

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union
Oral History Series

David Jenkins

THE UNION MOVEMENT, THE CALIFORNIA LABOR SCHOOL,
AND SAN FRANCISCO POLITICS, 1926-1988

With Introductions by
Robert Schrank
and
Joseph L. Alioto

Interviews Conducted by
Lisa Rubens
in 1987 and 1988

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PREFACE

For almost a century, San Francisco has been known as a union town, and the International Longshoreman's and Warehouseman's Union (ILWU) as its most active, progressive, and unique union.

Back in the 1950s, when the University of California still funded most of the research conducted by its faculty and staff, the University's newly established oral history program interviewed a number of San Francisco Bay Area's labor leaders; for example, Paul Scharrenberg (Sailor's Union), Jennie Matyas (ILGWU), Mary Gallagher (IWW), a variety of Teamster Union officials, and J. Paul St. Sure, representative par excellence of the employers in many collective bargainings. But in the following decades, as institutional research funds shrank and foundation funds became more limited to direct action projects, the oral history program of necessity focused more and more on fields that could fund their own historic preservation, such as businesses and the professions. A few brief labor history interviews were conducted, but only when they fitted in with another funded project such as the Earl Warren Era Project. The resulting lopsided documentation was noted and deplored by library officials, faculty, and scholars in search of research materials, but it took two private citizens, recently retired from labor union-related work and research, to turn the situation around by their own volunteer efforts--Estolv and Angela Ward.

First, Angela Ward volunteered her secretarial skills to The Bancroft Library to transcribe a taped interview with Henry Schmidt which had been donated to the office several years earlier. Her husband, Estolv Ward, reading each page as it came off Angela's typewriter, realized that his background had fortuitously qualified him to do labor oral histories. A newspaper reporter and court reporter in the 1930s, his sympathies had led him to throw in his lot with organized labor after the 1934 General Strike. He had worked for various unions and union-related agencies, and had researched and written on labor topics, including a book on Harry Bridges and one on Tom Mooney. He too volunteered his services.

And so Estolv and Angela Ward began a ten-year team effort to preserve a piece of California's labor history, he researching, interviewing, editing; she transcribing and final typing. The Regional Oral History Office provided format and procedures, indexing and cataloging, and all the finding aid requirements, including launching of the finished oral histories into the network of scholarly research. Such funding as was needed came from unions, mostly the waterfront unions, workers and attorneys in the organized labor community, and from families and friends of the interviewees.

Estolv and Angela began in 1978 with Louis Goldblatt's oral history, then Henry Schmidt and Germain Bulke. Their fourth was with labor attorney Norman Leonard, completed in 1986. Estolv hung up his

interviewer's shingle in 1986, pleading his eighty-seven years as excuse to step down to a less pressured job as proofreader. His partial retirement was the Regional Oral History Office's chance to capture his own recollections of the many historic events and persons he had seen and dealt with. Estolv's close friend and colleague, Norman Leonard, volunteered to raise the necessary funds. Lisa Rubens, a California historian with a specialty in labor history, was engaged to take over Estolv's job of labor history interviewer, and Estolv Ward's oral history became the fifth in the new labor series.

During the years of keeping the documentation of Bay Area labor history advancing, albeit slowly, all-around-labor-man David Jenkins had served as an advisor to the Regional Oral History Office--willing to give advice by telephone or to come over to the campus for a meeting. His knowledge, especially of behind-the-scenes shoals and opportunities, was invaluable. He was on the office's wish list of future labor interviewees, but he always dodged the question of when he might be ready. Too busy, too young.

In early 1987 then-director of The Bancroft Library James D. Hart sent a memo to the head of the Regional Oral History Office urging her to make every effort to persuade David Jenkins to do an oral history, and to confer with community leaders to raise funds for that oral history. His concern was in part instigated by the knowledge that the Bay Area's labor history was both rich in importance and poor in documentation in The Bancroft Library's oral history collection. But more urgently, Professor Hart had heard that David Jenkins had been diagnosed with a serious health problem. Serious enough that even the ever-youthful Jenkins agreed it was time to set aside other tasks in order to do his own oral history.

It was a welcome assignment for the Regional Oral History Office. David Jenkins's career in labor and progressive politics spanned nearly sixty years. He had played an active role in the trade union movement--as a worker in the maritime industries, as a prominent labor activist and as a teacher and advisor to unions and educational institutions. From the Passaic strikes in the twenties to the politics of modern day San Francisco, David Jenkins has been a key participant in and outspoken advocate for the causes in which he believed.

In the 1940s David Jenkins had founded the California Labor School, creating a focus for the union movement which helped consolidate its resources and dramatically increase its stature. More than 56,000 people passed through the school's doors; many of them became the labor leaders and labor scholars of today.

In addition David Jenkins's involvement in San Francisco politics had helped to make real changes in San Francisco. He had been there--in the trenches, on the soapbox, and behind the scenes--whenever major decisions affecting San Francisco's future had been made. Mr. Jenkins, his distinguished wife Edith Arnstein Jenkins, and their creative family

participated in shaping San Francisco into the progressive multi-cultural center it is today.

As to the funding, the community of Dave Jenkins's admirers rallied to the call. Susie Roff, C. J. Maupin, and Catherine Porter coordinated a fundraising campaign headed by the leaders in Dave's world: Art Agnos, then Mayor of San Francisco; Vincent Hallinan, Attorney; James Herman, President, ILWU; Paul Chown, Director, Center for Labor Research and Education, UC Berkeley; Joseph Alioto, former Mayor of San Francisco; Anne Halsted, President, SF Port Commission; and LeRoy King, Legislative Director, ILWU. Letters and telephone calls went out, asking for funds to support the David Jenkins Oral History Project.

Dave had known Lisa Rubens and her husband Danny Beagle over years of labor related activities. He said he would be comfortable working with Lisa. Interviewing began as soon as the first contribution checks came in, for Dave's health was precarious. There were start ups, speeding ahead, and delays for family illness in the Jenkins family and in Lisa Rubens' family.

Sometimes the work had to be slowed down to wait for another round of fundraising. It was a period of a declining economy, with labor people especially hard hit. Nonetheless, a final round of fundraising in late 1992, for which the original fundraisers were joined by Hadley Roff and Betty de Losada, put the project over the top. The donor list in the front of this volume is a historic document in its own right, illustrating some of the close and enduring friendships that Dave and Edith Jenkins have forged over the years. Special thanks to Victor Gotbaum and Clint Reilly for the final gifts.

Special thanks are also due to interviewer-editor Lisa Rubens, who worked with and without pay, in sickness and in health, in good times and bad as the situation required, over the six years of the interviewing-editing-funding process. Her background knowledge, probing skills, and candid rapport with Dave Jenkins enrich the interviews. She was joined in the final assembly and checking by senior editor Malca Chall, the office trouble-shooter for especially complex oral histories.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record the recollections of persons who have contributed significantly to California and the West and is under the administrative supervision of The Bancroft Library.

Willa K. Baum
Division Head
Regional Oral History Office

March 10, 1993
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

INTRODUCTION--by Robert Schrank

One of my fondest memories of David was a scene at the Butte, Montana airport in 1953. David, whose girth and stature dwarf many a person, was climbing the boarding stairs to his plane with stuffed, life-sized versions of Mickey Mouse under one arm and Smokey the Bear under the other. As the stewardess pushed him through the DC-3 door he was laughing so hard that tears were rolling down his cheeks. The plane taxied down the runway and the group of miners who came to see him off stayed to comment on David's great help "in saving our union." This scene was characteristic of David's sense of humor, always a welcome part of his rescue operations, and of the warmth he engendered from others.

What were these two guys, one from San Francisco and the other one from the Bronx, doing in Butte in the winter of '53? David was part of the leadership of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). In his role with the Bridges Defense Committee, defending Harry Bridge's right to remain in this country as the president of the ILWU, he was able to follow his conscience to other locations where workers needed help. I was an organizer for the Mine Mill and Smelter Union and was sent out from New York to try and save Mine Mill from both the Anaconda Copper Company and the Steel Workers Union.

Anaconda at that time controlled much of the state of Montana and wanted Mine Mill out of the state. The local union leadership chose the safer route of trying to take the union membership to a more conservative Steel Workers Union. There now ensued a most bitter fight to save Mine Mill and its militant tradition. Because these were McCarthy years, Mine Mill was broke, isolated, and under attack as a "commie front." Into the breach, as he had done so many times before, came David Jenkins to organize support and raise badly needed money.

After a long and bitter struggle that was fought in the whole state of Montana, we won an overwhelming victory in a National Labor Relations Board election. The miners and smeltermen threw a great party for those who came to help. To show their special appreciation they presented Dave with two huge stuffed animals. The miner who presented the gifts said, "For a guy with your heart and size, only really big stuff can show our love and appreciation."

That incident demonstrates what has been the essence of the work of David's life. He has devoted himself to improving the lives of working people. Whether it was running a school to help workers understand how to participate in the fight for a better life or, as Dolores Huerta reported, initiating crucial longshore support for Chicano grape pickers, David was there.

David grew up in a world where poverty and sweatshop exploitation were all pervasive. In response he formed a vision of a more just world for working people. His vision was a life of economic security, workers control of their workplace, no discrimination for any reason, and above all else, fairness. Fairness meant tolerance of differences of opinion, beliefs, skin color, and ethnicity. It was his vision of a better world that may at times have caused him to be impatient with the slow progress of change.

The militant tradition of Mine Mill, formerly the Western Federation of Miners, is part of the historic revolution that was integral to converting capitalism from the greed of a few robber barons to a more humane economic system. When I arrived in Butte, one of my first stops was a visit to Frank Little's grave. Little was the Wobbly organizer of the Western Federation of Miners who in 1917 was hung from a local railroad trestle by company goons. In 1917 it was the goons of Anaconda. Then it was machine guns on the roof of the Ford Motor Company assembly plants aimed at workers who were trying to organize. One Memorial Day of 1937 at a picnic of steel workers and their families, ten people were killed by the police and over a hundred wounded. These are part of the story of enormous sacrifice and commitment required on the road to a better life for working people.

In contrast, while there are still differences in the interests of workers and management, most companies now realize that the cooperation of their employees is essential and needs to be earned through fair treatment. There is no better living example of labor and managements' new cooperative spirit than the 1962 contract agreement between the ship owners and the San Francisco longshore union. Dave was a leading exponent in fighting for the new agreement. When the ILWU signed the first automation agreement for the San Francisco longshoremen, it signaled the end of warfare between management and labor. Managers had learned that goons, strikebreakers, and constant war with the workers did not help the bottom line.

This is part of the dramatic change in the 20th century that was helped by the David Jenkinsees of our country. He and others like him actually created a revolution that changed capitalism into a more humane and caring world. While some, like David, supported the Soviet Union out of the belief that it had achieved a more secure world for its workers, their major activity was in support of improving the lot of America's working people and their result was to improve how our system worked.

As we approach the 21st century with the popularity of socialism and Marxism at a very low ebb and we pride ourselves with the substantial social and economic progress that has been made, we should not forget the radical left's contribution to the new, more humane, form of capitalism. By standing up to oppression, the liberal left first forced companies to

make concessions to workers. Gradually this evolved into an awareness that the society could be stabilized by being responsive to the needs of working people. I find it a delightful paradox that people like David Jenkins, who thought they were overthrowing the capitalist system, actually helped to save it.

The fight for decent wages and working condition epitomized the achievements of the ILWU and the labor movement of which David was and is an integral part. Social Security, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, pension rights, minimum wages, safety and health regulations, civil rights legislation, Medicare, Medicaid, etc., etc., all grew out of the struggle of the liberal left for a better world.

The 20th century is the living history of how an assorted band of heroic left liberals, Marxists, socialists, trade unionists, and other true believers changed 19th century capitalism of greed and rapacious exploitation into the more humane and caring system of "the market economy" as we know it today. The future David Jenkinses will need to find a vision that continues the good fight for a better life while keeping greed under control.

Robert Schrank
Management consultant

October 1991
New York, New York

INTRODUCTION--by Joseph L. Alioto

A San Francisco original--via New York!

Those who would understand the volcanic social movements of our time must know the Dave Jenkins Story. In a conspicuous laboratory of change--San Francisco and the Bay Area--he mirrored the social leadership of the country.

Dave combines the qualities of the activist and the philosopher. What he went about doing was purposeful, directed, and motivated.

Moreover he is articulate--even eloquent--in preaching the gospel of social reform to achieve social justice for the disenfranchised masses.

Thus, through schools, labor unions, activist clubs, various political organizations and government agencies (not to mention the coffee-houses of North Beach) he was able to recruit adherents and advocates to multiply the practical effects of his social ideas.

Dave is a social thinker and a social doer. His oral history fills a significant patch in the quilt of California's history from the Great Depression to the dawn of the Twenty First Century.

Joseph L. Alioto
Former Mayor, San Francisco

April 1992
San Francisco, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--David Jenkins

I had met Dave and Edith Jenkins several times through a variety of paths--particularly through my teaching of American history in community colleges and activities associated with the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union. I had a background in labor history, had edited a few oral histories, and had conducted the oral history of Estoly Ward. For these reasons Willa Baum, Division Head of the Regional Oral History Office, asked me conduct an oral history with David Jenkins, primarily on a volunteer basis because of the difficulty of funding labor union oral histories. Although I had just begun my re-entry to the University of California as a doctoral candidate in U.S. History and my time was limited, I readily agreed to the assignment because I well knew the historical importance of this history.

Fundraising to support the oral history began in 1987. Dave and I held the first of our fifteen two-hour interview sessions on December 16, 1987. The last interview was conducted on May 18, 1988, with some subsequent brief tapings to go over and clarify one or another point.

These interviews were conducted during an extraordinarily eventful time in the history of the United States and the world as well as in the personal life of David Jenkins. But then this same description could easily apply to Dave's entire life.

The interviews took place primarily in the living room of David Jenkins's home on Belvedere Street in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. It is the home Dave and his wife Edith have shared for more than forty years; the home in which they raised their family, nurtured their friends, created political agendas of a staggering variety. It remains a home through which family, friends, and particularly the movers and shakers of San Francisco continue to flow. Usually when I arrived Dave was sitting in a large chair, cradling two phones. Our interviews were frequently interrupted by calls from the mayor of San Francisco, the president of a local union, a corporate project manager, or a neighborhood organizer. Continuing to consult with unions and businesses across the country, he often needed to make long distance calls at specific times, no matter how much the flow of the interview was interrupted.

Initially, Dave was quite reluctant to begin the oral history. He didn't know how to place himself in history, although he knew he had been at the center of some of the most important political and social movements of the century. The interview is filled with the names of people from many different realms of life--art, education, labor, and politics--who achieved national and international stature. His relationships with them ranged from the most formal to the most intimate.

He was a part of the leadership process; if not the actual leader, he was certainly a significant power broker and behind-the-scenes or public spokesman.

His is therefore not a clear-cut story; it is not exclusively concerned with one organization or one movement. This oral history becomes that much more important precisely for the breadth of Dave's experience, including the overall perspective and simultaneously richly detailed picture of twentieth century political, cultural, and social life.

The first interview begins with Dave reflecting on the nature of leadership and moves to a vivid picture of immigrant life. The oral history follows a largely chronological sequence, although there are also discreet sections about issues that particularly concern Dave--for instance his relationship with Harry Bridges and his own association with the Communist party. Although severe family illness interrupted the sequence of interviews, sometimes for three or four months at a time, perhaps the most important jolt to the narrative process of reconstructing his own life's history and the history of the successive social movements in which he was involved, was the unraveling of and then subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union. I can remember coming to Dave's house in the spring of 1988, prepared to conduct an interview on the National Maritime Union in the South during the 1930s, and after waiting out the customary barrage of phone calls, having an extraordinary pre-taping discussion with him about TASS's first use of the "B Word" [Bukharin] since the pre-Stalin era: the "rehabilitation" of Nikolai Bukharin compelled him to bemoan the history denied his generation as a result of censorship in the Soviet Union and self-censorship on the American Left. And later, during a visit, the aborted 1991 coup provoked equally agonized assessment of the ultimately subjective nature of history and memory.

David Jenkins is already a legend. He looms large in the history of the American labor movement and in local and regional politics. His advice and political clout is sought after by established civic leaders, would-be mainstream politicians, and challengers from the left. He also remains a target of public criticism. He is lionized, as evidenced by the many recent tributes and celebrations; but the thread of criticism and self-criticism weave throughout the oral history.

While Dave is notoriously articulate, talkative, public, his friends are also aware of his contemplative and analytic side. He is extraordinarily opinionated and his opinions are registered. But they are born of an incredibly disciplined and sustained self-education. He is a voracious reader, of history, literature, contemporary fiction, and political analysis. Our interviews were interwoven with discussions of contemporary issues, historical events, philosophy, literature, and

gossip. Education remains a paramount interest of his; he remains very active with the Labor Archives and Research Center at San Francisco State University.

The intersection of personal and political life is a recurring theme in this oral history. During the research before the interviews and in fact-checking after they were conducted, I encountered stories that contradicted some that Dave told but what is important here is that an oral history is different from a scholarly biography. Dave's version, including rumor, innuendo, and hearsay is as much the matter of history, as some allegedly "true fact."

Dave is a big man, used to moving about the city and occupying space in a rather imperious way. Stories abound about his appearance whether in workman's jeans, pockets jangling with paraphernalia attendant to longshoring, or suited up and pockets dramatically pulled out, exhorting the wealthy and powerful to support his various campaigns. In recent years he was a habitue of city hall, numerous city commissions, and political watering holes. Lunch with him at Stars, for instance, is almost a piece of theater, as scores of people, from the bartender, an aspiring county supervisor, a union president, or an opera singer make the migration to his table to pay respects, conduct a piece of business or bestow an affectionate embrace.

Dave loves to hear about, talk about, become involved in people's lives. He has many deep and lasting friendships going back thirty and forty years; he has devoted friends of two months; and others, like Jessica Mitford Treuhaft, have re-established friendships torn by what were at the time seemingly irreconcilable political differences. His personal affections and loyalties govern his politics; but his politics are tempered by a well-honed history of study, experience, organizational experience, leadership, and *realpolitik*.

Dave's long-time friend and labor union associate Robert Schrank agreed to write an introduction to the interviews. He underscores those qualities of loyalty, leadership, and deep commitment to a cause which are the essence of Dave's character and which will become apparent to readers of this oral history.

Joseph Alioto readily offered to write a brief statement as well. Dave played a key role in Alioto's election and administration and they have remained friends ever since. Alioto's presence in this volume speaks to the wide spectrum of people and political activity that can testify to Jenkins's importance as a political figure.

Transcribing, editing, and bringing these interviews finally to print has been a long and complicated process. After the twenty-seven tapes representing fifteen interviews had been transcribed, Dave, Edith,

and I did some initial editing, with Dave adding some information, and checking background he was not sure of during the interviews.

In January 1990, Willa Baum assigned senior editor Malca Chall the task of final editing and bringing the volume to completion. It was a wise choice and a blessing for this project. Mrs. Chall worked carefully over the nearly six-hundred-page transcript, consolidating repeated stories, checking for accuracy of spelling and dates, prompting Dave to add more information to some of his stories. She was instrumental in devising chapter titles and headings. Together we worked for nearly a year--again in episodic mode--to check facts. By now the original manuscript was nearly impossible to read and had to be re-typed and then given Dave and Edith Jenkins for one more review. Following another round of careful checking by Malca of the Jenkinses' editing, the memoir was final typed. Mrs. Chall then assigned Anne Apfelbaum of the Regional Oral History Office staff to proofread and index this final accepted draft.

In the meantime Edith and Dave helped me pick out a number of historically relevant photographs and supporting material from their large collection. By December 1993 the volume was virtually completed. Fundraising was completed in February of 1993.

This is not the end of Dave Jenkins's story. I hope that some day there might be an addition. But this oral history will constitute a valuable resource and reference for anyone interested in the history of labor, politics, and the social life of this century.

Lisa Rubens
Interviewer/editor

December 15, 1992
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

September 1993

David Jenkins died on June 28, 1993, a month after he received the first copy of his oral history at a family reception at his home. Recollections of Dave given at the memorial service held July 3, 1993, at the San Francisco Culinary Academy have been added in the Appendix.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name David Jenkins
Date of birth Jan 25, 1914 Birthplace New York City
Father's full name John Morris Jenkins
Occupation Translator, Foreman Birthplace ~~San Francisco~~ Turkey
Mother's full name Xenia Kolsgrad
Occupation Widener Birthplace Khar'kov, U.S.S.R.
Your spouse Edith Arnstein
Your children Rebecca, Margaret, David, Rachel

Where did you grow up? New Jersey, New York City
Present community San Francisco
Education 8th Grade

Occupation(s) Labor & Political Consultant

Areas of expertise Labor & Political Movements
Nationally & S.F. & Bay Area Labor Educator

Other interests or activities Labor Archives at S.F. State
University, Labor - Art & Art History
Lectures on Labor Movement

Organizations in which you are active
I.L.W.U. Pensioners Bd. Member Labor Archives
Legislative Comm. - Friends of Human Rights Comm.

I FAMILY BACKGROUND AND THE EARLY EDUCATION OF A LABOR LEADER,
1914-1932

Some Thoughts on the Nature of Leadership

[Interview 1: December 16, 1987]##¹

Rubens: I'm talking with Dave Jenkins in the living room of his home, and we're beginning to outline his oral history. Dave, you were saying you think of your role in politics and history as being accidental.

Jenkins: I never thought of the Left movement as a career or as a career ladder, as I know other people have. Someone would find themselves accidentally in leadership or enamored of it, and then they'd go from that into deliberating about how they stay in leadership--how they go from there. In a sense, I think that was true of Jimmy Herman. I think Jimmy came over from the Marine Cooks [Marine Cooks and Stewards] into Longshoremen--oh, I guess it's eighteen years ago; he was in the union twelve years when he was elected president of the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]. Well, at a certain point, I think Jimmy took a look around and thought to himself--once he was elected as president of the Ship Clerks [ILWU Local 34] that the leadership of the whole union was possible and deliberated about how to arrive at that, because to become leader of the ILWU in twelve years could not be accidental or just a spontaneous response to circumstances.

That to some degree was true of guys like [Hugh] Bryson who was head of the Marine Cooks. I think he discovered, when he came into the cooks, that he was a natural--young, handsome, in a union that in part was dominated by homosexuals. He was an attractive prototype of what was possible in the union because before that--what had he been?--he had been the typing champion of Illinois.

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page 311.

Rubens: When did Bryson come in?

Jenkins: Oh, I guess some time in the thirties.

Rubens: And were you close with him?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I ended up head of the Bryson Defense Committee when he went to jail. But he was always an enigma to me because I heard him say and do things that I always felt never came out of study or profound conclusions. In that union it turned out that he was a natural leader; so once he picked up on the language of the Left, and I think honestly believed it, he became a national spokesman and eloquent speaker. But all that was secondary to how he looked and where he came from in a sense. The key guys in many cases in the union were gay. We didn't call them gay at the time.

It was also true in other unions, as well, that some of our best fighters were either homosexuals or bisexual; so that the Party's policy when it came to the industrial section was much less enforced than it was in their uptown branches and among professionals. [See Chapter V for more of issues of sexual preference.]

Rubens: You know, you've launched into a series of fascinating stories about your early days in California in the context of assessing qualities which make or break a leader. Before arriving here you--

Jenkins: I was a Party organizer in upstate New York, not far upstate, around Newburgh, Kingston, Middletown, Erie. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers organizer (who was a Party member) and I sort of interchanged. He had formerly been a Party organizer in the area; then went over to being a CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] organizer. I came in as Party head.

Rubens: Why don't you just briefly begin at the beginning--I know that your mother had a lot of influence on you. Get us up to how you became an organizer.

Grandparents and Parents

Jenkins: Okay, that's reasonable. I was born in the South Bronx, New York. My family arrived there from the East Side a year before that.

Rubens: Were your parents immigrants?

Jenkins: Both my parents were--my mother from southern Russia, Kharkov, and then Odessa. My father was born in Smyrna, now Izmir in Turkey.

Rubens: Where did they marry?

Jenkins: They married in the U.S.; they met in this country.

Rubens: And so they separately emigrated. About when?

Jenkins: 1906.

Rubens: Both of them?

Grandfather Jenkins, a Legendary Seaman

Jenkins: I don't know for sure about my father. Well, at least my mother did. I knew my father's father and mother. His father was a seaman. Grandpa always claimed that his part of the family had been seamen for as far back in time as he could remember, sailing always the Mediterranean, and out of Haifa, and out of the Black Sea, and out of Egypt, and Alexandria, which I assume was the reason my father was born in Turkey. He was indeed a wanderer. So my father grew up in Turkey and then in North Africa. Why I know about the African thing is that he acted as a translator at Ellis Island for African languages when he first came here, for over a year anyway, maybe more. He knew the major African languages, some Arabic and others. My grandfather was illiterate in seventeen languages--at least that's what my father claimed.

Rubens: You knew him? Jenkins doesn't sound like a Jewish name; was it changed?

Jenkins: We never knew. My brother tried to find records of our father, John Morris Jenkins and his father, when he was in Turkey. We also traced some German and Russian spellings, but to no avail. I'm convinced that someone back in the thirteenth century named Jenkins was part of a holy crusade to Jerusalem and loved a Jewish woman, and that's how the Jewish line started.

Grandpa was very fond of, particularly, my brother and I. When he would come back from a trip to sea, there were always presents--most dramatic were little crocodiles or bow and arrows--things that my mother swore he had only one objective for--simply to kill ourselves. She always claimed when he died at eighty-four that if he was clean, he would still be alive. That was her infamous characterization of him.

When he got pretty old he lived with us for a while. He would come in and tell us stories. He would spit in his hand and make a map of the Mediterranean, and tell us what ports he had been in. He would only sleep in our room on our floor, where he would bed down, and there was no moving him. He also claimed to have been in every capital in the United States. My brother says that was true, and as a child, I just believed him.

Eventually it got too hard on my mother having him there and he went to live in the Jewish Old Folks home. He must have been about seventy-nine. One night he ran away and headed for Philadelphia. He fell in the Camden River--fell almost seventy feet into the river and then swam ashore. He was remarkable. But after that he got a job in Philly catching lines of ships along the wharfs.

Rubens: What did you call him?

Jenkins: We called him Grandpa or Abraham, I guess. I think it was Abraham; I'm not sure. I think there is a birth certificate of my father that I still have--it's back East with my sister.

Anyway, the old man was, in particular, a romantic type, and his wife (it didn't seem to me they lived together very much, since he was often at sea) came to live with my father and mother when they were first married, which must have been a nightmare for my mother because she [grandmother] was an extremely dominating woman.

John, as my father was called, was one of thirteen children--only two survived--my Aunt Sarah and my father, the two oldest. The others died, I think, of strange diseases, I imagine from their travels, in Izmir and then north Africa, through Spain and England, where they finally embarked for the United States.

Grandma--I called her Bubie. I didn't know her real name. She was a tough and vituperative woman; she could curse in Russian, in Turkish, in Spanish. Very superstitious, always talking of spirits and demons.

Rubens: You knew her?

Jenkins: Yes. We had a sort of terribly traumatic period when my father, who was literally the only human being in her life, and the only man in her life, died. She had long ago given up on my grandfather. Every time we went to visit her, we were forbidden to say anything about my father's death, but simply when she asked, say that Daddy was all right, or Papa was all right, which was a terrible thing to do to us because I think my brother and I, particularly, were suffering from my father's death.

Rubens: How did he die?

Jenkins: He died of cancer of the stomach when he was forty-four, and I was about five and a half.

A Maternal Heritage of Radicalism

Jenkins: My mother came to this country in 1906 with her mother, who was an Orthodox Jew, who had left her husband to bring my mother, Helen, to this country. Xenia, she was called. Her oldest sister was already in jail in Russia--she had married a Socialist revolutionary, not a Communist. My mother joined the Bolshevik group when she was fifteen.

Rubens: In this country?

Jenkins: No, in Russia. My grandmother was fearful of her arrest, so she left her husband, which was a second marriage for him. My mother talked about six half-sisters, whom she never talked about with any generosity, I must say. The only one that my mother left behind whom she longed to see was her older sister. And my mother was terribly envious of her vital life. She would go down to bring her food every day in the jail in Russia, and to hear tales. That's where the intellectual life of the city seemed to be.

Rubens: This was in Odessa, is that right?

Jenkins: I think it was Odessa, but I'm not sure myself. The glowing story my mother told: this intellectual elite, all in jail, ideas pouring out of each other about philosophy and--

Rubens: She lived through the '05 Revolution then?

Jenkins: She lived through the '05 Revolution, and came here in 1906. My grandmother instantly, apparently, went to work driving a furniture wagon. That I remember riding on when I was a kid. She rode through Bathgate Avenue in the South Bronx. It's a huge shopping district for Jews at about, oh, 145th Street. I guess it's gone now.

Rubens: It was a slightly atypical occupation for a woman.

Jenkins: She was a big woman. I remember her sitting on the high seat of the wagon. She always smelled of bread when she put her arms around me, holding on to me. But she died shortly after from high blood pressure. They used to call it apoplexy, I guess, and so that was the beginning of this family in the U.S. so far as I know.

My father married when my mother was about twenty-three, and my mother when she got here was sixteen or seventeen.

Rubens: And was your father much older than she?

Jenkins: About ten years.

Rubens: So he came around the turn of the century, do you think?

Jenkins: Yes. I don't know if he came with his father or if he came by himself, because he was always taking care of his mother and his father and seemed to inherit them afterward.

Family Life in the South Bronx

Jenkins: The South Bronx was the beginning of a major Jewish community. On our street, which was, I guess, Tremont Avenue, there was a huge non-Jewish population. And around that whole area when I was a kid in the South Bronx, there were still farms; there was a twelve-acre farm immediately adjacent to our street, [surrounded by a fence] which we were prohibited from climbing over, which, of course, we did. There was a huge park close by, Claremont Park.

Typical of the city in those days, when my father came home from work in the elevated, I'd run down about five blocks, and I'd walk him home. So it was an open community. I remember also a dramatic fight which I had with some kid on my block. His name was Fox; he was anti-Semitic or said something about Jews, and he and I kept fighting, and my old man, who was a big, strong man (I have a picture of him sitting in a rocking chair in an undershirt with huge shoulders and muscles) came home and whipped Fox's father, out in the street to the enjoyment of all the Jews in the street.

Rubens: Why had your family moved to the South Bronx?

Jenkins: Well, it was country compared to the East Side.

Rubens: They wanted that? They were willing to leave family and familiarity?

Jenkins: And I think also we got a six-room flat for about thirty bucks, which was an enormous change from Rivington Street where my cousins lived, and which we went down to, seemingly every weekend.

Rubens: Now, was it a political household? Did your mother remain--?

Jenkins: My mother obviously remained active. She had been one of the founders of the Millinery Worker's Union, one of the six girls who had started the union, and she had a gold card to prove it. Actually, I don't know whether it was gold or whatever. But she would tell endless stories about immigrant girls who were the only true unionists, and they had to convince the American girls not to scab and things of that sort, although she said some of the American girls were all right. But mostly the burden of the union seemed to be carried by these eastern European Jews. She talked endlessly about being on picket lines, and fights, and, as I remember, joyfully.

My father, I think, went from the Ellis Island stint to first, driving a New York streetcar, and then as a sort of manager of a fairly large factory in the garment district, because when he died, about 2,000 people came to the funeral, mostly from the union. It was the ILGWU [International Ladies Garment Workers' Union], and let's see, when was that? About 1920, '21. The union came up with \$2,000 insurance for him, which was all the money my mother had.

He was obviously a man who was very popular because they formed the Jenkins Circle, which continued to exist up till about ten or twenty [years ago]--I don't know how long ago--but my brother kept telling me that it was meeting every so often, and what it had become by then, I don't know. Its original name was in honor of my father--both as an activist against World War I, which he very much was, as well as his role in immigration.

Rubens: Did he belong to the Socialist party?

Jenkins: I imagine he did, though I don't know as such, but he always vowed he would not fight in World War I, and he was a moralist. Remarks that I would get from members of my family, like Aunt Sarah, was how somebody like him could have grown up in North Africa and still be a moralist. They found that was difficult to believe, but he apparently was an exceptional man.

Rubens: Was he a big man as well?

Jenkins: He was about five feet eleven inches--weighed about 179 or 180 pounds--very handsome man who looked totally non-Jewish.

Rubens: They moved to the Bronx--so he would have to go all the way down to the lower East Side for his work?

Jenkins: Going down, it was only a twenty-minute trip on the subway.

Mother as Businesswoman After Father's Death

Rubens: And did your mother work while you were young, or after your father died?

Jenkins: My mother, after my father died, went through a very difficult period. She had three children, and she was a skilled milliner, so she decided to open a millinery store. So in that period, my brother Leo and I were sent to a sort of middle-class school in Brooklyn called Mrs. Bernstein's Boarding School--I guess for about a year. By the way, as far as I know, Leo was his full name. I knew no other name. I was named Hyman David, but my mother hated Hyman, so she called me Duddy or David.

I guess my mother kept my sister home. She was struggling. And then because I was such a difficult child, I went first, though Leo joined me there, to a kind of orphanage in Washington, D.C., where my aunt lived at the time--who sort of oversaw us.

I want to tell you my father apparently had these semi-incestuous relationships with his sister or his mother, and they talked about him endlessly, "John, this; John, that." So he either was a saint naturally, or he was a particularly seductive man--I don't know.

Aunt Sarah, who was a huge woman, over six-foot, had run for public office--I don't know which--on the Socialist party ticket in New York. Then late in life she was a sort of turn-of-century Socialist, vegetarian, naturalist who married a butcher, Mike Dennison, whose claim to fame was that he was a widower with a couple of kids, and he was also a cousin of Al Jolson, whose father was a butcher also in a kosher slaughter house.

My brother and I came down and stayed about a year, maybe more, in an orphanage in Washington, D.C.

Rubens: So all these people had lived politically conscious and aware lives?

Jenkins: I don't think Mike was particularly political, though he may have been.

Rubens: Was he a butcher in Washington?

Jenkins: Yes.

Sarah had one child, Frieda, born when she was forty-five. Over the years, my brother kept in contact with her.

Rubens: So then you went back with your mother?

Passaic, New Jersey: Formal Education Ends and the Education of a Radical Worker Begins

Jenkins: Back with my mother--my mother had moved to Passaic, New Jersey, and opened up a millinery store. Passaic was twelve miles from New York, so if you played hookey, you could hitchhike to New York in an hour and catch a morning show.

##

Jenkins: By the time I got to Passaic, I guess I was about ten.

Rubens: And did she move there specifically because of that community or a range of--?

Jenkins: I'm not sure because she had friends there, or because she also decided that a cheaper-priced millinery store was possible. She kept her political activity up with this group.

Rubens: Whether she actually affiliated, you don't know?

The Passaic General Strike, 1926

Jenkins: Well, we had a famous strike at Passaic in 1926, which was started by Botany Worsted Mills and then spread throughout the whole textile industry around Passaic.

At one point, she was active in running the soup kitchen for the strikers. And as I remember, even closed her shop for a while to do that. But it was her clientele as well who influenced her--the Polish, Ukrainian, Italian, textile workers' community. My mother spoke both German and Russian as native languages. As that strike expanded from a textile strike, it became a general strike.

Then they brought in the U.S. Army; the Communists streamed down from Manhattan.

Victor Weisbrod became a leader of the strike. Weisbrod, afterwards, led a schism in the Communist party--for many years, there was a group called the Weisbrodites. Victor Weisbrod became some kind of Trotskyite. Also, there was a real community my mother had access to.

Rubens: Do you remember this strike particularly?

Jenkins: Well, everybody in town was affected by the strike. We kids around the pool hall that I hung out in were briefly arrested during the strike and temporarily held on a charge of possible manslaughter. We were accused of cutting off our pool sticks and beating up cops.

Although I was only a kid, I was oversized, accepted by a whole older group. There was a demonstration in front of the Passaic police station to get us out of jail. It was enormous. They released us.

Rubens: How long were you in jail?

Jenkins: Just a couple of days.

Rubens: Days! But you were a kid.

Jenkins: I must have looked awfully big to that cop I hit over the head.

Rubens: Was your brother involved in this, too?

Jenkins: No. He was a left-winger but was not involved in that. Leo's life and mine started early to go in somewhat different paths. He was much more of a scholar. While he was an avowed leftist, his eyes were primarily on becoming a doctor. He had gone through high school, had a broader set of friends than I, and then there was a sort of Jewish community--what was it called?--Passaic Park that he was attached to.

My life was attached to working. I went to work early, and I dropped out of school after the eighth grade. And then I went to work at the curtain mill, and then the Fried Radio Company in Clifton and the Ford Motor Company in Kearny, New Jersey.

Rubens: What did you do at the radio company?

Jenkins: Worked on a machine, stamping out parts.

Rubens: Your mother didn't chafe at your dropping out of school and going to work?

Jenkins: Well, things were very hard. It was the beginning of the Depression, early. She tried to get me to go to trade school, which I also didn't want to do.

Rubens: Were you conscious of acting out a different role from your brother, that is, were you consciously choosing to be--?

Jenkins: I don't think so. I think there was some conflict in the family but not really between my brother and myself. He always wanted to be a doctor and got into NYU [New York University] when he was sixteen, and he went into medical school when he was nineteen. So he was smart, and he beat the Jewish quota, only because, I think, he had the name Jenkins, combined with the fact that when he got his application, I suggested to him when they asked his favorite sport, I said, "Put down polo, that'll confuse the bastards." [laughter] I still think to this day the reason he got in was that--because there was a strict Jewish quota in medical schools--there may have been in other professions as well.

Rubens: So you weren't antagonistic towards your brother. It wasn't that he was going to go to school and anticipating later a profession, which you chose against. You just had a different leaning.

Jenkins: Well, there was only enough money, really, not that I made that choice. If I had wanted to be in school, my mother would have worked her arms off. I really didn't want to go to school; I was already involved in all sorts of other things.

Rubens: So what were those other things? You were working.

Jenkins: Oh, I worked in a variety of plants. I was early attracted by the idea of socialism and advocacy of the Soviet Union, the Russian Revolution--things of that sort.

More on Mother's Life and Influence

Rubens: Why?

Jenkins: Mainly because of my mother and her group. Our Saturday nights were full of Russians who were always telling incredible stories of what was going on in the Soviet Union. And the union stuff dominated my life for a while. Although we didn't understand all of it, we knew

the kind of poverty in what was our town, Passaic. As a matter of fact, when my mother got started here, she rented a six-room flat.

First, we lived behind the store in two rooms. Then she rented a six-room flat where she rented out all the rooms, except one for us and one in the kitchen. Then when she became prosperous, she got our first flat and it was a big flat. It was the first time we felt we had space. Leo and I slept in one room, but that was typical, and we had a front room, which we used for sitting and entertaining. Then we had two other bedrooms, and a decent kitchen.

My mother always worked very hard. She would get up at five o'clock and go into the millinery market in New York. Typically, what I remember of her is coming back with these two huge bags of hats that she would buy on 35th and 36th Streets in New York, which was the millinery district. Then she would block the hats and fix them. She also produced a whole number of hats; she was very good at putting these things together.

She also had a very active personal and sex life. She almost immediately, after my father died, took a lover, I think about a year afterwards--maybe it wasn't that long. I have a feeling it was shorter. But she liked sex, obviously, and she admitted it, and she missed my father terribly, in part, because of that. So she took a guy named Bernstein as her lover, who would stay over a lot. I don't think he lived with us. But then we lived with him.

When we left Washington, D.C., we moved to a small town in North Jersey called Tom's River, which was full of Jews who were financed by the Jewish Agricultural Society. I was in the third grade there. We had first a sixty-acre place, and Bernstein and his two daughters were the people that we moved in with. Well, he was her partner; but I remember my brother's theory, more than mine, that some of our cousins in New York broke off relationships with my mother when she was "living in sin," or as a "wayward woman." It hurt my mother because these cousins were almost her age when she had come from the old country. She had lived with her sister's relatives. She had lent them money, and she had been their advisor, and all that. So she was very hurt. It wasn't true of all of them; it was true of enough of them so that she felt badly about it. That obviously did not stop her because when Bernstein came around through Tom's River, it was a happy time for my brother and me. I have pictures of us on the farm there.

It's interesting because I had my first sexual experience in Tom's River in a loft of one of the adjacent farms. I don't know how specific it was. I know it was an extremely attractive experience because I kept going back [laughter]--taking her presents. That lasted a while.

Rubens: This was before Passaic, then?

Jenkins: Yes, that's before Passaic. So actually, that was for a couple of years. As I say, it was a happy time for us. We worked terribly hard; there were a lot of chickens around--it's where I first learned to hate chickens. You know how they peck you when you feed them. We had a lot of them--a couple of thousand. Then Leo and I would pull a plow together and clean up. It was fun. Then we would work crops when they came.

I don't know how the Agricultural Society worked, but we picked strawberry and potato crops. We were available. So while there was an abundance on our farm, everybody worked--got up early and worked hard.

There was also a famous spa where one could swim. There was a beach and all sorts of nice things. It was only a few miles from famous centers like Lakewood and Redwood, which the big Jewish families like Seligman and the German Jews had colonized. I remember as a kid walking through the estate of Jay Gould. It was an enormous estate with manicured gardens. The Rockefellers had an estate there, and I was one of the lucky ones who got a silver dime from old man Rockefeller, which he gave away--an old wizened man.

There was a famous story about the town itself. Jews were barred from Lakewood. Seligman, one of the estate owners, proceeded to go down there and buy the biggest hotel and made it into a spa for wealthy German Jews from New York. Anyway, I'm sorry about the aside--

Rubens: Oh, that's a delightful aside. And you did collect a dime from Rockefeller--

Jenkins: I was chased, I remember that.

Rubens: Then you left Tom's River and went to Passaic.

Jenkins: Bernstein and my mother obviously broke up because there was another guy named Reuben Wasserman. My mother was an attractive woman.

Rubens: Did she ever actually remarry?

Jenkins: She did remarry--married a guy named Abraham Goldstein. He came to us with one daughter and a "nanna." Know what a nanna is?

Rubens: Well--

Jenkins: It's a servant, a Russian servant. He had left Russia in 1919, 1920. He was an executive in one of the big sugar factories. His first wife died. By that time, we were about--I don't know--I guess about seventeen and fifteen. It was about 1929 when Mother remarried. He was then the head bookkeeper at Amtorg, a Russian trading import-export company. He lost his job in '31, and my mother supported him and his daughter and nanna for five years after that.

I once asked her how her sex life was. She said, "Well, he's impudent." [laughter]

Rubens: Did she mean--?

Jenkins: She meant he was impotent. So I guess the loss of the job--he was a sweet enough guy, but anybody who married into our family had to be crazy.

My brother was a big, dominating guy and terribly close to my mother. As a result of the early death of my father, he had just assumed for himself the role of--

Rubens: --caring for her--

Jenkins: Caring for her and being the head of the family.

Rubens: He stayed at home? Had he gone on to college? You said at sixteen he went into NYU.

Jenkins: He went to NYU, which was only twelve miles away; so he took the Erie Railroad every morning and then came back. That remained true until he was an intern, and he lived at Bellevue--had his residence, I think, at Mount Sinai in Cleveland. Then he came back to Bellevue as a resident. But it was a very close relationship between him and me and certainly with my mother. He was enormously dependent on her, and he played a special role in the family, which I never was envious of, I don't think.

To talk to my mother was the same thing. Neither would give you any relief from criticism, so that we had bad fights occasionally, most about my mother. I remember once when I came home, I had my first week's pay, and Leo said, "The only way Mama knows you love her is you give her your pay," and I said, "Well, she will live a long time."

We had a terrible fight, and I told her to go to hell, and I told him to go to hell, and he hit me with a full milk bottle. In those days, they didn't know anything about cartons. He split my head. My mother's screaming and trying to pull us apart. He

started to cry. He said, "Well, you made me do it." [laughter] That was the kind of typical fight Leo and I had, in a sense, because we always were friends afterwards. But he played the role of papa.

Rubens: You were carrying on another aspect of your mother's life, it seems, in some sense?

Jenkins: Well, he was a radical. The students he brought home were like the people I knew from Passaic.

When I moved, a number of years later, into Greenwich Village, Leo came down, wanted to meet the people I lived with. He had an affair with one of the women that was part of our group. He was taken out of his life because, in a sense, he had been small town industrial America, in spite of Russian radicals, grindstone of Bellevue and medical school, and with no money.

Jobs and Experience in and around New Jersey

Rubens: We had been talking about your work experience at the curtain mills, Fried Radio Company?

Jenkins: Also the Ray Burner Company. I worked for a hardware wholesaler--his wife seduced me, I must say.

Rubens: And before that, you had worked after school. But then you finally drop out of school, do all these jobs, and seem to have an active social life?

Jenkins: In Passaic, my associations were vastly different from later. I started to hang out in a place called the Oxford Pool Hall, which, in addition to whatever pool, or billiards, or bowling there was, it was also a lunchroom and social gathering and almost totally non-Jewish, mostly Italian and Polish and Russian--young people as well as some of the older ones. It was a mixture of older and younger men and also a place where there was, during the strike, an enormous amount of debate--all pro-union, and debate about everything else--socialism, women, everything else which was topical.

Rubens: Was there a Bohemian crowd attached to that?

Jenkins: Well, all the glaring contradictions in American life because they were socially advanced in some ways (that's one of the things that attracted me). There was a lot of in-fighting, mainly with me on

one side of the woman question and adversaries on the other. Not that my habits were so different from them, although they were. It was remarkable, every Friday there would be a cavalcade down to the whorehouses of Patterson, Easton, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which was only eighty miles away. They would all pile into a car and go down to the whorehouses.

North Jersey was a center of the Mafia of New York at the time. So the Italian towns of Lodi and Clifton were heavily Italian, and a good deal of the bootlegging of the period came out of there.

Among the Italian kids, however, most of the fathers were from my area from families of Italian Anarchists and Socialists--many of whom had left Italy because of Mussolini. They were textile workers from Lucca and from other Italian cities. Their fathers and family were passionately involved in socialism and new ideas. By the way, every Christmas, I'd get bottles of "Dago" red as a present. So it was a different world from my brother's, a different world from my mother's or anybody else's, as a matter of fact.

Rubens: How did you eventually leave Passaic?

Jenkins: I took to the road at some point. I went to work at one point at Ford Motor Company in Kearney, New Jersey.

Rubens: Were you just ready to go-- were you sort of chafing at home, or really was it the job that took you out?

Jenkins: I think it was the job at Ford Motor Company; it was a huge company at that point, assembly plant. It still exists in Edgewater, New Jersey, right on the Hudson. There was another huge plant right across the way--Western Electric.

Rubens: And then?

Jenkins: During that time, I hitchhiked with another friend up to Canada in Montreal and came back. And about then, I had an accident at Ford--in those days, you didn't get any unemployment or any comp--they tried to keep me on the job by coming to get me every day, sending a car for me.

Rubens: They needed workers that badly?

Jenkins: They were afraid of suits, I guess.

Also at Ford at that time, we started to talk about unions. I was obviously not a major influence, but a couple of guys I worked with were very pro-union. Wages were good at Ford for the time, twenty-five bucks a week. And then after you were there for two

months, they would put you up to thirty-five. But there was a fifteen-minute lunch period and a tremendous strain. Besides which every morning when you came to work, there were a thousand or more workers waiting outside the gates; so it was always ominous.

Typically, during the day, a superintendent would go down the line, freight line--I was never on the car line.

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Jenkins: It was all accidental, who got hired or fired. If somebody was standing up and wiping off sweat or some goddamn thing when the boss went around, you could be let go. So all this led to talk of unions, but the reality took another ten years, I guess, almost ten years. But already the air was full of it. They were worried about the talk.

So I left Ford, and I took to the road for a while. I guess it was after the crash. No, it wasn't after that; it couldn't have been. Let me go back.

When I first went to work, I got a job at an office called the American Locomotive Company at 30 Church Street--huge place.

Rubens: Still in Passaic?

Jenkins: No, this was in New York. I left there, went to work at a place called Bank of the United States, which was an immigrant bank, which was started on the East Side. It was headed by two Jews named Saul Singer and Bernard Marcus. I know about them--those names stick with me, particularly because my mother was able to write to them. I was given this job, and my job was as a runner out of a place called the Bankus Corporation, which was their bonding and stock company.

Every day for months, I either ran stocks and bonds and sales on Wall Street and then sometimes carried payroll. It was my introduction to New York work. I had those jobs until--the Depression was April '29--so I was about fifteen then, and then I had a couple of other jobs running errands for a cigar company. I know during one Christmas holiday, they were simply gifts that were sent all over the market.

I also had a job in a millinery company in the basement as a wrapper, which also came around as a result of my mother's contacts. All these places were on 36th and 37th Streets. You worked in the basement, and as your orders came down, you wrapped hats into boxes and put in tissue paper. I was a kind of shipping clerk. I had a series of these sort of small jobs. New York, by the way, at that

time was starting to ground down; a million people were unemployed in New York.

I had the advantage to some extent; I knew a little about the job market. I would say I could do anything even if I could only get a week or two weeks' work, and then they would catch up with me and throw me out. Then I went over to Ford. It was after all these small jobs that I got a job in Ford.

Meanwhile, I had gone into another world. I had a cousin, Philip Gordis, who came out of a distinguished Jewish family. His brother, Robert Gordis, is a leading Conservative rabbi of America. Philip Gordis, who was a Hebrew teacher, led a strike of hundreds of Hebrew teachers who hadn't been paid in some cases for a couple of years and he was very eloquent and extremely attractive. He finally became a Trotskyite, and he and I broke on that issue. I deeply regret that; he was my best friend.

Rubens: There must be a connection there. You said you started to get into another world.

Jenkins: There were a lot of people in that milieu. Philip, to some extent Ben Raeburn--who was editor of Falstaff Press--Philip and Heddy Gordis. It was an intellectual and artistic world. As a matter of fact, Raeburn served some time in jail during this period. Falstaff was a fancy erotic press. It published The Sex Life of the Japanese People. This was a very liberal and fluid set of people, I might add. The connections and friendships overlapped and also branched out in all kinds of directions.

II NEW YORK: EXPERIENCING CHANGES IN AMERICAN INDUSTRY AND SOCIETY, 1931-1939

Jenkins: Frankly, work was never difficult for me; I could always find work. Size, age, line, et cetera didn't make any difference. So I got back from the road and I didn't go back to Passaic Street. I moved to New York and got a job up on 71st running an elevator and sleeping in a room in the building. Then I started to do a little political work.

Rubens: How did you get into that--this circle of people?

Jenkins: It was hard not to. There was such mass unemployment. People were sleeping all over Central Park. They were still selling apples in New York. I remember one Thanksgiving going to eat in two places--I didn't really have to. I was in the spirit of two meals. There was a lot of private charity then.

By this time, I was listening to the soapboxes at Columbus Circle and the agitators generally around New York. That's all you would talk about. If you did talk about love and romance and roses--although we did occasionally--it was always attached to the Left in one form or another. I went for a girl who sold newspapers on 14th Street in Union Square--beautiful, little Jewish girl who was a passionate advocate. She never had any style; she used to wear an army coat and big boots.

Rubens: You were entering a whole social-political world?

Jenkins: Yes. I'd go all over, on Union Square, downtown, to the Communist Party cafeteria on 13th Street. It was a typical Jewish cafeteria. If anybody had set ham on the table, we would have dropped dead.

Moving into a "Collective" in Greenwich Village

- Jenkins: Then when I was, I guess, about seventeen, I moved into 64 Horatio Street with Gittel [Poznoski Steed]. I'm trying to remember how I met Gittel.
- Rubens: She was obviously part of this world.
- Jenkins: She was special.
- Rubens: She was a model of the Art Students' League?
- Jenkins: She was already a fairly famous model. And she was dancing at the Village Vanguard.
- Rubens: Was she older than you?
- Jenkins: No. Gittel was younger than I, actually. She had been on her own but also came from a very close family. Her father was a Yiddish scholar, who read Mark Twain and Marx in Yiddish, and her brother-in-law was a famous Yiddish poet, and she had a very tender relationship with her older sister.
- Rubens: Was this unusual?
- Jenkins: Well, I was trying to remember if I had met her through Muriel. No, I don't think so. But I guess I was about eighteen by this time or well into my eighteenth year when Gittel and I became part of a collective at 64 Horatio Street in Greenwich Village. It was a duplex and cost sixty dollars a month rent.
- Rubens: It was a collective. That's what I was going to ask you. Did you just move in on your own, or was it a planned community, so to speak?
- Jenkins: No. I moved in through another woman named Muriel Reiker. It was a relationship where I was sort of "tip-toeing through the tulips." Then with another woman I started to live with, Billie Borros, whose father was the science editor of the Jewish Day, and our relationship was no problem. Gittel was always there, and soon she and I took up together, but we were never exclusive. We were very good friends, brother and sister sort of, and would consult with each other, sometimes about the man or woman that we were living with. Occasionally, we would sleep with each other, but we were never a main couple.
- Rubens: Did these people introduce you to a new world?
- Jenkins: Yes. Well, Gittel particularly introduced me to a lot of the artists. Raphael Soyer, whom I met there, and [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi,

who was a famous Japanese painter. Arnold Blanche, and later on Doris Lee, one of the famous women painters. Louis Spieker, who was a famous painter, whose paintings still hang at the Whitney and places like that. I also met this guy, V. O. Matthiessen, who was a literary critic at Harvard, who was gay and later killed himself. Then I also met some of the poets: Horace Gregory, Kenneth Little.

Rubens: Now were you actually in the Party doing party work at this point?

Jenkins: No, Gittel and I decided to join the Party together, and we also decided in our youthful confidence that we were not going to join the Young Communist League [YCL] because we didn't feel that young. So we joined the Party together.

Rubens: This had to be around 1930.

Joining the Communist Party, 1932

Jenkins: Just about. Well, it has to be about '32. We were active in demonstrations, and we were active in all sorts of things. This group in the village was such a combination of the whole range of intellectual life from the Left. In my group were Philip Rahv and Walter Phillips, the two guys that founded the Partisan Review. Another guy who founded a poetry magazine called Anvil, a Hungarian whose name I've forgotten, told me it was a good thing I joined the Party. With my imagination, he said I would have ended up in Sing Sing. [laughter] He was a very dashing man; he wore a big black hat and cape and he had quite the luck seducing women.

Also, a guy who was editor of the Daily Worker, Clarence Hathaway, had been a lover of my friend Billie Borros--I think sometimes continued to be that, but Hathaway was finally "disciplined." I guess he was kind of a Gary Hart personality because he fucked everybody in the village that I can think of--all the young party members.

Another great--I hope his wife is gone by now--Louis Weinstock, who was still in the Party, and he was a Hungarian who was in the Painters Union, on the National Committee of the Party, was also a great philanderer. Not true of W. Z. Foster or others that I know because I do remember coming home one night, and Hathaway was just leaving my house. Much later, we were living on Horatio Street--I don't know what I would have done if I had caught him, but--

Rubens: As we just begin this titillating "bedroom history," we'll have to stop.

[Interview 2: December 23, 1987] ##

The Exciting Artistic and Political Mix in the Village

Rubens: We left off in 1932. In review, I realized I had a couple of questions about how you joined the Party, rather than joining the YCL and about your life in New York.

Jenkins: Well, 1932 I really started to live with Gittel, and a group of us formed a collective in order to pay the rent at a place called 64 Horatio Street, which was in the old village, half a block from Greenwich Avenue, where the old El was. Across the street lived Moses Soyer and Isaac, his brother, and a variety of artists, writers, such as Kenneth Little, Max White, all who went on to publish.

It was there that I met Henry Alsberg, who went on to become the head of the Federal Writers' Project and Genevieve Pitot, who was a fairly famous New Orleans-derived pianist and a Bohemian of considerable dimensions.

Rubens: So this was largely a Bohemian, artistic crowd, as well as a Left crowd.

Jenkins: A Left crowd, attracted to the Left. There were a number of translators. And I also met around that time, briefly, the author and former lover of Emma Goldman, who attempted to assassinate [President William] McKinley, Alexander Berkman, who had been released from prison. It was a funny group in many ways. Samuel Putnam, the poet and translator. Of course, they were a group who were also bisexual and Bohemian and doing a lot of experimenting, doing a lot of fucking, I would say. Also a woman named Josephine Little, who was Corliss Lamont's secretary, and in the immediate area were Party leaders like Clarence Hathaway and Lou Weinstock and people who figured fairly large in the literary scene, like Philip Rahv, Walter Phillips, and Harold Rosenberg.

Rubens: So, did you know all these people in some way or other?

Jenkins: I met them, and we talked, and there were occasional parties where we were all there. I was way out of my depth in terms of any equality, but they were interested in me, and I was, of course, once I got to know what they did, interested in them.

Rubens: Was this a higher education for you in certain ways?

Jenkins: Yes, I would say so. Also about this time, I met the people who then merged into the theatrical group which put on Waiting for Lefty. The Group Theater people--John Garfield, who was, I guess, secretary of his Party group at the time. (His name was Julie Garfinkle.) Anyway, part of the group was Franchot Tone and J. Edward Bromberg, Byron Meredith and Curt Conway--an actor in the movie Rambo--he was the guy who is the fight manager, kind of broken nose, pug, and who runs the gym. There were a lot of people--Lee Cobb, for example.

Rubens: Did you feel--I'm trying to get at your relationship to this yeasty world here. Did you feel intimidated, or did you figure out your own place?

Surviving the Depression: Working for the Unemployed Council;
Getting a Start in the Communist Party

Jenkins: I started to have a role with the Party, I started to play a role in the unemployment movement, through the Party, primarily, and the labor defense. We were leading demonstrations around Union Square, around City Hall, and I was a participant; I wasn't a leader at that point.

Rubens: But you had just joined the Party.

Jenkins: Just about the end of '32.

Rubens: Do you remember that as a focal point or a huge commitment? Gittel and you obviously talked about, "We're not going to join the YCL," but--

Jenkins: Well, I thought of it as a commitment. I deeply believed at that point in social change. My generation was unemployed. The hope seemed to be lying in a changed society. We were endlessly furious at the signs of great wealth and terrible poverty. The great unemployment centers of New York, like Sixth Avenue, where all the employment agencies were, were flooded with seemingly a million unemployed people.

In order to go to work, you had to pay a full week's wages if you could get work, and half the jobs were phony--they would fire you after a week.

Shortly after this, I started to get some pay each week from the Unemployed Council. Actually, it was called the Hudson Neighborhood Club, and with the help of seamen and others, we fixed up a loft on Hudson Street. It suddenly became a scene of meetings in the neighborhood--protesting evictions, demanding food and coal from the welfare department in New York City. I was getting about four bucks a week from them.

Then, once we won some house relief, I was getting six dollars a week for rent and food and a hundred pounds of coal and some groceries, I guess, and we pooled that pretty much at 64 Horatio. But that was my money, what there was of it. Things like clothes--Gittel had discovered the secondhand Junior League store up on Third Avenue. It actually had beautiful Harris tweeds and lovely pants that they used for horseback riding. She was very elegant, indeed. That was not where I shopped.
[laughter]

And there was a certain amount of pilfering going on. Pilfering construction on the waterfront: I'd steal coal and wood for the household and I guess other things, but there was an endless resourcefulness about tapping A & P [Atlantic and Pacific] stores, things of that sort, for canned food and things that you needed.

And, of course, there were bonanzas. Our group, economically, excited young people from middle-class families who thought we were really a bizarre group and who had much more money than we did. They would temporarily fall in, and if we found them interesting, we allowed them to stay. It was at that time I met Blake Cabot, who was part of the Cabot family of Boston. Actually, I recruited him into the Party, and he was married to, or living with, a gal named Peter Mearns (an unusual name for a woman), whose father, Hughes Mearns, was head of the Department of Education at NYU--a famous figure. As a matter of fact, many years later he wrote an introduction to my mother-in-law's book Adventures in Poetry.

Phil Rahv, who founded Partisan Review, was in my Party branch briefly. There were others from the Group Theatre, such as Johnny Garfield, Sidney Hook--who was then a Communist--(the well-known philosopher who later became a rabid anti-Communist) and his wife. Hook was sent to the Communist International School in Moscow. A woman named Eugenie Gershoy, whose brother was the famous academician and a writer on the history of the Renaissance at NYU. She was an exciting woman. I never went to bed with her in a bed, but I did go to bed with her in a closet, or sometimes on the floor. (I hate to tell you that.)
[laughter]

Rubens: You have plenty of time to decide what you're going to let stay here or not.

Jenkins: As a matter of fact, I once went to bed with her and Peter Cabot together, but anyway that was their doing. I had nothing to do with it.

So, it was a group that were mainly coming into the Party and attracted by the Party and stayed in the main up until about the time, generally, I would guess, till the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939. But during that period, the only credentials I had to offer were my size, what courage I had, and the fact that I started to play a leading role of sorts in the unemployed movement in that area. I was arrested occasionally. I shortly afterwards then joined the International Labor Defense [League], which Rebecca Soyer was the head of. It was the Ella Reeve Bloor Branch in Greenwich Village.

So it seemed to me I was in an endless series of picket lines, marches, demonstrations--I was learning to soapbox, speaking over the West Side was difficult--it was an Irish Catholic hangout.

Rubens: Who determined the West Side was where you--

Jenkins: Well, that was my Party group. And the Party group I was assigned to was headed and mainly peopled by intellectuals. And to have a genuine, working-class, youngster like me and Gittel in it was already a coup for them. So much of what they discussed I didn't always get--I understood it, but none of the reading, which I was making serious attempts at, but a lot of it defeated me, I must say.

Rubens: No one person took you under their wing?

Jenkins: Gittel and I sort of marched hand in hand.

Rubens: I meant of the Party leaders.

Jenkins: As a matter of fact, during that period, I recruited a lot of them into the Party. There was a guy who had gone to Dartmouth, who had come to New York with his wife--I forget his name. And Cecil Peterson who was killed in Spain had been a close friend. But combined with all this early radicalism were a lot of personal eccentricities--for instance, Peter who would grab her husband and someone else and want to go to bed all together as a delicious way of ending the evening.

And this group around [Kenneth] Little, Putnam-- Christopher Lazar was part of that, too, famous poet, gay. There were some

attempts on their part for seduction, which didn't repel me particularly, but I never participated in it. There, of course, was a constant stream of young men and women streaming down to the village to escape Bronx-Brooklyn, and combined with that was the seaman population that were coming into the Party, who were a couple of blocks away. They were coming into the Party by the hundreds.

So the scene was the village intellectuals, the youth, the seamen, the writers--it was in many ways a very exciting period. Occasionally, you would go to a meeting of the John Reed Club; they had a music thing that was named after the writer of the "Marseillaise." Later there was a theater on 14th Street, the Eva Le Gallienne theater, which started to do a whole series of plays which we had access to with little money. There was a great deal of dance and art as well.

Soapbox Activity on the West Side and the Docks

Rubens: In contrast, you mentioned that you were soapboxing on the West Side, and that they were a tough audience there.

Jenkins: Yes. They were Irish and church reactionaries, and they would break up meetings. And in many cases, I would be called upon to rescue speakers who were being surrounded and beaten up, et cetera. I already had a fairly good reputation among the Irish because in the unemployed work, many of their families were our clients, so to speak, if they were evicted, their furniture was put back, and they got their home relief, medical care, et cetera, through efforts I was identified with.

That area had two parishes, the Saint Christopher parish and the Saint Joseph parish; it was a strange combination of hard, Democratic, Tammany politics. There was a Jeffersonian Democratic Club on Hudson Street. As a matter of fact, they solicited me to join their club, and they would see to it that I was taken care of.

But Saint Joseph parish, which was up on 20th Street and Chelsea, was also the parish of Joe Ryan, who was president of the IIA [International Longshoremens Association]. So it was a strange and exciting and very tough area because Ryan and the waterfront--not all were gangsters--but they controlled docks. We were challenging that control in a not very effective way. We were soapboxing outside the docks, pointing to the racketeers, and the racketeer control.

Our problem was we didn't have people inside the docks, although we would occasionally get some. But there was not movement such as there was on the West Coast where there were people like Harry Bridges, and Henry Schmidt, and Germaine Bulcke, B. B. Jones, and Bjorne Halling.

Rubens: My understanding was that the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] had made such inroads on the West Coast earlier, and that there were a lot of people who had come from organizing the mines and all. Was there an equivalent history or similar potential in New York?

Jenkins: What you had, which was occasionally a help, was the Irish Revolutionary Movement, which expressed itself on the docks. You would run into Portuguese who were from the Rhode Island area who had had experience in the textile mills, and there was a famous radical Portuguese woman--"Red Anna," they called her--who had led a couple of strikes, and she made a deep impression. Among the Scandinavians, you also had a group that were fairly persistent, but the dominant group on the waterfront was controlled really by the West Side.

The present national president of the ILA, Johnny [John] Bowers--his father and uncle controlled the deep water docks and their local was known as "the pistol-packing local." Mike Tunney, who was the uncle of Gene Tunney, the grand uncle, I guess, of John Tunney, the U.S. Senator from California. [Heavyweight fighter] Tunney himself worked on the waterfront. Mike was an ally of sorts, and you needed allies down there.

Rubens: Was that your assignment, per se, on the docks?

Jenkins: Well, finally, it did become that. Out of the intellectual and white collar unit I was in, I was assigned to the waterfront, and our task was to distribute Daily Workers, leaflets, speak, and that sort of thing.

Rubens: Did you basically go along with the Party program? Did it seem "correct" to you; did you have access to the inner circles that made decisions?

Some Aspects of Communist Party Leadership, Influences, and Activities

Jenkins: Questioning it never occurred to me at that point; I was so new to ideology. It was enough just finding the intellectual energy to read Political Affairs, and the little Lenin library. I

party like ours had any chance was through democratic centralism and experienced leadership and a faithful and loyal following. And everybody seemed to accept that; there was no challenge at that point.

And at that point as well, there was no challenge of any substantial kind among the ranks of the Party or on the Left to the Soviet Union. The earlier struggles, which I learned about, the expulsion of Lovestone, which happened in '29 and that struggle which William Foster obviously had won, had already taken place, and we dimly were aware of it.

The other influence in our groups was what we called the "1905ers," the Russians who had played some role in the Russian Revolution. And there were all these old-timers out of the Ladies Garment Workers, and the trades in our units who had the most experience.

Rubens: Did you think well of them?

Jenkins: Oh, yes, but I was also bored by some of it.

Rubens: I was going to say, did some seem to be has-beens?

Jenkins: No, they just seemed to be redundant. There was, especially in the village units that I was involved in--there was also in the seamen's units--an imposition of discipline on what you could do in uptown units of the Party, in the Bronx or Brooklyn, that was extremely difficult. Our membership, to say the least, had some bizarre qualities. It was equally true of the seaman: only 5 percent of them were married if they were really married. They came from every place in the United States and Europe. You met the old time Anarchists and guys who wanted to have classes in how to make bombs.

So they were a different group on the West Coast. Now it's true that there was a West Coast workers group here in San Francisco that Sam Darcy and B. B. Jones, Henry Schmidt, Carl Yoneda, Elaine Black and others who were a part of who chose to work the waterfront. But on the East Coast, on the West Side, there was very little of that except seamen; hardly anybody met a real live longshoreman as a Party member, and that usually was accidental. We usually would find somebody who was a member of the IWO--International Workers' Order--which was a fraternal insurance group, and somebody would say, "Hey, a longshoreman signed up." [laughter] However, among garment workers and after among industrial workers, there were plenty of people around.

We immediately would go out and grab him. Usually we would find he wasn't interested. All he wanted was insurance. So that

We immediately would go out and grab him. Usually we would find he wasn't interested. All he wanted was insurance. So that the group itself never had the faintest chance except at the height of the '34 strike, when that penetrated the East Coast, of making a real dent in the ranks of the longshoremen.

Rubens: You were in New York during '34, is that right?

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: So the Party is shaping and organizing your days, in the sense of leafletting and speaking on the waterfront?

Jenkins: And my nights.

Rubens: I was going to separate that. I was going to say--you leaped into the Party when it's about to go into its popular and United Front phase, when it was Americanizing in certain ways. It seemed like most of you young people coming in are able to mesh politics and this personal Bohemian life because it all seemed of a piece. How much did the Party direct your life?

Jenkins: To some extent, they had the ultimate right of expelling you. They would do that occasionally, but that was almost impossible to do in the waterfront seaman section. I was educational director briefly.

Rubens: It sounds like you had a sense you belonged, that you were legitimate.

Jenkins: Not only that, we were kind of the shock troops around New York. Our group from the waterfront, even from the village, had meetings in Madison Square Garden, or where there was specific difficulty or unemployment, but we were always called upon to sort of be up front in case of attacks by the police or attacks by rowdies of one kind or another.

Protesting the German-American Bund

Jenkins: Around this same period, the Nazi Bund [German-American Bund] had this huge meeting in Madison Square Garden. I guess there were twenty or thirty speeches. We did disrupt the event and rushed

the stage. A guy named Cecil Peterson who was a printer, and later killed in Spain, was a friend of the people I lived with. He was in charge of the operation, and we were almost murdered. There were twenty thousand howling Nazis in the goddamn joint.

There were other occasions like this, as well, that we were called upon to play a role in. During the '34 taxi strike in New York, a guy came to me, W. Hourie, and asked me to help him in fighting the scabs, which we did--grabbing them out of their cabs. That was typical of our role. We picketed the Nazi Council, which was in the Rockefeller Center, and I was arrested on that occasion. We laid down on Fifth Avenue and stopped traffic. We picketed the Italian Council, which was up there too. I was part of that group with Bill Bailey that had a huge demonstration up in Yorkville, the German section on 84th and Second, First, Third. We got arrested there, too.

I had a friend, Barney Ellis, who worked for the city, whom a cop clubbed--it was New Years--and I picked up a paving stone, one of those huge New York paving stones under Third Street which they were tearing up, and hit the cop in the back with it, which didn't do his back very much good, I guess. And then I was aboard the Bremen when it came into New York harbor. Bailey cut down the flag in front, the Nazi flag. That was the first ship to carry the Nazi flag, and I was gnawing away at the flags around the ship.

Rubens: How did you guys get aboard?

Jenkins: Just walked on through the passenger gangway. And when the flag in the front floated into the bay, we had people--as a matter of fact Barney Dreyfus' wife, who is still alive and lives over in Mill Valley--lead a group of members from the Book and Magazine Club--well heeled people--into the passenger area saying that the ship was going to sink and people should get off. A group of the demonstrators--seamen, YCLers, people from the CP waterfront section--handcuffed themselves to a cable that ran around the upper deck.

The New York Police Department assaulted us, and I tangled with a Jewish detective. He hit me, and I hit him back, and we got knocked down, and he kept saying, "Well, what are you doing this for?" [laughter] I replied, "How come a Jewish cop like you doesn't understand what the hell we're doing?" But we had a huge demonstration on the dock in front of the ship, and then one guy was shot. A number of them were arrested--another guy, Paul White, who got killed later in Spain. But none of them went to jail. A judge in New York, named Brodsky, said the black flag of piracy had been cut off the ship.

Anyway, that was my introduction, really, to the movement and to the Left. To some extent, because of the group I came in with that was around, like Gittel and others, I was forced into an intellectual agenda, which I might have been attracted to anyway--literary stuff and reading. I felt this group demanded that I know something about this and I was interested, though it was not my native interest, so to speak. It probably, to some extent, directed me to become part of doing educational work for the movement among workers. Also I took a class taught by Morris Schappes, who is still alive--and was editor of Jewish Currents--on 18th and 19th Century poetry at the workers school in New York on West 13th Street. At some point I took a class at the New School for Social Research.

Rubens: What was the nature of this educational work?

Jenkins: We won what originally was the PWA [Public Works Administration], which became the WPA (which I was much involved in)--the Works Progress Administration.

Rubens: When you say "we", do you mean the Party?

Jenkins: Yes, the Party and front organizations of the Party which were composed of unemployed councils, foreign born groups and, to some extent later, groups from which the Workers' Alliance was politically derived; there was a merger of all of this. The great marches and the rest of the movement for social change which took place around New York in this period is what I think of when I say "we."

The Unemployed Battles Heat Up: A Demonstration Turns Violent

Jenkins: It was in this period when we organized the Downtown Unemployed Council, and I was one of the leaders. We decided to picket and demonstrate outside the newly-formed Department of Housing and Welfare in New York, which was then chaired by a man named Langdon Post, who afterwards came to California and also became head of federal housing. His son, Rollin Post, is on TV news [KRON]. We were demonstratively going to break into his headquarters, which was right across the way from the ancient, antique and infamous Tombs Prison in New York, and we, indeed, had a huge demonstration there.

The police had surrounded the area, and at the moment of our attempt to break into the headquarters, attacked the demonstration and drove us back. And then the leadership decided

that we were going to rush the swinging doors, which was probably one of the stupidest decisions in history. [laughter]

As we rushed, and I was one of those who either volunteered or was chosen to rush--I get out of the middle of the center just in front of the building, and I realized that I was literally by myself. If ever I was a vanguard, I was indeed a vanguard that day, and as I came at it, I was hit by a sergeant, whose name I found out afterwards was Foley, with a night stick--a billy. So he hit me hard over the head with that goddamn thing--didn't stop me, and then another patrolman by the name of Langallo hit me with a club, and I grabbed it out of his hand and whirled and hit him with it. Subsequently I discovered I broke four of his ribs. By that time, the police had really filled the vacuum, which we had not filled.

Rubens: Were you arrested?

Jenkins: So I ran up towards Foley Square, where the Federal Building was--pursued by, Christ knows how many, cops. A cop grabbed me--I don't remember his name. He claimed I broke four of his fingers getting his hand off my wrist. So they grabbed me, and they brought me back to the building, though I broke away from them again. I went north, and one of the members of the Unemployed Council, a huge guy named Polasky, was already lying in the street bleeding from his head, and I, for some stupid reason, stopped to try to help him to get out of the way, and just at that moment, a cop on horseback hit him on the top of the head again. I still had Langalla's club, so I hit the legs of the horse, and he fell.

They got me and brought me back to the square, and they did indeed take me through this revolving door in which there must have been forty cops standing, and then I went through a double line. They had shackled my hands--I have a picture as a matter of fact because the New York Times took it and ran the story.

They kept hitting me through my legs on my testicles, and if I had big balls before, they really became gigantic. [laughter] Anyway, they arrested thirteen of us. They sewed me up in the back of the building. This was done by a Mercer Street Hospital ambulance. They sewed my mouth and my head, mostly my mouth and lips. The reason I make a point of it is that in the so-called investigation by the detective, they had broken open all the stitches; so when I came down again, they had to recall the intern.

600 RIOTERS HERE BATTLE 100 POLICE AT RELIEF BUREAU

**Radicals Wield Sticks Against
Patrolmen on Guard at
City Welfare Office.**

5,000 WATCH THE FIGHT

**Reserves Rescue Comrades—
15 Injured, 13 Arrested—
Howe to Change Policy.**

More than 600 radical demonstrators, protesting the city's system of home and work relief, fought with clubs and fists for a half hour yesterday against 100 policemen massed to protect the Department of Welfare offices at 50 Lafayette Street.

While prisoners in the Tombs looked down from upper windows of the prison and spectators crowded adjacent side streets, the demonstrators ripped staves from banners they were carrying and used them to beat patrolmen, many without nightsticks, assigned to guard the building.

As a result, eight policemen were injured, two so seriously that they were taken to Beekman Street Hospital. Three spectators were hurt slightly when bowled over by rioters rushing up a side street ahead of mounted policemen.

March on Police Station.

Four more injured, making a total of fifteen, were listed among thirteen men arrested, for the most part on felony charges, and held at the Elizabeth Street police station, despite a march of some 200 of the demonstrators in that direction in what police termed an effort to release the prisoners.

In the belief that the demonstrators may seek to create a disturbance when the prisoners are arraigned in Tombs Court today, Chief Inspector Valentine last night ordered details of twenty patrolmen and two sergeants to report there at 8:30 A. M. and prevent any demonstration.

An immediate result of the riot, regarded as the most serious of recent months in connection with relief activities, will be a change in the Department of Welfare's method of dealing with complainants, it was indicated. Stanley H. Howe, Acting Welfare Commissioner, declared after the mêlée that he would recommend that the policy of receiving complaining delegations on Saturdays be abandoned and some other method worked out to spread the protests through the week, so that large crowds will not congregate before the offices on Saturdays, as has been the case in recent weeks.

If a method to check the disorders cannot be found, the city will have to obtain other quarters for the Department of Welfare, a representative of the New York Life Insurance Company, owners of the building at 50 Lafayette Street, said after the outbreak.

The owners, this representative declared, regarded the continued "protests" and disorders on Saturday in front of the building as "disgraceful."

Forty Police Lack Nightsticks.

About forty policemen, without nightsticks, were on duty before the building and in the corridors during the forenoon, in anticipation of the customary week-end demonstrations, when the delegation that later took part in the riot arrived just before 11 A. M. Mr. Howe and deputy commissioners of the department were conferring with other delegations in the building on grievances connected with relief work.

In response to a telegram sent him by the organizers of the group before the building, the United Action Committee of 100, Mr. Howe sent word that the committee would have to arrange an appointment if it wished to present a complaint. The group before the building, about three-fourths men and one-fourth women, then began picketing the building, marching up and down on the sidewalk. One of the leaders, hoisted to the shoulders of his followers, made a speech urging that the group force an entrance to the building.

Police Inspector James J. Wall, called by Captain Aherne, stepped forward and advised the crowd to disperse, in the interests of law and order. The answer he received was a blow on the head delivered with a pole torn from one of the banners. Inspector Wall's hat was knocked off and his head was cut slightly, but he was not listed among the injured.

Other members of the mob tore the staves from their banners also and surged forward. Police collected sixty of these pieces of wood later and estimated that as many more had been carried away by the mob or were among the debris that littered the street after the fighting was over.

Police Sergeant George F. Hartery, attached to the Beach Street station, stepped forward at another point before the building, in an endeavor to check persons who were rushing toward the door. He was struck by the staff from a banner and knocked down. Other policemen rescued him and helped him to the first-aid room in the Department of Welfare offices.

Meanwhile, reinforcements were summoned by Inspector Wall. Two police emergency squads, twelve radio patrol cars, additional mounted policemen and detectives from police headquarters responded. As the first of the emergency trucks arrived, their officers being the first to reach the scene with nightsticks, Patrolman John S. Conway stepped from the truck into the crowd, and was immediately overpowered by superior numbers. His nightstick was wrested from him, and he was knocked down. Members of the mob began to kick and beat him.

He thereupon drew his service revolver, fired one shot into the air, and cleared a space sufficient for him to reach his feet. Fellow-policemen rescued him. Upon examination, he was found to have suffered several fractured ribs, and was one of those taken to the hospital. Meanwhile, the foot patrolmen kept the crowd from entering the building, and seized such prisoners as they were able, while the mounted policemen gradually split the crowd into sections and drove these through Worth and Leonard Streets.

All traffic on Lafayette Street was forced to take other routes during the disturbance. Police estimated that the crowd, including spectators who had come to the scene during the fighting, totaled 1,000 persons, and that about 5,000 persons watched the battle from a safe distance.

Sergeant Harrerty was treated for lacerations of the scalp, but refused to go to the hospital. Those sent to the hospital were Patrolman Conway and Patrolman Frank Leragolla of the Beach Street station. The latter suffered a sprained right leg and possibly was injured internally. Other police casualties were Patrolmen John Turner, Beach Street station, fractured left finger and contusions; Joseph Matri, Fifth Street station, sprains and contusions; Leopold Kandler, East Twenty-second Street station, lacerated scalp; Joseph Greenberg, East Fifty-first Street station, contusions, and Patrick Hughes, Mercer Street station, abrasions. All of the less seriously injured policemen were sent home.

Police Horse a Casualty.

In addition, the Police Department casualties included the horse of a mounted patrolman, appropriately named Revolt. The animal was struck over the head with a piece of wood in the hands of a rioter and its scalp was cut open. The rider was Mounted Patrolman Herbert Moore of Troop A, one of three men under departmental charges for failing to take proper police action in suppressing a disorder during the taxicab strike on March 22.

The three spectators hurt were Abraham Hellman, 60, of 299 Broome Street; Jacob Damles, 51, of 36 Avenue J, Brooklyn, and Marie Carple, 37, of 2,573 East 118th Street, Brooklyn. They were treated for cuts and bruises received when they were knocked down by the fleeing rioters in Worth Street.

Among those arrested were David Jenkins, 20, no home; Jeremiah Lynch, 29, of 432 East Twenty-fifth Street, the address of the Municipal Lodging House; Cecil Alexander, 25, of 329 West Fourteenth Street; Larry Carlson, 40, of 40 Corlears Street, the address of the Salvation Army's Gold Dust Lodge; Joseph Schendler, 26, of 563 Sackman Street, Brooklyn, and a man booked as Core de Ancis, 25, no home. All of these were charged with felonious assault and rioting.

De Ancis was said by detectives to be Alfred Messina of 211 Avenue A. In his pocket was found a food ticket issued by the Department of Welfare May 26 for a family of four and a pamphlet bearing the name of the International Labor Defense on "What To Do if Arrested."

Harold Kithlein, 39, of 834 Bodine Street, West Brighton, S. I.; Charles Williams, 31, 332 Seventh Avenue, and Samuel Miller were held on charges of disorderly conduct and rioting. Miller, who is a cripple, described himself as a newsboy.

Jack Pulaski, 40, of 34 East Second Street, was arrested on charges of felonious assault and malicious mischief, the first charge being that he had struck Mounted Patrolman Moore and the second that he had injured Revolt, the latter's horse.

Joseph Elwell, 26, 145 West 133d Street; Joseph Chrimininsky, 27, of 333 East Thirty-fourth Street, and Michael Davidow, 21, of 29 East Twentieth Street, were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct.

Representatives of the International Defense were at the police station as the prisoners were booked. The injured prisoners were said by the police to be Jenkins, Lynch, Carlson and Elwell. They were treated by Drs. Gizella, Wittman and Sikorsky of the Beekman Street Hospital at the police station.

Davidow was sentenced to three days in jail by Magistrate Farrell in night court after he had declined the alternative of a \$15 fine. Elwell obtained a postponement until Monday and was released in \$50 bail. A hat was passed in the court room and the money raised among his sympathizers.

One man was arrested and two more patrolmen hurt when the police dispersed at Broadway and Forty-fifth Street a crowd of about 250 persons who had been demonstrating outside the court late last night. The group had marched down in the street, causing a jam amid the after-theatre traffic.

When five traffic policemen ushered the marchers into Forty-fifth Street, a small group turned on one patrolman and scuffled with him. The patrolman, Walter Bunderman, stood off his adversaries until one of them hit him with a missile. This man, who later identified himself as Philip Nicholas, 28, of 270 Bowery, fled down Broadway with Patrolman Arthur B. Gary in pursuit, biting Gary in the hand when the policeman seized him at Forty-fourth Street. Nicholas was locked up on a charge of mayhem. Bunderman and Gary were treated by an ambulance surgeon, from Flower Hospital.

Jay Gaynor, head of the United Action Committee of 100, said later that the committee had sent a telegram protesting "police brutality" to Mayor LaGuardia and had attempted to arrange an appointment with the Mayor, but that the latter had refused to see them.

A similar telegram of protest was sent by the Associated Office and Professional Emergency Employees, whose executive secretary is Alexander Taylor.

I said, "Are you going to testify you sewed me up twice?" He shit all over himself, and as I sat in the back with a lady who had been taken away, they brought Polasky in, who was bleeding very hard--they taped him up temporarily, and Langalla came up to me and said, "What did you hit me for?" I said, "Well, you hit me first, you bastard." Then Foley came up as I was sitting on a pile of lumber and he hit me. He was the first to break the stitches in my mouth. I got up and I slugged him. I figured, "Fuck you." Everybody was screaming and hollering. Foley was screaming, "I'll kill you, you son of a bitch." Then they took us down to the police headquarters across town, not to the local station, and the cops were frantic by then. They had never run into quite anything like this before because the guys they had arrested were seamen, and this one guy in the Black Maria (the police car) had his pistol out, and he said, "Make a move. I'll kill you, you Commie son of a bitch. Make a move. Go ahead." His eyes bulging, and he was sweating.

They had hit me so much by that time that I wasn't too coherent; I kept thinking, "You son of a bitch, when you step out of the Maria, I'm going to get you." He knew it too because when he backed out with his gun cocked, he stumbled on the stairs and fell. He screamed, "Don't let him get me." So then they took us into the center, and we kept chanting for medical care for Polasky. They really came down with rubber hoses and water and the whole shit, the police were totally out of control that day.

As a result of that, when we came up on trial, three of the newspaper men who had been beaten up trying to cover us--one from the Times, one amazingly from the Daily News, which made no attempt at impartiality--they were beaten up on the steps of Foley Square where the trials were taking place. Well, you can imagine what kind of a hero I was in the village.¹

Rubens: Indeed!

Jenkins: Rebecca Soyer's branch wanted to rename their branch the Dave Jenkins Memorial Branch. I got an instant reputation as a fighter, which was something of an exaggeration. I've never been a particular fighter. I had always been big and strong, but I was never a goon or anything, except in class situations.

This picture of me--David Jenkins, unemployed, homeless, was a far cry from the demonstrations which are going on today. The homeless were recruited out of the waterfront unemployed section and The Bowery. Our group was a formidable group. There was no

¹Jenkins' experiences in jail as a result of the demonstration are discussed beginning on page 41.

conscious attempt at violence. The police decision, because we were going on to city property, was plain then.

A group did finally unseat Post. We reminisced about it because historically what happened--when the Smith trials took place during the 1950s, he was one of the few guys that opposed the Smith Act. He and I reminisced about it. His wife worked for Israel bonds--she was Jewish and he wasn't. So it's a small world.

Well, in many ways, this '34 demonstration was a very dramatic shift in sentiment in New York for the cause of the unemployed, among the middle-class people. For instance, one of the guys arrested, Jim Leshay, afterwards was artist-in-residence at the University of Iowa. Years later I looked him up on Cape Cod. And because of the newspapermen who were beaten up, the whole tone of the papers shifted. When we were brought to trial, our bail was \$10,000. I was released first. I went out and raised most of the bail for the other thirteen guys. I went to all the established, mostly Jewish middle-class sympathizers in the Party and did indeed help raise the bail to get them out.

Rubens: So it was like one of those events that crystallizes what side people are on?

Jenkins: It also dramatized the finest aspects of the unemployed in the CP movement because the solidarity which followed through into the community was enormous. When I went back into my neighborhood, for instance, which was a huge Irish neighborhood in addition to us, my prestige among the Irish had gone up enormously because if they didn't respect my politics, they respected my defending myself.

Rubens: This was April 1934.

Maritime Organizing in New York, 1934

Jenkins: Yes. And of course, what was going on was the '34 Maritime strike out west. I got involved in organizing a visit of Harry Bridges on the East Coast which happened shortly after this. No, he didn't come till '35, but as one of the outgrowths of the '34 strike, we organized a sympathy strike where about 2500, 2800 people went out in New York City.

So while we didn't have any firm hand on longshoremen, the movement which was sweeping the West Coast and generally, which started to get us out of the doldrums in '34, started to affect

the activities of the Marine Workers Industrial Union. There were characters like Harry Jackson, who was from San Francisco, a leader of the warehousemen but had been an early Party leader in the South, who was sent East and played a role in the New York branch of the MWIU [Maritime Workers Industrial Union]. I once went to get some Daily Workers or some leaflets there, and I asked them for a nickel for subway/car fare, and Harry said to me, "We don't buy you in this movement. Grab a truck ride to the West Side." [laughter]

Rubens: Was the sympathy strike a big deal? I didn't know about that. Did a lot go out?

Jenkins: Yes. It was symptomatic of the anger at the [Joe] Ryan machine on the West Side control of the union.

Rubens: Was Harry Jackson and/or you involved in that?

Jenkins: Harry Jackson was somewhat involved in that, and I was in a general agitating way--speaking, distribution of leaflets, huge announcements through the Daily Worker, about what was happening to the strike out West.

Rubens: Were you friends with Bailey, by the way?

Jenkins: Yes. We knew each other in New York, and then I knew a lot of those coming into leadership in those days. It was then that I met Blackie [Frederick] Myers and Jack Lawrenson who emerged as leaders of the NMU [National Maritime Union]. My best friend was a guy, Tommy Ray. Before I knew him as a Party whip he was a dominant force and tough on the seamen. He was our section organizer. By that time, I was in the waterfront section of the Party. Ray later fell into disgrace over Joe Curran and broke with the Party.

Digression to Marriage and Birth of First Child, 1937: A Reflection on Contemporary Gender-Sex Roles

Rubens: To flash forward a bit, when did you come to California, and when did you marry Constance Dixon?

Jenkins: I came to California in 1939; Consie was already here with Becky. Constance was still married, I think, when Becky was born. She had to get a divorce and didn't for some time. That all didn't matter much then to any of us. Becky was born on February 15, 1937 at 17 Bethune Street, which was about five blocks down from Horatio.

Rubens: You didn't stay in the collective after Becky was born?

Jenkins: No, when Consie had her baby, we left. But we didn't marry until after her divorce; and really we didn't marry until Becky was about four--that was here in San Francisco.

I had followed Consie out to California because I missed Becky, but our relationship was doomed. We married in 1941 so that Becky would not, legally, be a bastard. I was not divorced from Consie until Edith Arnstein and I decided to get married. Just before Edith and I got married on March 12, 1942, I got a Mexican divorce from Consie. We had married at San Francisco City Hall, and then divorced almost immediately afterwards.

Rubens: How had you met Constance?

Jenkins: She came into our collective on Horatio Street and we started to sleep together. She got pregnant, had an abortion, we broke up. Occasionally, we'd sleep together again; she got pregnant again. We decided we didn't want to have another abortion. Abortions were cheap in New York then, twenty-five bucks.

Rubens: Were they easy to get?

Jenkins: Very easy to get. The famous Doctor Sunshine had developed a whole science of abortion and was known all over. But many of the women wouldn't wear contraceptives; they said it would interfere with the pleasure of sex.

Rubens: With their own pleasure?

Jenkins: Yes. They would prefer an abortion, if necessary.

Rubens: That was common?

Jenkins: Some women were notorious for their number of abortions. There was always a dialogue going on over Lenin's debate with Clara Zetkin. The claim was, you were "drinking out of a dirty cup." The truth was we were young, on edge. We opposed convention. The mix of seamen and Bohemians and young radicals was endless and stimulating. Some women experimented with lesbianism. There was talk of oral sex as a kind of contraceptive.

Rubens: I thought that women on the Left particularly knew about and obtained birth control.

Jenkins: There was one woman, whose husband was editor of Falstaff Press, that would never allow contraceptives. It was absolutely an interference to good love making, and the abortions were so easy

in those days, you just got cleaned out. She was known to have had many.

Rubens: I wonder what those women thought about later. Were people having children?

Jenkins: No. Becky was literally the first child in our group. We used to have dozens of visitors just to see how she acted.

Rubens: [laughter] A child, a child! We're talking about 1937 in the village. What happened next?

Jenkins: Well, I left and went upstate to Newburgh, and became Party organizer there.

Communist Party and CIO Organizer, Upstate New York, 1936-1937##

Jenkins: I had a Party section which included Newburgh, Cornwall, on the Hudson River, Kingston, Middletown, Erie.

Rubens: What kind of towns were these?

Jenkins: Newburgh is a famous American revolutionary town; by then it had some industries. Cornwall had the famous Cornwall Carpet Mills. We led a strike there in 1937. It was a successful one. Middletown was an industrial town but also a pleasant revolutionary era town with the huge Hollander Fur Plant, which we organized there. Kingston is still a famous revolutionary town distinguished by a lot of industries like Hercules Powder. We organized Kingston Shirts, and on the river, the brick yards.

Rubens: What was your job? Why were you sent there by the Party?

Jenkins: Well, it was the beginning of the CIO, and the Party was sending organizers. When the Party organizer of that section before me went on the payroll of the CIO organizing committee, I took his place. The line between Party membership and being a CIO organizer was very slight. I didn't have any Party membership up there. The few that I recruited were mostly industrial workers. I was down there on the picket line.

Afterwards, I went South. The head of the CIO Maritime Committee was Al Lannon, who was a member of the Central Committee of the Party. The CIO didn't discriminate, didn't care, and did not regard the CP as a menace. At least, they didn't regard their union organizers as such.

So I helped organize Cornwall on the Hudson, 1800 textile workers. And, of course, we had sent a couple of local Communists into the plant as missionaries that led the strike.

And then we organized Middletown. The Fur Workers Union leadership was dominated by the Party, Ben Gold, Irving Potash, Sam Burt. So I went house-to-house recruiting members. In the past the workers had been afraid to strike. So we went to the local ministers, and collected money and supplies--in all about a \$10,000 strike fund--to protect the workers, to insure a food supply, medical care, rent money, et cetera.

In Kingston, we organized the Kingston Shirt plant. That's when we got into trouble with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which was very consciously, I think, anti-Communist. We were threatened by their local in Poughkeepsie. We stayed the hell out of there because there was a group of hoodlums on the Amalgamated payroll, I guess. So I slept with a gun under my pillow.

Then, of course, the nicest part of my district was Woodstock, which was an artists' colony. So that sort of reintroduced me to the arts. I knew some of the artists there.

Rubens: Did you have a car by then?

Jenkins: Yes. I was getting fifteen bucks a week from the Party, and they were deducting three dollars a week for the car. Maybe I was getting more than that; I don't think so. I had a Chevy. Mind you, I had to learn to drive; I had driven as a kid, but I had never seriously driven a good car. It was a big territory--3,000 square miles.

The artists up in Woodstock, by the way, were getting involved in WPA projects and the Farm Security Administration. Constance had been hired by the WPA and my rent was minuscule, so we were all doing okay. There were a lot of generous people all over, who would give me a meal or a buck.

Everything was bursting open. The Roosevelt administration was flourishing. The Party was in place; it was no longer illegal, and was even respectable to belong.

Reflections on the 1936 Presidential Campaign

Rubens: I haven't asked you about the Democratic party politics and Roosevelt. Do you remember when you first voted?

Jenkins: I voted in '36. I voted for Earl Browder, the Communist party candidate. We were still characterizing Roosevelt, not a social Fascist, but part of the enemy. But as time went on, we more and more modulated our tone, and with the passage of the Wagner Act, it made politics even more complicated. But the Party persisted in running its own candidates in '36. In '32, they had run William Z. Foster and James Ford; there was a feeling that we needed a black on the ticket--that was significant. It was the forerunner of the Party's position on race after World War II.

The Communist Party Debates Morality

Jenkins: There were debates and discussions about free love, about the forefathers, as it were. Lenin and his great emotional experience and love for Krupskaya, his wife. Earl Browder spoke on the virtues of fidelity. When Soviet leaders began standing when their wives came into a room, Browder had the U.S. Party emulate that behavior. At the same time, we were seeing Weinstock and [Clarence] Hathaway and leaders of the Party come into our community on the West Side and, you know, seduce our girlfriends. They used their Party prestige, but I would say it was met with some willingness on the part of these women. There was no sexual coercion per se, but Party standing might win them over, if they were reluctant.

So we were frankly cynical about a sexual conduct line. We gossiped about it. On the other hand, we respected Browder, who had married a Russian. But I remember a famous meeting in Carnegie Hall in '39 where the main theme was promiscuity and pulling ourselves away from the decadence of society.

Many of the older generation came from Russian revolutionaries or were like Bob [Robert] Schrank and his father, who was a German Anarchist. When Bob's father died, he thought he would leave him a big library on anarchism and Marx, and it turned out to be a huge pornographic library that he had collected.

But I knew some of the women from YCL--Esther Rosenberg, who was leader of District 65 in New York. And I knew a lot of the Fur and Leather Workers leadership, too, who were very moralistic about money, but on sex, quite active. They actually shocked me because they would go to famous bars and restaurants and pick up gals, which seemed to me one, a peculiar appetite at best, and two, they were so flagrant about it. Ben Gold of the Fur and Leather Workers Union had an affair with his secretary who adored

him. Helen Lawrenson later would be an editor of Vogue and also wrote a book about her life and this heady life, called Latins Are Lousy Lovers. And in the middle of all this, she came on the waterfront and married Jack Lawrenson, NMU secretary-treasurer. He was sort of an Irish revolutionary. She was also the mistress of Bernard Baruch. She mentions me in her book.

So there were all these currents on the waterfront that were outside the regular Communist party.

One thing that I left out of those arrest periods was that I did go to jail for three months at Harts Island--first to Welfare Island and after New York State Penitentiary. I originally had a much longer sentence, but I was paroled.

Jewish Issues

Rubens: Here is one other question I'd like to throw in here to tie up various threads. What about Jewish issues?

Jenkins: It was almost not discussed. There was the New York district of the Party that was led by Israel Amster and Max Steinberg. Amster had run on a Party ticket in New York for governor--his slogan was "Vote for Honest Ike and protect your little tyke." The Party leadership in New York was Jewish. Early on, there were attempts to Americanize the Party and give it an American face, but there were a few Jews in the waterfront section. One guy, Sam Mandel, was head of longshore work, but the last thing in the world he would ever discuss was Jews or Jewishness.

People like Gittel came from Yiddish-speaking parents and Yiddish experiences that came from the Left Jewish movement, as was true for me. On Yom Kippur, they would go to the Cafe Royal, eat publicly as a kind of defiance of Jewish orthodoxy.

Outside of a few figures, like Rabbi Stephen Wise or Irving Miller, who was head of the American Jewish Congress, we did not pay attention to Jewish religious leaders. There were a tremendous number of Jews in the Party, the labor movement and in reform circles. But we were concerned with racism and politics. We didn't identify as Jews per se. After Hitler and World War II, many of us would have a different position.

Rubens: Leah Schneiderman had an interesting observation when I was asking her about women in the Party. I raised the question about anti-Semitism, and she said, no, that she hadn't ever experienced any of that; that Jewish heritage didn't make any difference.

Yet when she went to L.A. during the Smith Act trials in '51, she felt there was a greater sense of community and caring and taking care of people there than in San Francisco. She thought that had something to do with the Jewish roots of the L.A. Communist Party community--not that you can make anything substantive of that.

Experiences in Jail: Prisons, Prisoners, and Protests, 1934

[Interview 3: January 6, 1988] ###

Rubens: In our last interview, we were jumping around a little in time at the end. I wondered why you didn't go to Spain, you had been organizing, you went to jail, and you said there was something you wanted to talk about in terms of the jail experience.

Jenkins: Shall we go from there?

Rubens: Sure.

Jenkins: Well, after I was arrested in April of 1934, I was first sent to Welfare Island, which was the main city and county jail of New York, which is right on the East River at 59th Street. It has now been converted to apartments. It was a massive jail. At the time I went in, the jail was dominated by a variety of gangs in New York. "Mad Dog" Cole walked about the jail with a knife in his head for a month or so because they couldn't take it out.

Dutch Schultz's gang had control over one part of the prison. My part of the prison, which was the south crib, was controlled by a Harlem gangster named Joey Rayo, and "Legs" Diamond and others who were notorious. Various gangs were in the jail itself.

When I first came in and was brought down in the south crib, Rayo, whom I met for the first time, brushed aside the guard. He was dressed in a big blue sweater and a cap, and he said, "What are you in for, kid?" And I said, "Demonstration, and fighting for--" He said, "What do you think of LaGuardia?" And I said, "Oh, fuck LaGuardia." He said, "Well, that's all right with me." [laughter] He shook my hand, and he turned to one of his guys and said, "Give the kid a blanket and a pillow."

So they took me up to the third floor of the crib. In those days, there were no inside toilets at Welfare. So every morning at five o'clock, there was a march out to the cisterns, which were in the center of each yard, to dump your toilet and wash it out and bring it back.

Shortly after I got up, one of the Rayo's lieutenants came up and said, "You a Commie, kid? My father was an Anarchist. I know all about that." He said, "You need anything, just let me know." Jail was totally in the control of the mob.

Rubens: This guy was Italian, Rayo, and Harlem was his district?

Jenkins: Yes. So the first time I was up, they opened the doors--they were all individual cells--two men came out dressed as women, high heels, women's clothes, et cetera. So I asked one of the guys what that was about. He said, "Well, they were punks; they were used by the guys." He said, "You want some of it?" And I said, "No." But that kind of thing was all through the south crib, which was a big section of the jail where there were men posing either as transvestites or just whores for the rest of the men.

Jail was sharply divided between black and white, and I got to be friends with a young black man on my tier, and one morning, Rayo and his guys were trying to make this black guy dance on the main floor, and he was a tough, young, independent guy, and he refused to dance. I hollered down at Rayo, "Leave him alone. Lay off." He told me the appropriate words, to fuck off. So I took my shit pail and threw it down at him. In a matter of seconds, maybe fifty pails were raining down on him. They were driven back against the wall. It was the end of the so-called total Rayo control of our south crib because nobody worked in our section unless Rayo said he could work in the laundry or the mess or the yard work, et cetera. It was driving us crazy anyway.

Shortly afterwards, we had a strike started in my section of the jail that spread throughout the entire jail, for ten days off a month rather than five--a fight which we ultimately won.

Rubens: How did that strike get going?

Jenkins: Well, half a dozen of us started to talk about it, and then on Sunday during religious services, I took phoney notes to the Protestant and Jewish service leaders, excusing some of us each weekend, and we talked furiously among ourselves about a strike, and we agreed on it--each guy in each crib. We started by refusing, one, to go out to the shit pails, and two, to go out to eat. And then we started demonstrations in the mess, which were massive. We shut down the jail for about a day and a half, and then I got transferred out to New York State Penitentiary up at Hart's Island.

But it was LaGuardia who was starting to understand the control of the jails by the mobsters and the preferential

treatment. Rayo would go out of jail twice a week. We were right underneath the 59th Street bridge on the East River, and Rayo would go out, and the other guys would go out of jail for allegedly either business or sex, and there was a furios resentment in the jail about this preferential treatment.

Rubens: Were the officials of the penitentiary bought off?

Jenkins: Not only bought off but totally intimidated. The guard in our section was just brushed aside by Rayo and his guys. I assume that there was money passed or threats of murder.

Rubens: Were you transferred because they saw you as an organizer and a "shit disturber?"

Jenkins: Partially that. And Hart's Island for me, of course, was a tremendous improvement even though there were negatives about that as well. But I early set up alliances with the black prisoners who were fairly numerous in the jail, and once they got them organized, they were very tough. On Hart's Island, as distinct from Welfare Island's individual cells, we slept in dormitories with seventy or eighty men, and there was deliberate racial segregation. But blacks didn't resent this. It gave them more coherence or power.

Hart's Island was the main place for "Potter's Field" for New York City. So every day on the tugboats coming up the river, from Bellevue Hospital and the rest of the places, thirty or forty bodies would be brought up, and the prisoners had an assignment. They would bury them 300 in a grave and then throw lime over them and then start again. I said I was a political prisoner, number one, and I'm not going to do it. And I would not handle the stiffs on the boat, unloading them. They came in boxes; they were just dumped out of the boxes, and the boxes were used again.

So I was put in solitary for three days, and then I was brought out again, and I was asked again, and I said I wouldn't do it. So they assigned me then to--I hesitate to tell you--but they assigned me then to still births that were brought up from New York--I refused to do that--again I was put in solitary and taken out again.

By that time, there was some intervention from the outside on my behalf, both political and otherwise.

Rubens: That's what I wanted to ask you about--what was the Party doing to get you out, or were they making jail conditions and your jailing a cause. Were there others of you who had been in that demonstration?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. Nobody was assigned with me at Hart's Island.

Rubens: They remained at Welfare?

Jenkins: They remained at Welfare, but nobody came up. I made friends quickly up at Hart's Island. I met a Wobbly, Hugo Pushover, who had been in jail for five years.¹ He was a seaman who was in the hops strike in Oregon and had done five years in Centralia Prison there. He was a Wobbly, who had fought in the migrant camps, and he and I immediately were friends and made an alliance.

Rubens: Were you identified as a Communist?

Jenkins: Pretty much, and I identified myself pretty quickly. I think the ILD [International Labor Defense] was giving me two dollars a week in jail, which was not inconsiderable. I was a smoker, and it was accessible for other things, too--a little bribe money to the tugboat captains and the guys who worked on the tugboats to bring up food. One thing good about Hart's Island--they had an ice factory. They had a variety of other departments where the men could work.

I was then assigned to building a sea wall, which was outdoors, and black guys were generally doing the shovel work, and I joined them, and we became good friends, which stood me in good stead. There was a really impenetrable part of the jail, mostly waterfront gangsters, petty hoods, and also some of the drug addicts who were brought up. The drug addicts had to cold turkey when they came up; they would do nothing for them. They would jump in the ice cold water and try to swim over to City Island. They would either die in the swim, or they would make it to City Island. They just would be picked up and brought back.

It was interesting to watch the transformation of these guys as they came in--absolutely drugged out and wrung out by poverty, and in a matter of three weeks, they started to assume leadership in the jail. That portended really the kind of work of The Nation of Islam or Delancey Street would do. Under controlled situations, as barbarous as these were, these guys would return to life and become productive, so to speak. I knew many of them after I left jail who reverted back to the street almost immediately once they got out. Some would come and see me and ask for help and money.

Rubens: Who did you keep in touch with from the outside?

¹Wobbly: Member of Industrial Workers of the World.

Jenkins: Well, my mother would visit me in jail, and I had a girlfriend, Billie Borros, who came to see me.

Rubens: But in terms of being instructed by the Party or told to--

Jenkins: No, no.

Rubens: So was there any intervention? How did you finally get out?

Jenkins: I was convicted of three felonious assaults, which carried with them a sentence of three and one-half to five years, but the nature of the trial itself where they arrested photographers and newsmen at the courthouse--all the publicity, plus our lawyers, Joe Tauber and Eddie Kunst, helped out and the sentences were reduced.

Rubens: Were these ILD lawyers?

Jenkins: They were ILD, and later attorneys for the Hospital Institutional Workers' Union and a variety of other unions in New York. Tauber was a tough little guy, and when my bail was set at ten grand, he made a passionate plea for me--well, it was set at five, and the judge raised it to ten after he had pleaded.

I said, "For Christ's sake, keep quiet. If this goes on, I'll never get out of here." Kunst was a famous figure around New York after that, but this was early in his ILD days. In jail there were guys like Pushover, a seaman in New York, who was picked up in a whore's room by fly cops, they called them, who were out to get politicians. Because of his past record, he was sentenced to thirty-six months and was going crazy by the time I came in. A couple of others like that, and we had a kind of solidarity among ourselves, as well as the fact that there was a high degree of illiteracy in jail, and I was endlessly writing letters, or a guy would come to me with new plans for robberies when they got out and asked me what I thought of it--mostly fairly pathetic plans, although some of them were fairly clever, I must say. I think I was twenty, twenty-one then, so my knowledge of crime was fairly limited. But they were assuming my wisdom as a literate radical gave me the insight to crime as well. So I did get out of there, sometime, I think, in the summer of 1934.

Right across the river from Newburgh was a little town called Beacon, New York, where there was a camp called Camp Nitgedaiget, which means not to worry, let's have fun in Yiddish. I thought it was an Indian name at first. It was a huge camp, and when I came out of jail, the Party gave me a week up there to recuperate. Most of the recuperation was at a little place called Lenin's Rock where you and your girl would go and fuck.

So I'm one of the few living Communists, ex-Communists who fornicated under the shadow of Lenin's Rock. Al Richmond, who just died, worked in a store in the camp. He was editor of People's World for thirty years. He told me that the biggest single item was condoms. [laughter] Those are the little fancy bits of information we pass down.

Recreation Director in Harlem and Other Community Centers in New York City, 1935-1937

Jenkins: I went back to New York City and continued to be an unemployed organizer. The upstate district organizing did not start until '36. I continued really in New York steadily in the unemployed movement and went to work for the WPA. I got a job as a recreational teacher. It was one category of jobs that were wide open, and I went up to the 42nd Street Library and spent the week reading about organizational theory and practice. I was never a big athlete--but I liked athletics. The first job I got was at the Stryker's Lane Community Center, which was at 52nd Street and 10th Avenue in the heart of Hell's Kitchen. There I taught boxing and wrestling and was hired to coordinate organizational games, such as baseball, basketball. It was a tough, tough, tough neighborhood.

Rubens: What was the ethnic and class make-up of the community?

Jenkins: Irish, some Italian, a little pocket of blacks and all lived in constant warfare with each other. But there were some wonderful athletes, young guys. Their poverty was overwhelming, the drunkenness and grimness of what really is an equivalent of a massive Tenderloin area here in San Francisco. Our community center, in addition to offering a place for athletics, also offered hygiene instruction--teaching guys how to take care of themselves--exclusively all male--for some reason the poverty of girls was totally excluded from our center. While there was some work with girls in another part of the center in female activity, selling, things of that sort, athletics were for males.

And, of course, our teams used to play the waterfront ship teams that came in. There were a lot of the foreign ships that came into the port there--Scandinavians, et cetera, which had teams aboard, and we had teams made up at the community center. And we played rough gangs in for instance basketball games, which I refereed. I was one of the referees--I got an AAU [Athletic Association Union] card. Those games were games that you had to fight for your life in the showers afterwards if you made a bad

call. There were other problems, mass rapes of girls, and gang fights, et cetera, which were typical in New York City--and other cities of course--at the time.

Rubens: Was this a full-time job?

Father Divine's Mission

Jenkins: Well, I would go five days a week, but it allowed me to literally do unemployed work and Party work at the same time. During this time, Father Divine, who was a black, inspirational leader at his mission at about 56th or 57th, and thousands of blacks flocked to his temple--and this enraged sections of the Hell's Kitchen community. There were endless fights and setups where guys would catch each other from various sections.

I went up to the Divine Mission and became friends with some of the men there who were trying to play some role in bringing blacks and whites together in the neighborhood through the community center. It was not very successful, but there were some successes, and I met some blacks who played an important role in my later life as friends.

Rubens: Was this an important program for the Party? The period of the Popular Front had not formally begun, but was the Party quite conscious of trying to promote this kind of racial alliance?

Jenkins: Well, they were excited about it.

Rubens: And were you initiating this as opposed to being instructed?

Jenkins: Well, there was no Party in this area. This was the forbidden area almost. The church and temple groups would meet any invasion of the Left in this area with murderous opposition. This was also the place where there were a lot of longshoremen and teamsters who were in the ILA, in the Longshoremen's Union or the Teamsters Union.

Rubens: Just tell me one more time--where is Hell's Kitchen? I've never had a good picture of it.

Jenkins: It runs through about 48th to about 58th on the far West Side, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, West Street.

Rubens: So it's not literally backing up onto the Divine area? That was up in Harlem.

Jenkins: No, Divine came down from Harlem because there was a black community in this area. It may still be there, I think. I don't know, since that whole area has been so rebuilt.

Rubens: Divine was holding huge parades.

Jenkins: Well, not only that, but his followers marched in the May Day parade, I think, in '36 and '37. He and a big Cadillac or Rolls Royce with doves tied to the front of the car and thousands marching. So some of the guys I worked with on the waterfront--because I was doing Party work on the East River--black guys, went into the Divine Mission, paid their back debts, stopped drinking, stopped their promiscuous ways and were extraordinary.

Rubens: He was really effective--a precursor to the Nation of Islam.

Jenkins: The thing that he did as well was set up these cheap kitchens where people could come and eat for three and five cents a meal. And he reached into the heart of the old southern fundamentalists, the black community that migrated north.

It so happened a couple of years later Divine bought property up near Kingston, New York, and did have thousands of acres there where he planted food to bring into his missions, and I was the Party organizer in that area when his farm was established there. He had a march into all white Kingston out into this farm country, and it was an armed camp. With a handful of Party members and left-wingers I could mobilize, we did everything we could to subdue the local Klan reaction and the fury at the black penetration in this area.

I remember laying on a roof when he came down the main street--thousands of followers of Divine marching to this promised farm land. They made it too. The Klan, every reactionary Liberty League organization screaming about penetration of blacks into the area, was there. There was some black presence up there that worked in the brick yards along the Hudson, but there was almost no black community.

Strangely enough, towns like Newburgh now are dominated by black communities. I drove through there a year or two ago. It has become a vast slum all through the formerly pristine, revolutionary era white community.

Rubens: How long were you with the WPA?

Jenkins: Well, I went from Hell's Kitchen to the Central Jewish Institute at 84th and Lexington, and we started to organize recreational

teachers into the Teachers' Union. I still have my union card from that.

Rubens: We have to pull out some of these things later.

Jenkins: I had two jobs there. I think I was a rec leader and a librarian as well.

Rubens: You were organizing the recreational teachers into the union? Did that work? Were they accepted?

Jenkins: Oh, yes.

Rubens: The United Teachers was expanding then.

Jenkins: We got four or five hundred members. I think our dues were only fifty cents a month.

Rubens: Did you meet then and get to know some of those union people? I knew the Wortis family--Rose--were involved.

Jenkins: I knew her later when she was district leader of the Party. But I'm trying to think of the woman, Rose Russell, who was head of the Teachers Union before [Albert] Shanker--when they split the Teachers Union. Bella Dodd, I knew, who became a Party renegade who wrote one of these inflammatory, anti-Party books--nice woman at the time.

The German-American Bund and the Jewish Community

Jenkins: But also, being in the Central Jewish Institute put me--there was a big Jewish community there--on the edge of--well, it was a block away from a major German community in New York at 85th.

Rubens: Sure. That's where all those great restaurants are.

Jenkins: Now. There was a progressive German community there. There was a German Workers' club, but there was an increasing pro-Hitler, extremely nationalistic group that got stronger and stronger. The Bund opened up a headquarters on 85th with a big swastika--I guess it was '35, and some huge Jewish teamster leaped out of his truck and tore it down. The German Workers' Club appealed for a mass anti-Hitler demonstration, anti-Fascist demonstration in the neighborhood. About 3,000 Party members, Left Germans and young guys like me and seamen all arrived there.

We were assailed by people raining rocks down on us from the roofs, and the police attacked us and drove us--I guess we were about 84th, 83rd--up towards Lexington and 4th. We had a mass battle there. The city workers were tearing the street up. There were huge paving stones. A friend of mine, Barney Ellis, was caught by the police, and they were beating the shit out of him, and I picked up one of these paving stones and hit the cop in the back, which didn't do him much good, which didn't do me much good because I got arrested.

But again, the Jewish community was starting to respond to and did respond to the dangerous growth of the Bund in New York, and about that time, the Bund called a meeting in Madison Square Garden--turned out 25,000 people, and we were promptly released.

But at the same time I was involved in that, I was also involved in a Party unit that was concentrating on the ward--Puerto Rican [a shipping line] docks which had its piers on the East River. It was a huge local. I think it was Local 968, which never met, and we started to do work among the black stevedores there.

Rubens: It was an ILA local?

Jenkins: Yes. The work was led by this guy Barney Ellis, my friend. We made friends among the stevedores, and helped them set up a resting club, a longshore resting club at 127th Street and Harlem on top of a five-story slum. The rest of the places were either clubs or whorehouses. We would meet there once a week, and also somebody ran it, and there was an occasional gambling game.

Rubens: What's the makeup of the group of workers there?

Jenkins: Totally longshoremen from this group. All black. And the whole community was black except for us.

Rubens: How did they respond to you--these are all white leaders.

Jenkins: They responded well with the exception of the night that Joe Louis got beat by Max Schmelling. Your life wasn't worth two cents on the street. We were activists. There were some other whites. There was a Party bookstore that was at 135th Street. And Ben Davis's wife--Ben Davis was an important black Communist, who afterwards was elected to the city council. His wife was a beautifully serene woman who ran the Party bookstore. There was also the Schomberg Library at 135th. [Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture.]

And there was the Harlem Y [YMCA] where guys like Canada Lee and others were being trained for--well, it was a very vital drama group, and the Y played a big role in that.

Rubens: I don't know who Canada Lee was.

Jenkins: He was a black actor. What was that play he was in, the film? Cry the Beloved Country. He also played in a couple of roles as a prize fighter. And also about the same time as this--I think it was about '36--the black theater started to come into Harlem. They started off with a black Macbeth, and they did a black Mikado, and they did Mike Gold's play, God's Angry Man about John Brown, and suddenly, the old Lenox theater was revived at 131st and Lenox. Theater came to Harlem with a bang. Twenty-five cents and young actors like Canada Lee and others.

Rubens: And so when you were organizing this resting club up in this community, are you no longer working at the Jewish center?

Jenkins: That's what I got paid for.

The Communist Party and the Negro Question

Rubens: You must have had that job into '36 then?

Jenkins: Yes. Then we started to organize a section of the recreational workers in Harlem because a lot of the playgrounds were funded by WPA. And so we tried to integrate our work a great deal.

Rubens: Were you recruiting people into the Party at the same time? Did you get a few recruits--?

Jenkins: --a few recruits.

Rubens: Do you remember any in particular?

Jenkins: One guy who became the national vice president of the National Maritime Union, Frederick Smith, who played a great role in the early days in the National Maritime Union and in the progressive struggle in the Caribbean.

I was soapboxing in Harlem, too. I soapboxed with Angelo Herndon on one case. We were still fighting the Scottsboro Case, and I spoke on a number of occasions. I spoke with Ruby Bates who was one of the two women who were alleged to be the "victims" of the Scottsboro Boys.

I was totally enmeshed in the [Schomburg] black library for a while. In that function, there was a black woman who became my lover and who was an actress playing in Stevedore, which Eva Le Gallienne Theatre was presenting down on 14th Street. She would never introduce me to her parents. She was not ashamed of me, but she was kind of scared. I'd want to take her home in Harlem, and she wouldn't let me do that. And all of our love making was done under a heavy cloak of secrecy.

I was introduced to the black community. When the Harlem riots started--I think it was in '37--there was the incident on 125th Street in a department store--suddenly every plate glass window in Harlem was broken with a terrific revulsion against discrimination, combined with the fact that a great many of rent collectors in Harlem were Jews. The store was in 125th Street in Harlem which was the main shopping area in Harlem. There was an outpouring of anti-Semitism as well. It was the main shopping area which hired no black sales clerks. There were no black-owned businesses either.

The Party tried to play a role, though it was extremely difficult in the first few days. But we certainly played a role by our physical presence. And I was known as a soapboxer, and to some extent, helpful. Add to that fact that I knew a lot of the recreational workers by then, and some of the black seamen as well had come up to help. It was a period when the whole community was convulsed. The best you could do was stay out of the way for as long as you could.

But I early on started to read a lot about black history.

Rubens: Now isn't it at this point that the Party was taking a line in favor of black nationalism?

Jenkins: Well, they had a whole business about blacks being entitled to separate states in the South. There was a continuous line from Norfolk, Virginia and straight through the South that had a black majority--whose political power had been knocked out by artificial state lines.

Rubens: Do you remember this as being a big issue?

Jenkins: Well, I remember it. It was not a big issue. It was never a big issue in the black community except by Communist leadership. I raised these issues to those people who would listen, but they were very anxious for me to stop talking about it.

The whole theory, which was really a Stalinist concept which came out of his book on nationalism, was totally, I think, artificially imposed on the American Party. It was about that

time that I read [W. E. B.] Du Bois's book on black reconstruction, which was a milestone in my life. I started to know about Du Bois and a whole bunch of writers that published what they called Negro Caravan, who were the leading academic writers--James Weldon Johnson.

Rubens: I guess Richard Wright had published by then.

Jenkins: Wright had published his Native Son and before that another book of short stories. But by and large, the Negro Historical Society, I think it was Carter Woodson, that whole group--the Party was pushing their materials, as well. Early on they had been pushing Du Bois and, of course, [Herbert] Aptheker did three or four pamphlets, and then books, on Negro slavery, which were almost mandatory Party reading.

Rubens: Aptheker was in New York, isn't that right? Were you involved with him at all? Sure, it had to be a separate section that he was in.

Jenkins: Well, he was a top educational guy, up the hill. Years later, I met him. Of course, his daughter [Bettina] was a leader over here at Cal and down at Santa Cruz.

Rubens: Do you mind if I take one second and get something straight? When did you go to Kingston to do CIO organizing?

Jenkins: It was '37 really. It was with the formation of the CIO. I may have to check my dates, however, and clear it up for you. After that, after I was up in Newburgh, Kingston, Middletown, I went south to Norfolk.

Rubens: You were in Kingston and Newburgh after the Harlem riots?

Other Aspects of Harlem Life and Race Relations

Jenkins: Yes. There was one incident that was extraordinary in our relationship to the black community. At that time, there was an inn at the corner of 126th Street and Lenox Avenue called the Bella Rosa Inn. It was a tavern, a bar, which was one of many around that area, and the Garveyites organized a mass meeting outside of it on a huge platform and there was a huge crowd. [Followers of Marcus Garvey.]

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I was coming out of our resting club going down to the village where I lived, and I stopped on the edge of the crowd, and the speaker said, "You know why these white men come to Harlem?" He said, "Their white doctors tell them they have syphilis. They come up here to infect black women with their syphilis and their venereal diseases." I had just then bought their paper, The Black Worker, which was a nickel. I had given him a quarter, and he had given me no change.

He says, "Those black women ought to be driven out of Harlem, and those white men who come up here ought to be stoned." Then he pointed towards me. Well, I was the perfect picture of the youthful radical. I was huge for one thing. So I turned around, but there was nobody behind me. He was looking at me, and he continued to verbally attack me. I edged from the crowd; I was a block and one-half away from the subway at 125th, and I started to move fast; I started to run. A couple of the people in the crowd detached themselves and ran after me, but by the time I got to 125th, I was down in the subway. I went over that fuckin' turnstile as quick as I could. But that was not a typical occurrence.

The fact that I had soapboxed with Angelo Herndon and also had allies helped. The night of the Louis fight, there was no TV there of course, in most places, there were no radios, so hundreds of people were at the corner of 131st and Lenox at a little cigar store listening to the radio. At that moment Louis got knocked out, I had just gone to the corner to buy a pack of cigarettes, and they wouldn't let me out. The crowd just closed around me. Two guys who knew me from our resting club grabbed me and sort of carried me through. We went down to a place called the Lafayette Club, and I ducked off the street.

Sixty or seventy percent of the males in Harlem weren't working, or more, and the communities were being supported by black women who were domestics or whatever--it was rough.

I remember another instance where, after a rainy day, I accidentally splashed water on the stockings of two women who were standing on the corner. They started to curse me, and then as the male crowd started to gather, they said, "Okay, white boy, get out of here or you'll get killed." That was not typical either.

Also, there were only a few black cops up in this enormous community. And the white cops had a reputation for terrible brutality and part of that was throwing their night sticks very expertly. They would break somebody's kneecaps. One day coming down, I think it was 133rd Street, there was a big fight in which a cop had thrown it, and it was only again the fact that I was

known and immediately took the part of the wounded boy that I escaped, literally, with my life.

Of course, another phenomenon then was the gangs of kids who were totally out of control. There was no such thing as a latch key. There were just people sleeping in turns. One would have a night shift, and one would have day shift and sleeping space.

Of course, the sexual relations were complicated. As poor as I was, I had a certain amount of status and a certain amount of access to money. If you had a relationship with a black woman, a good deal of the motivation was economic because you'd take her out to dinner, buy food, etc. We'd have these block parties. On the way upstairs to our center, we got to know all the women in the building and the pimps. They were selling whiskey they called "King Kong" for ten cents a shot. It was inevitable, sooner or later that you were picked.

Rubens: Well, this was a recreational center. [laughter]

Jenkins: Well, also there was no bullshit about romance. Money was money and getting a place and getting a few dollars was extraordinary.

Rubens: Were people allowed to sleep overnight in that recreational center?

Jenkins: No. Well, there were countervailing influences. The Party was increasingly important in Harlem. They would run candidates; they had a national candidate for vice president, Angelo Herndon. There was a section of artists and actors who were increasingly important in Harlem. Many of the Party leaders like trade union leaders came out of this group originally, some of the public workers--although I don't know if it was also true of the teachers--but certainly, the public workers and some of the union leadership came out of this mix. They were very dynamic figures and terribly attractive. A lot of the white women either sought relationships with them, or guys sought relationships with the women.

There was no Party line really about the promiscuity or sleeping around, and if there had been, it would have been ignored anyway. But it wasn't that so much; it was just the physical fact of meeting blacks and whites who otherwise would have had no contact. Some in the Party opened that up.

The New Social Mix: Bohemianism and Education in Popular Front America

Rubens: Earlier when you were discussing your Bohemian experience, you mentioned a kind of hypocrisy that some of the Party leaders evidenced: promoting a line for marriage and stability, yet they were going uptown and picking up girls.

Jenkins: I was taken aback by the fact that the Party leaders would be so open about their sexuality, the only place I guess they were, although I'm sure there were other places as well. There were these delectable Bronx young Communists who wanted to give their all, and part of giving their all was giving it all.

It was equally true in other circumstances. I remember teaching classes to people who were really top flight commercial artists on Fifth Avenue; we held these classes in very elaborate apartments. The temptation, for especially a guy my age, to be attracted to the older women who suddenly became available to you, who not only wanted to be your friend but wanted to go to bed with you--it was a very hard thing to resist, I must say.

Rubens: What classes were you teaching?

Jenkins: In Marxism, and in all sorts of things that had to do with current events. They were short intensives--three or four sessions. So you suddenly were thrown into this furious mix of people. There was this gal who was Bernard Baruch's lover, Helen Lawrenson. She wrote Latins are Lousy Lovers. She married one of our guys in the seamen's union, Jack Lawrenson. There were numerous social gatherings where a whole group of very stylish and sophisticated women, attracted by the Left, mixed with a whole group of varied cultural backgrounds.

I knew a woman who was an editor of Mademoiselle. Suddenly, all these very talented women who had all sorts of other relationships discovered us, the seamen and working class, so to speak. We were both excited by it, and one woman who was the wife of Jed Harris, one of the most famous Broadway producers--why she would make herself available to a twenty-one year-old like myself had to be partially a kind of revulsion of the kind of life she was leading, in part, or maybe even dramatizing that or her unhappiness as a woman. It was a furious sexual bouting that she did.

Sometimes classes were held in the apartment of one woman who was the most famous commercial artist in New York. All her stuff was in the New York Times, all the big department stores, et cetera. When you went up to her place, it was unimaginably

fancy--beautiful furniture, extraordinary booze. They owned brownstones, three or four. Suddenly, you were a prophet about the unemployed movement--what was going on along the waterfront.

Rubens: So you were doing educational work, raising money, and then establishing these relationships? Were they sources of money?

Jenkins: Oh, yes, a tremendous source. And then a woman I got to know quite well, Myra Marini, who had been a wife of a doctor in Rutherford, New Jersey, had become a lover of William Carlos Williams and then joined the Party and was living with a friend of mine. You kept running into these contradictory relationships that only could have existed during this period.

In a sense, I guess, it's the way I met my first wife [Constance Dixon], who was the daughter of a famous painter [Maynard Dixon], and stepdaughter of a photographer [Dorothea Lange]. These Bohemians started to be recruited into the Left. I suppose I would never have met Edith [Arnstein] if it hadn't been for the Party. I was a waterfront worker, while she joined the Left herself out of the university--highly curious, this relationship. We met and stayed together in such a complicated period.

Rubens: Because of such different class backgrounds and social upbringing?

Jenkins: Exactly. I must say that I was more literate than most of the guys in the waterfront. Out of my own family, a great respect of my mother, great respect for literature and her early political advocacy. That was not typical of most working class families.

I have been reading recently a biography of Arthur Miller, who is the same age as I. He came out of Brooklyn, or the Bronx, loves New York, never lived anyplace else. His father was a literate worker and a conservative. His mother was a very dramatic woman. The Depression threw them into abject poverty. He had a tremendous desire to be a writer, which I never had. The influences in my life were political; his experiences among his own family led him to write the classic Death of a Salesman because all of his people are salesmen. They were all in retail; they were all going from small business back into selling, etc.

My mother's capacity to be a worker, when she was finally widowed--to open up a millinery store. That was the experience of her generation, that they could do this readily. Reading Miller's biography, everybody in the family seemed to have been small merchants, big merchants, successful, failures, made a buck, and the eccentrics that he met in his family finally led in a different direction, his desire for education and writing.

My desire was to get out in the world as quickly as possible.

The New Woman

Rubens: I'm struck with how much you were educating yourself. I was wondering also about this mix of people--these people from the upper classes that encouraged you even more. That developed your taste in art and your appreciation for the theater.

Jenkins: I also must say that the women that I met were enormously helpful. I had a lover, who was about twelve years older than I was, who was an extraordinary woman, very smart. She, as I remember, was in charge of public relations for something like Montgomery Ward for the whole East Coast, an energetic woman. And we remained friends for years and years afterwards. I moved her furniture. I was getting about three bucks a day working for her, and at the end of the day, she seduced me with a kind of energy that caused me almost to run out of the place. Then she lured me back in and promised not to tear me limb from limb. She was an extraordinary lady.

Then even living in this collective with Gittel and Muriel Keiker and then Consie and Billie Borros--they were all of a piece in terms of their drives as intellectuals, as creative people.

Rubens: This was your university?

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: And then the formal Party, too, would you say?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. I went to the Workers' School at night whenever I could. I took a class from Morris Schappes, who edited Jewish Currents, who had been an English teacher at CCNY [City College of New York], a class in English literature of seventeenth, eighteenth century poetry. Also, in a way, it was where I learned to know about the Jewish background because I surely didn't learn it from my own family.

So even though the fight for equality of women took years later to be expressed most formidably, and formally, in the early days in the Party, in the thirties, there were an extraordinary group of women that were in leadership. They were in the unions, especially the garment trades. But particularly among the

Russian-Jewish women, there was a big declaration of their own freedom and their own leadership, in all aspects of life.

The whole thing was an extraordinary phenomenon. And, of course, what was happening too was that all these young people out of Bronx and Brooklyn and Queens were flocking to the village for the life experiences. Their intellectual and emotional availability was just staggering. Many of them, of course, went on. It was a brief invasion from which they receded after a while.

My own family was attracted to them. My brother, who was going to medical school and was interning, followed me into the village. It was an eye-opener to him to a certain kind of life.

Rubens: Did he actually join the Party, because of you?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. He was in for quite a few years. I don't know if it was because of me. He earlier was a radical. It was hampered by his years of medical education. He stayed in the Party at least until the mid-sixties because he was a doctor to [Robert] Bob Thompson's kids in Queens; he was the Party leader who got beat up so badly when he was in jail under the Smith Act; and the FBI was constantly coming down and asking about him. He was increasingly critical of the Party during these years.

Rubens: Do you remember when that WPA job came to an end? Is that what led to--?

Jenkins: I went in and out of it. First of all, it supported me really from about '35 to about '37. I worked at three community centers, Hudson Lane, Strykers' Lane, and then Central Jewish Institute. It was a godsend. I made about twenty-six bucks a week. Consie, my first wife, got on a Writers' Project and made an equal amount of money after a while.

Rubens: Did you ever consider going to Spain in those years, '36-'37?

Jenkins: I had only a faint impulse to go. I did offer myself, but the Party turned me down. The guy who was in charge of the Party in upstate New York, Stein--I can't remember his first name--who afterwards became a terrible renegade and thief, left to go to Spain. The Party had given him permission to go, but they also felt they were diluting their ranks too much. I accepted the upstate position fairly agreeably. I was a little apprehensive about Spain.

First of all, my first daughter was just born, Becky. I didn't fancy myself particularly as a soldier. I just didn't;

yet the best soldiers, in a sense, were the guys out of the seamens' ranks.

Rubens: How long were you in Kingston, Newburgh?

Jenkins: About a year.

Rubens: How long were you in the South?

Jenkins: About a year and a half.

Rubens: You know, it's interesting. I feel that I understand what that period must have been, to be young and to have the world so in turmoil and to feel that there was something that you could really do to change the world. And at the same time, it all just heightens everything, of course, sexually. For me that's what the sixties were like. I think they are very analogous periods.

Jenkins: But we never went through that shit that the Civil Rights movement did in the sixties where they were demanding that the women play a secondary role. Women were really very important figures in our movement. Maybe they didn't get recognition in the Party, although they did to some extent. But they were very dominant figures in all of our lives. The men were very humble, especially the seamen--guys who were big and strong and tough and came out of very impoverished backgrounds, especially in comparison to how illuminated their lives became. They were exposed to important thinkers. A lot of the seamen became leaders of the NMU, and the other seamen unions that were Party influenced, many of them Jewish. The women were so extraordinarily feeling and caring and sexually liberated. These guys mostly only had whorehouse or very limited experiences. Suddenly these men had more relationships with women. It had some negatives if you were too free with them, and if you were too focused on sex, then you in some way were faulted.

Guys like Blackie Myers, vice president of the NMU and a national committeeman of the Party, who met Beth Myers, who tragically got very sick. I thought she was wonderful. There were others. Suddenly, their whole lives were being changed by these women who were excited by these guys, too. Most of them came from academic and petty bourgeois backgrounds. Suddenly, these big tattooed men slammed into their lives. The women were bright and courageous and ready to work for a cause.

A lot of the relationships didn't work out once the movement started to deteriorate or once the circumstances changed.

On Thursday, January 21, 1988 . . . Dave Jenkins has a Birthday Party!

Master of Ceremonies
Jimmy Herman

A Proclamation for Dave
Sung by A. Scott Beach

A Violin Duet
Pablo Jenkins and Joe Alioto

Mayor's Tribute
Art Agnos

Presentation
Clint Reilly

Birthday Remarks
Hadley Rolf

Flamenco Ensemble
Guitarists
Dave Jenkins, Jr., Federico Mejia, David Brewer
Ensemble
Kati Mejia, Dale Evje, Jane Grossenbacher,
Ernesto Hernandez, Christina Seeger, Kristen Wetterhahn

A Performance Gift
Margaret Jenkins and Rinde Eckert

A Surprise
David Malis and Ann Panagulias

Dancing
Music by the Vernon Alley Quartet

A Birthday (Drinking) Song

Music: Giuseppe Verdi
Lyrics: Stephanie Salter

Everyone: Hey Dave!
It's your birthday, your birthday.
Hey Dave!
And we've come tonight to tell you just how much
we lo-ove you.

Hey Dave!
It's your birthday, your birthday!
Hey Dave!
No one else in town could get a group like this
to sing in tune.

Ann: Dave's not the kind of man you'd want to bore
with speeches.

David: Dave's not the kind of man you'd want to give a
plaque.

Ann: To honor him you'd need a mind like Nietzsche's

David: With just the right amount of early Kerouac.

Everyone: Hey Dave!
It's your birthday, your birthday.
Hey Dave!
And we've come tonight to tell you just how much
we lo-ove you.

Hey Dave!
It's your birthday, your birthday.
Hey Dave!
No one else in town could get a group like this
to sing in tune.

No! No!
Only you inspire us all to go, "Oh! Oh!"
Happy Birthday David and . . . BRAVO!

Special Thanks to:

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The Jenkins Family
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McCune Audio-Visual
Caryl Mezey (Slide Show)
Carlo Middione
Pat Mitchell (Piano courtesy of Russell Kassman, Inc.)
Ed Moose
Peter Necarsulmer
Mary O'Shea (Flowers)
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pinsky
Catherine Porter
Sandra Powell
Clint Reilly
Susie Roff
Stephanie Salter
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The Students and Staff of the California Culinary Academy

Veteran S.F. Labor
Organizer to Receive
Honorary Doctorate

By Michael McCabe
Chronicle Staff Writer

David Jenkins, a veteran labor organizer and one of San Francisco's most durable underground legends, will receive an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree today from San Francisco State University.

The award is due to be bestowed at the university's commencement ceremonies this afternoon at Cox Stadium on campus.

"I feel wonderful about it," said Jenkins, who is 78. "My wife, Edith, got a master's degree there in English and was head of the poetry workshop there. This is my first and only honorary degree. I worked in labor education all my life but only attended school through the eighth grade."

He is best known for his work as a builder of bridges between labor and academia. During the 1940s, Jenkins almost single-handedly pushed for making education available to workers. He was a leader of the San Francisco California Labor School, a forerunner of California's community colleges and programs in extended education.

The school, under Jenkins' leadership, enrolled 56,000 students in classes that ranged the entire academic spectrum — from philosophy to architecture to literature — and were offered at hours that enabled workers to attend. Frank Lloyd Wright was an occasional guest lecturer.

"His accomplishments during a long and distinguished career in labor, education and politics approach legend in San Francisco, creating an indelible imprint on the character and quality of education in the city," said San Francisco State President Robert A. Corri-

gan.

Born in New York but a San Franciscan most of his life, Jenkins dropped out of school at age 15 to work with his mother, who closed her millinery shop to open a soup kitchen for workers involved in a citywide strike in Passaic, N.J.

As the 1930s ended, Jenkins was made educational director of the National Maritime Union in New York. This became a life commitment to continuing education. His first success was an agreement with shipowners to replace the dime-store novels on shelves of ships' forecastles with libraries of history and literature.

He shipped out with Marine Cooks and Stewards, working in steamy galleys of countless ships all over the world. In 1939, he began shipping out of San Francisco.

He was a significant force within the organized labor movement and politics in the San Francisco area for more than 50 years. He moved among several unions to fight efforts during the McCarthy era to break unions and discredit labor leaders.

Jenkins also organized the defense committee to fight the federal government's efforts to deport the founding president of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Harry Bridges, a fight that was carried to the Supreme Court.

Jenkins, who was recently hospitalized for a blood infection, said yesterday he is "on the mend" after a tour around San Francisco to "remind me why I love this city so much."

III HARRY BRIDGES: LABOR LEADER AND FRIEND

[Interview 4: January 13, 1988] ##

Rubens: Today you told me you wanted to talk about Harry [Bridges] and Louis [Goldblatt]. So we'll skip some intervening years for now.

Jenkins: I wanted to talk a little bit about Harry, but I'd like to say something about my relationship with the union and Harry. It begins at this time, at a distance and later becoming more personal.

First Meeting in New York, 1935

Jenkins: I first met Harry Bridges in 1935. I was then assigned to the waterfront by the waterfront section of the Communist Party in New York City. I had never been a working longshoreman, and my familiarity with the actual work aspects of it were very dim indeed. Most of the people that I worked with in this work were either seamen or uptown white collar industrial workers who had never worked as longshoremen themselves.

I had been on this assignment for a couple of years on and off when the 1934 Strike was heralded in the newspapers and we were informed of the events in the Communist party. It was, of course, the first major strike in the Depression years led by a group that were avowed Left on the one hand, and the star of that whole performance was Bridges, ex-seaman, longshoreman, who was identified certainly as a Socialist and privately among ourselves that he was probably a Communist.

He was certainly close to the Communist party. As a matter of fact, the secretary of the Communist party in California, Sam Darcy, was one of the architects of the strike.

Besides the publicity the strike got in the Daily Worker and other progressive journals, the press in New York was full of

stories and pictures of Bridges. The explosion into a general strike was the acknowledgement that the American working class was capable of taking things into their own hands and moving in the direction of revolution and social change on a huge scale. It was an enormous shot in the arm to all of us who were around and starting to understand the American labor movement.

Up to that time, a general strike in textile had failed badly. That had been broken all over the East Coast. Bitter strikes in a few places had ended without any successful conclusion. Suddenly, to have the whole West Coast, teamsters, longshoremen, and others give leadership to this splendid, shining new struggle that ended victoriously in the main, was exhilarating.

The AFL [American Federation of Labor] through William Green was still against an American "dole" as he characterized it. He said American workers were too proud to accept unemployment welfare. He was only a step behind Herbert Hoover calling for men to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

While not being for selling apples, it was close to it. We generally regarded him--I'm sure wrongly--in our total condemnation of him as a weak sister and hopeless tool of capitalism.

No other labor figures at the time compared to Bridges' courage and dramatic call to the whole country. The fact that he was an Australian and really part of the waterfront tradition was an additional factor. Bridges came to New York in 1935 after the victorious strike on the West Coast, and I was one of many to distribute thousands of leaflets for a planned meeting at Madison Square Garden.

When Bridges did arrive in New York, I had an opportunity to meet him with a group of other reds or guys that were working on the waterfront. We exchanged not ideas with him but listened worshipfully, almost, at this extraordinary figure. He was a slim, long-nosed charismatic guy.

Rubens: You said you had a private meeting with him. Does that mean that a group of party guys who were organizing the--?

Jenkins: Yes. He both had the commonness that endeared him, his nose-picking, his recommending People's World on the West Coast as a great paper and a variety of other things that openly identified him with the Communist party--in our minds at least--and his independence as well. This was no party puppet.

He was fully a man influenced by his background in the Australian movement which was largely an autonomous movement.

He had been a Wobbly, we discovered. His idea of one big union or the idea of unions taking over society was something that was close to his own thinking. Also, the democracy of the union floor--the regular meetings, the one-year elections.

Anyway, a meeting was held in Madison Square Garden. About 5000 longshoremen and other people showed up. He made a dramatic speech and, of course, sent waves all through New York City. Joe Ryan in the ILA, the AFL bureaucracy, George Meany, who had been head of the building trades in New York, as well as the Hearst Press leveled ominous charges against this "illegal" Australian.

I would say that Bridges, particularly in the movement of that period, was adored by the New York Left--garment workers, intellectuals, writers. He lent himself really to the legend and myth-making qualities of the time; he was the first genuinely working-class leader emerging outside of William Foster (whose reputation had been forged in the 1919 steel strike).

By the middle of '37, I had been hired as an organizer for the CIO Maritime Committee, which Bridges headed.

Incidentally, it was at that time also that I met Nancy Feinstein, who afterwards married Bridges. She was a dancer with Martha Graham's group, and one of the women who lived in our collective on Bethune Street, Geraldine Shandros, was from Chicago as part of the commune and a Graham dancer. Shandros's lover was a man named Hoy Haddock, who was the president of the ACA [American Communication Association] and one of the officials on the Maritime Commission.

Haddock, afterwards, became an anti-Communist, but he and Shandros had a long affair, and he promoted her to the leadership of the ACA. Shandros was an extremely active woman sexually. She went from Haddock to being a lover of Gregory Dixon, who was the first cousin of my then lover, Consie Dixon, who became my wife. Gregory was a cartoonist for Stars and Stripes in Europe. He was killed in Europe.

Nancy, I think, started to become involved with Bridges in the late thirties, and it was an open love affair between them. She left her husband. There is a hilarious story about her and Katie Popper in the New Yorker. When they met Bridges in the New Yorker Hotel, and Bridges knowing the FBI was in the next room--between the two of them, Katie Popper and Nancy, and Harry did a series of "mimes" which implied their sexual involvement

with each other, all in sort of innuendo language which was faithfully picked up by the FBI. Bridges had invited a reporter and writer from the New Yorker to be present while this was going on. The New Yorker then ran a very funny and very good article on the set-up of the attempt to trap Bridges.¹

I got to know Nancy fairly well before she finally came out to the West Coast and married Bridges and they bought a house not too far from where we are presently living. We played a role in her life and she in ours.

Maritime Organizing, Norfolk, Virginia, 1937

Jenkins: Anyway, I then met Bridges again in 1937 when he came to Norfolk, Virginia, where I was in charge of maritime work, working with the Longshoremen's Union, ILA, exclusively a black union.

The ILA was notorious as a gangster-dominated union in New York and the white ports of Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston. From about Baltimore down, it became a black union. Longshoremen in all the major ports from Baltimore down, afterwards in Philadelphia too, were black. It was a strange marriage between the union of 30,000 blacks in the South reaching all the way into Louisiana and Texas and Mississippi on the one hand and this white, mafia-dominated union in New York.

Rubens: There were three black international vice presidents of the ILA?

Jenkins: Yes. So I worked with them as well, of course, worked with the seamen in the port of Norfolk. Bridges spent a couple of days with us. We called a meeting of all the black presidents of locals and most of them came. Everybody was curious about it. He spoke about the conditions on the West Coast and the hiring hall. Again, as I remember, he carried with him a copy of the People's World which he recommended to everybody as an answer to getting decent news. He made no secret of his avowed internationalist points of view and generally made a good impression and also brought with him a figure, B. B. Jones, who was a longshoreman on the West Coast who was in charge of working with the Longshoremen's Union up and down the East Coast on behalf of the CIO Maritime Committee.

¹New Yorker, October 11, 1941.

We weren't trying to set up a rival union to the ILA though our tactics were somewhat obscure to us and others. We were almost working as a faction attempting to establish progressive sectors of the ILA who would fight for inter-coast cooperation and against the gangsters on the East Coast.

Actually, some time in '37, Bridges and the other leaders in the union did meet with the ILA East Coast in an attempt to set up a unified leadership of both coasts which blew up for a variety of reasons that I think are obvious. One, the total domination of New York City of the racketeer element in the union and the fact that Murder, Inc. dominated the Brooklyn locals.

Mob presence was less heavy in ports like Philadelphia but it was still present. What unity would have meant is hard to think of--the left-wing union on the West Coast and the strange conglomerate on the East Coast. The black leadership was not going to break with the ILA. They had autonomy in the ILA; it was the only union that gave them leadership. Leadership was getting decent pay and prestige in their own communities, and it was a source of jobs for the blacks. So we had nothing really to offer them except struggle, and it was a little too early for that.

Anyway Bridges was equally impressive in Norfolk though it was never clear to me what the line was. B. B. Jones, whom I got to know, was a totally sincere and dedicated man who was quite crazy in many ways. In ports in North Carolina and others where I went with him, he was extremely brave, particularly in the face of the Jim Crow society.

Rubens: He was white?

Jenkins: He was white. He was always threatening to quit. He finally did, thank God, because he was a pain in the ass, and went back to the West Coast and became a longshoreman and continued a rather interesting role in the ILWU. He recently died, but he was an avowed Communist. I think his wife at the time, Roberta Jones, who advised Edith not to marry me when I came out from the West Coast, left him. In many ways he was a man with great courage and a lot of working-class experience, but he was also so rigid in personality and so extreme. Only during a situation of great conflict like a strike is that kind of authoritarian personality most useful. Otherwise it is an interference.

Incidentally, that kind of personality as Jones' you'd find over and over again among seamen and longshoremen leaders--a talent for leadership, and courage. During a strike situation or during a situation of extreme pressure, they were great, but

under the normal situation of building leadership--the patience and insight to build an organization, they had little of that.

Rubens: This personality profile seems especially apt when contrasted with someone like Harry Bridges.

Jenkins: Bridges had the capacity for administration, had the capacity of drawing people to him and understanding that his quality of leadership was terribly important. He handled it quite well, I must say. He was a myth maker--the waterfront was full of stories about him. He had gotten a bad break from Alice, his first wife, who was a drunk. Money wasn't important to him.

On the West Coast, 1939: The Beginning of a Long-Term Relationship

Jenkins: Anyway, I again met Bridges in '39 when I came to the West Coast, partially because of the work I did but partially because of my wife, Edith. My wife Edith was best friends with a woman named Dodie Resner who was the wife of the attorney Herbert Resner, who was part of the law firm that represented the ILWU. Bridges lived in their house, and we would both be invited for dinner there. Dodie, by the way, had been Goldblatt's first wife.

Bridges was friendly to me, but I think aware of the fact of my limited experience in the industry and certainly limited experience on the West Coast. I'm sure I didn't ask his permission to come out here. I had the impression he wondered, what the hell are you doing out here?

Shortly after I came, oh about seven or eight months after I arrived on the West Coast, I went to work in Labor's Non-Partisan League, which was the instrument that helped elect Sheridan Downey to the U. S. Senate, as well as Culbert Olson as governor under the slogan "Free Tom Mooney," and King, Ramsay, Conner.¹

¹Three men, Earl King, Earnest G. Ramsay, and Frank Conner were defendants in what was known as the Shipboard Murder Case. These three members of the Marine Firemen, Oilers, Watertenders and Wipers Association (MFOW) were tried for the murder of their supervisor over a three-month period in a trial that coincided with the 1936-37 West Coast Maritime Strike. The men were convicted of second degree murder, but a series of legal battles ensued, claiming the three had been framed and the jury tampered with. Culbert Olson was elected in 1939, and freed Tom Mooney--who had been in jail (along with Warren Billings) since 1916 for allegedly setting off a bomb during a war preparedness parade. While

Labor's Non-Partisan League was in the same office where Bridges had the headquarters for the ILWU, and for the CIO. It was also where I got to be fairly intimate with Lou Goldblatt--other people, Jay Sauer (West Coast president of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific), Jim [James] San Jule, a leader in the cooperative movement, other longshoremen out of Local 10.

And then I became legislative director of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, which was a consortium of all the maritime, seafaring, and waterfront unions, and the ILWU with the exception of the Sailor's Union of the Pacific. There I would run into Bridges, but again on a level which was certainly secondary. Even in my social contacts with Bridges, if I expressed a point of view that was independent of Harry's point of view, he was either disdainful of or somewhat contentious about my experience.

However, we were friends in a general way, and I then became legislative director of the CIO Council. All the offices were together at 595 Market. ILWU, CIO Council. There again I ran into a guy named Merv [Mervyn] Rathborne, who was the head of the CIO, who was formerly out of the ACA in New York where I knew him originally. It was unclear to me why he had given up the national presidency of the ACA to come out for the San Francisco CIO Council. Of course the membership of the CIO was infinitely greater than the ACA which was a relatively small union of radio operators aboard the ships. (They did organize Western Union in New York.) But it was a small union. However, it is my opinion that Rathborne, who finally testified as an informer against Bridges in the last Bridges trial, had been planted as an FBI agent. He was a charming and urbane man.

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Rathborne in his own terms was a fairly dramatic figure. He was probably, after Goldblatt, the third best known labor figure in the West. He was in the Party. I think at that time I started to take up the task of collecting the Party dues of guys like Rathborne and the monthly contributions of Bridges and Goldblatt who were not in a specific group but were considered to be Party sympathizers.

Mooney was in prison, the case became entangled in the federal government's first attempt to deport Harry Bridges. See: The Shipboard Murder Case: Labor, Radicalism and Earl Warren, 1936-1941. Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.

Rubens: Well, Goldblatt had been in the Party. He talks about that in his oral history,¹ although he drops the story during his ascendance to leadership in the ILWU.

Jenkins: So I knew what the relationships of almost all the various offices to the Party were. It didn't necessarily indicate that they were in the Party, but the pressure was such that people would make a monthly contribution. So for years I played that role of collecting money.

Bridges Family Life and its Disintegration, 1950s

Jenkins: Anyway, Bridges and I were friends without really ever being intimates. It is true, however, when he finally brought Nancy Feinstein out and they married, since Nancy and I had become good friends, I started to be involved in their household. They lived a few blocks from us. Some evenings we shared dinners. Our daughters, Margy and Julie, were inseparable. I'd drive Bridges to work. Nancy was a vivacious and flirtatious woman, and her relationship with Bridges was one that she was terribly proud of. She got the accolades of the whole Left. She was the "first lady" for the Left in the San Francisco area.

She didn't compete, of course, with people like Oleta O'Connor Yates and Louise Lambert Todd and people like that, but in the general social ferment of the Left, Nancy was first among the first.

Rubens: She was attractive, witty, politically correct?

Jenkins: Attractive, witty, sexy, great story teller, and also she brought a great deal of money into Harry's life. Her own family was out of Chicago who were successful middle-class manufacturers. Her sister was married to a rich merchandiser in New York, adored Bridges and terribly proud of Nancy making good.

Rubens: She was Jewish?

¹Louis Goldblatt, Working Class Leaders in the ILWU, 1935-1977, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1980. In two volumes.

Jenkins: Yes. Her family helped them buy a house; they financed Nancy with full-time help; they helped Nancy with facilitating Harry's life here in a very generous way.

Rubens: Harry didn't mind any of this?

Jenkins: No. Harry, I think, was only getting a hundred bucks a week, and this family help was extremely welcome, and I'm sure also the fact that there was such total approval by Nancy's family. As a matter of fact, when I used to go to Chicago and New York, but primarily Chicago, I used to stay with them, especially during the Bridges defense days. I'd stay at their house, and they were always extraordinarily cordial and helpful about money raising. I met a lot of people through them, and they played a big part in Harry's life.

Significantly about Harry, even at that time, there were almost no working-class friends who came to his house. People who were at his house were the Resners whom he formerly lived with, his lawyers, George Anderson, Richard Gladstein, the psychiatrist Lawrence (Lawrie) Levitin, the private detective Hal Lipset.

However, Harry would come to left-wing moneyraising parties and would occasionally go to jazz bars where fairly famous musicians entertained.

Rubens: Were he and Louie friends at that point?

Jenkins: Very occasionally. Nancy didn't like Terry Goldblatt, and I don't ever remember them being at an event there. Harry's appetites were the races which he loved as an Australian, and whatever Harry's former relationships with women were, when he was married to Nancy, he was to my knowledge a totally monogamous husband.

Rubens: Just to anchor this discussion in time, let's mention some dates.

Jenkins: I guess about '40. About '42, I think.

Nancy had her first baby in New York and brought the baby out here. Then Robbie was born. Robbie is the same age as Rachel. Robbie and Rachel and Debbie Gordon all played together. It's later than that. It's forty years ago, and it's '48. This was maybe after the war.

Meanwhile, I had become head of the California Labor School. Bridges was never a particular advocate of labor education. He felt that labor education started on the union floor in the

membership meetings, and the stewards' councils. He opposed the Party tradition of centralized educations. He never was a particular supporter of the Labor School.

The big break with that was when, I think, Louie persuaded him to bring thirteen Hawaiian leadership people (rank and filers) to the school in 1945, and Harry participated in that and was interested. But he was rarely interested in any of the cultural events of the school. In many ways, Harry's interests culturally were extremely pedestrian. Harry's idea of a Saturday night at home was Lawrence Welk. However, he was interested in jazz. Bunk Johnson, the piano player, had played at the CIO Council. I would go with him occasionally to hear black jazz pianists, particularly when the heat was on. That he liked and understood. We had a CIO center in the basement of the CIO building at 150 Golden Gate Avenue. Billie Holliday came one time. It became a jazz club after the Second World War.

Rubens: Did his wife maintain her interest in dance?

Jenkins: Yes. She continued that. She and I saw not an extraordinary lot of each other, but we were very good friends. She would confide. Harry shared all his defeats with her but never his victories. And tragically Harry, who had not been able to drink for many years because of a stomach ulcer, was successfully operated on by Leon Goldman, father of Dianne Feinstein.

Gradually he began to drink again, and coming home at night after a day in the office made life miserable by at first only drinking beer, but being in a sort of semi-alcoholic state where his worst characteristics would be evident--grabbing Nancy, the kind of obscenities that drove Nancy crazy.

Rubens: That's why I asked you about was she frustrated also by his not being interested in other cultural or art forms. She had been a dancer and part of a whole intellectual crowd that you were a part of. Surely that must have grated on her.

Jenkins: Well, she had a lot to do. She had two kids. She had Bridges who was a complicated man to live with, extremely sweet with his kids but then his growing alcoholism as he recovered from his stomach ulcer made life difficult. Every night contending with that was a problem for her. She herself was not a heavy drinker but a constant drinker, and Harry's propensity for that increased hers. She became a boozer.

She was also a woman who came from a somewhat Bohemian background as a dancer and living in the village and being the Golden Girl in this Jewish family; she was their star. She was

the youngest, and she had had a lot of experience with men. She was very seriously tempted to accept the glare of publicity. Her having an affair would have been literally impossible. She probably needed one desperately. When she finally did break with Harry, it was around circumstances of an acceptable political guy helping around the house, Julian Hicks, whom I introduced her to, who finally helped to break up their marriage. Harry wasn't abusive to her ever, but he was silly--silly drunkenness which was never real drunkenness. It was three or four beers.

Alcohol and Other Diversions

Jenkins: He could get back on track when he was drinking; it wasn't that he was out of control, but he was loose as a goose. That persisted for a long time until years later when his drinking really got serious. When he was out of control, we would see that he got to Kaiser, got dried out for a week, and then came back to work. He had, I guess, literally no capacity to drink, and yet he loved to drink and he would say so openly. He loved the relaxation, and he couldn't wait to get out of the office at noon to have a couple of shots. He couldn't wait to get out of the office at night to drink.

The other thing is that in the atmosphere of the union it was permissible to drink. There was none of the Puritan Jewish tradition of the fur workers or the United Electrical Workers or the other Left unions. Longshoremen drank. Bulcke, the vice president once told me he figured he had thirty-eight shots a day for years until he got diabetes and they told him to stop.

Louis was a fairly steady drinker. Guys were always signing on and off drinking. It was acceptable.

Rubens: Part of the culture.

Jenkins: Part of the culture. And Harry, strangely enough, regarding the woman thing--at union conventions occasionally, after the convention, it was part of the ordinary after-dinner routine to have a stag party. Harry would never organize it, but he would roar with laughter. Some local madam would bring half a dozen girls into a stag or only-men party, and the guys would make sexual jackasses out of some naked women who would get up and rub their butt on some guy's bald head. Everybody would roll with laughter. I never would go to them. One, because I wasn't interested, and two, it would have been personal suicide to go to something like that. Edith would have killed me.

But this was a common longshore diversion. This was what was fun. It was all right, in some senses innocuous, but in other senses, it was a terrible reflection on the women leadership that didn't exist in the union particularly. But they made enormous sacrifices during strikes. Women's auxiliaries. It was a strange dichotomy in a progressive union. On the one hand, solemnly going on record for equal wages and trying to wipe out the discriminatory wage in warehouse.

It was finally stopped, but I can remember the party organizer, a guy named Harry Jackson, who came out of a warehouse, one of the great figures in the old days, organizer down South, going to the thing with glee. When he was in Alabama, he used to occasionally put on his expenses, "Two dollars for a lady; man did not live by bread alone." This was waterfront humor, and I guess it expressed the historic isolation and the dreariness of men's lives.

The other problem of the union was that guys like Bridges and the longshore leadership who had married women out of their own experience and class, once they became leaders, suddenly they were confronted with a whole new group of women who were exciting politically or attractive, who were not the mothers of their children and hadn't gone through all that shit. We endlessly had problems of men who had affairs with their office secretaries, the women who worked in the offices. Many of them, of course, were not ever promiscuous, but they did attract women who suddenly met these working-class guys who were very bright and physically interesting.

Bulcke broke up with his wife, and [Henry] Schmidt broke up with his wife. [Bob] Robertson married a very attractive Jewish woman who came out of Chicago; he had been an organizer there. Even Bridges cashed in, as it were, before his marriage to Nancy, on this fluidity. He would take out people like Stella Adler, others in the Hollywood community and other star-like figures. In the Left community, the women were excited by Bridges.

Rubens: Edith was friends with Louie, is that right, from college?

Jenkins: Not only that, she was involved in the '34 strike.

Rubens: The only rumor I have heard about Harry was his affair with Katherine Graham from the Washington Post.

Jenkins: She was a friend of Edith's father, Lawrence Arnstein.

Rubens: Graham? I didn't know she was Jewish.

Jenkins: Yes, well, her father was Eugene Meyer. Meyer and Edith's father were friends. When Edith was a girl at Columbia, she visited them in Washington. So when Katherine Graham came out here after the '34 Strike, well, Harry was perfectly capable of that kind of thing, but once he was married, he was not a big ladies man. He had had this terrible first marriage to Alice, whom he had met in Coos Bay, Oregon, who did a lot of sleeping around and was quite crazy and who testified against Bridges in the first trial for the FBI.

Bridges' Divorce: Its Effect on His Relationship with David and Edith Jenkins, 1954-1955

Rubens: You had been portraying Harry's disintegration of his relationship with Nancy, his drinking.

Jenkins: When he discovered that she was having an affair with Julian Hicks, Bridges was beside himself. He staked it out like he was a CIA agent--would go into the basement of their house and listen to them through the basement there for months. He finally said, "Well, I don't mind her having a roll in the hay, but she wants to leave me for him." It was absolutely incredible to him. The thing that showed itself was that he had this kind of enormous vanity. He was totally perplexed why anybody would want to leave him. He had no inner vision of what his relationship in many ways was to Nancy.

Rubens: Are you and he friends at this point? Are you a confidant?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. He was also furious at me at times because I introduced her to Hicks. He said, "Well, why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Well, first of all, I didn't know. And secondly, if you had had an affair with someone, I wouldn't have told Nancy." I'm not in the business of informing husbands and wives about their infidelities. He was also at this point very reliant on Edith. Finally, when he was really at his worst, when he was having Nancy followed in New York and tried to wreck the small printing business they wanted to start--calling on anybody who would be his ally--Edith finally confronted him and said he'd kill his children if he didn't stop.

Some of the things he was doing and the allies he was making were terrible.

Rubens: I remember you saying, a long time ago he'd come over here and just lie on the couch and drink for hours on end.

Jenkins: Well, he was really a man on the verge of a major breakdown.

Rubens: And he turned to you, is that right?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. We were terribly intimate during this period. Then shortly afterwards when he finally accepted the fact of their breakup and its tragic aftermath (Nancy became an alcoholic), our Washington D.C. representative, Charlie [Charles] Velson, would call me and say, "You've just got to get him to stop. He's using people that are absolutely impermissible to use."

Earlier, when I finally left the Labor School, Lou offered me the directorship of the Bridges Defense Committee. Of course, Bridges agreed to that.

Rubens: Lou offered--you went directly to the defense? I thought you went to the Wallace campaign. They were probably overlapping.

Jenkins: Well, I was in the Wallace campaign, and then I became the Defense Committee director. Then I was there for about three years, and then I got to know him well. By that time, I had ten or twelve years of background with Bridges, fairly intimate from about 1940 on. I got to know him very well, always admiring him enormously, always respecting really his approach to the waterfront. Before that, the connection had been more social and familial. Bridges was an insightful man.

Other Aspects of Harry Bridges' Personality

Jenkins: Once I talked to him about Bill Bailey, my old friend, being so preoccupied with young gals. Bailey would hang around the house and pursue some of Becky's (my eldest daughter's) friends occasionally--Bailey was never a crude man, but he was absolutely fascinated by their virginity. It was typical of these old time seamen. I talked about it with Bridges. He said, "You guys don't know anything about the rite of the first night with these guys." After years in dealing with relationships that men had on the waterfront, he had a lot of insights to the Baileys of the world.

Edith once got furious with me and said, "You've got to talk to Bailey about this one girl, Sheila," who was about Becky's age, beautiful, big-breasted woman who just didn't know where she

was at. I said, "Bailey and I have been friends for twenty years. I'm not going to talk to him about it. If you want to talk to Bailey about it, you do it. I'm not going to imperil my relationship with him." I said, "The worst that he will do is be rejected. The girl is embarrassed by his attentions. Put up against the wall a little bit, but that's the worst that will happen to him because she can't assimilate that kind of devotion. It's not so terrible."

Bailey fell in love once with a woman named Kathy Corbett, who was a skier, kind of an asshole in her own right, but quite beautiful, half his age. It was a sexual lark to her. Well, he fell so in love with her; I thought he was going crazy. He'd follow her around. It was a kind of devotion to another human being that was so extraordinary. She became a director of public radio in Los Angeles.

Harry was good about all sorts of personal insights except his own.

Rubens: And this dichotomy that you have portrayed--such a visionary in terms of leadership and promoting working-class leadership and his own life being surrounded by other than the working class--you must have been one of the closest people to him from a working-class background.

Jenkins: Exactly. Edith and I would comment over and over again why nobody from the waterfront ever visited.

Rubens: Do you think that was one reason why he turned to you?

Jenkins: Well, in a way.

Rubens: In times of real distress?

Jenkins: But also, he knew how much I admired him. Also, he had a lot of respect for Edith. Then all the people that he consorted with, the people that were his intimates, were our friends.

[Interview 5: January 27, 1988] ##

Rubens: There are so many little threads here. We can go any way you want to go.

Praise For and Assessment of Bridges' Leadership

Jenkins: Let me make clear that I had enormous respect for Bridges and even love, frankly. He had a lot of wisdom, this guy. He wasn't judgmental or ruthless. He could understand pressures on people and account for their failures. I admired his courage and especially his leadership. I admired his independence; I admired his refusal to take dictum from the Left; I admired, in a sense, his general wisdom about life and about the trade unions and politics. He was in many ways more of an influence and more important to me that anything in the CP or other organizations associated with the Party.

Rubens: What do you mean by that?

Jenkins: Simply that Bridges as an individual seemed to me to reflect during this period of his greatest vigor a sort of independent radicalism. It worked building the ILWU, the general approach to taking it down below, to the rank and file, which he insisted in the case of the endorsement of Wallace, a secret ballot, than to come from the top. Or his position on the Marshall Plan and affiliation with the AFL-CIO, taking it down below, making the issue one of autonomy rather than the specific political issues themselves.

The issue of autonomy, the right of a union regardless of its affiliation to take positions that are not necessarily the same positions of the federation or the congress--this approach carried with it the rank and file and the secondary officers of the union. Any other approach would have torn the union to pieces. In fact, it did in the UE [United Electrical Workers]; half its membership deserted to go into the IUE [International Union of Electrical Workers]. Dozens of locals left the Mine-Mill because the leadership took political stands rather than having secret ballots and didn't allow the unions their autonomy. And it was equally true in other sections of the so-called Left unions.

One of the things about factionalism is that once it's unleashed, many times it has no scruples. I remember once coming into UE's headquarters in New York, and the secretary-treasurer, Julius Emspac, was screaming about President [James] Matles--something to the effect that that fucking Romanian was a CIA agent, was always screaming at him over some political conflict.

Rubens: So you have suggested that this is an example of his leadership, of his independence from the Party?

Jenkins: Exactly, and also his continued militancy. The union had followed the no-strike policies during World War II, which he had been criticized for by the Left. By and large Bridges had carried that off--one, because he passionately believed it, I think, and two, it was his own independent conclusion as well. When the Party flew out Al Lannon, Sr., to argue with him about this issue, Bridges just dismissed him.

Jenkins Heads Bridges' Defense Committee, 1949-1953

Rubens: Tell me about running the Bridges defense.

Jenkins: Louis obviously asked me with the agreement of Bridges and Robertson and Schmidt who were the co-defendants. All my negotiations were with him. The only time Bridges intervened was when he found out I was making \$85 a week. He said that even he wasn't that cheap. I think I got a raise to \$115 or \$120. I ran the committee between 1949 and 1953.

Rubens: It came out of the defense committee money?

Jenkins: Yes. Also, I thought Bridges was almost genius-like in the choice of two secondary leaders who would take the place of himself, Schmidt, and Robertson if they went to jail for perjury. (James Franz, Portland president, and a Hawaiian guy, Joe Kealialio.)

Robertson was from the warehouse section of the union. The announcement at the convention was a dramatic one. There were many who were ready, either for competitive purposes or hope for political philosophies, to fall on the leadership in an attempt to take it over in case Bridges and Robertson were found guilty.

Also the subsequent McCarthy years--after this Bridges also acted with great courage and independence.

Rubens: Do you mind if I just keep you there for a minute? What did it mean for you to be head of the defense committee? You spent most of your time--?

Jenkins: Well, I spent a good deal of my time trying to forge coalitions around the country, going to unions which were themselves either anti-Communist or non-Communist. I was able to put together a group of fifteen or eighteen unions led by [Jimmy] Hoffa of the Teamsters but also Paper Workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers in the person of Frank Rosenblum who was one of the oldest social

democrats in the country--had always been anti-Communist; the Lithographers Union, the secretary of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers International, and others.

Rubens: Was this a conscious strategy to stay away from the Left?

Jenkins: Well, the Left unions were on record almost immediately. I did use, while I was away from San Francisco, the United Electrical Workers headquarters in New York and the Fur and Leather Workers in Chicago, and of course, the Left trade unionists who would advise and be helpful in identifying the local people who were prepared to be a united front on this issue, such as Ralph Helstein of the Packing House Workers union, Ken Burke of the Lithographers, Pat Gorman of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, who ran the union with an iron hand. He gave me his credit card.

So I was able to put together a remarkable array of trade unionists in particular who on all other issues were critical or uncooperative with the ILWU positions. In part, this grew out of the fact that the ILWU, even at the height of the greatest attacks by both McCarthyism and by the government, had maintained its relationship with the local unions on the West Coast. By that, if there was a strike of carpenters or chauffeurs, the local hiring halls became available for extra work for the strikers, contributions to the strikers, regardless of their affiliation. Longshoremen were regarded by the rest of the trade unions, on the West Coast in particular, as friends and allies of the local councils or local unions.

It was hard indeed to make them into the enemy that Dave Beck attempted to do then, who was the national president of the Teamsters. His march inland of 100 percent Americanism had some casualties, but by and large the trade union movement rejected that on the West Coast. That was also a policy that flowed out of the leadership of Bridges and Goldblatt. By the way, Beck afterwards went to jail on charges of corruption; he had been the darling of the Hearst newspapers.

Rubens: Now you were not in the leadership of the union? But in this position as head of the defense committee, you were in quite a remarkable position. Was this your first time as a national representative for the union?

Finding Aid in Prominent San Francisco Political and
Business Communities

Jenkins: I guess that the Labor School [See Chapter V] had placed me in relationship to a lot of international and national figures, as well, of course, as the ruling class of the city who were contributors to the school, and would give to Harry also.

Rubens: Is there anything outstanding that you remember about collecting the defense money, or forging this coalition?

Jenkins: No, except a variety of people were steadfast in their support. People like Linus Pauling and his wife and a great variety of both left liberals and liberals throughout the country--also, the judge in Bridges' first case, [James] Landis, who was dean of the Harvard Law School, people like Telford Taylor, who had been chief of the Nuremburg Trials. A lot of people who had come into contact with Bridges, and to a lesser extent, with Goldblatt had high regard for the union, and that also penetrated somewhat into the employers' ranks.

By this time, Paul St. Sure had taken over the leadership of the PMA [Pacific Maritime Association], and it was the beginning of a twenty-two year period of no strikes in the industry. St. Sure was a respected figure throughout the industry as well as the city. He formerly was a judge, and this was extremely helpful as well.

Also, the political atmosphere on the West Coast was interesting. I got money from people like Ben Swig, owner of the Swig hotel chain, George Christopher, who was to be mayor of the city of San Francisco, Russell Wolden, who was the city assessor, Harold Boyd, who was the city controller, also Pat Brown--a great variety of people who greatly respected the ILWU and the union's role as a significant force in the national labor movement as well as the West Coast.

Pat Brown had been a school chum of George Anderson, the union's attorney, and it was George Anderson who persuaded us to endorse him [Brown] for district attorney, which meant the difference between victory and defeat. Brown, who was always an effective advocate on issues, was extremely helpful and cooperative. I had some history in relationship to some of these people as, I said, being part of the Labor School.

Jenkins' Rise to Prominence as an Organizer Creates Suspicion in Bridges ##

Jenkins: To finish the Bridges thing. As I emphasized earlier, Bridges was extraordinary in my life, in spite of some personal difficulties I had with him and the fact that he seemed to be extremely competitive on issues. It took a long time for me to get over that. I wasn't challenging him ever, but he was intolerant of my non-ILWU West Coast experience.

Rubens: Do you think he perceived you as an interloper?

Jenkins: To some extent. After all, my maritime experience as compared to Bridges was very limited. I had been a CP recruit on the East Coast. I had something of a reputation at that time of being an effective organizer. I had gone to jail and been a dramatic case in New York during the '34 period, and then had gone with Jones in the South as a southern state organizer for the CIO Maritime Committee, and then educational director of the NMU, and played a limited role in the tanker strike in '39. I had really not any leadership identification.

I was well known, because of these incidents and also because I was on the Left. A certain mythology had started to spread about me, being half scholar, half goon. I was good friends with Blackie Myers, Jack Lawrenson and some of the leadership of the NMU, Tommy Ray.

I'm sure I came up in a lot of personal conversations, but I had played no real role in the industrial struggles in the thirties, even in maritime or anyplace else until I went to work for the Maritime Committee. When I arrived in San Francisco in '39, subsequently married Edith, and in a way, Edith was my entrance into the social grouping that took place. So too was my prior friendship with Nancy Bridges and also my relationship with Merv Rathborne, who was then head of the local CIO Council.

Rubens: Now how had you been friends with him?

Jenkins: Mostly through knowing him in the ACA in New York.

So I had been around every place, so to speak, and yet had been personal friends, been involved personally, with a number of women who subsequently played some role in all of these politics. Frankly, I suppose my first wife's being the daughter of Maynard Dixon as well as her stepmother being Dorothea Lange gave me a reputation, so to speak.

So I was a fairly colorful figure rather than one who had much substance in terms of real trade union history. I had been around the trade union movement. I had done all the appropriate things.

Rubens: Did you go to work out here immediately as a longshoreman?

Jenkins: I went to work as a barge man; I went to work in the ship scalers; I did some warehouse work. But I worked extra out of the longshore hall and went to sea in '39, went up to Alaska. All during this time, I was in the Party, and the Party played a role in introducing me to leading Left trade union figures.

So when I was in Seattle, I had been assigned the head of the seamen's branch in Seattle. I got involved with all sorts of things which brought me into some prominence. Dave Beck (Teamster's) was trying to break the Boeing picket lines, and we made an alliance up there, and I was one of the guys that played some role in fighting against the teamster goons. I soapboxed skid row in Seattle. I did all sorts of things which, in one way or another, created a reputation.

I led fights on the ships on the question of discrimination. I had an early friendship with Revels Cayton, one of the few black leaders of that period out here. He and I built a friendship which subsequently went on for almost fifty years. He felt much discriminated against by certain leaders, certain figures from the Left, Walter Stack and others. I was his ally on the fight inside the Party against this.

Rubens: Did he have an official position?

Jenkins: Yes, he was the business agent for Marine Cooks, and then he was head of the district council here for a while. Specifically, he was the vice president of the local CIO Council. He came out of an impressive black family in the northwest. His brother, Horace Cayton, was an author and sociologist. His sister, Agnes Cayton, was one of the first major black women in the Roosevelt Administration. She was head of Social Security in Chicago. His father had been editor and publisher of a Republican black newspaper in the northwest. Of course, the grandfather was one of the first black U.S. Senators after reconstruction.

So my beginning with Bridges was a peculiar one. I had not been through the '34 Strike; I had not been a factor on the West Coast waterfront. Bridges, while not being socially friendly with the guys he worked with in the union particularly, suddenly was confronted by me both because of Edith and because of his

wife who was lonely in coming out here. I was a familiar Jewish friend of Nancy's from New York.

Secondly, I was very rapidly promoted into leadership in this area, which I'm sure he was a little suspicious of. I first went to work as the legislative director for the Maritime Federation of the Pacific in 1940. I went to sea, then became secretary of Labor's Non-Partisan League, which had been a major factor in the united front in the trade union. Then I went to work for Rathborne as legislative director of the CIO Council in San Francisco. Then I rapidly became a leader in the Left/Right fight inside the Marine Cooks and Stewards.

Rubens: Were you literally affiliated with them?

Jenkins: Yes. I transferred my union book from the NMU to the Marine Cooks. We were in a struggle, which we won, and elected Hugh Bryson and a whole Left group.

Rubens: In terms of that split, were you and Bridges aligned?

Jenkins: Bridges was sort of the father-figure in all of this stuff. But out of it emerged the Bryson leadership. While it was a relatively small union, it was 6,000 then, during the war 15,000, it played a big role in almost every port city up and down the coast.

So I was a fairly persuasive speaker. I had spoken for the passage of the Copeland Bill, which was a state bill to ban shipping companies' use of "fink books." These "books" were essentially a dozen pages or so and worked like an employment card that each worker carried with him, and in it was recorded where he had worked and also personal comments that supervisors chose to make. We refused to carry them; we saw them as a register of who was pro union and radical, and worked to blackball someone from a job. For instance, a chief steward on a ship could comment on you in the book, when you were given your discharge, and you would have to carry those comments to your next job--or try to get another job with comments that might be less than favorable.

Rubens: That's in '39. What was the Yanks are Not Coming?

Jenkins: It was a Party maritime group that in a sense gave approval to the German-Russian pact. It lasted very briefly because almost immediately the United States entered the war after Pearl Harbor.

After Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, that committee became openly identified as supporting a second front. It was renamed;

I forget now the new name. It was totally manipulated by the CP but we felt legitimately, and I think historically, that the German-Soviet pact grew out of the attempt by the Western powers to pit Germany and the Soviet Union against each other. It was after the statements by Truman to the effect of a plague on both their houses.

Rubens: This discussion is really in part an explanation of why Harry may have distrusted you.

Jenkins: There were issues, but the truth of the matter was that questioning would have been a legitimate thing looking at my quick rise out here in California. He would suspect that I could have been an agent and in some cases, people swore that I was. As a matter of fact, that charge plagued me for years afterwards. At the CIO Council, the vice president named Herman Stuyvelaar, who was a ship clerk, got up and demanded to know who the hell I was and how I got up there.

Rubens: Did Bridges ever specifically ask?

Jenkins: Bridges knew enough about me, I think, through my relationship with Nancy and other people who knew me back East. Especially when I became head of the Bridges Defense Committee in 1949.

By that time, there was no question that I was identifiably who I was. Yet what that was was a little obscured. Suddenly, after I had been out here three years, I headed a school which became the biggest labor school in the history of the country, on the one hand. On the other hand, I was tapping everybody around the city because it was opening all sorts of new contacts for the Left itself. To some extent, I guess, people wrongly judged me a figure who came out of the waterfront. I don't know if I would disagree with that. It was true that my experience was almost really with the seamen, NMU and then Marine Cooks. I didn't really become a longshoreman. After the Labor School and Wallace campaign I was working on a longshoreman's salary until the mid-fifties.

In the early days of the ILWU (this was in the later forties and fifties), the schism between Goldblatt and Bridges was never evident. Louie admired Harry enormously. Harry respected Louie's leadership of warehouse and also left to him large sections of the work in Hawaii. So he unquestionably had the final say. In political issues, this was equally true.

I was extremely active in the Rosenberg case in 1953. I spoke publicly on the day of their execution--I was in front of city hall speaking. Edith was on a truck getting around to

neighbors pleading with people to send telegrams to the Supreme Court asking for a stay of execution.

In '48, there was a dramatic case of my having fallen off the CIO building after being pursued by subpoenas, and the headline in the Examiner was, "Suspected Soviet Spy Mortally Hurt in Fall." So I had penetrated the consciousness of the city and of the trade union movement, with a clear Left identity.

As time went on, however, Harry's main enemies had stopped being the ship owners; there was a long pact under the leadership of St. Sure; the march inland had been blocked by the Teamsters and Dave Beck. There was the ILWU's successful organization in Hawaii, and the firmness of its independence was assured.

Rubens: It sounds like all that fire goes out in the fifties. A lot had been accomplished.

Jenkins: A lot had been accomplished.

Rubens: Harry was tried several other times. Did you work on those?

Jenkins: No, no. I got out after the Bridges, Robertson and Schmidt case and I decided at that point to go to work on the waterfront. I attempted to get into Local 10 here in San Francisco with no success. The books were not open. Guys could respect your role, but giving you a membership was almost impossible. So I went up to Sacramento and worked for a while, and then I went over to Stockton, became a member of the Stockton ILWU, and then in '55, I transferred back to San Francisco.

Observations on the Harry Bridges-Louis Goldblatt Split

Rubens: We are continuing our focus on the backgrounds and ultimate split between Harry and Louie and its intersection with your life.

Jenkins: Let me go more quickly. The national union leadership remained unified up to the final period of the Mechanization Program, which was a big fight, and yet finally won. It was criticized nationally by the Party and sections of the Left who were quoted inside the union.

I guess the beginning of the smashing of that leadership as far as unity was concerned was in the late sixties brought on by, in part, bad relationships with Jack Hall in Hawaii (he was a close personal friend of Louie) and by disagreements about

internal struggles in Hawaii and the leadership here. Hall, after all, was appointed regional director. But Hall felt he should be elected vice president of the national union and represent Hawaii. There was a violent disagreement between Harry and Louie on this. He was not elected, but his prestige in the leadership had become such that he was literally untouchable in Hawaii. This was dramatized by the fact that Hall, who could be a heavy drinker, in front of a large section of the leadership in Hawaii, cursed Harry and characterized him as fearful and out of touch, which Bridges never forgave him for. It was a humiliating and deadly experience.

It was brought on by the fact that both Hall and Lou had challenged Harry's refusal to go along with a necessary strike in Hawaii that actually took place over Bridges' objection. That was the beginning of the end between Lou and Harry.

Rubens: Had he gotten conservative, old, or what?

Jenkins: It was unquestionably a shift in Bridges' point of view. There were a number of factors. There was his deep friendship with Paul St. Sure and the historical conditions that brought labor peace to the waterfront. That relationship shifted. It was a very warm and important friendship; it had been revived, and in a sense made to stoke Harry's moving to the Right in terms of the trade unionism. There was a period of twenty-two years without any strikes in the industry which made for a whole different kettle of fish. Harry was no longer on the firing lines.

Then, the fact that Jack Hall, who by this time became ambitious to be vice president of the international, was steadily opposed by Bridges. Hall was regional director in Hawaii, and adored over there--Hawaii was at least 50 percent of the entire union's membership. The fact that Lou could not deliver for Hall became a momentous matter.

Furthermore, in the longshore division, particularly the white Left, started to be increasingly critical of Bridges around the Mechanization Program; and while Lou didn't offer to give leadership to this white Left section, they identified Lou as an alternative leader.

Another factor is that the Party, which had been a major force in the union, started to be critical of Bridges over mechanization and contractual issues. Rising to fill the vacuum left by the disaffected Party members was a black leadership led by [William] Chester, our vice president who emerged from Local 10; there were other black leaders.

Rubens: Chester had been vice president of Local 10?

Jenkins: Yes, then regional director and then international vice president. Chester had been in the Party and had come into leadership through the Party, and I played a role in that as well. After all, he was the first black leader in our union and one of the few in the country.

Rubens: By then were you actually in Local 10?

Jenkins: Yes. This black leadership was unswervingly loyal to Bridges, and they really started to take on the "white Left," particularly some of the new "B"-men who had been promoted to "A."¹

Then from about the mid-seventies on, I guess, Bridges and Goldblatt stopped talking to each other altogether.

Rubens: Was there one final blow-out?

Jenkins: Well, they had meetings together, executive board sessions, but it is an open secret that Bridges and Lou didn't talk and that Lou was contemptuous of Harry and the way he had become. Lou felt that Harry had deserted the rank and file.

Rubens: You know, St. Sure remarks in his oral history that Harry and Louie disagreed and argued openly in negotiations. Literally their conflicts would break up the meeting, and yet when they came back, it was invariably Louie's position that prevailed.²

Jenkins: There was also a difference between Louie and Harry on the issue of students' rights at UC Berkeley. Lou became a speaker and spokesman for the students during the late 1960s; he appeared at their rallies. Harry was deeply suspicious of the student leadership. But he finally found a way of supporting it. When they threatened to march from Berkeley to Oakland, he said that if the police didn't protect them, the longshoremen would. It was Lou, however, who consistently and openly identified himself

¹Under the 1960 Modernization and Mechanization agreement between the PMA and ILWU, the longshore workforce was divided into two categories. "A" men are fully registered longshoremen who are members of the union; "B" men are registered, but are not members of the union. They are only dispatched to a job after every eligible "A" man has been dispatched. Ordinarily "B" men are advanced to "A" status within a few years as the workforce shrinks by attrition.

²Joseph P. St. Sure, in Industrial Relations Interview, Institute of Industrial Relations, UC Berkeley. Available at the Social Science Library, UC Berkeley. 1952-1962.

with their fight, which was a natural since Louie had come into the Left through the student movement at UC Berkeley.

Louie and Harry split over Cesar Chavez as well. Bridges' "natural" suspicion of a Catholic-led movement, part of his own rejection of Catholicism, was profound. Louie saw in Chavez the hope of a different leadership in agricultural labor. Louie's experience in Hawaii also was an enormous help to Chavez, where they organized pineapple and sugar workers and won a major strike. The parallels were uncanny between the Hawaii campaign and Chavez' efforts.

Once the definitive split came, however, I was in many cases the only intermediary between them. And that's interesting because I was not, at that time, on the ILWU payroll. I was either a working longshoreman or I was involved in local politics, which of course played a big role in the international. With the headquarters being here, when the union's legislative committee picked anybody to run for political office, or recommended appointments to a civic position, I helped broker that. I was endlessly involved in meetings, consultations, phone discussions about recommendations.

My pride and affection for Bridges continued. I lost a great many of my friends, particularly white friends on the waterfront who swore I had sold out to Harry. The white Left felt that some black leaders were tainted with corruption and that Harry was too permissive about that. To some extent there was a voice in the white Left that also continued their opposition to labor's "collaboration" with civic politics.

Rubens: What did "sell out" mean to them?

Jenkins: Harry was totally approving of Alioto and so was Goldblatt. Under Alioto's administration, one of the first things he did as mayor was to appoint Bridges to the Port Commission. It was the first labor maritime appointment in the city. After that, Bill Chester was appointed to BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit], Curtis McClain to the Fire Commission, Keith Eickman to the Parks and Recreation Commission--he later became chairman--and LeRoy King to the Redevelopment Commission, where he is currently chair.

But I was aware of how almost paranoid Bridges was--Harry's hatred of Louie's challenge to his leadership, his belief that Louie should play a secondary role--and to some extent that paranoia was true of Louie too. For example, one day we were sitting at Harrington's Bar. Louie was mad at me for taking Harry's side on a particular issue (I forget what it was) and he screamed that I was "trying to kill him." He also claimed that

Bridges had always been a political reactionary, even in the early thirties.

It was a momentary outburst--but it made an impression on me. Harry, on the other hand, would confess to me that he was so paranoid about Lou that he couldn't sleep at nights; he was possessed by fury and frustration. All during this latter period, Bridges was also saying that he wanted to retire. It became evident that that was nonsense. His inability to give up leadership was extraordinary. I think he was simply fearful that Louie would succeed him.

The split between Louie and Harry was souring the whole union. Finally, Louie won the fight to bring Hall to the mainland as vice president. His closest ally on the mainland was "Chili" Duarte, who was president of the Warehouse Union Local 6, a rather dramatic Portuguese-American figure from the East Bay, who had led the Warehouse Union into a major membership drive, and Duarte also wanted to be a vice president.

When Chili died it made a place for Chester. Harry of course wanted "his" guy.

All these struggles were symptoms of a major fight for control of the union. The loyalties down below were very sharply divided depending on what section of the industry you came from, warehouse or longshore, in a sense, depending on who you worked with.

As time went on I think Edith phrased it best: When Harry stopped having real enemies in the industries, he turned on his closest friends in many cases. Subsequently, I think that's what happened in his and my relationship. Once he retired, which was a bitter fact imposed on him by a resolution of the Hawaiian membership--the Hawaiians represented half the union membership or more--the resolution they proposed and that was adopted by the international convention in 1975 mandated that when officers reached the age of sixty-five, they had to retire. Louis was sixty-eight, and Harry was seventy-six, so it forced Louis to retire. Louis very much wanted to become the president of the union. Louis had a good reputation and loyal supporters in Hawaii, but Harry also actually always had a loyal following in Hawaii. The vote for him at elections was always higher than Louis's. I think the fact that Harry had a Japanese wife helped him as well.

Harry refused to back Jimmy Herman for president, and shopped around really for almost anybody to run against Jim. For instance Al Alameda, a guy from southern California, wanted to

run. Harry backed Al even though a few years before Harry had characterized him as a fascist. Also Harry and Chester spread invidious personal rumors about Jim Herman as a queer. Jimmy confronted both of them about this, and asked them if they wanted to have it out, as it were. They both promptly retreated from their slur campaign. But the rumors hung in the campaign. Among the Baptist black members, in some cases, it was damaging for Jim.

There was speculation that Harry also wanted Chester, who was the closest union official to Harry. Louis supported Herman. Now, Harry had originally liked Jimmy. In fact, Jimmy had lived at Harry's for a while when Nancy had left Harry. Jim and Harry had traveled on union business together, to Australia, for instance. But Herman solicited both Louis' and Harry's support; and asking both was untenable for Harry. Harry also wanted someone he could control more than Jimmy.

The Jenkins-Bridges Friendship Ends

Rubens: When were you and Harry no longer friends? I know he had also stopped talking to Henry Schmidt.

Jenkins: The final break came over an incident that was really quite insignificant. But I think the fact that I maintained my friendship and affection for Louis began to sour Harry regarding me. When Louis died, the family would not let Harry speak at the funeral. Edith spoke at the funeral--having known him since student days.

Then there were a series of silly events that led to his break with me. Once Edith and he were in an elevator at the Jack Tarr Hotel (now the Cathedral Hill) in San Francisco, after some event. He said to Edith, "Your eyes never met mine during the entire afternoon. I know there is something wrong in your attitude." Now, for a man of such stature to come to an old friend and be both accusing and inquiring of what was going on was indicative of his contradictions and ambiguities.

Later on I was involved in a statewide campaign that was being paid for by the tobacco industry. I was lining up the labor vote. Bridges had been a smoker all his life, and was asked to give his name to it, which he cheerfully did. He then asked that campaign to contribute \$500 to the California Seniors. There was no way we could do that legally; so the union legislative committee gave \$500 to the seniors. Harry remained

under the illusion that the money had never been given to the seniors, even though I had explained several times that it had come via a different route.

He called me about this again--I happened to be in the hospital at the time. I told him, "You son of a bitch, I suppose if I dropped dead, you'd demand it off my will. The money was given." From that time on--it was 1983--Harry and I never spoke. He was furious at me. He told everybody I was never a longshoreman and that I was simply a bag man. He went out of his way in a thousand ways to be petty and demeaning. When the union gave him a big retirement dinner, the two people that he demanded not to be invited were Keith Eickman and myself. Keith had taken Harry on about me, so he too became persona non grata.

During this same period, I was instrumental in getting delegations from the Bay Area to the Soviet Union, including some of the most respectable trade unions in the city. Bridges intervened, I know, with the Soviet Consul, to describe me as untrustworthy.

Ironically, this all must have caused him a great deal of pain because every aspect of his life was in some way related to me and Edith, including the children. His daughter, Julie, and my daughter Margy (Margaret) had been friends.

There is also the truth of the matter that from the earliest times when he and his wife broke up and she went off with Julian Hicks, he felt that I was in some way responsible because I had introduced them.

Rubens: Do you think that the Party and/or anti-Semitism played a role in his disposition towards you?

Jenkins: I don't think so. He was married to a Jewish woman for a long time. Harry of course came out of a native Australian Catholic background where anti-Semitism was pretty endemic. Waterfront culture did tolerate a certain looseness of characterization in reference to Jews. Harry certainly saw characteristics which he thought were "liberal" and "working-class" in Jews like Louis and Sid Roger who were of course quite educated. And he could become outrageously militant against wholesale anti-Semitism. For example, at a lunch once at Jack's he told me seriously he believed the only answer to the German question was to kill all Germans over six.

Vis-a-vis the Party, he was handled with a gentleness by the Party. If push came to shove, the national leadership lined up with Harry rather than the state leadership. That is, of course,

because Harry was a national working-class hero. The Party out here never paid attention to working in the Jewish community as such, although there was an issue of Jewish organizations. For instance, I had demanded that the Party set up a Jewish Commission here in the forties, even though the Party was led by many Jews, like William Schneiderman, and Archie Brown, Dorothy Healy, Ben Dobbs, Nemie Sparks, Sam Darcy, Al Richmond--all of them Jews. But it didn't happen.

In many ways Harry was a man who had extraordinary contradictions. He seemed to bear out the old adage, he loved the people and hated individuals. Harry's capacity to be gracious was uneven. He could forgive Herb [Herbert] Resner, an attorney who stole money from some union member, but he could be so mercurial. He made [William] Glazier [the ILWU Washington D.C. representative] and Sidney Roger miserable. Harry wanted unqualified loyalty. He didn't respect either's judgment or their liberalism. He considered himself a revolutionary and by that it meant being ruthless in your judgment of people.

Rubens: Had you remained social friends with Harry when he married Nikki [Noriko Sadawa]?

Jenkins: It so happened that I played a role in that marriage too. When I ran a cocktail fundraising party for Mine-Mill, I asked Nikki, who was a legal secretary for Charlie Garry and a number of attorneys, if she would act as a hostess. She and I were good friends. A couple of weeks later, she called me and said that she and Harry were getting married. So Nikki and I were very warm friends and remained friends. She goes out of her way now to greet me when she sees me. I assume it's impossible to be married to someone who is as paranoid and hateful as Bridges is capable of, and maintain an active friendship however. Nevertheless, when she was about to publish her first autobiographical piece, she brought it to Edith.

Rubens: It's quite a story. It must have hurt you deeply.

Jenkins: Well, also I would say it forced me to evaluate again the whole question of the cult of the individual, which Bridges in some ways exemplified. However, in this case, all the evidence was to the contrary--his insistence on taking issues down below, the secret ballot, disclaiming formal education as a guide to leadership, and promotions, learning at the point of production, meaning on the shop floor. All these things were extraordinary innovations of the American labor movement, in some ways initiated by him.

Harry and I had a long and involved relationship. While I was critical of him and would try to stop him from doing things, the friendship was a hard thing to put down.

IV THE YEARS WITH THE NATIONAL MARITIME UNION, 1937-1939

[Interview 6: February 3, 1988] ##

Rubens: Let's talk about your relationship with the NMU, the National Maritime Union.

Jenkins: All right, the NMU. It grew out of the rebellion of the seamen in the Atlantic and gulf ports against the old union, the International Seamen's Union, which had become moribund and defunct and was in the hands of a group of union leaders, headed by Paul Scharrenberg, who were no longer responsible at all to their membership, and who were extremely conservative.

The group that formed the NMU came out of that opposition led by Joseph Curran, Blackie Myers, Jack Lawrenson, Hadley Stone, Tommy Ray. All of them I knew well, least of all Curran. Most of them were in the Party at the time that I came in. I got to know them because really the Party was the driving force in that union.

I was part of the seamen's section of the Communist party in New York.

Background as Recreation Leader and Bouncer, 1937-1938

Jenkins: Our headquarters was, I think, on 23rd and 7th. Our section organizer was a guy named Robbie or Robinson. Our national leader was a man named Roy Hudson, himself an ex-seaman and about that time he became national trade union director of the Communist party working with another man named Jack Stachel. Hudson was known as "Horseface" Hudson, I guess because both of appearance and his tendency to repeat himself endlessly.

At one meeting, Tony Lucio, who went on to become port agent in New York, put an alarm clock under his chair in a vain attempt

to cut down the length of his speeches; this threw Hudson into an absolute fury. Hudson, however, was a hard worker and a totally sincere if boring man, I must say. He not only met with the leadership of the union but with those who were not in the Communist party like Joe Curran, who generally accepted the role of the Party and its importance.

At that time, too, we had an enormous amount of seamen who joined the Party who were on the ships and were in key positions. This is about 1937. I had just gone on the WPA payroll. I basically invented my own job category and was assigned to the NMU to do educational work. That was possible under the broad, sprawling rules of WPA. Inasmuch as I was already politically affiliated and working as a sort of communist missionary on the waterfront, although I had never gone to sea myself, I was accepted by all of the above.

I was known to the seamen, of course. During the 1934 taxi strike, the leadership of that union, Warren Hourie, came down and recruited some of us to help as volunteers, or paying us a little money to dump the scabs who were attempting to break the taxi strike. I was the leading figure among them and became fairly well known as a result of that strike among the section of the seamen. I also played some little role in the union called District 65 led by the Left among warehouse employees, mostly in smaller shops in New York, Brooklyn, and Staten Island where I helped organize the shops, teaching the workers how to fight thugs and scabs.

I got a bit of a reputation in New York as being available for that sort of educational activity which is a polite way of saying that I occasionally would beat up scabs.

Also, when I lived on the West Side, I had been a bouncer in a place called Stewart's Cafeteria, first on 14th Street and then in Sheridan Square. I think I got twenty bucks a week keeping order in these places. I wasn't a very good order keeper. The unemployed and the homeless would come into the cafeterias. We had free salads and rolls, and I was supposed to keep check of those and fight hold-up men.

Earlier I had been hired by the Majestic Dance Hall at 50th and 7th Avenue, which strangely enough afterwards became the headquarters of the Transit Workers' Union. I was first a doorman because I fit the uniform and then became a bouncer upstairs. This was mostly working-class guys who came from the various boroughs en masse on the weekends at ten cents a dance and for a variety of practices that took place there. The girls were mostly working-class kids who came either off the street or out of mining towns in Pennsylvania to try to make it in New

York. This was just one level above the streets. They would seduce the man into buying a lot of tickets with vague promises of later reward after the place closed. The practice, of course, was the girls would get a guy in a booth and either masturbate him or go down on him. I think it was four dollars a half hour. Maybe it was more, I don't know.

Rubens: Right there in the hall, not in a separate--?

Jenkins: Yes. Right in a little booth. There was a series of those, and, of course, the expectations were very high. At the back entrance, I would stand at three in the morning with a club just as the girls were picked up either by their boyfriends or hustled out to the 50th Street subway. Sometimes, gangs would come from the East Side or the West Side or the Bronx. It would be extremely difficult to escape. [laughter] I got cut in the face one night, and the local cops would occasionally help, but it was a fairly rough scene.

It was also a time when Broadway was full of unemployed drifters, con men, all of whom I met as a doorman or as a bouncer, who were being recruited by scab agencies that needed strike breakers, et cetera, even as mercenaries in Cuba. I was offered a variety of those things.

There was the O'Farrell Agency, and a guy named "Chowder Head" Cohen, who was a notorious scab herder. But there were many who just got picked up--guys who had no class sense and were just drifting about. It was in that place I first met George Raft who was known as a kind of pimp and hustler on Broadway and went on to become a movie star. I think the night I quit was when a group from the mafia from Brooklyn came in and ran up a bill of about \$220. The boss said, "Go over there and collect the money." I said, "You collect the money," and I think we parted ways then.

Rubens: It wasn't a Mafia-run club then?

Jenkins: No, no. At that time on Broadway, there were famous dance halls, Roseland, ours, The Majestic. They were sort of catch-alls for men seeking sex and some adventure. The girls were really fighting to stay off the street. That was about it. I lived then up at 72nd. Getting on the subway at three o'clock in the morning after my nightly jostle with the guys who were looking to pick up the girls--a subway ride with every car packed with people from the night clubs was an extraordinary adventure.

During the day, I would do a little soapboxing up at Columbus Circle, that sort of thing. So after I left my job at the dance hall, right below us was a Stewart's Cafeteria, and I

got a job there as a bouncer. Twenty or twenty-five dollars doesn't seem like much money now, but with food it was an extraordinary salary. I left Stewart's Cafeteria and then went downtown to Stewarts at 14th Street and then Sheridan Square in the village.

By that time, I was living with Gittel Poznonski, and I started to have a relationship with a woman named Muriel Reiker. They were in a kind of collective which I moved in on; I moved in with Muriel, who was much older than I and was working at Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary making sixty bucks a week. She had one son, Dickie, and I sort of became a father replacement, but not really. Muriel was a woman who was flinging off her New England inhibitions in a very dramatic way, mostly by sleeping with guys as young as I. She got very involved with me though, and that's when I met Gittel who was my age and sort of transferred my loyalties, as we discussed earlier.

Educational Director, NMU, 1938

Jenkins: When I landed at the NMU doing actual educational work, I was given the title of educational director by Blackie Myers who was national secretary of the union.

Rubens: But in part that position, that job was secured as a result of a Party strategy?

Jenkins: Yes. The leadership of the union, which was almost exclusively on the Left, thought it was a good idea. I think I still have a letter designating me educational director of the NMU. I started a series of classes in the hiring hall, on parliamentary procedure, on labor journalism, classes in English for foreign born--they were primarily Spanish-speaking. We threw in a lot of "political stuff" as well.

Then by a peculiar series of events, we started a program which became quite famous. We put chests of books on every ship containing progressive and Left literature, and the instructions to all seamen who were in the Left was, when they got aboard a ship, to throw all the stuff from the Christian missions out of the port holes and put our stuff in.

I financed that "cache of literature" originally by a very peculiar way. I was in the union hall one day, and we got a call from the American Television Corporation. A guy ordered, "Could we send up twenty seamen for some test shots at twenty dollars apiece?" When the word got around the hall--there were probably

1,000 guys interested--we dispatched the first twenty. That went on for about three days. We asked the guys what happened when they came back, and they said they just stood around and people filmed them. Well, twenty dollars a day on the waterfront was unimaginable. About the fourth or fifth day, I got a call from the president of the company asking if he could see me. The office was on 54th Street between 7th and 6th.

I came in and there was a long loft-like floor and on it were all sorts of screens. I remember it was cold, and I had this sort of decaying, ratty overcoat, and I was so embarrassed. I was not a great dresser. I was ushered into an office and a man said, "Mr. Jenkins, you know as a result of the Morro Castle disaster," (a ship that went down), "Emmanuel Celler--" (who was a famous congressman from Brooklyn) "--introduced legislation that every passenger ship, large tanker, freighter, had to have loud-speaking devices." He said, "We supplied almost all of that equipment, Mr. Jenkins. We made a great deal of money. Mr. Celler is now introducing legislation that requires speakers to be twenty-five feet apart on these ships because it was found that the previous seventy-five feet was inadequate for a real emergency. We are very interested in this education project of yours. We know that the seamen have a lot of friends in Washington. We'd like to get your support."

I was thinking rapidly. I didn't care if it was ten feet apart, what the hell. With that he took \$1800 out of his desk, which I counted out later, and said, "We know that it is expensive, and we would like your cooperation." I was brought up in the whole CP tradition of being meticulous in what we accepted money for. Anyway, I overcame my hesitation, pocketed the money, trembled while getting out of there, went back to the waterfront. My confidant was a guy named Tommy Ray, who was a very dominating figure in the early days. When I told him about it, he said, "Wonderful, we'll use the money for things we need." That financed the beginning of my book program. I think I could have gotten \$80,000, but I was new at this. Celler did indeed introduce this legislation.

###

Celler was eighty-two when he finally was defeated by a woman, Elizabeth Holtzman, who is now New York City's district attorney.

When I left the NMU to go South, I was succeeded by a famous educator, writer, Leo Huberman, who was the editor and founder of Monthly Review.

Rubens: Was he already editing Monthly Review?

Jenkins: Yes. He and I were friends. It was years later before I met a cousin of my wife, Louise Rosenberg Bransten, who helped fund that magazine. She's also the woman whose father and uncle left their money to establish the Rosenberg Foundation.

Rubens: Huberman took over. How did this decision come up to assign you South?

Jenkins: I think I wanted it, I'm not sure. Al Lannon, who was then the leader of the NMU and the main Party guy in the union (Roy Hudson was not in the union) had come out of the old Marine Workers' Industrial Union, but he was a full time and well known Party functionary by then. Magazines did a whole series on this "Red menace" on the waterfront. Hudson was always a major, mysterious figure. Actually, Hudson was a guy who came from the South.

He wanted to be a detective writer. He was recruited into the Party, and he died here in San Francisco only a couple of years ago. As a matter of fact, the story was that he had originally been a member of the Ku Klux Klan in the South. He was a man of extraordinary weight, who had married a strange woman who came out here with him, a woman I knew I must say--briefly. Her father had been head of the Budapest chief of police under the fascist regime.

Hudson came out here because he was demoted by the Party in the struggle around Browderism¹ and was assigned out here in charge of labor work. He and I were never very good friends. Then he went into the painters' union and became a house painter and stayed there until he died. History has a funny way--Hudson turned up living in the same little complex of houses in Bernal Heights with my daughter, Rachel. One day Rachel said to me, "Pop, do you know a guy named Roy Hudson? He lives just above me, and he's kind of a sad guy." I said, "I sure do." Rachel took pity on him, used to feed him occasionally.

Hudson was the trade union director of the Party, in charge of maritime, and also president of the Maritime Workers Industrial Union, which was the Red union of the maritime workers. The NMU was a major assignment. Strangely enough, when Hudson died, there was only a very brief notice of it, and I couldn't stand it. I called both the Chronicle and the Examiner and said, "Come on, this is a guy you beat up for years as a notorious Red, connected with Moscow. He dies a humble house

¹After 1945, the idea that the Communist party should dissolve. See Chapter V.

painter here. At least, give him his due, write something about his life." They both did as a result.

When he died, he and I were not friends, I must say, because after I left the Party and was still somewhat involved in the union that Hudson was, he became a victim of Alzheimer's Disease and would occasionally call me and berate me on the phone, give me orders to do a variety of things. It was really a terrible experience because I had known him in his full vigor and the kind of energy he had when he was a national Party figure.

Suddenly, all of us who had been just CP guys and involved in the waterfront with the creation of the CIO and the NMU being part of it and the West Coast being part of it, all sorts of organizing opportunities opened up. I was recruited to go South by Al Lannon.

Southern CIO Maritime Director, Virginia and North Carolina,
1938-1939

Rubens: Did you have an official title?

Jenkins: Yes, I was CIO maritime director for Virginia and North Carolina.

Rubens: Your headquarters was where?

Jenkins: Norfolk, Virginia.

Rubens: Had you ever been South before?

Jenkins: Never. As a matter of fact, I came to Washington at the time of the Veteran's march to Washington. I was sixteen and on the road. While I wasn't an official part of it, I was a hanger-on who suddenly supported the vets and hung around Washington until they were driven out and met them all over the road, guys coming into Washington. That was my first introduction to Eisenhower and MacArthur. Both of them were police chiefs of Washington. I was sleeping in the Salvation Army and the Young Men's Christian Association and a variety of other flop houses. But I had no connection with the South until I went down.

Rubens: What did that mean for you to be the first maritime director? Did you have to literally set up an office and make connections?

Jenkins: Yes. We put out a bulletin. A friend of mine, Barney Ellis, known as Barney Ross, did come South as a volunteer and worked with me for a while. But mainly, I think I got \$35 a week and

expenses from the CIO, and my assignment in part was bringing longshore and the seamen into the CIO. Of course, I had already learned the basics when I worked in upstate New York. Headquartered there in Virginia already when I arrived was a group from the National Maritime Union led by a guy named Red Graham and another guy, Blackie Alberts. They had, during the '36-'37 strike, arrived there from either New York or Baltimore and had set up headquarters. Norfolk was a big shipping town and also a big navy town. They had set up headquarters on East Main Street, which was also the main whorehouse section of the city--there must have been thirty or forty houses, one, the Carioca, run by the police chief.

A woman named Wagner who ran a whorehouse also owned a hotel called the Hotel Monterey. She was an older woman. Her pimp or lover was a seaman. She gave us her hotel as headquarters.

Rubens: She had a class identification?

Jenkins: Yes. She was a good and tough woman. She had been a whore herself and was determined not to be a victim and bought this hotel and owned one of the big houses on the street. It was she who persuaded the "girls" to sell Spanish liberty bonds and the Daily Worker in the houses. Then during the strike there was a system of strike cards where each guy was entitled to go to one of the houses and get laid a couple of times a week and get a stamp that he had exhausted his privileges. [laughter] Almost all the houses agreed to do that because seamen were their main clients, and there was no work anyway. There were navy guys coming in.

That was when I met Red Graham, who was kind of a genius, and port agent in Norfolk. I had known Graham a little bit in New York. I don't know what he did. He lived across the street from me on Hudson Street--handsome, very sort of battered face, but a handsome face. He suddenly emerged during the '36-'37 strike as a leading figure in New York and had been sent down to Norfolk. I afterwards learned that he had been a Wobbly and after the Wobblies were destroyed, he originally came out of Duluth, Minnesota, and a Wobbly group. Red had attempted to blow up the Brooklyn Bridge; he had a barge full of dynamite. He was caught and sentenced to jail for six years.

Graham was supporting himself holding up A & P stores and he was a very tough guy--crazy in his own way. He would also hang outside of gambling houses on upper Broadway and guys would come out with a big poke. He'd mug them and grab their money. I knew nothing about this when I first knew him.

Rubens: But then somehow he joined the Party and the NMU? Did he set up this office in the whorehouse? [laughter]

Jenkins: He was the guy who was responsible for the strike. He was the guy who set up the Hotel Monterey, which was headquarters of the striking seamen.

The girls would tell us when scabs would come in. The only house that didn't go along, the girls picketed. [laughter] We had a picket line of fifty whores picketing the Carioca, a whorehouse which was owned by the police commissioner.

All the cabs that went out to the ships, which were about six, seven miles out of town, cooperated with us as well because all their clients were seamen.

It was a southern scene. Most of the girls had come out of North Carolina; the textile mills had closed down. After the strike, many of our guys, seamen, married the girls in the houses.

Rubens: So the population you are talking about right now is all white basically? The seamen are white?

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: Were there many black seamen?

Jenkins: There were black seamen who mostly were Portuguese who originally came out of Cape Verde, who worked on the Mystic Steamship Lines on the coal colliers that came out of Portland, Maine. There were about ten ships that went back and forth. They were big, handsome men, spoke Portuguese, brilliant singers, and tough guys, and very black.

Rubens: Were you making an attempt to organize American blacks?

Jenkins: Well, not really. Other groups were at the time. About the same time, Smithfield Ham, which was in that area, was organized in the CIO by the Packinghouse Workers. There was a chemical plant sixty, seventy miles away. Suffolk Peanuts was organized. There was an organizing drive all through that area.

In the main, the seamen were the only group that broke through on the black/white relationships. They worked for Mystic Steamship Company and some of the other southern ship lines which would run between Norfolk and Wilmington, and Washington D.C. and North Carolina. The situation with the women was extraordinary in many ways.

Red and I would be on patrol, and we visited the houses every night to see that no scabs were coming in, and this whole mood of unionism, and revolutionary fervor was contagious. The whores, after all, were well aware of exploitation in the textile and aluminum mills. They were such direct victims of class and unemployment.

When Elizabeth Gurley Flynn came to town to speak--she was a leader then of the CP--we had about 150 of these women out at the meeting. Christ, they were contributing and crying and applauding. Elizabeth said to me afterwards, "I have never had an audience like this. Who are they?" I told her. She was a woman of great experience herself, and she was enormously engaged. When we won, we had a victory party at Ethel's Road House which was also owned by Madame Wagner. It was a wild party to celebrate almost a 100-day strike.

At the same time, Red and others--we were trying to organize a huge shipyard, Newport News Shipyard. I worked with a guy there named John Darling. We organized Annenburg's newspaper distribution agency in Norfolk. We organized the ferries between Portsmouth and Norfolk. With the success of the CIO, it really reached into the South. Everybody was coming to us asking for help in organization.

Rubens: What did this mean for you?

Organizing Other Unions in the South

Jenkins: We were all over the place. There was a whole group of upper-class, Virginians, the Taswells, for instance, who became our allies and friends. This was the whole period in which a section of the southern aristocracy and middle class was caught up and excited by the union organization in the South, and by the New Deal. We had some extraordinary experiences.

Rubens: When you say, for instance, you were trying to organize the news, what was that like? The Newport News was the shipyard.

Jenkins: The Newport News Shipyard was and is one of the biggest shipyards in the world.

Rubens: The Annenburg News. Were they a newspaper?

Jenkins: They were the big distributors of major newspapers and magazines all over the country.

Rubens: So you are working with a variety of unions, though?

Jenkins: Yes. Under the general banner of the CIO. We were organizing the tobacco companies up in Richmond, and the Party was growing. I was Party chairman or secretary in Norfolk, and many others besides seamen were paying Party dues. The Party headquarters were up in Richmond. The Party actually built a center and dedicated it to a guy, I think his name was Snow, who had been killed in Spain. We had an official, legal headquarters of the Party in Virginia.

Graham, who was in a sense the dominant figure in Norfolk, combined this incredible courage on the one hand and was quite crazy on the other. He would have these enormous suspicions that somebody was against him. In many cases, he would want to beat them up, I would stop that. I was influential among a lot of seamen who were brilliant in many ways but whose own disciplines and own emotional lives were extremely chaotic. Not that I was the great tower of strength necessarily.

My first wife, Consie Dixon, did come down after a while. My daughter, Becky, was about a year old, and they stayed for a while before they went back to New York. I and Blackie Alberts, I think, were the only two married guys among all of them. I remember Blackie was married to a Jewish gal, a big, tough gal. I think she complained to me, called me up one night, that he was beating her up. He was drunk. I came over. I remember I fought Alberts for about an hour in his room. He was a huge man.

But it was a bizarre scene. Graham fell in love with some quite beautiful woman working in a restaurant below our headquarters. Controlling him was almost impossible. She was married but he pursued her obsessively.

Then when we set up our headquarters after the strike, we had our first official meeting of the NMU in Norfolk. We had a black secretary.

Rubens: Where did he come from? He is one of these Portuguese guys?

Jenkins: He was a young, slim black guy who came off one of the ships. I remember our first meeting there where the black guys and the white guys sat together. That's the first time that ever happened since Reconstruction. Some white guy got up and complained about it and made an emotional speech about how would you like your sister or mother raped by a black guy. It was a very inflammatory speech. I remember this young, black secretary strolling up to the mike and saying, "I don't know about your sister, but my sister was raped by a bastard like you."

Red and I looked at each other, and I figured, oh fuck, this meeting is going to blow up. We grabbed this white guy, who started to fight and scream, and we threw him out of a second story window. Poor bastard. That quieted the demonstration, I must say. That was the first breakout.

Rubens: This black guy was elected secretary? How had that come to pass?

Jenkins: Yes, by a public vote. We had maybe two or three hundred guys around the hall, and he was elected secretary, and let me also say that these black Cape Verdians were in some cases enormous--they were six-foot five, six-foot six.

Rubens: Did they look and sound different than American blacks?

Jenkins: Yes. They were tremendously strong and had a reputation of doing the hardest work on the Atlantic Coast. You had to be a man of great courage to fuck with them. One guy, I remember, was enormous--about six-foot seven or eight and weighed 300 pounds. He was from the Azores.

Rubens: Do you remember the name of this guy who was elected secretary?

Jenkins: No. But shortly afterwards we were having all sorts of fights, our guys coming in on the streetcars from the seaports refused to sit in the Jim Crow sections. We were organizing a local there of coal trimmers out at Soule Point. Norfolk was a center of enormous coal shipments to Europe. There were about three or four hundred black guys; it was exclusively black who were coal trimmers. We organized them into a coal trimmers union local.

Rubens: Were you getting blacks into the Party at the same time?

Jenkins: I had a Party group of coal trimmers.

Rubens: That was only black?

Jenkins: I think so. I know I tried out the Party's theory of a black nation in the South, which was current then. They looked at me with, "There's a good guy, but what the hell is he talking about?" I tried occasionally to talk about continuous county lines and a black majority. They were intent on breaking the color barrier and getting decent wages. It wasn't even a color barrier. I know in our first negotiation with the Norfolk and Western Railroad, which was the railway who were their employers, when we brought in an almost all black group to do the negotiating, the chairman of the company, who was an old man, had a stroke and subsequently died.

Rubens: Literally?

Jenkins: Right there. One guy who was our spokesman--we called him Grandpa Goodman--it was kind of a play on words--but he had been called Grandpa since he was sixteen because he was so smart, an extraordinary speaker, very eloquent guy. The term Grandpa was an honor.

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It was a very exciting period in the South. Just to give you a sense of just how anarchistic the CP was in a way: Graham had this jail history and had this really erratic history of behavior. Christ, he was good in a fight because I was in two of them where he was absolutely extraordinary. When he was in New York during this period that I originally knew him, he had an affair with the wife of a poet named Orrick Johns. They were both drinking heavily, and I think they were doing what they were doing. Johns broke into the room, and Johns had a wooden leg. Graham knocked him down, poured alcohol over his leg and set it afire. [laughter]

Anyway, I didn't know this, and when I went back up to New York once, Graham begged me to go see Johns and ask his forgiveness--to say he was a different kind of guy and all that. I went to see Johns in the village. Johns let me in after I identified myself and sat across the room with a forty-five across his lap. [laughter] He said he would never forget him, the guy tried to kill him. His wife, Dolores, was sitting with him. She had been on a big drunk and big exploration with Graham.

Actually why Graham had me plead his case was because he wanted to come back to New York. He couldn't come back because of the warrants in New York, I guess. When Graham did come back, he finally was picked up and did three years up in Sing Sing.

Rubens: This is much later after the CIO job--?

Jenkins: It was before I came West. Graham was also the guy who married Bella Dodd. Dodd, who was a leader of the Teachers Union, and of the Communist party (who then became violently anti-Communist), came to see me to tell me she was in love with Graham and asked should she marry him. I said it's all right to have him as a lover, but it's insane to marry him. I described some of these things and his incredible will, violence, and instability--he looked like an angel until you looked closely at his face, he had been stitched up all over the place.

One time he stayed at my mother's house. My mother couldn't believe my stories. He'd call her Mother Jenkins, and he was

unbelievably tender. Which he was, but he was also equally crazy. When he got out of jail, I think he went back almost instantly because he tried to get into the house of a woman who was married to a friend of mine, Hugh Johnson, whom he had had an affair with. He climbed up the side of the house, got into the house, beat her up.

By this time, Bella Dodd had been going through this terribly bitter personal experience. She left the CP, did a book on it.

Rubens: Left him as well?

Jenkins: I guess so. She was a woman plagued by a sense of inferiority. She was terribly heavy, and I don't think she had been very successful with men.

Rubens: How long were you in the South then? It must have been two years because in '39--

Jenkins: Almost two years.

I wanted to add a story about how we got involved in electoral politics. There was a sheriff in the county who died. Graham and I and a couple of others decided we ought to run a candidate. What the hell, we had nothing to lose. We did, and we put every seaman in town out in the whole area. Then we helped elect a guy named [Colgate W.] Darden, who was a minor candidate, to congress from the area. He then became governor, and at one point president of the University of Virginia. The politics that resonated from a little seaman's room down at our headquarters was very important.

Rubens: You drafted him, basically? Why?

Jenkins: Well, we went to him and said, "Do you want our support?"

Rubens: He was a liberal?

Jenkins: He was nothing. He was just a guy, and we said we want a fair shake for labor in the county and some other things. We also, during this time, tried to address civil rights issues.

There was not an anti-poll tax effort. In fact, we paid the poll taxes of about 1800 people in order to get them to vote. But we had a joint march to the Norfolk city hall on a variety of grievances. Black and white marched together, sat down together and had both black and white spokesmen.

In other words, the seamen were a very active social force in this community.

I also went down to Wilmington, North Carolina, during this period, and we organized some nitrate workers and got their wages up--I don't know what the hell to, maybe about seventy cents an hour. It was an all-black plant. Some of the white guys and seamen who were hanging out, who were helping us, said, "That's not a nigger's job anymore; it's a white man's job." There ensued a big struggle.

Rubens: Even though your assignment was maritime, it always bled out into all these other things?

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: It was a general CIO organizing drive?

Jenkins: Well, my friend Warren Hourie, who had been president of the Cab Drivers Union, came down South. They were going to organize Virginia Power and Electric. We helped them organize. Then when the fur workers came down and saw me, they said that there were runaway shops down at Hampton Roads, and they needed to put them out of business. We helped put them out of business.

Rubens: Was that a pretty significant runaway?

Jenkins: Yes. These shops had run away from New York and processed thousands of skins.

Rubens: How did you put them out of business?

Jenkins: By going into the plant, throwing iodine onto the skins, breaking the machines.

Rubens: That's just what those days were like?

Jenkins: That's right.

Rubens: You managed to avoid police and--?

Jenkins: Well, I got this terrible scar there at Hampton Roads leaving the scene of an accident, so to speak. I had hired a car--I paid fifty bucks for it--and it was raining, and the tires got caught in the streetcar tracks. A bunch of black kids were walking on the sidewalk. I figured if I tried to pull it out, because the streetcar was coming, I'd hit them, so I aimed the car at a telephone pole. A window came back and smashed my face.

Also, the sirens were off in the distance because of the place we had broken into. I got on the streetcar, and the guy said, "Jesus Christ, you are going to bleed to death." I said, "Is there a hospital?" He said, "Well, there is a nigger hospital here," Dixie Hospital. So I got off there, and they sewed me up. The guy who sewed my face--I had a cut here and a big cut here [points]--was a black doctor. I had called the union hall in Newport and said, "Look, I'm in big trouble, come get me." I heard the cops out in the hallway inquiring about me. I had clipped the license plates off the car. And then the cab came from Newport News with our Newport News business agent. So I ducked into the cab (because the room I was in was right off the driveway). I got to Newport News and laid up there for three or four days. To get to the Newport News from Norfolk was about a four-hour ferry ride.

Rubens: That's quite a story--very heady times.

Jenkins: Very heady times. We would go up to New York for Party meetings, of course.

Rubens: And you had family up there?

Jenkins: Yes. That's when Bridges showed up, in 1937. B. B. Jones and a variety of other guys.

Rubens: How would you evaluate the success of this organizing drive in the South? Did those union drives take hold, and did the unions remain in place?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. The NMU stayed forever. The work we did in longshore could have had some results if we had in some way been able to create an East Coast and West Coast union. The black leadership would have responded to that. But lacking anything concrete, it was extremely difficult.

Rubens: The nitrate workers?

Jenkins: Nitrate workers stayed. Smithfield Ham stayed. Suffolk Peanut stayed. Hopwell Electric stayed. The Tobacco Union stayed. The other thing that was significant about Norfolk is that it is in a county called Suffolk County where an enormous amount of guys had A.B. certificates and engineer certificates, who would go to sea because it was the Depression and they were also fishermen. It was a real center of scab herding for any strike on the East Coast, and we put a stop to that after a while. So there was a great deal of physical activity going on all the time.

Rubens: How about in terms of the success of Party branches? Did those hold?

Jenkins: Not really. The seamen were too mobile a population. There was always a broad populist current in the South when I was there like the Taswells, and the Knights in Wilmington, North Carolina. So you would run into what was almost a revolution among the upper white middle class, many of whom became very important parts of the New Deal and in the revolution in the South.

The Jewish communities there were much more conservative. In many cases, they were helpful but not like they were up around places like Newburgh and Kingston and places like that. They were old establishments. They were old German-Jewish families that in many cases had been there before the Civil War. They were involved in cotton trade, and merchandising. Many of the big fortunes in the South were southern Jewish fortunes. In many cases, they were a duplicate of their Southern non-Jewish compatriots as far as race was concerned. They were perhaps more liberal. There was a very eloquent and very fine rabbi in Norfolk who was helpful. His name I don't remember.

Rubens: How about other civil rights stuff, per se? The Scottsboro trials, do you remember organizing around that issue?

Jenkins: Well, Scottsboro, we were still involved in it. When I was in New York, I had met Ruby Bates. There was another case, the Angelo Herndon case.

Rubens: The Party ran him for vice president of the United States.

Jenkins: We did things for them.

Rubens: It wasn't a major focus for you?

Jenkins: I don't remember it as a major focus. We gave them money. We helped. We responded to those things.

Rubens: It sounds like you were running all the time.

Jenkins: When we went up to district, Party and CIO meetings in Richmond, those issues came up. It was a very heady time for the Party, which had never had any base in the South before. We were the forefront of that.

Rubens: When you say, "we," you mean the CIO?

Jenkins: Yes. The Ben Davises were further South, Atlanta, Georgia. He became the first Communist city councilman in New York, a black man. He came from a distinguished Republican family in Atlanta. For the whole area around Norfolk and Richmond--we were the

vanguard, so to speak. We left behind, as we usually do, individuals, and movements went on to help change the South.

I left it to go back to New York. I think mostly because, well, the organizing in part was over, and then there were my personal problems. I was breaking up with my first wife, and my child was important to me.

Were your people part of the Left at all?

Rubens: No, not at all.

[Interview 7: February 12, 1988] ##

Rubens: While you were in the South, what was your official relationship with the CIO?

Jenkins: I was director of the CIO Maritime Council of Virginia and North Carolina.

The Structure of the CIO; Relationship to the Communist Party

Rubens: How much contact did you have with CIO headquarters? Were people coming down and evaluating what you were doing? Were they telling you what to do?

Jenkins: No. The guy who was head of my council, and to whom I reported in a sense, was Al Lannon. Lannon, of course, was also, I think at that time, on the National Committee of the Communist party as well.

The Left, to my knowledge, was almost in complete control of the Maritime Council wherever it was. I don't remember any supervision except a coordinated reporting of what was going on, progress reports, and calling for help occasionally when we needed money.

Rubens: That was the impression I had, that you had pretty free reign.

Jenkins: Well, as long as you didn't abscond with money or were drunk. We were all working the absolute limit of hours. We were available for not only a direct working relationship to Maritime but anything else that came up. The only release from that was a trip to New York during which we would meet then with some of the officials of the CIO Council and share reports of what was going on elsewhere.

Rubens: And occasionally, in Richmond, I think you said you went to Party meetings.

Jenkins: Yes.

In those days the CIO, in my section of it anyway, one day you wore a hat of the CIO Council, and the next day you could be at a meeting of the Communist party of Virginia. Your superior or your colleague was also at that meeting. That wasn't true of everybody who was at work. We had a hierarchy of leadership, and at that level we exchanged. I don't really remember a formal structure of the Party outside of these occasional, regional meetings.

As far as Norfolk was concerned, there were people who would collect monthly dues, for instance, and we would send that on. If we had a special appeal for the Scottsboro boys or Angelo Herndon or some other appeal for funds, we would all contribute.

Race Relations in the South

Rubens: And you would send it to New York?

Jenkins: Send it to New York. Occasionally, I guess we would send it to Richmond. The Richmond Center of the CP was named after a guy who was killed in Spain. I think it was Vernon Snow. The fact that we had it out in the open and we had a building--for those days, it was really phenomenal, particularly in the South.

Another thing that was interesting in a way--I was thinking about it after I talked to you. So much has been made of the fact, quite legitimately, that the black revolution started in the late fifties with Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. But there was a revolution of the early CIO which was moving into textile, moving into maritime, moving into chemicals, moving into meat packing, moving into other shipyard unions, fur and leather--all making thrusts into the South.

I accepted the assignment in the South without hesitation even though what I knew of the South was mostly stuff I had read rather than had much experience with. I had bummed through the region as a younger man; I knew about racism but had no sense of the structure of the South. Maybe that was good in a way because we young organizers came into the South with tremendous optimism. We saw no reason why blacks and whites should not get together. We assumed that this Jim Crow was something that was overlaid out of Reconstruction, the failure of Reconstruction.

When we organized that joint march on city hall, blacks and whites together, and sat down at the city council side by side, and

had both black and white spokesmen, we realized we were tearing up a hundred years of reaction as far as race was concerned. At the same time, we didn't have any realization of how this structure was part of the whole repressive system of capitalism in the South. We could quote figures like the Norfolk and Western Railway Lines and the persistence of control of the South by northern capital. When we broke that down, we realized that the southern industry as such was very limited and was still controlled as a result of the victory of the North in the Civil War. The great railways, the great cotton companies, the ship companies were still in the hands of northern capital.

Rubens: Do you mean these very ship companies whose workforce you were specifically organizing?

Jenkins: Yes. So we were always dealing with history in a sense when we really got close to it. A copper mine in Bessemer, Alabama, places like that, which were organized with black/white leadership, were also owned by northern capital.

There was an interesting paper done by a group, in a Labor Research Association, which was a left-wing research group, which laid those facts out very dramatically for us.

Rubens: Was the report done at that time?

Jenkins: Yes. So we really had a feeling that we were taking on the whole system in a way. We understood that, but the detail of Jim Crow, the detail of repression, the detail of wage differential, the detail of women's role in the South were all things we learned as we went along. That we couldn't ride in the same seat up front with a black guy in North Carolina, you had to sit in the back, or he had to sit in the back even though it was his turf.

The fact that we went into the black neighborhoods, particularly as alien white guys, we were under surveillance from the moment we came into that territory. And also every personal relationship we had that transcended the red line of intimacy--blacks to our houses in a white neighborhood--was observed and known to the police almost immediately. But never mind, we just carried on.

Rubens: I had the impression that you were just moving from struggle to struggle and from event to event.

Jenkins: Also, we were audacious. Our guys were tough. The police department in Norfolk, which is a typical Southern police force, had been particularly cruel in the beating up of seamen, particularly picking on some of the black seamen that participated in a strike. One night the two cops who were most known for their brutality were

picked up by a number of our guys, I guess, stripped naked, their guns taken from them, and the shit beaten out of them, and walked back to town and released at the edge of the town, which sent a signal to the whole police force that times had changed indeed. Typically, they would pick you up and throw you into jail there, which happened fairly often.

Rubens: Now was that to prevent any future political action?

Jenkins: Well, up to a point. It got too much one night, and some of the guys sat down and said, "Let's not take this shit any more." Then our guys almost spontaneously decided not to ride the streetcars in Jim Crow sections. There was a long streetcar in from the docks into the center of town. Cops got tired of hassling us. They would wink at a good deal of it.

And we had a lot of trouble with our own guys. I'd say, "You guys are such pigs on the questions of race, how come you want to lay with a black woman, but won't ride a car with a fellow worker?" The actual responses of the guys is unacceptable here. Ultimately, it was pushed away as a disquieting question.

But the truth was that there were a lot of black/white relations in Norfolk and in other southern cities--some tender, some loving, and in other cases--

Rubens: --outright exploitive.

Jenkins: Outright exploitive, yes, but also potentially politically liberalizing.

Rubens: Regarding the march on city hall in Norfolk, how had the blacks who joined in this march organized? Was that your job?

Jenkins: Well, in part because some of the guys were longshoremen. It was totally a black union in Norfolk. Others came through another union there, the clay workers.

Remember that the entire longshoremen's union from Norfolk on down, Charleston, Wilmington, Florida, the Gulf was black longshoremen. There were no white longshoremen. They had three black vice presidents. The ILA had black vice presidents, and every union president and the officials of every local union were black.

Now the other thing was that the whites worked as clerks throughout the system though occasionally that broke down too. Occasionally, you got into towns like New Orleans which had a rich history of greater political and social history. You would run into a white longshore local. The hard work and the union leadership was always black.

It was funny because the Azore blacks did have some relationships with white women, many of them. But in some unbelievable way of the southern white mind, identifying them as Portuguese or from the Azores gave them greater license. But they couldn't flaunt it too much.

Rubens: That was always the case with Africans or Caribbeans.

Jenkins: Longshore was really my main job. The seamen had native seamen leadership, Red Graham and Blackie Alberts, a whole number of others, were long-time seamen. Many of them had come out of the early Wobbly movement and were part of the renaissance of the waterfront unionism which started in New York and other northern cities and in the gulf. They started to move out all over. Many of the original CIO organizers came out of the seamen's union and then went on not only to longshore but to textile.

Rubens: What was the attitude of the ILA to these black longshore locals?

Jenkins: They were all members of the ILA.

Rubens: Did these guys then attend the national conventions?

Jenkins: Oh, sure. They were elected national vice presidents, had all the prerequisites of leadership. For years and years the ILA was being characterized correctly as dominated by the mob. But they were still the biggest per capita black union in the country.

Remember that port cities like Philadelphia were about half-black. Baltimore was about half-black. New York had black locals on the East River, although blacks were not a big factor in New York, but once you moved South, the ILA increasingly became a black union.

Our objective, however, was trying to build ILWU locals. By then we were competing with the ILA, which was an idiotic attempt, frankly, in retrospect, because regardless of the fact that the black longshoremen were attracted to our better conditions, control of hiring and non-corruption, black leadership was in their system. They had all the benefits of leadership. They were the leading citizens of their community as ILA leaders in the South.

Rubens: That sounds like a Party objective.

Jenkins: The only chance we had, and there was some talk early on, was of having a merger between the ILWU and the ILA and it may even have been accomplished except for circumstances which made it impossible. We were really functioning down there as an organizing committee for

the Left. While we were organized, there was no chance of our taking over the ILA or moving them from their positions.

Rubens: By the time you left the South, was that clear? Was that attempt abandoned?

Jenkins: Yes. We had really been general Left organizers in the community. When Bridges came to town, we got everybody in the longshore division to turn out. It was curious that every ILA president showed up to see him. We made all sorts of alliances, and we were well received.

The National Maritime Union Tanker Strike, 1939

Jenkins: I went back North. Then Consie left for the West Coast, and I stayed on. We broke up literally at that point. I stayed on in New York and was involved in the NMU tanker strike, then left about April of '39, and came out to the West Coast.

Rubens: When you went to New York, did you have a specific assignment?

Jenkins: Not initially.

Rubens: Do you want to say something about the tanker strike?

Jenkins: The tanker building industry was a bastion of non-unionism. The employment was heavily Filipino. They tended to live in boarding houses in their own community in Brooklyn, and because of the historic discrimination against Filipinos as well as minorities in the shipping industry, the attraction even of a Left union was very dim. They had their own organizations in a sense, their boarding houses, their groups, et cetera. They massively scabbed during the strike.

I, among others, was assigned to volunteer to go into the boarding houses and make a little speech to come help us picket. We told them that after the strike, we'll see to it that you are members of the union, which they mostly ignored. Then we would break up the boarding houses and proceed to try to frighten them off the ships, which we did fairly successfully.

I still have (as a matter of fact I was looking at it the other day) a release from the tanker committee to ship out, from the strike committee.

Rubens: As far as I recall, this is the first time you really worked in the industry.

Jenkins: No. I had gone to sea before that on the Chipana, a Grace Line ship.

Rubens: We haven't discussed this. Why don't we just now.

Recollections of Work as a Seaman

Jenkins: I made three trips to Venezuela and Colombia. This was after the New York taxi strike and before the South--that's about as specific as I can get now.

I was a member of the NMU. One story is worth telling. We sailed into La Guaira, Venezuela. We were about fifty miles from Caracas, the capital, and a couple of us took a bus ride up to Caracas to see the capital and spend a night. It was there we saw students hanging in the square who had rebelled against the government. They were part of an anti-Gomez movement. The government was totally supportive of American, British, and Dutch oil imperialism.

At Maracaibo we, a guy on the ship, and I, Leon Haskell, discovered where the revolutionary press was. In the square of Maracaibo, there was a pornographic or semi-pornographic bookstore, and we were in there looking at books and discovered underneath the pornography--I think I discovered Engels' The Origin of the Family and a couple of other things, and it became clear that there was a printing press around. So we became friends very quickly with the two men who ran the press, after their initial hesitation.

In Venezuela and Colombia both a big section of town was devoted to what they called the "crib whorehouses" which were not only a place where there were whores, but there were also restaurants and clandestine activities. For instance, the anti-regime groups would meet there. So every trip, I was collecting money off our guys to contribute, then we would give it to identifiable people in the book stores, etc.

I was trying to keep a high moral tone. In Maracaibo, Leon, a big blond guy who had graduated from CCNY when he was sixteen, had kind of a breakdown, and then had gone to sea, stopped wanting to be a genius, and myself had gone into a bar, the German Club. The rest of the crew had gone into a place next door, the Venezuelan. We sat down, and the bar was full of German seamen who were interned there. This was during the period of the phony war. We identified ourselves, Leon and I, for whatever reason, as Jews.

These guys, all Germans, were astonished. First of all, we were atypical in their mind, and we became a little uneasy, but we were drinking. There was a phonograph in the back which was playing Strauss waltzes or something. While there was a slight hostility, there wasn't enough for us to leave. They were talking about the "Jew press" in New York not telling the truth about Hitler.

Rubens: How were you able to talk? Did someone know German?

Jenkins: Yes. They knew enough English, and Leon knew a little German. As a matter of fact, he had learned German by reading All Quiet on the Western Front. He had the kind of mind that was absolutely incredible. In two trips, he learned German.

So Leon went on back to turn the record over or something, and this huge guy in a white suit came over, and he poured his beer on Leon's jacket. Leon came back at that point and hit him and knocked him down. I booted him; I had these heavy work boots on. I kicked him in the head. Then he started to bleed from the mouth, and so everybody jumped up. This guy when he was pouring the beer over the jacket, he kept talking about der Tag, der Tag, the day would come when we Jews would all be destroyed. He turned out to be a commissioner of police at Maracaibo.

There were Germans all through Venezuela, many had been there for tens of years. Within minutes, the police arrived. They rode these little Shetland ponies, carrying long knives, and they pinned us against the wall. Our crew poured in from next door, and there was a standoff. Leon and I were both arrested and taken to a bastille. I had never been deeper in an underground in my life.

##

Luckily, the captain of our ship, the Chipana, was a Christian Socialist. He and I were arguing on the ship, but he was a very gentle man, I must say, for a sea captain. It cost him three hundred bucks to bail us out with the admonition that we never again come to Maracaibo or Venezuela, which we were very happy not to do [laughs] at that point.

There was an enormous amount of smuggling on the ship because a carton of cigarettes was worth about five dollars. Silk stockings, clock radios, et cetera, were very valuable. Everybody on the crew participated, and you could buy the customs with a couple of cartons of cigarettes.

Rubens: You would go on the ship loaded with this stuff? That was a great way of making money.

Jenkins: It sure was. Most of the guys were good at spending it, too, buying things in Maracaibo--all through that area. It was the time of the Spanish Civil War as well. We'd get on the dock, and we would raise slogans like, "No Pasaran--They Shall Not Pass." Most of the stevedores would crowd around us. We were feeding guys. I was pantryman on the ship. I opened up the food ice boxes when we got to Maracaibo.

We did two ports in Colombia, the same thing there. So we made immediate friends and contacts when we identified ourselves as anti-Franco. For our recreation and time off the ship we would go to an area of the city where seamen, longshoremens, and workers generally congregated in cafes that were frequently adjacent to whorehouses. Prostitutes were available. There was a great sense of fraternity and discussions about the situation in Colombia as well as worldwide.

Rubens: Were you always a cook?

Jenkins: Yes. I was a pantryman. I was mostly a cook's helper.

Rubens: How did you get assigned to that job?

Jenkins: Just took it, that's all, out of the union hiring hall. I was called a pantryman, a combined job in the stewards' department.

Rubens: How long were these trips?

Jenkins: Thirty days round trip.

Rubens: So you did that a good three or four times before you came out West? So you had first-hand knowledge, I imagine, when you were telling these wonderful stories about creating chests of Left literature and tossing the mission literature off the ship.

Jenkins: Also, there must have been hundreds of Party members. They flocked into the Party the way birds go to Capistrano.

Rubens: Why?

Jenkins: Well, these were men whose lives were lived in terribly deprived circumstances, boarding houses, missions, isolated from mainstream American life, and they were suddenly regarded by the CP as proletarians leading a revolution and changing the nature of the world. They were given a whole new dignity and stature, and they responded to it with enormous enthusiasm. They flocked into the Party. I would say at the height of the NMU on the East Coast, there must have been a thousand Party members.

It's not true of longshore. There was a handful there, but in the seamen's unions, there was an extraordinary embracing of the Party, and all of them who had been to sea had brilliant ideas of how to reach their fellow seamen, how to break down the sterility of life. They were tough; they knew about police; they knew about hospitals; most of them had done a little time in jail for one reason or another. So life had knocked them out because in every port, they were shaken down a bit.

The big problem with seamen was to get past the waterfront. To get past the whorehouses and the bars, to get uptown was a major job. You met wonderful guys, and also you met guys who, in many cases, turned out to be so faulted by life. They were in the Party leadership, and as adversity increased and the Party's position became more isolated, they left.

An extraordinary amount of them went to Spain and many of them died. Joe Bianca was called the bravest man in Spain. The seamen were the biggest single section of the guys who went to Spain.

Rubens: These were single men, for the most part?

Jenkins: I think almost without exception. I think almost in recruiting, they would not take married men. Guys like Bill Bailey and a whole lot of others were not married. They were extraordinary figures in many ways. They were wonderful in crisis. For the long run, many of them neither had the education nor were trained. Guys like Walter Stack, the runner, were sent to the Lenin School in 1930. Stack spent a year or so in Moscow.

Rubens: He was a seaman in San Francisco?

Jenkins: He was a Marine Fireman and an official of that union. After he was blacklisted he became a hod carrier. His brother, Joe, was a seaman out on the East Coast. The brothers were of Polish ancestry, and had lived in a Detroit orphanage.

Bailey was typical, too. He was head of a machine gun division in Spain. Bailey came out of an Irish family--ten kids--the father, a drunkard, the mother, a charwoman. He went to school to about the third grade and then skipped to the waterfront.

Then you would meet guys who had been declassified, who came to the waterfront who had gone to college, whom the system had thrown out in one way or another.

Rubens: On the ship at night when you were sailing, were there political education meetings?

Jenkins: Well, there was a tremendous amount of talk. We discouraged the gambling, the bullshit, the woman talk. Then we started to challenge the guys, truly, about their relationships. Of course, we had a hell of a lot of women who were anxious to help--in ports like New York. Suddenly, the world opened up to those guys, as I discussed earlier. They were suddenly taken into Jewish intellectual homes, and the whole family welcomed them in spite of their tattoos, in spite of their naivete about urban life.

Significantly, a lot of these guys who went to sea came from inland industrial America who had never seen the sea. They wanted to migrate out of the coal towns that they had grown up in, or the Nebraska farm lands. The European seamen like Jack Lawrenson, the Irish, were more of a romantic mold. Going to sea was a way of escaping from Ireland in a way. More profoundly it was a way of life that allowed them a kind of revolutionary activity.

Rubens: There must have been stiff competition for jobs in those days; it was the Depression.

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: You talked so much about shifting from job to job. Was it easy to get a maritime job?

Jenkins: No, no, but it was fairly easy to get a certificate, which you can't get these days unless you have a job lined up in advance.

Rubens: The certificate was--?

Jenkins: It's a certificate issued by the Maritime Commission, without which you can't sail unless you have it. You could make a pier jump, for instance Saturday a ship was about to sail, and guys didn't show up because they had missed the boat or were drunk or something. You'd be on the pier or near a bar or something where they would say, "Hey, we need a couple of guys."

Rubens: The wages you started to say--

Jenkins: Were lousy. \$62 a month.

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Dancing
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V LIVING AND WORKING IN CALIFORNIA

The Move to California, 1939 ##

Rubens: Shall we push ahead in time just a little more? Your life's a bit in disarray. You had broken up with your wife; she moved out to California with your child.

Jenkins: She inherited, what seems like very little now, a couple thousand dollars. She came out here with our daughter, Becky. We had broken up, but exactly what our relationship was, was left suspended. Then she wrote me a couple of letters saying that she loved me and she needed me out here, et cetera.

Rubens: Did she come here because her father was here?

Jenkins: Well, this was where she grew up. When she returned in 1938, she got involved with the Simon Lubin Society and the early organization of agricultural workers. Lubin had been an early pioneer. She went up to Marysville and Yuba City during some fruit pickers strikes.

I decided I would come to California and I missed her; I guess, to be perfectly honest, I also missed Becky terribly and felt that I shouldn't allow her to grow up without me. I shipped out to San Francisco on the SS Columbia, a twenty-eight day trip through the Panama Canal. Consie was living with another woman, and then we reconstituted a household up on Lombard Street. Then I went to sea on the Pacific Coast and up in Alaska. For those days, it was a fair amount of money, about three hundred bucks a week, including endless overtime.

Consie got a job at the World's Fair over at Treasure Island. Through connections with her name, she became the

receptionist at the art collection at the World's Fair. But we grew apart; we had some tumultuous times.

Rubens: Did you know anyone out here?

Jenkins: My Left connections preceded me. I knew guys from New York. Merv Rathborne, who was head of the CIO Council here, I knew from the ACA. I had a reputation that was easily identifiable out here. I became active in the Party almost as soon as I arrived. I got active in political issues very quickly. I knew Bill Bailey from the East Coast. I knew Al Richmond who had come out and become editor of the People's World, and I knew other seamen from the NMU.

Work Along the West Coast

Jenkins: I started to pick up casual work on the waterfront out of the longshore hall [ILWU Local 10], the warehouse hall [ILWU Local 6], and out of the Bay and River Bargemans Hall [ILWU Local 22--absorbed into ILWU Local 10 after World War II]. I very quickly participated in the debates in these halls, and I became known as an articulate speaker. I also bore with me a letter from Blackie Myers, vice president of the NMU, identifying me as the former education director of the NMU. I transferred my book out here to the West Coast Marine Cooks and Stewards. That union was in a perpetual fight between the Left and non-Left leadership for the leadership of the union, and I became a floor leader and speaker there.

Opposing the Copeland Bill

Jenkins: Senator Royal Copeland of New York introduced a bill in 1938 which made it mandatory that when you got your discharge from a ship, that the captain or the discharging officer also included an opinion of your work and your general attitude, which we felt was generally discriminatory and was outside the authority of the officer.

We refused to accept the bill. Attached to the bill was a certificate that we had to carry off each ship when we left. We had public bonfires on the waterfront. We called it the "Fuck Bill," et cetera.

As a matter of fact, there were huge bonfires on the waterfront, which are probably in the records; photographs were in the Dispatch (the ILWU newspaper) and other maritime papers of the time, and the commercial papers.

With the Marine Cooks and Stewards

Rubens: What were the differences you encountered with the West Coast Marine Cooks and Stewards?

Jenkins: Well, the Marine Cooks was a phenomenal union in many ways. Unlike the East Coast, the individual unions, in terms of departments, still existed--Cooks for the cooks department, Firemen for the below decks, Sailors for the deck workers. Marine Cooks had a couple of interesting provisions. One, that a black officer under the constitution was authorized in ports of San Francisco and Seattle. That history went back to the fact that the passenger ships up and down the coast, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, had an exclusively black membership in the stewards department.

It was the only area of the maritime industry in the West Coast where blacks were employed. There were no blacks in the Marine Firemen, none in the sailors' unions, and none in the officers' unions. So the blacks were an important membership group in the Marine Cooks.

Secondly, important sections of the union were dominated by gay or homosexual members. The national secretary for many years, Frank McCormick, was an identifiable homosexual. Manuel Cabral, our janitor in the San Francisco headquarters, was known on both coasts as a tough Hawaiian. Yet he knitted doilies for furniture, and if anybody attempted to put his name out in the street, there was trouble; Manuel was a very tough guy, but he was also known as the "Honolulu Queen."

Rubens: So they were out front among the industry about being homosexual, if not wholly public?

Jenkins: Yes. Paul Boyles, a chief dispatcher for many years in San Francisco, a very attractive guy who came out of the West Virginia coal mining districts, was a homosexual. At one time, when he was in the Party, the CP made a real effort to convert him to heterosexuality on the theory that homosexuality was determined by environment. I recall that Revels Cayton found a willing female temptress for Paul--a woman named Wally Miller [later Wally Miller Geist] who struggled hard, I'm sure, to prove

that homosexuality was not native to the male species, but failed. We all were waiting breathlessly to hear about this attempted conversion. The attempt expressed our naivete and prejudice at the time, and when it failed finally, and he went back to his former lover, I don't know what we concluded. We just concluded that one failed, that other conversions were possible, I guess.

Of course, the Party forbade membership to open homosexuals. Boyles left the union after a number of years and became a shoreside chief steward for, I think, the Grace Line back East. He was an extremely likable and attractive guy.

Issues of Sex, Sexuality, and Race

Jenkins: In certain departments on the ship, the big ships particularly, there were major cliques of homosexuals. There was the waiters, the bedroom stewards, wine stewards, et cetera. Like all groups, I suppose, men waited for those jobs if they were gay. By and large aboard ship there was no discrimination against homosexuals on the passenger ships. On the big passenger ships like the Matson Line, American President Lines, phenomenal as it seems, a significant percentage of the men were homosexuals.

There were strict rules on those ships, at least on the ships that I was on, the Coolidge, the Monterey. The fo'c'sle [forecastle] was your home.

Rubens: The fo'c'sle was--?

Jenkins: Where you sleep. Anybody who intruded on that privacy was up for discipline because the men slept twenty or thirty in a fo'c'sle. So the showering, nakedness was a commonplace activity. So if men attempted to penetrate that, there was anger about it and rejection. As a matter of fact, as I remember, there was a rule that if you did that, you were up for expulsion from the union; although nobody in the history of the Marine Cooks was ever expelled for it.

One case I was involved in, where an old timer was sitting naked in Honolulu; it was a hot port on a hot night; he was approached by one of the gay stewards. A fight ensued. The guy's eyeglasses were broken. The man was brought up on charges. When we got into the port of San Francisco, we all went up to the union hall. There must have been 500 of us. The Coolidge was an enormous ship, and I was elected chairman of the meeting.

Rubens: You would elect a chair from the floor, someone to represent the grievance? You didn't have a designated structure?

Jenkins: We didn't have a designated chairman. The only issue on the floor was the trial of this guy for assaulting another member. I said, "Well, the discussion is open." Nobody got up to speak. I said, "Well, these are the charges of what happened. Anybody want to speak, yea or nay?" I said, "The rules are specific. All those for expelling (whatever the guy's name was), say aye." Not a word. I said, "All opposed?" Nobody said a goddamn word. So I said, "Well, somebody make a motion to table then." That was then discussed, and then somebody made a motion. That was the end of it.

Rubens: There was enough anger, upset, or curiosity that 500 would go to a meeting.

Jenkins: I think most of them were there to protect the guy who was under charges. When it came actually to take somebody's bread away from him for his homosexual activities, although among certain members of the sections of the crews, it was not acceptable conduct, by and large there was no real criticism of it. It was well known that one of the leaders of the Marine Firemen was a notorious sodomist.

It was equally true among sailors. Many had homosexual relationships. These were sexual alliances, perhaps more than homosexual relationships.

Rubens: Society was not as tolerant then?

Jenkins: Yes. Most didn't live together as open homosexuals. Some of that went on, I guess, but away from the eyes of the waterfront. By and large, homosexual conduct included many men who were married and ordinarily had man-woman relationships. Getting, as they would say, a blow job from a guy aboard ship was acceptable to many seamen.

Rubens: Among this group of working men, was this distinct behavior as opposed to the sailors that you had worked with on the East Coast?

Jenkins: It was commonplace. It was never acceptable in longshore or in other industries. But among seamen, whether they were cooks, sailors, or pilots aboard the same ship, it was. There was rarely a ship, a passenger ship, that you were on that there wasn't an identifiable group of homosexual men. If you were

seeking a homosexual contact aboard a ship, a passenger ship, it was available to you very easily.

Rubens: Do you mean between passengers?

Jenkins: No, no.

Rubens: Was there a strict line drawn between crew and passenger?

Jenkins: Very rarely did that come up. I remember being on the Monterey, and I was a bar porter. One night I went out. The old man, captain, would come down and put longitude and latitude positions in bottles, and I would throw them off the side so they would float ashore some place. I guess they were a way to identify currents. It was a beautiful night in the South Seas. Right behind where I was throwing the bottle, there was a pool. Behind the pool, there was a little cabin on the top of it, and I watched a couple go up there in silhouette, both of them undressed.

I was fascinated. They started to make love. He went down on her. By this time, I was absolutely riveted. You couldn't see their faces. I turned around. All the passengers who were dancing had come out and were watching this. It was around midnight. The bo's'n [boatswain] came on at 12 o'clock, the 12-4 shift, turned the lights on, a huge search light. I must say they had an enormous presence. They just picked up their clothes and climbed down the other side.

I must say that within a matter of minutes, the entire passenger group had disappeared into their cabins, inspired no doubt. It was extraordinary.

Rubens: So in terms of the politics of the union or power relationships within the union, do you think homosexuality was a factor?

Jenkins: There is no question. There is no question that Hugh Bryson, who was elected president, was an extremely attractive guy and was much admired by the homosexual membership, both for his policies and his liberalism on this issue as well as the fact that he was extremely, physically attractive.

I remember when I was with Marine Cooks and Stewards sitting in a union meeting where Bryson was speaking--it was at 150 Golden Gate Avenue, which was the ILWU headquarters--a packed meeting--and I was sitting next to two gays, and one turned to me and said, "Isn't he beautiful? Isn't he wonderful?" When Bryson announced he was the father of a child, the entire place,

including the gays, just burst out into the most extraordinary applause, and I was totally taken aback.

Frank McCormick was a charming man, who had been a song writer at one time. He told us that although he had tried sleeping with a woman once, it was so disgusting that he would never attempt it again.

Stories of this sort of thing were everywhere, and I discovered to my surprise years later that a number of the young guys who were in the Party, who were leaders of the union in the Northwest, had come in as a result of getting in through guys like Manuel Cabral and Frank McCormick and their lovers outside. In fact, it was repeated that you could also get into the union by letting Frank "cornhole" you. Then they would come into the union. This was a Left-dominated union, of course. Yet the Party would never face it. I'm sure there was an enormous amount of repressed homosexuality and bisexuality that the Left would never admit to.

Another phenomenon aboard the ships in the Northwest vis a vis homosexuality had to do with Filipinos who were going to Alaska every summer to work in the canneries. I was steerage steward on a number of ships where most of the Filipinos went up to Alaska and came back. You walked down into the steerage during any evening, and the amount of male copulation going on was enormous. This seemed to be accepted culturally and sexually among the Filipinos.

Rubens: This wasn't homosexuality; this was sexuality.

Jenkins: Sexuality--

Rubens: This was what was available.

Jenkins: There seemed to be no great cultural barrier to it. The Filipino men had labor negotiations in the canneries. They asked that as part of their union contract, they would have a nurse for every thirty men. I said to those guys, "What the hell do you need a nurse for. You've got first aid and doctors who fly to Alaska." They said, "Come on, Dave, we need a nurse." These same men that you would see--

Rubens: Did they get the nurses?

Jenkins: No. But given the slightest opportunity, these same Filipino men would marry. There was such hideous discrimination against the Filipinos in the Northwest that if a white woman came down to the ship to greet a Filipino crew member, and there were a number of

them; and if they would marry, there was so much anger and racism among the white seamen. They would refer to that "gook" married to a white woman or that whore married to a Filipino man. It was terrible. It was not untypical of even "better" guys.

The status of the Filipino in many ways was infinitely worse than the blacks. The Filipinos were totally excluded from every union in Seattle except our union.

Rubens: You said that the blacks were primarily stewards. Was there a Left strategy to open up the other unions?

Jenkins: Well, yes. It was all led by the CP. Walter Stack was a business agent in San Francisco. For years, he attempted to get blacks into the union. When he finally did ship a black, one Saturday when the hiring hall was closed, it was used against him in the next election, and he was defeated for the first time, under the slogan, "Do you want to share fo'c'sle with a man black as the ace of spades?"

Rubens: You stated that in Seattle and San Francisco, one of the elected officials there had to be a black in the MCS. How did that ever get through?

Jenkins: We had a black patrolman for years in Seattle, Charlie Nichols, and a couple of black guys in San Francisco who rotated in leadership. That exact history someday I will find out from Revels. I think it was unique. In a way, I think, it was almost symbolic, typical if not symbolic, of what happened in the ILA in the South. Black leadership from Norfolk on down. There was no intent to import white leaders on top of black locals.

Rubens: And no attempt to really integrate the blacks into white locals? So you acknowledged that.

Jenkins: Right. We had chief stewards who were black; we had key personnel. It is interesting in its history because blacks really from the time of the cotton trade even on the slave ships who were skilled deck men and engine men worked in all departments, even on the slave ships that were in the cotton trade.

In 1863, I think, there was a union of masters, mates, et cetera, so that the history of black seamen's participation goes back historically a long way. But on the West Coast, there were and remains to this day almost no blacks in sailors' unions. There are no blacks in the Marine Firemen. There is no campaign these days to do anything about it. Marine Cooks remains the only union that continues to have black membership, but it is not

true of NMU and SIU on the West Coast. It is difficult to fight in a way because let's assume you get one black on a ship or two blacks on a ship surrounded by a sea of hostility of another ten, twenty, thirty men. The morale of the black guy has to be enormous, not only enormous but being outspoken in many cases was tantamount to isolation.

My son, I think I told you, shipped out when he was sixteen. His best friend was a black guy who came down to see him off. They kissed and hugged as they went up the gang plank. He said the whole ship characterized him as a result during the entire trip to Japan and India. These were men whose whole lives were lived on the ship.

The Duties of the Steward

Rubens: Do you want to say something just about what it was to be a steward? I just don't know what the work was that you literally did.

Jenkins: Chief stewards' work was ordering all the food supplies for the whole ship, and preparing the menus. The stewards had to see that all the rooms where the men sleep are taken care of, et cetera. But their main function was food--cooking, serving, cleaning galley messes.

Rubens: --both the crew's and the--?

Jenkins: --and the officers. There was usually a separation. The officers had an officers' mess. That included all officers in the engine and deck department, which also included chief steward.

Rubens: Did you wear a uniform?

Jenkins: Well, you could have a white coat on the ships that I was on.

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Getting back to my early days shipping out from the West Coast, I made a trip on the Matson Line passenger ship Monterey to Australia, and was one of the ship's delegates aboard the ship. And then, when I was in Seattle, there were fights there which I immediately got into. Dave Beck of the Teamsters was attempting to raid the Left-led Machinists' union at Boeing. We

helped man the Boeing machinist picket lines and fought the Teamster goons.

Rubens: You were up in Seattle because you had shipped out?

Jenkins: Yes. At another point I was on a coastwise lumber schooner, and got off in Seattle because the Alaska run promised much higher income.

In San Francisco I had met the CIO people, and they were naturally part of the Left too. Almost fifty years ago, I lived near the Pike's Market which is now so famous, on First Street. I knew the leadership of the ILWU in the main and I knew a lot of black leaders, too.

Becoming a Political Leader in San Francisco

Jenkins: I came to be known as a political agitator. For example, during that period, the Left decided not to endorse Roosevelt. Bridges and the Left were trying to get an endorsement for Wendell Willkie because of John L. Lewis's opposition to Roosevelt.

After Roosevelt's speech "A plague on both your houses," his neutrality on Spain--I got up and made a one-hour speech against Roosevelt in M.C.S. Union Hall. I think I got two votes out of 350 members, and some guy tried to stab me on the stairway. Roosevelt's popularity was greater than ours, I can tell you that.

I also used to soapbox down at skid row and soon became known that way--as a Communist.

Rubens: So you just quickly established yourself here and were in the fray?

Jenkins: Yes. Revels Cayton, whom I had known in San Francisco, had a family who came from Seattle, and I met his family when I was up there. They were a famous black family. I became well known in the black community quickly. I was a model of sobriety, too.
[laughter]

Rubens: What does that mean, so many of them weren't?

Jenkins: Well, that was in '39. I was twenty-five. I was always a good speaker. I had had a lot of experience, so I very quickly came into leadership almost wherever I went, which led to some of the

old timers not liking me because they figured I got leadership too easily. I never really ran for office, ever. I was also very big, six-foot four-inches, and 250 pounds. I looked much tougher than I really was.

Rubens: You had kind of a natural leadership, and you became a spokesperson?

Jenkins: Well, I was not like Jimmy Herman, the past president of ILWU, who went for the main chance as soon as he got into the cooks and longshoremen. He took one look at the union and realized that he had a chance to become the president. That never occurred to me, really. So that I always saw my role in those days as a Left educational force rather than a union officer.

Many people have said to me in later years, "Why don't you run for public office?" I think very early I became so identified as a red, left-winger that that would have been hard for me in those circumstances. Even though we were Left-led unions, the origin of leadership was different really. I suppose I could have run. But all my jobs were either originally appointed or volunteer ones that became full-time paid work.

The Complexity of Leadership

Jenkins: When I volunteered for the California Labor School (which we'll get to), I quickly became director of it. While I had imaginative ideas about working-class education, to head a school administratively and working out a really comprehensive curriculum and all the necessities of the school that rapidly grew, I had no experience for it. I made terrible errors in relationship to people. While I learned very quickly, Christ knows I wish I had known more than when I had gone in. Later when we had full-time classes under the G.I. Bill as well as full-time work with the Hawaiian ILWU, I learned a great deal.

Rubens: Could you say more about those initial mistakes?

Jenkins: Well, the school became enormous almost overnight. On the other hand, as it became enormous, how to control it through leadership, promotion of other leaders in the school, personal relations, personnel objectives, all of that which I assumed if one was a Marxist-Leninist fell naturally into place, and of course that was not true at all. I brought other people into the leadership, for example, Hazel Grossman, in the social sciences; in the drama department, Mara Alexander. We had a bigger art

school than the San Francisco Art Institute. It grew amazingly. It was headed by Margaret De Patta.

Then there was my relationship with women. I knew all the rhetoric about equality. But the truth was that I had a complex web of sensibilities coming in succession out of a Jewish Left matriarchal household, then out of the Bohemian part of the Greenwich Village, and out of the years on the waterfront. Both my vocabulary as well as my propensities were open for legitimate criticism. [laughter]

On Trial by the Communist Party for Chauvinism

Rubens: Were you ever brought up on charges of chauvinism? And the term at the time referred to male dominance and privilege, is that right?

Jenkins: Yes, I was brought before the Party Security Commission. I think it was Hazel Grossman and Mara Alexander who brought the charges.

I was roundly criticized for conduct and language at a party. I was not charged with keeping women leadership out so much but for my personal conduct as such. It was a legitimate criticism. I was referred to by Hazel as a genius. But there were huge gaps in my education, et cetera.

Rubens: Did you accept the criticism?

Jenkins: Yes, I did. But I was somewhat resentful.

Rubens: It was a pretty remarkable phenomenon, the women having the capacity to do that!

Jenkins: There were a whole bunch of remarkable women in the Party and in the Labor School, not only Hazel, who had been educated at a convent, and lived with Edith at UC and learned Marxism in school. (She was teaching the three volumes of Marx, which she had actually read.)

And Mara Alexander was a very dramatic, flamboyant person who would refer to herself as having gypsy blood; and she was a very dominant figure. Margaret De Patta, who set up the art school, had an international reputation as a designer. She led a Bauhaus revival at our school. We must have had a total of twenty women, as teachers there and administrators.

There was some early lesbian activity, among some women leaders, and artists, such as Frida Koblick and others. But the truth of the matter is that we really had a great leadership. Also, the CP leader in education was a woman: Celeste Strack, who was the education director of the state CP. I was directly responsible to work with her on the school. Louise Todd--state organizational secretary--was an extraordinary figure, and Oleta O'Connor Yates, northern California chair of the Party.

So the Party leadership itself was dominated by women, at least in the San Francisco area.

Rubens: I think it was unusual here, which is why I wrote a paper about that very topic, and how I came to know you and Edith.

I would like to discuss a little more your "trial." It's not a surprise. You go to the meeting knowing certain charges are going to be discussed?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. They tell you that you are brought up on charges. So you proceed to the meeting. They present their case.

Rubens: Do you remember who chaired that meeting?

Jenkins: No. If you did show sufficient humility and accept the criticism, and I did, it went more easily. And I know some of it was laying it on a little bit. But you were facing your peers, people that you were involved with personally and socially and academically. Not to accept that criticism when they were all looking you dead in the eye, so to speak, would have been outrageous in a way. And they were mostly correct.

Rubens: How did you literally sit? Was it like a trial? Were you sitting up?

Jenkins: Well, you came in and there was a security commission which was made up of a half a dozen people. If they had other people who wanted to testify about it, they were invited.

Rubens: Did they literally sit at a head table in the meeting?

Jenkins: No, no. There wasn't a head table, but there could have been a head table. I don't ever remember that as formidable. I don't think I attended other sessions besides my own.

Rubens: So it's a special convening; it's not part of an ongoing meeting?

Jenkins: It was an apparatus, a security apparatus. Rudy Lambert was head of it in San Francisco and Lee Kutnick, who is still around, was a leader of it. Rudy and I were friends. After a while, I rebelled against what I thought was his narrowness and endless surveillance. He had a brother, Walter Lambert, who was trade union director of the Party, whom I was attached to. Rudy was married to Louise Todd, second in command of the state CP. Walter left the Party after the Duclos letter.

The question of acculturation was a very complicated one for seamen particularly. I was at a Party meeting in New York where there were about fifty or sixty of us Party members. I remember one guy came off a ship to the meeting. We were being critical of the Party, and he said he came up to the Party headquarters and there was this guy playing stick figure with this "broad" (that was the term he used). It was a shock, but we went on with the meeting. He was actually reprimanded, criticized. But it was not unusual for some of these guys to talk about, "He is black as the ace of spades."

The terminology was the terminology of the American working class in a chauvinistic way. The cleansing, so to speak, was not uncomplicated. We had Party women leaders. One was a black woman who was an extremely charismatic national leader of the Party. They were struggling, too. They had come to accept chauvinistic terms. They didn't have the tremendous militancy of the contemporary feminist movement where everything is defined, so to speak.

But in any case, I straddled two worlds. I was one of the few guys on the waterfront who always kept my ties there, occasionally going to sea, occasionally going back to the longshoremen. But I had also come out of this other world of education which I picked for myself; and of course, I had the experience of living in Greenwich Village. There were not many Jewish longshoremen. The model of my mother, not as a political figure, but just as a woman was an extraordinary one. A single woman raising three children by herself. So I was basically respectful of women and certainly not only accepting, but encouraging of women's leadership.

Educational Activities for the CIO

Rubens: Before we go on to discuss the Labor School more systematically, I want to clarify what your Party assignment was in the trade

union section, and how you became more involved in politics and legislation.

Jenkins: I was active. Come on, Rathborne says, you did the Copeland Bill fight, come on and stay ashore and do full-time work as legislative director of the San Francisco CIO Council, which I was delighted to do. One assignment would follow another. I went from Labor's Non-Partisan League¹, then into the Pacific Coast Maritime Council, a coalition of interest groups, doing legislative stuff, then I did some stuff statewide on education.

Meanwhile, I was a growing force in the Marine Cooks and Stewards. I became one of their spokesmen. At the state convention of the CIO, I spoke and carried the Left union position, so to speak. Archie Brown was at the convention directing the Party delegates along with Ben Dobbs from Los Angeles.

Rubens: It's up to you whether you want to talk a little bit about what you did with Labor's Non-Partisan League. I think I remember Estolv Ward telling about you at a New Year's Eve party. I wonder if it had to do with that period because Estolv was involved with Labor's Non-Partisan League.² They were going to run him as head of the CIO. Wasn't that the choice?

Jenkins: Well, a guy who is currently around, Jim San Jule, was state director of Labor's Non-Partisan League, and I was the San Francisco area director. I happened to have been a main money-raiser. San Jule came out of the cooperative movement at Cal, afterwards became a national housing expert and is currently back here in San Francisco working. We recently celebrated our fiftieth anniversary at a lunch--just the two of us; it was fifty years ago we became friends during the LNPL.

LNPL was turned over to us. They had already won the victory of electing a governor, Culbert Olson, and U.S. Senator, Sheridan Downey. Keeping the thing together became a major problem. Our assignment, I would say, was mainly keeping Labor's Non-Partisan League alive. A guy named Burke from the Webb Pressmen's Union was with us. Generally, it was an attempt to retain an apparatus which sprang into life and was tremendously successful for one election. The main slogan of the successful

¹The political and legislative arm of the CIO and AFL.

²Estolv Ward, Organizing and Reporting on Labor in the East Bay, California, and the West, 1925-1987, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1989.

campaign was Free Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, which was done right after the election.

Rubens: You're speaking of the '38 California governor's election?

Jenkins: Yes. And then LNPL deteriorated after that. I'm sure we supported local candidates, raised money, gave advice, et cetera, but it gradually withered and disappeared. I went back to sea briefly during the war, first on the Arthur Middleton, a troop carrier, and then on the S.S. Coolidge. There were trips to New Zealand and Australia, and then when I came in, went into full time working at the Tom Mooney Labor School, as director.

Rubens: The Labor School, I think, is going to be a good separate story. What about your role as statewide education director for the CIO?

Jenkins: Well, I was generally not paid for that, but I worked doing special sessions for the unions. Some would go to Asilomar, a retreat of sorts near Monterey, California, like the Electrical Workers for example, and I would help them organize a three-day school where I would speak on black history and a variety of other subjects.

I organized this through the state CIO. I worked with the Cannery Workers; I went to the Electrical Workers, and UCAPAWA [United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America]. I worked with Luisa Moreno in a couple of statewide schools. She was a Guatemalan-born agricultural leader of UCAPAWA.

Rubens: Statewide schools meant what?

Jenkins: For example, a whole union would send up leadership people. We'd do everything from an overall trade union point of view, the specifics of how to organize a union local--elections, dues, et cetera. I did a lot of those. Sometimes, the Alameda Labor Council would do it, and I would be brought in to teach and help organize.

Rubens: You say you did this more as a volunteer.

Jenkins: I would get paid by the local union for doing it, but I never was paid by the state CIO.

Rubens: The state CIO was a pretty shaky organization at this point, isn't that right?

Jenkins: Not really. Rathborne was state secretary by then. It was such a long time ago, however.

Rubens: It is long ago. But I think the state apparatus was pretty weak. Even the San Francisco CIO Council, which had strong leadership, suffered terribly for lack of money and political attacks against it.

We have yet to discuss your legislative lobbying for the CIO as well.

Jenkins: Yes. I'd go up to Sacramento for particular bills but mostly internal mobilization and teaching about the importance of politics as part of the trade union movement.

Meeting Edith Jenkins

Rubens: You met Edith about this time, didn't you?

Jenkins: Yes. About '41. I met her at a dance, a Spanish refugee benefit at the Italian American Club in North Beach, and we started not to date, but we started to know each other. She had just broken up with her first husband, Emil Geist, who was a Spanish teacher at Cal. She was married for a couple of years. And I had broken up with Consie. But Edith was very moral about all this because I was still married. She heard I was going to ask her out, and she went away for a weekend and determined if I called, she was not going to see me. When I called her and said, "What are you doing tonight?" she said, "Nothing." I think that was the start.

Edith told me afterwards that she told her mother she didn't think she should go because she was attracted to me and I was married. Her mother said, "Don't be so moral. You've just been asked to dinner."

Rubens: You were in separate branches of the Party, with separate assignments?

Jenkins: Yes. Before that I saw Edith at Louise Rosenberg Bransten's. I was working out of a warehouse and met Louise who headed the Civil Liberties Council. She was a very rich woman whose father and uncle had set up the Rosenberg Foundation and had left her a great deal of money, which she continued to use all her life for the Left.

Rubens: Was Louise in the Party?

Jenkins: No. But she bought the press for the People's World. So I was working out of the warehouse hall, and I had a date with Louise. I arrived at her house. She was scared, I think, to be alone with me. She invited Edith to be with me. So Edith and I left together.

Rubens: This was before the dance or you had already--?

Jenkins: This was after the dance. So Edith swears--you know she had a car--that she never drove it after that--that I took the car over. But I don't remember that. Shortly after I moved in with her on Green Street.

Jenkins Activities and the Role of the Communist Party in California

Jenkins: When I was assigned to the California Labor School, it dramatically changed all of my relationships to the Party. As far as the Party was concerned, I was now more important. I went on the political board of the County Party shortly after I became director. Then I was put on the state board of the Party. It was a party of about 10,000 members by then, and I guess I was put on because of my mass contacts through the California Labor School and my general work and substantial background in the trade union movement, and, of course, then specifically with my wide-ranging contacts with money raising and the publicity that I was doing. I suddenly became a factor statewide in the Party, especially when we opened schools in Oakland and Los Angeles.

Membership in the Party during the war years swelled enormously after the second front. It was dropping off when we organized "The Yanks Are Not Coming Committee." I was the head of the waterfront section of that committee. Then the Party made this abrupt switch as soon as the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. There was, however, a strong working class sentiment to stay out of Europe, especially among Irish, Italians, German working class groups.

The Party membership generously supported the school raffles, parties, bazaars. The school had an enormous backup in the community among the foreign born, but also among the growing CIO unions under the leadership of Bridges and Goldblatt and ten or twelve other unions, and even the unions that we didn't lead nationally. In many cases, we had Left leadership here on the coast. A number of them were open Communists or close to that.

I was on the political board at this time, and to be on the political board of the Party during that period was to have a relatively powerful position. The Party controlled the People's World, which was a daily newspaper. There was an enormous educational effort. We had bookstores in every major city in the state and must have had close to one hundred full-time people.

Rubens: Who were some of the actual organizers or functionaries you worked with?

Jenkins: Functionaries were every place. At every CIO convention, Archie Brown, Ben Dobbs or somebody was around to give us the line. They weren't in any sense totally in control. They did it up to a point, democratically. But they were there. So that the Party during the Browder period of leadership was an enormous force in California.

Not to understand the role of the Party in California was not to understand California history from 1932 on, because not only the pro-Roosevelt forces, but in every aspect of state leadership and elections, the Party played a major role. Not to have our support, in many congressional, senatorial, or state assembly districts, or a local municipality was a real demerit for anybody who was running.

Then culturally, we were a major force in Hollywood (and the arts generally). Of course there were writers like Albert Maltz, Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson, Ring Lardner. And there was a whole array of others who were a dominant group in Hollywood, they were all over the lot. For instance, they were at many rallies; they would show up, and that influenced the Hollywood unions which were dominant as well in many other aspects of the industry. This was the period of John Garfield, Franchot Tone, Lee Cobb, all these Left actors out of the Group Theatre who had been received in Hollywood.

Then while I was never an open Communist per se, at one point in the Labor School, I recruited 160 people into the Party in one three-month period. So my "non-public" membership was known to hundreds of people I recruited. As a matter of fact, I won a state prize for recruiting more people than anybody else in the state.

Rubens: How did that recruitment literally take place?

Jenkins: I would ask people whom I got to know to join the CP.

Rubens: "Would you like to come to a meeting and see what we do?"?

Jenkins: Not necessarily a meeting. Just through normal social and political intercourse--and talking about philosophy and ideas. After all, we as a nation were backed by a great Red Army who was out fighting in Stalingrad. The Soviets were part of our allied campaign against fascism. I recruited a lot of professionals in the state whose names I will not give you at this point--crucial people who stayed a number of years.

Rubens: So it wasn't just that you met them at the Labor School. These were people you were raising money from, or people you had identified as being important in some way.

Jenkins: Many of them were in the school, and I met them through the school. In that sense, the school was a major vehicle for the Party. After the war when the young veterans came into our GI school, stirred deeply by their experience in the army overseas, they joined the Party very readily.

Rubens: The McCarthy era was so traumatic and dramatic in this country. It has shaped American images of the Party. Phrases like, "There is a specter that haunts the land", "The Red Menace"--a kind of image created for instance by the TV program "I Led Three Lives." The Party worked, I think, in a lot of Americans' minds, through very sensitive, secret, whispered encounters. That's why I think it is important to correct the historical memory and I thought if you could give me just one example, not with a name, but telling me how you would approach someone. What did it literally mean to recruit someone into the Party?

Jenkins: Well, somebody would work with me for a while in the Labor School. A prominent architect is a good example. I think he taught a class in architecture, not per se, but the social aspects of it. We became friends, and when I identified myself as a Communist, after a while, and as our friendship proceeded, I asked him to join the Party, and gave him reasons why he should be in it. In most cases, I was rarely turned down. People were quite receptive, particularly among professionals. But I recruited a lot of trade union leaders as well. I shared similar experiences with them, but recruiting was easy.

The House Committee on Un-American Activities had suspended its operation during the war years. Public figures like Attorney General Robert Kenny, Harry Bridges, and there were others, were identified with the Left, even if they were not in the Party. There was a big Party membership among lawyers. The Lawyers Guild was an important organization, a Left alternative, and in some ways a challenge to the State Bar. There was a fairly big Party membership among doctors and among analysts and psychiatrists.

To have a city like San Francisco with two or three thousand Party members, as well as thousands of sympathizers and all sorts of other people--it was a very considerable political force. This was an amazing time. Politically, San Francisco elected a mayor, Roger Lapham, who was a ship owner. I'm sure the Party didn't support him. He had been a main antagonist of the 1934 strike. By 1942, when he was elected, he appointed Oleta O'Connor Yates, San Francisco Party secretary, to the Council for Civic Unity. In fact, she and I were on that committee together.

Rubens: Were you appointed then by the mayor as well?

Jenkins: No, by the committee. Of course, she was a well-known debater and spokesperson and the daughter of a San Francisco teamster. Her appointment was obviously a recognition of the Party's importance in the union and the shipyards.

Rubens: What did that council do?

Jenkins: We dealt with discrimination, a whole variety of things--racism, sexism. After the war years, it continued; it still exists.

It was set up and funded, I think, by the Rosenberg Foundation and the Columbia Foundation. That was Koshland and Haas. They had thrown me a lot of money.

Rubens: At the same time?

Jenkins: Yes. It was a manifestation of the unity of all people in the fight against Fascism.

We appointed Matt Crawford, who was a Communist and a black as a full-timer. He's eighty-four now. That was a breakthrough then. Also on that board with me was Josephine Duvenceck, and Dan Koshland, who was head of Levi Strauss. We became friends. Arthur Kahn, husband of Sally Lilienthal, was on the council.

Rubens: Who was Duvenceck?

Jenkins: She was the first principal of the Peninsula School for Creative Education, and was later a principal at Presidio Open Air School, which was started by Edith's mother and her aunt, Helen Salz, and

uncle, Ansley Salz. It is now called Presidio Hill. It still exists today.¹

Rubens: I know that name in another context.

Jenkins: Yes; she was a leading Quaker. There was the Duveneck Ranch. And also her husband, Frank Duveneck, was a famous painter. They had a school for creative education.

Rubens: When I was researching my article on Charlotte Anita Whitney, someone (maybe Marge Frantz) told me they were great friends. There was a question of whether they were related, but they weren't.

Was it known to that council that you were a CP member?

Jenkins: No, no.

The California Labor School

Rubens: Let's talk about the California Labor School now, and why you were so successful with it.

Jenkins: I must say that I regarded education when I began there as really a tool to promote union leadership and I suppose to promote people into being knowledgeable about socialism. I saw education as the vehicle for clearing away the cobwebs of confusion. Our curriculum reflected that in the main. Our classes were on the history of the American labor movement, classes on politics and political economy, on Marxism and Leninism.

##

Rubens: How long were you at the Tom Mooney School before you then transformed it into the California Labor School?

Jenkins: I would say about a year. There was some bitterness, of course, about that. John and Rena Mooney never played a role in the school, but they were president and vice president. History had already started to mangle the Mooney image, which the press had

¹Flora J. Arnstein, Ongoing: Poetry, Teaching, Family in San Francisco, 1885-1985, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1985. Also Helen A. Salz, Sketches of an Improbable Ninety Years, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.

done in successfully because Mooney had started a love affair while he was in jail. Also his wife got seduced by an FBI agent. So the press started to attack Mooney.

Rubens: By then, he was out of jail, and not quite the same kind of martyr, even though he had been in jail two decades.

Jenkins: He was too Left really for the established AFL. We were trying very hard to get AFL unions into the Labor School with some success, so we at that point took the Teheran line of the Party, enunciated by Earl Browder and adopted by the Party.¹ We felt that greater unity was important. Although we continued to call our library the Tom Mooney Library. In our publications, we changed the name of the school to the California Labor School.

Rubens: When was that?

Jenkins: About '43. Of course, this huge and young population that came into California had no knowledge of who the hell Tom Mooney was or even of his struggle and his victory that had dominated a few years before. John and Rena Mooney were very bitter about our changing the name of the school.

Rubens: Tom of course had died by then?

Jenkins: Yes. He died almost immediately after his freedom from jail.

Rubens: He lived a year, I think.

Jenkins: But on the other hand, Warren Billings continued to be a sponsor of the school all during this period. He was president of the Watchmakers Union here in town, a trade he had learned in San Quentin.

Rubens: Just for the record, when did the Tom Mooney Labor School open?

Jenkins: It had existed only a couple of months before I came in. It was very small. The man who was the leader of it was a guy named Frank Carlson, who was also a Party leader. It was a temporary assignment for him. A woman in it, Cleo George, was married to Harrison George, who had been the first editor of People's World. George was a famous left-winger, kicked out of the Party, afterwards, on some dissident issue.

¹The Teheran line established the idea of the popular front.

Rubens: So, you were assigned by the Party to replace Frank Carlson?

Jenkins: Yes. I very quickly understood that this very limited vocabulary of education just couldn't make it. Two things aided us: one, we had a whole number of people, young Communists who were coming into leadership of unions as a result of World War II, or if not Communists, Left liberals or people who were trying to make their unions work, so to speak. Overnight the union movement in California and around northern California quadrupled. Many of the locals which had been moribund, which had a few members during the thirties, suddenly exploded into membership. The unions like the boilermakers, shipwrights, all the metal trades and shipyard unions gathered massive numbers, as we discussed earlier. This was also the years the black boilermakers had a separate union. Separate unionism was a strategy of the Communist Party. We found out that a lot of blacks preferred Jim Crow--as was true with the National Maritime Union in the South. Blacks had control of leadership and more; they had more autonomy from the international.

All the shipyard unions, the carpenters unions suddenly overnight went from a handful of members into thousands of members. Equally true, to some extent, in the ILWU, the warehouse local, I think at its height, was 17,000 members. Longshoremen went up from 3,000 to 10,000. Ship scalers--every union just exploded with new members.

Business agents and officials were looking for help in educating their new members, so the school announced classes in parliamentary procedure, how to run a union meeting, how to build a steward system.

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Rubens: These were classes that were going to help them run the union?

Jenkins: Yes. These unions were tremendously excited and needy. They didn't care what you were. So in many cases, we had classes in the union halls which became mandatory for new members: what happened to the dues dollars, what welfare was, what your industry was and who controlled it and who owned it--all the things that are assumed that you know these days.

A Center for Expanded Education, Especially the Arts

- Jenkins: So we were a utilitarian arm. Then almost immediately artists and dancers and writers saw this school as a place for their activity as well. They started to flock to the school and not demand, but to say that they had an audience and they wanted to teach, and they wanted space.
- Rubens: What do you think was attractive to them about it? Is this the second thing you said really added to the growth?
- Jenkins: Yes. I would say really that art is a weapon in the struggle for socialism, for education as well as for self-expression. So almost from the beginning, dance became part of the school under the leadership of a woman named Mimi Kagan. Also Gloria Unti. The art department almost immediately attracted attention because of the vibrance of the Bauhaus school, and the leader of that was a woman named Margaret De Patta. She was a designer and came into the school and both headed the department and also brought with her people like Adele Erickson and Claire Falkenstein.
- Rubens: I don't know these names. Were these known artists at the time?
- Jenkins: Yes. And they are still. Claire Falkenstein and Adele Erickson--who now lives in Sweden. At the Labor School, she met the head of the Scandinavian seamen's union, and she married him. This was a sensational kind of thing, and especially celebrated by the Left. Giacomo Patri was an artist on the Chronicle, who did a book called White Collar, which I have here. During the war years and afterwards, Anton Refregier was head of the art department. He did the famous murals in Rincon Annex. Victor Arnautoff was a well-known local artist who taught at the school. Also Ralph Chesse.
- Rubens: So these people weren't initially Party people necessarily?
- Jenkins: Oh, no. Many of them were not. If they ever did join, I don't know. But that department almost overnight was what convinced some of us that we had to move, in a sense. We were getting a lot of attention from the trade union movement as such. Young people who were walking in wanted contact. It was a place to meet other young people. It was a place to meet men, a place to meet women. We would have Saturday dances.
- Rubens: California Labor School's Artists' Ball was a well known and well attended San Francisco event.

The Move to Larger Quarters: The Role of the Communist Party

Jenkins: We had all sorts of activities. We were convinced by the kind of tremendous population explosion in the Bay Area as the result of the war that the school had to be an expression of it. Most of those coming in weren't coming in just for Tom Mooney or unionism, but because of their own needs and because of the situation that existed.

So we took the building, a six-story building at 216 Market Street, corner of Drum and Market. It is now owned by [Walter] Shoreinstein, who built a \$100 million building there. We were offered the building, I think at, oh, if we could put together \$60,000. Of course, we couldn't.

Rubens: You were renting this building?

Jenkins: Yes. We put a lot of money into it. I raised about \$30,000.

Rubens: Where had the Tom Mooney School been before?

Jenkins: Six seventy-eight Turk Street, corner of Van Ness. It's still a lovely space, incidentally.

Rubens: So when you moved, you said, "Let's get a new name?"

Jenkins: That was pretty much a Party decision. It was our idea, but we ran it through the Party, and they all approved of it.

Rubens: Give me a sense of what that meant. You would go to a meeting and say we need--

Jenkins: Well, in my case, I would meet with the leadership of the Party in San Francisco, which was Oleta O'Connor Yates and other people. I guess they would take that up with the county committee, which represented the leadership of the CP in San Francisco.

In the case of the Labor School, assignment as well was the state educational director out of the state. We would run it by her as well, but basically we dealt with the county committee.

So on the question of the school, I didn't hesitate to go up to the Party headquarters openly. It was at 121 Haight, then 878 Market Street. I never hesitated to do that. There were known Communists at the school.

Rubens: Just to make this perfectly clear, you would go before the county CP committee and say, "We need more space; we are going to make the move to Market Street." Would they say to you, "We think you should change the name to--." I'm just trying to get at the relationship, when you say it was a Party decision as opposed to your doing.

Jenkins: As I said, almost all of the decisions originated with us.

Rubens: Us, meaning the people at the school? Of course, you were all Party people as well.

Jenkins: Yes. Those who weren't were not an alternative point of view.

Rubens: So in a larger grouping, when you would go to the Party, they would show you broader implications for what you were doing or other ways to look at things?

The Faculty and the Broadened Curriculum

Jenkins: I think we led the Party on the issue of an expanded education. Nobody expected the Labor School to expand with such swiftness. I think the same surprise of how quickly the school expanded was an endless surprise to the Party. I think mostly they were worried in a sense about restraining it to specific and limited trade union work. We quickly moved into an area which up to that time had been more or less non-existent and forbidden almost. We started to have art classes at 216; then at 240 Golden Gate in psychiatry and psychoanalysis, all sorts of areas that broadened the focus.

We suddenly had classes in comparative philosophy, in comparative politics. So that the whole Teheran line of the Party, as enunciated by Browder, started to affect the school and school curriculum and school approaches.

We tried genuinely to become a more united front and spread the leadership of the school. I guess at this time, we brought in Holland Roberts, who was associate professor of education at Stanford. Jules Carson also came in early.

Rubens: Carson was an economist?

Jenkins: He was an economist and old-time Party teacher in the South and back East.

Rubens: Was Roberts in the Party?

Jenkins: Yes. Roberts had also been very active in the American Russian Institute and continued, I think, during those years to be head of it. That was a major area of his activity.

Rubens: Was that a Party front?

Jenkins: Well, Roberts, as I said, was a Communist, but there was a big group of genuine non-Party people who were members and leaders of it: Dorothy Erskine, who was a very well-known liberal. I don't remember the board, but the board was a combination of identifiable Marxists and people who generally believed in American-Soviet peace and collaboration.

Rubens: Was that your idea to bring in Roberts?

Jenkins: No. I don't exactly remember how he came in.

Rubens: That might have been an example of the Party influencing or directing.

Jenkins: Yes. But let me say that the reason we sought Party agreement was economics, as well. They gave us an enormous amount of support. From the CP, not from direct contribution, but if we announced a program of selling raffles or a program of money-raising, the Party branches would participate. Those people who were in the unions would sell our things.

Our wages, even by any academic standard, were ridiculous: \$25 per week, as head of the school and finally it went up to \$35. When I really got a representative board, the board said, "This is ridiculous," and they raised my salary to \$100 a week, which I was very defensive about.

The Advisory Board

Rubens: When did you create that board? You wanted legitimacy or--?

Jenkins: From the beginning, it was an objective. We had had people like the Mooneys come aboard and other figures in the community.

Rubens: You had mentioned earlier that the widow was very upset about changing the name.

Labor School Seeking Post-War Unity

*Director Says
It's Not Working
For Special Groups*

BY DOROTHY WALKER

David Jenkins, director of the California Labor School, will bet you his school, faculty and students that San Francisco is not going to the dogs after the war.

The catch to the bet, however, is a concise little word, spelled UNITY.

The infant California Labor School—three years old shortly after the next December 7—is not labor's school, Mr. Jenkins will tell you; not management's; not earmarked for any special class or economic sponsor. It belongs to the community, for everyone's use. "You're neither too young or too old to learn here," he will say.

"The big thing the school is pointing out is that neither labor or management can get along without each other," he says. "Old concepts of employer-employee isolationism are being thrown out the window. War production is showing us that every day.

Slow Process

"Sure, it's a slow process. Sure, there are setbacks. But the new spirit of co-operation and unity has already been planted in the Bay Area. It's up to us—you and me, whether employer or worker, to keep that unity strong after the war. It's a question of survival. If we don't work and plan together—labor sitting around the council table with management—I don't see how plants can effect reconversion and absorb workers thrown out of war jobs."

You can't be five minutes in Mr. Jenkins' office at the school, 678 Turk-st., without being impressed with his sincerity.

Mr. Jenkins is young, 30. He is also big. Somewhere along the line as a seaman he decided he wanted to do something about bringing education closer to his fellow seamen and others like himself out of reach of institutions of higher learning.

For many years here and in New York he directed educational programs of the Seamen's Institute and seamen's locals. He started the project of putting meaty "pocket libraries" aboard ships, throwing out the Elsie Dinsmores and other unwanted which usually found their way to ships in those days.

Just by looking at and listening to Mr. Jenkins you know he's a man who usually gets what he's fighting for.

He stretches his big frame over the desk, clasps his handle loosely on the blotter and starts talking. His simple, direct way of speaking, flavored with a dry sense of humor, is disarming.

Safe Bet

You begin to feel sorry for a skeptical union leader or industrial executive trying to stand off Mr. Jenkins' persuasion to become a sponsor of the school.

The chips are on Mr. Jenkins for a safe bet. And he's making a lot of front office calls these days.

At present he is in the East dicker-ing for assistance from some foundation.

From its meager beginnings shortly after Pearl Harbor when only a dozen classes were offered, the school has overflowed its present location.

More than 6000 men and women have attended classes, lectures and conferences there.

On June 19 when the summer term opens, the school will be in new quarters—a five-story building at 216 Market-st.—and will offer a varied program of 50 classes, all of them closely geared to the war effort and what is to happen after the war.

"The war has made people ask a lot of questions," Mr. Jenkins philosophizes. "And when people ask questions they just naturally find a place to get the answers. That's how the California Labor School got started, and it's that kind of healthy curiosity that will keep it growing."

Jenkins: Not the widow, the brother and sister. But the school could not have existed in the initial years without the Party. We had one raffle where we raised \$15,000--on a car. We had a yearly artists and models ball, endless events to raise money which the Party membership had a part in. The Party membership was three or four thousand in San Francisco. It was a very substantial group, very enthusiastic.

Rubens: But you said from the beginning, you wanted a board that was representative of the community?

Jenkins: Yes. Then we set up a labor board headed in the beginning by a guy named Stanley Isaacs, a middle of the road guy from the Building Service Employees and G. L. Irvine of the Railway Brotherhoods, Paul Schnur, secretary of the CIO Council, Jack Shelley, who was the president of the San Francisco Labor Council, later mayor of San Francisco. More and more people joined. I don't know if we ever had an official meeting of that board. We used it on our stationery.

Literally every union in the Bay Area endorsed us and gave us a monthly stipend.

Rubens: I cut you off before you said the ILWU was a major force with the school?

Jenkins: Oh, an absolutely major force then. That meant that people like Paul Pinsky, who was state research director, taught there. Guys like Phil Eden, who was assistant secretary of research, Virginia Woods, who worked for the ILWU, taught at the school. She was married to Gene Patton, who came out of ILWU Local 6 and became an international officer of the union, secretary-treasurer.

Rubens: Now I thought I recalled you saying when we were trying to assess some of the enmity or differences between you and Harry that Harry was opposed to this kind of education.

Jenkins: Harry was never impressed with it. He felt that education should be on the union floor.

And of course Lou was extremely helpful. The leadership of the local unions, Local 10, Local 6--all the locals participated. They were incredibly helpful. The ILWU's prestige was enormous also, particularly in the black community where thousands of blacks were getting into the union.

Racism and the War in the Pacific

Jenkins: It was not equally true among Asians. We never had much of a penetration there. Then the silence on the part of the Party and the People's World when the Japanese were put in camps was so loud. They never fought it. As a matter of fact, they approved of it.

Earl Warren was governor at the time of Executive Order 9066 and advocated it. It was Roosevelt's hideous mistake. A number of the Japanese were in the Party and were absolutely beside themselves by the Party's position.

Rubens: And were there other people within the Party saying this position was wrong?

Jenkins: Very few. The outstanding figure among them was Lou Goldblatt, who testified for the Japanese and was then characterized by the Party as dangerous and hostile. Archie Brown and others said that Lou was not to be trusted, that he was probably an informant. He was one whose independent position made him much loved and admired by the Japanese community. For the rest, the Quakers, some of the church groups had opposed it, but the CP and the Left generally were silent.

Rubens: But even before that, you feel the school did not attract Asians.

Jenkins: Well, the Asians were starting to stream out of the ghettos into the shipyards and other places. Almost every union constitution had excluded Asians from membership in San Francisco.

Rubens: Specifically?

Jenkins: Specifically. It started to break down, but it took a long time.

Rubens: I know the ILWU sent Hawaiians over to the Labor School specifically to be educated.

Jenkins: We had Japanese and Chinese students, but it was far fewer as compared with blacks.

The Labor School Strives for Recognition Beyond the Left

Rubens: You talked earlier of being so successful at raising money for the school. This was when you really started going out and meeting some of the establishment.

Jenkins: Yes. We set up another board. We set up an advisory council of educators, the president of San Francisco State University, president of San Francisco City College, the president of the extension division of UC [University of California], Baldwin Woods.

Rubens: They were willing to serve?

Jenkins: Yes. Stanford University as well.

Rubens: Why were they willing to serve?

Jenkins: Well, war years. There was a kind of unity. While the school was recognized as a Left school, on the other hand, this country was involved with the Soviet Union as a major ally in fighting fascism. Then we had a variety of community people led by Bishop Parsons of the Episcopal Church. Bartley Crum was a leading figure on Montgomery Street. There were letters going out to all businessmen signed by William Crocker, head of Crocker Bank, Blake Moffitt, who was head of a huge paper company, Frederick Koster, who had been the founder of the National Association of Manufacturers. There was one other name. They were saying it was an extraordinary school, come help them, make a contribution.

Rubens: Why were they willing to do that?

Jenkins: I think the feeling of Teheranism for lack of a better word, unity between labor and capital and the fight against fascism was overriding. Besides that, all the unions had taken non-strike pledges, including Bridges. Capital never made as much money as it made during World War II. All of the old shibboleths were being blown apart. They wanted to encourage every manifestation of that kind of collaboration and non-militancy that we were exhibiting.

Rubens: They also must have respected you. You obviously impressed them.

Jenkins: Well, I was selling the line. I was the guy talking to them all over the city--the president of the Bank of America, the president of the San Francisco Bank. Presidents of all the banking institutions were contributing. Crocker was giving me \$500 a month.

Rubens: Didn't you tell me you got money from Gumps?

Jenkins: Gump gave us an enormous amount at our annual bazaar. He married Sally Stanford, a former brothel madam, you know.

Rubens: Was that a short-lived marriage?

Jenkins: [laughs] I don't know. Our capitalists were a little more dramatic. Of course, the head of the San Francisco Bank was a lawyer who had been the attorney for all the madams in town. He was the guy who gave me a loan of \$30,000 for the school. Louie Lurie gave me some money.

The Support of the Jewish Community

Jenkins: The other thing that happened was that the Labor School, once it moved, started to be in the mainstream. Even the anti-Communist organizations like B'nai B'rith looked upon it with favor when we did a pamphlet called "Made in Berlin," which was directed to anti-Semitism among the newly arrived workers from all over the country, particularly from the South. We put out, ultimately, over a million copies. That was in the main financed by contributions from the Anti-Defamation League.

I went to people like Louis Lurie and guys like Jake Ehrlich, who was a famous criminal attorney, to help fight against anti-Semitism, particularly in San Francisco. That was when Dan Koshland came aboard. Also Bartley Crum, who eventually became prominent in the Arab-Jewish Commission.

The Party supported us in this. But I would say generally there wasn't a great deal of consciousness about it. The recognition of the Holocaust came slowly into this country. While the Party generally was certainly against anti-Semitism--after all the state chairman of the Party was Bill Schneiderman--there were other leading Communists, Ben Dobbs, Nemie Sparks, and Dorothy Healy, Archie Brown, who were all Jews.

It was never a very vigorous aspect of the Party's activity; it was a secondary concern. When the school took leadership on the recognition of Israel, and the school participated in picketing the British Information Service and the British Consulate, that was not a Party activity, but they didn't object. On the other hand, many Jews objected to the recognition of Israel: Dan Koshland, the German Jews of this town organized the American Council for Judaism. The philosophy was that we were alike in all things American except religion. They were furiously against Israel. Many of them withdrew from supporting the school when we supported Israel.

Rubens: Was that significant?

Jenkins: Well, it was not a major blow. It divided the community on an issue, but Zionism was never a dominant issue.

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Rubens: We had been talking about the school taking leadership on the recognition of Israel and how that divided the Jewish community.

Jenkins: As a result, I taught classes on the history of the Jewish people. It was kind of presumptuous, but I did do a lot of reading and studying for it. It was an area, of course, which was mostly unexplored at the time in the West. But there were classes like that in universities and I'm sure some departments which had Semitic studies. But for the ordinary labor school student who came to the Labor School and who was working, that was really an unknown area.

Our activity in publishing "Made in Berlin" gave us a widespread reputation. We not only got money from the top Montgomery Street people, our main support was really an extraordinary amount of middle-class people that were in business and had stores. The man who owned the Bellevue Hotel, another who owned the Richelieu and some of the merchants on Mission Street.

Rubens: Why were they supportive?

Jenkins: Well, I think generally because we identified with the anti-Fascist war.

Rubens: Did they get advertising?

Jenkins: No. Another man, Nat Schmulowitz, was quite a conservative and got us huge contributions from National Dollar Stores, which were totally Chinese owned. Schmulowitz, who was a bachelor and strange little guy, got us money from all over as did Bartley Crum.

Seeking Major Donors

Jenkins: Among business guys, if there were Party people, they were few and far between. I was getting money from Daniel Koshland, who was head of Levi Strauss, Madeline Russell Haas, Frederick Koster, a founder of the NAM (National Association of Manufacturers), and a barrel maker here in San Francisco, Crawford Green, the head attorney for Standard Oil, John Mailliard (who had been part of the vigilante committee in 1934), and William Crocker, head of Crocker Bank, gave \$500 a month for a while. Henrietta Durham, a wealthy friend of Edith's, gave us \$20,000. Afterwards she wrote an indignant letter saying she had been deceived about the school being non-communist.

Rubens: Did anything come of that letter; did she demand her money back?

Jenkins: No. Besides, we were starting to get money from foundations. Rosenberg gave us money and the Columbia Foundation gave us money. Frank Sinatra's film The House I Live In (about racial discrimination) gave us money as well as some of the left-wing foundations like the Rabinowitz Foundation and the Louis Marshall Foundation in New York. By the way, Sinatra designated a committee to donate some of the profits from the film to organizations fighting against racism. We got \$7,500 from that committee--they gave to several other institutions that worked for equality in America.

Rubens: You solicited this support?

Jenkins: These were all solicited.

I was getting a great deal of press coverage, features et cetera. The school was in the papers every day. I made contact because I was a money raiser. Between the income from students and our contributions, our budget kept going up. We had maybe \$150,000 a year that had to be raised outside of school tuition. That was a tremendous amount, and one had to penetrate all sorts of places.

Rubens: You mentioned in the context of the Bridges defense work [Chapter III] that Bartley Crum introduced you to the business world. Is that often what it took, someone with connections? He was a lawyer for many of these businesses.

Jenkins: It took that to break through. Once we got one or two, it was a steam roller. Dan Koshland was extremely helpful. Koshland, who was one of the founders of Levi Strauss, and his family were important to the German Jewish community--of course, knew my

wife's father and family. They came out of the same community, so that was a help. But Koshland gave the school stock in the Tidewater Oil Company. Levi Strauss officially contributed.

There were also the attorneys for some of the most conservative or even reactionary corporations, Charles deYoung Elkus and others. Jesse Steinhart, who had been a suitor of Edith's mother, so every place I penetrated, particularly in the Jewish section of business, Edith's parents were known and her family as well.

At one point a letter was sent out to every business in San Francisco signed by William Crocker, Blake Moffitt, with Blake, Moffitt, and Towne, the famous paper company, Ansley Salz, Bartley Crum, to every major business listed in San Francisco soliciting money for the Labor School.

So I was already a fairly famous figure in the city in that sense. A few papers were running major articles about me, this boy wonder, who was an eighth grade graduate, but the Labor School, the U.N. thing, and then, of course, the greatest coup of all in getting the school designated a G.I. Bill recipient.

Rubens: How did that come about?

Jenkins: Well, we just applied for it based on contributions that the school had made during the war: the classes, labor relationships to the Board of Civic Unity, labor's relationship to national history. It was a hard request to turn down. [General Omar] Bradley was in charge of the G.I. Bill for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When some groups in California, such as the Tenny Committee and Sons of the American Revolution red-baited us, I went to Washington to see Bradley. I was given a cordial reception and after I told him about our school, I showed him the catalogs and he concluded we were well entitled to this status. He was impressed.

Rubens: What about local artists and/or literati?

Jenkins: On one occasion, all the artists in Monterey and down in Carmel Valley and Big Sur threw a big party for us at the Monterey Pier. It was a funny party. A woman writer named Mildred Brady, a leader in consumer affairs, who was married to Robert Brady, an economics professor, had done a satirical article about the artists in Big Sur all being part of the Reichian Movement, of sitting on Orgon boxes getting rays from the sun which would increase their sexuality. These artists asked everyone to attend in an Orgon box. Edith would not let me go down to that one alone. [laughter] They raised a lot of money.

Then there were people, the Hollisters, the family who established Hollister, California. Dr. Hollister was a big contributor. We had individual people like this all over the state who were helping the school. One guy who owned a 400-acre ranch in the Santa Cruz mountains wanted to give it to us if we would absolutely guarantee to teach dictatorship of the proletariat and the oppressed. His name was Tim Riley. He had been a former secretary of the California Labor Federation in San Francisco. We never got it because he was a total eccentric.

But on the other hand, there were so many other generous people. Money came from Holland Roberts' contacts in Palo Alto. The money streamed into the school, although each month there was an economic crisis. Then we had massive affairs. We started an Artists and Models Ball. Our art department started the San Francisco Fair at the Civic Center. It has been an annual event ever since then. It was an art exhibit at the square in front of city hall for all artisans.

Besides Henrietta Durham, we had a couple of other dramatic benefactors, including Edith Chamberlain Field who was extremely helpful.

Rubens: Is that the Field family in Chicago?

Jenkins: No, but Marshall Field had given us a contribution from the Field Foundation. Edith was married to Fred Field who was from New York. She just died, as a matter of fact. She came from a famous San Francisco family--gave me an endless amount of money.

In some cases, people's attraction to the school was that it had a kind of vitality and it was educating more humans and the working woman and playing a role in the life of the city. Gertrude Atherton in her book Black Oxen has a chapter on the school in its early days.

Rubens: Did you know her, by the way? Did she come and speak to the school?

Jenkins: No. So it was a variety of reasons. Then I, of course, was an extremely persuasive advocate. So I penetrated all sorts of places which opened the doors to the Left generally because once I got in and perceived that people were progressive, then other causes would follow me. The same Mrs. Durham who gave me \$20,000 afterwards gave an enormous amount of money to the Federation of Atomic Scientists--I think close to a half-a-million dollars and then later for the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

Rubens: What was the Durham money?

Jenkins: I don't know. Strangely enough, the contact for that came because Durham's daughter, Margaret, and Edith were best friends.

Rubens: Edith's family connections must have helped tremendously.

Jenkins: Oh, sure. My access to the Salz's was Helen and Ansley Salz who were important philanthropists in the city. Ansley Salz was Edith's uncle, and he owned Salz Tanning in Santa Cruz as well as being a major stockholder in Longview Fibre. I knew their son Andrew. Helen, as I mentioned earlier, was a founder of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]. Edith's family founded the Presidio Hill School. Irma Arnstein was a founding member of the Socialist party here and her uncle, Harry Wollenberg, was head of Longview Fibre and a conservative. When the school was attacked as a Communist school, he broke off from us.

And, of course, I was duplicitous for many of the people. I would not say that I was a member of the Party--I defended the right to join it but was careful in these areas never to identify myself as a Communist.

Rubens: You had to walk a careful line.

Jenkins: A line that was literally in retrospect impossible.

Rubens: Because at another point you were saying that in your capacity as director of the school you recruited a lot of people into the Party.

Jenkins: Not only that. I was enormously fond of the Durham woman and felt terrible about disguising my membership. At the same time, I realized that if she thought I was a Communist that she would not contribute. A lot of famous liberals were part of the school in a way especially because of the art department, the drama department. As soon as you tap into the arts, you find them among both workers and non-workers an enormous desire to be in those arts. So we had the strange woman, Mrs. Mansfield, who killed her husband's nurse. She was a student of the drama department.

Rubens: Vince Hallinan defended her?

Jenkins: Yes, Hallinan defended her. Then her husband, who was a well-known doctor, committed suicide. It was equally true that many of the young artists and dancers came from rich and well-known families and brought their families into the school. It is, I suppose, an inevitable aspect of any school.

Directing the School: Impact on Family Life, Social Life,
and Communist Responses

Rubens: You mentioned that there was a period when the money rolled in. Was there a height of attendance? Was there a period when it was in its fullest flowering?

Jenkins: Yes, during the mid or late 1942-1946. There was a period when we opened a school in the East Bay, which was headed by Gordon Williams and Decca [Jessica] Mitford Treuhافت.

Rubens: That was before the war ended, '44?

Jenkins: Then we opened a school in Los Angeles. Dave Hedley went down to head that and Julian Hicks.

Rubens: Was that successful?

Jenkins: Up to a point, yes. Raising money for all this was really--I don't think I was home for many nights.

Rubens: What were your hours like?

Jenkins: Really impossible and Edith put up with all this shit, I would say. I mean she carried the family and did everything else to make it possible. Once in a while, I would wiggle her out to come to the school. She was exhausted. I often wondered--

[interruption with question to wife, Edith]

What did you do all those years when I was head of the Labor School, Edith? I don't think I was home more than once a month.

Edith: It was pretty hard especially since Becky came to live with us, and was away from her mother so really needed her father's presence.

Rubens: You had an endless array of meetings, classes, appointments?

Jenkins: --meetings with teachers--

Rubens: --Party meetings?

Jenkins: Well, I didn't go to many Party meetings.

Edith: The Labor School work was pretty much non-day work.

Rubens: Night work. Were the classes primarily at night?

Jenkins: Except for the art classes. So I was never home, and Party meetings were never a significant part of my life. By that time, I was on the county committee of the Party myself, went on to be on the state Political Bureau, which was the elite of the Party in a sense that it was ten of us who made up the top Party representatives. I would go to those meetings. In a way, I felt pretty isolated from those meetings because for inner Party stuff, I had little information and knowledge. So on broad political issues that came up, I played a role. I think I was the only member of the bureau that was not a "Party functionary," so they were either full timers from the People's World, or whatever. I think I was probably the most aloof from direct political line of command, so to speak.

Rubens: But it speaks to how important the Party felt about the Labor School.

Jenkins: Yes. By that time, we were an enormous and popular apparatus.

Rubens: In terms of the height of attendance, do you have a rough idea of numbers?

Jenkins: Well, I would say that maybe 10,000 people or 15,000 people had been reached each year through classes or other forums, probably more than that. Then we did all sorts of auxiliary things. We helped the unions organize pageants. We were a resource for picket lines in the city and in the area. Our chorus was everywhere in demand, at public gatherings. Our drama groups were doing things in union halls. We had art exhibits and we had by that time built a respectable library. We started the Graphics Art workshop which still exists.

Rubens: Yes. Clara Hanchett was in charge of the library.

Jenkins: She was a wonderfully active woman, but I did most of the buying for her. My one relaxation was to go to bookstores and pick up stuff.

Rubens: I was going to ask if it was fun for you. It was hectic, tiring--

Jenkins: Yes. First of all, I got a lot of recognition, which was rewarding.

Women and the School

Rubens: As opposed to anxiety producing or stressful. Plus you have this extraordinary mind and love of learning.

Jenkins: I got stressed out about money, but I never really allowed it to eat me up. There was somewhat of a rebellion at the school. Staff felt that every decision should include everybody in the school from the secretaries to the top people, and this went on for some time. I think it was, in part, a struggle on the part of some of the women members of the school for more recognition.

Rubens: We were talking earlier in a different vein--isn't that when you were brought up on charges?

Jenkins: Well, that could have been coincidental. Minnie Katz, later Minnie Jurow, was the secretary of the school. Peggy Sarisohn did all sorts of things for the school. Clara Hanchet, of course, was the librarian. Hazel Grossman was leader of the social sciences. The art department was dominated by female leadership. There was Celeste Strack, who was state Party education director, and the head of the Party in San Francisco was a woman. So that if I was guilty of male chauvinism, which I'm sure was in part true, it wasn't in commission so much but lack of commission, so to speak.

And in personal attitudes, which coming from a Jewish mother, no matter how revolutionary, you continue to have characteristics which are sexist. It's hard to recognize but the truth of the matter was women played a crucial role in the school. They were a very considerable part of the enrollment, as well.

Rubens: Fifty percent or--?

Jenkins: Well, from the trade union movement, no, but from certain sections of it, yes. There were always really important women around the school. Angela Ward was a factor in the school. By and large, I think we were a fair reflection of what existed in the CP generally in terms of women's representation, probably somewhat better. The Party early gave recognition to women leadership. The question of feminism and the detail of that was another question. Then the school appealed to a cross section of housewives and mothers, and working women, and students.

More on the School's Growth and Fundraising

Rubens: How did you manage such a huge budget like that? Did you have a bookkeeper?

Jenkins: Well, Minnie was the secretary. She had an assistant.

Rubens: Three hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money to administer and be accountable for.

Jenkins: As I say, at the top, my salary there was a hundred bucks a week. I wasn't doing very well with that. Nobody else was making any money in the school.

Rubens: This was going for supplies and rent and--?

Jenkins: Remodelings and an endless amount of--I guess I took money for some traveling for fund raising. But I never stayed in a hotel. I always stayed at somebody's house. That's not totally true; in L.A. I would stay in a hotel, but it was five to seven dollars a night. Food was never gourmet; clothes was my father-in-law's buying me a suit once a year.

Rubens: Did you wear a suit and tie in this capacity?

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: Men still wore hats in those days, too.

Jenkins: Yes, for instance, car salesmen wore hats.

Rubens: Did you wear hats once you left the East Coast?

Jenkins: Well, I wore caps occasionally. It seems to me that the nature of the school was not that informal. Roberts was a professor and dressed like a professor. Hazel was a conventional woman in terms of her clothes. I don't remember distinctly any of the office people or women librarians--we were typical of our period, dressing informally.

Rubens: This was not Bohemia. When I researched the '34 strike, I noticed that longshoremen went to work in "street clothes," changed into their work clothes, worked, and then changed back to street clothes again. To have seen them on the street would not necessarily indicate their socio-economic status. That's a foreign concept today.

- Jenkins: I look at people being interviewed on TV who are important people.
- Rubens: They're pretty casually dressed, aren't they!
- Jenkins: Indeed. As I remember, all the Party officials were not particularly handsome men or women. I don't remember their clothes as a factor in their personalities one way or the other. Louise Todd was probably the most attractive woman in the Party. Oleta was always troubled by semi-ill health. Dorothy Healy was more dramatic and vibrant. She dressed sexy, I guess.
[laughter]
- Rubens: The high point of the Labor School was '44-'45. You stayed with it until--?
- Jenkins: Forty-eight. Then, of course, with the beginning of the GI Bill, that was really extraordinary. Suddenly, we had a full-time faculty. We were getting monthly payments which were enormous for us.
- Rubens: You had to apply for that GI status, and the school qualified?
- Jenkins: Exactly. I guess at the height of our registration we had sixty or seventy students in the GI program. So that amounted to thousands of dollars of regular payments. That gave the school enormous prestige as well. With the cultural activity, the unity to beat fascism, the non-strike pledge, the whole teaching of people how to use the labor force during the war, the whole instrumentality of the school probably was the best expression nationally of Teheranism that the CP had in terms of effective mass educational work.

While it was true that the no-strike pledge spread through the labor movement, it was essentially led by [Philip] Murray. It was never accepted by [John L.] Lewis. Bridges accepted it. As I remember it was a target for a lot of Left criticism.

Hosts for the United Nations Labor Delegates, 1945

- Jenkins: You might remember as well that the Labor School was designated as the labor hosts for the United Nations conference by the State Department; Ed Stettinius, the secretary of state, made that designation. We had another group of people streaming through there as a result of that.

Rubens: How did that come about?

Jenkins: Archibald MacLeish was the Library of Congress librarian and he knew about our program and identified us as the labor host.

Rubens: There must have been a Party connection, no?

Jenkins: I don't know. MacLeish was never a Communist. I guess we may have applied for it. I don't remember the process. We were enormously pleased by the designation. Of course, as a result, we had all sorts of dignitaries visit the school. Clement Atlee, the Labour PM [Prime Minister] who succeeded [Winston] Churchill, spoke at the school. Also Kingsley Martin, who was editor of the British New Statesman. He couldn't take his money back to England, so he contributed money he had been paid in this country that he had left over. There were several prominent Soviet leaders from the Communist International and the trade union federation. The school became a center for the "fall-out excitement;" most people of course could not get into the UN, but they could meet some of these people at the Labor School.

So we had an array of particularly English-speaking labor people whom I met and some of the Russians--Konstantin Simonov, who wrote the famous Days and Nights about Stalingrad. We hosted him; he was a larger than life figure whose letter to his wife was a popular poem and circulated throughout the Soviet Union during the war. He apparently wrote to his wife a poem called, "Wait for Me." Simonov was also a great taster of booze and ordered every cordial and whiskey he could find in San Francisco in his hotel room.

We played a small role in a reception that was given for Vladimir Molotov, Soviet secretary of state.

Rubens: The Party must have been kvelling¹ during all of this. This is the period of the Popular Front. The U.N. is being created.

Jenkins: The Soviet Union and the United States were allies--great heroes--every place in the city there were parties. All of society was vying for one of the Russians or one of the heroes of World War II, and it was every place. The school was in the center of this, so I had met and knew many people in the city and already was receiving contributions from a fairly impressive group of people.

Rubens: How long did that go on?

¹Yiddish word meaning to swell with pride.

Jenkins: Six weeks. We had a role when there was a reception at the St. Francis Hotel for Molotov, where Bridges and I were as well, which was much heralded here. One of the delegates was Manvilsky, who had been head of the Communist International. He was the delegate from the Ukraine, which came as a separate delegation.

Rubens: The reception for Molotov was held at the St. Francis Hotel?

Jenkins: Well, we jointly sponsored it, I think, with the American Russian Institute. Molotov seemed about four feet tall, all shoulders and no legs!

Paul Robeson Comes to Raise Money

Rubens: You once told me a wonderful story about when Paul Robeson came to help raise money.

Jenkins: I had met Robeson back East. He was a particular friend of Louise Bransten, who was our friend as well. Louise was the heiress to the Rosenberg fortune, and she had married Edith's first cousin, Richard Bransten, who wrote Men Who Lead Labor, and then went on, after he and Louise broke up, to marry Ruth McKenney, who wrote My Sister, Eileen. Bransten was the same family that was the B in MJB Coffee.

Then Paul was here during the war years, performing Othello, and there was an enormous acclaim for him. When he spoke at the Commonwealth Club, it broke their attendance record. They did that at the Palace Court. Robeson, who had a magnificent presence, just actually blew the mind of San Francisco business. That's the time he was staying at Louise's; she lived off Divisadero and Green.

Desdemona was played by Uta Hagen, and Iago was Jose Ferrer. Hagen and Ferrer were married. After one of the performances, Louise had a big reception for Paul and the cast at her house. It was a rainy night. I remember opening the door. I had seen the play that night with Desdemona being killed on stage, and Uta Hagen came to the door and it was raining, and this ethereal creature looked at me and said, "What a fucking night this is." [laughter]

One of the subsequent stories was that Ferrer afterwards testified against Robeson, identified him as a Communist before

HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee]. Robeson cuckolded Ferrer, which he deserved, but Uta Hagen was irresistible, I must say. Anyway, then I escorted Paul all over the Bay Area, and I remember how impressed I was even then when we were driving across the Golden Gate Bridge and I said how beautiful it was, and he said, "Even beauty is affected by racism." Marin County of course was so white, with the ghetto Marin City encircled. It was a striking observation, but he also was a man of great humor.

Then in subsequent years, I knew him fairly well. After the Peekskill riots, he couldn't get a concert hall where he could sing. Sometime in 1953 we hired the coliseum out here in San Francisco which had been a fight arena. It seated 3,000 people, which we filled. And I got Dr. Carlton Goodlett, who was publisher of the Sun Reporter, the Negro newspaper, to help sponsor the event. Goodlett was the son of a worker who was head of the United Packing House workers in Omaha. I did the promotion work on it, and we packed the place.

Rubens: When you say "we," do you mean the Party or the Labor School?

Jenkins: Well, the Labor School, the ILWU, the NAACP, the Negro Labor Congress combined, but I individually was in charge. Alfred Frankenstein, who was the music critic for the Chronicle and nationally known, did a magnificent review of Robeson's singing, which broke the barrier of silence on him. So as the years went on when Paul came out, I was always around him.

By the way, my mother had gone to Peekskill on the bus. I think she was a member of the IWO [International Workers Order]. She was badly cut when the anti-Communist rioters smashed the windows on the bus. But really the whole town, the state troopers, everybody, was participating. The Fur Workers' Union and some of the Left unions went up as guards for the actual concert. For Robeson to even appear was an act of great courage. It was a set-up for a confrontation from the moment it was announced.

The California Labor School Brings W. E. B. Du Bois to the West Coast

Rubens: There is also a wonderful story you tell about driving around W. E. B. Du Bois on a fundraising campaign in California.

Jenkins: Yes. The Labor School had brought Du Bois out, I think in 1948. He did a whole series of speeches in northern California. In

Sacramento, I was driving him back to San Francisco. All the black communities especially turned out for Du Bois. He was really a household name, as the founder of the Niagara Movement and the NAACP, and the first head of the Crisis. By then he was in his eighties, and still a handsome man. On the way down, he sang the entire score of the Pageant of Ethiopia, which he had written, in which he had much earlier toured the country.

A woman who worked for the school, Mary O'Shea, was in the back seat with him on this drive. After he sang, there was a big silence. Then I heard Mary say, "Oh, Dr. Du Bois!" [laughter] Then I didn't listen very carefully.

Rubens: How could you not--it was W. E. B. Du Bois, after all. Propriety had clearly gone out the window.

Jenkins: I can't testify as to what happened, but they both were smiling.

Don't you wish you could screw when you are eighty-three? Anyway, Du Bois was very intolerant in many ways. I remember him speaking at the Jones Methodist Church here. We were in back of the stage, and the minister came in and prayed for us there, and then he prayed again for him out on the stage. Du Bois turned to me and said that if he prays once more, I'm going home.

I once sat with him when Shirley Graham, his wife, was speaking at the CIO building, and I think he was supposed to follow her. She went on and on, and he got up and said simply, "I'm going home." He could not listen.

When we went to places, people would say to him, "I knew you in Harvard in 1893." He would say, "Of course." Then Du Bois would say, "Jackass! For me to remember 1893!" He was a combination of a great man and a great scholar who was very imperious.

He very publicly joined the Communist party. And he was a leader of the peace movement. The U.S. government took his passport away. He was ninety-six when he died, I think, in Ghana, as he was completing his dictionary of black people of the world.

The Duclos Letter Signals Significant Changes in the
Communist Party, 1946 ##

Jenkins: The end of the Teheran period was in 1948. The Duclos letter had already disrupted the Party profoundly.

Rubens: Just for the record, would you please explain the Duclos letter?

Jenkins: In 1946, Jacques Duclos, who was secretary of the French Communist party (the largest Party in the West), had characterized Browder's Teheran program as a capitulation to imperialism. Browder said that the unity between the socialist and capitalist world established during the war would continue and would mean a different future for society. Duclos said that Browder's notion that this new era would not see imperialism still a factor in international politics was a gross distortion of Marxism. He sent a letter explaining this position to the U.S. Party. Apparently, it was backed by the authority of the Soviet Union.

Foster, who was then chairman of the Party, immediately identified himself with the Duclos line, and a struggle ensued which split the Party all over the country. I participated in that struggle and was elected secretary of the review commission on whether or not the old leadership, including Schneiderman, should stay on. It was an endlessly active period where I spent hundreds of hours at meetings.

Rubens: At this time are you still head of the Labor School, and this was an ad hoc committee, the review committee?

Jenkins: Yes. The committee was set up by the Party, and a state convention was called. The state Party elected me to an executive committee that would review the findings of that convention which was called specifically around the letter. By and large, the leadership remained intact in California, but many members resigned.

Rubens: What was your position?

Jenkins: I was for that by and large too. There were a number of people who felt that the very logic of the Duclos letter implied that the entire leadership should be wiped out, that it had been corrupted by the years of the war, and the Teheran movement. I opposed the mass removal of leadership.

Rubens: Was Foster pushing that?

Jenkins: I don't know if he was. He was never a factor so much out here. Immediately, a whole group of the younger leaders demanded the resignation of the state leadership--Jimmy Kiernan on the waterfront, Lennie Cahn, Walter Lambert.

Rubens: The old guard then were really Oleta and Louise Todd, and Bill Schneiderman and Alan Yates?

Jenkins: And to some extent, myself.

The meetings went on endlessly. Ironically enough, we held one at the Plumbers' Hall in San Francisco. Al Yates, the husband of Oleta O'Connor Yates, was then a business agent for the plumbers. I don't know if Joe Mazzola, the present occupant, knows about it. That's where the action was.

Rubens: These were nightly meetings?

Jenkins: They went on and on. We had meetings all over town; then we would go back to a central meeting. The amount of rhetoric and language around somehow was absolutely incredible: reviewing every decision we made during the war years, the leadership of Browder and the rest of the national officials.

Rubens: That kind of scrutiny, evaluation, reassessment seems quite remarkable. It must have been grueling and as you said, a turning point.

Jenkins: Of course, what happened was that hundreds of people left the Party around these issues. One, because we didn't go far enough.

Rubens: In terms of purging and cleaning up?

Jenkins: Yes. And there were others who thought we had gone too far and that he who was without guilt should throw the first stone. It was the beginning of the end of the Teheran period anyway, not only the leadership but of the whole turn towards the Americanization of the Party, the reliance on its own historical sources, relying on a new literature which would identify the Party with its American beginnings, getting away from a kind of control by the International Communist movement.

All of that was suddenly restated by having the head of the French Party, who was a member of the Comintern, be the identifiable critic. And obviously the non-Communist press and the commercial press played it up wherever it could get any insights into it.

Many of the national leadership, like Roy Hudson, left the Party or were kicked out. Many had been the well-known base of the Party. Browder was by far the best-known public advocate of the CP nationally, even to the degree that I think in one election, the right-wing accused Roosevelt in 1944 of checking with Sidney Hillman, head of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and Earl Browder. So Browder's leaving the Party was in retrospect a disaster for the American Party. Whatever his weaknesses were, the attempts on his part and by the Party leadership under his direction to go in this direction were cut off.

There was a re-reading of the text of the Duclos letter. There was a re-reading of Stalin's position on nationalities. Besides that, it affected the Labor School. The teachers in the full-time program who were teaching economics, international relations, felt the impact of this new line.

The Communist Party Changes Its Support of the California Labor School: Jenkins Resigns as Director, 1948

Rubens: How so?

Jenkins: Well, in the sense that the whole line of the school started to buckle, so to speak, under this tremendous re-evaluation. The CP was a major pillar of the school. Raising money became more difficult. Especially at that time, we had just bought a building at 240 Golden Gate. Raising money for it and continuing to raise money for programs was complicated. Everything became more difficult in the period after the war.

For instance, thousands of war industries closed. The crisis of unemployment really attacked us. I was running around day and night to keep it all going. By '48, I was tired; I had had seven intensive years of this. I even had given up teaching, which I loved.

It was impossible really to maintain any level of academic excellence. In many cases, I was starting just a little bit ahead of my students anyway. Also, it encouraged, I think, revolts inside the school against my leadership, and I had to deal with that.

Rubens: Were the challenges over some of the issues we were talking about earlier, for example charges of chauvinism?

Jenkins: There was also a demand for total participation in the leadership of the school from janitor to money-raiser. It was kind of a democratic anarchy that was leading this really because none of them were willing to go out and raise money. None of them were willing to work with the labor movement which fell almost exclusively on me.

By '48, I was tired. The Party at that time then started to challenge the question of our most popular classes which were in the field of psychology and psychoanalysis. We had probably the most popular lecture series in the city. Sometimes there was standing room only literally; we used psychiatrists and mental health workers in a variety of fields.

Rubens: Including psychiatrists such as Phil Shapiro, who would be later known as a confidant to the Black Panthers?

Jenkins: Yes. Shapiro and Jacob Kasanin of Mount Zion. The Party in effect asked us to stop the classes when they themselves passed a ruling that anybody that was a psychiatrist or was in therapy had to drop out of the Party. The claim was that these people were no longer trustworthy, which was stupid.

Rubens: Had there been any recent examples of some revelation?

Jenkins: As a matter of fact, during this whole period of increased red-baiting, the ones who had been the most stalwart and the most to the Left were the psychoanalysts and the Psychoanalytic League. There was a certain rationale that people were telling their all to the psychologists who if coerced by the FBI could be dangerous. The whole handling of these matters was poor.

Rubens: When you say Psychoanalytic League, do you mean that there was a psychoanalytic section of the Party?

Jenkins: No. There was a group of analysts, but they were dropped from the Party almost immediately. Their influence penetrated into areas that were terribly important to the Labor School for money among the middle class and among others. The architect of that purging policy was Aubrey Grossman, the labor attorney.

I didn't agree with it. Nonetheless, it was still in effect. It was also a period when there was a big debate about the question of black nationalism when the idea of using the word "black" for black coffee or black sheep was tantamount to being brought up on charges in the Party. One of our teachers, Andy [Andrew] Zirpoli, was teaching a class in economics where he referred to primitive communism and used the term "black sheep," and was challenged by a black worker in his class. He was

ultimately brought up on charges because he refused to recant his position. Black sheep was not necessarily a chauvinistic term. He left the school and, I think, was kicked out of the Party. There were all sorts of stupid excesses.

Rubens: The party line was changing from integration to--

Jenkins: Well, black nationalism was a reaction to the whole Teheran period of collaboration and melting pot. Suddenly, black nationalism emerged, probably out of the experience of many of the returning black soldiers who were suffering. It was a whole preamble to the movement which exploded finally under Martin Luther King.

The Party's line, which had successfully drawn in leading blacks like Langston Hughes and Paul Robeson and countless others, Du Bois--started to go past that. The younger blacks were demanding of Robeson and Du Bois. Black nationalism was on the agenda. One expression, of course, was in education. We had never successfully in the school had more than an occasional black teacher. We had one black personnel, Ernestine Gatewood, who was our registrar, who turned out afterwards to be an informant. There was nobody of significant stature who was really out of the black community.

Rubens: Who was the teacher, do you remember?

Jenkins: Oh, there was a guy named John Flowers. Matt Crawford would occasionally teach also.

Rubens: What would he teach?

Jenkins: He would come in for individual sessions.

Rubens: He was in the Party then?

Jenkins: Yes. He was head of the Council for Civic Unity.

Rubens: Did that council start to fall apart, too?

Jenkins: Well, it changed character. Everything did. By '48, the progressive and Left unions were expelled from the CIO, the veterans' program at the school started to be attacked; the Tenney Committee was starting to subpoena me and others, Bridges was starting to get re-indicted. All this meant the end of the school really.

I often speculated that if we had taken a position to the right of the Party, that the school could have flourished and

continued to be a major institution. But I think I am probably wrong because the Party was so much a part of the school that it would have been torn apart if I had led a direction which rejected the Party Line of the time, rejecting getting involved in the politics of Henry Wallace's campaign, or the Marshall Plan, or the CIO unions expulsion.

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Rubens: While you might have been tempted or even opposed to the Party's purging the psychoanalytic divisions, et cetera, you were a good Party member and followed orders?

Jenkins: Yes. I did go along, although I remember debates with Celeste Strack. She characterized the current Hollywood movies, which started to be pro-black, recounting war experiences, for instance, and other subjects, as a charade, even more chauvinistic than the old Uncle Tom-ism, which I thought was a profound piece of nonsense. Millions of Americans were going to the movies, seeing blacks in dignified if maybe somewhat tortured positions, but I'm sure they were an improvement over the Old Black Joe and Step 'n Fetch-It. She wrote a pamphlet on it that we distributed, but I thought it was essentially nonsense.

It was my decision to leave the school; nobody removed me. I was given a big dinner and a gold watch and stayed on at the school a little bit, but Holland Roberts effectively took over. While I had enormous affection and respect for Roberts, he was totally intimidated by the Party leadership. We would have independent meetings at the school and say we were going to fight on the classes in therapy and psychoanalysis or agree we would take a position on something else. But once the Party objected, he would cave in.

Rubens: So the Party leadership remained the same, but the Party Line in fact reflected what was happening nationally?

Jenkins: Exactly. California was at least a third of the Party or more, so our leadership out here, what our opinion was, was crucial.

Rubens: A third of the national membership?

Jenkins: We were at least 10,000 members. We had a daily paper, which we supported out here.

Rubens: How big was the split? When you said people started to leave in '48, was it pretty significant?

Jenkins: It was significant. Also the failure of the Progressive party created serious disillusion because the Progressive party by then, out here, had come to be almost totally in the hands of the CP.

The Progressive Party and the Henry Wallace Presidential Campaign, 1948

Rubens: Tell me about the campaign.

Jenkins: That campaign was always vexed. Wallace in his own leadership resisted it, and it became an impossible task. By the time I took over, by the time I was asked by the Party to go in and revive the IPP, the Independent Progressive Party, it had no headquarters in San Francisco, no state headquarters, and only the remnants of one in southern California, and, of course, a skeleton in the rest of the state.

Well, I pumped life into it the same way, I guess, that I pumped life into the Labor School. I opened a headquarters, raised some money in the Fillmore; then opened one in the Mission which became a state headquarters, and raised more money. The Party, however, felt that I should not be the state director and placed a guy named Martin Ludwig out of Contra Costa. He was a nice enough guy, but a real schlemiel about money-raising. He was an insignificant figure, but he was a hard-line Party guy, which is what they wanted.

I had gathered a certain opposition out of my leaving the Labor School and increasingly a certain section of the Party led by Archie Brown and others started to characterize me as a vacillating petty bourgeois element. But they still didn't dare surface with that. Anyway, so my role then became more or less the northern California organizer and money-raiser for the Progressive party, and I really was able to put together a staff of about five people full time: Frieda Saltzman, Ludwig, myself, Hershel Alexander (a black leader), and Tiny Carillo, who was a black Portuguese.

Rubens: I guess Estolv Ward wasn't involved in that, was he?

Jenkins: I don't think so. But by that time, I was resentful of the strange role I was assigned in the Progressive party and more or less decided to quit and go back to work on the waterfront. Then I was drawn in by Lou Goldblatt and then by Bridges as the director of the Bridges-Robertson-Schmidt Defense Committee.

The Bridges-Robertson-Schmidt Defense Committee, 1949-1952

Jenkins: I stayed on with that until we freed them. I think that was '52. They were re-indicted after that, but I was then full time with the ILWU. By 1950 I started to make trips all over the country, raising money for Bridges and also expanding the defense. I got Hoffa of the Teamsters to go on record, and I got Frank Rosenblum of the Amalgamated Lithographers and the Paper Workers ultimately. I got fifteen national trade unionists lined up. Hoffa, of course, was a big help, a contributor.

Rubens: Why was Hoffa willing to do that?

Jenkins: Well, we had some sort of alliance with him in Longshore. We had never joined the attack against him. I think he appreciated that.

Rubens: Now they weren't kicked out in '48, were they? They were kicked out later for racketeering.

Jenkins: No. They were kicked out just before us, in '47. They were kicked out on corruption charges. Harry and the leadership of the ILWU would never allow us to be kicked out on the issue of disagreeing with Wallace and the Marshall Plan. Harry correctly said that the issue is autonomy, our right to take our own positions.

The CIO Expels Unions for Following the Party Line

Rubens: Why don't you explain what this issue of charges was.

Jenkins: The issue was that the CIO brought charges against the ten unions who they said followed the CP line: the endorsement of Henry Wallace, their refusal to back Harry Truman, refusal to support the Marshall Plan, which was the great "rehabilitative" program of Truman's. Bridges would never allow it to be that down below. That was never debated by and large down below. The issue that Bridges and our leadership forced the CIO to discuss was the right of unions to take positions that were in disagreement with the center, not the actual position.

At the '48 convention, northern California CIO Director Tim Flynn was invited, and he debated the issue, and he lost it in front of the delegates, which is one of the reasons that they were never able to split the ILWU as they were able to do with the Electrical Workers, from which a major group split away. To some extent that was true in Mine-Mill as well, and equally true among the others.

So that in that sense, Bridges' insight on how to keep his ranks together and over what issues should be discussed was crucial.

Evaluating the Wallace Campaign and Its Aftermath

Rubens: The Party lacked that insight vis-a-vis Wallace?

Jenkins: Yes. He got 500,000 votes in California out of a national total of 2,500,000. I started to suspect it during the campaign because we would put leaflets out, and everybody would love it, but people would come back and say, "Hey, they like our stuff, but they sure are scared of Dewey." I'd say, "Well, let's get another leaflet out."

Rubens: What does that mean that they were scared of Dewey?

Jenkins: Well, the possibility of a Republican victory.

Rubens: Therefore that would lead them to vote for Truman.

Jenkins: By that time, we were saying, "We have a chance of winning."

Rubens: How could that big a mistake have been made? Do you have any idea?

Jenkins: It was self-delusion. I can't think of any other reason.

Rubens: Coming from that intense period the year before of trying to re-evaluate the Teheran line, was it easier to acknowledge a mistake?

Jenkins: It was a terrible mistake. It was a ghastly error in terms of estimates. It's true, Wallace had been a vice president. The peace movement was still a strong one. But the old alliance between the intellectuals, artists, et cetera, had started to fly apart. The expulsion of the unions, which was going on almost simultaneously, was spreading. The anti-Communist movement,

which had deep roots in America, was effective. The activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee was a special barricade to overcome.

Rubens: So in California, Wallace was associated with the Party?

Jenkins: Well, there was no real alternative leadership. I am trying to think of the people, but nobody that was significantly important in the general political struggle. Maybe former attorney general Bob Kenney.

Rubens: Was he for Wallace?

Jenkins: Yes. I think that we would sort of take people and give them a new face, for instance Ben Margolis, lawyer for the ILWU and some of the other Left unions. It was never a significant breakthrough. The central liberals really started to attack us, like Philip Murray, national head of the CIO, the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action], Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.--it was very bad. The Progressive party started to fall apart. We ran, as you may remember, Vincent Hallinan for president. It was only Hallinan's energy and the fact that he had some money that made that not totally a charade.

Rubens: When did you run Hallinan for president?

Jenkins: Nineteen fifty-two. He ran on the IPP ticket. He and Charlotta Bass, who was the editor of The California Edge, a black newspaper in Los Angeles.

Rubens: Were you out of the Party then?

Jenkins: No, but I know I was helping.

Rubens: You mean despite that devastating loss in '48?

Jenkins: The persistence of a third-party attempt in American labor political history was evident, not only because we made a mistake in '48, but the desire for a third party, a Labor party, an alternative Socialist party--

Rubens: In order to keep the issues before the people?

Jenkins: Yes. It was always a big, big factor. We continued the illusion. I was in it because I had a lot of influence with Vince Hallinan and with Vivian. We were good friends. I would occasionally be asked to talk to him about some position he was taking publicly. I accompanied them a few places. I was in Boston with him. I was moving around for some other reasons in a

lot of places. Whether it coincided with my moving around the country for the Bridges Defense, I don't quite remember. I do remember that flight from New York to Boston, which was one of the scariest flights in history.

Rubens: What was Wallace's [national] vote? I don't remember.

Jenkins: It was nothing--750,000 or something nationally. One way personally even I got insight into the Truman victory was that I went down to the betting parlor and bet a lot of money on Truman and won ten to one.

The Smith Act Trials, 1952

Jenkins: Then about that period as well, I guess the Smith Act trials heated up. The Party put me in charge of the fight-back campaign on the Smith Act. During that time Archie Brown moved to expel me from the Party, because I invited I. F. Stone--who criticized the Party's lack of support for the Trotskyites in the Minneapolis Smith Act trial--to a mass meeting on the Smith Act trials. I detested Brown. He was dogmatic, unyielding and arrogant--a typical Stalinist.

Rubens: Did Stone appear here in California?

Jenkins: Yes. At that meeting at which we had about 1500 people, Stone criticized the CP for its lack of support on the Smith Act cases where the Trotskyites were involved. I was brought up on charges for not getting up publicly and denouncing Stone and saying this was unacceptable. Brown had gone underground with the beginning of the Smith Act. He and, I guess, Schneiderman, and Louise.

Rubens: I don't think Schneiderman went underground, did he?

Jenkins: He may not have.

Rubens: Louise certainly did. What about you? Were you asked to go under? Did you think of it--?

Jenkins: I was asked to go underground, and I even started to leave town, and I thought what bullshit this is.

Rubens: Edith once told me that precisely when she and the kids were going up to Bolinas for part of the summer, you announced you were asked to go underground.

Jenkins: Well, I never did. Edith said that it would have been publicly an impossible position for the family and myself, so it was never a firm order with me but it was suggested that I take off at that point.

Rubens: On what grounds did Archie bring charges?

Jenkins: Denigrating the face of the Party. Schneiderman apparently told him it was nonsense, but Brown was a persistent and relentless opponent, and one of the reasons I left the Party in '56.

Well, we got bail money for the Smith Act people, and after the Bridges victory, I decided to go to work. It was not totally voluntary on my part, in the sense that Bridges and Lou and I could not work out an accommodation of what role I would play in the International Union after the Bridges case was over. It was then I decided I would try to get a book in Local 10.

Working as a Longshoreman: Sacramento and Stockton, 1950 to 1954

Jenkins: Preliminary to that, I went for a number of months to Sacramento and worked there as a warehouseman. Then I went to Stockton and got my longshore book, and worked up there for a year or so.

Rubens: It would have been hard to come into the International in some kind of role?

Jenkins: Well, it was hard to get into Local 10 directly. My idea was Bridges and the rest of them write a letter asking for the dropping of the rules in my case because of my service to the International. Bridges would never do that. The guy who was the most help was a guy named L. B. Thomas, who was head of the Coast Committee. He and I were good friends. He helped me get into the local in Stockton.

Then after a year, you had the right to transfer, and I got a guy from San Francisco to transfer up to Stockton, and I came into the San Francisco local. It was a difficult period. I was living away from Edith and the children. I would come home on weekends, but then finally in the summer, she came up with the kids, and we got a house for a hundred bucks a month. She did stay for the summer in Stockton, which was a kick for all of us. So a position with the International was never an option then.

Rubens: How old were the kids about then?

Jenkins: Davy is forty-two, so he was nine or ten. Rachie was about seven. The Stockton experience was a very good one. I had made friends with a lawyer and his wife up there, named Henry and Preston Saunders, and I met some of the people in the music department at the College of the Pacific, and some of the longshore guys and I were very good friends. Occasionally, the Stockton Record would attack me.

Some of the guys I made friends with were not only good guys but had been bar fighters--they identified with me, the fact that I had a reputation. So they wouldn't let anyone get me. So guys like Blackie Hidalgo, Victor Romero, Ace Hopper, Dusty Rhodes--there was a whole group of us who worked nights together. They didn't give a shit if I was a Martian. Some of them had a history of militancy but not much politics.

Blackie Hidalgo had been in the mining strike up there in Modesto in '37. Biggie, another friend, had done time in the '34 strike in Pedro. Edith fitted in, too, with all these working-class wives.

Rubens: Edith told me to be sure to get the stories of pilfering on the waterfront. Was it in Stockton or San Francisco?

Jenkins: Both.

[Interview 9: March 2, 1988] ###

Rubens: While in Stockton, it must have been the first time in twenty years that you were removed from a daily fray of politics.

Jenkins: It was really a great relief. There was some action up there in the sense that there was a small party group that I paid some dues in. Henry Saunders (a left leaning lawyer) led a boycott against a bus company in Stockton which was owned by the same bus company that owned the bus Rosa Parks had been kicked off in Atlanta. He put together a coalition of black ministers in Stockton, and so they had a day's stoppage--fairly effective in Stockton. We did some other things. We broke the race barrier of the Stockton ILWU local. We got a couple of blacks in finally with some help.

Rubens: Stockton was a growing port after the war?

Jenkins: It was a good port to work in, good conditions. Much harder work than almost any other port because it was all canned goods and raisins, and wool and wine. We worked our ass off in that port.

Rubens: There weren't container ships yet.

Jenkins: No, just endless work. A big ore and grain load would take all night.

Rubens: What kind of ore?

Jenkins: Iron ore, coal. Aluminum, wheat, barley, flax, et cetera.

Rubens: What was the membership of the local?

Jenkins: About 300. It was all white. It was an elite local. Everybody in town wanted to be a member. They would take a few football players from College of the Pacific for extra work. Some cops and firemen would work extra. It was good money. We had a warehouse local with 350 members that was primarily black. That was the place where Al [Elmer] Balatti during the war, was a business agent with [ILWU] Local 6, a famous cocksman up in the valley, a sort of character, good organizer, kind of crazy.

During the war years, the need for workers was overwhelming. A lot of prostitutes around Stockton and Jackson came into the warehouse union. Two of them went to work for Gallo Wine, more than two. But two of them were working on the fifth floor of Gallo Wine--500 men and a handful of women. They thought it was crazy not to make a few extra bucks, and they were turning the fifth floor into a brothel, but there was never any water up there. So they were using Gallo champagne to douche and Gallo fired them.

They wouldn't tell the union why, and the union was furious with them and filed a grievance on these two shop stewards. Gallo called Balatti and took him to lunch and told him what they had been doing. He said, "It's bad advertisement for your union, bad for my champagne." [laughs] But it is a famous grievance in California labor history. I never douched; I don't know whether wine or champagne burns or not.

Rubens: The ladies remained dismissed?

Jenkins: Yes. Or maybe they took them back with a promise not to--I don't know. Jackson was a famous whorehouse town. Stockton was an interesting place.

Our guys in Stockton stole their ass off. I remember a Japanese ship came in. The guys stole kimonos that they had found on the ship, and I wouldn't take any. They took so many that the FBI was notified. They were expensive. Every guy in Stockton had a phony closet where he could hide stuff. I remember the panic when they started to go from house to house.

They were coming to me and telling me. I said, "I hate to tell you so, but when you get that flagrant, there just is no way to avoid it."

Another time in Stockton, when they were loading cartridges for guns, the whole load was put on the back of a pickup truck, which drove away, with about \$4,500 worth of stuff. They just drove it off the dock with a canvas cover. They would bury stuff in their back yards.¹

¹For more on pilfering, see Chapter IX.

VI A CRITIQUE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY: ACCEPTANCE,
 DISENCHANTMENT, FINAL BREAK, AND THE MOVE INTO MAINSTREAM
 DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLITICS

[Interview 10: March 9, 1988] ##

The Hitler-Stalin Pact, 1939

Rubens: You headed something called The Yanks Are Not Coming Committee, and I didn't know whether that was--

Jenkins: That was a period of the Soviet Union's alliance with Nazi Germany during the so-called phony war period. In retrospect, it was a period of shameful collaboration.

Rubens: The '39 Pact, you mean?

Jenkins: The '39 Pact, which obviously was a pact of enormous opportunism on the part of both countries. On Stalin's part, it may have been an attempt to shock the British, American, and French governments into recognition that something would be done to save the Soviet Union.

Rubens: Did you have a personal feeling that was distinct from the Party position? That Pact was a hard one for some people to swallow.

Jenkins: No. It so happened that I was on a ship, the President Coolidge, at the time or the Monterey--I'm not sure. The ship's delegate was a guy named Campbell, whom I do remember, was a reactionary and right-winger, sort of pro-Fascist. We had been fighting all trip and after the Pact he came to me, shook my hand, and said, "We're comrades together." I thought, Jesus Christ! I was at sea at the time. I guess I waited until I was at shore to find out what it all meant. But at that time I accepted the rationalization that the Pact was a good thing. The Soviets had to move in some direction to protect themselves. Then the People's World started to report totally differently about Germany for a brief period, and we reacted to that. But we still were not critics of their pact. It was true that all sorts of

people dropped out of the Party, and the impact, particularly among the Jewish Communists, was widespread.

Then we organized the committee, The Yanks Are Not Coming. It was premised on the dismay really over what we felt was the betrayal of the Soviet Union by the United States and the western allies. There was some capitulation if I can remember the rationale for it. Ultimately it was not an unimportant event because afterwards, I was attacked in some newspaper article (it was an anti-Communist attack) that I was a Communist who headed The Yanks Are Not Coming Committee. There may have been subpoenas. I don't remember exactly, but it came up in some way that showed my ideological adherence to the Communist party line.

Mostly we sponsored a rally. We put out a couple of leaflets. As soon as Germany attacked the Soviet Union we called for a Second Front. Shortly afterward, I probably headed the committee, The Yanks Are Coming. It was a slavish response, really.

One of the problems of the American CP, which remains its difficulty today, is that the American CP is the most slavish in terms of imitating the foreign policy position of the Soviet Union. On domestic issues, there was considerable leeway and differences, and we made up our own positions as long as they were in the general framework of Marxist thinking on foreign policy.

Just as we rejected any criticism of Stalin, we, in a sense, rejected any criticism of the Soviet Union which we generally felt represented the peace-loving peoples of the world. It was in those same terms that we supported the Chinese communist fight against Chiang Kai-shek and at the same time supported the underground in France and the underground in Czechoslovakia.

So that it had very funny contradictions on the one hand. In many cases, we supported governments and movements, which were genuine in terms of their aspirations for peace and sovereignty. In the case of the Soviet Union, we absolutely supported their position and the vagaries of it.

Rubens: But you didn't question that at the time?

Jenkins: It was quickly succeeded by the entrance of the United States into the war, its own obligations to the Soviet Union as an ally. It was in this period that the American Party grew enormously, including the California Labor School. People's memories were short.

Rubens: Were you ever sent to or had the opportunity to go or interested in those training schools that the state CP ran? I was wondering if, since your role was so prominent as an educator--

Jenkins: No. I don't remember state schools. The only schools I remember were schools in Moscow.

Rubens: I presume that didn't appeal to you. There would be no reason to go.

Jenkins: I was never asked to go. I was not seen as the future proletarian leader of the American Revolution along with Walter Stack and others. I think Paul Manning went. He was an informer afterwards. He was the head of the Party in Oakland.

Rubens: When was he an informer?

Jenkins: During the same period as the Smith Act trials. I think Loretta Starvis, who was organizational secretary of the California Party and who married Walter Stack, was a student, but I'm not sure of that. I remember a group who were sent to that school.

A Growing Personal Disenchantment with the Party

Rubens: You were talking about time in Stockton and seeing that that was also coincident with disenchantment or a real stepping away from the Party.

Jenkins: What happened to me really was as I left San Francisco to go to Sacramento and Stockton, I had no organizational connection particularly at that point.

Rubens: Your role had been to raise money for Smith Act and also for--

Jenkins: --for the public campaign. Then when I went up to Sacramento, that limited my activities. I played some role in the union up there but a limited one. When I went to Stockton, it was equally true. There was a small Party group in Stockton that I met with occasionally, paid some money to. By that time, I was in sharp conflict with Rudy Lambert, who was head of the security of the Party, whom I liked personally though I detested his political rigidity.

Rubens: What was the consequence of that? They were going underground at that time.

Jenkins: I think Rudy stayed above ground.

Rubens: Louise went underground.

Jenkins: Yes. My general feeling of the inadequacy of the Party in relationship to my last period at the Labor School, being rejected as the state head of the Progressive party because I wasn't of proletarian origins, which was a lie, the unwillingness of the Party to---. And I was always a so-called loose cannon. So while I was admired on the one hand as a mass figure and a mass organizer, as indicated by the fact that I had been put on the political bureau of the CP statewide; on the other hand, I always had a persistent group of critics who felt that I didn't belong there. While I took assignments, like the Progressive party assignment, which was directly from the CP, I helped to give the Party a false rebirth by raising money and putting organizing behind it. It was mostly based on my energy rather than any need or the Party's energy which brought it to life.

In Conflict with the Party on Black Nationalism and Other
Issues

Rubens: What was the conflict with Rudy specifically?

Jenkins: Well, he was endlessly accusing me of stepping outside the discipline of the Party. Then the Party more and more became unattractive. During the period of the Labor School there began an extreme black nationalism in the Party where friends were being kicked out for things I thought were absurdities and exaggerations, like teachers using the term "black sheep," and also dropping of the psychiatry classes from the Labor School, but also in the area generally of the black-white relationships. This continued not only in the immediate period but from then on.

On the one hand, I was closest to black people like Revels Cayton, Paul Robeson, Du Bois, and on the other hand was subject to some criticisms from black Party leadership here in the city.

Rubens: On what grounds?

Jenkins: My not being orthodox enough, particularly the argument about language. It was in many ways absurd.

Then the endless series of people who were being dropped from the Party. One guy who had fought behind the lines in Yugoslavia was kicked out because he was considered pro-Tito. It was at the height of the Party's attack on Titoism a la Stalin. A branch organizer in our neighborhood, a woman of pure and fine

reputation, was kicked out of the Party because she was pro-Tito, a housewife.

A guy who owned a couple of apartments was dropped from the Party because he refused to give precedent to a black tenant over a white tenant. It all seemed chicken shit. I was assigned to a branch led by a black guy who almost made the members do a catechism every time they came into a meeting. My friend was in that group, too, and just stopped going to meetings. He turned out to be a thief and an asshole. The black chairman of the branch.

Many blacks got caught up in the years of oppression and discrimination and grasped symbols which were not terribly meaningful. I had taught classes on Negro history and knew a good deal about it. I had read Du Bois, and I knew a good deal because of all of the stuff that the Party had put out, some of it impressive and some enormously exaggerated with some black heroes that, in a way, became ridiculous.

Also having worked on the East Coast in Harlem and on the waterfront there, to romanticize the black experience in a way that made them without faults made the "line" incongruent with my background.

Rubens: So you in fact got out of the line of fire by going to Stockton or Sacramento. You severed your connection?

Response to the Khrushchev Report, 1956

Jenkins: To some extent. Also the Khrushchev Report was unbelievably upsetting.

Rubens: That's the 1956--?

Jenkins: Yes. It's hard to describe to somebody who was outside of it. It was like a rape, a mental and emotional rape because we were involved with hundreds of non-Party people to whom we had denied the possibility of these "slave labor" camps, the murder of honorable and fine people. We defended the trials. We said it was an example of socialist justice and socialist conscience.

Vyshinsky had written a whole book on the new socialist conscience and how these confessions which were being characterized by [Arthur] Koestler and other writers much more appropriately, were wrong. And suddenly in the middle of all that, the admission by the head of the Soviet Union's CP that

there had been a period of terrifying dishonesty and murder. One was hard-pressed in a way to remain faithful to any model of Marxism.

Rubens: How did the report literally become available? Was it published or--?

Jenkins: Obviously, it was reported to a special session of the Communist party's central committee. There were obviously leaks, CIA, whatever, or the British intelligence.

Rubens: My point was that it was not through the Party apparatus; it was released through the press.

Jenkins: Literally, through the non-Marxist press all over the world. For those of us who had some contact, as I had with the Soviet delegation to the UN as well as during the years when Russian war relief was going on and we hosted Michoels and Pfeiffer--a leading poet and head of the Moscow Jewish Drama Art School--suddenly, to learn in '48 that they were jailed or dead, the persistence of our belief--talk about sickness of leadership--remaining faithful to a concept.

It finally started to fall apart, including the reversal on the Tito business, including some admission of what had happened in terms of the China relationship, including the fact that Khrushchev reported the death of a million or more people. That expanded in my mind because if they reported a million, it must have been three, four, five million people. Everything then became reviewable. Every writer that you had rejected because of his anti-Soviet position, writers like James Farrell, author of Studs Lonigan, whose works were among my earliest read novels, Phillip Rahv, Partisan Review, all sorts of other writers--[John] Dos Passos--now needed to be reconsidered.

It was a contradictory period. [Pablo] Picasso still remained in the Party. [Jean Paul] Sartre refused to break with the Party in Europe. It was a period of enormous confusion and bitterness besides which it was just relying on anti-Soviet reports. The American Party was fully implicated. Of course, it would never renounce ties with the Soviet Union. But more important than that, papers like the Daily Worker and the People's World were faithfully being reported to by American reporters who were our correspondents in the Soviet Union, who lived in Moscow, lived in Leningrad, who were there all the time. Not the slightest hint from them but a total protection of the Soviet leadership.

While we had gone through a period with Lysenkoism that dominated the agricultural theories of the Soviet Union, people

we trusted here and respected scientists thought it was nonsense. Eventually, we rejected them as mere critics, and broke off friendships. A doctor I knew, Kalman Klinghofer, a distinguished internist, said he read it and he was absolutely appalled at the scientific nonsense that Lysenkoism represented, and the fact that scientists were being removed from leadership positions.

The impact of the Khrushchev Report and the subsequent conclusions that one drew were overwhelming. You didn't regret the years you had spent in the Party; you didn't regret the things you had done domestically, the anti-Fascist movement, the war in Spain. All those things remained intact. But other things started to be in review in your mind. But you couldn't just go on as if nothing had happened.

So we, in the mass movement, would have had to defend the Party and reject the red baiting, although it was made terribly difficult. We had already gone through the catharsis of expelling Browder and rejecting the Teheran period and going back to the hard anti-imperialist line, et cetera.

Rubens: The Smith Act trials were over, is that right?

Jenkins: Well, they went on depending on what state.

Leaving the Party

Rubens: I mean in California. Wasn't it '55?

Jenkins: About then. So every group like ours--I don't mean Party group--our friends which included parts of the leadership, certainly the mass movement, certainly the trade union movement--we were meeting and examining and defending still. Some people were dropping out of the Party. First there were characterizations of them. Then you decided you couldn't stay in the Party any longer. I think [William] Schneiderman came to visit me and said if they couldn't keep somebody like me in the Party, then the Party really had lost its mass approach. Edith happened to be furious with this because she was sitting in the room when I was told this by the Party leadership. He totally ignored her and that she had been in the Party almost as long as I.

Rubens: She had already dropped?

Jenkins: Yes. They had made no approach to her to stay in or reconsider. Symbolic of this rigidity and this tenacity was, I think, more

than anybody else, Archie Brown, who was trade union director of the Party, who led in the expulsion of all sorts of people during the so-called Duclos period and to this day maintains his hold on Party leadership, even though he is in his seventies now. He was the executioner for the California Party. [Archie Brown died in January of 1991.]

* Rubens: You had said that you and Brown had been struggling with each other all along anyway. When you decided to leave did he--?

* Jenkins: He came to see me.

Rubens: He and Schneiderman. The big guns are going to hold you in?

Jenkins: No, I had a separate meeting with each. As a matter of fact, I had lunch with Brown out at Bayshore, and bitterly attacked him as being symbolic of everything I hated in the Party. Not his personal courage which was there. Or his devotion to his family. But what I felt was the ultimate Stalinist personality in the American Party.

Lou Goldblatt had always rejected Archie as a fool, but Archie had a lot of influence.

##

Jenkins: Brown had gone over to Hawaii to BS the Party, to give the directives to Jack Hall and Lou Goldblatt about the 1951 strike, and they literally threw him out of Hawaii. But Brown was very tenacious and would come back over and over again.

Rubens: So that was a turning point, a painful period for you to come to that decision--I'm going to leave?

Jenkins: Terrible period. It was not only leaving the Party because if you left you were charged with inevitably landing in the arms of the enemy, so to speak. Resisting that characterization both in retrospect to the Labor School when I left, and the Party, I persisted in my determination to stay in the working class. Because it was an ideological break and a personal cutting off from "comrades."

Rubens: When did you actually leave the Party?

Jenkins: I guess technically about '56, the same time as the Khrushchev Report.

Rubens: After the Khrushchev Report?

Jenkins: Yes.

- Rubens: So going over all of that meant entailing your own evaluation?
- Jenkins: Also, I was protected as many Communists were not. I was associated with a progressive union that gave you harbor, so to speak, for your political points of view.
- Rubens: What was it literally like to reject the Party? Do you literally go to a meeting and say, "I am severing my membership"?
- Jenkins: Well, you tell whoever is your branch organizer or section organizer. In my case, it was Schneiderman when I was through with the Party.
- Rubens: Was this something Edith and you also discussed?
- Jenkins: Oh, yes. Either way, Edith had a more difficult time leaving the Party than I. It meant more to her in a certain sense because she had rejected her family liberal tradition. Her alternatives were very dramatic and she had lived through years of being characterized as a bourgeois intellectual German-Jew who had to be watched, so to speak, and couldn't be trusted. I don't know if that was an official definition, but it showed up endlessly in discussions. In order to protect herself from these attacks, she had to separate somewhat, emotionally both from her family who were very generous towards her generally, as well as so many of the things she loved which the Party characterized--certain kinds of poetry and writing.

So she was very much more orthodox, and I'd come home and say, "Rudy Lambert, Archie Brown and Schneiderman are full of shit; they took an outrageous position"--on this and that. Edith would be very upset by what she felt was my lack of loyalty to the Party. I would get into furious battles with them about something, and I would come home and say, "I love Al Richmond, but he is so chicken-shit in the meeting and I sometimes think Holland Roberts is senile." They were so frightened of authority. They would agree with me personally; then they would break with me at party meetings.

So that when she left, I think, having a more consistent philosophical point of view than I, she really saw the contradictions and what we had been involved in.

- Rubens: Was this a joint decision? You both left at the same time?
- Jenkins: Yes. We gave a part of our yearly income, which wasn't large. Every bazaar, People's World drive, we were one of the leading givers. We kept buying things back from garage sales we had donated in the years before. Yet, we were better off than most

of the Party members. We had a house. We had \$3,000 to put down on this house, which we got from Edith's grandpa--Jacob Jacobi, who had put aside \$100 for her for every birthday. Our lifestyle was pretty much the CP's; we didn't eat out much, and it was years away from taking regular trips, though we did go on some trips on the theory that if you were always going to be broke, you might as well go broke about things that you love. So we always took holidays with the kids. So it was a real tearing thing for Edith as well as myself.

The after-effects of that weren't gone for a long time.

Rubens: In what way?

Jenkins: Because of endless situations that you had to re-evaluate. I had read hundreds of books--all the orthodox ones. I even read the "official" history of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, which had eliminated two-thirds of the revolutionary leaders in the telling. I had read Foster on almost every issue I could remember for twenty-five years. Suddenly, all the people that I respected most ideologically turned out to be not only vulnerable but they had kept hidden not only the Duclos letter but the Khrushchev Report, which in my opinion would have come out differently if the CP had been responsible for its public confession. Yet God knows the tortuous way we would have gotten the information ourselves.

On the other hand, there were genuine parts of the Stalin heritage that we thought were valuable. Stalin had this phenomenal record during World War II, particularly the Battle of Stalingrad. There have been many great figures, such as Pablo Neruda, who have regarded Stalin and Stalingrad as a hero and a heroic moment in history. Years later, when we were in the Soviet Union, two of our Soviet friends, who were then children, and now are both doctors, told of standing in the streets in Moscow during Stalin's funeral with tears pouring out over the death of a great hero.

Still, years later, when we went to the Soviet Union, we sat in our friends' apartment while they turned up the phonograph or whatever so they could tell us how they felt about those years. And we were sitting with two distinguished members of the Russian CP, one who was the architect who built the subways, and originally an Austrian Communist and a woman who was the chairman of the CP's translator's collective. When she came to give me money in cash because she expected her son to come to the United States, she took me into the bathroom and turned on the shower.

These were devoted Party people--the man saying that he thought that Stalin was the cruelest and most bitter murderer in

history. It was shocking. He still took me around all of Moscow to show me subway stations, apartment combines that he had helped build, a man already in his seventies. The same process, in a way, was going on with us on a different level, of course.

Rubens: You were working by that time on the San Francisco docks, is that right, '56?

Jenkins: Yes, just about that time I came down here.

Rubens: Was there a wholesale exit from the Party?

Jenkins: I would say that 80 percent of the Party left. They took a little time, and also I was in a more vulnerable position; I had been an educator in the Party. The fact that although everybody had as little insight as we did to what actually was going on, in a certain way, I felt more responsible.

Rubens: You had had--it's not insignificant, but it was limited visibility at the state leadership level. You were on the political bureau. During the Wallace campaign, you were on the state committee.

Jenkins: The truth of the matter was that none of them had insight! Schneiderman had briefly been national secretary of the Party. Nobody here in this country, known to us anyway, knew; even guys like Joe Clark, who was the Soviet correspondent for the Daily Worker and the People's World and who was also a close friend of Al Richmond (the editor of the P.W. [People's World]). They didn't have the slightest insight or they censored themselves so that their reporting was abysmal.

Rubens: There was a suggestion that Schneiderman leave, step down from leadership?

Jenkins: Everybody was up for review, but in the long run, Schneiderman stayed.

Rubens: Did you find your life changing dramatically after as a result of that?

Jenkins: Well, I had already cast it in a way. If I had known after I left the Progressive party and the Labor School what I knew eight years later, I don't know if I would have ever stayed, so to speak, in the Longshoremen's union and all that hard-ass work. I was trying to prove my proletarian affinities. There were a thousand things I could have done--if I had to some extent renounced publicly as Howard Fast did and others. I could have gotten credibility. I don't regret not doing that, however.

After all, I don't think there was a Communist in the area who got more publicity than I did or was in the press more often and was known generally, not only by labor but by the business community and the cultural community. If by 1949 or 1950 I had known this and had said something publicly and renounced the Party, there was no question that my life would have been totally different, but, as I said, I don't regret not doing that.

Rubens: You are saying that is the turning point in a way?

Jenkins: That was really the turning point.

The Last Round of Labor Defense Activity

Rubens: You did the work in Stockton, Sacramento; you got your longshore book; you came back here to San Francisco.

Jenkins: Then I was pulled off the job by defense work. Mine-Mill, the Bryson case, the Bridges case, even to some extent the cases back East, Ben Gold.

Rubens: Is that the Fur Worker connection?

Jenkins: Oh, I had a longer connection with that.

Rubens: From when you were back there.

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: What does this mean? I don't know whether we have ever really addressed what you did for the Mine-Mill or the Bryson case.

Jenkins: I was head of their defense committees. In the Mine-Mill, eight of their national officers were indicted on perjury charges about the anti-Communist Taft-Hartley oath after they had been kicked out of the CIO. I was hired by Mine-Mill to work on the defense of these guys. There had been another Mine-Mill trial in Silver City, New Mexico, where there had been some indictments.

Rubens: So the national CP headquarters says, "We want you to come and organize the defense."

Jenkins: Well, I knew the Mine-Mill leadership, Morris Travis, et cetera. I went to Denver. I made endless trips to Denver and out of Denver to the rest of the country lining up support. I got an impressive group of non-Communist trade unionists, Frank Rosenblatt of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Jimmy Hoffa of

the Teamsters, Kenneth Burke of Lithographers, and the head of the Textile Workers. And, of course, the UE and other progressive trade unions, ACA, United Packinghouse, Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union, and the Paper Workers Union.

Rubens: Were you doing the dogged work of calling them up, seeing them, writing leaflets, asking for money--

Jenkins: --organizing dinners in every town I went into. People in the Midwest, like Ernie DeMayo of UE and Abe Feinglass of the Fur and Leather Workers had been terribly helpful in using their own connections with the rest of the labor movement in the Midwest. Feinglass and I became particular friends. He succeeded Ben Gold when Gold was indicted. Gold thought, well, I'll put Abe in, and I'll run the union through Abe. Abe got in and told him, "No way." But Abe and I were particular friends. I used to stay at his place when I came to Chicago, and we traveled a lot together. He became national president. Gold became his most furious critic, attacking him and finally ran against him.

Gold was an open Communist for years and a legend in his own time.

Rubens: Gold was in New York, wasn't he?

Jenkins: Yes. But Chicago had a considerable fur industry, and they had a union there. The other center of the union was in Montreal.

Rubens: The L.A. contingent was still there?

Jenkins: It was still there, but it still was small. Then fur took over the jurisdiction of leather, and that expanded it, particularly in Chicago. Abe and I were very good friends.

Rubens: Just compatible--enjoyed each other?

Jenkins: Then we agreed politically. When we went to the Negro Labor Council's meeting, there was a huge fight that was directed in part against the Fur Workers and some of the other unions as not being sensitive enough to black issues. We thought the criticism had some legitimacy but was placed somewhat out of context. Abe also had real connections in the Jewish community.

Rubens: Was he in the Party?

Jenkins: Yes. And he was a Yiddishist and one of the funniest story tellers that I ever knew, typical of the industry. He would come out here occasionally. Ernie De Maio and I were good friends but never in the same way.

Rubens: Ernie De Maio was--?

Jenkins: The leader of the Midwest UE with the biggest, I think, membership in the union. They had a huge membership for a while. But Ernie remained devoted to the Party even after the Khrushchev Report and finally ended up being head of the World Federation of Trade Unionists at the UN. He was a tough little guy, attractive and bright and a fine musician. He was the epitome--well, if he hadn't been a Party member, he would have been in many ways a better trade union member. He was totally devoted but fought the Party in their directives since they had somebody assigned to him who was always at his elbow, telling him when he was doing right and wrong.

Rubens: In the Bryson case?

Jenkins: Same thing happened. I had been a member of Marine Cooks. Hugh Bryson went to jail on charges of Communist membership or was tried on it. I went up and down the coast, and nationally as well. Bryson was personally very popular in the trade union. He was attractive and young and a great cocksman.

Rubens: He wasn't Jewish?

Jenkins: No.

Rubens: When was this, by the way? When was he charged?

Jenkins: Sometime in the fifties because he was one of the few guys who went to jail. He went to jail for a couple of years. When he got out he immediately went into the motel business and became a national figure in the National Motel Association some years later. He had seven kids, and three wives, and when he came out, his current wife, whom we had been giving about \$800 or \$1000 a month to while Hugh was in jail--

Rubens: --That you had raised through this committee?

Jenkins: Yes. She was a very naive woman. She had been a dancer, and a sort of call girl at a joint in San Francisco called Sinaloa, which was a Mexican dance place. Her mother had been a hustler down in San Jose, beautiful woman.

Anyway, she came to me when Bryson was on trial and said, if we didn't get him out, she was going to tell everything. I said, "What are you going to tell?" She looked at me accusingly and said, "You know." I said, "I really don't know. What are you going to say about us?"

Rubens: What did she mean?

- Jenkins: I guess she meant that she would tell people we were Communists and we were manipulating Bryson. She had no information. Anyway, when Bryson went to jail, she reverted back to her old life.
- Rubens: Despite the \$800 a month?
- Jenkins: Yes, \$800 a month, in spite of all that. Bryson got out of jail. He was as successful in jail as he was out. He was head of the furniture shop.
- Rubens: He was a natural leader?
- Jenkins: Yes. He had won his state typing championship in Ohio when he was a kid. He was a clean-cut American boy who loved a certain kind of sordidness. His wife greeted him when he got out of jail; then she disappeared and didn't show for a couple of days. She went on a terrible drunk, and she was living with another guy. She just couldn't confront Bryson. She had made do the best way she could.
- Rubens: Was he in the Party when he was indicted?
- Jenkins: Well, he was charged with a strange indictment--not Communist membership but Communist affiliation.
- Rubens: I was just wondering why she thought you were manipulating him.
- Jenkins: I think she was just desperate. Anyway, he went through a terrible period after he got out of jail, and I think they finally worked it out. He ended up by having a very big house down in Woodside, California, and a jumping ring. He became the state horse marathon rider.
- Rubens: Post-jail signified the end of politics for him?
- Jenkins: He never ratted on anybody.
- Rubens: He went into the motel business, made money and--
- Jenkins: Then he got a much younger wife, who was also a horsewoman. Whenever I saw them, they had horse clothes on. Every once in a while, we would get together.
- Rubens: Didn't the Party want to run him for assemblyman? There was some Bryson campaign for a while here in San Francisco.
- Jenkins: Bryson and Paul Robeson were very good friends. He was a Party member, and he said his three Mexican wives were emotionally very

devoted to him but so far out of the political and intellectual life of the Left. Lulu, his first wife, whom I adored, was a dancer and loved Hughie. They broke up because he accused her of being unfaithful and promiscuous. For hours, she would tell me how much she loved him. Bryson fell out with her--as a matter of fact, she joined the army, and she was away for a while. She was very attractive but from a different world. She had all the attractiveness of being a working-class girl, which was not true of his third wife. She was one of the most beautiful women I ever met but had been brought up in such a lousy environment--semi-prostitution. Hugh died recently at 64.

Rubens: These women were not in the Party, I assume?

Jenkins: No, I don't think they were.

So anyway, to finalize about the Khrushchev thing: you found as time went by you had to review everything. While a lot of people approved of everything, we were surrounded by deceit and dishonesty and lack of knowledge and therefore were reviewing our convictions, every aspect. The conclusion: that we would never accept leadership ever again from anybody without the grimmest goddamn review.

Reconsidering Some Leaders on the Left

Harry Bridges

Jenkins: In many ways, Bridges was as close to the Stalinist personality as anybody I knew. He was perfectly capable of cutting off somebody's head who was in opposition to him or characterizing him, as he did to Paul Pinsky, as he did to Louie, as he did to Jack Hall, as he did to others. On the other hand, he was capable of the most spectacular sentimentalities. He forgave a guy like Herb Resner, a union lawyer who stole thousands of dollars from clients, whom he had lived with. He tended to understand the stool pigeons against him. He would say, "You know Wilson, he's not a bad person."

##

Jenkins: Herb Resner stole from a trust fund.

Rubens: He needed the money, gambling debts? [laughs]

Jenkins: No. Lifestyle. House on Pacific Avenue. He was married to a woman named Dodie Resner, who had lived with Edith at UC, who was the daughter of Jewish working-class parents. She was really the first Communist that Edith had ever met. Beautiful gal. She was first married to Lou Goldblatt, then to Dick Criley, who was in the Party. Criley came out of a Carmel family, became captain in the U.S. Army, head of ACLU in Carmel now. Then she married Herb, I guess. Dodie gave Edith, who was very innocent, a lot of information about sex.

Rubens: Now that I recall, wasn't it through Dodie that you became socially friends with Goldblatt?

Jenkins: No. Dodie and Louie's breakup was fairly bitter. Then Louie married a very safe, fine woman, Terry. She was not only bright and stable but considered Louie made a great contribution and was perfectly willing to play second fiddle to his life even though she was an anthropologist and studied with Franz Boas.

Rubens: I know their daughter is an anthropologist. But you were characterizing Harry.

Jenkins: As Edith said about him, "When he had real enemies he was magnificent--a genius, courageous, a real unique leader. When we won, he invented enemies, paranoic, obsessive."

Rubens: He and Archie must have been a team?

Jenkins: Well, they were mostly allies, although they fought a lot, too.

William Schneiderman

Rubens: I also wanted to ask if you had ever been close to Schneiderman. I don't think one actually got close to Schneiderman.

Jenkins: Has he come up on your other oral histories?

Rubens: Yes.

Jenkins: Well, I knew him fairly well. I think we liked each other. But he was such a diminished personality. He was bright and a good record-keeper and, I think, personally courageous. He doesn't have any spectacular aspects either in speaking or personal actions. There was no flamboyance. You could meet Bill fifty times and not quite remember his name.

His brother, Lou Sherman, was a leader in our union, the ILWU down south, in Local 26 for a while.

Rubens: He had changed his name?

Jenkins: I guess so.

Rubens: It's not that I know much about Schneiderman, but I interviewed Leah about the role of women in the Party. I asked her about anti-Semitism. She said that there was no issue over her being Jewish all her years in San Francisco. But she said during the Smith Act trials, she felt that so many people fled from her. She claimed she would walk down the street, and people would hardly talk to her. When she went to L.A. to visit her husband--I guess she ended up living there for months, she said it was quite different. People said, "What can I do to help you?" There was a sense of community and when she thought about it, she attributed it to being a Jewish community. There was just some sense that you take care of your own and you bind together.

Jenkins: Could be. I didn't particularly dislike her; but I didn't like her particularly. Leah was such a devotee and protector of Schneiderman. Her own personality didn't really emerge until after his death in a way.

Rubens: She seemed very strong, feisty--she seems like the archetypal Communist woman.

Jenkins: We all thought a little bit that Schneiderman had been a little brow beaten. His mother-in-law lived with them. She was an endless yenta [Yiddish for a busy-body]. "What's going to happen to us?" They were always embarrassed about it.

There was a CP community down south. Leah's devotion to the Party line was so apparent, it shocked me. If you said an off word, she immediately launched a case against you. She was here the other day when we did the review of the California Labor School at the SFU [San Francisco State University] Labor Archives, along with Florie [Florence] Hicks, an old friend and critic. (She used to be married to Julian Hicks and was still in the Party and active in Berkeley a few years ago.)

Rubens: She is still a trooper and has great hopes for the Party. She told me that it's growing. They have divided districts between north and south again, each headed by young Chicago women. I saw the new Party platform and I think the lead sentence went on for about three paragraphs.

The Hallinans

Rubens: I think you know that my husband and I are very close friends with Ringo Hallinan, son of Vincent Hallinan and editor of the People's World until 1985. We don't talk about the Party very much. He doesn't feel compelled to defend it, though he finally left the "Daily Planet," as we call it--when they merged and became the People's Daily World.

Jenkins: He's not on the paper anymore?

Rubens: No, he left the paper because he just couldn't take it anymore.

Jenkins: Well, his brother Matthew and my daughter Becky are very good friends. He was the education director of the Party. We're old good friends with Vince and Vivian. I met Vivian when she was carrying Danny, their youngest, in 1948. She was making a speech at the Fairmont for the IPP [Independent Progressive Party].

Rubens: I think she has a real business acumen and is a wonderful person.

Jenkins: Edith and Vivian would see each other a lot through the kids, especially when Vince went to jail.

Rubens: Why did he go to jail?

Jenkins: On some financial trust that he had set up for his kids illegally, but it actually grew out of his prominent role in the Progressive party and his role as the lawyer in the Bridges case.

Rubens: He apparently was quite a task master with his kids.

Jenkins: He gave the kids ultimate freedom, though, in language and contacts. Their house in Ross was extraordinary. They had an Olympic-size gym on their property and swimming pool. Going to dinner there was an exercise in obscenity. People were screaming, "You're full of shit, you cock sucker." He was amused by it. On the other hand, he was an eccentric. He had never slept with a woman until he slept with Vivian. He had been a Catholic. He had been terrified of hell and limbo. He became a famous anti-Catholic and sued the Church.

Rubens: He's much older than she.

Jenkins: He's ninety-one, and she's our age, something like seventeen years difference. I don't think he's ever slept with anyone besides Vivian. He suddenly saw the light one day when he was

going by a bookstore and bought and read Tom Paine: changed his entire life.

When the kidnaping threat took place, I went over and stayed with them a few days. Somebody threatened to kidnap Danny if Vivian didn't put twenty-five thousand bucks in that tunnel that goes from Marin City up to Sausalito. She called, and so I went over. Wykoff, who was district attorney, came down and patrolled the grounds with a deputy.

Rubens: Was this when he was in jail?

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: Were they known to have money? They had that house, obviously.

Jenkins: It was an enormous house, and one of the things that Vivian and Vince would show you was their clipping book. Whether it was good or bad, they collected material on his trials. She got permission to speak to him when he was in jail. He gave her that "don't you worry little woman" shit. I think she told him to go to hell.

Anyway, I went over, and I patrolled the grounds, almost shot their nephew who came over the wall one night with two friends. Then I took the kids to school. We were very good friends. Finally, they caught the guy. He turned out to be a black soldier at the Presidio who had gone to a Left money-raising party on a yacht in Sausalito called the Wanderer. He saw all these rich lefties and figured, my mother has cancer, so I can get some money. Vivian would never prosecute.

Then there was a period when Vivian couldn't get money because their money was tied up. A whole group of friends each lent them \$10,000, which they paid back. But she has gone through a lot. She has had cancer, a son died, a grandchild died.

[Interview 11: March 23, 1988] ##

Divisions in the Ranks of Labor

Paul Jacobs' Role in the CIO and the Expulsions

Rubens: We went over pretty quickly the ILWU's expulsion from the CIO. We discussed your role in being a money-raiser and supporter of

those unions that were defending themselves, Mine-Mill as well as Fur Workers, and Bryson. Did you know Paul Jacobs? Maybe ten years ago he wrote an apology for his role in expelling the ILWU from the CIO. Now that the ILWU has gone back into the AFL-CIO, it is important to recount the historical circumstances of the expulsion.¹

Jenkins: Yes, I knew him fairly well. Jacobs originally was on the staff of the Ship Building Union down in San Pedro. He had a history on the political Left, a Trotskyist, et cetera, and he openly boasted of his supplying the material to the leading expulsion committee of the CIO. For that matter--I'm not sure--either to the FBI or some government organization as well, he supplied facts about the Communist leadership of the union and Communist policy, et cetera.

Rubens: Facts meaning what? Giving names of people who were members of the Party?

Jenkins: I don't think it was that but just generally philosophically, comparisons between the CP line and the Left unions. However, he left the staff of the Shipyard and Ship Building Union, whose leadership was red-baiting and social democratic. Later he was employed by the government as an advisor to the Peace Corps all around the world.

Rubens: That was much later. Did he stay with the Ship Builders all throughout the fifties?

Jenkins: I don't know exactly, but obviously he had access to the government during the period when everybody on the Left, so to speak, was being marked "lousy" by either McCarthyism or by the House Un-American Committee. After his role in the Peace Corps, he had second thoughts about his role in the expulsion of the Left unions.

I guess he had played a role as an anti-ILWU figure. I don't remember exactly how he surfaced and generally was adopted as the fair-haired boy of the anti-Communist liberals. On one occasion when he first came to San Francisco about 1960, he was invited to a house party at which he took off on Bridges and the union being a Communist union. Decca Treuhافت happened to be there, and James McGinnis who had been the attorney for Harry during the Bridges, Robertson, and Schmidt case. I think there

¹In 1950, the ILWU was expelled from the CIO. Between 1949 and 1950 almost a dozen unions were expelled from the CIO over cold war issues and anti-Communism. The ILWU rejoined the AFL-CIO in 1988. See Michael Harrington and Paul Jacobs, ed. Labor in a Free Society, 1959, Berkeley.

was some fisticuffs from McGinnis calling Jacobs a goddamn liar, punching him out. Decca hit him with her purse or something. He learned very quickly that the ordinary red-baiting of the liberals and the ADA professional witnesses were not acceptable on the West Coast. In other words, it was a very different "bag" or way of operating here compared to the New York center of anti-Communism. The union here had much more relationship to the community than any of the unions back there. The entire Bay Area community had an enormous amount of respect for Bridges, Goldblatt, and the ILWU.

After that lesson, he showed up at a number of house parties I was at, for example at one of our relatives, the Perlman--Dave Perlman, who worked for the San Francisco Chronicle as a science editor. His wife and my wife are first cousins. Then I was doing some side work as a travel agent, doing union travel and stuff. He came and gave me his business, which was fairly extensive for traveling throughout the Far East and West.

Rubens: So he had never attacked you personally?

Jenkins: No, I don't think so.

Rubens: He was not in San Francisco when the expulsion actually took place?

Jenkins: No, but he was bitterly regarded by the leadership of the union: Bridges, Goldblatt, and myself, for that matter, for his role as a sort of insider playing the role of a traitor.

Rubens: Most of that, I assume, emanated from his being a Trotskyite.

Jenkins: I'm not sure of his political affiliation.

Rubens: I'm almost sure he was SWP [Socialist Workers Party]. What I am really asking is were there others like him? We never really discussed the Trotskyite and other parties in your political life.

Trotskyites and Other Leftists

Jenkins: Well, insofar as those who were most comfortable attacking me and the ILWU, it was difficult for the ordinary liberal Left to attack the ILWU. It usually came from the Trotskyites, who regarded the ILWU as a CP-dominated union. That kind of attack was equally true of the leadership of the regional NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], for

instance Franklin Williams here, in California, who afterwards became ambassador to Ghana.

Rubens: Then Paul Jacobs died tragically, in a sense, because of having contracted cancer from--

Jenkins: Radiation while writing a story of nuclear testing in Nevada. He had joined forces out here with people like Earl Raab, who had been a Trotskyite and then became head of the Jewish Community Relations Council, a long-time ally of Irving Howe in the early days in the fight against Communism. Raab was prestigious in the city, also Bill Becker and Ed Howden, who was the first executive secretary of the Council of Civic Unity and married to a distinguished Japanese woman who also sat on some city commission. While Raab was friendly enough, he was always very cautious in his relationships with me, even after I had left the Party.

There were some others: Gordon Haskell, who was a Trotskyite and became the founder of the AUD [Associated Unions for Democracy]. It's a trade union organization which exposes corruption and has now become much more respectable. I think this guy, Norman Hill, in the NAACP, was a figure nationally, associated with fighting racism in unions. Bridges at one point was a labor secretary of the NAACP.

In spite of these attacks, I must say, as a result of the '34 Strike, as a result of the unrelenting campaign of the government to expel Bridges, he had enormous allies, for instance Landis, who was extremely prestigious and dean of the Harvard Law School, had identified Bridges as a fierce advocate but not a Party member, and there were figures from the American Civil Liberties Union, James Waterman Fly, a national figure in the ACLU. Telford Taylor, who was chief of the Nuremberg Trials, currently a professor of law at Columbia, was brought in for writing briefs in the Bridges case. And, of course, Hallinan had no national reputation, but he was enormously respected by the bar in California. He had a long reputation for victorious cases, a little bit regarded like Mel Belli as a great advocate but unscrupulous. He would do anything to win a case, including eating the evidence, which he did in one case. Also Paul St. Sure, head of Public Maritime Association, the shipowner association.

Conflict over Legal Strategy for the Bridges Case

Jenkins: I remember when [Vincent] Hallinan was first hired by the union. Left figures like Aubrey Grossman said that it was the beginning of the end of the ILWU. They had sold out by dropping him and Richard Gladstein as their attorneys, who had been the attorneys in the first cases.

Rubens: What prompted that decision, do you know?

Jenkins: Broadening the defense and keeping the union. It was equally true that Hallinan embraced the ILWU with a passion that indicated his own identification with people's rights and went whole hog, but I was witness to a lot of very inside differences between the attorneys. Norman Leonard, who continued on until very recently as the ILWU lawyer, and was a magnificent brief writer, had real differences with Hallinan's approach to the case. There was a big struggle about it.

Rubens: Do you know what the basis of that difference was?

Jenkins: Generally, it was over how to create a mass base and on fine points of law as well. Leonard was a magnificent technician. Hallinan was a courtroom performer and depended on surprises and also confronting witnesses. I did some work on those cases: investigation of witnesses, trying to find out what they had on a guy who had a good reputation and became an informant, like Blackie Cannilonga, who was a Marine Fireman. They were using the fact that he had transferred a woman out of Nevada across state lines and was afraid of the charges of white slavery.

Rubens: They held that over him so that he would testify?

Jenkins: Yes. So I checked maybe thirty motels in the Bay Area where he may have checked in, and found nothing. However, Cannilonga first testified against Bridges and then took a trip up from here to Portland with two FBI agents. We suspected that there was a struggle in the car, and all three of them were killed on the trip up to Portland. Cannilonga was obviously in agony about his testimony. We ran into a lot of that.

Rubens: What kind of name is that?

Jenkins: I think he was half Hawaiian.

Stool Pigeons

Jenkins: Also, Eleanor Kahn was the research director of the union along with the help of people like Aubrey Grossman. They identified a thousand people who were potential witnesses in the Bridges case, using a system of unstable backgrounds, access to the police, ambition, anger at being denied position in the union, homosexuality, et cetera. An enormous amount of energy and money was spent on that. I think one of the thousand testified. The rest of the hostile witnesses were surprises basically: people who were either hidden in the Party, people with grievances; guys like Blackie Cannilonga.

Butch Saunders, who lived with me for about six months, a long-time Party leader on the waterfront, suddenly appeared against Bridges.

Rubens: So he had been an informant in the Party and--?

Jenkins: Well, we never knew. Merv Rathborne, who had been head of the ACA, American Communications Association, and then had become West Coast secretary of first the San Francisco CIO Council and then the state council, we suspected that he had been a paid informer from the beginning. He and I were very good friends, and he had promoted me to leadership in the council as their legislative director. He went on to become a builder in Half Moon Bay, California, financed by Elinor Heller.¹

George Wilson, who had been president of the CIO Council and one of the founders of the Newspaper Guild here suddenly testified, even though he had been chairman of the Bridges Committee in the first case. Wilson then left San Francisco, went to Los Angeles, became a fairly persistent drunk who would come up to you in the Biltmore bar and say, "I had to do it; (testify that Harry was a member of the Party) I didn't know what I was doing," and a variety of other things.

Johnny Schomaker, who was one of the big witnesses, had been one of the leaders of the '34 Strike, one of the speakers of the funeral march; a handsome, attractive guy. He had run for the president of the local and been defeated. I think he aspired to high office in the union and had every reason to believe he could make it. He became bitter when he imagined that Bridges had not supported him, which was probably true, and when he testified he

¹According to Alice Adams, long-time secretary to the Heller family, Edward Heller provided the finances to Mervyn Rathborne. Elinor Heller was not involved. Mr. Heller died in 1962 after a several years' battle with cancer.

was an extremely damaging witness. His wife had an affair with an FBI agent. He then was a bartender down in the peninsula. What ultimately happened, I don't know.

The witnesses were from our own ranks, in some cases, people who were closest to us. In some cases, they were Party officials who had dropped out of the Party, who had been informers, et cetera, and were not so damaging because they would testify that they heard that Bridges had paid his dues or they heard, et cetera et cetera.

Rubens: It must have been demoralizing.

Jenkins: None of the stool pigeons out here ever got any acclaim or ever "made it," outside of Rathborne. On the East Coast, they did a TV series, "My Life as a Spy." The Hearst Press played them up enormously--Howard Rushmore was one of the leaders of the journalist anti-red brigade. Rushmore, Victor Riesel, and a dozen others.

Howard Rushmore was the major Hearst reporter on red activities. But the truth was with the exception of Rathborne, who if he had not had the protection of Heller, would have too, they just disappeared into the woodwork or never played a role in other unions, et cetera. There is maybe the exception of Al Addy, who testified he was a Party member and member of the Warehouse Union, recruited both his father and mother, whom he turned over to the FBI. He then was made editor of the Teamster paper for a while.

Rathborne, as a matter of fact, got a job right after he testified. He was an electrician with Ets-Hokin Electrical Company, a well-known marine electrical contractor on the waterfront--pretty distinguished--the father of Naomi Lauter, who is head of the American Israel PAC [Public Affairs Committee]. As soon as they found out that Rathborne was an informant--stool pigeon--Al Weber, who was the shop foreman, made his life so miserable that Rathborne quit.

Butch Saunders was a stool pigeon, not only in the Bridges case, but he was a stool pigeon in the Smith Act cases. He and his wife lived with us, not with Edith and me but Consie and me after his wife lost her job as a public health nurse down in Monterey County. Barney Dreyfus, the attorney, and myself got her reinstated. I carried Butch during that whole period until he went back to sea. Then I shipped with him during the war. He was a bo's'n on a ship called the Arthur Middleton, and I was the second steward. We were good friends. He also had a master's license.

He suddenly popped up as an informer in the Bridges case and the Smith Act cases. He had been chairman of the waterfront Party group, et cetera. I think ultimately he was a gutless wonder. I think they put some heat on him and threatened to take away his master's license. He had the morality of an alley cat.

Saunders--he went on to become port captain for the N.K.B. Lines, which was the Nippon Shipping Company. One day, he was walking down the dock, and I was working on the dock with my partner, Hal Yanow, who walked over to him and said, "Captain Saunders?" Saunders said, "Yes?" He says, "Do you have change for thirty pieces of silver?" Then he knocked Saunders' homburg [felt hat] off his head. That kept happening to Saunders. He would come aboard a ship where we were working, and then nobody would work.

Years later, I went to a social event out in Sea Cliff, with Anne Halsted, who was then president of the San Francisco Port Commission. It was Anne's sister's house, a place I had never been before and knew nobody except Anne, who was sitting there with Saunders. I said, "You fuckin' stool pigeon, are you still around?" The whole room stopped. I must say, it was a Sea Cliff room. The owner of the house was an IBM executive--nice enough guy--who was married to Anne's sister. It changed the atmosphere of the party. Saunders and his wife left. That happened to a lot of Saunders-type guys around San Francisco.

Rubens: The stool pigeon phenomenon must have been very demoralizing. What was the Party's explanation for this?

Jenkins: Well, all of us knew about Saunders. He had been an orphan and a kind of tough waterfront type. Nobody had measured his degree of sincerity. After all, thousands of people came through the Party, especially in the ILWU on the waterfront and in the seamen's unions.

Rubens: Conversely, the government pressure must have been severe. I am not excusing it--

Jenkins: Yes, especially if you were threatened that they would possibly take away your papers. And Saunders had made a lot of money during the war. He had shipped all 100 percent bonus routes. He was a good gambler. It is true, I have seen him in a couple of fights where I didn't respect him, particularly. But, I didn't draw any permanent conclusions.

His wife had already gone through some persecution, but she was always a very decent woman.

Reflections on the Communist Party and the Waterfront

Jenkins: When I say that thousands of people went through the Party, at one time on the West Coast waterfront, we must have had, between Longshore and Seamen's Union, Warehousemen, Scaler, and Fishermen, a thousand Party members had come and gone, been recruited during a drive and stayed on. Occasionally, they were tabbed by the FBI and were paid a couple of hundred bucks a month to inform.

Also, the Party on the waterfront was an open Party. We had a bookstore at the corner of Embarcadero and Market Street [in San Francisco]. It was the section headquarters; we had a full-time section leader. Ernie Fox, Bill Bailey, Alex Treskin, Walter Stitch--there were an endless amount of them because they would get the job and then ship out, less true of the longshoremen who were pretty stable and homebound.

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There were seamen who were stable guys like Bailey and all the ones I mentioned as well.

Fox had an interesting history. He was on a ship with me in 1942, the Alexander Middleton. He was the bo's'n on it. The FBI came aboard and took him off. It turned out he had been born in Germany and came here when he was three years old. They kept him in a German internment camp for the duration of the war. It was only an enormous campaign that finally got him out. He had a long history of Left activity. His wife, Elsie, was our office manager of Local 6. She led the campaign for years to get him out of a temporary Army internment camp in Sharps Park, California [located between San Bruno and the coast].

Rubens: Is this an example of going for someone on the Left using whatever you can?

Jenkins: Yes. Bailey, of course, remains a distinguished figure of the Left. He and I have been friends for years and years. Stitch died early, and Treskin. Also, there was a whole group of seamen, Joe Bianco, Harry Hines, who were called the bravest men in Spain.

So the industry itself contributed to a certain kind of leadership--the fact that Bridges had been a seaman as well as other leaders of the longshore union up and down the West Coast, combined a history of going to sea and then getting off ship in a port because they got married or because they finally decided to stay ashore.

Rubens: You were talking about thousands coming through and particularly during the war period when we discussed the California Labor School and what a mecca it was.

Jenkins: I remember in one Party drive, I recruited 60 people out of the Labor School. The Party, after all, with the Soviet Union playing the role it was in the war, and with the role of the ILWU and a number of other progressive unions, its policies of racial equality attracted a lot of people.

Rubens: The war was a big time for recruiting people into the union, as well.

Jenkins: Yes. Union membership went up. Local 6 which was a local of about 4,000 went up to about 17,000 members. So at one time, one could say that almost every prominent black family in Alameda and Oakland had come through Local 6 for their first working experience. It was not untypical then to find guys running for public office whose fathers were longshoremen like Congressman Dellums' father who was a longshoreman. Longshore Local 10 went up double to 8,000 members.

The Growth of the Shipyard Trade Union During World War II

Rubens: Chuck Wollenberg has a new book on the Marin [California] Ship Corporation during the war. He writes that within two or three months, hills had been leveled, the factory built and the 1,000 workers were coming. He claims that the unions didn't really make a big attempt to organize these war workers, they were perceived as temporary people who would upset the balance of power. He particularly addresses the Boilermakers Union and the fight over black admission. I don't remember the details. I wondered if you had anything to say about that.

Jenkins: There is no question, particularly in the shipyard skilled unions, the Boilermakers, Ship Fitters, Machinists which were relatively small unions, suddenly their membership swelled enormously from maybe 200 to 20,000, in the Boilermakers case.

Rubens: They were not particularly Left unions either?

Jenkins: Oh, no. In one case, the Boilermakers were led by a guy named Ed Rainbow, who was a full blooded Blackfoot Indian. Not that he liked blacks; he just didn't want Indians discriminated against. I remember once at a meeting where somebody made a derogatory remark against Indians. Rainbow, whom nobody associated with

being an Indian, pulled a knife and said, "You say that again and I'll cut your throat." Suddenly, we all knew that he was Indian. I knew Rainbow and we were friends. He was no different than the ordinary white redneck on the question of blacks.

These unions suddenly had huge treasuries. The initiation fees were enormous. You had to be a member of the union in order to work. So suddenly, the Boilermakers had three million bucks. After the war, these members disappeared. The work disappeared. These were little unions sitting on top of huge treasuries, and they actually became businesses living off these huge treasuries.

Issue of Race and Separate Unions

Rubens: What could these unions have done about the dismantling process or the relocation of these workers? I don't know what power they could have exercised.

Jenkins: The best they could have done, and I guess they did to some extent, was seniority in the shops. They were strangers and they were migratory populations. These old building trades and shipyard unions had a little core of members that were on the executive board and the leadership, and they held on tight to it.

It took us years to put together the fight against the black auxiliaries in the Boilermakers. We played a role in it. Some of the blacks didn't want to lose that status. They figured they were leaders of their own auxiliary, to be integrated would be to lose their advantage. This was equally true in the Musicians union, which had a black auxiliary.

Rubens: I knew there was some conflict between the NAACP and the Party. Maybe it had to do with that strategy.

Jenkins: Well, there were a lot of currents in it. It was not simply a black and white situation. Black leaders of the auxiliary didn't want to give up their posts. They figured they would just get lost and so the suits just continued over and over again. It finally got resolved but by that time, the bonanza period was really over.

Rubens: The Party position must have been against the separate locals?

Jenkins: Oh, yes.

Rubens: Bechtel built Marin Shipyard. The whole history of Bechtel--following the money from the construction of the

bridges, then the shipyards, then transforming itself into this internationalist developer.

Jenkins: Also they set up Marin City, which was an incredible act. They had 14,000 people settled there at once.

Rubens: Marin Ship turned out the ships at a furious pace. It was just phenomenal. The workers had taken a no-strike pledge and really worked hard. There was the sense that this is the war and we are going to do what we need to do.

Jenkins: Also, by comparison with the wages they had left in the South, and the Okies, and the Arkies, so-called, and the Texans and the New Orleansians, thousands of blacks. I don't know what the comparison was in terms of equality, but the blacks took over all the lowlands in Berkeley and Oakland, so to speak, and ultimately led to a black-led city, I guess.

But the mood was a progressive mood in these unions as well.

Friendship with Jessica and Bob Treuhaft

Rubens: During this time Jessica Mitford wrote a funny piece about "Commie Speak." Were you close with her then?

Jenkins: Yes. She had been one of two people who ran the East Bay Labor School. Then she went to work for Herschel Alexander and the Civil Rights Congress and went off to work on a couple of fairly publicized and dramatic cases, Martinsville Seven, the McGee Case. She was a very dramatic opponent on that issue. I met her mother; we went on a picnic together. Her mother kept a clip book of her famous daughters and regarded all of them with equal pleasure--one being a Fascist and one being a Communist, another a writer, et cetera.

As time went on, Bob ran for district attorney for Alameda County, I was legislative director of the union then. We walked precincts and the ILWU raised money for his campaign.

We had a warm and close relationship, which went on for years. Politically, we were in general agreement. She was more devoted to the Party, it seemed to me, than I was. Bert [Bertram] Edises, who was Bob's law partner, was married to Pele [DeLappe], who worked for the People's World, and was famous for his defense of Steve Nelson in the Pittsburg Smith Act trial.

During the Alioto years¹ Treuhaft and I had an unfortunate break; we were never friends again. He had a particular history with Alioto, which I don't remember the details of, which infuriated him.

Rubens: The Alioto campaign would be a watershed in San Francisco political life.

Jenkins: Yes. Alioto's reputation among working people was a good one. One, he had been an anti-trust attorney. Two, he had been chairman of the Rice Growers in the valley, and we negotiated with him for years and always signed decent agreements with him. The rest of the labor movement liked him. He had been chairman of the San Francisco board of education, and of San Francisco redevelopment; he was a pretty conventional figure.

When he became mayor, he was against busing. I was working with him, and I disagreed with him. He never took umbrage at that, but we had big debates. While his and my positions on Vietnam were different, he also listened to our position and gave us the polo grounds out in the [Golden Gate] park. The biggest issue became the TPC [Tactical Police Squad] squads out at San Francisco State college. We endorsed him four years later in spite of the years of Vietnam and city turmoil.

Background on Alioto Endorsement

Rubens: I know the new Left charged that the Alioto sellout had to do with the coalition between labor and business. Under Alioto, of course, was the first time labor was represented on the port commission.

Jenkins: Not exactly, but the first ILWU member on the commission. Well, Bridges got appointed in 1970, but we had an agreement with Alioto. I sat in on it and helped forge it. Bill Chester, Leroy King, Keith Eickman and myself in Alioto's office when he agreed to put blacks on every commission and trade unionists on every commission. That had never taken place even under the so-called union administrations in San Francisco. There never had been any blacks or trade unionists on police, never on fire, none had gone on the airport commission. We had never before had labor people on the port commission or any of the really powerful commissions.

¹See Chapter VII.

When he announced the appointment of Bridges, that was the most creative thing he could have done. Bridges loved him and was devoted to him. Goldblatt, who was to the left of Harry, was extremely devoted too, particularly when we persuaded Alioto to give the Palace of Fine Arts for the Exploratorium rather than give it to Herb Caen's tennis leagues. Frank Oppenheimer was the great leader of the Exploratorium and was a good friend of Lou's.

While in office he also agreed to make Fort Mason into a public center for recreation and arts. He was an enormous help to the arts.

Also during a 103-day longshore strike, he made contributions to the pickets, going down and shaking their hands. Then in addition when the Independent Journal, the newspaper in Marin, went on strike and Leon Olson of the Printers Union and Jack Goldberg of the Teamsters were arrested for violating the injunction and went to jail for fifteen days, Alioto stood in front of the jail making public speeches against the use of the injunction.

On every strike situation we were involved in, we negotiated with him, and he was our ally and friend. On other social issues, as well. He was mentioned as a potential vice-presidential candidate along with Humphrey.

If that Look magazine article accusing him falsely of Mafia connections had not been written, he probably would have received a nomination. He was enormously persuasive. The Italians loved him all over the country.

VII DAVID JENKINS' INVOLVEMENT IN SAN FRANCISCO CITY POLITICS
AND GOVERNMENT

Introduction to John Shelley

[Interview 14: May 4, 1988] ##

Jenkins: This is somewhat interesting. In 1940, after I had just arrived in California, I had taken on some legislative responsibility on the waterfront. Jack Shelley was then a state senator; he recently had been state president of the AFL and before that had been president of the Central Labor Council.

Rubens: In San Francisco?

Jenkins: Yes. He was a member of the Bakery Wagon Drivers, which was a Teamster affiliate. The union, under the leadership of George Kidwell, had the reputation of being a progressive, even a left-leaning union. Georgia Kidwell, his daughter, and another daughter, Jean, became leftist and still live in southern California.

Rubens: Were they of your generation?

Jenkins: Yes. Both of them, I knew and subsequently worked with them in various ways. Kidwell, indeed, produced these two stars, Jack Shelley and Wendell Phillips, both who succeeded Kidwell in the leadership of that union. Phillips accumulated an enormous reputation as a negotiator. Indeed, the wages of a bakery wagon driver were higher in San Francisco than any other comparable group in the country. He [Phillips] was also on the War Labor Board and was notorious for being a serious alcoholic, but he maintained his integrity in the union.

The John Shelley - Charles Garry Campaign for Congress, 1949

Jenkins: I led a demonstration of a couple of thousand people calling upon Shelley, who was state senator for help in Sacramento. I don't remember the issue. But my introduction to Shelley was fairly adversarial. Then when he ran for Congress, I handled the campaign of attorney Charles Garry, who ran against him. Garry, whose whole name was Garabedian, came out of the Armenian community of Fresno, formerly a cannery worker and had a reputation as a good criminal attorney.

Rubens: He had been a lawyer for the Cannery Workers?

Jenkins: No. He was a cannery worker himself. As a matter of fact, he had a reputation of being the fastest can stacker in California. Later, Garry was the attorney for the Cleaners and Dyers Union in San Francisco a long time before his involvement with Black Panthers.

Rubens: Let me ask you a couple of questions here. Was he first known as Garabedian and then later changed the name to Garry?

Jenkins: No, but he has a brother who is a member of the Ship Clerks, Local 34 ILWU, who uses the name Garabedian.

Rubens: Let me clarify this. You managed his labor campaign for U.S. Congress.

Jenkins: Yes.

Rubens: So this is a Party position, to back Garry. It was in your capacity as a Party worker that you managed his campaign?

Jenkins: Yes. Now, back to Shelley, he had an excellent reputation.

Rubens: He was supposed to have been fairly instrumental in releasing Mooney, isn't that so?

Jenkins: He played a role in the Mooney release. He marched up Market Street with Harry and the rest. He had a good liberal policy on domestic legislation. When it came to foreign policy, he was a traditional patriotic gung-ho, even jingoist, always promoting his status as a reserve officer. When you visited his house, his uniforms and medals from the navy were dominant around his house. He was a huge man, about six-feet-four or -five. His father,

Kevin Shelley, had been a longshoreman and his son Kevin Shelley is now running for supervisor and is a good friend of mine.¹

When we decided to run Garry against him, it was a Party decision because the Party opposed Shelley's position on foreign policy. In retrospect, it was an absurd decision. We had had to get an endorsement for Garry from the Longshoremen's Union. Shelley appeared at the meeting. I was then not a member of the union but was involved there. Shelley pointed to his father and his own history in the trade union movement. He was overwhelmingly endorsed, but it was quite a battle. The police were called because there was fear that it would break out into a fistcuffs.

Rubens: Was Harry particularly pushing Garry?

Jenkins: No, he went along with it as I remember, but I'm not even sure of that because there was enough energy down below in the Party. Garry didn't get a respectable vote. There was no reason to expect he would. Shelley was, at that point, almost a perfect candidate: Irish American, rooted in the trade union movement, having proven his own leadership of the state AFL. He had been beaten up by the right wing led by [Edward] Vanderleur, state secretary of the AFL, at their convention when he ran for office.

Coming out of Kidwell's local, he was not only a leader they loved but was one of the key guys on the strike committee in the General Strike in '34. We were really going off into leftist politics that didn't have any base in the trade union movement or in the working class or among the minorities.

Garry, in later years, of course, went on to play an important role in the "New Left" movement as a Black Panther attorney and in the Jim Jones case. I'll tell you a funny incident about Garry and the Panthers. We were invited to a \$50 dinner at the Hilton for Garry. Edith and I were there, at the same table as Decca Treuhaft and Paul and Sarah Pinsky. Garry's father was sitting on the platform. He was stone deaf, an old Armenian who had worked for years in the canneries around Fresno, a big, solid man. The chairman of the event was former state attorney general, Robert Kenney, a charming and left-wing guy. (As a matter of fact, I knew Kenney's wife well. She used to come to San Francisco and stay in the Huntington Hotel. She gave a lot of money to the Labor School. She was a member of a Bahai group and would come here for some retreat.)

¹Kevin Shelley was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1990.

One of the speakers, as I remember, was one of the leaders of the Black Panthers, Bobby Seale. Seale got up to speak and said they wouldn't come to this "mother-fuckin' imperialist hotel," or a "mother-fuckin' dinner," except for a guy like Garry. At our table, Sarah Pinsky turned to Paul Pinsky and said, "Now you see how you sound?" We all "fell out" [laughing].

But some waiter listening to this diatribe started to sing "God Bless America" in back of the auditorium. The manager of the hotel, Henri Lewin (who is famous in hotel circles; he and his brother own the Las Vegas Hilton) rushed up afterwards and announced that they had fired the waiter for doing this. Anyway, the place broke up in consternation. The dinner went on. By that time, everybody felt outraged by it, but at the same time, the power of the Party in terms of supporting Garry and the Black Panther movement was strong--as a matter of fact, I think Bobby jumped up after the announcement, and said, "We didn't want the worker fired by this 'mother-fuckin' hotel,'" and again an outrageous tirade followed.

Rubens: Why did Sarah Pinsky chide Paul?

Jenkins: She was criticizing him for his bad language. He was state director of research for the CIO. Everybody knew that Pinsky's vocabulary was terrible. Incidentally, he was formerly head of the Federation of Architects, Chemists, Engineers, and Technicians in California. Afterwards, Pinsky was named by Oppenheimer as one of three Communists who he knew--and this was an outrageous dishonesty by Oppenheimer. Pinsky was well known to all of our friends.

Pinsky's union had about 3,000 members; he was one of the founders. Oppenheimer had been helpful to them in organizing the Shell scientists and technical workers, and, of course, knew Pinsky. When Oppenheimer in later years named his brother Frank as a Communist, he also named Pinsky. Pinsky never played any role on that level; it was strictly a union thing. As a matter of fact, Pinsky was expelled from the Party in 1949 for what was called white chauvinism. It had something to do, I recall, with renting apartments he owned to whites instead of blacks, but it was simply leftist nonsense.

Rubens: He is known for setting up the ILWU and MCS [Marine Cooks and Stewards] and other unions' welfare benefits. He was a genius at that.

Jenkins: That's right. He then himself set up his own insurance company in Hawaii. Years later, Bridges broke with him, dropped him as

the welfare consultant and put in Alan Dorfman, this strange, gangster-tainted man from Chicago, who was connected to the Teamsters there. Dorfman was later killed, executed really. His whole family was involved in some way in corrupt pension plans.

Rubens: Why did Harry replace Pinsky?

Jenkins: Well, Harry thought Pinsky was a close ally of Jack Hall. Then, too, there was probably some quid-pro-quo with the Teamsters. Harry always wanted to see an International Transport Workers Union created, and he always wanted to keep on good terms with the Teamsters. So Dorfman may have served that function as well.

Anyway, getting back to Shelley, when he ran for mayor against Harold Dobbs, I ran that labor campaign for him. Years before Shelley had helped me with the California Labor School, and at one point was president of the California Labor School's board of directors.

The Shelley Mayoral Campaign, 1963

Rubens: You put him on the school's board of directors?

Jenkins: Yes. Well, he was a good catch for us. His reputation, his political reputation, et cetera. He was on our board of the California Labor School during the "United Front era," from '42 to '46. The significant thing in the mayoralty campaign in 1963 as far as I was concerned: I was approached by first Don Bradley, who was the campaign manager for Shelley (who was brought into the campaign by Bill Malone, chairman of the Democratic [State] Central Committee), and John Rudden, who was a port commissioner, a bag man for Malone and Shelley.

This--my role as a campaign organizer--was a real change for me. I had gone through a period of being publicly characterized as a Communist. I had left the Labor School and the Progressive party and was working in a warehouse in Sacramento. I formally got into the union in '55 in Stockton when I worked as a longshoreman. I had also worked for Mine-Mill and a variety of other Left unions, which were under attack by the Taft-Hartley law. Shelley was a mainstream Democrat. He had a reputation for being an anti-Communist, but not a red baiter. He was mainstream AFL, liberal.

When he took me on as the labor director of his campaign [for mayor], this for me was a major step, my first time coming

into mainstream Democratic politics. I had played peripheral roles. As a matter of fact, I had even organized a campaign against Malone for the chairmanship of the Democratic Central Committee, by backing Elmer Delaney. Shelley's taking me on was a gesture of generosity, but I don't think they ever gave me a litmus test. They never asked me if I was still a Communist. In addition, Bradley was at that time regarded as a genius at political campaigns. He was state secretary of the California Democratic Party. He had run the campaign of Pat Brown for governor. Bradley, however, was a former member of the Marine Cooks and Stewards and knew me from the waterfront. He himself had some knowledge of the Left leadership, was respectful of Bridges and the ILWU but essentially an ADAer [Americans for Democratic Action] type.

Bringing the Black Community Leadership into San Francisco Politics

- Jenkins: We elected Shelley. The main role that I played was in bringing the ILWU and the black community into his campaign. The black community didn't think so much of his reputation; they demanded of Shelley that he support our candidate, Percy Moore, for supervisor, which he finally did.
- Rubens: When you say "our," what does that mean?
- Jenkins: He was our welfare director at the ILWU and black activist.
- Rubens: Who picks him? How does it become logical-- that "he's the one"?
- Jenkins: Well, he wanted to run. He was a friend of Curt McClain. He was the only black candidate of any importance of that period. He, indeed, got 57,000 votes, and could have been elected with 8,000 more. He was reluctant to support Shelley unless Shelley supported his candidacy. We forced both of them into supporting each other.
- Rubens: How did that literally happen? Do you sit down and talk?
- Jenkins: We had confrontations with Moore, even with McClain about it, down at Local 10. Both were very reluctant to support Shelley. I and McClain almost got into a fist fight.
- Rubens: Was he calling you a sellout or--?

Jenkins: No, no. It was just basically McClain refusing to buy our line. He accused us of chauvinism.

Rubens: On what basis? What was wrong with Shelley?

Jenkins: Well, he said Shelley was essentially a racist and was wrong. I was saying that our objective was a maximum vote for Moore, an electable vote, and we could force the Democratic party into taking that position. There was a fuss in the Party for the fight against racism and for equality. McClain was extremely bitter at the time and perhaps legitimately so. He did attack me personally to some extent. I threatened to slap the shit out of him. [laughter] With Leroy supporting me--

Rubens: Attacking you personally, assuming all you wanted was to sell out, or didn't join the fight against racism?

Jenkins: Well, that I was the equivalent of being a white con and renegade, et cetera. We cleared that up, and we continued to be friends but a little nervously for a while.

Rubens: Was this the first time a black man had made that kind of showing?

Jenkins: Yes. What happened afterwards was fairly interesting. Moore, for a variety of reasons, bitter, and trying to be independent of the ILWU, then proceeded to support John DeLury, a Catholic progressive, who went on to become the administrative assistant to Leo McCarthy. He died recently. He married an ex-nun who is a charming and fine woman. DeLury ran for assembly against John Burton [1964]. We went to Moore. We at least reminded him about the money that we had raised for him and the support that we gave him, and we argued that he should consult with us. But Moore refused to go along with us, and continued to support DeLury. We, as a union, had endorsed John and were tied to the Burtons.

As a result, one of the things we extracted from Shelley was that if there was a vacancy on the board of supervisors, that he would appoint a black candidate. That vacancy occurred. He then came to us and asked us who our choice was. At that time, we were bitter about Moore and his being a renegade and his refusal to go along. Particularly Chester. So we then recommended that Terry Francois be appointed. A lot of people never forgave us for it, but that's how Francois got on the board.

Rubens: Why didn't people forgive you? What was wrong with Francois in people's minds?

Jenkins: Well, he was essentially a conservative in the black community. He had been head of the NAACP. He had launched attacks against Carl Goodlett, who was a Left leader of the black community. His history showed that he was not only a bad choice but almost crazy in many ways.

Rubens: How did Chester become so instrumental in this?

Jenkins: We all agreed with Chester that we not recommend Moore, because he had broken with us. Moore was not reliable really, even in the most elementary political terms.

Revels Cayton and Bill Chester

Rubens: What about Revels Cayton? Where is he on this alignment?

Jenkins: Revels was with us. Revels was astute politically and in many ways was a major thinker in this field and would hammer out programs.

Rubens: He was not an activist himself? He wouldn't have been the candidate because he was just not that kind of person?

Jenkins: I don't know. It never occurred to him or to us. He was playing a major role behind the scenes. Chester was, indeed, crucial in much of this. In the early days, after Chester had just gotten appointed as regional director of the ILWU, and Leroy had just been elected as a business agent in Local 6, Revels was a member of the Warehouse local, and he tended to be the dominant black ideological figure in the ILWU around here. Particularly in black-white relationships he was much respected for this leadership. Though, as these men got their own experience, Chester started to feel and exercise his authority as regional director. His background was totally different. Chester had come up through the ranks; Revels had a long political history with the Marine Cooks; he had been a business agent for them in Seattle, and had worked with the Party there.

That's equally true of Leroy, who was a native son, came out of a huge black family. His brother was head of the Shipyard Boilermakers Union and very respectable. Curtis McClain also had come up through the ranks in Local 6, although he and his family had a history of activism in Ohio.

It was Cayton that led us really into the early stages of the [Willie] Brown campaign, putting out in the Western Addition.

Rubens: Putting out means--?

Jenkins: Well, he was the one who really alerted us to the fact that Willie Brown was electable. To some extent the disquiet was true with me as well as Cayton. He was a great friend ever since I arrived in California. I started to be a little restive under his demand for endless recognition of and subservience to his leadership.

Rubens: Did he want recognition for himself or to be calling the shots?

Jenkins: To be calling the shots basically.

Rubens: Was this a personality issue or--?

Jenkins: Well, I think to some extent that was true.

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I think that Revels was pushing much harder in the early beginning for a more Left tradition than he ended up with. He started off out of a respectable middle-class family out of Seattle, who had a national reputation. He was an elected official in the Marine Cooks and Stewards. He had been elected as secretary of the District Council in San Francisco. He was the vice president of the CIO Council and an extremely effective speaker at the state conventions and on the union floor. As the years went on, it became the question of black consciousness and the blacks deciding their own leadership without consulting whites. Cayton was way ahead in raising the new concept of black consciousness and the necessity of blacks to determine their own struggles. There are a few exceptions, me being one and a few others--we were known for being good organizers and being front runners in decisions essentially made by the black community. It was Cayton who set up a meeting at Chesters's house in San Mateo with Paul Robeson, Harry Bridges, Lou Goldblatt, Johnny Walker, a business agent for Local 10, Albert James, chief dispatcher or business agent for Local 10, I think, both black men, and myself, which went on for five hours which raised this question of black concern. It ended up in a fist fight between Revels and Goldblatt. There was a threat by Bridges. He said that if that's what the black leadership wanted, he would resign. The meeting had started about 7 o'clock and ended at 3 a.m. We were exhausted.

Rubens: What did Harry mean, "if that's what the black leadership wanted"--what was the "that"?

Jenkins: National leadership of the union and carrying the fight on other levels. That was the high point, I would say, of Cayton's ability to manage affairs of the union. To a large extent, it was Cayton, supported by me, who promoted Chester, when the man who had been regional director of the union resigned. That was a hard-won decision, to replace him with Chester.

The funny thing that happened to Cayton, of course, was that he was then appointed--it was at that time when we built St. Francis Square--as the manager of the square. He started to be attacked at that point by the Party in the persons of a couple living at the square, Rose Noss and her husband, and also being attacked by Goodlett's paper.

Rubens: Why did Goodlett attack him?

Jenkins: I don't remember the exact circumstances. There was a whole series of guest columnists attacking Cayton and his leadership of St. Francis Square. The Party started to attack Cayton on his policies in the square. It finally exploded with us supporting Cayton, and the Nosses moving out of the square. Mason Roberson was working at the square and sided against Cayton. Cayton dismissed Roberson, even though Roberson was married to Doris Walker, then a leading Party member and later a head of the National Lawyers Guild.

Cayton had already made tracks into the Shelley campaign. He was working first in housing and had already played a role in the Human Rights Commission.

Rubens: Was he one of the first blacks inside an administration? Was he on the commission or working for the commission?

Jenkins: Working for the commission. Then he was very close to the EOC [Economic Opportunity Commission] program in the company of Judge [Joseph] Kennedy and generally regarded, I think, as the most articulate black figure in the city. One of our demands was that we agreed to support Alioto if Cayton would become his administrative assistant for social services. That, indeed, happened.

With that, however, his wife got a job at Redevelopment, a job that paid close to \$50,000 a year. She was a very competent and fine woman, but at the same time, her entrance into that agency was a result of our victory. Cayton started then to reevaluate his militancy. He thought about our breaking with Alioto on the issue of busing and that even opposing him was wrong. He didn't think the busing issue was a life or death issue, and was critical of me for challenging Alioto.

Rubens: Was this when Alioto was mayor?

Jenkins: Alioto was mayor then, even though he had been chairman of the board of education earlier. Cayton said to me, "Why are you endangering all of us who have power, by fighting with him?"

Rubens: What a switch in positions.

Jenkins: Yes. Historically, at that point, and other points where Cayton attempted to unnecessarily dominate programs in Redevelopment and other places, he would call a meeting in his house in St. Francis Square. There he would lay down the law. What happened, what evolved at that point, was that we felt he was just one among many of us. We started to be restive under Cayton's leadership. He didn't understand that. We really started to buck.

Rubens: Had he stayed in the Party?

Jenkins: No. He and I had been very close. I had loaned him money over and over again, which he paid back. He had reciprocated when he could. He lived with us for some time when he came back from New York with his wife, Ethel. We were best friends. His handling of leadership at that point missed in some extraordinary way. I don't think he realized the power that Chester was accumulating and that the union guys felt their own power.

With the Alioto victory, we had literally, as far as trade unionists, created a period which had not been seen in the city since 1910, in terms of influence in the city, for instance with appointments on commissions, and full-time jobs. He saw himself at the center of that. He wasn't able to translate that into a relationship with all of us. At that point, and for many years, our relationship was very distant. Recently, he and I have become closer.

Rubens: He's still around?

Jenkins: Yes. He's eighty. He had a birthday party, which was Sunday, and all of us were there.

Rubens: Is he retired now?

Jenkins: He is still a force, but in a very limited way. But he is still there.

A couple of things that were interesting: the fact that Chester would have this meeting at his house where the challenge was placed to Bridges, who after all was president of the union,

and was in a sense his employer. It was in retrospect an astonishingly drawn performance to challenge the acknowledged leader of the union and say, "Would you move over for black leadership nationally and in all sections of the union as well as"--I don't know if Cayton was then preaching super seniority or not with, in a sense, Chester tacitly agreeing to it but already starting to see that this format for a meeting was very dangerous for his future leadership.

Rubens: Cayton did put him up to do this. He had his own reasons for going along?

Jenkins: Yes. The guys from Local 10, who loved Bridges and were already in leadership on the waterfront, were perfectly willing to go along with Chester up to a point, but not willing to break with Harry and Lou whatsoever. Cayton exceeded himself in that format and, in a sense, spelled for himself a diminishing of his leadership in the union.

Rubens: What was the fight between Goldblatt and Cayton at that meeting?

Jenkins: At one point (I don't remember the specifics), Cayton got very extreme. Cayton called him a "petty bourgeois fuckin' college boy." Louie hit him. That was out on the lawn. The meeting broke up at 3 o'clock in the morning. The very lack of security about it was interesting. I'm sure it was taped by the FBI.

Rubens: Why are you sure of that?

Jenkins: Well, Robeson was an identifiable left-winger.

Rubens: Why was Robeson there?

Jenkins: His prestige, which was enormous. Cayton had helped Robeson in this whole period of black consciousness. Robeson was the darling of the Left. Cayton had been head of national black union leadership.

Rubens: When is this, about '60?

Jenkins: Just about. Chester immediately moved into a close relationship with Harry making clear that his first loyalty was to the union and not to Cayton or the Party.

Rubens: Chester went on to be vice president of the ILWU.

Jenkins: He goes on to be vice president, becomes Harry's closest ally in the union, particularly in the years of rupture between Goldblatt. He remained close to him until he died. In many

ways, if Harry had been able to pull it off, Chester would have run for president. Chester knew he couldn't make it, and also Hawaii would not have supported Chester against Jimmy, particularly because Louis supported Herman.

It was not only a significant meeting for us, it had all sorts of implications for the Party. The Party at that time was in a period of decline. It was more and more turning to a black base and becoming extreme in its position on black leadership. It went through an astonishing period of kicking old-time Party members out of the union. And there were a variety of other things. People were dominated by fear of being charged with white chauvinism. People like Paul Pinsky and Keith Eickman and others were expelled from the Party. It really became incredibly provincial. While the Party had a splendid history in many ways against racism and black identification--

Rubens: We are talking about strategy here?

Jenkins: It became more than that. It became absurd. Figures like Jimmy Herman and others ultimately were the ones who fought and won black membership in Ship Clerks and the ILWU and were more influential in the actual fight against chauvinism.

Cayton was not only guilty of that. I think what happened ultimately was Cayton, when his leadership was reduced, that he, himself, didn't understand that it was one thing to create cadres and bring people into leadership, but once you got them into leadership, you had to treat them as leaders; you couldn't issue orders. I guess that was a failure on his part.

William Malone and Elmer Delany: Democratic Party Politics

Rubens: Back to Elmer Delany and Democratic politics--you were supporting Delany.

Jenkins: I was supporting him against Bill Malone for the chairmanship of the Democratic Central Committee. Delany was a well known criminal attorney to the left of Malone and wanted to wrestle the leadership of the Democratic party from Malone. He came to me even though I was not an active Democrat because we had an organization in three or four of the communities here.

Rubens: Who is "we"?

Jenkins: ILWU. I agreed to support him. We had no love for Malone. We wanted to make an alliance with whomever. Malone was very well entrenched in the trade union movement. He had been a guy who had nominated Truman at the national Democratic convention and who had squeezed Wallace out of the nomination. He was a power broker and was very skillful. He was essentially not a bad man but profoundly anti-Left. He had fashioned Shelley's career, for one. There were other candidates he had elected to the board of supervisors and mayors of the city, and he was a main mover in the Alioto campaign.

Even in the days that I worked with Delany, he [Malone] would beat us by two votes. In any case, Elmer Delany and I remained friends, and I made many friends in that campaign.

Rubens: Was he out of power as a player after that?

Jenkins: Yes, I think so.

Rubens: Where had he come from?

Jenkins: He was a San Francisco criminal lawyer. He came out of the Irish community. He had a huge office.

Rubens: Delany was a mainstream Democrat?

Jenkins: Mainstream. He was well known. He had both of his legs cut off at the knees and was well known for his survival and his success.

Rubens: You were becoming mainstream too. You're out of the Party. The thing that seems so artful about this time in your history is that you were not characterized as a Communist. You had really managed to make these coalitions, and to become an important player in Democratic party politics.

Jenkins: Well, the Sons of the American Revolution were going around to all the contributors of the Labor School, identifying me as Communist. Then there was the time I appeared before the Tenney Committee in Oakland at the courthouse. [November 3-6, 1947]

Actually, in 1948 there was a funny story about me. I had fallen from the roof of the Yellow Cab garage which was right behind the CIO building, and woke up in the hospital to see the newspaper headlines, "Suspected Soviet Spy Falls through Skylight." The House Un-American Activities Committee had been in town issuing subpoenas. Of course, one way to beat the Un-American Activities and not go through all this Fifth Amendment nonsense was not to get a subpoena. I was in a meeting at the CIO Council at 150 Golden Gate. Somebody came in and

said, "Hey, the investigators are up there on the second floor with subpoenas."

I contrived to go out the back entrance, which was next to the roof of the Yellow Cab Company, which was immediately behind it, and stumbled on the cat walk and fell forty feet through the skylight. I luckily landed on my feet, broke my arch, tore all the tendons in my hand. I got a hundred stitches in my head and started to walk away. I had hit a bench with two machinists working on it. They said, "Hey, you had better lay down; you're dead." They promptly wrapped my head and stopped the bleeding until the ambulance came. The ambulance took me to the emergency room where they sewed me up, then took me to the French Hospital, where they tore open the stitches again, picked out the glass and wire that was still in there.

Actually, Asher Gordon, who was our doctor, called Edith and said, "Dave has been hurt, and I've put him in the hospital." Edith knew I was trying to evade the subpoena. She thought it was a ruse. Edith arrived at the hospital with Davy, our son, in her arms just as the ambulance arrived, and I was covered with blood. Poor Edith, and then the headline.

Joseph Alioto's Mayoral Campaign, 1968

- Rubens: Let us go back to establish the political climate surrounding Alioto's campaign. Who did people like Treuhaft or others on the Left want? Who else was running?
- Jenkins: Jack Morrison, the supervisor. Morrison had been called the most progressive member of the board, a planner, and somebody we had supported consistently.
- Rubens: "We" meaning--?
- Jenkins: ILWU and generally trade unionists. But we felt he had no possibility of defeating Alioto. He had a fairly narrow progressive base in this city, enough to get elected to the board. But more importantly, he didn't have any money and was not a particular friend of the Burtons [Phillip and John]. As a matter of fact, he even detested the Burtons. They had forced him off from being the chairman of John DeLury's campaign, who was an opponent of Johnny Burton. So Morrison never respected the Burtons and their tactics.

The Burtons were furious about Alioto's challenge to their control of the Democratic party here in San Francisco. So they picked up Morrison's campaign. I was invited to a meeting of Phil Burton, Agar Jaicks, chairman of the Democratic Central Committee, Joe Beaman who was on the board of supervisors, and an ally of Phil, and Morrison. We were asked to support Morrison. I said, "Well, I'll think about it, but he can't beat Harold Dobbs and Alioto can."

Rubens: Dobbs was the Republican?

Jenkins: Yes. Dobbs was not a bad man; he was a Jewish restaurateur and an attorney. He had approached me, promised us anything we wanted if we would support him, but he had no record of any progressive tradition. Alioto came to us with considerable credentials as well as the fact that he had maybe a hundred relatives on the waterfront, members of our union. That was not a negligible factor. Burton was furious, as were the rest of them.

The Burton Brothers, Democratic Party Leadership, and the ILWU

Rubens: The union had been close with Burton?

Jenkins: Yes. We had played a role in his life from the beginning of his career. We had gone along and had been crucial to him. Our union was key in electing Willie Brown. We brought a hundred black longshoremen and warehousemen to do precinct work. Willie recently had his twenty-fourth anniversary, which I was invited to, along with ILWU leaders Leroy King and Jim Herman. It was one of the few anniversaries where we didn't have to pay. Everybody who was there was in at the beginning. The guy most responsible was Revels Cayton. I was the legislative coordinator for the San Francisco and East Bay ILWU locals when Willie got elected. Our support was equally so with Phil. The ILWU did much of the leg work for Phil in precincts when he got his 51 percent to go on to the Congress.

Rubens: When was that?

Jenkins: In the early sixties. I had known Burton's father; he had been my doctor at the old Franklin Hospital, and I knew the Burton boys since they were teenagers. I played a role at various times in their lives. Phil, by that time, was a major power broker in the city. He was furious at what he considered the Alioto takeover of the party.

Bill Malone, who had formerly been [state] chairman of the party, was the guy who had made the nomination of Truman against Wallace at the Democratic [National] Convention. Truman became a vice-presidential candidate. Malone had controlled the Democratic party and labor movement's politics in this town for years. So Burton had something to be worried about, but we had no commitment to an alternative ideology, only to a candidate, Alioto. We had a frankly opportunistic line of staying with a guy who we thought could win, and indeed he did.

Rubens: Would you say this was some legacy or realistic, pragmatic politics learned from the debacle of the Wallace campaign and how bad things had been during the fifties?

Jenkins: Oh, sure. That was true. Suddenly, we were in a position to be top dog, and I mean ILWU top dog. We had never been that.

Rubens: How come, what had turned the--?

Jenkins: The balance of power lay in the ILWU in the Left unions, as well as our influence in the black community, among other minorities, and among certain liberals who respected the ILWU.

Rubens: So you could have delivered the vote for Morrison, or you could have delivered the vote for Alioto?

Jenkins: Well, it's possible, but our membership really rallied to Alioto. We, at first, had thought that the fact that he was a very rich man would turn off the black community, et cetera. On the contrary, coming from the ranks, they said, "Well, he's rich. Maybe he'll teach us how to get rich, too."

Rubens: Is this right: within the actual leadership of the international union and within the leadership of the local, there wasn't a conflict? The conflict was stirred up by "outsiders"--whether it was lawyers, or the far Left, or--

Jenkins: The Party opposed him: Archie Brown and Joe Figueredo. They were delegates at the ILWU meetings, after all, and certainly Party member Elaine Black Yoneda of the auxiliary, who was a fine woman, by the way, but nevertheless very dogmatic. We overwhelmingly, particularly with the help of the black membership, defeated the Party.

Rubens: Objectively, the real ideological difference between Morrison and Alioto was not that great. Is that how you saw it?

Jenkins: Well, we thought there was enormous political advantage in the city at the time.

Rubens: That Alioto could deliver?

Jenkins: That he could deliver. Secondly, Willie Brown came down to our meeting and tried to persuade us to support Morrison.

Rubens: Because of his relationship to the Burtons?

Jenkins: Yes, but to no avail. Phil was there. I don't know what the hell the vote was, but it was about ninety to two or five for Alioto. Now it's true Alioto spread money during the election period and to some extent through me.

Rubens: Why through you?

Jenkins: Well, I was chairman of the labor committee for Alioto.

Rubens: How did that happen?

Jenkins: Well, that happened because the AFL's Labor Council couldn't get a two-thirds vote for a candidate, so they didn't endorse. While individuals like Joe Mazzola of the Plumbers and other unions came along, we were the union with the unmistakable credentials, and the ILWU unanimously endorsed Alioto. Well, this led to a certain amount of resentment in the AFL and Teamsters, but I had already been the secretary in former Mayor Jack Shelley's campaign, so that I knew the curse was off me to some extent of being a former Communist.

Right-wing figures like Joe Diviny, who was vice president of the Teamsters in San Francisco, respected me. We were fond of each other. George Johns of the San Francisco Labor Council, Daniel Del Carlo, head of the Building Trades Council, Jack Goldberger too, who was head of the Joint Council of Teamsters.

I was always trying to draw him in on Jewish issues. He died a Catholic. There were other fine trade unionists we worked closely with.

So that there was great bitterness among the Left sections who were still in the Party and still influenced by the Party. Also, there was a lot of very genuine affection for Morrison.

Rubens: How long had he been a supervisor?

Jenkins: About six years. He was not a native son. He was an Oklahoman. His wife [Jane] worked for one of the major radio stations. They

live a couple of blocks from me on Woodland Avenue. Some of my best friends, of course, worked with him like Susie Bierman and others who were extremely bitter at the time. We resumed our friendships, but I was seen as the master designer, even though Bridges, Goldblatt, Chester, Eickman were aboard, but in a sense I was the dominant personality.

Political Aftermath of the Successful Alioto Campaign

Jenkins: Alioto gave me a considerable amount of money which I distributed, for precinct work. Almost anybody who worked with us in a leading position got a job in the Alioto administration.

Rubens: So the charge was you were being bought off?

Jenkins: In a way. The fact is that we were doing what was traditionally American politics. We had the advantage of picking progressive people; blacks, particularly, by the hundreds came into jobs.

Rubens: Did you get a job?

Jenkins: Yes, I got a job. I got a job as a consultant. I never took a job on the city payroll. I went to redevelopment as a consultant. I was a consultant in a general sense. So I never got on the payroll. Chester went on the BART Commission; Bridges went on the port commission, Joe Mosley on redevelopment, Wilbur Hamilton as director of redevelopment, Curtis McClain went on the fire commission, until he was recently replaced by [Mayor Art] Agnos--although another black man took his position, and indeed he had not exercised much leadership lately.

Rubens: Eickman went to recreation? Or was that later?

Jenkins: Eickman went to recreation fairly early, about twelve years ago. Then Revels Cayton went into the mayor's offices as director of social programs. We had more people on commissions than all the other AFL and Teamsters unions combined. That infuriated some of the AFL guys like Mazzola. The plumbers said, "How come all these commies are getting the jobs?" Alioto would say, "Well, they were the guys who helped elect me."

Rubens: Mazzola got a job, too, didn't he?

Jenkins: He was on the airport commission. We also secured the black appointments: Mattie Jackson went on the city Commission for Permit Appeals from the International Ladies Garment Workers;

Susie Bierman went on the planning commission. She was a neighbor here, probably the biggest voice on planning in the city. She was the one who led the fight against the demolishing of the Panhandle [leading to Golden Gate Park]. I was the labor chairman of the committee. She still is on the planning commission.

Rubens: Tell me about the Panhandle Committee.

Jenkins: We had mass meetings with thousands of people in the city. Susie is a very creative and fine woman. She was the moving force on the Panhandle fight.¹

Under Alioto we also got set up the human rights commission, which didn't exist until I was out here. Also the first black executive director of housing.

The assumption was that there was a sell out. It's true many got a job out of it. We got the commission appointments. I think at the height of my salary, I was making \$25,000 or \$26,000 a year. I was the unofficial ombudsman for the mayor for eight years [1968-1976]. There was no graft. There was not money that changed hands independent of work done.

Rubens: What did that mean to be ombudsman?

Jenkins: Well, I was consulted in many departments in which there were conflicts. We changed the face of City Hall. That accomplishment reluctantly started to sink through to the Left, even guys like Victor Honig [a San Francisco businessman] whom I got on the human rights commission. He quit after three months. He was one of the worst critics. All the rest of them could have gone on commissions if they had wanted to. We needed people desperately to fill posts on social welfare and all that.

So they were not forgiving. Well, the relationship had become somewhat bitter by this time. You would go to a cocktail party and a guy like Frank McTernan, who was a sweet guy, screamed at me that Alioto was a fascist. If I supported him, I was a fascist, too. It was nonsensical after a while. Not only that, in many cases, they were sending me their kids for jobs and their friends for jobs and their wives for jobs.

It is true that Left trade unionists never participated in this. They were with us from the beginning. It was mostly the lawyers. It was also true we had already broken with Archie

¹More on the Panhandle controversy, page 255.

Brown and Figueredo and the rest, even though they continued on payrolls in the union. Figueredo had been elected business agent in Local 6, and Archie was a semi-officer on the waterfront. But they were snowed under.

Alioto to this day is thought of nostalgically by the whole labor movement in the city with great longing, particularly because of his history with the Marin IJ [Independent Journal] strike and the waterfront strike. He would wheel in and support the unions. The group that identified him with the enemy were the environmentalists when he supported the TransAmerica tower. They thought this was the end of San Francisco. Anything bad that he did in terms of buildings, and there were some bad things done, is counterbalanced by the fact that he did Fort Mason and the Exploratorium, and a huge walk on the waterfront.

The Left and the Alioto Administration

- Rubens: This is what I think, and I'm wondering what your response is: that it has to do with the perception of politics being compromise and consensus? In a way, just listening to you portray it, what was going on in the Alioto administration is somewhat analogous to what was going on during the Roosevelt administration. There was a recognition on the part of the Left that it was a time for coalition and for liberal reform in order to get somewhere.
- Jenkins: We never even had a contradiction that was as large as that with the Roosevelt administration. When Roosevelt refused to recognize Spain, on the one hand, and the plague on both your houses speech, the steel strike, or the fact that he didn't admit Jewish refugees, the countless number who died as a result--we had no issues of this sort. Alioto was with us. Even on the Vietnam War on the question of the right to march, the question of the polo grounds, the question of meeting on city property was never argued by him. The big issue, of course, was the use of the TAC squad out at San Francisco State. I think that is when the word "pig" was invented.
- Rubens: Was that a mistake?
- Jenkins: Well, we didn't agree with him. We went out and picketed. The ILWU went out and picketed with the kids. That was when we were in the administration. He didn't regard that as a break-off issue. The fact was that with kids like my daughter, Rachel, who was at State, rather than go through the picket line, even though

they didn't agree with the tactics of black students, they didn't want to give away the opportunity to participate in decision making.

Rachie quit and became a waitress at Zim's and then fell in love with a police inspector in the TAC squad whom she met there. He was a terribly decent guy. Every time I went into Zim's, he was sitting there. Rachel was progressive and left-wing. They broke up at his initiative. He was married and felt it was unfair to her. She still has enormous affection for this guy. Whenever she came into town and he heard about it, he would get hold of her. That was years ago.

Rubens: You see the rallying cry against the Left and then the new Left, which adopted some of these same allegedly principled positions, was no collaboration with business. For instance, I don't know if you ever saw the film--there is a new Left radical group called "Newsreel" out here that did a film on redevelopment in the 1970s, called "Redevelopment," and it presented an expose of Alioto and his co-optation of labor.

It seems to me that the same charge is now made of the student movement. The new Left was always afraid to assume power, to make the kind of compromises and alliances that politics requires. It's easier to remain outside as a critic on politics and redevelopment.

Jenkins: Not only that. In Chester Hartman's book on redevelopment, I'm the enemy.¹ Hartman identified me: When I came over to Alioto, I brought the rest of the labor movement. Hartman was a friend of my daughter Becky. What Hartman didn't recognize was that we fought the Yerba Buena project as long as we had a primary interest, and that is we had a lot of union shops down there--ILWU and a lot of the other unions had small shops. But as we got priced out and driven out of that area, the reason for the opposition disappeared.

We weren't co-opted; we helped. You take Union Offset, an old printing outfit that we used: we got them \$28,000 to move their machinery and stuff to a new location, which was an enormous improvement for them. The city with redevelopment money spent millions of dollars relocating businesses along there. In addition, we had the only anti-alcoholic program in that area. Thousands of dollars were spent drying out drunks, sending them

¹Chester Hartman, The Transformation of San Francisco, New Jersey, Rowman and Allanheld, 1984.

to rehab centers, getting them on welfare, getting them into hotels, all as part of our rehab thing.

The third thing we did--we had 300 young black men and women working on jobs at decent wages, union wages through the Western Addition. What has happened to Yerba Buena actually is they're finally off dead center. It's twenty years later. The only thing we have is the Moscone Center, which brings millions into the city. We have the senior apartments, all those places built. Our payoffs were very substantial.

It was true with hundreds of seniors permanently housed there. There were shopping places. Now with the cultural center going up, which will be up in a couple of years, it will be a tremendous boon.

Rubens: So the relative loss, you are saying was offset.

Jenkins: The housing and the small businesses were not all driven out as a result of redevelopment. As a matter of fact, we still have buildings on the corner of Third and Mission, a seven-story building, filled with progressive organizations in town that can't pay rent. They have been living there for close to fifteen years. Children's rights organizations, poverty organizations, among others.

Rubens: Who owns the building?

Jenkins: Redevelopment. Then we got an agreement from every one of the major developers coming in--including Marriott, which is notoriously anti-union--to agree to a union contract before they could join the project. We extracted every single pledge that we could. I personally took a representative from Olympia York (of the Yerba Buena Project) to every involved union in the city; Hotel Workers, Retail Clerks, Building Trades, and they solemnly agreed that they would all sign union contracts. Marriott reneged. However, the present Mayor Art Agnos has set up a communitywide committee headed by Supervisor Shelley to force Marriott to live up to its agreement.

The alternative which the Hartmans and the rest advocated in terms of land usage, assuming you had total control of the city, was for a superior program, no question; but it assumed enormous control and agreement and a kind of political power that we didn't have in this town. While we had labor strength, it was our strength they saw, not necessarily progressive ideas of our leadership.

Rubens: What is the relationship between the M & M [Mechanization and Modernization] Agreement and this kind of compromise? I am likening it to in redevelopment, that the ideological Left position has often been against growth, against change, a seeking to maintain a kind of working base that has already eroded.

Jenkins: Industry in that area was moving out. The buildings in that area were uneconomical. One, to have a printing plant with four floors when you could buy one out in South San Francisco or Brisbane all on one floor, which eliminated elevators, eliminated handling. Once that benefit was seen, the Warehouse position changed. We had been against it.

The attrition was enormous. We could have taken a stand and fought. It is true to some extent that we helped push the guys living in the small hotels into the Tenderloin out of the Third and Howard area. That's not something I feel was socially regressive. The answer to the Tenderloin in the city still remains to be solved. How it is solved needs a different kind of control and financing. It certainly is totally different from what we have today in terms of homelessness.

On the other hand, we exercised an enormous progressive control in the area of housing--thousands of units of housing were created. Yet with all of that, it was difficult. It's still terribly difficult. How do you get people in housing where you take care of those properties and they don't want them? What do you do with generational poverty? What do you do with the kind of discrimination that is part of the whole housing process?

##

The Hartmans have been unrelenting. I have said openly, "We created more agitators out of the Yerba Buena Project than anybody in the history of the country." It's true. As a result of fighting our project, they learned more. Don't forget Mayor Moscone supported Yerba Buena. I organized a campaign with five, six thousand people who marched up from the Embarcadero to the Alcoa Building, which was one of the first buildings of the project, demanding and chanting, yelling "Tear up your lawsuits. Let the people go to work in this city."

The environmentalists, of course, isolated themselves because of their lack of sophistication on the job issue. They had totally middle-class, white leadership. It's not accidental when they wanted to have a conference out here, I was hired to do two conferences on environment and labor. I did those conferences with funds supplied, one \$25,000 which got every

union, Sierra Club and environmental group together.¹ And an ongoing committee chaired by the president of USF [University of San Francisco], Father Albert Rupert Jonsen. Every important environmental group participated, and I got most of the unions to participate. I did the same thing once more. Hundreds of people got involved. Incidentally, Father Jonsen left the church shortly after conference to marry. (He was president 1969-1972.)

Alioto spoke at our opening. The town's attitude towards me was pretty supportive. In a way, I was the leading labor guy who played a role out here on saving the Panhandle. The building trades was for tearing it up. They had a \$280 million project. I challenged these guys. When Dan Del Carlo, a friend and a trade unionist, progressive, and who testified for Bridges, said, "You've got to help us," I said, "Oh, fuck. You guys would build concentration camps as long as it is union labor." [laughter]

Or, for instance, [Ed] Gaffney, a union painter whom Willie Brown defeated for assemblyman, and who had been in the state assembly for years. When we finally decided to oppose him supporting Willie Brown, the rest of the labor movement went against us. Equally true in the East Bay: we supported [Ronald] Dellums against incumbent Congressman Jeffery Cohelan, who was a very decent man from the Milk Wagon Drivers Union.

Dan Del Carlo of the Building Trades said, "The guy's got seven kids [talking about Gaffney]. Who is going to support them for Christ's sake if Brown beats him?" It was a joke, but it was in part true. Gaffney had a very decent record; he was backwards on race. He was a typical Building Trades trade unionist, a house painter.

We elected a brilliant black assemblyman. Look at what Willie Brown has become. He is a unique progressive wheeler-dealer in the state, for Christ's sake.

Labor Unions and the Politics of the Left Regarding Race and Environmental Issues

Rubens: And Dellums in the U.S. Congress.

¹David Jenkins, "Environmental Controversies and the Labor Movement in the Bay Area," in Sierra Club and the Urban Environment, II, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1983, pp. 1-56.

Jenkins: Yes. The black Left understood immediately that for them to play any role, they had to make compromises. That's what Bill Chester wanted. He went too far in many cases. He was too impressed with the other side. One of the criticisms of us was legitimate. Why didn't we have a labor caucus inside the city government having a point of view. We represented no cohesive point of view in that sense.

Cayton, Chester, Curt McClain, Bridges, Mattie Jackson, [William] Kilpatrick of Cooks Local 44--we never could have gotten them and we never ultimately tried. We tried to get them to make reports to the ILWU legislative committee, and we monitored their activities to some extent. But we couldn't honestly monitor Bridges. He would not take up certain things like race. He would not take up other issues, seeing that all the contracts that the port commission got were union contracts. That was against us, but he didn't feel that was a major issue he could raise as a commissioner.

Bridges had a whole theory about participation in government and that is that you limited yourself to the major issue. The port director was a vicious anti-Semite and a vicious racist, and we did get him replaced, with a fine woman.

Rubens: The Left has always claimed that when you move inside, power corrupts. I don't mean it monetarily. I mean that it softens conflicts, and undermines principled positions.

Jenkins: I don't know if it corrupts. Then you are dealing with ideology. Bridges, as far as a buck was concerned, was the most honest man I've ever met.

Goldblatt, also, was much further Left ideologically than Harry in the traditional sense, a guy who came from a radical background. He also saw politics in the area of what could be achieved. Louie was one of the few leaders who stood up against putting the Japanese in camps. He was one of the few guys who felt that we were wrong to fight the Marshall Plan and to go to an independent political party.

Rubens: Did Louis support Alioto?

Jenkins: Yes.

The Hartman book particularly raises the issues that perplexed us because the role of the environmentalists was still to be defined. I went before the national executive board of the Sierra Club and, along with John Henning of the state AFL-CIO, got their support for the Standard Oil strike across the country.

This was the first time the Sierra Club ever took a position on an industrial dispute.

So our influence was also significant. [Phil] Burton, who didn't know the word environment for years, suddenly discovered the environmental movement and discovered that there was an enormous strength. I'm not saying he was cynical about the things he was doing, but he certainly was not any dyed-in-the-wool environmentalist. I would run into him at a meeting where the environmentalists would be wildly cheering. He would grin at me and he would say, "Have you ever seen anything like this?" Absolutely amazed at the support he got.

Rubens: Had there at some point been a rapprochement with Alioto and [Phil] Burton and you?

Jenkins: Yes. It took longer with John. I liked Phil. I had enormous respect for his intelligence and his energy as a congressman. I think that what ultimately killed him, he was a boozier. When he was boozing, he became enormously arrogant and insensitive, as far as the impression that he gave. With Alioto, we were up front on the question of Vietnam. We didn't capitulate. I had fights with some of our people about going up front.

That was equally true on the question of busing. In the same auditorium with Alioto surrounded by hundreds of people, I followed him to the rostrum and said, "I just don't agree with you on busing." Joe hit me on the back and said, "It takes two to tango." Then we had a big fight up at Revels Cayton's house one night when Joe was speaking up at McAteer High School. He [Alioto] challenged us. We went by Wes Willoughby's house afterward. Lee, Revels' wife, asked me, "What are you fighting over? We got jobs now. It's [meaning busing] not that important." I said, "Well, I learned this stuff at your husband's knee, for Christ's sake."

Rubens: One could take principled positions from within.

Jenkins: Yes. And Alioto never said to us, to me anyway, "One more word out of you and you're through." I would have said, "No way."

Rubens: It had something to do with personality, didn't it? Alioto, somehow, would withstand stuff. He didn't take it personally.

Jenkins: He had enormous self-confidence. Jack Morrison thinks I am the guy who denied him the mayorship of the city. I told him he could not win. I didn't lie to him. He got 25,000 votes. That was with Phil and Goodlett and Willie Brown and the Democratic

party and everything else, and a number of the AFL unions which joined as well supporting him. He just couldn't have made it.

Rubens: Alioto got what?

Jenkins: About 58,000, and then he campaigned for only eight weeks.

Community Opposition to Redevelopment

[Interview 12: March 30, 1988] ##

Rubens: There is a lot of ambiguity still about evaluating the Alioto administration. We were both agreeing, making those parallels between the thirties and the sixties and the idea of coalition and reform politics. There was the Chester Hartman kind of reaction, that labor made its corrupt bargain, and "coming in" was a sellout.

Also, as I mentioned before, a group called "Newsreel" provided a film, "Redevelopment." It was originally done in segments with much community input. I don't think they particularly represented any political party, but they were new Left. They interviewed Mike Miller and some of the lefties in the labor movement. The film claimed redevelopment was a scheme on the part of the Chronicle and the unions to clear the Tenderloin, to drive out the blacks, and to gentrify the city.

Jenkins: Well, the truth of the matter is that Mike Miller and my daughter, Becky, set up the first center in the Fillmore to resist redevelopment. So I was familiar and even agreed with some of the critics. Especially the question of black removal, which was the issue that they had a lot of support from the various labor, church, and community groups. As a matter of fact, I gave them contact with some of the black churches whom I have worked with there.

Transforming Neighborhoods and City Politics

Rubens: I think Mary Rogers was involved.

Jenkins: Rogers came much later, actually. This was years ago when Becky was only twenty-five or six. Interestingly enough, Mike Miller has just written a series of articles, and asked for my opinion of them. We have always maintained our friendship; we like and

respect one another. Not that they were necessarily wrong in the early days, but certainly the changes that took place in redevelopment as a result of the Alioto administration, Justin Herman and Wilbur Hamilton in redevelopment, the role of the ILWU and myself in particular, came about because we forced the redevelopment agency to look for trade union and church sponsors of the apartments and full participation in the design and character of the housing.

Certificates were given out. Anybody who was removed had first choice of a new apartment. Thousands of people moved back into infinitely superior places as against the slum and broken-down housing that existed in the Fillmore. The illusion that the Fillmore was anything more than old apartments which had been broken up into three or four rooms or rentals, along with lack of adequate shopping, was all dramatized in later years. The charges were untrue.

Rubens: I suppose there was a sense of the picturesque ghetto which lingered among people who went there for the bands and clubs.

Jenkins: There was some of that, but really the black community was suffocating there. With the new income of the black longshoremen and the black warehousemen, the breakthrough of blacks into crucial industries in San Francisco, there was no place to move until, in an ironic way, the black removal from the Fillmore forced the opening of the Haight-Ashbury, forced the opening of Ingleside and changed the nature of black residential patterns in the city.

The anomaly existed where you would see black longshoremen and warehousemen driving Cadillacs and going to substandard housing because that decent housing just didn't exist. There was almost no black ownership of housing which was the reason so many of the blacks resettled in Oakland because there were whole areas of black single family housing. It literally didn't exist in San Francisco.

As a result, the Haight-Ashbury was integrated. Blacks moved in on my street, Belvedere, on Downey Street, on Ashbury, down on Page and Oak. They bought houses some with the support of progressive whites. That was true out in Ingleside as well, which was a white working-class area and became a major black center.

So that this picture that was created of "black removal" was off. The other thing that happened in redevelopment, we made it the best and most important black agency in the city. Wilbur Hamilton, a black ship clerk and minister, became the head of

redevelopment after Justin Herman died and was there until he resigned from redevelopment just six months ago. He is now the bishop of his church. Our area directors in Western Addition and Hunter's Point were all black.

Rubens: How did that come about?

Jenkins: Well, we fought for it. I was a full-time consultant for redevelopment. The ILWU, Bill Chester, Leroy King, others lobbied, so that half the agency personnel was black, and the key blacks in the agency, such as the deputy directors, the regional directors, the controller of the agency. They were in real estate, et cetera, in every department.

To accuse that agency of being a duplicate of what it was ten years earlier was bull. Besides that, we became the thrust that demanded black leadership in other agencies: housing which had been in the hands of white leadership suddenly became a black leadership center. We tried and to some extent broke down barriers in public utilities. The city changed in relationship to blacks in the Alioto administration with the full support of Alioto.

Bus drivers became a majority of blacks for the first time in the history of the city. We had the director of Muni, a man named Curtis Green, who was a black man and was manager of Muni. We set up the human rights commission, which was headed by first a white but then a black, who is still there, Grant Mickins.

And so it went. In a sense, it wasn't a machine, but it certainly was a political apparatus because in every agency, blacks felt that we were the center, so to speak, of the city. Besides having Revels as a deputy to the mayor in charge of social services for the mayor. There was an awareness throughout the entire city about this shift in emphasis. The two unions which had done the most for Alioto were black unions, so to speak, ILWU and Local 260 of the Laborers Union, and the Transport Workers which had a black leadership. It is not accidental that Mattie Jackson, a black woman, came into leadership of the ILCWU during our period.

There were places, of course, we weren't able to break through. But we at least had some reputation on city commissions. We had a black fire commissioner, and a black on park and rec, and on airport.

Rubens: Was that Chester?

Jenkins: Well, he got on, and later was appointed as a commissioner on BART. He was succeeded by Zuretti Goosby, who previously was a Shelley appointee on the Board of Education and had been proposed by the ILWU. He got off there and went to the airport [commission], an extremely influential figure in the city. Came out of the Progressive party.

Rubens: Not a Communist?

Jenkins: Not a Communist but very close to the Left for a period. He is quite a rich man now. But our influence spread throughout the entire city--I wouldn't say it was the single influence. Remember, it was a period of racial politics in which Martin Luther King's leadership predominated. We were ever present in that; it was we who organized a black march in San Francisco with Nelson Rockefeller marching with us.

Rubens: When was that?

Jenkins: That was really the end of the sixties, before King died. Dick Gregory and Martin Luther King came. We met him. He played a role here to some extent. We had an active and present leadership which was unique in the country in that it was black trade unionists who were in the leadership of it. It was a difficult period for the so-called black bourgeoisie. Carl Goodlett, the editor and publisher of the Sun Reporter, in an editorial, challenged this black trade union leadership, which he said was excluding the professionals and the black politicians. It was led by Chester and King, Wilbur Hamilton, and the black Baptist ministers. It was a labor-church alliance.

Rubens: Was this red baiting at all?

Jenkins: Goodlett never called us a Communist union, but the inference was there. The majority of the professional leadership of the black community and Willie Brown had opposed Alioto and that leadership he brought in.

Rubens: They were with Brown?

Jenkins: And Jack Morrison. Our first act after the Alioto victory was to get him to appoint Dr. Washington Garner a police commissioner. Garner was a surgeon and a friend. He was black. And he put Revels on as head of social service. We also got the black attorney who was in the ILWU firm. He's now a judge--Judge Richard Bancroft [Superior Court, Alameda County].

Rubens: He was an ILWU attorney?

Jenkins: Yes, originally when he came here. He had two sons who were longshoremen. We got Bancroft appointed as a lawyer at Hunter's Point and a whole variety of posts.

Rubens: When you say "We"--?

Jenkins: I mean the ILWU, trade union black leadership, per se, which was a dominant leader in the Alioto administration. It is true that there were other important forces. There was the Building Trades under Mazzola for trade union issues but it was essentially conservative. But as I think I said earlier, the ILWU had more people on commissions than the AFL and Teamsters put together, not only Bridges and the rest, but the head of affirmative action for utilities was black. Arnold Baker was a deputy in redevelopment. The training grounds for a whole new black leadership came through the redevelopment agency where I was functioning, well, I think, in a sense, the main white functioning figure because I was the only full-time figure and a white figure, political figure in the agency.

Rubens: How is it you chose to be a consultant as opposed to sitting in an office? Did you like that flexibility?

Jenkins: I liked the flexibility, and I wasn't responsible for a nine-to-five job, and it also allowed me to reach out all over the city and maybe I couldn't have done that otherwise. Also, it allowed me to make some more money. I could take on consulting jobs which had nothing to do with redevelopment.

So I never was on the city payroll. I also had individual contracts. Well, we got some help to get some blacks into the CO's [Chief Administrative Officer] office in the city. Departments in the city they control, taxes, marriage bureau are too wrapped up in civil servants or procedures. We affected that as well. There is no question about that.

Rubens: I am impressed with your portrayal of Alioto's flexibility and openness.

Jenkins: Not only that, but it is incredible that radicals like Hartman and others in their fury about Alioto and the alliance that we built totally neglect to identify these advances, both for trade unions and minorities. But in addition to that, they go on to characterize him, and to characterize black trade unionists who worked with him as Uncle Toms.

Rubens: Now you heard that within your own family. What were things like for you and Becky? Was it a tense time?

Jenkins: Yes, we had real differences. Not in the beginning. I had helped Becky. There was a period when we were opposed to what redevelopment was doing. Once we got some control in our hands, and opponents saw that we had some influence, much of the opposition died down. Arnold Townsend, for example, is still there. He is now a partial developer. He's head of a radio station, KPUU, or something like that. He is in the mainstream. Nobody stayed outside of it. There was one guy, Bob [Robert] Covington, who came in, ran for office, was much admired, had big anti-white position. He was head of the tenants organization TOOR [Tenants and Owners Opposed to Redevelopment]. He was a man of some power and was already starting to turn towards getting inside when he died.

Rubens: Two important figures in TOOR were Pete Mendelsohn, an old merchant seaman, and George Woolf.

Jenkins: Actually, George was a member of our union, the ILWU, Local 10. He came from the Alaska Cannery Workers. He led a fight for housing in the Yerba Buena, which we helped. His portrayal as the isolated longshoreman fighting for housing for himself and others was somewhat exaggerated. He had a house out in the Sunset; he was fairly well off.

But it was a period in which anybody who came along and criticized the redevelopment agency at a certain level became an instant hero. Woolf was a sweet guy but a bit of a fool. Another guy named Pete Mendelsohn had been a member of the Party but was expelled because he traded in money during World War II in the Far East. He had a general reputation as an eccentric loner. Peter joined the fight for housing. He was effective. He would get up at meetings and accuse me of being a former Communist. He would say that at the board of supervisors. Anyway, red baiting didn't work when we were in power.

St. Francis Square: Integrated Housing

Rubens: Now, was this the same period when the ILWU housing, St. Francis Square, went in? Were you involved in that particularly?

Jenkins: Yes. I worked full time on it for a while, first in bringing it to existence. Second, Revels Cayton, Ruth Bailey McGuire (an extraordinary woman), and I worked on a housing policy, guaranteeing it not be all black.

Rubens: When did that idea emerge?

Jenkins: It emerged mostly during this opening up of the Western Addition.

Rubens: Under the Alioto administration or before?

Jenkins: No, before. Edward (Ned) Eichler, who ran a large development corporation, Eichler Homes, Inc., had the property that we finally got, and we forced Eichler out.¹ The ILWU and PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] put up \$3.5 million from their pension fund at 3 percent interest to build the project. The guy who was crucial conceptually in that was a guy named Harold Dunleavy, who was an extraordinary housing figure and character.

Rubens: Was he an ILWU person?

Jenkins: No, an independent leftie. The problem was that he and Louis Goldblatt got along very badly, and Louis would call me and say Dunleavy just called at 2 a.m. and threatened that he is going to shoot him. Louie made the mistake with him of being terribly arrogant. He couldn't do that to Dunleavy, who was a genius at housing. He really was the guy who brought the project into fruition.

As soon as it was built, the major question was who would get housing, because it was supposed to be on a first-come, first-served basis, which would have defeated our whole purpose of proving that blacks and whites and Asians could live together. So we had a gentle form of discrimination to guarantee a racially mixed composition.

Ruth Bailey McGuire was in charge of the rental and the organizing of it. At one time she was married to Bill Bailey, and they had one son, Mike Bailey, who now goes to sea. I made her go down and buy a coat and a dress when she went to work for us. She reminded me of that the other day. She was an abominable dresser, with a beautiful face. I think I lent her a hundred bucks, too. She was also the sister of a longshoreman and union activist named George Kaye, now dead.

¹Ned Eichler was the Chairman of the Housing Committee of SPUR [San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association]. He had a particular interest in integrated housing. During the mid 1960s, after the defeat of Proposition 14, the Fair Housing Initiative, he built many homes in the Diamond Heights area that were available to Chinese and black residents. Jim San Jule, Dave Jenkins' friend, had worked for Eichler.

Then the project started to be promoted all over the country. It was in Life magazine with a picture story and became a most popular example on integrated housing.

Revels became manager. Carlton Goodlett, editor of the Sun Reporter, the black newspaper in San Francisco, and the Party attacked him. Again, Goodlett and his group were opposed largely because they had been excluded from the Alioto administration.

A Period of Dissension Within Black Leadership

Jenkins: Goodlett was an independent black who would use black nationalism or anything else which challenged his position as the black leader of San Francisco or California. He originally was opposed to Alioto. Alioto said, "If you go to the race track and buy a ticket on a horse that comes in second, you don't get paid off." [laughs] Goodlett published that remark, of course, and added, "Well, you'll get paid off." For eight years, we kept Goodlett and to some extent, Willie Brown away from the main leadership of the city. They did, at various times, press for reconciliation but on their own terms. Willie was a state leader and Goodlett was a national black leader in the black press and the peace movement.

As a matter of fact, it was a period when Willie Brown and our people were pretty alienated. When Willie ran for state speaker against Leo McCarthy, our alliance was with Leo. We influenced enough votes that Willie was six votes short. He came to us, begged Chester and Leroy King and some of the black leaders to use their influence. They agreed to it, and then they came to me and said, "Let's do everything we can to defeat him." We did.

Rubens: That was his first bid for leadership?

Jenkins: Yes. We then--mostly because of Leo's faults--switched when Willie made his own run at it again. One, because none of the appointments from Leo came in our direction. I don't know what Leo assumed--that we were all so idealistic that nobody wanted to be appointed. Either you were condemned as being an agent of the Left which had all sorts of dire scenarios, or you assumed that these guys just respond idealistically. Neither was true in a sense.

The Gubernatorial Campaign, 1974

Jenkins: The other thing that happened, of course, affected our support of Brown. Alioto wanted to run for governor with our support, among many others. The national Italian community of course adored him. Also running for governor were Jerry Brown and George Moscone, and Robert Moretti. Alioto lost to Jerry Brown and came in second.

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Willie had supported Robert Moretti, who had been the speaker of the house after Jesse Unruh, and we supported Alioto. Jerry Brown had enough influence and support to split the state AFL who refused to endorse one or another. We thought we had it wrapped up: Joe Mazzola spent a fortune inside the AFL for Alioto. But Brown had the Hotel and Restaurant Workers. They were the biggest single group of votes in the state AFL. Jack Henning, who headed the state labor council and was for Alioto, decided that he was not going to split the AFL over the issue, so he supported no endorsement. He infuriated the building trades. We endorsed Alioto. The Teamsters endorsed Alioto. I bet Willie Brown \$100 that Alioto would get a higher vote than Moretti. He said, "Take it." Alioto came in second. It was the time of the accusation in Look magazine that he was tied up with the Mafia. That was wrong and never proven, but it was enough of a story to finish him. Willie would not pay me, but I finally taunted him enough that he paid me publicly in Bardelli's. Herb Caen was a witness.

Rubens: So Jerry Brown got the gubernatorial nomination.

Jenkins: Brown got the nomination. I became a labor chairman for Brown. It was a bitter loss. Both the AFL neutrality, as well as the Mafia story, which lingered on for years, and which mostly centered around the fact that Alioto's first wife, Angelina, came out of a Mafia family in New Orleans. I don't know other specifics. It never had any validity to the damn thing. Alioto, of course, is an Italian, a great charmer and great speaker. Most Italians, including the Mafia, loved him every place he went.

Rubens: Having closed ranks behind Jerry Brown, how did the rapprochement with Willie Brown, the black community and the Democratic party leaders come about?

Jenkins: The black community supported Alioto. The record he had built up here in the city was unique. Black leadership passed clearly in

the city into the hands of the black trade union movement and its white allies, with the black trade union leadership being a dominant force.

Labor Goals and Conflicts with the Alioto Administration

Jenkins: In New York, Bayard Rustin, who was head of the Harlem Labor Center (which was originally sponsored by the A. Philip Randolph Institute) played the role of broker for black leadership in the city, to some extent. But in San Francisco, the black population was not a dominant political factor, as it was in New York. Our union played that role of broker in a way. We might have had a more radical union, but there were differences of opinion among the black leadership.

Rubens: What do you mean?

Jenkins: Well, for example, Curt McClain was close to Goldblatt; Lou encouraged Curt's leadership and wanted him to follow when he retired as secretary-treasurer. When Curt took that office [1977] he separated from us--he took more of a nationalist position vis-a-vis blacks. At one point he even picketed Local 10 on some issue. There were others in the black community, particularly among the church leadership, for instance, who took an anti-political integrationist position.

So the problem of keeping together a group who were in leadership in various parts of an administration and the community, and keeping them to the same moral and political standard, was extremely difficult.

Rubens: What role did the Communist party play?

Jenkins: Well, mostly the CP itself supported Morrison. It was always opposed to Alioto and created a situation for their own black leadership which was impossible for them to stay with. Given a choice, the black Party members came with us rather than the Party because we were where the jobs were coming from. For the Party to make that kind of challenge was really hopeless.

Rubens: So the Party's own separation from and isolation from the mainstream seems to reinforce what you were saying happened to some of these new "establishment" leaders. They didn't have a moral or organizational base that pushed them to pursue a responsible and accountable style of leadership: for the CP it was ideological, for the mainstream it was individual betterment.

Jenkins: Not individual betterment, but actual betterment for blacks in the city by wiping out job and housing discrimination, for example. With Hartman and the rest being contemptuous of what was happening, it wasn't the best of all possible worlds.

But we accomplished a lot. We finally fell back on the criterion that we could guarantee decent wages, conditions, affirmative action, integration, and leadership of these projects. We got black day laborers, and black architects, because Olympia and York, which had taken over Yerba Buena, hired me as a consultant and I could push that position, as well as the hiring of women.

Olympia and York was a real estate development company, one of the biggest in the world, a huge Canadian operation headed by Orthodox Jews and the third richest company in the world. To be just mau-maued as sell outs and collaborators was an absurdity.

The labor caucus within the Alioto administration never took hold. It was impossible to do. We tried to set up a monthly meeting where we would exchange ideas, but it fizzled out. For instance, we were responsible for getting a guy named Stan Jensen, head of the Machinists Union, on the redevelopment agency. Jensen was wonderful on the issue of trade union conditions, but he came from essentially a white union. He went along with the issues we raised, but he considered, as most of the trade unionists did, the guarantee to the labor movement of wages and conditions. So if there was a major bid, let's say, by a construction company or a printing company, Jensen would fight, in spite of the city's charter saying it would go to the lowest bidder--he would insist that there be trade union conditions among the people who got the contract. That was duplicated around the city.

Harry Bridges was backward on it, but he went along with some things. Harry was never a real fighter on the port commission. Not on issues of race, particularly. His concept of city government was not helpful to us particularly.

Rubens: You couldn't get labor to cohere, and I guess you can see from that where a facile analysis will say once you are in power, then you sell out. I don't think it's that clear or that simple.

Jenkins: We never allowed anybody to sell out.

Rubens: There were enough of you around to watchdog?

Jenkins: Yes, and also the example of Bridges and Goldblatt were very dramatic. Money was never a temptation. That was crucial. There were never the big Cadillacs and the country homes, the grotesqueries of so many others.

The Golden Gate Panhandle and Other Environmental Issues

Rubens: Since we are talking about principles, would you pick up the story of opposition to the Golden Gate Park Panhandle development--talking about the builders, how the builders were--

Jenkins: There was a push within the city to develop that strip of property known as the Golden Gate Panhandle, that runs east and west between Fulton and Masonic and Oak and Fell along the north/south axis. Develop it. Tear it up. Build a freeway, then cover it up. The freeway would cut through the edge of Golden Gate Park. It would be a main thoroughfare to the Golden Gate Bridge instead of Lombard Street.

The Panhandle had 1,100 different kinds of trees and bushes on it. It was a major recreational area for the Haight-Ashbury and for other neighborhoods too, and it was one of the few places that blacks and Asians were simultaneously using. When Susie Bierman and the group from the Haight-Ashbury who originated the fight against it came to me and asked me, as a resident of the Haight, to be the chair of the Labor Committee, I was delighted.¹

Rubens: What was the conflict for labor?

Jenkins: Well, the Building Trades, the Operating Engineers, the Laborers and others were for development. We had had unity ultimately on the Yerba Buena project, and most redevelopment projects. We didn't go along with a lot of stuff, but there was no huge public rift.

But on this issue the truth of the matter is that I had a position much closer to the environmentalists. During this period, I did a conference on environment and labor, and I had a

¹The "Panhandle Fight" lasted between 1959 and 1966. Sue Bierman recalled: "During those years, I always kept a dime in my pocket so that I could call Dave Jenkins when I got in trouble. Whenever I needed him to go before the board of supervisors, he would show up, this huge man thundering down the aisle to address the board, yelling, 'I represent sixty thousand longshoremen and we oppose this steamrolling of the park!'"

lot of their material. We had Alioto be a key speaker; we had a whole bunch of famous landscapers and designers, including Lawrence Halprin, the famous architect, who spoke. And we had the Sierra Club and the Friends of the Earth and all the environmental organizations represented.¹

Rubens: How did you come to that position?

Jenkins: I was approached by Victor Rabinowitz, who had an institute back East which was being funded by the major foundations. He came up with about \$20,000 to organize a conference and came to me because I was, in a sense, the logical figure. We used the University of San Francisco. The overall chairman was the dean of USF.

Rubens: At this time you were also appointed to the [San Francisco] Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

Jenkins: That was many, many years later. I was also with the environmentalists when U.S. Steel wanted to build a building on the waterfront, and a movement sprang up to stop it. I was opposed to the building.

However, when Alvin Duskin, the garment manufacturer and environmentalist (we became friends later) led a movement to put a forty-foot limit all over the city, we were opposed to the forty-foot limit. It was absurd to include areas that we felt would develop anyway, so I led the campaign against that. Actually San Francisco has more low development than any city in the United States. The anti-development slogan was, "Let's not make San Francisco New York."

Rubens: Stop Manhattanization?

Jenkins: Yes, Manhattanization. So I then worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the majority of the labor movement. I did a full-time campaign to stop the height limitation initiative.

Rubens: I'm interested in how you assumed that role. You are seen as a figure in the city who speaks to labor and speaks to the community, and who is a reasonable environmentalist. Did someone hire you to do this thing?

¹Dave Jenkins, "Environmental Controversies in the Labor Movement in the Bay Area," in The Sierra Club and the Urban Environment, II. Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, 1983.

Jenkins: Yes. There was a committee, and there was money. I worked with a bright guy, Kenneth Thompson from Bechtel, whom they also assigned full time. Then I worked with the Chamber of Commerce, and I worked with the labor movement, and I worked with the Alioto administration.

This came naturally to me, out of my political activities and the alliances I had made. It was fun and also by that time, the endless suits that were stopping Yerba Buena were stopping development in the city. The anti-growth people were winning these suits from judges like Stanley Weigel and others who had been corporate attorneys, but who when they got into judgeship decided to "protect" the city.

Later, his daughter and my daughter became best friends. They were both in a Ph.D. program on mental health at UC Berkeley. Weigel was a corporate liberal, profoundly anti-union but a liberal nonetheless. Alioto was endlessly furious about court decisions that he made, which were all inadequate and destroyed the city's ability to grow. The opposition fastened on the TransAmerica building, decrying the old "monkey block" destruction, which they saw as an historical landmark. The fight was terribly ugly.¹ Nonetheless, it was built, and it is now one of the great symbols of the city.

When we did the strange-looking fountain down at Justin Herman Plaza, there was almost a war. The architect who ended up building it was a French Canadian. Representatives from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York including Thomas Hoving came to adoringly review stages of its completion. A lot of eastern art and architectural aficionados were very supportive of this fountain.

But on opening day, Alan Temko, art critic for the San Francisco Chronicle, led a group of young architectural students and architects with black flags saying they doomed the city to endless mediocrity. Then the French Canadian architect, a nationalist, and others leaped into the fountain with signs held over their heads, saying "Free French Canada." [laughter]

Rubens: To return to the environmental conference--

Jenkins: I hired my daughter Becky and Jeanne Mulligan to help run the conference.

¹A block of artists' lofts on Montgomery Street in which Maynard Dixon, among others, had begun their careers, was torn down.

Rubens: Rabinowitz had \$20,000 to spend on this?

Jenkins: Yes, and we got more money, as a matter of fact. Local foundations helped. The environmental movement suddenly became aware that there were a lot of allies in the labor movement. They had tended to regard the labor movement as inflexible, only seeing it through the Building Trades, which had opposed almost everything that they wanted to do.

Of course, the majority of the labor movement was pro-jobs. But there were sections, though, that said, "You are going to have to make some adjustment between our livings and the environment." And it was not accidental that the major political environment figure who came out of California was Phil Burton, essentially a labor congressman and that the labor movement never challenged his position on the national parks, on Point Reyes, or on the Golden Gate National Recreational Area. There was also an enormous area that was opened for development. Not only that, Marin elected his brother, John Burton, who shared the same position, with labor support.

I'm not trying to deny that there are figures in the labor movement who cry, "To hell with all that; what we do care about a view corridor to the bay. As it is, we are only working seven months a year." Furthermore, there was never a base in the black community to join the environmental movement. To some extent, it was the enemy. Still today, you go down to Golden Gate Park, black faces are too few because of a past history of racism. You go to Point Reyes, it is the same way. Or if you go and look in the leadership of the Sierra Club or any of the environmentalist organizations, it's essentially a white movement. The blacks of course had other more pressing priorities.

So I worked for getting the environmental movement turned towards the urban problem. The biggest environmental thing we could do in San Francisco was providing better housing and jobs, as well as more adequate facilities and playgrounds. It was our influences out of these conferences that pressed for that kind of agenda. If you want kids to love the outdoors, give them something to play on and money to spend and decent education.

Rubens: Alan Jacobs, the director of city planning, had a vision of design and a balance of human needs. Did you work with him particularly?

Jenkins: Well, he came during the Alioto administration. He was a fine planner and scholar. Then he slipped with us. He refused to endorse Alioto's second run for mayor. He had a lot of pride in San Francisco and what he had accomplished, but he said he

couldn't support Alioto.¹ He was just agonized. He was a favorite of Dianne Feinstein and he also saw the unions as an enemy in their role of maintaining jobs that he thought were unnecessary or on supporting some incompetent people through civil service.

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He sure didn't see unions as a creative force in the solution to the Yerba Buena conflict. It was impossible, really, to ignore the trade union movement. It represented one of the most articulate forces in the city. So that the workers were being spoken for by building trades officials who were yesterday rank and filers themselves. They responded to the issues of work and wages.

Rubens: Did you run more than one environmental conference?

Jenkins: Yes. The first was at Clerk's Hall down on Mission Street. I was responsible for putting together community and labor people who called the conference. And then we had two at USF. We had an extraordinary amount of business people involved in them, too. That kind of coalition was for the Hartmans, the Calvin Welshes and Sue Hesters, a sign of collaboration rather than innovation. There is no question that all of this was terribly imperfect because we didn't have an instrument, really, to follow up on this. The continuity was lacking. This was a time when people were frequently changing their political position.

The George Moscone Administration, 1972-1975

Jenkins: Then when Moscone came in, although I did a labor campaign for Moscone, initially he was upset about me. I had made some comment privately, not publicly, about his peccadilloes.

I had told him when I refused to support him for governor that if he ever ran for mayor, I would support him. My group, Chester, King, Eickman, other trade unionists, were not infatuated with this guy.

¹Alan Jacobs, planning director of San Francisco 1967-74, established one of the first comprehensive urban design plans adopted by the city council in 1971.

Jimmy Herman, who had been very critical of our alliance with Alioto, said that unions had no business in city government because he said that you had to, in effect, become contaminated by aspects of the politics of administration, unless you were able to control it. Jimmy had been left out of the whole Alioto thing. He admired Moscone.

Rubens: He was president of the Clerks at that point, Local 34.

Jenkins: He didn't oppose Alioto, but he was not enthusiastic. Jimmy raised a meeting with Moscone at the house of Danny Weinstein, a friend. He was a superior court judge. We had a big three-hour meeting. Moscone finally turned and said, "What do you want?" I said, "Well, we want to see trade union appointments and black appointments stay where they are." Then he said, "What do you want?" I said, "I don't want anything; I just want to stay where I am."

At one point, he got very angry and was about to walk out. Jimmy stopped him. Finally, I drove him home that night, but we didn't really resolve anything. So I then went on Bill [William] Bradley's payroll, who was the PR guy who ran the Moscone campaign. It made the difference; after all, he only won by 3,000 votes.

Rubens: I forget who his opponents were.

Jenkins: Dianne Feinstein and John Barbagelata. We would have supported Feinstein, frankly, if she had had enough brains to stay away from the supervisors board meeting where they voted sanctions against the unions that were on strike in the city; but she went along with people who really were her worst enemies, for example Barbagelata.

In any case, about a year after Moscone came into office, the first thing he did was ask for the resignation of all the commissioners, which we opposed. So none of our labor people would resign. Then there was a long strike that went on, and he sat in his office for fifty-five days playing cards.

Rubens: What was that strike?

Jenkins: It was a city strike of all the construction workers. Then they broke it with injunction. So George came in under circumstances which didn't show him off to his best. Then shortly afterwards, it started to be clear that Moscone was going to do everything he could to get rid of me, as well. His main deputy was a man named Bernie [Bernard] Teitlebaum. He is now a leading lobbyist in

Sacramento. A cold man, hated me. I gave him some cause. He died early this year, only fifty-five.

I met Teitlebaum at a cocktail party after Moscone had made some move against me, and Teitlebaum was the instrument for it. Teitlebaum turned to me and said, "It's not my doing; I got orders from the mayor that we give you one year and then you're through."

Rubens: One year as a consultant?

Jenkins: One year on what I was doing. Actually, it lasted longer than that; it lasted about two years under Moscone. Then when I switched my position on district elections from opposing--because I had helped run the campaign against it--to supporting it because the labor movement, with me agreeing with it, decided that to go with district elections was a way of getting the supervisors who had acted so badly during the strike out. So once I switched, [Quentin] Kopp made a motion to eliminate my job as a consultant with redevelopment with Moscone's support. The board of supervisors voted me out six to five.

Rubens: That was a distinguished honor! [laughter]

Jenkins: Best thing that ever happened to me as far as money. They eliminated my contract, took it out of the budget in 1977.

Rubens: When Teitlebaum told you one year, he meant at redevelopment?

Jenkins: I had done a lot of important things for Moscone. I had brought the unions back into his office at the beginning of his administration.

Rubens: There was no other better candidate for labor in the city?

Jenkins: At the end of Alioto's administration, Feinstein had gone along with the supervisors' injunction against labor. We would have nothing to do with her. I think after her defeat by Moscone was when Dianne decided that she was not going to run again and get out of politics. It was shortly after, of course, Moscone and Harvey Milk were murdered by Dan White.

Jenkins Evaluates His Role in City and Labor Politics

Jenkins: Interestingly enough, after Moscone was killed, I was asked to a meeting at Jack's restaurant with Dick [Richard] Sklar, who was

in the city administration, and Johnny Maher of Delancey Street, the drug rehabilitation program, and Jimmy Herman was there, four or five people, maybe. They wanted my support on a move against Dianne to stop her from taking over as mayor. They thought that with my help they had enough votes on the board of supervisors to stop her.

I think Sklar wanted the job. He had come out of working with the Kennedys back East. He was a dynamic guy who became head of Public Utilities, an attractive guy. I did like him, I guess, but his drive for power was so naked that I was put off by it. I said, "I don't think you can pull it off. I think she acted heroically under the circumstances of the murders." I didn't see any reason why we couldn't work with her.

That was an acrimonious meeting. Jimmy accused me afterwards of acting very nasty to Sklar and to Mimi Silver, a brilliant woman, now head of Delancey Street, who was Johnny Maher's co-director; they were together.

It was interesting to see what had happened. It was a stupid move. It was such a power move. There was a mood in the city of great tenderness, too, and regret about what had happened.

Rubens: It was a time of unity and binding the wounds. He had been in how long?

Jenkins: Well, he had been in a little over two years. During this whole period, from the time that I had worked with Shelley and after with Alioto and then to Moscone, there was no major move in the city made without, in a way, me either being informed of it or being involved in it. That's not to say that I was head of some operation that controlled the city, but I was a very important component.

If they wanted ILWU or sections of the labor movement and the black community, as well as a lot of allies in the liberal middle class in the city, including the environmentalists, I would be contacted. Moscone had come to me, and Feinstein had me over to her house--gave me a double martini--put her arms around me and said, "Can't we dream this dream together, Dave?" Well, it just suddenly struck me that really almost nobody in that period, which was a period of about twelve years in the city--which is a long time for a political apparatus to operate--could bypass me and my group. When I say "me," I know it sounds egotistical because there were others; Chester was certainly a power. He was wheeling and dealing all over the city.

A Political Power Behind the Scenes

By Marshall Kilduff

Dave Jenkins, one of the city's most durable underground legends, will leave his job at the end of the month as consultant to the Redevelopment Agency — the latest in a series of behind-the-scenes power posts in his career.

At 62, he is a shambling, bear-sized, political charmer, a former fiery labor organizer who has become one of the canniest operators ever to insinuate himself into the City Hall mainstream.

Jenkins has never been elected to public office, nor even to an upstairs job in his home base, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union.

He is nonetheless one of the city's best-connected powerbrokers. Jenkins was the man who turned out the huge black pluralities in Hunters Point and the Western Addition that helped win the mayoral race twice for Joseph L. Alioto and most recently for George Moscone. He was a top adviser behind two liberal slates that have now won a majority on the Board of Education.

His departure from the redevelopment field came on a 6-to-5 vote of the Board of Supervisors eliminating his \$28,200 per year job — a decision brought on by the board's anti-labor mood and suspicions that Jenkins played a role in the victorious district election campaign.

Doubtless, Jenkins will pop up again. He is already putting together a labor studies course at San Francisco State University, organizing a symposium for trade unionists and conservationists, and reportedly angling for another City Hall job as a "consultant."

"In a city with as many problems as this one — race, labor, taxes, politics — I can't imagine Dave looking too far for work," said a political insider.

"This is sort of my life, this kind of work," Jenkins said the other day.

"I don't think I'd like to do much else. I did lousy with the Board of Supervisors, but what the hell, I'll get by," he added.

At age 12 Jenkins got his first taste of the system when he served a three-week sentence for throwing rocks at the New Jersey militia during a general strike in Passaic where he was working as a bobbin boy.

He bounced through the '30s as a labor organizer for such groups as teachers, longshoremen and factory hands along the East Coast and through the deep South.

"I got the — beat out of me so many times I can't even remember," he said. "Must have been in jail 30 times."

In 1939 he ended up on the West Coast and he worked aboard a merchant ship at the beginning of World War II.

But his proselytizing led him to start the California Labor School in 1942 and he served as its director until 1950.

His rough-and-tumble past as a left-wing agitator landed him before state and congressional panels during the McCarthy years.

On one occasion he broke a foot and required more than 100 stitches when he fell through a skylight while dodging a subpoena server. "I was bored and decided to look over the fire escapes that day," he said wryly.

Through the '50s, he worked occasionally along the waterfront but found more of his time spent on union affairs such as organizing the fight to prevent the deportation of longshore leader Harry Bridges.

By the late '50s the ILWU's prestige as one of the first integrated unions made its endorsement a prize for politicians seeking ghetto voting blocs.

As the legislative coordinator of the union, Jenkins was the man to see.

After Alioto's victory in 1967, the new mayor sent Jenkins to the Redevelopment Agency to hire more blacks and soften its bulldozer-and-concrete image.

Jenkins has stayed on even after the initial impetus for his job faded.

Instead, he became a kind of jack-of-all-liberal trades — drumming up support for a new Hunters Point school, working on minority hiring at Fisherman's Wharf restaurants, and, during the recent city strike, making sure that redevelopment projects did not suffer.

Because his salary was paid by the city, the ILWU got a free legislative coordinator in the bargain.

"I doubt many people in town have ever heard of him, but there isn't a political or community leader of any consequence who hasn't met the big, ugly slob," said Wilbur Hamilton, the acting director of the Redevelopment Agency.

Jenkins would never think of moderating his up-from-the-docks bluster. But now and then he does let slip a reference to the Canterbury Tales or an evening at a concert when he wore a tie for a few hours.

"Well, I guess I do have my own — way of doing things," he concedes.

He and his wife, Edith, who teaches literature at Merritt Community College in Oakland, live in the upper Haight-Ashbury District in a small home that is continually overrun with acquaintances, old pals and fellow politicians.

"One of my daughters and my son were both busted for civil disobedience a few years back. The other daughter belonged to a Quaker peace group during the Vietnam war. It's enough to make any father proud," he said.

Rubens: But as a linchpin for labor, environment, white liberals, blacks, you were central.

Jenkins: It was a period where one could take on a lot of ego, I suppose. But once you got into it, everything that you did was so obvious in a way. Coming from my background, it was absurd not to have an alliance with so many good people in the environmental movement. And the fact was that the blacks had been my main base in the city for years. It was especially true in the ILWU. I had taught Negro history, and my whole history was connected to civil rights, my affection and concern with Robeson and DuBois, and even my early alliance with Carlton Goodlett and Willie Brown, and of course Revels Cayton.

So all these major friends I had, and the role I played in the Party on the black issue--I had learned a lot in the Party. It was terribly important to my whole political development, my whole life. My alliance was a natural alliance for me. Other people, the old Irish who had a machine, Bill Malone, Jim Rudden, their base was the Irish leadership of the trade union movement, which had been overwhelming for years before the rise of the ILWU.

Women in Government and the Labor Movement

Jenkins: So our base shifted to black trade unionists. Its most inadequate aspect, I guess, was that there was no dramatic woman leadership in the city. People like Caryl Mezey were brought in. She was active around the San Francisco school board. With people from the board of education, where the women were extremely active, women started to fill out to some extent, into other parts of city administration.

Caryl Mezey's husband became chairman of the school board. She ran for office against Dianne during district elections and got beat by a respectable vote.

Rubens: When Dianne said, "Can't we dream this dream together," was that when Moscone--?

Jenkins: No, when she wanted to run against Alioto, earlier, on the issue of busing. We also supported Joyce Ream, who is now head of the commission on aging. She also came out of that board of education group, got a vote of 58,000, which made her hot political property in the city. I got Shelley's daughter, who is

head of the Teachers Union, on the redevelopment agency, Joan Marie Shelley, a splendid woman, who is still very active in the Teachers Union. Mattie Jackson, from the ILGWU, was appointed to the city board of permit appeals.

Rubens: Jim Ballard was the Teachers Union president I knew for so many years.

Jenkins: She [Joan Shelley] was his vice president when he was president. She was a French teacher and still is, I think, out at Lowell High School, a charming woman. She now works full time for the union. I'm trying to think of other examples where we pushed for support of women's leadership in the city. We did, at one point, go to Lucy McCabe, who is now a judge and ask her to run for Congress; she would have ended up opposing John Burton, and we had a good chance of defeating him. She had the political background to do it. She was an attractive figure. But she wouldn't run.

Of course, we drew a whole bunch of black working-class women leadership into the Redevelopment Agency into key jobs: Bernice Watkins, Robbie [Roberta] Yocum. Those jobs are paying \$35,000-\$40,000 a year. They became job supervisors and they were key people there, but if we had a more conscious leadership, I think it would have made a more substantial difference. The woman leadership in the city came along in such a scattered incohesive way. First came Dianne as mayor, followed by a majority on the board of supervisors, later by Congresswomen Barbara Boxer and Sala Burton and women judges. Then Wendy Nelder came onto the board of supervisors. She is the daughter of the former police chief.

Rubens: There was the ILWU supervisor--?

Jenkins: Yes, Ella Hill Hutch.

Rubens: She was a very respected black community figure. It was district elections that brought her in, wasn't it?

Jenkins: Yes. She was not our candidate. Chester and King didn't like her and didn't respect her. She had broken with us, and stayed with Willie Brown on a whole number of issues; she had her own women's power base, and it was considerable. She had come out of the Party. She had worked for many years on the paper People's World. We helped get her the job in the ILWU, but she went her own way.

Additional Information on Democratic Party Politics

Rubens: So some of that tension with Willie Brown kept up then?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. There was no question. Willie was always trying to find ways of cutting up the ILWU black leadership. He needed it. He finally appointed Leroy King on the state Democratic Central Committee.

Rubens: When did he do that?

Jenkins: I don't know the exact time, but it was a major objective of his.

Rubens: Brown's?

Jenkins: Yes. He kept stumbling over our leadership in the city all the time.

Rubens: So on the one hand, he was trying to cut it up, and the other hand, he was trying to embrace it. Did you ever have a role in the Democratic party of that order?

Jenkins: Years ago, when a guy named Elmer Delany, an Irish American attorney, a liberal, fought to take over the Democratic Central Committee against Bill Malone, Delany came to me and asked me to help him. I did and we fell one person short of taking it over. Vince Hallinan helped us at the time. Hallinan had been involved in a famous case involving a guy named Frank Egan, who had been an assistant D.A. and was sentenced to life imprisonment for contriving to murder a couple of widows in the city for their insurance policies.

Egan had been a classmate of Hallinan's when he was in law school; Hallinan got his sentence commuted from execution to life imprisonment in San Quentin. He came to Delany and said, "The only thing I'd like to ask you if you take over the Democratic Central Committee, is a pardon for Egan, who is dying of cancer," and he flopped down \$10,000, which was enough for us to organize the local precincts. These are little known facts about San Francisco.

Many years later, Edith's best friend fell in love with Elmer Delany's son, who was a professor back East and then over at USF. He has just written a book on the history of Irish socialism. So if you stand still long enough, everything comes back.

Rubens: Who was this Delany?

Jenkins: A very famous criminal attorney who was severely crippled, had both legs taken off, walked with enormous difficulty, had a big law firm in the city.

Rubens: Sort of a broker in Democratic politics?

Jenkins: Wanted to be. Tried to take on Bill Malone.

Rubens: I have an incidental question left over, by the way. What happened to Duskin? He was a big figure; then there was a cloud over him, and he disappeared.

Jenkins: Well, Duskin in many ways was a contradictory figure. He sought for a political role in the city, a legitimate one. He ran a prosperous garment factory. He fought the union, so the unions had a very legitimate beef against him, led by Mattie Jackson. He tried again on the forty-foot limit. We defeated him, and then he came back to me a couple of years later with the whole idea of low cost housing which he had, and I presented it to the unions.

They said, "You're kidding; this is from the famous anti-union stalwart." But we became friends as a result. Then he built windmills. He had a windmill farm.

Rubens: There was some tax break for wind-generated electricity in California.

Jenkins: He's still around, and we're friends.

VIII FILLING IN ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON CITY AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY
POLITICS

[Interview 15: May 18, 1988] ##

Jenkins: The union had generally supported Senator Gene [Eugene] McCarthy as the Democratic Party candidate in the 1968 presidential election. I worked full time on that. After he lost the nomination to [Hubert] Humphrey, the union decided to endorse Humphrey, even though we were very critical of him, especially around Vietnam.

Rubens: This is '68, right?

Jenkins: Yes. The '68 convention in Chicago, of course, blew the mind of everybody, including the trials of the Chicago Seven and Bobby Seale subsequently.

A Political Endorsement Breaks a Friendship

Jenkins: I went to a dinner over at Madeleine Duckles, whose husband was head of the music department at Cal. Madeleine was very involved in rescuing children who had been savagely hurt by the Vietnam War. There was a committee which was helping children get plastic surgery, and I was a member. She had one of the wounded children staying at her house. There was a big party. There were maybe twenty-five other people.

Decca and Bob [Treuhaft] arrived very late and quite smashed, with Anne Kerr, who was an M.P. from England, whom I met in London. I also knew Kerr's husband who was an Australian and also an M.P. I had met him in a progressive pub in London.

It so happened that that week, Ben, Decca's son, who was schizophrenic, and whom I have gotten jobs for before, asked me if I could help him get work. I did get him a job in San

Francisco at the nightclub called The Committee. Decca and I were very old friends. She lived in our neighborhood when she first came to San Francisco, and then subsequent to that, she had worked at the East Bay California Labor School. Her [Decca's] son, Nicky, who was killed, and my son David were best friends. Edith had talked at the funeral, the only person that Decca wanted to do so. So we had a long relationship. When I was a longshoreman working out of the East Bay, I used to stop at her house, and have a midnight supper.

So at this dinner, which was served at a long table, Decca opened up, "Dear Anne, tell what happened to you at the Chicago Democratic convention." Incidentally, Anne Kerr was an alcoholic and subsequently committed suicide. She started to tell the story of the confrontation with the brutal police there, and being beaten up. All during that, Decca would turn to me and hiss, "All the way with HHH." She was sitting right next to me. The whole table kept turning to me. She said this about four or five times.

I said repeatedly, "Stop it." And then I said, "If you do it again, I am going to throw some wine in your face." Edith, who was across the table, said afterwards that we were two people who shouldn't play chicken with each other. She did it again, and I threw some wine in her face. She leaped up and hit me with her purse. Bob, her husband, swung at me. George Roth, the doctor in charge of this committee on Vietnam victims, grabbed my arms.

Anyway, it broke up the party, I must say. Bob then threatened to sue me. That never happened. So we didn't speak afterwards, it took a couple of years; we did make up but never had the same quality of relationship. The older she got, the more British she got and her drinking was always a problem.

I have seen her a number of times, mostly at Eva Maas' house. She is very much involved with Edith in many ways; she describes Edith in one of her books as a very courageous woman, all dressed in red. She likes my kids.

Rubens: Where had Edith been all dressed in red?

Jenkins: At one of the Burns committee hearings. I'm always a little apprehensive about seeing Decca when she is smashed. One evening recently when I was at her house, the first thing she wanted to know was, was I going to support Bush? She made some other nasty comment. She told me at great length how Bob was crippled and how tedious it was to help him dress. She hates that. She said

that the last time she saw me at Eva's, all I did was complain about how sick I was.

I said, "That's a goddamn lie. I never talk about being sick." She said something to me, "I've loved you more than anybody else for years, Dave Jenkins." Then she sort of sobered up and acted decently the rest of the evening. It was a party that she was giving for Martin Bernal and his friends.

It's been kind of painful in many ways because I do have enormous affection for Decca. We have many friends in common. I have been in a lot of situations with her over the years. I admire her independence and her refusal to get involved in red baiting, even though the reds needed to be baited. We have broken ranks about being a left-winger and she has never really apologized for being in the Communist party.

I have known Bob Treuhft even longer than she. I knew him back in New York in Greenwich Village. I knew Bob's mother, a famous hat-maker. I met Decca's mother in San Francisco and met her sister Nancy in Paris (the writer who wrote the Sun Goddess).

On the other hand, she is a very head-strong woman. At the time, I think, when we endorsed Alioto, Bob and she sent us a telegram that the ILWU had forever lost its reputation as a progressive union and was doomed to a reactionary future. Then she and Bob sent that to all the papers, which was presumptuous. The only paper that would print it was the Examiner.

Rubens: To stay with that one point about Decca: my understanding was that a lot of friendships splintered during the Alioto period. They were all supporting Supervisor Jack Morrison.

The Mayoralty Campaign and the Labor Unions, 1968

Eugene McAteer's Death: Alioto Emerges as Front Runner to Morrison and Dobbs

Rubens: You make an interesting case that Jack Morrison just could not have gotten elected. Sid Roger, who was editor of The Dispatcher at the time, told me how divisive the choice of that strategy was, to endorse Alioto, to go with the winnable candidate, to get labor people appointed inside the administration. Political alliances and friendships of long standing broke up in that period, such as yours and Decca's, some that have never been

mended. For instance, I think Roger said he stopped speaking to you, and he certainly attributes his bucking Harry, his refusing to put as much about Alioto and labor's position on Alioto as Harry wanted in the paper, to why he was fired by Harry.

Jenkins: Not true. Harry never trusted Sidney. He thought he was too much an intellectual.

But regarding the choice of Alioto, it was simple. Morrison was a very good supervisor. Most of the people in the liberal community didn't know Alioto or only knew him as an establishment figure. He had been chairman of the Board of Education, and chairman of the San Francisco Redevelopment Commission. He was very well known in the Italian community (and the unions didn't have much depth in the Italian community). He was much respected on the waterfront among longshoremen in particular. Many of his cousins worked there and many on Fisherman's Wharf ran the big restaurants.

He had also been chairman of the California Rice Growers. The ILWU had unionized that, and he had been the company negotiator. He had a very decent reputation as an employer with us. When McAteer died, his supporters moved quickly to replace him with another candidate. Everybody assumed that Jack Shelley could not be elected.

Rubens: McAteer was a state senator?

Jenkins: Yes, McAteer was a state senator, who had announced for mayor. Most of the establishment Democrats moved over to McAteer. Then he dropped dead playing handball at the Olympic Club; he was in his early fifties. A deal was worked out where Shelley would not run again and it was reputed that he received a cash settlement of \$30,000 to \$50,000 not to run, as well as a promise to make him a legislative representative in Sacramento. Shelley accepted that. Then the big money Democratic establishment led by Ben Swig, Walter Shoreinstein, and Bill Malone came up with Alioto, who had been McAteer's campaign chairman.

We were then introduced to Alioto. I was approached then by Bill Malone, the leading Democrat of the old school, and asked could we support Alioto.

Alioto was also popular with the AFL in town, and the Teamsters. So there was no way that Morrison would ever get a unanimous labor endorsement.

Rubens: Would that have been true of McAteer, too?

Jenkins: McAteer had been a member of the Pile Drivers, Local 34, and somebody who had come out of the old Irish establishment with a lot of prestige and considerable money.

McAteer would have run ultimately against Shelley unless Shelley didn't withdraw as they wanted him to. Then there was Harold Dobbs, who was a millionaire lawyer, the Republican candidate for mayor who had been a supervisor, and he was not unpopular in the city. He also owned Mel's Drive-Ins. He had a very dramatic father who was involved in some bizarre affairs.

Rubens: Where did the money come from?

Jenkins: From those restaurants. He was also a successful lawyer but a rightish middle of the road. He did get money from the Republican party.

Rubens: The San Francisco high school, McAteer, a tough place, was named after him then.

Jenkins: Yes. At that point, Bill Chester, Leroy King, Keith Eickman, who was secretary of our legislative committee, and myself met with Alioto. Alioto then promised at our request that both Chester and myself would be on the steering committee.

Rubens: Of his campaign?

Jenkins: Yes. And he also agreed to appoint a trade unionist to every city commission and blacks to every commission and put Revels Cayton in as a deputy of social services.

Rubens: That would have been a new job?

Jenkins: Yes. Revels had been on the Human Rights Commission and on Housing. Revels, in many ways, had been the major strategist for our relationship to the black and trade union communities, and on winning power in the city.

So at that point, Phil Burton came into the picture. He was the leader of Left Democratic politics in the city and he wanted and did control the Democratic Central Committee.

By the way, did I ever tell you about getting to know the Burtons' father? I was in the hospital for a back injury about 1942 and the night intern was Dr. Thomas Burton. We took a liking to each other, we talked about politics and books. I stayed in touch with him and recommended that he be appointed the San Francisco CIO's council doctor. I think I met John and Phil a few times, they were teenagers. But we didn't become friends,

and those connections were not in place by the time of this political contest.

Rubens: At that point who did Phil Burton endorse?

Jenkins: His position was that Morrison was their candidate.

Rubens: And was he already in the legislature?

Jenkins: Yes. He was already a congressman. He was joined by Joe Beaman, who had been his aide, and who was then a supervisor, and Agar Jaicks, who was chairman of the [San Francisco] Democratic Central Committee, and Willie Brown. They all importuned us to stay with Morrison. They didn't importune us; they assumed we would and wanted to involve us in a strategy about it. The meeting was held at Jaicks' house with Jack Morrison present.

Rubens: Who was at the meeting?

Jenkins: These five people. Burton, Brown, Agar Jaicks, Beaman, and me, and, I think, Keith Eickman. I said at that point that I didn't think Morrison could win and we saw no reason to turn the town over to Dobbs and that we had extracted important promises from Alioto. Burton brushed that aside and said, "We are going to shove Morrison's bald head up Alioto's ass." [laughter]

So I turned to Morrison, who detested the Burtons, and I said, "Do you let this asshole talk this way about you?" He smiled weakly and said, "Well, you know the Burtons."

Rubens: Why did he detest the Burtons?

Jenkins: Their style. Morrison was and is a very soft-spoken planner, originally from Oklahoma, a student of politics rather than a mass leader, which was one of the problems we had with him anyway. As a spokesman in the debates, Alioto just rode roughshod over him. Sue Bierman, present chairperson of the San Francisco Planning Commission, and an old friend, led a delegation of herself and her husband, who was head of the San Francisco State college teachers union at San Francisco State, and a number of others, to my house asking for the ILWU to support Morrison. We refused to do so.

So actually, by and large, it was the trade union Left, centered primarily in the ILWU, with the building trades, Teamsters, construction laborers, and ILWU that constituted the main union group supporting Alioto. We were joined by most of the trade unions in the city led by Joe Mazzola of the Plumbers Union, who idolized Alioto. While we never got an endorsement

out of COPE [Committee on Political Education, AFL], we obviously had a majority of the unions in the city, including left-wing unions like Leon Olson's Printers Union.

The AFL never did endorse as a council, but most of the unions, including the culinary workers, led by a fellow Italian-American, Joe Belardi, and Tim Twomey of the hospital workers, which were the two largest unions of the labor council.

But the Left in the city, which was considerable, and were placed in many of these unions, were furious at us. Alioto was characterized, first of all, as reactionary and in the most extreme cases, as a fascist, a boss-style politician, and that we had all sold out for power and money.

There is no question that Alioto spent a lot of money in the campaign, \$300,000, in a 58-day campaign, part of which I helped to distribute for paid precinct workers and for staff. My own fee was \$10,000, but \$8,000 of it I returned for neighborhood work.

Rubens: What do you mean by that?

Jenkins: Well, Edith and I disagreed about the campaign. She was for Morrison, and she said that, "I had to be like Caesar's wife, above suspicion," even though I wasn't doing it for the money. I took \$8,000 of it and put it back into the campaign.

Rubens: Were Edith and you bitterly divided?

Jenkins: Bitterly, I would say. Our personal dispute over this didn't go on long; it only went on for a year. But she disagreed with the ILWU and me. In any case, the Burtons were furious--they were supposed to be in control. I suspected they knew Dobbs pretty well, as a matter of fact. Moscone was a legal associate of Dobbs, and he was in his office. I suspect that a lot of the money that Morrison got came from Dobbs through Phil Burton, who spent it on the Morrison campaign figuring votes for Morrison would split the Alioto vote. By the way, John Burton and Moscone were high school friends.

So that period was very bitter. It was particularly true among the lawyers, who were very critical of Alioto. Alioto had a reputation of being one of the greatest anti-trust lawyers in the country with enormously big fees and an enormous office. Two of his sons were partners. The left lawyers were particularly critical of him.

Rubens: You mean Aubrey Grossman?

Jenkins: Yes, but also Frank McTernan, Al Brotsky, Charles Garry, Doris Walker, Bob Treuhft, and Willie Brown. The People's World supported Morrison.

Rubens: How about the Hallinans?

Jenkins: Hallinans, no. They supported Alioto. I went to a cocktail party at Estolv Ward's, an old friend and trade unionist. Frank and I almost came to blows.

On the other hand, we had Bridges, Goldblatt, Chester, all with various degrees of influence in the Left community and myself and Eickman and Leroy King.

Alioto as Mayor Appoints Union Leaders and Blacks to Responsible Positions

Rubens: Were there other black leaders who supported Alioto?

Jenkins: Yes, Cayton and Curt McClain. But it split the Left community right down the middle. Strangely enough, even though Alioto delivered on all of the issues, black appointments, trade union appointments, major support in the longshore strike, major support to the strike at the IJ [Independent Journal] over in San Rafael, it didn't heal things.

And a lot of other of his appointments were extraordinary for the time. Two things the Left pinned on him was that he was for our [U.S.] policy in Vietnam. Even so, not particularly under my persuasion but under my leadership, he turned over the polo grounds for demonstrations against the war and a variety of other things. And on the other hand, he was a supporter of the national Democratic administration.

Also there was a student strike at San Francisco State and the TAC squad was used. There were arrests, and Alioto responded to that by arresting students, especially when they started to call the cops pigs. It had an enormous negative influence in the Left community. Even though the ILWU also opposed it, I went out and picketed with the students. We were accused of selling our souls. Alioto knew we opposed his policy. What the hell, we were out there.

The third thing was on the issue of busing. He opposed it. I openly opposed him on that and spoke at mass meetings around

the city. Joe never broke with us, though, even though we challenged him. He thought it was the wrong policy. He loved to argue and debate.

Rubens: I must say that over at the UC campus, some people were always wondering why Harry Bridges didn't take a stronger anti-war position, even shut down the port.

Jenkins: Well, I know he was explicit about not wanting the U.S. government to come in and take over; this was a military concern; we had encountered the same problem during Korea. Then there was Alioto's own politics. Alioto was a fair-haired boy in the national Democratic party, a rising star. There was a great possibility that he could have been a vice-presidential candidate with Hubert Humphrey. He would have been, in my opinion, except for a story in Look magazine accusing him of being connected with the Mafia.

Rubens: How did that happen?

Jenkins: Well, it was just two writers, one was the son of Barbara Hutton, who wrote the story. It was never proven. Alioto sued and then the thing dribbled away. It is true that Alioto's wife, Angelina, came from a Mafia-dominated family in Dallas.

So we had a very peculiar administration. On the national political issues like Vietnam and busing, Alioto was a traditional Democrat, but we maintained our position, had a decent dialogue with him and influenced him on most city matters.

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Rubens: There was room for your voice of opposition?

Jenkins: Not only that, he did unprecedented things. He appointed Harry Bridges to the San Francisco Port Commission.

Rubens: He came through on the promises.

Jenkins: He appointed Bill Chester to BART, which was a powerful position, and then to the San Francisco Airport. He appointed our guy from our union, Wilbur Hamilton, director of Redevelopment. Leroy King went to Redevelopment, Keith Eickman to Park and Rec, and of course all sorts of AFL and CIO people to commissions.

Rubens: I didn't know Hamilton was from the ILWU.

Jenkins: He was from Ship Clerks Local 34 and Jimmy Herman's pick.

- Rubens: Is that when Jimmy came in as head of that union?
- Jenkins: Head of the Ship Clerks. But Jimmy was never part of the Alioto thing. He was outside of it and critical of it. He would talk about it, say he believed that progressives should not be in government unless they could control them. I remind him sometimes about his relationship with Feinstein and Agnos. He was pissed at us because he was not in the top group of ILWU advisors.
- Rubens: What do you mean, he was excluded?
- Jenkins: Well, he wasn't part of the power block in San Francisco, which consisted of Bridges, Goldblatt, Chester, and to a lesser degree, me, and Eickman and King.
- Rubens: I thought you were indicating, in part, it was his choice not to be part of it because he opposed it.
- Jenkins: Yes, but we went to him, and tried to bring him in. He did suggest Wilbur Hamilton, who then got into office. But his own independent relationships with Alioto at the time were non-existent. Jimmy Herman's main terrain for a long time was the East Bay. So that these very dramatic things that Alioto was doing, like the Bridges appointment and the Revels Cayton appointment and me being put on as ombudsman for the city--I was never on the city payroll; I was a consultant. That went on for eight years or more. I had an office at San Francisco Redevelopment office--all that just offended the Left and convinced them that we all were going to the dogs. The fact that many of them came to me, who needed jobs for themselves or their kids, which we got many of them, and changed the whole access of the city to labor, those factors were never owned up to.

Factions Within the Democratic Party in San Francisco: The Effect on City Politics

- Rubens: Now the Burtons and Brown came around, isn't that right?
- Jenkins: They finally made a deal, but they were never close. Alioto had been the only major successful challenge to the Burton, Brown, Goodlett control of the Democratic party, and Burton never fully forgave me. We also broke with Burton on Leo McCarthy, whom he opposed. There was a fight between the McCarthy people and the Burton people for control of the central committee. We didn't take a major role in it, but we supported McCarthy rather than

Phil. We were pissed at Phil and Brown for their attacks on us. Also, in all the years of appointments, Phil and Brown never appointed anyone from the ILWU or any of the guys who had been crucial in their campaigns. That remained a very sore point.

That was even before the Alioto thing, even though we were crucial to Phil Burton's election to Congress and every other campaign he was part of. I ran the street campaign and turned out the guys on the waterfront. There was never an acknowledgement of this in terms of appointments or recognitions. There were guys in our ranks who wanted jobs and deserved them. We almost single-handedly elected Willie Brown--turned out over 100 precinct workers in the black community.

Rubens: Why do you think that was? Did you ever put it to them?

Jenkins: Oh, yes, we put it to them. They just never did. Burton made good appointments, but they were all inner staff people that were not in the main political center of the city's life.

Rubens: Sounds to me like they wanted to keep close control of those appointments.

Jenkins: They didn't put any of our people, even on state commissions. Finally, years later I was appointed to BCDC [Bay Conservation and Development Commission]. Willie Brown appointed me as an alternate in July 1981, and as a commissioner in July 1987.

He appointed Leroy to the state Democratic committee, and he appointed some others. Willie had a very tight, as Phil did, inner group: Rudy Nothenberg was his key aide. Phil had the same sort of apparatus; it was kept very much in-house. During that mayoralty campaign, Harold Dobbs came to me, offered me support and money if I would come over to him.

Rubens: He knew a good organizer when he saw one?

Jenkins: Well, Dobbs in some ways, in subsequent years, has turned out to be a fairly decent guy. He ran three times, and we defeated him three times. He and his family were leaders in the Jewish community as well.

Rubens: Is he Jewish? What kind of name is Dobbs?

Jenkins: Same as Jenkins.

Rubens: And he is still around?

Jenkins: Yes. He begged me, said I could name my job. Anyway, we won.

Rubens: In all this, what happened to Malone?

Jenkins: It was Malone's reintroduction to leadership in the city. What had happened was that Malone had always been a sponsor of Jack Shelley. Shelley had grown up in his shadow in the Democratic party. Meanwhile, the Burton forces had come in, not only challenged Malone but taken over the Democratic Central Committee.

Malone, however, remained a power. He had an office downtown in the Russ Building. He made a comeback, first with Shelley, but he also did the Alioto campaign. He was close to Alioto and helped choose him. Malone was back in. That meant that Jim Rudden got appointed to the Port Commission. He was Malone's bag man. Alioto then appointed Malone to the Library Commission.

Rubens: Why that? Honorary?

Jenkins: I don't know. Then Malone wanted to go on the Port Commission, and Alioto would not do it.

Rubens: Didn't think he was good enough?

Jenkins: Well, he already had Rudden on there. Jaicks was now the chairman of the Democratic Central Committee. They--Burton, Brown, Jaicks--had wrested the committee from Malone, who had been head of the San Francisco Democratic Central Committee for years and years. Jaicks stayed there for many, many years. The committee is now headed by a lesbian woman, Carole Migden. I think the gays and lesbians have a majority on the central committee. She is also head of the Alice B. Toklas Club.¹

Rubens: What happened to Malone?

Jenkins: Well, Malone, at that time, was in his seventies. He had been a key guy; he had made a lot of money.

Rubens: How did he make money?

Jenkins: As a lawyer, but also as a favor-doer--he had nominated Truman for vice president. He was deeply Catholic and anti-Communist with very close alliances with the uptown unions, which was really the history of the Democratic party in the city. The fact

¹Migden was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1990. She sought and received support and political consultation from Jenkins.

that Malone had financed me in the Shelley campaign and worked with me was an astonishing development. It's not only that politically we were at opposite ends, but I had fought him around the chairmanship of the Democratic Central Committee.

So Malone and I became friends late in his life and fairly late in mine. He never had the tail and horns that I always thought. He was a deeply established figure, particularly with the Irish contractors, with the whole building industry, with traditional Democratic centers in this town, including the Jewish monied leadership such as Shorenstein and Swig, Adolph Schuman and others.

Rubens: Is what you mean by "with uptown unions," that is with the building trade unions?

Jenkins: Generally. Teamsters union, et cetera.

Well, as a result of all this, my whole relationship with the city changed. Not only was I out of the Party, but here were important interests of both labor and political leaders who had turned to me to chair the Alioto Labor Committee, as they had earlier when I was secretary of Shelley's campaign. The fact that these guys, so to speak, had taken the curse of my being a Communist off my back took a little time for the town to swallow. I mean the press, et cetera, but they did, indeed, do it.

I am indebted to Shelley for having the courage to do it because during this period, inevitably there were stories which would mention me or my family as being red.

Rubens: What happened to Shelley? That deal was made?

Jenkins: He didn't run again.

Rubens: Where did he go?

Jenkins: He became the legislative representative of the city in Sacramento.

Rubens: Why couldn't he have run again?

Jenkins: He was perceived, even by the labor guys, as an inadequate figure who just couldn't put it together. He had been a good congressman on labor issues, but not good as mayor. He was a centrist Democrat.

Rubens: That seems to be the problem with Mayor Agnos right now. Will he be viewed similarly in history?

Jenkins: Well, Shelley had been a golden boy, too. He had come out of the Bakery Drivers. He had been state secretary of the AFL-CIO and local labor council president. He was a state senator. He was part of the Longshoreman-Teamster-Democratic party roots in the city. Besides that, he had been a fairly famous football player. So almost everything that he did was grist for the mill of a successful politico.

Rubens: Was he one of those University of San Francisco guys?

Jenkins: Yes. His wife, Thelma, that is from his second marriage, directs the Opera House. His daughter, Joan Marie Shelley, is the executive secretary of the Teachers Union. His son, Kevin Shelley, of course is very attractive, and in San Francisco politics.

Rubens: You had mentioned the Biermans, Sue Bierman and her then-husband, Art [Arthur] who was head of the Teachers Union.

Jenkins: Yes, at San Francisco State College. He had been in the thick of the fight against the House Un-American Activities Committee. He was never a CPer. Bierman was a well-known philosopher, a logical positivist. My daughter, Becky, had been the secretary of the committee that led the resistance to the House Un-American Activities Committee and this meeting at city hall which exploded into arrests and hosings. Becky was and is a Left activist, famous radical therapist, great supportive daughter.

Susie Bierman and I joined ranks to save the Panhandle. So that we were all very intimate. [The Biermans] are Nebraskans. Susie and I, we all, remained very good friends, but we had very bitter differences. Subsequently, Art was absolutely convinced that Joe Freitas, a good friend of mine and who had been the district attorney, had deliberately let Dan White off the hook. We had one terrible, terrible fight. But Art was totally paranoid about that. I said I knew Freitas very well. He had been at my house the night that the decision came down on Dan White. As a matter of fact, Bierman wrote a play about it. He relented but he was terribly obsessed with it. But Art Bierman and I have always been good friends.

Agar Jaicks and I disagreed about Dianne Feinstein. I persuaded the Democratic Central Committee to support Caryl Mezey against Dianne Feinstein. Caryl Mezey was very active in PTA. Her husband became chairman of the board of education. She was put on the Human Rights Commission with my help. She ran against Dianne. She is from Pacific Heights, a graduate of Wellesley.

We became very good friends. She ran against Feinstein in the San Francisco district elections.

Rubens: For supervisor you mean?

Jenkins: Yes. While I didn't agree with her running, I did support her and persuaded the Democratic Central Committee to support her against Feinstein and got AFL-COPE to support her.

Rubens: On what grounds? That she was more electable? More consistent?

Jenkins: A better person.

Rubens: Her husband was what?

Jenkins: He is the chief attorney for U.S. Leasing, now bought by Ford Motor, a big firm here in the city. He was chairman of the board of education. They are involved with the arts. He was head of Pocket Opera. He currently is chairman of KALW. He was chairman of the Bach Society.

Rubens: Movers and shakers in that world?

Jenkins: Yes. I had an alliance that I built with a lot of people because of my position in the city. People like the Mezeys were very helpful in that part of town, and Milt Reiterman, who was deputy director of the board of education--that was a power base. And of course my main power base remained the ILWU.

Then I worked with Mo Bernstein, president of the airport commission, who was a traditional power broker and a wealthy realtor in town, and Billy [William] Coblentz, who is a downtown attorney. He was an attorney for the Hearst Corporation as well as some other things. When Freitas ran for DA, I ran the first Freitas campaign. Mike Schneider was deputy director of OSHA, a position which I had helped him get. Jack Crowley of the Labor Council and I became very good friends.

So that if I did move in on a campaign during the years I was with Alioto and to some extent with Shelley, I had a group I could call on to work with, and I also had enough money to help them.

So that when I did move, I moved with considerable authority. You can't stay in politics and just do brilliant performances. The base is crucial. I also had a very close relationship with guys in the Laborers' Union, which was the biggest building trades union with a large black and Latino membership. We could turn out between us enough street people

that nobody else in the city could compare with us. For instance, I would call on Bud Johnson of the laborers who had 300 gardeners under him. So we moved with considerable authority.

Rubens: Danny Weinstein, what was his position?

Jenkins: Well, he was a deputy district attorney.

Rubens: I knew his family back in Chicago.

Jenkins: Well, Edith and Jacob and Janet Weinstein were best friends. They are dead, Janet died this year, Jacob many years ago.

More on the Alioto Campaign

Rubens: I want to know why COPE, the labor political action committee, never endorsed Alioto?

Jenkins: In a way, it was better because it forced us to get union lists. Instead of just going through the COPE apparatus, we were able to go, for instance, to the hotel and restaurant [union]. They had 23,000 members. So they would do a special mailing to their membership. They would turn over a half a dozen business agents during the campaign. So we had an enormous force. That was true of the Teamsters as well. So that was extremely helpful.

Rubens: If COPE had endorsed, then it would have almost mechanically turned out union support, without developing an active base?

Jenkins: Exactly.

Rubens: This way, you felt you had to get into the unions more?

Jenkins: We felt that we weren't coming from behind. There was an enormous amount of activity. The other thing that happened for the first time is that hundreds of blacks and minorities went on payroll. It was a cash payroll, mostly, out of my pocket. But I would demand off Alioto, [through his] treasurer, Vern Kaufman, \$10,000 in fives and tens, which made them extremely nervous. For a while, I had enough receipts in there to paper the house because every guy I gave money to, I made him initial and write his name because I figured it was inevitable that they were going to accuse me of having some of it stick to my fingers.

We manned a headquarters in the Western Addition; we had a headquarters at Hunters Point; one in Ingleside. We transformed

the black relationship into the center of politics in a way that was actually extraordinary. We broke down doors; we changed the face of city hall. This was done by Alioto, with Revels Cayton and Chester as consultants.

The John Burton Campaign for Congress, 1974

Jenkins: It certainly was not true of the Burton operation. The Burtons were insensitive to the race issue. Phil ran his brother for state assembly from Hunters Point [1964]. These days it would be considered the height of political insensitivity to do that. It's true that Willie Brown and Carlton Goodlett were part of his team.

Rubens: Why did he pick that area? Phil exerted such extraordinary power through his redistricting schemes in the state legislature and in Congress.

Jenkins: Because he wanted John in, and he figured that was the best place to do it. Then the same thing was true in Marin. In Marin, they had had hundreds of women activists. Mind you, this was before we had women congress people and the like. He ran John for Congress out of Marin.

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Rubens: Was there somebody already in Marin?

Jenkins: Well, he died in a plane crash or something. He was a good guy. I'm trying to remember his name; I think it was Clem Miller.

Rubens: So then Phil says, "Hey, I want to put my brother in Congress." Your point was there might have been better people in the city to run.

Jenkins: Not only that: more appropriate. The leaders of the Democratic party in Marin were women.

Rubens: Who were they? Obviously, Lucy McCabe was someone who had potential.

Jenkins: Yes, she was on this side of the district at that time before Phil reapportioned the state--had a section of the Marina and Russian Hill in the district as well as Vallejo. Suddenly, that whole thing changed with Moscone's assassination. Dianne came in. We suddenly had a majority of women on the board of

supervisors. We had Barbara Boxer, who succeeded John when he resigned on the drug thing, and Sala Burton replaced Phil when he died.

IX THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S AND WAREHOUSEMEN'S UNION

The First Generation of Leaders

[Interview 13: April 15, 1988] ##

[Before recording began there had been a discussion of Curt McClain]

Jenkins: Curt [McClain] has been on the fire commission close to eleven years.

Rubens: You spoke of his political quiescence; was it a matter of personality or the absence of a political movement? If he were still in the Party, for instance, wouldn't they have demanded that he take a position on certain issues?

Jenkins: No. I guess not. I'm sure he played a role in increasing what black firefighters there are. Let us assume that he evaluated the situation, that the only way he could play an effective role with white firemen that he influenced, and the union that he might have influenced, was by being silent publicly in tacit agreement that they would take in blacks. He didn't want to go out front and attack them, because it would blunt his usefulness. It was an absurd performance. Never once did he report to the legislative committee of the ILWU at that time. Never once to have gone to the press. He's not an Uncle Tom. On the contrary, he is a nationalist in many ways.

Rubens: Is that a personal failing?

Jenkins: I think that was a tactical thing on his part. He got caught and he can't get out of it.

Rubens: He didn't want to rock the boat?

Jenkins: He didn't want to rock the boat on the fire commission. He was too close to Henry Berman, the chairman, a Jewish moderate, nice man. But for Jimmy Herman, who is close to the mayor, it must have been an embarrassment.

Rubens: Is there something in the works?

Jenkins: Art Agnos must have said to Herman, "What about this guy, McClain?" Jimmy Herman must have said to him, "Let him go; there will be no beef with the ILWU." I said to Leroy, "What do the black firemen feel about it?" But he had no answer.¹

Jimmy is accepted as a liberal and by the AFL-CIO and the community. That doesn't mean he sold anybody out. It's just that the period of his leadership in the union is really to take it down this kind of path because nobody could have carried on what Goldblatt and Bridges stood for. It is a new period.

Rubens: Bridges always talked about rejoining the AFL-CIO.

Jenkins: Yes. The era of separateness is over. Jimmy may have thought when I get in the level of the union will be what it really should be, a progressive American trade union. Besides, there is another element in longshoremen, no matter where they are in the world, that always leads some of them to a vanguard because they are on the cutting edge of international issues. Even without Harry and Lou, and Jack Hall, and Jimmy Herman, it will always be a unique union. They are, for instance, always more sensitive to issues of South Africa, to issues in the Pacific Basin, China, certainly farm workers and civil rights in the U.S.

I'm as close to Jimmy, in a certain sense, as anybody he knows. We have a long personal and in-depth friendship and great affection for each other. I advised Jimmy not to run for re-election as president. He was sixty-three and already had thirty years as a union official between MCS and the ILWU. He had had this heart business [a bypass operation]. He had worked hard for Art Agnos. I said, "Take a job in the city administration; it would be exciting and your contribution would be a progressive one."

Also, he could be a liaison in the AFL-CIO between the Teamsters, the ILA and the ILWU, and they may very well want to set up a maritime federation. Jimmy could be head of that, and he would be acceptable, it seems to me, to almost all three

¹A few months after this interview, Mayor Art Agnos did replace McClain with James Jefferson, who was with the Black Chamber of Commerce.

groups. Teamsters like him. He has spoken at their conventions. That's what I mean by an agenda. [The ILWU re-affiliated with the AFL-CIO in 1988.]

The Question of Developing New Leadership

Rubens: I think that I'm asking you this as much as an historian as personal interest. The critique from the new Left is that there has been a failure to develop leadership, to go down into the ranks and really groom some people to take positions of leadership. My understanding was that in certain ways, Leroy and Curt had been groomed or encouraged. But why are there seemingly no proteges after them? Does that have to do with an era of acceptance and also not having a political party that was committed to creating new leaders?

Jenkins: Well, I think the latter is probably true. The question of building black leadership in the union was a goal of the CP and a goal with many of us who left the CP, also a goal of the leadership in Hawaii which is 90 percent Chinese, Filipino, Japanese. There were figures like Leroy and Curtis and Chester and some others who fitted that potential and indeed became regional directors.

Now Chester, who came from the Left, was really a very conventional, black middle-class figure in this city. Once Alioto appointed him to commissions and once he saw the interplay between Lou and Harry, he chose a role for himself that brought him closer and closer to the center and even on some issues to the right of center, on issues like busing, on issues like politics, alliances, things of that sort.

At the same time, he satisfied Harry by being devoted to the Soviet Union and some other international positions. He felt those did not intrude into his day-to-day life in the union. One of the most embarrassing and humiliating events in history was the dinner that Chester put on for Bridges. There were a thousand of us there. He hired a professional group to run the dinner. He brought figures to the dinner that were, at best, not offensive but totally outside the history of the union and Bridges. Chester was M.C. of the event and at one point, Chester said, talking about Cyril Magnin, "He is one of the only white men who could call me nigger and still be my friend." He meant he had swum into the area of respectability. It sickened me to hear it. On the whole he was a mainstream, middle of the road, political black figure, and he used his power this way.

Secondly, Bridges and Goldblatt were never any good at building cadres. The old leadership was progressive and tenacious, the Heides, and Chili Duarte, who was enormously competent and ambitious, also out of the mainstream of the Portuguese working-class movement, and George Valters. They were natural leaders that came from below. Valters was a white Russian. For years, he worked at Hills Brothers Coffee, and then as chief of the Stewards Council and then elected secretary-treasurer of Local 6 of the ILWU.

Rubens: Was he a Party guy?

Jenkins: He may have been. I'm not sure if he was. Then there were figures like Dick [Richard] Lyndon, who were brilliant and charismatic and yet faulted by drunkenness. For years, Chili Duarte wanted to be vice president, but Bridges stood in his way. He never made it and finally died, very young.

The Heide brothers, who came in '34, Ray and Paul, particularly Paul, were literally almost legendary figures in the warehouse union and deserved their reputation; they were of the Left. Paul was a CP delegate with me in New York in 1943. Typical of Heide, he got drunk in New York when we were at a Party convention, and got rolled. If it had happened to me, I would have been kicked out, but Heide was such a legend; he was a typically mainstream western working-class guy. Those were the figures that came out of warehouse.

Al Lannon, the former president of Local 6, was unnatural in many ways. He is not from the West Coast at all. His father was a member of the National Committee of the Communist party, an indicted Smith Act guy and was part of the NMU and the seamen back east. Lannon was not their real name. It was an Italian name, but I'm not sure what it was.

Rubens: Which the father changed?

Jenkins: Yes. I worked with Al Lannon, Sr., in Norfolk, Virginia, and the East Coast, and the father finally came out here. I signed a note in the ILWU Credit Union for his Smith Act fine. He went to work in one of the warehouses and stayed there until he died. Al grew up primarily in the East and became our legislative director to Washington and then came out here and went to work in warehouse.

The old warehouse tradition was an exciting one: Gene Patton, Paul Heide, Chili Duarte, George Valters, Richard Lyndon, Curt McClain. But Bridges never thought of cadres. He thought of the whole union as a cadre. This was his concept of

of the whole union as a cadre. This was his concept of membership meetings twice a month. Formal education was not necessary as long as you participated in the full democracy of the union. It was sort of an old Wobbly sensibility, but in many ways he was right. It worked for years and years. All sorts of people came out of the rank and file, many of them extraordinary leaders.

Of course, the other factor in this area was the role of the CP, which promoted leadership: Archie Brown and a whole number of other guys who came out of the Party, particularly among blacks. They were native, too. Whatever weaknesses Brown had--Christ, they were monumental--he came out of an Oakland, working-class Jewish family. He had been a cannery worker. He had been in Spain. He had all virtues as well as all the rigidity of the class he came from in many ways. His brother was head of the Milk Wagon Drivers Union in Oakland and another brother was a longshoreman, so he has roots in the West.

Bulcke, who is still around, was part of the '34 Strike, and is now about eighty. He never turned down a drink in his life. Bulcke was a Belgian, vice president of Local 10 and an extraordinary figure in many ways. He had potential for leadership, yet was inadequate for the kind of quick-headedness of a Bridges or a Goldblatt, but at the same time had a lot of virtues and steadfastness, and also knew a lot about politics. Bulcke once confessed to me that he averaged thirty to thirty-five drinks a day on the waterfront when he was president of Local 10.

Rubens: Was he able to hold his liquor?

Jenkins: Hold his liquor--it was incredible. We also had an office secretary in Local 10 who slept with every new president of Local 10. She was his mistress. Maybe it's a comment on sexism, but she was the only continuity in the office. These guys had to go out of office every two years, so for years, she was the dominant figure down there.

Rubens: Who is this?

Jenkins: Well, I'm trying to remember her name. She was a dominant figure in longshore. First, many of the guys who were elected were not particularly literate, didn't know about books, didn't know about money, didn't know about all the intricacies of running a union office, and she was superlatively good at that. Most of them came from fairly staid working-class marriages. Their wives were traditional working-class wives, home with the kids. She was, by contrast, glamorous and available, and very smart, and they were

got most every president in the local--something about working together and loving together.

But my comment on this part of union history is not untypical in many ways. The majority of the union, insofar as relationships, always seemed to center on the women who worked at the union and that's where the relationships were made. The men didn't go out looking for women. The presence of a woman on their job suddenly struck them.

Howard Bodine once boasted that he slept with every woman in the building. He was kind of a bright guy, but he was so infantile on this issue. We sat in a restaurant once and he boasted to me about availability. They were available. Many of them were single. They were among men who were different from men they had ever met in a way. They were good speakers; they had a leadership quality. When they got into a personal affair, most of them had never been in any since they married. They really went all out. You would see the strangest combinations.

Rubens: There was so much passion in general during the days of building the union--hard fights, lots of liquor, boundaries changing.

Jenkins: But getting back to our topic, new cadres never came in. I was around the union here from '39 on, in one role or another, whether it was working on the waterfront, defense work, or political work. Rarely did new figures enter into the original leadership. In '34, there was Schmidt, Bulcke, Robertson, King, Patton, Lyndon. They were the dominant figures and they stayed there and remained that way. Eventually Patton's and Lyndon's alcoholism required they be replaced; yet they were replaced by guys who had supported them.

Harry's Role

Rubens: You said Harry stood in the way of Chili Duarte. Was that a personal vendetta?

Jenkins: To some extent. Chili lined himself up with Goldblatt in the union. I think one time there was an off-the-cuff move to attack Harry, and I think Harry did not appreciate that. I don't remember outside of Chester, any new figure that came into the leadership from this area. Some of the most brilliant, at least the '34 figures, like Johnny Schomaker and Henry Schrimpf and others, became stool pigeons. Schrimpf was a major witness against Bridges in his trial.

others, became stool pigeons. Schrimpf was a major witness against Bridges in his trial.

Of course, the other group that affected the leadership came out of the Northwest and out of San Pedro. But the leadership of the union was centrally in San Francisco and never, never, ever left it. Bridges and Goldblatt were always making alliances with progressive figures in Local 13, which is in San Pedro, to off-stand the attempt by 13 to either take over the International, or to challenge it. There were dozens of maneuvers, constitutional changes, skirmishes.

That was equally true in the Northwest. The leadership was basically anti-Communist. Harry and Lou combined gave extraordinary leadership and skill in negotiations. They became acceptable to the group in the North who, in some cases, came out of Wobbly backgrounds. A few leaders in Seattle were of the Left, the CP, but in the main were profoundly anti-Communist. The Left was Rosco Craycraft, Bert Nelson from Seattle, Craig Pritchett in British Columbia.

This dichotomy in the union leadership always affected it and to some extent, Bridges' policy of taking issues down below to the rank and file, secret votes on every issue, offset their charge of CP influence.

Rubens: The challenge from 13 was that, based on anti-Left sentiment?

Jenkins: To some extent. But Bridges from the beginning would argue if you had a controversial issue, never win it by 51 to 49, take it down below. So the issue of Henry Wallace, the issue of the Marshall Plan, the issue of the AFL-CIO affiliation, was always taken down below. It was a great answer of the claim of CP domination.

The Mechanization and Modernization Issue

Jenkins: Look at the question of mechanization. I don't know another union in the history of this country that took the issue of mechanization down below in the same way. It's true that contracts were voted up or down based on what the content was. But the issue of mechanization, which tore this union to pieces for nearly a year or more, was also debated all over the docks and ships. The national union movement and the Left debated whether or not what the ILWU was doing would set a precedent in

unions like the Mine-Mill and UE and the general trade union movement.

Rubens: Did you have a position on mechanization?

Jenkins: Yes. I was for mechanization. I thought that ultimately there was no way to keep the practices on the waterfront alive. There were guys like Herb Mills and Hal Yanow and others who were nostalgic for the traditional work patterns. I worked nights for four years, this was under "four on and four off."¹ There were innumerable nights I went home after four hours. The ship owners kept screaming about it. Bridges kept screaming about it. They were right.

But Bridges never could control the four on, four off. That was not true in the Northwest, but it was true around the major ports down here. We pointed out the fact that production was just as high for four on, four off. It was a hell of a bargaining position. We were paid for eight hours. The benefits were amazing. Edith would come down to the waterfront with the kids at midnight, and I would take a two-hour lunch. That was true on ship after ship, especially when you were loading; it was absolutely four-on, four-off. When you were discharging, it was a harder thing to do, four on and two hours off, something like that. We would work hard on those ships. It's true we worked our asses off. It was an impossible position to defend, but we did it for years and years with every kind of cargo.

The working bosses, our own bosses would protest, but we were really in command of the hold. You couldn't do it on the dock because you were working out in the open. Once you disappeared in the hull, below the level of the ship, that was it.

¹Four on/four off refers to a labor practice or convention that began among longshoremen on the West Coast during World War II. It was an arrangement with the stevedore (the contractor responsible for loading and unloading ships) and the shipping companies which had federal contracts for loading and unloading essential cargo and the longshore crew. It enabled a crew to work out its own schedule so that each longshoreman only had to work four hours while being paid for eight hours. This practice persisted in part because of the cost plus method of payment for government contracts; cost plus affected other industries during the war as well. See "Who Controls the Hiring Hall? The Struggle for Job Control in the ILWU during World War II," Nancy Quam-Wickham, in Steven Rossworum, ed. The CIO's Left Led Union, Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Some Aspects of Working Life on the Waterfront

Rubens: Did they play cards or sit around?

Jenkins: Guys would go away. Some guys had other jobs. The steady guys would go uptown to get sex. The freedom of the waterfront was the central thing of the four on, four off. Bridges was an old-time longshoreman. He was outraged by it, and a lot of other old-timers were. When the black membership came in, they grabbed on to it with great joy; this was a new freedom.

More on Building Leadership

Jenkins: Getting back to the question of cadres: in all the time this was going on, in contrast to what was happening in the International, there would be new leadership appearing in the locals over and over again. Even that tended to duplicate itself. Jim [James] Kearney would get elected every two years; Callahan would get elected every two years; Bob [Robert] Rohatch would get elected every two years. They would go back to work, and once in a while, somebody would break in. Many of the key guys in the waterfront were not ambitious to be in office; they made more money as a steady man.

They skimmed off some of the best guys with being a walking boss, being a supervisor, transferring over to the clerks union. So that was a problem as well, that kept talented guys from becoming national leaders.

Rubens: Would you say this was characteristic all throughout the fifties?

Jenkins: Oh, yes. Even today, it is characteristic. A guy like Whitey [Howard] Hansen or a Hal Yanow, Bill Bailey, a dozen others I know who were natural leaders in the union suddenly would see sixty grand a year as a ship clerk or as a walking boss.

Postwar Prosperity and Some Changes in Working Conditions

Rubens: So you had a two-fold economic phenomenon in the fifties; you had expansion and prosperity and at the same time, there wasn't enough work for people, really.

Jenkins: I guess they stopped four on, four off now. I was in a store gang. Many of them worked four on, four off. We had a deal with the ship owners. If we could finish the job early, we would go home. If we could get all the stores in by eleven o'clock, we would take five hours off.

Rubens: Store gang meant--?

Jenkins: Ship stores, food, supplies for the engine room, the deck and passengers.

Rubens: These are the days before containers. You are literally handling the stuff?

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Jenkins: The stuff is sent down on the rollers as you skip from one icebox to another. One you do vegetables; another one you do meat; another one you do ice; another one you do dry stores.

Rubens: Is it coming down in big boxes?

Jenkins: Yes. The trucks that bring it in put it right on the dock. Then the dockmen give it to the guys down below. The quicker you get it in, the quicker you go home.

Rubens: Was the deal with the employer a personal deal, not a union deal?

Jenkins: In many cases, trucking companies like Anriato, one of the big suppliers of chicken, would come down with huge loads of stuff for stores. On the big ships he would say, "You guys get it in so my truck driver doesn't have to hang around. Come by the warehouse and we'll give you some turkeys and chickens." I would do that every time we worked chickens. It was right across from the union hall. I would go over there. The whole gang would go over there. We were whipping the shit out of that stuff getting it all loaded quickly.

Pilfering: Petty and Otherwise

Rubens: Were there ever public claims of corruption or--?

Jenkins: There wasn't really corruption.

Rubens: It was not considered the same thing as "ham hanging"--like in the old days when you'd hang a ham over the dispatcher's door--of

how you got your job, but an incentive to work faster? Edith said you had funny stories of filching on the waterfront. We're not talking about grand larceny here, but--

Jenkins: Take a ship, like a Matson ship going to Hawaii. It was a moving icebox. You were putting everything from frozen chickens to meat to delicatessen, to sausage, to cream cheese, and the guys would go out, have to get by the guard.

Rubens: Whose guards were they, the employer guards?

Jenkins: Yes. The guys would wear clothes to these jobs that hid as much as they could, like a woman who wanted to hide her pregnancy or something. I remember one night one guy ahead of me had stolen two fishing rods. The rods were coming out of the back of his head. He said to me, "How do I look?" I said, "You look like a man from Mars, you dumb bastard. You'll never get by."

So they would go into the john, and his partner would rearrange his clothing so that he would hide whatever he was taking. Typical of this, I was working the reefer ship which is a freeze ship, and one of my partners was a guy named Kenny Austin. We were working all day, and the boss called us up, oh, about 4:30 a.m. to cover up. Kenny put about eight to ten pounds of frozen butter in his shirt. We got up to the deck, and the boss said, "Looks like rain, let's cover up." These were big, heavy planks. Ordinarily, you just work the next shift and continue. Austin had a heavy work shirt on and his jacket. He started to throw these hundred-pound planks around. We were all watching him. He started to itch. He started to sweat. Finally, he ripped open his shirt. The butter was dripping down his whole chest, into his pants--it was kind of golden grease. He was trying to mop it up, and the entire crew just fell out in hysterics.

Another time, I was working aboard a mahogany ship coming out of the Philippines, and as we got down below, there was just a corral with about a thousand packages. We opened them to find women's underpants, rayon stuff, kind of frilly stuff. One guy dropped his pants. He says, "I got five daughters, for Christ's sake." He put on about thirty pairs of underpants. About ten minutes later, he fell and broke his leg. So what do they do aboard ship, they send a cradle in to take the guy out.

He told us later when he got up to the hospital and they started to cut through his pants, the doctor said, "I don't know what the hell this is. We got some kind of a crazy guy." The guy said if he had had a knife, he would have stabbed himself in the heart. [laughter]

Rubens: Didn't the company have an inspector? Where were guards?

Jenkins: The guards were members of our union. They were hired by the employer. The only guys that searched us occasionally, and even that was very dangerous for them, were the customs guys. I was working this ship at Pier 45, which was an English ship. The ship was full of scotch whiskey.

As we came out at noon, there were about fourteen customs guys doing the search. They started to search us. "Don't you put your hands on me," I said. "You're doing this out at Fisherman's Wharf? My rabbi is probably out there shopping. I'm not going to be held up to public ridicule unless you show me your authority. Who the hell are you?" He gave me some identification. I tore it in half and threw it on the ground. I said, "If you continue to search, we'll strike and not come back to work." We made a big fuss. They stopped searching us. They had the right to take you into a private area, but they had to have a reason to be suspicious. We stopped the mass searching. That also happened near Pier 32 when we were leaving the ship.

However, there is no greater indignation than a dishonest longshoreman. Most of the guys didn't steal, but there was a steady group that did.

Rubens: Was there some code for limits on theft, if that wasn't too obvious, or if it started cutting into the employer's profit?

Jenkins: Certainly on the electronic stuff, little radios and little TVs. One of our dispatchers, Joe Mosley, was chased down the waterfront with a truckload of this stuff, got arrested and went to jail for a year. When he came out, he was elected chief dispatcher. It certainly was not a deterrent in terms of the general morality on the waterfront.

This was another thing which infuriated Bridges and the old-timers: they said it was legitimate to steal in the old days because you were getting miserable wages. He says, "Christ, they have a good union, and now these bastards are stealing." Harry was genuinely just as indignant in some ways as the employers.

Of course, the employers were at a limit, too, because of their insurance. When a guy ripped open a case--let's say there were twelve bottles in it, and eight left--you couldn't write that down. They would prefer that if you were going to steal, to steal a whole case because it was much easier to claim the insurance, as a cost over-ride.

The employers, after a while, played all sorts of games. They would only send right shoes in a carton, instead of right and left. They would do all sorts of things like this with sizes. When I worked in a small port like Stockton, I saw a lot. One night, I saw them take an entire load, which was about 2,000 pounds of shotgun shells, and land it on the back of a pickup, which some guy promptly drove home. There was an enormous amount of freedom on that score.

On the other hand, it was only one-tenth of one percent of what went on in the East in New York where longshore was associated with the mob and gangs. This to my knowledge out here was never collaborative stealing. It may have been, but by and large, it was spontaneous. I remember another dramatic episode. There were thirty grand pianos stolen on Pier 31. It was never solved. What happened was that trucks came down and unloaded the pianos on the docks for shipment. The thieves reloaded the pianos on some empty freight cars and moved them out during the night this way across from the Embarcadero. Then the trucks came back and took the pianos. Luckenbach got so furious about this, he came and fired his entire management crew on the dock. This was unusual, to say the least.

The guys would take a little, take a couple of boxes of wild rice, if that were the load. Or if you worked stores on the big ships, you would take pate home. But if you were to work a liquor ship, now that was something else. I remember we worked a Luckenbach ship which was totally a booze ship.

It was typical of some of these ships that the longshoremen worked four decks while unloading the ship. As soon as the guys went aboard, and we went down below, we set up a bar. We did have a third mate assigned by the ship to watch us. He said, "Well, don't worry about me. Watch that guard in the other section." So we "pieced" him off--that is paid him--with some booze. I went and talked to the guard he pointed out and the guard said, "Watch the officers. I'm all right." Meaning I won't turn you in. So guys had a hell of a time. After three days working in that goddamn ship and in our hatch guys from all over the waterfront came crawling down with cans, with bottles, whatever they could get--finally, I took the walking boss home, Julius, who lives about ten blocks from me.

Rubens: Walking boss meant?

Jenkins: The guy in charge of the ship, a member of our union. He said, "I can't stand this." First of all, he was drunk by this time. I took him home and he wanted me to come in and meet his wife. I said, "Don't do me any favors." He said, "Come in and save my

life. She's going to kill me." [laughter] That was not typical, but it could be. That was not untypical in some ways.

Rubens: This is good spirited rather than crime driven?

Jenkins: Everybody was drinking. Guys would fall out or pass out and sleep one hour or two, and we would do their work.

Rubens: The work got done.

Jenkins: The work got done in some form. If a sixty-gallon brandy barrel came down, the guys would make a spigot for it, usually with the help of the security guard. What the hell, he was getting less money than we were. It was insane for him to take on a group of eight guys down in the hatch, going running around saying, "Hey, don't do this." There were a number of possibilities. He either joined it or ignored it.

Mechanization Changes the Work Process

Rubens: I guess containers changed all that. You just can't get at the stuff.

Jenkins: You can get at them, but you've really got to be a burglar. It was the end of spontaneous stealing.

Rubens: That's what it sounds like. There was a certain camaraderie.

Jenkins: For containers, you've really got to come down with burglary tools--hacksaws, flashlights.

Rubens: By the end of this period, you guys are on the waterfront talking about whether you are for mechanization or not. Do you think the ranks were for it?

Jenkins: We voted for it. We were in an impossible circumstance. Take a job like Crockett Sugar, up at Crockett. In the old days, the sugar would come in, in 160-pound sacks. There was a twelve-man gang in the hole. Altogether, it was a twenty-man gang. Then they started to pour the sugar--to change the loading method, but still had the same gang size. All they had to do was set up the hoses and then watch the sugar come out or just scoop it out. After the sugar was out, they would clean up the hatch because it would get into all the seams. How could you keep a twenty-man gang with a loading process like that?

This was equally true on other work that had been converted into strap loads. Take pineapple, which came in from Hawaii. Every box had to be handled separately. You would load one and then another, that was it. Then they started to strap the loads. So all you had to do was clean out a place where you could put a forklift to get under it. You would pick it up and then take it out, take it down to the dock; put it on another lift and put it directly on a truck. But we still had the same gang size.

The same thing happened with cement. I had loaded thousands of pounds of cement in individual sacks. Then they started to strap it, binding it together. It eliminated three handlings of the goddamn thing. The only cargoes they couldn't do this with were selected brands of coffee and rice.

Rubens: Why not rice and coffee?

Jenkins: You never could pour the rice because if it got wet, it would expand and literally become an impossible bulk to handle. Coffee is all based on special marks, keeping loads separate.

In the old days, which was back-breaking work, you would just maneuver the stuff into the center of the hatch and then pick up load after load. Cotton, even cars. You would have to manhandle every car into the center of the hatch to get a hook on it. They started to build ships where you could drive cars on and off because it was the only cargo on the ship. They changed the whole marine architecture of the ships to get out the cars.

Now you look out in the bay and see a ship coming in and you can tell if it's a Honda or Toyota ship. You can drive every one of those off. We couldn't as a work force stand up in the face of that, even to adjust the gang size; and they were taking it away from us anyway. So the attrition would have destroyed the amount of men. To get paid for it [the agreement to mechanize and modernize] was one of the greatest things the union managed to do. It seemed to me preposterous to oppose that.

The Loading Process Prior to Mechanization

Jenkins: I found unloading one of the dullest jobs in the world, unloading pineapple all night, or working sugar sacks all night. Now there was a rhythm to all of this work, and there were "sugar stiffs" who loved it and guys who worked freight cars who loved it. Once the breaks, or time off, were worked out, then the four on, four off, your walking boss couldn't give you a direct order. It had

to come from your own gang boss who was a member of your union. Within that, the men had an enormous amount of freedoms where if you came down to the job and it was too hard for you or if you were drunk, you would replace yourself. You would lose a day's wages, but you would go back to work the next day. That is a freedom that no other job in the world has.

We also had a union, employer trial committee. If you punched a walking boss in the mouth, he had to take you before the trial committee. At the trial he would say, "Well, he called me a cocksucker." You would turn to the committee and say, "Well, that's what I heard, that he is a cocksucker." In all the time I was down there, I don't think any member was thrown out of the union or prohibited from working because of conduct, unless, I think, that he was totally non-show. You could be off the goddamn job for three months in a drunk and come back.

Rubens: There was just this camaraderie, loyalty--habit?

Jenkins: Not only that, but the hiring hall protected you. The gap would be automatically filled. If there were not enough men in a given night, they would call the warehouse hall or the ship scalers hall. There were many union halls in town more than anxious to get longshore work.

For years, the union fought any permanent men. The ship owners had a legitimate beef; they said, "We need thirty gear men down here at Piers 32 or 34, to take care of the jitneys and take the gas, et cetera." The union allowed it a certain amount, but for years, they would not allow them to have a permanent work force because they said the permanent work force is loyal to the company and not to the union hall. The logic for the union was overwhelming. Sure, everybody was against the companies building large, standing work groups.

It was true that as soon as you got a steady job at Matson or APL [American President Lines], men tended to be more conservative than guys who came down from the hiring hall and screamed about safety and about heavy loads. You didn't scream about any of those things if you were steady. I have seen many a fight on that score.

I had a partner, Hal Yanow. It was legitimate to make your own dunnage loads. Dunnage is lumber that you put between levels of cargo to protect the cargo. Yanow would come down and there would be three or four loads of dunnage already made up. That was breaking union rules. Dunnage was supposed to be made by your shift. He would go and push them over. The boss was

standing there. The guys had just done maybe two or three hours of work to set that up. No one said, "Don't touch it."

On the one hand, the work was hard. I have seen black guys, who came from the South, jump down the hatch rather than be winch drivers because they liked to work cotton. They would make it dance. They would go three or four high with 800 pounds. It was a trade skill, a tradition with certain cargo.

I had another partner, Bjorne Halling, who had been a leader of the union, and who came back to the waterfront as a worker. He had been state secretary of the CIO, one of the founders of that union. Halling was a very handsome, rugged Norwegian, who was extraordinarily active in the sack. He was the ILWU's legislative representative in Washington, D.C., but he came back to work. He would get down below with me. There would be a 400-pound box, and he would say, "Come on, let's give it a 'yerk'." I said, "Come on and 'yerk' my ass; let the winch give it a 'yerk'." He'd say, "Ah, come on, Dave." Such a tradition of muscle particularly among the old Swedes and Finns, who thought machinery was an intrusion.

There was a fellow named Norberg who was a member of a fairly well known progressive Norwegian family; in later years he was seen in a muscle magazine as one of the strongest men in the world. He and I were partners for about a month. He was only about five feet eight. He was unbelievable. One day we were working, and a load of steel hit up above and broke the straps and came down on us. I didn't see it. He grabbed me--I was then 250--and he threw me out of the center of the hatch into the wings. It's true that we all went out and had a drink afterwards. It was just a matter of minutes before we would have been smashed.

These guys just treasured their skill and agility in taking our loads. Halling was part of that tradition. There were other guys like my friend, MacDonald, who must have been 300 pounds, that could lift the side of a house. MacDonald had two failures: one, he had a disease where he would fall asleep when he was standing up.

Rubens: Narcolepsy?

Jenkins: Yes. We would be working a hole, and I would look over and his eyes were shut. I would scream and wake him up. The other thing, he was a terrible gas hound. He could drink steadily. Then he would get sick, throw up, wash his mouth out, come back and have another drink.

I had another partner, J. B. McNair. He never had a first name. He was from Arkansas, a famous guy in the union. A white guy. I never saw him eat. I worked with him for two years. Worked next to the guy. I asked his woman once when I picked him up, because I would pick him up every day--he lived down here on Ellis--I said, "Does he have breakfast when he gets home? I've never seen him eat." Because when I asked, he always used to tell me, "Oh, I ate at home." I guess she said yes. Once every four months, he would disappear for a week. He had been a parachuter during World War II, this was the source of his famous reputation. He came from around Stockton. He would go up in the mountains around Stockton to a guy who was a fire warden, stay up there with him for a week or so until he dried out. Worked like a dog when he worked; he was a great worker.

Rubens: What happened to him?

Jenkins: He died.

Rubens: Cirrhosis?

Jenkins: Cirrhosis or something. All these guys had it. There was a lot of drinking. That was part of the ritual. We never heard of drugs on the waterfront at that time. Drinking sure was the curse of the working class. There were a lot of splendid guys, McNair was typical, who were done in by alcohol.

Rubens: We talked earlier about the corrosive role of alcohol. Harry's drinking, for instance, and its effect on union leadership.

Jenkins: Yes. Lou also was a heavy drinker. He didn't show it as dramatically as Harry, but Louie could put away a lot of booze. Chester was a boozier. Bulcke was a boozier. Schmidt was never that or Bodine. Halling was.

Rubens: By the way, were these guys, Norberg and Halling, were they for M & M, despite their personal elan, skill, devotion to the work tradition? Did they see it in strategic terms?

The Mechanization Agreement and the Workers

Jenkins: Oh, yes. Inevitably we were going to win it. There is no way we could lose it. Basically, the argument from the Left, and an important theory on the Left, was that you don't give away conditions; let the employer take it, fight for every bit of it. That was only a theory. There was no way practically to honor

that theory. Speedup in the auto plants, speedup in the steel mills--on the waterfront. Stopping innovation in industry after industry, how could you stop it? The only way was if you got a part of it. Well, we got a part of it. We got a \$15,000 early retirement. We got early pensions. We retained control over the gang size. We increased the onerous aspects of the contract. We didn't have to work if the work was onerous. We got a weekly guarantee of income. All that was built into that mechanization and modernization agreement.

Rubens: It seems remarkable. When you look back, now it's more than twenty-five years of M & M. Do you see it differently?

Jenkins: Well, I think it was the right thing to do.

Rubens: It could have been set up differently. Now I guess there are problems with the pensions, other issues.

Jenkins: Well, whatever they are, the highest pension that the waterfront had ever known came through. Getting a bunch of cash was a dream that everyone entertained at some time--it meant maybe going into a little business, living life differently.

Rubens: In your generation's lifetime, the work force has gone from nickel wages, basically, to a cash settlement.

Some Final Thoughts on Jenkins' Leadership Role and the Break with the Communist Party ##

Rubens: You ran for vice president of the ILWU in 1953?

Jenkins: Yes. I had been elected a member of the executive board. Then I ran for vice president. I was in a three-man race. There was one guy who was very popular, a gang boss, whom I liked. He was a Dane and had been head of the Danish Federation of California, quite prosperous as a gang boss. The other guy was Walter Nelson, who had been a former official and had been identified as an informant to the FBI. It came down to Nelson and me in the runoff. Then I was defeated by Nelson, just barely. The Party supported Nelson on the basis that I was not a working-class guy and Nelson was.

Rubens: He had been an informant and the Party still supported him?

Jenkins: It was notorious. He identified Communists for the FBI.

Rubens: How far back?

Jenkins: Well, he was an early member of the union, much longer than me. Archie and Nils Lange and the Party supported him for several reasons. I hadn't gotten the permission of the Party to run. In fact, I had in effect left the Party. They swung the election. Nelson also came in as a hero. There was a strange story that gave him this status.

Nelson was business agent one year. There was a gang boss named Jack Riley, who was known as a kind of brute. One night he had a job, San Francisco side. One of the guys sent down from the hall for his gang was a guy named Russian Nick, who was a drinker but always could do his work.

When Russian Nick got up on deck, Riley saw him and said, "Hey, come on, you're drunk. Get off the ship. I'll get a replacement." Nick said, "I can work, what do you mean?" and tried to go back to work. Riley fired Nick and hit him and told him to get off the ship and called him a cocksucker. That word happens to be important in this context. Nick went home and got a gun. He said he was going to come back and kill Riley for calling him a cocksucker. He didn't care about the drunkenness or being fired, but the term "cocksucker" was unacceptable. He came back with a gun. The cops had been called and Walter Nelson had been called as the night business agent.

Nick got up on deck with his gun, and shot and killed Riley, and shot Nelson in the arm. That was Wednesday. Friday was the pay line. On the pay line, they collected over \$5,000 to defend Russian Nick. Riley was generally detested. Everybody knew somebody was going to kill him someday. Barney Dreyfus was hired as his attorney, a distinguished labor attorney and civil liberties guy. Dreyfus said that outside of anything else, that using that epithet on a man like Russian Nick, an established church figure in the White Russian community, was what set him off. They gave him three years; he got out in about eight months.

The funny part of that story is that we all had a doctor who was the official doctor of longshoremen, Asher Gordon, one of my best friends. I was in his office, and he said to me, "Isn't it a shame about Riley getting killed?" I said, "What was so terrible about Riley? He was a bully. He had brought it on himself." He said, "He was the most tender man. He used to take care of his mother and bring her in here. I have never seen such good temper and a sweet guy." I said, "Why did you have to tell me? I was very comfortable in my prejudices."

Rubens: He had a different public personality, I guess?

Jenkins: Yes. He was an ex-heavyweight fighter. The theory on the waterfront was if you used your hands too much on guys, you would get killed. It is an inevitable aspect of waterfront life.

Rubens: The word "cocksucker" he took to heart really, or is that kind of a trigger?

Jenkins: No. That was a word that you just didn't use, even among the guys. It was serious; it meant trouble.

Rubens: It's bantered about more now, isn't it? Did it seriously question a man's sexual identity?

Jenkins: Well, it was always true. You just don't say it. You don't call a man a bastard. You don't call him a cocksucker.

Rubens: Those are fighting words?

Jenkins: Those are fighting words. I don't know when Russian Nick came to this country, Christ only knows. That White Russian community was a famous community, not only for purposes of ethnic identification, but they were all over the labor movement in important ways. Two of our officials were White Russians. Pete [Peter] Dorskoff and Michael Samaduroff, who is still the secretary-treasurer of our pension group. He was the guy who, when Khrushchev came to our union hall, was a dispatcher. He translated Khrushchev's speech. He's still around.

Khrushchev came to our union hall, Local 10, in 1959 surrounded by 200 FBI men and also with Henry Cabot Lodge. So we gave him a stand inside the hall, and some of the men gave him a white longshore cap which he put on. He got up and said, "Can I call you comrades?" and the brothers in the union hall went wild. He made a speech, then he turned the sound off and invited them to the Soviet Union. I had set the whole thing up and organized it. Samaduroff got a free trip to the Soviet Union with his wife. Samaduroff is a very sweet guy.

Rubens: Were you still in the Party at that point?

Jenkins: No. I left officially in 1956. We got everybody who was in the area off the ships at eleven o'clock and got them to the union hall. The hall was packed. He was an instant hit with these guys. They knew a working stiff when they saw one. He looked like one, and he talked like one. The White Russian community, no matter whether they were left or right, loved him.

Rubens: Khrushchev's visit to this country was one of the touchstones of my life in a couple of ways. He was driven in L.A., two blocks from where I lived, and I ran down to see him. To me, it was a moment in history and a man to see. I didn't have much politics, but I knew this was an historical event. A few people were lined up, but very somber and reserved. I was the only one who waved. He looked right at me and waved. I didn't know whether these people were going to throw rocks or what, at me or him. The other story has to do with Nixon lecturing him in a hot dog factory. Swift was on strike, and he wouldn't cross a picket line, so he ended up at Brady Meats--my best friend's family kosher meat business--a small plant down the road.

Did you have a private meeting with him?

Jenkins: No. We pressed to get him another speaking engagement. Then there was a reception back at the Fairmont Hotel, with Mayor George Christopher welcoming him. He got a lot better treatment than in L.A. and a lot of other places.

Rubens: How could the Party have supported Nelson? I don't understand how they could have done it. This was clearly a vote against you by the Party as opposed to for Nelson. Is that right?

Jenkins: It was typical of the Party, in a sense. Ever since I had left it, even though I was active in all sorts of things, my name has never been mentioned in the Party's West Coast paper, the People's World from '56 to the present, '88. I once said publicly, "If they saw me crucified in front of their offices, the story would have been, 'Large man with nails through his hands found.'" [laughter] It was unbelievable. And their fury at me was endless.

Rubens: My understanding was that it was the Party that particularly encouraged you to go into the longshore rather than run for international leadership.

Jenkins: That's right. Once I left the Party, once I broke with the Party, at first its reaction was mild. It was such a period of confusion, people were sorting themselves out into those who decided to remain and those who left, and what the new Party leadership would consist of. The architect of that new structure was Archie Brown, whatever he was; I guess he was trade union rep in the county and he was still on the state board.

Then this strange figure, Nils Lange, who I think still is a Party organizer up in Napa, Sonoma County, a man in his seventies, a Swede, very rigid guy, but a long time longshoreman and respected on the waterfront, emerged as a player. He felt

that when I came on the waterfront here in 1939, that I too easily came into leadership. And he characterized me (I found out later) as a Trotskyite and potential stool pigeon.

Lange and I were briefly friends, and as long as I accepted his leadership unequivocally, that would have gone on. He fought me when I ran for office in Local 10. He never left the Party. I think by leaving the Party, it was my open break with him. I never went to the press. I never did anything of that sort.

But there was also an accusation then against me by another guy, a guy whom I respected, Herman Stuyvelaar. He was a leader of the Ship Clerks, and was never in the Party, but he was on the Left in his own strange way. He also resented my quick rise to leadership.

Rubens: Within a few years, you would be playing an important role in Democratic party politics.

Jenkins: Yes, I did become "legitimate." Out here, I know some who were on the Left as deeply as I was, in the Party leadership, openly known as a leftie, who were called before the Un-American Activities Committee, the Tenney Committee, House Labor Committee, and it didn't hinder them. Although my wife was subpoenaed before the Burns Committee and my kids getting arrested in '60s politics, I was able, so to speak, to become respectable again. I never attacked the Left publicly and at the same time I was being accepted by a considerable section of the community, including business, whom I work with on strange issues like height limits, construction--

Rubens: And the environment?

Jenkins: Yes. But I broke with them on many issues, too, and continued to break with them on many issues. I don't know how many others played that role. Others went into their own businesses, like Bill [William] Sennett, who was a leader of the Party in Chicago; he left the Party and then opened his own business and made a lot of dough.¹

Rubens: What kind of business?

Jenkins: It's a trucking leasing business. Or my friend, George Kiskaddon, who became a ship owner, but he stayed progressive.

¹William Sennett, Communist Functionary and Corporate Executive, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.

But for the rest, I don't know anybody else out here that went from being either a rank and file union member or a Party member, or an organizational leader, as I did, to becoming a political consultant or a labor consultant. There was this one guy, Bert Coffey, in Contra Costa, that back in 1937 was briefly a Party member, then became a power in the Democratic party. There were hidden Party people who were exposed, so to speak, but I was never in that category.

Rubens: You never turned on the Party publicly or recanted your positions even after you left the Party. But you were critical, you were a thorn inside the Party. Is that one of the reasons you always remained in trouble with the Party?

Jenkins: Well, they felt I was an important enough person that they had to do a job on me. They never could identify my "betrayal" except ideology. I was never an informer; I was never an opponent; I never fought them; although I was tempted to. I remained in the leadership of the ILWU, or at least I had the confidence of the leadership and the confidence of the Left leadership around the country in the trade union movement. This was true of my relationship with Jim Matles and Jules Emspack of UE, with Mine-Mill, and Ben Gold of the furriers, Jack Biegel of the Public Workers, Jesse Proston of the Packinghouse Workers. All the Left leadership around the country continued to work with me but the Party got more and more strident about me as the years went on.

When I got involved in the Alioto campaign, the Party passed the word out nationally that I had traded the working class in. Some of that was cruel to me. For instance, I was deeply attached to Proston. When I was in New York, Jesse would take time off. He was a billiard player, and we drove around together. In Chicago, I stayed at his house. He was a superlative guy. In that recent beef with Hormel, he was the one who even though retired put out a paper on why the locals were making an adventurous mistake, striking independent of the union. I didn't lose any other friends.

Rubens: Are you saying the Party did undermine your relationship with Proston?

Jenkins: Yes. There were friends like Jack Biegel in New York, who was the head of Public Workers, who now is counted as one of the seven most powerful men in New York City, mainly because he was an expert on health and welfare, much like Paul Pinsky here, who became a crucial figure in the Teamsters and Hotel Workers. And my friend, Esther Rosenberg, who was secretary of District 65, Warehouse Union, or Bob Schrank, who was a CPer at one time and head of the Machinists in New York. He is now one of the great

experts on work in America. He was at the Ford Foundation for twelve years and was Mayor John Lindsay's youth expert. He also ran the Mobilization for Democracy. There was only a handful of us around, really, that I know of.

Rubens: You could have lost yourself here, too, and you didn't.

Jenkins: Yes. The truth of the matter is that almost nobody I know, who is in the Progressive party, who was in the CP, in the Left trade union movement, went from that into leadership and respectability, where ex-mayors come to your birthday party. In a sense, I guess, because of Edith and her role and the extraordinary role of my children, too. How do you refer to the father of Margaret Jenkins? She is obviously not a left-wing talent, but she is a vanguard in her field, and a force in the city.

A Proud Father Talks of His Creative Children as Beautiful Human Beings

Jenkins: One of the things that grew out of my birthday party,¹ which I had never fully realized, is the multi-talented and bizarre approach of my kids to the environment they grew up in, the fact that they made it, so to speak, in bourgeois society. I know it is an antique term.

Rubens: They made it with principles and position in the same way you have.

Jenkins: Exactly. People come up to me and say, "Gee, how did your kids turn out so well?" If I remember anything we did, I'd tell you. Becky, more than the others, has been mad at me in a sense because I didn't continue to be primarily a Left leader. Rachel, my youngest, is a wonderfully talented [psycho]therapist, a lovely human being and wonderful mother. David, my son, is a splendid flamenco guitarist, a successful mediator and a great human being, a loving father. Margy is one of the great American choreographers and dancers and a joy, and Becky, my oldest, is principled and loving and takes care of everybody. She is a radical [psycho]therapist recognized all over the world. And Sylvia Forman, our surrogate daughter, an anthropologist at the

¹On the occasion of Dave's seventy-fourth birthday, family and friends hosted a swank party. See invitation in appendix.

University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is a great human being.
We also have seven lovely grandchildren.

Transcriber: Chris Fenner
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David Jenkins

January 25, 1914—June 28, 1993

11



Late Song

If I believed souls would survive
it would be little comfort.
This clumsy cloak my body
is myself, vague but incumbent
full of largesse and trivia,
and you have done it honor.

I, waiting your loud
footstep on the stairs,
know that no soul
exists without that sole,
sandal and cumbersome,
joyful and obdurate.

Threat of mortality,
sweet smelling ether,
is in the air, irksome
as itching and less permanent.

- Edith A. Jenkins

David Jenkins Memorial

July 3, 1993

Chamber music
by Bravo

Becky Jenkins
Joseph L. Alioto
Rachel H. Jenkins
James R. Herman

"Che Jellida Maninia" from La Boheme
James Caputo, tenor
Kathleen Kelly, accompanist

Lisa Rubens
David L. Jenkins
LeRoy King
Caryl Mezey
Peter Mezey

"Minstrel Boy"
Tom Burke, vocalist
Kathleen Kelly, accompanist

Margaret Jenkins
Eric J. Voorsanger
Hadley R. Roff
Stephan Jenkins
Joshua Walker
Edith A. Jenkins

"September Song"
Tom Burke, vocalist
Kathleen Kelly, accompanist

Chamber music and refreshments

Becky Jenkins

FOR DAD'S MEMORIAL - July 3, 1993

On behalf of the Jenkins family, I want to welcome you to this memorial to celebrate my father's life. Your presence means a lot to us and will go a long way toward helping us to get our balance back and repair our souls. We hope it does the same for you.

Even though my welcome to you is sincere, I don't welcome this event. I am having a hard time making peace with Dad's death. That's strange given how ill he has been these last months and how debilitated and uncomfortable he has been the last several years. Some people have wondered if there might be some relief on our part to know Dave was no longer suffering. I wish I could say yes, both for him and for my mother, who bore the enormous responsibility for his care and comfort, and who no doubt was responsible for lengthening his life. I don't. Nor do I find solace in the formulation that he had "a long and productive life". It's true and none of it helps, and I don't yet know why.

About the program - The family has chosen people to speak today who knew Dad well in the various parts of his life: the labor movement, City politics, close friends, and family. These are people he worked with and loved, and some he talked to every day. Shaping the program entailed some difficult decisions for us, for people who fit the above description are legion, and many of them are in this room. In the end it was impossible to represent accurately the many incarnations of Dad's life - from his early years in New York to the various caps he wore during the fifty years or so he lived in San Francisco. When a person is a public figure, there is temptation for people who had limited contact with him to see him through a prism that is too narrow (working class hero, that kind of stuff). So today we wanted to celebrate as much of him as we could.

I want to get back now to what is difficult to give up about my father. Maybe I will be comforted somewhat if I can formulate here some of the things I have tried to learn from him over the years, and I wasn't always his best student. We fought about many things (I'm the oldest. That was my job!), but we always made peace, if only because Dad insisted on it. There is one of the things I learned. He never gave up on people he loved. Many years ago as a very young man, at an age most young men are driven by their personal, often selfish passions, he crossed the country in pursuit of his 2 year old daughter (he was just 23 when I was born.). My mother, exhausted from their poverty stricken life in Greenwich Village and my Dad's long absences while on union organizing jaunts, returned to her home in San Francisco. He was having none of it. He followed shortly. He insisted on a relationship with me and later, when he had a new family he included me. Those were fateful decisions, ones for which I will be eternally grateful.

Dad respected people's work. He understood work, its importance and inherent dignity. The waitresses and waiters and busboys in the restaurants where he spent many of his hours, doing important political work, were people he wanted to know about. Everyone he came in contact with as he went through his daily routine he engaged, and in the most personal way. He spoke to people with power in exactly the same dimensional way, often to their relief, I suspect. How did they earn their money? Where was their family from? How did they treat their wife and children? Did they have a happy sex life. It could be irritating, come to think of it. He knew the names of the women who answered the phones, secretaries became his confidants and best friends, no fool he about where real power resided. He knew the histories of all of them, what states and countries they were from, why they had come so far from home: the man who sold him cheese, the store where he bought Italian pottery, and more recently the wonderful woman from Tonga and the

avid reader from Connecticut who this past year so tenderly cared for him at home. There were the nurses who took care of him at Mt Zion, the Residents and Interns, the doctors, all the people doing their work. He really saw people and listened to them carefully.

And then he just had the capacity to reach out and connect. Once many years ago we got stuck together on the freeway in a terrible traffic jam on the way to Carmel. Before it was over he had made friends with people in adjoining cars. Of course I was mortified but also completely fascinated. He was the only person I knew who could take the alienation out of a freeway.

I think what this is all about is the personal and the political. The expression is a little shop worn, but I don't know how else to describe this quality he had to move from big ideas, from a sweeping overview of the social context in which he and others were operating, calling on his knowledge of history and culture, to the most personal and intimate things about people's everyday lives. He was a consummate psychologist; a damn good sociologist and a wonderful dancer. (I know there is some connection!) His understanding of the big things was informed by all of the details. This talent not only benefited his work and the City, for he always had an original way of looking at things, but also enhanced his relationship with me and the others he loved. He got the whole picture.

One of the people who appreciated this about Pop was Hadley Ross^{FF}, who will chair today's program. Hadley describes himself as having spent more time in City Hall than most of the statues there. He has worked for 4 mayors. Dad and Hadley met during the mid-60's and had more contact during the Joe Alioto Campaign. During 1968-69 while Hadley worked for the Alioto Administration, they got to know each other better. In March 1969, Susie, then Trommald, later to become Ross^{FF}, came to work as a secretary at the Redevelopment agency and worked for Dad. In the 70's Hadley worked and

lived in Washington and strangely enough that's when their friendship really took off. Often Hadley would call Pop to find out what was happening politically in the City. In the meantime Susie and Dad had become fast friends and political confidants. Later in 1980, Susie and Hadley were married and the wedding took place at my parent's house. They are dear and old friends who have offered their love, help and counsel to Dad and the family on many occasions. Today is no exception. Hadley.

This is a poem I wrote several months ago during my father's illness...

Did you know that
my Father is dying off the coast of my
life to the west?

He's dying in the seas, pulled and thrashed and yanked down.

Did I remember to tell you
that I was young once
in the beginning of my life?

Back then my Father was a very big man.
A Daddy of all Daddy's, 6'3", 275 lbs.,
his voice huge, his body lumbering,
already he'd been alive and buoyed up by cause, song and story.

My Father is dying right now off the coast of my life, sinking in
to the sea of death, the waters part and make way for all he
carries in the folds of his life, names, strikes, his father's funeral,
his mother's millinery store, the farm in Passaic, NJ, his trips at
sea and organizing on shore.

My Father's life is ending and he is being spun round and round
by his asbestosed lungs, his ulcerated stomach, his clamped
spinal cord. And he is spinning so quick he can not catch his
self, dizzy with remembering and forgetting, with holding on and
letting go, with seeing and blindness, with the symphony of
voices and the silence of aloneness.

I am an immigrant from my homeland. I used to live in a village where our streets were rivers, and our rivers were thick with song and the songs were dripped into the throats of the young and the young swallowed the songs and sang them as they swam, and now if I close my eyes, and hold still I can hear their echo, the faint sweet melodies of my homeland, and feel the coldness and shuffle of the waters.

My Father is dying off shore and with him sinks his courage, and his humor, with him sinks the names of his men: Leroy King, Harry Bridges, Al Richmond, Abe Feinglass, his brother Leo Jenkins, Bob Shrank, his father John Jenkins, Louis Goldblatt, Keith Eickman, Bill Bailey, Jimmy Herman, and with him drown the stories of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers of him organizing in the south and the streets of South Bronx and the fight for Social Security, the Bridges defense fund, ^{the} fight for fair wages.

As we speak my Father struggles off the coast of my life and I am not sure how to not swim to him and try to hold him to keep him from spinning and being pulled down by the weight of his life and his body and his stories and his legacy.

I am a mother now and have been for a while, yes I have a 10-1/2 year old daughter named Anya, a dream of a person I made her out of my collar bone and she grew into a whole person and I have another child, another daughter, Rosa who is made out of my mucous membranes, she's very full, she's very big, she is new to the world, her birthday's in November, she's already 7.

What will happen when my Father sinks into that sea? Will I drown in my sadness? Will the death rehearsed all of my life now fully relinquish its whirl pooled power?

I live on the East Coast, 3,000 miles from the west, and my Father is drowning off that shore. I live on dry land, in the beginning of the Berkshires on 4 acres.

I am a woman who now has a life
 that is many times more than my years
 I began living when
 I lived in the old country
 I began living when he did
 which was when his mother began her life
 outside of Kharkov;
 did I tell you that my veins are wired and my blood circulated
 through his veins and hers?
 Did I forget to tell you that my Father's name is David,
 actually Hyman David,
 and his Mother's name is Helen,
 and my middle name is Helen.
 We share our blood, originating in Russia, we are Jews.

My Father is dying off the coast of my life and I am living on shore. And I am so sorry. I cannot pull him back on land for he is a very big man, and although I am many years his junior, and I am very strong and very willful. I have tried with my sisters and my brother and my mother to pull him back on land but he's farther out now, off the West Coast of my life, and he's struggling with his dying and we are on shore....

The following I wrote a few days after his death...

This father of mine filled rooms, filled hearts, filled ears, filled my wallet, filled my refrigerator, filled my adolescence, filled my daughters lives, fills my stories...

This father of mine wouldn't leave anything alone, not till he was done with it. Get rid of that man, take off that scarf, clean your car, leave that job, go back to school, pull up those weeds.

This father of mine made friends out of my friends, made jobs into his jobs, made my break-ups into his break-ups, made my education his.

My Dad couldn't not give us money. Don't tell your mother he used to say, we'll pay for your trip, get you a new car, he bought me a dishwasher twice.

My Dad's expression and language already spill into my mouth... gutless wonder, deep down he's shallow, spineless asshole, beauty is as beauty does, beauty is only skin deep, you can't be good looking and smart, and many lewd expressions worth repeating...

We drove for hours in the city holding hands, mine in his big battered hand, serenaded by KJAZ or opera, through the park by the ocean, under the bridges, stopping by the Golden Gate Bridge to look at the benches dedicated to his ILWU buddies, on the waterfront, stopping in the old days at Local 10, and then out 3rd Street. The last ride in April we drove to the dock and sat under the lifts and watched the bay and the ships pass...

The car rides were punctuated with shopping, for always more than we needed, loaves of bread, wedges of cheese, piles of cold cuts, bags of fruit, toothpaste, dozens of bagels, Jean Nate...

...talking, talking about my relationships, and his, about my work, and his, the other kids, mom, my kids, my finances.

My Father could make you laugh, really laugh, deep down laugh.

My Dad was big,
big in the heart
big in his love
big in his anger
big in his offers
big in his intrusiveness
big in his outrageousness
big in his forgiveness
big in his generosity
and smart.

For David Jenkins, July 3, 1993
Lisa Rubens

I was privileged to conduct David Jenkins' oral history for the University of California -starting in 1987. His image was larger than life, and his life was a legend -entwined with the history of the left, the avant garde, the labor movement and the political culture of San Francisco. I had a lot of questions (and preconceptions) -about his life, about the left, about life inside city hall, and about how he reconciled his role on BCDC -how could he save the bay and save jobs.

In the process I got more than I bargained for. Dave answered all my questions, in his own manner and in his own time, even as he wrestled with my challenges in a careful way. He provided insights into aspects of San Francisco life and politics that had never been recorded. I also came away with a much richer, textured view of the relationship between public and private life -as Becky said, of the relationship between the personal and political. And I gained an understanding of the interplay of passion and principle that is really what history is all about. I also came away with a treasured friend, and a world of friends who touched Dave's life in so many ways.

You may be surprised, as I was, that David was reluctant to begin the history. First, because he was not -and it is hard to think of him even now- simply a part of history. To the end he was an active, integral part of the currents and contests that engulfed our community.

More to the point, he was reluctant because for all his prominence and boisterous notoriety, for all his delight in telling big, salty, ribald tales, he was a reflective, contemplative, deeply thoughtful person. He had a voracious appetite for learning -usually reading three books at the same time. And though he had been at the center of some of the most important political and social movements of the century, he was unclear in his own mind about his role in all this. The interviews begin with a careful assessment of the nature of leadership -thoughts about leaders he knew, his relationship to them and the particular role he played as strategist, broker, consultant and man behind the scenes.

While the interviews are filled with graphic and entertaining stories of his encounters with significant people from so many different realms of life -with whom his relationships ranged from the most formal to the most intimate- the weight of the stories falls not just on him, but on what they tell us about the essence of the world he lived in.

Some of the interviews were conducted in the political watering holes of San Francisco -the Washbag or Stars, where scores of people, supervisors, bankers, a fledgling opera singer or the bar tender, would migrate to his table to pay respects, to conduct some business, bestow an affectionate embrace or in some cases a sarcastic needle.

But most of the interviews took place in Dave's living room, where he and Edith lived for more than 40 years -raised a family, nurtured their friends, created political agendas of a staggering variety. It remains a home through which family, friends and the movers and shakers of San Francisco continue to flow. Usually when I arrived, he was sitting in his chair, cradling two phones; the interviews were constantly interrupted by calls from the mayor or a grandchild, a neighborhood organizer or a developer, or a friend whose son needed a job.

During the interviews he regularly would scream out to Edith: "Who was that artists we liked;" or "Who was that asshole stool pigeon?" or when did so and so have an affair? She might say I'm not sure if that happened, or how it really happened; and then we'd dig in and sort it out. And when I went back to the university I would do a lot of fact checking, if I could.

He had a remarkable memory and an incredible ability to paint a broad canvas with specific and illuminating details -getting the picture deliciously fleshed out. Underlying this was a fundamental largesse and generosity of spirit. And there was always humility, honesty and incisiveness. Most important, there was a willingness to examine and re-examine long held beliefs and principles; an ability to take criticism seriously.

I'll never forget arriving at his home one day in 1989, all ready to ask him about his role in the National Maritime Union in the South during the 1930s -only to find him utterly preoccupied with some new Gorbachev revelation about distortions of history under Stalin. He lamented how much his generation had been denied and how it denied itself. He was keenly aware of the ultimately subjective nature of history and memory.

This blend of subjectivity and fact, of action and reflection is what the process of history -of this oral history anyway- is all about. And I conclude that we don't have to make summaries and judgments about a life so complex , so filled with contentiousness and tenderness, so deeply driven by passion and commitment .

I am honored that I had a part in making that history come to life and remain in life. Historians may be able to reconcile public and private; but I personally can't reconcile life and death.

I dreamed I saw David Jenkins last night, as live as he could be.
Vive David Jenkins!!!



First of all, let me just say how moved I am by seeing all of you here today, coming to pay tribute to, and share your feelings with us about, your connection to our Dave, my father, who many of us knew asbig Dave.

I'm not going to say much today..... mostly because I plan to talk about my dad for the rest of my life, since, as we all know and feel..... there is so much he gave to so many of us. However, while I am talking, you might want to flare out your nostrils a bit and catch a whiff of this Florida water I am wearing from New York,,,,, since New York is where Dave came from.....I thought it might help us to conjure up some of the living history that is embodied in the collective consciousness present here in this room this afternoon..... I came upon and purchased this New York Florida water the other day ...in Beverly Hills, in a drug store where they sell a lot of things to which we Jews are especially susceptible. And so I'm wearing Florida water here because it's what Dave used to wear when I was a kid..... and therefore it helps to transport me back to my childhood, on the wings of an aroma to a time when Big Dave and I, and others of us here today, shared the terrors, joys, adventures and struggles of growing up in the 40's, 50's and 60's..... It takes me back to a time when I was five when dad used to take me down to the P.F.E.L. and Matson line docks to watch the cargo ships being loaded .. and to the Southern Pacific switching stations where he would somehow wrangle us a ride on the big locomotives..... In the evenings back then, he might be heard to sing *My daddy was an Engineer, My brother drives a hack, My sister takes in washing and the baby balls the jack.*

And then I remember the time when he lay in the French hospital room with his bones broken from his fall through the skylight while fleeing

the process-servers. And I remember his union comrades stood by the circular bed curtain in his hospital room, in case the goons came back after him again..... And This Florida water takes me back to the 50's, to the front porch of the family house on Belvedere Street..... on a Sunday morning when two FBI thugs came knocking at our door in their gray polyester suits with guns barely concealed beneath the armpits of their dapper jackets. "Is your daddy home, little boy?" ..they crooned... And I'll never forget that clap of thunder as Dave's 300 pound footsteps cascaded down the stairs, and how he burst out the front door onto the front porch, stark nakedexcept for a white skivvy while these two terrified federal finks scurried down the marble steps to their getaway car, permanently frightened and undoubtedly confused.

Yes, this Florida water takes me back to my fifth, sixth and seven-year old birthdays on top of our beautiful Mt. Tamalpais and then back to the living room size lap of our much beloved Paul Robeson who sang to me, *Little Davey play on your harp, hallaloo, hallaloo.....* And I remember that camping trip by Crater Lake when we traveled with pop on union business in the Pacific Northwest. And how he snored belligerently while the grizzlies fought over our food outside the tent. And I remember him rushing to protect me from the red-baiting boy's deans in both junior and high school, with whom I was always in trouble. And I remember him always arriving just in time to bail me out.

And I remember him bailing me out many a time when we went to jail to fight Jim Crow here in San Francisco or protest the war in Vietnam at the Oakland draft board. I'll never forget when he and mama came to visit me, Melanie and our kids ,Stephan & Miranda , in Mexico, in '72 where he insisted in climbing the Zapotec pyramids even though his legs had

3

already begun to hurt him way back then, or when he lent his shoulder to help some stone workers who were trying to push their huge quarry stone over pine logs so they could effect repairs to their ancient church outside of Oaxaca.....near Zachila.

And I remember when I was a 24-year old longshoreman, skinny, with my white cap cocked just so, with my long shore hook protruding from the rear pocket of my Big Bens, and I remember him greeting me on some coffee pier or banana dock where I had just returned from lunch with some of my longshore buddies like Stephan Argent or Billy Bancroft and I remember my mix of love and humiliation as he knocked the cigarette which had been sexily dangling from the corner of my mouth, when he picked me completely off the ground and kissed me passionately on the lips.Yes... this Florida water also reminds me of how many of us he loved with a combination of such tenderness and real ferocity...and about this ferocity..... Dave fought for what and whom he believed in with his immense arms, hands and heart..... He also waged and won many a battle in his wrestle with his own mortality, harnessing this extraordinary quality of will that up to a week or so ago had me and many of us fooled into thinking him completely immortal..... Good-bye, Big Dave, my father. We'll all always love you.

For David Jenkins - Caryl Mezey
July 3, 1993

I've been asked to speak on behalf of the many women that Dave befriended, coached and sent out to do good works in this, and other communities.

It's certainly no secret to this group that David *liked* women. Not in the way that his constant comments suggested, but in a profound and respectful way. He could understand non-linear thinking because that's the way he thought. He appreciated feminine values because he too was a nurturer with the good of the human community foremost in his heart. And he loved *people* - to trace their histories, to share their lives and even to gossip about them when it would do no harm. He was a complicated man who was at ease with the complications of women's minds and women's hearts.

Dave didn't particularly like being alone, evidenced by the fact that he was terribly attached to his telephone and to his car. It also led to his practice of asking us women to make his rounds with him --- visit the museums he loved and knew so well, stop in at the union hall, maybe even the Bouncer's Bar.....and certainly to keep him company at Washington Square. And he took us home to Edith, who also took us into her heart.

We all know Dave loved an audience. We became one. These trips out became seminars on European history, the labor movement, books that he cherished, or his great love, San Francisco politics. In addition to being a teacher, he became a mentor, an utzer, and I must say, a critic. Anything to get us to use our own talents and the experience that he had so enhanced to be more active, more productive and more committed to making whatever change we could in this needy world.

The community has benefited tremendously from this yeast he set going. And so have we! We like our new self-image, we like knowing more about the world around us. We like it that David understood our needs, listened to our aspirations, was comfortable with our frailties --- and gave us the kick in the pants that we needed to step out the door, spread our wings. and on occasion, even fly.

For David Jenkins - Peter Mezey, July 3, 1993

Dave's colleagues have accurately extolled his accomplishments and contributions as as a labor leader, as a community organizer and a political adviser. Members of his family have described the caring, support, and at times, exasperating over-protection he provided them. I want to talk about Dave as a mentor, inspiration and, most importantly, as a friend.

Caryl and I met Dave when school integration was a burning issue in San Francisco. Even though he was a close adviser to the Mayor, who was not sympathetic to integration, Dave's dedication to human equality would not let him remain silent. At a tumultuous meeting at Masonic Auditorium at which the Board of Education was listening to a fierce debate on the subject, Dave inspired the hundreds present with his uncompromising support of integration as the only way to provide truly equal educational opportunity. He strode to the front of the hall, pushed away the microphone, and offered the Board a lecture on the history of race relations in America, on what a poor place our country would be without the intellectual, artistic and social contributions of its minorities, and the role of equal educational opportunity in creating a progressive and humane society. He concluded by admonishing the labor and liberal members of the Board not to disappoint their forbears or basic ideals.

Having been moved by Dave's inspired and courageous position on school integration, we soon found ourselves at various social gatherings at which Dave was present, and always seemed to be presiding over. We were intrigued by his spontaneity, warmth and true interest in the lives of everyone around him. We immediately associated with him one of his trade mark questions - "And what did your poppa do?" - which made eating in a restaurant, traveling or standing in a ticket line with Dave an adventure and a lesson in reaching out to other people.

We learned that Dave very much identified himself as an American. This was the country that had taken in his parents and millions of others fleeing from injustice all over the world, and seeking a new start. It was a country with its own oppressions and inequalities, but its ideals and basic institutions carried the flames of justice and truth.

Dave's quest for knowledge was manifested in many ways - reading books and newspapers, attending concerts, walking through museums and meeting new people. But none was more important to him than traveling, and he drew others along by organizing delegations. My life expanded by being a member of two of Dave's delegations - one to the Soviet Union and the other to Israel. While in each country, we met opinion makers and thinkers to whom Dave was a valued and admired friend.

I have always particularly enjoyed my recollection of one incident on the trip to Israel, both because it was amusing and because it illustrated an aspect of Dave's strongly identifying with his Jewish ancestors and their history, while being non-religious in the traditional sense. The day we arrived in Jerusalem was overcast and drizzling. Perhaps moved by the poetic qualities of the city, Dave insisted that we immediately visit the Old Temple Wall - in what was by then rain. As we approached the awesome and inspiring monument we were each handed the obligatory yarmulka, which we dutifully put on. Then, in emulation of our religious brethren, we faced the Wall and leaned against it with our heads. After a few moments, I turned my head to the side and observed Dave writing on small scraps of paper and shoving them into cracks in the Wall. As my eyes widened in wonderment, Dave shrugged and asked "What have we got to lose?"

How would I summarize what David Jenkins meant to me, and to so many others? Why was this booming and sometimes outrageous man who loved and was loved by so many so important? Why will there remain within easy recall to my mind's eye to the end of my days the image of this towering figure? Rising even above his many accomplishments and intellectual prowess will be David Jenkins - the Friend. The person who always had a warm interest in what was happening to me and my family; the person to whom we could tell our triumphs and who would join in our satisfaction in them, but more importantly to whom we could tell our defeats and setbacks, and know that in Dave's eyes we were no smaller and no less important than we had been in our moments of success.

Good by, my dear friend. We will not forget you.

DAD

THE LAST THING DAD SAID TO ME
A FEW DAYS BEFORE HE DIED
WAS: "HAVE A GOOD SEASON!!"
EVEN IN HIS PAIN AND
DISTRACTION AND FEAR HE WAS
COMPLETELY PRESENT AND
CONNECTED TO WHAT I HAD TO DO
NEXT

SO---

I THOUGHT TO SPEAK TO DAD'S
INCREDIBLE COMMITMENT AND
LOVE OF THE ARTS--HOW HIS ART
LIBRARY WAS OFTEN A SOURCE
FOR THE NEXT WORK--HOW HE
INTUITIVELY AND THEN WITH
ACQUIRED WISDOM KNEW WHEN
A WORK OR ART--A DANCE-- AN
OPERA -A PAINTING ---WAS
WORTH SEEING OR LISTENING TO -

HE'D OFTEN CALL WHILE
WATCHING SOME DANCE ON TV
AND ASK "WAS THAT DREADFUL
OR WHAT?"

- IN SOME REAL WAY HE WAS
THE ORIGINAL AVANT GARDE
MAN--HIS ONLY FEAR WHEN I
DROPPED OUT OF UCLA TO GO TO
NEW YORK TO DANCE WAS THAT
I'D HAVE NO WAY OF MAKING A
LIVING--OF COURSE I HAVE SINCE
ALLEVIATED THAT FEAR---
SO WHETHER HE AND MY MOTHER
LOANED THEIR HOUSE OR MONEY
TO STARVING ---TRAVELING
DANCERS OR TO MY COMPANY--
THEIRS WAS AND IS A PROFOUND
LOVE OF THE ARTIST-THEIR
STRUGGLE AS RADICAL-- AS
STORYTELLER--AS
REVOLUTIONARY..

WHEN I TOLD MY DAUGHTER
LESLIE WHAT I WAS GOING TO
SAY TODAY SHE SAID: IT SOUNDS
LIKE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT A
SPONSOR --HE WAS YOUR DAD.

WHEN I WAS SMALL I USED TO
WALK UP HILLS BACKWARDS.
THAT WAY I WAS NOT REALLY
GOING WHERE I HAD BEEN TOLD
NOT TO--THIS I'M SURE I
LEARNED FROM DAD!!!!!!

WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN I CAME
HOME FROM SCHOOL DESPONDENT
THAT SO MANY KIDS DIDN'T LIKE
ME AND HE SAID:
"IF YOU'RE ANY KIND OF PERSON
HALF THE WORLD WILL HATE
YOU, HALF WILL LOVE YOU."

SO I KNOW THAT MY STRUGGLE TO BE "SOME KIND OF PERSON" HAS COME IN PART FROM HIS QUIET YET AGGRESSIVE DEMAND TO LEARN TO WITHSTAND THE ENORMOUS CONFLICTS THAT RESULT FROM DEVELOPING A POINT A VIEW--IN HAVING A POSITION --IN TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

YESTERDAY I WAS PERFORMING A WORK IN CHICAGO FOR A GROUP OF SCHOOL CHILDREN FROM CHICAGO'S GHETTO-- AS WELL AS FOR THOSE WHO JUST WANDER INTO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AT NOON.

AND AT THE END OF THE PERFORMANCE WE CAME OUT TO TALK TO THE AUDIENCE. WE WERE DOING A WORK CALLED SHOREBIRDS ATLANTIC

WHICH, IN PART, IS ABOUT
DEATH, LOSS AND RENEWAL -
WITH A TWIST.

ONE SMALL GIRL RAISED HER
HAND AND ASKED: "ARE YOUR
MOTHER AND FATHER PROUD OF
YOU. DO THEY LIKE THAT YOU
DANCE?? HOW COME YOU MADE A
FUNNY DANCE?"

THE KIDS IN THE AUDIENCE
THOUGHT THIS WORK WAS FUNNY
NOT SAD. IN PART THEY WERE
RIGHT AND IT WAS A GLORIOUS
REMINDER OF ONE OF DAD'S GREAT
GIFTS -- HIS ABILITY TO FIND
LEVITY IN ALL SERIOUS
SUBJECTS. AND YES I KNEW HE
WAS PROUD!!

JOHN CAGE DIED LAST YEAR--
ANOTHER GREAT TEACHER AND
RADICAL --

HE ONCE SAID:
THE WONDERFUL THING ABOUT
THE HUMAN MIND IS THAT IT
CAN CHANGE DIRECTION AT ANY
TIME---

THANKS DAD FOR ENCOURAGING
THAT DANCE--THAT LESSON.

Remarks of Eric Voorsanger at the David Jenkins Memorial at the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, July 3, 1993.

Among Dave Jenkins' many roles, he also was a loving and generous uncle -- to me and to my twin brothers, Bart and Neil. My name is Eric Voorsanger and I am honored to speak here today, for myself, for my own family and for my brothers and their families, who send their loving thoughts but cannot join us today. You should also know that after my parents passed away over twenty years ago, Edith and Dave -- with children and grandchildren of their own -- stepped in to act as loving grandparents and parents to all the Voorsanger family members. But, of course, you who knew Dave and know Edith know how matter of course it has been over the years, that they have always provided others a marvelous welcome in their hearts and their home.

I have a small confession to make here. It took me a number of years to get along with Dave in a discussion -- shall we say argument? The secret, I only discovered in later years was that I was always arguing about the little inconsequential details while Dave always fixed on the big picture, the important questions, the questions of value.

And with this ability of his to focus on the big issues of society together with his ever-present sense of moral outrage at all forms of injustice, he made, as you well know, immense contributions to our community. We family members have rejoicedⁱⁿ and shared his pleasure at the public recognition and many deserved honors that came his way.

So when I remember Uncle Dave, I think of him as loving, generous, courageous and, above all, grand. And I am honored to call myself his nephew. Thank you.

PERSONAL REMARKS

Earlier, I spoke of Dave's having implanted in each of us a vital microchip of his incomparable social consciousness.

For it is true that he was a life long fighter of injustice and inhumanity.

And his struggle is no where near ended as simply a stroll down San Francisco streets will demonstrate.

And it is for us, the living, to take strength from Dave's commitment and rededicate ourselves today to his goals of peace and opportunity and justice... seeking jobs for the unemployed, housing for the dispossessed, hope for the disheartened, and, always, concern for the disadvantaged.

In the 25 or so years I have known Dave, his politics came not from a frozen ideology but from a ferocity of caring about his fellow human beings.

But if the intent of his life-long crusade was intensely serious, Dave, as we all know, personally was not always so.

He could be incorrigible, with a vocabulary that defied any disarmament treaty and a rambunctious intellect that could kick the dust of pretension and sham from any discussion whether political or scholarly.

No one could use four letter words with such creative genius as Dave -- unless Jimmy Herman and Dave together were engaged in discussion that usually had all the serenity of an artillery barrage.

And, of course, Dave could use phrases and expressions that would knock an ocean liner off course.

Years ago, he rolled into the Mayor's office with that remarkable pendulum-like gait of his and, without even a hello, told the startled occupant:

"You know, you're the first monogamous mayor I've ever known."

Once asked about a political figure, Dave responded, "He not only feet of clay, the clay's all the way up to his ass."

I probably shouldn't reveal this, but Dave didn't always support Joe Alioto. In fact, when Joe replaced Jack Shelley as candidate for Mayor, Dave vowed to leave politics for ever. For him it must have seemed like an eternity out of the political swim in San Francisco. "I'm back on the waterfront," he told me, standing in bibbed blue overalls. That's the first and last time I ever saw him so dressed, for the very next day he was back at Alioto's headquarters, demanding, as only he could, "Where the hell

is my desk."

Dave's sense of language was truly remarkable. Only a few weeks ago, when his health was markedly failing, his voice little more than a whisper, he was talking about his oral history and how history had changed so dramatically during his life time. "It galloped," he said, "out of control. "GALLOPED ... what a perfect verb to describe the lurches and scrambles of recent history.

As we all know, Dave had no formal education. He dropped out of school in his teens. But his was a life time of learning.

His range of knowledge was truly stupendous.

Once he came into my office, knowing that Susie was going to take me to my first opera, and proceeded forthwith to synopsise Aida. He even sang some of the principal arias in a voice that would have scattered the pachyderms.

Always a learner and always a teacher, Dave's contribution to education in this city is truly a lasting monument. Some 56,000 students attended his California Labor School in the 1940's. It was there that he personally taught labor economics, Jewish history and what was then an unprecedented course in black history.

He helped establish labor studies at San Francisco City College and the Labor Archives and the Urban Institute at San Francisco State University.

San Francisco State last year honored Dave's devotion to education by making him an honorary doctor of humanities. Some 2000 students were assembled for the commencement, restlessly awaiting their diplomas, when Dave, then in a wheelchair, was brought forward.

The students paid little heed to earlier speakers, bouncing beach balls into the air and laughing and chatting among themselves. Then Dave boomed into the microphone, "Brothers and sisters" and told of the Depression of the 1930's, the McCarthy repression of the 1950's and other struggles for working men and women, and all 2000 stood, applauded and then cheered.

We offer that same heartfelt tribute today.

I've known no richer or more reaching intellect or a warmer and more giving heart than David's and, it should be stressed, Edith's.

David and Edith welcomed Susie and me into their home so often, so warmly and affectionately. Our wedding reception was there, as have our Thanksgivings since.

The Jenkins family -- so incredibly talented, Becky with her knowing insights into people, Margaret with her dancing, Davy with

his guitar and his ability to conciliate disputes, Rachie's perceptive humanity -- extends beyond bloodlines to involve all who care deeply about our world and its people.

All of us are richer for being part of that extended family. Some may leave monuments of concrete and steel, but Dave leaves one of loving and caring.... His is a gift of spirit that will live on forever.

Your absence is too large, too perilous as yet to comprehend. I can locate you only through the particular: how every night for fifty-one years you thanked me for dinner; how you loved to adorn those you loved with gifts of jewelry; how I will miss your command, "Fix your hair. you look crazy; "how I will miss your talent for friendship the way; you engaged every waitress, every waiter, learned about their lives, their families, would suddenly guess and so often be correct with "When will you get your M.A. in English or your degree in social work?"; how you would help countless young people to connect with jobs -- relatives, close friends, children of people who defamed you; how you could enlarge the field of inquiry in any evaluation of the political scene and deepen the scope of every endeavor-- be it your most recent project the Urban Institute of S.F. State or the California Labor School in the forties; how you helped the Powells when they were indicted for treason during the McCarthy era, fought for the Rosenbergs forty years ago and only last month met with their son to help him win support for the Rosenberg Children's Foundation; how you got the longshoremen to refuse to handle grapes when Chavez first called for a boycott; how you helped me to raise money for Small Press Traffic and for the Poetry Center at SFSU; how you so rightfully insisted I go back to college in my forties. I think of your irreverence and respect that fell with equal weight

on carpenter and dean, mayor and secretary. And how once you thoughtfully characterized yourself: "Sometimes," you said, "I can't get over my magnanimity and other times I can't get over how chicken shit I can be."

These are the random thoughts that guard against the grief that lies in ambush and that I know will later accost me. But for now, I cannot sufficiently separate your being from my own to mourn. I feel your presence within me and cannot think of you apart, or your great self in ashes. I remember the bigness of your presence on the floor of Fugazi Hall at the dance for Loyalist Spain where first we met. I remember the bigness of your presence last week in the hospital bed at Mt. Zion. I do not dare as yet experience your absence for when I do "There { will be } nothing left remarkable/ Beneath the visiting moon."

Total Care	T
Partial Care	P
Self Care	S
Refused	R

NURSING ASSISTANT NOTES

Mele (Nurse)

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CLIENT'S NAME

DATE

Bath	Catheter	Transfer
Mouth Care	Dressing	Ambulate
Skin Care	Apply Brace	Meal Prep
Shampoo	Laundry	Shopping
Shave	Linen Change	Feed
Foot Care	Clean PI Area	Encourage Fluids
Nail Care		

Cici - This was written by the woman from Tonga (Mele) who cared for Dad. We want it included somewhere. Thanks, Becky

PATIENT CONDITION

Appetite:
Skin:
Urine:
Bowel:
Activity:
Mental Status:

NURSING ASSISTANT COMMENTS

6/28/93. Dear David My name is Mele
 I am your nurse for today.
 I drove this morning across the bay
 and hope a very happy to me
 I know you will be with me, all day.
 I kissed Good morning to you
 but I don't realized ^{that} a Kissed Goodbye.
 I know I am the one was last kissed
 to you before you go.
 Goodbye Dave. I aint forget you,
 Edith and all the children. Thanks to
 God for the oppotunity to be to you.
 Sometime you very heavy and I hurt but
 I keep inside my heart. I never s/o
 because the love filled my heart
 anything. Thank you for sweet time, and hard time.
 all I do for you, from the bottom of my heart
 love + care, kind from the Gods will. Goodbye & love.
 Nurse's Signature Mele
 smallest in the family

Total Care T
 Partial Care P
 Self Care S
 Refused R

NURSING ASSISTANT NOTES

[Signature]
 MON. June 28
[Signature]

CLIENT'S NAME

DAVE JENKINS

DATE

JUNE 8/1993

Bath	Catheter	Transfer			R.O.M. Upper Extrem.			
Mouth Care	Dressing	Ambulate			R.O.M. Lower Extrem.			
Skin Care	Apply Brace	Meal Prep			WT.			
Shampoo	Laundry	Shopping		Temperature				
Shave	Linen Change	Feed		Pulse				
Foot Care	Clean PI Area	Encourage Fluids		Respiration				
Nail Care				Blood Pressure				

PATIENT CONDITION

Appetite: _____
 Skin: _____
 Urine: _____
 Bowel: _____
 Activity: _____
 Mental Status: Room 527.

NURSING ASSISTANT COMMENTS

6:49 Am. I get to the hospital (Mt. Zion) EDITH
 + DAVE in the room. Dave still sleep
 Hi EDITH, than I kissed Good morning
 Dear. His eyes is close hard sleep.
 touch his hand clear very pale pale (2)
 his feet very cold, his hand ^{is warm} very cold
 I asked to shaved hair but they don't
 want. but on lotion on his hand, sand
 zinc oxide. I really don't know he will ^{go} pass
 very soon. I put down the bed. (head of the
 bed) the Nurses came in the room and they
 We all stand by his bed, EDITH, Rachel
 Liente, Susan & Mike, so pt his last
 breath very peaceful. We all cry (tear)
 and feel missed him very much.
 I called home Ana, Maura, Jan, John send there
 love & best, feel sorry for EDITH. Mike Your
 Nurse's Signature

OBITUARIES

Historian of labor dies at 79

By Larry D. Hatfield
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

David Jenkins, a school dropout who became a powerful adviser to five San Francisco mayors and one of the nation's most erudite and respected labor historians, died Monday at Mount Zion Medical Center.

Mr. Jenkins, 79, who was one of the most unobtrusive but most powerful leaders of the San Francisco labor movement, had been in ill health for several months.

"He was a social conscience of the community and played a major role in stabilizing racial relations in San Francisco," said former Mayor Joseph Alioto, in whose administration Mr. Jenkins served. "He was a real champion of working men and working women and the underprivileged generally. That kind of epitomizes Dave Jenkins. We'll miss him."

Former Mayor Art Agnos called Mr. Jenkins a valued mentor from the time he was a novice politician in 1975 through his term as mayor, adding: "Dave Jenkins was one of the giants in the labor movement and in the struggle for social justice and peace throughout the nation. He was the first to whom I gave the key to The City as mayor because of my personal admiration and the contributions that he has made to The City that he loved and the movement that he was such a magnificent part of."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., a friend for 25 years, mourned Jenkins as "one of a kind . . . in terms of the history and legacy of San Francisco."

'Roaring laugh'

Remembering his "vigor, jocular humor, roaring laugh (and) abundant enthusiasm that did not shrink from four-letter words," the former mayor added, "No one was better in a street fight, not in the sense of fisticuffs, but in the political sense of organizing, when you needed something done."

Walter Johnson, secretary-treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council, who also said Mr. Jenkins had taken him under his wing when he was a fledgling labor leader in The City, said: "David's death brings to an end an extremely important era of the labor movement and also silences the voice of a person who was not afraid to speak out, not only in the early days but throughout his entire lifetime."



David Jenkins was an adviser to five San Francisco mayors.

"He always had the courage to raise necessary questions as to what direction we are traveling. He knew his way around the political highways."

Jimmy Herman, former president of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and a friend of Mr. Jenkins' for 50 years, called him unique: "All of the efforts of his life really were to better things for working people. Dave could always be counted on to be there; he was utterly dependable when it came to being on the right side of the struggle."

Home became a salon

Mr. Jenkins, a native of New York City, had lived in San Francisco since 1939. He married Edith Arnstein, a poet and teacher from one of San Francisco's oldest families, in 1942; their Belvedere Street home was long a salon for, as former mayoral aide Hadley Roff put it, "writers and welders, labor organizers and politicians, deckhands and dancers in robust argument and discussion."

A dropout at the age of 15, Mr. Jenkins was active in the union movement both in New York City and San Francisco, where he was long associated with Herman and the ILWU.

From his first voyage as a merchant marine in the Depression years, Mr. Jenkins pursued the education he never formally received and fought for educational opportunities for others.

"He got shipowners to add histories, the classics and literature to the pulp fiction usually stocked in seamen's quarters aboard ship," Roff said.

In the early days of World War II, he also became director of the California Labor School, recruiting faculty from Stanford and the University of California and establishing branch campuses in Oakland and Los Angeles. He taught classes in Jewish history, labor economics and a pioneering class in black history.

In the 1970s, he helped establish labor studies at San Francisco City College and the Labor Archives at San Francisco State University. Recently, he worked with S.F. State in developing the Urban Institute to deal with homelessness, health care and other current social problems.

Frequent lecturer

He also was a frequent lecturer on labor history at Stanford, UC and such leading think tanks as the Brookings Institution. Despite his failing health, earlier this year he completed an oral history on the labor movement at UC-Berkeley's Bancroft Library.

Mr. Jenkins' lifelong devotion to education was honored last year by S.F. State with an honorary doctorate of humanities. The university called him one of the "rare few (who) touch many, challenging the complacent, comforting the distressed. . . . A working stiff, blue collar, laboring in mines, in ships, in warehouses, Dave . . . has been a profound influence, a reverberating force."

Mr. Jenkins was an adviser and friend, and key political organizer, to Mayors John F. Shelley, Alioto, George Moscone, Feinstein and Agnos.

He worked for a time with the Redevelopment Agency, constructing affordable housing for working families, and since 1984 had been a member of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

Besides his wife, Mr. Jenkins is survived by three daughters: Becky, a radical therapist, Margaret, a well-known dancer and choreographer, both of San Francisco, and Rachel, a psychotherapist, of Westhampton, Mass.; a son, David, a professional mediator and classical guitarist, of Muir Beach; and seven grandchildren: Stephan Jenkins, Miranda Lucas, Joshua Walker, Leslie Wax, Pablo Jenkins and Anya and Rosa Ferris.

The family prefers memorial contributions to the Labor Archives at S.F. State, 1400 Holloway Ave., San Francisco CA 94132, or to the Hebrew Free Loan Association, 703 Market St., San Francisco CA 94103.

Plans for a memorial service were pending.

PAGE TWO OVER EASY



JUDY
BERKLEY

In memoriam

DAVID JENKINS used to lumber through the doorway of the Washington Square Bar & Grill on his cane and start bellowing. He'd scan the available tables through Coke-bottle glasses and plunk down at the one that suited him. If the table was reserved for the Pope, too bad. Before David had even situated his tall bulky frame in a chair and shoved his feet, shod in socks and sandals, under the table, he'd be growling for service and looking for someone to bedevil. I'm happy to say that someone was sometimes me.

LATER the cane was replaced by a wheelchair, and last week, after a long illness, the irrepressible white-maned lion with the mischievous roar died in San Francisco's Mount Zion hospital. There are many people like me, working folks with everyday jobs, who knew David Jenkins from the many opportunities he created to get to know us. Dozens of busboys and bartenders will recall his unabashed querying about where they came from and how their bosses were treating them. Dozens of waitresses will recall his pink face beaming with merriment as he asked, "How's your sex life?" an impish question his advanced years and good humor allowed him to get away with. This wasn't idle banter. Weeks might go by before you'd see him again but he'd pick up the conversation where you left off.

BUT David Jenkins, the outrageous and talkative frequenter of Frisco restaurants and watering holes, was also a powerful force in city government and a link to San Francisco's past. That's why the crowd which gathered Saturday for a memorial service at

the old California Hall on Polk Street was so diverse. Working men in suspenders sat next to City Hall power brokers. Women of all ages brushed tears from their eyes. The flags in San Francisco flew at half-staff in his honor.

IF YOU'RE UNFAMILIAR with the insiders of Frisco politics, you may ask, "Who was this man?" Lisa Rubens, who compiled an oral history of David Jenkins for UC's Bancroft Library, sketched in the details during her eulogy when she referred to "a life on the left in the halls of City Hall." In his youth David was a militant labor organizer, confederate of Harry Bridges, and during the McCarthy era, an erstwhile guest of various committees investigating Un-American Activities. In later years, David was a sometime lobbyist for developers and a key player in the election of mayors Alioto and Moscone. But a mere outline of a life that combined what Rubens called "passion and principle and the public and personal" can't begin to capture the "deeply reflective man who loved to shock with salty ribald stories."

DAVID Jenkins claimed to have made it to the eighth grade but he was a well-read, eloquent, self-educated man. He was married for 51 years to the poet Edith Jenkins and they produced a quartet of talented, artistic children. His daughter Rebecca recalled being stuck in an unmoving traffic jam with her larger-than-life father who, with his inevitable good-natured questioning, struck up conversations with other stalled motorists. Said Rebecca, "He was the only person I know who could take the alienation out of a freeway."

SPEAKER of the House Willie Brown's association with David went back to Brown's earliest days as an elected official, when he said, "There was nothing more offensive in my life than having to deal with David Jenkins." The older man criticized, nitpicked and second-guessed everything the fledgling politico did. It wasn't until Brown overheard David ringing his praises and outlining his hopes for the younger man that Brown began to understand David's irascible style. Daughter Rachel Jenkins described a big man who was big in his anger, big in his generosity and big in his forgiveness. David's friend Hadley Roff called him a "great radiant force, a giver of life."

AMONG the hundreds who gathered to say goodbye to this life-giver, there were many who'd known David intimately for many years and from the many paths he walked in those big sandaled feet. And perhaps a few of the mourners were people like me, who'd been made to feel that our work had dignity and our lives had importance because this great grizzled delightful man had taken the time to make us feel that way with his questions and his unstinting spirit. Thanks, David, from all of us everyday working people. Thanks for believing in us and for devoting so much of your life to our betterment. P.S. My sex life is fine.

D-18 Friday, July 2, 1993 ★

S.F. EXAMINER

 PHILIP ELWOOD
JAZZ BEAT



Old-line Labor activist Dave Jenkins, who died on Monday, played an important, if inadvertent, role in San Francisco's folk music and traditional jazz activities during the 1940s, when he headed the California Labor School.

Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie performed on the waterfront under the auspices of the school and Harry Bridges' ILWU in 1942.

The legendary old New Orleans trumpeter Willie "Bunk" Johnson played regular Sunday afternoon concerts with various Bay Area traditional jazzmen (like Turk Murphy and Burt Bales) in the basement of the union hall at 150 Golden Gate Ave., and the California Labor School offered a course, taught by Bob Waller, on the history of jazz at the same time. It was the first such course ever offered, anywhere, to my knowledge.

In the spring of 1945 the California Labor School sponsored Bay Area concerts by the magnificent Texas bluesman "Leadbelly" (Huddie Ledbetter), and subsequently Jenkins condemned the American Federation of Musicians for their refusal to allow their white members to record with the black Leadbelly — at precisely the time the United Nations was being founded in the War Memorial Opera House.

Jenkins was a marvelous raconteur. His lively recollections and stories of his wild and woolly years at the Labor School and after taught me more Bay Area social history than I got at either Cal or Stanford.

March 12, 1994

Dear Edith: I am writing to you in relation to the important role your husband played in the founding of labor studies programs for trade unionists in the greater Bay Area.

It all started with the University of California's Labor Center for Education and Research securing a grant from the Ford Foundation to launch a program for Labor Studies with special emphasis on minority training. This was at a time when the civil rights movement was at its peak and liberals were moved to act in many directions. And hence Bob Shrank who was then at the Ford Foundation was able to persuade the organization to put a lot of money into a five year program aimed at developing leadership in trade unions for Blacks and others. Dave was very active in this and consulted with Shrank many times.

The program at Berkeley was also funded to reach out to the community colleges and establish courses in these institutions as well. This effort was where Dave made his major contributions. Dave organized a loose coalition of many people who visited the heads of these colleges and put on the pressure to offer a labor studies program which included hiring coordinators to engage teachers and to promote the classes in the labor movement. Some fourteen classes on as many subjects were developed and most of these are still offered with some additions on gay rights and other newer subjects.

I recall going to numerous meetings with the SF City College, to San Jose City College and to San Mateo and Contra Costa College.

I no longer have my notes as to the times and composition of our delegations. This varied somewhat from time to time. One great thing which Dave, supported by the rest of us established was that teachers and the coordinators of programs did not have to have BA or MA to qualify as teachers. Thus Jack Olsen, the first coordinator for San Francisco, had only a high school diploma but a lifetime of experience in the trade union movement.

The point is that we still have on going labor studies in Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose after all these years and Dave Jenkins played a major role in making this possible.

And of course the same thing was done at San Francisco State College and another school in Los Angeles. In this case what we were aiming for was to enable students who wanted to have a degree in Labor Studies, that is an BA degree, to have some school which they could attend.

Students continue to pursue the advanced degree at SF State after they complete their work at the three area City Colleges I have described.

And of course Dave worked actively and hard to get the Labor Archives established as an essential part of the SF State program.

What is doing currently in Los Angeles I am not aware of.

I do know that initially Dave made any number of trips to LA to get the BA program started.

I hope this is helpful and if you want more information please call me.

As ever, *Paul*

Paul Chown
2509 Carquinez Avenue
El Cerrito, Calif 94530

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Malca Chall

Graduated from Reed College in 1942 with a B.A. degree, and from the State University of Iowa in 1943 with an M.A. degree in Political Science.

Wage Rate Analyst with the Twelfth Regional War Labor Board, 1943-1945, specializing in agriculture and services. Research and writing in the New York public relations firm of Edward L. Bernays, 1946-1947, and research and statistics for the Oakland Area Community Chest and Council of Social Agencies, 1948-1951.

Active in community affairs as director and past president of the League of Women Voters of the Hayward area specializing in state and local government; on county-wide committees in the field of mental health; on election campaign committees for school tax and bond measures, and candidates for school board and state legislature.

Employed in 1967 by the Regional Oral History Office interviewing in fields of agriculture and water resources. Also director, Suffragists Project, California Women Political Leaders Project, Land-Use Planning Project, and the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program Project.

Lisa Rubens

Received a B.A. in American History from the University of California at Berkeley, and an M.A. from the University of Michigan. After working for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, she taught United States History from 1969-1984 at Laney Community College, Oakland, California. She helped develop and taught a series of special-emphasis courses on the History of U.S. Labor, on the Social and Cultural History of Working People, and on Women.

During the 1970s Ms. Rubens was an organizer for the California Federation of Teachers and also began more scholarly endeavors. She has written on the 1934 Maritime and General Strike in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as on the role of women in California politics and labor.

Ms. Rubens is currently completing her Ph.D. in U.S. History at the University of California at Berkeley, where she is specializing in U.S. social, cultural, political and labor history during the 1930s. She continues to conduct oral histories in the field of labor history for the Regional Oral History Office.

