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Hadley Roff
*Hadley Roff: A Life in Politics, Government
and Public Service*

Interviews conducted by
Lisa Rubens
in 2012 and 2013

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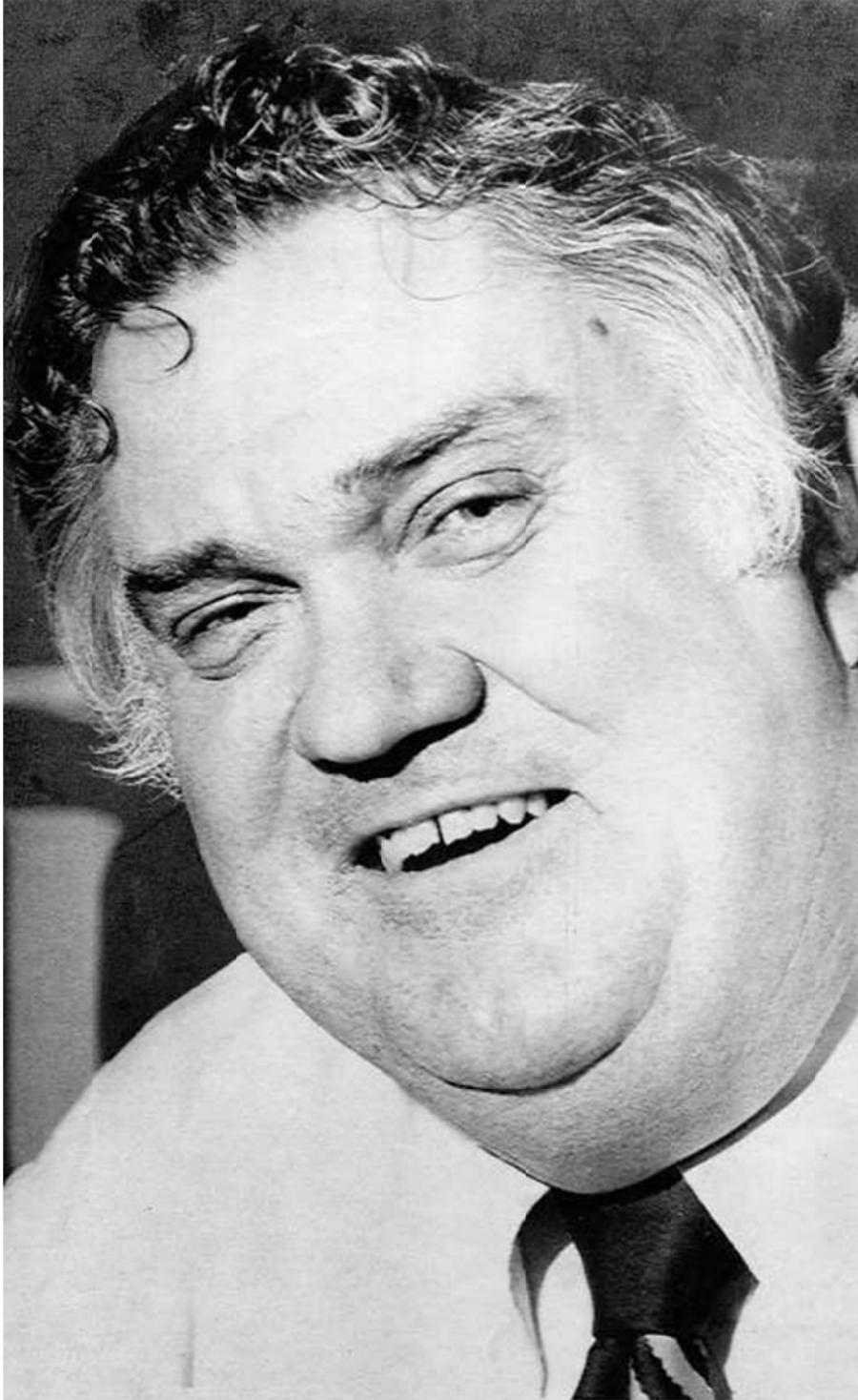
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Hadley Roff

Hadley Roff (1931-2016) was a top aid and advisor to four San Francisco mayors from 1967 to 1992: Joseph Alioto, Dianne Feinstein, Art Agnos and Frank Jordan. He attended Stanford University from 1950 to 1954 where he was editor of the *Stanford Daily*. From 1957 to 1964 he was a night beat reporter for the *S.F. News*. He became a vocal advocate for firefighter safety and was beloved by the San Francisco Fire Department, serving on the Fire Commission beginning in 1995. In these interviews, Roff recalls the turbulence in San Francisco in the 1970s and 1980s: Harvey Milk's and George Moscone's assassinations in 1978, Jonestown, the early years of the AIDS crisis. He recalls events on the national stage as they played out in San Francisco: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination and Watergate, among others. In 1992 Roff was press secretary for Dianne Feinstein's senatorial campaign, and head of her California senate staff office from 1992 to 1995.

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Hadley Roff’s Vitae

“My view is principally from the Mayor’s Office, Room 200” by Hadley Roff

Interview History by Lisa Rubens

Hadley Roff was a to-the-bone politico: he loved rubbing shoulders with voters on the street; he loved the intensity of electoral campaigns; and he loved serving the many outstanding politicians for whom he worked as press secretary or chief of staff, including four mayors of San Francisco (Alioto, Feinstein, Agnos and Jordan) and six senators (Cranston, Tunney, Muskie, Kennedy, Eagleton, Feinstein). He loved the give and take of politics. Though decidedly a liberal, he thought finding practical solutions for conflicting positions was essential. As he often opined: “On Wednesday you have to work with those you opposed on Tuesday.”

Born in 1931, he was a man of humble origins who lived for a while in a wood cabin and went to a one-room school. But as he recounts in this oral history, he had an un-quenchable thirst for learning about and understanding his world. He cringed at the sight of those in the ubiquitous bread lines and labor strikes during the Great Depression; and he was moved by the oratory of the giants he read about in newspapers, heard on the radio and saw in movie newsreels, such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Douglas MacArthur. Having earned a scholarship to Stanford University, he studied the science of politics and as the editor of the *Stanford Daily* he wrote about the McCarthy hearings and Adlai Stevenson’s campaign for president.

He worked as a reporter for several out-of-town newspapers before he ended up in San Francisco as a political reporter for the *S.F. News*. He learned how cities work and who were the important players and was plucked by Joseph Alioto, and then three more mayors, to be their chief deputy. While he entered the national political arena with his service to a succession of senators in Washington, D.C., and was at the center of some of the most celebrated issues of his day—his description of sitting with Ted Kennedy in small strategy meeting of senators immediately following the Watergate Saturday Night Massacre is riveting—his heart remained in San Francisco.

When Mayor Dianne Feinstein called him to become her chief of staff, he jumped on the first plane. His work for, observations of and friendship with now-Senator Feinstein is a keystone of this interview. This is matched by Feinstein’s statement: “Hadley Roff was a public servant and great friend. Never have I had a more loyal, stalwart partner and friend.”

Hadley Roff died in 2016, without reviewing this oral history. And during the course of our interview sessions he had a number of health crises. Yet his sharp mind and voracious capacity to stay abreast of current issues and the fray of politics is evident. While I pushed for more specifics on the many responsibilities he had throughout his career, he had an amazing capacity to offer the bigger picture—to establish the history and context of his work and those he worked with. His phone was always ringing throughout our interviews with people who wanted to know what he thought about an issue. His desk was a mound of newspapers and binders of his work, and pages of newly written reflections on his life in politics—a testament to his vitality even as

his body failed him. His apartment was filled with books in cases and on the floor, with photographs of himself with a who's who of politicians and labor leaders on his walls and his extensive collection of fire helmets on shelves rimming the ceiling.

It is evident throughout this oral history that "Had," as he referred to himself, was a self-effacing man. He continually praises people he worked with, offering great praise to their ideas and actions. It is also evident that he retained lifelong friendships, a voluminous Rolodex to use when he needed information, a favor, to manage an incident.

Interview 1 November 27, 2012

Audio File 1

01-00:00:10

Rubens: Good morning, Hadley. Today is the 27th of November 2012 and we're sitting in the living room of your apartment, you're at your desk with mounds of paper and books on it, and we're beginning your oral history. You told me you were born in 1931, almost the depth of the Great Depression. I guess '33 was the lowest point.

01-00:00:37

Roff: Of course, I wouldn't remember that much.

01-00:00:43

Rubens: But tell me about where this was and who your family was.

01-00:00:46

Roff: I was born in Fresno, California, December 16, 1931. Only child. And I have to confess, I don't know a great deal about the family history. The family had kind of scattered. My father's family—

01-00:01:10

Rubens: Well, who are your mother and father? Let's get their names.

01-00:01:27

Roff: My mother's name is Gertrude Olive—that may be a precursor of why I like martinis—Rea, R-E-A. Her antecedents came from Ireland. I can't tell you just when. Her mother, my grandmother, Mary Nagel, N-A-G-E-L, Rea, R-E-A, was born in 1877 in Grass Valley up in the Gold Country. And I can't tell you why she was there or why her family was there.

01-00:02:22

Rubens: Your mother's second generation?

01-00:02:23

Roff: Yes. And my father's family, I think—

01-00:02:29

Rubens: What was his name?

01-00:02:30

Roff: His first name is Fay, F-A-Y, Freeman, F-R-E-E-M-A-N, Roff, R-O-F-F. Not his immediate family but his antecedents, maybe a grandfather or something, had settled in the Midwest. And then the family moved to Fresno, California where his mother and father ran a packing plant. They packaged fancy fruits. In fact, they won the blue ribbon at the 1915 exposition here in San Francisco. It was a little blue ribbon on the wall. I was there [in Fresno] probably maybe the first two, three years. I have little fleeting memories. I remember getting a red hobbyhorse, which I thought was wonderful. I remember my dad taking me to the airport and I could see these old bi-wing planes wobble into the air. And I can still see them. But then the Depression—

01-00:03:53

Rubens: How did your parents meet?

01-00:03:55

Roff: I don't know. Well, the family had scattered and there were no grandparents other than the one grandmother, my mother's mother, who did live with us in my later teens before I went to college and actually was the one who was sort of there as the day-to-day as supervisor, guardian, what have you. But I'm sad to say I can't tell and there are no records that I can find, anyway, of the marriage.

01-00:04:40

Rubens: What did your father do?

01-00:04:41

Roff: Well, he worked with the—

01-00:04:43

Rubens: Your father worked in the family business.

01-00:04:44

Roff: Yes. But then that apparently—I say apparently because I don't know the deal but apparently that business failed during the Depression. And my father kind of drifted from job to job and from place to place. And we were dependent “on the kindness of strangers.” And as a child, preschool, four, five maybe, we moved to Bonny Doon of Santa Cruz. And because friends had had a fair sized ranch and it had several cabins, log cabins. And we could live there apparently rent-free. But my father had no steady employment when I was growing up and he did have some small income from whatever was left of the business but it was—

01-00:06:09

Rubens: Tough times.

01-00:06:11

Roff: —a difficult time. And then we were in this rural area. Of course, as a kid, an only kid in an area where there are no other kids really, it was a kind of constant exploration of trails and wilderness and I think I've had enough of the outdoors to last me forever. Now I feel if I'm outdoors, why, if I'm spending the night out in the country and hear crickets, boy, that's louder than any sound I'll ever hear in the city. I'm accustomed to all the sirens and the bellows and the horns. But just the little nature signs, argh. Anyway—

01-00:06:59

Rubens: And so did you feel that you were wanting in any way? There was food on the table?

01-00:07:08

Roff: No, no. I felt secure. I had the run of the place. The people had this wonderful German shepherd called Lobo who was born of a Lobo, the name of the dog. He was really mean. Except he just took to me as a guardian. In fact, my mother once got so angry that she slapped me, which I don't think had ever happened then or again. But she slapped me and that dog grabbed her hand and clamped those teeth. And I started school in a one-room schoolhouse, typical little wooden-steeple bell-tower Norman Rockwell country school.

Five kids. I think two were in the first grade and I think maybe a third grader and there were two in the sixth or something. And was there for a year. My memory is of just sitting in this classroom and getting stuck in the outhouse. I couldn't get the door open. That was embarrassing. But, again, the only kid, lots of time, this wonderful dog to protect me. Kind of life of kids, you begin to live in your imagination. And books were very important. Not books, we didn't have books, but magazines or things that I—

01-00:09:00

Rubens: Your parents didn't have books? Were they—

01-00:09:04

Roff: They weren't readers. They kept current with things. And I couldn't help as a child not be aware of the Depression. Some of the kids in that school came from real poverty. Very poor. Poorly dressed and living just day to day. And I can still think of driving with my dad down through some of the—we had some relatives in Watsonville and there was a strike in the fields. You could see the black and white police cars bristling with—and then you could see under a tree or an elm. You'd see all these sad fellows sort of bouncing on their haunches, sort of talking. You could see the lines at churches and other places for food. So even as a young kid, at least aware of not only of the number of people but the incredible looks on their faces. In some ways passive, in some ways anxious. But these grim, grim looks. Well, you can think of the Dorothea Lange pictures [shrugs; voice trails off]. And I have no idea why this would trigger in my mind as a relatively young kid. I became interested in how people reacted to their government. And that sounds pretentious as hell. I wasn't interested in article seven. I had no specific knowledge. But just the relationships between people and their ability to survive and whatever hope they might have, although their faces were seemingly hopeless. But I expected—

01-00:11:45

Rubens: Were your parents Democrats, or socially conscious?

01-00:11:51

Roff: Again, I don't think politics was ever discussed in the house. I don't know.

01-00:11:54

Rubens: Okay. Or did you listen to—

01-00:11:56

Roff: I presume we were Democrats because the only thing I know I think part of my reaction to politics was at a time when even a kid would feel the anxiety of my parents anxiety when it came time to pay the grocer, whether they had money enough. But they always listened to the Fireside Chats. Which were so marvelous. You can listen to them today. They're so marvelously reassuring.

My father died in 1940. We were then living in Santa Cruz proper. And there was nobody, a father figure, except for my uncle who was childless and who took a tremendous interest. He managed a--there was a family that owned the large department store in Santa Cruz called Leask's, L-E-A-S-K-S, apostrophe S. I don't know if those even exist now. And Uncle Jimmy would take an interest. But I would see him only irregularly. But there

was something so enormously warming and comforting and reassuring about Roosevelt's voice. That voice now, I still tear up when I hear it. I also really began reading.

Well, just back to chronology. We lived in Bonny Doon for, oh, I don't know, a year, a year and a half or so, and then moved to the Valley, to Gustine where my grandmother, my mother's mother, did what she did all her life, and that was to manage boarding houses and small hotels. And she managed the Gustine Hotel. And we, of course, get roomed there inexpensively. My father was around quite a bit during that period. He'd take me down to the train station. But I was very reluctant to go to the school because the first grade had this huge massive metropolitan population of about fifteen and I felt I was just, "Where am I?" — my little one room school. And I was scared to death of all these people. And so he would march me down the main street and we'd go into the always unlocked door of the volunteer fire department, put me in the driver's seat of this rickety old wagon that they had for about five minutes and that would be my pacifier. And by the time I got to school I was all right.

01-00:15:40
Rubens:

And, of course, you had a lifelong interest in fire trucks and engines.

01-00:15:42
Roff:

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. No, I can tell you every fire engine, every station in town and all of that. You see all the fire helmets [pointing to a shelf in the living room.]. Anyway, we were in Gustine and then moved to Santa Cruz where there was a home that had been owned by my father's parents but had been long rented out. He finally decided, "Well, why keep moving around the country?" We moved to then 206 King Street in Santa Cruz. And I started at Mission Elementary and Middle School.

01-00:16:27
Rubens:

So you're nine when your father dies?

01-00:16:31
Roff:

I was nine, yeah. And my mother didn't tell me. My father was not always a presence. He was a periodic drunk and he would go off for days. Never abusive, but he was just not a—but I remember peppering him with questions about did he know Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had become a figure in my mind. When I got to school—

01-00:17:19
Rubens:

So when he died, is that when your grandmother moved in with you?

01-00:17:24
Roff:

Well, we all sort of moved in, yes. She had become quite ill when she was managing this motel. She had managed an apartment building on Van Ness Avenue here also. She had three children, including my mother, all of whom were here during the 1906 earthquake, living in the park. So this was always glorified as The City, capital T, capital C. My grandmother would never think of venturing to San Francisco without her white gloves and little blue straw hat. And there was a kind of democracy in the sense that even persons who were in menial jobs and all, they still dressed to go downtown and there was kind of that sense we're San Franciscan. So there was always The City.

01-00:18:25

Rubens: Did you make any visits to the city?

01-00:18:27

Roff: Oh, yes. We had the World's Fair [1939] and my uncle, who headed the department store, would bring me up to San Francisco. After the start of World War II, I was very much interested in following the arrows and the maneuvers and the maps that were in the newspapers of the battles. And he'd park me in the lobby of the Saint Francis and he'd go off on his visits. But the lobby—[Interview interrupted by telephone call.]

01-00:19:23

Rubens: By the way, is that uncle your father's brother?

01-00:19:32

Roff: No, it's my mother's sister's husband.

01-00:19:42

Rubens: So he would—

01-00:19:42

Roff: Yes, bring me up to San Francisco. And park me in the lobby of the Saint Francis Hotel, which was then the kind of hotel for the generals either going to or coming from the Pacific battle areas. And I would get their autographs. I remember being turned down, however, by a Marine general, a Marine major general, which would be a very high rank. Oh, surrounded by his staff. And apparently he was just going overseas and, of course, apparently it was top secret that he was going to be moved overseas. And here's this little kid with a little autograph book. Well, I didn't necessarily look like an Asian James Bond but he wouldn't sign. "I'm sorry, son, I just cannot do it." And he sent his chief of staff over to explain. They couldn't do it. But I did get autographs. I got Thomas Kincaid, who was the last of the battleship admirals. He fought the battle of Leyte Gulf in 1944 and a number of others. We had come up for a business day, which turned out to be V-J Day. You couldn't move in the city. And the town was, of course, just riotous. Just joyful. But I think the military, the absolutely sterling role of Roosevelt and the fact that Roosevelt — my father had died, although some years before Roosevelt — I think in some subconscious way, was kind of a figure I looked up to him. And his death, I was ill for several days. And I had asthma at the time. But, again, there was always this confluence. One, the war, the interest in the battles, and then these kind of mammoth heroic figures that were dominant on the world stage. Roosevelt and Churchill and the awfulness of Hitler and yet his ability to sway a fairly sedate nation. It was [shrugs, trails off]. And, again, I was fascinated: why did anyone want to follow someone like that.

01-00:22:33

Rubens: Since we're on that vein, Roosevelt dies in '44 and then are you aware of the forming of the UN here?

01-00:22:42

Roff: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I came up to one of the sessions. I'd go listen to the local congressman speak at a church supper just to hear a congressman. And the first magazine I subscribed to what was then *US News & World Report*. It was *World Report*, then it became *US News*

& *World Report*. I really just was interested in politics. In junior high I had what I wish every student, every young person could have, was a teacher so wonderfully outstanding. Hideously dictatorial. Totally authoritarian. Not that she forced her beliefs on you. But if the homework wasn't done [gestures and vocalizes as if to mean no need to explain and never mind]. And somewhat undemocratic because she would select, never announcing but it became obvious, select students who she'd really begin to push. And Gwen [Gwendolyn] Bohn was one of those absolutely stupendous teachers. She was absolutely one of these persons who could either scare the wits out of a kid or turn him off totally or her off or just excite. I was so miserable when my mother kept saying I was staying up too late to read and she actually went to the principal to complain about Ms. Bohn. And I remember my footsteps plopping toward that classroom the following day thinking, "What is she going to say to me? Oh, my God." But Gwen was wonderful. The public schools in Santa Cruz at that time in the forties and fifties were quite good schools and I had a scholarship to Stanford. But, again, Paula—

01-00:25:10

Rubens:

Let's get you to high school first.

01-00:25:12

Roff:

Yes, yes. But because I had been an asthmatic I was kind of limited in what I could do physically. And although I outgrew it I still did not participate in any sports activity other than as the team manager or the "blah" [whatever]. But I always ran for student council. I don't think I was one of those awful eager beavers but I guess I was. I remember partic—

01-00:26:07

Rubens:

We're talking about in high school now.

01-00:26:07

Roff:

No, we're still talking about being in junior high. And I remember speaking, being in speech contests and talking about current affairs and hardly erudite but it was interesting and it just stimulated my thinking and I began seriously to buy and read books on history and biography. They would ask for a report on something at school and instead of turning in five pages I'd write endlessly. Of course, couldn't spell. That was always a problem. Junior high was, as I say, I got an eye opener with this one particular teacher. And then in high school I was very much involved in the news. The newspaper attracted me. And I was an editor of the *Santa Cruz Trident*, the name of the school paper. Then I was student body president. Defeating one of the top athletes. And not that I took pride in that but that's the only office I ever held.

I ended high school in '47. Roosevelt had died. But Truman was such an interesting person. Here, suddenly taking the reins of this aristocratic semi-secretive, or not semi, very secretive President in the sense he worked often without divulging what he was really doing. And here came Truman, not even knowing that we were about to drop the atomic bomb and to see how he was able to step into Roosevelt's shoes. Roosevelt was by then, at least among Democrats, was looked upon as sort of as a semi-God practically. And I'd been following his career and then I arranged to go up to the legislature and to spend time talking to the legislators. And by then the ambition to go to politics, not to run

necessarily, but just to know the motivation behind politics and, again, what were the elements that motivated? Were they emotional? I sound now a little more sophisticated than I was then. But just what motivated? And especially what motivated a person seemingly to go against their own personal interest and involve themselves in efforts that were I thought counter-productive for them. The working stiffs who were voting Republican. I still can't figure them out.

01-00:30:21

Rubens: Were you following any particularly representatives from Santa Cruz?

01-00:30:23

Roff: Well, I was just sort of generally interested. And then I was doing some pickup work at the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*.

01-00:30:30

Rubens: While you were in high school?

01-00:30:32

Roff: In high school.

01-00:30:35

Rubens: Doing what?

01-00:30:36

Roff: There was a weekend editor who wanted lots of features. She went on to the San Diego paper and was a very outstanding editor and she kind of encouraged me. And I would go up and I'd interview political figures. Very juvenile. If I saw them now, I'd probably retch. But I remember [Estes] Kefauver. He was very nice. Adlai Stevenson. Well, I was in college when Stevenson ran. But, again, I was getting to write about politicians. Actually sitting down with people of some note. And then I became student body president at Santa Cruz High School. And probably the only English honors student ever to graduate from Santa Cruz that went and failed the English entrance exam at Stanford the next day.

01-00:32:11

Rubens: So high school was a good experience for you?

01-00:32:12

Roff: Good experience. In a city that was a kind of tightly knit smaller city, people knew one another. And if a kid, not necessarily me, but if a kid got a reputation of being somebody who's a hard worker, people would be supportive. They'd always say something nice, encouraging. And I was in all the contests and got the DAR award. Good God.

01-00:33:01

Rubens: By the way, was your high school journalism teacher or sponsor important?

01-00:33:07

Roff: I can't even think of the journalism teacher's name.

01-00:33:11

Rubens: Yeah, so he wasn't a critical figure for you?

01-00:33:11

Roff: No. But the editor had a fair latitude. I can't think who the advisor was.

01-00:33:22

Rubens: Well, editor in chief, you're choosing your own stories, I would I think.

01-00:33:26

Roff: Yeah.

01-00:33:37

Rubens: You know you want to go to college?

01-00:33:41

Roff: Oh, I know I want to go to college. There was no doubt about that. And, again, I have no idea of any kind of rational process. College just seemed to be the inevitable step. Also, if I had any reason, it was to get out of Santa Cruz for someplace bigger.

01-00:34:08

Rubens: I assume your parents weren't college educated?

01-00:34:12

Roff: No, as I say, my mother would worry that I was becoming too reclusive, too antisocial, too whatever. As I say, went to complain about being too studious.

01-00:34:36

Rubens: Do you have an idea where you want to go?

01-00:34:38

Roff: No, not particularly. Cal was always the college that seemed the one that would sort of be most welcoming to somebody of my economic background. But I got a scholarship to Stanford.

01-00:35:11

Rubens: How did that come about?

01-00:35:14

Roff: Well, Stanford hosted the first Model United Nations, and then insisted on playing the villain in the sense that it assumed the role of the Soviet Union. I can't again think of his name but the head of the Soviet delegation, was a graduate student at Hoover Institute in Russian studies. So he had a very exacting knowledge about Russia and all of us were really drilled so that we became total obstructionists. And the final day, I finally walked out. I thought, "Well, at least they should go back to their campuses." And I was just reamed. "You did what? You're not even supposed to— [shrugs, voice trails off.] But I thought, "My God, you were supposed to— " And I went back. We were just stymied. One of the things the delegation did, we refused to let the Hearst newspaper, the *Examiner*, take our pictures. And that, of course, that nearly blew the tops off all the administrators.

01-00:36:33

Rubens: Were you the organizer of this protest?

01-00:36:35

Roff: No, I was head of one of the agencies, UNESCO.

01-00:36:40

Rubens: And the Hearst corporation was particularly offensive because —

01-00:36:45

Roff: Oh, because of how rabidly anti-communist they were. We were being a little over the top. But that got me a scholarship to Stanford. That was the decision. That was it. So, I graduated high school and started Stanford in 1950.

01-00:37:19

Rubens: Boy, that must have been a new world for you.

01-00:37:21

Roff: It was. Yes. Yes. I found it difficult to adjust because there you really are more on your own.

01-00:37:35

Rubens: You lived on campus?

01-00:37:36

Roff: Well, at that time, at least for your first two years, I think, you had to live on campus. And I did well enough but I let a lot of things slide. Then I became interested in the *Daily* and eventually became editor of the *Stanford Daily* and involved in school news. But I thought I was running the *Chicago Tribune* or something and not the *Stanford Daily*.

01-00:38:18

Rubens: So was that your senior year?

01-00:38:19

Roff: I was editor the senior year, yes.

01-00:38:22

Rubens: How long had you been on the paper?

01-00:38:26

Roff: Well, I guess I joined the paper as a freshman. I don't know, either freshman or sophomore. I've forgotten. But a lot of friends, friends I still have, who were interested in things, contemporary things, go back to that time. And I guess my mother was so concerned that I would be so antisocial that I probably wouldn't get along at Stanford. We had a cousin who was at Stanford so I guess he was strong-armed into trying to get me into a fraternity, which was probably the most stupid thing I ever did in my life.

01-00:39:15

Rubens: But you did do it?

01-00:39:16

Roff: I did, yeah. Maybe I am anti-social but I was—I didn't like it. I got a good education at Stanford. Academically did okay, mainly because I did stuff I didn't like. Of course, I would start a class but didn't like it and then I'd be too lazy to sign out and then I'd get an incomplete. But I still regret that I didn't go to something like Cal. I never did have a little red roadster at Stanford, which is—

01-00:41:23

Rubens: Do you remember anything particularly that you wrote about when you were the editor? Did you have a certain focus or interests?

01-00:41:29

Roff: Well, no, I wrote anything when I was writing. I was editing papers, first political editor. And Joe McCarthy was riding high. We'd listen to these broadcasts that were terrible hours, late at night when he'd speak in the east and we'd hear it out. When he finally came to the Bay Area to speak, and I can still see this B25, two engines, a big nose, light bomber, and it was painted a brown and it had a dazzling green color. A very stylish looking plane. And the plane landed and a little flap came down from the bottom of the plane. Little ladder. And then these two legs come. And then we watched these two legs just stand there. No body. It was cut off by the entrance to the plane. And finally he came. And finally he was introduced. He had been saying, "There are 109 Communists in the military and I have that list here." So finally he was quoting name one, which turned out to be a dentist. A dentist in some remote station. He wouldn't be a threat unless he put in a poisoned tooth into George Patton's mouth or something. Anyway, but he spoke and I wrote a long piece on that.

And I also covered, which was one of the more exciting events I think I've ever seen, General Douglas MacArthur's return. He'd been fired by Truman, as you know. And he flew back, arrives in San Francisco International about, oh, I don't know, fairly—it was dark—but fairly—maybe eight o'clock, maybe. And they built rows of fences inside the parameters of the airport because they knew there'd be huge crowds and they were afraid the [trailing off]. And the place, of course, was absolutely just mobbed with people. And the police were guarding the gates closest to the runway. This great silvery constellation, four motors, this big silver tri-tail. The last of the real propeller driven planes. And landed in all this glory.

01-00:44:53

Rubens: And you're there?

01-00:44:54

Roff: Oh, yeah. All this glory of light. And then it stopped and nothing happened. And the crowd just silent. And a door opened. So this little dark U in the side of the plane. And nothing happened. And nothing happened. And then suddenly he was in the middle saluting. Well, that crowd went absolutely bonkers. And as he said in his speech later that week, or within a week when he went to West Point, that, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." Well, he did. But when he stood out, no matter what you might have thought of him, no matter how egotistical he may have been, no matter how brilliant or whether he was a Dugout Doug, as some of his soldiers called him, he was a towering

figure. He knew how to command. Just stood in this silent splendor and saluted and that crowd had been so quiet and then just burst into frenzy. And then he drove through the crowd waving to everyone.

When I wrote an editorial about McCarthy and said that we should guard against persons making wild accusations without proof, I was summoned to the president's office. Wallace Sterling, who was this huge, huge bear of a man. As usual, I didn't have any clean shirts and my roommate was about seven feet three or something. So I took one of his and his cuffs came down [gesturing below his hands.] Anyway, I go to see Sterling. "How do you do, Mr. Roff?" "How do you do, Mr. President?" He says, "Do you know, Mr. Roff, you have cost this university two million dollars?" And I thought to myself, well, at a nickel a month, I could just— And I had written this anemic typical acned little editorial about this sort of suggesting maybe we should worry about this creepy guy. And dear God.

01-00:47:58

Rubens:

But there was no censorship? You had done it? It was—

01-00:48:00

Roff:

At that time there could be no political activity on campus. Believe it or not. At the university, we had to meet off campus if we were to do anything political. There was an Eisenhower Club and I for a moment flirted with a Republican candidate. I wrote my first press release. Fortunately didn't get printed. And then I came to San Francisco to hear Adlai Stevenson speak at the Palace Hotel. And I walked in early, the long corridor into the hotel—

01-00:48:40

Rubens:

This must be '52 when he's running for president against Eisenhower.

01-00:48:42

Roff:

Yes. And here he was all curled into one of those wingback chairs in the hallway, all bent over and holding a little ringed school pad writing out his speech. Oh. And then he gave this dazzling speech. Just the words. That was it. One brief flirtation with a Republican, with Eisenhower, but Adlai won my heart.

01-00:49:21

Rubens:

Did you literally get to interview him? Did you meet him?

01-00:49:25

Roff:

I got his autograph— as far as I got. The first president I met—it was about that same period. Truman was still president. He came to San Francisco, then he was going down the Valley by train and I rode the first leg—got as far as Fresno or something. And he had a press conference and we were told it would be off the record. And here are all the Scotty Restons and all the journalistic heroes and here is Truman, and I'm there. And I wanted to take notes. I wanted to sort of remember how the light was and wearing his hat. And I wasn't quoting him at all. And suddenly this fellow with a little thing in his ear and dark glasses, he took my notebook, said, "Thank you." And then I took a picture.

01-00:50:34

Rubens: So how'd you get his autograph?

01-00:50:36

Roff: Oh, I walked with him. I guess this came later, after he left the presidency. But he would stay at the Fairmont and then he'd take these early morning walks. So everybody would be traipsing after him. And there's a picture of me looking absolutely like some crazed person, like I'm about to pull out a nine millimeter. But Adlai was really the first introduction, being involved in a working campaign in a very minor local level. But the phones ringing and people running around. Frankly, I loved it. And, of course, his speeches were so—I remember he used the word that dealing with Russia was like, "Shaking the iron dice." I don't know what that did mean but it's a nice phrase, though.

01-00:52:00

Rubens: We have about ten minutes, a little less on this tape. Let's talk about if you had decided what you wanted to do when you knew your time at Stanford was coming to an end. You were editor of the *Daily*. You had had these experiences.

01-00:52:20

Roff: But again, it was all kind of inchoate. The Stanford journalism school was run by a formidable old journalist who was well respected in San Francisco. And he had worked out an internship program with the *San Francisco News*, at that time one of four daily papers in San Francisco. But it was an afternoon paper competing with the *Call Bulletin* at the time. *Examiner* and the *Chronicle* were morning papers. But the *News* had an intern program because it was probably the least profitable of the papers.

01-00:53:04

Rubens: Wasn't it known as a liberal newspaper politically?

01-00:53:06

Roff: The liberal working man, union, union paper. And I had an internship and I was hoping, it might lead to a job. But they didn't have any. So I worked for a time in Bend, Oregon, on the *Bend Bulletin*.

01-00:53:37

Rubens: You just applied?

01-00:53:38

Roff: Well, again, this is a Stanford tie.

01-00:53:41

Rubens: Oh, okay.

01-00:53:42

Roff: While I was at Stanford, I met an older student, Bob Chandler. He had been a copy boy at the *Chronicle* on December 7, '41, and almost single-handedly put out an extra. And then he went in the Marines and then he got married and then he worked on newspapers, *Denver Post*, and *Oregonian* and then he decided, "I'm going to go back and get that degree." And he got it and then he bought this paper in Bend, Oregon. And that paper had been established by a Harvard graduate who was thought to be one of the most dazzling

prospects from Harvard but his wife had tuberculosis. They located in Bend for her health and he started this paper, even though it was small and didn't quite reach the—but it was written with such authority, his editorials and all. Anyway, Bob took the thing over, and there were only five staffers. But, again, here I had a contact with somebody whom I knew, knew at Stanford who understood what it takes to kind of mold a young journalist who took an interest in me. It was very supportive.

01-00:55:23

Rubens:

Well, he liked you. Obviously liked your writing.

01-00:55:25

Roff:

I don't know. And I was cheap. But I kept writing to San Francisco. And finally an opening did occur on the *News* as night sports editor. Now, you could search the world and probably find no one less knowledgeable about sports than I. I had to go to work with the *World Almanac* tucked under my shirt to find out who's in the NFL. That job didn't last very long, mainly because there was a huge championship fight, I've forgotten between whom, and it was one of those crunching, crashing blows and the spit and the rubber guards flying and the eyes rolling back. So I dummied this dramatic picture, five columns on it. And my job was sort of to get the paper all set so that the morning man would come in and make any last minute changes, and then would see that the material got to the press room and it was typed up or put on the lithograph, linotype. Anyway, that afternoon—I was living in a little dump on Pine Street. And I walk out and I put my nickel in and ding, ding, ding, ding. And I pull out the copy and open the sports page and here's a five column picture, all right, of three of the most buxom DAR women you've ever seen with badges and sashes. The guy who was supposed to sort of button up the whole thing down in the morning had come in apparently with a terrible—you know, drunk, and swept a hand across the desktop, threw everything on the floor, and then went to sleep. So when they went to press they couldn't find the picture. When I opened that paper and saw, that was the slowest walk I've ever taken. I don't think anybody walking to death row would walk any slower than I. Oh. Well, they decided they'd put me on the copy desk. And the other guy, unfortunately [trailing off]. Was sad. I was put on the copy desk. Now, of course, my one great failing as an English major and honors student was that I didn't know how to spell. Well, that didn't last very long.

01-00:58:11

Rubens:

That's a day job.

01-00:58:12

Roff:

That's the day job. And then they said, "Well, gee, we don't have anybody just roaming the city at night just picking up stories. Here, we'll give you a car with a police radio and you just sort of follow-up and see what you can find." My God, that was just fantastic. And I covered anything and everything and, oh, got all these wonderful features. Got to know the city and got to know probably every saloon from here to probably beyond West Portal even. But then I began more and more to report on politics and then that led to being asked to work in campaigns and the papers allowed that at the time because the salaries were so small. By then I had married and kids were coming and—

01-00:59:16

Rubens: Well, we'll get to all that in a minute. How long were you in Bend, Oregon?

01-00:59:17

Roff: Probably about a year or maybe a little less. Then there was a little stint afterwards at the *Stockton Record* but that's not worth—

01-00:59:29

Rubens: Oh, you didn't mention that.

01-00:59:30

Roff: I went to the *Stockton Record*. That was at least 400 miles closer to San Francisco. But I had my sights on San Francisco all along.

01-00:59:40

Rubens: And so the *Record* got you closer? Is that why you—

01-00:59:42

Roff: Yeah. And they also paid more. But Bend was important because the editor was so aware of how to be helpful to a young journalist and how to coach him and how to suggest a better—and just how to cover things. Kind of a dull town. I remember arriving in Bend and I had driven up through California and came to a sign: Bend, Oregon, next right, or maybe next left. I turned and the next thing I saw was a sign, "Hurry back." And I'm like, God, I haven't been here yet.

01-01:00:41

Rubens: That's funny. I think we're going to run out of tape so why don't we stop. I think we got to exactly where I expected but there's much more detail to add. So next time I'd like to begin with your working for the *News*. Now, how long were you with the *News*?

01-01:01:09

Roff: Let's see, I graduated in '50. Probably '56 by the time I got there. Again, I'm not—

01-01:01:34

Rubens: Okay. So I think maybe what we should start next time with how you found San Francisco. Just sort of your overview.

01-01:01:44

Roff: This brought up a lot of memories. I want to go back. I talked about the impressions I had of the Depression, but after my father died and we were living in Santa Cruz and my grandmother cared for me at home, my mother worked. I think she worked for fifty bucks a week as a seamstress. But I can remember her at the end of the month in tears thinking about having to go to the local grocer and the others to ask for extensions, problems that people are probably going through now. But I think it brought home all the more vividly to me, at least, the impact of the Depression.

Interview 2: December 4, 2012

Audio File 2

02-00:00:00

Rubens: You had some memories and observations you want to talk about.

02-00:00:1123

Roff: Well, I've been thinking about so many things that came up in our last conversation and it's just made me think a little bit more about certain things that were always bothersome in my mind and still are. I guess I best summarize it by the faces of people, the contrast among people. I was thinking as a youngster, and why I was sort of really kind of prematurely interested in politics. But I think part of it was just the visuals, *Life Magazine*, then no television, and the radio. But partly the contrast between the avuncular Franklin Roosevelt and the kind of menacing hysteric Hitler ranting and stomping and I remember there was a face that I think of, not often, of a young Nazi youth on the drums with his furrowed frantic look. His brow knotted, his eyes just ablaze, banging away at this drum. Some of the images from Leni Riefenstahl.

And, again, looking at the lines of people at soup kitchens or a picket line or wherever. I think I mentioned my mother weeping one time because she couldn't pay the grocer. I had no personal hardship. I never felt deprived. I had everything I wanted as a kid. But I remember one time I wanted to go to see the movie *Bambi* about the little deer and the little rabbit, Thumper. I don't know, I was five or six or something. And my mother didn't have the fifteen cents or twenty-five cents or whatever it was for a ticket. I never saw the movie. And I have often thought of it. Every kid has seen it. [laughter]. But I was aware of the contrast of people. Why would people so surrender their reason to a strutting authoritarian like Hitler? Yet there was far more reason on this, in dealing with Roosevelt and the New Deal and all, approaching many of the same economic issues and the deep deprivation of part of the population, some with hopelessness. You can think of the Dust Bowl and all. But from a far less militant point of view. And even though they might have no immediate hope, there was always kind of a thought that somehow things would get better and that the community would somehow rally, either under the auspices of government or as neighbors would do on the frontier, I suppose. We'd all come together to build the barn or feed the sick or whatever was necessary. But a sense of community where people truly did cooperate and empathize one with the other. And I'm always interested in how the mind worked in these different situations. Now that sounds very sophisticated as I'm portraying that. As a kid, I was not aware of it in quite that detail. But thought this could—

But it encouraged me just from the time I was young. I can still so vividly see the pickets and the people in the food and soup lines and I remember going to a Ham and Eggs Rally, which was a political movement, EPIC, Upton Sinclair. I saw the circus he was on. Well, I was in the school, but I noted it. We'd have political circuses now but they tend to be more annihilation derbies than they are anything fun or constructive.

02-00:05:11

Rubens: Just parenthetically, do you read *The New Yorker*?

02-00:05:13

Roff: Yes.

02-00:05:14

Rubens: Because there was a wonderful story about the public relations firm Whitaker and Baxter.

02-00:05:19

Roff: Oh, that was an excellent story. It was a really good story they told because they were really the first who really professionalized political campaigns. And I think it's now professionalized to the point where it's become a detriment between voter and candidate rather than a working instrument. But we can get into that later.

02-00:05:41

Rubens: My only point being that it really begins with the 1934 election where Upton Sinclair ran, for governor and that firm brutally attacked his campaign. Greg Mitchel writes about that in *Campaign of the Century*.

02-00:05:45

Roff: Right. Well, *The New Yorker's* one of my favorites anyway. And that was a particularly interesting piece. When I was first in the newspaper business, Whitaker and Baxter were really renowned, representing business, representing more conservative elements. They un-did Upton Sinclair by using the little daily quotes that were taken in large measure from dialogue in his books. Had nothing to do with him personally, just something that he'd said on the stump. But they'd reference in a book what one of the characters said. Well, it may be a little unfair but—

02-00:06:39

Rubens: I've interrupted your narrative, but I'm curious if you came up against them in your later campaigns?

02-00:06:45

Roff: No. I was—

02-00:06:48

Rubens: They weren't a factor in the Shelley or Alioto campaigns?

02-00:06:50

Roff: No, no. They went out. I've forgotten when—he [Clem Whitaker] died. And I think they suspended their political operations largely in the mid-fifties. But I don't know. I think she [Leone Baxter] remained active as a kind of consultant but not the actual campaign manager. Spencer Roberts was the big Republican guru when I was starting out.

Anyway, there's always been this interest I've had in people's faces and behavior and contrasts among—and I've always sort of pondered this. And I've carried this kind of interest all through my life. I've read scores of books and tried to in my own mind figure out why people behave in certain ways and why they respond. Part of it is sort of a professional question that I had later in life as a political consultant trying to figure out

what would appeal to voters and would make them vote for someone. And it's a tricky business.

Then I began to think a little bit more about the experience of a, then it would be ten years old, of a kid who was interested in history and all, in World War II, because here was history on the front pages exploding every day. And I can think of so many manifestations. The sudden surprise of Pearl Harbor. I can think of my grandmother coming out of her room—who really raised me while my mother worked. My father had died and my mother worked. Our grandmother left us but she was the principal guardian of my upbringing and she came out and said, “There's something on the radio about someplace called Pearl Harbor.” And I said, “That couldn't be Pearl Harbor?” And she said, “Yes,” and that it's bombed. And, of course, there was always worry in Santa Cruz which is on the coast but a few miles, sixty, seventy miles south of San Francisco, but, of course, it would be the obvious invasion point for any direct Japanese assault on this country. Now, of course, that's fantasy.

02-00:09:40

Rubens:

Well, you had mentioned there was something off of the coast of Santa Barbara.

02-00:09:45

Roff:

There were very early on. We'd had a couple of blackouts. They'd actually evacuated people from around the beachfront. So people were wandering the streets. It was dramatic and we were all glued to the radio. No lights, blankets on the window, and still no lights. We had a front door with a very small little glass opening. And one of my dearest, closest friends at the time was the son of the owner of the local Chinese restaurant, Daniel Lee, and he and I traded comic books. So he came one day to trade comic books and dutifully rang the doorbell and was looking through the glass. And my grandmother, again was coming from the back room, took one look at this person looking at her through the glass and shouted, “They've come, they've come,” [laughter] thinking of course, that the whole Japanese army was outside our house. And poor John. I went chasing after him and he was running down the street and these comic books that he'd brought were fluttering out of his arms like little seagulls. They just floated around.

Anyway, and I could see him coming up the street. It's a picture of my uncle who had a local department store; he was my father in absentia for my real one. He'd bring me up to the department store. He brought me up to San Francisco when he went on buying trips and other times. Once we went up to the top of Coit Tower one time and looked down at San Francisco Bay, which was absolutely chockablock full. It was almost as if every square inch had a big gray ship. There was an aircraft carrier sort of off by Treasure Island. You could see a cruiser with all its guns bristling going out the Golden Gate. Little submarine slinky in black coming up under the Bay Bridge. And it was just this huge massive array of cargo ships and fighting vessels and brought at least this sort of one collective picture at least to this kid. A sense of the immensity of this monster war and just the number of people involved. We had a naval hospital that took over one of the hotels along the waterfront in Santa Cruz, the Castle Del Rey. And we had a lot of marines and sailors who had been wounded on their crutches, in their wheelchairs. We saw those.

And then I went on another shopping trip to San Francisco with my uncle and it turned out to be V-J Day. But we were stuck in San Francisco. The town was absolutely massively wild. We had gone into the theater to see *G.I. Joe*, which was just a picture lifted largely from the cartoons of Dave Breger. And we came out. It was fairly quiet on the street when we went in but apparently the end of the war was announced. And we came out and Market Street was just a sea, a huge raging torrent of people. And the clang of the streetcars trying to make their way through the crowd, impossible. And I remember realizing there was no way we could get a car and get out. We stayed at the Bellevue Hotel and I can remember looking out the window and you'd see the water bags. Bags filled with water being thrown from upper windows at the Clift across the street from the Bellevue. And they'd cave in the cars as they'd pass by, the roofs would be dented.

02-00:14:19

Rubens:

What was the point of the water balloons?

02-00:14:20

Roff:

They filled many bags with water and they threw them. Of course, they were heavy and they'd come down and they'd bang on the roof of a car, the car would cave in.

02-00:14:28

Rubens:

Well, was that a celebratory—

02-00:14:29

Roff:

Yeah. Who knows. The place was nuts. We went to the Ice Follies. And they had one great long chorus line. Well, I think the number one skater skidded as soon as she got out and all the people were falling down. And I remember there was a couple copulating on the hood of a car. And that was of some interest to me at thirteen, I'll tell you.

Anyway, the war again was one of these vivid experiences where the contrasts were strong. We thought our cause among the Allies was righteous. And, of course, had two of the world's most articulate leaders as our spokespersons, Roosevelt and Churchill, against the rantings of Hitler, and a war that was tragic. One of the scenes from V-J Day, when we were walking out of the hotel, there was a group of about five American Japanese soldiers, persons who'd served at, I think, the 442nd Central Postal Directory. But it was a group that had been—[Daniel] Inouye, who is now in the Senate was in that. They were sent to the European theater and put into some of the most horrendous battles imaginable, I think deliberately on the part of some of the—their superiors were just racist. Well, the unit emerged with more medals I think than any other unit. I can remember the five. And I was always very keen about all the ribbons and the decorations. And I know that two of the men, two of the five, had Distinguished Service Crosses which are next to the Congressional Medal. These are persons who were considerable heroes. They saw this absolutely kinetic frantic hysteria around them.

02-00:17:17

Rubens:

And you were watching them?

02-00:17:18

Roff: They were just standing there. They were just in the crowd and they were just standing. But when you realize, well, they must be glad that the war in which they played such a major and heroic and bloody part and where they paid such a sacrifice, many, many were killed, was over, but also maybe a sense of concern for relatives who may still be in Japan, for the fact that we had dropped a nuclear holocaust on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

02-00:17:55

Rubens: And that some of them had their own families in a concentration camp here in the U.S.

02-00:17:57

Roff: May have had them. I had no idea. I don't know. I'm just looking at their faces and imagining what they're thinking. There was just such a serious look. It wasn't a look of disapproval. I'm sure they're glad that they weren't going to have to go to confront this. But it was just a vivid snapshot of persons who might have some very understandable ambivalence about the war. And it just is one of those things that's stuck in the back of my mind. It was so striking and I was always fascinated by the decorations. I think one of them may have had the Congressional Medal but I can't be quite sure. But it was just, again, this look, the face. And this quiet look. Anyway, it was just something that just absolutely just stuck in mind.

I was thirteen at the end of the war and finished high school. And, as I mentioned I think, I was fortunate to go to the public schools in Santa Cruz at the time and I don't think it's just my naked braggadocio about the schools but it had some excellent teachers that really encouraged you.

02-00:19:41

Rubens: You talked about the Model UN and the role of an English teacher.

02-00:19:44

Roff: Yes. So I went through all of that and got the scholarship to Stanford on the basis of participating in the Model UN and other things, had been the student body president.

02-00:19:58

Rubens: So should I bring you up to where we left off last time?

02-00:20:00

Roff: Yes.

02-00:20:03

Rubens: Well, it's a nice segue way, really, from being in San Francisco at the end of the war to now being in San Francisco as a beat reporter at the *News* ten years later, in 1956.

02-00:20:15

Roff: And Stanford provided a network. So many friends or associates reconnected and had jobs. That's how I got the job in Bend.

02-00:20:42

Rubens:

And you were moving through a few assignments, including copy editor and night beat reporter. You said, "Oh, that was so wonderful," having a car, a police radio. Tell me what that was like.

02-00:20:53

Roff:

Well, I mentioned before there were four active daily papers, highly competitive. There were two in the morning, The *Examiner* and the *Chronicle*, two in the afternoon, the *News* and the *Call Bulletin*. And the difference was that the morning papers were the larger ones with the full days. The afternoon papers tended to be a little more sensational, looking for feature stories, running race results, and things like that. But they had no overnight reporter. They had Jack Rosenbaum, who was the columnist there for years and years and years. But he did columns. And they had a night sports guy, which I was, and then they finally got one who knew what he was doing. They decided to have a night reporter and they had a radio car. By a radio car I mean, one with a police radio. They gave me the key, told me [trailing off]. And I was just to sort of drive around and listen to the police radio. Or if there were night meetings at the school board, cover those, or whatever it might be. Well, I did cover the school board. The person that became very helpful to me was Irving Breyer, who was the father of Stephen and Charles Breyer. One's on the Supreme Court and one is on the district court here. But he was the lawyer there. And he was very patient in explaining the background. I got to know some of the officials and I covered a number of major incidents.

One was called the Land Brothers fire. Land Brothers was a sporting goods store on Market Street, I think between Fourth and Third, I'm not quite sure, but about that area of Market. And the fire began in the basement and it got into a store or a closet filled with ping-pong balls. And ping-pong balls give off a hideously noxious gas and suddenly the firefighters were staggering from the building, some having to be carried out screaming because what the gas did was expand the blood vessels in the head. Had excruciating, excruciating headaches. And they were coming out. They'd fall at your feet. I remember the chief said, "You've got to help." I went down to the hospital that was then Harbor Emergency. They had small emergency hospitals throughout the city and Harbor was down off Battery down by the waterfront. And there were these men that were on the floor. And we were giving them oxygen. One of the firefighters died. But I went on a crusade. I started writing articles about the need for modern breathing apparatus, tanks, for the firefighters. They used to take oxygen, pure oxygen. But oxygen excites people and they tend to overdo. And wanted something that was really compressed air that would keep the heartbeat and everything a little more regular. And we succeeded and the city bowed and bought the—so the fire department was always very helpful to me.

02-00:25:06

Rubens:

Well, they must have been grateful to you.

02-00:25:08

Roff:

Well, they were and I became very close to the chief, to Bill Murray, who was kind of another one of these persons of mention. Older man. Very thoughtful, very commanding figure. Tall. When he walked into the scene, they saluted. They no longer do that. But he

took an interest. And I did a lot of feature stories. I wrote about a fire on Memorial Day, at the end of which they found a veteran, a blind veteran they had overlooked, they didn't see, found him in the building during the fire. And he sat through it. He survived. And, of course, here is Memorial Day, a veteran, sightless. Oh, that was a perfect front-page story. And I remember my rival on the *Call Bulletin* had just said there was a three-alarm fire and I had acres of copy. And I was called up before the guild. Anyway—

02-00:26:26

Rubens:

Why?

02-00:26:26

Roff:

Well, because the other guy was mad because I was supposedly off duty. But I wasn't going to pass a story like that.

02-00:26:32

Rubens:

Did you work with a specific photographer?

02-00:26:34

Roff:

Yes, Ken Yimm, who just passed away. And the *News* was a fairly small operation. But, again, the *News* had a relationship with Stanford to hire a select number of interns, so that gave us entrée to working, having experience in the big city. And the city editor was a Stanford grad who just returned to the paper from a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard and he again was one of those persons who took a great deal of time to coach the younger staff. By younger staff, I was younger by fourteen years. In 1958 I think it was that the papers, the *Call Bulletin* and the *News* merged into a single afternoon paper, as the *News Call Bulletin*. And the staff was hired by seniority but I was hired as the senior night reporter because I was the only one. Thank God. I was, I'd say, fourteen years younger than the next reporter. And I went over to the *News Call* and then was—

02-00:28:13

Rubens:

What building did they stay in?

02-00:28:15

Roff:

They went down to the *Call Bulletin* building. The *News* was on Fifth and Mission and the *Call Bulletin* was on Howard and about Fifth. We were on Fourth and Mission. It was midway. It was on Howard toward Fifth Street. They're closed. The *Chronicle*, of course, is where it is now, Fifth and Mission. Then I began to do more political reporting, day reporting on the dayside and doing political reporting. And the chief political reporter was a Pulitzer Prize winner by the name of Jack McDowell who became a Republican consultant. Then actually we were on opposite sides of the Senate campaign in 1976, he representing [S. I.] Hayakawa and I was representing John Tunney. His candidate won.

And Jack, again, when I worked for the *News*, I covered the '64 Republican convention with him at the Cow Palace and he did the big think piece and I would do so-called color and side bar, fiction. Or not fiction but sidebar—

02-00:30:09

Rubens:

Human interest stories or—

02-00:30:10

Roff: Human interest stories and that type of thing. And that was, of course, where Goldwater said extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice, moderation in the defense of justice is no virtue, something like that. There were a lot of press conferences. I remember Nixon and Bill Knowland from the east East Bay, from the *Oakland Tribune*. And Nixon, I can still think of this, every time I saw Nixon, he kind of— He kept his left hand behind him and you could see him keeping pace like a metronome for his voice and his voice was very well modulated. And Goodie [Goodwin] Knight was governor and Earl Warren was still active before going onto the Supreme Court.

02-00:31:13

Rubens: Well, let me back you up. You get married in 1958.

02-00:31:24

Roff: Yes. That was the other merger I was going to talk about. In August of '58. I married Mary Killoran, K-I-L-L-O-R-A-N, who was born in Chicago and lived in San Francisco and was a librarian at the *News*. That is, they kept the files and the stories. They were just simply clipped by scissors out of the paper and kept in big envelopes. Now, of course, it's all computer. And then we were married and we lived on Child Street on Telegraph Hill with a magnificent view from the back porch of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay because the living room had no windows in it at all and we saw nothing. Now the construction would have been reversed. But a hundred bucks a month was great. She stayed on at the paper until we had children.

02-00:32:30

Rubens: And why don't we just flash forward. So when was your first child?

02-00:32:38

Roff: My first, James Michael, was born in September 24th in 1959. Then Tim, Timothy Charles, came along about two years thereafter. So that would be '61. And I remember he had severe health problems as a kid and as an infant. He had meningitis. I remember being in the doctor's office at Kaiser while they were examining him and also listening to the radio of Kennedy announcing that the Russians were turning the ships around with the missiles for Cuba. And then Kelly was born in '63. Then, of course, she was killed in '84. The kids were boundlessly athletic. Connected to me, this absolutely sedentary hippopotamus. The only reason for the pool, we put in a pool, was so they could swim. I never learned to swim even though I grew up in Santa Cruz but I thought they should. Well, it turns out that Kelly was a very proficient swimmer by the time she was all but an infant and she spent about eight years with a team called {Soletar?} in Northern Virginia that was a team that coached potential Olympic swimmers. That was when we'd moved to DC.

But when she was just a child, she'd compete locally with the state championships and things like that. And we have chests of medals and things. And I remember her mother had multiple myeloma, which is cancer of the marrow, of the bone, and the bones can become very brittle and break and so she had to be carried gently so that there wouldn't be any chance of her bumping and falling because that could be just catastrophic. I remember Mary was in the hospital and it was toward the end and Kelly was in a meet but was

seated and the third—it was one of the middle heats, maybe her sixth, and she was in the third heat. Usually no chance of winning. When she got up on the little stand, she had a look on her face that defined determination. Just this, “Oh, damn it.” And she won the meet. She won the gold medal for that meet. And then she took it. Well, the first thing she wanted to do is see her mom, who was then semiconscious and ended on her—anyway, that—

02-00:36:36

Rubens:

Mary died in '75, so Kelly was only about twelve years old.

02-00:36:46

Roff:

Yes. They began at five o'clock in the morning and they'd swim until 7:30 and then they'd begin at 4:30 or four o'clock and swim to 6:00 every day. Funny. When she sort of began reaching pubescence, she just didn't—and her mother was dead.

But that's getting ahead of where we are, because I didn't move to Virginia until Tunney was elected in 1970. I started working for Alioto, Joe Alioto as a candidate in '67 and then with Tunney as his press secretary on his campaign in '70, and then he went to Washington; he asked me to stay on as his press secretary and then we moved to McLean outside of Washington.

02-00:38:01

Rubens:

And that's where you built a pool?

02-00:38:02

Roff:

No, I had actually built it in our home in Pleasant Hill when I was still on the papers.

02-00:38:13

Rubens:

You commuted in from Pleasant Hill?

02-00:38:14

Roff:

Yes. Well, initially, having these night shifts, the commute was easy.

02-00:38:24

Rubens:

Well, let me pull you back here. I interrupted you to make sure we got this overview of your family. I'd love to get a little overview of basically what San Francisco seemed like to you between about '58 and '63. It's going to change dramatically. [George] Christopher was mayor when you started covering the school board and the fire department.

02-00:38:52

Roff:

Actually, Elmer Robinson was still mayor. And then we had Christopher until 1964. And Christopher, he was good to cover. He was very open. And then [John] Shelley came in; he was going to run for reelection but his popularity had failed. He had just had, it seemed, a kind of old Irish conception of mayor as somebody who marched in parades and kissed babies and, of course, the country by then was in upheaval over civil rights and racial issues. Although Shelley reacted quite heroically in some cases, I mean, marching up into Hunter's Point by himself, a line of cops down the block. But—

02-00:40:07

Rubens: And I read that he hired the first African American who had been hired in I guess a mayor's office.

02-00:40:13

Roff: No, no. Well, let me go back. Shelley was concerned because then, as now, the housing authority was having a tremendously difficult time trying to maintain these I don't know how many units. Seven or eight thousand units with diminished funds. And he put Eneas Kayne, and I think it's K-A-Y-N-E, I'm not sure, Red Kayne, who had been his sort of political aid and lieutenant for years but thought he needed backup. And he hired an African American from the ILWU, Revels Cayton. And Revels came into that administration about the same time I was brought in, in '67 to the Housing Authority as administrative assistant to handle press and handle things in general. Revels was the grandson of [Hiram] Revels Cayton, who was the first black ever elected to the US Senate in Reconstruction. I've forgotten from what state. It didn't last beyond Reconstruction, after the Civil War. But Revels had been a Communist but a person whose views had long moderated. And like many so called communists before World War II, was not so much that he was pro-Soviet as just pro-working class. And fairness of labor in big business and all. But he was a person of tremendous insight. He introduced me to Dave Jenkins. And I'll talk about Dave later but Revels was a major person in my life, not only because he was a close and wonderful friend and a wonderful, wonderful companion for my kids, although he's much older. He knew that they were readjusting from the loss of a mother and a move in a city that they didn't know really. And he took them around. This was later. But he brought me into contact with the whole variety, the whole range of black leadership and black political life in this city.

He was assistant director of the Housing Authority under Shelly. And he had been brought up to back up Red Kayne. And then I came in as an administrative assistant. But he and I became exceedingly close. It was an education unto itself just to be with him and all that he'd been through, not only in the union movement but just in social circumstances generally. His widow just died just a month or so ago. They had a son who was kind of a troublesome young kid but he settled down. He became a thoracic surgeon and is very successful. But Revels was a person who had just this absolutely—sounds corny—but just a wonderful heart. He had absolutely just this expanded sense of compassion. He understood and liked and was willing to go way out of his way to be helpful. And, of course, at the Housing Authority that was unique because that was sort of run as almost a colonial operation where the white bosses and—

I can think, one of the first times I went out to Hunter's Point as the administrator. And I'd only been out to the Point because of when I had been a crime reporter. But I had no real feeling or understanding of the place. And I went out with the director of construction to see the units that were falling behind and being remodeled and painted and made livable for new tenants. And I noticed a playground and this kind of rusty, really horrible looking equipment. Barren ground. No grass or anything. Just dirt. Except you could see a little indentation, a little line about an inch wide. It sort of trailed through the play area. Obviously a track of something. I said, "What's that?" He said, "Those are the rats. That's the rats' trail. It's the rats." I said, "Well, what do you do about them?" "Oh," he said, "we

don't do anything about them." He said, "These people, they're used to living with rats." I'm looking at kids who are toddlers like mine and thinking the difference, absolutely that sense of superiority, that racism. I'd never personally encountered it in just that kind of blunt—"Oh," he said, "they're used to it." I made life hell for him.

02-00:46:53

Rubens:

Let me just ask you something for my own clarification. Are you saying that the construction industry had a kind of imperial sensibility? Or are you saying—

02-00:47:02

Roff:

Well, no, no. Not the construction. This was the director of maintenance or something for the Authority.

02-00:47:19

Rubens:

I'm trying to get just your description of what the Housing Authority was at that point.

02-00:47:22

Roff:

Well, Kayne was a good administrator and he was trying to pull it together. They got a fairly effective commission. Hamilton Boswell was a minister at Third Baptist now. Oh, I can't think of his name. But it was tough. The place was very heavily unionized. It was not that union members were disrespectful but there was not the rigor to take care of a place that there might be if that were in a white community. The idea that rats were running up and down through a children's playground. I may have overreacted but it stunned me right to the bone.

02-00:48:20

Rubens:

We have ten minutes on this tape so I want to just clarify a few things. It's by 1966 that you're in Shelley's housing administration.

02-00:48:33

Roff:

Yeah.

02-00:48:34

Rubens:

Let me just take you up to there. Were you still with the *News*?

02-00:48:40

Roff:

No. I had left the *News*. I'd been leaving the *News* rather periodically after '64 to work campaigns. The [Lyndon] Johnson campaign of '64. A couple of local races. I'd take leave but clearly I could take more, not a great deal more but more. By the time I had three kids I was living in the suburbs. I used the salary and then when Kayne took over the Housing Authority he asked me because I was friendly with some people with whom he'd—well, I had helped manage the Cranston campaign. And I met some of the people who recommended me to Kayne, who was quite political, "There's this young guy who might be helpful." So I went to work there, and I think with the assumption, although it was never said, but I think with the idea that I would serve there until the '67 election, when Shelley's reelection got under way.

Well, Shelly never made it to reelection. He dropped out. They said he was forced out. I don't think so. I think he anticipated a totally different kind of situation and not the

intense, unrelenting pressures that he found. I don't think he frankly knew quite how to adjust and then he was offered the city lobbyist job in Sacramento, which is back—he'd been in Congress. That was a more natural fit for him. And then Gene [J. Eugene] McAteer, who was the state senator was the likely successor. But he dropped dead. He was a health fanatic and played handball every day and he died on the handball court, which I should—anyway. And then Alioto kind of emerged as a kind of consensus among some of the heavy players, some of the political people around Shelley, although he had never been in elected politics. He'd been on the Redevelopment Commission. He was an antitrust attorney, very successful. Spent his summers in Italy. Enjoyed the symphony and the opera. He was not really deeply involved in the city. But he was intrigued by the possibility of becoming mayor.

02-00:51:44

Rubens:

Let me ask you just a couple of other things before we get to Alioto. What about the demonstrations on Auto Row and at the Sheraton Palace for integration of hiring in 1963?

02-00:52:04

Roff:

Yes, I covered the ones at the Palace. I was still on the paper then.

02-00:52:14

Rubens:

I just wondered if they stood out in your mind.

02-00:52:20

Roff:

Well, they did. There were so many other things. They stand out more in some ways in retrospect. Because it's one of those things where the newspapers at least thought we were inadequate in the sense that we really didn't know. And it was difficult to get to know the people behind the various student movements particularly. By the time they assumed leadership they'd become very defensive and were very suspicious of the press. And, of course, we didn't help that any. But I've talked at length now to a number of them and have gone to meetings where they've reviewed—I think we missed some of the significant, the important motivation. Were preoccupied as newspapers were then more by the interaction with the cops. But the Palace Hotel and Auto Row. I was asked to do a series on the Negro in San Francisco.

02-00:53:46

Rubens:

Still called that, yeah.

02-00:53:48

Roff:

And I never could find the copy. I have no idea what I said. Well, that would have been in the *News Call*.

02-00:54:04

Rubens:

So you were paying attention to those issues.

02-00:54:05

Roff:

Yes. I remember the publisher came in, "Oh, my maid'll be interested in that."

02-00:54:09

Rubens: You're saying 'we,' meaning the news in general, the publisher at the *News*, the reporters were not paying attention to these developments?

02-00:54:23

Roff: Well, it wasn't paying attention. Crime was always a big feature of especially afternoon papers that sold on the street. So dependent on crime news. I remember a woman was murdered by her lover. She worked in a beauty parlor on Ninth Street off Market. And the copy editor is yelling to me, "Can't we say it as though it was on Market? Market Street Murder?" "No." Well, da-da-da." Well, I lost that one. But almost all the front page stories were murders or fires.

02-00:55:12

Rubens: But the culture is changing. So it's changing quickly.

02-00:55:14

Roff: The culture is changing in ways that were not easy for press to access through its normal channel. If you covered City Hall, you covered the politicians there, and maybe some more conspicuous opponents, but you didn't really get into all the mix. Politics was fairly simple. You had downtown interests with money. You had an extremely strong union movement. About a third of families were unionized, if not more, and the unions had a strong history of very direct involvement and some conspicuously smart and politically tactical leaders. Jimmy Herman, of the ILWU. was certainly one. I didn't know Harry Bridges well. But Jimmy and [Jack] Goldberger from the Teamsters and Jack Crowley from the labor council. They were important. Jimmy was extremely smart. And they all were. But they were tough. But you knew that settlement was going to be possible. And I felt that I really had some part in bringing labor more into the Alioto and Dianne Feinstein administration.

02-00:56:58

Rubens: Yes, we'll get to that. So the three constituencies you were talking about: downtown, mainstream politicians, labor –you didn't have district elections then for supervisors.

02-00:57:10

Roff: Well, you didn't have these districts. The elections were all city wide. You had neighborhood groups that had political influence. But basically you had the Ben Swigs and the Cyril Magnins and others that had money. But basically were liberal in their general outlook. You had, as I say, very strong and very committed labor that held together very well. And the Catholic Church was quite important, especially when it came to the cops. They said there would be no captain appointed unless the archbishop gave his blessing. I don't know whether that's true. Well, now, of course, you've got a whole panoply. A whole array of interest groups. Unfortunately some are so singular in their interests that they have difficulty forming any kind of coalition and we tend at times to pick candidates simply because they fit. Well, I'm blathering a bit here.

02-00:58:39

Rubens: No. Because they, candidates fit in what, a certain profile?

02-00:58:43

Roff: Yes. San Francisco after the General Strike in '34—of course, the ILWU was so enormously important in this city. But after the General Strike and the city shutdown, even business didn't necessarily fight as they had with labor. But they became very cautious and there were big things planned. The city was just alive with hope in the sense of big projects. Treasure Island, the World's Fair, the completion of the San Francisco Airport. Big, big projects. Much with federal funding but the realization that none of these big, big projects could get done unless there was at least some sense of truce, some sense of communication between labor and management. And it was Harry [Bridges] who in the late thirties or forties pulled a meeting at Pacific Auditorium of business and labor and kind of worked out a modus operandi where they got along. Not that there weren't strikes but the major breakdowns like this General Strikes were avoided. And there was a kind of cooperation. And at the end of the war, when federal monies became readily available for reconstruction and development, of course, labor and business cooperated greatly.

02-01:00:31

Rubens: Hadley, let me turn the tape over.

Begin Audio File 3

03-00:00:00

Rubens: Hadley, let me just ask you, since you're talking about all this growth and expansion. This is also an era of the freeway constructions and the massive redevelopment in the city. Do you have a sense of the city physically expanding? You talk about the airport and—

03-00:00:22

Roff: Yes. Well, the city began to change significantly, not only demographically but in terms of the interest of various groups. I had mentioned business and labor as being very particular forces in town. You had a certain conservative element. The Catholic Church was quite prominent in certain areas. Then came the sixties and seventies and a sense of the civil rights effort, the sense of personal liberation, and on the part of many neighborhoods, Haight-Ashbury conspicuously, a desire to maintain the character of the neighborhood. A desire to maintain the character of the neighborhood and resist growth and a concern that redevelopment was going too far, maybe too fast, and displacing too many African American families, although the intent was that all would be placed in new housing at some of these ugly high rises like the [Yerba Buena] Plaza, which was just a toxic building. It would be gone and there would be smaller developments and more attractive units.

03-00:02:12

Rubens: You're talking about the public housing—

03-00:02:14

Roff: Public housing and redevelopment. But it became a great contest, especially in the Haight-Ashbury, in the Western Addition over the displacement of African Americans.

03-00:02:31

Rubens: I had asked you when we changed the tape if you knew Susie Berman, an activist who led an anti-freeway campaign.

03-00:02:41

Roff:

Yes, a mobilization of neighborhoods. And that was a particularly important one because while it affected the Panhandle and Haight-Ashbury, but it also would extend across Nob Hill and Lower Haight and down into the Marina. It would cut a swath right smack through half of the city. So you had a number of neighborhoods that all got together. Sue was a major public spokesperson, a strategist for them. Calvin Welch is kind of a general strategist and major domo behind the scenes. Calvin in some respects probably has as much influence on the development of the city as almost anyone in the sense that he was able to impose a rather strict growth cap on the city in the late eighties. Not he but he was the prime mover. And Sue, of course, always was the *avant-garde* of that effort. But the freeway revolt, one, was so unique because most cities—you think of Los Angeles—thrived on this whole spaghetti of freeways swirling through these. And here would have been an effort that would have effectively divided the city. And, of course, it's a problem from a traffic engineer's point of view, I guess, that's still awkward because you have Gough and Franklin Streets in San Francisco, Franklin going north and Gough south, where your major residential streets are also major thoroughfares. But the freeway revolt empowered the neighborhoods in a way I think that they had not been before in the sense then that neighborhoods had that power. Also empowered residents of other neighborhoods to take up interests of particular concern to them. The Castro with Harvey Milk.

The whole era of civil rights activities that began in the fifties and Martin Luther King in the sixties. We had some very forceful voices here in San Francisco like the Reverend Cecil Williams and others. And you had a city that, although it had a very checkered past racially, we had the vigilantes and anti-Asian groups in the 1800s, the exclusion acts that forbid Asians from coming to this country, then the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II to these desolate desert camps, Tule Lake and wherever. But basically San Francisco began as essentially a progressive city in the sense that you had the masses of young, energetic, entrepreneurial men, all eager, of course, to find gold in them thar hills. But many who saw greater opportunity, rather than standing out in a cold stream hoping to find a nugget, that if they just put their talent to building the hotels and the bars and the taverns and the whatever, that they could probably make more money more steadily through a year than any other way. So there was very early union organization here. Now, again, this was exclusively white. The people coming here rejected the idea of California as a slave state. There was some in the south who—this, of course, was prior to the Civil War—that would have liked to see California as a slave state. These persons who traveled by wagon and by horseback, of course, they didn't want the competition of unpaid labor and they refused it.

03-00:08:07

Rubens:

All right. So I'm going to stop you there so I make sure that we get in some more detail before you move from the Shelley Administration to Alioto's. We didn't talk about your role with Alan Cranston.

03-00:08:29

Roff:

Ok. But there has always been this pulse of progressivism in the city that's moved the city on through struggles and battles and then through a dramatic change with the advent of the

gay community, the civil rights movement, and the black community coming together. We have a different configuration now than we did. Also, in politics, I think it has gotten so overwrought and a bit overcomplicated. I think this ranked voting is a dreadful mistake. But the Cranston campaign, that was—

03-00:09:23

Rubens: I'm sorry that I interrupted your over view, which is important.

03-00:09:25

Roff: No, I just want to set a context about why the city has grown and has always been considered a liberal city even though there are some terrible incidents of overt and quite tragic racism.

03-00:09:44

Rubens: So speaking of liberals, wasn't Cranston—

03-00:09:47

Roff: Oh, Cranston was very liberal. Very, very liberal. Very outspoken. Wrote about the need for a kind of one world approach through the United Nations. Very idealistic. Head of the liberal group, the CDC, California Democratic Council. Let's see. I guess his campaign for Senator was '67. I came on as his northern California campaign director but essentially was among his top staff.

03-00:11:01

Rubens: Do you take a leave from the Housing Authority to do that or have you already done that? That's what I want to know.

03-00:11:11

Roff: Well, that's—

03-00:11:11

Rubens: Should I stop and we'll—

03-00:11:14

Roff: That may have been the interval before I went to the Housing Authority.

03-00:11:17

Rubens: Or maybe his third campaign for state controller in 1966, that he lost?

03-00:13:09

Roff: I think so. Again, Stanford ties. His chief of staff was best man at my first and second weddings. Win Griffith. He lives back in Maine. And Wes Willoughby. Worked the Alioto campaign and he went, eventually became the director of information or public relations director at the redevelopment agency and worked there 'til his retirement I think in the nineties. He passed away about two years ago and was a very close, close, close friend.

03-00:14:06

Rubens: And what was Win's relationship to Cranston?

03-00:14:09

Roff: He was his chief of staff. And he followed me as editor of the *Daily* at Stanford and then he wound up on the *Examiner* and then went on from the *Examiner* to work with Cranston. And I don't know quite how that came about.

03-00:14:34

Rubens: But he's looking for someone to—

03-00:14:36

Roff: Yeah, to run the campaign operation in northern California. They had somebody in the south. And then I was asked to run one of Cranston's later campaigns or be involved in one of his presidential campaigns but I already had left Washington and was working for—I had just started work with Feinstein. So I could not do it.

03-00:15:13

Rubens: So anything stand out particularly in your mind about running that campaign? It's going to be a losing campaign.

03-00:15:19

Roff: Yes. Controller is an office that most people are not all that aware of so it was hard to generate an interest. Alan had very strong backing from the liberal side of the spectrum because he had been so active in international and liberal issues. But he was not all that well known, even though he'd been in the controller's office for some time, not that well known statewide. He lost to a fellow named [Houston] Flournoy. Then he ran for the Senate and he won.

03-00:16:47

Rubens: And you've got a photo of him signed to you in '71: "For Hadley, with deep appreciation for all your help. Also, the trail that led to Capitol Hill. With admiration and appreciation." So did you stay in touch with him?

03-00:16:57

Roff: Well, there's something incestuous about some of these campaigns. One of his campaign workers was a person who came into one of Feinstein's campaigns, Kam Kuwata, and so there was that connection. Kam died about two years ago. I knew Kam back in Washington, not well, before Feinstein's campaign for mayor that Kuwata ran.

03-00:18:27

Rubens: So nothing stands out so dramatically then in the campaign particularly?

03-00:18:35

Roff: No, no, no. It was kind of just like fast, traveling up and down the state in tiny little airplanes and speaking to breakfast clubs. Doing all the basic stuff.

03-00:18:49

Rubens: But this took you into a larger arena in politics.

03-00:18:51

Roff: Yes. The thing is that Cranston had a network of appointees. They're called ITAs and I forgot now what that means. They're appointees. Many of them were active politically in

a number of areas and one of them was a woman by the name of Madeline Day. And she was very close to some of the older Democratic leaders in the city. It was she who kind of promoted me with some of the old clan here.

03-00:19:53

Rubens: That led to your ultimately coming back?

03-00:19:55

Roff: Yes.

03-00:19:57

Rubens: Well, so I think where we are historically, in terms of the timeline, is if there's anything more to say about being assistant to the Housing Authority because it's from there that you're then going to go—

03-00:20:18

Roff: To City Hall, yes. And the Housing Authority was in many ways a vast frustration because we housed I don't know how many thousands of people, many of them in the most despicable kind of circumstances, most of the money from the federal government but usually not enough really to sustain all these residences in any kind of truly livable or decent circumstances. Many of them were ill maintained. Especially the ones in Hunter's Point were isolated. There was some innovative housing. In the Western Addition there's one group called St. Francis Square, where LeRoy King lives and where Revels Cayton lived for a time, which was basically sponsored by the LWU and not the Housing Authority. And they were very—But the authority was struggling with many issues. At the time there was a very strong group of older women who had a great deal of sway in the Hunter's Point community.

03-00:22:22

Rubens: Are these African American women?

03-00:22:23

Roff: Yes. And tried to keep a lid on. Things were tough. Many people in the Authority wouldn't even go out to the Hunter's Point. We'd be too frightened.

03-00:22:39

Rubens: And what would you literally do? What were actually your tasks?

03-00:22:43

Roff: Well, as administrator, most anything they wanted me to do. Essentially press. And I did spend some time out at Hunter's Point and Sunnydale and some of these rougher areas. And there was movement to try to replace the larger older high-rises that were just awful.

03-00:23:14

Rubens: Did you contend with people like Joe Mazzola or—

03-00:23:17

Roff: I dealt with Joe. Joe was a very formidable guy. Head of the plumbers union. They'd hold out for big settlements. I believed strongly in the public unions, for one, as a counterbalance to developers, especially, and of course now, it's so changed. Labor is so

weakened. But as a counterbalance to all the monied interest in politics. And two, because as I say, at that time labor represented so many families in the city. It was such a big part of the city. Now, they say it used to be thirty-five percent or so. Now it's twelve or thirteen percent. Mazzola was snarling at me at one point. "You never did anything for us." I didn't have the authority to bargain on money matters but I always try to keep the door open to negotiations, try to figure out. And I kept telling people, for heaven's sakes, don't get uptight. They go through a kabuki, you go through a ritual of stomping and yelling and walking out. A lot of that's nonsense. After a week or so, when there's no money coming in and then as you see some of the—then as you begin to see Jack Crowley and Jimmy Herman around you know then things are getting serious.

03-00:25:23

Rubens:

That's interesting the way you're characterizing the negotiations as a kind of theater of politics. So as a press administrator you're kind of managing that?

03-00:25:36

Roff:

Well, yes. There's a kind of schizophrenia that goes on. I understand what the reporter wants and I know what whomever I'm working for wants. I know I'm not going to betray one or the other. I'm not going to lie. If the press doesn't ask the tough questions, well, I'm not going to volunteer the tough answer. But I realized the con—both. But I think in terms of negotiation, just in terms of how issues are dealt with, that you can pretty well sense, if not by intuition but whatever, that when the time really is right—again, this is jumping ahead to Feinstein. There was a teacher's strike and it went on and on the negotiations, until about four o'clock one morning I'm walking the hall at a hotel that had more fleas than people. And it was Jack Crowley coming down. He winked and said, "Maybe I'd get some of your people together. Why don't we say a half hour?" Half hour, hour after that, all settled, all done, complete. You want to give the other side a chance to—

But getting back to Cranston. He was so idealistic and really was a liberal, not extreme, but just a sensible voice for involving people, for the pragmatics of helping those who are in need and for whom government would be the only aid or source of sustenance they would have. But the campaign was overshadowed by the [Pat] Brown gubernatorial campaign, Brown and Reagan. And it was very hard for Cranston to break in.

03-00:28:23

Rubens:

That kind of brings the story a little round robin because you were talking about the role of the new generation of political leaders in the civil rights movement and then the student movement in '64 in Berkeley and Reagan comes to power saying, "I'm going to clean up that mess in Berkeley." He really represents the rise of the right wing politicians. Brown had been governor over a period of great liberal expansion in the state and Reagan's going to come in to curb that, to ferret out the communists, etc.

03-00:28:59

Roff:

Yes. The student movement and all became a foil for the conservatives that tried to consolidate power, police power. And they were very difficult. While I was with the

mayor's office, with Alioto, we're getting at it, with the shutdown of San Francisco State in 1968 and into 1969.

03-00:29:24

Rubens:

Now I didn't ask you about the students protesting the House Committee on Un-American Activities at San Francisco City Hall in 1960.

03-00:29:34

Roff:

Well I did cover the Velde hearings. [Harold Velde: HUAC 1954-55] And I do remember that vividly because it was set. The whole purpose was to try to damage Harry Bridges as much as possible. And they were depending on a witness, a little thin, as I remember, thin, little nervous, twitchy, blinking guy. And he went through all this innuendo of what he'd seen, he thought Harry leaving the meeting. And he had attended this meeting. He personally had been a Communist and he thought he saw—Velde was this ex-FBI agent, tall, straight back. But his mouth was always open and he had kind of a Pleistocene look or something, of some other archeological age. And then Richard Gladstein. the attorney began the cross-examination. But it went something like, "By the way, have you ever used the name" — whatever it was. "Yes." "Have you ever used the name of" —again whatever that name was. "Yes." "Have you ever used another name?" "Yes." "Well, now," whatever his first name was, "Wasn't he convicted of perjury? Was that you convicted of perjury under that name?" "Yes."

03-00:31:09

Rubens:

So you're in the supervisor's—

03-00:31:12

Roff:

Chambers, yes. And I was covering that for the *Daily*. I was fascinated. This cross-examination was the most relentless dissection. And this guy, of course, after about five minutes was devastated and Velde kept at him. It was during all the McCarthy dustup, yeah.

03-00:31:59

Rubens:

But the 1960 one, where the students are washed down the stairs.

03-00:32:05

Roff:

I wasn't there. I was covering an execution for the *News*. I should tell this story. It was a guy whose name I think I purposely erased from my mind who had been convicted in Los Angeles for murdering a policeman. He had been sort of traveling back and forth across the country by rail and couldn't find any job. Life seemed to be absolutely a dead end and he bought a pistol and he was going to hold up a liquor store but life reached the point where it was for him intolerable, I guess. And he's about to go into the liquor store and a black and white pulls up and says, "Hey, you come over here." And he walks over to the car, pulls out a gun, bang, bang, shoots the two cops, kills one. Well, killing a cop obviously is a serious crime. But it was more of a spontaneous manslaughter thing, although he bought the gun, he was going to do a robbery, premeditated conviction. Anyway, he's going to go to the gas chamber. So it was just after [Caryl] Chessman had died and there was some concern that Chessman—supposedly there was no obvious physical suffering from the gas. The person just dropped off unconscious and died. But

there was a question about Chessman resisting. And I didn't cover that actual execution. I was out doing the story from the phone outside so I could communicate faster. But for this next one my editor asked me if I would go and talk to the guy and see if he would agree to try to signal me from inside the gas chamber as to how he felt and what was happening. And so we worked out a series of gestures. It sounds like the cruelest, most awful thing anyone ever could do. Could he wiggle a finger or blink or something.

And finally the day comes and I'm just traumatized with this idea. I'd already seen executions and I — they're just awful. They're dehumanizing to those who see them, to some part of you. He comes into this little apple colored steel room with the two metal chairs with their straps, window around. He comes in, looks through the glass, and says, "How are you?" He who was about to die is asking how I am. Then I'm down on my knees trying to look in his sightless eyes. Oh, gees. But that was the same day that the City Hall riot—

03-00:35:39

Rubens:

So did he signal to you?

03-00:35:40

Roff:

Not that I could discern. It's possible. I know I saw two men go one time and one said to the other, "Oh, that smells awful."

03-00:35:52

Rubens:

Why were you covering executions?

03-00:35:56

Roff:

Well, I'd been trained as a Hearst. I could write. So that was the same day as the City Hall riots. But I covered the trial, the reporter [Robert] Meisenbach trial. Got to know Becky Jenkins a little bit. I went to the party after Meisenbach, the principal defendant, had been acquitted and the evidence clearly showed he was standing to the side and not really involved in any of the demonstrations. Becky had been washed down the steps. She could have been terribly hurt. And I went to the party afterwards just to see. Persons were committed, highly idealistic. So that's when I decided to really make an effort, although it's hard to do. We're not out on the campus every day to meet these people and they're in class. The papers do a great deal of writing about that. Wes Willoughby, my friend, was on the *News*, as well, at that time. The *News Call*. And we did a tabloid on the so called City Hall Riots and tried to give a more balanced picture, talked at length to the leaders and to the police. The police then drastically altered their tactics, some say probably for the worst. But they organized the "tac squad," not necessarily to impose more force but to ensure more discipline. Now, it got out of hand. The original person in charge was a very talented older lieutenant who retired. But it was mainly to keep some discipline. The idea that washing these people down the stairs — They had one older policeman on duty initially who was almost ready to retire. Had a bad heart. Died not too long after. The whole situation was beyond him. And, of course, when the word spread, radioed for help, the whole force practically responded.

In fact, it was just not too long after Susie's death [Roff's second wife], a few years ago, that Becky helped organize a reunion of persons who had been involved. And many of

them are still very much involved in liberal and labor causes. Not on the radical fringe but just solid people. And it was interesting. When they talked about their view, what they thought they were doing, and basically their view was that they were raising a little noise. But they didn't see themselves as doing anything more than just exercising their free speech rights. And then this chaos followed. And then they went to the stairs and then got washed downstairs. But they were afraid if they were taken down by elevator they'd be beaten by the police—and, of course, there's just all this fear of the cops. No, that was a big thing. But also revealing. I still have stuff from Becky of the reminisces of co-participants. And Becky herself described herself as a red diaper baby and her upbringing and then her involvement. And then Becky, stalwart, strong, began to not cry but tears began to come when she recalled the humiliation of it, the sudden violence, being tossed in the paddy wagon.

03-00:40:50

Rubens: Well, I think we're at a good stopping point.

03-00:40:55

Roff: Yeah, I'm sorry to be so—

03-00:40:56

Rubens: No, don't be sorry. I think fascinating things come out. Who would have known about the special edition of the tabloid that you did with Wes Willoughby.

03-00:41:06

Roff: Yes. That would be interesting to see what—I had all those. I saved all those. And unfortunately I kept them in a suitcase in the basement and when I opened them after Susie died, when we were going to move, they had all rotted. Oh, God, the odor was enough to drive you right—. Eventually those will all be on microfilm. I don't think the *News Call* is on microfilm now.

03-00:41:31

Rubens: I don't think so either. The *Chronicle* is and much of the *Examiner*. Unless there's anything more to say about Alioto now, we can go into more detail in the next interview.

03-00:47:16

Roff: Alioto was a mayor who tried to open the city to minorities. Had won simply because he could bring the Catholic conservatives and the labor liberals together and an awful lot of the labor is due to Jimmy [Herman] to David [Jenkins]. But Alioto also did some remarkable things as mayor. And then, of course, he had this whole episode with *Look* magazine, which thwarted him from any higher office he aspired to. There are still people who have great suspicions about him. I never saw anything that I considered even remotely illegal or dishonest. But I also stayed away from anything that had to do with money. Anyway, with Alioto we'll take some time. He did a totally unique thing on the day that Martin Luther King was assassinated and saved the city from riot when 130 other cities—and that was absolutely to me one of the most significant activities.

Interview 3: December 11, 2012

Begin Audio File 4

04-00:00:00

Rubens: I think our task today is to talk about your role in Joseph Alioto's campaign for mayor, I guess in '67, and then when he becomes mayor and your role with his administration.

04-00:00:30

Roff: San Francisco is wonderful in the sense that it's a big city with a brawling, vast variety of activities, but still it's a small city where people know one another. There are a number of connections and friendships. After working in Alan Cranston's campaign, I had gone to work for the Housing Authority as administrative assistant, and there met Revels Cayton, who I mentioned.

04-00:01:03

Rubens: We talked about him last week.

04-00:01:04

Roff: Black leader in the city. Then the campaign for mayor at that time, the leading candidate—Jack Shelley was the incumbent, but the leading candidate was another Democrat, a state senator by the name of Gene McAteer. He unfortunately suffered a fatal heart attack on the handball court, and there was a great search for a substitute, because Jack's health was not—he felt—and I'm guessing now, I didn't discuss this with Jack—Shelley was exhausted by the four years he'd spent as mayor. I think he came to San Francisco back from Washington, where he'd been a congressman, with the anticipation that being mayor was celebratory. Parades, St. Patty's Day. I don't mean to say that he was that naïve, but it would be, obviously, major municipal tasks. But the old municipal focus on service, patching streets, fighting fires, catching criminals, had expanded vastly with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement. There were always threats of riot. We had several here in the city that were difficult to negotiate, tiresome to deal with. It took hours and hours of effort. Shelley was offered to represent the city as its lobbyist in Sacramento, and a search was underway by a number of the Democratic leaders in the city for somebody to step in. Alioto was sort of plucked out of anonymity, in the sense he was well-known in the courts here, but not well-known in the city. He had served briefly on the school board, but was not all that active politically. He had a reputation for being smart and decisive, quick-minded, and very outgoing. I was brought into the campaign as one of several others with whom I had worked in previous campaigns with. Willoughby had been my friend from Stanford. We had worked several campaigns together. Spencer Roberts, who was one of the original old-time political consultants in town. They were in the campaign.

I did principally the press, and when Alioto won, I think I mentioned that basically he put together a unique coalition of the liberal and more conservative, labor and more conservative business people in town. He had great support from the Italian community, in which his family had played a major role. The Aliotos on the Fisherman's Wharf were a well-known family in the Italian community, and he was always looked upon as a child, among many in North Beach, as a prodigy. He played the violin at some extraordinarily

young age, did beautifully in college, went on to be an antitrust lawyer with the federal government, and then in private practice. Very successful. Again, a person of great decisiveness. Quick to analyze issues and find avenues of discussion that would lead to solutions. His inauguration celebrated, in a very deliberate way, the diversity, the wonderful differences between neighborhoods, at an event in the Mission on inauguration day. He took a violin with one of the mariachi players and played with the band. I have a picture somewhere on the wall. He was very outgoing, and not in a pushy, extroverted way, but just very outgoing. Enjoyed people, enjoyed the give and take, and made himself available right at the outset in minority communities. I think he probably was one of the few mayors who regularly would visit and go to meetings at Hunters Point and other areas that had been somewhat neglected. Shelley did some negotiation with groups that were threatening riots and all, but Alioto tried to build bridges of community interests, of commonality, of common ground. Again, Revels Cayton, who had been a main influence, been a major factor in the Housing Authority in getting it more responsive to the tenants, Revels came to City Hall as essentially a deputy for social programs. He didn't carry that particular title, but essentially he was the first African American in an elevated position, in the mayor's office, directly in the mayor's office, speaking to the mayor.

Alioto worked closely with labor, most particularly the ILWU. Put Harry Bridges on the port commission, which at that time was thought of somewhat heretical. Here was a person who had led this strike back in 1934 or whatever. And Dave Jenkins and Revels, who was a former member of the ILWU. But forged close associations with labor, and became very forceful in resolving labor differences and possible strikes. He had this deep and abiding regard for what he thought were the strength of San Franciscans, the people, and their ability to fall behind, or get behind, and support worthwhile social programs.

04-00:09:18

Rubens: Where do you think that sensibility came from in him?

04-00:09:21

Roff: I would think part of it, the community, the African American community around the wharf. They worked—

[Phone call interrupts interview]

04-00:09:34

Rubens: We're talking about where does this regard come from, and I think you're seeing a political astuteness. The winds had changed.

04-00:11:28

Roff: He was brought up in a fairly close-knit community, was used to working congenially with groups of people. North Beach was a tight community. Sort of the fishing community was. He went to a small college, St. Mary's, across the bay, and then established a very successful law practice here. Again, while he wasn't well-known to the citizenry as a whole, he certainly knew the waterfront and he knew working people. People who went out on those little boats and who worked hard. He had a great empathy for working men and women. He was very erudite, very well-read, brilliant conversationalist, but he had this deep and abiding interest in people, and had great confidence in their basic common

sense. And again, tried symbolically to emphasize the sense of community in San Francisco. One of the first things he did was, on the anniversary of the earthquake, April the eighteenth, precisely the hour of the earthquake, five or so in the morning, he invited the city to come to a gathering at the Civic Center, and he had a model of Caruso on the balcony, singing the opera that he sang the night before the earthquake, and had flashes from the movie, 1936 movie with Spencer Tracy and Clark Gable, *San Francisco*, that shows the earthquake. This crowd was jubilant. People came and sat at tables with candles and champagne. There were about 15,000 people. Ten or fifteen thousand people came.

04-00:14:06

Rubens:

This was the first time this kind of commemoration—

04-00:14:08

Roff:

Oh, first time. There was Lotta's Fountain. This was big. We mounted the old horse-driven fire wagons on trucks, and they came clanging down the street, their bells ringing, and the firemen in their older hats, caps. It was quite a show. Providing shows and circuses for the people. But that wasn't it. He wanted to bring people together. Then this was—

04-00:14:54

Rubens:

Let me just interrupt you, if you'll keep your thought. By then, you're press secretary. How did that come about, literally? You'd been involved with the campaign.

04-00:15:03

Roff:

Involved with the campaign. I was one of the two or three people involved in the media and the campaign. I'll intercede with this little story about being asked to go to Alioto's home, which was then in Presidio Terrace. A great ornate, sort of Grecian style, marbled—it wasn't marble, but it had the effect of classic Greek architecture. A big, clamorous door-bell that rang, and it played some aria or something. There was one other person asked. He went, and as he rang the bell, a big Labrador, one of those big, smiling, affable Labradors, came up, little tongue hanging out. Squeezed in between him and the door. Inside came the shout, "Come in! Come in!" The fellow opened the door. Dog races in, and in his little shiny, black shoes, Alioto came waltzing down the marble stairway. *Dee, dee, dee, doot, doot*. The dog went over to the banister and lifted its leg and piddled all over the floor. Alioto is looking down, and said, "Is that your dog?" I heard that, thought, oh my God. The home was then filled with—this is Alioto at that time—had Madonnas floating and flying in every possible wall. Except for this little den that he had, and he had these great, sort of Captain Marvel comic thunderbolt designs. Very modern. We spent about two hours just talking about San Francisco and how we liked San Francisco. But no commitment was made.

04-00:17:14

Rubens:

He had asked you over to talk about your role, what you might do for him?

04-00:17:17

Roff:

Talk about the job. Interview. Very pleasant. Searching, but pleasant. I thanked him and shook his hand. I reached out, and here's a gold, Venetian, hand-carved doorknob that was probably from some palace in Italy somewhere. I turned it and I pulled it, and out came

the doorknob, and the door doesn't open. I had pulled the doorknob out of the door, and I'm standing there with a doorknob in my hand. Anyway, I was offered the job. It was an adventure right from the first moment. I mentioned inauguration, he's playing with the mariachis, he's going to Chinatown to—

04-00:18:18

Rubens:

Is he discussing this with you? He's got people who are planning his—

04-00:18:22

Roff:

No. Much of this came out of his own—"Maybe we should do something like this," and then he'd sort of outline it, and we'd all immediately—as I say, this emphasis on events that bring the community together. Steve McQueen wanted to do a movie here, one of his chase movies, police movies. As quid pro quo, Alioto asked that the movie company, the production company, build a swimming pool at Hunters Point. There was none in that area. As I say, he would spend time just going to meetings out there, not to arbitrate or negotiate some instant problem, but just simply to talk about problems in general. Then he had the anniversary of the earthquake.

Just before that, on April 4, 1968, my phone rang. My desk at that time was outside of his curved office. Because my voice was rather loud, I was later given a private office, one removed. Anyway, it was Tom Cahill, then chief, saying that word had just flashed over the police communication system at that time that Martin Luther King had been assassinated in Mobile, and that it was expected that there would be severe reactions in many cities, possibly riots, and that we should begin preparing. Got out of my desk, walked into Alioto's office, and I told the mayor that Martin Luther King had been killed and Cahill was extremely concerned about the possibility of riot, and that the warning from Washington to all cities was to be prepared. He thought for a minute, put his head back, said, "Well, now here's what I want you to do." Milliseconds, really, between the time I told him, and he kind of thought for a moment, and his response was just a snap of the finger. Said, "Here's what I want you to do. I want you to have a platform stage built on the Polk Street side of City Hall, and I want an ecumenical service arranged with all the major religious figures from all the various religions there at eleven o'clock tomorrow morning." I said, "Mr. Mayor, I think the police are going to object to bring a crowd together, with the possibility of riot." What could happen with a great big group of people and some over-anxious person? "No. I want you to get the priests and monks and the rabbis, and we'll do that ecumenical service tomorrow." He didn't jab his finger at me, but the voice was prodding enough.

The first thing I did was call Tom, who had the great Irish brogue. He said, "Oh my God. My God, we can't possibly do that." You heard this little whiny siren coming closer to City Hall, and Tom came in with his gold braid on his jacket and said, "You can't do it, mayor. You can't do it." The mayor says, "Yes, we can." As it turned out, we had police battalions in nearby streets should anything go wrong. But the platform was built, and the archbishop and the rabbis and the saffron monks and Buddhists came, with all their various customary and vestments. A crowd maybe ten to fifteen thousand—hard to estimate—ranged from across from City Hall, from the far side of Polk, all the way to the

other side. It would be Larkin Street. People would climb trees, but most were just standing. Multi-racial.

04-00:23:32

Rubens: It's your job to get the word out, right?

04-00:23:34

Roff: Word out. I got everybody, and they came up to the mayor's office beforehand.

04-00:23:41

Rubens: You're calling all the newspapers, the radio stations?

04-00:23:45

Roff: We announced that there would be this service. I got to personally invite the various dignitaries. I don't know whether I did it or a group of us did, because there were so many. Cecil Williams, of course. There were just many, many religious figures, some well-known, others not, and filled this platform. They first gathered in the mayor's office, while this crowd outside enlarged, ever grew outside. But the crowd was absolutely, remarkably—to the point of really being so noticeable that it was absolutely soundless. No whispers, no shouts, nothing. Just quiet. You could hear the pigeons flutter around among the trees. You could see, if you were looking, the rooftop of the auditorium, the police keeping very close watch. This crowd was quiet. It was multiracial. The very front rank were a group of young African Americans in black jackets. They weren't the Panthers, but a young group. I mentioned this group, and the police thought that group looked menacing, so I was dispensed to bring that group up to his office, in with the ministers and the priests and the bishops and all. I brought the group in. There was one young woman, probably late teens, who had written a poem. Alioto, in an instant, said, "You're going to speak right after the archbishop" or whatever. The assembly all descended down to the platform and took their seats, including the woman. Prayers were offered. Young woman had this really quite—a very heartfelt poem about Martin Luther King. I wish I could recall it. I can't. It was very touching. Still, this crowd was absolutely silent. The silence was so vivid, so extraordinary, kind of electric. There was no sound other than, I say, the voices over the microphones and the flutter of the birds. Cecil Williams, with that powerful, charismatic personality of his, gets up and says, "The choir from Glide is going to sing. Going to sing 'We Shall Overcome.' I want every one of you out there to hold hands and join that chorus of 'We shall overcome.'" This bombastic choir gets up and sings this wonderful—

04-00:27:12

Rubens: From Glide Memorial?

04-00:27:13

Roff: Yes, from Glide Memorial. Gets up and sings this wonderful hymn on civil rights. Slowly, hands began to reach out. Still no sound, but clasping neighbor's hands. That crowd began to sway. We had no incident in the city. A MUNI driver was shot, but it had nothing to do with Martin Luther King or revenge. It was simply one of those terrible urban robberies. Something like 130 cities—Washington, Philadelphia, Los Angeles—had calamitous riots, some of them lasting days. National Guard units taking over the cities. This city

remained calm. Again, to me, it was, one, a testimony of his decisiveness. He didn't call a focus group. He didn't call a taskforce. He didn't sit down with a committee. He said, "Do it." He was protested by his own police chief. Most people would say, "Oh." "We're going to do it." It was one of those things that left people breathless, at least me. Partly thankful it was over without incident, but it was so, so extraordinarily moving. Not only by the testimony and the messages from the ministers and priests and monks and all, but from the reaction at the end of this song, lustily, loudly, proudly sung by the crowd.

04-00:29:13

Rubens:

Did Alioto speak to the crowd, too?

04-00:29:15

Roff:

He did, but briefly. There were very few speeches of exhortation, other than—

04-00:29:21

Rubens:

And you didn't need to write something for him?

04-00:29:23

Roff:

Oh, I didn't need to write anything for him. I mean, I did, but—no, he was—

04-00:29:34

Rubens:

He knew what he wanted to say.

04-00:29:37

Roff:

No, no, he would be the type who would finish up a labor negotiation, say, at eight o'clock in the morning, but agreed, in one case, to make an amicus argument as a friend of the court on a very delicate First Amendment question to the state supreme court. When the negotiation is over, the press conference held at eight thirty. Nine o'clock, he calls to his office, his law office, has them bring a particular law book that he wanted. He's reading it as he walks across from City Hall over to the old state building, and then gets up and gives a fifteen-minute Patrick Henry defense of the First Amendment. One of the more elegant speeches I've ever heard on the subject. Many people question Alioto, but my association with him, albeit was not that long—I was there from '68 to '70, and then briefly again when he ran for reelection in '75—but I found this confidence in the city, confidence in himself, and confidence in the people with whom he placed confidence, was quite extraordinary.

04-00:31:16

Rubens:

Tell me a little bit about your relationship to the press. Here you are, a reporter who had been with the *News* for many years.

04-00:31:25

Roff:

It was always ambivalent. I think I was a pretty good reporter. I approached the job both from the viewpoint of a reporter and as a spokesperson. I believe very much in being very straight with reporters. If they ask off-the-mark questions or didn't pursue questions, I didn't necessarily volunteer. I knew what they were after, and I certainly knew those who were diligent and professional in their jobs. They were not just in there and trying to get a couple of paragraphs and call it quits. There were several who were really good, hard by heart. They would stick with a story until they could get the facts or find the story false. I

know that when I'd get one of those, "Hi, Had, this is Herb" from Herb Caen, I knew that ninety-nine percent of the time, he had every fact nailed down, and all he wanted me to do was make some foolish statement, or just confirm it and end it. I respected good journalism. At that time, City Hall was covered by some really quite—a woman who does City Hall for KCBS and whose name is just—

04-00:33:29

Rubens: We can add it or I can—

04-00:33:31

Roff: It was one of the extraordinary—Sandy Zane of the *Chronicle*, and Jerry Burns. Jerry Burns became editorial page editor of the *Chronicle*. These were very, very good reporters.

04-00:33:45

Rubens: Were there cases of you placing things in the newspaper that you—

04-00:33:50

Roff: Oh, yeah. We'd send out press releases on events and make statements.

04-00:33:55

Rubens: I mean even more behind the scenes. Calling Jerry Burns and saying, "Hey, look, we're trying to push this through. Can you—" Maybe that's not how it worked.

04-00:34:07

Roff: Not so much, because the press was competitive. If you fed one reporter, all you did was tick the others off. I was careful and respectful. A lot of this with the press culminated in probably one of the more, in my view—I'm rather partisan. I have very high regard for Alioto, at least for that time that I was with him. Mafia that was gang-related. Well, I mean, he was Italian. I kept getting feedback from either people who were being interviewed on the story—there was just such concentration on possible negative points and trying to build some kind of a case to make this linkage between Alioto and the mob and the gang or whatever. It was a time that Alioto was approaching '68, and there was some talk of Alioto as a possible vice presidential candidate. He had risen very quickly in the estimation of Johnson. In fact, just to backtrack for a moment, the incident with the Martin Luther King assassination, when the city didn't burn, the phone rang the next day and it was President Johnson. Johnson asked him, "How the"—expletive deleted—"did you do it?" He said, "That's remarkable." Alioto had gained considerable stature. He had become a voice in the council of mayors and had been talked about. Then the *Look* magazine piece came out, just as—

04-00:37:08

Rubens: Did you have any advance warning that this was coming out? Was there a rumor that—

04-00:37:12

Roff: We got it round-aboutly from people who had been interviewed or who knew who were being interviewed. I could tell from the nature of the kinds of questions that seemed to be asked that it was not—and they made no attempt to get in touch with our office. I think they came in, but the interview was very abrupt. They were asking questions that just were

not productive. Anyway, I remember I called the publisher of *Look* and said, “If you’re going to publish an article that, by all intents and purposes, is directed at damaging this person’s future and damaging his political credentials, at least we should have an opportunity to see it, at least a day or so in advance, so we know what”—well, no. Usually that courtesy is to do this. “No. No.” I was bound and determined to get my hands on a galley or a proof of the story, and found somebody in Sacramento who could be helpful. At that time, of course we didn’t have email and all, but he sent a galley of the story down from Sacramento. Stamped on top of the first page was, “From the office of the Governor of California, Ronald Reagan.” Immediately, I put a press conference together quickly. Had press from all over the state, including [Richard] Dick Burgholz, who later on recommended my working with Tunney. The best we could do is Alioto denies. At least have him make the first statement, a denial, and then try to break down the story as we could read it. As I say, when I opened that galley—the source was not in the governor’s office. But when I saw that stamp—

04-00:39:36

Rubens:

Let me just be clear about what you’re seeing. So *Look* magazine had sent it to Reagan?

04-00:39:42

Roff:

Somebody had. I always suspected that this was part of the Nixon political operation and the then-attorney general, John Mitchell. It had obviously come through political channels. It was accepted in Reagan’s office. He got an advance copy.

04-00:40:23

Rubens:

I see you have in the corner of your room the new book by Seth Rosenfeld [*Subversives: The FBI’s War on Student Radicals, and Reagan’s Rise to Power*].

04-00:40:28

Roff:

Yes, I haven’t had the chance to read that.

04-00:40:30

Rubens:

He does have evidence of the FBI, and I guess the Nixon administration, being in touch with Reagan when he was governor and having Reagan tell them about what his perceptions were and understanding about what’s going on in the university. So I can imagine that this is also—

04-00:40:47

Roff:

Oh, yes. The story was basically innuendo. A relative of Alioto had been shot in a barber’s chair. Well, that seemed like something that would happen in New York in the mob. But years and years and years and years ago. He had been with the federal government as an antitrust attorney. I don’t know.

04-00:41:20

Rubens:

There just wasn’t the evidence?

04-00:41:25

Roff:

I never sensed the possibility of any association. I’m naïve and I—

04-00:41:37

Rubens: How did Alioto literally respond, feel?

04-00:41:41

Roff: He responded like a good attorney. I think there was a libel suit. He took it as a legal challenge. I think before that played out, I had left.

04-00:42:12

Rubens: Do you think it was damaging to him?

04-00:42:19

Roff: It did not, apparently, affect his reputation here in the city, where by then he was well-known. He ran for reelection and won. I think such a story, if it bore any credibility, would have damaged him to the point that reelection would have been out of the question. But he won reelection. He seemed to be as popular as ever. I left before the whole episode ended.

04-00:42:54

Rubens: He never did become a contender in the national arena?

04-00:42:57

Roff: No. There was talk.

04-00:42:59

Rubens: He may not have been anyway.

04-00:43:02

Roff: He went back to the '68 Democratic convention in Chicago. That was the one where it was riotous. The police were particularly hostile to the crowd in the park. The place reeked of teargas. We were on the same floor that Humphrey was.

04-00:43:28

Rubens: Were you there? You went back with him?

04-00:43:30

Roff: Yes. Typical Alioto, he wasn't satisfied just looking out the window. All the laundries were on strike, so we all just reeked of this god-awful gas. He insisted, "I'm not going to sit around. I want to hear what these kids say." And out he goes, right into the thick of the crowd.

04-00:43:59

Rubens: Why were you along with him? On the chance that something might have happened in terms of his nomination?

04-00:44:03

Roff: I was the press guy. He was meeting with Humphrey and Dick [Richard J.] Daley, the mayor of Chicago. Aliotio gave a nominating speech for Humphrey then, and I wrote something for him, but he didn't read from the text. I remember Humphrey telling Alioto, "Oh, that Reagan may be governor, but he's going to go out the window." He, of course, went on to become president of the United States. I remember Alioto going into that

crowd, and I must say I was a little trepidatious. The policeman who was assigned as his bodyguard lost his pistol. How an officer would ever lose his pistol in this chaos, I don't know. Anyway, that was a big adventure. Alioto did make his try for governor, but that didn't succeed. It may be in part due to the magazine. But in San Francisco, he remained—he was able to get reelected.

04-00:45:20

Rubens: Just to follow up the Mafia charges, I always understood that the Mafia didn't have roots here in San Francisco. That was one of the distinctions between Left Coast/East Coast crime culture.

04-00:45:37

Roff: The old stories around the hall of justice back when I was a reporter was that if anybody from the mob was about to get off the train or whatever, they were met and put back on the train. It had no effect. I don't know. I never—

04-00:46:00

Rubens: It just seems there's never been anything uncovered. No role in the labor unions.

04-00:46:05

Roff: No, no, no, no. Not in the labor unions. Again, there may have been skullduggery around somewhere. I don't know.

04-00:46:40

Rubens: Tell me just a little bit more about your working day. Did you meet with him regularly? Every day would you—

04-00:46:47

Roff: I always had this arrangement—and I made this from the time I first became press secretary—that I would have immediate access. I would not abuse it, but immediate access any time that I thought I needed to talk to the mayor.

04-00:47:02

Rubens: Did you call him the mayor or did you say Joe?

04-00:47:05

Roff: I started with Joe, then it became the mayor. I know I called Dianne “Dianne,” but in a more formal setting, I'll go back to say senator. She's very informal. I know Joe, it didn't make a difference. Privately, we used first names, but I think in public, it's an acknowledgement of courtesy.

04-00:47:31

Rubens: I just meant if you walked into his office and said, “Joe, I need you to look at this.”

04-00:47:35

Roff: I probably would say that.

04-00:47:38

Rubens: You had an open door. Did he have a weekly meeting with his top administrators?

04-00:47:47

Roff: No. Dianne was the only one I know who did the weekly—would go to department head meetings. He met with them as the need arose. I don't recall.

04-00:48:05

Rubens: The other question I had just sort of left over, was there any paper in the city—I would imagine if there was, it would be *The Examiner*—that was gunning for Alioto, that seemed to be needling him or calling him on the carpet?

04-00:48:21

Roff: No, not really. Their reporting was pretty straightaway. As I say, the re-creation of the earthquake, that was a little on the circus side of things, and it was more just to flatter the public rather than—but no one really complained. I don't know. There were a lot of issues. There were a lot of things going on in terms of redevelopment, in terms of building. A lot of those were carried on and executed when I wasn't there. I'm not trying to say I—I just don't know. I'm just telling you what I knew about. Again, it was this quality of seeing through problems. He was very good at labor negotiations and holding firm, but unions then were in a much stronger position, and there was give and take, and sessions were usually conducted on a pretty high level.

04-00:50:09

Rubens: You became pretty close with Leroy King from the ILWU, and Dave Jenkins from the ILWU.

04-00:50:19

Roff: Dave particularly. Dave sort of became just a great social friend, and in a way, kind of a mentor. Susie, my second wife, and I had our wedding reception at Dave and Edith's home. We've been very close to the Jenkins, to their daughter Becky.

04-00:50:45

Rubens: When did you meet Susie? Before you—

04-00:50:48

Roff: She worked on campaigns. She worked at the redevelopment agency, and they did some consulting there. Wes Willoughby, who was the friend I had from Stanford, during the Alioto administration, he worked at the redevelopment agency, and she was then a stenographer, an aide. When I left Alioto and went with Tunney to Washington, whenever I'd come to San Francisco, there was always a small group—David Jenkins and Susan and others—whom I'd see, and be kept informed about what was happening in the city. After I lost my first wife in '75 and I moved back to San Francisco in '79, I married her in 1980.

04-00:52:14

Rubens: This is sort of irrelevant here, but hadn't she worked for a big developer? I thought that—

04-00:52:30

Roff: Yeah, she had worked for—I can't think of his name now. He built The Cannery, one of the first commercial ventures, turning an old warehouse into a series of shops. Leonard Martin, I think. She'd worked with him and then she had worked at the redevelopment,

and she worked at the Alioto reelection campaign of '72. She was just somebody who was lively and just knew the city.

04-00:53:16

Rubens: And her maiden name?

04-00:53:18

Roff: Was Trommald. T-R-O-M-M-A-L-D.

04-00:53:23

Rubens: All right, so we'll pick up Susie a little bit later. This was all in the vein that you met really good friends, people who became your—

04-00:53:29

Roff: Oh, yes. In a newspaper, you hop from story to story. You sell them—especially the kind of reporting I did, mostly from the police. You're covering incidents. As a consequence, there's a new subject, new something, every day. Politics, of course, has a greater continuum to it. Issues tend to linger and defy easy solution. Also, in government, obviously you have to work with a whole variety of interests, hopefully to reach some compromise if necessary, or reach some point of agreement.

04-00:54:38

Rubens: I was going to ask you just one more area. What about, if you will, the elite of the city? Both socially and economically. It's a two-part question. I don't think you needed to manage anything about Alioto's social life or sort of public personal life. He didn't make any splashes there.

04-00:55:01

Roff: No, I wouldn't be involved in that. I always knew where I could reach him. They managed their own private life and their own life.

04-00:55:27

Rubens: But was he a *bon vivant* around town? Was he in the—

04-00:55:31

Roff: He was extremely interested in music and the opera, and a voracious reader. I can think of having brunch with him one day, with Edith Jenkins. Edith had taught Shakespeare at Merritt College for decades. They traded, word for word, from memory, Shakespearian sonnets. In terms of a person's private life, I deliberately avoided that.

04-00:56:26

Rubens: So there wasn't cause for you to manage this in the press.

We're going to have to change the tape in a second. I suddenly realized I never looked up, when did the incident happen with his wife? She disappeared for a while, and then said she was visiting the California Missions—was that after you left?

04-00:56:48

Roff: I was back in Washington. I was called and told about what was happening. It was when I was gone. She went around and visited the missions.

04-00:57:00

Rubens: Some press secretary had to manage that.

04-00:57:03

Roff: Yes, somebody had to handle that.

04-00:57:07

Rubens: Otherwise, there weren't things like that in your tenure?

04-00:57:10

Roff: No. No, no, no. I'm sure there probably were—but nothing of any significance, other than the *Look* magazine piece.

Audio File 5

05-00:00:05

Roff: Some of his antitrust work before he became mayor had been questioned.

05-00:00:12

Rubens: He came under some criticism.

05-00:00:13

Roff: A question of payments to the attorney general of Washington, where it was an antitrust suit. But the attorney was free, under the laws of Washington, to accept clients. It was just something that the *New York Times* was interested in.

05-00:00:40

Rubens: Did you have to manage that?

05-00:00:42

Roff: I didn't really manage it. I just mentioned it to Alioto and Wally Turner. There's no question that money had been—but it was never looked upon as—it was explained as something that was acceptable. Maybe today, that would be looked upon as a conflict. I don't know. I can't imagine an attorney general being able to take private clients or being associated.

05-00:01:27

Rubens: So there you are, sort of in the thick of things, and then you moved to the Tunney campaign. How does that come about?

05-00:01:40

Roff: To me, it was a surprise. I did not know John Tunney. I had never been involved in political campaigns, essentially, in the south, Southern California, and suddenly I get a call, would I be interested in moving to Los Angeles?

05-00:02:03

Rubens: The call is from someone in his—

05-00:02:06

Roff: Somebody, I've forgotten whom.

05-00:02:08

Rubens: In Tunney's circle?

05-00:02:09

Roff: In Tunney's operation. I went and talked to him and his sort of guru and major campaign advisor was Warren Christopher, who later was secretary of state in the Clinton administration. I was offered a job as press secretary. It was a little awkward, because I had to take the place of someone who was given a lesser job.

05-00:02:50

Rubens: Why was it attractive to you?

05-00:02:56

Roff: It was a Senate campaign, and it offered more money.

05-00:03:12

Rubens: Also, if he was elected, you knew you'd be in D.C., whether it be—

05-00:03:17

Roff: Yeah, and I thought it might be time. He made it very attractive. Tunney was nice, young, bright guy, full of vim and vigor, and was fun to be with. The campaign was made up of some truly talented persons, many of them at that time—Mike Barnicle went on to become—he's on *Morning Joe* now on television. And Nelson Rising, who is a big land developer down in—well, was here, and then down in Los Angeles. These were bright, bright, young persons, and it was kind of an exhilarating campaign. There was Gene Tunney, John's father. Gene, the former world champ boxing champ. Always called me the fat man. "Hey, fat man." He'd be on the plane. "Put a fighter in your corner" was the campaign slogan against George Murphy, the actor, who had contracted throat cancer and could only speak in a husky, rather forlorn rasp. Tunney was vigorous. We did then kind of the old-fashioned campaign. A lot of stops at town halls and schools. Even did a train trip up to the Valley.

05-00:05:25

Rubens: Were you there for the primaries? Because there was a—

05-00:05:30

Roff: I was really more there in the general. That's when they made the change.

05-00:05:34

Rubens: Because the primary had been very bitter, right? I don't know who George Brown, Jr. was who was contending for the nomination.

05-00:05:40

Roff: He was a congressman.

05-00:05:41

Rubens: But he defeated him. Tunney was a congressman also.

05-00:05:48

Roff: I missed it. I came in in the general.

05-00:05:51

Rubens: When he was running against Murphy?

05-00:05:53

Roff: Right. We traveled by plane. We made sure that he got around the state many, many times, and in as lively a setting, sort of vigorous as any we could, in contrast to Murphy's obviously more frail condition. Tunney was a great campaign. He had one of the great consultants, who really first pioneered the creative use of television. Oh, God. [David Garth] Jeff Greenfield, who did some of the speechwriting. Young guy. Just amazingly smart. In fact, a lot of the campaign and the campaign people were incorporated into a Robert Redford movie, *The Candidate*.

05-00:07:41

Rubens: What was attractive about the candidate?

05-00:07:45

Roff: One, I think it was his youth, his interest, his vitality. He knew the issues. He could speak on issues that were then emerging in importance, like environmental issues.

05-00:08:07

Rubens: And antiwar. Wasn't he in opposition to the war in Vietnam?

05-00:08:14

Roff: He may have been, but that was never a—he was against Tom Hayden, but that was later. Basically, he put on a campaign of multi, multi appearances. As I say, the train trip. All these little burgs up through the Valley. High school bands. All that kind of stuff. I'm traveling with him. The only problem is I foolishly left someone else the job of writing a memo to the press on the operation of the train. Unfortunately, the person didn't mention until the fourth page or something, far beyond what most reporters are going to read, that when the train whistle blew three times, that meant they should get back on the train. On our first stop, we left practically the whole press corps in Delano. That was one of Dick Tuck, who was the great prankster for the Democrats—he organized every cab and truck and whatever. You could see this parallel caravan of cars and trucks racing alongside the railroad track, trying to keep up. Reunited us all. I was practically really throttling—

05-00:09:51

Rubens: You were saying TV campaigns, too. This was the consultant's name we're trying to think of.

05-00:09:58

Roff: Tom Brokaw was the local political reporter in Los Angeles. All the stations then, at least all the bigger stations, had political reporters. They had an excellent one here in San Francisco. You had Rollin Post here in San Francisco, and a number of others who were really good. There was lots of television coverage. Of course, there wasn't the instant news cycle as there is today. Something said one instant is immediately responded to with a Twitter or something. There's very little time to really develop any kind of argument. It's just a lot of little sound bites thrown back and forth. Then, it was a little more systematic. One person responding to the other. You're usually thinking about a twenty-four-hour cycle. If you said something on a Tuesday, the other person might respond on a

Wednesday. If you were smart, you'd probably think of something to say on a Wednesday too that's going to blot out the other. Anyway, it was kind of a chess game as to how to manage the news cycle then. The reporting was very high caliber. You had Sid Kossen on the *Examiner* here. You had Burgholz whom I mentioned. These were superior reporters. Really first-rate. There were many, many others. George Murphy here. Mary Ellen Leary on the *News-Call*. These were top-flight, and they followed politics with a great deal of care.

05-00:12:17

Rubens:

Is it a kind of nail-biter as you're getting closer to the general election, or are you feeling—

05-00:12:23

Roff:

Yes, but we felt pretty good about the race. The polls were usually pretty supportive. No question that the father, the champ, added a celebrity to the campaign. Again, John, younger, was more current on immediate issues. As I said, the environment and issues like that.

05-00:13:01

Rubens:

So he's elected.

05-00:13:02

Roff:

He's elected. He goes to Washington, and he asks me to go as his press secretary.

05-00:13:15

Rubens:

Did you have to think about it a little, or this is kind of what it was about?

05-00:13:20

Roff:

I had to think. Of course, I then had three children. My first wife. I was uprooting the family, but we were able to—but kind of thrived in Washington, especially the daughter, who—very precocious as a swimmer.

05-00:13:50

Rubens:

How did Alioto take you saying goodbye?

05-00:13:56

Roff:

I don't know. Off I went.

05-00:14:01

Rubens:

Did you have a hand in picking who was your successor?

05-00:14:05

Roff:

I had made some suggestions. A fellow who did come in was a person who I had recommended, yes. It was Tom Flynn from the *Oakland Tribune*.

05-00:14:22

Rubens:

So you set yourself up in Washington. Why don't we do just a little bit more. You gave such a nice, vivid portrait of Alioto. Do you want to say something about how you found Tunney as a person, as an administrator, as a mind?

05-00:14:42

Roff: Tunney was extremely well-intentioned and really committed to the more liberal side of the democratic ideas of things. His closest friend, who had been a classmate at University of Virginia law school, was Ted Kennedy. Ted, of course, had been a young member of the Senate. Was quite a powerful voice. He had two brothers killed, and had been very active in politics for a long while. John was involved in some of the early legislation in terms of the Clean Water Act and a number of things on the environmental front.

05-00:16:01

Rubens: Did he have good people in his office that you liked working with?

05-00:16:04

Roff: We hired very well several of the legislative assistants. Two of them went on to become members of Congress themselves. Two were from major law firms. Many of them, the lawyers or the legislators, were interviewed by Warren Christopher, who was very particular. John was going through some difficult times domestically with his first wife, who I don't think really took too much to the obligations of heavy travel and all that were involved in the Senate campaign, and then being in Washington.

05-00:17:04

Rubens: But you liked him?

05-00:17:06

Roff: Oh, I liked him. He was accessible. Extremely nice, thoughtful guy. Sometimes he was less diligent than the job demanded. He was hard working, but there were many times that major votes would come up in California—not many times, but several—very key votes, and John would miss them. One time because he arrived—he lived not too far from the Capitol, and when the buzzer rang, the vote was being called, I called him at home and he said he'd be right there. The buzzer system has, I think, five initial calls, and then there are warnings, and then there's a final call. By the final call, he hadn't arrived, and I couldn't imagine what had happened. I had the Capitol cops looking for him. Well, he got to the Capitol, but he'd forgotten his coat, and you can't go in the Senate floor without a coat. I'm there, practically screaming at him. I shouldn't do that. "Why don't you just go up to one of the Capitol cops and borrow a coat?" That'd be a fashion statement, but he doesn't have a coat. Also, that was a time when the Watergate was beginning to unfold, 1971. He was not on a committee that was directly involved in that, although we found ourselves somewhat involved. You go and you deal with a hundred fellow senators.

05-00:19:40

Rubens: I was going to say, it's a pretty prestigious, small club.

05-00:19:43

Roff: To try to carve out an independent identity for yourself is very, very tough. A lot of the old lions were still alive back then. It was hard sometimes for younger members to gain notoriety.

05-00:20:13

Rubens: You had to learn the rules of the Senate and—

05-00:20:16

Roff: Yeah, but they're not—

05-00:20:17

Rubens: —meet with the Washington press corps.

05-00:20:19

Roff: Yes. Again, the California press corps back there really was very—it was extremely diligent. If Tunney were to miss a vote—you could almost see the red hand of the clock go past the starting time and it was not very long before one of them would call and say, “Where was John?”

05-00:20:49

Rubens: You wouldn't be on the Senate floor?

05-00:20:51

Roff: Not during a vote, no.

05-00:20:53

Rubens: But were there more occasions than not that you would travel in and out of the Senate floor?

05-00:21:00

Roff: Not much. That really was the legislative aide.

05-00:21:05

Rubens: Where was your office, actually?

05-00:21:07

Roff: There were several. The final one was in the new Senate Office Building. I think it's called the Hart Building now. We had a suite up in one of the upper floors. I've forgotten. We had a good crew, several of them from the campaign, and several extremely capable legislative assistants. As I say, two went on to be members of Congress. It was just because the focus was so on Watergate through much of that period that it was difficult to really make an independent mark, unless you were part of the Ervin Committee.

05-00:22:15

Rubens: Maybe we should think about stopping here and mapping out what we'll talk about next week: specific hearings about “Watergate; working with Ted Kennedy, the Muskie campaign and then going back to Alioto's administration. When did you first meet Kennedy?

05-00:22:34

Roff: I met him through Tunney.

05-00:22:35

Rubens: During this time, did you have any audiences with the president?

05-00:22:59

Roff: Carter had all the senior staff people, all the administrative assistants and the staff directors, in for a breakfast. Then later Clinton had a so-called California day, when he

had about 150 or so Californians in. Some big donors, others political activists and all. I was one of those who—This was when I was back in D.C. with Dianne. I really want to focus on Dianne.

05-00:24:08

Rubens:

We'll do that soon.

Interview 4: January 15, 2013

Audio File 6

06-00:00:00

Rubens:

I have a few follow up questions from our last interview. Before we began to tape this morning, I was asking you about David Garth coming in from New York to work on Tunney's campaign, first campaign for Senate.

06-00:00:18

Roff:

Well, I was asked to join the Tunney campaign for the general election. It had been a bruising primary, of which I was not a part. So he brought in David Garth, who then was the guru of the brief punchy television ad. And Jeff Greenfield, who was then his assistant, went on to be a commentator on several national news broadcasts. But David was an extremely, extremely—and then so is Jeff—extremely—they were creative. They saw things in very visual terms. The idea was to associate Tunney with youth and vigor and activity and adventurousness. And for one thing, the slogan capitalized on his father. Put a fighter in your corner. And, of course, his father, Gene, was a boxing heavyweight champion and still an esteemed figure who traveled with the campaign doing part of the, early part of the general. Always called me the fat man.

And the ads would always feature John in a shirt with a coat slung over his shoulder. Very, very, very youthful image. Part of that was very deliberate, one, because John was youthful and was vigorous and was a hearty robust campaigner. But his rival in the general, the Republican Senator George Murphy had throat cancer and spoke only with a very difficult rasp. And so, again, the fighter image, the youth image was very clear for John. And also the campaign was built around a lot of activity. An old fashioned train trip up through the Valley.

06-00:02:44

Rubens:

That we did talk about.

06-00:02:48

Roff:

A lot of campaign activities. Rallies and a time when people would come out even for candidates lower on the ticket. And it was a lively campaign. Many of the people in it went on to other things. Mike Barnicle, who was the speechwriter, became a television commentator. I've forgotten the name of the program. But it was a lively exciting campaign.

06-00:03:32

Rubens:

Did you work with Garth and Greenfield yourself?

06-00:03:38

Roff:

They were there for the general election and they were extremely creative. Of course, they did their filming and editing back in New York but they were very, very adroit and were very visual. The ads then were not so much these biting slanted bogus hit pieces. We showed Tunney reacting with voters, being with people, going to the barrios in Los

Angeles. It showed him in various settings but interacting with people. They were very, very good.

06-00:04:31

Rubens:

Were these the people who were sort of pioneers in using television that you mentioned earlier?

06-00:04:39

Roff:

Very much so. Oh, yeah, yeah. Garth was one of the really formidable pioneers.

06-00:04:48

Rubens:

Not too long in this conversation we're going to get back to Tunney's reelection campaign and that proved tougher. But let's take the detour that you take. You've worked for Tunney for two years, '70 to '72.

06-00:05:08

Roff:

I did. Herb Caen once referred to me in a column when I moved from California to Washington as super flak. I hope he wasn't being sarcastic. But I built a certain reputation with Alioto and then in Tunney's campaign. And it put me in touch with people who were active on the national scene and Muskie in early '72, early '72, decided to bring some additional people into the campaign. And I was asked to come in to be what was never really well defined, a lesson that I learned. I was media director but there also was a press secretary. And the press secretary traveled and I stayed in Washington.

Muskie seemed at the outset of '72 as if he were absolutely guaranteed the nomination. He had the backing of almost every Democratic Party leader, labor leader, fundraisers, governors. He had an enormous list of supporters. A considerable amount of campaign cash. Drew large crowds.

06-00:06:51

Rubens:

Won the Iowa caucus.

06-00:06:52

Roff:

Yeah.

06-00:06:53

Rubens:

I think there was a poll that said if the election took place at that point that he would win.

06-00:07:01

Roff:

Right. And I think that kind of psychology of winning, of being ahead, of leading the pack became a kind of inhibition. That line out of Bette Davis' movie, *All About Eve*, where she predicts this is going to be a bumpy road ahead. Well, they really didn't anticipate a bumpy road. I think they thought things would go very smoothly up into the convention and then his nomination. But it turned out that Nixon made a startling, totally unexpected move. A person who spoke on one hand in very conservative social terms to satisfy apprehensions about disorder in some of the cities, but also took probably one of the most daring foreign policy initiatives in our history by opening diplomacy with China, going to China and meeting with Mao and Zhou Enlai. And it just absolutely dominated the papers and captivated I think a lot of people's—focused a lot of people's attention on his

effectiveness. Meanwhile, the war in Vietnam was teetering, going badly, and he promised to bring it to an end without really saying how he would do it.

But he seemed a more emphatic candidate. And while he was in China—I think Nixon was still in China—Muskie became enraged about an editorial in the *Manchester Union Leader*. Was it the *Union Leader*? I've forgotten the name of the—but it was just a hugely partisan newspaper. The Fox News of the media game then. Highly favorable to the Republicans. And wrote a campaign that criticized his wife. And I've forgotten exactly how. It was a mild insult. And supposedly while it was snowing.

06-00:09:22

Rubens:

She drank and used off color language. That was the charge.

06-00:09:27

Roff:

Yes. And he found that personally very offensive. And he went to her defense and a flatbed truck was brought. I wasn't there at the time. I was in Washington at the campaign. And he went before the *Manchester Union Leader*, I think it was. And in an outdoor speech from the flatbed truck, while it was snowing, some of the reporters thought he was crying. And there's some dispute. David Broder, who was one of the premier political reporters, he thought that Muskie had actually cried. Later on in his life he was trying to recast the thing. The idea of this sort of Lincolnesque rather stolid figure. Muskie had the profile of somebody who was destined to be on our coins. Just had this statuesque solid tough looking visage. And the idea that he's crying, and in contrast to Nixon's obvious success the contrast was very sharp. And the polls just absolutely—as if a trap door had opened beneath Muskie.

06-00:11:09

Rubens:

There was also, I think at the same time, maybe it happened just before, this famous incident, the Canuck letter.

06-00:11:20

Roff:

Yes, that was published in the *Manchester Union*. And also, and it's never been fully developed, we know that David Segretti, one of the Nixon operatives was being paid to disrupt the—we know for a fact disrupt the Muskie campaign. Discredit the campaign. And I think it was in Florida they circulated a letter, a phony letter, in which accusations were made against leading Democrats, of being deviants and being corrupt. Totally phony but it put the campaign on a very defensive position. But I think the principle difficulty in the campaign, looking back on it, was that because they had such universal support, or seeming such universal support among the traditional party leadership, the unions and environmental groups and the more progressive and left, that he should deemphasize issues so as not to offend any one of these groups and try to maintain as broad a coalition of support as possible. Well, that was a time of deferment. Again, questions about the Vietnam War, a great division in the country over its conduct. Nixon, promising results. Going to Asia gave his statements on the Far East considerable credibility. But there was a kind of void on the Muskie side in terms of specific issues. He made a good speech. He made a good rally speech but it lacked—and it was often discussed in the campaign. It was not very clear and hard hitting and concise.

06-00:13:32

Rubens: Let's talk about your role in the campaign, what you're doing. Firstly, do you have to take a leave from Tunney or do you get time off?

06-00:13:41

Roff: I took a leave. I was paid out of the campaign. Of course, my assumption was that Muskie would win and, of course, when I went with him there was every presumption that he would. I thought maybe I'd get one of those nice little cars in the White House with a little lamp in the back. And I know I was fine with Muskie after he lost I think the Wisconsin primary and we were in his little cabin in the back of this prop driven, propeller driven plane, and talking. And things were just obviously just going down the tubes. So I, not being maybe as wise nationally, on the national stage, but I thought maybe a dramatic showing in the California primary in June. And I suggested, well, maybe we really put more effort into California. Of course, I knew California and I thought there would be a chance of having a dramatic show in the biggest state with the largest number of delegates, and et cetera. And suddenly we're being all being served by stewardesses in-service trays. And Muskie grabs his napkin, throws it at me. "God damn you," and threw this napkin and it's wrapped around my face. So then I—

06-00:15:10

Rubens: Well, what was he—

06-00:15:12

Roff: Well, he thought that it was a stupid statement. And I, of course, was insulted at being—so I went and sat in the front part of the plane all by myself, missed dinner because they all thought I was elsewhere. And meanwhile I began to listen to the engineers and I realized that one of the engines wasn't working. So I sat there and kind of, "Oh, Jesus, am I going to make it back?" But, again, the Muskie campaign put me in touch with many people who were on the—well, one of the persons became quite a good friend, although I don't see him often because he's back east. But the fellow who does the commentary on the *News Hour*. Mark Shields. A wonderful sense of humor. We became friends and the speech—

06-00:16:17

Rubens: What was he doing on it? Was he with the campaign or—

06-00:16:20

Roff: He was one of the senior field aides in the campaign. And we had a very good staff. Madeline Albright on the staff. Had Tony Lake, who became a foreign policy advisor for a number of Democratic leaders. Madeline, of course, became secretary of state for Clinton. George Mitchell, who went on to become one of the great diplomatic negotiators. It was a good, good, good staff but—

06-00:16:58

Rubens: And you're meeting with these people? Do you—

06-00:16:59

Roff: No. We didn't meet. There was one time we met. Again when the campaign was—it was obviously severely wounded and there was still hope maybe something could be done at

the convention in Miami. And I do remember at one point the discussion, which was very serious, but also it was kind of oblique because everyone wanted to say, "Well, Ed, you got to face the fact you're kind of a loser," but no one wanted to say that. And conversation would lapse. Well, Muskie tried to entertain by showing a camel that the prisoners at the Maine penitentiary had made when he was governor. You put a cigarette in and you crank the snout or something and it came out the other end. Oh, we all ha, ha, ha. And then one of his kids, I don't remember the name, but about nine or so, I guess, in a little striped t-shirt, rolled his bike into the den where we were all sitting. And you can look out the rear window and these spare wintry trees were barren of leaves. But you could see the Secret Service men. And he came in. And, "Gee, Dad, can't we—" he said. And Jane, Mrs. Muskie, looked at the boy and said, "Why don't you go outside and play with the Secret Service?" And that got a laugh from us all. But Muskie was serious.

06-00:18:45

Rubens: Did Tunney have a stake in the—

06-00:18:48

Roff: Well, he was an early endorser, as were almost all the senators. He was very new to the Senate. But a Californian, that was a big boost. He was early on interested in the environment. And I don't remember the subcommittee. But Muskie was pushing, as was the White House, environmental reforms. Creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and a lot of regulation dealing with clean air and clean water and Tunney was very much involved. Muskie was chair of the relevant committee. And Tunney had worked closely with the Muskie people on the environmental legislation.

But it was a time of great political fermentation. The division over Vietnam, which led into a real fracturing of the country in many ways that still exists. There was still impulse to reform, and reform as in the environment, rigorous efforts. And Tunney did have an association with Muskie. I don't know whether a close friendship. I don't recall it being that. But I do know that they were interested in much of the same progressive legislation.

[Phone call interrupts the interview]

06-00:21:38

Rubens: So we're talking about Muskie's early run for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, in the spring of 1971.

06-00:23:02

Roff: In fact, I had taken leave from Tunney to work for Muskie and then when the Muskie campaign folded I went back with Tunney, only now as not his press secretary but as his administrative assistant or chief of staff. And then I had always kept very close touch with people in San Francisco. So I followed San Francisco politics carefully but from a distance, from 3,000 miles away. But the city was undergoing huge political change. We had Jim Jones, whom I never met, but who obviously had a profound effect on the city. He rallied many of the political leaders into his camp, apparently provided walkers for the campaign and helpful. Was on the Housing Authority. Never met but I followed these developments and what seemed to be a kind of widening—well, I am getting way ahead of myself because that's later. I'm sorry.

So I went back with Tunney and then—

06-00:23:05

Rubens:

Why did he now want you as chief of staff?

06-00:23:07

Roff:

I'm not sure. His former chief had also been his chief when he was in the House and I think had had an offer for another job. I don't know. Anyway, I was made the administrative assistant or the chief of staff and then—

06-00:23:37

Rubens:

So it's got to be in November, after the election?

06-00:23:39

Roff:

Yes. But it was also the time when my first wife, Mary, and the mother of my three children, had a cataclysmic cancer, multiple myeloma, cancer of the bone, where the bones were so brittle they'd break at the slightest movement. So she had to be carried. So I was involved in that. And then she passed. It was just simply a preoccupation of mine. I was thinking about maybe coming back with the kids to San Francisco where they would be better known. But it was sort of serendipitous. Out of the blue I got a call from Alioto, who was running for reelection.

06-00:24:40

Rubens:

Literally from Alioto himself, not an aide?

06-00:24:41

Roff:

Yes. And asking if I'd just come out for the final three or four weeks and travel with him. I'd just be there as a kind of advisor. And I couldn't resist not coming back to the city. Alioto had this sort of volcanic charisma. He'd walk into a room and every eye would turn to him just automatically. He just radiated confidence. I thought of the campaign as just get him out on the hustings, on the campaign meetings, getting him out with as many people as possible. He still had that unique coalition that he had when he won in '67 of great support from more conservative Catholic groups that had known him through his family as a kid, and the labor and more progressive forces who had come to work with him closely when he was mayor and he had paid attention. The first mayor I think who really paid particular attention to minority claims, particularly African American and Asian and Hispanic, too, and brought persons from those communities into public life, and put them on commissions, put them on the Board of Supervisors, and brought them into the political fray. So he had a pretty broad coalition. And, of course, in those days, it was whoever got the plurality. It was not a majority vote. It was whoever got the most votes. You'd always see he could get forty, forty-five percent, and not fifty plus. So anyway—

06-00:27:06

Rubens:

But obviously he was capitalizing on your experience in a broader arena.

06-00:27:11

Roff:

Well, I just think he saw me as somebody he could bounce ideas off of.

06-00:27:15

Rubens: And felt comfortable with you.

06-00:27:17

Roff: Yeah, I guess. I don't know. He was extremely warm and cordial to me and we had a very good working relationship on most matters and he knew that I'd really gone the extra mile in terms of dealing with the *Look* thing and probably handled that as well as could be handled given the impact of the article. And mine was just sort of to be there and— So I spent the five weeks or whatever it was.

06-00:28:26

Rubens: His main opponents were—

06-00:28:28

Roff: Well, one was Dianne [Feinstein].

06-00:28:31

Rubens: Of course. Then John Barbagelata.

06-00:28:37

Roff: Yes. So I flew out on a red-eye or overnight flight from Washington to here. I got into the St. Francis Hotel very, very late. And the bellman was just opening the door to my room when the phone rang. There were only four or five people who know that I'm here. And it was Dianne. "Dianne?" "Yes. How can you come back and work for that man?" she said. To this day I have no idea how she found out. Anyway, I did. He won.

06-00:29:24

Rubens: So you had known her, previously, and of course because she was prominent on the Board of Supervisors.

06-00:29:32

Roff: She'd been on the Board of Supervisors. And she was at Stanford the same time I was. I was the editor of the paper; she was the student body vice president. We weren't close friends but we certainly knew one another. And we'd seen one another. We had friends in common and we saw her when she was first married and when Kathleen was just a baby. So I knew her slightly when she went on the board. But she didn't care for Alioto and Alioto didn't really care for her very much I think. Anyway, I came out. I don't know that I contributed anything but I was there to offer whatever I could.

And then I went back to Tunney. And then his re-election, that was in '76.

By then my wife had died. I brought the kids out to Beverly Hills. Our headquarters was in Santa Monica. But I brought the kids out and somebody loaned us a little cabin up one of the little canyons. Well, originally I was to stay in Washington as his chief of staff but there were problems with the campaign. It didn't quite gel. So I was asked to go into the campaign as the manager. And it was against this icon in San Francisco, S.I. Hayakawa. He was a respected linguist and had been president at San Francisco State when the campus went into rebellion. And he was—

06-00:31:37

Rubens: The third world strike. That went on for a long time, 1968-1969.

06-00:31:38

Roff: Yeah. And he was a genuine character. He was fascinating to people. A little tam o'shanter that he always wore.

06-00:32:00

Rubens: Now at stake was Tunney's record. He was criticized for a particular bill—

06-00:32:05

Roff: There was one vote on an appropriation, a defense appropriation, that would have kept one of the big airplane factories open in Los Angeles. Now, that would have been looked on as a piece of pork, a piece of pork that the local senator, whom ever it might have been, would have supported. Well, Tunney was out of the country skiing when the vote came up.

06-00:32:33

Rubens: Yes. I think there was a picture of him in the paper on the ski slopes.

06-00:32:37

Roff: The editorial pages. The vote was called. But anyway, no Tunney.

06-00:32:54

Rubens: This was the kind of press you had to manage, right?

06-00:32:56

Roff: It was very hard because, one, the press mentioned that he had nothing more—you had to just wait 'til that faded. There's no alibi for it. Hayakawa's campaign, which was being co-led by Jack McDowell, who was the Pulitzer Prize political editor of the *Call Bulletin*, with whom I worked during the '64 Goldwater [Republican] convention here. So I knew Jack very, very well. It was very early in August, warm, hot in California. They ran an ad. Nothing. No music background. It just came on, snow peaks. The long skier coming down the hill. And I remember I was talking earnestly to somebody, but I'm looking at the television. And suddenly as he comes down the hill, a voice-over says: "Guess who was skiing when the crucial vote came up for 7,000 California workers? John Tunney. Vote for"— And they hit every market repeatedly early August. We hadn't even thought of the television by then. And that hurt.

06-00:34:37

Rubens: Now were Greenfield and Garth back for that campaign?

06-00:34:43

Roff: Well, they were. We just weren't prepared. And that was just a hard one to—And I do remember once John was on an interview, one of these interview shows with Hayakawa and Jack McDowell and I had gone through this long negotiation about the use of props. I didn't want Hayakawa to bring the tam o'shanter [the cap he wore] on the program because it was a symbol of his being such a maverick and such an engrossing figure. Anyway, the interview went all right. The two of them dealt with issues rather matter-of-factly. They both were doing well. And Tunney was pretty good on his feet or debate and

Hayakawa is quite good to the end. And I think it was Heidi Schultz, I remember her name, long blond tresses, quite good looking woman. Goes, “Well, Senator,” speaking to Tunney, “there’s a lot of reports around that you’re quite a womanizer.” You could just see him have a minor heart attack. His eyes would flare. And I’m sitting in the green room with his family, his two boys and little daughter and his wife at the time. And he leaned forward, said, “Well, I think we should just discuss this in private sometime.” [gasp]

And I jumped up and said, “That goddamn fool.’ And, of course, here’s the whole family. But Hayakawa did not—

06-00:36:23

Rubens: Had that surfaced? Was that an issue?

06-00:36:27

Roff: Well, no, not really yet.

06-00:36:29

Rubens: I didn’t see it in my research.

06-00:36:31

Roff: No, it was a very tangled affair. One of the debilitating things about a campaign is you’re on the rush all the time. One hotel, there are bags to pick up, that you lose track. You try to keep up with the papers, you try to figure out what the reporters are doing. But you don’t know what people are really talking about at the bars and whatever. But anyway, we had a good pollster. We had Pat Caddell as our pollster. He thought things were breaking our way. He was very optimistic because there were several attractive features about John, his youth and all. And he had done some good work on the environment and he also had done some investigative work. And I don’t quite know how he got into it but he sent two of our—we hired a foreign correspondent who was retiring from the *LA Times* as a press person who knew Africa. He went and did a wonderful background on the developing civil war in the Congo and that got a lot of serious attention.

06-00:37:51

Rubens: He had money, too. Apparently there was still debt from the previous campaign. But I read about Walter Shorenstein still giving him money.

06-00:37:59

Roff: Oh, yeah. No, no. He had Lew Wasserman down in Los Angeles who was the movie industry. He had corporate basically. And he had a lot of support out of movie people. And Shorenstein who almost singlehandedly rescued the Humphrey campaign. Anyway, so there wasn’t a shortage of money. But it was an image problem. He was considered the lightweight son of a heavyweight boxer kind of. And then of course this skiing fiasco.

And that kind of wrapped it. The opposition had come in on early with this very simple, simple ad but clearly in August. A slope with a skier. The people are going, “What’s that?” And it just was enough of a bite to—

So John lost and that’s when I moved over to Kennedy’s office as his press secretary.

06-00:39:27

Rubens: So this is a good point to now just jump back and pick up your work with Ted Kennedy while you were in Tunney's office. Tunney, of course, had been roommates with Ted Kennedy during law school—

06-00:39:48

Roff: Yes, at the University of Virginia Law School. And they won the moot court. They were a good pair together arguing.

06-00:39:59

Rubens: So you meet Kennedy through Tunney.

06-00:40:02

Roff: Yes. No, they were the closest friends and they spent a great deal of time together.

06-00:40:12

Rubens: So let's talk about the '72, '73 period when Watergate dominates politics and you'll work closely with Kennedy.

06-00:40:16

Roff: Well, it was probably one of the most dramatic moments for me. Not that I was not that involved with Watergate, although I was—well, now—

06-00:40:30

Rubens: How could you not keep up?

06-00:40:32

Roff: You try to keep up with it. Here was the preoccupying topic. And in 1973, on a Saturday night, Nixon abruptly fires Elliot Richardson, the attorney general, and his deputy [William Ruckelshaus] and brings Robert Bork in. Suddenly fires his two top law enforcement officials in his cabinet.

06-00:41:11

Rubens: Because Nixon wanted to fire Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor. Because Cox had subpoenaed Nixon for the tapes.

06-00:41:27

Roff: Right. He wanted to close down the special prosecution. The news was so shocking. It came over about, oh, if I remember rightly, about eight o'clock Saturday night. But there was a feeling of a White House that was beginning possibly to go out of control.

06-00:42:02

Rubens: Really?

06-00:42:03

Roff: No one knew what Nixon might do next. A declaration of martial law, emergency of some kind, putting troops on the street. Nothing seemed beyond imagining. But it was Kennedy who the following day, on Sunday, initiated what I thought was an act of really bold leadership. Kennedy knew that if he injected himself in any public way into the Watergate matter, other than his obvious displeasure at it, his general condemnation of it, but if he

injected into the actual workings of the investigation, that the Republicans would respond by making it appear that this was just a political move and the whole episode is politically motivated and there's nothing more to it than just the usual rivalry between the Democrats and Nixon. To avoid that stigma of it all being explained by rough politics, Kennedy arranged a closed or secret meeting. He personally invited people to come to his home in McLean, Virginia, just overlooking the Potomac. You could see the river glinting in the background through the trees. And he had both senior Republicans and senior Democrats. Senators, some staff. Tunney, who would have been there, was in London on a parliamentary trip. So I was asked to sit in for him.

06-00:44:20

Rubens:

Because you're now chief of staff and—

06-00:44:23

Roff:

I was chief. Right. And we met at his home at noon and the conversation was intensely—well, it was intensely serious. Weighing not just fantasy horror stories but the real possibility that Nixon might take some extravagant extra-Constitutional steps. There were wide reports that he was drinking heavily, that he was wandering the halls of the White House late at night. No one seemed to have any particular control over what he might do. So the meeting was looking into what ifs. Now, they were senators. Of course, impeachment is brought by the House and then tried by the Senate. So impeachment, they examined what would be involved if it came to that. But basically how should the Senate or the courts react to some abrupt action. Sort of a *fait accompli*, a taking over the FBI—I don't know. Taking the FBI file.

06-00:45:59

Rubens:

Some total disruption of—

06-00:46:00

Roff:

Who knows? Who knows what was going on. And as Woodward and Bernstein found out as they dug into it, there were peels and layers and layers of conspiracies and skullduggery. As I stated earlier, even in the Muskie campaign with these phony letters, they were deliberate attempts to distort elections through lies and vicious plots.

06-00:46:41

Rubens:

So what was the outcome of the meeting?

06-00:46:42

Roff:

Well, the outcome was, of course, another meeting, a little more expanded, later in the afternoon in the Senate Office Building. There was Warren Magnuson and Charles Matthias, who was a Republican, one of the senior Republicans, a senator from Maryland. There was Pell, who was then seriously ill with cancer. And he'd lie down in one of the little statuary alcoves, would lie flat on the marble, the cold marble to ease the pain in his back. And there was some Constitutional expert from Harvard whom I don't remember. Joe Califano, who was a D.C. lawyer with a very prominent firm. And Tunney, who had been in London, and I'd called him as soon as the news came over the television, I told him to get back, get the first plane back. We'd be confronting a putsch here, whatever that German word is. Some kind of a government takeover. We don't know how far this man

will go. Well, he says, "It's four o'clock in the morning here." I said, "Well, I don't care." Call. There'll be an early flight back to Washington.

Anyway, Tunney arrives back in time for the four o'clock meeting and the others, we all gather. The caliber of the discussion was not at all just political scheming. Most of it was very centered on the law, centered on the Constitution, centered on the divisions of power, and who could do what and what might happen. And there were a variety of actions, including direct appeals to the military, if necessary, not to follow the orders of the commander in chief, which would be highly extraordinary. And Tunney arrives and then Tunney, after about a half or so, he left. I said, "Well, why?" He said he had an engagement, a date. I—

06-00:49:15

Rubens: You couldn't keep him.

06-00:49:18

Roff: Right. I wouldn't want to exaggerate the quality of the discussion but it was extraordinarily precise, extraordinary careful.

06-00:49:41

Rubens: And Kennedy and his staff are leading this? They're orchestrating—

06-00:49:43

Roff: Kennedy was a great convener and he could get things moving. And he relied on a really excellent legal staff. Stephen Breyer was one of his LAs [legislative assistants] at the time. I don't think was involved in this but he always had top flight legal staff. And, of course, he always had access to top scholars. That family had always maintained contacts with the Schlessingers and people of real intellectual heft and substance. It was simply, I think, one of the more dramatic weights that just began to fall on the scale just as they began to lead the House impeachment and then his resignation in '76. Didn't prevent his reelection, though, in '74. But it was a very extraordinary time.

06-00:51:10

Rubens: How many were there at the first meeting versus the second meeting?

06-00:51:14

Roff: Well, I don't know. The numbers were fairly small. The first was maybe eight. I'm not certain.

06-00:51:22

Rubens: Oh, small.

06-00:51:23

Roff: Then the next one was maybe fourteen. They weren't big meetings. But they were powerful in the sense of the people who were there.

06-00:51:33

Rubens: Critical people.

06-00:51:35

Roff: And who could then, but now might be impossible today in 2013, they could reach a bipartisan consensus. These were persons who really put the nation clearly number one. Just didn't become just blind obedience to a paranoid President but a real soul searching as to the powers of the Constitution and the prevalence of its order of government.

06-00:52:19

Rubens: So then as the whole thing unwound did you and Tunney have a particular hand in, now dealing more directly with Watergate?

06-00:52:30

Roff: Well, there was a Watergate committee and then Sam Ervin and that really ripped the curtain away from the White House and then Woodward and Bernstein provided the coup d'état.

06-00:53:01

Rubens: The oil crisis is going on right around—

06-00:53:04

Roff: Oh, yes, that's right. Those images of people waiting for gas in long lines.

06-00:53:08

Rubens: Tunney wrote a book, *Changing the Dream*, isn't that about—

06-00:53:20

Roff: Oh, I wish I could find that. I'll probably put my hand on it as soon as you walk out of here.

06-00:53:35

Rubens: I was going to ask you, do you remember how that came about? Did the oil crisis have some kind of genesis of his book or was the book in anticipation of the reelection?

06-00:53:45

Roff: Oh, I think the book was an attempt on his part to appear serious, give him more gravitas. And he'd been encouraged by a number of people to do a book, kind of a diary of a freshman senator, how it's like to come to Washington and confront issues of immense consequence and impact on the country.

06-00:54:22

Rubens: So you started talking with him about that?

06-00:54:23

Roff: People did. It turned out there'd be a reasonably substantive book. But I'm always kind of jaundiced about political books because most of them are just trivial. On great occasion you'll get one like Obama's *Dreams of my Father*, which was an exceptionally brilliant book. But this was what life was like and how to adjust and kids. Obligations other than on the Senate floor. It was kind of an intimate insight into the adjustment of a young senator to the Senate.

06-00:55:18

Rubens: I'll be sure to look at it before we see each other next, because I thought it was really about energy policy and—Let me change the tape. I'd like to talk a little more about that book.

Audio File 7

07-00:00:00

Rubens: I have a review of the book, in which the reviewer says maybe *Continuing Nightmare* would have been a better title than *Changing Dream*.

Now I'd like to get a sense of what you're doing as chief of staff. You said that he had had good people working for him. How big was the staff?

07-00:01:16

Roff: His campaign staffs were good. His personal staff, oh, I guess we'd have about twenty, twenty-five persons in the Washington bureau and then we'd have—Washington bureau, in the Washington office and then there would be field offices and reps in California, in San Francisco and Los Angeles, smaller offices that handled principally casework that is citizens with complaints or that needed help with particular departments. Getting a visa or straightening out a social security matter, things like that. The personal service things that Senate offices and Congressional offices generally do. Washington had our legislative staff, which was exceptional. Most of the lawyers had been recruited by Warren Christopher, who was the senior partner of O'Melveny & Myers, which is one of the larger law firms in the country and who later was a secretary of state to Bill Clinton. But an extremely successful brilliant careful thoughtful attorney. And he recruited some young attorneys in their early thirties who showed conspicuous talent. They were really quite creative. He brought in the early one, then I hired a couple, including two who went on to become congressmen themselves.

07-00:03:07

Rubens: So you were actually doing the hiring?

07-00:03:10

Roff: Well, as a chief of staff, I would supervise the staff. And that mainly meant, obviously with consultation with the senator, any changes, any hirings. I'd do the interviewing, make recommendations of whom to hire. Because they'd be working for him, he'd have to pass and keep track of the progress on various major pieces of legislation. Not necessarily on its every detail but on the general time schedule of how it needs to proceed through committee and to the floor and when action needs to be taken. And coordinate with the local offices and just generally oversee the smooth operation of the office. Not always smooth.

07-00:03:57

Rubens: What was the feel of the office?

07-00:04:00

Roff: Washington offices tend to be very close knit. People come there because, one, they're interested in politics and government. Two, they have a good educational background and

they're willing, at least in the young part of their careers, to make sacrifice. Not make huge amounts, but do what they think is important work. They believe in the Senator.

So there's a great deal of conviviality. There was a shared interest at the beginning. And, of course, some friendships are closer than others. But basically you're recruiting from probably the upper strata of college graduates. Almost always college, except for some of the points you'd have old experienced hands, especially in the local offices. People who knew the city, Los Angeles or San Francisco well, and knew the politics. But you had Kennedy's staff. Kennedy's staff was highly professional. He had a great consistency in keeping senior people and then bring in these—especially people on healthcare and other complicated issues. Bring in really people of great expertise.

Mayors' staffs are smaller but, again, it's really sort of just managing the day to day things. You keep an eye on staff, watching to make sure that the staff is responsive and also being—inevitably the senior advisor to whomever the office holder, or at least a senior advisor—but in the sense the relationship has to be of really a substantial understanding, one or the other. An ability to argue and to say no or to say yes, that's a good idea or whatever. Sometimes being overruled, other times being—

07-00:06:56

Rubens:

Did you feel you had that?

07-00:06:58

Roff:

Well, I sort of made it a rule when I began moving from office to office, that if I were to hire on that I would have permission to walk into the office or call the senator or the mayor at any time I thought it essential to do so. Not that I would invade privacy or be a nuisance but that I would have instant access if I thought the matter was important enough and they have to trust my judgment that it would be so. And I always had a very good relationship. Well, Dianne, I was with her the longest. Alioto was so swift in his own thinking that he didn't really need a great deal of advice. And they all differ. But sometimes—I don't know. Maybe old age, patting myself. But I think the offices were run—I tried not to be overbearing. But on the other hand, I was not tolerant of sloppy work and would let people go. And I always found that a torture. But for the most part we had people who really would work. If they had to work twenty-four hours a day, they'd do it.

07-00:08:54

Rubens:

You were probably on call most of the time.

07-00:08:57

Roff:

I felt on call all the time. In fact, in the mayor's office I had a beeper and I'd respond to a large fire or a large criminal event or whatever.

07-00:09:09

Rubens:

And then we've said your wife is sick during this period and dies before the reelection and so that was tough. Well, we're getting ahead of your story. You obviously did a good enough job with Tunney that Kennedy wants you to come in.

07-00:09:27

Roff: Yeah. Although I think he may have been sold a bill of goods by John. But Kennedy was totally and absolutely focused on his senate duties. When he arrived at eight o'clock in the morning, things were focused. He was one of those persons who is confident in his own intelligence but he wasn't put off by persons who might be more knowledgeable or maybe a little brighter than he. Many politicians kind of retreat back into the comfort zone and surround themselves with lackeys who—that's an awful description—but I mean with old friends. But they don't get that challenge that is necessary. You want some mavericks. You want some people who think a little differently and you want to have access to other ideas. And you never have access to enough. I can think of issues now that I wish I'd had much greater insight into earlier on. UC students, the Free Speech Movement and things like that, which tended to be kind of brushed aside by the media but the—

07-00:11:04

Rubens: Well, tell me, what does Kennedy want you to do for him?

07-00:11:07

Roff: Well, he wanted me to be press secretary. He had Paul Kirk, who had been his press secretary, I don't know—for a long, long while. In fact, took his place temporarily after Ted died. But press. But again, very conscientious about the press. Not only the national press. And he, of course, was subject to a lot of attention by the heavyweights of journalism there. But he wanted to make sure that Worcester, and all these other towns, that their local newspapers would be told and get releases. And he was very constituent oriented. One, I think he and apparently the whole family thoroughly enjoyed politics, the rough and tumble of it. But also he was a person who didn't allow enmities to grow if he could help it and usually was open to compromise, open to working out arrangements, working out those compromises which were absolutely indispensable in our system of government. We don't have either/or situations, hopefully, government standoffs. But ability to reach some common ground where movement—common ground that's solid enough for some progress to be made. Maybe not all that we want at one time but keep things moving as Ted did with healthcare. Finally there was more universal care provided by Obama but certainly the groundwork was laid by Kennedy. And I think it would have been an easier sell if Kennedy had remained active.

07-00:13:26

Rubens: So you're there one year basically?

07-00:13:28

Roff: About one year.

07-00:13:29

Rubens: It's '76 to '77. It's the first year of Carter's administration.

07-00:13:36

Roff: Right.

07-00:13:36

Rubens: Were there issues, particular issues you were having to deal with or was it a pretty—

07-00:13:40

Roff: Well, there seemed to be a kind of tension on the part of the White House. Again, Carter has proved himself to be a brilliant former President in the sense of his Carter Center. The work he's done in Africa and elsewhere is extraordinary. And I can remember watching out of the Senate Office Building as he left the Capital after his swearing in and then walked down Pennsylvania Avenue holding his wife's hand. But I also remember there was a letter that Carter wrote, handwrote on White House stationary. "Dear Ted," and then something where there was talk about Ted possibly challenging Carter four years hence. The letter was something to the effect that, "If you should decide to run, you can count on me. I'll never bring up Chappaquiddick or anything like that." And, of course, what was on the front page of the *Post* the next day but that letter. And I've always been suspicious. A personally handwritten note suddenly appearing?

07-00:15:14

Rubens: So you're saying that his office leaked it?

07-00:15:17

Roff: I think the White House may have. I don't know. These places are sieves in many ways so it's hard to know. But I don't know. But I think Carter was one who surrounded himself principally with persons who were his buddies, his friends from Georgia, and he really didn't bring in people who could give a contrary view. Not that you want an oppositionist who's going to criticize you at every point but you want challenge. You want—

07-00:15:55

Rubens: Well, and also, he was inexperienced. He was not—

07-00:15:57

Roff: Yes. And all the more so. You want to hear other voices because you're living in a bubble. You go out in a car. You're in a parade of armed vehicles and ambulances and all the paraphernalia of an armed camp almost. And if you go into a restaurant everybody's been through a magnetometer. There's very little chance to sit down and just have a conversation. You can do it, of course. But can you imagine what it must be to awaken each morning and finding half the world in flames and the other half starving? How in the world are you going to face the day? I can't find a book and I go nuts.

07-00:16:45

Rubens: So just to get back to that leaking of the letter. Did that sort of bespeak what—tension between Kennedy and—

07-00:16:56

Roff: I don't know. Ted was never one to carry a grudge or make public grudge. But I certainly was highly suspicious. And I'm sure he must have been, too.

07-00:17:12

Rubens: Was there anything particular you had to do to manage that?

07-00:17:15

Roff: Well, again, there's nothing—

07-00:17:17

Rubens: You've just got to let it die.

07-00:17:20

Roff: That's basically a one shot deal. And I think the political press saw what it was meant to do and, of course, we knew that if Ted ever were to run—and he did run against Carter in '80. Bob Shrum would have been Muskie's speechwriter and McGovern's speechwriter was Kennedy's speechwriter.

07-00:17:50

Rubens: I think you had met Shrum in the Muskie campaign.

07-00:17:53

Roff: In the Muskie campaign. Absolutely dazzling. He knew words and he could write in the most beautiful—but he couldn't type. He wouldn't use a computer. Everything was on longhand and then he would bang his head against the wall if words wouldn't come, to the point you think he's going to hurt himself. But he is a brilliant speechwriter.

07-00:18:20

Rubens: So did he work for Kennedy then?

07-00:18:22

Roff: He followed me as press secretary. So there was a kind of loose kind of incestuous kind of thing. I followed this one, this one follows me, I go here, they go there. They hire me, they hire them.

07-00:18:36

Rubens: So in that year, I don't have my facts in front of me, anything big that you think of that you had to handle that year with—

07-00:18:49

Roff: I don't recall. Well, I do remember one time when I totally failed it. One Friday he came in, said, "Well, I'm going to take the weekend off. I'm not going to do anything. I'm going to be with the kids. You won't have to do anything. Have a nice weekend." "Oh, Ted." Phone rings about eight o'clock in the morning Saturday. "Oh, I forgot. I'm having a dinner tonight. Gees, I really need some zingers. Really pointed remarks. Something that's really sharp." And I said, "Well, who's the guest?" He said, "Well, you have to be careful in what you say but I really want them really just perfect." "Who is the guest?" "My mother." Oh, my God. What am I going to say about a saint?

The only thing is Kennedy, I think I may have mentioned this before, but Kennedy did have a wonderful sense of empathy of other people. When my daughter went off one day to babysit with some friends and the car skidded—she wasn't driving but she was in the passenger—my daughter and another girl were killed and I came home from a movie and to learn that you've lost a child is something that's very hard to overcome. Anyway, the next morning, about 4:00 or 5:30 or six o'clock the phone rings. And, "Hello?" "Oh," he said, "this is Ted. I just heard about Kelly." He said, "I'm here in Florida with my mother and I just want you to know you have the prayers of a saint and the prayers of a sinner." Well, of course, I dissolved. But the fact that he'd even call. I hadn't worked for him for

years. So I obviously have regard. And he was again one of those persons who made an effort to maintain friendships with the opposition. Now, there were many moderate Republicans then with whom compromise and conciliation and negotiation were possible. But he was very careful and was respected by both sides of the aisle. And, of course, he could be a forceful campaigner. If you got his dander up a bit, that voice would take off.

07-00:21:38

Rubens: Did you guys ever have dustups with him or outright conflict?

07-00:21:40

Roff: No, no, no. I got scolded a couple of times. When I hadn't reported on some event at a shoe factory or something. I don't mean to belittle it. But what he was telling me is you pay attention to the little things as well as the big things. He did the right thing.

07-00:22:02

Rubens: And you obviously wrote these remarks about his mother, that he was going to de—

07-00:22:09

Roff: Oh, I nearly died. I don't think I wrote anything. I talked to a lot of his old friends and people who knew—the only thing that he had told me—the first day I went to work for him he took me around, he took me into his office, and he had walls full of pictures and autographs. And, of course, he had the Presidential flag from the White House that John had. There was a letter from his mother. “Dear Ted, I just read in the paper you called so and so an ass. I wish you'd refrain from using such language in public. Your mother.”

07-00:22:46

Rubens: And he had the letter framed?

07-00:22:47

Roff: Oh, yeah. Was a delicious little letter. Was a wonderful little letter. And, of course, that—

07-00:22:52

Rubens: Did you go to the compound in Hyannis Port or did you ever play ball with them?

07-00:22:59

Roff: Not only not throw a ball, I could barely pick one up. No, I didn't get further than the house in Boston. I never did. I was in his McLean house a couple of times—but no. But, that was really, obviously, an unusual family. The family was just an enormous part of his life. He was paternal figure then for several families when Bobby and John were killed and it had to be a terrible weight on him.

07-00:23:41

Rubens: Was he still married to Joan at the time?

07-00:23:43

Roff: He was. Yes, he was when I was there and Joan would be just kind of a will-o'-the-wisp. You'd see her kind of floating around. Vicky, I met his second wife, who was very, very sharp. Very, very self-confident. And enormously good for him.

07-00:24:11

Rubens: How did you meet her?

07-00:24:12

Roff: He was out here in San Francisco. He brought her several times. I'd see her at parties or at fundraisers.

07-00:24:23

Rubens: So you'd see him when he came out here?

07-00:24:24

Roff: Occasionally, yes. But Dick Sklar used to be her head of—he was a friend of the Kennedy's and Kennedy would have dinner there. And then Jim Hormel, who was our ambassador to Luxembourg, the first openly gay ambassador appointed by Clinton, had a fundraiser and Vicky was there. This was later.

07-00:24:51

Rubens: So the year or so with him is memorable, but—

07-00:24:56

Roff: Well, it was memorable. Yes, we had a good working relationship, but it wasn't a big—

07-00:25:03

Rubens: There weren't huge fires you had to put out or campaigns you had to wage.

07-00:25:08

Roff: No. No, no, no. Campaign in '80 was still kind of a theoretical thing and it wasn't anything that was being deliberately planned. It didn't have to be because he could readily recruit this team of consultants and all who were top flight. And he interacted well with staff people. He was very respectful. And, as I say, he was a person who was certainly bright but he was not—some politicians deliberately avoid being challenged. He would stand up to the challenge.

07-00:25:54

Rubens: By the way, did you have staff under you?

07-00:25:58

Roff: As a press secretary? No.

07-00:25:59

Rubens: No, you probably had a secretary or—

07-00:26:01

Roff: No, not really. No.

07-00:26:04

Rubens: So then you become the staff director for the governmental affairs committee.

07-00:26:12

Roff: Then the staff director position opened in the Senate Subcommittee on Governmental Affairs. The staff directors committee, looked upon with almost the same privileges that a

senator had. Not quite but you could ride the elevator at any time. Little things. You got the special phone. A lot of it was nonsense but you were at the senior level in the Senate. And so when an opening came I was recommended for it. Whether Tunney was involved, I don't know. Ted was already looking at Shrum. I think so. And the committee was chaired by Tom Eagleton, from Missouri. It's up here somewhere. He was the vice presidential pick of George McGovern when McGovern was the Democratic Party nominee for President in 1972. This was for a short time and then dropped Eagleton dropped out when it was discovered that he had had electroshock treatment.

And Tom was a jolly happy guy and he loved practical jokes and he loved to kid. One of the jobs of the subcommittee was oversight of Washington. At that time Washington was all but controlled by the Congress. It had a mayor and a city council but much of the legislation had to have Congressional approval. And so I served on the district planning commission and other things as representative of the Senate. And about the only thing I did, though, was the fire department, their pension had never been funded. So I went back to my old interest in fire departments. Worked with the fire department and got them funded. Got their pension funded, for which I got one of those helmets.

07-00:29:06

Rubens:

Now the District had no representation as that time.

07-00:29:10

Roff:

See, that was totally under the thumb of the Congress. Congress passed all this and then it began to ease and when I was there was sort of a quasi—Congress had a kind of a veto role. And it sat on the planning commission in terms of the architecture of the District. That federal essence was maintained and no building could be taller than the Capital Building and all. So that gave me kind of a local anchoring. And fortunately I worked with the fire department, worked with planning, and as well as on broader governmental issues. And as a director you're working closely with your principal, your committee chair and the other members, but you also have a good deal of independence. You have more latitude, taking initiative.

07-00:30:16

Rubens:

So this was attractive?

07-00:30:17

Roff:

It was attractive, indeed. It meant more money. Working for Kennedy was—invariably in the middle of the night you'd get a call from Associated Press in Bogota or something asking if Cornelius P. Kennedy is any relation to the Senator. I don't know. You're on the phone all the time and you had to be extraordinarily alert because you were dealing often with the very best press and they could ask questions in a way that—I'll go off the record for a minute—it just reminded me of Muskie.

[taped interview resumes]

Nixon's gone to China. Muskie's gone to Manchester. Open relations with China. Cried supposedly. Theodore White, Teddy White had been covering politics generally. Written *Making of the President*, 1960 to 1964. He had gone to China with Nixon and came back

and the first person he wanted to interview was Muskie. So Muskie agreed to meet with him in a little hideaway office he had in the basement of the Senate. No windows. This dark little cubbyhole with one big easy chair and two little funny chairs. And Teddy White was rather small. Comes in. He sits down, plumps a leg over the arm of the chair, looks at him. Said, "Ed, I just got back from China." Said, "Ed, tell me, what the fuck happened?" Excuse the language but it was the best journalistic question I have ever heard because there was no escaping that one. There was no way you—. [laughter]

07-00:32:20

Rubens:

So maybe we'll stop here today and think about if we've covered these topics enough.

07-00:32:23

Roff:

Okay. And then I'd like to spend much of our time on my role with Dianne [Feinstein]. I need to check out a few things. Dianne will be—I was really, really deeply involved in her administration. And she did so many things. She was criticized; there was the recall, which was totally undeserved. And she could be a pain sometimes. We'll go into all that.

07-00:33:12

Rubens:

I look forward to it.

Interview 5: January 30, 2013

Audio File 8

08-00:00:00

Rubens: Good morning, Hadley. This is our fifth interview session and I wanted to just clarify the last position you had right before you come to be chief of staff for Dianne. It was a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on governmental affairs?

08-00:00:20

Roff: Its formal title was Subcommittee on Governmental Efficiency and one of its primary tasks, among other than sort of providing some overview of various government operations, but its principle function was to help ameliorate the transformation of political power from Congress to elected representatives of the district itself. Throughout most of history, Washington was governed with the budget drawn—the budget essentially was in the Congress and was very parsimonious. These were from Kansas and from Bakersfield or wherever. Washington was not a high priority. There was a time when some of the schools were using American history books that were copyrighted in 1912. So not only missed World War II but World War I. I represented the Senate on what was the district planning authority, which regulated the height of buildings. None could be higher than the Capital, the dome of the Capital. Also, given my long, long interest in the fire department, we also funded for the first time the fire department pension program, which was totally un-funded. And was running into really deep, deep problems because it had nothing to pay to the retirees. And we got a retirement plan passed through the Senate with Eagleton's efforts as the committee chair, or subcommittee chair, and then through the house. And I think that led to my being given my first honorary chief's cap, helmet, which I've never dare wear because it'd be a little too ostentatious.

08-00:02:38

Rubens: But part of a collection of what would become many.

08-00:02:42

Roff: But it was a kind of good preliminary to my coming back to San Francisco as a deputy mayor, which came about sort of like a thunderclap one day when I got a call from one of the old Irish political luminaries asking if I'd come back to work for the mayor. And not too long before I had lost my first wife, Mary, the mother of my three kids, and I was anxious to take the kids and go back to San Francisco. Go back to California so the kids would have at least some family and a society which they'd find agreeable. But I had no expectation because Dianne had already indicated to me several times before her displeasure with my having worked for Alioto, whom she disliked rather intensely. When the person called, it was very circumspect.

His name was Ray—I can't remember his last name. He owned a heating oil store out on the outer Mission. But he was part of the Henry Berman/Mo Bernstein group, although they were not Irish, that were very active politically. He was very much a protégé of Bill Malone, who was a long-time [Democratic Party] county chair here. And he was obviously trolling the waters just to see if I'd have any interest and it just happened to be—

08-00:04:55

Rubens: This had to have had Dianne's approval.

08-00:04:57

Roff: Oh yes, I presume he wouldn't have done this without having discussed it with her. I can't remember when his happened. Maybe early in 1979.

I had the call and then I got a call from Dianne asking me if I'd come out to San Francisco and spend a day just chatting with her. She had, not too long before, there's almost a symbiotic relationship here in many ways, losing her husband, Bert, Dr. Feinstein, Bert Feinstein, to cancer. And it was a dreadfully painful ordeal. This was the death of my first wife. So we had those sorrows to discuss. And as I mentioned earlier in interviews, I had known her, not well, but known her at Stanford where she was student body vice-president and I was editor of the *Daily* and she and I were both active in Young Democrats, although we couldn't have any political activity on campus in those pristine days but we did meet off campus to discuss Adlai Stevenson and other liberal luminaries.

Anyway, I got a call, asked me to come out. I spent most of the day at her home on Lyon Street and then she and Dick Blum, whom she was at that time seeing, drove me around the city to point out all the various projects, all the various things she'd been involved in. And we talked about the city. And then we left very noncommittally and then I got a call, I don't know, the next day or the day after that asking if I would accept the job of deputy mayor. And I jumped at it because Washington had kind of—it was such a one industry town. It's politics. And San Francisco always, always just buzzed in my head as this marvelously glorious, attractive, vibrant, varied, and challenging city. So I was pleased to come back. And our relationship was a good one. I'm sure I was not her model of the *Gentleman's Quarterly*. I was sloppy and never could put my tie up quite straight. But she tolerated all that. And we had a good relationship.

08-00:07:59

Rubens: By the way, did she poke at you for that?

08-00:08:01

Roff: No, not really. Everybody else would wear ties and were buttoned down. But I decided that I never was and probably never will be, and either I'm going to be what I am. Anyway, it worked out. We became quite close.

08-00:08:45

Rubens: So to set the stage for working with Dianne, let's just close out Washington. So you had had quite a store of experience with the Senate. I mean, there's Cranston, then Tunney, Kennedy, now Eagleton.

08-00:08:54

Roff: Oh, yeah. Well, of course, with Cranston he still stayed controller, although he did go on to the Senate and I was asked to be in his campaign but I'd already signed up with someone else. But we talked frequently and if I were in Washington I'd see him. But I worked for Tunney and I worked for the Muskie Presidential campaign and then in Muskie's office and then went back with John as his chief of staff or administrative

assistant. And then with Kennedy as press secretary, of course, he was involved in so many solid, very difficult legislative efforts, especially healthcare, which Obama finally brought to fruition years later, a year or so after Ted's death.

Anyway, I think in terms of the committee work in Washington, one, you learned how to jump from one big issue to another quickly. And you learned a great deal about the inner workings of politics. As somebody once said, I forgot whom, "It ain't bean ball." Although I don't think it's ever been as homicidal as it is now. Also, as a director, staff director, I had not quite equal privileges with the senators themselves but I could find the senate elevators. I got the same buzz signals on the clock when the votes were being cast. And I was included in senior staff meetings, senior staff level meetings. So I had a pretty good insight into—as I said—the inner workings of politics.

08-00:10:34

Rubens: Anything to say about working with Eagleton?

08-00:10:36

Roff: Tom had suffered a great public embarrassment. He was selected as vice-presidential candidate in '72 and then had to resign from the ticket when it was revealed that he'd, one time as a young person, had undergone electric shock treatment. It was unfair but just the prejudice of the time about mental illness and all. Tom was an extremely compassionate person and very, very involved in a number of issues, civil rights issues. But was a very caring person and was fun to work for because he had a piquant sense of humor. He had a very tall administrative assistant and when the administrative assistant would be out of his office, Tom would sneak in, knowing that his chief would always snack on a candy bar in the afternoon. He'd carefully unwrap the candy bar and just take a little gnaw at the end, just a little tooth scrape, then fold it all back up. Because he'd open it and here it'd look like a mouse had climbed into it. It took the fellow some time to figure out it was Tom who was just fooling him. And he was fun.

08-00:12:13

Rubens: Did you work pretty closely with Eagleton then?

08-00:12:14

Roff: Yeah. Well, he was the chair. My office was quite separated from his. I was several floors different from his. But I was in daily contact and I was certainly included in all these major staff meetings. I sort of kept him informed of what was going on in the district. No, I worked closely with him.

08-00:12:45

Rubens: And how was his office? Since we've characterized a couple of these offices you worked with, how would you compare his to the others?

08-00:12:53

Roff: I don't know. He was in his second or third term so he had an office that was very well established. But as an outsider, unfamiliar with the staff, unfamiliar with Missouri, his state, his home state, I nonetheless was well accepted and I felt quite at home there. He

wasn't the aggressive legislator that Kennedy was but he was effective and very conscientious about his state and hard working.

08-00:13:35

Rubens:

Okay. So now let's turn fully to joining Feinstein's administration. When you met with her on that exploratory trip, did she say what she needed specifically?

08-00:13:45

Roff:

Well, no. Actually, that first meeting at her home, then on Lyon Street, the talk was very general. But it began very personally because both of us had just months before lost our spouses. So much of it was very personal and just sort of catching up. I don't remember being cross-examined. I think I mentioned that when I was asked to come out briefly toward the end of Alioto's reelection campaign in '71, the first call I got as I was being escorted into my hotel room was I thought from Washington because the only people who knew I was coming to San Francisco were my wife and the Senator. But it was Dianne saying, "How can you come back and work for that man?" I still don't know how she found out.

But anyway, I came back. And the relationship, as all relationships, evolved but from a premise that really was essential. And that is if I were to be a chief or a chief of staff or a deputy mayor or press secretary, that I would have access to the officeholder at any time, knowing that I'd be discrete, that I wouldn't be just bothersome. But if there was something that I thought important enough, that I could interrupt a meeting or phone in the middle of the night, whatever. And we established instantly that kind of a rapport. Dianne had a reputation of being, and an absolutely correct reputation, a correct description, being very, very hardworking. Very, very, very focused on issues of concern to her. And very demanding of staff, as she was of herself. She was a prodigious worker. And she went out knowing that she'd been rebuffed in earlier campaigns for mayor and then on the board as being the first woman. And, of course, when she ran for mayor, was twice defeated, and the last time in '71 was just really humiliating. She came in a distant third. She thought that the gender gap was so broad, so huge, such a wide chasm that she might not have had a future in politics. But she had always been interested. And then they [Alioto and Feinstein] had a falling out. He removed her as the city's representative to a couple of state commissions, the Bay Area Conservation Development Commission. [BCDC]. And she resented that.

08-00:17:26

Rubens:

He did that in retaliation.

08-00:17:28

Roff:

Yes. Well, he felt, "I appointed her, she served at my pleasure. And she didn't tell me that she was going to run. She, in fact, indicated to me that she was not going to run. And I believe in loyalty." So: period. And also she said, and it was repeated often in everything that, "You don't bring a loser's ticket to a winner's window." But she never—

08-00:17:58

Rubens:

And apparently in '75 Jerry Brown supported Quentin Kopp.

08-00:18:06

Roff: Oh, I didn't know that. I had forgotten. He was always rather disdainful of her. He's not now. They're very close now. She officiated at his wedding to Anne Guest. In fact, I saw him last at an event with Dianne.

08-00:18:24

Rubens: We'll talk about the contours of politics.

08-00:18:27

Roff: Anyway, the call from San Francisco was welcome. I can just sort of set a general background for San Francisco in the late seventies when she became mayor.

From the sixties on, the city had undergone really very substantial economic and social change. The city simply couldn't keep pace with the maritime industry because we didn't have piers. We didn't have the dredging capacity for the big cargo ships, these big, huge cargo ships that began putting into Oakland. So that the waterfront as a job source began to decline. And with it all the kind of ancillary businesses, the blue collar businesses, that go with maritime. Warehousing, light manufacturing repair, a lot of those jobs began gravitating outside the city. As the suburbs developed a stronger infrastructure, big facilities, printing plants and other things that occupied a great deal of space, could find larger space at cheaper prices in the suburbs. And even if they could afford the space here, some of them just weren't big enough to accommodate what they wanted. So we began to lose blue collar workers. And economic changes that were quite profound because this had been a distinctly labor town almost from the beginning.

You go back as far as the Gold Rush. It always intrigues me. You had all these single men, all entrepreneurial, individualistic, eager for adventure coming west, but few really succeeded in panning any nuggets, but learned that they could make a lot more money working year round pounding nails and building hotels and bars and stores and what have you. Carpenters organized early here. The labor movement, some parts of it had a definite racist bias. Were anti-Asian, tried to block, and did succeed in blocking, Asian immigration to this country and had vigilantes that had a kind of murderous path through California history. On the other hand, they were also very anti-slavery because they didn't want slave owners moving from the South with their legions of slaves. So we were anti-slave, anti-South, pro-Union, Lincoln. The town was awash in individuals, yet compact, forty-nine square miles, which is probably the most significant political fact in the character of the city. It created, at least in the neighborhoods that were then built up, a kind of shoulder rubbing neighborliness because everything was compacted. So that it made community action feasible, including vigilantism. But there'd be political rallies of ten thousand, fifteen thousand people on the sands, in the dunes of what are now the City Hall. Political parties would come and go. And is this continual cycle of change, of labor parties and progressive parties and da, da, da. So there was always a great deal of political involvement, political tumult in the city. Despite the racism that was obvious, there was also a very dominant progressive sense to the city in that it took great pride in its civic development. In the development of Golden Gate Park, in a majestic park system. The building after the earthquake in '06, a truly ornate and striking—

08-00:24:26

Rubens: Oh yes, the City Beautiful movement.

08-00:24:28

Roff: Yes. City Hall and ultimately the whole civic center. And there was the first large publicly owned municipal rail system in the country. So there was always this sort of progressive side, a kind of labor that in some ways was very conservative on certain racial issues but very progressive in terms of wanting to see the city build and expand. We were kind of the western frontier of the American dream. Anything was possible. Hope was always sort of a gleam in the sky. But there was always this sense of public purpose, of public identification, this being The City. The earthquake certainly was a compelling—not only was it a tragic thing but it was also a compelling kind of unifier. Everyone, rich and poor, were equally terrorized and suffered from the quake. Many people wound up from little hovels down in the Tenderloin to Nob Hill. They wound up in tents out in Golden Gate Park, including my mother and grandmother. They abandoned an apartment building that my grandmother ran. But this was The City and there was always that kind of adventurism in The City. And I like to look at things somewhat objectively. But always a kind of sense, maybe way down deep, of hazard. A sense of subtle but nonetheless kind of subterranean but still kind of a vital anxiety. The earthquake city.

08-00:26:29

Rubens: Potential for eruptions.

08-00:26:30

Roff: Eruptions. Change—And I think very significant in the leadership and I think something we'll expand when we talk about the mayors that I worked for later on. The presence of the mayor as the principle spokesperson for the city. Dianne would resist the idea of going outside the city. Something might happen. But I began to see, and I'm sure she—

08-00:27:02

Rubens: Well, let me keep you focused here. You're starting to lay out a background. Talked about a long historic background and moved to the context of Feinstein's rise in San Francisco political history—since the late 60s. Particularly the change in the economic base of the city.

08-00:27:12

Roff: Yes. Well, we had economic change. Of course, we had vast social change. One, the mobilization of young people in very strident political expression. The Vietnam anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, all were turbulent at the time. All taking to the streets in San Francisco at the time. Universities of course. University of California deeply involved. S.F. State. Sit-ins. A kind of real social upheaval in terms of the assertion of young people with very set purposes in mind. End the war, to end discrimination.

08-00:28:02

Rubens: There is the emergence of the women's movement and gay rights—both well developed by the time Feinstein is mayor.

08-00:28:13

Roff:

Right. So we had that ferment. And ancillary to that we had the rise of the gay community. Very slow, very subtle at times, but more and more strident and sometimes overly theatrical. But it was steady, and of course, it changed markedly during the time I was in Washington when Harvey Milk was elected the first openly gay supervisor. But the gay movement. There were the love-ins, that whole episode. The sort of counter-cultural effort. The whole invention of new music. Janice Joplin, the Grateful Dead. A whole new vibrancy to the culture and a whole new challenge to all their established interests and great attention. And then the city began to splinter between neighborhood and downtown. The old compacted shoulder to shoulder community began to divide into distinct neighborhoods very concerned about their preservation. There had been the freeway battle in the fifties and then the anti-growth, anti-high-rise movements grew particularly strong in the seventies to cap downtown growth. So there were great internal political pressures in terms of growth, in terms of political participation, in terms of identification, in terms of policing, accusations of police brutality. But it was a great period of tumult and a sort of collective hyper-partisanship.

It really culminated in 1978 into a year that was enormously transitional in a number of ways. One, in the way cities financed themselves. The passage by California of Proposition Thirteen which put a strict cap on property taxes, which were the principal revenue for cities or local government, which meant an immediate loss if I remember correctly of about 180 a million a year to San Francisco. And that in turn put pressure on the pro-growth side to expand office space and office buildings, to fill in the gap with more taxable property and to raise the revenue so we wouldn't be laying off more firemen and more policeman and closing libraries early and beginning the cutbacks that have become rather epidemic in our politics today. So you had this growing tension between the neighborhoods and downtown. You had what Richard DeLeon, who is a professor of political science at San Francisco State, he now may be emeritus, wrote a book in the late fifties called *The Left Coast City*, which he identified three main divisions within San Francisco progressivism. One, the traditional liberal civil rights equal opportunity affordable housing. Another would be the environmentalists concern about reducing greenhouse gases, concerned about open space, concerned about parks. And third, the populous neighborhood base concerned about conserving and preserving the characteristics of our various neighborhoods. So you had all these groups within a broad context of progressivism that's still liberal in basic intent but still with rather distinct agendas and not always an ability to work together. The point, as we said, this hyperpluralism. This just tremendous seeding of political activism. I don't want to suggest that every San Franciscan was carrying a picket sign but the level of political activity in the city was high, far beyond what you see in most cities. I really don't know where you had such feeling.

And you had very distinct political figures. Phil Burton, who was a very strong, if rather coarse, but smart fellow. Willie Brown came early. Enormously smart fellow. Alioto came in as relatively unknown politically and became a very charismatic figure in town. And Dianne, of course, was catapulted into the mayor's ship on the very day that she announced she would be leaving politics. But all these various contrarian kind of

impulses. All these various activist groups. All that kind of seething cauldron came to a full boil particularly in 1978, if you want to see one transitional year. Because not only the Prop Thirteen and the cap on revenues, but the unbelievable horrific tragedies of one—within weeks of one another. One, the mass suicide/murder in Jonestown down in Guyana of, I don't know, I think some 900 people who swallowed that Kool-Aid that day. And then you had Leo Ryan, who was an enormously respected political figure nationally, was killed. Jackie Speier, who's now in Congress, hid behind the wheel of an airplane that had brought them to Guyana with five bullet wounds. Survived. Tim Reiterman, whose father was an executive with the school board, he is an *Examiner* reporter, he was shot but he was able to hide in the bushes until rescue arrived. He wrote a book on Jonestown called the *Raven*. But there was that whole episode with Jonestown and the array of political support that he got almost overnight from the more liberal element in San Francisco politics. People became really quite involved, were very supportive of him until this unbelievable horror in the jungle. So we had Jonestown and then—

08-00:36:01

Rubens:

There was some issue of the role that his congregants played in Moscone's victory—bussing in people to vote for him who weren't legitimately registered.

08-00:36:08

Roff:

Right. There were some questions, investigations that apparently were deliberately downgraded and shunted aside by then district attorney Joe Freitas, who apparently was very close to Jones. And he thwarted his own investigators. At least that's their accusation. But there was great local tumult because here was suddenly this mad man and the stories that began coming from persons who escaped this jungle madness of the terrible ordeal and his increasing insanity. Apparently became addicted to cocaine and he was increasingly just raving mad and he had these people absolutely terrified off in a jungle somewhere where they had no idea how to escape and then all died in this mass holocaust.

08-00:37:18

Rubens:

So that was a week early.

08-00:37:20

Roff:

Yeah. And then the trouble with somebody whom I never met. Supervisor Harvey Milk. Rather troublesome person from all that I've learned about him. Dan White slipped into City Hall through an open window in the basement. Obviously deliberately sneaking into the building to avoid going through any magnetometer. Packing a gun. Went to the mayor's office and read the newspaper for a while and then was called back into George Moscone's little sitting room behind the main office, his main ceremonial office, and shot him with a final coup de grace in the head and then marched across City Hall to where the supervisors sat and murdered Harvey. Suddenly the city loses its mayor, a supervisor, had lost 900 people not too many days before, and was absolutely traumatized. And this is when Dianne, who after twice running for mayor and not succeeding, in fact in 1975 coming in third, behind Moscone and I think it was Harold Dobbs. She had gone to Nepal to make part of the trek up Mount Everest with Dick Blum, who had climbed Everest. But she got quite ill and had to be brought down and came back. And on her first day back at

City Hall she arrived a bit early and she had talked to Moscone on the phone and he'd asked her, "If you see Dan White—" Dan had resigned from the Board of Supervisors and then changed his mind and wanted his job back and Moscone decided not to give him the job back but to appoint somebody else. And George wanted to ask Dianne to kind of ameliorate the situation. Ameliorate any anger that White might have. See, he'd had no conversation with White. And meanwhile White apparently was lurking in through the basement window.

Anyway, her first sight of White was when he barged into the supervisors little warren of offices on the Van Ness Avenue side of the City Hall. Rushed past her. She said, "Oh, Dan, I'd like to talk to you," and he said, "Not now," or something to that effect, rushed down the hall. She heard bang, bang, bang, bang, scream, bang, and then White ran past her, back past her. She went down the hall and found Harvey lying in the pool of blood. She tried to resuscitate him with mouth to mouth, couldn't. And she tried to feel for his pulse. She only told me this story, and she's now told it several times, but that day when she reached for a pulse and her hand plunged into a bullet wound where he had tried to cover this, and found no pulse. But she had no awareness that George was lying dead across the hall down on the Polk Street side. And anyway, within an hour of her telling the press that she was going to leave, because she went across the press room, which was just across the hallway from the supervisor's office, she told the pres that she was going to leave politics at the end of her term. She wasn't sure what she was going to do but it was not going to be in politics. So the very day that she removed herself as a possible candidate for anything, she was the de facto mayor of the city and subsequently appointed as president of the board. She succeeded until the board could act on naming a successor and then the board, with the exception of Quentin Kopp, endorsed her.

And so she came at a time of not only very grave economic challenge to the city but of enormous social upheaval. Raw terror and sorrow and horror in the city and vast social changes. She came at a time of great destabilization in the city. And the city was suffering. She had not been elected, she had no mandate. She simply was there by the fact of assassination and she'd make no change in the administrative goals or the staff of Moscone, which she eventually did do. She came at a time probably utterly unique in the city's history, of the confluence of so many huge events. Some that government might be able to affect, others that were just fate or whatever. So her challenges were huge and her attitude was one not only of personal horror at what had happened but also a personal sense. She had lost her husband not too many months before and was thinking of a total change of career and suddenly catapulted into a job that she no longer aspired for. But she became the great sort of stabilizer in the city and kind of brought the city back to some sense of direction and equilibrium.

08-00:44:51

Rubens:

So we want to chart how that happened.

08-00:44:53

Roff:

Yes. But I wanted to set that background of this busy kaleidoscopically changing rapidly diverse scenario of things. And then she steps in just without warning under the darkest of circumstances. It was extraordinary.

08-00:45:22

Rubens:

I think this background is useful —this focus on the landscape of political conflicts and alliances. There had been this very tight coterie that had produced Moscone —the Burtons and Willie Brown, who had succeeded Bill Malone – and his protégées Henry Berman and Mo Bernstein. Of course Alioto really wasn't a factor anymore.

08-00:46:17

Roff:

No. During his time was not quite as kaleidoscopic. Basically he won. The mayor simply had to win a plurality of the vote, not a majority, so that made the task a little more simple. But he was able to put together a really quite unique coalition. On the one hand the old Catholic families that had known his family for generations, the wharf and North Beach and out in the avenues. The Catholic community where he'd long been active. And some of the downtown business interests where he'd been a lawyer. He had served on the school board but it really gained no public constituency.

But he was always looked upon as a virtuoso, as a kid that played the violin and still worked on the fishing boats and then was the prodigy at college and a person obviously of great intellectual ability. And then slowly, and I think we had some help in bringing him the support from the left through the labor unions, principally through the ILWU, which as you know is probably the most politicized of the unions and certainly the most progressive. Dave Jenkins particularly was helpful. And it was also his character. And I think I described earlier. One of the assessors was driving down to the ILWU hall for a candidates' night. And that night he took delivery of a Rolls Royce and I'm pleading with him not to drive up to the union hall in a Rolls Royce. But he said, "What are you going to do, walk?" But it was a terribly foggy night and he couldn't find the defroster. So we're both hanging out the windows trying to see where we're going. And, of course, when he gets out of the car with his pinstripes and his gold cufflinks, you could see the white caps, of the longshoremen.

It so impressed me, just somebody who was just getting to know him. The other candidates all spoke very formally, at the microphone, standing on the stage in recital pose, going through their platforms. Joe stands up and says, "Can you hear me?" And the people go, "Yeah." And then he leaps off the stage. I'm thinking, "Oh, my God, what now?" And he paces the center aisle. He points his finger and he's talking and he's just talking all the time. And I realized that even though there was about a thousand people in that room he was essentially, in his own mind, I think, talking to twelve people, the jury. And he made such contact that he got the endorsement of the ILWU and that meant entrée to the black community. So from the far right, really of devout Catholics, to the most explicit, the most political of the labor. He went on to win. And he courted those groups very successfully, especially the black community. He put minorities on the various commissions and broadened his base. But anyway—

08-00:50:34

Rubens:

But as a factor in choosing Moscone and then sort of—

08-00:50:37

Roff: Well, Moscone was a product basically of Burton and Brown. And he felt that Alioto was much too conservative, despite how much he had diversified his appointments—was much too conservative, pro-growth to a fault. Tied to big interests downtown. I could dispute that. But they all were stunned by the fact that he beat them. Phil was not a particularly forgiving fellow and George, of course, was a very attractive candidate and the fellow had been in town for a long while, been in politics for a long while. Charmer. Great big good-looking galoot. People liked him. He was just instantly likable.

08-00:51:35

Rubens: So what was Moscone's relationship with Dianne while she was a supervisor?

08-00:51:40

Roff: He was trouble. He had made some comments that she was just a do-gooder, a white gloved liberal that dabbled in politics, no real conviction. He called her worse things. But he didn't see her as a kind of street fighter and glad hander that he was. He liked to mix it up. He liked to be out. And she was always a kind of reluctant campaigner.

08-00:52:17

Rubens: You think he was worried about her, though, as a political force?

08-00:52:22

Roff: I don't think so. I don't think so. He had the troops. But her early campaigns tended to be fairly exclusive in the sense that they depended on a small coterie of old friends. Many of the more political deserted her in support of Moscone, not that they liked her less, but thought he was the more electable in that '75 race.

08-00:53:17

Rubens: So basically through their emissary, Ray, Henry Berman and Mo Bernstein are coming to you.

08-00:53:21

Roff: But they always were close. Dianne had somebody whom I never knew, but apparently just a wonderful San Francisco character. Had an uncle named Uncle Morrie and he knew all these guys. But they—

08-00:53:43

Rubens: And was she trying to separate herself from Moscone's machine, if you will?

08-00:53:48

Roff: Well, she never felt part of it. I don't think she tried to separate herself from it. She always viewed herself as a good administrator, as a hands-on manager. She got a reputation of being a micromanager but she stayed on top of issues and she had learned them in great detail. Moscone was more of a generalist. He'd be out playing basketball with the gang at one of the high schools. He had quite a reputation around town.

08-00:54:30

Rubens: So you become her deputy mayor seven or so months after the shootings.

08-00:54:38

Roff:

Yes, she was already mayor. She became mayor in November of '78 and then, as I say, initially said that she was—because she was not elected. She had no mandate, she had no voter approval. She would continue Moscone's policies as best she could and would retain his staff. She brought her aide from her supervisor's office, but just simply as a personal aide. But otherwise kept Moscone's staff, many of whom, of course, were totally traumatized by his death. And he was a great big friendly guy who they all loved and suddenly here's a newcomer. What brought her the realization that she had to form an administration in which she personally felt commitment and with whom she could personally work, that realization came after the so called White Night Riots, when Dan White was found guilty not of murder but of manslaughter, which was an outrageous verdict. This was in May, towards the end of May, 1979.

So that's what led to the call to me. I know it was in the spring. And she decided without telling anyone on the staff that she might want to change the deputy job. The person who was deputy was a very close personal friend of George's and I don't know that there was any problem between Bernard Titlebaum and Dianne but nonetheless I got the call, came out, interviewed, offered the job. Somehow the story leaked, which I had no hand in, and was in the papers before she had a chance to tell Bernard. And that was very unfortunate. That was very poorly handled on this. Anyway, he was quite, I'm sure, quite embittered. Shocked and embittered by the change. But it was certainly a new beginning for me and for her.

08-00:57:13

Rubens:

So when do you literally come to work for her?

08-00:57:16

Roff:

I don't remember the exact date, but it was the middle of July. And, of course, she was then into her own election campaign then.

08-00:57:28

Roff:

That may have prompted the—

08-00:57:31

Rubens:

She then hires Don Bradley?

08-00:57:35

Roff:

Don Bradley, who had done Moscone's campaign. He was sort of an old campaign manager type.

08-00:57:44

Rubens:

Had you worked with him at all?

08-00:57:46

Roff:

Well, I was city staff so I didn't work directly in the campaign, although I certainly counseled her about the campaign and I tried to keep an eye on what was going on. He was—

08-00:58:01

Rubens: But had you known him from earlier here?

08-00:58:02

Roff: Oh, anybody in Democratic politics would know Don. He was a nice guy. And politics wasn't quite so personal and vitriolic and as diverse and as complicated as it was then. It was just sort of putting out a few fliers and that was it. Only, of course, this was much more complicated.

08-00:58:26

Rubens: And Clint Reilly is involved?

08-00:58:27

Roff: This is Clint's first big move because she was opposed by Quentin Kopp initially. The polls showed her way, way ahead and I think that created complacency in the part of Don's part, although Dianne had never—she always thought that she would lose. But that's just Dianne's way. But Quentin hired Clint and Clint was one of the first to really develop targeting lists through computers and pulled right up out of a sort of thirty point deficit, huge. And I knew that in that race, that their final hit would be the fact that she owned this hotel on the outskirts of the Tenderloin and they'd somehow try to make a claim that she's abusive toward her tenants. I had a watch on all the various print shops and I was able to get a copy of the final brochure before it was distributed. And sure enough, here were these forlorn people sitting on this ratty sofa looking as if they hadn't eaten for about four days and were ready to take a shower at Auschwitz. And we were sitting in my office and they were looking at this thing. It was really a hard knock. And in the last minute you don't know if it's close. Kicking old people. You got an elderly population. And suddenly Dick Blum leans over and says, "Hey, this isn't the hotel." And I said, "What?" He said, "That's not our hotel." Oh, Lord. I was on the phone in an instant and a half to every city editor and news editor and television reporter and gossip columnist. You can imagine who that was. So that the story was in the paper about the phony brochure before it ever arrived on the doorstep. So when it did arrive, the accusation was made that it's a lie. But when he said, "That's not the hotel," I remember thinking, "Oh, my God."

08-01:01:04

Rubens: That's a great story. That's your political inside track. Well, let's change this tape.

Audio File 9

09-00:00:03

Rubens: By the way, at the same time you're coming to work for Feinstein, Susie Trommald, who you had known, who you had been friends with, is now someone that you become involved with after your wife died.

09-00:00:15

Roff: Well, she was in the campaign. Yes. We saw more and more of each other. One thing led to another. I proposed marriage on election-day, because I didn't know whether Dianne was going to win or not. I thought she would but, again, Riley had done a very good job. Riley is a person who plays politics as hardball as they come. He's very smart and very,

very shrewd. As I say, he pioneered targeting in a way that I don't think any other campaign, at least at that time, had the capacity.

09-00:01:13

Rubens:

By the way, you had planned to propose to Susie on election night.

09-00:01:22

Roff:

Yes. Actually, we had lunch at a Chinese restaurant. I had the ring in my pocket. I talked to Susan before the dinner and I announced it at the luncheon. But I don't think I surprised Dianne.

09-00:01:42

Rubens:

And Dianne and Blum have decided to get married and—

09-00:01:51

Roff:

Well, we had a fellow come in. He got the license and I think Dick just had left his wallet or something. Anyway, I paid for the two of them. I was repaid, of course.

Of course there were some similar experiences. We were at Stanford together. Both lost spouses on the same year within just months of one another and now we're working together on an election, neither of which we're totally confident we would win because, as I say, Riley had boosted Kopp to a—and Kopp had played a very kind of sexist game. You have to be tough to be mayor. You had to be male. In some ways that played to her strength because part of Dianne's role, not only you had to have the city administrative, the bureaucratic technical responsibility of balancing the budget and live within the very rigid confines of Prop Thirteen, which required a devastatingly—not a devastating but a huge revamping of the budget and assignment of priorities. You had that grave kind of governmental responsibility. On the other hand she had the responsibility of trying to heal, trying to restore some normalcy to a town that was distraught by the murders, Jonestown and the assassination of Moscone and Milk. A town that was reeling in this double tragedy. And it was in a kind of despair. I don't know how to describe it. There was just not the usual buoyancy, the usual confidence of the city, this is the city, the Golden—cable cars halfway to the stars and all. That kind of jubilation was lost and people were very veiled and pessimistic about the city.

09-00:04:47

Rubens:

But she won, by fifty-four percent. Jerry Brown towards the end of the campaign endorsed Kopp. Some political observers felt Brown was indebted because he had been the only supervisor to support him for governor in 1974.

09-00:05:23

Roff:

Well, it was a difficult campaign. Kopp was certainly gaining some momentum. As I said, he had been down thirty points and he was moving and he was moving and I don't think we were. We had stymied that last publication of Riley. But I don't remember what effect Brown's endorsement had.

09-00:05:28

Rubens:

There were some far-out candidates. Jello Biafra was running.

09-00:05:38

Roff: There are in all these elections, these fringe candidates. I never paid them much heed so I don't—

09-00:05:46

Rubens: I guess Alioto is not really a factor but his angry taxpayers are being whipped up by Kopp. Oh, Kopp had won the *Chronicle* endorsement.

09-00:05:56

Roff: Oh, I'd forgotten that.

09-00:05:57

Rubens: And Alioto and Welch, Calvin Welch were not supporting her. So she fought hard.

So what are you doing literally? You're advising her on the campaign. But how are you structuring your role, carving out your role?

09-00:06:52

Roff: Well, I don't know. It sort of evolved. As a condition that I'd come, that I'd have that access that I've talked about. I felt comfortable with her. I felt that I could be, if necessary, frank and contrarian if I had to be. Oppose her idea or say, "I don't think you're right." And we'd argue over issues. But I always felt that the relationship was very candid.

09-00:07:42

Rubens: So she had weekly staff meetings.

09-00:07:44

Roff: Weekly staff meetings. But she insisted on having all the department heads. Small departments and big departments. Everybody come in. And she still does it. All the staff in at nine o'clock. In this case, department heads and the senior staff. In a way it was a way of proclaiming herself as the mayor. There had been this obvious gender bias early on. She wanted no mistake that she was the one sitting in the chair asking the questions. And not through any kind of arrogance or ego but just the reality of the situation. That she was mayor, she felt responsible, she held them responsible. And I think it was a very wise tactic. One, it forced all the departments together, at least chatter among themselves while they waited to go to get into the meeting and it created a closer relationship among department heads, some of whom would probably never see one another otherwise.

09-00:08:58

Rubens: How many departments are we talking about?

09-00:08:59

Roff: Oh, everything from the police and fire, to public health to, the city planning office, city assessor. Tax collector, city chief administrative officer. Many others.

09-00:09:15

Rubens: So this then was close to thirty people I imagine.

09-00:09:18

Roff: Oh, it filled the office. And some people felt it was micromanaging. I always felt it was her way of ensuring that she was kept informed. Part of it was defensive, to make sure that she was informed. If she wasn't then she could say, "Well, why didn't you tell me?"

09-00:09:37

Rubens: Now, were you setting the agenda?

09-00:09:42

Roff: Well, we'd do that together. Basically it followed a pretty set routine. The chief, whoever the police chief was, would begin by reciting what the crime picture was for the week and what was being done. And then it would go around, depending on what the issue is. Muni always had a featured part because Muni was always under fire for one thing or another. And civil service. You go around to the other departments.

09-00:10:17

Rubens: How long did these last?

09-00:10:18

Roff: Oh, they'd last about an hour; hour and a half.

09-00:10:22

Rubens: She ran an efficient—

09-00:10:23

Roff: Ran efficient. If there were really a deep problem with a department, she'd obviously have the department in by itself. The department managers in by themselves. But it was a way of keeping the whole bureaucracy sort of informed about what was going on. And I thought it was a very useful instrument. I tried to suggest that to other mayors but they felt differently about it. It was kind of a waste. But I think for her to establish her credentials and also her sensitivity. That anything that was being done would affect the morale of the city. And the morale of the city itself needed very careful attention, more so probably than any single typical political issue. It was just this morass of uncertainty and anxiety that had settled over the city.

09-00:11:19

Rubens: Well, one of the first things she did was to bring in the new police chief. She got rid of Gaines, brought in—

09-00:11:25

Roff: Well, Gaines, yeah. Again, I wasn't here but she felt that the crowd that night at the White Night Riot was allowed to get out of hand because the police didn't act as quickly as they should and when they did react they did so with insufficient personnel, so that the officers involved had to use more force than they intended. And, of course, the Police Officers Association, which itself had great political clout in the city, did not like Gaines, did not like the fact that the police cars were changed from black and white to powder blue and white. And she felt, and I think —and certainly when I came— that the department was in very low morale. And kind of twixt the devil of the deep blue sea, between trying to take steps against what became multiple demonstrations and tried to keep them peaceful and

yet more and more of the demonstrations would be infiltrated by—most were highly motivated idealistic young people but there'd be the masked anarchist.

09-00:12:59

Rubens:

Agitators.

09-00:12:59

Roff:

Agitators, oh, yeah, provocateurs and troubles would inevitably occur. And I remember going out several times, negotiating with the leaders that they'd stay on the sidewalk, they'd not block the streets because that inhibits the fire trucks and makes it impossible for muni to operate. And, oh, yes, they'd do so and, of course, two seconds later they'd be in the middle of the street. They were really difficult to deal with. But I spent a lot of time in those first few months just on the street. But she felt that a stronger hand was needed in the department and one who would have the confidence of the personnel and could exert stronger leadership. And I must say that, although mine was a judgment, I had not had much experience with him, I felt—When I was a young reporter. I looked up to chiefs who were strong personalities and who commanded respect from the troops and she made the change to Con Murphy, who was this sparkly eyed, somewhat sardonic Irishman who was a delight. He was the one who, when she came back from lunch one day and said, "I was listening to the police radio in the car and there were seven burglaries or something. And what are we going to do about them?" And he said, "Well, you could turn off the radio," which she didn't like but I thought was funny.

09-00:14:46

Rubens:

Well, it's one of the threads of her career. From having been on the prison board.

09-00:14:52

Roff:

Sure. She used to be against the death penalty, then she was very much for it. She also was a pioneer early on as mayor and through her years as mayor and then into the Senate and up to this very day, an advocate of stronger gun controls. Not the elimination of guns, it's not the confiscation of guns. It's not the elimination of legitimate handguns and hunting rifles and target pistols and that kind of thing. But the assault rifles and all. Overturned by the courts, recalled by a small group. But she has fought—

09-00:15:28

Rubens:

That led to her recall.

09-00:15:30

Roff:

Yes. She's fought valiantly and unendingly. Well, the first two years in the Senate, as a relative freshman, she got the Congress to pass a ten year ban on assault rifles, assault weapons.

09-00:15:50

Rubens:

Now, she had had her own experience with violence.

09-00:15:58

Roff:

Right. Well, we had the Zodiac killer. Well, of course, that's another element. We had the Zebra killings. So that was a terrorizing thing because this person shot at random. Art Agnos was one of the victims.

09-00:16:13

Rubens: But then something personally. Her daughter?

09-00:16:17

Roff: They planted a bomb in her home on Lyon Street in a flowerbox one floor below her daughter's bedroom. The bomb didn't fully go off. It made a bang but it didn't. It was apparently too cold and the ignition didn't fully take. Otherwise it would have probably blown the house.

09-00:16:39

Rubens: Was this the gun opponents who did that? Who were the perpetrators?

09-00:16:42

Roff: Well, I don't know that anybody ever—That was before my —Although I was in town and heard the blast but I didn't realize it was she. And then she had received a number of death threats. And it was a troubled time. A mayor had been shot and killed in this city. So there was a time when she carried a—or was supposed to. I never saw it. She learned and went to the police firing range and learned how to use a handgun and carried a handgun in her purse for about a year, I guess, and then she had a gun turn in where people could voluntarily surrender their weapons and she surrendered hers. But she's been outstanding in that regard in a battle that's won the enmity of the National Rifle Association, which, of course, is probably one of the most powerful lobbies in the nation.

09-00:17:41

Rubens: She of course would have a body guard. Of course she had a limo and driver.

09-00:17:46

Roff: Oh yes. She had a bodyguard or bodyguards. Comes with the position. There's always been a police driver and usually one other person who sits in the office. Jim Molinari, who was on the detail with Moscone, in fact, was the one who phoned in the alarm that Moscone had been shot, he stayed on through Dianne's and then she had him appointed a federal marshal. She went to the Senate, and Carter became President, she nominated him as federal marshal and he was that. And then he succeeded me as state director of her Senate staff when I retired back in the mid-nineties. He's just retiring now in 2013. Very alert cop. Just a great, warm person.

09-00:19:02

Rubens: So I think we should move in terms of what you remember about main issues that you had to focus on in those early days.

09-00:19:12

Roff: Well, yeah. Again, there was a campaign and while I was not managing the campaign, but still obvious interest in what was expressed and just becoming, on my part, acquainted with the city. I fortunately had an excellent staff and, of course, one of the mainstays of the Moscone staff, who stayed in the administration, was Rudy Nothenberg, who became chief administrative officer, who was a budgetary whiz. Just incredibly brilliant when it came to numbers. I can barely add a column. But he understood city finances as well as anybody ever has and he did a wonderful job for her. But it was a closely knit group. We still meet once a year. But for a time, as she went on in her career, she always would sort

of be reaching back to persons who served her in prior capacities. And now she's getting to the point where, of course, most of us now are superannuated.

But there were a number of issues, whether you had the low riders in the Mission groups that fixed up their cars so that they could bounce up and down. Don't ask me how they did it. But they went up and down Mission Street. The merchants complained. I went out to try to see if we couldn't regularize the thing in some way so that it wouldn't be a constant disruption. I spent one night driving around the Mission and car was pulled over by a police car, and his red lights zipping and cop comes up to the window and it was a taxi unit. There were four officers in the car. One came up to the window, demanded a driver's license. I think I told you this. But anyway, he asked for the driver's license, which he didn't have on him. He didn't have his wallet. Oh, boy. Then I tried to intervene and then the guy said, "Shut up. You're not driving, are you?" I said, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. You may be interested to know who I am." And he said, "Well, who are you?" And I said, "I'm the deputy mayor." "Oh," he said, "let me check." He goes back to his car and I could hear him on the radio. "Well, he says he's the deputy mayor. Uh-huh." "What's he look like?" "Curly-haired and fat." "Oh." He came back and said, "All right."

And I spent a lot of time getting myself up to speed on issues, on the growth issues, on the implications of Thirteen. Again, not as a budgetary expert but as somebody who wanted to better understand the politics of the thing.

09-00:22:54

Rubens: But the cable car overhaul comes along.

09-00:22:57

Roff: Yeah. I realize that. They had to be sent down for remodeling and I was quite upset that they were losing—

09-00:23:04

Rubens: She was already anticipating the '84 convention.

09-00:23:10

Roff: Yes, and I was very much involved in that. We can save that for the next time. I don't know. That first—

09-00:23:19

Rubens: And you must have been meeting with leaders of the gay community, too, because Dianne had made big commitments.

09-00:23:37

Roff: Yes. And it was actually through Susan and her acquaintance with Jim Foster, who was the leader in the gay community, that I got to know a number of the gay leaders. I never met Harvey Milk. He'd come and gone during the time I was in Washington. But I spent a great deal of time in that community with David Scott, who had run for mayor and had won a fair considerable number, about 10 percent of the vote or something, and tried to get his endorsement. I think it finally succeeded.

09-00:24:19

Rubens: I think that, you did.

09-00:24:20

Roff: And, as I say, I built friendships with Foster and Jim Hormel, who went on to become ambassador to Luxemburg, the Hormel meatpacking family. There were a number. I found them absolutely wonderful. Jim was probably one of the funniest, brightest humans I've ever met in my life. He just kept me in stitches all the time. He was basically a philanthropist businessman then. President Clinton nominated him to be ambassador to Luxemburg, the first openly gay to be given a diplomatic post, or prominent ambassadorship. But I spent a lot of time in the Mission, much in the gay community. I worked on labor issues because I still had contacts in the labor unions and I built up a considerable amount of trust, I think, when I was with Alioto working with not only Dave and Jim Herman and others at the ILWU but with Jack Crowley and others of the AFL-CIO.

09-00:26:07

Rubens: And Jimmy and Dianne had a close relationship. Wouldn't have expected that in certain ways.

09-00:26:19

Roff: Yeah. I think so. Well, Jimmy was a very challenging guy. Alioto put Harry Bridges on the Port Commission, which nearly threw the town into chaos. But they became kind of a fixture around City Hall with Alioto and then with Dianne, mainly because I thought so highly of Dave. Dave was a person whom I just adored. He had access to my office anytime. Because he'd usually come in with a usual wheelbarrow of bullshit. But also he had such insight on things. You could cull through the four letter words. He was a very smart man. And, of course, Jimmy was very smart. She always found, I think, Dave a bit blustery for her somewhat pristine taste. But Jimmy was always very much the gentleman.

09-00:27:51

Rubens: She is so characterized or she's pigeonholed in different ways; as a goody two-shoes, but a great equalizer, as evidenced by her response to the gay community.

09-00:28:05

Roff: Right. She was. But the gay community was always very ambivalent about her. She put up a strenuous fight to close the bathhouses as the principle public health issue. Yet she was the first elected official in the country to take action on the AIDS crisis. She probably pioneered the public response to the AIDS crisis and identified it as an epidemic and as a public health issue of the first magnitude. She appointed a taskforce, not a bunch of pols but of leading researchers and epidemiologists and doctors from UC. Always felt close to the medical community because one of her husbands was a doctor, and then her father who was a very respected surgeon. And, as I say, she was really the first to take action. But much of it was absolutely positive. The taskforce, the efforts to establish an AIDS ward at San Francisco General Hospital. The assignment of doctors like Paul Volberding and others who became specialists in AIDS. We were really leading the field. We had people from New York and Chicago and elsewhere coming to San Francisco for lessons on how to deal with the crisis. But she ran a political storm on issues like closing the

bathhouses. She vetoed a domestic partners bill that Harry Britt had put in, although he had been— And he never discussed it with her.

09-00:30:03

Rubens: Who she, by the way, appointed to fill her own position.

09-00:30:06

Roff: She appointed and then he never came to her to say that he was thinking about it and work out some kind of an arrangement or get her support. I really felt strongly about including the gay community and getting it more involved in city affairs.

09-00:30:47

Rubens: Because?

09-00:30:48

Roff: Well, because, one, I thought it made sense.

09-00:30:57

Rubens: Well, the numbers—

09-00:30:57

Roff: They had perfect human rights—

[Phone call interruption]

09-00:31:26

Roff: I was enchanted, one, by their buoyancy, their courage and their indescribable—I mentioned Jim Foster—sense of humor and their diligence about civic affairs. And it was a growing factor in just raw politics and also the subject of a terrible epidemic that required concerted action and certainly they should be part of it.

09-00:32:11

Rubens: It wasn't a monolithic community.

09-00:32:14

Roff: No, it was not. No, no, no. You had the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. You had all kinds, many of them very button down and well-suited professional people, lawyers and all. You had a mix of people. But those whom I met who were really interested in the city were persons of very considerable knowledge and very considerable insight about city affairs. Anyway—

09-00:32:49

Rubens: So you're saying you had some influence on her?

09-00:32:50

Roff: I think I did. I remember bringing Hormel in as a possible commission appointment. Foster, put him on the health commission. These were bright, bright, if somewhat iconoclastic, thinking people and I think made a great addition to the city. That sounds like kind of liberal babble, I think, but I just so looked forward to being with someone like Foster, who was just so uproariously humorous and insightful.

09-00:33:32

Rubens: Well, and she probably understood this as—

09-00:33:34

Roff: Yeah, yeah, and she did. She did have a gay taskforce made up of gays. I think I told you. And she had a meeting at the conclusion of it in some restaurant under the freeway. I could hear these cars whizzing overhead. And at the end she said, “Oh, by the way, this weekend or next weekend is going to be fleet week in San Francisco and there are going to be 15,000 sailors in town and I hope you welcome them with open arms.” And Foster had this little wagging mustache. Wiggled his little mustache and said, “Oh, we will, we will.” And, of course, the room went crazy with laughter. It was just—

09-00:34:20

Rubens: Did she get it?

09-00:34:21

Roff: No, she was looking at me. Said, “What? What?” Anyway, the gays, the Hispanics and then there was a constant upheaval. By then the redevelopment was becoming not the object of great hope for better housing for minorities but it was looked upon by some as a deliberate effort to move African Americans out of San Francisco. I don’t think it was ever intended to be the latter. But it caused a great deal of disruption and a great deal of anxiety and protest.

09-00:35:07

Rubens: The high point in the seventies.

09-00:35:09

Roff: Yes. And I don’t know. I would meet with the dissident groups and try to calm the fears. I don’t think I did much but at least I was a willing ear, as she was, when she’d come to meet with them. Anyway, I just sort of filled in. I was sort of the 911 of the office, I guess.

The person who I’ve come to know better since I left City Hall, simply because we taught together out at State, was Calvin Welch, who was one of the truly, truly significantly bright people I’ve known. Probably had as much effect on growth patterns and city planning as any person in San Francisco, certainly on the no growth side or slow growth side. But the feelings became so intense and so personalized that each side sort of looked upon the other as enemies rather than as possible collaborators. I think Willie Brown, when he was mayor, was able to try to patch a close relationship. But I debated Calvin at one point and he was great. He could be quite intimidating. But he’s a bright guy and we taught together. I learned just how wonderfully smart he is.

09-00:36:50

Rubens: There was a story of Alioto going after the Good Earth Commune in the Haight-Ashbury and there were raids and the police left terrible disarray and Dianne, when she was supervisor, and Calvin Welch, go to the commune to see firsthand what’s going on. And then there’s a story that Dianne pitched in to buy them beer and pizza and had dinner with them.

09-00:37:21

Roff: Oh, I don't know. But she understood the suffering. She could personalize that. The agony of her husband's death. And she was very attentive to persons who were ill. Visited the AIDS ward, consulted with the doctors frequently. And, of course, two of her friends, two lesbians, had a kind of a wedding in her backyard. A landscaped backyard. A very colorful garden, almost a park.

09-00:38:10

Rubens: Was that Carole Migden?

09-00:38:11

Roff: No, it wasn't Carole Migden. I can look it up before we leave.

09-00:38:29

Rubens: Appointments of women. Was that an issue for her that there be—to staff women, commission heads or commission members?

09-00:38:41

Roff: Yeah. She was not a so-called feminist. She was not a Gloria Steinem by any—

09-00:38:47

Rubens: In fact, she asked Gloria Steinem not to come? There was an occasion when—

09-00:38:53

Roff: Yeah, yeah. Her closest friend was probably Merla Zellerbach, who was a writer. I think for reasons that go back to her childhood, she had very few close friends. When she was not in the office, she was not particularly social. She'd stay largely by herself. She and Dick would go out and she'd do all the obligatory things, openings and all that. We had women department heads. We had Mary Burns at Rec Park and we had Joyce Ream at the Commission on Aging. But I don't know of close pals. People whom she'd known from Stanford were very loyal to her and I'm sure she reciprocated and she could be a very compassionate and consoling friend. When my daughter was killed in an auto accident, Dianne could not have been more solicitous or more helpful to me.

09-00:40:41

Rubens: That was in '84. I can't imagine anything worse.

09-00:40:42

Roff: Eighty-four, yeah.

09-00:40:48

Rubens: What about Rose Pak? I meant to ask you about her earlier. Rose Pak had volunteered to campaign for Dianne when she ran for supervisor.

09-00:41:01

Roff: Yes. But I didn't have much to do with Rose.

09-00:41:07

Rubens: Or the Chinese community?

09-00:41:10

Roff: No. Gordon Lau was on the Board of Supervisors and he was kind of our conduit to the Chinese American community. Rose was a figure then, as she is now, of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. But I didn't have much direct dealing with her.

09-00:41:30

Rubens: Or to your knowledge Dianne?

09-00:41:31

Roff: Yeah. I know that she could be very abrupt. I know when Dianne had left the mayor's office but then was going to run for governor, I called Rose to ask if Dianne could have a place in the Chinese New Year's parade. "No." I said, "What do you mean no?" I said, "You guys were close allies." "No." "No?" San Francisco's produced—you have Dianne. Each in their own way, they were very strong persons. We had Dianne, we have Jackie Speier in Congress now who underwent the ordeal at Jonestown, lying there on that tarmac overnight with five bullet wounds. Wow. Most people wouldn't survive. And, of course, Nancy Pelosi, who's become probably one of the most powerful woman in all American politics. Strong, independent minded women. And in many ways, Dianne, in a way, kind of set the pace with Barbara Boxer.

09-00:42:50

Rubens: Would they meet? Would they have a kind of caucus or—

09-00:42:53

Roff: No, not that I know of. I don't know. That's an interesting question which we can take up later as well. Or not.

09-00:43:05

Rubens: I want to actually just return to this kind of landscape of Democratic Party players. I think Shorenstein had supported her.

09-00:43:18

Roff: Well, Shorenstein had supported her and then was turned off by her when she began imposing—again in this controversy over downtown growth. The Calvin Welch progressives had put a Proposition O on the ballot I think in '73 that would have capped downtown growth. It failed but it came close. It was a warning signal. And then they went back to work. In the meanwhile, Dianne, her planning director, Dean Macris, again—San Francisco was fortunate in the quality of its department heads. I mentioned Rudy Nothenberg. Dean was director of planning. He was probably one of the most widely recognized and respected city planners. But, again, in a very contentious city. And he developed a Downtown Plan which would have put some restrictions on high-rise, would have limited the annual output but would not have eliminated their development on the grounds that the city wouldn't be able to survive financially without continued growth. That was the main sparkplug, especially since, again, as I mentioned earlier, the change in economics were going more and more white collar, less and less blue collar. Office oriented, then technologically oriented toward the Silicon Valley and computers and all. And he came up with a plan that was hailed nationally. The *New York Times* gave it a laudatory review as probably the most stringent and sensible domestic growth limitation ordinance anywhere. But it fell far short of what the no-growth or slow growth group

wanted. And it put together a downtown referendum, Proposition M, I think, in '85, which all but eliminated downtown high-rise construction. And that did pass. So that was a long battle.

09-00:45:41

Rubens: Longstanding. By the way, I think Rose Pak was outraged by a master plan for Chinatown. I don't know if that was part of Macris' plan.

09-00:45:43

Roff: I really don't recall that. I have very little recollection of Rose other than her—

09-00:45:59

Rubens: Part of dealing with the Chinese community.

09-00:46:01

Roff: Yeah. But that community, of course, has very much now come into its own politically. It has mayor of the city and strong members of the board. That's been one of the great political advances in the city, along with the gay and Asian and the Hispanic communities. They've become really, really very powerful voices. But now one of many. There's no real central core. There's a whole plethora of various groups, sometimes the common interest, sometimes not. And it takes some skillful effort to keep them all in balance or maintain a balance, I guess you'd say.

09-00:46:59

Rubens: You think homelessness was another issue that she—

09-00:47:10

Roff: Homeless. Yeah, that's one of those things that just plagues because no matter what you do it's not enough. Many persons, of course, are mentally ill but not to the point where they can be forcefully incarcerated. Many refuse shelter. I think you had a Newsom plan in the nineties [2002] of Care Not Cash, [a ballot measure] providing shelter and food and medical and counseling support. It has worked to a degree, rather than direct payments that would go into Thunderbird wine or something.

09-00:47:50

Rubens: I don't remember Dianne's exact proposal but I know—

09-00:47:52

Roff: Yeah. It was just beginning. Civic center became just congested with tents and the homeless and it became quite an eyesore. And Agnos tried to temporize that, tried to come up with a solution. But solutions were hugely costly and not always that successful. It's just we're dealing with an extremely difficult population. I don't belittle it. Your heart goes out to some of these people who shiver in the cold and they're just asking for pennies.

09-00:48:35

Rubens: So that was not something that you were specifically taking care of?

09-00:48:38

Roff:

No. And I don't remember if this was with Dianne or later on when I was with the—I guess this is later. Rudy Nothenberg, this brilliant budgeteer whom I described earlier, who was chief administrative officer at the time, came into the office and said, "Look out the window," and I did. And at the far end of Civic Center, over by what used to be the old library, the Asian Art Museum now, was a little rather woebegone pickup truck. Gray, I remember. And there were three or four nuns with a big kettle of soup obviously or some stew or something, serving a line of hungry people or people wanting—so he said, "If you allow that, three days from now there are going to be tents." I said, "Well who are they?" "I don't know. They shouldn't be there." So I sent an aide over. I didn't want to get directly involved. Came back breathless. "It's Mother Theresa." So I called Rudy. I said, "Well, now the problem is just how to respond with the police. Now, we can use the TAC Squad. Of course, this is Mother Theresa, you understand." I say Mother Theresa. And I could hear, "Mmm, gulp." We did not take any action against—imagine SF arrests Mother Theresa.

09-00:50:12

Rubens:

How was your relationship with the press? I assume you had a press person.

09-00:50:20

Roff:

Oh, we had a press person. But of course, that was in my blood. I didn't look over their shoulder but I certainly knew press and I certainly knew when things should move. It might sound schizophrenic but I always sort of felt about it that we were kind of on a teeter-totter in dealing with the press. On one hand I was spokesperson for an elected official. On the other hand, I was a conduit for information that the public probably had a right to know. I never would be false with a reporter. If the reporter was sloppy in his questions I might be indistinct in my answers. But most San Francisco reporters are quite good, especially the ones who are assigned to City Hall. And, of course, if you got a call, "Hi, Had, this is Herb," you knew Herb had the answers, he probably had the details, exact quotes and everything, and all he wanted to do was some confirmation. And if you mis-stepped—I always had a deep respect for good reporters. I disliked sloppy ones but good reporters—

09-00:52:03

Rubens:

There were a lot of them. Rollin Post.

09-00:52:06

Roff:

Oh, Rollin. Yeah, these were really good reporters. These were top. With Alioto early on being talked about nationally as a possible vice-presidential candidate, similarly with Dianne, with Mondale in '84, we had a lot of the national press stop by. A lot of the big names would come by. And I had known some from my years in Washington and then campaigning in Los Angeles. I knew Tom Brokaw well. But as I say, if I had a good reporter, I had respect for what they did. And, of course, with Dianne, she believed in, and almost everyone else with whom I worked, has been open with the press. Alioto we had the difficulty with *Look* magazine, which was probably the most dramatic thing with the press that I had to deal with.

09-00:53:15

Rubens: We're coming up to two hours, and I feel I've been jumping from topic to topic. I'm thinking the one big area I want to move to, is how she's starting to be looked at nationally.

09-00:53:31

Roff: Yeah. I think that's kind of where I was kind of leading.

09-00:53:35

Rubens: Good. She played a role in the 1980 convention. She was given a high profile speaking role on the opening night. And there's some issues going on with Ted Kennedy challenging Jimmy Carter. So I thought we could talk about that and lead into '84, okay.

09-00:54:00

Roff: Yes. And in '84, she was on the cover of *Time* magazine as a rising star in the Democratic Party. Then we had the profiles in the *New York Times* and all. So there was a lot of press interest in her.

09-00:54:18

Rubens: So I think that we should move to that. Maybe open with the recall election, which is before the convention.

09-00:54:25

Roff: Yes. The recall I would get into a bit because she looked upon that as a terrible setback, as a personal defeat, as a personal insult. Of course, she won by such a huge—it probably cleared the way for her moving ahead politically because no one could really begin a campaign for mayor while she was under recall. That would make any would be candidate seem to be an ally with this far out radical group. So it stifled opposition, silenced opposition. And what opposition it didn't stifle, we could find other ways to do. But it cleared the path toward reelection and then toward her eventual ascent. She was defeated for governor in '90 but she had a very credible showing and then she was elected to take Cranston's remaining term, I think he had a few years, rather than a full term as Boxer did. But it made her the senior senator.

Interview 6: April 17, 2013

Audio File 10

10-00:00:00

Rubens: Hadley, hello. We haven't seen each other for a while. And we really want to get to more on the story of you being chief of staff.

10-00:00:15

Roff: Okay. Why don't I begin at the beginning of my involvement directly with Dianne in the mayor's office. I think I mentioned in one of the earlier sessions I had known her somewhat at Stanford where she was the vice-president of the student body and I was editor of the *Stanford Daily*. And we had friends in common when we got out of college and saw one another socially when she was married to Jack Berman. But we were never close friends. We were just simply acquaintances. And then I was press secretary to Joe Alioto when he became mayor in 1968 and she became a member of the Board of Supervisors in 1969. She and Alioto did not get along particularly well. She always was critical, I think, of my having worked for him. Nonetheless, I soon left San Francisco and Alioto for Washington, was there ten years, and we've gone over that period.

But I still stayed close to events in San Francisco. San Francisco was a city that was deep in my soul, I guess, or my heart. It was always, to my family, the city. My mother and grandmother were in the earthquake, and so they felt a particular affinity with San Francisco and I inherited that. Anyway, I followed events in San Francisco, but never with any thought of being hired or joining Feinstein when she became mayor. Initially, upon becoming mayor, when there this sudden thunderclap of horror when George Moscone and Harvey Milk were assassinated. On the very morning when she told the press she was going to leave politics at the end of her term as the board president in two years, and that she was going to go into some private activity, she wasn't clear what. But she was going to leave politics. And then by the time she'd walked back to her office and sat down, Dan White had rushed by her down to where Harvey Milk had his little office and she heard the shots, the scream. White ran by. She ran down and tried to revive Harvey but couldn't. He was gone. And within an hour of her declaiming any interest in politics, she was acting mayor of the City of San Francisco.

Initially she made the decision, she explained later, because she had not been elected and she had not been in any way ratified by voters, in no way elevated to the position of mayor other than through the trigger finger of Dan White. She elected to make no change in staff until after the White Night Riot, which occurred in May of '79 when White was found guilty of manslaughter rather than what many people thought was an obvious and deliberate premeditated murder. And the city rioted. Police cars were burned. Wonderful little anecdote. The battalion chief, tough, very talented but very firm minded battalion chief on duty inside the hall and he was told, "Well, why don't we go out and put out those fires?" He said, "No, because those blazing cars are already on fire but they provide a barrier so that the crowd can't rush City Hall. They're more protective now than they'd be." And I thought it a very considered judgment. Kind of counter to the ones you might expect, but the fire wasn't going to spread. The cars were already destroyed. But yet

provided this flame through which the demonstrators couldn't rush City Hall. Anyway, a small note.

But it was at that time that Dianne decided that she needed—really, she explained to me later that she decided to bring some staff of her own choosing into City Hall and I was approached.

10-00:05:13

Rubens: Did you remember the name of who contacted you originally on her behalf?

10-00:05:14

Roff: Yes. It was a fellow by the name of Jim Rudden. And he had a home oil supply firm and was part of the old political apparatus in town and called and—

10-00:05:43

Rubens: He was working in concert with Mo Bernstein, no doubt.

10-00:05:45

Roff: Probably, yeah. He was a very close friend of Mo Bernstein and Henry Berman. And Henry and Mo and I had known one another. I didn't know Ray all that well. But it was just this sort of roundabout call. "Would I be interested in coming back to San Francisco?" And I think I explained earlier I had lost my first wife just a year or so before, or in 1975 actually, to a dreadful cancer and I was looking or thinking about returning to San Francisco with my three youngsters who then were in their pre-teens or early teens. And suddenly the call and I came out on a bright, sunny, beautiful April day and met Dianne at her home, sat on the back veranda or back porch area all aglow with flowers and we chatted and Dick Blum was there, whom she was seeing. And then she took me for a tour of San Francisco and all the projects that were under way and all the things that she was involved in. Not necessarily proselytizing me because I think she was still a bit wary about the fact that I had worked for that man. So we left on a somewhat inconclusive note. She'd be in touch. Usually the famous last words. But she did call and ask me if I would come to San Francisco as a deputy mayor and essentially chief of staff. And I did so, made the move in July, late July of 1979. She was running not for reelection but for election in '79.

10-00:07:49

Rubens: That was already in the works when you came?

10-00:07:51

Roff: That was already in the works, much to the disgruntlement of Quentin Kopp, who was an opponent and who believed he had a promise from her not to run. But if there was such a promise, and she says there wasn't, but if there was such a promise or inference, it was made prior to her ascending to the Room 200, the mayor's office after the assassinations. And, of course, once in that office and once enmeshed in all its myriad of obligations and duties and responsibilities and challenges, it's hard to cut loose, break loose. You're suddenly just so wrapped up into these, some great excruciating issues, all very challenging. And so I came out and—

10-00:08:48

Rubens: Well, how much time did you have with her to really lay out what it was you were going to do?

10-00:08:54

Roff: Well, I don't know whether that was ever spelled out. Mayors' offices are not large staffs. Most of the positions are clerical and the few administrative roles principally liaison with the various city agencies and departments as the eyes and ears of the mayor. But I think the responsibilities, at least as I found them, sort of evolved, emerged as we went along and became used to one another. I insisted, as I had in previous political or governmental jobs, that I would have unlimited access in the sense that I could call her or go into her office whenever I thought it necessary. I would not abuse that position or be frivolous in taking her time. But if there was something I thought important enough to command her immediate attention, I was free to approach her and could be very candid with her, as she would be with me. I always felt we had a very direct and very honest relationship. I could suggest to her if I thought she should consider other alternatives or if she was on a policy course that I didn't think was quite right. But we could thrash it out. And it could have evolved. And we had Rudy Nothenberg, who had been a deputy with George Moscone and had been in and around politics in the city for a long while. He was their budget director and he was enormously knowledgeable about the budgets and very meticulous in the way he handled them. I had no responsibilities of that kind of detail. Mine was more of a generalist role, somewhat political in the sense of keeping an eye on various constituent groups, trying to understand the complexities of the city and new things that might be happening or challenging. I vetted commission appointments and department appointments and acted when necessary as a liaison with department heads if there were issues of critical importance, most particularly the police and police department. I spent a lot of time on the street trying to negotiate with various protest groups so that they wouldn't block intersections or sit in traffic lanes and block traffic and not always with great success.

The Low Riders, which was a group in the Mission District that souped up these cars and put them on—I know nothing about automobiles or anything about mechanics. But anyways, they put these cars on some kind of vast, huge spring so they'd bounce up and down and they'd parade them up and down Mission Street on Friday nights. And it was quite a parade but it also interfered with some of the businesses there because there was no parking. In fact, one of my first eye opening experiences was riding not in a Low Rider car but riding with one of the young people who was involved with Low Riders and a group of his friend. And they were just pulled off Mission Street onto, I don't know, 24th or 23rd, I don't know. Suddenly there was a whale of a siren behind us, the red light beaming into the car. A cop comes up. It was a member of the SWAT team all helmeted. And the driver, much to my chagrin, did not have a driver's license. So I, being the pompous and then bulbous person that I was, I weighed hugely, I said, "You might be interested, Officer, who I am," trying to ease my way into the fact that I was deputy mayor, "and maybe you'll—" And, "You're what?" I said, "I'm the deputy mayor." And he said, "Yeah?" He goes back to the car and I can hear radio. "This is SWAT ten," or

whatever. “Fellow says that he’s the deputy mayor. Yeah, he does have kind of curly hair. Yeah, he is fat.” So that was all over the network was, “Yeah, he’s curly haired and fat.”

10-00:14:10

Rubens:

So you would go into communities.

10-00:14:13

Roff:

Oh, yeah. Yes. I carried a beeper. I would go to three alarm fires. Feinstein also would go to larger events. She had what I think is an indispensable quality. She understood the importance of presence, of being at a scene. Not because she wanted camera time or not because she wanted the publicity. But there is a kind of subconscious factor in a city like San Francisco, that somehow the city lives on the edge. The earthquake. The San Andreas Fault. Issues, oil spills in the Bay. And there’s a kind of unconscious thought or require—not a requirement but awareness the mayor should be available and on the scene. Not that she’s going to lug a hose into a fire, although she’s done that. Incident on Hunter’s Point, she was going to a meeting there one night and found one of the buildings ablaze and had Jim Molinari, who was her security and driver, radio an alarm. She went and knocked on doors, roused people, and then as the engines arrived, she helped the firemen drive a hose up to the house. And I can see her in bright silk pumps, beautiful blue shoes, and a very elegant dress, she must have come from some very elegant party, down on a waterfront fire where the shed, one of these huge wharves, was totally ablaze, spewing out this terrible black smoke and great hunks of black charcoal. And the water was all blackened with this goo and she was trotting with these fancy and elaborate shoes with her fire jacket on.

I’d call her if I thought—you know, if it were a four-alarm fire or something extraordinary. Not every event.

10-00:16:51

Rubens:

So let’s talk a little bit about how you perceived her in those early years.

10-00:16:57

Roff:

Well, at first I was a bit wary, again knowing her feelings about—not that she ever explained to me about Alioto. Well, I know once when I was working in Washington and Alioto was running for reelection, I—

10-00:17:15

Rubens:

Yes, we discussed this.

10-00:17:16

Roff:

He asked me to take leave from Washington and come out and just be with him as a kind of advisor in the final weeks of the campaign. And I flew out. I told my wife, who was alive at the time, and I told my boss in the Senate. And as far as I knew, the only two persons who knew I was on the plane to San Francisco was the two of them. In fact, the bellman was just opening the door of the room to the Saint Francis and the phone rings and I instantly think, “My God, probably something has happened to the kids.” “This is Dianne. How can you come out here and work for that man?” she demanded. Now, how in

the world she found out I was in San Francisco and that I was at the Saint Francis Hotel and that I had just checked in I have no idea. To this day I have no idea.

So I was a bit wary. I loved San Francisco. I loved being back here. I've found this town has always been, from the time when I was a young reporter and I think I've gone over this, this has been an exciting, vigorous, vibrant town with all kinds of interests and outlets for entertainment and art and writing. So I was glad to get back among this kind of wondrous boisterous family of friends whom I had here.

10-00:18:51

Rubens:

So she obviously wanted you because you had had this tremendous amount of experience.

10-00:18:53

Roff:

Well, I think I came highly recommended as somebody who knew and was very practical about politics. I came not as an ideologue necessarily, although a liberal. But I came not part of some machine or apparatus or background as a sort of hired gunslinger, although I did in campaigns. But I didn't have that reputation. My reputation in Washington, where I was Kennedy's press secretary and all, was fairly well established.

10-00:19:24

Rubens:

Now, my understanding is that in the very beginning, from January on when she's sworn in as mayor pro tem, that she really had a vision of tightening up how City Hall worked. That—she had a dress code, she wanted to meet regularly with her department heads.

10-00:19:49

Roff:

Yeah. Part of it was her nature. She liked things in good order. She was not necessarily all that enforcing about a dress code because, after all, she hired me. And as somebody wrote in a book on Dianne, that I looked as though I dressed in discarded garbage bags because I was always rumpled and the tie was down. And part of that was deliberate on my part to see how far I—or if I could sort of be a little, somewhat nonconforming, although in the important ways I was extremely diligent in my duties. But when I came, I was a bit wary because of her feelings about Alioto. And I was kind of struck by her. And it's strange to say for somebody who had run for the Board of Supervisors, had been the top vote getter, was president of the board, had run by that time twice for mayor, albeit that she lost each time. But there was a kind of—at first what struck me as being almost a political naïveté about her. I was thinking of the Britt appointment, because when I—[Harry] Britt, whom she appointed to succeed Harvey, turned out, as Harvey was, to be a steadfast opponent of her. And I'm practical enough in politics that if you have an appointment to make, you make damn sure that you get someone who is going to be respectful at least of your views. And that—

10-00:21:55

Rubens:

She had already made that appointment of course.

10-00:21:56

Roff:

Oh, already made that appointment. But I thought, "Hmm, that's a strange one." Although he was very respectful toward her. He had not the personal dislike toward her that Harvey apparently did. I did not know Harvey but I understood he was very disdainful and very

derogatory toward her. And he had written a will and it suggested Britt as his successor should anything happen to him. And I think many in the gay community, particularly persons who had been in the struggle for a long time and were knowledgeable about the city and very committed to gay rights but were not necessarily flamboyant in their advocacy. They were highly disappointed that she didn't pick somebody whom they thought was a bit more mainstream within the gay community and the gay leadership.

10-00:23:01

Rubens: Did she talk about that with you? About her disappointment with—

10-00:23:03

Roff: No. It was past and it was—

10-00:23:06

Rubens: Well, but afterward did she talk about her disappointment with him?

10-00:23:08

Roff: No, no. I couldn't help but think if I'd been there I would have—and I may not have stopped it but I would have probably raised some question about it.

10-00:23:23

Rubens: But the powerhouse was really David Scott, right?

10-00:23:25

Roff: Yes. He ran and he brought enough folks to force a runoff so his vote was important.

10-00:23:39

Rubens: When he came over to supporting her.

10-00:23:40

Roff: When he came over. And a very nice fellow. Although he had this menacing German shepherd, I remember. But I didn't talk to him after the election. And, again, through Susie and through friends I had met, so many in the gay community were just wonderful, exuberant, funny, thoughtful, incisive persons. I thought there was a very considerable pool of leadership there that could be tapped. And eventually some were selected to go on commissions, not necessarily just because of my advocacy but she put them on commission.

10-00:24:36

Rubens: Jo Daly, was someone mentioned.

10-00:24:38

Roff: Oh, Jo. Yeah, Jo and Nancy Achilles were the two who had a ceremony in Dianne's backyard where I had had my interview. And although Dianne, when she was mayor, she vetoed domestic partnership legislation, her record with the gays was in many ways very tense, especially among many of the gays who objected to her stand to close bathhouses, on which she was adamant. And, of course, she took this ferocious kind of personal position about pornography. Now, the Mitchell brothers were certainly not homosexual in their content. But any kind of prurient sex was just appalling.

10-00:25:44

Rubens: And, in fact, doesn't Feinstein dismiss Jo Daly because Daly had endorsed a film the Mitchell brothers had produced.

10-00:25:55

Roff: Yes, it may be. I've forgotten whether she quit.

10-00:25:58

Rubens: Well, she probably resigned under pressure.

10-00:26:00

Roff: Yeah. I've kind of lost track of her. Nancy and Susie were great friends. We used to see a great deal of her. But in one very critical aspect, one really overriding aspect of concern in the gay community was the burgeoning AIDS crisis, which I think Dianne was the first public official in the country of any stature who began to take an interest and began to probe and demand and ask about what's causing it, what is it, and organized a very forceful, very professional taskforce of epidemiologists and medical experts and worked very closely with Dr. Mervyn Silverman, who was the director of health here, who became a national leader in the efforts to treat and to curb AIDS. But I think without question San Francisco established the first model, at least for larger cities. We had delegations come from New York and other major, major urban centers. "How did you do it? What did you do?" And, of course, San Francisco General became one of the leading research hospitals and caring institutions for AIDS. And that, of course, led her to try to restrict promiscuous public sex like in the bathhouses and that became a great tangle.

10-00:27:54

Rubens: Were you a party to that tangle? Do you remember her discussing this with you?

10-00:27:59

Roff: Oh, yeah. It was a huge issue. Angry issue. Many in the community felt it was a violation of their freedom and it created tensions with the police, who really weren't very keen about having to enforce the—have to investigate these allegations. And there was always tension between the gay community, especially after the White Night Riots, when some of the police themselves, after City Hall was secured, went into the Castro and sort of raided—not raided but assaulted people in some of the bars and there was great chaos. So there was a great deal of tension. But also—

But also a sense of respect and I think on the part of many, of admiration for the leadership that she took. And it was absolutely something that probably originated within her being, that she had heard it from her dad who had been the chief of surgery at San Francisco General for years.

10-00:29:46

Rubens: She certainly allocated a lot of city money by the end of her tenure as mayor.

10-00:29:48

Roff: A lot of city money and effort. I think—

10-00:29:55

Rubens: He [Silverman] resigned. But was that due to her pressure—

10-00:30:06

Roff: Oh, no, no, no. He went on to become head of one of the largest AIDS research organizations. I thought she felt very highly of him.

10-00:30:18

Rubens: It took a while for the bathhouses to be closed.

10-00:30:20

Roff: They tried. He actually, I think, at one time told me he was wearing a bulletproof vest. And then you had Dave [David] Werdegar, who was another MD, a very thoughtful fellow. I thought Merv was always a leader. As far as I know, as far as my experience had been, was always well received and well respected in the office, at least from my viewpoint. I had the highest regard for him. I thought he was vigilant, very guarded and, again, the people on that task force, it was not the typical political balancing act. These were the true researchers and practitioners who understood the disease.

When I first come back, as I said, one of my sort of little nagging concerns was this kind of political naïveté of hers that I thought because I think—I don't know, it was early on, a few months into my being there, I arranged with Ted Kennedy, who was speaking at a big Democratic rally down at the Embarcadero, that he would introduce her. She was running for election in her own right. He was one of the stalwarts of the Democratic Party, certainly a person who's highly regarded in San Francisco and I thought it was just natural that she would come. Well, I got tapped on the shoulder and told that Dianne had just arrived. She was sitting out in the car and I was to go out to the car and talk to her. So I went out to the car and she rolled down the window and looked at me and said, "Who are these people?" And I remember sort of just ice water being drenched on my head. "Who are they?" I said. "They're voters, Dianne. They're Democratic voters." And she went in. But I thought, "Why are we questioning?" But she proved resolute on matters that became of interest to her.

She was, as many people have described her, a micromanager. She did have the department head meetings. But there was a very good purpose to them. One, she had not been elected. So essentially they were an assertion of the fact that she indeed was the mayor. Maybe by accident, maybe by fate, certainly not by election, not by any political process, through horrific horror of assassination. But she nonetheless was the mayor and in charge. Part of it was just her natural caution, not wanting to be blindsided, so asking if there's anything that anyone should tell her—and a way for her to keep tabs on what was going on. Inevitably the beginning report would be for the police chief, who would tell about what were the crime statistics and the problems arising. But it was all the departments, who, in a sense, all began to feel, I think, more of a team because they would meet beforehand and after and chat and maybe go out for a coffee afterward and get to know one another when basically many of them probably not have had much contact one with the other.

10-00:34:14

Rubens: Now, this continued throughout her tenure as mayor?

10-00:34:21

Roff: And continued when she was back in the Senate. She had a nine o'clock Monday staff meeting and I was out here on the West Coast and she'd called. And she say, "Well, how is it out in San Francisco?" about three hours difference. I said, "It's dark." But it was—

10-00:34:38

Rubens: And what was your responsibility there?

10-00:34:40

Roff: I was there, one, to take notes. I would be the kind of gentle—not necessarily gentle. Be the nudge sometimes to make sure that things did move along and try to keep on top of things. Again, the generalist approach but I wanted to know where departments stood, where issues might arise, where—

10-00:35:07

Rubens: How did you keep your hands on things?

10-00:35:10

Roff: I paid a great deal of attention to what was going on, everywhere. One, I literally loved the job. It was fatiguing. It was hugely long hours. But I relished the contact. Again, the uniqueness and just wondrous diversity of this city.

10-00:35:32

Rubens: Well, the fevered pitch of what was going on.

10-00:35:33

Roff: Yes. So there was so many things. So I got a taste of—I would sit in on most of the labor negotiations, not necessarily as a negotiator but just somebody whose practical outlook might be helpful at times.

10-00:35:49

Rubens: And there were some pretty big strikes during this period. The hotel workers. At San Francisco General Hospital.

10-00:35:55

Roff: And teachers. Now, those teachers, we met in the—what was it called, the San Francisco Hotel down by Tenth and Market and it was infested with fleas. We were sitting with cans of bug spray. Anyway—

10-00:36:14

Rubens: The newspaper strike, too, I think she was—

10-00:36:17

Roff: I had a good rapport with a lot of the labor people, much of it because of the ILWU, because of Dave Jenkins and Jimmy Herman. And there was a kind of triumvirate of union leaders then. Jim Herman from the ILWU. George Johns and then Jack Crowley from the Labor Council and the head of the Teamsters Union, the newspaper drivers

union. Who just had enormous reservoirs of commonsense. If they began to circle around the negotiations you knew that things were getting close. They usually didn't come in until the last. And then you'd always watch Jack and Jack would—I forgot what strike it was. I think it was the teachers. Was it the teachers? I've forgotten. But I remember about five o'clock in the morning I was sort of wandering around the halls of the hotel and he pops his head out of a room, says nothing. Winks. Then I went and got our side up and by eight o'clock it was all settled. But I tell people, "For the first two weeks usually, don't listen, don't take anything personal. It's all going to be Kabuki." And then when the monies begin to pinch on both sides, then—

Anyway, labor, Low Riders, the gay community, these were all issues that occupied us.

And she had never been a party apparatchik in the sense of being integral to some party apparatus. She was not a product of the Democratic Central Committee. She was not part of a so-called machine. I can remember there was always the so called Burton Machine. The most apt definition of that came from Johnny Burton at Phil's memorial at City Hall. John, the younger brother to Phil Burton, and he looked at this mob of people, just mob of people of all manner of dress. And he said, "There's the Burton Machine." Just people. I believe that. But Dianne did not really have an established base. She had some people who were very supportive of her, who recognized her unique talent. But it was basically driven by her own sense of ambition, her own will.

10-00:39:18

Rubens:

Were you aware of her interest in the national public scene?

10-00:39:22

Roff:

She was again, and this is again where I was struck by possibly a kind of—that she would spurn any talk about political advancement. She was one of the very few politicians whom I knew who wasn't in some way or another almost constantly thinking of the next rung in the ladder, although she got an enormous amount of attention. Front page in magazines, claimed the best mayor in the United States.

10-00:39:51

Rubens:

Well, certainly by '84 she knew Mondale was seriously considering her to run as his vice president.

10-00:39:54

Roff:

Yes. By '84 he talked about her being vice president.

10-00:39:58

Rubens:

Now in 1980 she spoke at the national Democratic Party Convention.

10-00:40:02

Roff:

But, again, because she was then one of the few women in any kind of major political position. Although she's anything but a professional feminist in the sense of leading parades or anything, but she cracked the glass ceiling fairly substantially and, of course, now rather very specifically. But she didn't have any broad base. She had some good loyal supporters, people who were savvy but—

10-00:40:39

Rubens: She brings in Clint Reilly for her reelection campaign.

10-00:40:46

Roff: Brought in Clint, yes, because he came—He ran Quentin's campaign against her in '79 and then came to the recall—and the reelection. Clinton Reilly was a person with whom I sometimes disagreed with but who unquestionably was a pioneer in modern campaigns. In some ways I regret the fact that he modernized or helped modernize and industrialized politics in the sense of computers and phone banks and prearranged lists and all, and got away from the simple neighbor to neighbor kind of grassroots campaigning that used to predominate here in San Francisco and still was a factor. But Clinton was an extremely, extremely capable strategist and organizer, although I sometimes felt that he went too far.

10-00:41:59

Rubens: Too far in what sense?

10-00:42:01

Roff: This may have been kind of self-effacing in a sense. But I always felt that there came the Wednesday after that first Tuesday after the first Monday or whatever the thing is with the election. There's always the next day when somebody's got to sit down and govern and bring whatever disunion there may have been because of the election, have to try to repair any lasting harm or actually bring a city together so that you can function properly. I was always aware that probably on that Wednesday you'd be talking to the very person whom on Tuesday you wouldn't talk to. Clint, I think, he was going to win. And I agreed with that. You're going to win. I think we agreed to disagree on some strategies and things. He sometimes took positions I thought were more daring than she would carry off and were needlessly partisan. But that's—

10-00:43:35

Rubens: Okay, no specifics.

10-00:43:39

Roff: I knew that in some campaigns you always became anxious in those final days that some surprise would suddenly snap out of some hidden silo somewhere and—

10-00:44:04

Rubens: Well, the recall must have been like that or may—

10-00:44:06

Roff: Yes. The recall came—And I remember the mayor being quite angry that I did not know of a group called the White Panthers. I had never heard of the group called the White Panthers. And how I'd know about some commune that adored guns, I don't know. But they took advantage of all the uproar in the gay community to get enough signatures from—

10-00:44:32

Rubens: They were protesting her ban on weapons.

10-00:44:35

Roff: Well, the White Panthers, yes. They were pro-gun but they were so far and so radical. But they managed to bring in some hefty support. Or at least people joined them. I think not necessarily to replace Feinstein but teach her a lesson. And we tried to block—

10-00:45:01

Rubens: She had already vetoed the supervisors' domestic partnership ordinance.

10-00:45:04

Roff: Yeah. There was some thought, I think that one of the supervisors, that Quentin Kopp might come out in favor of the recall, although I can't imagine that he'd really do so. But anyway, there was a thought about what did I think about if Quentin would do such a thing. And it was the time that Spielberg's movie the *E.T.*, was out and E.T. was trying to phone home. And I said, "Oh, Quentin, kind of guy who wouldn't give E.T. a dime to call home." And that took him out of the—I think that blooded his moment and he would have given it great legitimacy. And, again, this was her personal concern about being rebuked by the voter when I think, in total agreement with Clint, I and others felt that it was an absolute opportunity because what it effectively did was block anyone from organizing for later that year to run against her for reelection. Because any attempt to organize would appear to be an endorsement of the White Panthers and these White Panthers were just such a fringe group. And San Francisco in general terms, then and now, was largely sympathetic to gun control. Alioto had endorsed legislation that was passed and then overturned by the courts. Similarly, she tried the same and got the same reaction with the courts. And she still persisted and did get the assault weapons ban passed in the Senate that lasted ten years and then was sun-setted.

10-00:47:10

Rubens: The recall must have preoccupied her.

10-00:47:19

Roff: Oh, yes, it did. And, again, however, because of the nature of it, it really did provide an opportunity to organize a campaign essentially at the grassroots, with the ironing board brigades that went out and signed up voters and proselytized for votes at street corners on Saturday. Whole battalions of people going out with the ironing boards, which became kind of a symbol. And it was the first time she had had I think that kind of a campaign. In '79 the campaign then was basically brochures and candidates nights and earnest speeches. Anyway, she communicated well but—

10-00:48:05

Rubens: So are you with her on these? Are you literally—

10-00:48:12

Roff: Yeah. And I did a lot of the sort of general speech drafting. Time consuming. Mostly mine was sort of a general kind of oversight, sort of reinforcement role of reinforcing her, making sure that people understood her position or if commissioners became involved in questionable activities, I'd be the one who would have to deal with them. And often the letter would be in the drawer for them to sign when they came in.

10-00:48:50

Rubens: Are there any that you remember distinctly?

10-00:48:52

Roff: None that I want to be—

10-00:48:53

Rubens: That you want to talk about. Okay.

10-00:48:54

Roff: No, no, no. Because they didn't do it. But when—

10-00:48:58

Rubens: There were some—

10-00:48:59

Roff: There were some.

10-00:49:01

Rubens: Like Richard Sklar right before the recall. He had had a major disagreement with her. He was head of the Public Utilities Commission.

10-00:49:10

Roff: Yes. Richard was just an extraordinarily forceful bright guy who saw things his way and did not have the greatest diplomatic skill in the world. But he was bright, knowledgeable, a good manager. He felt that she intruded too much on his province. But it was a strong personality and—

10-00:49:47

Rubens: And her interest was really—

10-00:49:49

Roff: Again, her interests were practical things. There was no huge theologic point of view. There was no utopian vision. There was do the buses run on time? Can a fire truck get to the scene within three minutes? Can a police car respond in a minute and a half if there's a major call, et cetera. Hers would come down to fairly practical but achievable and she kept pressure on to make sure that they got taken care of. And she was detailed. I think of going to a 49er game with her once and sat in the box that she had. And was scrambling around in my pockets for papers as she was telling me the number of mattresses she saw in vacant fields on the way to the Niners and I should have them picked up the next day. I never sat with her again. I was going to watch the game. Stories of her leaping out of the car to give mouth to mouth resuscitation to somebody on the street.

10-00:50:54

Rubens: I brought up Sklar, because as with others, and that basically he leaves, because there was tension between them. This was over the high-rise growth, about the development—

10-00:51:08

Roff: There may have been. I happen to like Dick. And also, Dick had an opportunity. He went on to work in the Clinton Administration. He did a lot of the work on rebuilding and aid work in Kosovo after the war there.

Many mayors came into office thinking that being mayor would be such a pleasant kind of honorarium. Parades and babies to kiss. And, of course, by the sixties and seventies, city government basically was a chaos of challenge. In '78 you had Proposition Thirteen, which immediately just chopped 130 million, bang, right out of the city budget. Bang, 130 million lost. And then we still suffer today from the city's—

10-00:52:37

Rubens: She had built the budget up. She had gotten a surplus at one point.

10-00:52:38

Roff: Right.

10-00:52:39

Rubens: And I think Quentin Kopp sued over it. I don't have that information here.

10-00:52:42

Roff: I don't remember that. A lot of the budget issues were due to Prop Thirteen. Then there was this huge economic change as the city moved away from a maritime industrial base, especially south of Market, to a more service oriented as the big ships went to the larger docking facilities in Oakland and no longer came here. So a lot of the blue collar jobs that had been so important to San Francisco over the decade were lost to the East Bay. A lot of print shops and small manufacturers and warehouses moved to the suburbs where land was cheaper and more available.

10-00:53:36

Rubens: One of the things that she's really focusing on quite a bit is the economy and trying to bring in new business.

10-00:53:41

Roff: Right. Because you had Prop Thirteen, you had the Reagan so called revolution. And then Clinton following in the nineties with the end of the era of big government. So government funding began to diminish. Not to the extent it is in 2013 but still—

10-00:54:03

Rubens: She's also leading a lot of delegations abroad trying to bring foreign business. Goes to China.

10-00:54:11

Roff: Yes. She established the sister cities in Shanghai.

10-00:54:13

Rubens: She goes to Israel, right.

10-00:54:15

Roff: Israel. She went to a number of countries. Ireland.

10-00:54:21

Rubens: Did you go with her on any of those trips?

10-00:54:24

Roff: No, no. I stayed home. No, that was Peter Henschel, who's passed away. No, I did not. And Charlotte Mailliard did protocol. And then business development people, Bill Woody, and others like that. But no, I never traveled. I'd probably have to pick up mattresses in Peking, or something Beijing. No, I would stay here. And Dianne often was reluctant to leave the city for fear that something might happen here. Again, her sense of presence here. And I know several times things did happen. Illegal fireworks factory in a huge, huge warehouse complex in the Bay View blew up and killed a number, seven people, I think. And she had gone to Los Angeles, much to her regret.

When traveling, she'd lament: "What if something happens?" "Nothing is going to happen." "Oh, what if something does?" Well, of course, I have to call her and say, "You've got to come back." Or when the gas line outside the Embarcadero Center was ruptured and this fine oil, slippery goo coated much of the downtown and people were slipping and sliding. The whole Embarcadero, a hundred and some odd thousand people had to be evacuated. And she was in New York. But she came right back. But she made those trips and they were quite successful, the ones to China particularly so. And she became quite close to the then mayor of Shanghai, Jiang Zemin, who later was president of China. That was an association that was maintained over the years.

10-00:56:18

Rubens: So she was bringing in business.

10-00:56:19

Roff: Oh, yeah. For a time downtown was bustling. It began to fade in the late eighties and nineties. Then the high-tech kind of bubble burst for a bit but now dominates many places south of Market now. But it's created not only a huge change in the economics but the makeup of our neighborhoods, the demographics of the city. No longer is there a—

10-00:56:51

Rubens: She had a significant increase—I don't know significant, but sizeable. City jobs were up in the nine years she was there.

10-00:57:01

Roff: Yes. And we had many new programs. You're dealing with the homeless. AIDS, of course.

10-00:57:09

Rubens: She increased Muni.

10-00:57:10

Roff: Increased the size of the police department eventually. Although the fire department was cut. And there were just a variety of programs. Now we're suffering. Our court system is hugely understaffed.

10-00:57:36

Rubens: Oh, there's also the federal building. She arranges for a new—

10-00:57:41

Roff: Well, that's right. They were going to build a new one.

10-00:57:43

Rubens: Let's stop here and change the tape, and sort of regroup to see where we'll go in this discussion.

Audio File 11

11-00:00:00

Rubens: Why don't you tell me about what you literally did and your observations about the coming of the Democratic Party national convention. That was in August of '84. I read early that initially she had been concerned about it coming, that it would drain resources.

11-00:00:25

Roff: Well, Dianne was very concerned. There was a great deal of interest on the part of some of the party leadership in Washington for a California convention. And trying to in some ways maybe break the hold that Reagan seemed to have on the country's imagination. Oversimplified it maybe. But she was reluctant. One, because of the city's reputation in some parts of the country as being kind of a kook city, the uncertainty of demonstrations. The police responsibilities of maintaining order with a huge number of people. The long history of noisy and sometimes quite unruly demonstrations here. And the seeming initial inadequacy of the Moscone Center, which was the only venue of any size that could be used because it was a fairly shallow bowl rather than the real amphitheater, large arena with lots of seating. And so they were concerned about—

11-00:01:48

Rubens: I think there were some problems with leaks and—

11-00:01:50

Roff: Yeah, there were problems. There were police problems. There were really serious construction problems. One, the television had to have these unobstructed sight lines for their various booths and studios. You had to have the VIP boxes. You had to have, of course, extraordinary security with presidential candidates and all. And it was logistically a huge, huge, huge undertaking. But there was a lot of pressure to do it. There was a belief that the hall could be reconfigured sufficiently to accommodate the needs of a convention. I do remember a meeting. Dianne paid very close attention to this but I was kind of the go-between in the office and a lot of the—just in terms of city involvement. Willie Brown also was very active in the political front, as was Nancy Pelosi, who I think was the convention chair, at least one of the ranking people. And then Roz Wyman from Los Angeles, who became very close friends with Dianne and had been a kind of marvelous help to me when I was younger and my first wife had died and my kids moved to Los Angeles to be involved in the campaign and she sort of adopted my kids. A wonderful woman.

Anyway, a lot of issues. But the headaches were enormous. Where to place the demonstrators so their First Amendment rights would be protected and yet they could not just automatically block or obstruct the convention. And adequate personnel for the emergency rooms. Just a myriad of detail. Although it became obvious early on that the contractors were going to have problems because of the shallowness of the dimensions in the Moscone Center. And a meeting was held with the contractor in New York and his minions and city people, Dianne and I were there. Others from the city. And Nancy Pelosi and Roz Wyman. And then Walter Shorenstein, who was a huge contributor to the Democratic Party, and I think one of the backers who's raising money to help pay for the convention. He sat. And the meeting began in this kind of strange little office on Kearny Street, I remember, with kind of bent Venetian blinds that sent little stabs of light in a kind of surrealistic pattern across the wall. And the contractor began to lament about how he just—his best efforts and how he simply, if he were to meet the deadline he'd have to go over budget and he'd simply have to have more money in order to complete the job. And it was all the more imperative now that time was short and it was only a few weeks or a month or so before the convention and he just needed to work around the clock and it just demanded a greater expenditure of money. No two ways about it. Walter, who usually had very little to say, but I always told people when you talk to Walter, he uses with precision two words. One is yes and the other is no. And you listened to him. Anyway, he kind of stuttered a little bit and said, "Well, you're sure? Your figures are—well," he said, "if you can't bring that project in on time and under budget, you'll never work in the United States again." Meeting over. That was like a punch. "You'll never work in the United States again." Yikes.

11-00:06:47

Rubens:

Why were they dealing with a New York company?

11-00:06:49

Roff:

I don't know. Because they'd done that kind of construction before. I'm pretty sure they were from New York. But they would remodel an arena for convention use. And the convention came off well enough.

11-00:07:03

Rubens:

How involved were you with Mondale's negotiations, inquiries?

11-00:07:13

Roff:

Dick Blum was a friend of Fritz Mondale. And I don't know just how long but apparently for some time. And no question that by '84, she had been in office then five plus years. Speculation was rife. She was being interviewed then by *Time* magazine and featured in the *New York Times* magazine. And so there was a lot of national publicity about her success. At the time she was getting great credit for her AIDS program here and for what was then the Downtown Plan, which was later scrapped and replaced by Proposition M, which was a slow growth movement that capped downtown construction. But at the time she was getting just copious and very favorable coverage in the national media as one of the few leading women politicians. And there was some thought that Mondale needed something kind of extraordinary to spark his election against Reagan, who seemed all but unbeatable. So I did go back along with Tom Easton, who was then press secretary, and

had been the managing editor of the *News-Call Bulletin* when I was a reporter there. Went back to Minnesota so she could spend personal time with Mondale.

11-00:09:02

Rubens:

You went with her?

11-00:09:04

Roff:

Went with her, and Dick Blum. Mrs. Mondale took Dick on a tour of local museums. Dianne and Mondale huddled upstairs. The rest of us, along with Mondale's staff, sat on a screened porch and listened to these gigantic mosquitoes thump against the screen. Then we went out to the back after the two of them, Mondale and Dianne, had spent about two hours, I think, or quite a long time. Went out for a press conference. And these mosquitoes were zipping around. I remember at one point she was talking and one went into her mouth. And she just as if nothing had happened. I would have choked. And her legs became bloodied from the bites. It was really dreadful. But she did an absolutely, and I say this with admiration—I always felt myself in some ways kind of schizophrenic, being part reporter and part flack but still respectful if somebody's able to handle himself or herself well with the press. And she did absolutely superbly.

11-00:10:21

Rubens:

Well, you had prepared her as well.

11-00:10:23

Roff:

Well, no. When you were there. And the cameras and the mosquitoes and one of the first women ever to be considered for vice president. There was a lot has to be going on in your mind. And as the press conference ended, Mondale and Dianne walked past me and he slammed his fist into the palm of his other hand, said, "That was A plus, that was A plus." And I was thinking to myself, "Oh, it was." And I thought maybe she would prevail. And she did not.

11-00:11:06

Rubens:

How did she let you know? I guess he calls her and decides to go for—

11-00:11:09

Roff:

He calls her. Yes, for Geraldine Ferraro. And he made a conscious East Coast ethnic, blue collar—And I can still think of being on the floor of the convention. Andrew Cuomo, who's then governor of New York, had given an absolute barn burning speech. A wonderful, wonderful eloquent speech. He had flown in and left the convention hall immediately after his speech and flew home. He didn't spend any time here. But he gave this just rousing, rousing speech. And Mondale's acceptance speech was by comparison fairly pedestrian but he also talked about the need for a tax increase. And I remember I was standing next to Pat Caddell, who was then a leading pollster and probably one of the smartest political minds I've ever encountered. We looked at one another and shrugged because that was—

11-00:12:22

Rubens:

Seemed like suicide.

11-00:12:23

Roff: Yes. If we hadn't heard "Taps" already we were hearing it then.

11-00:12:28

Rubens: Did she call you shortly after Mondale had called her and—

11-00:12:32

Roff: Yes. She'd gotten the call in the office and I think I was called in. And she was very matter of fact. She really, and I believe her, she really did not expect it. I had begun to think, given that kind of extemporaneous, "Wow, that was A plus." I don't know why. But she just seemed so sure of herself without any arrogance. Just was one of those confident self-assured performances that was really excellent.

And I had gone back to be present at the city's final presentation to the Democratic National Committee in Washington. I went back with Nancy Pelosi to represent the city and to make the city's appeal for the convention. And Nancy was then a considerable force within the party, simply coming from this remarkable political dynasty from Maryland and being not only just a wonderfully warm, compassionate, outgoing person. She was also intensely clear in her political thoughts. Anyway, that was quite an adventure to go back. And it certainly elevated Dianne further and I think did plant in her mind the possibility that when she left the mayor's office, that other political jobs might beckon. But I don't think she ever really calculated about taking definite moves. Again, my trying to suggest to her and others. I'm certainly not the only one. But others who are interested in her career, urging her to spend more time in Southern California, try to cultivate people like Roz Wyman, whom I mentioned earlier, who was elected supervisor in Los Angeles on graduation from UCLA when she was twenty-two and almost single-handedly was the one who lured the Dodgers to Los Angeles. But just one of these just indefatigable, a relentless hard worker.

11-00:15:25

Rubens: There had been talk of Dianne running for Sala Burton's congressional seat.

11-00:15:29

Roff: There was some talk of that. But, again, some people were urging that, but it was fairly clear that Sala was the selected candidate in terms of the Burtons and others. And not that Dianne was beholden to the Burtons. In fact, I don't know that they got along all that well. But she certainly was mindful of Nancy's position, mindful of Nancy's position within the Party and I think felt that it was an office that she deservedly should run, should seek. I would think if there were no term limits, if Dianne could somehow hold on to the key to Room 200, the mayor's office, she'd still hold it, still be in her purse, her wallet. She still very much sees herself as a manager. Still takes infinite interest in San Francisco. Conversations with her will go into detail way beyond my sort of generalist outlook. She's just concerned about the city. She selected a former member of the Board of Supervisors as her new deputy in the state. And it's really the first time that she's kind of reached outside a group that had been with her over decades. We all sort of recycled. Like little moons we'd sort of come into orbit and then—

11-00:17:37

Rubens: Well, I think we're not quite ready to get to the end of her term in the city. But so far as you know, what you saw, she was not crushed by Mondale's decision to go with Ferraro?

11-00:17:52

Roff: No, no, no. I hate to use a word like fatalistic but after the way she became mayor I don't know how you'd not consider that.

11-00:18:05

Rubens: Do you think Blum was upset about this?

11-00:18:08

Roff: I don't know. He had a close relationship with Mondale. He may have been. Certainly they didn't let on any disappointment that I sensed. You're close to something that's so enormously historic. Still, what she did was historic and certainly she'd led the way. Now, what are there, twenty women members of the Senate. She was one of the leaders. She's certainly done well. There are many more women mayors of cities now.

11-00:18:45

Rubens: Well, let me ask you just one more question about the Democratic Party convention and then maybe we'll stop for today. I couldn't find—did she address the convention? Did you write a speech for her? She had to have.

11-00:19:00

Roff: I don't remember. I wrote so many. She would have just as the host. As a hostess she certainly would have spoken. I don't remember that it was—She probably spoke at the state convention. She would make appearances at major political events but she was not part of the apparatus, not part of the committees, not part of the intrigue, the intraparty fights.

Again, she is so independent. She still marches more to her own drummer than she does to any partisan band.

11-00:19:54

Rubens: At the '80 convention she had supported Carter when the San Francisco—

11-00:20:00

Roff: Yes, I know she did.

11-00:20:00

Rubens: —delegation was behind Kennedy.

11-00:20:03

Roff: Yes. And that may have had some factor in her mind. I didn't know better. I would have obviously Kennedy. When Kennedy withdrew from the race, he gave the "Dreams Will Never Die" speech, written by Bob Shrum. A great speech.

I can conclude today and we can pick up on more of this. Again, I was very much influenced by a book on San Francisco politics called *The Left Coast City*. It was written by Richard DeLeon of San Francisco State. It was written in '95 so it's a bit—but he

describes her tenure as mayor as interregnum and basically a failure because she didn't fulfill Moscone's liberal agenda. Well, nor, of course, did Moscone. Nor did Agnos following, because contingencies were such that—or other demands. But I do think that, again, the AIDS and the way she managed to pull the city through the Prop Thirteen crisis at least you have a stable budget and there was a great controversy at the end of her term about whether she left or didn't leave a surplus. Agnos said that she left a huge debt, which I think was manufactured.

11-00:21:54

Rubens:

I don't think that was true.

11-00:21:55

Roff:

No, not true. I think they just added up every figure they could get and came up with this gargantuan number. But to me it was hardly a failure. She did restore a sense of stability in the city. Granted, cultural upheaval, counterculture, Grateful Dead, all this excitement, some of it hugely creative and marvelous, some of it not so great. But I think she restored a sense of pride and confidence in the city, its ability to get things done. And I think is recognized as a very effective manager. And certainly she was far ahead of the country in terms of AIDS and I think many things. She was not a flaming liberal. She once hissed at me, "You're nothing but a San Francisco liberal." Well, I may be but she's not that. She was hard to work for in the sense that she was demanding but I respected that. I'd rather know—

11-00:23:19

Rubens:

Do you remember any other tangles that you had with her?

11-00:23:23

Roff:

No. We'd plan events that didn't go quite right. Not her fault, just things we didn't see prop—the anniversary of the Golden Gate Bridge where too many people got on the bridge and the bridge began to sag. Yipes. Or when she was preparing for the visit of the Pope, Pope John Paul, and she had a brandy after dinner and I think asked the archbishop, "Why would anybody ever run for Pope?" But no, I mean, again, I always felt comfortable. It was not a big emotional deal. If you presented your argument and your argument well, and she'd say no or yes or yes, right, or this. She's great at memoranda. You could express yourself in writing in some detail on issues. Many times when I was on her Senate staff I would oppose some nominee whom I thought was absolutely worthy of her support or a judgeship that—but, again, I was the sort of generalist, the troubleshooter, the guy who'd get the phone call first and then—

11-00:25:01

Rubens:

And then find who would take care of it.

11-00:25:05

Roff:

Yes. And the staff still gets together once a year. It's dwindling, the number down, but it was exciting and I enjoy seeing her. And, also, she's a very warm and compassionate person. She gives a sense of distance to people but that's inevitable if you're in the public all the time because you've got to keep a little barrier. But in personal matters, when I lost

my daughter, no one could have been a stronger support than she. And Clint Reilly, as a matter of fact.

11-00:25:39

Rubens:

Really?

11-00:25:42

Roff:

And, of all people, when Susie died, Quentin Kopp wrote me the loveliest note. One of the loveliest I've ever received, I think. So you never know. As I say, you never know who you're going to have to talk to on Wednesday after that election on Tuesday.

Well, I said force her. I didn't want to use that term. But I mean—We followed up. We kept track of what was going on and made sure that people worked together and understood her policies. If they did not, if they object—it's not that we didn't have contrarians on commissions. There were people like Sue Berman on planning who was essentially a slow growth leader but a person enormously close to Dianne and somebody I consider one of my dearest friends, not only because of her friendship but because she was an absolutely honest, straightforward person from whom you could count on getting the truth. You might not like to hear it but you knew exactly her position and why and you had a much better appreciation of issues. One of the futilities in government is that people cut themselves off. They don't listen as well as they should to other viewpoints and in a city like this, it's difficult not to listen because if you don't listen they'll be throwing a rock through your window. But you've got to keep open. But, again, discipline counts in politics. She always said in terms of the Board of Supervisors, eleven members. You've always got to know where six are, or six are going to be with you. And once you've got that number, that arithmetic down then—but that's just practical politics.

11-00:27:40

Rubens:

Maybe we'll talk a little bit about that next week. I think there's more to talk about regarding your time with Feinstein. For instance, more on conflicts with supervisors. Feinstein had appointed Louise Renne to take her place on the board. And then she tangles with her. Renne's not always her supporter. Carol Ruth Silver.

11-00:28:01

Roff:

Yes. Again, we can talk about that next time. Carol Ruth was unpredictable. Renne was a very thoughtful person and I might disagree with her but she also had instincts. Big disagreement between Renne and the mayor's office came with later mayors. But again, we could count those six votes. And, again, the staff worked closely together to make sure that those policies were carried forth.

11-00:28:57

Rubens:

Was there one person assigned as liaison to the Board of Supes or was that in your purview?

11-00:29:01

Roff:

We had Jim Lazarus, who came on when Rudy Nothenberg moved on to be chief administrative officer. Jim, who had been in the city attorney's office, the attorney to the board, came on and was the liaison to the board. But, again, on more just political stuff,

I'd also be involved. And inevitably, I still believed in going to bars and listening to people, probably too much.

11-00:29:37

Rubens:

All right, I don't want to wear you out today.

11-00:29:39

Roff:

Okay. I just didn't have a lot of energy.

Interview 7: April 24, 2013

Audio File 12

12-00:00:01

Rubens: Let's start today talking about your discussions taking place with Dianne in her anticipation of leaving the mayoral position. In January '88 she's going to be out of an elected office for the first time since the 70s.

12-00:00:25

Roff: Well, at the time, there was certainly no decision or announcement about running for any other office. She was, I'm sure, thinking about possibilities. I assume that she was.

12-00:00:43

Rubens: But not discussing this with you?

12-00:00:43

Roff: Yeah. And I was asked to stay on with the subsequent administration, with Art Agnos, as one—not of two deputies as Feinstein had, but one of seven. And I think maybe at one point we had eight, organized sort of along the lines of a cabinet with special responsibilities. One for health, one for finance. I was the deputy for public safety, which meant I oversaw the police and fire and emergency services, ambulance services, that type of thing. So there was a continuum. It was sort of the culmination of the long battle, I don't know how much we covered before, over growth policies. Finally the passage of Proposition M, which is probably one of the more significant caps. Totally the most significant cap on construction. I think it was limited to 950,000 square feet a year but buildings and plans already in the pipeline would have to fit within that cap, which meant essentially we could build about one thirty story building maybe a year. A very slow growth pattern. And, of course, key behind that Proposition M, and there had been several earlier attempts to put a cap on downtown construction, on high-rise construction, was the architect was Dean Macris, who's director of planning. The plan, that I think I mentioned, that received national acclaim. *New York Times* was hugely laudatory about the plan. It got a tremendous amount of notoriety but it did not still the opposition in San Francisco toward—

12-00:02:48

Rubens: This was the Downtown Plan.

12-00:02:49

Roff: Yeah, right, the Downtown Plan. And that was a plan that had, as I say, great notoriety nationally among architects and city planners and urban design experts. But it did not dissuade or put off the determined effort by the neighborhood activists, who had tried before to impose caps and had come close but not succeeded, but continued to try and continued to organize. And Calvin Welch, who was really the leader and sort of mastermind, and I say that because he's an extremely, extremely bright, purposeful, relentless, sharp, sharp person, who probably had as great an effect on the nature and design of the city as many others, although in a more controlled circumstance.

12-00:03:53

Rubens: So let me just get clear. Is there a legacy that you have to handle regarding this during the Agnos administration?

12-00:04:00

Roff: Well, not so much. The question of downtown growth remained urgent throughout and continues to this day. There's a great deal of building going on and exceptions to high-rises—we were developing south of Market. Because, one, it provided the avenue for greater revenue for the city because the value for buildings, the more property tax revenues would come in to replace all that lost by Proposition Thirteen. So it was a way of sustaining this unbelievable rate of public services that San Francisco provided. San Francisco was exceptional in the range and the quality of public service. And I say that not just as an enthusiast for San Francisco, but it's true. A first rate fire department, a first rate police department, by and large. First rate health service. Excellent trauma services. A park system that is one of the more exquisite in the world. Just any number of areas that require enormous public support and public revenues. So it was a forced revenue stream. And also because the nature of the economy was changing away from blue collar to the high tech and the need for office space.

There was a balance but it was a hugely contentious fight. And it culminated with the Downtown Plan and then the subsequent passage of Prop M. And it's a battle that's still being waged, although not quite as intensely. But the slow growth movement has always been very, very potent in San Francisco, going back into the fifties and objecting to the cross town freeway.

12-00:06:05

Rubens: So let me interrupt you for a minute here, Hadley. Because some of this we discussed before. But you brought this up in the context of Agnos setting up his cabinet and we were getting to your responsibilities.

12-00:06:20

Roff: I just sort of wanted to put a context to Agnos coming in. There was an accusation in the campaign, that she had left the city hugely in debt. It was not the case. I had been involved certainly in some aspects of the downtown issue when I was her chief deputy but in my new responsibilities with Agnos, I was—other than part of a general discussion among the various deputies—was not intimately or directly or daily involved in that issue, although it continued on because many of the buildings had already been approved and much of the highways construction, although slowed a bit, continued. And there was great fault finding by some of the more ardent of the neighborhood activists very critical of Art for allowing this growth to go forward. On the other hand, economically, simply because of the changing economy and the need for revenue, it continued to put tremendous pressure on the mayor's office.

Art Agnos came from years of experience in the legislature, where he had been the chief assistant to Leo McCarthy, who would become a state senator. And then Art was in the Assembly. A very forceful liberal voice in Sacramento. And came into City Hall with high expectations on the part of the more progressive neighborhood oriented slow growth

movement. Not really able to address all their issues. One of the burgeoning issues that I found myself involved in was the homeless, which established an encampment at City Hall. Many found it to be an eyesore. On the other hand, there was no immediate place to put them. There were tents and laundry hung out. So this was an issue of public safety. Because if they tried to clean it up or move it, of course, it would become then a police action and there was a great deal of—had any number of protests and marches and things.

12-00:09:27

Rubens:

Because this had been a big issue under Feinstein and she had never really come up with a master plan. It was an issue he had campaigned about; it was a legacy he felt—

12-00:09:34

Roff:

Right. It was a legacy. But it kept getting more and more pronounced, more and more public. I'm sure there were always homeless but they were more obscure. Now they were a constant presence, both to agitate the more conservative and to produce empathy among those who were sympathetic to their plight. There's always—

12-00:10:05

Rubens:

So you're dealing with this from the beginning.

12-00:10:05

Roff:

From the beginning. I really forget whether this is the end of Feinstein's term or the beginning of Art's. If I'm repeating I'm sorry. But there was a little truck that pulled up across. This is before the encampment, so it may have been at the end of Feinstein. A little pickup truck, blue gray rattle of a truck pulled up across on Larkin, across the Civic Center from City Hall. And these people began serving meals to homeless, who began to gather in a long line. One of the city officials came in, complained about this eyesore right in front. What can you do about it? So I sent somebody over just to see what group was serving the meal. Well, it turned out to be Mother Teresa herself. So I called, said, "Now, do you want me to use the TAC Squad to arrest Mother Teresa or do you want to make a citizen's arrest for Mother Teresa? You want Feinstein to go out and have a headline? "Feinstein Nabs Mother Teresa?" It was an enigma. Art tried desperately to find solutions. They were difficult because all were costly. Providing homes, counseling, medical help for many of them, psychiatric help for some. Gavin Newsom later on, in the early 2000s, he had the Care Not Cash, to try to provide more and then actually succeeded in helping thousands. But it's nonetheless been a very troublesome problem.

12-00:12:05

Rubens:

So let me stick with you, though, specifically with you. Feinstein had supported Jack, John Molinari for mayor. Agnos had been hard in his attacks on her, because she hadn't solved issues of the homeless, because of the debt. I think also because of the home porting of the Missouri. What did Feinstein think of you going into his administration?

12-00:12:30

Roff:

I don't know. She never said much. I know Jack was quite hurt that I didn't support him. I knew Art slightly, not well, but I was attracted by his liberalism. And I was attracted by many of the persons who were around him who I thought had quite good ideas. And he—

12-00:13:08

Rubens: Like who?

12-00:13:08

Roff: Well, there was John Keker, who was one of the lawyers in the Watergate case and now is one of the premiere defense lawyers in the country now here in San Francisco. John Keker—Just a very thoughtful, bright, capable person. There were many.

12-00:13:30

Rubens: But who had supported Agnos.

12-00:13:31

Roff: Yes. And Larry Bush, who was sort of Art's scribe, writing for Art. Art and Larry put together this booklet about the campaign and about the city. It was not an exquisite work of scholarship but it was a very sensible kind of outline about what the city needs and how it should approach its issues. But it was a very emphatic kind of liberal manifesto. And then some of the deputies he had, Claude Everhart, who had been with him in the Assembly, who had been with him, had that kind of seniority in working with Art. And Sam Yawkey, who was the budget fellow who also had been in Sacramento and who was an absolute whiz with numbers and insights and ideas. But again—

12-00:14:43

Rubens: So you were one of the only holdovers from—

12-00:14:46

Roff: I was the only holdover, yes.

12-00:14:47

Rubens: Yes, because he was really cleaning house.

12-00:14:49

Roff: But I had been approached by Lou Giraudo, who had been a police commissioner and owned the sour dough bread company, Boulangerie. But very, very active. Had been very active with Dianne. And I think who felt that Art would be a strong leader. But, again, the times were such that mayors were inhibited. The federal monies had begun drying up with Reagan in the White House. Prop Thirteen's impact was continuing. And meanwhile, additional burdens, as I'd mentioned in the past, AIDS, homelessness, all were costing more and more money each time, each day, along with each year and each—and, of course, salaries go up. And the city began not to hire, say, new policemen and firemen but cycle existing firefighters and police officers back on overtime simply because they didn't have to pay extra for the—

12-00:16:03

Rubens: Dianne had expanded the—

12-00:16:06

Roff: Had expanded the department. But in order to sustain the member—I've forgotten now the numbers but we used to have something close to 400 firefighters on duty. We're now down to something around 300 now. Of course, fire hazards are much less now because of the building codes than they were twenty, thirty years ago. Nonetheless, a lot of financing

had to be done through extraordinary methods. That is, by using overtime rather than hiring fresh and then adding to your eventual retirement cost. And a lot of huge issues to deal with in a city that was still trying to find its way into a new economy, a new global economy, a new high-tech economy with this rich tradition of blue collar established neighborhoods. Middle class.

12-00:17:14

Rubens: So you just hit the ground running with the Agnos Administration?

12-00:17:16

Roff: Right. Yes, I was—

12-00:17:18

Rubens: I would think you had a little more time to breathe than being chief of staff.

12-00:17:22

Roff: Yes. My concerns weren't as universal as they had been. That's kind of an exaggeration, universal. But they were broad. No, a lot of questions. And, of course—

12-00:17:43

Rubens: Do you remember some of the first issues that you dealt with?

12-00:17:47

Roff: Well, and again, I think the manpower issues, immigration issues in both departments. Concerned about so called old boy network. In San Francisco, many families had generations who'd been in one or the other of those departments.

12-00:18:26

Rubens: Tell me what it was like to work with Agnos compared to—

12-00:18:27

Roff: Well, it was different and I should have expected that. Probably one of the things that I didn't take into consideration was the fact that there'd be a change in tempo. I felt very close to Dianne. We communicated easily and well and frankly with one another and enjoyed being with one another. I enjoyed being with Dick. There were some social exchanges. We'd have the occasional dinner. I felt that Art, no intent, I think it's just the way the politics were. Politics in San Francisco, indicate because we were a small city, forty-nine square miles or whatever, were very compact. So politics is very intimate here. People rub shoulders. They can yell at one another. They can crowd the same meetings and shout. In Sacramento you're working through committees and through an eighty person assembly and a forty person senate and you're working intimately a relatively few people. Granted, you deal with constituent groups, a variety of people, but there isn't quite that instant confrontation that you have in a city, where any issue can be on your front stoop in a millisecond. And I wasn't thinking of my role because I still found myself busy. I was always entranced with the public safety department so it was really nothing new and it was something that interested me a great deal. Still, I felt that we acted as a kind of barrier to him. We saw the wing-nuts. We went out to the meetings. And although Art was a very vigorous mayor, there was a kind of lost—he wasn't able to establish the rapport that Dianne—and for Dianne it was odd because here comes a person who's looked upon

as rather white gloved and prissy, although she'd had a very difficult upbringing and had been a single mom working at the Emporium. She knew what it was like to be on limited income. But there was an assumption of kind of remoteness about her. But she was instantly empathetic with any situation. The willingness to give mouth to mouth to strangers. Lugging of the hose up the hillside with the firemen and all that. She was very much involved day to day on every aspect of the city. Not in some extravagant showboat way but just because she sincerely loved the city. I assume Art did, too. But there was a—

12-00:21:48

Rubens:

He didn't get out in the same way.

12-00:21:50

Roff:

Yes. And I probably should have expected that. And I should have probably realized that after eight, nine years of being sort of intensely in the front line, right there in the lead trench, so to speak, that I was probably tired. And I probably should have stepped back for a while. But nonetheless I gave it my best in trying to reduce the impact of some of the marches. I've forgotten all the issues that came up. Homeless was one of them. Protest about police. I tried to negotiate with the marches, sort of keep them on the sidewalk, not block traffic. Wasn't always easy. I was not in City Hall at the time of the '89 earthquake, although I was down in the Marina, as was Dianne, who was not mayor, with our little fire jackets as if we were still involved. I think a matter of great egotism. I can think of walking down two mornings after the quake and there was a fire truck that came up the street just loaded with firefighters coming back from the huge fire in the Lower Marina toward the Presidio. Huge, huge fire. And all black-faced. The charcoal and the smoke and the truck stops. They all got off and they stand in a line and they saluted. And I thought, "My God." I was practically walking on air.

12-00:23:52

Rubens:

Did he have the same kind of weekly staff meeting?

12-00:23:58

Roff:

No. Again, it was mostly with the deputies who then met with the department for which they were responsible, the health department or the cops and the fire. I know there's a great complaint about hands on and over micromanaging. It's not bad. The question of micromanaging. It's a question of presence, of being seen as the principle leader in the city. We have a complicated city charter that's sort of like the ribs of an umbrella. But it's the character and nature and charisma basically of the mayor that gives dimension and color to the umbrella. We have the structure of supervisor and mayor, CAO [Central Administrative Office]. But, again, the nature, the character, it depended greatly on the mayor. Alioto had this extraordinary touch of charisma that no one could define. Dianne not so much charisma but just her very earnestness was a tremendous attribute, particularly given the tragic situation she found herself when she became mayor.

12-00:25:39

Rubens:

She also had been on the Board of Supervisors.

12-00:25:41

Roff: And been on it. She was knowledgeable and she was involved and she has a very retentive mind. And she could grasp issues. And she was unafraid of confronting issues. What is the real problem? And she'd ask hard questions. Art, as I say, may have been affected by, and this is just pure theorizing. A genuinely nice guy and a very empathetic one, and very liberal. But one I think was used to the one-on-one dealings with co-legislators rather than a massive kaleidoscope of changing interests and people. Of course—

12-00:26:35

Rubens: Did you have many conversations with him?

12-00:26:39

Roff: One telling incident, I'd say, and I'm sure he finds it petty. But I was told that I would have total access to him whenever I wanted. He'd be totally open with me even though we weren't from originally the same camp. Although Leo McCarthy, with whom he'd worked, was very much aligned with Dianne in many ways. But anyway, it was a Saturday that I came in and I was working in my desk, in my office, which he let me keep. It was the bigger of the staff offices. My office. And then his secretary's office was next to mine and then next to that was the big office, Room 200, the mayor's office. And he came down the hall one day with Claude. And I say this without any sense of jealousy but it was to me strange. Came down. Now, I was far enough removed that no way I could hear what they were going to talk about. But I could hear them go down the hall. "Hi, how are you?" and then I could hear the door close, and that told me something. And then that was just about the time that, again, Dianne decided that she'd run for governor. And in terms of higher office or statewide office or a national office, or even when she began locally, she was never one—until the latter stages of her mayoral campaign, actually the reelection in '83, and the recall in '83, she never had any kind of grassroots organization. Sandy {Weiner?}, who was one of the early political gurus in town, very talented. You had Ron Smith and other—she had talented people but none was adept at organizing systematically from ringing a doorbell or making a phone call at the local level and building a network of support.

12-00:29:10

Rubens: She'd become more comfortable with that kind of operation when Riley came in.

12-00:29:14

Roff: Riley was one of the pioneers. He was one of the first who recognized the value of computers, had an enormous computer put into his office so he could manage these lists and be selective in terms of targeting in a hugely sophisticated way. In some ways I think that's somewhat unfortunate because it is kind of industrialized politics and taking a lot of the personality, the old rubbing elbows and having a guffaw over the coffee out of the political process.

12-00:29:48

Rubens: Now, he had encouraged her to run for governor.

12-00:29:52

Roff: He had come in and run that. And this was after almost beating her, and Quentin came close in '79 and then she hired him for the '83 campaign. He brought in people who were

expert at this. Fred Ross, whose father had been one of the early organizers of the farm workers. People who were really good. And Richie Ross was also involved. But this was grassroots stuff and wonderfully thoughtful and wonderfully well organized. And we had the ironing board brigades. Everybody hoofed out on Saturdays with their ironing boards and that gave it a kind of homey logo, so to speak. But she was slow to translate that in San Francisco, only in that '83 election. And she made no effort as mayor to do anything, to build any kind of apparatus statewide. By apparatus I mean just basic supporters whom she might call on to help. And, in fact, resisted traveling outside the city and I think we talked about her belief in being present should something happen and then be the spokesperson for the city.

12-00:31:20

Rubens:

But she calls you and she says, "I'm going to do this." Run for governor.

12-00:31:23

Roff:

"I'm going to do this." And she was quite excited, voice. "Did you hear the news?" I'm like, "No, what?" And she said, "Deukmejian is not going to run," and I think she presumed that as an incumbent he'd have an easier time. "He's not going to run and I think I might." And so we ran against John Van de Kamp, who had been attorney general, and who had been—I think he had been DA in Los Angeles. But he had a statewide reputation. Had been very active in the state party. He brought Bob Shrum, as I've said somebody for whom I had high respect, as his speechwriter. Bob is, again, one of these genius, very bright guys. But he ran a typical Democratic campaign within the usual party constraints. Well, within the usual party lines of authority, which were sound and strong but not like they might be in some of the older Eastern cities where the Democratic apparatus would be very much—

12-00:33:04

Rubens:

Solidly behind him.

12-00:33:04

Roff:

Yes. And I think Dianne had built, even though she made no attempt to proselytize it on her own, but she had built a reputation and had gotten recognition in '84 as a possible vice presidential candidate, picture on the cover of *Time*, and a profile in *New York Times*. And so that she was at least known to the politically aware but it was to get her to really know them and, as I say—

12-00:33:42

Rubens:

I think at some point Van de Kamp's campaign manager, I forget who that was now, was surprised. He thought it was going to be a hard race, that she was really a very viable contender, especially because of her appeal to women.

12-00:33:58

Roff:

Yeah. I always thought it was difficult simply because of his standing with the party but I thought we could make a strong appeal to women and that—obviously with Ferraro and all that had become at least an accepted political possibility, whereas a dozen years before it probably was not.

12-00:34:30

Rubens: Now, what is it she wanted you to do specifically?

12-00:34:31

Roff: Well, as with the deputy mayor, anything that had to be done that I could do. These jobs you tend to fill the vacuum as you best can, and in the best way you think you can help. I've forgotten when it was that Clint abruptly quit her campaign with what I thought was a rather unfortunate manner because she had been close. But he called a reporter in San Diego and let the San Diego paper release the fact that he was leaving and that he didn't feel she had the fire in the belly, I think that was his phrase, to run. And his office was one block away from ours.

12-00:35:29

Rubens: Where was your office at the time?

12-00:35:30

Roff: In 909 Montgomery, on the fourth floor.

12-00:35:33

Rubens: Oh, in Dick Blum's building.

12-00:35:34

Roff: Yes. And this fellow, I've forgotten his name now, the political reporter called me and I said, "What?" I felt that was—

12-00:35:50

Rubens: Had you been working with him closely?

12-00:35:51

Roff: Well, he was the campaign manager. But he was complaining that she wasn't following his instructions, she wasn't doing the kind of travel that he thought necessary. And he was right, she wasn't.

12-00:36:04

Rubens: He wanted her to sponsor an initiative on abortion rights.

12-00:36:09

Roff: He wanted her to take a stand against some of the very popular Democrats, just to show her independence. And I kept saying, "Why would we antagonize people who have large followings?" And I got whacked across the face for that.

12-00:36:26

Rubens: This I think particularly had to do with issues of ethical conduct in the state legislature.

12-00:36:30

Roff: But it was Willie Brown who always respected Dianne, I think, although he was very much part of the Burton machine. But he has a great deal of independence and also he is probably one of the shrewdest politicians. Understands all the tactically. Very bright. I put high value on intelligence because maybe I'm not as intelligent as others. But I certainly

recognize the need to have in others a ready imagination, an ability to think things through, and a capacity to analyze.

12-00:37:14

Rubens: Had he taken a position on Dianne before—

12-00:37:16

Roff: He hadn't publicly that I know of. He may have. But he suggested that she hire this fellow in Los Angeles whom none of us knew.

12-00:37:28

Rubens: Was that Bill Carrick?

12-00:37:30

Roff: Yes, Carrick. And then Hank Morris's partner, who lived in New York. And they turned out to be just a superb duo. They produced the most forceful television ad I've ever seen. It was basically footage of her announcing Moscone's death in this trembly voice outside City Hall. They called it "the grabber" and it was one of those that you just automatically responded to. And he elevated her. What really capped it was the fact of her independence, ability to manage her kind of moderate views on things, the fact that she wasn't just out of a political apparatus of some sort and she won the primary but ran against Pete Wilson.

12-00:38:34

Rubens: It was a bruising primary.

12-00:38:35

Roff: A bruising primary. Van de Kamp was a strong candidate and he had an excellent—

12-00:38:42

Rubens: Lot of money.

12-00:38:42

Roff: A lot of money and he had excellent staff so it was very competitive. But she won simply because they were able to take advantage of the thing that others might have seen as her major weakness, and that is that she did not have the strong partisan ties. And they developed them. Not we, all of us involved. I've mentioned, I think in the past, Roz Wyman, who was this absolute dynamo down south who graduated from UCLA at twenty-two on the board and brought the Dodgers to LA. And she'd worked on the convention. So Dianne had begun to forge some alliances. And Dick had some contacts and then—

12-00:39:33

Rubens: There was someone who had been her aide. Percy—

12-00:39:36

Roff: Oh, Percy Pinkney had been a long-time activist, civil rights activist in the black community, in San Francisco and then he went to Los Angeles. This all sounds calculating and in many ways it was.

12-00:39:56

Rubens: Well, you were in a brutal campaign.

12-00:39:58

Roff: Yes. We brought strong Latino Hispanic leaders into the campaign. We had Jim Gonzalez, a member of her staff, who went to the Board of Supervisors. He's now a very successful lobbyist in Sacramento. And puts together again with Carrick and all. Puts together this broad if fragile coalition but with Pete Wilson we were up against a sitting United States Senator, a person who had lots of money and was well, well organized. And at that time some absolutely crackerjack consultants. The campaign had kind of subtlety played, tried to emphasize San Francisco, kook city of the world, of the liberal, blah, blah, blah. And—

12-00:41:25

Rubens: Now you also had Dee Dee Myers. Was she just starting out?

12-00:41:28

Roff: Just starting. I forgot how we—

12-00:41:30

Rubens: I think Clint Reilly hired her but I don't know where she came from.

12-00:41:34

Roff: And then she was Frank Jordan's and then from there went to Clinton, as his press secretary. And that was a bruising campaign. Of course, by then there was no belittling her ability at campaigning. So the Republicans ran a very strong, maybe the last kind of really strong campaign they've run in this state.

12-00:42:23

Rubens: Jerry Roberts quotes her saying that the campaign—Dee Dee Myers as saying, "The campaign has been like an Indiana Jones movie. A snake bites Dianne on the leg, alligators are about to eat her up, then she gets a court ruling and a favorable poll." The court had thrown out the limit on campaign contributions right at the end. Because she had trouble raising money most of the time.

12-00:42:50

Roff: Yes, I'd forgotten that.

12-00:42:52

Rubens: There had been a Prop 73 that had put a cap on contributions and that was thrown out and so then she could really raise some money. But one thing after another had happened. There was a Supreme Court decision about abortion, that states could limit abortion rights. And then she didn't take as militant a stand on pro-abortion as the feminists wanted her to take. So there was some wrangling between them. Oh, she had been sick. At some point she you were both sick.

12-00:43:36

Roff: Yes, we both were.

12-00:43:38

Rubens: It was a really roller coaster of a campaign. The polls started turning up in September-October and really she marshaled ahead but then lost, because of the absentee ballots, I think.

12-00:44:01

Roff: Yeah. I've forgotten the percentage. It was close.

12-00:44:06

Rubens: Two hundred and forty thousand votes.

12-00:44:08

Roff: Yes, that's pretty good. But you're down on a single digit difference so it's—

12-00:44:14

Rubens: Was that pretty intense at the end? Do you remember—

12-00:44:20

Roff: Oh, yes. No, no. It was a tough campaign. Wilson had an organization that had a very quick ability to respond. We thought we were quick in responding to him. So it was a very tough campaign. Carrick would be a source for inside of the campaign. But also brought Kam Kuwata, who had been involved as one of Alan Cranston's top deputies, in to sort of supervise things down south. So, again, we began to have an anchorage in southern California, an anchorage in the Valley where her moderation helped a bit. Again, offset somewhat by her coming from San Francisco. But, again, many of her positions on the death penalty and others were fairly conservative. The question about the struggle with women's rights was just—she was not a strident feminist. She felt that she personally was illustrating how to crack the glass ceiling, so to speak. She had moved up from obscurity to national prominence unmistakably as a leading woman.

12-00:46:08

Rubens: Now, you're writing speeches for her?

12-00:46:18

Roff: Yes, and coordinating with Carrick. And I had ties with a lot of the labor people.

12-00:46:23

Rubens: Well, sure, and then Cranston. Did Cranston endorse her?

12-00:46:26

Roff: I've forgotten. I don't remember Alan playing much of a role but I don't know. He may have been sicker than I thought.

12-00:46:35

Rubens: Maybe he was getting sick.

12-00:46:37

Roff: I don't know.

12-00:46:37

Rubens: Was Mondale still around? Were there any national people that made a difference?

12-00:46:50

Roff: Not that made a difference. Usually that doesn't work well anyway. The coat tail thing can backfire. We had an appearance with Kennedy in '79. But that was really just sort of establish her bona fides here in the city as a Democrat.

12-00:47:23

Rubens: So Wilson squeaks in. Were you with her when she learned, because I think her defeat wasn't confirmed until the next morning.

12-00:47:35

Roff: Seems to me every election isn't. I don't know. She's very stoic about things. She, I think, begins with the supposition she's probably not going to win. "Oh, I'm not going to win," and, of course, we're all saying, "Yes, you are." And in that case she didn't. And then she bounced back in '92 to run for the Cranston seat against Wilson's handpicked candidate, Seymour, John Seymour, who was probably the most colorless politician you could ever imagine. That's when she had the very tough primary with Huffington. Michael Huffington. I don't know that Huffington ever spoke for himself. Adrianna Huffington, who now runs the Huffington Post, seemed to do most of the talking. She was strident. By that I don't mean shrieking but she was very partisan. And conservative at the time. I remember being told by one of the pollsters, who doesn't usually poll for political organizations. We were walking. We'd had lunch and other people were walking up the street. Said, "By the way, you haven't got a poll. You better take one right now." He said, "Things are changing." And suddenly Huffington, boom, was coming close. But by then—

12-00:49:56

Rubens: What accounted for that?

12-00:49:59

Roff: Well, I don't know. I've often wondered. They had Ed Rollins, who did the campaign. Probably was one of Reagan's top campaigners. I don't want to make these all *ad hominems*, as if it's this person's responsibility or this person's genius or whatever. But Ed was a fighter. Ed was a really tough, tough fighter. And they used Arianna as a sort of woman. We didn't realize that their marriage was in jeopardy. But we get down to one issue. I think I've already mentioned that we found that the Huffingtons had a covenant in their mortgage for their home that barred Jews from settling in the community. And I said, "Well, before you put this out, are you sure that we don't have something like that?" And turned out they did and didn't realize it. It was a thousand years old. Anyway, so every little thing was picked at and scrubbed raw. I don't know that there were any big issues. I don't think we even had a debate with him. But it was a tough campaign.

12-00:52:02

Rubens: It was a substantial victory?

12-00:52:05

Roff: Oh, yeah. And then, of course, from there on she was elected in her own right, and then reelected continuously, including last fall. But, I mean, the campaign was sort of a constant blitzkrieg of one shot fired, when one side in a salvo, fired right back. A lot of it was just, I don't know, all that substantive. And she developed the skills of a good

campaigner. Became more comfortable speaking. She always had a great deal of confidence but she was able to connect more intimately with audiences and she was very, very good on television. And very accustomed to the way of talking directly and with some intimacy with the camera.

12-00:53:03

Rubens: Well, and the gubernatorial campaign had really given her exposure.

12-00:53:06

Roff: Oh, yeah, sure. And she had developed by this a following and people were interested and people had given her money and she'd built up a network of support so it wasn't just starting out fresh as it was in 1990 without any real organization behind me. And, believe me, in a state as big as this you've got to have some network that you can put together quickly or already exists.

12-00:53:41

Rubens: Well, why do you think she wanted to be governor? Did she talk to you about that?

12-00:53:43

Roff: I don't know. No, no. She never talked about her ambitions. I can't help but think that the way she became mayor—suddenly, a thunderbolt. Within minutes of her announcing that she was leaving politics, or within the hour, suddenly being the mayor of the city. I think she had great confidence in her managerial abilities. She was very, very sure of herself. Very careful in her judgments. But I think it built up because of her childhood and the pressures she was under at home. She'd become very resilient. And I think felt confident about—

12-00:54:36

Rubens: That's what Myers is saying.

12-00:54:39

Roff: And very self-confident. And some complained that her micromanagement, or so called micromanagement, was simply an expression of her ill confidence but I think it was the other way around. I think it was a demonstration that she was the person in charge. And, then, of course, like anybody in politics, there was always that little needling thought, "Am I doing the right thing?" There's always some caution in your head. Or the things that I don't know about. Is somebody withholding some information.

12-00:55:20

Rubens: Now you mentioned it, but we didn't talk really about the fact that when she runs in '92, that it was a special election. By then Wilson was governor and he had given up his seat in the Senate and that position was open. Now that's an interesting kind of switch, that Wilson leaves the Senate, a national arena, to then run, what, the sixth largest economy in the world.

12-00:55:51

Roff: Sixteen hundred Pennsylvania probably could hear those keys jingle for the White House.

12-00:55:58

Rubens: You think that the governorship was a better—

12-00:56:01

Roff: I have no idea what he thought. No. In my limited way, being a Senator would be—

12-00:56:10

Rubens: A more powerful—

12-00:56:11

Roff: Yes, but some like the administrative role and that's why Dianne can take on an issue like water rights in the Delta and can tell you about every square foot of seepage from this dam and that dam and I don't think there's anybody else other than some engineer that's going to remember that kind of detail.

12-00:56:39

Rubens: And this is what Dianne could do.

12-00:56:40

Roff: Yeah. She wanted to be sure. She didn't feel that she had to be an expert in every issue but she had to know the basic pros and cons. And if somebody who was advising her and couldn't really explain a situation well, that person might expect a little tongue lashing. Not unkindly but—

Audio File 13

13-00:00:00

Rubens: Hadley, we didn't talk about how Art Agnos responded to you leaving to work on Feinstein's campaign?

13-00:00:16

Roff: Well, he expressed regret but that's customary when somebody leaves. I don't know.

13-00:00:24

Rubens: He didn't see it as a betrayal, I guess.

13-00:00:25

Roff: Well, no. I was returning to my previous employer, who was running for higher office and he certainly knew my association with her. So he made no protest to me.

13-00:00:45

Rubens: Were you taking a leave or were you—

13-00:00:47

Roff: No. I left. No, I firmly believe that a mayor should have staff in whom he has full and complete confidence. Now, I have no reason to think that he didn't have confidence in me. But, still, the others were persons whom he'd—like two. But I came with more baggage, I guess, than others and I always felt a little uneasy with him.

13-00:01:32

Rubens: Well, you said that incident where he shuts the door.

13-00:01:36

Roff: Well, that seems like that's a small thing. But to me there was some symbolism because it was so unnecessary, unless I were going to stand in the hallway with an earpiece or something.

13-00:01:51

Rubens: But you never had outright conflict with him?

13-00:01:53

Roff: Oh, no, no, no, no. And, again, the group of deputies was very convivial, very congenial, very communicative one with the other. It was a good group. I had no particular complaint. Granted that there was a kind of not stasis but inability really to take bold action simply because of the economic situation and it was just very difficult. And then, of course, when Dianne called, and as you know, I'd known her since we were in Stanford in the fifties. And I think Art Agnos was quite upset when he learned that I was supporting Frank Jordan, although—

13-00:03:11

Rubens: Well, let's talk about how that comes about. So the '90 campaign is over. Dianne is sort of licking her wounds. Had she asked you to write a book with her?

13-00:02:24

Roff: No. If she were to write it, she would have written it herself.

13-00:03:38

Rubens: I've read in one newspaper that she had a contract with Random House when she left the mayor's office, so she was considering some kind of memoir.

13-00:03:39

Roff: I don't know. Never approached me. I ghosted one book. I can't imagine her doing that. So when she lost the governor's race—

13-00:04:02

Rubens: We're now talking about in November, 1990.

13-00:04:11

Roff: —then it was just sort of serendipitous that Frank Jordan, who had been the chief of police, selected by Dianne, was thinking about running for mayor. Now, it happened that he and I had known one another, oh, from the late fifties or so or way back when he was a young patrolman in the police department and I was a rookie reporter for the *San Francisco News*. So I'd known him. It turns out that we were living just a little more than a block away from one another in the Cow Hollow area, he on Laguna and I on Greenwich in '91. And we saw one another not often. And became friendly with Frank and with Wendy, with whom he was seeing at the time. And friendships strengthened and I found myself more and more involved, first as just an acquaintance, not really imparting campaign strategies but just talking about some of the things that he might have to face just personally in running, the sacrifice.

13-00:05:55

Rubens: So were you involved in the campaign?

13-00:05:56

Roff: Yes. Then I began spending time at the campaign headquarters, which was on Van Ness Avenue. But, again, Frank is and was an always unfailingly charming gracious person. And I can remember when Dianne interviewed him at her home on Presidio Terrace, the sunroom, all growing orchids around, and remember asking Fred, "Some of the cops say that you've been mostly in administrative jobs at the hall and haven't spent all that much time on the street. Said that you're a kind of empty holster cop." And he looked at me and he said, "Well, better an empty holster than an empty head." I thought, "Oh, that's a good answer." Frank—

13-00:07:07

Rubens: He was in part kind of, it's alleged, put up to this by Jack Davis and Warren Hinkle.

13-00:07:13

Roff: I don't know that he was—well, Jack and Warren are the great practical jokers in a way. But Frank was sincere and then he somehow got Davis involved and Davis was another one of these hard knuckled street fighters when it came to campaigns. But Frank never had any particular—I don't fault this. He felt very responsible for the city. He wanted to put his divot back, as he kept saying, but he had no larger personal view of the city. Saw things through a fairly narrow lens. He really had no fiscal experience, something that I couldn't be all that helpful, although there were good people in City Hall that were expert. But there was a lack of certainty of what he wanted to accomplish, how he wanted to accomplish it. I found at times, and I'm not trying to amplify my role, but would find that I would stay in the office after he left to make the rounds at night. He had a very active social schedule at night, and activities.

13-00:09:11

Rubens: Appearances and—

13-00:09:12

Roff: Appearances. And then I'd come back early in the morning and be there when he arrived. And sure enough, on leaving, even before we would agree that certain things would be done and I would stay until I had the proper memos out and properly delivered to the responsible persons, the department heads or whomever. And so when he came in the next morning, said, "Well, he's been thinking things over, maybe we should hold up," and I'm saying, "Well, Frank, it's too late."

13-00:09:46

Rubens: And are you talking about during the campaign?

13-00:09:48

Roff: No, this was when he was mayor. During the campaign, we kind of disagreed. I prompted Frank, along with Dee Dee Myer, who was press secretary, on statements on television appearances. But it was Davis who organized the campaign basically around older more conservative San Francisco Catholic Irish communities.

13-00:10:31

Rubens: Did Dianne endorse him? I don't remember.

13-00:10:36

Roff: That's a good question. I never talked to her about it that I recall or I certainly didn't. I don't know. She was not particularly fond of Agnos. She felt that he had deliberately misrepresented her {inaudible} but I don't know that she endorsed Frank. But Frank had support from homebuilders, small business. A lot of the more conservative side of things. And then Jack Davis printed up this little—like one of those sets of postcards you could buy at the wharf about the scenes of San Francisco and he had it all folded up in a nice little thing. And, of course, he had pictures of homeless. They're all soiled in front. Really grim, awful pictures of San Francisco. And, of course, it was about as stringent and toxic a campaign piece as you'd want to see. I offered some objection to it but I didn't prevail. But I found that after a time I was in essence kind of working across purposes with the mayor, doing things that I know he might reverse later on.

13-00:12:27

Rubens: All right. So let's just establish your role in his administration. He wins the election.

13-00:12:30

Roff: He wins the election. I come in as his chief of staff. And, again, because I was at least in the periphery of his campaign and I've known him for literally decades.

13-00:12:52

Rubens: Well, and he knew your strengths. And I think he stated he'd appoint you his chief of staff during his campaign.

13-00:12:54

Roff: And I was present when Dianne decided to appoint him chief, so he knew that I was probably a friend and a potential ally and somebody who would be supportive and have what he did not have, and that is a lot of experience in City Hall. He'd had a lot of experience in the hall of justice but I'd had years at City Hall. So I think I was there just to provide some background and experience. But I after a time felt that I was somehow working at cross purposes. If not somewhat subversively to him, doing things in anticipation that he might reverse them.

13-00:13:46

Rubens: Can you just give an example?

13-00:13:47

Roff: Yeah. He'd come in and say, "Well, I've been thinking it over," which meant he didn't have money to, well, I don't know what. And some of his more conservative backers protested my appointment, although he never questioned my loyalty to him.

13-00:14:20

Rubens: Who protested, for example.

13-00:14:22

Roff: Oh, Joe Donahue was an Irish carpenter and headed the Irish Builder's Association here. But they had a figure of a growling dog named Roff. Roff, roff. As if I were going to eat the city alive or something. But there wasn't a kind of controversy.

13-00:14:44

Rubens: Where did this show up?

13-00:14:45

Roff: In front of the campaign headquarters. But in City Hall we got along fine. He was not a micromanager.

13-00:15:03

Rubens: Was it reorganized, the administrative structure?

13-00:15:06

Roff: Well, he did away with the cabinet structure and went back essentially to a two deputy system. A chief of staff and a finance director. More or less the same operation that Dianne had.

13-00:15:21

Rubens: And you advised him to do that?

13-00:15:22

Roff: Well, I'm sure I did because I thought the other was too much of a praetorian guard between the public and the mayor. But we came to a real departure, and this was again with Clint Riley, who was not really part of the campaign. But he came up with the idea of sort of a triple play politically that put Dick Hongisto as the chief of police and Annemarie Conroy, who was Frank's goddaughter and a member of one of the old Irish families, police connected families from the west side. Anne as a member of the Board of Supervisors. And I've forgotten. There was a third person who was going to be moved into some key position I can't recall offhand. Dick Hongisto was hugely controversial. I had great reluctance about him, although I didn't and I should have stood in the way and maybe made a public objection. But I didn't. Key, key public officials. And then these were not the political types. They're usually the real pros. One came in in tears, said, "You cannot appoint this man." And he lasted long enough. That lasted long enough, that is a matter, I don't think even a week. Simply got fitted, outfitted for a chief's uniform with the gold braid and all. And when he was ousted by the police commission and Clint, who was somehow—I've forgotten how he had gotten himself involved in this maneuver. But he thought Frank needed to solidify his political hold on the city more and he thought putting Hongisto, who was sort of progressive, put Annemarie, more conservative, and I can't think of the—but Hongisto clearly was the lightning rod.

I don't even think a week had passed when Frank Reed, who was the deputy chief of police and a hugely respected police officer—hugely respected—came in to report that Hongisto had ordered detectives or inspectors to seize all the copies of the street of I think the *San Francisco Weekly* that had a rather obscene caricature of Hongisto on the cover with a baton in kind of a phallic position. And had seized and dumped these papers I think in the Bay or somewhere. Well—

Clint insisted that we get the commission, our appointees. We had Harry Low, who was a former judge at the appeals court. I said, "I can't direct these people to vote on a question like that. That's, Dick, something that's going to have to stand. It's going to have to stand

to fall on its own weight.” And he was yelling and screaming at me and Frank was saying, “Oh, don’t. You’re going to break old friendships.” He kept saying, “Please be calm.” And Clint was railing about—“Go home to Susie,” he kept saying to me. It was really ugly. And soon after that we were six, seven months in the administration, we still hadn’t filled many of the commission appointments. And we had a meeting in an office on—I think it was on Sutter on a Saturday—with a very few of his closest advisors. Jack Ertola and Jack Immendorf, who was a private detective. Jack was a former judge, former supervisor and put names down. And after about a half hour I said, “What unites all these names? What’s similar about all these names?” Well, they were all white males. I said, “This is San Francisco.” And I went home and I decided to quit.

13-00:20:25

Rubens:

That was it?

13-00:20:25

Roff:

I’m working against how he imagined seeing—and it’s certainly not the job of a chief of staff to be a point of resistance. I should have, and I regret to this day that I didn’t object right off the bat to Hongisto. I didn’t and I regret it. Dick was unpredictable. There was a demonstration, oh, several nights after his appointment and he was in the command post. I was there. And Dick said he’d drive me home. So we’re driving up Franklin Street and there’s a young couple in the doorway kissing. And suddenly he’s on the bullhorn. “You two, get off the street. You’re causing a public nuisance.” Must have frightened these children sexless. Scared me to death. I don’t know.

And this business of destroying a paper. Most people wouldn’t have even seen it. A few people would have laughed at it. Most people would have disregarded it as being just the *San Francisco Weekly*. And the fact that the complaint came. And obviously a tortured guy because here he’s going against his own chief. And there was no expectation he’d ever become chief. He knew that he would have probably no chance with Frank. And I realized then that I was not being what I’d always thought I’d been with Dianne and indeed Dick, or certainly Alioto or others. That I wasn’t honest with myself. It doesn’t mean that I didn’t follow orders and sometimes do things that I didn’t approve of. But I never would do anything that would actually be a violation of my deeper beliefs, of a policy matter about how many square feet it is. That’s just part of the ongoing negotiation and compromise essential to our kind of government. But the Hongisto thing, that troubled me. And I still think of the person coming in in tears. And that person was not emotional. But just realizing that we were going to have some catastrophe, it turns out sooner. I went down actually to the hall to meet with the city attorney and others. Or one of the deputies. Because we agreed that the matter was something that had to be decided as objectively as possible by the commission and not influenced by a political edict from the mayor’s office. And I certainly wasn’t planning to participate. I would have quit then. But—

13-00:23:59

Rubens:

So they did remove him?

13-00:24:01

Roff:

Oh, they did remove him. Oh yes.

13-00:24:03

Rubens: But the occasion of your resigning was, what, seven, eight months into the—

13-00:24:08

Roff: Yes, seven or eight. And then I just realized it wasn't worth the toll, that I was just sort of chewing myself up for not being—

13-00:24:19

Rubens: Well, it sounds like for not having more influence then—

13-00:24:20

Roff: More influence. Again, it's not that I ever pushed—well, I pushed my ideas at times but I never abused my loyalty to the mayor. You always had frank discussions.

13-00:24:42

Rubens: Did you feel like there was somebody calling the shots behind Jordan? Somebody was—

13-00:24:46

Roff: I don't know. I don't think it's—

13-00:24:48

Rubens: Or that he was skating?

13-00:24:49

Roff: He had served the city and he wanted to continue serving. I think this was motivated by a personal sense of commitment to the city but not to any particular overriding vision or idea or purpose in terms of achieving certain programs or implementing certain policy.

13-00:25:24

Rubens: So was this time then coincident with Dianne gearing up for the Senate campaign?

13-00:25:31

Roff: Well, I left and then she suddenly—I mean, all these steps were kind of linked. They all sort of followed—

13-00:25:42

Rubens: Cranston resigns.

13-00:25:43

Roff: And she ran for his seat.

13-00:25:47

Rubens: Did you have any advanced warning of Cranston's resignation, by the way?

13-00:25:49

Roff: No, no.

13-00:25:50

Rubens: Were you in touch with Cranston or—

13-00:25:50

Roff: No. No. I had worked with Cranston back in the '68 campaign but other than through Kam Kuwata, who had been with Alan in Washington, I had not really kept up. I talked to Alan and Alan had asked me to run some of his later campaigns but I was already engaged so I didn't. So no, I didn't have an advance warning.

13-00:26:19

Rubens: She makes the decision to run. So it sounds like there's no—

13-00:26:23

Roff: Yes. By then she was fully assured in her ability to run the campaign.

13-00:26:32

Rubens: And she had a campaign structure.

13-00:26:33

Roff: Had a campaign structure. Had two of the outstanding consultants in the country at the time and an organization on which she could depend. And friends whom she could stay with as I mentioned earlier.

13-00:26:55

Rubens: So we began today talking about the campaign. Was there any down time for you, or did you go directly to her campaign after leaving Frank Jordan's office?

13-00:27:18

Roff: No. I had worked briefly before going with Frank, and after Feinstein's gubernatorial campaign, just briefly for a private public relations firm as its vice president. It was called the PBN company, for Peter Necarsulmer. They had a large contract with the Port of Oakland. They had a variety of clients. PR, just PR. Not necessarily political. KQED. And a good list of clients.

13-00:28:34

Rubens: And what were you literally doing?

13-00:28:36

Roff: I was sort of one of the consultants. Offer ideas or suggestions. We argued at length with KQED with some thought of their—because the death penalty was such an issue. They'd actually filmed a person being executed. I said, "No way you can put that on the air. That's a grisly awful thing to watch." I've seen four people, seen four.

13-00:29:10

Rubens: Yeah, you've talked about that in an early interview.

13-00:29:12

Roff: And I said, "No way." "Well, the people have a right to see it." I said, "Well, they can have it described. But you do not want some innocent person to see the drool and the glazed eyes." I can't imagine. Well, I was being softhearted or whatever. But I'm still opposed to the death penalty.

So after Dianne's campaign, I didn't really want to go back to that after I left Frank. I was rather unsure as to what I'd do.

13-00:30:38

Rubens:

So then you are part of the campaign in '92 and then—

13-00:30:49

Roff:

She had actually organized the staff and hired younger people who had been on the campaign at very reduced salaries. But it didn't work. Had to bring me back. I didn't make a fortune but I didn't work for a nickel an hour either.

13-00:31:12

Rubens:

And she called you?

13-00:31:13

Roff:

Well, actually, it was Dick I think. I went back and that would have been two, three, four, five. I don't know. Ninety-five or ninety-six. Then I retired.

13-00:31:29

Rubens:

What was your title?

13-00:31:31

Roff:

I was called the California State Director. And that meant I supervised major offices, by major offices I mean we'd have ten persons or so, in Los Angeles and San Francisco. I'd do it from here. But San Francisco and Los Angeles. Then we had smaller satellite offices in Fresno and San Diego. But I also did a lot of the writing and I'm involved in preserving the Mint. I worked with Nancy Pelosi and her people on the Presidio from the Senate side. And so there were a lot of major activities. And then I left and was made an Urban Fellow at the Urban Institute at San Francisco State and retired from there in the early two thousands.

13-00:32:31

Rubens:

All right. That's our topic for next time.

Interview 8: May 22, 2013

Audio File 14

14-00:00:00

Rubens: I thought we'd start today talking about how you come to work for Dianne Feinstein when she's elected senator in a special election in 1992.

14-00:00:15

Roff: Well, when she was elected I was at that time being considered—Bill Clinton had won the Presidency in 1992 and I had been involved in aspects of his campaign in northern California. I served briefly as a northern California deputy director for the Bill Clinton campaign and I was in line for nomination to be a representative for the Department of Labor for the West Coast and Hawaii and I had actually gone to Washington after he was inaugurated and was interviewed in the Department of Labor. Each department has a regional director. And I had gone back to Washington to be interviewed at the Department of Labor. But before the formal word came from the White House to my appointment, I had a call from Dianne. Actually, from her husband Dick Blum, asking if I'd consider joining her Senate staff as director for the California staff. She had put together a kind of makeshift staff using some persons who were veterans of Alan Cranston's office and brought in some people who had worked in her gubernatorial campaign. But my name had apparently come up because I had served so long as her deputy mayor. I knew the city well, I knew the state well. I obviously had contacts in Washington, having spent time there, and thought I might be able to be helpful in terms not only of organizing her California staff but getting it involved in major issues around the state.

14-00:03:19

Rubens: Was that a hard decision for you?

14-00:03:21

Roff: No. Well, because the appointments were moving very slowly with the administration. And I knew Dianne well and although I knew a number of people in the Clinton Administration I just thought it was a better fit. For one thing, it was a very concrete job offer, unlike the other where you had to wait to be vetted. Anyway, no, I was pleased. They reorganized the office somewhat over what Alan Cranston had had. His principal office was in southern California. Our larger office was in San Francisco. Not that the geography made that much difference because communications and computers made it easy to communicate. And we could certainly attend to major events in both. Anyway, had a larger staff in San Francisco. I think we had about ten and maybe six in Los Angeles and then we had a two person staff in San Diego and a two person staff in Fresno. And those are approximate numbers. There might be a few more.

14-00:04:48

Rubens: You were inheriting the space that Cranston had.

14-00:04:49

Roff: The space mostly located in federal buildings or on federal property, although in San Francisco we did rent because there was no room in the inn at the federal building. And

much of the work in the local offices dealt with constituent services, people who needed help with their Social Security or whatever it might be. Mine was principally to maintain contact on major issues and major constituent groups and follow major issues. And also I did some writing and worked on some of the legislative proposals. And she had been as mayor very diligent, very punctilious in terms of following up on issues and she was able to push through legislation that had been pending for years and years to acquire a huge swath of desert lands as federal lands down in southern California.

14-00:06:20

Rubens:

Death Valley and Joshua Tree.

14-00:06:21

Roff:

Yes. And that was a big effort. Alan Cranston had put in a great deal of time. But she, with her sort of indefatigable steady way, she persisted and got the measure through. And as mayor she also pursued relentlessly stricter gun control, especially a ban on automatic weapons, something that was considered a highly volatile issue, one where there was a great deal of timidity on the part of some persons in Congress and certainly a great deal of intimidation by the gun lobby, by the National Rifle Association. But she persisted in that steady relentless way of hers. Remember, although I wasn't with her, personally with her when she—but one of the more conservative lions of the Republican—on the House side Republicans, was the congressman from Illinois. His name escapes me at the moment. But one of the really old forces in the GOP, Grand Old Party. And she went to him, in his office, and she had a list of all the persons who had been murdered by handguns and automatic weapons in Illinois for, I don't know, some period of time and went over it with him and persuaded him, "By gosh, we need to be on these kinds of weapons." Henry Hyde. Henry Hyde. He was really one of the longest serving and considered highly regarded, very deep, wonderful, resonant voice. And he joined in supporting the measure in the House and I think was very helpful. And she passed the ban, an assault weapons ban, that had a sunset clause. That is, it expired after ten years to be renewed after ten years. But the Congress was then loath to pass any kind of restrictive legislation in regard to firearms. And she reintroduced it in 2012 after the massacre in the little school in Newtown, in Connecticut where twenty first graders were mowed down with multiple bullet wounds and six, I think six staff people. But it didn't muster the necessary majority. But she persisted.

14-00:10:07

Rubens:

So that was a victory, though, her first major piece of legislation.

14-00:10:08

Roff:

It was.

14-00:10:14

Rubens:

Did you have to do lobbying in the state? Was there a campaign strategy?

14-00:10:18

Roff:

Yeah. We certainly made the case, although she had been in the forefront, had passed legislation, as had Alioto when he was mayor in the seventies. Had passed handgun or Saturday night special prohibition. Because at that time it was just these all almost—all

handmade guns were then the more lethal weapon and later became these rapid-firing military weapons. And so she was well known for her support for not in any way banning guns or seizing guns but to regulate the kinds of guns that could be freely on the streets. And I think it's a concern that mayors of bigger cities have because of the at one point staggering homicide rates. They've sort of brought those down recently.

14-00:11:31

Rubens:

But so in terms of what you had to do throughout the state regarding it—

14-00:11:32

Roff:

So part of that was to meet with groups concerned about those issues. Mine was principally to listen and to report what they said or to make the case if necessary. But basically to open channels of communication with a variety of groups and then to follow along on issues that were of importance in the state. We had issues at that time that very much affected San Francisco. One, the future of the Presidio, whether that should be sold off for development or preserved as a national park. And because the cost of operating that facility would be equal to the cost of all the other national parks together, there was great hesitation on the part of the more conservative to fund it. And Nancy Pelosi, who was then a member of the House, led the fight in the House, led legislation. But worked closely with her staff and Dianne with Nancy in Washington and through meeting after meeting after meeting negotiated an arrangement whereby the Park Service would operate the park, would take it over from the military, from the Department of Defense, operate the facility, but they would have to be self-supporting by '12, '13. And largely it has achieved that because as the Disney Museum is there now, and the housing is extremely valuable and is almost totally rented and there are other facilities there that bring in revenue. But it preserved this magnificent landscape, this beautiful, beautiful wooded area overlooking the Golden Gate and all for public use and I think was a great achievement. As I say, Nancy Pelosi pushed very hard for it in the House and was really the originator. But Dianne was a major factor in the Senate and then I represented her at the various negotiating meetings with Nancy and with others who were involved. And it took a great deal of time. There were a great many questions and there was considerable pressure to open at least part of it for development if you want an absolutely choice property. It would be a windfall for whom ever might secure it. So there was a long, long period devoted to that.

Another old facility that we wanted to retain as part of our city heritage was the old Mint. This old fortress like building with its multi—these huge blocks of rock and cement. It was a fortress and now is a museum. It's difficult to reconfigure because of this sturdy, unbelievably—it's unbelievable. At Fifth and Mission. It's marvelous space. It's a marvelous old building. Eighteen seventy-two I think was built. But that again was a long negotiation which involved Bob Mendelsohn, who had been a member of the Board of Supervisors and then with the Department of Interior and then was in business here. He led a civic committee and we worked with him and others on that project. But these were very time consuming meticulous kinds of—you go through. I pulled out an old binder of memos.

Now, Dianne, as we know from her days as mayor, was very particular about being fully informed about things that were going on. There were to be no surprises. No sudden headline that would explode unexpectedly. But so many of the issues just on this first page [Looking at a list of Feinstein's legislative initiatives.]. Also, I just found a binder of the weekly memos I sent back to her. And the first one here from January of '95, the first issue is immigration, an issue that of course continues even today in 2013. Reverberates loudly in Congress. And legislation is being considered to overhaul the immigration system. But over the years immigration has always been an issue and at that time it was a concern that some of our legislation might need to be updated. And just as the arguments are being made today that we should provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented aliens.

14-00:17:36

Rubens:

Was this an example of you having tentacles into the community, monitoring what is bubbling up?

14-00:17:40

Roff:

Yes. Well, just anyway, general review of immigration, concern about border crossings, anxiety about too many undocumented and yet concern on the part of many groups, particularly Latino groups and civil rights groups that there be a path to citizenship. That path to citizenship is a more recent coinage but basically that issue of how to provide for persons who have been in this country long, particularly kids who were born here, grew up here, really were citizens and of course there were a number of interests in California, particularly farm, agricultural interests, who were eager to have workers come available, mainly because they could pay them in minimal wages. But I'm just suggesting these were issues that have some longevity to them.

And then affirmative action. There was consideration that would eliminate all reference to affirmative action and whether that would be justified in this age or whether—there were questions about—

14-00:19:18

Rubens:

There was a big issue about admissions to universities.

14-00:19:20

Roff:

Admissions to the universities and preferences, unwarranted preference to certain people. And great argumentation. And there was pressure by some more conservative groups for a balanced budget. The legislation actually was introduced to require a balanced budget. One of those things that sound easy but is not in a country with so many issues that need to get dealt with. Foreign affairs and domestic affairs and what have you. Simply try to stay within a very confined, rigidly fenced in area. Try to be resourceful, try to be thoughtful in the budgeting but borrowing is something that governments inevitably do in order to sustain the level of services that people want. Anyway, she said that she would oppose a balanced budget amendment unless it clearly specifically exempted Social Security. Because even then there were rumblings around some of the more ultra conservatives of doing away with Social Security, something that had been always sort of on the back burner politically since the New Deal. And now, of course, is being advocated

by some now, in 2013 being advocated by some in Congress. But children's issues, funding issues. Funding for AIDS.

14-00:21:14

Rubens: Her record suggests she was interested in hate crimes.

14-00:21:18

Roff: Hate crimes, of course. There were several heinous ones in the country. A person's dragged behind pickup trucks or tortured and battered.

14-00:21:37

Rubens: She authors and gets passed something called the Small Business Defense Conversion Guarantee Act. This was permitting small businesses to leverage loans and create jobs in the areas where the military was downsizing. Bases were being closed throughout California.

14-00:21:58

Roff: Oh, yes, especially in southern California. There were a lot of smaller businesses that served the larger manufacturers. The persons who manufactured airplanes and what have you in a lot of this location politically and economically and tried to soften it by encouraging small business, small businesses to branch into other fields and to—

14-00:22:30

Rubens: Would you go down to San Diego and meet with them?

14-00:22:34

Roff: I would occasionally. I'd go to the various offices from time to time.

14-00:22:38

Rubens: I didn't know if you needed to meet with the mayor down there.

14-00:22:40

Roff: I did a fair amount of traveling and I met with a number of people. I don't know whether I met with the mayor of San Diego.

14-00:22:55

Rubens: You had talked about constituencies, major constituent groups that you needed to attend to for your representative. Who are you thinking about when you talk about—

14-00:23:06

Roff: Well, the children's advocacy groups very much concerned about reduced funding for youth programs and particularly health care programs for children. And a number of demonstrations. By that I mean people come and present petitions and what have you. But there were any number of funding issues because government even then was beginning to trim back on some of its larger urban programs. Public housing and in other areas. So there were advocacy groups. Environmental groups were concerned about any number of things and still are. The unions were beginning to feel kind of the harsh reality of diminished membership and struggles to organize and the labor agricultural groups concerned about water. Still an ongoing issue and one that Dianne has taken a strong hand

in trying to deal with. Just a myriad. Again, we wanted to listen to anybody or everybody whom we could that seemed to have a legitimate issue.

And one time the office was occupied by ACT UP, which was a group of gay activists and they chained themselves to desks. I remember trying to coax them out and finally said, "Well, we'll have the police." But I went outside of protocol and did not call the federal police. I called a police captain of the central district where our office was located, down along the Embarcadero and he sent this wonderfully diplomatic easygoing soft voiced sergeant. And probably the biggest man ever to walk the earth. A gargantuan Atlas of a man who was so gentle. The gentle giant. Well, they, of course, had everybody out and smiling. They were terrified, of course, by this big man. They thought he'd beat them on the head. He wouldn't hurt anyone. And then I would travel with Dianne when she'd be in the state. Not all the trips but many of them. And, again, I tried to be her eyes and ears here and I would report on—things I do remember. She continued her nine o'clock staff meetings, nine o'clock Washington time, which, of course, is six o'clock in the morning San Francisco time. She said, "Oh, how are things out in San Francisco, Hadley?" And I said, "They're dark."

14-00:26:18

Rubens:

So you were on the phone during those meetings?

14-00:26:20

Roff:

Yes, yes. Every Monday. But I'm one of those. I sometimes was agitated by the fact we had to sit through these kind of endless meetings. But on the other hand we knew what was going on and she knew what was going on and there was a much greater coherence on the whole operation simply because communications were so rapid and frank.

14-00:26:44

Rubens:

Who was running the office in DC?

14-00:26:45

Roff:

Well, Dianne but her first chief of staff was Mike McGill, who had been the head of SPUR here. He went back.

14-00:27:06

Rubens:

Having been in that position for several senators you knew what the requirements of the job were.

14-00:27:13

Roff:

But I prefer much more the direct contact with voters and issues.

14-00:27:24

Rubens:

Now, she knew that she had a campaign coming up in two years. So was she in a campaign mode from the beginning of her taking office?

14-00:27:28

Roff:

Oh, yes. And she'd put together a good campaign team, too, and kept Bill Carrick and Kam Kuwata, who had been with Alan Cranston as a senior staff person in Los Angeles. Unlike in the past where she would sort of organize a cadre of friends and acquaintance to

help, this time she had a pretty solid core of not only staff who were experienced but campaigners who were enormously respected nationally and were top tier in terms of their capacity and their ability.

14-00:28:22

Rubens:

So in those first couple of years, is there always the anticipation of this upcoming election?

14-00:28:31

Roff:

Yes. Inevitably. Almost subconsciously there's always some political pressure. Not that it necessarily would dissuade you. Something that might not be all that helpful to a campaign. Decisions are taken because of the merit of the issue or whatever. But still you're conscious of the politics inevitably. If you're involved in dealing with a whole variety of persons and issues and complaints and what have you, inevitably you have some appreciation of how people feel and what they feel the most strongly about. And Dianne is very conscious. She's in Washington. She usually has a constituent breakfast for whomever is visiting from California and she knows about them. She'll do a breakfast and a Q&A. She makes herself available. When she was here in San Francisco earlier this year, 2013, she met with all the CORO interns, all the young people in the CORO program. She herself had been a CORO intern back in the fifties when she was at Stanford. And spent what they say was a dazzling two hours directly unequivocally answering their questions about difficult issues. She's always been sort of in the middle, although she has very good voting ratings by some of the more liberal organizations, the ACLU and others. And, again, she's been way out on this gun control issue from the very outset and continually, without any hesitation.

14-00:30:50

Rubens:

She took the lead on drug legislation.

14-00:30:53

Roff:

Yes. On methamphetamines. She followed California rigorously and it wasn't just political. When I was talking about her as mayor, she was never a partisan apparatchik. She was never just the face of the Party. She was quite individualist and quite independent in her way. Very supportive generally of the Democratic presidents. A liberal moderate, to be sure, but fundamentally pragmatic about issues that she felt needed action and she was willing to put whatever effort and thought that she could into pushing forward with those concerns. I'm particularly struck by the gun, simply because the emotion on gun control, because the issue is so fraught with emotion. People feel so intent. And now we've got this situation where people feel that their guns are their sort of badge of citizenship, that they will protect them against—what, I have no idea. Are they going to fight their own government? And it gets very, very emotional.

The Valley is basically far more conservative as a general proposition than the rest of the state, especially San Francisco and LA. San Diego, Inland Empire, and the Central Valley tend to be more conservative. And near the Sierras and they hunt. So people feel more proprietary toward their guns than many people here in the city. Again, the attitude in a city is going to be different because they're confronted with so much gun violence.

Oakland, of course, is just a war, sometimes, it seems in bloodshed. So many shootings. And so there's reasonable pressure to try to curb these military weapons that rattle off bullets by the millisecond. And these high powered bullets that tend to expand and cause wounds that are just lethal no matter where they hit.

14-00:34:05

Rubens:

As mayor and in her campaigns she had spent time cultivating growers in the Valley. I think we talked about when she was mayor she got into some trouble from liberal constituents because she made an arrangement to sell water to growers—I forget what the plan was, but—

14-00:34:24

Roff:

Yes. Well, she's taken a great deal of heat in that water plan. And she can be, from my more generalist perspective, can be unduly microscopic, if I can put it that way, about details, about the water flow and acre feet and the details of what dam supports what system and how it affects the ecosystems. Although she defends the little oyster plant over in Point Reyes. But when she gets into an issue, she digs deeply into it. Personally I was not involved in this but I know in more recent years she's very much involved in interstate Nevada, California concerns about Tahoe.

14-00:35:37

Rubens:

How did you keep yourself informed? You're going to the regional offices, you're writing these weekly memos.

14-00:35:44

Roff:

One, I guess this is an old newspaper person, I listen. I read the papers. I made it a point of talking to people and getting input from staff. This sounds kind of silly but I took money from the public and I should be available to it. I always had my phone. I never had an unlisted number. I was always in the phone book and the Lord knows in the middle of the night somebody—well, but I—

14-00:36:26

Rubens:

You would get calls?

14-00:36:28

Roff:

Yeah. And I had a lot of contacts. And I'd been in the city beginning in the mid-1950s as a newspaper reporter, then in City Hall, and so I just knew a variety of people and I had contacts with people at least initially when I first worked for Alioto whom Dianne was not particularly close to or knew well, especially in labor and more on the left or the liberal side. And although I, like her, was never a part of the party apparatus, the Burton machine, or whatever, well, I knew them and respected them as extremely able professionals but I never was part of their operation.

14-00:37:21

Rubens:

How often would you see her?

14-00:37:23

Roff:

Well, I would be on the weekly phone call and I'd see her whenever she'd be out. We'd get together. And often she'd do her work from home or she would come to the office and

make phone calls and have meetings. And one of the more interesting things, at least from my point of view, was that I chaired the judicial selection committee, her judicial selection committee. At that time, with a Democratic president, nominations from states for judgeships within the state usually came from the senators, and alternate between Dianne and Barbara. But I would arrange to interview and vet and we had a committee that would meet and question candidates. And we put some really top rate people on the bench. Really highly qualified. Of course, now, again, and now being 2013, there's such obstructionists in the Senate it's hard to get any nominee through who's probably ever read the Constitution, let alone feels sympathetic to government of and by and for the people. I'm being a little sarcastic but those interviews were interesting. I'm not a lawyer but you could sense the caliber of response, the thoughtfulness, background, the manner.

14-00:38:49

Rubens:

So you had a panel? You had other people that you consulted with.

14-00:38:52

Roff:

Yes. We had panels and others who could make a professional judgment and we also would pay attention to the recommendations of the bar association as to whether somebody is qualified or not. And they used to have a rating: qualified, not qualified, very well qualified or whatever. They had a little signal or not a signal but a kind of rating system. Some persons would come and they wouldn't know the cases. Not that they'd have to know them with intimacy. They wouldn't even know what kind of issues were coming before the court. But most were very, very sharp and San Francisco had a marvelous legal community and so did LA. We didn't appoint exclusively from the big cities. And we did interviews, maybe fifteen or so, for each opening. But it was to me an interesting process.

14-00:39:51

Rubens:

Did you have any role in facilitating her relationship with Ted Kennedy, for instance? She's a junior senator. She needed mentors.

14-00:40:01

Roff:

No, I didn't. I don't think they were on the same committees. Now to be in the Senate, a hundred members, is a fairly intimate body. They'd see one another on the trams going from the office buildings to the capital, see one another on the floor, see one another in the dining room or the cafeteria. See one another at meetings. Unfortunately that congeniality that was prevalent even during the Watergate years when I was in Washington and even though there was huge tensions between the Nixon camp and others, both Republican and Democrat, there was a cordiality. A Republican senator and a Democratic senator could sit down and talk about kids and go out and have a drink or see one another socially. Now, at least the way Dianne explains it, and I've heard from others, there's barely a good morning exchanged. The atmosphere is toxic and almost totally obstructionist in terms of any major legislation.

14-00:41:21

Rubens:

Well, she clearly came in with a lot of credibility.

14-00:41:25

Roff: Oh, yes. And she's maintained it. One, I think they respect her honestly. I think they respect her steadiness. As I told you, she once said, "You, Hadley, are nothing but a San Francisco liberal." Well, I probably was a bit more liberal than she and I wish sometimes that she would take a little more defined stand on things. But basically she's a real trooper. She gets in and she fights for what she thinks she can achieve. She doesn't engage in a lot of puffery about it. She just does it.

14-00:42:21

Rubens: It's your job to really be her eyes and ears in bringing to her attention what is rumbling around in the state.

14-00:42:26

Roff: Well, that's what I felt. But I seemed to do it and, again, they had these memos. They're all over the map in terms of issues. The map. You got the Presidio, whatever in health care and water distribution, issues about smog, the desert lands.

14-00:42:52

Rubens: There was the earthquake in—

14-00:42:54

Roff: In Northridge was the big thing. And she got a considerable amount of federal money. I've forgotten what it was but it was some huge sum. Because that was quite devastating.

14-00:43:12

Rubens: Eleven billion.

14-00:43:13

Roff: Yes, eleven billion. Of course, now there was reluctance about trying to provide assistance to the persons who were affected by the horrible hurricane in the northeast, by Sandy.

There were two things you mentioned. The assault weapons ban, going over to Henry Hyde's office. Just that persistence. I'm not going to literally leave a stone unturned. And even though that rock would seem like almost trying to push the rock up the hill, she persuaded a high change. And Joshua and all those. Obviously I have high regard for her and for that tenacity of hers. And for her experience. And I enjoy my association with others. Like Kennedy, who was, they say, the liberal lion of the Senate and he was loud and vociferous on issues. Fought hard and long and often futilely for health reform. I regret that he died before Obama's plan got to the floor because I think he would have been a huge asset in pushing that. And Pelosi, I think San Francisco is very fortunate to have a person—She's criticized as being too liberal. I think she's extremely courageous.

14-00:45:07

Rubens: What about Dianne's relationship with Boxer? Now Boxer had—Now it seems to be quite a partnership.

14-00:45:17

Roff: Well, I think Boxer at one point had opposed her, during the campaign against Van de Kamp, I think.

14-00:45:30

Rubens: And there was an issue about who would be the first woman senator. Dianne is seated before Boxer because she's succeeding Wilson but—

14-00:45:44

Roff: I don't know. I see them together and they seem perfectly at ease with one another.

14-00:45:50

Rubens: So you didn't have any intersection with Boxer?

14-00:45:52

Roff: No, her staff was in the same building as I was when I worked for Dianne on the Senate and we were close. We talked. I do remember that Boxer suddenly popped into a press conference that we had for some reason. I thought that was a little strange. No, I like Barbara. But Dianne, for a public figure, does like her time by herself. She paints and reads and sometimes is frustrating. Obviously she doesn't want to be on the road all the time. Of course, when you're in a campaign you keep thinking, "My gosh, you've got to go to Modesto sometime." And Barbara, I think, is more active. But I don't know. She seems perfectly nice.

But, again, Dianne has always, as I say, been—while a loyal Democrat has always been independent and not reliant on a big party network. A lot of the people who support her are Democrats but she's not, as I say, been a party apparatchik.

14-00:47:34

Rubens: By the way, I meant to follow up with your having been slated by the Clinton administration for a position in the labor department.

14-00:47:37

Roff: And, as I say, kind of factotum?

14-00:47:39

Rubens: Why do you say it was a factotum job? What is it?

14-00:47:42

Roff: Well, it was not a senior policy job but it was a job of some consequence for northern California, particularly with labor because labor then was still fairly strong. That was the year I think I was named labor man of the year or something and got a plaque. The Clinton people said, "Well, maybe this guy could go work in the Department of Labor with Robert Reich. But I had gone to work in '92 for Jordan and then I left Jordan. Finally decided. I had resigned. But that happened to become news on the very day that one of the senior Clinton people happened to come into meet with Jordan on some other matters and said, "Are you going to be free?" and then she offered me a job—no, she actually offered me a job in the San Francisco headquarters as kind of coordinator on issues and things. And it was fine. And then, as I say, I did not expect with Dianne because she had organized the office around persons whom she got from the campaign and sort of middle level people with whom she was paying minimal salary in order to spread the salaries. Hire more people rather than a number of—but then she decided that she needed somebody maybe a little more experienced as the director here. Turned back to old Had.

14-00:49:54

Rubens: So were you not really involved in her campaign for senator in '92?

14-00:50:04

Roff: I was involved in so many campaigns with her and so many issues. I don't know whether I was ever really not involved but I don't know that I had any kind of official position. I certainly was in her '94 campaign and I was—

14-00:51:00

Rubens: Well, maybe that's where we should move—

14-00:51:02

Roff: I probably attended planning meetings. I did work full-time in the Clinton campaign.

14-00:51:24

Rubens: So do you think we've covered the kinds of things that you did?

14-00:51:27

Roff: Yeah, I think—pretty well.

14-00:51:29

Rubens: So maybe the thing we should turn to, the '94 campaign.

14-00:52:39

Roff: The '94 campaign was rough in that the opposition, the head of it was Ken [Kenneth] Khachigian who had been one of Reagan's top strategists. And tough and a lethal campaigner in the sense that he was sharp and quick. And lethal. And Huffington himself was kind of an elusive figure. He really was. It was really his wife who was more or less the spokesperson for the two of them. Arianna. And very outspoken. The ads tried to suggest that because Dianne and Dick owned this hotel here in San Francisco, that she was the [Leona] Helmsley of the West Coast. That kind of thing. They really tried to hit her hard. And, of course, the Republicans had a lot of money. Huffington was wealthy, quite wealthy.

14-00:54:37

Rubens: So are you shifted from being her state director to the campaign?

14-00:54:42

Roff: I did not handle directly campaign things. Inevitably, yeah, I understood issues. I certainly would be consulted but just as a person who was her professional staff. But that was really Kuwata and Carrick They made a wonderful team. I sort of made suggestions. But in terms of day to day, the press and all that, that was handled by other people.

14-00:55:29

Rubens: All right, let's turn the tape and then continue.

Audio File 15

15-00:00:23

Roff: So running her state office was very fulfilling, because we dealt with so many different issues and so many different people in so many different situations continually. And some

of them were real challenges. The Presidio. I certainly wasn't the engineer for that. Nancy Pelosi had the lead. But it did involve time and concern and big things I think for San Francisco.

15-00:00:31

Rubens: Were there developers who were knocking on your door, though, saying, "Look, she's not—"

15-00:00:35

Roff: No, not directly. They would be wary of that. I might get inquiries from lawyers but not really. I don't think anyone wanted to become the lightning rod as the developer. But there were interests that clearly thought—and the Republicans in the House, the more conservative, the budget, those were concerned about balanced budgets and concerned about the costs because the costs would equal, of operating, all the other national parks combined. And so it was a huge challenge.

15-00:01:25

Rubens: All right. So you're tangentially involved with the campaign? She won by a nice margin.

15-00:01:38

Roff: Went well. But it got personal at least in assaults on her and she always took them very personally. She couldn't quite be the blasé professional and ignore the innuendo and the toxicity of some of it. And, again, they were quick on issues. They tried to keep us off-guard on things. By us, many things we could do. Her positions were very, very clear. But their campaign was essentially, as politics has increasingly become, more of an attack campaign than it was an issues campaign. Trying to denigrate her. Trying to belittle her record. Trying to besmirch her reputation but not deal with anything substantive in terms of what he would do.

15-00:02:53

Rubens: And so '94 is also the huge conservative turn in Congress. Clinton had a Democratic Congress and then loses it.

15-00:03:14

Roff: That's right. I'd forgotten. But I don't know that that had all that much effect here. But, again, it was the personal level of the campaign I think that was irritating and disquieting to her, to Dianne.

15-00:03:54

Rubens: She's elected in her own right. She knows she's going to be there for six years. You stay on as the state director.

15-00:04:03

Roff: I stayed on through '95.

15-00:04:11

Rubens: How does it come to an end? How do you move from there to the Urban Institute?

15-00:04:19

Roff: The Urban Institute was a very attractive offer. I'd been in and around politics for almost a half century and then the opportunity came to be part of an academic environment. I'd have an office. I'd have staff assistants. We would take on issues of broad concern in the state. We benched off the person who headed the Institute, recruited me and then two others, Calvin Welch, a community activist and another to teach a course on urban politics, San Francisco politics essentially through a class that was made up—we had about sixty students once a week for about four hours. And half were matriculated students of the university and the other half were from the community, either from charitable organizations or various advocacy groups or from some organizing in the project, some who had had considerable education, some who did not. And we thought maybe it would be difficult to get the two groups together, or at least all of them in sync with one another and interested in interacting. And it turned out that they'd be hugely interactive. These persons who kind of had the theory and these others who had had the actual real life experience and yet in a kind of blue collar institution where everybody took the Muni and had problems finding a rental. So there were certain common threads between all of them. And it turned out to be a vigorous class.

15-00:06:36

Rubens: So it was just attractive to you. You had been in the fray of politics for so long.

15-00:06:40

Roff: Yes. They offered me a respectable salary and called me an Urban Fellow and I helped write some of the text material. And it was just a challenge but more relaxed. I wasn't quite on the firing line.

15-00:07:03

Rubens: Sure. How did Dianne take it? Did you meet with her or—?

15-00:07:09

Roff: Oh, yes. Perfectly understandable. May have even welcomed it. Her chance to bring in younger people and the new generation essentially. Campaigns and politics and all this high tech stuff, that was all science fiction to us, to me, at least, for a long time. And here, of course, comes the basic instrument of politics. Certainly of communication in government.

And I was helpful to them. I helped arrange to get Hillary as a commencement speaker. Hillary Clinton. I do not know her so I probably shouldn't be so familiar to call her Hillary. But Mrs. Clinton to be their commencement speaker, oh, in the late, early 2000s sometimes. There's a picture of us together. And then, of course, our old friend Dave Jenkins. We worked to get him the commencement speaker. He was tremendous. Absolutely. "Brothers and sisters," he began.

15-00:08:43

Rubens: So you go to the Institute probably in '96.

15-00:08:45

Roff: Probably then. And I sort of went on half-time status probably sometime in the early 2000 and I think I taught my last class there in 2005 and then fully retired.

15-00:09:06

Rubens: Close to ten years. Now you join the Institute right around when Willie Brown becomes mayor of San Francisco.

15-00:09:08

Roff: Yes. He was elected in '96.

[Tape interruption]

I supported him and was on an advisory committee that met with him every week on political things. And then he put me on the Fire Commission. Interviewed me for that position. I had always been interested in public safety issues and had been deputy for public safety with—

15-00:10:36

Roff: Tell me about meeting with Brown regularly.

15-00:10:39

Roff: We'd meet weekly on Saturdays doing whatever. And just to sort of highlight the San Francisco issues, because Brown had focused his entire career in Sacramento in the Assembly and as leader or as speaker and, of course, been probably the second most powerful political figure in the State. There were a group of us who met once a week, Louise Renne and Calvin Welch, who is my teaching mate down at State. Oh, I know Sam Yawkey. And John Burton. And John finally, toward the end of the campaign, getting close to the New Year. "Oh, by gosh,"—and John's known for rather livid lively conversation style and use of words. And then he said, "Well, I'm going to promise I'm not going to use that word again." And Calvin looked at him and squinted and said, "My God, John, I think you had a stroke."

15-00:12:05

Rubens: Was Jack Davis part of that, too?

15-00:12:07

Roff: No, Jack had run Frank's campaign four years before. I don't think he was involved in this group. At some point he moves to Nevada and now, of course, lives in Wales, over in England.

15-00:12:33

Rubens: So you were one of Brown's political advisors.

15-00:12:38

Roff: Sort of. After he was elected and it came October and he had to give the state of the city address and he called me and said, "Would you write it for me?" And I said, "Mayor, no one writes anything for you." You're probably one of the most gifted natural speakers." I said, "I don't want to waste your time or mine." He said, "Oh, no. I want you to put it down. I want you to write." So I wrote and I wrote and I edited and I wrote and I rewrote and I edited and sent it up to him. And he called, "That's great, just fine. Yes, thank you." Then he gave it and, of course, I don't think there was any—there wasn't one syllable—or

maybe a syllable. Well, as I told him later, he said, "Gee, that was a great speech." I said, "Yeah, I recognized three be's."

15-00:13:32

Rubens:

Hadley, I wish we had a copy of that. Is that somewhere in your files?

15-00:13:34

Roff:

Somehow those vanished. I'll put my hand on them someday or somebody who ever cleans this place out will. And, of course, the Fire Commission has always been interested vitally in the fire department all along so I went on vice chair and then I became chair [president].

15-00:13:55

Rubens:

So he appoints you to the Fire Commission—

15-00:14:06

Roff:

It was the first day. He announced it in his inaugural speech.

15-00:14:15

Rubens:

How do you become president of that?

15-00:14:27

Roff:

It's usually a little prompting from the mayor's office.

15-00:14:31

Rubens:

Worked out ahead of time, then. So you go on as vice chair.

15-00:14:36

Roff:

Yes. And I think he wanted to put a woman. I don't know. I took no offense. I was glad to be on the commission. And then when I became chair, the department just wasn't functioning the way it should. Morale was bad. An effort that now has gone awry in a way of consolidating the ambulance service, which used to be under the health department, with the fire department with paramedics on the various fire engines and ambulances operating out of the firehouses. Seemed like a good idea, which I pushed and pushed and finally got through. It didn't work out. The culture between the emergency technicians and the firefighters didn't seem to mesh. The ambulances were running all the time, day and night. Fire trucks, in many stations, might have a call every other day or something. They work still under the fire department but ambulances are handled under somewhat different auspices now within the department. But the department was not making progress in terms of really consolidating these services in the way that I thought, and other commissioners were dissatisfied, too. And there was some question that may need a change of leadership. Headed by a chief who had been one of the early African Americans to be in the department and who faced just enormous opposition when he first joined and suffered through the most hideous kind of indignities and then rose through the ranks and appointed chief by Brown. Bob [Robert] Demmons.

He felt that the department wasn't being responsive to him, was being hostile to him and he kind of withdrew in a way. Kept his office door closed, had very little communication with staff. And you can't have that kind of an arrangement, well, in any kind of an

institution, but particularly one that is hierarchical in uniforms and ranks and gold braid. And the mayor called one day and discussed with the chief the possibility of his leaving. In many ways very conflicted because he was truly somebody who had undergone all the indignities of racial harassment of the most hideous unkind sort and who persevered. And was exceedingly respected in the city and really in many ways was a very heroic figure. But I think his experience had so—in a way, not necessarily embittered him but blunted his ability to provide the kind of active, pro-active leadership that the department needed. And he did step down and I was castigated as a racist in the *Chronicle*. But then came the appointment of a new chief. And we canvassed nationally. We hired a search firm. We talked to people from around the country. But we also talked to people within the department. It had been my view that San Francisco, because of the fault line, the earthquake propensity, the hills, the varying water pressures, because of the hilly terrain, a lot of difficulties arise that don't apply to most cities and most chiefs aren't acquainted. So somebody coming in here from outside is going to have to learn a whole new hydrology in terms of where water is and where it goes and how it flows and inherit a turbulent department with a lot of unrest and a unique city with very divided and vigorous neighborhoods and concerns. And I thought it should be somebody from within the department and the commission agreed and nominated a person from within the department. And the mayor made clear that he wanted somebody from the outside. And I wrote him a letter saying, "No." And he had a letter delivered to me saying that he expected me to be—

15-00:20:26

Rubens:

Offer your—

15-00:20:28

Roff:

To conform. I've forgotten what it said. It was far more diplomatic than that. But anyway, he expected a greater variety of names, but it was clear he was displeased. And then I was told by the mayor on a phone call, when I called him, "Well, Hadley," he said, "I'm mayor and you're not." Then I resigned. And I wasn't piqued. He was perfectly right. He was mayor and I'm not. I think he made a mistake. He brought somebody in, a nice, nice fellow who was looking for, I think, just another listing on his résumé. He was gone in two years onto another fire department. And then Gavin appointed Hayes White, who's proved to be quite a good chief.

15-00:21:26

Rubens:

So when did you resign?

15-00:21:30

Roff:

That would be early—I'm just not sure. I was probably still teaching. But most of my working time was with the fire department. And I still maintained contact with the fire department and I still listen to the sirens and can tell you where every engine is and truck is.

15-00:22:23

Rubens:

So we'll get the date of when that is that you resigned. Did you keep your hand in politics in San Francisco? Speaking of Gavin, just to kind of bring it full circle, you're on his—

15-00:22:34

Roff: Well, I was on Gavin Newsome's, his transition team when he became mayor.

15-00:22:35

Rubens: Were you part of the campaign advisory?

15-00:22:40

Roff: Well, I met with him a couple of times. I'd known him. Well, I'd known him for many years but I was particularly fond of his father, Bill, a former appellate court judge, state appellate court judge who's the true renaissance person. He's read everything from Plato to whatever. He's one of those didactics who just knows—and he's just a wonderful conversationalist. I talked to Gavin and then he put me on the transition team along with half the city. We met. I was on the group that dealt with the police department. John Kecker, the lawyer, was a member and there were a couple of ex-cops. I've forgotten the group really. But I never played any particular part in his administration. Although I'd see him at things.

15-00:23:55

Rubens: And by the way, was there ever a rapprochement with Willie?

15-00:24:02

Roff: Yeah. I was never close to him and I wasn't angered by what he did. He was perfectly right. If the president of the Fire Commission had gone against the wishes of any mayor I worked for we'd probably—

15-00:24:23

Rubens: Well that happened with other commissions at several key times while Feinstein was mayor.

15-00:24:25

Roff: Yes. So he was perfectly blunt but it was perfectly obvious that I'd become the obstructionist if I stayed. And I just felt in my bones it was a mistake. And the fellow, he did okay. He was a very personable and very capable guy. But, again, the city is so unique and I just felt the department needed that extra adrenaline, that boost that would come from somebody, from within the ranks that the department knew who was free of any taint of discrimination or bias toward anyone. He'd been director of training. Had advanced the position of women in the department, was respected. But they let him serve a year so he'd get a pension.

15-00:25:40

Rubens: Ok. So are there some concluding remarks you'd like to make about the Institute?

15-00:25:46

Roff: Well, the Institute was eye-opening for me because it gave me a chance to be in a kind of an academic setting, not that I was all that scholarly.

15-00:26:00

Rubens: Yes, but really reflect on your long history at the center of power.

15-00:26:01

Roff:

But Richard DeLeon, who was the chair of the poli sci department and has written still the best on San Francisco politics, although it is dated. He wrote it in '95—*Left Coast City* [*Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1971-1995*]. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed teaching. I do remember one of the first classes I taught before this combined. I was called as sort of as a lecturer on municipal political courses. And remember there was a young fellow sitting in the front row and you know the little metal bindings of some old school notebooks? Well, he had the wire through his eyebrows and I kept looking at him thinking, “Oh, my God, that must have been so painful.” Then I thought, “My God, in a thunderstorm he was going to be electrocuted right on the spot.” But I found the kids for the most part engaging. My only classroom experience had been as a student. Well, if I handed in some of the material that was handed in to me, I would have been bye-bye. Some of it was illiterate. Some of it's quite good. I actually sat next to some guy the other night at a little bar and he said, “Oh, you taught that course.” He said, “I was a student.”

15-00:27:49

Rubens:

So it was rewarding and then time to retire.

15-00:27:51

Roff:

It was rewarding and people were good. Brian Murphy, who was head of the Urban Institute, who was a professor of political science. He is now president of De Anza College down in Santa Jose area. Really a charming, wonderful, bright guy. And Calvin Welch. Calvin, who could be really painful to deal with because he was so sharp and could be so acerbic and he could just put the stiletto right in between the ribs. But he was so incredibly bright and saw things in perspectives that I never thought of. Not that I necessarily agreed with them all but it was stunning. And then there was an African American woman whose name escapes me who had come out to San Francisco in the seventies as a member of the Black Panthers. And now and then was an activist. Not so much on the radical side anymore but an activist trying to curb the violence in the projects, in the housing projects. The murders. Really a very formidable African American woman and her name escapes me again.

And it was a great experience and a kind of salubrious conclusion in the sense that it gave me a chance to think about what I'd experienced. I wasn't just on the firing line in the trenches. And as I say, the people were interesting, the students for the most part. Especially that mixed class that turned out to be—the back and forth became absolutely engaging. In fact, I think they were teaching me more than I ever could teach them.

15-00:29:57

Rubens:

So then just to put a cap on this interview. You've stayed good friends with Dianne Feinstein. This is someone—

15-00:30:10

Roff:

We'd known one another fifty years. And I think I was unfailingly loyal to her. We had our disagreements. We could be angry at one another but it was always candor and done in friendship. When I lost my daughter, Dianne could not have been more empathetic or more supportive. And Dianne's been very much part of Susie and my—we were married

one day apart. We got our wedding licenses together, she with Dick and me with Susie. Susie and I had our honeymoon in her home down in Pajaro, that she had at the time.

We've been close. We're always glad to see each other. We bumped into one another a few months ago down at Original Joe's that just opened. And somebody said, "Oh, there's Dianne." Oh. And so we went and I said, "Of all the gin joints," that old line from "Casablanca" "All the gin joints in the world, you'd walk into this one." But she's always been a close, close friend. And I think you can tell from conversation. And I have high regard for her, respect. The person I think of courage. She hung in at times when others would have faltered and I think that the way she handled what was probably one of the most tragic periods in this city's history, the assassinations at Jonestown and then the assassinations of George Moscone and Harvey Milk was exemplary.

And the Prop Thirteen issue, which was huge and still is a huge impact. And the thing is that the city has remained a vital center. It's changed considerably in the sense that it's no longer a blue collar city. It's high tech and finance but it's still one that bustles with activity and enterprise. The sports center. The fact that as of now San Francisco will host the Super Bowl in 2016, as it did in, was it 1985, with Montana, Joe Montana swinging those wonderful little passes of his.

So it's a city that has sort of rolled with some terrible punches but has always come back seemingly even more vital.

15-00:33:24

Rubens:

Well, Hadley, your history has been inextricably linked with it.

15-00:33:26

Roff:

It's fascinating. And it's important to keep in mind that it's not so much the organized duties of the mayor as described in the charter, the city charter, but basically the character, the spirit that can come from Room 200. You get a dynamic mayor, an Alioto or Feinstein, Brown, others who can just energize a community. I think we're very fortunate.

15-00:34:05

Rubens:

All right. So let's call it a day.

[End of Interview]

Hadley Roff Vitae

- Born 1931 December 16, 1931
- 1950-1954 Stanford University: Editor *Stanford Daily* 1953-54
- 1954-57 Internship with *S.F. News*; reporter for *Bend Bulletin*, *Stockton Register*,
- 1957-1964 Reporter *S.F. News*
Brief stint with Lyndon Johnson's presidential campaign and some local election campaigns
- 1958 Marriage to Mary Killoran [died 1975] 3 children

Works for election of Alan Cranston as California State Controller
- 1962 Special Assistant Alan Cranston's senate re-election campaign
- 1964-1967 Administrative Assistant S.F. Housing Authority under Mayor John Shelley
- 1967-1970 Special Assistant to S.F. Mayor Joseph Alioto
- 1970-1976 Moves family to Virginia to become Press Secretary for John Tunney's campaign for, and first years as, U.S. Senator, California; Chief of Staff
- 1971-1972 Media Director Edmund Muskie's campaign for U.S. President [on leave from Senator John Tunney]
- 1976-1977 Press Secretary Senator Ted Kennedy
- 1977-1979 Staff Director, U.S. Senate Sub-Committee on Governmental Affairs
- 1979 Returns to California as Deputy Mayor & Chief of Staff for S.F. Mayor Dianne Feinstein
- 1980 Marries Susan Trommald
- 1988-1992 Deputy of Public of Public Safety for S.F. Mayor Art Agnos
- 1989 On leave to serve as Press Secretary for Dianne Feinstein's campaign for Governor California
- 1992 Chief of Staff for Mayor Frank Jordan

Northern California Deputy Director Bill Clinton's presidential campaign
- 1992 Press Secretary for Dianne Feinstein's U.S. Senate campaign

- 1992-1995 Director, Feinstein's California Senate Staff Office
- 1995-2005 Urban Fellow, Faculty, Urban Institute S.F. State University
- 1995 Member Advisory Committee Willie Brown's campaign for Mayor of S.F.
Appointed by Mayor Willie Brown to the Fire Commission
- 2000 President S.F. Fire Commission
- 2003-4 Member S.F. Mayor Gavin Newsom's transition team
- 2005 Retires
- 2013 Oral history conducted by UC Berkeley Oral History Center
- 2016 Death due to congestive heart failure

My view is principally from the Mayor's Office, Room 200, where the levers of power exist, if only the occupants will use them.

It's the Mayor who shapes the budget, appoints the commissions and through them, the department heads. It's the Mayor who speaks for the City as a whole and can use the office as a bully pulpit.

And the Mayor pretty much can organize Room 200 as he or she likes. Joe Alioto had an administrative assistant and a confidential secretary (press secretary); Dianne Feinstein had two deputy mayors; Art Agnos had eight; and Frank Jordan had a chief of staff.

In this intensely political city, with its compressed 49 square miles, the Mayor, for better or worse, is the figure head to whom most people turn with a problem—whether a pot hole or a riot.

Not that the Mayor is the only power. There are multiple venues in this diverse city—11 members of the Board of Supervisors, some 300 commissioners and a galaxy of powerful special interests, any of which can overshadow a mayor if he or she shies from the limelight and lacks verve and vision.

In 1967, Joe Alioto—exuberant time....sunny with optimism....war on poverty well underway....large ingestion of federal funds—housing, community development, Law Enforcement Assistance grants....

Over the years, Washington was a cornucopia for California—billions in defense and huge projects like the Central Valley Project and the freeway system. (Getting the federal government off our backs in California is akin to the sky-diver taking off his parachute before jumping.)

In 1968, a shadow lengthened across the land with the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King—and their loss of compassion, conscience, commitment.

Reagan, despite his "It's morning again in California," saw wages, opportunities stagnate for the middle class, and increased scapegoating of government ("that's the problem") and the poor.

Huge cuts came in urban programs—LEAA, community Development, public housing, job training.

Then, with the end of the Cold War, cuts came in defense spending, putting hundreds of thousands of skilled workers on the street. At the same time, a slowdown in the global economy hit California hard, and a recession still lingers.

Now, Congress is in full cry against the cities....in the darkness of a new ice age in Washington....

A society where a few bundle themselves in fur and millions are abandoned to sleep on grates.

Compassion seemingly has frozen to hard-heartedness.

Maybe not as oblivious as "let them eat cake," rather, "let them have lap tops."

The Contract with America targets the American city—congested, where poverty and crime are epidemic.

The Congressional leadership—southern and suburban—smug, isolated, indifferent.

Unseeing either because they've closed their eyes to the suffering and poverty around them, or because their world is remote from such problems.

In their well-policed malls, they've simply never seen a hungry child or a homeless person.

To many, poverty is far over their horizon—a Third World problem as remote as Zimbabwe.

To them, inner cities are distant villages in which war drums thunder along with the Uzis.

Is there an element of racism? You bet.

Is there a Darwinian reckoning that only the fittest should survive? You bet.

Is there belief that some Americans simply can't assimilate into a majority society? You bet.

Charles Murray and the late Richard Herrnstein, in their "Bell Curve" suggest that inferiors may have to be kept in a "custodial state."

Cities, historically, have been the conscience of civilization, principally because, I suppose, people live close together and must get along and, therefore, give at least some thought one for the other.

The challenge, for those of you who intend to involve yourself with cities, is historic.

I envy you your opportunity to study and reflect on urban issues before actually becoming immersed in their turbulence.

It seems to me certain basic principles must be kept in mind:

- * Cities can't survive Balkanized.

- * They must seek the broadest possible common ground by the widest possible consensus.

- * They must connect the concerns of the wealthiest and the neediest on the premise that each person will be better off if all persons are better off.

In San Francisco there are major hurdles to the way these principles—political and structural.

For one, politics, in California and here, are increasingly divisive. Wedge issues are promoted for the sole purpose of shattering consensus, fragmenting the electorate.

Last year, we had Proposition 187 calculated to scapegoat the foreign born and split white from brown.

Next year, we'll have the proposition to end affirmative action advanced for the sole purpose of promoting the vote among some groups by shunning others.

In San Francisco, in the mayor's race, we see the Mayor targeting Muni drivers, principally African American, and the homeless in order to play to certain constituencies.

Politics generally, with its computers and targeting, zeroing-in more and more on a smaller and smaller turn-out—white, better off, older—80% of all voters nation-wide.

Both political parties are guilty

Exclusionary politics is anathema to cities.

Decreasing turn-out means disenfranchisement means disenfranchisement means disengagement.

And that means disaster for cities.

There must be engagement. There must be participation. There must be a reaching out to include more and more people, encouraging them to vote, empowering them.

There must be collaborations between City Hall and the private and non-profit sectors. Also, there must be broad public support for new ideas, strategies, experiments.

In the way, however, are structural hurdles. As S. F. State's Richard DeLeon points out in his "Left Coast City," San Francisco, proud of its diversity, is splintered into scores of politically sophisticated advocacy groups, making consensus difficult and the ability to govern all the more so.

Often more concerned with what they can prevent rather than what they can promote, groups shower the city with issues but blur focus on broad issues. Politicians try to cover all bases and be all things to all people, which means many stand for nothing particular.

Also, as DeLeon and others have pointed out, the City Charter so divides authority between Mayor, a Chief Administrative Officer, the Board of Supervisors and a host of Commissions that accountability can be lost.

But now that cities have all but been written out of the Contract with America, San Francisco no longer can afford to deter tough decisions and muddle after the lowest common denominator.

The stakes are enormous and will leave no San Franciscan untouched.

San Francisco is accustomed to a far higher level of city services than other big cities—more police officers per capita, more fire houses per square mile, the largest senior care facility in the nation—Laguna Honda with 1300 beds; a vast health care system that provides for 100,000 persons with no or little health insurance; a Muni that serves more passengers per mile than any other transit system.

Historically, San Francisco has been bold....converting sand dunes into Golden Gate Park and bringing its drinking water all the way from Yosemite.

And we could afford to do so because, for most of its history, this has been a boom-town—gold rush, silver bonanza, Pan Pacific Exposition, Kaiser's World War II shipyards—high-rises rapidly filled with workers in the 1970s; tourist Mecca, center for the arts and finance, home of the 49ers and the Giants.

Even when Proposition 13 capped property taxes in 1978, the City's growing economy produced revenues ample enough to maintain first-rate city services.

Now our docks are silent and many high-rises beg for tenants. The warehouses and printing plants South of Market have long vanished.

Our streets gape with potholes. Muni is deteriorating—a third of its light rail vehicles broken down. Laguna Honda is old beyond rehabilitation, and the County Jail at San Bruno and the Youth Guidance Center need replacement.

Beyond the physical changes, more importantly, are human ones.

Homelessness seems intractable—one-third debilitated by drugs and alcohol; the rest jobless without income or hope. Can't vouch for it, but it's been reported that some 90,000 households in the City are but two paychecks away from homelessness.

Shockingly, one out of four kids goes to bed hungry here each night.

Will ours be a future that hurts many and diminishes us all?

Instead of an economy that lifts most Americans, we may have one that enriches a small elite and casts many American adrift. Labor Secretary Robert Reich, in his "The Work of Nations," describes the middle class as the anxious class, pointing out, Americans no longer are in the same boat.

"We are in different boats, one sinking rapidly, one sinking more slowly, and the third rising steadily."

Over the years, I've seen countless demonstration—angry, resentful, disdainful. This year, I saw something different in the eyes of young welfare mothers. It was raw fear.

"What's going to happen to us? Where will we find work? How will feed our babies," asked a young woman, holding down two part-time jobs, attending classes at City College, and raising a one-year-old.

If, indeed, Washington cuts deeply, will the city be able to provide general assistance to those denied AFDC? Paid for, how? With higher local taxes? Charity: but cutting police, Muni other services or....or....or what?

There are nightmares in those questions.

Like Freddie on Elm Street, they'll come to reality unless the city can pull together collectively.

If before we could indulge in factionalism and stalemate and substitute scapegoating for straight-forward debate, we clearly no longer can.

If there was money enough for basic municipal services, there no longer is.

If S.F. could avoid dealing with the future because the present seemed comfortable enough, it no longer does.

Now, S. F. must pioneer again. Among the challenges are these:

We must explore whether our crowded public hospitals and under-utilized private hospitals can collaborate to reduce overhead and duplication.

Similarly, whether the City can save \$600 million estimated to replace Laguna Honda by using beds in private facilities.

Private-public partnerships must be considered in our neighborhoods for the preservation of parks, playgrounds, school and other facilities.

Also, the City must work even more closely with its extended family of non-profit providers in offering job training, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, family counseling, the construction of affordable housing.

And business, labor and the neighborhoods must be brought to the table to work together in establishing an economic development plan into the next century to keep enterprises alive and to create jobs.

San Francisco must improve the collection of existing taxes through computerization and enforcement, and it must turn old military bases like Treasure Island and Hunters Point into job-producing assets.

Similarly, it must explore whether its vast land holdings on the Peninsula and the East Bay can be developed without injury to the environment or our neighbors. Regionally, the City must reach beyond its own borders and the work of neighboring jurisdictions on sharing facilities to reduce duplication and cost.

The City Budget must be restructured from its present patchwork of yearly compromises to a true planning document that stretches in increments of five years so those services truly needed can be sustained and those that aren't can be jettisoned.

Muni must be revitalized, its fare and route structures examined, its staffing and work rules evaluated, perhaps even a new governance set up separate from City Hall as an independent district.

The substance of government, in my mind, lies in the subjective....

A spirit of adventure, an openness to new ideas, the will to change, the courage to speak frankly and precisely, the boldness to use the bully pulpit....in other words, leadership.

The structure of the City Charter, to me, is less important than the character of the person who occupies the Mayor's office.

To be sure, Proposition K, the charter reform on the November ballot, will impose clearer lines of authority, greater accountability, but it, too, will be a dead battery unless someone is there to spark it to life.

A Mayor's power depends on the political will he or she brings to the office. Management skills, of course, help get the job done. Additionally, there should be vision for the future (regrettably, few candidates can seriously answer why they're running), understanding of the historic principles of our democracy (regrettably, few do) and connection with the concerns of real people (not special interests).

Difficult standards to be sure, but they should be the measure of expectation for persons who stand for office.

In the past, leadership prevailed, particularly in times of tragedy....

1906, 1989 earthquakes...

Joe Alioto and Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination...

Dianne Feinstein and the assassinations of George Moscone and Harvey Milk and, later, when the AIDS epidemic first emerged, in organizing what became the nation's model for treatment and prevention.

Also, leadership in community prevailed against City Hall...

1934 general strike, in which the whole city, defying City Hall, shut down in support of the dock workers...

1991 Proposition J, successfully pushed all but single handedly by Margaret Brodtkin of Coleman Advocates for Youth and Families in the face of City Hall opposition.

Friends of the Library followed up with its measure to save libraries despite the Mayor.

Despite its reputation as politically dysfunctional, San Francisco does lie on solid bedrock. We have a developed sense of place and community.

We have a history of settling disputes and finding common ground—Yerba Buena Gardens, although it took two decades.

We have a reputation for social justice and tolerance, and, essentially, the City remains liberal, a sanctuary for diversity.

To me, there is much greater common ground in this City than usually imagined.

Business and labor, neighborhoods and downtown, homeowners and renters, whites and persons of color, gay and straight all value the need for more jobs with the payrolls and revenues they generate as key to the future.

All want a city government that is efficient and responsive and even-handed.

All want neighborhoods that are wholesome and sage.

All want good schools that equip youngsters to get ahead.

They may differ as to means, but there is the appearance, at least, of agreement on ends.

Now, more than ever, that commonality needs to be emphasized. The various groups must be energized to work together, brought together to pull together.

It won't be easy. It may not work.

But the City's got to try. It again has to think big.

That means not just the Mayor and other elected officials, but everyone who cares about this City—the Chamber, the Labor Council, neighborhood associations, health providers, non-profits.

The University can be helpful as demonstrated by Professor Legates' Community Outreach Partnership Center assists with housing and community development planning.

That's what I hope the university's Urban Institute will be with San Francisco Together—helping focus attention on issues that most seriously beset the city...assisting people whose viewpoints may differ greatly, but who share a common interest in the City, to come together in a neutral setting to see if, out of their differences, some consensus might emerge.

In this regard, we are working with SPUR in planning a conference on Muni.

Hadley Roff