out of business anyway, in short time. But there wasn't much choice. Right? But they did not set out, we did not set out, to capture the *Examiner* and take over publishing the *Examiner*. We set out to cut a deal with the *Chronicle*, with the Hearsts, by making so much trouble politically, under the table and in public, with a crusade and stirring up all the always volatile San Francisco local politics, that they'd be happy to make a deal and we'd all be happy, and then we'd go back and do what we were doing. It didn't end up that way because of the requirements of the joint operating agreement that had to be settled by the Justice Department. And this was the only way—that Willie, through Clinton—they could find. Otherwise, they could've just ruled that they can buy this thing and fold the *Examiner* and that's it. Forget the local clamour.

Rubens: Right. By the way, so there's no other Gannett paper or nothing in the East Bay that's thinking of getting their hooks into San Francisco?

34-00:33:17

Hinckle: They could have.

Rubens: But they just didn't.

34-00:33:21

Hinckle: Even with \$65 million bucks, the newspaper market was such that it costs so damned much money to publish a daily. And the *Chronicle* was the dominant paper.

Rubens: Was it required that it be a daily, this—

34:00:33:34

Hinckle:

Yes. The *Examiner* continues as a daily newspaper. And nobody wanted—not a chain wanted to go into San Francisco. Because everywhere else in the Bay Area—San Jose, they’re bigger; in Contra Costa—there’s only one paper. And all of a sudden you’d be publishing two papers in San Francisco, against the dominant *Chronicle*. And \$65 million bucks would go like that, right? And you’d be in a competitive situation that you hadn’t prepared for.

Rubens:

Now, was there anything else thrown into that pot? It’s \$65 million, but do you get the trucks? Do you get the—

34:00:34:15

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens:

You just were going to take over that operation.

34:00:34:19

Hinckle:

There were printing presses. Because they were printed on the *Chronicle* presses.

Rubens:

They were jointly—

34:00:34:24

Hinckle:

Well, they were owned by the joint operation. So they get to keep their printing presses. And the trucks, there was a certain amount of trucks that were apportioned to the *Examiner*, under this thing. So those trucks, you got. The *Examiner* editorial library, *Examiner* photo library, *Examiner* furniture in the *Examiner* part of the building—that stuff, you got. It was like that.

Rubens:

And the building, yes, obviously. And the building.

34:00:34:57

Hinckle:

Yes. And then the photo library ended up being donated to UC, to Berkeley. But that’s down the line, another part of the story, because when the *Examiner* was sold to—When the Fangs sold the *Examiner* to this extreme right winger, Phil Anschutz—By extreme right winger, I mean Coors Beer type right winger, aggressive United States Chamber of Commerce, total Republican. He now publishes the *Washington Examiner*—we’re getting ahead of the story here—which is considered by every journalist in Washington, more to the right of the Moonie paper, the *Washington Times*. So just go figure from there. Right? But that’s getting a little further down the line. But make a note to ask me what happened to the photo library. That’s a little, teeny scandal.

Rubens:

What else? How long does it take for you to realize, I’m going to be editor of the *Examiner*?

34:00:36:04

Hinckle:

But I *wasn’t* editor of the *Examiner*. Teddy Fang, the younger son—James Fang was the older one; he was more into politics and family, some real estate

and other things they'd acquired, and on the BART board. He was making a political career. Teddy was loose as a goose, and was the editor of the *Independent*. I was never the editor of the *Independent*. I just sort of took care of the battles there and fought its fights and wrote the main column and set the tone for it. And got in arguments sometimes over, no, you can't endorse this guy and that guy. And Teddy and I had had our differences, because some of his— My journalism is fairly flamboyant. And in that old San Francisco tradition, to this day, I cannot see anything wrong with that tradition. People enjoy it. It's like a spectator sport, right? You're not conning anybody. Everybody's got all kinds of sources of information. If they see you're picking a fight with somebody and the fight's fun, then they'll either take sides or just sit back and enjoy it. But it's good fun for everybody. It's spirited. Nothing wrong with it.

Rubens: But Ted sometimes—

34-00:37:18

Hinckle: Ted, well, he did some terrible, terrible things. He tried to be a journalist, but that really wasn't his background. He was more into dealing and making deals, that part of the family personality. And there was one time this guy— We were backing a guy named [Terence] Hallinan, from an old San Francisco family, for district attorney. And a guy named Fazio ran against him, who was Italian American. And I picked up the *Independent* one day. There was my column, that's usually placed on the front page; but there is this entire giant diagram on the front page—which Teddy had concocted, unbeknownst to me—showing Bill Fazio, through this square, black lines here, there, there, his connection to the Mafia. Which was absolutely absurd. It was absurd and outrageous on the face of it. I said, "Teddy, what've you done, you lunatic?" "What? Oh, well, no. You see" this and that. "No!" I called Fazio, I said, "Hey, man, I didn't know anything about this. I really apologize. This is insane."

Rubens: Did he sue?

34-00:38:34

Hinckle: No. No, he didn't sue because it's like are you still beating your wife. Besides you can't sue in time, during an election cycle, for it to do anything. But I toned down my columns about Fazio, went in the other direction, because I just felt so embarrassed by that. I guess the only way I could put it is, given the type of journalism I've done over the years in various publications, if I think something is going out of bounds and over the lines, it's pretty well sure it's out of bounds and over the lines. And there was a bit of that in the *Independent*. And then the next question became, what was *going* to happen to the \$65 million? And there, you get into the twisted and sometimes almost sordid tale of what happened with the first Chinese American owned daily newspaper in the United States.

- Rubens: So do you want to save that for next week?
- 34-00:39:36
Hinckle: Maybe we should. It's not a pretty story.
- Rubens: Okay. It'll let me do a little more background research.
- 34-00:39:42
Hinckle: Yes. Let's save that till next week, because by then, I'll have talked to both Davis and Darrell Solomon.
- Rubens: All right. So we're talking about 2000. This is in the spring of 2000.
- 34-00:39:56
Hinckle: I have one of the first *Examiners*. I've got some of the old ones around.
- Rubens: I'd like to see those. So the *announcement* came down, I think, in the spring of 2000, that the Fangs were going to take it. How much time before the actual start-up?
- 34-00:40:09
Hinckle: It was very little time. I think the Hearsts had to publish it for another six weeks, two months. I'd have to check.
- Rubens: And in the meantime, should we round it out just by saying what happened to most of the people who were at the *Examiner*? Will that be part of the story? Some of them come to the *Independent*, others are just gone?
- 34-00:40:29
Hinckle: No. Part of the deal negotiated by the Justice Department, with Willie's prodding, was that since they own the editorial staff of both papers and just wanted to extinguish one, that the Hearst Corporation had to assume the editorial staff and continue them on in both papers. And since it took them out to— In theory, that would make the *Chronicle* a better paper, right? Because they have a bigger staff. So that was another little deal.
- So basically, the *Examiner* was taken over with a clean slate, with a few trucks, some furniture, an editorial library, a photo library, the name. And that was it. No real estate, no staff. That's it. And \$65 million.
- Rubens: And the television station, had that been—
- 34-00:41:28
Hinckle: With no television station.
- Rubens: KRON had not—
- 34-00:41:31
Hinckle: No, that had always been owned separately by the Thierrots.

Rubens: Now Bronstein was—

34-00:41:42

Hinckle: He was the editor of the *Examiner* at that time. Not when I was working for the *Examiner* with Will. But afterwards, he became the editor of the *Examiner*. And then with the merger and extinction of the *Examiner*, he became the editor of the *Chronicle*.

Rubens: And who had been the editor of the *Chronicle*?

34-00:42:04

Hinckle: I forget who the hell was editor of the *Chronicle* then, but he was now out.

Rubens: We'll save the rest for next week. Thank you!

Interview 17: December 5, 2010

Concerning the place of nerve-center bars and restaurants in great cities, the personal relations with gossip columnists and officers of the law and recounting more on the life and death of the first Chinese-owned major metropolitan daily and San Francisco politics.

Begin Audio File 35

35-00:00:00

Hinckle: Elaine Kaufman, of Elaine's in New York just died.

Rubens:

Oh, boy. You've lost a lot of friends in the last few years.

35-00:00:05

Hinckle: Yes. From all the clubhouses— Mitchell Brothers, Elaine's, the Dovre Club.

Rubens:

You spent a lot of time at Elaine's when you were in New York. You had a fundraiser there for your campaign for mayor..

35-00:00:17

Hinckle: Yes. Which was a disaster.

Rubens:

Oh, why?

35-00:00:20

Hinckle: Because it was the day the bottom fell out of the market, the over the counter market.

Rubens:

Well, it was only \$100 a ticket.

35-00:00:28

Hinckle: Yes, but it was a disaster because instead of a thousand people there, we had about 200, because the market had literally collapsed, right? And everybody was licking their wounds and running for whatever cover. It was a big over the counter market crash; it was one of the big ones. It happened to be that day.

Rubens:

I saw a photograph on your table of you and your children at a party, with everyone wearing an eye patch? Was that a party for *you* at Elaine's?

35-00:01:02

Hinckle: That was an engagement party for me and Cheever.

Rubens:

So that's around the same time, though, isn't it? Probably in 1988. Herb Caen chronicles "rumors" of your impending marriage. He writes that he doesn't know about an engagement, but anticipates a child and wedding.

35-00:01:38

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens: He loved writing about you. You're in a *lot* of Herb Caen columns in '85 through '92.

35-00:01:47

Hinckle: Well, we got along not great; we got along fairly well. He was a close friend of Howard Gossage. And when we were both between divorces, Herb bunked at Howard's firehouse. They were intimate friends. And I know Gossage would, without fail, call Caen just about twenty after twelve, towards twelve-thirty, and Caen was furiously trying to finish his column, because contrary to myth, he wrote his own column and typed it on a manual Royal typewriter and was pounding away. And without fail, Gossage would call him around twenty after twelve, twelve-thirty, so he's trying to finish and get out of there and go to whatever lunch he had set up for one o'clock. And Gossage—[imitating voice and stutter] "Well, how's it going, Herbie? You got the paper filled out yet? Huh? Huh? Huh?" Just gave him crap, right? Just drove him crazy.

Rubens: So by the way, I was wondering how some of these items get into Herb Caen. He's always looking for things and having people tell him things, but it's in your interest, too, to call him and say, hey, guess what.

35-00:03:08

Hinckle: I rarely called Caen about an item unless it was one I wanted kept out. There were many of those. And then we'd have to trade favors and he'd say, well, maybe we'll leave that out, but what have you got in return? Stuff like that. Because he was all business. He needed his stuff.

So, that was a disastrous fundraiser. I had a lot of friends in New York. A lot of politicians have held little fundraisers there and things, but it was the— It must've been '89; there was a big, famous market crash. It was Black Friday. It was *horrendous!* Everybody lost fortunes, right? So even if you were only giving a hundred bucks, you don't feel like going to a fundraiser, [laughs] when you're licking your wounds and saying, oh, my God, what am I going to borrow from to cover this margin and that sort of stuff. But Elaine's was definitely a clubhouse for *Ramparts*.

Rubens: You started going then?

35-00:04:18

Hinckle: I started going there, well, when we first started having to go to New York, doing *Ramparts*. And it was probably about three years after she opened. And that became the adopted place. And that was it. We always picked the Algonquin Hotel, which is a famous old literary hotel. The Dorothy Parker Round Table and all that Algonquin history. Always stayed at the Algonquin, which was about four or five months out of the year, as things got going, most of it having to do with fundraising, not so much to do with stories. And always hung out at Elaine's. I wouldn't call it a strategy, but the *Ramparts* attitude, or the one that I inculcated—which is criticized quite well by some of the former New Left staff members in that book on *Ramparts*—was that we

were, to put it in the ghetto vernacular, that we were white people. Right? So what if we were screaming left wingers? We'd hang out, fly in the same airplanes, hang out in the same places, do the same type of journalism and use the same fancy color presses as the enemy, right? And fraternizing with the enemy didn't bother me or anybody else. All these New Left guys, they didn't know where else to go because I was buying their dinners, so they all ended up at Elaine's—some of them making some good long-term friendships.

Rubens: But are you saying that Elaine's was also a watering hole for, quote, "the enemy?" Who was that?

35-00:06:02

Hinckle: Well, yeah. Oh, there're Republicans at Elaine's, but basically, it was a New York establishment, intelligentsia, liberal Democrats.

Rubens: Did Woody Allen play clarinet there?

35-00:06:24

Hinckle: He played clarinet at a place down on Madison Avenue. But he had a regular table in there two, three nights a week. Everybody was there. It just seemed normal. And so you're putting out a crazy magazine that's blowing up the country, and why shouldn't you hang out there? It rattled the CIA; they couldn't figure out [laughs] why you're hanging out with all these famous people. They expected you to be bunkered down somewhere, hiding, stealing grenades to attack the bridge or some crazy thing. And there we were, like I say, hey, we're just regular folks, just doing journalism.

Rubens: So this remained a watering hole for you over the years.

35-00:07:00

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: When you ran for mayor, when you get engaged.

35-00:07:04

Hinckle: Yes. I had a big engagement party there that the Mitchell brothers picked up the check for. It was amazing.

Rubens: You did say that the Mitchells gave you some money for the mayoral campaign.

35-00:07:17

Hinckle: Yes. Basically, not funded us; but they built a big set in this old motorcycle shop and sponsored quite a few hijinks and events that we did during the campaign. They were the only guys who actually came through.

Rubens: I meant to ask you about your proposal to turn Alcatraz into a gambling island.

35-00:07:50

Hinckle:

Yes. I'll get back to that. But before we leave Elaine's, she remained a quite close friend over many decades. I was always in there. And my girls, both of them went to college in the New York area. One went to NYU and one went to Sarah Lawrence. And she took care of both of them. Because that was the period when I wasn't living in New York, or in New York at all that much. Usually I'd be in there for business or something or putting out a magazine, but in that period, I was mostly writing books and I was out here most of the time. I wasn't really in New York. And she took care of them. Any time they needed money, she'd give it to them. And I'd come in three or four months later, at some point eventually, she says, "Hey, whenever you've got it, I gave Hilary 400 bucks for something," like that. She seemed like she needed it." Or they couldn't pay a bill there; it was covered. So there was a sweet side to her.

Randy Hearst told me one time—this was during the Patty Hearst kidnapping. And part of the reparations or whatever and ridiculous negotiations to release her, included a big food giveaway to the poor. And the food giveaway in New York City was somewhere up in Harlem. And I remember I went there with Randy one night and— A lot of the Hearsts hang out there. Bunky Hearst hangs out there all the time. He's one of the Hearst family board members, very funny guy. [laughs] And I told him, I said, "Remember that cheese you handed out?" "Cheese?" He was a very proper guy, Randy Hearst. I said, "Well, you know, the food giveaway." He said, "Yeah. Oh, yes." I said, "Well, you were giving away the big blocks of this like industrial cheese up in Harlem, along with other stuff." "Oh, yeah, yeah. Part of— Oh, yes." I said, "Well, Elaine here—" This is her restaurant we're sitting in. I said, "A couple of the guys that work here told me that she sent busboys and everybody up there and got as many blocks of that as she could get [laughs] and brought it down here and served it on the cheeseburgers and stuff." I've never seen a man laugh so hard in my existence.

He thought that was the funniest damn thing. After all the aggravation and everything over that thing, and he got stuck in the middle of it, whatever. Somehow, it just all came to the point of the absurdity of it all, and he exploded into laughter.

Rubens:

So is that some indication of her? She liked hijinks too? Or she was fun—

35-00:10:51

Hinckle:

Hijinks? No!

Rubens:

Oh, this was really for money?

35-00:10:53

Hinckle:

She wanted the money. She wanted money. It was free. Oh, Elaine's was all business. My friend Sidney Zion used to have the best rap on her. The checks at Elaine's were always in pencil. They take your order and make out a check in pencil. For twenty, or almost thirty years, she usually sat up at the end of

the bar, right by the cash register, and would go through the tabs and the checks and look through them. And if she had a good night—To her, as Zion always pointed out— She says everyday was the first day of business for her. She never made a dime, she didn't have any money. She had to make the nut that day before she could *even* take a breath. And she worried about it every day. Right? Some days, she would make *fabulous* amounts of money because somebody from Hollywood or somebody from Saudi Arabia would be in there just spending a fortune, buying \$500 dollars of champagne for the place. You never knew what was going to happen there. [laughs] And then she would even it out. So if she knew you and she was having a really good night, things were going great, somebody was spending an obscene, fabulous amount of money, then your bill— Because it was all pencil. So she would adjust it. And if she was having a rough night she would adjust it, right? And as a regular there, you got used to that. You never knew. And the worst thing you could ever do was question the check. Then you would be fined for months. Whatever you ordered, if it was an \$82 check, it was always \$127. For months, because you were being punished. For not understanding the system.

So basically, it was like communism. She sort of apportioned the number of tables and the amount spent. And if somebody sat too long at a table and didn't buy enough drinks, or she didn't know them that well and they just had drinks and didn't order dinner, oh, those drinks were *fabulously* expensive. That sort of stuff.

Rubens: Where was Elaine's. I never went to Elaine's.

35-00:13:19

Hinckle: On 2nd Avenue, about 86th or 88th I think. A familiar trip. I'd always go in there; get off the plane from San Francisco about eleven-thirty, twelve, whatever. You get into town around one o'clock, which business is just getting going at Elaine's then. And for *years* and years, she had a big giant jukebox that was almost all Beatles tunes on it, in the front, when you come in the front door, at the left. And I'd just take whatever suitcase I had—we didn't bother going to the hotel—just drag the suitcase and throw it behind the jukebox and sit down at whatever table she's at and say, well, what's going on? And that's how it was. It was really, literally, a clubhouse for so many people in journalism and theater and the arts.

And nobody gawked, nobody looked at anybody else, nobody really cared. It wasn't that way at all. All my dogs were always welcome. And there's a picture over there. That's Melman at Elaine's, taken by Jessica Burstein, who's a great, great photographer.

Rubens: So maybe we'll include it in this oral history.

35-00:14:33

Hinckle: Oh, that picture you should, yes. He's tied to a barstool at Elaine's. It's a beautiful picture.

Rubens:

Melman went everywhere with you. During your campaign for mayor, Melman was stopped from going into a bar here in San Francisco. And you responded "He's the guest speaker."

35-00:14:56

Hinckle: [laughs] I don't remember. Probably a Caen item..

Rubens:

Yes, it was a Caen item. Caen also made note of a proclamation from Willie Brown, with a statement "Whereas Melman was a candidate for mayor."

35-00:15:14

Hinckle: That's when Melman died, yes. Willie issued a proclamation.

Rubens:

Oh, is that what it was? I have the name of the shunning bar somewhere in my notes. It of course was not Tosca because Etheridge was your friend.

35-00:15:34

Hinckle: It *couldn't* have been Tosca.

Rubens:

Was there any place equivalent to Elaine's in San Francisco?

35-00:15:40

Hinckle: Tosca.

Rubens:

And maybe Stars and the Washbag [Washington Square Bar and Grill] Those were political watering holes..

35-00:15:47

Hinckle: Well, yes. The Washbag became pretty much a journalists, sports-type politico's hangout. And Tosca had the movie crowd. And Stars had basically a society crowd.

Rubens:

Oh, is that right?

35-00:16:11

Hinckle: Yes. Jeremiah [Tower] had the society crowd. But that was a pretty familiar place. He was very nice when I'd go in. In fact, he had a sendoff for Melman. We had to take him and put him down because he was blind and he had to go. And he brought out chopped steak on a silver platter and a champagne glass with sparkling water or whatever type of water, and the dog couldn't even stand. He was kind of laying down eating this stuff. And the Irish builders were there, my friends O'Donoghue and Joe Cassidy, guys like that, and they had outfitted a flatbed truck, one of those big trucks that builders use to move lumber and stuff. And the guys had got together and built a doghouse on the flatbed of the truck, to put him in the doghouse and take him over to the vet's.

And guys were there in black tie. Jeremiah couldn't have been sweeter. He was always nice to the dog.

Rubens: Was Stars one of your hangouts?

35-00:17:25

Hinckle: Yes, well, classy joints are classy joints.

Rubens: I remember going there just a few times with Dave Jenkins, when I was doing his oral history.

35-00:17:37

Hinckle: Dave liked Stars.

Rubens: And people would pay homage to him— You would see them line up, coming over to say hello. There are stories similar about you, too –people coming over, buying drinks and lining them up

35-00:17:53

Hinckle: It's not unusual in English political or journalistic life. It's certainly not unusual in French literary, journalistic, publishing, political— People live public lives. They hang out together in public places, where they are more likely to run into each other or gather. It's been going on for centuries. And I never quite understood the reluctance and the Puritanism of the left and the New Left to go along with that. It's almost like, what are you afraid of? Don't you think you're a regular person? You're so afraid of your ideas you can't go out or you're so this and that? It's very odd.

Rubens: It was a different cultural scene. We talked about that earlier. We talked about seeing the difference of recreational drugs versus alcohol, that the New Left wanted to withdraw from everything that was “traditional” or “bourgeois.”

35-00:18:58

Hinckle: Yes, well, great public rooms are part of a civilization. I mean public rooms in the sense that may be for profit, may be run by somebody as a restaurant or whatever but they're gathering places where people get together and exchange stuff. There are only so many private parties you can have, there's only so many people you can invite to them, for this and that reason. But if a place becomes, or places become where politicians go to run into not just each other but to other people, and ordinary people also go and there's a civic mixture of stuff, it's not performance art at all, it's functioning daily life. And it's been that way since the English coffee houses of Samuel Johnson's time.

Rubens: Sure. And the American Revolution was really born in the coffeehouses of Boston.

35-00:19:56

Hinckle: Yes. So I've never understood the, well, Puritanism I guess is the way you'd put it, the aesthetic of the left that just couldn't handle that.

Rubens: The *New Left?*

35-00:20:05

Hinckle: The New Left, well, the old left, too. I remember taking Carl Marzani to Elaine's one time. He said, "Oh, my God." Now, one of the guys who did understand that was Emile de Antonio, one of my closest friends, who's a documentary left wing movie director. He did *Point of Order*, about Joe McCarthy and all the—

Rubens: And we talked about him some. When you were at the *Examiner*—

35-00:20:24

Hinckle: Very, very close friend of mine, over many years. And he was a regular at Elaine's. And he was also an art snob. He knew his art. He did a *great* documentary on the art world. Fabulous. Because he really knew it. And he knew all those rich people. He had a few bucks himself. But we both just had nothing but disdain, I guess you'd call it, for both the old left and the New Left. They were opportunistic revolutionaries, or such ideological revolutionaries that they never accomplish anything. And none of them ever had much staying power. A few of them did. And I guess we were alone. And I was putting out left wing magazines and he was doing these movies. We always, always hung out at Elaine's.

Rubens: Well, one of the things I noticed by reading Herb Caen is that you travel easily with some of the swells of the city. Caen notes that. There's a birthday party for Gordon Getty. Ann Getty is putting on her annual party. And when they list the lineup of who's there, Warren Hinckle is part of the line-up. Sometimes it noted Warren and Linda. You show up in Leah Garchick's who's who column, also.

35-00:22:00

Hinckle: Well, I usually go to Gordon's parties, but I'm close friends with the Newsom family over the years. And we may have talked about that, but the Newsoms—it isn't just Gordon is the rich guy who parachutes into town. He went to high school and college with Bill Newsom, to Catholic schools, and lived in the Newsom family house most of the time. Even though he had been living somewhere in the Marina, he had his own room there. They all got to know each other. Now, Bill, now retired from the bench, is basically managing the Getty billions and their charitable investments and their for-profit investments. But it happened because they were high school and grammar school friends, for Christ's sake. And people don't realize that stuff.

Rubens: So for a while, did some of those people line up to support your run for mayor as part of the whole spirit of the thing, and then at the end, switch over to—

35-00:23:00

Hinckle: No, we never really put much effort into doing that in the campaign. It was supposed to be to write about it, and it got outrageously sabotaged by the

Chronicle and Will caved in to those idiots. And then I was stuck out there. So that the only people—

Rubens: Now, Herb Caen's writing about it. That's where I picked up the—

35-00:23:19

Hinckle: He might've written some stuff.

Rubens: Oh, yes. He announces that you're running; he says you're the father of the plan to turn Alcatraz into a casino. You want to just say something about that so we can put it on the record?

35-00:23:30

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: It was a great plan. Liz Lufkin, she's a writer for the *Chronicle*, right- she has a couple of articles about the casino scheme. Later she writes a long piece on you.

35-00:23:43

Hinckle: Oh, in the KQED magazine, *Focus*.

Rubens: Nice piece, nice piece.

35-00:23:51

Hinckle: I wrote several columns for the *Examiner*—advocating San Francisco using its clout in Washington and getting Alcatraz ceded to the city, from being a federal prison, former site and whatever it is, tourist joint now, and putting a casino there and make it—

Rubens: It's a great idea.

35-00:24:16

Hinckle: Oh, income would be *fantastic* for the city. And went so far as a couple of guys I'd actually met at Elaine's over the years, who were very interested in backing it. Trump-type guys. Why not? How can you lose? The biggest tourist town outside of New Orleans, or maybe even with New Orleans, in the country, and a casino there?

There were some practical problems because there's no water on Alcatraz, but we'd work that out. You could ferry the water for a while. But if you were going to build a hotel or something, then you had to build a pipeline under the bay. But the money to be made was so huge that that became, okay, we can do that, too. That's not a problem. And started sort of a pseudo-editorial campaign that said, hey, let's put gambling on Alcatraz, solve a lot of the income problems of the city, do this, do that. Perfectly natural thing. Why should everybody come to San Francisco to spend some tourist dollars and then go dump it all in Nevada, most of their traveling money, when they can dump it here? What the hell?

And some ministers opposed it because they didn't like gambling. But basically, we did a poll and it was almost 80% of the town was in favor of the idea, theoretically. So then it became, well, how do we get this going as a real thing? So we needed four—It takes four supervisors to put something on the ballot. And a lot of things that are on the ballot are called policy positions. It doesn't commit the city to legislative action; it's like, would you be in favor of legalizing marijuana? Or something like that. Just yes or no, what's the public opinion on this? So we got four supervisors to put it on. And then there was a *furious, intense* lobbying campaign to get it off the ballot.

And that was coming from the racetrack industry. And most of the calls at that time— And it finally got knocked off. They yanked the fourth supervisor off the last day and it never did get on the ballot. That was John Burton, who was then working as a lobbyist or a friend—I have no idea of his financial connections, because most of his financial things over the years have gone to Marcia Smolens, who's a political operative and lobbyist, and Burton is her attorney. So because of attorney-client privileges, no one could ever know, or would ever, ever be able to know, if there was any money that passed between Burton doing legislative things and Smolens plotting for it, because he was her attorney, so those records are sacrosanct. Anyway, Burton got knocked off on the behalf of the racetrack industry, which shows you how scared they must've been, because this wasn't like, we shall start building, we shall dig a— It was just like people were in favor of it or not, right? They were *feverishly* opposed to getting that voted on in San Francisco.

Rubens: Did you have names of developers or money people behind it?

35-00:27:54

Hinckle: Yes. Yes.

Rubens: Do you remember any specific names?

35-00:27:58

Hinckle: I'd have to look back at the columns. But one of them, Trump was a partner in. And people who had done stuff in Atlantic City and stuff like that. They were like, wow. Alcatraz? Open sesame.

Rubens: I saw one letter to the editor that said it should be on Treasure Island. But Treasure Island hadn't been demilitarized yet. It was still owned by the Navy.

35-00:28:21

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Well, once you start something like that, everybody's got another opinion. And I was like, no, no, not Treasure Island.

Rubens: Too far away?

- 35-00:28:29
 Hinckle: It's landfill, it's unstable anyway. But Alcatraz, come on, it's a prison. Al Capone, whatever. It's just too romantic. It's just too *good*. It's a very San Francisco thing—that a century before, would've been done in a second, if the possibility came up, because the town was led by imaginative business people then.
- Rubens: Well, Herb Caen was certainly promoting it. That's where I first found it.
- 35-00:29:02
 Hinckle: Yes, Herbie liked the idea, too. Well, it was a good idea.
- Rubens: Your effort to dump the song "I left my heart in San Francisco" was not part of your mayoral campaign?
- 35-00:29:20
 Hinckle: No, I don't think that was part of it.
- Rubens: Herb Caen's often wrote about the unholy trinity —Jack Davis, you and a pollster, I think Ed Canapary.
- 35-00:29:49
 Hinckle: Could've been Ed Canapary. He was a good friend, yes. Davis and I had been blamed for a lot of things in this town. Mischief, mostly. And political things that—
- Rubens: At the time you ran for mayor, Davis was chief of staff for Quentin Kopp, and here he was running your campaign. And Quentin Kopp publicly endorsed you, till almost the very end, and then switched over to—
- 35-00:30:22
 Hinckle: Yes, it was all symbolic. My friend Larry Mazzola didn't want to endorse Agnos, for the usual reasons, because Agnos had stepped on him, as he had most of the labor industry and most everybody in town. But he endorsed the dog, my dog for mayor. In the plumber's newspaper.
- Rubens: Just to round this out a little bit—we were talking about Elaine—was Jeannette Etheredge sort of a functional equivalent?
- 35-00:30:56
 Hinckle: Yes. It's odd because it's left wing stuff, and you do left wing stuff. Well, what's wrong with doing left wing stuff? I never understood that. I don't see any harm in doing left wing things or holding so-called left wing ideas. But there's this, I don't know, posture of shame, I guess is how you'd put it, that the old left and most of the New Left had, for being what they are. And I just never quite understood why. And one of the social contradictions was that there were a lot of rich leftists who would give money but pretend they really didn't have that much, and do this and that. But it was almost a crouching

position. It's like they were embarrassed to think what they thought or do what they did.

Rubens: So you're talking about any kind of partying or hanging out at bars, or—

35-00:33:10

Hinckle: Well, that plus—

Rubens: Well, people in both the old and New Left had been called on charges for sexism.

35-00:32:16

Hinckle: Yes. And they ducked public appearances whenever they could, except for when you got to the New Left and you got the demonstrations and mass stuff like that. And then a lot of the Jerry Rubins and the celebrity-type opportunists who latched onto the New Left, got involved in that. But basically, there's this—I don't know, you can almost call it crouching shame or afraid to show their spots, which was a characteristic, a cultural characteristic—and in some ways, a political characteristic—of the old left and what was for a while the New Left, until it fell apart.

Rubens: Well, we certainly saw it in the women's movement. And we talked a little bit about the women's issue with *Ramparts*, that you couldn't joke. There was just a kind of a Puritanical and ideological posture, a lack of humor that riddled the whole thing.

35-00:33:21

Hinckle: Total lack of humor and I guess, and unwillingness to live a public life in public places, which most societies—I've never read about or anybody's ever really studied, from the Roman Forum and whatever Roman society would be summed up as then, to almost every culture—at least the European cultures; Asia has a different way of approaching things that was much more dynasty orientated and things like that. But the very democratic idea of people all getting together in one place and eating and drinking together and discussing ideas together—I've never quite understood what the hell is wrong with that.

Rubens: We also don't have a chronicler of that anymore; that's a role that Herb Caen played, and you have played. For instance, in 1990, Herb Caen writes about a food fight that took place at Mayes Oyster Bar.

35-00:34:32

Hinckle: Oh, yes. That was great.

Rubens: Caen writes: "A current crop of rogues," you, Hinckle, political consultant Jack Davis, pollster Ed Canapary and Paddy Nolan, saloonkeeper.

35-00:34:40

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Nolan was there.

- Rubens: And Wayne Shannon and the Mitchell brothers.
- 35-00:34:45 Hinckle: Yes, he was a weather guy at the time. He's a buddy of mine at one of the TV stations.
- Rubens: So this event is the First Annual San Francisco Crab Cake Festival, that's organized by Davis. We're talking about 1990. And somehow, it broke out into a food fight.
- 35-00:35:02 Hinckle: Oh yes. I can tell you exactly how that happened. Davis, for some reason—He was a buddy of Gigi Fiorucci; they were close friends. Gigi's a restaurateur, has owned four or five of the major places in town over the last three decades.
- Rubens: Including Mayes?
- 35-00:35:27 Hinckle: Oh, yes, he owned Mayes. Yes. And Davis was sitting up there sort of being the grand poobah, and Artie Mitchell was sitting next to him at the table. And there was a woman at the time, Barbara—I'm trying to think of her name now. She worked in the housing industry as a lobbyist. Anyway, she was a friend at the time, so we're sitting there watching together just lording over this great event he's holding. And I said, "Let's go trash Davis." She says, "Good idea." So we went over to where the cutlery was kept—the knives, forks, spoons, all utensils, a big, low thing that separates and hold the stuff when they've got to set tables. And we lifted the whole damned thing up and brought it over behind the table where Davis was and Artie, and dumped the entire—all the cutlery on top of Davis' head and the people around him. Came clattering down. And immediately Artie Mitchell grabbed some forks. He jumped up and said, "*Food Fight!*" [laughs] And started grabbing some clams and some oysters and throwing them on the table. And the place erupted into madness. There used to be a lot of blue rinse older type ladies who would come in there for lunch, and some of them kind of—Because it got pretty crazy. Plates were cracking and it was wild. And they sort of decided maybe they should make an exit. And they were getting hit in the head by clams on the way out. It became a riot.
- So at first, Caen celebrated it as a good old-fashioned Frisco food fight. Wow, isn't this great? Then all the purists on the left and food people and the greens and whatever started going after Caen for—How can you do this? This is wasting food, this is this, this is that sort of thing, right? And he caved. He had to back off. You look at his column the day or two after that, he's saying, oh, what a bad thing it was and going, naughty boys and that sort of thing, when he first was exalting it. Because it was exactly that; it was a good old-fashioned San Francisco prankster, seacoast, spirited food fight. That's what it was.

Rubens: Yes, it sounded great. And also the Crab Cake Festival sounded great as a new tradition. There's the opening of crab season, that's a public celebration in San Francisco.

35-00:38:06
Hinckle: Yes, well that's what it was, it was Davis' idea, but we dumped everything on him and it erupted into a crab cake food fight and most of those crab cakes were tossed. [laughs]

Rubens: So I didn't see that part, where he's criticizing you. I saw him just a couple of times, taking you on. He writes that you were caught pulling down some "Yes on P" posters. This is in '89. Isn't that about the ballpark?

35-00:38:40
Hinckle: I think that was the one where Davis was indicted.

Rubens: Yes. Oh, it was. He writes: "Warren Hinckle, the cyclopean columnist." He always had some kind of comment about your eye patch. And "Jack Davis, now ex-aide to Kopp," so this is in '89, said he thought it was a good idea.

35-00:38:57
Hinckle: That's the one where Art Agnos got Arlo Smith, who was then the DA, to indict Davis and these other guys who became known as the Ballpark Five. I think we discussed that earlier, when I was explaining how Frank Jordan became the accidental mayor.

Rubens: Right. But we didn't mention the Ballpark Five. I haven't heard that phrase.

35-00:39:18
Hinckle: Yes. Art was furious because Davis had done a mailer. Bob Lurie owned the team at the time, and he did something to turn the lights off or something like that. Anyway, there's a picture with Lurie, and you'd punch it out and his nose came in where the light switch went and you'd put it on your wall over the light switch. Some sort of a mailer like that, rather prankish and fiendish. And anyway, Art's ballpark was defeated almost single-handedly by Davis doing this. And Art was furious and wanted them indicted for some infraction of the rules about mailing or something like that. And he leaned on Arlo Smith, who was at the time, running statewide for attorney general. I think he was running; but if he wasn't running, he was planning to run. Anyway, Art, in his typical and his heavy-handed way, said, "If you don't indict these guys, I'm going to let it be known around the state that your department is overrunning its budget by—" This and that, some stuff like that. "And then it will look like you're a poor manager and then your opponent will cream you." Anyway, one would have to ask Arlo the details about that, but that is exactly what happened and these guys were all indicted. Ballpark Five. And they all had to get attorneys, expensive attorneys. It went to a whole grand jury indicting proceeding, the whole thing, and was eventually tossed out of court

and duly appealed by the DA's office here. And then tossed out by the California Supreme Court—

Rubens: Wow.

35-00:41:20

Hinckle: —and finally made law, which is that you cannot be indicted for conspiring to commit a misdemeanor. And this was a misdemeanor that they were charged with. Something about filling out the forms or some stuff. And they were charged with criminal conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor. And when it finally, two or three years later, got out of the top court of the state, it is now written law, solid law, that you cannot be indicted for conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor. Has to be a little more than a misdemeanor.

Rubens: You reminded me of something that I found in the newspapers. I just can't find it in my notes right now. But another plank that you had for your mayoral campaign was to go after the vice squad. You want to just say something about that?

35-00:42:19

Hinckle: Well, there was a period, a very rough period in the San Francisco Police Department's history, when the cops were basically out of control. There was a famous incident at Lord Jim's, which was a bar, where some rookie hazing went on, involving guys having to strip naked and whores and this and that, and it all became public in the papers. And there was a series of just overreaching raids and kicking down doors and planting evidence. There's a litany of stuff that you could say. It was out of control. And it was almost all centered in the vice squad, which I felt and often have expressed in the newspaper and other writings, is the most useless part of the police department. If they're tracking international cocaine smuggling and it leads to the Mexican mafia, that's one thing; when they're just harassing individual adult choices about whatever they smoke or whatever they're doing behind closed doors, whether it's in a club or anywhere else, and nobody's being hurt, who cares? And cops making overtime and—

Rubens: Yes, a lot of money.

35-00:43:39

Hinckle: —*huge* sums of overtimes out of that, and then running amok and partying in outrageous ways on their own with all the money they were making on the overtime, driving everybody else nuts, for what, I thought was way, way out of line. So I was quite critical of the vice squad over the years. And the Mitchell brothers, the raid on the Mitchell brothers was part of that. It took thirty guys with backup to arrest one naked woman, Marilyn Chambers. *Come on!* It's ridiculous.

Rubens: And then punishing you with —

35-00:44:18

Hinckle: Oh, yes, and then they arrested me for walking my dog without a leash.

Rubens:

Right. But that was really because of your articles.

35-00:44:22

Hinckle: Oh, sure.

Rubens:

Yes. So did that ever get traction, that campaign to pare down the vice squad? Or did anyone pick that up?

35-00:44:34

Hinckle: No, everybody's afraid of it. In different administrations, when Dick Hongisto became, for a brief and shining time—a friend of mine for a long time—became—And Davis, also helped Hongisto get elected the first time. And when he became police chief, he immediately said, “We’re defunding a lot of vice squad activities. Just don’t allow it. You don’t have to pass any laws, you don’t have to do anything. Of the 100 percent of things the police department has to do, the last 5 to 3 percent are going to be efforts in these areas.” Right? Unless there’s a serious or series of crime going on or something that merits actual attention. But he wasn’t chief for too long, until Frank Jordan crapped out, because Hongisto made a big mistake and had some guys—A gay paper, *The Bay Times*—it was sort of a lesbian-transgendered paper—had a cover which depicted him critically.

Rubens:

Him meaning—

35-00:45:50

Hinckle: Dick Hongisto, when he was the chief. Oh, I don’t know remember exactly what it was, with a baton for his dick or something like that. And so he asked some guys, “Get those goddamned papers off the street.” Well, they did. But unfortunately, they didn’t get them all the way off the street. In fact, the current head of the POA was one of the officers involved, and kept them in his basement. And I remember saying to him at the time, “You schmuck. What?” Hongisto shouldn’t have done that. That was nuts, in the first place. But—

Rubens:

Keeping them.

35-00:46:34

Hinckle: But keeping them? Why didn’t you take them and throw them in the bay or whatever? Throw them in, whatever, the garbage dump. You kept them? And then what if there was a flap and they complained and they come to your house and found them and everybody got in trouble? Why would you do that?

Rubens:

Right. So was that basically what—

35-00:46:54

Hinckle: That’s what happened.

Rubens: —led to his—

35-00:46:56

Hinckle: Yes. Yes.

Rubens: How had you met him, Hongisto, and become pals in the first place?

35-00:47:03

Hinckle: Oh, well, God, I don't know, when he first ran for office and when he was supervisor. He was also a guy who hung out at the Mitchell brothers' poolroom office. That didn't bother him, both when he was chief, when he was sheriff, and when he was a supervisor. Didn't bother him. It was a good place to hang out. You found out gossip, you talked to people. Sometimes you'd talk to criminals that you don't ordinarily meet in the course of things and casually, you find out this and that. You see this stuff happens in movies all the time, you find it out in books. Society is interwoven. And to separate yourself totally from one part of it is kind of dumb, to isolate yourself. What do they call it about the presidency, living in a bubble?

Rubens: Yes. So Hongisto, well, he was a fun guy, wasn't he?

35-00:47:59

Hinckle: Oh, he was a funny—

Rubens: He died much too early.

35-00:48:00

Hinckle: Oh, yes. No, he was a close friend. And we hung around a lot and went to a lot of places. He was always invited to my parties and came to, hung out at my magazines.

Rubens: Speaking of your parties, Herb Caen also has an item, which I guess he used to call his round up of reports—about a party that you gave for your mother, for her eightieth birthday, at the—What is it?

35-00:48:30

Hinckle: The Conservatory of Flowers.

Rubens: At the Conservatory of Flowers. Oh, God, that sounded like such a wonderful thing.

35-00:48:35

Hinckle: I had Sam Jordan, a black Butchertown bar and barbecue place, cater it. And he was a friend. He was over at my house, my family house all the time. Sam was a great friend of mine.

Rubens: Your mother's quoted as saying, "I want to dance with mariachis."

35-00:48:55

Hinckle: Yes. [laughter] Well, she *had* mariachis. We had a mariachi band there and Sam Jordan. A lot of her co-equal eighty and eighty-five-year-old and whatever-age-they-were friends did have a bit of intestinal distress the next couple of days, [laughter] eating this black barbecue.

Rubens: Oh, no. Because they had spicy, hot—

35-00:49:22

Hinckle: Well, they did have stuff that was plain; it wasn't like they just had to eat only the barbecue.

Rubens: And they loved it.

35-00:49:27

Hinckle: Everybody did. It was a great party.

Rubens: In another Herb Caen column, I read that Larry King's talk show, radio talk show, was coming to San Francisco, and you are to be part of the line-up to be interviewed. I didn't know King had begun as a radio personality. We're talking about '88.

35-00:50:08

Hinckle: Yes, I guess he had— There was something—it's only a vague memory now—but he had something here. He was having a forum or a bunch of people on. It was radio then, it wasn't CNN. I don't even remember what it was.

Rubens: It suggests to me that you're one of the voices people want to hear when they come to San Francisco. Another example is a book that came out, and I couldn't take a look at it, but I think there was a party for it. *The Big Book of Irish-American Culture*, by Bob Callahan.

35-00:50:37

Hinckle: Bob Callahan did that, yes. He's a friend of mine.

Rubens: Are you in there?

35-00:50:42

Hinckle: Probably, yes. He was a friend of mine. He did that book, edited, shaped or wrote a lot of other books; and he was a big pop culture guy, very interested in comics. And I hired him to work on the *Examiner*, to do all the pop culture-historical research for the centennial issue, which provided a lot of the real context to that issue. It was stuff that normally wouldn't be in a centennial issue, but he knew where it was and we dug it up.

Rubens: Oh, that's great. So he's a local guy?

35-00:51:15

Hinckle: Yes, he lived in Berkeley. Had a little press [Turtle Island] and published an Irish magazine. And did books like the book of Irish culture, whatever that title is.

Rubens:

I want to ask you about an item I read in a Leah Garchick column; it ran in December of '88, reporting that: "The latest issue of *The Village Voice* reports that its publisher has hired a new editor, Jonathan Larsen, and after a concentrated, wide-ranging search—" You were considered in that search. Do you remember being asked about it by the *Voice*

35-00:52:07

Hinckle: I think they talked to me about that at one point.

Rubens:

Would you ever—

35-00:52:14

Hinckle: I'm kind of radioactive to established publishing operations. If somehow accidentally, my own magazines get going, they take off and they do whatever they do; but I just don't go by the rules of the road. I think I'm kind of considered a little dangerous, a little radioactive. I don't know if I would ever fit into an established publishing order.

Rubens:

But there it is. Your name's being talked about, so that's—

35-00:52:54

Hinckle: Well, they were desperate, *The Village Voice*. [laughter]

Rubens:

Were they really?

35-00:52:57

Hinckle: That's how desperate they became.

Rubens:

Well you were getting a lot of success with *Image*.

35-00:53:06

Hinckle: That's the Sunday magazine at the *Examiner* that Roger Black, my friend the art director, and I redid and sort of salvaged. I think we talked about this. Macy's was going to take its ads away and run their own supplements. And the newspaper printing company had run it into the ground, in terms of ads, and it was floundering as an editorial supplement to the Sunday paper. And it was a mess. So Roger and I fixed it. And he did the design and I did the editorial, and we made it very lively and went out and met with all the advertising directors of the department stores and everything, and said, hey, come on, you guys. Let's see. Here's what we're doing. This is how it's going to work. And it was commercially quite successful. I think it was Roger's idea to call it *Image*. Have big photos in it or something.

Rubens: Well, and isn't the lead one a photo of you and Hunter Thompson and I guess—

35-00:54:31

Hinckle: No, it was an issue we did on Hunter Thompson. Big issue I did on Dan White and—There was a lot of serious stuff in there. But it did the job. It was commercially—Part of the job of a Sunday magazine like that is to have fashion and food and furniture and that sort of stuff in there; it's what people—That's what a Sunday newspaper magazine did.

Rubens: Sure. A little history, a little cultural and life style stories.

35-00:54:55

Hinckle: Usually, they don't have strong journalism or arresting covers, but we added that to it. It was a formula that worked. And all the advertisers came back. In ordinary publishing terms, it was quite successful.

Rubens: And did you stay with that till you left the *Examiner*?

35-00:55:17

Hinckle: I did it for about two years, and then we turned it over to somebody else. Got it going.

Rubens: Herb Caen criticizes you, or really, *Image* magazine, because of some item that you'd put in.

35-00:55:39

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: You had a gossip column in the *Image* magazine?

35-00:55:47

Hinckle: Well, I didn't sign it but I wrote it every week. Just manufactured some items of gossip, I guess, three or four short items, a couple pictures, a crossword puzzle and a cartoon, something like that, and called it "Seeing the Elephant," which was the nineteenth century San Francisco term for doing the town, going to all the downtown bars and restaurants in the afternoon and evening of a day. I called it "Seeing the Elephant." There was no television or radio at those times, and that's what people did. And it was just that, it was a gossip column. But it was short items and it looked—The first thing, when you opened the magazine, there were these three or four short items. And one of the first had to do with Herbie, who was the premier gossip columnist in town, needless to say. And it was a gossip item about him having a dispute, getting a free car or not paying for something, or something like that. Anyway, he didn't like it at all.

Rubens: He called it "a sensation concocted by Warren Hinckle."

35-00:56:51

Hinckle: Yes. Right. Yes, fair enough.

Rubens: And that's one of the only times I saw pointed criticism of you in his column

35-00:56:55

Hinckle: We were friends, but he'd do it to me and I'd do it to him, too. What the hell? An item's an item.

Begin Audio File 36

Rubens: I read that –and you talked about this- the *Chronicle* had tried for a while to basically compete with the *Independent*; that they had a short period where they were putting out neighborhood editions.

36-00:00:18

Hinckle: Yes, until the *Independent* finally— until Anschutz folded it. Because these guys would always say to me, well, we have another vision or another plan. And I couldn't conceive of how you could have another plan to publish a paper in San Francisco, which didn't involve the type of things I knew about the city and wrote about. I just didn't get these guys. And only later, it became clear that the plan was to build a network of right wing free-distribution daily newspapers. They registered the name *Examiner* in twenty-eight—I'm just guessing—a number of cities, and planned to publish them in San Diego, Los Angeles, Denver, everywhere.

Rubens: You're talking about Anschutz now.

36-00:01:15

Hinckle: Yes. This is after he bought it from the Fangs. And I knew I was out, because he was *very, very* far to the right of the Coors family. My God! And a couple of friends told me, hey, they can't just shut down your column; they're going to try and get rid of you, but you could sue them and get a big settlement.

Rubens: So you lasted through the sale.

36-00:01:50

Hinckle: Oh, I wrote for them for about another year. They waited until it was safe, protected themselves against lawsuits or whatever. But I just wasn't inclined to sue. I'd published stuff myself and I think you've got a right to hire and fire who the hell you want. I'm just not of that school to gouge people.

Rubens: So you were still writing when Anschutz takes over, and then when do you leave?

36-00:02:22

Hinckle: I was still doing columns for about a year and a half or so, until they finally thought it was safe enough so it didn't look like it was a political firing.

I could never understand their strategy. The guy who was Anschutz's general manager, or something like that said: "Well, we're going to do something different." And I'm saying, how can you do anything different in San Francisco? It's the only thing that's going to work. And indeed, they were going to do something different. They planned to publish the title *Examiner* nationally, as the second newspaper in a one-newspaper town, a free tabloid, given away, that would promote conservative national chamber of commerce values and a right wing agenda. And they only got it from the *Washington Examiner* to the Baltimore one. And they finally had to fold the Baltimore one because of wide public outrage in Baltimore, which has more sense than San Francisco. Because people didn't want it dumped on their doorsteps. Right? And people literally filed complaints against them and called the department of public works or whatever the equivalent is in Baltimore. Get this crap off the streets and off our doorsteps. And that didn't help their advertising viability.

Rubens:

There's some of that in the letters to the editor in the *Independent*, about it taking place in San Francisco, getting the fish wrap and—

36-00:04:05

Hinckle:

Yes, but they did have another plan. It was beyond my comprehension because I was thinking San Francisco; I didn't think they'd just want the title to do some vast right wing publishing network. Hey, my imagination failed me on that one. [laughter] I didn't think that's what they were up to.

Rubens:

Okay. So let's go back and talk just a little bit, I don't think we've adequately covered— It's almost eight years you're writing for the *Independent*. We talked about a deal with them, that you're also starting up, putting a lot of energy into the *Argonaut*, which we'll talk about later. But you did have a regular column called "The Hinckle File," which was usually on page one, wasn't that right?

36-00:04:44

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens:

And in fact, there's an argument that takes place once the Fangs take over the *Examiner*, where they bring in an editor and they say there's some argument over whether your column would stay on the first page or not.

36-00:05:02

Hinckle:

Oh, there were so many arguments over the *Examiner*.

Rubens:

I want to talk for a minute about your office at the *Examiner*. I picked this up in a couple of different places. You had red walls—

36-00:05:27

Hinckle:

Oh, it's still down there, yes.

- Rubens: Astroturf on the floors. Where was the office?
- 36-00:05:40 Hinckle: It was in the building they purchased with the *Examiner* money, down at Sixth and Market.
- Rubens: Well, before that, though, during the eight years before it becomes—
- 36-00:05:50 Hinckle: There was no—I didn't have an office at the *Independent*.
- Rubens: Oh, you didn't?
- 36-00:05:54 Hinckle: No, that was in the *Examiner*, when they got the *Examiner*. But they were also publishing the *Independent* out of the *Examiner*.
- Rubens: So how long did that go on, the *Independent* being put out of the office as the *Examiner*?
- 36-00:06:04 Hinckle: Well, the title was bought by Philip Anschutz, the Denver right wing billionaire, when he bought the paper from the Fangs. And they continued the *Independent* for about a year or so—
- Rubens: The Fangs did?
- 36-00:06:22 Hinckle: No, Anschutz.
- Rubens: Oh, so he bought both.
- 36-00:06:24 Hinckle: Oh, the Fangs have continued all along, because the *Examiner*, they just fell into the mud hole and what are you going to do? Might as well take the damn thing. But as I think we went through before, that was not the object of the campaign; it was to let the *Independent* be for a reasonable period of time and we'll let you go ahead and buy the *Chronicle*. That was our position. Business stuff.
- Rubens: By the way, that's not what Ken— We were just talking about Ken Garcia. He says, oh, it was always the plan of the Fangs, from the get-go, to go after the *Examiner*.
- 36-00:07:06 Hinckle: Ken Garcia's an imbecile.
- Rubens: [laughs] Okay. Okay. He wrote with you when you were at the *Chronicle*?

36-00:07:14

Hinckle:

Well, he was writing a column for the *Chronicle*, and even *they* couldn't stand his crap. They got rid of him. I had nothing to do with that. I didn't go after him. I would ridicule him once in a while for something he wrote when I was writing for the *Independent*. I'd take on his columns as an example of, wow, how-dumb-can-you-be sort of thing. But the *Chronicle*'s decision to get rid of him was totally their own.

Rubens:

And then he went to the *Examiner*?

36-00:07:46

Hinckle:

Yes, he's more comfortable there. It's a right wing sort of fascist, conservative environment, editorially. [laughs]

Rubens:

All right, let me just get this picture. So for almost eight years, you don't have an—Where are you working out of then, your home? Or do you have an office for the *Argonaut*?

36-00:08:04

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens:

Okay, we'll get to that. But when the Fangs buy the *Examiner*, they get the building it was in, so that's for when they take on—

36-00:08:10

Hinckle:

Yes, but that office, it was a nice office until my friend Ron Turner—A guy named Chicken John, who's a performance artist and the owner of a couple of little nightclubs in town in the Mission over the years he had lucked onto two Alcatraz cell doors from the original Alcatraz prison rooms. And he gave one to Turner, which Turner has in his office at Last Gasp, the publishing house—which is publishing the Hunter Thompson books, by the way—and one to me. And I installed it in one of the offices at the *Examiner*, and then had a guy named Gilbert Baker, who was the originator of the gay rainbow flag, the artist who designed the rainbow flag, who was a friend—And he came in with a crew and they painted circular rainbow flag colors on the ceiling of this office, and we carpeted it with Astroturf, with green Astroturf. The walls were painted red. But the floor was green Astroturf. And there was this wackily eccentric circular—like the sun or Saturn's rings—drawings going out on the ceiling. And the Alcatraz cell door: you could see right in; there was no door; it was the Alcatraz cell door. Had to put a padlock outside it to lock it because nobody had the key to the Alcatraz cell door. In fact, there were no keys there; I think they opened electronically or something. There was no key.

It was a nice office. And it had a refrigerator and a bar and a little conference table. Florence Fang was delighted because they never spent any money fixing up the *Examiner* office building, except for her own office, which was very well decorated. It had hanging gardens and a fountain that trickled down with birdsongs and water. It was a very nice office. And I did my own; I paid for it.

And she was delighted, of course, since I'd spent my own money to decorate it, but she thought it was very cute. Would often come down and chat. I don't know, probably that was the basis of our friendship that's kind of lasted since then. "You spend no money, make a very nice office in my rundown building." Because her office was very nice and my office was eccentric, but nice., with the Alcatraz cell door. And there were a lot of parties in there, people dropped by. But the rest of the building was— How would you make a phrase? If I knew French better, I could put it in French. But it was shit shabby.

Rubens: Not shabby chic, shit shabby. That's good.

36-00:11:31

Hinckle: Yes, yes. They never fixed up the front entrance, it was all cracks and crap. It looked like the bad part of Market Street, where it was situated. And it was a great building. The guy who bought it now is a friend of mine and Linda's, David Addington, who's a great guy. It includes the Warfield Theater, which is still a great going concern. And there was an original speakeasy there from another century and all that stuff. But the upper part of it and the entrance to the stories above—it was nine or eleven stories—was vacant. It was a mess. And you'd walk into it, it's like the hallway to a shoot-up joint. It was horrible. Shabby, little tiny narrow— Anyway, the Fangs rented out a couple of floors to some other people, some internet startup and some radio station or something. And the Warfield Theater always continued underneath. But they really didn't fix up the building, which was the first fight we had. It was like, you've got to clean up. Let's put some lights outside the building and put some flags, do whatever, light it from underneath. You can fix some of these old buildings without spending a fortune. But their sense of pride of ownership didn't go to spending a dime on cosmetics.

Rubens: But so you're saying they're maintaining the *Independent* at the same time?

36-00:13:19

Hinckle: Oh, yes.

Rubens: So they had a building there? They owned a lot of real estate.

36-00:13:23

Hinckle: Well, the *Independent* had its editorial offices out by Sam Jordan's place, in the Bayview, and that's where the printing plant was. And so there was a little building that was part of the printing plant, and there was just whatever you needed for offices; that was hardly glamorous, either. But when they ended up with the *Examiner*, they used the—and kind of combined, more or less, the staffs and put the *Independent* out of the *Examiner* building as well.

So the *Independent* was still coming out two times a week. It dropped back from the three times a week we did it when we had a civic fight. And the *Examiner* was coming out six times a week, as a daily.

Rubens: Now let's just characterize a bit, your work with the *Independent* before it acquired the *Examiner*. Did you have anything to do with editorials or the overall look of the paper? You have your column.

36-00:14:29

Hinckle: Only when we were in crusades.

Rubens: And tell me about some of the crusades. One was your eliminating the sex crimes unit of the police. I saw that in—

36-00:14:38

Hinckle: Well, no. No, that was just my column. But when we were in civic fights, then I would sort of design the front page and the headlines. Not that I'm a great art director. Some of my friends are *great* art directors, but—

Rubens: Yes, but you really love to do it and you have a flair for it.

36-00:14:57

Hinckle: —over the years, I've kind of learned. I'm a B-minus, at least a C, art director, and most people are D's, let me put it that way. [laughs]

Rubens: I think you're modest. But you enjoyed it, too, didn't you? You love picking type faces and borders—.

36-00:15:11

Hinckle: Oh, yes. I'm a type junkie, old time. And I never put out a publication, be it short-lived or long-lived, that didn't look good, above the average. And sometimes redefined the average for things. But one of the things we learned, I mean I learned, over the years is that among the many reasons publications fail or somehow disconnect or things don't work out totally right, even though they may be filled with advertising or not and this and that, is that so many editors don't have any sense of display. This goes for newspapers. Scott Newhall knew this very well, with the *Chronicle*. I knew it very well with *Ramparts* and other magazines I've done. There has to be a connect between an editorial vision and the presentation of it. And the traditional American magazine, for most the last century has been the editor's idea that he edits and writes the stuff, gets the articles, hands it over to an art director, and he sets it in type, puts in an illustration or not, and he makes a cover for it, and these are the important items. There's no synergy, there's no sparks, there's no— And my feeling always was that the presentation is 50 percent of the part. It's like the Bible, a very sensationalistic book; when you look at it, it's full of blood and gore. It's not a calm thing. It could be a tabloid newspaper, if you put it out in daily installments. And there has to be that connect.

Rubens: Sure. So you're saying when you were engaged in crusades you were also interested in the appearance of the paper.

36-00:17:12

Hinckle: So in the *Independent*, yes. Because it looked like crap most of the time.

- Rubens: We talked about you bringing in the comics, too.
- 36-00:17:19
Hinckle: Well, yes, because that was part of a crusade.
- Rubens: Oh, yes. So one of the crusades that we said we were going to talk about was going after Bronstein, calling him Mr. Sharon Stone.
- 36-00:17:29
Hinckle: Well, that was when we were trying to go after the Hearsts being able to buy the—
- Rubens: Oh, that was one of the last crusades.
- 36-00:17:38
Hinckle: —*Chronicle*. Yes. And Bronstein was a target. And unfortunately for him, he happened to be married to Sharon Stone at the time, a very high-profile actress, to say the least. And it made him, from a cartoonist's point of view, an interesting subject. So we created this comic strip called *Mr. Sharon Stone*.
- Rubens: And the story is by Warren Hinckle, so you did the content.
- 36-00:18:09
Hinckle: Yes, I wrote the narrative and found the guy who did the art. And he's another guy. Like Herb Caen didn't— If you did a gossip item on Herb Caen he didn't like at the time— I did one in the magazine in the *Examiner*. And Bronstein just had a thin skin about it. Hey, a lot of people have written pretty nasty things about me. I think they're all merited. But they don't really bother me. It's just part of the business. But Bronstein really, that bothered him.
- Rubens: Is that right? He felt his wife—
- 36-00:18:44
Hinckle: Well, the conceit that I created was that she's running the show. So he always ends up the fop, right? Sometimes running the newspaper, she laid back put her long, good-looking legs out embarrass him by ordering him around. Or puts him in a banana suit and made him hop around. It's like Laurel and Hardy, same sort of thing. Not exactly original, but—
- Rubens: So would he call you up or would he write—
- 36-00:19:15
Hinckle: Oh, he was furious.
- Rubens: —dirt in the *Examiner*.
- 36-00:19:17
Hinckle: Well, he did everything he could to get me, Jack Davis, and other guys who were his mortal enemies. But it's just part of the game.

Rubens: All right. So crusades. That was one of your last crusades. You began with their crusade against Agnos. Are there any in between that we should highlight.

36-00:19:39

Hinckle: Well, I think we tried to cover those. They were all fights for survival. I did various crusades. Not crusades but series of columns on— Like I think I wrote a three or four part series on the life of Sam Jordan, my friend out in Butchertown. And wrote a long series of columns, during a brief period when Hongisto was police chief, sort of warning him about how they were trying to set him up. And it was set up as a Q&A with Hongisto and how he might answer and stuff like that. Wrote a lot of things about my friend Paddy Nolan, but the same people I wrote about in the *Examiner* and in the *Chronicle* columns there over the year. A lot of old-fashioned, old town San Francisco stuff, nostalgia, color, history—call it what you want. And took on a lot of fights out in the Bayview, a beat up and neglected political area, where the black population had almost been subject to a migration. One of the great scandals of San Francisco history was the “cleaning up” of the South of Market district for what is now there—for the museums and the Moscone Centers and this and that—and wiping out the old timers who lived in boarding houses and the homeless in the city, and the wholesale bulldozing of the magnificent Victorians of the Fillmore District, the greater Fillmore District, which had become largely black by then. And all those people were promised that they’d get their homes back and that they would be rebuilt and everything. And that area looked like Berlin after the Second World War, for twenty years. And nobody ever got their homes back. All these people were kicked out.

Rubens: Oh. So you’re looking at it twenty years later, thirty years later.

36-00:21:39

Hinckle: Well, yes, but that’s that what they did then. And I did an inordinate—not an *inordinate* amount, but more than the average, picking ten topics, about black politics and games within the Democratic leadership and basically screwing over some black people in the Bayview, some of whom had risen somewhat in the civil service ranks. And it was very funny because— We went to a fundraiser just last week with Wade Randlett, who’s a big Democratic Party fundraiser and had played a major role in Obama’s first presidential campaign. And he’d helped out with Malia Cohen, a woman who ran for city supervisor, on this new rank choice voting thing, popped up and won. He’d worked a little bit on her campaign and he had a fundraiser for her. And I went over there and it was like old home day. It was a Pacific Heights house, just two blocks from my own friend-enemy Frank Jordan’s house, [laughs] in the upper Fillmore. They’re all expensive homes up there.

Rubens: Jordan ended up well.

36-00:23:14

Hinckle:

Oh, he did end up well, financially. Anyway, she was running to represent District 10, the Bayview-Hunters Point. She grew up out there. And there were so many people there, it was like, my God, all these people I've known for twenty years and have written stories about and got involved in their fights. So I did a lot of those stories for the *Independent*.

Rubens:

I've only read a few issues of the *Independent*. We're saying that they're not archived anywhere, to your knowledge.

36-00:24:07

Hinckle:

I don't believe so.

Rubens:

There's a story on page one—this is July of '95—you went to Clint Reilly's wedding, speaking about—

36-00:24:12

Hinckle:

Oh, yes.

Rubens:

Yes. You said everyone in town was there. Especially if you count the women he groped. [laughter] So the gloves had already been off.

36-00:24:30

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. There was no real antagonism at that point, but I usually tend to write slightly edgy stuff, even if it's all in good fun.

Rubens:

And you said my enemy Jordan. because— Did you end up on bad terms?

36-00:24:48

Hinckle:

Yes. Well, that was an extraordinary thing. I really got my feelings hurt, as kids say. I was really friends with his wife, who's Wendy Paskin.

We went through how it started from nothing. Agnos attacked him and got his Irish up, and Davis was in trouble and couldn't run any campaigns, hadn't been able to because of the indictment. And it started from nothing and we ended up defeating Art Agnos, who was considered invincible at the time. And we did it largely with the *Independent*. And Wendy was a stockbroker, a high mover, but—Anyway, actually, it's one of the few times in politics I've made a friendship. And I thought we were friends. And came the time when it became clear—I'd say, "Wendy, what are you doing? Jesus, Christ. All these society people are coming to the mayor's office. The Irish gardeners, all these guys backed Frank and he's not promoting any of them. He's not doing this and that." In politics, I'm sorry to say it has nothing to do with honesty, morality or anything, but there are spoils. To the victor belong the spoils. It is true. Now, you don't have to do it to such a corrupt extent that you give everybody who has an Anglo-French name all the jobs in government; that's absurd. But there's a certain commensurate amount of repaying that people culturally and traditionally expect when they throw themselves into a campaign to do something. Most people who get into campaigns don't want a

job out of it. Some people do. But as a class of the people who supported a candidate—In Jordan's case, it was Irish. They expect something for the Irish. That's how it is. A couple of commission appointments here, some guy gets to be this manager, this part of the parks, the gardeners' department. Stuff. Anybody who says that doesn't go on every time there's an election change is nuts. It does. And it's culturally—And I don't really see anything wrong with it, as long as it doesn't go so far, to insane lengths, when you're putting absolute, total incompetents into things they have no business of trying to manage.

Rubens: So you're telling Wendy this, not Jordan himself.

36-00:27:53

Hinckle: Well, I told Frank that, too and I told her. But anyway, we remained friends and we'd always go out to dinner, and Wendy and I would always—I thought we were personally, friends. And then I called her and Frank and said, "Hey, here's the thing. We looked at what's going on. I'm speaking for the *Independent*." The Fangs weren't quite up to making that call and I felt a friendship and a responsibility, since I sponsored him, to say, look, we're not going to back you for reelection. And here's why. And here's what you can do about it. You can keep your pledge to be a one-term mayor. You've got another year and a half to go. You can actually go ahead with the reforms we all said you were going to do—cutting the size of city government, changing the classification rules for civil service, attacking some of the pension things, which even back then, were obvious that were going to be a nightmare coming down to the future. And you could go out a hero. You'll be the greatest guy in the world. But if you keep going the way you're going—Frank and Wendy they were both on the line—we're going to have to oppose you. "With who?" I said, "I don't know. I frankly don't know. I wanted to talk to you guys first, before we went ahead and did this." I said "Why don't you do it this way? Stay with what you said you were going to do, and I'll make sure you're going to go out a conquering hero. And you're going to have a great life thereafter, first citizen mayor who actually fixed up the town," and stuff like that. And Wendy said, "No. We're not doing that. We are running—we—are running for re-election. And we will win." I said, "Wendy, geez, don't do this."

Well, anyway, but they did and we ended up backing Willie Brown and won that campaign. This is mostly Davis' campaign management that did it. But there was a strong editorial presence in it because the *Independent*, as I think we discussed, had this *enormous* influence in town because it was free to everybody's goddamned door. And it was a big, fat newspaper, full of local advertising and stuff and da-da-da-da-da. And I always had a strong column in it. It wasn't brilliant-looking and this and that, but it worked. It did stuff. And anyway, after the election—I must say, I was kind of shocked—she was mad at me. And cold shoulder sort of stuff. And I just said, "Hey, politics is politics. Sometimes it's hard."

Rubens: And what happened to him?

36-00:31:03

Hinckle: Richard Goldman put him under his arm, made him director of his foundation. Frank had made Goldman his chief of protocol when he was mayor. Goldman had stepped up when Frank was looking for investors to buy the Giants. Frank was globe-trotting around the world and giving away money and— Hey, he did fine. He did fine. Richard Goldman just died recently.

And his kids had the same concern. I was friends with a couple of Frank's kids. One owned a bar out on Union Street; another one was this good guy. And we'd sort of share the same misgivings. Geez, I wish Dad would just stay for one term. I know what you're saying. And they would blame Wendy and I'd try and defend her a little bit, although I shared their thoughts.

Rubens: You guys backed Willie Brown, but you wouldn't have had any clout in being able to stop him from running. Willie was going to run, right?

36-00:32:02

Hinckle: No, we talked Willie into running.

Rubens: Oh, tell that story now. I didn't know that.

36-00:32:07

Hinckle: This was a Tosca backroom meeting. Well, a couple years ago, Jeannette Etheredge took out the pool table. But this is another meetings-in-public-places sort of story, like Elaine's. There were a lot of things that got done there. So Willie was termed-out, so he had to do *something*. But it wasn't automatic that he could win a race for mayor. And we tried a couple of other people—Mike Hennessey, the sheriff who may or may not become the interim mayor. He's one of the strong guys in the running now to do that for the last year of Gavin's term, but I don't know what's going to happen about that. And others. And it came down to Willie's going to have to do this. And Willie had many, many lucrative offers to go into, let's just say, more private practice. The Assembly does not have the ridiculous rules that San Francisco City government has. They were ridiculous. The conflict of interest rules, the this, the that. When the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco was sort of a distinguished, civic, sensible institution, which allowed for all the frivolous or culturally wild parts of San Francisco to endure, they were mostly relatively conservative businessmen and some longstanding black and Chinese politicians who'd gone through the ranks. But all had careers. They had a day job. And the original idea of the charter was that the supervisors would oversee the city because of their combined experience in whatever their jobs might be. The Seaman's Union, a builder, a bank owner, whatever. That they would get together and say is good stuff or not for the city. But run it and dick with it on a day-to-day basis.

And then there was a change; the charter was put up in, I think it was the early nineties.

Rubens: Oh, yes. Barbara Kaufman was the spearhead.

36-00:34:43

Hinckle: I can tell you exactly when. Yes, that's when Barbara redid things, in 1994 and '95. That was a disaster. And even then, it was tentatively moving it from a part-time position to more. And since then, the salaries of the supervisors have accelerated by something like 400 percent—maybe it's only 370 percent—over fifteen years. Far more than anything's ever accelerated. And there was an article in a recent *Argonaut* about this and a chart that showed that. And it, in my opinion anyway, has sort of led to a training program for people learning how to do government who are theoretical leftists and don't know anything practical, and are making \$100,000, give or take, 10,000 bucks a year, off doing it, and have staff and are feeling pretty good about that. And that was not the original intent. And I don't know if that's the best thing for the City, but that is the spirit of debate and I'm happy to have that any time with anybody, and maybe I'm not right.

Rubens: So there you are, talking to Willie Brown in the backroom of Tosca.

36-00:36:04

Hinckle: Yes. And it was Davis— Who the hell else was there? Jeannette was there, Davis, Steven Kay, Ed Canapary, I think —Kay is an attorney. He's my attorney, a guy in town who operates under the radar as much as he can. He doesn't do anything wrong, he's just not a publicity seeker.

Rubens: So you're literally talking Willie into doing it?

36-00:36:38

Hinckle: Hammering him, saying, "You've got to do it, mother fucker."

Rubens: You don't have anybody else?

36-00:36:44

Hinckle: It's not that we didn't have anybody else. He *certainly* knows how to win elections. Had already run the state for so long, knew how to manage things and things like that. But after all those years in public life, to take on a huge, campaign which you might not win— And then if you *did* win, because of the city laws, not being able to make any money, right? But in the assembly, he could make money. You could be a lawyer, as John Burton and others well know; and you can be an insurance broker, you can be whatever. You can have a thing. San Francisco restricts that. I think that's absurd. Right? If there's any conflict of interest, you just declare it and don't vote on it. It shouldn't disqualify. At any rate—

Rubens: Was Burton there?

36-00:37:35

Hinckle:

No, John was not there. I'll get the full cast of characters for you. But it was like there'd been many conversations before, but it was like a climactic night. And the same thing, some years later, happened with Gavin Newsom. Oddly enough, not on purpose, but it was in the Tosca back room. [laughs] Right? It was like, okay, let's crunch this thing. You going to do it or not? And the pluses and the minuses were laid out and weighed and it was like, come on, let's— Because everybody there wanted him to do it.

Rubens:

So was it a hard sell?

36-00:38:17

Hinckle:

No, it was, I think, sixty-forty going in; he was inclined to, but he still had some reservations about it. And he said, all right, god damn it, we'll do it," and that was— And we did it.

Rubens:

That's a great story.

36-00:38:32

Hinckle:

And it's not political power broking, it's just stuff. What are you going to do? You've got a newspaper, you influence public opinion, you think certain things are good, certain things are bad. You want somebody as mayor who's going to— And if they screw up, they screw up, so you're disagreeing with them during the course of their reign, but that's okay. But you just don't want somebody you know is going to do the opposite.

Rubens:

So it was a good relationship with Willie for his two terms, right, with the *Independent*?

36-00:39:03

Hinckle:

Oh yes. Very tight. And Willie, of course, expanded government and did a lot of things, but so has every mayor since Feinstein, who expanded middle management so explosively. That's the biggest hunk of the cost of city government, the innumerable amounts of middle managers with MA's and this and that overseeing people who oversee over people who oversee. I don't know. I don't know where you get down to the ones who are actually going to type something or dig the hole. Right? [laughter]

Rubens:

All right. So should we close out with the dogfights between you and Brugman, the editor of the *Bay Guardian*.

36-00:39:48

Hinckle:

Oh, between me and Bruce, those went on forever.

Rubens:

When did that start up, though?

36-00:39:53

Hinckle:

Started back in the sixties when I was doing *Ramparts*. And we put out, for a while, a thing called the Sunday *Ramparts*, we talked about that. And I

remember—I may have mentioned this—but we had racks and then we got a new investor in *Ramparts* who said to me, “You can’t do two things. I’m putting all this money in, I want you to concentrate your energies just on the magazine.” I said, “Hey, come on. This is like playing golf for some guys, to me. We’ve just got overflow and we stick it there. It doesn’t lose any money What do you care?” And, “No, no. I want you to seriously concentrate—” That sort of thing. Okay. So then we had a funeral and burial with a coffin and printed eight pages, blank, with a big border around it and that stuff. And my friend Fred Hobbs, the artist said, “This is a work of conceptual art.” [laughs] We literally did have a coffin parade into a bar, and an eight-page blank issue with big black borders and little obit thing in the middle.

And so Bruce calls me. And he was putting out the *Guardian* then. And we didn’t get along well at all because he first got some money— Hey, he bravely started an independent weekly; hey, I ain’t knocking him for that. Let a thousand flowers bloom. I’d like to have fifty weeklies in any city. But he successfully sued the newspapers over, oh, some sort of advertising lock for employment advertising. One of those type of antitrust lawsuits. And he got some money. And everybody was working for nothing at the *Guardian*, including some friends of mine. So they came to, when they got the settlement—it wasn’t much, but it was maybe six or \$700,000. I can find it for you; you can amend this transcript—or a million-eight or— So it wasn’t a huge sum, but this was in the 1960s, so it was a hunk of money. That money meant a lot more then. And they said, “Okay, we’ve been working for \$40 a week. How about \$75 a week? We got all this money.” Or whatever they asked. And his answer was, go screw yourselves. We’re going to buy real estate. And they said, “Well, we’re going to strike.” And he locked them out and they put out a paper called the *Strike Guardian*. So I thought for somebody who champions the rights of whatever, this was a somewhat hypocritical stance to take. And since that period, we’ve never got along too well. We’ve certainly not for the municipal ownership of public power. I don’t care who owns— I’m not a stockholder of PG&E. It’s regulated by state, to the effect anything’s regulated. But I just always thought any expansion of San Francisco city government, when we can’t even run the buses on time, is almost doomed.

Rubens: That was his big campaign, wasn’t it to—

36-00:43:22

Hinckle:

He’s had an obsession with PG&E. So we’ve been on opposite sides of that one all along.

Rubens:

Okay. So it goes back a long time. And then did it get fiercer during the period of the *Independent*?

36-00:43:33

Hinckle:

Well, yes. It was an ideological—it is an ideological dispute. I backed the Irish builders, who started building these lofts south of Market. They call them live-work lofts. Because there was a wrinkle in the planning code. And the vacuum was enormous. And the background of that has nothing to do with housing for people, whether they're ducking the law or making a profit building them, or whether they're ugly or not. It had to do with the nonprofit organizations, which were tied to politics, sort of filling the void in San Francisco. And the planning department during Feinstein's years—this is about 1984, I'm guessing—did this big report on the future of the city, and projected that—Or maybe it was '78. I can get you that; I've got it sitting in my office somewhere. Their projection was that the population of San Francisco would decline from 700- or 680,000, whatever it was then. That it would further decline. So that was the basis for a planning policy which said, there will be no building in the neighborhoods, of any type of housing, and restricting amendments to your house or anything like that.

Well, the opposite happened historically. The population didn't decline, it grew. But planning had already locked down, based on this study, the ability to build new housing. Then the vacuum—I guess you'd call it a vacuum—All of a sudden you're 30,000 units behind; now you're 45,000. Just the growth of population. There's a housing crisis in San Francisco. At the same time, they put on these controls on middleclass houses, so if you got married and got a place in the Richmond, and you had one kid; and now seven years later or whatever, you've got three kids, you couldn't add an extra room to your house. It took you three years and lawyers and every other goddamn thing. But you need it. You want to keep your family there. You need the room. You couldn't build in your own goddamn back yard. It was insane. But the overall ethic and the proposal of the planning department and the city's was, we're a family-friendly city. Well, this was the *opposite* of family-friendly, sending people on and on, moving into the suburbs. And the vacuum was taken up by nonprofit housing organizations, which said, okay, we'll build the housing - and who were supported largely by bond issues, and who never basically, when you measure it across a couple of decades, built *any* sort of housing. What they'd finance was their organizations, to salvage the people, and they were all political tribesmen for various politicians in their campaigns. So I thought that was scandalous. And I thought the idea that there's no housing in San Francisco, based on an erroneous projection and now tied up into politics, and public money being funded into what were basically political do-nothing organizations, was beyond the pale. And the *Guardian* and I were on opposite sides. Opposite sides.

Rubens:

Were you talking about entities like Mission Housing Coalition—

36-00:47:30

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens: —or Bridge or—

36-00:47:32

Hinckle: Yes. Well, Bridge is a little different. I'd say Bridge is the exception to this. But not wholly apart from it. But Bridge, you'd have to discuss a lot more. But there were all these organizations that were supposed to build housing, and they get all this bond money and then they don't build. And when they build them, they cost more per unit to build and they have weak foundations or something. They basically didn't do anything. So the private builders—actually, most of them Irish friends of mine—would be just straining at the leash. And they saw a crack in this thing, some interpretation of law that they could go in there. Again, it's called "no growth." But you needed growth because people couldn't live in the town. They couldn't find an affordable place. Even a town like San Diego, which has had a lot of growth, they have, if you—People who study housing will tell you there's a ladder thing. The older people would make a little bit more money, then they would move on to another type of housing or buy something or whatever, right? And then it allows the people with less money to come in, a rehab or a fix-me-up, and they kind of improve that property and live in it, and they move up. It's not a phenomenon, it's not a political process; it's just the way things often work. But that was denied in San Francisco and there was this lock on everything. And so I got in enormous fights with the *Guardian* and other people over this, because I didn't think it was progressive; I thought it was anti-progressive. I thought it was denying people places to live, cutting out jobs, strangling the city, and all that was surviving were the very rich; and poor people who were screwed, by these political nonprofit operations. That's the way I see it to this day.

Rubens: So we read about this in the *Independent* or—

36-00:49:39

Hinckle: Oh, yes, I was always attacking.

Rubens: Starting in the *Examiner* and then—

36-00:49:43

Hinckle: In the *Examiner*, I attacked them, yes. Right. And I didn't even meet those Irish builders. I think I was working for the *Examiner* at the time. I didn't even know who Joe Donahue, who's become a close friend of mine over the years, was. And I went out to see—Oh, they've got all these tractors. They were going to have a protest at city hall. And they're lined up at Ocean Beach; it's going to be quite a show. I said, "Yeah?" So I hopped in a cab and went out there. I'll be a son-of-a-bitch, up and down the Great Highway, there must've been eighteen blocks of trucks and big tractor trailers and stuff like that and this crazy guy up there, "Blah, blah blah" And they took them down there and they went around city hall for two hours—traffic couldn't move—protesting "no housing being built in the city; they won't let us build it." One of the things they always did was to do a study. A moratorium, or a study,

right? But meanwhile, people can't live, right? They can't get jobs because it—

Rubens: Who was the force behind that?

36-00:50:45

Hinckle: It was the nonprofit coalitions and their political sponsors, who used them as part of their operation for political machinery. And that's how it's worked. So I wrote a *lot* about that in the *Independent* and in the *Examiner*. So it's just a different point of view. I'm sure people can make the representation that all this is fine, it's the way it should've been; but I don't think so. Anyway, the people who call themselves progressives, by and large, I don't think are progressives. From a traditional left perspective and many other ways. I don't think they deserve that term.

Rubens: Okay. So is that enough on Brugman, you think?

36-00:51:28

Hinckle: Yes. He's a nice guy and we sit next to each other at dinners and that stuff. We're not *personally* antagonistic. But I wouldn't sell him— Where it really started was he called me when we had to shut down the Sunday *Ramparts* thing we were putting out, which was a beautiful little paper, by the way. And he said, "Hey, I hear you're shutting it down," Ha, ha, ha, I could hear him saying. "Yeah, I can give you a good price on your racks, because you won't be using them anymore." And I remember saying, "Bruce, I'm throwing those racks in the bay. They're going to be good for the fish. They can go down there and nest and stuff. I wouldn't sell them to you if you paid me a million dollars."

Rubens: So maybe in our next interview we'll pick up, then, with the Fangs putting out the *Examiner*.

36-00:52:19

Hinckle: Yes, and then I'll do my homework because there's a lot of details in that which are like—it's almost the detail you get into when you're discussing environmental law or some of these big fights about this bill meant that and this money was spent for this. I'd rather have it more accurate than a vague memory.

Rubens: Okay. So I'm going to stop today. Thank you. I know there's always more to say.

Interview 18: January 9, 2011

Wherein our narrator continues his tales about and provides insider accounts of the rise and fall of the Fang-owned *San Francisco Examiner*

Begin Audio File 37

Rubens: How did Rose Pak and Florence Fang get along?

37-00:00:05

Hinckle: Not too well. I remember there was something going on—it was an event in the Chinese community; it had to do with a mayoral election or sort of community thing. They were both on stage, and as I recall it, Florence was the most dignified Chinese princess, queen or regal kind of person. But there was some shoving incident. They were always fighting for who got the better position for a picture. They hated each other. Absolutely hated each other.

Rubens: What's Rose Pak's base?

37-00:00:37

Hinckle: Poverty groups, Chinese, nonprofits, tenement Chinese, Democratic political machine. Florence was basically an aristocrat and Republican; but certainly, in her mind, she came from noble stock in China and remained so in this country, and Rose Pak was a ruffian and hooligan, out for herself, striving—Oh, there was no love lost between those two Chinese power brokers. None whatsoever.

Rubens: Say something more about Florence, do you want to characterize her? You tell a nice story about her comments on how you furnished your office at the *Examiner*_building but we didn't talk about her, what it was like to work for her.

37-00:01:28

Hinckle: Well, I never had any problems with Florence—but other people did—except that she let her son Teddy run and sort of wreck the *Examiner*, when he got started. But she was very clear in her priorities, and her priorities were family first and money second; but it was a close second. She had tragedy in her life. I actually liked Florence a lot. But she did some, from a journalistic standpoint, terrible things with the *Examiner*. We just talked about some of the differences between Florence and Rose Pak. And they just despised each other. Rose Pak was a machine Democrat, and Florence was a Republican who helped create a Chinese media presence in the English-speaking part of the city, and a political powerhouse with the *Independent*. And they had a restaurant called the Grand Palace, her and John Fang, and that became a central place, almost the way the dreadful Delancey Street is today, for political parties. They certainly had Republicans, and they were Republicans; but they were quite wise, and certainly wise enough to embrace Democrats of all stripes, particularly ones that agreed with them or they could back. So there

were *innumerable*, innumerable political gatherings and fundraisers, where they helped out so it didn't cost the person giving it much money. At the Grand Palace, which was part of their power base in Chinatown and in San Francisco politics in general.

Rubens: Where was it, literally?

37-00:03:40

Hinckle: Grand Palace was on Grant Avenue, closer to Broadway than it was—

Rubens: In Chinatown, okay.

37-00:03:46

Hinckle: Yes, it was in Chinatown. Very large. I think it was somewhere around Jackson or Washington, but I'd have to check. So between that and the *Independent*, after the *Independent* became a citywide newspaper and a political powerhouse in its own right and we went to battle against Art Agnos who was after the Fangs for political reasons and was going to hurt them financially, because he was a very manipulative guy—John Fang was a wonderful, wonderful man. I have no ambivalent feelings about John Fang. He had started the first English-orientated Chinese paper. I think we discussed that. It was a very smart idea. You're never going to get ahead in the United States if you don't speak English, was his idea, so you might as well print the damn thing in English and put all the news about Asia in English. That was his thought for *AsianWeek*, a very smart idea at the time. And they went to war, obviously, against Art Agnos. I think we talked about that war. I was intimately involved in it. Rose Pak was Art Agnos' person in the Chinese community. So it was Rose versus Florence.

Rubens: Because by then, John had died?

37-00:05:07

Hinckle: No. No. John died much later. This was when Willie Brown knocked Art Agnos out and there was the war, and that began and then sustained a—rivalry would be too sedate a word to put on it. I'd say it would be more like hatred between those two Chinese women, and there was an incident. I'd have to correct myself of who did the pushing, but they, among other things, would jostle and move around on any stage they might both be on. Not to their happiness; they didn't like the idea of sharing any stage. But as there'd be community events or the Chinese aristocracy would be—for some political gathering, anyway, they'd be up for a picture. So it was always who was going to get in the forefront or not. There was one famous occasion—it was famous to me, it was so amusing—when I believe it was Florence, when Rose Pak was shoving and pushing to get ahead so she'd be more prominent in a photo taken—I think it was somewhere at city hall, for some ceremony—and Florence somehow maneuvered it so Rose Pak was either knocked off the stage or at the moment the picture was taken, completely obliterated. Gave her a good ass bump. Which is highly out of character for Florence, because she

was very regal in her bearings, in her speech and her behavior. I'll have to ask somebody that was there at the time, which one knocked the other off the stage and out of the picture, but I'm almost certain in memory that it was Florence. Out of character for her to give shorter, in the sense of much smaller and squarer— Rose Pak looks like one of those clay soldiers in China. She's sort of built like that. And got her, so to speak, out of the picture. But there's no love lost between those two.

Rubens: So Florence let her son— there was no question but that her son was going to be calling the shots at the *Independent*?

37-00:07:42

Hinckle: Yes, well, she's very big for family, and John was the same way. And Teddy had worked hard on the *Independent* and the *Independent* was doing, by then, quite well. It was all over town twice a week and was making money, and had become a political powerhouse. Teddy was like the editor and publisher overall of that. I never took an editorial position with the *Independent*, I just argued through the politics with them and wrote the main column on the front page. But myself and Jack Davis were always in intimate conversations with the Fang family about politics and what moves to make and who to support and not.

Rubens: You told that great story of calling up Frank Jordan and—

37-00:08:44

Hinckle: Oh, yes, and telling him, "Hey, Frank, here's how we can do it right," sort of thing. But he didn't want to do it that way. At any rate, out of all this politicizing, if you want, or political strategy with a journalistic environment— [Linda Corso enters the room.] Hey, Linda, remember when there was the scene when Florence and Rose Pak were on the stage at the same time? Who pushed who off? Was it Florence gave her the nudge to get out of the picture?

Corso: No, Rose gave Florence the nudge, I think. I'm pretty sure it was Rose.

37-00:09:29

Hinckle: Now, did somebody get knocked off the stage, or just shoved out of the photo?

Corso: Shoved out of the picture. Rose shoved Florence out of the picture.

37-00:09:37

Hinckle: You think so?

Corso: Yes. Because it was all around the trip to China.

37-00:09:41

Hinckle:

Yes, yes. It was a civic delegation, civic whatever. And that was one of Rose's big deals, to lead the group to Shanghai, et cetera, and Florence wanted more than a piece of that, let's put it that way.

At any rate, out of all this political involvement in local politics with—And the Fangs, even though they were Republicans, were wise enough, in a totally Democratic city, never to support Republican candidates, except where it made sense, where the Republican had some history of local respect and was either winning or had a good chance for winning. But they would not stubbornly support a Republican for something they knew he wasn't going to win for, in a Democratic town. They were wise that way. All this stuff, because of unintended consequences, which we discussed, the Fangs became the proprietors of the *Examiner*, with something like \$66 million. All of which was brought about by Davis and with Willie Brown.

Davis was very close to Willie; he ran both his campaigns for mayor. And Willie was close to the Fangs and the Fangs supported Willie. And Willie, who Davis—Davis wrote the letters for Willie, leaned on the Clinton justice department and this odd deal came about. Which was never the intent, but that's how it ended up. So the Fangs got the paper. And then the question was, what were they going to do with it? At the beginning, everybody was elated. It was, let's let it be said, a long shot, because the daily newspaper business is brutal and if nothing else, capital consuming. If you've got an established product with a long time running, as is clear from the last thirty to forty years, most cities aren't large enough to sustain two papers. Very few exceptions. So it was a tough situation to begin with, in terms of starting out without presses, without anything but the editorial files of the *Examiner* and some trucks, and the title.

Rubens:

And the building?

37-00:12:45

Hinckle:

No. There was no building. That was the rub. That was the rub. So decisions were soon made. By the way, let me say that the topic of publishing and gaining financial gain from the efforts of your publishing—I mean, gaining personal financial gain, et cetera—sounds scandalous, I guess, to some people, who don't know very well the history of American journalism. But the history of American journalism is basically publishers gaining political and personal financial power from their publications and having a strong hand, a very strong hand, in configuring the way governments run, both local, state and—

Rubens:

Even national.

37-00:13:55

Hinckle:

—at a national level. Hearst is a prime example of that. The Hearst Company's greatest wealth came, at the end of the day—the Hearst Corporation—not from its newspapers, which are now a very small division

and a weak one, of the Hearst Corporation, but from its land holdings. And a lot of the land holdings were achieved through the political maneuverings—any standard biography of Hearst will detail this history—with his influence with the government, much as the railroads got their land grants and then all the property that went with them. This went all the way to Mexico, where they had extensive property ownings, and into Canada and in the United States. The beginnings of the real wealth of the Hearst Corporation. Newspapers provided cash flow. And Hearst even got into movies, early radio, et cetera. But the money was in land and in mining interests tied to the lands. And a lot of the access to those things came from the political influence he had through his newspapers. And he's not the singular example of this, if you go through history, of other publishing families. So I don't view what happened with the *Examiner* and the *Independent* and San Francisco politics in any way distinct from what always happens with publishing families. That's what gets done.

Rubens:

Well, so did they continue to make money? They get the \$66 million, which theoretically then was used to buy a building and to pay salaries?

37-00:15:47

Hinckle:

Well, first of all, then it became, well, what to do with the paper. So Florence wanted Teddy to be the publisher, and I thought that was a good idea. This was an historic thing. It was a major city daily. And at the time, the *Examiner* was the afternoon paper, but had all the ads of the *Chronicle*, because of the joint operating agreement. We discussed that one before. It was a big, fat daily. And it was the first Asian-owned major daily in the United States. First Asian-owned daily, American-Asian-owned daily. There are several Chinese daily newspapers; most of them are not national, most of them are published out of Hong Kong or some out of mainland China. They're national papers, to the extent that they publish editions in the major cities that have a large Chinese population. But there had never, ever, in the history of journalism, been a regular urban daily owned by an Asian family that was publishing it. So this was quite a story.

And so even though the odds were daunting, everyone had high hopes that, wow, this could really be a story. So people drafted—Well, at least Teddy went about trying to say, okay, now we've got to hire some people who know the publishing—the putting out daily newspapers game; the circulation, the business, that sort of stuff. I said, yeah, I guess that makes sense. And I said, "Okay, I'll map out an editorial plan so there's a reason for this paper to exist and how we can connect to some advertising." Because once you're stripped of the basically free copy ads of the *Chronicle*, this thing is going to be thin as a cheap toilet paper roll. It's going to be really thin. So we're going to have to scramble to get advertising. And you don't want to jack up the *Independent*'s advertising base, the cost of their ads, because that was working. To raise that and throw them into the *Examiner*, get more money out of them, would disturb that model irrevocably because these were mostly small advertisers

who preferred to be in only one section of the city. That's why the *Independent* became successful, the sort of zone concept.

Rubens: So the thinking was you could keep both these—

37-00:18:34

Hinckle: But citywide or for the rest of the Bay Area, where the daily paper went, they couldn't care about that, that advertising base. That didn't do them any good. So you had to get national advertising and you had to gain the respect of the major local advertisers—the department stores, et cetera—to have them continue advertising in the *Examiner*. So you had to come out of the starting gate pretty smart and looking very respectable, to even have a shot at continuing with \$66 million. So one of the first issues, aside from editorial and what the point of view would be, was where to put an office. And it was my strong viewpoint—and it was Jack Davis's, also—don't put the money into a building; this thing may only last three or four or five years anyway, if we don't make it. We're going to need every cent we can to publish the damn thing. Let's cut a deal with the city, take some property on Treasure Island—didn't matter much—and rent the space, and put every dime we can into the editorial product and marketing it so it has a chance to achieve an advertising base. Because even before the newspapers came to their current troubles, more than—an average paper—80 percent of its income base was advertising. So basically, the *Examiner*, when the Fangs acquired it and it split from its relationship with the *Chronicle*, was denuded of 98 percent of the advertising that made it a big eighty-page paper on Wednesdays, and even a sixty-four-page paper most of the time. Pick up the paper; it was hefty. So with no advertising, it's like you're going to print empty pages. So it was a real quandary. What do you do? So I suggested a program. Wrote a memo saying, okay, here's what we do. We anchor this paper positing San Francisco as the queen city of the Pacific Rim. Took this idea from a Diego Rivera mural that was in the—I'm almost certain it was the World's Fair of '39.

Rubens: Yes. Painted it at the fair the second year of the fair, in 1940.

37-00:21:35

Hinckle: Yes. It showed the Pacific Basin as essentially one big lake. Here was, from Alaska down through California, through Mexico, through the entire coast of South America, was one side of the lake or the bathtub; and then on the other side, you had all of the Pacific, from Australia and New Zealand, up through Japan and the other islands, et cetera, into China, Thailand and everything, right? When you looked at San Francisco as a homogenizing city, it was then well on its way to having a third of its population—which is more than a third now—of Asian descent, in all of the varieties. When you looked at what was happening in food and fashion, and to some extent, in aspects of architecture, there was an enormous Asian influence. Certainly, in food.

Rubens: Certainly, American investments and trade was expanding fantastically.

37-00:22:55

Hinckle:

Yes. And then there was San Francisco as the port city, even though its port had declined. But the main corporations, the historic ones that made San Francisco, had made their money off of trade, from Ralston's time—William Ralston who started the Bank of California; he was an early trader; one of the first envoys to China. All this was back in the 1870s and 1880s. They knew what they were doing. Both for the dreadful Spanish-American War, so denounced by Mark Twain—And there was of course, an enormous shipbuilding industry in San Francisco, basically, that had built large parts of the American Navy, up through after World War I and into the Second World War. But it was particularly important in the nineteenth century because it provided all kinds of vessels for trade, more than for war.

So my thought was, hey, we take this concept of San Francisco as the queen city of the Pacific Rim and we focus our editorial coverage, to make it unique, because nobody else had this viewpoint—not a Los Angeles newspaper, not a San Francisco newspaper, not a Seattle newspaper; nobody else on the coast—and that gives us a lot to write about. The business section should be the most prominent section. Because we'll have the potential, by paying attention to trade, to listings, to foreign exchange rates, et cetera—I had a whole model that we put in—and to political and economic developments in South America and in Asia, all of which were, to a large extent, ill covered or less covered anywhere else. Certainly, they would not have focused on business in the other daily newspapers on the Pacific coast. And that focus, putting some money, editorial capital, resources into that, would give the paper a potential advertising base that was original, in the extent that nobody else could go out and go to corporations in Asia, in Japan, and other multinational corporations, both here and abroad, and say: this is, hey, a place you should be advertising because this is what the people who are doing business with you read, and we're providing the coverage that nobody can get. You've got to sift through the *Wall Street Journal*, buy the Asian edition. You have to do this and that. We're covering that market.

Then the other area where it had a shot was entertainment. I wanted to get Francis Coppola involved, as sort of the—not the movie editor, as such, but the overall artistic impresario to set the tone and use all his connections, we hoped, including with the wine industry. But it's going to have his stamp and—Because Francis likes to direct things, I knew from working with him. Given a free hand—because he had published his own publication, which I edited, *City* magazine—he had all these ideas about young movie writers and young reviewers and critics and art and the culture of the Bay Area, and he still is full of those ideas that he tried to make happen with *City* magazine. So if you gave him the overview of that coverage and then spent your time with mostly young, smart writers and reviewers, put a lot of emphasis on youth and club culture and that sort of thing, and with Coppola involved, there would be an opportunity not only for club, movie and that sort of advertising, looking at the business side of it, but you'd have a real shot at—Because you'd have

some serious articles about movies and pull some of Francis' old favorite movie reviewers, of the classic variety, out of their stables, let them write big essays on Sunday and that sort of thing. So they'd be reading it down in Los Angeles and other movie people would be reading it. It wouldn't be that hard, because it wasn't being done. That would give you an opportunity to see movie advertising from the big studios, which were never adverse to take out large ads when a new movie was coming and liked to brag on the Academy Awards. You look at the *New York Times*; for a month or so before the Academy Awards, it is *full* of twelve pages of full-page ads bragging on movies, to help influence the thing. So that was another area, I thought, where if you're— Not only would it be interesting, but you could have a possibility of being this little kid on the block, say, we're doing this and nobody else is.

Rubens: Did you talk to Francis about it?

37-00:28:25

Hinckle: Yes. He was interested. He said, "Well, tell me what you're thinking about." And he said, "I see what you're thinking." I said, "Well, let me get you together with Florence and all these people and this and that." And there were numerous other ideas, but they basically made sense for if you had a paper with a limited amount of money and it was publishing daily, how to distinguish itself from the dominant *Chronicle*. So the money you did put into editorial would have a chance of gaining something back in advertising. Realistically, a new paper, taken over by an Asian family with a history of political combativeness in town, was not going to come out with its first issue and thereafter full of full-page Macy's ads. They were going to wait and see. Same thing with national advertising. A lot of the buys from national advertising were made by agencies based in San Francisco, West Coast. But all of national advertising is a national sell. Every newspaper's got people in New York, et cetera, just working agencies for their big product campaigns, everything from deodorants to cars to— The typical ads that are in newspapers. So one of the things I'm saying is we should really cover the hell out of the advertising community on the West Coast, because nobody covers that. That would be easy, too, because it's not being covered. *Really* cover it, so it'll be read by everybody in advertising, so that'll be a good start. But basically, the whole thing had to have a purpose, be coherent as a whole, and be not only respectable, but innovative, in a sense. And after a while— Because the national ad agencies would take a wait-and-see approach. The department stores, et cetera, the big local advertisers, would take a wait-and-see approach. What are they going to be? What is this thing going to be? We don't know. So they're not going to immediately rush in to embrace you.

So you had a rough period, so you had to do it right; it was only one shot. Well, without going further into the details of that sort of suggestion, the Fangs did exactly the opposite. Teddy Fang wasn't interested in meeting with Coppola. Ah, that's old-fashioned stuff. Florence let him have his head. After all, he's my son. She concentrated on the money side of it and put all her

energies and a large part of the *Examiner*'s—a small amount, compared to the task ahead—capital into buying a building, which proved to be the ruin of the paper. Highly overpriced building.

Rubens: Where was it?

37-00:31:33

Hinckle: Sixth and Market. The worst area of town. Top of slum row. Skid row. And she paid a ridiculously ridiculous price for it. I think it was \$12 million or \$14 million. And then, obscenely, in my mind—I remember screaming at her, “Florence, you can’t do this!”—prepaid for years ahead, the loan payments. Crazy. So immediately, about maybe a fourth to a third or more of the small amount of capital was gone into a real estate project. Right? I just about broke a gasket when I found out that they had prepaid the mortgage payments out of active capital you needed to publish—

Rubens: So this sounds atypical. They had had pretty good financial sense, hadn’t they, up till this time?

37-00:32:39

Hinckle: Well, from one standpoint, it makes good financial sense, if you think that this thing ain’t going to last anyway; we might as well take all we can get out of it, right? But that was hardly what you idealistically or romantically or journalistically would expect of the first Asian family to own a major daily. You’d think they’d really want to make a go of it, right? And there is such a thing as Asian capital, and there are other Asian financiers. And done rightly, nothing would stop them from seeking further capital, if they did their coverage right and covered—I don’t mean politically, in the sense of backing one party in Asian countries, but I mean overall—did a very dignified, interesting thing, and their future was not as short as just \$66 million.

And then on the other side of the equation, Teddy Fang, it went to his head. At the time, I think he had a boyfriend who kept telling him, now, you get your own people in there. You’re the boss now. Anyway, he went on what became an absolutely disastrous hiring spree, and ran around the country and hired himself—I can only charitably describe the individuals involved as second-tier, also-ran, former newspaper executives; most of them, or many of them unemployed at the present. The ones who were employed were employed in second-tier, smaller dailies; may have had a little job here and there, at some point, at a larger paper, but hey, I get to run a 30,000 circulation daily in, whatever, Illinois, a state like that, so I’ll do that. Business managers, circulation managers. Oh, good God. He hired all these people unbeknownst to anyone, paid no attention to any Asian theme, any of the fairly reasonable ideas that had been put forward; and collected these people—I still shake my head when I think about what happened—and gave them all enormous contracts. For a paper that didn’t have much dough, we’re talking executive salaries, \$150-, 200,000, 250,000 a year. And even *more* inexplicably—

because at that caliber of floating, used-up newspaper executives on the open market weren't too hard to get. So *most* inexplicably, he gave them all golden parachutes to lure them to San Francisco. Gave them loans to buy their houses or gave them this, gave them golden parachutes, so if for any reason the paper failed, or God forbid, you got fired or anything like that, you'll walk away with a half a million dollars sort of thing. Unbelievable for General Motors, let alone for a paper that had [laughs] this little, tiny hunk of money, considering what its enterprise was to be.

Darrell Salomon, who was the general counsel for the paper, within a year, was spending almost full-time trying to untangle these golden parachutes, because every single one of those executives was, and had to be, fired. As a whole, they were *utterly* incompetent. Didn't understand the town, screwed up everything they did. And the first issue of the paper made it a laughing stock. They didn't know how to—couldn't fit a shoe in a shoebox. It came out four or five hours late, type was upside-down, everything was ridiculous. And adding more to the disaster, the paper had to, of course, look smart.

So I did get Florence to hire my friend—he's my friend for good reasons, because he's so talented—Roger Black, who's one of the major designers in the United States. He designed the original *Rolling Stone*; he did the *Newsweek* redesign. He's done every magazine from *Esquire*, across the board. He did the *New York Times* section redesign; he redesigned the *L.A. Times*, the *Washington Post*. He has offices in South America and in Italy; he's got Italian papers he's designed, and magazines; and all kinds of sports and other magazines in Latin America. Huge office in Mexico. He's one of the premier journalistic designers and typographic innovators in the country. Unquestionably, Roger Black is *it*. He's the top of the line. We had worked during the sixties and seventies—we were friends—on other projects. And Will Hearst knew him and we got him in to fix, redesign the *Examiner* at one point; and then both Roger Black and I did this faltering Sunday magazine they had and turned it into *Image Magazine*. It was quite a successful thing.

So I finally got Florence to pay Roger what he needs, let him design this paper, because with him, you're going to get not just a design, but you're getting your own special fonts and all that stuff. But a real professional looking paper. And he knows the game, and he'll be of *enormous* help. He's got editorial ideas that are always smart; he's got promotion ideas; he's got contacts; he knows everybody who's creative in any way in the industry, all over the country. He's a real solid pro. So she did hire Roger; he produced a design for the paper. But more than that, he gave them a whole program of how to bring this thing out of the box as a professional product to be accepted within the community. Because all he did was work with the owners of major newspapers and publications in the United States, in South America. He had clients all over. He was on intimate terms with every goddamned publisher, just about, in the country and a large part of the world. Everybody wanted Roger, because he knew what he was doing. So the first thing he said was—

He came up with a bunch of innovative ideas, put a team together to make proposals. Okay, here's how we promote the paper. Did it quite inexpensively, for a promotion campaign. Got some very interesting artists for what they call rack cards and billboards, for inexpensive television ads on the—

Rubens: Rack cards were?

37-00:40:32

Hinckle: Rack card. That's the thing that goes in the news rack. They change them. They say, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday's food section, or stuff about our sports coverage, that stuff. That was something, parenthetically, that got stolen so many times in the *Examiner*, because when I went to the *Examiner* the first time, I got Robert Crumb to do a rack card for me. It would be hauled away by people who wanted it; "Hinckle moves to *Examiner*—Free at last," it said. And the rack card immediately disappeared from every *Examiner* rack in the Bay Area, and they had to reprint it about, oh, over a dozen times. And every time they'd re-insert the rack card, within two weeks they'd be all gone again, because Crumb fans and collectors wanted the rack cards. I've been to many people's houses where they've got it framed. It was a classic.

Anyway, he came up with a whole low cost, brilliant promotion campaign to launch the paper, set it off, geared, basically—which is a smart idea—to the advertising community, because that's who you wanted to pay attention to the paper because they were the ones who could say, hey, let's run some ads in this thing, this is looking good. It went all the way up, including saying how, quite inexpensively, they could take the building at Sixth and Market, and simply by putting a couple of exterior lights shooting up on—you know how buildings are lit up at night—and some flag stanchions, and then putting flags along the top so it wouldn't look like the pile of bricks it was, right? It was very smart. And had a little design for the lobby; it had kind of an ugly lobby. Well, again, this executive team that Teddy Fang brought in would have none of this. The lobby was never fixed up; the exterior of the building looked like the head of skid row that it was; the lobby was filthy with everything broken in it, dirt, old newspapers floating around. Never changed. The elevators remained filthy. The only money that they spent in the building—Then they screwed up the reconstruction of the building. Didn't understand, these people Teddy brought in, about San Francisco fire codes, how between floors, you have to do this and that. I remember Linda [Corso] who's a construction manager—she's rebuilt buildings that her company owns, and knows all these codes—she said, "Hey, this is all wrong, what you're doing. They're going to shut you down. You can't do this. You have to put a central whatsit down there and this, otherwise the inspectors will come in and shut them down." Nobody listened. Sure enough, inspectors came in, shut them down. All kinds of fines. It was a complete and utter disaster. The first issue came out, a laughing stock. The only argument, I guess, that I won was after this woman, who Teddy hired as editor was utterly flummoxed. These aren't just personal

opinions, they're just—Teddy had to fire them all, okay? [laughs] And then they had these huge contracts, which—

Rubens: She didn't want you to have a front page column.

37-00:44:28

Hinckle: Oh, no, she didn't want me anywhere near it. No. Didn't want a column at all in the paper. Said, "Let's leave them in the *Independent*." She didn't want me touching what she thought was her paper. So I had to battle with Teddy to make me the associate editor of the paper, which I'd been on Will Hearst's paper when he had the *Examiner*. I said, "No, you've got to do this. I'm not going to let these people just destroy everything. You watch what's going to happen." It all happened.

Rubens: So he agreed to that.

37-00:44:57

Hinckle: Yes, he agreed to that. But these people just blundered ahead, full tilt in every possible screwed-up way, one thing after the other, from the ridiculous—Then they screwed up Roger's design, had it upside-down. Didn't know how to use it. Any competent newspaper would, say hey, you're handed a huge gift here. He was tearing his hair out. Didn't have any promotion campaign at all. What they did was so stupid it was just a waste of money. There were some TV ads that cost a lot of money, didn't connect to anybody. It was just horrible. The only argument I won was I said— She had a paper mocked up and there was *an* editorial page, and it was stuck up somewhere. I said, "No. You can't do that. You have to have two editorial pages. You have to have an editorial page and an op-ed page," as the *Chronicle* has and famously had over the years. They had one of the first op-ed pages.

Rubens: Is that right?

37-00:46:00

Hinckle: Yes, because the *Chronicle* was always sort of feature orientated and columnist orientated. So they had an op-ed page in the fifties, before—

Rubens: Before the *Times*?

37-00:46:10

Hinckle: Oh, yes, *well* before the *Times*. Oh, yes. I think the *Times* went in some time in the— Well, it was definitely in the sixties; it wasn't in the fifties, that's for sure. The *Chronicle* may have had that even from the late forties on. But they had even their columnists all lined up, down the middle, and a cartoon here and a puzzle in the center. But it was an op-ed page. My argument was very clear. They said, hey, we can't compete head-on with the *Chronicle*, because they're going to have seventy-two pages a day and we're going to have twenty-four, with hardly any ads in them. So the only place we can compete is on the op-ed page. Because anybody could read— You've got to have an

editorial page. Of course, I wanted to hire a Chinese editorial cartoonist I thought was really good. I'd used him at the *Independent*. I thought he was one of the best I'd ever seen. He drew occasionally for their publication, *AsianWeek*. But they'd have none of that. No, we can't—

Rubens: His name?

37-00:47:10

Hinckle: I think it was Gordon—I'll have to get it for you. He was very, very good. He would've made a national caliber editorial cartoonist, and he happened to be Chinese. He was Chinese American. And he was great. He was extremely effective with the *Independent*, when we were having our crusade to stop the papers from combining and ending up with the *Examiner*. But none of these things happened. It was like the most frustrating thing of all times. And clearly, with the number of universities in the Bay Area, there were no end of people to be asked to write op-ed articles. Right? No end. With no effort at all, you could be equal with the *Chronicle*, in terms of an editorial page and an opinion page. So those were only two pages. The *Chronicle* had two. We could have two of those, the *Examiner* could have two of those; and *there*, you could even compete. And with a little sense, you could outsmart it.

The other thing that I tried to stress was, hey, we have to rely on the university community—that would be the *Examiner*—in our coverage. Don't spend a lot of money on foreign wire services, this or that. We don't have the room to print all those damn stories anyway; and they're already in the *Chronicle* and they're appearing in the *New York Times*. Foreign coverage, as it is, everybody's laughing about that. So it just doesn't do us any good to print wire service and print—Nobody buys a paper for that anyway, particularly a paper with not so many pages in it. So let's make all of our foreign coverage interpretive and interview—Or have, actually, people in the department of Asian studies or the political science department at Cal or Stanford, et cetera. Pick up the phone, hire one bright graduate student who's familiar with the whole university setup, and make him the foreign editor. And for every big story, national or international, we'll get our stories out of either interviewing or having the actual person write an interpretive piece, and run it in the news section. Because there'd be some there and some op-ed pieces and it would be quite relatively inexpensive. You can pay somebody a hundred dollars. Academics will be happy to get their name out. Not being cheap, but you don't have to pay them a thousand dollars to write a 250-word piece and be known as the expert in that field; they like that. And they wouldn't be called on every day, so it's hardly a burden. Anyway, all of that gone. None of that type of thinking. So that was all that came out of the beginning of the stumbling *Examiner*, was that.

Then there was the war between Jack Davis and Teddy Fang, because they were friends, and Jack was with the Fang family, because Davis had described himself as the consigliore to the Fang family. Famously, had always stood up

for them in the fights, et cetera. It was Davis' understanding—and he remains bitter to this day about it and has taken huge whacks at them in the press and in other areas—that since it ended up, from both of our combined efforts, the big editorial crusade with the *Independent* and his workings with Willie and getting them the money, and they ended up with the newspaper—that there should be a payoff. He says, “Hey, I told Florence, ‘I think it’s reasonable we both get out of this \$66 million, a million bucks each.’” Davis didn’t think small. He says, “It’s quite reasonable. It wouldn’t have happened if we didn’t make it happen. They don’t have to pay it all right away; pay something and if the paper lasts ten years—

Rubens: Who’s each of us?

37-00:51:16

Hinckle: “—pay it out.” Davis and myself.

Rubens: Yes. I was going to ask you earlier if you had any payback.

37-00:51:20

Hinckle: Oh, yes. And then Florence at first said yes, according to Davis, and then wouldn’t talk to Davis, and he became extremely embittered and went to war with the Fang family, which didn’t help them, either.

Rubens: What form did the war take?

37-00:51:38

Hinckle: Sniping personal comments, doing things, badmouthing them. Very angry. Is still angry to this day. I was kind of, well, disappointed at the whole thing that happened—

Rubens: But they’re giving all these other people golden parachutes and helping them buy their homes and— Didn’t you have some basis of upping your salary or security?

37-00:52:03

Hinckle: Yes, yes. Anyway, the paper was so bad I refused to take any money from it. I only wrote for the *Independent* and wrote occasional columns sometimes in—I said I was going to write twice a week, so I did. Sometimes I didn’t bother. It was just an utter embarrassment. So finally, when it came to pass that Teddy had to fire all these guys one by one—the editor that still worked there said, what are we going to do? Then back to the same thing. And Davis also felt a sort of element—I must say, I shared it—of, hey, these guys forgot who brought them to the party, basically made the *Independent* happen for them, really developed its political influence and its editorial influence. With all the stuff, we made a shot for them to remain big players in San Francisco journalism. But instead of listening or staying with the people who brought it to this point, they went out and hired the most expensive, incompetent, white

help they could get; wouldn't listen to any idea of hiring an Asian for anything.

So it was really a psychological and a business disaster of the highest order, and it was a laughing stock. The paper was a joke. Now, at some point—it was almost a year into it—Teddy began to fire these people. And poor Darrell Salomon, the general counsel, had spent all his time getting out of these legal entanglements, getting rid of these people. Good God. It's a nightmare. So Ted said, "Well, who are we going to get? We've got to get rid of—" I said, "Well, Teddy, it's such a mess now. You just screwed this whole thing up so badly." I said, "The only guy I can think of—and I'll call him up, if you want—is this guy named Dave Burgin," B-U-R-G-I-N. Now, Burgin, I thought, was kind of an insufferable guy. We never got along personally very well. He was at the *Examiner*. Will had hired him to be editor of the *Examiner*. This was shortly before Will hired me to come to the paper and I brought Hunter Thompson and all those people. And he was a pro. He had a good sense of a headline. He was a pro, Burgin. He'd edited papers, big daily papers in Florida and other places in the country, and had a pretty good relationship with the guy out of Texas—and now he moved to Colorado now—who owns a big string of—I'll think of his name—dailies in the country now. But Burgin was the only guy—Nobody, no editor—It's like the 49ers, almost, right? What coach is going to turn them around? Just a laughing stock, disaster of a paper, with everybody being fired and bailing out. It was just horrible.

And on top of that, for staff, this woman who came from upstate New York or something—I don't know what the hell she was doing; didn't understand *anything* about the town or coverage or anything like that—hired a bunch of former *Bay Guardian* type reporters, who were put on to the news stories and the coverage, the antithesis of the Fang's politics and their political values. So it helped their enemies along. In their own paper. I can't describe what a mess it was. So the only guy I could think of who might've—Because he'd been fired by Will because he got drunk and was supposed to show up at the board meeting in New York, with a big presentation for the *Examiner*, the revised *Examiner* and this and that, and all kinds of projection charts, et cetera, and the budge. And Will had said, "You be there for the meeting. Bring all this stuff. I'm going to introduce you. You tell the board and I'll have them appropriate more money." That sort of thing. And to Will's utter embarrassment, he didn't show up at all. This is what Will told me. Went to New York, got drunk for three days, nobody could find him. So Will had to fire him, so he was kind of in disgrace and kind of sitting home. I think he lived in Tiburon. And I professionally got along very well with him. So I said, at least he knows how to put out a goddamned paper. He's used to putting out a daily paper and he did a fairly good job, I thought, with the *Examiner*, even though personally, we weren't friendly. So I call him, I say, "Hey, Burgin, you interested in taking over this wreck? You think you can make anything out of it?" Well he was willing and we got Burgin in there and he kind of

perked it up a little bit. Then it came to—I said, “Look, you’re going to have to turn it into a tabloid; it’s the only shot. At least if there were less pages, it won’t look so less.”

Rubens: And by a tabloid, you mean?

37-00:57:18

Hinckle: You just fold the paper. A tabloid, like the *Daily News*, *New York Post*. Basically, you take the *Chronicle*, you fold it halfway and you print images there. So the *Chronicle* front page, folded in half, it runs vertical. That’s two pages of a tabloid. That’s all.

Rubens: Okay. Got it.. It’s referring to the paper size and the direction of the—I thought it had to do with being sleazy or sensational.

37-00:57:37

Hinckle: Yes, it’s the same size as the paper— Well, they have tabloid sections, like the pink section of the *Chronicle* on Sundays. The real estate sections, all those are tabloid. That’s just the paper folded the other way and printed vertical. Same size. That’s what I’d done years ago with the *Foghorn*. I turned it into a— It had been a big paper, it was six pages and I turned it into three small pages. That’s all. You just turn it around. And the famous tabloids, of course, are the *Daily News* and the *New York Post*, and then the English tabloids, the mass market ones. They’re just easier to fold. Oddly enough, now, that’s become particularly— And European papers, many of them were always tabloids. But now every quality daily, national dailies in England, are all tabloid. *Times of London*’s tabloid, *Guardian*’s a tabloid, *Independent*’s a tabloid. It doesn’t change the content, but it’s easier to carry.

Rubens: And so why were you saying you would have to turn the *Examiner* into a tabloid?

37-00:58:46

Hinckle: Well, a tabloid format. Because if we’re going to at all have a chance to sell ads and pull it out of this slump after they’d already gone through probably half or two-thirds of the money— Nobody knew; Florence kept a tight grip on what money was left, but we knew a lot of it went into real estate. We knew there was trouble. And of course, there were no ads. It was a laughing stock.

Rubens: You mean there was more than the building that the money went into?

37-00:59:12

Hinckle: I’m not privy to what else they bought or didn’t buy. I know they did prepay the mortgage payments. But she owned a garage next door to the building, which housed the Warfield Theater. I don’t know if she bought that garage with the paper’s money or not. I’m not sure if she had that garage before. I wouldn’t be surprised. Then they, of course, printed the paper at the *Independent* plant, and then put presses in there, et cetera. Looking from the

outside in, you'd say—a person would say, as many observers had said—they never really intended to make the paper go. They just wanted to get as much money out of it as they could. So they increased the presses and quality of the *Independent* plant, where the *Independent* was still being printed and I was still writing my main column for the *Independent*.

Rubens: We're going to stop for a minute while I change the tape.

Begin Audio File 38

Rubens: So did Burgin stay?

38-00:00:12

Hinckle: Burgin stayed. Burgin did a good job. Burgin's a good daily newspaper editor, just I didn't like the guy very much. And I don't think he liked me very much. But he was a pro and he had a good sense of a headline and stuff and he knew how to acquire, if he had some money, some feature writers. He was a good editor. He was a crazy man. People could never know if he was on drugs; he would throw tantrums and yell.

Rubens: How old was he, about?

38-00:00:48

Hinckle: Burgin had to be then in his—this was ten years ago, so probably in his, I don't know, somewhere in his sixties, middle sixties, I don't know. Maybe his late fifties, early sixties, I don't know. He was very overweight and always just wore sweatshirts and sweatpants and—

Rubens: Did he get a pretty deal out of it?

38-00:01:16

Hinckle: —was an ill-tempered guy. Well, considering the salaries they were paying all those people, I said, "Jesus, pay him whatever he wants." It was too late then. I wasn't going to try and come in at that time and say, I'll save it for you guys, because they'd already—I just knew it wasn't going to happen.

Rubens: They weren't listening.

38-00:01:37

Hinckle: Yes. Well, but it already happened. So it was, hey, let's see if we can salvage this. I'll start giving you some ideas. Let's hire a pro. If we can get Burgin to do it, he'll know how to get the paper out, anyway, and give some sense to it. Everybody was pretty dispirited by then, and frankly, nobody really trusted the Fangs on what they could do or what they steal or grab.

Rubens: What a shame!

- 38-00:02:09
Hinckle: Yes. Oh! And this is the first— There was a story in *Time* magazine or something about it. It was a big deal!
- Rubens: So how long did it last, the *Examiner*?
- 38-00:02:22
Hinckle: The years they had it, it must've been—I'm just guessing—four years.
- Rubens: I think a little less than that.
- 38-00:02:29
Hinckle: It could've gone on to five or it could've been three and a half.
- Rubens: But when did they make the decision that they've got to look for someone to buy it?
- 38-00:02:37
Hinckle: Well, then Florence decided they were running out of money, so they fired half the staff and did things like that, and it began to really flounder.
- Rubens: And it became a tabloid?
- 38-00:02:52
Hinckle: Oh yes. And I wanted Roger to do it, but then Florence said, memorably, “He’s already been paid once.” I actually liked Florence; we got along well personally. We had the only two offices in the *Examiner* that were offices. This building was really decrepit, that’s all I can say. Not a dime was put into anything in the building, except—
- Rubens: I think you called it “shabby shit” in our last interview.
- 38-00:03:22
Hinckle: Oh, it was terrible. It was terrible. Newspaper city rooms famously don’t look pretty. That’s not the point. The whole building was dirty and ugly and the outside was non-descript.
- Rubens: And is this where you had the jail cell door?
- 38-00:03:39
Hinckle: Yes. I put an office in there. And I decorated my own office and got an Alcatraz jail cell, through odd means, through my friend Ron Turner, the dirty comic book publisher, now fancy art book publisher, and Chicken John, a comedian who owned nightclubs. Anyway, somehow he and a couple guys got a hold of some jail cell doors. So I had an Alcatraz cell door, had the ceiling—it’s still there because we were going to go for landmark status of the damn thing—ceiling painted in the colors of the gay flag, by Gilbert Baker, who was the designer. It’s a fabulous ceiling. It’s all concentric circles.
- Rubens: Who owns the building now?

38-00:04:25

Hinckle:

Well, a guy who's become kind of a friend of mine, a guy named Addington. He bought it from the Fangs. When the Anschutz people took over, they couldn't care less about the building. They wisely, even though they have billions and billions, rent space. Right?. And the *Chronicle* is itself, at this point, even as we speak, selling its famous building. It's removing the entire paper out of it and selling it for the real estate. It's great to have a tower and be the *Chicago Tribune* or the *New York Times*, but to publish a daily newspaper, you could publish the damn thing from anywhere.

Rubens:

Well, the *New York Times* was having trouble with their new building, weren't they?

38-00:05:20

Hinckle:

No. They built that giant new building. That's because of the real estate market, not because of the newspaper part. They only occupy about four floors of their own building.

So there's no reason to— The *Chronicle* building is only four floors. And they used to have the presses in the back. So the *Chronicle* actually occupied its entire building, because it's a small building. But if you build a skyscraper, a newspaper is not going to take— The *Chicago Tribune* only occupies, I don't know, five or six floors in the Tribune Building, which is a huge building in downtown Chicago.

So it was a sign and a warning to everybody, uh-oh, when Florence decided to put the money into real estate and then prepaid the payments. When I found that out I said, "This is it." So it was just taking the money. Because you don't have to own a building to publish a newspaper.

Rubens:

So was Teddy there the whole time?

38-00:06:30

Hinckle:

Until she fired him.

Rubens:

So how does that come to be?

38-00:06:35

Hinckle:

Oh, God. I was so close to this family. So then, oh, she told him— Anyway, we changed it into— I said, "We'll make it a tabloid." And so they decided to hire some other designer than Roger. Which was fine. It came out looking okay. It was all right. But I would've preferred Roger because at least you get his free ideas along with it. This other guy's just getting out of town in seven days; "I redesign newspapers." Bing, bing, he was gone. But he's a respected newspaper designer. That's okay. And it looked okay.

Rubens:

Do you remember his name?

38-00:07:15

Hinckle:

No. But I'll get it for you. I've got all this. And for a while, it was looking fairly robust, in a tabloid format, and it was a decent enough design, and I went back to writing for it. Anyway, I was going to say that Florence and I had the only two offices in that building that were offices. Mine was eccentric, to say the least. You couldn't shut the door; you could see in through the cell doors. Had a lot of antique furniture and it had Astroturf as a rug on the floor. It was red walls. That sort of thing. And I had a big table and I had a bar and a refrigerator and we had a lot of meetings in there and people—And Florence had taken the top floor of the building and turned it into her private little paradise. It was great. She had a giant water fountain, and it was filled with antique furniture, and the water was churning and there were chimes tinkling and there was all kinds of Asian stuff. You would've thought you were in a museum or some wonderful executive offices of some—

Rubens:

Did Ted have an office?

38-00:08:32

Hinckle:

Yes. His was just a dumpy office in the corner. But Florence's was wonderful. She was very delighted because I spent my own money. I said, "Hey, just give me the space; I'll do what I want with it." So she was all happy. Came down, "Ooh, nice. Very nice. Spent money in here. Spent money in my building." Teddy was, to say the least, running erratic at that time. He made some spectacularly bad decisions. And Florence decided, I guess as it soon became evident, what remaining money they had was running out; that he should not be the publisher; she'd have to take over all that, overseeing all the business, because it was wreckage. Worse than two train wrecks. And he decided, no, no, I'm not leaving; I'm going to fight you. Wasn't going to leave. And I remember taking him for drinks over at a place called the Double Play, which was sort of a blue-collar bar in this town where I spent some time. He wanted to have a showdown with his mother the next day. I said, "Teddy, it isn't a question of votes. Florence has got all the marbles." I said, "Hey, you can go on as long as the paper lasts, being the editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*. You're Chinese, for Christ's sake! You're the editor of a major American newspaper! At least the title page says you're editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*. So it's a name, it's a respected paper. You can go on television, be a talking head—easy to arrange—commenting on things like that. You can be the editor on the masthead of the paper. What a deal! You've screwed things up, Teddy, disastrously. Your mother's right. She screwed up, too, but the whole family's screwed up here; it's a disgrace. Never would've happened under your father." It wouldn't. John Fang would've never done this.

Rubens:

By then, he was gone.

38-00:10:57

Hinckle:

Yes, he'd died in 1992.

Rubens:

You wrote a beautiful obituary for him in the *Independent*.

38-00:11:01

Hinckle:

Yes, well, he was a wonderful man. I was very fond of John Fang. And the whole game would've been run a lot differently if John had remained alive. He was a very honorable, very honorable man –heart of a businessman, but he had great instincts for the craft and the business of journalism. He'd taken courses in photography; he was at first a journalistic photographer. He cared. And he knew printing and presses; he'd run presses himself. I liked him very, very much. But he died and you had what you had. Anyway, so Florence said, "No, Teddy, I've got to take over everything now. Look what you've done," sort of thing, right? Family showdown. And then her middle son, Douglas, who was sort of a computer wizard— He was teaching, I think, at UCLA, Douglas Fang. She brought him up to try and straighten out the family disaster, by installing systems or common sense or whatever, but he was a computer guy. Because none of the computers worked right, either. You should hear Roger Black on this. "Those *morons!* You know what they did? Da-da-da. *Nobody* can screw up this much. It's beyond the gang that couldn't shoot straight." It was just so *fabulously* fouled up. Nothing was done right. So he was there. Then he had some weird thing, an appendectomy-type thing and it went wrong. Anyway, he died like at thirty-eight. So that was quite a blow to her. Then she decided maybe she— because he left. He was teaching and had a business on the side in the computer world. He really knew his stuff; he was really good at it. At UCLA, he was in Southern California. And he sort of gave that all up to come and try and help his mother create this family disaster, which she had a hand in creating herself. He did, and gave up whatever he was doing down there and came up here. He had a wife named Angela, who was Italian. The only surviving part of the Fangs, this thing today, is the Bay to Breakers Race, which the *Examiner* used to sponsor. She said, okay, you'll run the Bay to Breakers race. So she's still doing it, even though that's not under any newspaper sponsorship now. That's all that remains of the Fangs, in terms of journalism in San Francisco. Even *AsianWeek* stopped publishing.

Rubens:

And what happened to the *Independent*?

38-00:14:01

Hinckle:

Just an online thing. The *Independent* went when Anschutz bought it. That's another story, the Anschutz period. They folded the *Independent*. Nobody had any idea why they would do that, since it was making money. But who would have known that the Anschutz master plan—somebody with billions of dollars of capital like that sometimes thinks differently than the rest of us—was to turn the *Examiner* into a national rightwing daily? That was his plan. He registered it in thirty-something, thirty-two cities, I think, the name *Examiner*; began obviously, publishing the San Francisco one, and then established a *Washington Examiner*, which is still publishing today, as we speak, and a *Baltimore Examiner*. Obviously, because he registered the name, his concept, it gradually became clear, was to publish this extremely conservative—*extremely* conservative—paper as a second paper in major circulation

population areas, under the title *Examiner*. Basically, it became headquartered out of Washington; that's where most of the stories and the coverage came from. And famously, in Washington, people call it their— In Washington, there's the paper that was owned by the Moonie church, the *Washington Times*. Well, just to give you indication of the caliber of the *Washington Examiner*, many of whose articles are reprinted in the *San Francisco Examiner* today, it was widely considered, among the Washington political class, to the right, to the far right of the Moonie paper politically, right? So take it from there.

Rubens: So you wrote for him for about a year, you said?

38-00:16:01

Hinckle: Yes, they continued to publish the paper and I continued to write my column for it, but you could gradually see they had no interest in local issues or doing anything.

Rubens: Had they brought in their own editor?

38-00:16:14

Hinckle: No, they promoted a guy who was there putting out the—in the ranks of the *Examiner*. They got rid of Burgin. Because they really weren't interested in local product. But nobody could figure it out at the time. We all were saying what are these guys thinking? So I continued to write until they decided to kill the *Independent* and I said, "That's it. I'm getting out of here." They wisely, because they didn't want me suing them or anything like that— Not that I would. I publish stuff myself, so I don't believe in suing other publishers. I think if you own something, you do what you want with it. So I continued to write for them for a year or so, until they said, "Well, now we're going to reconfigure the paper." I said, "Yeah, I figured that's what you guys wanted to do. So I'm out." And they said, "We're going to stop publishing the *Independent*." Nobody could understand why anybody would do that, because that was still going on its own. But they did.

Rubens: By the way, when the *Examiner* became a tabloid, was that when it was free? There's no longer subscriptions or pay at the racks.

38-00:17:33

Hinckle: Right. A free distribution tabloid. Well, the *Independent*'s a free distribution paper. It always was. It just happened to be a standard.

Rubens: So then what we should pick up next is you keep the *Argonaut*. We haven't talked about—

38-00:17:52

Hinckle: Well, I've always had the *Argonaut*.

Rubens: Such an astounding group of writers that you get for the *Argonaut*. But part of the deal of working for the Fang owned Examiner was that the Fangs backed it, in a specific way.

38-00:18:04
Hinckle: Yes, they gave me absolute printing privileges the first couple of issues. When it was a quarterly-type format, they printed in their off time and on their stock, and basically printed it for me. We printed it as a large circulation paper in the city, mostly for elections. I paid for it, but it was at a decent price.

Rubens: How long did they keep their presses? Or do they still have them?

38-00:18:42
Hinckle: They still do. The *Examiner* today is printed on those presses. Anschutz bought the printing plant, the *Independent*, and the *Examiner*.

Rubens: Okay, okay. So the Fangs are out totally.

38-00:18:52
Hinckle: Out totally.

Rubens: What's your relationship with the Fangs today?

38-00:18:55
Hinckle: I get invited to their Christmas party; I see James once in a while.

Rubens: So they've lost that power base. They're not playing that same power—

38-00:19:03
Hinckle: Yes. From an Asian studies standpoint, or American-Asian studies, it's like wow, what a story. What happened to—

Rubens: Did they have anything to say about David Chiu, the president of SF's Board of Supervisors wanting to be, or about Ed Lee picked as, interim mayor?

38-00:19:19
Hinckle: Not now.

Rubens: Because they have no forum in which to wield political pressure.

38-00:19:22
Hinckle: Well, not now, a fact that must really grate on Florence.

So Teddy said, "No, I'm going to stay publisher," and Florence fired him and that was that. He went off and sulked for a year. She made up, kind of, with him. He shows up now at things.

Rubens: What did he go on to do?

38-00:19:45

Hinckle: Oh, he's always taking graduate courses at Berkeley.

Rubens:

And is on some family retainer?

38-00:19:52

Hinckle: No. Well, I'm sure she helps him out financially; he's her son. She's very tight on family. The only one who's successful in his own right is James Fang, who's been on the BART board for a long time. He's the longest serving guy on the BART board now. See, they always have had, and Florence had, investments in China.

Rubens:

Ah. We didn't say that.

38-00:20:19

Hinckle: Yes. And I think some of the money of the *Examiner*—I'm only surmising now—

Rubens:

In Taiwan?

38-00:20:25

Hinckle: No, John was originally from Taiwan, but no, this is mainland China. And I think some of the dough went there. But it certainly didn't go into the newspaper.

Rubens:

So did anyone ever do a real investigation into—

38-00:20:45

Hinckle: I'm amazed that somebody doesn't write their graduate thesis on what happened to the first Asian-owned paper.

Rubens:

It would be a great topic. Now where was the *Bay Guardian*, in all this?

38-00:21:00

Hinckle: Well, they were the enemy, always, of Teddy.

Rubens:

They were trumpeting the mistakes of the Fang's *Examiner*. They called it the "Fangzaminer."

38-00:21:04

Hinckle: Oh, of course! Yes.

Rubens:

Yes, they were just relishing it.

38-00:21:07

Hinckle: As well they should. Yes, it was an open-air embarrassment. It was terrible!

Rubens:

I got a lot of information by reading the *Bay Guardian*, because they were covering it in much more detail and consistently than the *Chron*.

38-00:21:15

Hinckle: Of course. Yes, they wrote a big cover story, I think, about the Fangs; had me in the car with Florence and Teddy, all driving off a cliff or something. Well, it was pretty close to accurate.

Rubens: And there would be no reason that you would ever go back to the *Chronicle*, right? You had the *Argonaut*.

38-00:21:39

Hinckle: Oh, I *couldn't* go back to the *Chronicle* because of Phil Bronstein. That situation's changed now, in the last two years. But up until then, Bronstein—

Rubens: Because of your "Mr. Sharon Stone" attribution.

38-00:21:53

Hinckle: Yes, we didn't get along well anyway, and I pretty well savaged him and then made fun of his celebrity marriage, in a cartoon. He didn't take it very well. So it wasn't like I could walk out of that *Examiner*, because that was obviously the end of the line.

Rubens: So it's only a couple of years that Ward Bushee has now been editor at the *Chronicle*, is that right? Because I think when we were setting up these interviews, that you had been discussing with him writing a column with a Pacific Rim focus.

38-00:22:28

Hinckle: Yes. At the time, Will Hearst was going to start a magazine on California, and we kind of got the old team together. Roger Black designed a prototype for it and I came up with the editorial perspectives for it, and we spent about a year on it. And then Will—who has flitting interests, I could put it that way; his attention span wanders from this to that often—finally decided—The market turned bad and the economy, et cetera, for advertisers, so he decided not to do it. But that was why I had basically taken a lot of the ideas that were formed about the Pacific Rim and proposed to look at the interconnection of the cultures and everything, as an aspect of what this California-based magazine would cover.

Rubens: Was there a working title for it?

38-00:23:26

Hinckle: Yes, we called it the *Alta*, from the old *Alta California*, which was the first daily. That was stuff in my files going way back.

Rubens: Not bad. Would've been good.

38-00:23:38

Hinckle: The prototype was nice. It was a good looking magazine.

Rubens: It would be great if you could get that prototype and also your memo to Bushee to include in the appendix.

38-00:23:50

Hinckle: Yes, I've got it, somewhere.

Rubens: So should we wrap up today?

38-00:23:54

Hinckle: Yes, I'm starting to get a little hoarse, but not that hoarse.

Rubens: Then we'll wrap up the *Examiner* focus and get to the *Argonaut*.

38-00:23:59

Hinckle: It was such an ugly story. I'd rather get it over with.

Rubens: Do you feel you said everything you wanted to say about the Fangs and—

38-00:24:05

Hinckle: I'm going to read the *Bay Guardian*'s exposé again and see if there are any details I should include. The details are a lot worse and there's a lot of things that were so, frankly—

Rubens: Corrupt?

38-00:24:26

Hinckle: That I wouldn't even want to talk about, even in this thing. I don't want to get anybody into trouble. But certainly, the historical record is— That is the story of what happened to the first Asian-owned newspaper, and it was terrible.

Rubens: The Herb Caen Magazine and Newspaper Center of the San Francisco public library has a complete run of the *Examiner* –listed up to through three months ago; a broken collection of the *Independent* 9/27/94 through July 20, 2005. And the History Center has a complete run of *City of San Francisco* magazine.

38-00:25:00

Hinckle: I've got huge boxes of the *Independent* and the *Examiner*, various copies of— It's just all part of records for the years. I've got tons of that stuff.

Rubens: Did anything ever go to Boston University?

38-00:25:16

Hinckle: No! Harold Gotleib was after me for years. My friend Sidney Zion gave him his stuff. He chased a lot of people for their papers. I was always too anal retentive. "I've got to go through it before I give it to you," sort of thing. So it's still sitting around. It's in a car repair shop a friend of mine owns, down South of Market. Takes up half a floor. There are boxes and stacks of that crap. It's a lot of stuff.

Rubens: I'd love to see your files come to The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley. But if you decide on some library to which you'll donate your papers, depending on the funding, they'll organize it for you.

38-00:25:50

Hinckle: I guess that's okay.

Interview 19: January 30, 2011

While explaining the origin and his revival of the *Argonaut*, a venerable journal now dedicated to “Low Brow Culture and Contrarian Politics in the Capital of the West Coast,” our narrator is joined by his younger daughter and together they regale the reader with rollicking stories about strange characters and manic milestones in their history.

Begin Audio File 39

Rubens: While we were setting up, we were looking at some of the old *City* magazines. You mentioned that one of your favorite issues is the story of Bob [Robert] Patterson, the “real Mr. San Francisco;” August 10, 1975. His picture is on the cover. Tell me about him. He’s a wonderful San Francisco character and journalist.

39-00:00:27

Hinckle: Well, when I took over *City* magazine, the staff had a whole bunch of articles they had assigned and were actually in the can and almost all were unusable. And I just tossed them all. But one of them had been to expose this fraud of Bob Patterson, who’d been charged with extortion and all sorts of things. He’d been an *Examiner* columnist, was a favorite of old Randy Hearst for years. His pen name was Freddie Francisco and he had written a gossip column in the *Examiner*. This is when, of course, the *Examiner* was the top paper in the city and the morning paper, against the *Chronicle*—fifties into the sixties—and he worked for the *Examiner* later, when it was the afternoon paper, and they sent him to China. He was the first American reporter in China. This was long before Nixon went to China.

And it turned out that he’d never got out of Hong Kong—they wouldn’t let him into China—and he faked every story, out of his hotel room in Hong Kong, with all the China datelines. It was perfect Patterson. He was just a scurrilous, reprehensible, wonderful person. But they hired him back after he was fired because Randy Hearst had sort of a soft spot for him.

Rubens: Did you actually know him?

39-00:01:56

Hinckle: Oh, very well. I got to know him quite well. I think we discussed this in an earlier interview. I had assigned Susan Berman—who had famously written the article “You can’t get laid in San Francisco,” and who was an indefatigable reporter, literally like out of the old gum shoe newspaper days—to get an interview with him. I told her “we’re going to expose him. Go hang out at his house. We know where he lives. Here’s the address.” He lived down by the Youth Guidance Center, by Laguna Honda. “Just wait for the guy. He’s got to come home sometime. Nail him, and tell him we’ll give him a chance to expose himself, or else we’re going to print this boring exposé that someone had written before I got to City. So she got him and I said, “Come on, let’s go

to lunch, Patterson." I said, "Here's the thing. You get to tell all of this from your perspective. Now, of course, you're going to lie but that's all right, as long as you put enough real history in there. You get to expose yourself with your own byline or we'll print this piece of crap these idiots wrote about you." So naturally, he took the job and he exposed himself. We paid him about a thousand dollars. He came up with these *wonderful* stories about old San Francisco newspapering, when Bill Wren was the managing editor of the *Examiner*, and it was great. Then he had a photo archive second to none, of these *classic* pictures of San Francisco—Herb Caen in the forties and himself and nightclub types like Barnaby Conrad. But they were just these wonderful old grainy black and white newspaper- nightclub-type photos.

Rubens: There's a picture of him in *City* with Jake Ehrlich and Bob Lurie.

39-00:03:30

Hinckle: Yes, he knew everybody.

Rubens: The headwaiter at the Mark Hopkins is also in the photo.

39-00:03:24

Hinckle: Oh, yes, just wonderful stuff. So basically, we put out a cover that just says, "Forget Herb Caen, this is the real Mr. San Francisco," got everybody going, with Patterson on there, and got Caen a little pissed off. He was thin-skinned. And Bob was just a great friend and he wrote several articles. He had this phrase which I'll never forget. He was obviously a great raconteur; he could really tell a story. And he'd say, "Now, there's an element of truth in what I'm about to tell you." An element of truth. I never forgot that. And sure enough, there was always more than an element of truth; but you couldn't trust every detail, but it's like the willing suspension of disbelief. They're such great stories and he was there. You'd just say, go ahead, tell the story Patterson. It's just too good to reject. A little Damon Runyonesque.

Rubens: He wasn't on the *Examiner* when you went there.

39-00:04:33

Hinckle: No. No. After this China fiasco, that was sort of his last tour of duty on the *Examiner*. And I guess he'd been writing stuff, freelancing. He ghosted a lot of books for people. He wrote several articles for *City* magazine, and I had him do stuff for other magazines I had later, that fit his expertise. He was a prison journalist. He was in the Atlanta pen and ran the prison magazine. And he was an old Far East Asia hand in the thirties. He was a newspaper bum, skipped from here to there, from Thailand to Hong Kong to other cities in Asia that had English language papers, and worked on them all.

Rubens: That's a biography for someone to write!

39-00:05:25

Hinckle:

Oh, his stories are just marvelous. And he knew it. He had a memory like—What he couldn't remember, he made up so convincingly you didn't care. He was charming. He remembered everything from the thirties on, during the war, being a newspaper man; and then got himself in a little trouble, in and out of the can a couple times, being a prison journalist and that sort of thing; and then going and writing a gossip column in San Francisco and shaking people down. He used to go around town in a—I think it was a red Buick convertible, and he had a police siren he put on the side of it and he had a searchlight on the side he could turn on. He'd show up at crime scenes with his press hat on. Famously, one time, he walked into some mansion that was for sale in Pacific Heights and said, "I'll take it." It was a couple million dollars. This would've been in the fifties. He immediately moved into part of the mansion. And he was throwing big parties there. And then of course, by the time they got through escrow and processed the check, the check bounced. But it took them six or eight months to get him out. He was that sort of a guy. He was just *terrible*; but he was wonderful.

Rubens:

He's gone by the time you started the *Argonaut*.

39-00:07:02

Hinckle:

Yes, he'd died by then. But *City* did a lot of other—For a weekly, it was really on top of things. Like for instance, the first story, the first time the idea was ever raised in print, about restoring the other half of Hetch Hetchy Valley that was flooded for the dam, and draining the dam and restoring it. It's a second Yosemite, there's no question about it. It's just huge. That was raised in *City* magazine by a guy named Tom DeVries who was an environmentalist and writer. He was working at the time for one of the television stations, as a reporter. KGO, I think it was; it could've been KPIX. At any rate, he raised that issue. What if we just drained the dam and restored the other half of the valley? That was later taken up by a guy who became a good friend of mine, George Miller, who is a donor to many things, to UC and to environmental causes everywhere. I never asked him if he read that *City* article or if he had this interest long before. But anyway, he's the sponsor and main funder of the Save Hetch Hetchy movement, which is to drain the dam. And propitiously, events have moved forward, as they do over decades, and now because of the rebuilding of the entire Hetch Hetchy system. At the time, it was a scandal royal. The *New York Times* just tore its hair out and all the Eastern papers went nuts, because San Francisco jammed a bill through congress allowing it to build a dam for its own commercial water use, in the middle of one of the great national parks of the country. Imagine the uproar of the rest of the country. It's as if we took Yellowstone and made half of it a parking lot or something. They flooded half the valley and built this damn dam, and got away with it.

Rubens: Well, wasn't the other part of the scandal that it was federal money that built that dam and had the delivery system go only to Crystal Springs. But then the city had to pay PG&E to get the water up from Crystal Springs.

39-00:09:46

Hinckle: Yes, the *Bay Guardian* is always harping on that. The Raker Act, which was passed in 1913 said that this is water for San Francisco, but it should be used as municipal power and the excess should be sold at reasonable municipal rates, to those who need it, once they've had their fill. Right? But basically, that was never done. It was passed off to private industry and became part of the PG&E empire. Now, however, the whole Hetch Hetchy system is not necessary. In fact, the Schwarzenegger administration did a study and came out that it's entirely feasible to tear down the dam because it's not necessary to hold that water back in the dam anymore, because as they're rebuilding the system for earthquake safety and other reasons downstream, they're enlarging and adding to other reservoirs, which are going to hold the water. The river that leads to the water that's behind the dam, that would keep flowing anyway. It would just keep going into the system. They just don't need the goddamn big dam anymore for that water. There'd be a little shortage of some, but to a very minor degree, hydroelectric power that is produced by the dam. But it's a minuscule loss financially, compared to the benefit of restoring the other half of Yosemite, and the Schwarzenegger administration report said it's entirely feasible to do that. The scary thing in that report was that tearing down the dam, the physical act would be so horrendous because there's no easy route in and out of Yosemite Valley. There is no highway going to Yosemite; they're all smaller roads. So the removal of the concrete from this giant dam is an environmental nightmare in itself. They'd have to build, literally, roads, and the dump trucks would be running day and night for a year and a half or two years, with all this goddamned concrete, and the dust—That's the horror of it. But my friend George Miller came up with this very fantastic, simple idea. He said, "Leave the dam up. Let them make a hotel out of it. The people walk across it now anyway. Don't tear the damn thing down. Leave it up, do whatever you want with it."

Rubens: Or just blast a hole in it?

39-00:12:33

Hinckle: Well, the river goes past it, basically. No problem for the river to keep going. So this would restore the other half of Yosemite. And Miller says that maybe a century from now, somebody will figure an easy way to remove the dam. But for the time being, so what? Don't put us through this nightmare of having to haul all that concrete out since we don't need the dam anymore. Just leave the thing up. Let somebody turn it into a hotel or a tourist camp or whatever they want to do with it." Very smart. And meanwhile, you've got a double Yosemite. It will have a little bathtub ring around it but so what.

Rubens: I think the DeVries article says it's seventy-five to a hundred years before it'll be restored.

39-00:13:11

Hinckle: Well, it's longer in that article. But the studies now say that it's not going to take anywhere near that time to get the valley back to sustaining fauna and flora. A lot of the original rocks and formations are just there; they're in the water.

Rubens: That *City* article has drawings of a mountain peak that's similar to Half Dome.

39-00:13:32

Hinckle: Yes. It's an arch crime not to restore the valley. San Francisco's ridiculously hanging on to it, basically because Dianne Feinstein has an unnatural affection towards that dam and the lake because when she was a supervisor and then later mayor, she spent some time up there. There's a lodge up there that the city maintains, which is basically— It's not rented out to people; it's for city officials and congress people and other officials to use for private parties. It has a caretaker and all that stuff. And it's a magnificent lodge; I've stayed there many times. It's very pleasant. It has six or eight or ten bedrooms.

Rubens: Near Camp Mather?

39-00:14:20

Hinckle: Yes, it's near Mather, but it's sitting on the lake, on the lake created by the dam. So it's a beautiful view and it's a great place.

Rubens: Who invited you to stay there?

39-00:14:36

Hinckle: Oh, Quentin Kopp had a party there once, and some other member of the Board of Supervisors and somebody from the PUC. It's a well-known party pad, over the decades, for city and government officials. It's one of the perks of government. So I don't know how thoroughly Dianne has ever read any study of how it's practical now to restore the valley, but she seems to have taken the position that it will never be torn down during my lifetime, and that scares everybody. And the PUC bureaucracy, which is a horror in itself, is sort of lockstep with that, "oh, we can't do that." They don't really know why. But pretty soon, they're going to lose complete control of the dam because the voters ridiculously passed—and the *Argonaut* strenuously opposed it and we lost—a bond issue; after the most recent big earthquake, they had to rebuild the whole system, the Hetch Hetchy system.

Basically, the language of the bond act required sponsorship also by the counties that the PUC now sells water at a profit to; aside from letting PG&E sell the water to private consumers, it sells water to municipal water districts. The upstream districts in the farm counties near Yosemite get first dibs. But basically, we provide a large part of the water for San Mateo County and

onward, and a large part of the water for Contra Costa County, and sell it to them at a decent price. So the legislation on that, which is what the *Argonaut* was yelling about, says that if the PUC doesn't finish rebuilding the system by X date, a date coming perilously close, within two or three or four years now, that the ownership and authority over the entire project—dam, everything—will go to this multi-county body, to be administrated, more or less, by the state. In other words, San Francisco would lose sovereignty over its own dam, which I think never should've been built; but once it's built and we own the water system, it might be perilously given away because the PUC has never met a deadline and it's already a billion dollars or something over budget and projected four years behind in completing that thing. So in a few years, San Francisco will no longer own its prized municipal asset, which is its own water system.

Rubens: And that's what the *Argonaut* was trumpeting?

39-00:17:23

Hinckle: Well, we were going against the bond issue that if it passed, the city committed itself to, if it didn't do it right, giving up ownership of the system to a multi-county state body—which is what's going to happen-- we screamed, you can't do that! This is insane! But it won. Not every business group was for it; some smaller property owners were wise to it and said this is insane. But the Chamber of Commerce, the newspapers, every politician—everybody said, vote yes on Prop A or whatever damn thing it was; and of course, it's another disaster. But anyway, Miller has for years kept that body going, Save Hetch Hetchy, the nonprofit, and I think within this decade, it is very likely he'll achieve his long-term goal of draining the dam, because it's not necessary.

Rubens: Before we turn to the history of your journal the *Argonaut*, I want to ask you about hear-say about S & M parties held on Alcatraz, in abandoned jail cells. This came up when I was telling somebody about the jail door to your office at the *Examiner*. Do you know anything about that?

39-00:19:05

Hinckle: No. Never heard anything about that. It wouldn't surprise me.

Rubens: Who would have access to it, though? People might have been just sneaking onto the island.

39-00:19:18

Hinckle: Well, I don't know. The Indians controlled it for several years in the late 60s. Movies were shot on it. There was a caretaker there; there weren't guards or anything. It was sort of an abandoned federal property.

They closed down the lighthouse. The lighthouse became outmoded in the sixties. I remember one of the first stories I did as a cub reporter for the *Chronicle*, sometime in the early 1960s, was to go over there for the last day

of the lighthouse and go up in the lighthouse with the light keeper. They put it out because they'd gone to automatic lighthouses. There used to be several lighthouses at various points around the Bay. They're all gone now.

Rubens: Well you are the go-to person for the hidden history of San Francisco, I just wanted to run this tid-bit by you.

39-00:20:18

Hinckle: Now the cell door I had from Alcatraz, I think I said, was from a friend of mine, Ron Turner, came across, who's a collector of all this weird stuff. He got two of them, and he kept one in his office at Last Gasp Books, and I got one and installed it in the *Examiner*. It's still there. The building's long since been bought and sold, and a guy named David Addington who happens to be an acquaintance, friend of mine, has the building. He owns that building now and has been going back and forth with the city on which way he's going to develop it, as living condos or an office space. In fact, there was just an article the other day in the *Real Estate News* that the Burning Man people are looking at taking over the whole building. They have a big business operation for Burning Man, down south of Market, in Dogpatch now, and they're planning to move to the central part of the city, basically to the Tenderloin, where that building is, and that's one of the buildings they're looking at to turn into a Burning Man building.

Rubens: What does Addington do?

39-00:21:33

Hinckle: He's a real estate investor. He owns two buildings. He owns that building he bought from the Fangs, and he owns the— Oh, there's a big billiard parlor sort of across the street from the Golden Gate Theater, that is a sleazy little businesses on Market Street. There used to be formal billiard parlor above it, a very big one, and he's turned that into some sort of a development, a hospital or something like that.

Rubens: So should we move to the *Argonaut*? We sort of followed your trajectory through the *Independent* to the *Examiner*, part of the deal you made when going to the *Independent* was that you could use the Fangs' printing presses for the *Argonaut*. I'd like you to talk about what your vision for the *Argonaut* was. You published an amazing number of important writers. You knew many of them, but how did you bring them and others in?

39-00:22:32

Hinckle: That was easy. It's usually easy to get writers. Most people don't ask people to do anything. If you know them, you usually say, "Hey, I'm starting a magazine, will you do something?" They usually say yes. It's not that hard.

Rubens: Well, so had that idea been brewing in your head ever since the *City* days?

39-00:22:49

Hinckle:

Yes. I was, most of the time, living in New York then, married to Susan Cheever, and we had a sort of San Francisco-type house on 72nd Street, on the hill on the East Side there. It was a framed wooden house with a big front porch. It was one of the last four wood-frame large houses in New York, because that area used to be farm land and these were farmhouses. She hated it. It was *too* much like San Francisco. But I was kind of itching to get back and do something in San Francisco, and she wanted me to stay in New York, become a book editor and scout the West Coast for talent. And that just didn't fit my mode of thinking. Anyway, so I was thinking about a lot of things and just said, might as well start a magazine. We talked about in the past, I had looked at some properties, including the *Territorial Enterprise* in Virginia City, and had the thought of starting up an old Western title journal and publishing some sort of, oh, literary and somewhat irreverent Western journalism, harkening back to that tradition of the time of Harte and Twain and Ambrose Bierce.

There were a lot of quite distinguished publications out here, especially in the 19th century. The *Overland Monthly* was a very, very nationally distinguished magazine that came out here. A guy named Burlingame was involved in that and I think Bret Harte was the editor of it for quite a while. It was the first magazine to sort of become involved in arguing for an approach to the China trade with attention to cultural things with China. And in fact, this guy Anson Burlingame, for whom the city of Burlingame was named, I believe was the first American ambassador to China. There were a lot of things happening on the West Coast that were glorious, in the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, up through and past the earthquake. There was a lot of literary activity. So the idea was to kind of restore something along that line.

The *Territorial Enterprise* wasn't available. Any time you tried to buy that, about eighty people claiming title came out of the woodwork, so it was a nightmare. But the *Argonaut* was. Bierce was an original columnist and editor who had written it for the first two years. The two guys that get credit for being the publishers and editors were sort of anti-Irish, anti-Chinese bigots in the stuff that they wrote, and just had a good time, stayed around town and partied all the time. But basically, Bierce had to write the whole thing himself for the first two or three issues. Anyway, so we restored the *Argonaut*, originally, as a quality paperback quarterly.

Rubens:

What made you decide on this format?

39-00:26:16

Hinckle:

Well, we had to do something, and I thought it should be a national magazine. So just publishing it as a local paper or a slick, a local thing wouldn't really do. So at the time *Granta*, which is still doing well, was a book magazine published in England. That was doing quite well. It came out basically four times a year, it was a quarterly, and it was an oversized paperback, and it had a

lot of distinguished writing in it. And I said, "Well, why don't we do one of those for America and we'll make that the *Argonaut*." And I had an aversion to fundraising, which I never got over after *Ramparts*. I hate raising money. I had my fill of it with that. Then we had to go through fighting for that stock issue for *Scanlan's* and we had to pre-sell a lot of stock and get relatives, get people to buy the stock before the underwriter would bring it out. I was just sick of raising money, didn't like doing it. But that magazine had a unique publishing history because I never raised an investment cent for it; did it all out of scut work and—

Rubens: What does that mean?

39-00:27:37

Hinckle: —availability of press. Well, I didn't have to have any investment in it because I asked the Fangs—who I was close to politically and worked for, and they had a giant printing plant. I said, "Hey, for the first bunch of issues, in your down time in this plant, will you take leftover paper and print this thing for me? You've got this kind of fancy white stock that you put on the cover of the college papers. The original *Rolling Stone*, for instance, had just newsprint inside, but they had a heavier white, coarse newsprint on the cover. Many magazines, in the sixties and seventies, tabloids, did that. They made a cover out of something heavier, white stock, and then they just stuck the newsprint inside. So this was what we did; we used the cover stock all through the whole thing. Didn't cost them much because they just ran the sections of it when they'd finish running another job, and stick it on, and it wasn't that many copies, and we'd gather it. They had a bindery. All we had to do was job out the cover. They didn't have a thing that could print a color cover. Then I went to some friends of mine I'd known from books I'd written, published, and they'd distributed, some of them, friends who owned a group called Publishers Group West, which is a very large book distributing consortium of mostly West Coast—but actually East Coast, also—publishers.

Rubens: That was Charlie Winton.

39-00:29:07

Hinckle: Yes. He's still in business. They made a lot of money. They sold it eventually, oh, about ten, fifteen years ago. However, I'd learned from the publishing business, and also learned from putting out magazines, that your distributor advances you money when you ship a copy. That's how the distribution business works. For instance, when we had the big blow-up over Israel at *Ramparts*, when all of its financial support was withdrawn and I knew we were in trouble, and then it was a race to find investors or the thing was going to under—I made it into a twice-a-month publication, from the monthly. Everybody then thought I was completely insane. What are you doing that for? I said, "Well, what do you mean? We can easily with our staff, we can get two issues a month out of them. Look at all the stuff we have." But the real reason for doing that was not to work the staff harder; it was that we got

two advances a month from the distributor, rather than one. That was a significant amount of money at the time.

Rubens: Why is it in their interest to do that?

39-00:30:22

Hinckle: It's the publishing tradition. The publisher prints it; you deliver it to the distributor; they distribute through other sub-distributors—books, magazines, whatever it might be—to the rest of the country. But the overall distributor takes it from you, and they're responsible for collecting from all the other people down the line and settling up the things and paying you. But in the book business and in the magazine business, the distributor that you contract with, by all publishing tradition—this is books and magazines—gives the publisher an advance against estimated sales. It's just the way it's done. So I saw these guys at a convention—I think it was down in Disneyland; it was the annual book convention, held that year down there. And I said, "Hey, here's the idea. Here's what it's going to look like." I got my old friend Roger Black to sort of spec the design for it. And it looked pretty good. And these are some of the writers we're going to have, here's the idea. We're going to do it just like this. We'll have a book-magazine, four times a year, in the book stores, which is where you guys go. And they loved the idea and said, hey, we're done. Let's make a deal. And we did. So I got the first one printed, basically, for free. I delivered it to them and then they gave me a bunch of money. And then we were off and running. Didn't have to raise a cent.

Rubens: This is in the spring of '93, when the first one was published.

39-00:31:56

Hinckle: Yes, we actually put one out earlier, as a local version, a newsprint tabloid, in '92, because there was a big election coming. It made sense to publish locally, particularly in political times, because if you printed enough copies and delivered them, as opposed to just stuffing them in coffee shops, it was a desirable thing for political advertising. So the *Argonaut* existed for a period as this quality paperback literary quarterly, and as sort of a muckraking, locally oriented political journal, which it still publishes as, in basically a tabloid, home-delivered format, almost all the time at election times.

Rubens: What do you mean it's not hard to get the writers like this? Which John Simon wrote for you? You list him as a co-editor.

39-00:32:54

Hinckle: John Simon was the senior editor at Random House for many years. He was the left wing editor. And I knew him, of course; he was a friend of mine from left wing or New Left circles of New York, from the time I was doing *Ramparts*, on. And he had sort of retired from Random House and was writing a couple of books himself and doing some pieces of criticism. And in New York publishing, there's two John Simons. One is John Simon the bad, who was the theater critic, usually for *New York Magazine* and those places. But he

was mean to everybody. He was called John Simon the bad. And then there was John Simon the good, who was the left wing editor of a lot of New Left writers, things like that, at Random—

Rubens: Wrote for the *New York Review of Books*, didn't he?

39-00:33:41

Hinckle: Yes, he wrote for them occasionally, but he didn't like that crowd too much; his politics were a little too, I'd say, left for them. Anyway, he's a friend of mine and I say, "Hey, I'm going to start this magazine. I can get it printed for nothing, but I've got to get people to write for it. Till we finally get money from the distributor, we can't pay anybody. Somebody must have a piece lying around. Well, we'll just ask people." And we came up with a *stellar* bunch of writers.

Rubens: Stellar! Allen Ginsberg, your friend Sidney Zion.

39-00:34:12

Hinckle: Yes. Allen Ginsberg sent a piece in. Of course Sidney wrote a piece.

Rubens: You have Susan Cheever's name on the cover.

39-00:34:18

Hinckle: Well, Cheever, naturally, yes.

Rubens: Studs Terkel.

39-00:34:21

Hinckle: Oh, Studs is an old buddy of mine; of course he'd do something.

Rubens: Thompson, of course. This says Dr. Hunter.

39-00:34:29

Hinckle: That's what he always called himself. He always called himself Dr. Hunter S. Thompson, because he was a Universal Life Church Doctor of Divinity and he always called himself Dr. Hunter S. Thompson.

Rubens: Even back in *Scanlan's* time?

39-00:34:44

Hinckle: Oh, yes. All during the sixties.

Rubens: There is Ishmael Reed.

39-00:34:49

Hinckle: Yes, Ishmael was a friend in Oakland. And Eve Babitz is a friend of mine from the Coppola days as a Hollywood writer. It's just all kinds of people.

Rubens: It's unbelievable.

39-00:35:02

Hinckle: Erica Jong, who was one of Cheever's best friends. She was always at the house. I'd say, "Hey, will you write something? We're starting a magazine." "Oh, good. Of course, I'll do something."

Rubens: Even Coppola.

39-00:35:13

Hinckle: Yes, there was a piece by Francis. I think he had written something as a memo or bitching about something. I said, "Hey, Francis." I called him. "Do you mind if we print that? I'm starting this *Argonaut*." "Oh, yeah. I'd love to get that around." It was like that.

Rubens: Oh, wow. So you didn't have to pay these people?

39-00:35:28

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: There are three issues that I have.

39-00:35:35

Hinckle: That's all we did, because they finally got an accounting and the Publishers Group West found that they'd been ripped off by their accountant or their publisher—the whole thing nearly collapsed, poor guys—and that a lot of the figures the guy had fed them for sales and things like that were phony or couldn't be done, and the guy had jacked them up to steal the money. And a lot of them never got shipped, they found out. And so it was like a disaster, right? So they said to me, "Jesus, we're really taking a bath on this. We're out all this dough, so you are." So I said, "Oh, no. The deal was I print the things and you distribute them, collect the money. I'm sorry you got screwed, but hey, you're not getting money out of me. I kept up my part of the bargain. I'm sorry you got taken." But then I said, "Jesus, let's forget doing that. And we'll just stay as a local publication till we figure out what to do with it." And then we were going to publish books. We had Jerry Brown and a few people writing books.

Rubens: He has an article in one of the issues.

39-00:36:42

Hinckle: Yes, And so finally, we drifted into a— Well, we started a website, which is now becoming a pretty prominent one in the city. It's called *Argonaut360.com*, because there are too many Argonauts. There's pawn shops and insurance companies, bookstores all over the country. You can't just lay claim to the title *Argonaut*. In fact, there's more than one *Argonaut* publication. There's a quarterly or a twice annual publication put out by the— used to be by the San Francisco Historical Society, called the *Argonaut*. There's a paper in Southern California, Marina del Mar, I believe, called the *Argonaut*; and there's probably a couple other *Argonauts* around the country. It's a common word. You'd have to get some trademark lawyers to take a look

at it. It's like the *Chronicle*. How many *Chronicles* are there, how many newspapers named the *Chronicle* or the *Chronicle*-something around the country? Quite a few. So all you can really trademark is your design of that name and your use of it. And you have to use it to keep alive your claim to it. In other words, if you don't publish for a period of years—and court cases have been decided on this—you've abandoned it. But as long as you publish continually and you publish under your trademarked design, it doesn't matter how many *Argonauts* there are. I can't get a letter from somebody that says, "Hey, I put out an *Argonaut* in Georgia; cease and desist." The hell with it.

Rubens: So how'd you come up with the 360?

39-00:38:29

Hinckle: A partner of mine who's a website inventor, who's got several businesses, John Calder set up the website for us. We said, "Hey buddy, we want to make a website; you do the technical stuff, we'll provide the editorial." He said, "Hey, we can't register *Argonaut*, because there's too many of them. They'll never find it on the web." So he came up with 360. He said we'll tack on 360—I love that. What the hell? Had to add something to it.

Rubens: So the last paperback book format of the magazine comes out in about '94.

39-00:39:07

Hinckle: Yes. We put out three of them, until this disaster, and then continued publishing it as a local paper.

Rubens: And how often did that come out?

39-00:39:15

Hinckle: Two to four times a year. We'd put out special issues. We had a building and a big office on the waterfront and would publish other things. We are a publishing business.

Rubens: So who's backing you? Is this Ron Turner?

39-00:39:33

Hinckle: We did all this out of income.

Rubens: Unbelievable.

39-00:39:36

Hinckle: Yes. It's the only start-up I've ever heard of that didn't have any investment people behind it. Because I hated the idea of raising money.

Rubens: Were you selling advertising, though?

39-00:39:49

Hinckle: Well, yes. The advertising in the quarterly wasn't particularly significant; you couldn't charge them much. But the advertising in the newspaper, the local

paper, it was substantial. We printed a couple-hundred-thousand copies and home delivered it, so it's expensive to put out; but the ads weren't very expensive, and all the big campaigns, just about, had to be in there—which continues to this day. So that carried the overhead.

Rubens: Tell me about the building near the waterfront.

39-00:40:22

Hinckle: Yes, we had a building. A friend of mine, Joe O'Donoghue of the Irish Residential Builders, had a building that he and some guys owned, on Geary Boulevard, and it was just abandoned. They'd rented out a couple places in it but nobody paid much. It was kind of a decaying Victorian and they were going to rip it down in five or six years. So he turned to me one day, and says, "Hey, you want it?" I said, "Yeah, I'll take it. How soon you going to rip it down?" He said, "I don't know, four or five years. We have to work out what we're going to develop on the site." I said, "I'll take it." It was a free building. So we called it the Argonaut Building.

Rubens: Wow. And so what happened?

39-00:40:59

Hinckle: Well, eventually, they ripped it down. Kaiser's there now; it's a big Kaiser office building. And then we moved to a different office on the waterfront, where he was involved with the Residential Builders, and we said, hey, we'll take some space from you, too, since we're sort of involved in the same side on a lot of political issues. So we worked out of the waterfront for quite a few years and then we've had various places. It's been in North Beach, it's been above a muffler shop owned by a friend of mine, where I've got my archives.

Rubens: So who's we? You're the editor, you're basically the controlling voice; but do you have other people that you've been working with over these years?

39-00:41:46

Hinckle: Well, off and on, yes. Like Ron Turner's a heavy element of local artists in there. He was the original dirty comic book publisher in San Francisco, first publisher of Robert Crumb and that sort of school of art, and was involved—they were all involved—with the beginning of the Mitchell brothers, another cultural story, who were like the Medicis of the underground artists in the city. And some of them, like Crumb, have become quite famous, but their work appeared—well, in *Scanlan's*, in *War News* and certainly in the *Argonaut*. So Turner was always at the ready with art and artists and just assigned people. My daughter, for a while, was the managing editor. That was a famous incident, where I fired her.

Rubens: Well, let's hear the story.

39-00:42:46

Hinckle:

This was Pia. She is, and has been a professional journalist. She went to graduate school at Columbia in journalism, and then worked for *Newsweek* in Rome for a while, and worked at the *Bay Guardian* as managing editor. Then she came back to San Francisco and worked for several years as the business editor of the *Examiner*, of all things. So I said, "Hey, if you want to run the Argonaut—" A friend of mine, Nancy Ho, had said, "Hey, I'll put some money into it." I said, "Well, we don't take investments, but if you want to buy some furniture and get some computers in here and stuff like that, that would be great, and we'll owe you." She was a close friend of mine for a long time. She was Mel Belli's old girlfriend. Finally married Mel, after they went back and forth, and became Mrs. Belli in the last years of his life. She and I had gone out, we were very close, and she helped out a lot. But we basically never took investors.

Rubens:

Well, you had to have an advertising strategy— someone in charge of that.

39-00:43:59

Hinckle:

No, we never had ads. We tried a couple of people on commission; they didn't work out. Basically, I end up selling all the ads, which is why there aren't many small ads in there. There are the big ones that come in during campaigns and we say, okay, come on firemen, cops, you've got to pony up. Which is the way publications have always operated. They make the money off of advertising. It's only now, with the collapse of newspaper advertising, that they're thinking of what they should've done in the first place, which was Howard Gossage's idea —and why all publications were going to be in trouble—which was charge enough for the publication so you're independent of advertising. But in news publication, basically, they're now trying to make it by charging more and charging for the internet; but for all of last century, every newspaper and magazine made their money off of selling advertising.

Rubens:

So the *Argonaut* sold for twelve dollars an issue.

39-00:45:16

Hinckle:

It's there on the three issues. They were good magazines. Some of them were themed. They were pretty interesting.

Rubens:

As with all of your journals, there are wonderful color plates. But so tell me about Pia's role.

39-00:45:25

Hinckle:

By then we had a cash flow, so we could have people in the office setting type and doing different things. And some people started to subscribe and that sort of business stuff. And I was back east a large part of the time. So she came in. And I would always take deadlines rather cavalierly. This is when it was a quarterly, so to speak. It never seemed particularly important to me what week the quarterly came out. When it was shipped, it shipped, and it sat in the bookstores for a year, year and a half or two. But she was a journalism major

and had worked on various papers, and she was used to putting out things. So at one point, she sent this message to me in New York. "If you don't send in the last of the copy or stop writing, or say you're going to change things and let us put out the issue as it is now, the entire staff will go on strike and walk out in the morning." And she came to work the next day and there was basically a new staff in there] and the locks had been changed. It was one of those things.

Rubens: You just said, that's it, I'm not going to be in this position?

39-00:46:41

Hinckle: Yes. I said to her, "You'd do the same thing to me." It took her about a year. She laughs about it now.

Rubens: Really, overnight?

39-00:46:53

Hinckle: It was overnight. Yes, I called a friend of mine and said, "Hey, you're going in there. You're going to be the editor. Get a locksmith, change the locks, do this and that. And call this guy and call that guy; get them in. Pick up all the proofs, let me see where it is. We're putting a new staff in. You're the managing editor."

Rubens: When did that happen?

39-00:47:16

Hinckle: Probably between two and three.

Rubens: Your sister is also there, she's listed as production manager.

39-00:47:23

Hinckle: Well, I usually let her into things. She got work out of the *Argonaut*, as she had out of *Ramparts*; we'd send her out to interview people, and she was around the office then. She has a fine printing business. We don't speak anymore, but that's a family thing.

Rubens: Is that right? I saw her at your talk on *Ramparts*; it was for the publication of Peter Richardson's book on *Ramparts*, at Vesuvius.

39-00:47:58

Hinckle: Yes, well, she worked on *Ramparts*, she knew a lot of those people who came to the talk. And it was a public event. We haven't been talking. It was over my mother and how she treated my mother. Typical family story.

Rubens: Who would have known at that event? And of course, Roger Black designed the *Argonaut*.

39-00:48:18

Hinckle:

Oh, Roger Black's the best guy in the country— He's the best designer. He's got clients all around the world. He's designed, re-designed every major daily here and in Italy and in Brazil, Japan. He's got an office in Italy. He started the first internet type foundry, private type foundry back in the eighties, when that stuff just hadn't been done yet.

Rubens:

I see that your old friend Bobbie Stauffacher is also on the masthead. But she's identified as an architect, not a graphic artist. She of course had worked for you before and was well known for her computer type faces.

39-00:49:02

Hinckle:

Yes, we published selections from some of her books. She knew a lot about California history. She did a great study of California. Very, very, *very* smart woman. She thought about that a lot. Kevin Starr thought about that a lot, another friend of mine who's in all these issues. And out of that, kind of, came this early germ of the idea that we promoted in *City* magazine, about the Pacific Rim; a similar orientation that I urged the Fangs to take up. And more recently, just a couple years ago, I reiterated that theme when Will Hearst was seriously looking at starting up a magazine based in California. I mentioned that before. We were going to call that the *Alta*, after the *Alta California*, which was the first daily in Northern California—I think it was the first daily in California; actually, I think it was the second, but it really doesn't matter. So we were going to call it the *Alta*, and we spent a lot of time and sort of redefined that idea and said, this should be the theme of the—I found that memo; I'll give you that one. I haven't found the original one for the Fangs. But basically, they're reiterations on a theme that was first laid out in *City* magazine.

Rubens:

By the way, there is a complete run of *City* at the main branch of the San Francisco public library. There's also a useful clipping file on you in the SF History Room at the main branch.

39-00:50:48

Hinckle:

So anyway, now the *Argonaut* is a give-away that comes out two or three, four times a year. We keep volume numbers on them, but I don't believe that—it's like *Scanlan's*; you can't find *Scanlan's* in the libraries. They're *hard as hell* to find. It goes for a small fortune on the internet because it was barely a year old when it got shut down in Canada, and not around long enough for the libraries, in their slow-moving way, to get subscriptions to it.

Rubens:

But you've got a run of the *Argonaut* in your storeroom above the muffler shop?

39-00:51:24

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens:

So you've been putting this out for a long time.

39-00:51:41

Hinckle: Yes, it first was published in '92; the first fancy quarterly-type issue came out in '93.

Rubens:

That's one of the longest running journals of that type in the country.

39-00:52:02

Hinckle: Yes, it was published from when Ambrose Bierce worked on it; I think the date was 1877. It's on the *Argonaut* masthead. It was around the time the *Examiner* started as a daily. There was a proliferation of newspapers and journals in San Francisco then. It was post-gold rush. It went through a succession of owners and it was published into some period about the middle fifties. And then it finally ceased publication. And I restarted it in the nineties.

Rubens:

In 1993, yes. Now before we started taping this morning, you were telling me that it puzzles you about why there aren't more literary magazines in the San Francisco area, because there is such a wealth of topics, writers, universities, new things happening all the time.

39-00:53:33

Hinckle: There's never been a successful city magazine in San Francisco—for that matter, in California. *Los Angeles* has kind of caught on, but it's never become distinguished. And there was a time when there was *California* magazine that tried to be a magazine for California. This was in the seventies. I wrote a few articles for them. Then Clay Felker bought it and renamed it *New West* magazine, and that published for a few years. Not many. But there's been a succession of San Francisco magazines, and none of them ever caught on or became distinguished. There's one now, but it's okay. It's basically a fashion slick; there isn't really any literary or political content to it whatsoever. The newspapers are famously jokes in the city. There's a famous line in the Watergate movie, where Bernstein or Woodward are trying to convince Ben Bradlee to run the story of the break-in and he says, "Oh, go out and sell that to the *Chronicle*; they'll buy anything in San Francisco."

But for a city with a distinguished journalistic history up through at least the forties—And when Scott Newhall had the *Chronicle*, it was the liveliest paper in the country, in the sixties. But contemporary San Francisco journalism, in just about every form, is flat on its ass. *Anybody* in any journalism school will say, oh, it's terrible. It's amazing. I thought in, *City* magazine, we turned that into a damned interested magazine. Did a lot of pioneering things. And it came out as a commercial weekly. That *had* a big ad sales staff and it was going along quite well. I think it had a pretty solid circulation of 40- going towards 50,000. The few times where we did this Sunday magazine in the *Examiner*, Roger Black and I did, that was a *sterling* good magazine. It was really an excellent journal and did its commercial job for the advertisers. The *Argonaut* has certainly raised hell, has had some very distinguished writers and has kept coming out. Maybe it's just too pleasant to

live in this town; people don't want to —I don't know what it is, really. The talent's there, the ideas are there.

Rubens: But you've shrunk the original, or your vision for the *Argonaut* after the first three book like issues; it became oriented to San Francisco and California politics; you didn't have the same national focus.

39-00:56:18

Hinckle: Yes, I didn't want to go out and go through the process of raising money to make it a regular monthly or a paper. And the easiest thing to do, so I didn't have to raise money, was to use the ready political advertising when you put it out to every home in the city. And at that, it's always full of half non-political stuff; there's a lot of art and short stories in it and stuff. It's a regular magazine; it's not just focused on politics. But the ads are what supported it. Eventually, I guess, I could have talked to a few people and said, "Okay, let's make it a regular publication and take some investors," and that sort of thing. But I don't know, I just had an aversion to it. I got so sick of it during *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's* that I just never wanted to do it again. But the *Argonaut* is unique for students of publishing, in that it started with no investment whatsoever. Just the advances from the distributor. And the deal with the printer to print it in their dead time because they owed me a few favors.

Rubens: But that deal ended, right?

39-00:57:34

Hinckle: Oh, that was just for the quarterly. When we printed it as 200,000 tabloids, we paid the bill like everybody else. I'm sure they gave me favorable press time, and probably gave me a little bit of a deal on the price; but nonetheless, we paid.

Rubens: So what's the circulation when you— What's the run size that you have now?

39-00:57:53

Hinckle: Usually, about 150,000. These are home deliveries. Sometimes it's up to 200,000. We don't have subscribers. We home deliver, put them on every doorstep. It's a ferocious cost. It costs far more, three times the amount of money, to pay the home delivery than it does to print the damned thing. But it's far more effective if they're on every doorstep.

Rubens: How do you come up with that number of 200,000?

39-00:58:26

Hinckle: Well, we took the model of the *Independent* when the Fangs had it and it was so successful for a while. That was a free distribution paper. It became the largest free-distribution newspaper in the country, in the United States, because they expanded down the peninsula and bought some titles down there also. And their citywide circulation was approximately 180- to 200,000 when

they went to every home in the city and every apartment house you could get into to leave copies. So that became the model.

Rubens: So that's how you calculate what the population is? 750,000 comes down to—

39-00:59:04

Hinckle: Yes, it's the places that have doorsteps: homes, flats and apartment houses. Of course, this is a city more of—at least the west side—individual homes and apartment houses. But apartment houses where you can get in to leave copies, at least in the lobby. And occasionally, I know the owners of some places, like Park Merced, and they let us go in there and actually leave them at the doors of the residents; but usually, these big complexes frown on that. But the figure came from the *Independent*, which was very, very successful as a free home-delivered local paper, when I worked with the Fangs on it, so I knew what the circulation model was.

Rubens: So you keep up your investigative reporting and issue oriented campaigns. What about hijinks?

39-00:59:59

Hinckle: Yes. I'll pull out some issues of the paper for you.

Rubens: Great. On the web, I think you've been archiving only since '08.

39-01:00:17

Hinckle: I think that's right. We've still got to scan some dusty issues and get them on line.

Rubens: Let's stop for a minute and change the tape.

Begin Audio File 40

Rubens: So while I was changing tapes your daughter Pia Hinckle came over to visit so has joined this interview. It's fortuitous because your dad had earlier today told the story of firing you as managing editor of the *Argonaut*. Let's hear it from your perspective. You had been brought on to be—

40-00:00:18

Hinckle: The managing editor.

Pia Hinckle: Yes, I did a lot. I did all the work.

Rubens: Let's hear about it. What was the work, literally?

40-00:00:28

Pia Hinckle: Well, the work was trying to coordinate— We had to put together an editorial team, so we needed to have an art designer, Rona Michele I think was in there.

Hinckle: Roger Black did the logo and the basic format, but every issue needed design attention.

Pia Hinckle: Basically, he had done this so many times, for him, it's just sort of like sitting in a kitchen, right? So it's like, okay, let's call Roger and get a new font design. Let's get the templates all designed, and then let's get so-and-so. And then Rona, we found through a friend of mine. She was looking for work.

Hinckle: She was good.

40-00:01:07

Pia Hinckle: Then he had called all of his old farts to get stories and artwork and all of that stuff, so then it was just trying to get everything together and come up with some kind of publishing schedule—which was, of course, the major problem. So the biggest part of my job was probably trying to have any semblance of a schedule for him to actually get the thing completed enough so that it could finally be printed.

Rubens: And this mattered because you had to book the printer and then line up the distributor.

40-00:01:36

Pia Hinckle: And ads were sold, of course, and all of that stuff, and subscriptions were taken on a supposed quarterly edition. That is definitely his major weak point, is completion.

Hinckle: Not my strength.

Rubens: So how many issues did you do?

40-00:01:53

Pia Hinckle: Two. [laughs] Two in a year.

Rubens: And then tell it from your point of view. You just got so fed up with the waiting for his stuff?

40-00:02:02

Pia Hinckle: No, no, not at all. No. I learned a ton from him. He's brilliant. We'd get these layouts, designs, and he knew exactly what was wrong with it. The problem was he could never just sort of stick with something. He'd get one more piece of art, he'd want to rip up everything and redo it all again. And then the other big problem was he was writing a couple of big pieces for it, and of course, he would never finish them.

Hinckle: Of course not.

Pia Hinckle: The straw that broke the camel's back—I didn't resign; he fired me. So literally, he was in New York, he wouldn't finish his work, he wouldn't let us

finish it for him; and I finally told him, “Look, if you don’t get it done—” He was editing the whole thing by fax in New York, a 125 pages or whatever, and then faxing it back, and then changing everything again three days later. I said, if you don’t finish your piece, we’re just going to yank it out and we’re just going to go with the book the way it is, without your piece in it.” And then he had some flunkie come over and change the locks and fire me, because he was too chicken-shit to do it himself.

Hinckle: Right.

Rubens: Who did he get to do this?

Hinckle: The travel agent. Mary O’Donnell.

40-00:03:24
Pia Hinckle: Who was a nice lady, but fired me.

Rubens: So you literally went to the office expecting to now put this thing together without his article, and it’s locked.

40-00:03:33
Pia Hinckle: Not exactly. I went to the office and she came over with a locksmith and said, “We’re changing the locks.” She hardly said anything. She was just like, your father has decided, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. And so then I called him and used every swear word that he’s ever taught me in his entire life and smashed the phone. Can I say all those words? You goddamned mother-fucking asshole, piece of shit. Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. He was in New York, of course, protected from it all.

Rubens: You’re just listening to this, Warren?

40-00:04:09
Hinckle: Yes. It was Stalinesque.

40-00:04:10
Pia Hinckle: And I’m happy to say it was never really published again. I think one; finally, a year later, the last one came out.

Rubens: Without you.

40-00:04:18
Pia Hinckle: Yes, it all fell apart. Yes. And then he had obsessed about one of my friends, who was working as one of the assistant editors. He was convinced that Suzanne— You had it in for Suzanne, for some reason. Remember the blonde—

Hinckle: No, I don’t remember her.

Pia Hinckle: —from Sarah Lawrence? So everyone got fired except Rona.

- Hinckle: I remember your suitor.
- Pia Hinckle: Oh, well, whatever. He wasn't working there, though.
- Hinckle: No. Just hanging around.
- Pia Hinckle: But Rona, who was the art designer, who I'm still terrific friends with, so poor Rona was the only one left behind, of the old team. I said, "Rona, just make sure you get paid in cash, ahead of time." Which she did.
- Rubens: So you weren't speaking to him for a while?
- 40-00:05:01
- Pia Hinckle: Yes. It was probably three or four months. Actually, it was that night we were out with Ron Turner—
- Hinckle: It took a while.
- Pia Hinckle: —at some bar in the Mission. And Ron said this is crazy. You have to talk to him. And I think you kind of apologized, sort of.
- Hinckle: I'm sure I did, kind of. I think I said, well, you'd do the same thing to me.
- Pia Hinckle: Yes, well—
- Rubens: Hard to believe.
- 40-00:05:32
- Hinckle: Family tradition. [laughs] It's all true.
- Pia Hinckle: It's true.
- Rubens: Well, just when you came in, I was asking your father about an interview that he did in about '93, '94. The book's published in '95. It's called *Then and Now: Candid Conversations With Those Who Shaped the Era*.
- 40-00:05:52
- Hinckle: I never heard of that book.
- Rubens: Ron Chepesiuk is the author. There's a chapter on you –among 17 others. He asks you about the *Argonaut*, if it would be the next *Ramparts*? And you said it depends on how bad the rest of them are. You considered it a low period of journalism.
- 40-00:06:17
- Hinckle: Well, probably. Nothing's changed that much.
- Rubens: You took a lot of whacks at Clinton in the first issue. You saw him as a servant of the corporations. You wrote about a story floating around about the

Contras laundering money in Arkansas; and you wrote that he had to know about.

40-00:06:37

Hinckle: Oh, that was a huge thing on the early internet.

Rubens:

So how bad was the competition? There obviously has been room for this to keep going so long, close to twenty years.

40-00:06:49

Hinckle: But I was just too lazy to raise the money to get it out regularly. I publish it regularly at election time, when the money is easy. Otherwise it's on the web and comes out in paper intermittently.

Pia Hinckle:

There was a space in between, though, too. The book was more like—I remember you talking about this—more of like a *Granta* idea. It's a paperback—it's a collection of fiction, artwork, political essays—

Rubens:

Exposés.

40-00:07:22

Pia Hinckle: —exposés, all of that, kind of put together in a book format, as opposed to a tabloid.

Rubens:

It's a great idea.

40-00:07:31

Pia Hinckle: And then the *Argonaut*, the paper, was I still there?

Hinckle:

Well, you worked on the first tabloid; you put out the first one. The first *Argonaut*.

Pia Hinckle:

When we did the tab?

Hinckle:

The red one, yes.

Pia Hinckle:

Oh, yeah, you're right. Oh, my God, now I remember. It was a lot of really late nights. Yes, yes.

Hinckle:

Well, the thing about this type of publishing—

Pia Hinckle:

That's right.

Hinckle:

—when you refuse to raise money, is that it tended to be, a lot of it, very much last minute, because I wouldn't really press the button till we knew we had enough money. It wasn't just publishing one copy, it was publishing 150,000, or a lot, and then delivering them was a big cost. So you had to have enough advertising money to press that button. And if we didn't, it was like, screw it, we won't put it out. So you had to have people wait.

40-00:08:29

Pia Hinckle: I forgot about this. This was at the same time, and that started the whole election editions, yes. That's right. So then after I got fired, I went to the *Guardian*. That was after.

Hinckle: Oh, is that when you went?

Pia Hinckle: So I had just moved back. I had lived in Italy for five years and worked for *Newsweek* and Vatican Radio and the Associated Press. So when I came back, he was starting this and we just kind of joined forces.

Hinckle: So *that's* when you went to the *Guardian*.

Pia Hinckle: After I was fired. That's why I remember being asked—

Hinckle: That would make Bruce [Brugmann] happy.

40-00:08:55

Pia Hinckle: So what happened with the *Argonaut*? I was like, "My dad fired me." And they were like, "What?"

Rubens: So how long were you at the *Guardian*?

40-00:09:04

Pia Hinckle: About three years. That's where I met my husband, and then I got a fellowship for the journalism program at Columbia—the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship in Economics and Business Journalism, that's for mid-career journalists—and so then I left and went back east for year at Columbia, and came back and worked at the old *Examiner*.

40-00:09:18

Hinckle: She was their business editor.

Pia Hinckle: Yes. So I had already been working for like seven years or so. And then went back and did that program, and then was hired by Hearst afterwards, as the business editor.

Rubens: And how long did you do that?

40-00:09:53

Pia Hinckle: That was only about a year and a half because that was at the beginning of the whole dot.com explosion. I went to work for Schwab, Charles Schwab, they were starting all of these magazines around personal finance and investing, so they hired me.

Rubens: Oh, what an amazing trajectory. So how long did you do that?

40-00:10:16

Pia Hinckle: That was only about a year and a half, and then it turned out to be a complete fiasco, because when you go from real newsroom journalism to a corporate kind of environment, where they're not really even sure what journalism is—it's a peculiar fit. And there were just these sort of endless circular meetings that didn't go anywhere. I just was not used to that environment. So I basically quit after a year. And then I worked freelance off and on, and then I had twins and then—

Rubens: So this is Schwab's magazine or zines? They had several? Were they oriented to their clients?

40-00:10:53

Pia Hinckle: Yes. They were just private, for their clients, on investing and personal finance. And they had a lot of different requirements because they're a licensed broker, so the stories had to be— Some of them had to actually be written by people with certain securities licensing and— So the whole way you came up with story ideas, how they were edited, how they were legally vetted, all of that was a whole different system.

Rubens: Fascinating. But she wasn't your spy, Warren? You could've done exposés on Charles Schwab or—

40-00:11:24

Hinckle: I've never thought about that.

Rubens: I've just been reading a couple of—I'm going to interview Warren Hellman and I've been reading about the world of finance and the fall of some of the big brokerage houses.

40-00:11:34

Pia Hinckle: He's a fascinating guy, though.

Rubens: *Vanity Fair*'s exposé of Merrill Lynch, is a good piece in the tradition of your father's exposés.

Hinckle: He's a very interesting guy. I think we'll talk one of these days. Someone said he asked, in anticipating meeting him, "Will he scream at me?" I don't know why people are scared of me?

But you should ask him why that paper [*The Bay Citizen*] is such a piece of shit. He should put more money in it, for Christ's sake. It'll never work. Well, one big mistake I think he's making is as I told George Miller who is putting some money into it: "Jesus Christ, tell them to look at *Politico*." Everybody said it was ridiculous; you're not going to make it. Well, it's become the top political website. And they've got plenty of financial backing and everything to hire everybody, and that's working. But where they're really making money is not so much off the internet; they publish once a week, a print

edition, a fat goddamned tabloid, which has got every corporate advertiser in the world.

Pia Hinckle: And all the people on Capitol Hill subscribe to it because they've got to be right on top of all that stuff, so they get the digests.

Hinckle: Yes, but they just want to be in on the swim. But they take stuff that's on the web—I don't know what they do with it. But it's the print edition, which is so fat, they charge up the butt for the ads. And that's what he should do with the *Bay Citizen*, because then you could really charge money for ads. Everybody likes him. He's got every corporate advertiser in town.

40-00:12:51

Pia Hinckle: What's their relationship with the *Times*, though? They're printing their little section in the *Times*.

Hinckle: That's not going to hurt the *Times*; you could give the goddamned thing away.

Pia Hinckle: No, but how much is the *Times* paying them for that content, the *Bay Citizen*?

Hinckle: I have no idea. I don't know how that's set up. It doesn't matter. The only thing that's been profitable, hugely, on the internet, except—*The Huffington Post* maybe is making money now; nobody really knows. But *Politico* is making tons of money by, once a week, just in the environment of Washington, putting this fat thing—which is *fat* with corporate advertising—and whatever editorial they put in, I don't know if it's fresh or they just reprint stuff, but everybody wants to be in there, to be seen to advertise. And he could do the same thing with corporate advertisers here. What would it cost him? Nothing. But it's in your budget. And then he'd have a solid financial basis,

Rubens: He's given something like \$5 million as seed money.

40-00:13:50

Hinckle: Yes, but it's not enough.

Pia Hinckle: As you know, it's never enough.

Hinckle: Oh, it's never enough. It took *Sports Illustrated* twenty-something years, with all of Time-Life's backing, to even break even. It's a rough game.

Rubens: But I want to come back to the *Argonaut*. So you've been doing this— After the book format, it's twelve years that you've been maintaining a website and putting out a tabloid.

40-00:14:19

Hinckle: It comes out two or three times a year. Now it's got the website. Oh, you've got to see what just went up. You'll laugh, it's very funny. It just says, "Top demos fire on party boss." But the details are what's funny. It's absurdist.

- Pia Hinckle: Did you write it?
- Hinckle: Yes. Oh, yes. It's theater of the absurd. It's so funny.
- Pia Hinckle: Your good friend, Aaron Peskin is in there?
- Hinckle: Conway's in there, blasting Clint Reilly, who's Peskin's chief defender. It's very amusing.
- Rubens: Will you lay out your thesis about the hijacking of the Democratic Party, which you wrote about in a recent *Argonaut*? I want your assessment of what the political scene is today. You wrote an article during the Gulf War questioning what happened to radicalism in San Francisco, and ostensibly, this is another period in which the left, or I guess it's more accurate to say progressives, are not successful.
- 40-00:15:06
Hinckle: Well, that article was about more traditional left radicalism. It's pretty common knowledge now that the progressives, or whatever they used to call them, on the Board of Supervisors have collapsed. This was almost the beginning of it, because what happened is they took over the—that would be Chris Daly and Peskin, particularly—There was famously a Burton machine and there was a Willie Brown machine. For good or evil, they were there. But basically, they just wanted power and they wanted to take care of things this way and that; but they didn't dick around too much. These guys set out to—particularly because Peskin was going to be termed out as a supervisor—to take control, in the old-fashioned machine way, of the Democratic Party structure, and use it to continue to control the forthcoming district elected Board of Supervisors by controlling the recommendations, the official Democratic recommendations for supervisor. Because prior to this fall, when everything went to hell, after we started this fight against them, it was like a golden endorsement. If you got endorsed by the Democratic Party, they put out a slate card and you were in.
- Pia Hinckle: Well, but not only that, basically, they controlled the Democratic central committee, which controls all of the money going into those candidates' pools. So one of the big things now is that you're supposed to just only take public financing. Well, where is the public financing coming from—the Democratic Party Central Committee. So if you're not their tool, there's no way you're going to get their endorsement *or* their money.

- 40-00:16:40
Hinckle: Oh, you can't get in. Peskin has totally controlled it. And then they changed the bylaws. They did it very easily. They changed the bylaws first because the standard for the Democratic Party in California, the state Democratic Party, which has got every county and all that crap for an endorsement, official endorsement for the party, is 60 percent. For a big group of people, that's kind of hard to achieve. They changed it to 50 percent plus one. Much easier to get.

Just for this thing. Then two years later, wham-o, they took control. And the idea behind it was that, as stated in emails by Daly screaming at people, was that, hey, we have to control the endorsement because that's how we get progressives in as supervisors; we get them nominated by the Democratic Party and they always win it. Like two people in the last ten to fifteen years, whatever, have been elected to the board who were Democrats Ed Jew is one of the exceptions. And Ross Merkarimi, who's a Green. The rest of them, if you ran for supervisor if you didn't have that thing, you usually lost. They usually won. So it was an easy way to continue perpetuating their same type of thinkers on the board. And with Peskin being termed out and Daly being termed out, control of the whole game. That's what that laid out. And that raised a fight, and then it got picked up around town and people started to talk about it, and it culminated in this last election, when they lost everything. The gold standard went. They lost every supervisor they backed.

40-00:18:11

Pia Hinckle: Well, it's also about how power corrupts. Just like what's happened with the *Guardian*. The *Guardian* has always been on the opposition side against the Burton machine, against the Willie machine, blah-blah-blah. But as soon as the machine was theirs—

Hinckle: Yes, then what did they do?

Pia Hinckle: —they start falling apart, too.

Hinckle: And I noticed that their turnout, their usual voter post-mortem—

Pia Hinckle: Is a lot smaller.

Hinckle: Yes, a lot smaller.

Pia Hinckle: Because these guys are just as hypocritical as these other assholes.

Hinckle: Yes, as everybody else.

Pia Hinckle: They're all exactly the same. So power corrupts.

Hinckle: They've got to cleanse the machine. Anyway, nobody else started this fight. Only this crazy *Argonaut* started that fight. Nobody had picked this fight with these guys before.

Pia Hinckle: That's true.

Hinckle: And by the time the fall came around, it changed the city, they lost everything. Lost their ballot issues, they've lost all their people. It went down. The gold standard's gone. It used to be if you got the Democratic Party endorsement that was it. Not anymore. They've devalued the coin.

You should tell her a couple of the stories back in the *Ramparts* period, when you girls were growing up, the loonies that used to come to the house.
 [laughs]

40-00:19:21

Pia Hinckle: Well, during the *Ramparts* era, I was too little to remember most of that; I remember more of *City* magazine era. Well, Bob Lewis was the conspiracy theorist, who lived in our basement for like a year.

Hinckle: Yes, I wrote a couple articles about him in the *Chronicle*, and then he ended up living in the basement.

Rubens: Did you work with him on the JFK investigations?

40-00:19:48

Hinckle: He was doing Kennedy-assassination-investigation-type stuff.

Pia Hinckle: How *did* he end up in the basement, though? Why did you adopt him?

Hinckle: Oh, because everybody was chasing him—the mafia, the CIA and everything—he needed a place to hide.

Pia Hinckle: So anyway, it was probably supposed to be just for a week or something and then it ended up being six months or year.

Hinckle: Yes. And then he'd try and help out around the house, like putting up bookshelves in the hallway upstairs—

Pia Hinckle: They'd all fall down.

Hinckle: —which collapsed. And the last straw was the clock.

Pia Hinckle: We came back from a weekend up at my grandmother's house and my sister and I were with my mom, and we came into the kitchen. He had taken the old cuckoo clock, which hadn't been working for a while, and he had it completely dissected on the kitchen floor. And there it was, just spread out and Mom's was freaked out. He said, "I'm working on trying to put it back together."

Hinckle: Yes, I think we got it in Europe one time or something.

Pia Hinckle: My mom just was freaked out. She was like, that's it. Bob needs to go, with his station wagon, his white station wagon, filled with files.

Hinckle: That car was filled with files.

Rubens: Pia, do you have your own stories about Hunter Thompson?

40-00:20:55

Pia Hinckle: I remember Hunter more from the eighties era, when he was here working for the *Examiner*. I only met him a few times, when we'd come and meet Dad and they were all having dinner with the Mitchell brothers. The Mitchell brothers, I knew better.

Hinckle: You have that line in the Hunter Thompson book, if I ever finish it.

Pia Hinckle: Another famous project. [laughs]

Hinckle: Yes, it's only five years. Hey, it took Wayne Ewing eighteen years to get the first Hunter Thompson film out. What's the rush?

Pia Hinckle: That's true, that's true.

Hinckle: In the book, you have a line where you ask him, "Hunter, why do you wear two watches?"

Pia Hinckle: Oh, yes. Yeah, that was in the Mission someplace. He wore two watches, one on each arm. And I said, "Why do you wear both?" He says, "Time is very important to me." But you never understand what he's saying, "Time," then he mumbled something.

Hinckle: He did mumble.

Rubens: Your dad gave you a party at the Mitchell Brothers.

40-00:21:51

Pia Hinckle: I had my twenty-first birthday at the Mitchell Brothers. I did. Upstairs, in the famous room, with all of my San Francisco friends. All these kids had known my dad since high school, basically, because some of them took either the San Francisco history class or the journalism class at Urban School. A couple of my old boyfriends were there. So we're all twenty, twenty-one. It was basically a huge party upstairs in their huge office-pool room. It was craziness, with an open bar and a giant cake shaped like a huge cock. And then we were all allowed to just wander freely to see all the strip shows and whatever. And some of these kids are from Pacific Heights were knocked out. [laughs]

Hinckle: It's a pretty good place for a party.

Pia Hinckle: My sister and I always joke about the pornographer family friends. Dad's line is always, "Just folks. They're just folks."

Hinckle: They're just folks.

Pia Hinckle: Our family friends.

- Hinckle: Artie wanted to marry Big Angie, my mother.
- Pia Hinckle: He did. He was very sweet. They were all very sweet. They were just totally crazy.
- Rubens: Did they hang out at the house?
- 40-00:22:56
- Hinckle: My mother's house? They were over there all the time.
- Pia Hinckle: They were there a lot. They were there for family parties and stuff, absolutely. And can I tell the wedding story?
- Hinckle: Sure. Which one?
- Pia Hinckle: About what Artie told me?
- Hinckle: Oh, God! Sure
- Pia Hinckle: So when he remarried to Susan Cheever, and my sister and I had had sort of varying degrees of friendliness and not friendliness with Susan—[laughs]
- Hinckle: Well, they said, "Don't do it." They told me off. They said, "You're crazy. Don't do it."
- Pia Hinckle: We were just sort of concerned. We were like, "We know she's pregnant and all this stuff, but maybe you shouldn't get married. Maybe you guys should just raise this baby together." So we kind of gave him this whole hard daughters' talking to. And then that night at the bachelor party at Elaine's, my sister and I were there and we showed up wearing eye patches Artie starts talking to us, giving us a really hard time. "You shouldn't give your dad a hard time. He's in love. She's all right."
- Hinckle: Artie was stoned all the time.
- Pia Hinckle: He fed you oatmeal, he took care of you.
- Hinckle: That's Artie.
- Pia Hinckle: "You're going to give him all this shit?" And then the next day— Well, that whole wedding was so insane anyway.
- Hinckle: It was pretty insane.
- Pia Hinckle: So the next day, when we finally actually made it very late, up to the wedding—
- Hinckle: For a while, they thought I wasn't going to show. They were all happy.

Pia Hinckle: I won't go into all that level of detail.

Rubens: Cheever writes a little about it in her memoir, *Note Found in a Bottle*.

40-00:24:24

Pia Hinckle: But Artie and some stripper girlfriend who he had with him —she got so drunk she fell over a balcony fence and landed in—

Hinckle: That was Ellen Ray, an old girl friend of mine. She was a reporter —put out what was then called *CovertAction* [stet] *Information Bulletin*, an anti-CIA magazine that actually published the names of agents around the world. Oh, she was stoned. Fell into a flower bed. Everyone wondered if she was dead, but Mrs. Cheever exclaimed: "My dahlias!" Someone handed her his card in case she wanted to sue.

Pia Hinckle: Anyway, Artie got chewed out by Susan for some incident.

Hinckle: He was going after Sara.

Pia Hinckle: He was not going after Sara, it was something—

Hinckle: Well, that's what she said.

Pia Hinckle: That's what she said, but that wasn't true. It was some other thing. And he came up to me and he said, "You know what? You were *right!* [they laugh] She's a fucking bitch. He shouldn't marry her. You guys were right. I'm sorry. I didn't know what the hell I was talking about."

Rubens: Good story. Let's tell the story on tape, about working at Urban School. That was a quid pro quo arrangement?

40-00:25:13

Hinckle: Yes, I could take off part of the tuition.

Rubens: Tuition was getting steeper and steeper. So you taught San Francisco history?

40-00:25:20

Pia Hinckle: Yes.

Hinckle: Apparently, yes. There was one thing I remember clearly, about a play. They said "You've got to be in the play." It was a pageant or some— Anyway, there was an earthquake, everything fell down, everybody fell down dead on the stage, and I said, "What do I have to do?" They said, "Well, you've got to get there exactly by this time because you're just supposed to walk on at the end. Everybody's falling down dead or whatever, and you walk on and say whatever." So I walked onto the stage; I had the dog with me, the basset hound. I walked on the stage, looked around at everybody, say whatever I was

supposed to say —the dog lifts his leg and pees right where the kids are laying on the floor. It was pretty good.

Pia Hinckle: Oh, gee. I forgot about that. Yes, it's pretty embarrassing to have your parents teach at your high school.

Hinckle: No, not a good idea.

Pia Hinckle: No matter how interesting they are.

Hinckle: Not a good idea.

Pia Hinckle: So yes, it probably wasn't the greatest. Although I think his class probably had some really great— Did I take the San Francisco history class? I might have. I think I vaguely remember it.

Hinckle: I don't know. I can't remember what I did in that class.

Pia Hinckle: But then he was late all the time, and we'd be sitting across the street at the first class break at ten-fifteen, and he'd come up in a cab, just throw all the empty beer cans out of the cab and be like, "All right, let's go up to Haight Street and start class," at some bar.

Rubens: No. A pizza parlor.

40-00:26:31

Hinckle: Pizza parlor, yes. I usually gave them pizza and beer.

Rubens: Did you also produce a newspaper?

40-00:26:37

Pia Hinckle: They did.

Hinckle: Yes. And the kid who sold the most ads got an A.

Pia Hinckle: Yes. And Gretchen who worked really hard on her story and she was so pissed because she only got a C-plus or something.

Hinckle: I should've given her a B.

Rubens: Was that the only time there was a paper?

40-00:26:55

Hinckle: I think so.

40-00:26:58

Pia Hinckle: Urban didn't really put out a paper.. It was barely certified back then. I think it finally got its accreditation my freshman year. It was pretty out there still.

- Hinckle: Yes, it was pretty out there.
- Rubens: What was the paper called?
- 40-00:27:13
Hinckle: I don't know what they called it. Urban-something, I guess. I was like, hey, no sense farting around. Actually, let's put out a paper.
- Pia Hinckle: So you see what you have to do.
- Rubens: So was this mimeographed, or did you actually put out a print edition?
- 40-00:27:214
Hinckle: No, it was printed somewhere. I don't know where; probably at the Fangs, I don't know.
- Pia Hinckle: They probably had it, yes.
- Hinckle: Yes. But to get out the paper, you've got to get ads.
- Rubens: So they probably hit all the businesses on Haight Street.
- 40-00:27:39
Hinckle: I guess they went around, one guy particularly, held them up for money. But, whatever, they stuck the ads in and set the type and out came the paper. That's learning journalism, as far as I'm concerned.
- Pia Hinckle: You've got to pay for the print.
- Rubens: Tell me about going to Cuba with your dad.
- 40-00:28:02
Pia Hinckle: Oh, Cuba, that was a really interesting trip. It was before everyone started kind of going surreptitiously. Was that '82?
- Hinckle: Probably the early eighties. For a while, I was going to Cuba a lot because we were doing all this work, me and Bill Turner, on a book about Castro.
- 40-00:28:20
Pia Hinckle: So we went, my sister and I, Dad and Susan, his beloved fiancée at that point. I remember we got to the airport and we had these kind of faux-y visas, which they won't put in your actual passport, because of course, you weren't supposed to be going; so they were just on slips of paper. And I had sort of expected —because he had all of his Cuba contacts and he had been there, and because *Ramparts* had been such a big supporter of the revolution, et cetera—that they wouldn't necessarily give us a huge hassle. But we were still at the airport for something like three hours before they decided to let us in.
- Hinckle: Yes, Cuban bureaucracy.

Pia Hinckle: Yes. And then Dad would point out we had people tailing us. We had all these tours set up. My sister had done a lot of dance; we went and saw the Cuban ballet. I was interested in marine biology; we went to these different science institutes. But it was people with drivers; they would take us around and then—

Hinckle: Oh, they're always spying on you. They always have someone watching you.

Pia Hinckle: And then the one thing H [sister Hilary] and I did on our own was take a bus out to one of the beaches that were right outside of Havana, and we spent the day out there. It was a beach for tourists, where they were a lot of Europeans. Because they still had European tourists then, so there were lots of French and Germans and Italians. And we spent the day out at that beach. And you guys were at the hotel almost the whole time, wandering around.

Hinckle: Probably.

Pia Hinckle: And then there was the big reception with Fidel, yes?

Rubens: I asked in an earlier interview if you ever got to talk to him.

40-00:30:00

Hinckle: Yes. In passing, in a line. And once they had arranged for me meet with him, this was another time, but it was to get an interview, and then they said, "No, now is not the time. It's not politic," something like that. So what are you going to do? Then you just wait till they decide it's politic. Sometimes you wait a long time.

Rubens: But this reception, Pia, did you see him?

40-00:30:21

Pia Hinckle: We were all there, oh yes. It was at a kind of classic Havana tourism spots. The Copa Cabana, we went to dinner there; we went Hemingway's bar. I still have the coasters. [laughs] My stolen Cuban coasters. It was just interesting, these huge, fancy hotels and all the ancient cars. The hotels were basically run down but huge, built in the whatever, the forties or fifties.

Hinckle: Yes. I think we stayed at the one that George Raft used to own, that was a smaller hotel.

Pia Hinckle: There was saltwater in the pool, I remember that. Sometimes there was water in the rooms, sometimes there wasn't. When you'd walk around the neighborhoods, just the empty, empty shelves in the stores, everywhere.

Rubens: I went there in '77 on a teacher's delegation.

40-00:31:23

Pia Hinckle: Wow.

Hinckle: There you go.

Rubens: It seemed very exciting because they were starting to experiment with elections. There were some local election in the Isle of Pines, and it seemed they were on a path towards democracy.

40-00:31:33

Hinckle: Yes, Sidney and I used to always have fights about Cuba. He would say, "No, they don't have democracy and freedom." I said, "How can they? Look what happened to Allende. We're trying to knock him off, we're subverting him all the time." Allende was the perfect Democrat. He ended up with machine gun bullets in his head and got killed because we took advantage of all the freedoms; the CIA overthrew him. At least Castro's smart, for Christ's sake.

Rubens: Well of course you've written about the outrageous dealings of the CIA and the craziness of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. took in Noriega from Panama and the Shah of Iran. Could the U.S. give refuge to [Hosni] Mubarak?

40-00:32:27

Hinckle: They would *never* take him, no. It would just inflame the fucking Arab world. Even Obama's not that stupid. He's been pretty stupid. He can't be that stupid.

Pia Hinckle: No. I think that's why Obama's staying so quiet.

Hinckle: He might as well ask for anti-American embassy burnings all over. If you have a foreign policy that supports Arab dictators constantly, through all these presidents, well, eventually it's going to come around and bite you in the ass. The Democratic Party's got as dirty a history of that as the Republicans do. So it comes around and gets you in the end.

Rubens: In the time we have left today, I'd like to talk about what we'll cover in the next couple of sessions. There's a bevy of fascinating people that you've encountered in your life that I haven't asked you about.

40-00:33:38

Hinckle: We should talk about my friendship with [Emile] deAntonio

Pia Hinckle: You should ask him about the bartenders.

Rubens: I want to do our last interview in a bar.

40-00:33:36

Pia Hinckle: Instead of this perennial Hunter book, I told him it should be "The Crazies, Volume One." That he should do these books on all of these wackos that have been his friends. Paddy Nolan who was a legendary bartender; ran a salon-like place there on 18th Street; the Mitchell brothers; all of these kind of people.

Hinckle: Yes, there's a lot of stuff. Most of it's written, in pieces here and there.

- Pia Hinckle: You just have to put it together and let it go.
- Hinckle: Put it together. You're the managing editor. She's the managing editor of the Hunter book.
- 40-00:34:13
Pia Hinckle: Oh, well, Dad, we tried that.
- Rubens: You're almost done with the book, no? You mentioned to me off camera that you need to fill out a few parts, to balance the graphics.
- Hinckle: Well, there's still a couple things I've been trying to do in the last few weeks. Basically, it's me and Turner pissing on each other, that's what it is.
- Rubens: What's his beef?
- 40-00:34:35
Hinckle: Because it turned into this major book. I turned it from just a quick Hunter memorial to this huge thing about journalism and the period in the sixties, the seventies and the eighties, and blah-da-da. It's just this huge book—
- Pia Hinckle: It's a great book.
- Hinckle: —with all this stuff in it.
- Pia Hinckle: It's a great book.
- Hinckle: And it is turning into a different book than we were going to do. Let's divvy up the money a little bit here because you're going to sell a lot of these things. And he's like, "No, no. We can't do that. We said we'd give the royalties to the writers." I said, "Yeah, that's what we said, but you're going to make a ton of money off this. Let's cut a deal on this thing."
- Pia Hinckle: It was going to be a nonprofit book.
- Hinckle: Yes, it's a nonprofit; we're given no royalty. Nobody got paid for it. Which is fine. But then it turned into this monster. We'll work something out later. So basically, that's why it's taken so long, because we're pissing on each other's legs.
- Pia Hinckle: Oh, so you're stalling.
- Hinckle: Old farts pissing on each other's legs.
- Pia Hinckle: Okay. Okay.
- Hinckle: Well, I'm not rushing.

Pia Hinckle: You're not rushing. Well, okay, that's something else. But there's one thing in the Hunter book, in reading some of that stuff—I forget who wrote it, the piece talking about Hunter, his last gig writing the sports commentaries for espn.com or something. And the point being that he had a much harder time sort of in this kind of bloggy internet age, where there's no deadline really to fight against. Dad has the same problem. So these guys have spent their whole lives basically—

Hinckle: That's right.

Pia Hinckle: Pushing deadlines, missing deadlines, that whole kind of push and pull with an editor to fight against and to piss off and to kind of like have your little kid tantrums against. And then that's all gone now because—

Hinckle: That's gone.

Pia Hinckle: Nobody reads your stuff, nobody edits it anymore. They make maybe a cursory look or whatever, but it just goes. As long as it hits, it just falls into cycles.

Hinckle: It's hard for us old-school guys to get used to that.

Rubens: Warren, how much are you reading on the web? You always have new books and tons of newspapers and journals on your dining table and in the living room. You read so much. Do you have certain web sites, like *Politico*, or are there other spots you go to?

40-00:36:29

Hinckle: Well, sure, I think everybody checks it out to see what's going on. Sometimes I throw stuff up on our website, that nobody's looked at, for Christ's sake, and that sort of thing, but yeah, you look at it.

Pia Hinckle: But do you still like print better? What do you like to read better?

40-00:36:43

Hinckle: Print. I hate reading the web.

Pia Hinckle: Have you looked on the iPad yet?

Hinckle: No.

Pia Hinckle: The iPad is actually pretty cool to look at; it looks like a piece of paper.

Hinckle: Well, did you see my new computer [a MacBook Air], it's beautiful.

Pia Hinckle: But the iPad, because it feels like—It's like holding this. But this is the screen.

40-00:37:17

Hinckle: I thought [William] Keller's piece, by the way was a little niggardly, in the proper sense of that term. Spoiled brat. I gave you all this stuff, you've got to whine and take a piss on him? That was childish.

Pia Hinckle: I don't think I even read that yet. This is in today's *New York Times* magazine. About [Julian] Assange.

Hinckle: Yes. Just because he's pissed off at the second one around because he didn't like some article, something they did on him in London— Assange, that is— so he wouldn't give the *Times* the stuff the second time around. They excluded them; they gave it to the *Guardian*. Then the *Guardian* said, oh, we'll give it to you. Well, that pissed him off, so he's got to beat up on the guy. Jesus Christ! He's facing— publishers are trying to give him a death sentence and he's got to beat up on him, I thought in a childish way.

Pia Hinckle: That is.

Hinckle: There wasn't any substantive work. He never took on the issue of what he's doing is right or wrong or this or that. He didn't discuss any issue with the profit he's making off of it, what value it is to them. Wouldn't even get into that. Should they be taking stolen stuff? He ducks all that shit. It's just all personal picking at the fucking guy. So I thought it was an unseemly piece.

Rubens: I saw an interview on CNN. Wolf Blitzer, I think, is interviewing Keller.

40-00:38:38

Hinckle: Yes, well, there's another idiot interviewing a whiner.

Rubens: Keller would not discuss whether or not Assange was a journalist. He said, "It's not for me to decide who are journalists or not." He also talked about a representative from the state department vetting what he was going to publish.

40-00:39:09

Hinckle: That's because Wolf Blitzer's a jerk. The question is: "You are making a profit off of this stolen material. How do you feel about that? And why don't you defend this guy more?"

Pia Hinckle: He's making a profit because of the donations that go to sustain *Wikipedia*? Or he's actually getting paid?

Hinckle: No, "you" is Keller.

Pia Hinckle: Oh, *of course*, they're making a profit.

Hinckle: The *New York Times* is making a profit off of what is supposed to be stolen and treasonous material. How do you defend that, and why do you waver

about whether this guy's a journalist or not? Is he a thief or is he a journalist? Answer the question. That's the problem.

40-00:39:44

Pia Hinckle: I think he's just a thief, because he's not publishing it—

Hinckle: Well, that's fair enough.

Pia Hinckle: —he's just getting the information and sticking it out there. Journalists are deciding on what to do with it.

Hinckle: Yes, now to cover their ass, they're having to say, well, we are now editing the stuff, so we're really editors. That's what Assange is saying now. Because he has to because these Republicans want to give him the death penalty.

Rubens: You would've published this in an instant, right?

40-00:40:08

Hinckle: In a second. But it's like, hey, if these guys, with all the money they spend and all the various assassinations they still do, if they can't protect their own networks, shame on them. That's the scandal. He's doing them a service by saying, you idiots. In the high tech computer age, if you don't know how to protect your own shit, shame on you!

Getting back to stories about you, there was the time you guys went to Ireland. [laughs] Remember that?

Pia Hinckle: That was a great trip. So that was the only trip we took solo—because in Cuba, Susan was there. So the only trip we ever took solo with my dad was when my sister was turning thirty. That was the year I was living in New York. I had this Bagehot Fellowship at Columbia's journalism school and I had just gotten married, actually. So I ditched my poor newlywed husband. I was like, "We're going with my dad to Ireland." He totally didn't get this whole thing. "Well, am I coming?" "No, you can't come." [laughs] We just got married; what does that mean? He doesn't like me? You don't like me?

Rubens: He was living with you in New York?

40-00:41:15

Pia Hinckle: Yes. We just got married. We'd been at the *Guardian*, we'd known each other for a year, we got married, we moved to New York, and then I'm like, at that Christmas or whatever—or spring.

Hinckle: Well, you weren't gone for long.

Pia Hinckle: And I wasn't gone for long.

Rubens: So what was the purpose or nature of the trip?

Pia Hinckle: We'd kind of talked about it over the years. He had been over there during the Irish hunger strikes, when Bobby Sands led those strikes. And there was a lot going on here. He took us to the protests at the British consulate in Pacific Heights or whatever. I remember some of that going on.

Hinckle: Lipset's house was right across the street. Everybody'd go in there for drinks. Hal Lipset's office was right across the street from the British embassy, in Pacific Heights.

Pia Hinckle: So we went and we stayed with Joe O'Donoghue, the big residential builder, who's another good friend during that whole *Argonaut* era. In fact, he put a lot of money into the *Argonaut*.

Hinckle: Yes, yes.

Pia Hinckle: Absolutely.

Rubens: Plus giving you use of the building.

40-00:42:11

Pia Hinckle: Plus, actually, that was the only reason we had the building, too, was—

Hinckle: Oh, yes, we had the building. We said if he's going to tear it down, we'll take it in the meantime.

Pia Hinckle: It was his building, exactly. The only completely ischemic Irish man I've ever met.[laughs]

Rubens: So were you visiting historical sites, or seeing your roots, or was it—

40-00:42:31

Pia Hinckle: Well, we don't know where our roots are because, as my grandmother would say, by the time she was curious enough to ask, everyone was dead. And all the Irish, they never wanted to talk about it.

Hinckle: That's that generation of Irish that was almost guilty that they were Irish, didn't care to go back.

Pia Hinckle: That they'd made it out and—

Hinckle: We know that some of them were from around Clare, the Noonans and gradually, the facts filter out. And there were some DeVeres in Belfast, and then there's a lot of DeVeres down in Limerick.

Pia Hinckle: Right. So we went to Limerick.

Hinckle: And now we've found out, because some guy had written me— Remember I sent you that once? Some guy in Pennsylvania—this is years back—who said:

“Oh, you must be the Hinckles that were down in Limerick, because then they came to Pennsylvania.” Because when the English were planting Protestants, in the seventeenth century, in the north, they just brought mostly Scots and other types, and some English, and planted them up there. It wasn’t known, but they planted that—it was a part of France that’s on the German border, called Alsace—I don’t know how you pronounce it—Lorraine, something like that. Anyway, a mix of German and French. And the name DeVere is some kind of French name. And they took about 3,000 of those people and planted them, of all places, in Limerick, where there was a big fortification, and they stayed there. And then a whole bunch of them went on, centuries later, moved to the United States and they settled somewhere in Western Pennsylvania. Now this guy had a newsletter.

Pia Hinckle: He was from around Germantown or whatever.

Hinckle: And said, same spelling and all that shit.

Pia Hinckle: So there was a German migration at some point. And of course, all of those Germans became drunks as soon as they moved to Ireland, and lost all of their good Protestant work ethic.

Hinckle: Oh, yes, their work ethic went to hell.

Pia Hinckle: And they were happy then to immigrate to the US.

40-00:44:28

Hinckle: There’s a pretty famous Irish poet named DeVere, but anyway, it’s a pretty big family.

Rubens: Speaking of the Irish, I never asked you if there was a fight to save Nolan’s bar here in San Francisco?

40-00:44:40

Hinckle: Yes! *Huge*.

Rubens: Tell me about that. What form did it take?

40-00:44:46

Hinckle: Well, it was in the Women’s Building. And the Women’s Building became this women’s lefty thing, cultural icon of the city.

Rubens: There was an “important” mural on one of the walls.

40-00:44:55

Hinckle: Yes, it had all the murals and they did all the good things there and everybody spoke there. The bar, the Dovre Club, was in the corner of the building. It had been in the building before, when it was a Swedish or Norwegian Hall, before it became the Women’s Building. The rest of the hall had been there and

they'd taken it over. Assembly rooms and all. But it had been—I think it was Norwegian, not Swedish. Anyway, it was a Norwegian or Swedish hall, but the bar was always in the corner. Then Nolan, for one reason or the other, came down from Canada and got an apartment and anyway, got the bar, and then had a verbal lease when the women took over the building, to stay there. And it was a very democratic bar. It was full of women, dykes, lefties, labor guys, everybody, old neighborhood people. He wouldn't charge them much for their drinks. It was this plastic, wonderful place. If you want to, you could call it progressive, it was full of left politics. But that was the neighborhood. It was just this wonderful bar, right?

Pia Hinckle: It was a great bar.

Hinckle: And so he dies and they decide, okay, now we're going to shut down the bar. Because they said, lying, they wanted to put a nursery school there, which they never did. So at the time, this friend of mine, Jack Davis and I say, no, you're not going to let the bar close. So we remembered that we were witness to a verbal agreement between Nolan and the woman who was the head of the Women's Building at the time. Nolan had, unfortunately, died and so had the woman.

Pia Hinckle: So it was your word against theirs.

Hinckle: So we were the only witnesses to this verbal contract, and that became the bone of contention. They kept trying to evict the bar.

Rubens: Who was running it or managing it, after Nolan died?

40-00:46:43

Hinckle: A friend, some kid who'd worked there and Nolan liked him. And he had an evil cousin who was a banker, who tried to make a deal with the Women's Building, and eventually sold the thing out. And the women made the mistake—But it became a huge popular cause.

Pia Hinckle: Yes, it was. There were a lot of stories about it.

Hinckle: Davis and I were fighting the Women's Building leadership and saying, screw you and this and that. There were a lot of televisions covering this. The place got more packed every night. When would the eviction come? There were two trials. The first trial ended early because it was a six-person jury, one of these civil juries, and I was testifying, sitting very close to the jury. And this guy gets up, who was a male real estate attorney, hired by the Women's Building leadership. Linda knows him, he was a real idiot. And I'm telling this story, he says, "Well, how do you know Mr. Nolan had the \$80,000," or some figure like that, "to make the down payment, which you say was agreed to in this verbal agreement, to which there's no witnesses to but you and Mr. Davis?" I said, "I saw it." And he said, "Well, how do you mean you saw it? Were you

privy to his bank records?" "No." "Well, did you look through his check book?" "No." Well, what do you mean you saw it?" I said, "I saw it." He said, "How the hell could you see it?" I said, "He kept cash. We used to pack the coffee cans. All the IRA money came through there." It's true, right? "And Nolan would keep the cash and we'd put it in a peach tree in the backyard, we'd sit around and I'd jam it into things, anything like that." And he steps back and looks at me, he says, "Mr. Hinckle, have you been drinking this morning?" It's like eight o'clock in the morning, And I turned to the jury, "Can you imagine this rat bastard? Do you know what he does for a living? He throws old ladies out. He's a fucking real estate attorney. He's the most blood thirsty guy." There's a bang, bang, bang by the judge, who says, "Stop, stop. Everybody in chambers. Mistrial." I got another six months, I think. [laughs]

Pia Hinckle: I remember that.

Rubens: That's a great story. Great story.

40-00:48:46

Pia Hinckle: Didn't you have to go and dig up in Nolan's house, after he died, to find all the hidden money?

Hinckle: No.

Pia Hinckle: Wasn't there something about that, too?

Hinckle: I don't remember that part. But it is true we used to bury money. Nolan didn't trust banks. And he had about twenty bank accounts here and there, but he kept small amounts in each one and would bury a lot of cash, because a lot of cash came in. And then the IRA guys would come and they'd wear two heavy sweaters and an overcoat and push cash here, cash under both sweaters, into the pockets of the overcoat, and go on down to L.A., pick up some more cash. It eventually got to and helped out the IRA guys.

Rubens: Well that's a story in itself we should get to. But what happened to the bar?

40-00:49:36

Hinckle: What happened was the cousin, the banker, got into the deal, and that creepy attorney that we had for a while—what the hell was his name? He's a friend of Horse Face, that guy. He's that Irish prick. Anyway, they cut a secret deal with them and made a deal and the bar left.

Pia Hinckle: So basically, they were able to salvage the sign. They took the sign and then they moved it up on Valencia, right?

Hinckle: Yes. But it's like water through a garden hose. It was a neighborhood. You can't move it eight, nine blocks away; it changes the thing. But then it was like, okay, lost the trial, then it's time to throw you out. And how are you

going to throw them out? Because they were still protesting the deal; the deadline arrives, and they'd find one reason or the other to put it off. So finally, Hennessey, who's a friend—

Pia Hinckle: The sheriff.

Hinckle: It was Davis' first campaign; he got Hennessey elected sheriff. And this friend of mine, Norman Young, who has the muffler shop, where I have all these archives rotting away upstairs there, and he comes down and we're talking and saying, Jesus, what are we going to do. And Hennessey says, "Look it, you guys, you've got to go. This is it." It was a holiday weekend, and the crowds were huge. And I said, "Well, you've got to let at least these guys stay over for the weekend, to get all the extra money." And so Norman was there and I said, "What we've got to do, we should wire up or down the building, with rebar, and put it on both sides, because it's kind of a rickety old building. And then if they come in with the bulldozers or whatever and we lock ourselves inside, it'll collapse, the whole goddamned side of the building and they wouldn't dare do it." So I didn't think anybody'd do it. So he shows up about three hours later with a jackhammer and this rebar, and puts this stuff on the cement wall outside and inside.

So it was supposed to be the last night and the place was packed. There must've been 800 people in there. And when Hennessey shows up, they said, "Hennessey, come on in." We locked the door after him. "Come on in, we want to show you something. Did you notice that stuff outside?" "What stuff?" "Well, when you go out, you can look; but see, the same stuff outside. We're all standing in here, everybody's staying, we've got a huge supply of booze, and you're going to have to break down the building to get us out. And when you break down the building with the battering ram, you're going to dislodge the whole foundation and it'll cost millions to repair the building." "What's the deal?" "Let him stay open through the long weekend, and everybody'll leave." And so they did, and that was the end. Peace was made. I'll never forget Norman showing up and doing that. I couldn't believe he did it.

Rubens: Great story. I meant to ask you earlier, when you were talking about Joe O'Donoghue, why was he bringing over Irish immigrants?

40-00:52:41

Hinckle: This was before the Irish economy began to boom; it was pre-Celtic Tiger. Pre-boom, and there was a lot of illegals because the immigrant restrictions were still very tight on Ireland. And so most of the guys in town, who were working construction jobs and things like that, didn't have a green card. So Joe brought over a lot of guys. And a lot of them worked as bartenders at the Dovre Club at times, as did fugitive IRA people. So it was all one big thing. And the *Chronicle*, they were furious at me because I'd write all these columns defending the IRA. But, hey, that's how it was.

Rubens: One other area that we should also talk about is your take on the Catholic Church, post-*Ramparts* era.

40-00:53:35

Hinckle: O-h-h-h, yes.

Rubens: Particularly regarding the revelations of all of the abuse of young boys. I know that you wrote a lot about that.

40-00:53:47

Hinckle: They're acting true to form. They haven't gotten any better. Look at what the Jesuits just did at USF.

Pia Hinckle: They sold KUSF.

Hinckle: They changed the locks—

Pia Hinckle: My favorite punk rock radio station.

Hinckle: Changed the locks in the middle of the night. Now it's become a mini-cause.

Pia Hinckle: It's a dirty deal.

Hinckle: Typical.

Rubens: Let's clarify the story.

Pia Hinckle: So USF's radio station, KUSF, the university sold it to KDFC to become a classical radio station.

Hinckle: They sold it out. They sold it to the University of Southern California for some three- or four-million, and then USC flipped it to a media enterprise.

Pia Hinckle: So now KUSF is an internet-only radio station.

Hinckle: Yes. And that's just bull shit. They don't know what internet-only means. It means that you have to have the money to have the access to the internet. You can't be a cab driver going around or a night watchman or something like that, listening to the music in the middle of the night. I know everybody's supposed to have the internet now, but not everybody does. Right?

Rubens: Or necessarily *wants* to use it regularly.

40-00:54:53

Hinckle: Yes. No, it's outrageous. That was Anne Marie Conroy's friend, USF President Father Privett. I just started writing something. I'm putting something up on the *Argonaut* website about the Jesuits, up to their usual shit.

Rubens: Well I know you are pressed for time now. So why don't we call it a day and we'll pick up some of the undeveloped threads of this conversation another time. Pia, I'm just delighted that you came.

40-00:55:20

Hinckle: I'm glad she corrected the historical record.

Interview 20: February 6, 2011

Being a compendium of studied opinions on certain celebrated events and notorious personages and a taxonomy of liberalism

Begin Audio File 41

41-00:00:00

Hinckle: Politically, in this town, people have always opposed public financing of stadiums. Jack Davis single-handedly defeated the last one, down in Santa Clara. Had his own mailer. That was when Agnos had vindictively charged all those guys. I think we talked about that.

Rubens: We did talk about that, yes.

41-00:00:23

Hinckle: Agnos was a nasty bastard. But for this one, the Giants came to Davis and said, hey, we really want to take a whack at it. And he said, "Well, I won't do it unless you finance the stadium." So then Willie Brown got into it and—

Rubens: Brown recalls in his memoir walking the streets with the woman who was high up in the management, both campaigning for the stadium.

41-00:00:54

Hinckle: Yes, so the City did do a lot for him. But it wasn't the same as putting taxpayer money in. It laid out the streets and built some streets provided the power and the lights and so on. That's the same thing they do for any—For adding a block to downtown San Francisco, they put in streets and power and light and that sort of stuff, so they didn't have to do that. And there were a few other things. I think they made a deal on the parking lot. But basically, that was a privately financed stadium. And it won.

Rubens: It really was the anchor, the lynch-pin for that whole area's development. We talked about the Delancey Street building and its headquarters there.

Hinckle: Yes. We also talked about how shabbily they treated John Maher.

Rubens: But I am interested in the football stadium. Something got passed, just squeaked by, with Willie's support, about relocating the 49ers. And then it never got built because—

41-00:02:13

Hinckle: There were two bond issues, yes, and one just barely passed. They made it very complicated. That was in the middle of Jack Davis' birthday party. I remember seeing him sitting—In fact, Linda gave him the office space, or rented it to him cheap, something like that, to the 49ers for that campaign. That office was in her big building down on Market Street. I remember we were down there one morning for just a talk about, what are we going to do

now? This is after Davis' birthday party had caused such a major national scandal and that nonsense.

Rubens: You think it was national?

41-00:02:54

Hinckle: Oh, yes! It was on the front page of the *Times*. Oh, yes. I'll never forget, Eddie DeBartolo, who was a hell of a good guy—I really liked him a lot—he comes in holding a cup of coffee and he looks like he'd been run over by three trucks. He really had a rough night the night before; whatever it was, he was almost stumbling into walls. So he sits down in the campaign headquarters. He's rented little tables from Abbey Rents. And the campaign headquarters are usually not decorated, and neither was this one. We're all around that morning. Davis is there. Davis says, "Look, the first thing I want to do is say, hey, I'll quit the campaign because of all this flap over this party." I said, "No, no, we're not doing that." I said, "I've had more trouble than that in my life." He says, "I've only got one question for you. Do we have a chance to still pass this thing?" Because he had to put up some more bucks for mailers or some campaign stuff like that, and he just says, "Hey, do we have a shot?" Just totally realistic. No, no, we're not canning you. I don't give a crap about that party and all that stupid flap. That didn't bother me at all. He just said, "If we threw some more dough in this thing, do we have a shot to pass the goddamned thing?" And Davis said, "Yeah, it's going to be close, but I think we can probably pass it." He says, "All right, let's go." What a guy. Anybody else would be so uptight. You get out of here, get disassociated from this campaign, and this and that. Not Eddie. Not one of those players loved him. Of course, he paid them a fortune, but—

Rubens: Willie says in his autobiography that he *didn't* go; that his chief of staff called him at ten o'clock at night, he was doing all sorts of other things, and she said, "Don't show up," but she didn't say what was going on. The next morning at six, he gets a—

41-00:05:01

Hinckle: Well, he's full of shit.

Rubens: Is that right?

41-00:05:04

Hinckle: Of course. Of course he was there. Everybody in town was there. Oh, Christ!

Rubens: Because he then said the reporter calls him at six in the morning.

41-00:05:11

Hinckle: I'm surprised P.J. let him put that in there.

Rubens: The reporter asks, "How was the party?" And he says, "Great." And, "What did you think of—"

41-00:05:18

Hinckle: No, he was there. He showed up early. He showed up before any of the so-called hijinks went on. But he was there.

Rubens: You're referring to P.J. Corkery who wrote the book with Willie? You knew him?

41-00:05:30

Hinckle: Yes. Great guy, he's a Boston guy, newspaper guy. He became a very good friend of mine. He wrote a column for the *Examiner*, for the Fangs. For a while there, it was a halfway decent paper, once we got rid of all of Teddy Fang's hires, et cetera, et cetera. He was a great guy. Died very young. He had some blood disease or some damn thing that was sort of screwed him up.

Rubens: But your point is Willie was there, no question.

41-00:06:08

Hinckle: Well, yes, Willie was there. Now, he wasn't there the whole night. He split when those guys showed up. [Hinckle addressing Linda Corso:] Willie says in his autobiography—Rubens just read it—that he never went to Davis' party.

Rubens: Well, he then says that he's called at six in the morning by a reporter who asked, "How did you like it? How'd you like the entertainment?" He said, "Oh, just fine, fine." And the reporter says, "Do you know what went on?"

41-00:06:44

Corso: Well, he walked Davis in. When Davis came, he came up the freight elevator, through the back, walked him in, and then he left. He was only there in the beginning.

Hinckle: Well, he wasn't there for that raucous part. But he says he didn't go. So he lied. I'm surprised P.J. let him do that. I'm sure that's not the only lie in that book.

Rubens: But the reason I'm bringing it up is because Willie —when he learned what had gone on at the party— thought that would be the death of the bond issue, and in fact, it squeaked by.

41-00:07:06

Hinckle: Yes. That's what happened. In fact, I had to defend Davis—that was interesting—because the whole town was attacking him. I really went to the *Independent*. It was then just a few little offices by its printing plant, up there in the Bayview. I went in there that night, because it was going to press the next morning, and everybody was—the usual nonsense. Sat down at some typewriter there and wrote this thing about how hypocritical all these liberals were in their understanding of all this stuff. The thing that got them all upset was an Indian ceremony.

Rubens: Didn't you call it an Aztec ritual?

41-00:07:46

Hinckle: Yes. We had that crazy guy. He was around for quite a while. I've got a book of his somewhere here. Yes, but he did. He went around the Indian reservations and did that routine and did other stuff. But it's a rough argument to make. It was such an uproar; *somebody* had to take the other side. So that was the best argument you could make. That was one thing out of thirty things going on at the same time. It was ridiculous. But it is true that most of the politicians in town, they were falling all over themselves saying that they weren't there. Right? And of course, they were. But at one time or the other. Very few of them hung most of the night. Linda knows, because her place where the party was; it was in the Furniture Mart, that big huge building on Market Street.

Rubens:

Oh. I thought Willie says it was on Treasure Island. Of course I could be wrong here.

41-00:08:54

Hinckle: Now, he was at *my* birthday which was on Treasure Island. Maybe he got them confused.

Rubens:

Oh, I probably conflated the two. Did we talk about your party on Treasure Island?

41-00:09:07

Hinckle: Well, it was no big deal. It was just a party.

Rubens:

That was your sixtieth birthday?

41-00:09:10

Hinckle: Yes. Best thing about that was a bunch of Santa Clauses my friend Ron Turner got. It was before the Santa Claus phenomenon came around to these guys showing up all of a sudden, in masse, at a department store or an airport. All of a sudden there are 200 Santas and that sort of thing, right? That's still going on, but—A few years back, one of those first sort of mass show-ups. But Santa Clauses. They did one in the airport in Oregon. I think it was Portland, but it could've been Seattle. I think it was Portland. All of a sudden there's 200 Santa Clauses walking around in the middle of the day, right? Just freaking everybody out. In the summer, of course. But he had these rented Santas, and they got totally smashed and then sort of got to the liquor storage for the party, after it was shut down and we were getting people out of there and everything, and ended up in a couple of big trees there on Treasure Island, outside the old officers club, I think it was, the building it was in. They were up there drunk as hoots, up in these trees, with just these giant jugs of bourbon and tequila and things like that. And the Treasure Island cops were there and said, "Will you guys get down?" So Rich Cairns, who's a good friend of mine, one of the best cops ever in town—he was a captain of the small Treasure Island police force—Cairns said, "What am I going to do with these guys?" I

said, "Ah, leave them up in the goddamned tree. Worst they're going to do is fall out and break an arm." That's what we did; we just left them up there.

Rubens: Are those the very trees you've written about on your web site, *Argonaut 360*, that are being cut down right now?

41-00:10:58

Hinckle: No, no. This was more than ten years ago. The recent post on *Argonaut 360* was something about they're chopping down the trees to develop Yerba Buena. They're going to put some extra housing in there and things like that. There was one blogger, this potty old lefty guy, screaming at everybody about it saying, "But nobody'll pay any attention to me." And I said, "For God's sakes, they should." Only because you can't cut down *one* tree in San Francisco, that there isn't a huge fight about it. Some guy wants to cut down a tree and add to his house or something like that, my God! Particularly if it's a developer. People go nuts and there are hearings and protests and picketing. And here they're just chopping down trees at will on Yerba Buena and nobody said a peep about it. I thought that was kind of interesting. Maybe that tide has run, too?

Rubens: It was a good story.

41-00:11:52

Hinckle: Yes. Cairns by the way was the best god damn cop. He cleaned up the entire Western Addition –there was not even bubble gum o the street. He's still active in the Police Officer's Association.

Rubens: I'd like to clarify the stadium saga. Despite the bond measure passing, the football stadium was never built? And also DeBartolo is replaced?

41-00:12:08

Hinckle: Well, in the meantime, Eddie lost control of the team and had to make a deal with his sister and get out of—Because typical Eddie—I just loved that guy. He was just one of those wonderful, great, just down to earth—He was Eddie. He was what he was. He loved his players and he loved the game. He also liked gambling a lot. He had started a riverboat casino-type thing in New Orleans, on the river. And it was the year that the Super Bowl was in New Orleans. And of course, all these uptight NFL owners—There's a sacrosanct rule about separation of gambling from anything to do with ownership of a team or anything like that, right? So Eddie goes around all the owners' boxes and he passes out all these gambling tokens, or \$200 chips or something like that, for his casino—the one on the river in New Orleans—to all the other owners—which of course, caused an absolute uproar in the sanctimonious, crooked NFL. Right? They don't care if the players get injured and they have to pay their medical expenses the rest of their lives or anything like that. They're happy to get out of that. But gambling, they can't have anything to do with gambling. At any rate, so Eddie was in some trouble. It was alleged that

he bribed the governor at the time in Louisiana to get a gambling license and things like that.

Rubens: Because of course he wasn't a San Franciscan.

41-00:13:57

Hinckle: Eddie? No. Well, the family's originally from Cleveland. They had shopping Centers. So anyway, the short of it was, he had to get out of the NFL. So his sister ended up with the team and he ended up with more property—which was a tragedy for the 49ers, because that was the beginning of their long, long decline, once the sister and her husband, who didn't know anything about football, took it over. I don't follow sports very much at all, I'm not particularly interested in them; but I do follow the politics of football, and a little bit, the politics of baseball and the money involved. You've got to watch those things. But he just had to get out. So there was no enthusiasm for continuing the deal, because it was Eddie's deal. I think it was part family stuff and part the changing economy and part looking at, how long can we milk San Francisco out of this lease on Candlestick? Maybe we can get a better deal on a stadium somewhere else. Immediately, the family started thinking that way, because that was Eddie's deal, right?

Rubens: Okay. But now it seems pretty close to going down to Santa Clara.

41-00:15:17

Hinckle: Yes, I don't think that's necessarily a sure thing, but yeah, it's a probability it's going to go in there, but I think there was a thing in the *Chronicle* today about that there's a lot of redevelopment money tied in that, which Jerry's going to cut off. The mayors are scrambling to cut a deal with Jerry Brown to get this and that hunk of redevelopment dough back. He probably will end up making some sort of a deal with most mayors. But from what I understand, at least in the *Chronicle* today, is that Santa Clara's spent all its redevelopment money, so they'd have to go back to the state, in this depressed economy and ask—these billionaire owners—for \$30- or \$40 million—for Santa Clara to put up this stadium, on which the owners are going to make millions out of. So I don't think that's a political likelihood.

Rubens: And there's just no white knight on the horizon, say a functional equivalent of Bob Haas who rescued the Giants. So there's no San Francisco big money that's putting some effort into keeping them here?

41-00:16:57

Hinckle: No, because that family's dysfunctional. They finally may have hired a decent coach now and maybe things will slightly change around for that team, but they don't really know anything about the game or about politics. I've never put any long-term money that that stadium was going to be built in Santa Clara. If this wrinkle is true, it seems quite unlikely.

It could come right back to San Francisco. But then I think there was redevelopment money in the San Francisco deal. But I wouldn't be surprised if you get people in. There's enough money in this town that they probably could get a lot of private money into that stadium, depending on how the deal was structured. That chapter ain't over yet, by any means.

Rubens: Let's talk about your relationship with Willie Brown during his administration. It sure seems to me he owed you big time, you and Davis, for urging him to run.

41-00:18:08

Hinckle: Well, I was certainly his defender-in-chief in the press, as I was Art Agnos' attacker-in-chief in the press. Of course, I know Willie; we've both had kids in Presidio Hill School, way back when they were in the second or third grade in Presidio Hill. I remember he'd be sitting in the makeshift stands in the courtyard there, when they had some show they put on or something like that during the day, and we'd be both reading *The Nation*, laughing at each other. And there were controversies along the way where I took a side on; and generally with Willie, it was very good for this town. People had money in their pockets. All the projects that had been blocked by the no growth people, he was able to get those things going again. And of course, he's a big-government guy and expanded the size. But every mayor, including Feinstein, has hugely expanded the size of government. Dianne's big sin was that she went beyond just hiring more people in city government; she was the one who ballooned the middle management.

Rubens: The one biography of Brown quotes you as criticizing his position —this is in the early sixties, when you were with the *Chronicle*— on not supporting the NAACP. I can't remember the details and I don't think this matters much.

41-00:20:50

Hinckle: Of course in the sixties and seventies, my friends were Eldridge Cleaver and Robert Chrisman and people like that. They looked at the NAACP as a bourgeois organization of sellouts, from their particular black vantage point of view.

[tape interruption]

Rubens: The impression I got was that the NAACP leadership in San Francisco—and this is in the late sixties—represented an old guard, and Willie was challenging their positions and candidates.

41-00:21:59

Hinckle: Well, it probably did.

Rubens: I think Terry Francois was the leading—

41:00:22:06

Hinckle:

Yes, Terry was always the head of, the big poobah in the NAACP. And he was extremely conservative. So Willie was probably on the other side from them, in terms of state politics. I don't know. He was usually on the left edge of most state issues, which was true of a majority of the assembly at that time. In contemporary terms, there was a lot of cutting-edge stuff done there, in terms of housing issues and racial issues, gay rights, things like that, all during Willie's term as speaker.

Rubens:

Okay, so anything more to say about Willie's tenure, your access to him, or good fights during that period?

41:00:23:02

Hinckle:

None I can particularly think of. I saw him all the time. Socially, we were always at the same restaurants and parties and everything. We were always gossiping about stuff. I don't think we had any big battles. I took his side in a couple of fights, because as far as I was concerned, he was doing mostly the right thing, in terms of the city getting some growth going, which had been artificially blocked by so-called progressives, who just stopped all building and then tried to replace it with nonprofits, using public money. And they didn't build anything, number one, and used the dough for political bureaucracies to keep supporting their candidates. It was scandalous, as far as I was concerned.

Rubens:

Yes, I think we talked about that. Willie really pulled off a deal with Catellus [Development Corporation] that opened up the whole Mission Bay area, south of Third. He was brilliant at getting a variety of stakeholders together.

41:00:24:10

Hinckle:

That was when Anschutz first came into town. He bought that railroad and most of that property. Well, long before he bought the *Examiner*. He ended up with a large hunk of that property that became Mission Bay. The old railroad yards.

Rubens:

There was a specific deal that had to do with the UC campus going in there. I think Willie brokered that.

41:00:24:49

Hinckle:

Probably did. Just *enormous* politics, because UC politics are a whole world unto themselves. Not always a pretty picture of politics, either. Politics of the regents and some of the games and some of the things Dick Blum has pulled when he's been a regent and others — it's not exactly a spotless history of idealism. The Board of Regents is very interesting.

Rubens:

But you didn't particularly go after them, did you?

41:00:25:17

Hinckle:

No, no. Never particularly got into that.

Rubens: Let's talk a little more about Gavin Newsom. In an offhand comment, you mentioned that you were also in the back room of Tosca when Gavin Newsom was thinking about running for mayor; you were trying to draft him?

41-00:25:35

Hinckle: Oh, that was ironic, yes, because we talked about the pivotal night that Willie finally said yes, that he would run, was in the back room of Tosca. There were a few people there; it ended up in the back room of Tosca, in the little pool room. And the same thing happened with Gavin, when we all sort of ganged up on him one night.

Rubens: Who constitutes we? Davis, you—

41-00:26:12

Hinckle: Davis, myself, a couple of people in his political business, a few individuals who'll go nameless, just saying, come on, you've got to do it, man. We don't have anybody else. Willie had some genuine reservations about running for mayor. Well, because of the money. Not only was the salary not what he was used to making in private practice -- in the state legislature, you can have a private income. You can be a real estate agent or a lawyer or a doctor or whatever. But ridiculously, the board of supervisors in San Francisco, you can't basically do anything; you have to divest yourself of so many things. It's really another mess that's happened in the city over the last twenty years or so of so-called progressive rule. It's made it impossible for sort of fair-minded people who made their money in business one way or the other to take part in city government, to run for mayor or to do anything, because they've put so many rules and reins and divestures on them they can't do a damn thing.

And the irony of that is that it was always the business community—I mean historically Kevin Starr writes about this in many of his books. But they were a visionary business community. They raised the money and rebuilt the city after the earthquake and fire. And a damned pretty city it was. I've always found it interesting that the beautiful city that everybody knows around the world, of San Francisco, and its greatest buildings and its skyline as such and everything, all of that was achieved by private leadership, before there was such a thing as a planning department. Right? And as far as I'm concerned, if you want to compare that record of the past to when the planning bureaucracy has increasingly controlled growth and became the tool of the no growth-ers and drove families out of the city by restrictions on being able to add a bedroom to your house if your family got to big, et cetera, and families having to move to the suburbs, it's always been at odds with the idea of planning—The planning policies of the city have always been family orientated, or said they were. But when they carried them out, they were the opposite of family orientated, from the position of somebody owning a house or wanting to expand their house to make room for their family, that sort of thing. It's been amazing. It's been the opposite. They've been regressive.

And they've allowed an enormous amount of really, really ugly buildings to be built. And there was no such thing, particularly—with the possible exclusion of the old Jack Tar Hotel and the Fontana Apartments, which are a bit of a scandal, on the waterfront—but there's just no such thing in San Francisco's past, at least up through the fifties, as an ugly building. It was a beautiful city. It's only modern planning that somehow brought about allowing some really ugly, cheap crap to be built.

Rubens: Where is the Fontana?

41:00:30:19

Hinckle: Oh, the Fontana's right down on the waterfront, next to Fisherman's Wharf. It's those two big twin things that sort of block off the view of the waterfront around Jefferson Street there, right off Van Ness. It's between Van Ness Avenue and Aquatic Park and the wharf.

Rubens: You would think that district elections would've meant that some assault could've been made on the restriction of the developers.

41:00:31:13

Hinckle: No, because as we've been pointing out in the *Argonaut*, district elections became a tool of the progressive ideological left, who didn't want any sort of growth at all, except when they got paid off. And the person who was most instrumental in allowing, for instance, the building you're discussing—Rincon, they call it, or whatever they call it—to be built was Chris Daly, the most left, or loudmouth left of the supervisors, because he held them up for money. An outrageous hunk of extra dough, the developers there, and then steered it to his nonprofits, who were his political goon squad. Shaking down people saying, you're going to get evicted from your SRO hotel room, if you don't march out and vote for Chris Daly and the rest of the ticket.

Rubens: I didn't realize it was that naked.

41:00:32:05

Hinckle: Yes, in this case, it was. But again, most of this stuff, you don't read in the papers. Everybody in town knows it and talks about it, but—I don't know why. Most of this stuff, I've written about in the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* and we've done in the *Argonaut*; and to me, it's fairly common knowledge politically, the stuff I'm talking about, and common knowledge in the neighborhoods, what type of deals are made and what goes on. But you rarely read any of that stuff in print. Really.

Rubens: Off camera during a break earlier today, we were talking about Gerry Adams, the *Examiner* reporter whose beat covered the planning and redevelopment commission.

41:00:32:50

Hinckle: Oh, he was objective to the point of being irrelevant.

Rubens: He really dogged the redevelopment commission. His articles are a good source of information from the sixties up through the nineties.

41-00:33:00

Hinckle: Well, I would think he was right there. The story of redevelopment in this town is a horror. I think it's done nothing but terrible things.

Rubens:

Where you live now was part of one of the redevelopment projects.

41-00:33:13

Hinckle: I think some of these towers were put up with some redevelopment money. Certainly clearing out the area west of here. What they did in the Fillmore is outrageous. They left it destroyed for decades and promised all the black families that they'd be relocated, and they never were. You can't get worse than that.

No, I've never been a fan of redevelopment. I don't think you particularly need it—particularly when you can do spot redevelopment; you can put together, in a number of city blocks, an area with people at least who own property in the area and decide on improving the area, and who get tax advantages and other things. I think Jerry Brown's absolutely right. Why do you need this massive amount of state and federal money poured into areas, and then basically bureaucrats making the decision of what the hell is going to happen, and the city sitting powerlessly by and watching itself get chewed up? Same old Robert Moses debate in New York. Robert Moses did a lot of obviously good things, when you look at the parkways and some of the parks he built; but he destroyed almost as much. It's the old argument made by Jane Jacobs.

Rubens:

Here it was called Manhattanization.

41-00:34:44

Hinckle: That's the *Bay Guardian*'s term for it. Most of that was back during Joe Alioto's term as the mayor, a little bit in George Christopher's. I guess my point is there was growth downtown that went on and more office buildings were built; but a town's not a museum and it *was* the downtown, and that was the logical place to put more office buildings. It was a growing city for business. So I never saw anything wrong with having a business area in the city. There always was one. The Russ Building and the Shell Building, et cetera, were built back in the twenties and thirties. There *was* a downtown. There were high-rises.

Rubens:

I remember that when Allan Jacobs was the head of the planning department, he issued a master plan, I think he called it. He looked back into the Burnham plan from the City Beautiful movement.

41-00:35:53

Hinckle: Whenever I hear the phrase master plan, I reach for my revolver. It always makes me wonder right away.

Rubens:

He was the last one, I think, who had that kind of vision of zoning.

41-00:36:07

Hinckle: He was the last sort of planning tsar. Relatively, Jacobs was a contemporary guy. Before him, Justin Herman was the real tsar.

Rubens:

Sure. Did you know those guys?

41-00:36:24

Hinckle: Yes, I knew them. I never approved of what Justin Herman did. And Jacobs, I was usually at odds with over one thing or the other that the planning department was up to. I don't think they've done the city a hell of a lot of good. They've done, visibly, immensely more harm than any sort of good they've ever done, and they have succeeded in driving out light industry and small businesses, and succeeded in it largely being a town that's either for the very rich or for the very poor. They've failed in their ultimate task of redevelopment, which is to provide housing and comparable growth for the poor, who need housing; for the middleclass, who want to raise families and go and live in the city and work there; and for the wealthy, which want and are willing to pay for nice places. Pacific Heights was built a hell of a long time before there was a planning dept. Most cities in the country have their areas of very wealthy homes. That doesn't seem to me something particularly shocking. Even Cleveland and Cincinnati do, for God's sake. So it isn't like that's unusual. What the hell? But planning failed to provide for the middleclass to live in the city. And that's a pretty big failure. And that was run largely by bureaucratic-minded, ideological leftists. They screwed up the whole town.

Rubens:

Yes. There was a conflict over those same points of view when Newsom ran against Gonzalez. Gonzalez represented that no growth position, didn't he?

41-00:38:26

Hinckle: Well, Matt ran a much more nuanced campaign. And he was the candidate because nobody else had a chance to win. Of course, all the rest of the left jumped on him because they wanted one of their favorite sons to do it. And he said, "Hey, I'm the only guy who's got a chance to win." And he was right and he almost did. Came very close to winning. In fact, Tom Ammiano came very close to winning on a write-in before him. Elections in San Francisco are historically close. 52-48 is a big election to win by.

Rubens:

So how'd you feel about Newsom? Newsom's now stepped down, to be the lieutenant governor of California.

41-00:39:23

Hinckle:

Good for Gavin.

Rubens: What'd you think of his administration?

41-00:39:26

Hinckle: I didn't think he did a lot. He took a kind of aloof, technocratic view. He's a good friend of mine.

Rubens: Is that right?

41-00:39:37

Hinckle: The Newsom family is old, close friends. We talked about that, right. So I certainly approved of him running.

Rubens: He had that very public position in support of gay marriage.

41-00:39:50

Hinckle: Yes, that was great. But in terms of the nuts and bolts of running the city every day, let's just say he was no Willie Brown. He kind of left that to staff. And they were wildly influenced, both, certain times by development interests, which put up bad things, or ugly things, if you want, to simply stuff, and by the no growth-ers, who added to the civic bureaucracy and continue to drive, basically, the middleclass out of town. It's a damned shame that they have to live in the suburbs to work in the city, and San Francisco can't provide that sort of housing. It used to provide that housing. That's what the Sunset and the Richmond were all about. And again, that was done before there was such a thing as our current planning bureaucracy. So you have to step back and ask yourself the question, well, whose side were these people on? And I'd say the wrong side.

But that's really the politics of the town, in a summary of the last thirty years.

Rubens: So do you have a horse in this race for who will be the next mayor?

41-00:41:17

Hinckle: Not yet.

Rubens: Okay. Waiting to see how it sorts out?

41-00:41:22

Hinckle: Yes.

Rubens: Who's really running? You have an article in the *Argonaut* about Leland Yee's ambition.

41-00:41:36

Hinckle: Oh, Leland Yee, yes. Well, Leland, until recently, was the presumed frontrunner in this race. I think it's pretty wide open right now.

Rubens: Okay. So you're going to keep your eye on this and keep writing about it.

41-00:41:56

Hinckle:

Well, not that it's linear in this town. Leland and Willie, for instance, are enemies. I'm on Willie's side, or have been historically, on most things, not all of them. But then Willie and Rose Pak are a power combined, whatever you want to call it and I've been a relentless critic of Rose Pak over the years, for a litany of many sins, almost too many to delineate. Everything isn't just that way. But in summary, regarding all the arguments in San Francisco, you're either against the no growth planning bureaucracy that has basically wrecked the town, in terms of housing for the middleclass, and taken public money and bond issue money and public use money and put it into nonprofits that are more political operations than they are service operations—or if anything, duplicate already existing functions—and have just done terrible stuff. So the *Argonaut*'s always been allied not with the biggest of the developers, not the Sangiacomos and people like that, but with the more middle range of property owners, apartment house owners and businesspeople. I've certainly taken their view on taxes and things like that, but largely against sort of wasteful bureaucracy that impedes any sort of economic and building growth, in a town that's so sorely needed it. It's had a housing crisis since the 1970s, which was self-created. That's San Francisco politics.

Rubens:

So you're going to still be flagging this; you're going to still be calling it as you see it.

41-00:44:10

Hinckle:

Well, yes. That fight will not change. And I'm generally known, in most conventional summaries of careers and stuff like that, as a lefty. *Ramparts* and various books and things I've done on the CIA and things like that over a number of years. But here, the *Bay Guardian* crowd calls me a conservative, a right winger. I used to call them and I'd say, "No, you guys are corrupt and are screwing up the whole town. You're ruining it for everybody."

Rubens:

Of course you've long been the target of the *Bay Guardian*; Bruce loved to go at you.

41-00:45:04

Hinckle:

Yes. Well, that's how city politics shapes up. Who knows? We've got a whole lot of issues to take on.

Rubens:

I heard someone talk about that they were in the "still of their life". They were still writing, they were still out there. You still are just indefatigable.

41-00:45:26

Hinckle:

Well, what else do you do?

Rubens:

You're coming up on twenty years at the *Argonaut*. How many people do you have working for you there?

41-00:45:37
Hinckle: *Argonaut's* pretty much like a pick-up basketball game. I decide to put one out, pull together the usual suspects.

Rubens: So you have a webmaster.

41-00:45:52
Hinckle: Yes, I have a partner in the web operation, and that's not a separate thing editorially, but it's an ongoing thing.

Rubens: And you've got an advertising person?

41-00:46:08
Hinckle: Never really.

Rubens: Oh, but ads come to you? Off camera I'd asked you about the ad promoting travel to Israel; something about Israel's a good place to visit. It's the first thing you see when you get on the web site.

41-00:46:23
Hinckle: Oh, that's a web ad. The *Argonaut* website, almost like every other website, has automatic ads from Google. And they sell the ad space and send you a check once in a while. But they post the ads. So you never know— We've had ads up there for Sarah Palin, which is certainly not our politics. But it's an ad.

Rubens: I asked you once about the little animated cartoon figure on the *Argonaut360* website, the home page - he bloodies himself typing furiously. Is that supposed to be you?

41-00:47:00
Hinckle: No, that's just a funny thing that John Calder found that popped up on the web. It's supposed to be like, make a comment.

Rubens: Of course people are still calling you up with stories and leads. I imagine there are certain people that you still check in with about what's happening?

41-00:47:17
Hinckle: Oh, yes. Well, the older city workers, you see them all the time. I took my dog out to the dog park the other day, and a guy comes up to me. More people know you than you know them over the years. Old time San Franciscans, people who live in various neighborhoods and grew up there and their parents grew up there, they all have long memories. They remember Art Agnos; they remember this fight, that fight. A lot of the city workers, current and retired, know what's going on and they're always telling me— For instance, this guy was telling me about a scandal we'll soon be writing about, having to do with the city tree planting program and who owns the nursery that the city's buying its trees from, and who has the contract to water the trees; and then what's happening to the homeowners where they plant the trees on them when they pick the wrong trees, because they crack the sidewalk or they die right away,

and then they bill the homeowner and the DPW comes in. It's an endless cycle of city government, sometimes almost humorous—

Rubens: Their fuck-ups.

41-00:48:40

Hinckle: Fuck-ups, disasters, yes. In this particular case, there's a certain amount of graft. When I'd be writing stuff for the *Chronicle*—well, the *Examiner*, too—everybody'd say where do you get all this stuff? Well, I've usually read all the minority press on all sides and hung around neighborhood bars, where people tell you stories. Go in for a couple of hours, to any neighborhood bar in San Francisco—out in the Ingleside, North Beach, in the deep Sunset—and time after time, somebody's going to come up to you and start chatting and tell you something. And most of the reporters—this is true going back, certainly, to the seventies, and it was beginning to be true in the sixties—there weren't too many old-fashioned-type reporters who lived in town; they were becoming suburbanites and full of themselves, and didn't really know what the hell was going on in town. Never spent any time with it, never went to crazy old Italian society dinners out in the outer Mission or any of the neighborhood merchant groups and heard them all jacking each other up and making fun of each other over the years. You get to know all those people. And they know what's going on; and they're all, almost to a person, on, I guess you'd call it, my side—certainly, on the *Argonaut*'s side—of these issues, which all have to do with what type of growth, what sort of taxation, who's making a career out of city government and that sort of thing.

Rubens: We didn't get on tape, what was your critique of the *Bay Citizen*? You were saying there's an opportunity missed. This is mostly a website that reports on civic and community issues in the San Francisco Bay Area; it also has a weekly presence in the *New York Times*.

41-00:50:46

Hinckle: Well, it's a good try. It's more a business critique than anything. I think Warren Hellman put up enough money for them to get going.

Rubens: The seed money.

41-00:50:58

Hinckle: But unless he's going to put a hell of a lot more money into it or bring a lot more people in to put money into it—it's nothing to finance a website. Most independent websites are not making money yet. The best of them, *The Daily Beast* and the *Huffington Post*, for instance, aren't making money yet. Maybe the *Huffington Post* is breaking even now; I don't know. But I know that *Daily Beast* loses a lot of money. But it's tied to a larger operation. Now they've picked up *Newsweek*; that may or may not help them. But most websites, even though there's an enormous growth in web advertising as opposed to newspaper advertising, it's just not enough to support it yet.

Rubens: You had a critique, though, and I can't restate it adequately, about what they could be doing with it.

41-00:51:59

Hinckle: Oh, I think I was saying as if I was sitting down with Hellman, I told him to take a look at *Politico*, which is one of the new websites, where it was originally owned—still mostly is—by a company that owns a lot of television stations, particularly in and around Washington, D.C. They started *Politico* as a political website, centering on Washington news, and hired away some of the most long-term print journalists. People were looking at that going, well, where are these people going? What, are they going to write for a website instead of the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*? Wow. What are they thinking? Well, *Politico* has certainly established itself. But the irony is that it makes money off the political operation by a print spin-off. I think it's once a week, in Washington, D.C. And every lobbyist, every law firm, every congressional office pays to get it delivered, and it's *filled* with corporate advertisements because people want to be seen in that environment and everybody's reading it. It's making much more money off of the print spin-off than it is off of the website as such. I think something like that, structurally, is necessary for the *Bay Citizen*, if it's going to make it long-term.

Rubens: I thought you also had a critique about it was just missing some of the key stories. Maybe that it could be doing more on the Pacific Rim, along the lines of your vision of what could be in the *Chronicle*.

41-00:53:47

Hinckle: Oh, it doesn't have a vision for why it's there. It's done a couple of, hey, we found this out about a school board and that sort of thing—meaning investigative stories, but its primary thrust is not investigative. It hasn't really defined itself. I think they have twelve, fifteen staffers against, even in their diminished state, the *Chronicle*'s got forty to fifty people trying to cover the city. And they're covering the East Bay, also. So you almost have to pick where you're going to go and what type of thing you're going to be. So I don't think they've really thought that all the way through yet.

Rubens: Okay. So after I change the tape, perhaps we could tie up some loose ends? For instance, I don't think we talked about Hunter Thompson's death. I had asked you off camera if you went to the funeral, and you said no, because your mother had died right around the same time. Is that right?

41-00:54:59

Hinckle: Oh. Yes. Well, there was a wake a couple of weeks after Hunter killed himself, and I went to that one, in Aspen.

Rubens: You weren't there when the rocket was shot off?

41-00:55:16

Hinckle:

No, because my mother had died two days before and it was go to her funeral or go to watch Hunter's ashes be shot off in a rocket. There wasn't much question which one I was going to go to. But I'd been working on that book for—It's now into its sixth year, and it's just about done. I finished it, basically, last fall and I'm still dicking with it a little bit. But it's a mammoth book. It went from a bunch of quick memories of Hunter by his friends—And there was so much negative stuff that came out, there was so much—I can only call it Hunter penis envy, on the part of other writers, that nobody would dare say it while he was around. But boy, he got piled on everywhere from the *New York Times Book Review* to—

Rubens:

Really? After he died?

41-00:56:16

Hinckle:

Oh, yes. He was a has-been; he never was serious, he was this, he was that. Oh, just a major pile-on, by guys who were envious, in my opinion, of Hunter, his talent and how much he produced, and that he just did exactly what he wanted to and they couldn't do that. So it was a largely positive take by friends, and then it kind of expanded. My friend Ron Turner, who publishes art books now—He started out publishing dirty comic books years ago and was part of the original Mitchell Brothers' crowd, which was a lot of artists and poets. They were like the Medicis, when they started their porn business, and continued to be—in San Francisco at least. He publishes all these art books now and he said, "Well, we've got to put the covers in, of the magazines." Of *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's*.

And then it expanded into the Mitchell brothers and Hunter's close connection with them. So I ended up writing a 40- or 50,000-word book about Hunter and the journalism of the sixties, seventies and eighties, and San Francisco and San Francisco politics, and the Mitchell brothers and artists and the type—And it's full of art. So I could say there are underground comic books that guys self-printed about Hunter during this period that nobody's ever seen them; they're republished in there. It's a telling of the politics and particularly the art. If *Ramparts* is known for anything, aside from reviving muckraking and that sort of stuff, it's for changing the look of left-wing journalism. Putting them on slick paper, having them on the newsstand, putting in illustrations with the articles, that sort of thing. *Scanlan's* was a big jump up or a continuation of *Ramparts*. All of those, the artists for those publications, many of whom I'm still using today in the *Argonaut*—

Rubens:

The *Argonaut* covers are also wonderful.

41-00:58:43

Hinckle:

Yes. And other magazines I've done, too. It's sort of the same stable, I guess you'd call it, of people. All of their work is in there, so it's this massive history of politics and journalism in the sixties through the nineties, almost, with a heavy emphasis on art. And then there are a lot of personal memoirs of

Hunter and photo sections, stuff people have never seen. It's a big, huge potpourri of delicious stuff. It's well over a 500-page book, when it gets printed.

Rubens: So when do you expect it to—

41-00:59:22

Hinckle: Oh, I think I'll probably kick it out the door sometime before the end of this month. I know I've been saying that since last October or November, but it's coming.

Rubens: That's great.

Begin Audio File 42

Rubens: I wanted to ask you about your ongoing relationship with the Mitchells. We had left off your relationship with them when they were backing *War News*. That's in '91?

42-00:00:13

Hinckle: Yes, the beginning of the first Gulf War.

Rubens: Yes. So did you remain friends with them until Artie died? And of course afterward with Jim? Had you been closer to one over the other?

42-00:00:27

Hinckle: No, they were both good friends. And then when Jimmy killed Artie, there then was the trial and I was intimately involved with the trial. Susan Cheever and I were doing a book on the trial. I later killed it, to her chagrin.

Rubens: Why did you kill it?

42-00:00:49

Hinckle: Mitchell wanted it killed. There were two books coming out, and they were both really nasty books. You can't write a positive book about a guy killing his brother, even accidentally. But they were just these negative, trashy books about porn kings and sibling murder and a sensational trial, and not about what a cultural institution and what a part of the entire fabric and life of the city the Mitchell brothers became. So unique to a city like San Francisco. And a large part of that story is told in the Hunter Thompson book. His entire history, cultural history, if you like, of the Mitchell brothers, is outlined in there. Susan and I had almost finished—of course, she produces books like clockwork—the Mitchell brothers. So this was going to be more of a cultural positive history of the whole thing. But of course, it had to go through the trial, too.

And we're out at the home of an old friend of mine, the attorney Michael Kennedy, who started off in San Francisco, representing the Mitchell brothers

and drug dealers and other people and then went on to become one of the most prominent defense attorneys in the United States, and the pizza connection—a lot of mob clients and all that thing—and very successful in New York. He's got this great house out on the island, in the Hamptons. We were out there one night and Jimmy was there. They let him travel a little bit to go see his attorney, so he could go to the Hamptons and stay at Kennedy's house and go fishing up at Montauk, because he was a big, avid fisherman, da-da. And we were out on the deck just talking one night and it just came up. I said, "Well, what do you really think?" He says, "I just don't feel good about it. I know it's a positive book, but I'm so down about the whole thing," and this and that. It was stupid; it was like a buddy thing. I said, "If you don't want to do it, we won't do it." I said, "But geez, we've already got a hundred-grand out of Random House already." So there was a discussion about that and Mitchell said, "Well, do me a favor. I just don't feel right about the whole thing, even though it is positive now. Now that the trial is over, I'm still thinking about stuff. I just don't really want another book, even though—" I said, "Yeah, good idea." Of course, I discussed it with him before I began it. I said, "Well, hey, you don't want it done, I'm not going to do it." Well, that was quite some shocking news to Susan.

Rubens: And what about Random House?

42-00:03:55

Hinckle: Yes, well, too bad. Sue me, if you want. I'm not going to turn this book in. Mitchell basically said, "If they go after you, I'll cover you." Really guy stuff.

Rubens: Loyalty.

42-00:04:14

Hinckle: Yes, just loyalty. It was like, okay, you don't want the goddamned book to come out, we're not going to do it—even though it was just about done. So I killed it. Susan went bananas, couldn't conceive of such a thing and wanted to know why, and I couldn't really tell her why. I said, "Ah, I just don't want to do it."

Rubens: Why couldn't you tell her?

42-00:04:38

Hinckle: Oh, because she'd go running to Random House—she tried to—and take it away. But fortunately, the contract was in my name so she couldn't do anything too much about it. It wasn't nice, it was just a tough—it was a loyalty thing. Certainly, not anything she approved of. So that book is still sitting around in a box somewhere. But a lot of that story's told in the Hunter Thompson book.

Rubens: So you've remained friends with Jimmy until he died?

42-00:05:09

Hinckle: Oh, yes. Jimmy died about two, three years ago. Sudden heart attack.

Rubens:

Is there any light that you particularly want to shed about the shooting of Artie? Do you think it was an accident?

42-00:05:29

Hinckle:

Yes.

Rubens:

Not a moment of crazed aggression?

42-00:05:36

Hinckle:

No. No. He told me exactly what went on in that house that night, and it was one of those things, if they'd brought a cell phone with— First of all, the jury never heard that there were two of them. There was Jimmy and his cousin Rocky [Davidson] who I know very well. And they were tight knit. They were Okies, grew up in the Antioch waterfront. Literally, the father was an Oklahoma riverboat gambler-type guy, right? Close knit farmer-type Okies. Don't play poker with these guys; they know every card in the deck. Stuck together. And everybody knew that Artie was just going off the wall. He just was running around shooting off guns, had really gotten into guns, and was high on various different mixes of drugs and totally smashed all the time. He was basically going nuts. Threatening to kill everybody and shot up the ceiling of the O'Farrell and threatened some of the girls. Basically, the girls had gone to Jimmy Mitchell and said, listen, if he comes in here again with a gun and shoots it off like that and threatens us, we're going to call the cops and have him arrested, right? And Artie was like, cops ever come for me, I'm going to shoot it out with them. It was going to be a disaster. So in true Okie style, frontier justice, whatever you want to call it, he and his cousin, who's also Artie's close friend, Rocky, they decide they'd go over to Artie's house, which was in Corte Madera, Marin County, and basically get the drop on him and tie him up. And they'd rented a cab up in Tahoe and they were going to—

Rubens:

Dry him out.

42-00:07:41

Hinckle:

They brought ropes and stuff with them. They had it all planned out. And they were armed to the teeth. They had rifles and pistols and knives, because Artie was always packing two or three guns and it was like, get the drop on him. That sort of thing. But when they got there, it looked like he wasn't there. There was no car around and the place was dark. It was a horrible rainy night and they hadn't brought a cell phone with them. So Jimmy says to Rocky, "Jesus Christ," he says. "Get in the car and go down to a shopping center somewhere down there and get a phone and call the O'Farrell. Call my girlfriend first and tell her to stay away from the window," because Artie had taken a couple of shots at Jimmy's house on in the avenues. "Call the O'Farrell and tell them he's probably coming over there. Have some of the guys wait by the front door. When he comes in, jump him from behind." That

sort of thing, right? So Jimmy was standing around there in front of the door in the rain, kind of frustrated, and he kicked at the door and to his surprise, the door opened. The house was dark. So he walked into the house. He had a rifle with him and just took a couple shots at the ceiling and said, "Well, if you were here, you'd hear me, mother fucker," that sort of thing, right? "We were going to tie you up, take you up there and dry you out. That's what you need. You are so out of line." And he took a few more shots at the ceiling, that sort of thing. Then all of a sudden a light went on down the corridor, a crack of light was visible under the door, and out comes Artie. And the door shuts again and it's still pitch dark in the house and he's coming down the hallway saying, "I'm going to shoot it out with you. I'm going to get you, fucker," and stuff like that. The last thing Jimmy recalls, remembers, is thinking, oh, God, I've got to try and shoot that gun out of his hand. He took a couple of shots in the dark and one grazed the guy, and the other was a ricochet bullet that went into his head and it killed him. It turned out he was so stoned and crazy, he didn't have a gun at all. He had an empty bottle of Heineken's in his hand.

Rubens: Tragic.

42-00:10:25

Hinckle: So clearly, this was not a case of premeditated, first-degree murder, but the Marin County DA wanted to make it that. Pornographer living in Marin County. Oh, boy, what a great trial. And he spent a fortune with all these whacko experts. I covered the whole trial and wrote about it for my friend Bruce Anderson's paper, the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, which is this great, great—It's the greatest paper in America.

Rubens: You have a story about it in *Argonaut*.

42-00:10:44

Hinckle: Oh, yes. But the *Advertiser* is a wonderful, wonderful paper. It's put out in Anderson Valley, which is close to Mendocino. It's the valley before Mendocino, when you cut in from Santa Rosa. It's just Boonville.

So it was ridiculous to charge first-degree murder in those circumstances. But the jury never even got to hear, for instance, that there were two of them—that they'd gone over prepared to do that—because the DA had basically threatened the cousin who went with Jimmy and said, "If you testify and say that, I'm going to charge you as a co-conspirator." So Jimmy said, "You're not going to do that. I don't want you to get into that sort of trouble and legal mess. I'm going to get some time and you'll end up doing time, too as a co-conspirator, and you didn't have anything to do—" So the jury never heard that there were two of them. Just this crazy theory that he went over there to kill him.

They simulated the shots; and they had a robot. The trial cost a fortune for the taxpayers. But Michael Kennedy did such a good job on the defense that they

got in enough about how out of control Artie was and how whacko and this and that way and how much, basically, his brother loved him and how screwed up the situation had become that the jury came back with what—Jimmy originally wanted to plead guilty to manslaughter. Because he felt *terrible*. He'd killed his brother. But the Marin County DA wanted to charge degree murder. So he had to defend himself against that charge. That's what that trial was about.

Rubens: And they came back with a conviction of manslaughter.

42-00:12:48

Hinckle: Yes. Which he wanted to plead guilty to in the first place.

Rubens: Was there an original enmity between Artie and Jimmy?

42-00:12:56

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: Artie was just crazy and fired on Jimmy?

42-00:12:58

Hinckle: The last couple of years, Artie felt a little bit out of it because he wasn't quite involved in *War News* and Jimmy was getting more interested in— This porn business is on automatic pilot. DVDs had come in and they were making most of their money off of DVDs and not the live shows, where they put in a lot of experiment and had some, if you want to call it, creative fun with making up the sets and the acts and all that stuff. I guess he just didn't see what there was for him to do that much in the thing and he was like, all right, you— As he got crazier, he'd say, you take *War News*, I'll take the theater. That sort of stuff. It was becoming completely deranged and drugged and crazed and into guns and shooting them off and a menace. So those two guys tried to take Okie justice—

Rubens: Intervention.

42-00:13:59

Hinckle: Yes, and get the drop on him, one behind him, one in front who said, "We've got more guns than you, tie him up." They had a straightjacket; they were going to put him in a straightjacket and dry him out.

Rubens: Who has the theater now?

42-00:14:12

Hinckle: The kids. Most of the kids were— There was a very ugly period of lawsuits from Artie's kids and this and that, but everybody was bought off and all that got settled, with a lot of grief and details, but it finally got all settled down. There're two kids who take an interest in running it now and they're doing it now, and most of the old-timers who were there through the sixties are basically kind of retired and out of it, and God knows what will become of—

Jimmy's daughter is basically kind of running the thing now and she wants to have a feminist slant to a porn palace. I don't know how you do that, but—And then of course, there was the latest tragedy in the family; that was Jimmy's son Rafe [Raphael] who's been in a lot of trouble. He always had behavior problems. I knew him pretty well; we were always trying to get him straightened out one way or the other. He ended up killing his girlfriend, and now he's awaiting trial in Marin County, in the same jail that Jimmy was in. There's going to be another Mitchell murder trial. It's quite a family story, when you take the whole thing in. You still see a lot of the old artists going over there just to see Rafe, to say, hey, how you doing, man? There are artists who went through all this stuff over the years with both brothers. So I don't know, I might revive that book someday and finally tell that story because it's quite a story about San Francisco and quite a family story, too.

Rubens: What do you think about another interview in which you talk about famous people, as well as a host of characters that you knew? I know there are some wonderful stories we haven't covered about San Francisco characters.

42-00:16:14

Hinckle: Yes, for instance, de Antonio with whom I was very close.

Rubens: I want to ask you about Ayn Rand and Oriana Falacci, for instance.

42-00:16:22

Hinckle: I know we talked a lot about Howard Gossage, and there is a lot about him in this Hunter Thompson book.

Rubens: I'd like to film an interview in one of your favorite bars.

42-00:17:11

Hinckle: Let me look through the interviews we've done so far, and then we'll sit down and patch things in if we need more. And you may see some things you want to clarify.

Rubens: Good plan. I'll get a copy to you in the next couple of weeks, in a box. You're used to huge manuscripts like this.

42-00:18:00

Hinckle: Yes, I'm used to those things. I'll correct the factual stuff, spellings. There's a lot of stuff I just guessed at. And if I think of some more specific information about something, I'll tell you about it. Like the exact title of something.

Rubens: I think we may have given short shrift to your *Examiner* stories, pre and during the Fang ownership.

42-00:18:23

Hinckle: Oh, yes, we can do all that. Also, I'm talking to Barnaby Conrad's kid now, about doing a book about my friend Bernie Murphy. I think I told that story,

but we can save it for the bar. This was the Irish politician who couldn't read or write. We brought him to the city, I remember, Hearst, Nick, all the guys.

Rubens: You'd met him in Ireland

42-00:18:47

Hinckle: Yes. I went over there twice, brought him over here twice. I got him his teeth. Some friends of his have done a book on him and Conrad wants to publish it. He wants me to write an introduction.

Rubens: Who is Conrad?

42-00:19:03

Hinckle: Barnaby's son, Barnaby the third, who's got a little publishing company now with Maurice, who used to own Skyy Vodka and he gives a lot of money to the film festival. Kanbar, Maurice Kanbar.

Rubens: I think there could be more said about Ireland, raising money for the IRA, and also more about the Irish in San Francisco. We should also make sure we've covered recent flaps in the Catholic Church, including the law suits over child abuse.

42-00:19:43

Hinckle: Of course I wrote a bunch of columns in the *Examiner* about that. I've basically, well, certainly beat up the church enough over the years, and that was pointed out, that that was well known back in the seventies and eighties.

Rubens: But known to you?

42-00:20:03

Hinckle: Well, *everybody* knew it. It's a national problem because it was a big problem of paying a lot of money to hush up these lawsuits. The total extent of it wasn't known. But it was known that they were hush-hushing all kinds of this sort of stuff up and it'd become a financial problem for certain dioceses which are very important to the Catholic press. If you read the Catholic press—

Rubens: Which you do.

42-00:20:30

Hinckle: —then there's only one liberal Catholic paper, *The National Catholic Reporter*, out of Kansas City. So I knew about that stuff. But also I defended a couple of priests in San Francisco, who I knew they were caught up in this web and I knew were blameless of any such behavior. And it went into a certain tendency towards McCarthyism and hysteria in the church at that time, in some of these charges. Clearly, some of them were guilty as sin. But an enormous amount of priests were caught up on vague charges and it was just more politic, then, to dismiss them or, you go somewhere else, than it was to give them justice, if you want. There was one case, a guy who was the pastor across the street here, in St. Mary's. I knew him quite well. Nice guy. He'd

come to use the gym in this building. He got caught up in that stuff and I said, "This is ridiculous." Somebody had reported an allegation, back thirty years ago. One of those things.

One report, one charge. They'd reported it to the DA and the DA had a full investigation, not a trial it went through, and said, there's nothing to this. So it was completely dismissed—right?—as a criminal matter, as any matter at all, yet the church still screwed over the guy, because it was easier. So I raised a couple of issues like that, in defense of certain priests, in the *Examiner*.

Rubens: I asked you in an early interview if you'd known kids who had been hit on or approached by priests when you were in grade or high school.

42-00:22:26

Hinckle: No. No. We used to make jokes about it. Some brother sitting around trying to feel your leg up your sock. We'd just laugh about it, laugh at those guys, right? Just stuff they were doing, goofy, old, senile faggots. Never really thought much about it at all. So it was well known and laughed at, at least in the part of the church that I grew up in. But later on, I did come to know, just from curious stories of liberal priests I knew, that it was a problem. And I knew a lot of those guys from the whole Catholic period of *Ramparts*. We really got into that and knew a lot of the reformers. They knew what was going on. It was outrageous. These celibate old men in the Vatican are shutting up this whole thing that's going to take down the church, to hear guys tell stories like that.

Rubens: It's pretty amazing, the amount of money that's been spent.

42-00:23:22

Hinckle: Oh! It first surfaced as a financial problem for the dioceses that was in lawsuits. It was like, well, what were those lawsuits about? They didn't say why they had to pay up all these enormous legal expenses. But it was in the early wave of this stuff. This was back in the seventies and eighties, and this didn't really blow up until ten years ago, give or take.

Rubens: Any figures in San Francisco that we should point the finger at?

42-00:23:52

Hinckle: Oh, there's a couple. There was one, a guy who was at St. Cecilia's. They nailed him pretty good. No question he was grabbing little boys and taking them off places. And a few others. And there's some that were wrongly charged. And I felt comfortable defending a couple of these priests because I was such a well-known Catholic critic of the church that I could—It wasn't just like the typical conservative Catholic saying, oh, this is really wrong. I wasn't defending them all; I just made a couple—

Rubens: So you still identify as a Catholic?

42-00:24:29
Hinckle: Yes. We baptized my son in the Catholic Church, after a big fight with Cheever over it, but we did.

Rubens: Did you baptize the girls?

42-00:24:37
Hinckle: Oh, yes. They're both Catholics, yes. You've got to be something.

Rubens: Do you ever attend, maybe for Christmas services or Easter?

42-00:24:49
Hinckle: Not too often, once in a while. If somebody wants to go, I'll go, but I gave up going to church back in the sixties, when most of these priests wouldn't go to church anymore. They'd had it with the church, it was so corrupt. What the hell do you stand for?

Rubens: Then you were particularly upset about segregation in the church.

42-00:25:08
Hinckle: They hid behind. You go to mass every Sunday, you do all this bullshit, and they were committing these horrors, right? Horrors! Blessing wars and letting them go on and every racial thing you can imagine. You got so sick of the church you didn't really want to go anymore. And your Catholic friends, aside from the traditional ones you went to school with, who just kept going to mass, I guess— My Catholic friends were all the reformers, and they didn't have much use for the traditional church anymore. But they didn't say they weren't Catholic, they didn't become something else. Right? They stayed in there and gave them hell. So that was about it.

Rubens: And you still take *The National Catholic Reporter*.

42-00:26:09
Hinckle: Yes. That sounds like tokenism, but—

Rubens: Well after you read the transcripts we'll fill in anything more you want to say about the church or anything else.

42-00:26:19
Hinckle: Sure; the rest we can fill in. There is the Bernie Murphy story, and there's a couple more people I'd like to talk about.

Rubens: We'll do it.

Interview 21: May 2, 2012

Imbibing a mug of brew in the infamous Tosca Café, our narrator discusses events that transpired and personages who frequented this establishment, and holds forth on the sorry disappearance of San Francisco bars and bar culture, on the seamy side and intricacies of local politics and on his future projects.

Begin Audio File 43

Rubens: So tell me why you picked Tosca or today's interview. In previous interviews you talked about you working in bars since your days at the *Foghorn*, through *Ramparts*.

43-00:00:37

Hinckle: Lot of guys did that.

Rubens: But we didn't talk about Tosca, so how did you come to pick this North Beach icon?

43-00:00:44

Hinckle: Oh, this has been a hangout for, well, in North Beach, *since* the sixties. *Ramparts* was down the street, on Broadway, next to a bar with a topless broad who danced. Big sign.

Rubens: Carol Doda?

43-00:01:07

Hinckle: A neon sign. Oh, it wasn't Carol Doda, but it was just that was the topless theater on Broadway. Then *Scanlan's* was down a block on Pacific, and Gossage's great firehouse, a big difference from the big *Ramparts* office. I just told this story today. A guy called me this morning, because he's doing a thing on Hunter Thompson's Kentucky Derby piece and he wanted to ask some dumb things about this and that. This was where I put it together, because it came over the mojo. In those days, there was no fax machine, but they called these early facsimile transmission machines, before everything was so convenient, like a fax, forget email—None of this was around. This is, again, 1970. But it was a big, huge thing on a rolling drum, something like the old wire-photo transmissions. First World War pictures and things, they'd wrap the picture around the drum and the drum would whirl, whirl, whirl, and would somehow copy it and then send it. But it had to be one machine to the other. That was it. So we had one at the office in New York and one at the office here. This is where we did all the typesetting and layout, in San Francisco. The one in New York was just Mafia guys and weirdness.

Rubens: You have a wonderful description of it in an earlier interview.

43-00:02:49

Hinckle: Oh, God.

Rubens: Wonderful description. The watches in the window and the— So literally, at one of these tables you edited Thompson's *The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved*? ?

43-00:02:55

Hinckle: Yeah. Stuff came over at, whatever, ten or eleven at night. It was such a mess, the Kentucky Derby piece. And this was after a guy had spent a couple of days on it, taking out the extraneous things. There were treatises on flying saucers; he wrote about, and kangaroos. I don't know how they got in there. There was a lot about kangaroos. Some things it had didn't have anything to do with him. It was already huge, just the stuff on the Kentucky Derby. I think those extraneous parts have been lost to history. Nobody can ever remember where the hell they went. Anyway, he went through it and separated all this stuff and tried to make some order. In the end, it comes over a rather slow-moving machine, the mojo, at the office here. Took a while, an hour or so, for thirty or something pages to wind their way over. I looked and it was just a mess. It didn't make any sense at all, the article. So I said, "Oh, crap." I just kind of bundled it all up and took a walk up the street, around the corner, to the Tosca. Fortunately, it wasn't a crowded night, so I sat in one of these back red booths and spent a couple hours actually reading the thing and figuring the heads and the tails. It was episodic, to say the least. Kind of reassembled, somewhat. It was like— Oh, dear. It was sort of like trying to assemble a very big, complex crossword[sic] puzzle, without having the picture on the box. Right? You didn't have that to go by. So anyway, I did what I could and finally came up with what seemed like some order. Then I sat around over many of the Irish coffees—but they're not Irish coffees; they're called house cappuccinos here.

Rubens:

They have them lined up on the counter over there.

43-00:05:04

Hinckle: Yeah. They pour a lot of those. It's a mixture of, I guess, that cappuccino stuff and milk and brandy. So I went through quite a few of those, of course, in two or three hours and finally, because I stood around writing these little subheads for each section or paragraph, I went back through it again. Finally came down the street about two, two-thirty in the morning. They were kind enough to let me stay here. This was also, of course, Hunter Thompson's hangout when he was in San Francisco. He hung out and would take Jeanette out driving.

Rubens:

I wanted to ask you about Jeanette Etheredge. Is she an Elaine kind of figure? How do you talk about her as a San Francisco personality?

43-00:06:01

Hinckle: I don't think she'd appreciate the comparison, but yes, she is.

Rubens:

Why wouldn't she appreciate this?

43-00:06:10

Hinckle:

Because hardly any saloon owner appreciates being compared to another. They think their places are individual and their own. I think there would be some feeling, "What do you mean, I'm like that woman?" Or something like that. Anyway, I don't think she'd appreciate it, but she was. Elaine's was the place where all the writers and literary types—and some of the movie makers, but mostly it was writers and theater types—all sorts of famous people went to Elaine's, from the early sixties on. In fact, that's where I met Emile De Antonio, who we talked about the other day.

This place was a hangout for film people. Francis Coppola was a big buddy of hers, because she used to help babysit for him and is a good friend of his wife, and the families got very close. He hung around here and naturally, drifted in the other movie makers of the sixties, who were friends of Coppola's. So everybody from Lucas—you name all the A movie guys—would hang around here when they were in town making a movie. They would all retreat here. And if they didn't—the directors, that is—at least their staffs would—the sound guys, all those people. Some of them got Academy Awards for the stuff they did. So it was always full of movie people. So this was more based on the movie culture out here than it was on the literary culture, as in New York. But this was definitely a social setting and everybody came here to hang out and hang around with the crowd that was here, as was true at Elaine's, in New York. So the comparison is absolutely solid, although I say I'm sure Jeanette wouldn't appreciate it. In fact, I'd like to hear what she says about it.

Rubens:

Is that how you met Antonio?

43-00:08:39

Hinckle:

De? Yes. Most friends called him De, De Antonio.

Rubens:

So you meet him here and you strike up a friendship?

43-00:09:03

Hinckle:

Well, he was one of the earliest customers of Elaine's and fell in love with the place. And then we were working together, years later, in the late eighties. He died about 1990, I think. Anyway, we were working on a couple of projects. We were starting a magazine we were going to call *Smoking Gun*. This was before the *Smoking Gun* website, which is now there, grabbed the name. We were going to start a company called Smoking Gun, Inc., and use a lot of the investigative stuff that he'd done, but the style of his movies, and that I'd done in magazines, and get some young, rad researchers in there on topics that make us think. So we spent a lot of time in New York, talking about that. But that was many decades later. But he was an early friend of Elaine's, became very close to her, through all of his marriages. De had six wives. Beats all of our records. He had six. The only one he really liked was Terry [Moore], who was a sweetheart and was number four. Sometimes he'd be interviewed for something and he'd say, "Well, I can't remember her name, but it was wife number five, who—" That sort of stuff. Hysterical.

Rubens: But I want to just get clear. You met him at Elaine's or you met him here?

43-00:10:49

Hinckle: Elaine's. The Tosca of New York.

Rubens: So what a project. Did you have investors lined up? Did you get that far that you were going to go into operation?

43-00:10:51

Hinckle: Yeah, we weren't worried about that stuff. De, he had a principle with his movies, which was never use your own money. But *The Year of the Pig*, which he did, savaging Nixon and the whole stuff that was going on then, the late sixties and early seventies, he ended up having to put his own dough in it. He was a rather wealthy guy. He's from Pennsylvania; I forget the town. His father was the town doctor, but had some dough and made some right investments. Anyway, he grew up with coal miners in the town, the kids in school and stuff like that. Ended up going to Harvard. I think he told me at one time that he was a freshman when John Kennedy was getting out of there. That period. And was not only a brilliant guy, an artist, and he knew every artist of the time—He made a great movie called *Painters Painting*, which was about Rauschenberg and just—You name them. Every artist of the seventies was in there, the modern artists, and he was good friends with them all. They all liked him because he was an artistic guy himself.

But I guess one of the things we shared was that he was an incredible snob. Liked people that he felt were genuine people, but had not much use for anybody in the movie industry or in his profession and was quite contemptuous, speaking of them, and was sick, very early, of the left and the New Left and its moralistic and puritan pretensions. These were things that we completely shared, because I had absolutely no use for these guys either. Didn't like them and he didn't like them, so we shared some uproarious conversations about that. I remember I went over and he was making a movie or doing something in Paris—it was sometime in the sixties—and he said, "Now, you've got to come over here. You can't believe the lunatics hanging out here.. I've got this little apartment above—It's eye level with the top of Notre Dame. Every insane leftie and artist is hanging out here all night. That sort of stuff. "You've just got to see this. This won't last forever." He was right. This was a garret.

Rubens: You went?

43-00:13:55

Hinckle: Well, yes. Combined it, fraudulently or conveniently, with something that I had to do, anyway, with going to France. It was nuts. Kept going till two or three in the morning, and it'd be packed with artistic and political—French politics are much more convoluted and enjoyable than American politics are. There's a good sense of humor about what they're doing, that most—not all—of these Frenchies have. The American left has always taken itself much more

seriously. What little I remember of some of those nights, it was just insane. There'd be lightning storms and it was a little garret-type place, and level with the top of Notre Dame. Where's the hunchback? You look out the window and these loonies would be drinking out of bottles; guys would be playing three different instruments and everybody would be arguing. It was one of those scenes. It was pretty good.

Rubens: So you shared this kind of political-cultural view of the world. But you must have had fun brainstorming on *Smoking Gun*. How far did that literally get?

43-00:15:17

Hinckle: De became a really close friend of mine, because we had the same prejudices, I guess, some of the same background. He had done a lot of Marxist reading when he was in school, Harvard and elsewhere. He was a complete insomniac. Went to sleep maybe two hours a day. Stood up almost every night, all night, reading, when he wasn't drinking. Also he was a big drinker. Wow, what a drinker he was. There was a time when Warhol, who he met also at Elaine's—all these artists were always hanging around there—Warhol kept bugging him, "I want to make a movie with you. I want to do something." One night De had had quite a few drinks and he says, "Okay." He says, "We will make a movie. You make a movie of me drinking by myself. There'll be no dialog. I will just sit there, in front of a brick wall, and keep drinking until I fall down. I'll just keep drinking." So the finished film is about two and a half hours. The whole film was just him kind of staring at the camera, just drinking and getting progressively smashed, smashed. One time Warhol, he told me, had to change canisters of film. He said, "I had to act. I sat down on the floor." He says, "I was stinking drunk by then." He said, "I was kind of clawing the wall, trying to get up." But there was no talking. It was completely silent. It was just hours of tape, until he just sort of collapsed in a puddle on the floor, of him just sitting and staring at the camera. No talking, no watching anything, just consuming this giant bottle of booze. The movie never came out. One of his wives—I think it was wife number five—went crazy when she saw it and said, "That's not coming out." Got a lawyer and went after Warhol. So it ended up that Warhol kept it in his private collection and only certain types of people, could see it. It was never released. But it was just a movie called *Drink*. Apparently, Warhol—I saw an article once where he talked about it. He says, "It was the greatest movie ever made." Because if Warhol likes you—

Rubens: Did you ever see it? Did you see any part of it?

43-00:18:05

Hinckle: No. He had a couple of stills from it, but he never even had a copy. Oh, there was a big legal thing and he finally decided, well, maybe number five was right. It's completely disgusting. "There I am, just getting totally smashed all by myself. Just degrading. It was a work of Warhol art that I probably made a mistake making." That sort of thing. So it was pretty—

Rubens: Did he consult with you on your movie *Jailbreak*? You actually said earlier that you didn't have much to do with that, right? It was your book, but--

43-00:18:41

Hinckle: Yeah, we had a nightmare over that, right? That was the one where the two main characters—The book had already been published by Playboy the movie had been sold, and then they walked out of the movie and went to Columbia, I think. I might have said this earlier; when we were talking about it. Anyway, they walked in there and said, “Hey, we’re the main people in this book. You can’t make the movie without us. We don’t want that one-eyed asshole and his FBI buddy having any part of it. You’ve got to give all the money to us.” So that started this huge battle.

Rubens: But does De Antonio have any—

43-00:19:25

Hinckle: No. He hated commercial movies. Hated all that stuff.

Rubens: So is there anything more you wanted to say about him? You lost so many people. That must’ve been a hard one for you when he died.

43-00:19:36

Hinckle: Well, no. He was such a roots guy for me.

Rubens: Roots?

43-00:19:42

Hinckle: Yeah, because he became early on, cynical about Marxism in its traditional forms, or the people who professed it and tried to apply it. Then when the New Left came along, he just couldn’t stand it. Puritanism, phoniness and everything like that. We shared that. But he gravitated very early, to Catholic radicals. That’s where *Ramparts* came from and I came from. We had major mutual friends in the Berrigan brothers. In fact, he made a terrific movie on them, about the Plowshares Eight. He also made a movie about the Weather Underground, about the big bombs and that stuff. But these were guys who didn’t make bombs, they dismantled them. That was their form of protest. Put blood on them and were going to factories and taking screws out.

He thought the conscience and the real Christianity, whatever it might be, of these guys was fabulous. He became close friends with both of them, particularly Dan Berrigan, who’s a good friend of mine, and ended up making this movie, which was really an odd movie to make. He wanted to make the movie of the trial of the Plowshares Eight, and he wanted the people who’d been arrested and were on trial to play themselves. He didn’t want actors. Then the judge ruled that he couldn’t do that. Most of them couldn’t do that. Anyway, there was a lot of stuff going on. So when they finally got permission to make the movie, they had some of them in it, but they had to get some actors. Martin Sheen, who was also close to the Catholic—

volunteered—in fact, sent him, he told me, five or ten grand to help with the movie—a week of his time. He ended up playing the roughest part, which was the judge in that trial, who's really a jerk. Sort of like the judge in the Chicago Seven trial. So he played that. Martin Sheen played the judge, and a lot of the defendants were in the movie playing themselves. But they only had three days or less than a whole week to make the movie, because if they got the word to go, they'd get everybody together and build a set really quick, in an Episcopal church in New York, on the Lower East Side—I forget the name of it—build a courtroom set and that stuff. But they had to have it there because on the Monday of that week, the guys were to appear in court for sentencing, and then they were all in jail. So it was really a time thing. So one way or the other, it got made. It was a little rough. He and Sheen stayed on, with their interest in Catholic radicalism.

Rubens: Would you see him when he came out here? He was making a movie on Berkeley, too I think, at some point.

43-00:23:06

Hinckle: Well, he did the Weather Underground. We also had the same criticisms about stuff we did. He got a lot of trouble for the Weather Underground movie, for sexism, because three of the five Weather Underground people that he interviewed were women. So he said, "Hey, three of them are women. What's sexist about that?" But the left is so crazy. I had the same thing going with *Ramparts*; I think we talked about that. Jesus Christ.

Rubens: Yes, you were named chauvinist of the month, at some point.

43-00:23:37

Hinckle: Oh, God, yeah.

Rubens: *Ms. Magazine*'s attribution.

43-00:23:39

Hinckle: He lined the Irish guys together with the Vietnam war. He thought this article by a guy named Don Duncan, who was a master sergeant in the Green Berets, which was the first major piece we printed about the war, was the strongest thing that'd ever been written about that war, or published. But he was an artist, and he thought *Ramparts* was very artistic.

Rubens: Well, it was.

43-00:24:13

Hinckle: What he did in his movies is that he used art, or his art as a filmmaker and an editor, to explore and communicate ideas, and ultimately, make a critique of society or whatever the issue was. He felt that I was doing the same thing with *Ramparts*, using these whatever techniques—pizazz of design or slickness—to do that stuff. Then also the Warren Commission. He made a movie out of Mark Lane's book, one of the original Warren Commission critics. Bit of a

jerk, in my opinion, but he kind of liked the guy. But we would spend a lot of time rapping about the time Mark Lane had cozied up to Jim Jones and the People's Temple. He was down there in Guyana, at the time that Jim Jones decided to tell everybody to go kill themselves. Jones kind of wiggled his way, with this and that reason, out of the place. As soon as he got outside to pick up some—whatever the hell he said he was doing, ran into the jungle and hid for two days, while everybody killed themselves. Then he went around giving lectures about it and all that stuff. But we thought it was pretty funny, the guy having to hide in the jungle for two days. He didn't want to drink the stuff. Even though De liked him a bit more than I did.

Anyway, we shared this complete contempt for most of the American New Left, and thought the old left was fuddy-duddy and haughty and misapplied Marxism and stuff like that. So we really shared a lot of stuff.

Rubens: *Smoking Gun* didn't happen, though.

43-00:26:16

Hinckle: Oh, this was much later, back in the middle, later eighties.

Rubens: Well, get us there. So you stay in touch with him all throughout your time at *Scanlan's* and *City* and then back in your *Chronicle*—

43-00:26:29

Hinckle: Well, not so much with *City*. Once in a while he'd be out here and we'd go out drinking for a night and that stuff, and I'd be in New York and we'd go out and have a drink. But we were really quite close in the sixties, centered around Elaine's and our mutual interests—Catholicism and a war and the Warren Commission and all that stuff. He was making movies about all that stuff. *Ramparts* was doing about the only cogent stuff on that.

Rubens: But so how did *Smoking Gun*—At what point do you sort of commit that you're going to—

43-00:27:08

Hinckle: Oh, that was much later. I was living in New York with Cheever, and so I had some time on my hands, once this settled down. Okay, I've got to stay in New York; I've got this kid coming and all that stuff. So I could spend time with him down in the East Village, in a townhouse down in the East Village, the basement of which had more books—*Huge* basement with basically nothing in it but polished hardwood floors and a little conference table and some chairs around it and one kind of easy chair, and this *giant* bowling alley type of space, the walls just *filled* with books. He'd go buy books by the crate. Mostly new books. Left books, conspiracy books, theory books—every type of thing. Anything but books about movies. He detested those, had no use for just about anybody in the movie field. Haskell Wexler was a friend of his off and on, but he detested his movie. I'm thinking it was the Dylan movie or maybe the Maysles made it. I think it was the Dylan movie, and Wexler made

that. Just thought it was all rubbish, what they did; their values were all wrong and their art was awful. De was a genius—as anybody who's written about him, studied him, has said—of a filmmaker. The Army-McCarthy movie, *Point of Order*, was his first movie.

Rubens: Was that his movie?

43-00:28:54

Hinckle: Justly famous for that. Yes, *Point of Order*. He took the rough footage, the black and white footage from the televised hearings, McCarthy hearings, and spent God knows how many times a year or more, taking these horrible kinescopes, and working at the editing table, re-splicing them together and rearranging them—the whole movie was just that stuff; it was a sort of kinky-looking kind of old-fashioned, raw footage, taken off late fifties television—and made a brilliant movie about it. Just scathing. It was a great, great movie.

Rubens: Yes. Really converted a lot of people on the— So is there anything more you want to say about him and you in the later period? *Smoking Gun*; I'm trying to keep you on what happened to that. It was a great idea.

43-00:29:55

Hinckle: Well, whenever I was in New York, which was often during the seventies and eighties, after *Ramparts*, we'd usually hook up at Elaine's and do our usual drinking. Then we started talking about it. He says, "Well, let's do something." I said, "Well, what should we do?" He says, "Well, I don't want to make another movie right now and you don't know shit about movies, that's for sure." He says, "Well, let's make a magazine in some publishing house." So we spent a lot of time down in his house around in the East Village, where he lived. His last wife, Nancy, was a therapist, psychiatrist, family law or something like that. She just couldn't stand his drinking heavily. Had all kinds of rules about it. Oh, God, she'd drive me crazy. She didn't welcome my presence, because whenever I was down there, we'd find a reason to go out of the house and walk a few blocks to some Ukrainian bar, with all these Ukraine ad men he was taking advice from, drinking with.

De loved that original sort of real-people peasant life. He didn't have too much use for the cultural life. He was a wonderful, educated snob about that. Felt the same way about a lot of the art world and a lot of the left world, so we kind of hooked up on a lot of things. So we spent a lot of time trying to plot this thing out. Then we decided to do one book. Oh, yeah, I had all this research into— George Bush was president, George Bush the first. He was fascinated by that and the Skull and Bones Society and Bush and evolving into a spy and that stuff. So he said, "Hey, let's make a book about that guy. When we've got the book, then I'll make a movie about it." So we ended up doing that and brought some of the old *Ramparts* and other leftwing researchers in, to really dig into George Bush the first's life and his spy connections and everything. That ended up in a commercial disaster, because

it was a young publishing company that some guy who shouldn't have been in the publishing business— He finally went broke and got out of there pretty fast. But anyway, we got into a terrible fight.

Rubens: You had a manuscript?

43-00:32:48

Hinckle: Well, we were working on it, but I sometimes take time with things. So we told the guy, "This just ain't going to do it." The money involved with the book was nothing, because maybe he gave us twenty, twenty-five grand or something like that. But we didn't care about that. It was enough to pay the researchers; that's all we cared about at the time. So we got in a terrible fight with the guy and he sued us. Then we went to a mutual friend, Michael Kennedy, the criminal lawyer in New York, who was originally from San Francisco—everything becomes rather concentric—who was the first lawyer for the Mitchell brothers. Defended them on all these porn charges and all that stuff. His wife, Eleanora, was an executive at Joseph Magnin's and did a lot of their buying and their window displays. She was kind of artistic and stuff. Anyway, they moved back east. She had met him when he was in the army and he was married, and she was married to somebody else who was in the army back in North Carolina or someplace. They dumped their spouses and took off. It ended up with a great life in the Hamptons. Kennedy had a big office because he ended up with the pizza connection lawyer and a lot of Mafia clients and a lot of great criminal cases and a lot of complicated stuff. He was a personal friend of De's from New York and I knew him very well from here, San Francisco, from the Mitchell brothers, the years that he was out here. So we went to him and said, "Hey, we want to sue this bastard back." It became this enormous, complicated lawsuit we were in, suing everybody, subpoenas being served. It was a typical wacko thing, but we just drank our way through it. Ended up with a hell of a lot of George Bush research, and probably would've done something with it, but along the way—I think it was 1989 or '90; I'd have to check the date—De was taking out his garbage one day at his house and dropped dead. Just like that. We just had lunch the day before. Some sort of a heart attack or something. She never had an autopsy. Of course, the wife blamed it all on—

Rubens: On his drinking.

43-00:35:37

Hinckle: —me. I was his drinking buddy at the time. I mean in that period, the late eighties. She became terrible about the whole thing and wouldn't allow a funeral with all his friends and people and me. Well, we have to do something. We've got to do this and that. She just shut it off from everybody and stopped going to Elaine's. They used to go to Elaine's—oh, God—about four nights a week. Her practice was up on the Upper East Side, a couple blocks from Elaine's, so De would usually go up there. She worked late, because she did family shrinking. She'd usually get out of the office at nine or

nine-thirty. So he'd head up to Elaine's. De wore a kind of uniform. I've never known him to wear anything but jeans and a blue Brooks Brothers shirt, and he had sort of these round, horn-rimmed glasses. I've never seen him dressed in anything else, for decades.

Rubens: Were you still wearing your uniform at that point?

43-00:36:54

Hinckle: Which one?

Rubens: Well, you had the velvet coat and your patent shoes and—

43-00:37:01

Hinckle: Oh, yeah, I was still wearing those damned patent shoes.

Rubens: You had yours and he had his.

43-00:37:04

Hinckle: Yeah. Yeah.

Rubens: So you think that Bush material is in your "vault" above the garage, in your archive?

43-00:37:12

Hinckle: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I've got tons of stuff there.

Rubens: See, that's why we [The Bancroft Library] want to talk to you about your papers. But anyway.

43-00:37:21

Hinckle: Anyway, we would've gone on doing that, but De died quite unexpectedly. So that was that. Very sad. Anyway, he was a fabulous friend because we converged on issues. I don't know whether it's print or however you take it, or making movies. Basically, it's some sort of an art form to convey ideas. Those processes that most people use to popularize things or sell products, et cetera, he used the same artistic approach to a serious idea. So his movies were singular. Several books have been written about De and he's considered, properly, the great American documentary filmmaker. A total lefty of the Cold War period, just raising hell. The FBI had a file on him. I never wrote for my FBI files. I was bored by it. But it began to be a badge of honor on the left, to get your FBI file. I couldn't care less.

But they had a huge file on him. Then they subpoenaed all the records of his Weather Underground film. There was a big court battle over that, and Martin Sheen came forth on his side in that, fighting the FBI subpoena and all those issues in court. Ironically, I never met Sheen myself. De would tell me all these stories about him. We had parallel worlds, but not always together on issues. My daughter's putting together a fundraiser next month for St. Anthony's Dining Room, in St. Boniface there. It's the only church in the city

that allows the poor to sleep in the church at night—on top of feeding everybody at St. Anthony's Dining Room. So they're throwing a big fundraiser. Linda's cooking all the hors d'oeuvres and stuff for them, and the speaker is Martin Sheen. Because he's tied to this Catholic stuff. The good side, we'd say, of the Catholic stuff. The real saints left in the Catholic Church, not the corrupt popes and that sort of stuff. So I guess I'll finally get to meet Martin Sheen.

Rubens: Of course, he's the star of your *City* magazine backer Coppola's film, *Apocalypse Now*. That's what undoes your magazine.

43-00:40:39

Hinckle: Yeah. They didn't film any of that here; they filmed all that in Philippines.

Rubens: Yes, but he was brilliant in that film. Listen, do you mind if I shift gears?

43-00:40:46

Hinckle: Sure, no.

Rubens: I want to shift gears and make sure we get this. You're running for the DCC, the Democratic Central Committee? You've run for mayor, you've run for supervisor, you're now— Tell me about this.

43-00:41:01

Hinckle: Oh, that was just local political stuff for the *Argonaut*, which I put out. I've written about this in the *Argonaut*. A few years back, there was a machine created that took over the Democratic Party in San Francisco. It was my friend Aaron Peskin— We actually are pretty friendly.

Rubens: Even though you've gone after him, tough.

43-00:41:23

Hinckle: Yeah, well, George Miller is a good friend of his, too. And he and Chris Daly, who was kind of a wonderfully wacko supervisor, they took over the structure of the Democratic Party. Endorsed people and took positions on issues mainly related to the central committee, on certain common interests.

The control of the Central Committee of the Democratic Party, called the DCC, by very artfully ganging up melees from leftwing organizations - oh for instance the Tenants Union; the Sierra Club —which has, scandalously to me, a flank of it that just does political stuff; I can't see where it has anything to do with the environment; so I wonder how they get their tax credit for that. But at any rate, they do. And the Harvey Milk Club and the nurses union and the SEIU workers union and this and that. Very strong. They came on this really smart thing, because this is a pretty obscure committee; almost nobody knew about it, and couldn't care less. So it really wasn't important; it was just an internal Democratic Party thing. It was never controversial or anything before. It wasn't anything.

But they took it over by these multiple mailings at election time, for all the same people, with all the mailings looking the same, with the same people on it. It just flooded mailboxes. There were seven, eight, nine, ten of them. And all the same candidates all around. They all looked the same, but it was always different, varying organizations that were sponsors. Left organizations, mostly. Hard to say left, in a town that's so left, but still. there you were. Then basically, created a political machine. Now, Phillip Burton used to have a political machine in San Francisco. But he really didn't use it to mess around with local politics. He was much more interested in what went on in Sacramento and Washington, and who was going to be the congressional representative and who was going to Sacramento to be assemblyman or state senator; because that's where his power base was, originally, as was Willie Brown's, the state government. So really didn't care that much about local civic issues, like who was supervisor, a ballot issue for this or that. Didn't really mess with that. This committee really didn't get involved. But when Chris Daly and Peskin and those guys came upon this way of gaining control of it, they immediately turned it into a political machine for their people, to get more of them into office. Because they used the endorsement process, because in this most Democratic of towns, the official endorsement of the Democratic Party, which is mailed to every registered Democrat at election time, means a lot. I think in twenty years that we looked at it, there were only two people who managed to get elected to the Board of Supervisors, even, without the blessing or the endorsement of the Democratic Party. Those types of endorsements changed character quite a bit when they took control of the structure, the endorsement structure, and the political machinery of the party.

So we put out this issue of the *Argonaut*, which just said, hijacking the Democratic Party. Just threw a grenade and raised all kinds of hell. But by then, they'd been in power for two terms, and had taken it over in, I think it was 2008, and succeeded in keeping power in 2010. Because when I did an attack on it, saying, "wait, what the hell is going on here; these guys are putting all their friends in office, they're doing all these goofy bond issue positions, they're raising taxes for all the businesses, they're putting money into nonprofits who just employ their friends and don't do any work and don't build any housing"— it had the usual, at least to my view, scandalous aspects of a political machine. Boss Tweed and classic political machines—they were really building one up. Take the public's money, use the election to get everybody in place, and start taking money out of the public treasury for your friends' projects and works. That sort of stuff. So I find it pretty outrageous and went after it. But that issue that the *Argonaut* put out didn't come out till the actual election time, and they had already continued the process of the mailers—this was the second year, 2010. Peskin was very smart about this, by mailing at the same time the absentee ballots went out. Which is quite a few weeks before the election. Absentee voting has been gradually growing in San Francisco, till it's where I think it's much more than a third now, getting closer to 40 percent of the voters. So really, on election day, I guess you could say you've got 50, 60 percent of their people who are voting. But already

locked up, are the votes. Almost everybody has to be unanimous in the polls at election day, if you're already salted the absentee votes that have already come in. So that was smart. Peskin was very smart. So they stayed in.

43-00:48:06

So now we're at 2012, and a friend of mine, John Shanley and I, we're Gavin Newsom's representatives on the DCC. Now, the mayor of San Francisco doesn't have a representative on this, but statewide elected officials who live in San Francisco, statewide or national—Feinstein has people on it, Jackie Speier. If you're in the assembly or the state senate, if you're a congresswoman or a senator, or in Gavin's case, lieutenant governor, you get a voting representative on the DCC. The rest of the seats are publically elected, there are people running for—Especially in little-known organizations it's pretty easy to steer the elections, if you wanted to. So both Shanley and I are ready this time, because naturally, when we were on this thing, we had hilarious wars with Peskin and his friends.

Rubens:

So both of you were you on it before.

43-00:49:12

Hinckle:

Both of us were on it, because Shanley was Gavin's representative and I was his alternate. Shanley was taking the bar in Ireland at the time, so he was away a lot. So I would be the alternate, so I'd go to the meetings. "No you don't Peskin" and all this; raised hell; it was a lot of fun. So we both ran for it this time. Not so much to win, but to say, hey, this election, we're going to take this thing back. So I've been working recently, trying to get the Chamber of Commerce in—which has never been very bright politically and certainly, out of focus, in terms of their own interests, in understanding this town—to kick in and put out as many of these mailing slate cards as the more ideological lefty groups, whatever you want to call them—machine groups, I'd call them—have been doing to control the thing. We put out this big memo about it and picked the people who'd be pro-business or moderate votes, not part of the machine. Because they never saw a tax they didn't like. They were very, very anti-business, and other things that were somewhat crazy, in terms of the overall economy of the town.

You've got a great welfare system in this town, huge public services, in a large renters' town where the Tenants Union is so powerful, because two-thirds of the people in town are renters, tenants. But they never ask themselves, where's the money going to come to pay for all this? If you keep driving businesses out of town or doing this or that, there's not going to be any money in the public treasury to pay for all these services that they want to give to people, like promising to give to them, if they get elected. So there's a quandary there.

Rubens:

Did you have to take a petition around to get on the ballot?

43-00:51:36

Hinckle:

Yeah, we had to run around. Yeah, I was asking George to go out and get signatures. But not that many, but I think it was thirty or forty endorsements.. So we did that. Of course, Shanley was in Ireland that week, taking another bar course, so I had to get names for him, too. It was kind of a nightmare. Anyway, so we're candidates, but I don't have any chance to win, because—I happen to be on the Tenants Union side of town, the assembly district, and that's where the majority of the ideological supervisors are on the committee. The Tenants Union kind of controls the votes in the east side of town, the mass voting, and it's difficult for anybody who's kind of moderate or critical of what's going on, to get elected on that side of town. The other side of town is much more moderate voters. The greater west side of the town has larger houses, not as many apartment houses. That's to keep a tight control.

Rubens:

These are the class divides.

43-00:52:41

Hinckle:

Yeah. So we'll do well on the west side of town. It's going to be rough to get people elected on the other side, which, by geography, I'm on. But anyway, so yeah, we put together slate cards and picked people that would add to the few things that are going on, so there'd be so many slate cards it would nullify, for the first time, or chill out, their method of maintaining control. So now I'm having trouble this week, because the Chamber and those people, several of the business groups came to me. "Okay, yeah, we'll help out with this." Meanwhile, we've got to print the goddamned things and start mailing them next week, because the absentee ballots go out next week. So I've been going nuts the last two days, screaming at everybody down there. I said, "For God's sake, don't you see what's going on? This is what we're going to do." So that's something.

Rubens:

So partly, it's fun, partly it's your old crusade style of civics?

43-00:53:50

Hinckle:

Yeah. What you don't do journalistically, you've got to do personally sometimes, if you want to finish the job. I don't know what you'd say.

Rubens:

Is some of this the fallout of district elections? How do you talk about—

43-00:54:16

Hinckle:

Well, yeah, district elections has not led to a great multiplicity of people being supervisors in their districts, because since district elections became the norm—it was not that long ago, but it's been three or four, maybe it's five elections, district election system; then there's the ranked-choice voting system, which fits in with that—it's proven virtually impossible—at least it hasn't been done yet—to dislodge a sitting supervisor. Because the smaller district, as opposed to citywide campaigning you used to have to do—and then you'd have to raise a lot more money to campaign, and mail and advertising throughout the whole city. But when you bring it down to a

district, it's a little more feasible to do. So that's the good part, if you want to put it that way, of district elections. But the promise of that was that the campaigns would cost less; and that, combined with ranked-choice voting in San Francisco, would eliminate the cost of a runoff election—usually in November, but would often be in December—and that would make things less costly and the election process itself less costly and more efficient, and not that much money would have to be raised for campaigns. Well, the practical reality of it is that after a good part of the decade of that now, each year there's more money given and raised by the people running for district office than there was, compared to ten years ago, when everybody had to run citywide. The election costs haven't changed an iota. So what they set out to do by making a practical economic argument for this process, just hasn't proved true.

Rubens: You used to write about the real intense debates between business and, let's say, the liberal Democratic Burton machine. You were a champion of Barbagelata—who's an honorable person, but a real conservative.

43-00:56:37

Hinckle: Oh yes. Many of my friends locally, and some of them nationally, are conservatives or rightwing madmen, but they're interesting people and they're honest, compared to most of my friends on the left, who are sneaky and boring. De Antonio was like that, too. He was the same way. He was a famous leftwing filmmaker, but he couldn't stand most of the left, personally.

Rubens: Let me just ask you this. Is there something behind Peskin? Do you think he's really smart? Jack Davis is the one who kind of made his name through doing slate cards, didn't he?

43-00:57:19

Hinckle: No.

Rubens: Who did we talk about?

43-00:57:20

Hinckle: No, Davis' secret of electing and un-electing mayors—We've always been on the same side. He's a close friend of mine. In the mayoral contests of the last decade or so—

Rubens: Well you were king, mayor, makers.

43-00:57:37

Hinckle: Yeah, because I went after this guy Art Agnos very much in the *Examiner*, when I was there, and then basically quit the *Examiner*, with the fight with Will Hearst. I think I may have talked about this.

Rubens: Indeed; you were very detailed about that.

43-00:57:49

Hinckle:

Well, we're repeating a couple of things here. Was in love with the guy. I said, "Will, you're nuts." Anyway, took all my files and went to this Chinese paper. I think we talked—

Went after Agnos, and then Davis ran the campaign against him and for this guy Frank Jordan, and we knocked Art Agnos out. He didn't get a second term and Frank Jordan got elected. Then Frank Jordan soon became a disappointment. So we recruited Willie Brown to run against Frank Jordan. Famous meeting in the backroom at Tosca here, in the pool hall there. So many things happened in Tosca. A lot of stuff's happened here over the years.

But Davis' secret—if I hadn't talked about this before, campaigns—it's somewhat scandalous, how much money these campaign managers make, because they steal. By steal, I mean they juggle the books and stick the money in their pockets. They take the fees to run the campaign, then they give the jobs for the making of television commercials and the buying of time for television commercials and the printing of mailers and that sort of stuff, to guys they have a deal with, and they get kickbacks from them. So basically, they just loot. This is most of the big campaigns. Their clients. Davis, who has a lot of people pissed off at him for this reason and that—he is a little difficult to get along with sometimes—but he never did that. He just took a flat fee for the campaign. Why he won elections that other people couldn't, was that he put almost all his money, not so much in mailing and TV ads—he did those, too—but he put most of his money on ground troops. Going out. And he was the first campaign manager, at least locally, to understand that on the list, there's a huge amount of voters—mostly Democratic voters, this is such a Democratic town—who are less frequent voters or who haven't voted once or didn't register yet. He found a way to find out who they were—I mean their names—and to do telephone polls with them and one way or the other, to go after them, and to find if they'd be in favor of the candidate or the issue, or were inclined to be against it. If they were against it, they didn't bother; if they were in favor, they followed up with mailings and telephone calls. He brought out, in many of these elections, these invisible droves of voters. Nobody could understand what the hell happened, because the polls would be this way, and all of a sudden he'd show up with all these votes in his pockets, so to speak. That's why, because he spent the money on this sort of research, and then on door-to-door things—

Rubens:

The real precinct worker.

43-01:01:11

Hinckle:

—knocking on the doors. But yeah, the real precinct work, going to the people. But before that, he went to the less frequent voters or hardly ever voters, and rooted them back out from under Brown. Found somebody to say, yeah, I'd do that. Then followed them, basically, with the precinct workers, dragged them out of the house and took them to vote. It was a winning

formula, because that isn't done. It still isn't done by most campaign managers active in the city now, because it's not profitable, because you can't get a kickback or an extra commission on paying street workers to go out and walk on doors and organize. You can't really—because there's a very few people who have these lists—make any money off of getting the lists and then having to do all the work, volunteers calling them to see if they'll actually vote again. That's a huge organizational job, and there's no markup in that. But he's done quite well winning elections. I mean he's done well financially.

Rubens: Is he still in the game? Is he still a player?

43-01:02:19

Hinckle: Well, he's in Wales now. He's found his heritage; rediscovered it.

Rubens: Oh, so I can't interview him right now.

43-01:02:26

Hinckle: No. He was here a couple weeks ago. But I would say a topic to be continued later, whether he's out of the business totally. For the moment, he says he is.

Rubens: You're saying Peskin is really smart. It's not like someone—

43-01:02:44

Hinckle: Very smart.

Rubens: —that he's depending on, who's helping him.

43-01:02:47

Hinckle: He's one of the smartest guys I know. Yeah, Peskin's really smart. Yeah. He didn't run this time. I doubt it was because I was such a formidable pain in the ass. I actually got elected. And he's helping me on this fight we're having locally, over this saloon, the Gold Dust, which is being evicted under outrageous circumstances, where they've changed the contract, the lease, six times in a year and a half.

Rubens: Where is the building?

43-01:03:23

Hinckle: It's on Union Square. It's the last walk-in bar on Union Square. It's an old piano bar, honky-tonk, has a house band and this ugly sign, like a billboard thing. Tourists come in there, but it's got a big following. Bing Crosby was a silent partner in the fifties and sixties and a lot of musicians hang out there. A lot of people do.

Rubens: Did you hang out there? It's not one I heard you mention.

43-01:03:51

Hinckle: No. I knew about it, but it wasn't my type of bar. But on the other hand, it's the last example of the old piano-bar culture, which was a huge deal in the city

when I was growing up, where people gather around the piano and things, and you still have a bar where people gather. That's it. That was sort of the culture. Everybody got together. Not that everybody loved this thing, but a lot of people did. Then a lot of these same bars had house bands at night. This is the last bar that has its own house band and it's the last of the piano bars. In Union Square, the whole culture of Union Square wasn't chain stores and all these big stores; it was these sort of small, family-owned bars, including a lot of family-owned smaller stores with a building. Most of those have been knocked out for chain stores now and hotels, so this is the last one.

What was outrageous about it, to me, was that the two guys who owned it are elderly. I guess you have to call them elderly; one's eighty-two or -three, and one's eighty-five. They're sharp as tacks. But they're gentlemen. This guy Handlery—he owns the Handlery Hotel, he owns a lot of property in Union Square—the old man was a friend of his. He was the landlord for twenty-how-many years. And it was all a handshake with them; they never read a contract. He'd drop down, have a few drinks with them. He'd say, "Oh, we've got a new lease now. Nothing's changed." So they discussed whatever. They never read the damn thing. Or he'd send his secretary over; sometimes he couldn't get there. They say he says it's the same; it's not. So the son took over, a new generation, brought in a money manager guy. To them, it was still the same thing. Oh, Handlery says it's okay, it's okay. They never read the contracts. So there's a great lawsuit that Joe Cotchett—a lawyer who does a lot of good pro bono cases along this line. He's a pretty crusading and a very good lawyer down the peninsula, very big in Democratic politics. He raised a lot of money for Gavin Newsom—is a close friend of the Newsom family and that stuff.

The main claim in there is elder abuse, because they've got documented where five times, at least—I'd have to look back at the plea dates—over a year or some period, they'd keep bringing a new—it's a lease for five years. Why do you keep bringing new things? You've got five years, usually that's all that happens. Since they obviously, to me, they realize they'd sign anything, because that's how they always worked with the old man; it's gentlemanly. Handshake business, old San Francisco. They signed it. They keep sending over new leases, and they'd sign it, and they would gradually diminish their rights under the lease, till they could be kicked out almost tomorrow. That's what they did with them, so now they want to bring a chain store to this place. Fifteen years ago, there were three piano bars just a block up, on Geary Street, two on the surface street. They were great bars. And there was one, the Geary Cellar. I think that may still be there. But they were all the same. They'd stay open late at night, none of them shut till two. And the cast of most of the shows would go over to these bars and drink and sing with people, and they none of them shut. They were packed at two in the morning. There was life up there. A block up from Powell and Geary, where the theaters are, it was lively. Now they've all been shut down for these things like this, with stores. The place is a wasteland. It's dead at night. A lot of crime and shit. It used to be all like that—as did Laurel Village and other parts

of San Francisco and parts of North Beach. They had these sing-along piano bars, these places with house bands, people sang. There used to be bars with singing waiters who'd come in. They worked as waiters or bartenders, but they wanted to be opera. So they'd all do their things, but they would also work in the bars, to serve drinks. Then they'd get up and get to sing. It was wonderful. It was a great part of the city culture. Gone, gone, gone, gone, gone. So this is the last example of it. It was, to me, an act of fraud that got them in this situation. So I think it's pretty outrageous.

43-01:08:45

But anyway, I was saying, Peskin was the author of the creation of this thing, the historical review commission, or historical commission, which he had something called Proposition J, which he wrote and put it all together and got it passed. So when this situation arose, I called him because now the historical commission voted against them, five to two, saying that, well, if it was an elegant-looking building, we could landmark it; but because its uniqueness is its cultural use, we can't do that. I'm like, well, wait a minute. City Lights, about twenty years ago, was in a similar situation. There was a lease fight. They were going to kick them out in the first big dot-com boom, because they wanted to build on the property. People wanted to build the property. So Ferlinghetti was just totally screwed and everybody got together and fought it. And City Lights now, everybody says, well, it looks like Paris. Well, it didn't look so good then. It was just a crowded bookstore.

But it was the issue of use and what it was and the people who read and spoke there, right?—that got it finally saved and declared historical; and ended these guys before the tech bubble ended, the first tech bubble, and they were saved anyway, right? So to me, this is a parallel situation. You're trying to tell me that you can't landmark a place because its cultural use is so unique that one can't say this is the last of them? So that's going to be interesting. Anyway, the city ruled—not the city, but the planning commission, which is the boss of this commission—that you couldn't appeal this decision, because now, in city government in this town, everything's appealable to the Board of Supervisors. *Everything!* Why you even have commissions, I don't know. Because in the end, it all goes to the supervisors all over again and they do it, because that's a gradual accumulation of power to the board, which Peskin steered and really created. He's a brilliant political guy in that way.

So I called him and said, "Hey, you made this thing. Here's what's going on." He just said, "That's bullshit. How in the hell could they do that?" "Well, I looked up his original papers and who rented." "What did that letter say?" "He says, 'Yeah.'" And the letter said something ridiculously bureaucratic like, "you can appeal"—because they said, "well, the old laws, you could've done it; but this comes under Prop J, Aaron Peskin's thing, which created the commission." So they say, "No, this is now under the Prop J rules." And those rules say that you can appeal a decision, if you're a landowner or something like that, to landmark a building—a positive decision, because you don't want

it landmarked for whatever reason, because you can't build on the site or something. And you can appeal a decision not to landmark, if you're the person who wants it landmarked. But you can't appeal a decision to decide not to do either, which is what they did. Well, that's *Waiting for Godot*. That's crazy.

So Peskin was very helpful and he said, "Hey, that is a complete undermining the thing. It says right here, 'The tenor of the voters was every—This is all appealable, no matter what they do to the board.'" He says, "I will give a declaration. I'll go yell at the city attorney. I'll testify in court for you. You go after it. It'll be a three-day hearing. They won't win this. This is bananas," he says. So, anyway, he's been very helpful.

Rubens: No wonder you like him.

43-01:12:40

Hinckle: Very helpful. Well, he's got a lot of admirable qualities.

Rubens: Are we running out ?

[Break in tape]

Rubens: Do you have something to say about San Francisco's first Chinese mayor.

43-01:12:56

Hinckle: Too soon to say.

Rubens: Harvey Milk once said that it's going to be the gays and Asians that are going to ultimately control the city. The alliance.

43-01:13:09

Hinckle: I think he's right. This last election, when Peskin got, amazingly—because they had ranked choice early— didn't politically like any of the Asian gang. And they were major. It was Lee, it was Leland Yee, there was this guy Phil Ting who is the Assessor Recorder for the city. Well, it was five fairly substantial. There was Jeff Adachi. There was five fairly well-established, reasonable people to run for mayor. There's five Asian candidates and the Democratic Party excluded every one of them. They had three choices for mayor. Extraordinary. That's what happens when you've got a machine. He ended up with two Hispanics, this guy Avalos, who used to be Chris Daly's aide, and Herrera. Herrera was certainly the most antagonistic and meanest towards me, of all candidates. He really went after me, and now he's paying the price; but that's how life is.

But there'll be a fight in this new Democratic Party, whoever gets to structure it—we'll find out in June—between the woman who'll be running to succeed Peskin and Peskin's old handmaiden on the thing, who's a guy named [Rafael] Mandelman. He'll be running from—that's like the machine side,

and she'll be running—But she's Chinese, Mary Jung. So it's going to be the Chinese and gay community. The gay community's split, because they've got two clubs. One is very left, if you like, the Harvey Milk Club; and one is much more centrist, the Alice B. Toklas Club. So it's of interest.

Rubens: What is your relationship now like with Florence Fang?

43-01:15:31

Hinckle: Never see her. Well, James Fang's still on the BART board, and Teddy, once in a while I see him somewhere, Teddy Fang. But he's dropped out of it. He's over at Berkeley, doing some sort of cultural studies PhD or some bull shit.

Rubens: So you're still in the political swim of it here; *The Argonaut* is still a forum.

43-01:16:06

Hinckle: Well, you can't get politics out of your existence, because it keeps interfering. Local level, national level. What's more disruptive to somebody's existence or a country's economy and everything than war? And these guys start wars on their own. It's like, wait a minute. No. Things like this—driving the last little bar out, a piano bar that's representative of a whole culture, which was huge, out of business, just because they can—it never stops. It doesn't matter if it's a local issue or taking on the CIA or a big national fight. It's all the same, the enemy's homogenization of power, at whatever level it's at. So none of the things you think that you learned about in school, to redress your grievances or participate in society, at whatever level—your neighborhood or anything else—when they don't work, that's what leads to people—The system gets so clogged up it just goes one way, or it won't allow for any real participation, then that's what leads to people going into the streets.

Rubens: Well, there you are. I love the descriptor on the *Argonaut360* website, that *The Argonaut* is about the campaign for low-brow culture and contrarian politics, in the capitol of the left coast. Such a great—

43-01:17:43

Hinckle: Well, that's a smartass phrase, maybe. In New York, they call us the left coast. Calling San Francisco left coast.

Rubens: Tell me a little bit about your future projects. You're of course editing, writing for *The Argonaut*. You're working on a book on Joe Mazzola. I don't know how you have time, if you're doing these political campaigns, how you have time to pay attention to this.

43-01:18:12

Hinckle: Well, you do, just get involved in them. I don't do them as a profession.

Rubens: Did you get Noam Chomsky to write for you? "May Day." I love to check on *The Argonaut's* website to see what's there.

43-01:18:28

Hinckle:

Yeah, well, we haven't been putting too much in it recently. I've got to crank it up. Because a friend of mine, Roger Black, the designer, I keep begging him to redo the site. He was out here last week and we were talking about it—because it's a pretty crappy website. It's kind of archaic, in the way the art and layout.

Rubens:

He does great stuff. You brought him in for the *Examiner* anniversary edition.

43-01:18:54

Hinckle:

Oh, the Centennial paper's design, he made it. But he's also a pioneer in this web stuff. Roger had the first web type foundry, God, way back in the seventies. The first type foundry for computers, to go on the web. Had this giant font bureau. Early seventies, he got that going. It was *so* ahead of the time.

Rubens:

You talked also that you brought in Bobbie Stauffacher who created a whole new look for *Scanlan's*.

43-01:19:46

Hinckle:

She's an expert in Helvetica. But she does all this severe stuff and design, very strict, Germanic.

Rubens:

The website also has something to say about [Bruce] Brugmann's paper [*Bay Guardian*] being bought by the *Examiner*.

43-01:20:31

Hinckle:

Oh, yeah, well, we've been battling forever. That's completely fucked up.. When the Fang's sold to Anschutz, he had this idea—if we haven't talked about this before. He registered the name the *Examiner* in thirty-some cities. His idea was that he does all this big Christian rightwing conservative stuff. But he's also smart as hell. He owns half the Staples Center, he's got these big concert businesses. He's no just square. But politically, he's extremely conservative. His idea was to put an afternoon tabloid, full of conservative views, in a whole bunch of cities in the country, as a second paper. So then he went to Washington and he started one in Baltimore, but that ended in the shitter. The people were suing to not have it delivered on their streets and shit like that. Baltimore's a little too liberal for Anschutz's point of view. Funny, nothing like that happened in San Francisco. They love it; love it. It's nuts. But that was his idea and that hasn't worked out. He's still got the *Washington Examiner*, which is more—if we haven't talked about that, it's more to the right than the Moonie paper, *The Washington Times*.

Rubens:

Why does he want the *Bay Guardian*?

43-01:22:24

Hinckle:

Anschutz doesn't. He sold the paper to a Canadian-based and independent publishing firm. They seem to have a different view. At first, I thought they'd be pretty rightwing, but they don't seem to be. I think it's a business decision

to buy the *Guardian*, because the *Guardian* has been on pretty shaky legs. Forget what's in it, whether you like it or not. Financially, with the economy and all the ads went out of print papers—Two of those papers, the *SF Weekly* here—And they had that long legal battle with the *SF Weekly*. At any rate, so Bruce [Brugmann] just cashed out in the hot real estate market, and sold the building and sold the paper.

Rubens: Ok. Oh, it's Bruce cashing out, I get it.

43-01:23:15

Hinckle: Oh, Bruce cashed out, yeah. Went against everything he ever used to say, of course. He sold the paper to one of the companies he was always attacking for Manhattanizing San Francisco and crap like that. But he didn't mind making two-million bucks off the thing.

Rubens: As you say, on the *Argonaut*, the profits, that he had denied the decent wage to his staff, who were doing—

43-01:23:40

Hinckle: So we never got along. I just thought his politics were goofy, because his idea of what progressives are, his idea of that I thought they were reactionary. They were really curtailing growth, in a way that people didn't have jobs, and they went for all this zoning that made it impossible. We have wasteland in the old manufacturing-culture spaces, in the east side or in the Mission and around there, all that general area. Those old blacksmith shops, et cetera, ain't coming back. It's not going to happen. Meanwhile, it's a waste—No jobs for anybody and no room, and then having to say, hey, we have to have housing, affordable housing for everybody; the city has to do it. But because there's no growth, the city doesn't have any money to do it. Their politics just drove me nuts. I really thought it was reactionary politics, not in any way so-called progressive politics. But that's a long-term fight. But basically, he just cashed out. He cashed out.

So the guys that bought it seem pretty practical publishing businesspeople, and they brought in a sort of lefty, sharp guy, the editor for a long time of the *East Bay Express*. Politics of Oakland and the East Bay, you've got to be—You're not exactly conservative, when you deal with that. And as businessmen, I'm certain that they wouldn't change the character or the approach of the *Bay Guardian*, because that's what makes it what it is, right? Why it has, or traditionally has, an audience, east side, lefty audience, who read it like the Bible and take a streetcar to the polls. And that's what it is. Compared to the *SF Weekly*, which is just homogenatization of—Now owned by *The Village Voice*, and they own a bunch of weeklies nationally, and the same articles appear and it's just long feature articles, some of them well-written, but there's no political view or no purpose to the paper, as such. But the *Guardian*, for whatever you feel about it, has a purpose. I don't see them dismantling. So I think they'll keep it the way it is. As a business decision, it's

very smart, because they can combine a lot of the ad sales and other back-office functions. They can combine a lot of stuff and save a lot of money for both papers. And they have a daily and a liberal weekly that all the libs in town read.

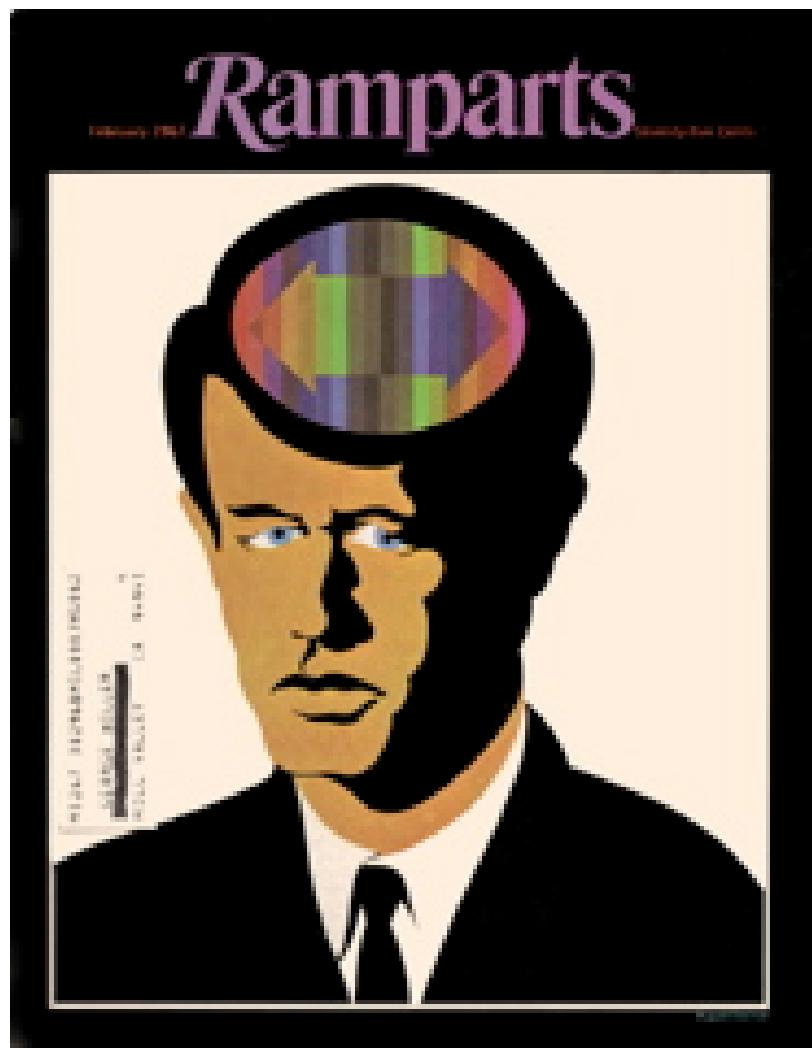
Actually, the *Examiner*'s been doing a superior job of covering local news full-time. They've really been doing a much better job. More stories that actually cover the city — much more. *Chronicle* used to cover it extensively, but as they cut back their staff and then they combined things they don't cover the city very much, compared to the *Examiner*. Anyway, I think it's a smart business decision for them. It's all business. Brugmann sold the *Guardian*; . Went against his, whatever, principles, and they will publish a liberal paper because that's the way they make money. They're not ideological, as far as I can tell.

Rubens: I'm having trouble concentrating, with the crowd starting to swell up here. I think we're going to have to stop recording. I think we got a lot of great stuff in this interview. And I think the historic value of sitting here talking about Hunter Thompson and politics in San Francisco-

43-01:28:22

Hinckle: Well, a lot of shit happened in Tosca.

End of Interview



Robert Kennedy, *Ramparts* cover, by Dugald Stermer, November, 1966



Wirephoto of The New York Times

PLANNING THE NEXT EXPOSE: In San Francisco office of Ramparts magazine are, from left, Warren Hinckle 3d, editor; Sol Stern, assistant managing editor and author of the article on C.I.A. links with student group, and Robert Scheer, the managing editor.

Ramparts: Gadfly to the Establishment

Special to The New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 19
—Resplendent in a pink shirt, red suspenders and a deep blue and maroon striped necktie, Warren Hinckle 3d paced between the rolltop desks.

He lifted the telephone off its stand, a black-painted kog with gold-painted hoops falling in rings on the floor. He talked to his pet monkey, Henry Luce by name, caged in the next room.

He talked, too, about his magazine. "Next month we have Stokely Carmichael on the origins of the Black Power movement," he said. "Then we're going to go out after the world of the foundations,

following up what we found out about the C.I.A. Just decided that today. Got to do it."

Mr. Hinckle, a pudgy six-footer with a flowing Edwardian mane of hair, is 28 years old and the editor of Ramparts, the splashy magazine that won front-page newspaper notice last week when it scooped itself.

It bought advertisements, which soon became news, to tell what its March issue would say about the Central Intelligence Agency's undercover relationship with the National Student Association.

This was the latest in a series of publicity coups for

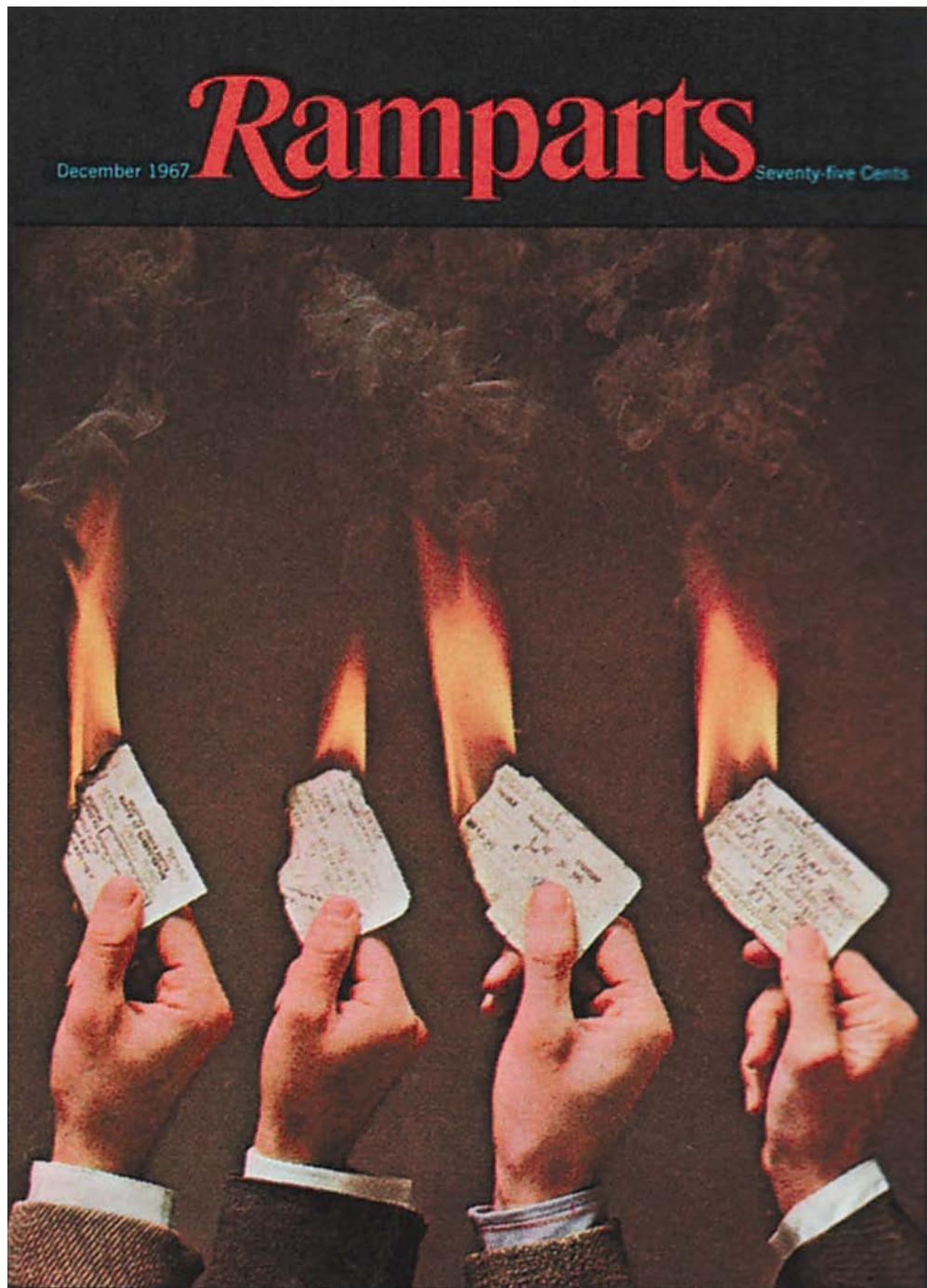
Ramparts, which was founded in 1962 as a five-times-a-year journal aimed at liberal Catholic intellectuals.

The magazine's conversion into a busy gadfly on the liberal-to-left side of politics began two years ago. Two business consultants (who have since become stockholders) recommended a change in direction. And Mr. Hinckle, whose first connection with Ramparts was as a public relations man, was named editor.

The consultants, Howard Gossage and Dr. Gerald M. Feigen, have a company here

Continued on Page 18, Column 5

"Ramparts: Gadfly to the Establishment," *New York Times*, front page, February 20, 1967



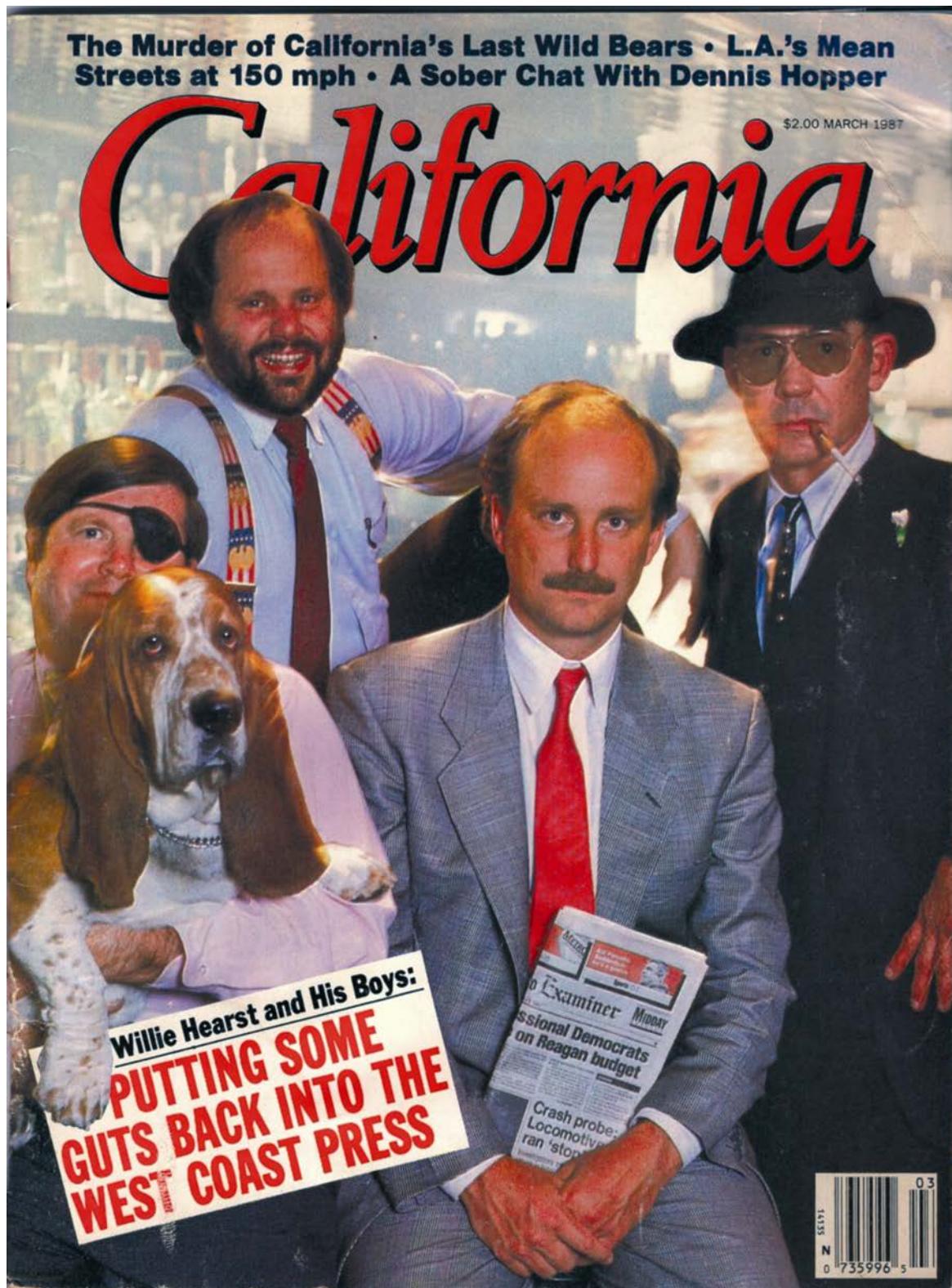
"Four Editors Burn Their Draft Cards," *Ramparts* cover, by Dugald Stermer, December 1967. A grand jury in New York investigated the incident



John Clancy, left, libel attorney and Warren Hinckle at *City* magazine, 1976



San Francisco police arrest Hinckle at O'Farrell Theatre, February, 1985, on
misdemeanor charges as alleged retaliation for Hinckle's lambasting police arrest of porn
star Marilyn Chambers



California Magazine cover, *San Francisco Examiner*, 1987. Left to right: Associate Editor Warren Hinckle with his Basset Hound, Bentley; Editor Larry Kramer; Publisher William Randolph Hearst III ; Columnist Hunter S.Thompson

To: Hinckle

GONZO NATION

THE GONZO MAGAZINE. WHEN THE COOL GETS WARM, THE WEIRD TURN PRO.

WARREN

I SHALL SURFACE WHEN THE ROCK IS ROLLED AWAY.
 YOU CAN HELP. I WANT TO BE APPOINTED IMMEDIATELY AS
HEAD OF THE ART DEPARTMENT AT STANFORD. MY FRIEND BILL
 WALSH HAS RECOMMENDED ME VERY STRONGLY, BUT HE SAYS I
 NEED SUPPORT FROM THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY IN SF, ALONG
 WITH A TORRENT OF AFFIRMATION BY LOCAL ARTISTS.

I KNOW YOU CAN DO THIS, WARREN -- AND, ONCE IT'S
 DONE, BILL HAS AGREED TO SIGN ON AS SPORTS EDITOR OF THE
ARGONAUT. INDEED, HE LOOKS FORWARD TO IT WITH GREAT EAGER-
 NESS & POLITICAL ZEAL, AS DO I. SO LET US PROCEED.

AS FOR ART -- WELL, SHUCKS. WHY NOT? I WOULD BE
 HONORED TO HAVE MY ART ON THE COVER OF YR. MAGAZINE, WHICH
 IS LOOKING VERY SHREWD, CRUEL & ELEGANT A/O VOL. 2. I HAVE,
 AS YOU KNOW, ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT YOU ARE THE FINEST EDITOR
 OF YR. GENERATION & PERHAPS THE MOST GENEROUS WITH ARTISTS.

IN CLOSING, LET ME SUAVELY REMIND YOU OF THAT \$10,000
 YOU OWE ME FOR THE WORKS (OF MINE) THAT YOU PUBLISHED IN
 VOL. 1 -- AND BE ASSURED THAT I DO UNDERSTAND THAT THE RICH
 PAY LATE & THE DOOMED PAY FOREVER. SELAH.

SO, WHO DO YOU WANT SHOT? ALL I NEED IS A FINELY-
 MOUNTED HUMAN PORTRAIT, CORPORATE LOGO OR EXPENSIVE ANIMAL
 IMAGE. YOU SEND IT, I'LL SHOOT IT. NO QUESTIONS ASKED. I AM,
 AFTER ALL, A PROFESSIONAL. OKAY

HUNTER

Fax, Hunter S. Thompson to Argonaut editor Warren Hinckle, 1993. Thompson had originally demanded to be made the Argonaut art director

FOR SUPERVISOR: FARREL [D.2] CHU [D.4] SPARKS [D.6] WIENER [D.8] MOSS [D.10]
NO ON B! YES ON L NO ON J, K, M & N FANG FOR BART

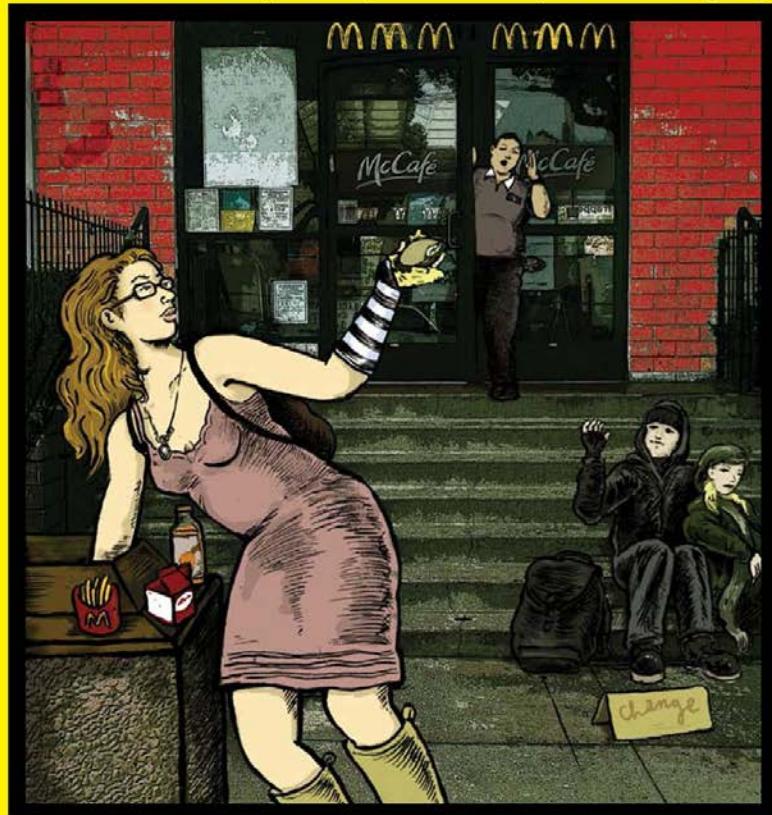
John Shanley on Supervisors Pay Cut? [p.5] Warren Hinckle on Janet Reilly's Problem With Women Voters [p.6]

ARGONAUT

Published in San Francisco Since 1877

The Steps of McDonald's

The "Sit-Lie" Controversy. Civility on the Streets of San Francisco [p. 16]



Argonaut cover, November, 2010



Linda Corso and Warren Hinckle, Valentine's Day 2010, courtesy SFGate