Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Government History Documentation Project
Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era

William French Smith

EVOLUTION OF THE KITCHEN CABINET, 1965-1973

An Interview Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris
in 1988

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Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West,and the Nation. Oral history is a modern research technique involving an interviewee and an informed interviewer in spontaneous conversation. The taped record is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The resulting manuscript is typed in final form, indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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PREFACE

California government and politics from 1966 through 1974 are the focus of the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series of the state Government History Documentation Project, conducted by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library with the participation of the oral history programs at the Davis and Los Angeles campuses of the University of California, Claremont Graduate School, and California State University at Fullerton. This series of interviews carries forward studies of significant issues and processes in public administration begun by the Regional Oral History Office in 1969. In previous series, interviews with over 220 legislators, elected and appointed officials, and others active in public life during the governorships of Earl Warren, Goodwin Knight, and Edmund Brown, Sr., were completed and are now available to scholars.

The first unit in the Government History Documentation Project, the Earl Warren Series, produced interviews with Warren himself and others centered on key developments in politics and government administration at the state and county level, innovations in criminal justice, public health, and social welfare from 1925-1953. Interviews in the Knight-Brown Era continued the earlier inquiries into the nature of the governor's office and its relations with executive departments and the legislature, and explored the rapid social and economic changes in the years 1953-1966, as well as preserving Brown's own account of his extensive political career. Among the issues documented were the rise and fall of the Democratic party; establishment of the California Water Plan; election law changes, reapportionment and new political techniques; education and various social programs.

During Ronald Reagan's years as governor, important changes became evident in California government and politics. His administration marked an end to the progressive period which had provided the determining outlines of government organization and political strategy since 1910 and the beginning of a period of limits in state policy and programs, the extent of which is not yet clear. Interviews in this series deal with the efforts of the administration to increase government efficiency and economy and with organizational innovations designed to expand the management capability of the governor's office, as well as critical aspects of state health, education, welfare, conservation, and criminal justice programs. Legislative and executive department narrators provide their perspectives on these efforts and their impact on the continuing process of legislative and elective politics.

Work began on the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series in 1979. Planning and research for this phase of the project were augmented by participation of other oral history programs with experience in public affairs. Additional advisors were selected to provide relevant background for identifying persons to be interviewed and understanding of issues to be documented. Project research files, developed by the Regional Oral History Office staff to provide a systematic background for questions, were updated to add personal, topical, and chronological data for the Reagan period to the existing base of information for 1925 through 1966, and to supplement research by participating programs as needed. Valuable, continuing assistance in preparing for interviews was provided by the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, which houses the Ronald Reagan Papers, and by the State Archives in Sacramento.

An effort was made to select a range of interviewees that would reflect the increase in government responsibilities and that would represent diverse points of view. In general, participating programs were contracted to conduct interviews on topics with which they have particular expertise, with persons presently located nearby. Each interview is identified as to the originating institution. Most interviewees have been queried on a limited number of topics with which they were personally connected; a few narrators with unusual breadth of experience have been asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. When possible, the interviews have traced the course of specific issues leading up to and resulting from events during the Reagan administration in order to develop a sense of the continuity and interrelationships that are a significant aspect of the government process.

Throughout Reagan's years as governor, there was considerable interest and speculation concerning his potential for the presidency; by the time interviewing for this project began in late 1980, he was indeed president. Project interviewers have attempted, where appropriate, to retrieve recollections of that contemporary concern as it operated in the governor's office. The intent of the present interviews, however, is to document the course of California government from 1967 to 1974, and Reagan's impact on it. While many interviewees frame their narratives of the Sacramento years in relation to goals and performance of Reagan's national administration, their comments often clarify aspects of the gubernatorial period that were not clear at the time. Like other historical documentation, these oral histories do not in themselves provide the complete record of the past. It is hoped that they offer firsthand experience of passions and personalities that have influenced significant events past and present.

The Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series was begun with funding from the California legislature via the office of the Secretary of State and continued through the generosity of various individual donors. Several memoirs have been funded in part by the California Women in Politics Project under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including a matching grant from the Rockefeller Foundation; by the Sierra Club Project also under a NEH grant; and by the privately funded Bay Area State and Regional Planning Project. This joint funding has enabled staff working with narrators and topics related to several projects to expand the scope and thoroughness of each individual interview involved by careful coordination of their work.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative direction of James D. Hart, Director of the Bancroft Library, and Willa Baum, head of the Office. Copies of all interviews in the series are available for research use in The Bancroft Library, UCLA Department of Special Collections, and the State Archives in Sacramento. Selected interviews are also available at other manuscript depositories.

July 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

Gabrielle Morris
Project Director

REAGAN GUBERNATORIAL ERA PROJECT

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Lawrence deGraaf
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A. Alan Post
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Ed Salzman
Paul Seabury
Alex Sherriffs
Michael E. Smith
A. Ruric Todd
Molly Sturges Tuthill
Raymond Wolfinger

Interviewers

Malca Chall
A.I. Dickman*
Enid Douglass
Steve Edgington
Harvey Grody
Harry P. Jeffrey
Ann Lage
Gabrielle Morris
Sarah Sharp
Julie Shearer
Stephen Stern
Mitch Tuchman

*Deceased during the term of the project

On behalf of future scholars, the Regional Oral History Office wishes to thank those who have responded to the Office's request for funds to continue documentation of Ronald Reagan's years as governor of California. Donors to the project are listed below.

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Porter Sesnon

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*deceased

INTERVIEW HISTORY — William French Smith

Like many other young Americans, William French Smith came to California in the 1940s because it was the exciting place to be. He prospered as an attorney, took an interest in Republican party activities, and in 1964 became acquainted with Ronald Reagan during that year's presidential campaign. From a mutual interest in Barry Goldwater's candidacy, the acquaintance developed into a longstanding personal, business, and political friendship which took Smith to Washington from 1981-1985 as President Reagan's first attorney general.

In this brief interview for the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Project, Smith sketches some high points of the early years of his association with Reagan. Smith's comments touch on the carefully planned 1966 campaign, selection of key governor's appointees, exploratory activities in the 1968 presidential campaign, as well as his views on judicial temperament and his service as a regent of the University of California.

The narrative provides a valuable picture of the activities of the kitchen cabinet, of which Smith is an original member. He recalls that the small nucleus of the group committed themselves in 1965 "to provide a political organization and the necessary funding." Although membership has fluctuated, its core has remained the same throughout Reagan's political career, probably the longest span of allegiance since the term was first used in 1829, in reference to Andrew Jackson's administration. What appealed to the kitchen cabinet about Reagan was "his basic philosophy that everybody agreed with, which he articulated so well. . . You don't sit down and hatch it up. It just develops. There wasn't much discussion of that, because everybody knew what it was."

It is hoped that at a future date, Mr. Smith will have an opportunity to discuss these and other aspects of California government and politics in more detail, as well as his experiences as United States attorney general.

After an initial request for an interview early in the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Project was set aside in the press of his responsibilities as attorney general, Mr. Smith contacted the Regional Oral History Office when he was again based in Los Angeles, and an interview session was arranged for March 16, 1988. A follow-up session was recorded on May 5, 1988, also in Smith's office at the law firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher.

Transcripts of the tapes were lightly edited by the interviewer and sent to Smith for review. He returned the manuscript promptly with minor corrections of name spellings and syntax. He also provided written responses to two additional questions sent with the transcript, pp. 35-36 in the present text.

Gabrielle Morris
Interviewer-Editor

November 1988

WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH
333 South Grand Avenue
Los Angeles, California
90071

Born: Wilton, New Hampshire
University of California
(A.B., summa cum laude, 1939) Phi Beta Kappa
Harvard Law School (LL.B., 1942)
U.S. Naval Reserve, to Lt., 1942-46
Senior Partner, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, Attorneys
Los Angeles, California

Attorney General of the United States, 1981-85

Member, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, Washington, D.C., 1985-

Member, The Board of Regents, University of California, 1968- (Chairman, 1970-72; 1974-75; 1976)

Member, Board of Trustees:

Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, 1967-
The Cate School, Carpinteria, 1971-78;
Northrop Institute of Technology, Los Angeles, 1973-75;
Independent Colleges of Southern California, 1969-74;
California State Colleges at Los Angeles, 1968-72;

Member, Board of Trustees:

Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, 1971-
The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1985-; Chairman, 1987-
National Trustee, National Symphony Orchestra, Washington, D.C., 1975-
The UCLA Foundation, 1972-

Member, Board of Directors:

General Electric Company, New York, 1986-;
National Broadcasting Corporation, New York, 1985-

WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH

Member, Board of Directors:

American International Group, Inc., New York, 1985-
Pacific Telesis Group, Pacific Bell, San Francisco, 1985-
Pacific Lighting Corporation, Los Angeles, 1967-81; 1985-
H. F. Ahmanson & Company, Los Angeles, 1985-
Earle M. Jorgensen Co., Los Angeles, 1974-81, 1985-
Fisher Scientific Group Inc., La Jolla, 1986-
Weintraub Entertainment Group, Inc., 1987-

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RCA Corporation, New York, 1985-1986
Pullman, Incorporated, Chicago, 1979-81

Member, Advisory Board, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 1978-82, 1985-

Member, Advisory Council, Harvard University School of Government, Cambridge, 1977-

Member, Visiting Committee, The Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1986-

Member, Board of Fellows, The Institute of Judicial Administration, Inc., 1981-
National Advisory Committee, International Tennis Foundation and Hall of Fame, Inc., 1985-
National Legal Center for the Public Interest, 1985-
National Board of Advisors, Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), 1985-
Fellows of Section of Litigation, American Bar Association, 1985-
Standing Committee on Law and National Security, American Bar Association, 1985-
Chairman, Planning Committee for the National Conference on Law in Relationship to Terrorism, American Bar Association, 1986-

WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH

Member, The United States Advisory Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs, Washington, D.C., 1971-78
U. S. Delegate, The East-West Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange, Hawaii, 1975-77
Panel on International Information, Education and Cultural Relations, 1974-75 (Frank Stanton Commission to review relationship between the United States Information Agency and the educational and cultural activities of the State Department), Washington, D.C.

Member, Board of Directors:

California Chamber of Commerce, 1963-81 (President, 1974-75)
Los Angeles World Affairs Council, 1970- (President, 1975-78)
Executive Committee, The California Roundtable, 1976-81, 1985-
California Community Foundation, 1980-81, 1985-

Member, Center Theatre Group (Los Angeles Music Center), Los Angeles, 1970-81
Partnership for the Arts in California, Inc., San Francisco, 1971-81
Performing Arts Council, (Los Angeles Music Center), 1978-80
California Foundation for Commerce and Education, 1975-81
Industry Education Council of California, 1973-81
California Congressional Recognition Council, 1957-68 (Chairman, 1957-60, 1964-66)
Harvard Law School Association of Southern California, 1946- (National Vice President and Chairman, 1962-64)

Member, Board of Directors:

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, 1963-72
Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on City Finances, Los Angeles, 1975-81
Mayor's Labor Management Advisory Committee, City of Los Angeles, 1974-81
Business Advisory Committee for the Public Commission on County Government (Los Angeles), 1975-76
Junior Achievement of Los Angeles County, Inc., 1974-81

WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH

Fellow, American Bar Foundation, Chicago

Member, The American Law Institute, Chicago
American Judicature Society, Chicago
American Bar Association
The State Bar of California
Los Angeles County Bar Association

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American Jewish Committee
Human Relations Award 1979

University of California
Outstanding University Service Award 1971

University of California, Los Angeles
Alumnus of the Year Award, 1981

Thomas Jefferson Award,
International Platform Association, 1982

International Association of Police, 1982

Golden Plate Award,
American Academy of Achievement, 1984

Bonaparte Citation for Outstanding Public Service,
The Italian Historical Society of America, 1985

Life Achievement Award, Los Angeles Area Council,
Boy Scouts of America, 1985

Franklin Society Award, The Federation for American
Immigrations Reform, 1986

Honorary Member, Order of the Coif,
University of Southern California, 1983

Honorary Member, Phi Delta Phi International Legal
Fraternity, Washington, D.C., 1983

- - - - - - -

WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH

Chairman, California Delegation to Republican National Convention, 1968; Vice Chairman, 1971, 1976 and 1980

- - - - - - -

Honorary Degrees:

Pepperdine University, Malibu, California
DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois
University of San Diego, California

- - - - - - -

Fraternities:

Pi Sigma Alpha
Pi Gamma Mu

I FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE TO LOS ANGELES

Via Harvard Law School

[Interview 1: March 16, 1988] ##

Morris: So when you were working with Governor [Ronald] Reagan in Sacramento some interesting things were happening. We like to start an oral history interview, as you probably noticed from my notes, with a little bit about how you got to be in that position. Who's Who says you were born in New Hampshire.

Smith: Yes.

Morris: How did you get from New Hampshire to California?

Smith: Well, actually, my family has been in New England since the proverbial 1620s. I was the first of my clan to have the temerity to wander west of the Hudson River, and became an instant black sheep in the process. But there are a lot of reasons for it. Actually, when I graduated from law school at Harvard [1942], Boston was really sort of dead on its rear. There wasn't any apparent future to that city at that time. All of the old industries--textiles, shoes, and so on--were moving out, south and west. Plus the mobility that was created by World War II--everybody was moving everywhere. Plus the fact that I wasn't going to be dictated to by my ancestors, a youthful reaction. And again, the fact I had been out in California earlier.

Morris: You did your undergraduate work--

This symbol indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page 57.

Smith: ---at the University of California [at Berkeley, 1939]. And I had a mother who thought that travel was more educationally valuable than formal education. We heartily encouraged her in that thinking.

Morris: Your brothers and sisters also?

Smith: Two sisters. We had come out after my father died to spend the winters here for two or three years. So all those things put together made me decide at that time that it would be an exciting and interesting thing to go somewhere else. And there's no doubt that the exciting place in those days was California. It still is, but it was then.

Morris: In those days did the major law firms come to the law schools to recruit promising young folks---?

Smith: It was quite different in those days. That was perhaps done a little bit on an informal basis, but nothing like it is now. It was more a matter of your just visiting whatever firms you were interested in, in whatever areas you were interested in. And I was interested in San Francisco and Los Angeles. I had offers from the two large firms up there and two large firms down here. Large firms in those days were quite different from what they are now, because when I joined Gibson Dunn [and Crutcher], which was one of the two here in Los Angeles, I was lawyer number 33. Thirty-three lawyers was a giant law firm at that time, at least in the west.

Morris: I understand, yes. Were you particularly interested in the business aspects of law?

Smith: Well, in terms of locating, I was interested more in the locale, really, and where the dynamism was. It was very clear then, indeed as it is now, that southern California was that place. The most difficult decision I had to make was San Francisco versus Los Angeles. Because at that time, in eastern eyes, the only city west of the Mississippi that had any class was San Francisco. I had a Back Bay Bostonian aunt, right out of the Late George Apley, who when she got over the shock of learning I was coming to California, when I told her I was coming to southern California, said in words I'll never forget, "If you have to go to California, you might at least have the decency to go to San Francisco." [laughter] So in any case, that's how I ended up here.

Morris: Were you interested in politics and government at that point?

Smith: Not particularly. Yes, I think you always---particularly a lawyer, always has rather broad-ranging interests in what goes on about you. So I had had an active citizen's interest in what went on in the political arena, but I never really thought much about getting involved in it myself at that point.

Republican Speakers Bureau, 1952, 1956

Morris: Right. That was the distinction I was thinking about. At what point did you decide to become active? Was it in a specific campaign?

Smith: No, it was probably as much accident as anything else. I had a good friend, a lawyer who was in the same building but not in this firm, who just one day was going to go to what was then called the kitchen cabinet of the speakers bureau of the Los Angeles County Republican Central Committee, and asked me to go with him. So not having had any exposure really to anything political, I decided to go. This was during early 1952, when the Eisenhower campaign was getting underway. As a matter of fact, it was during the primary when the big battle on the Republican side was between Taft and Eisenhower. I got involved in the middle of that one.

Morris: Which side were you on?

Smith: Well, interestingly, at the beginning I didn't really take sides. I was just sort of interested in the contest. I'd always thought a Republican was a Republican, but I think I ran into more battles between the Taft people and the Eisenhower people than I had run into between Republicans and Democrats. [chuckles]

Morris: Was this in the local Republican county committee?

Smith: Oh yes, right here in the county.

Morris: When you say the kitchen cabinet of the speakers bureau--?

Smith: Well, this was just the first time I had ever heard that term. This was just a very small group involved in the speakers bureau. And that's what I became active in. During that period I became heavily involved in speaking and debating.

Morris: For the candidate?

Smith: For the ticket, what turned out to be the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket. We appeared everywhere--live audiences, television, radio, everywhere. And one of my perennial debating opponents was a neighbor of mine in Pasadena, Jimmy Roosevelt, son of FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]. And in those days just his name and accent was enough to be very persuasive to a lot of people.

[message from secretary--takes phone call]

Morris: You were telling me about debating Jimmy Roosevelt. That was after he'd run for governor?

Smith: He ran for governor in 1950 and he was active politically after that. As a matter of fact, the first debate I had was with him alone at the Beverly Hills Hotel. And this all came out of that chance meeting that I went to. Then from there on in we did a lot of that.

Morris: Did the audiences generally come down on your side or Mr. Roosevelt's side, would you say?

Smith: Well, it depends on the audience. The first debate was in Beverly Hills before a very liberal group. I don't think there were probably more than one or two Republicans in the audience. The Roosevelt name and the Roosevelt accent--that was a pretty tough arena for a Republican. But from there on in it depended on the audience. So many of them were radio or television. We used to debate--another opponent was Paul Ziffren, whom I got to know and respect. He was fun to debate with because he was all substance.

One of my debating partners from time to time, interestingly enough, was Howard Jarvis, later of Proposition 13 fame.*

Morris: Really? That far back he was politically active?

Smith: Oh, yes, very much so.

Morris: Was he advocating tax reform at that time?

Smith: No, tax reform was not much of an issue at that point. It was just sort of Republicans versus Democrats.

Morris: Was he then speaking as a spokesman for the Republican party?

Smith: Yes, well, under the auspices of. The arrangements were pretty informal. In other words, if there were a television program or television panel, they would invite people who would represent various viewpoints. You could be affiliated or not affiliated. It was more informal than formal.

Morris: So it wasn't the party organizing these meetings, it was radio and television people in--

Smith: Oh, every which way. Sometimes the party would do it, sometimes other organizations would do it. You did it for the fun of it, and you would respond in kind.

Morris: After the election did you stay active with the Republican party?

*Successful 1978 initiative measure that drastically reduced county property taxes in California.

Smith: I continued to do a certain amount of speaking and debating around. Then I was chairman of the speakers bureau for Millie [Mildred] Younger's campaign for the state senate. That was 1956. Then I sort of drifted away from the political arena. I really was not very active, except peripherally, for I guess eight or ten years.

Morris: Because of personal circumstances?

Smith: Oh, you get involved in other things that tend to supersede. And besides, you know, you go through certain cycles. You've done that and it was interesting, it was exciting. Then you just do other things.

II GETTING TO KNOW RONALD REAGAN

Early Acquaintance, 1964-1965

Morris: Then at what point did you become acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Reagan?

Smith: Well, that started in about 1964-65.

Morris: As his attorney?

Smith: No, we just sort of had a shoulder-rubbing acquaintance which was political and social. In other words, we had several mutual social friends. Also then more and more I became, well, shoulder-rubbing, I guess, in things political.

Morris: Would this be in the Barry Goldwater campaign, or was this more general?

Smith: Well, no, I was not active in that campaign at all. But Reagan was a state co-chairman. I remember, I think I just happened to be in the Ambassador Hotel on the night of the election. He was speaking to a rather dejected group of people. And interestingly enough, the Democrats were celebrating their victory in the same hotel. So it was an interesting juxtaposition. I think that's probably the first time I ever saw him in a political context. That was in November of '64. Then as time went on these relationships just gelled. Then when things began to crank up for the governor's race in 1966, that is when I started getting involved in the political scene again.

Morris: Because Mr. Reagan asked you to?

Smith: No, it was because--again the cycle was just--I had been out of it and I was developing another interest in doing something.

Morris: Does that relate to your own professional time commitments?

Smith: No. It's an extracurricular activity.

Morris: The firm doesn't have a policy? Some law firms encourage people to take part in civic activity.

Smith: We do that. But it's essentially an individual choice. In other words, what you want to do on, in effect, your own time, you do. And the firm certainly encourages all kinds of extracurricular activities, of which political is one.

Morris: Was it the political issues that interested you to become more active?

Smith: Oh, a little of everything. The political issues--the Free Speech Movement was getting underway.

Morris: Had you stayed active in UC as an alumnus?

Smith: Not really. I had become a life member of the alumni association.

Morris: That's a good thing to do.

Smith: That's about the size of it. At that point I really hadn't done very much there.

Morris: But you personally were concerned about the student activism?

Smith: Yes. I didn't agree with what was going on on the campuses. Of course, that became a principal issue in the 1966 campaign. Actually, the University of California--I guess if you had to single out one issue in the campaign that year, it would be the University of California and what was going on on the campuses.

Origin of the Kitchen Cabinet

Morris: Several of the current books on Mr. Reagan refer to you as having been his personal attorney in the sixties.

Smith: Well, I became his personal attorney. Well again, that was sort of a metamorphosis. That happened in 1966. And again, as I say, we had social contacts and political contacts, and relationships just grew.

I think what is now referred to as the kitchen cabinet was not then known by any title. It was just a group of friends that became an executive committee. And I think that group of friends probably may be unique in the annals of American political history, because it started with him, and at least the nucleus has been with

Smith: him ever since. I don't know of any other situation where it has been quite like that, people are both social friends and then became active politically in furthering his candidacy.

Morris: Were you already acquainted with Holmes Tuttle and Henry Salvatori and some of the members of that group?

Smith: Yes, we'd known them--well actually, my wife [Jean] had known Holmes Tuttle for a long, long time, a lot longer than I did. And Henry Salvatori, of course, was an institution in this city for long before then, and so on.

Incidentally, those books you were referring to, I haven't read one yet that was a sympathetic book. Every one of them that I've read has been hostile, critical.

Morris: They tend to be journalistic.

Smith: Same thing. If you find one that's sympathetic, I'd like to know what it is. That's neither here nor there; that's the nature of the beast. But the ones I've read are so far off base--not only from the standpoint of conclusions and opinions--of course, that you would expect--but from the standpoint of facts. I find it extraordinary how far off base they are. Even people like Lou Cannon, who has followed him for years, have been so far off base on so many of the just plain hard facts. I think that's the way history is made, and I don't think there is anything you can do about it. But it's a fact of life.

Morris: That's one reason that we like to come along and talk to people and get their direct recollections of what it was, so that there's more information for future historians to make their judgments on.

Smith: Yes, well, that's part of the game, I guess.

Morris: By the time that you became his attorney had he already decided to run for governor?

Smith: Oh, yes.

Morris: Did he talk to you about that at any point, whether or not he would have a go at the governorship?

Smith: Well, actually, the people who really persuaded him to run for governor were really three people, and they did it back in 1965. It was Holmes Tuttle, Henry Salvatori, and Cy [A.C.] Rubel, who was then the head of Union Oil Company, who unfortunately died within the year. But they were really the nucleus that in the very early stages put it together. I would say that if anybody could take credit for him ultimately becoming the President of the United States, it would be those three. Because they promised to do for

Smith: Reagan the one thing that he could not do without, namely to provide a political organization. They committed to provide a political organization and the necessary funding.

Morris: They were all pretty experienced at that point in how you run a political campaign.

Smith: Well, they were all volunteers. None of them had held any official party position or anything like that.

[Telephone interruption]

Morris: You were talking about the original group that was promising, committing to provide support for Mr. Reagan.

Smith: That group was called, as I mentioned, the executive committee. Nobody had ever heard of the term "kitchen cabinet" as applied to this group. That came much, much later. And interestingly, it applies to a lot of people who never were part of that group in the first place at all. Actually, there are only three--well, survivors isn't really the right word, but three members of the original group who had been with him all the way--left. One is Holmes Tuttle, one is Jack [Jaquelin] Hume, and one is myself. There were others who later on sort of nurtured the idea that they were charter members of this group, when in fact they really didn't join the group until years later.

Morris: And are there some who have kind of fallen away that are no longer as close to Mr. Reagan or as interested in politics?

Smith: Yes, there are some who were involved during that period who just sort of drifted away from the political scene, either for health reasons or for lack of interest or what have you, and so on. But by and large the group has continued on and has been augmented with others as time has gone on.

III THE 1966 GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

Challenge of the Primary

Morris: When you were first talking with Mr. Reagan about running for governor in that '65 period, were some of the discussions already in terms of a possible eventual run for the presidency?

Smith: Oh, no. Good heavens, no, you don't look that far ahead.

Morris: Well, so many people had worked with Mr. Goldwater that I wondered if then it was sort of automatic for them to think of Mr. Reagan as a potential presidential candidate.

Smith: No, during that period you were interested in winning the primary. You weren't thinking about anything else. And winning the primary was a pretty sizable trick, because there were other candidates in the race.

Morris: Did you see Mr. [George] Christopher as a serious challenge?

Smith: Oh, indeed. In fact, I think by and large he was looked upon as a hands-down winner in the early stages.

Morris: Even in Los Angeles?

Smith: Yes, indeed. I think that probably Reagan at that time was looked upon as being a curiosity, a glamorous curiosity, having come out of his background in Hollywood and all. I can remember that during that period Life Magazine, as it used to be ran an article on him. It wasn't a cover or anything like that, it was just a couple of pages. The other candidates--one is a friend of mine, Lock [Laughlin] Waters, and Christopher, too--were highly irritated with Life Magazine that they would give this kind of publicity to a candidate, which was free publicity.

Morris: Right. And who they saw as not really a candidate.

Smith: Well, they had to pay attention. He was a candidate and he was known, but he was a curiosity. Nobody really had come out of that milieu before and with no previous background run for the highest office in the state.

Morris: We did have George Murphy as United States Senator by then.

Smith: Well, let's see. Murphy was elected in 19--

Morris: He was elected in 1964.

Smith: Yes, I guess he was elected in '64.

Morris: But it sounds like you don't recall him as being--

Smith: Now, wait a minute. Was that '64? Yes, it had to be, because he ran out in 1970. But that's true, he did come out of that milieu. Well, he sort of--the Democrats probably lost that race rather than his winning it, because you know, Pierre Salinger came out here smoking cigars as a carpetbagger and just did not sell. So George Murphy was a very attractive person. It's interesting you raise that. I had never really tied--I hadn't thought about that period, as to how George Murphy could have gotten elected at a time when the Republicans took one of the worst beatings they had ever taken in a national election. That wasn't so much anti-Republican as it was Kennedy's death and--

General Campaign Executive Committee ##

Morris: --'66 campaign. Did you work on the primary campaign?

Smith: It was just a group of people that again were half social and half political. It was hard to separate the two during that period. The first official capacity that I had, if you can call it that, was as a member of what was called the executive committee of the campaign. That was made up essentially of the same group that later became known as the kitchen cabinet.

Morris: Right. And was this during the primary?

Smith: No, not during the primary, this was after the primary. It was not formalized before the primary.

Morris: Okay, that's interesting. It was formalized during the general election campaign, when Mr. Reagan was the Republican candidate.

Smith: Well, let me add this. One of the reasons it became formalized was this: primarily because of Holmes Tuttle, the Reagan people did the one thing that was really politically smart and which so often is not done, and that is the minute that it became obvious that Reagan was going to win in the primary, they went to the Christopher people, the principal opposition, and threw their arms around them and asked them to join in the campaign. And they all agreed to do that. And that was a very wise thing to do. I think they did it almost on election night. In other words, they made a positive step towards developing unity. And that worked; it was very successful. So the Reagan group merged with the Christopher group, and that group was named the executive committee of the campaign. It included such people as Leonard Firestone, Taft Schreiber of MCA [Music Corporation of America], and Arch Monson of San Francisco.

Morris: Mr. Schreiber had been associated with Mr. Reagan in other ventures though, hadn't he?

Smith: Well, yes, in the sense that MCA had represented him in the past.

Morris: Were the Christopher people as active as the original Reagan people had been?

Smith: They worked very closely together. As a matter of fact, this group just ran the campaign. This group was made up almost 50-50 of Reagan and Christopher people.

Morris: And it sounds like it was pretty much separate from the Republican State Central Committee. Is that accurate?

Smith: Well, that's always the case. In other words, the candidate has his own campaign group, and you work sort of hand-in-glove with the permanent party organization.

Morris: But in the general campaign they were all totally working for the statewide candidates?

Smith: Oh sure, absolutely.

Morris: But was there an official liaison person from the Republican State Central Committee, or was one of the executive committee by chance a member of the state central committee?

Smith: I think Ed Mills was a member of the state central committee. But those things sort of work out. The formal lines or arrangements don't make as much difference as the personalities and how they work together.

Fundraising

Morris: Did you have a specific job as a member of the executive committee, or did you just discuss policy?

Smith: Well, there was a lot of fundraising, of course. And we had Spencer-Roberts [Co., Stuart Spencer and Bill Roberts], who were the professional managers of the campaign. They handled all the nuts and bolts and the executive committee handled the policy. But it's essentially--you know, the candidate makes such a difference in this scene. He's the fellow who's out making the speeches and getting around and attending the fundraisers, although Ronald Reagan never liked to attend those fundraisers.

Morris: Really?

Smith: No. I don't blame him. You know, it's a necessary part of campaigning, but he never really enjoyed that very much. He didn't like to ask people for money. So the rest of us did that.

Morris: On a one-to-one basis?

Smith: No, he wouldn't do it on a one-to-one basis. What he would do would be, he would go to a fundraising group and speak to them and all of that, but then leave it to others to actually--

Morris: --to actually extract the checks.

Smith: Yes, extract the checks, that's right.

Morris: That's interesting, because it has come to be, I gather, that individual candidates do spend a lot of time in individual sessions with prospective major donors.

Smith: Well, he never liked that. He never liked to do that. He just didn't like to ask people for money.

Morris: Did you do anything about going after small contributions?

Smith: Oh, sure.

Morris: Or did you get enough money from the major donors?

Smith: Oh, no. It's very important to get a lot of money from small donors, for two reasons. You raise a lot of money that way. The second reason is you get people interested. So the wider the group contributing, the better.

Morris: Was direct mail being used at that point?

Smith: Oh, sure.

Morris: It's come to be fairly sophisticated.

Smith: Well, it wasn't as professional then as it is now. But it was certainly a fundraising device that was widely used.

Morris: It was generally being used by lots of candidates? It wasn't something that--

Smith: Well, I guess. I don't know. But we certainly did it, for the two reasons that I mentioned.

Basic Political Philosophy

Morris: In your recollection, what worked particularly well in that campaign?

Smith: Well, the candidate. He was something new on the scene. He had a definite--I was going to say glamour. Probably mystique is a better term. He was really quite different from anything that anybody had seen on the scene before, including George Murphy. George Murphy was more of a hail-fellow-well-met kind of candidate. Reagan had a certain something, which he still has, which is indefinable. But it was very appealing to people. Plus the fact he had a message that was well-received by large numbers.

Morris: And this was a message that the executive committee was in agreement with?

Smith: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, it was his basic political philosophy that everybody agreed with, which he articulated so well.

Morris: That had been part of a social relationship in sitting around at dinner, talking about the problems of the world?

Smith: You know, you develop a basic political philosophy. You don't sit down and hatch it up. It just develops. There wasn't very much discussion of that, because everybody knew what it was. I suppose the blueprint would have been referred to as "the speech." That was something that so many people were subscribing to. In other words, its time had come, after all the years since Roosevelt.

Morris: I'm interested in how, if you could describe any more the essence of Mr. Reagan as a candidate. You said Murphy was more hail-fellow-well-met. But Mr. Reagan is generally considered to be somebody who does relate to people very well. But he was not terribly comfortable, you're saying, in all these large campaign meetings?

Smith: Oh, he was comfortable. But like all of us—I suppose in a sense we're all this way—you don't like to ask people for money. And he particularly didn't like to ask people for money. It wasn't that he was uncomfortable. He would make great presentations before various groups. But he just didn't want to then ask them for the money. That's when Holmes Tuttle and the rest of us would jump in and do the asking. And that's perfectly normal. I mean, there's nothing particularly unusual about that. Some candidates will ask themselves, but a lot of them don't want to. And he particularly didn't want to. But he didn't need to.

Morris: He didn't need to. Well, that saves a lot of time that way.

Smith: That's right.

Democrats' Strategy

Morris: Were there any weak spots that you recall in the campaign? Any points when you thought that Pat [incumbent governor, Edmund G., Sr.] Brown was closing in?

Smith: No. The Democrats did everything wrong after the primary, which was something we were very grateful for. For one thing, they had campaigned entirely against George Christopher, because they assumed that Christopher was going to win this election hands down. They hadn't campaigned really against Ronald Reagan at all. They thought he was a dumb actor that was just sort of on the scene, maybe, in a joke. That overstates it, but that's the idea. So when he won by a million votes—well, I don't know what the votes were in the primary, but when he won the primary—they were just caught off base. They never expected this result.

And so they immediately tried to paint him—to use the term the "right-wing extremist." They even came out with a pamphlet that looked like a Time magazine cover. The title was, "Ronald Reagan, right-wing extremist." So they started to develop this theme. They even ran a television ad, which I think has got to be the all-time classic in terms of what not to do, and that was where they showed a little girl talking to her father, I think it was. And the father was saying, "And remember, it was an actor who killed Abraham Lincoln." Whoever authorized that ad should get some kind of an award. We couldn't believe it, but we loved every minute of it. They finally took it off, and we were very sorry about that. But all of this just completely backfired, because when Reagan goes on television and makes a speech or what have you, one impression he does not create is of being an extremist of any kind. So that campaign just fell absolutely flat. And by the time they realized that it was just almost too late, and they couldn't do anything right.

Smith: Meanwhile Pat Brown was saddled with the University of California, which is where all kinds of depredations were taking place. The public was reacting hostilely to that and the fact that nobody was doing anything about it. Pat Brown was the president of the board of regents of the University of California, and therefore could be held responsible for what was going on on the campuses. All of these things just added up.

IV TRANSITION TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Major Appointments Task Force

Morris: During the fall campaign, as it kicked in and it looked like Reagan was for sure going to be elected, did you start with this executive committee, helping to put together some plans?

Smith: Well, then the executive committee became the same group, essentially, that formed itself into what we called the major appointments task force. Cy Rubel was the original chairman of that. But about two weeks after it was formed with him as chairman, unfortunately he went into the hospital, really for a minor operation, and had a reaction to something and died.

Morris: Oh, that soon?

Smith: That soon.

Morris: Oh, my goodness.

Smith: So then I became chairman of it. That's when I guess I spent some of the busiest times I've ever spent. I just enlisted one of my colleagues here, Dean Dunlavey.

Morris: As your assistant?

Smith: As my assistant, and we went to work on this. It was really a very hectic time.

Morris: Did you sort of have to stop doing your law-firm commitments?

Smith: Just about. Because there are a million people who want jobs, and there are a million people who are qualified for it. But where those two overlap--it's a very narrow band.

Morris: Were the queries about a possible appointment coming to you at your office?

Smith: Oh, by the hundreds. If I were going to do it over again, I don't know whether we would or not--we didn't have any professional headhunters. Actually, at that time there weren't that many headhunting organizations. Now there are, but there weren't then. But we did it ourselves.

Morris: Again, the literature indicates that there were--I don't know whether it was personnel firms, but some management consultants or accounting firms that were called on.

Smith: Yes, we did call on them for aid and assistance here and there on sort of an ad hoc basis.

Morris: Right. To look for people for an individual job?

Smith: Yes. Or what they would do, they would volunteer people, names and so on. Or maybe they'd do some research on some people. But we never turned that function over to them. We handled it ourselves.

Morris: Were there some criteria that, you know--what were you looking for, and did Mr. Reagan have some special kinds of requests?

Smith: Criteria really don't help very much during times like that. It's a matter of finding the individual to fit the particular position, and there's just a million considerations. A lot of them, of course, have to do with who was sponsoring individuals. You have to balance all the political forces that come to play with getting the right people. We recognized from the very beginning that the important thing was to get well-qualified people to take the principal positions, because if you didn't do that, you're asking for trouble all the way down the line. So we took some extra time to do that. By and large we succeeded pretty well.

Morris: How much of the sorting and interviewing was done in Los Angeles through your office and how much was done in that temporary office that was in Sacramento?

Smith: Most of it was done down here. Almost all of it was done down here. I'm talking now about the principal positions, not the--you know, after the appointments office was set up up there and so on, then they just took it over. But I'm talking about the cabinet-level positions. They were all done down here, and we did the interviewing, the major appointments task force did the interview, either as a group or in sort of subcommittees, although it was never formalized.

Governor's Staff

Morris: Who did the actual governor's office people, you know, as opposed to the cabinet? The people who were going to work in the governor's office with Mr. Reagan.

Smith: Well, the only key there was the executive secretary. That was already decided, because the governor asked his then campaign manager--

Morris: [Philip] Battaglia?

Smith: Phil Battaglia, yes, to take over that spot.

Morris: That was sort of something that Mr. Reagan had decided and talked with Mr. Battaglia about?

Smith: Well, he had worked with him during the campaign, so it was just sort of a natural for that relationship to continue on.

Morris: That was just sort of taken for granted by your group and Mr. Reagan's?

Smith: Well, it wasn't taken for granted. The governor just asked him at one point to continue on in that function.

Morris: Kind of young for an executive secretary, wasn't he?

Smith: I don't think so.

Morris: He was about thirty-two.

Smith: Well, let's see--yes, somewhere around there, early thirties. But for that kind of a job that's not too unusual.

Morris: In terms of stamina, the kind of--

Smith: That's what you need, that's right.

Morris: I have a list here that I got from the governor's papers at the Hoover Institution, and it includes George Deukmejian as chairman of a legislative task force. He was then in the state senate. And I wondered if he would have met with your committee at all?

Smith: Yes, we met with him.

Morris: Was he offering some suggestions on what you need to do if you're going to be doing work in state government?

Smith: Oh, sure. We got--where did these names come from? [referring to list from Hoover Institution] Oh, this is northern California.

Morris: Right. That's interesting that there's a large list of people from northern California, and it just says southern California major appointments. I guess everybody knew--

Smith: Well, really, it was southern California where all the decisions were made. This is probably one of those efforts to get everybody involved. We did that. We had much broader groups, a little like a delegation to a convention where you'd set something up to provide input. Not only to provide input, which you want, but also to provide the feeling that everybody is involved and is doing something.

Morris: And feels important.

Smith: Feels important, yes, exactly. Interesting down here: "Staff hiring minor, Henry Shine, Mike Deaver, staff." [chuckles] How times have changed.

Morris: Yes. It sounds like there's kind of a hierarchy of appointments that needed to be made and staffing that needed to be done.

Smith: My guess is that probably Tom Reed put this together. He always loved to write memoranda and put things in writing. I'd be surprised if you'd ever find anything like that about what happened down here. Because we were not big on formal organization, but we were big on de facto performance.

Morris: I see, getting things done. Was Tom Reed also sort of an automatic decision, that he would move from the campaign into the governor's office?

Smith: No, that was not automatic. He headed the campaign in San Francisco. I mean, he was the campaign chairman for San Francisco. I guess he just sort of gravitated to that job. But that was done after all the major spots were filled. Why he would want it, I don't have any idea. That's a nasty job.

Morris: The appointments function?

Smith: Any appointments function is hard work. But that was all done later. No date on this.

Morris: As I say, it came from a folder labelled "1966-67 Transition."

Smith: Yes, well, that's probably about right.

Morris: This is a photocopy of a photocopy.

for staff info only

ORGANIZATION

Mr. Reagan — secretary: Judy Danko

Philip M. Battaglia, Executive Secretary — secretary: Polly Wyant
Dirk C. Eldredge, Assistant Secretary
Curtis Patrick, Special Assistant

LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

George Deukmejian, Chairman — secretary:
Legislative Task Force
Richard Woodward

STATE RE-ORGANIZATION STUDY

Caspar Weinberger, Chairman

MAJOR APPOINTMENTS - STATE

A. C. Rubel (Los Angeles)

MAJOR APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE/NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Leland Kaiser, Chairman — secretary: Carol Broer
Thomas Reed, Co-Chairman
Jaquelin Hume, Co-Chairman

Robert Barnum	Robert Monagan
Theron Bell	Don Mulford
John Bohn	Arch Monson
Roger Chandler	Dr. J. L. Price
Vernon Cristina	Trevor Roberts
Peter Cook	Lloyd Stolich
John de Heras	N. Connor Templeton
James Halley	Mrs. Mark Valory
Marco Hellman	Caspar Weinberger
Josiah Knowles	Mrs. Wayne Wentner
Lloyd Lowery	

WELFARE TASK FORCE

Lt. Governor-Elect Robert Finch
c/o Norman Morrison
Crocker-Citizens National Bank Bldg.
400 Capitol Mall

STAFF HIRING - MINOR

Henry Shine
Mike Deaver, Staff

PRESS

Clyde Beane — secretary:

SCHEDULE

Pat Gamon

ORGANIZATION - cont'd

SECURITY

Art Van Court - assigned to Ronald Reagan secretary: Rene Sims (213) 388-9564
A. E. Neilson
Curtis Patrick

PACIFIC TELEPHONE

Lyle Moore, Pacific Telephone State Government Officer
(permanently assigned to Ronald Reagan)
Bob Tarbut

LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS

Walter Dahl

INAUGURAL BALL COMMITTEE

Sandy Quinn
Pat Gamon
Jim Caswell
Dana Reed

(Inaugural Ball Committee will be located in downtown offices separate from those of the Governor-Elect. Phone # not available yet.)

Smith: Most of those, I think--all of the members of the then executive committee in northern California are on there. But there are a lot of other names that are made up of, I'm sure, party people and all that.

Morris: Well, your thought was that it might have been put together by Tom Reed, who knew the northern California situation.

Smith: And loved to write memos.

Caspar Weinberger: State Reorganization Study, Finance Director Appointment

Morris: I see, okay. There's also Caspar Weinberger as chair of the state reorganization study.

Smith: Yes. That was something that later became part of what was called the businessman's task force.*

Morris: How did that relate to the existing Little Hoover Commission, which was part of the state apparatus of which Weinberger was chairman?**

Smith: It was separate apart from that, although it was related. This was a novel approach. Little Hoover Commissions all around study and make recommendations. Some of what they do is enacted in a law; most of it isn't. And that's true at the national level as well as the state level. The thrust of the businessman's task force was to have top-level executives in the private sector go into government on a strictly volunteer basis, not paid, and from an outside viewpoint determine how the various agencies and departments can more efficiently function, using private-sector organization as a standard. And of course that was the precursor to what turned out to be the Grace Commission report, federally.

Morris: I was interested in the question of Mr. Weinberger as a potential Department of Finance director.

Smith: He was a candidate. He was a candidate, and it's fascinating to think now that he was considered at the very beginning to be too liberal. He was looked upon as being a liberal Republican.

Morris: By the appointments committee?

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* Governor's Survey on Efficiency and Cost Control, 1967-1968.
** Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy.

Smith: No, no, not by the appointments committee, by the political forces that be.

Morris: That being the state Republican committee?

Smith: No, it's hard to formalize it. You just know that if you go in a certain direction there are going to be complaints or criticisms or what have you. And when you start out you want to minimize those.

Morris: Is this because of things he had done when he was chairman--he was Republican state chairman from 1962 to 1964.

Smith: No, it's just image. In other words, he was a San Francisco Republican and had been active in the past, had been a legislator. And he had the image in the eyes of some of being a liberal Republican. And too liberal for the likes of a lot of other people who were on the conservative side.

Morris: I see.

Smith: That was not the only consideration. It's always compared to whom. By the time a year or so had passed, Cap somehow had lived that one down. [chuckles] In view of what's happened since, it's a little hard to understand how he had the image in the first place.

Morris: Well, did he live it down because he's reported to be a very bright fellow, or just he worked hard?

Smith: I just think it was passage of time. And the fact that when the administration was up there and settled in, he became better known to all the people involved. And he is very bright, very able, and actually was ideal for that spot. I'm sorry we didn't do it to start.

Morris: Gordon Paul Smith--had he had some experience with public administration or government organization?

Smith: Not enough. But he was with the leading management-consultant firm, Booz Allen and Hamilton, and headed their office here in southern California. He had done some first-rate work for them and came very, very highly recommended for what he did. He just didn't fit into the political scene too well, as so often happens. Businessmen very often do not do well in government. Among other things, they can't put up with the stuff and nonsense you have to put up with in government.

Morris: The stuff and nonsense being the fact that so many things have to go to the legislature?

Smith: No, being because--and this is true in Washington as it is here--that it isn't often that you can deal with the merits of a problem. A businessman deals with the merits of a problem. In politics and government, you're lucky if you ever get to the merits of a problem. It's that kind of thing, I think, that throws people without government experience off the track.

Cabinet Members vis-a-vis Office Staff

[Interview 2: May 5, 1988] ##

Morris: So where I would like to start today is with, when the committee was advising Mr. Reagan on potential appointees to the gubernatorial administration, I wonder if anybody talked to you about joining the governor's administration?

Smith: Oh yes, I was asked to do various things. But the timing wasn't right for me to leave what I was doing and to go to Sacramento. I just never really seriously considered doing that.

Morris: The attorney general's job in California--

Smith: That's elected.

Morris: Right. What kinds of spots did they think you might be interested in?

Smith: Well, nobody really asked me to fill those spots, other than the governor, early on. And I just early made it definite that it just wouldn't be possible for me to go to Sacramento on any permanent, full-time basis. And that sort of disposed of that question.

Morris: Well, that's interesting, because a couple of people have told us that Mr. Tuttle looked at them and said, "It's your duty to go to Sacramento."

Smith: Well, there were all kinds of discussions on the subject. But I thought I could be more valuable doing what I was doing anyway.

Morris: Helping to screen people for appointments.

Smith: Well, that and various other things that we did. But I was going full speed ahead in the law practice here, and it just didn't fit for me to leave all of that and to pull up stakes and to go to Sacramento.

Morris: By then you were a senior partner in the firm?

Smith: Yes, I was.

Morris: It's interesting, looking at the staff list in '66 and '67, a number of them were relatively young fellows, in their early thirties. I wondered if there was any concern that maybe they were too young to take on major responsibilities.

Smith: When you say "staff," are you talking about cabinet officials?

Morris: No, and that's an interesting point, how you distinguish those. I was thinking of people like Phil Battaglia and Michael Deaver.

Smith: Well, Michael Deaver didn't really surface until much later.

Morris: Well, I find him--this is the 1967 governor's office executive and staff list.

Smith: He could have been there, but he would be one of a whole ton of people. I don't think I'd ever laid eyes on him until much later.

Morris: He was Bill Clark's assistant. Bill Clark was cabinet secretary, and Michael Deaver was an assistant.

Smith: Well, he was executive secretary.

Morris: Before Bill Clark was executive secretary he was cabinet secretary.

Smith: Is that what he was?

Morris: Right. This list is from the Hoover file.

Smith: Oh. Well then, that ought to tell the story, I guess. Yes, I guess he was cabinet secretary while Battaglia was executive secretary. Then when he left in August of '67, that's when Bill Clark stepped up.

Morris: Right.

Smith: And I just don't remember who Bill Clark's deputies were.

Morris: Michael Deaver and a fellow named Charles Tyson.

Smith: Oh, Chuck Tyson, yes.

Morris: Right, in the cabinet secretary office.

Smith: See, we didn't do much with staff people. Our prime concern was with cabinet officials. The secretary of this, that, and the other. You know, the director of Motor Vehicles and the Public

Smith: Utilities Commissioners and people like that. The actual governor's staff was pretty well put together by whoever was the executive secretary.

Morris: Right. And I was interested that Phil Battaglia had been campaign chairman in '66.

Smith: That's right, he was. The professional firm that ran the campaign was Spencer-Roberts. Bill Roberts and Stu Spencer. Battaglia came in as--

Morris: Liaison to Spencer-Roberts, or just in charge of keeping all the--?

Smith: I don't know what his title was.

Morris: Title was director.

Smith: Maybe it was campaign director or something like that. And that's the way that they worked, because he was full-time, and he was paid, as I recall. But he wasn't professional the way--

Morris: So it was sort of the chores of keeping things going rather than the policy-making.

Smith: Yes, nuts and bolts, primarily.

Morris: Is that the distinction also between the people in the governor's office who answer the phones and get out the reports and things like that, as opposed to the cabinet of appointed agency secretaries?

Smith: Well, the executive secretary is primarily responsible for handling and doing whatever is necessary to aid and assist the governor. That's their function. It was like the White House staff. The cabinet secretaries are responsible for running the various departments, and that's quite a different thing, although they're obviously--

Morris: More responsibility and visibility.

Smith: Yes, depending upon what issues are hot at the moment, in terms of visibility.

Morris: Well, it's an interesting point. I think you were interviewed by Dr. Gary Hamilton at UC Davis for a study he was doing on Governor Reagan's administration, comparing it with Governor Jerry Brown?*

* See Governor Reagan, Governor Brown. A Sociology of Executive Power, Gary G. Hamilton and Nicole Woolsey Biggart, Columbia University Press, New York, 1984.

Smith: I was?

[Interviewer's error. Mr. Smith was not interviewed for the study mentioned.]

Morris: The point that he makes in writing up his research is that from the sociologist's point of view, there developed during the administration a certain amount of tension and some conflict between the agency secretaries and the governor's staff.

Smith: Well, that's always the case.

Morris: Is it?

Smith: Oh, sure. That's true everywhere. That's just almost by definition. It's true in Washington, and it's true in Sacramento, because people sort of come at things from a different angle. And the director of finance will have programs and policies that he wants to implement, and all the other cabinet officers have the same. The governor very often has to--and of course there are budgetary considerations. So much money, resources can be made available to this agency or that agency or this project or that project. And so there's always--then the governor has to--

Morris: Mediate.

Smith: --preside over all that. And of course a lot of that routine work is done by his staff. So that's just part of our system, that you're going to have tensions that exist.

Morris: That's an interesting point. Was that a factor in Phil Battaglia's departure as executive secretary?

Smith: No.

Morris: That there was some question about his management style.

Smith: Well, that's a pretty broad term. But I really can't get into that. I can't get into that subject.

Morris: As an attorney, or because you weren't that close to him.

Smith: No, just because it was a sensitive situation.

Morris: Well, the media mostly dealt with the sensitive situation, but there have been some other questions, that he was maybe too protective of Mr. Reagan. People who needed to see him couldn't get to see him.

Smith: Well, there was probably some of that. Of course, that's another eternal complaint which always exists.

Morris: Yes.

Smith: But it's true, his management style did not develop too much love and affection.

V ROLE OF THE KITCHEN CABINET

Reagan's Speeches

Morris: We also talked last time about some of the things that the kitchen cabinet was able to be of assistance on. The other day I was reading over Mr. Reagan's inaugural speech. And I wondered if that was the sort of thing that you long-time friends and advisors would sit around and discuss with him, and toss around ideas?

Smith: Well, yes and no. We would certainly do that, and he would seek out ideas. But to a really surprising degree he wrote his own speeches. When I say "wrote," he usually put them on 3x5 cards. Very often he would come up with things that none of us had ever heard before. People talk about his reading scripts, and [say that] separated from his cue cards he would be helpless. That just has never been so. It's true, I would say that he probably, at least when he was here--now in Washington the time pressures are such that it's quite different--but I suspect that probably he actually put together more speeches that he actually delivered himself than would be normal for that office.

Of course, you have to remember, too, he had been making speeches for a long, long time. He had done it as a matter of livelihood, in effect, when he was with General Electric and all that. So it's not too surprising that he would have quite a repertoire of speeches and favorite approaches and so on.

Morris: Well, the famous "cut, squeeze, and trim" phrase--was that one that surfaced in the general discussion?

Smith: I don't know where it came from, but it's just a classic example of the kind of thing he'd come up with. He's good at that. He's really good at that.

Morris: Yes, it has a very catchy cadence to it.

Smith: And I remember one time—I can't remember what, it must have been '76, it could have been '80—when a couple of professors of English, one of whom I knew, came up with what I thought was an absolutely superb conclusion to an acceptance speech. Extremely well done, the kind of thing I would have latched on to. And I took it up and I showed it to him.

He read it and he said, "That really is very good, but it's not I." And so, as you know, he crafted his own. Not only his acceptance speech, but the speech that he gave in Kansas City in 1976 after he lost the nomination, but where he got that tremendous acclaim. And he delivered that great speech on Thursday night. That was entirely his own. He did not use what I thought was a superb conclusion. Of course, needless to say, the one he did use was his own and very, very effective.

Morris: Did he use some of the idea or approach that the English professor had prepared?

Smith: Not at all. Totally different; totally different. He didn't use it in any way, shape or form.

Morris: Right. He already had something working in his own mind.

Smith: Yes. He knew what he wanted to say, and he produced it himself.

Morris: Well, the '66-'67 inaugural speech has a number of rather formal governmental issues in it. Like there's a need for property tax reform—

Smith: Now, wait a minute. The '66—

Morris: The first gubernatorial inaugural speech talks about things like property tax reform and the state needed a crime technological foundation. Those sounded like fairly technical public administration kinds of things.

Smith: Oh, well, sure, there would be advisors and specialists in various areas who would contribute to that kind of thing. I don't mean he just made his speeches up out of the air. You know, he had a good deal of assistance and a good deal of raw material to draw from. Although you read those things now and it sounds like they're technical or highly special. It depends on the context of the times. For example, at that time property tax relief was on everybody's lips. It finally came to fruition with Proposition 13, but it had been talked about for a long, long time, the need for property tax reform. It was a current issue.

The Governor's Mansion

Morris: There was also, early on, the governor's mansion question. Do you remember when it became clear that the old existing governor's mansion was going to be inappropriate for Mr. and Mrs. Reagan?

Smith: Well, they lived there for a while, a few months. I knew they had a few dinners and so on that we all went to. I kind of liked the old building.

Morris: It has a lot of charm.

Smith: But it was true, the thing that concerned them was the fact that it was a fire trap. And in a very real sense it was. They just didn't want to live in it, and that's very understandable.

Morris: Were there some questions that the neighborhood maybe was not quite what it should be?

Smith: I don't think it was that so much. It's too bad the neighborhood did develop the way it did. You've got that Mansion Inn across the street.

Morris: American Legion on the next corner.

Smith: It's pure commercial, and that's unfortunate. But I think it was really the age and the condition and the threat that did it.

Morris: Were you part of the group that went out looking for something that might do?

Smith: Yes, that's right. We had one of the leading real estate people in Sacramento, I can't remember his name, who became very closely allied with the so-called group. He ultimately found the house that they used. Things were done to fix it up and to lease it.

Morris: Lease it rather than buy it?

Smith: Yes, it was leased as I recall. Yes, it was leased.

Morris: That's useful, because again the reports in the literature are that the house was bought for the Reagans.

Smith: I don't think so. I think we leased it. But I will have to defer. I just can't--that was twenty years ago and I just can't remember whether it was bought or leased. My top-of-the-head recollection is that is was leased, but I could be wrong.

Morris: Well, that has some logic to it. But there had also been for some time talk that there should be a more official governor's residence, and I wondered if the group were thinking about finding appropriate housing for the Reagans--

Smith: We did that.

Morris: Right, think of finding something which could then be donated to the state for a governor's mansion.

Smith: Yes, we did that.

Morris: You did donate?

Smith: It was something called the--what was it? We wrestled with the doggoned title for a long time, because it was so awkward. But something like Committee for Residence for California Governors--I've still got some of the stationery around here somewhere--which was in effect headed by Leland Kaiser in San Francisco, who raised money to buy this beautiful site out in Carmichael, eleven acres overlooking the American River. It was just a knock-out of a site. And again, you'll have to check the records on this. We bought the site.

Morris: And there was a state competition for design.

Smith: We donated it to the state. We wanted to donate it with a condition, but under the law we couldn't do that. So we had to donate it with the request, what it amounted to, that it be used for this purpose. And of course the house was built--I can't remember who paid for the house. Probably a legislative appropriation paid for it. But we paid for the land and we gave the land to them free and clear. The house was underway and the architecture was determined by the Reagans and all of that.

Morris: The Reagans had a voice in deciding which plan to pick?

Smith: Yes, that's right. Then I can't remember when construction was started, but it was finished. They were obviously never able to move into it. Then Jerry [Governor Edmund G., Jr.] Brown came in, and the thing was already up at that time. Of course, he refused to move into it, and it lay fallow.

Morris: For one bachelor fellow with his blue Plymouth it would seem to be a large establishment. So the plan originally--the committee there had hoped that once the site was chosen the building would be done in time for the Reagans to live in it.

Smith: Well, as soon as possible. I don't think anybody was really optimistic enough to think that it was going to be up in time for them to spend much time in it. But the idea was really to provide

a residence for California governors, period. And as always, with anything like that, you run into controversy. And the controversy was whether the governor's residence should be downtown or should be that far out. A lot of legislators wanted it downtown so they had easy access to the governor. Others, including the Reagans, thought the idea of being that far out in that beautiful a location was just vastly preferable. So that went on and on and on. It's one of the great ironies that, despite the fact that that spot was donated and the house was built, no governor yet has lived in it. I don't know what it's being used for now, or whether they sold it. Maybe they sold it.

Morris: I think the Deukmejians suggested it be sold.

Smith: Well, they did not want to live in it. I don't know what their reason was. It was a beautiful house in a beautiful location.

Morris: Well, out along the river is exceptionally pretty.

Smith: We were told it was the most beautiful location available anywhere in Sacramento at the time. I believe that, because it was certainly a knock-out. But whoever would have thought that after all that effort and all that time and all that money, the thing would just go unaborning, or whatever the word is.

Businessmen's Task Force; Legislative Process

Morris: Right, it is curious. What kinds of other things did the kitchen cabinet involve itself in?

Smith: Well, I told you about the major appointments task force, which we call it. And then there was this project. This is not in order of occurrence. And then another one was the businessman's task force, which was an idea that was developed here and later used to produce the Grace Commission report in Washington, where a group of businessmen, high executives, would volunteer their time to go into government and to see how things could be improved in terms of just plain management efficiency. And they produced a report which you've probably seen somewhere.

Morris: Right. It was very useful in our work.

Smith: Yes, I would think.

Morris: It goes department by department.

Smith: Right. I think they implemented some very high percentage of the recommendations of that report. As I remember there was something like 1,600 recommendations and they implemented 1,200 or 1,300, something like that.

Morris: Right. The guy from Chicago who was the consultant on it [Warren King] said it was more recommendations than any other project that he's worked on.*

Smith: Yes, that were actually implemented.

Morris: Well, and he made the distinction that some the governor can do by executive order, but there are a lot of recommendations that take legislative--

Smith: That require legislation. And that's what really bogs so many things down.

Morris: Were there some legislators that you were comfortable with talking to about some of these things that needed doing?

Smith: Oh, sure. But that process is so unwieldy.

Morris: The task force process?

Smith: No, no, the legislative process is so unwieldy. And again, it's nobody's fault. It was just part of the system where you have the separation of powers arrangement and where you have that many people involved. You have two houses, you have politics involved, and you have money involved, resources and so on. I suppose in one sense you could say it's amazing anything gets done.

Morris: Mr. Deukmejian carried the governor's tax legislation. Was that coincidence because he was on a tax committee, or were there people who had become acquainted with him?

Smith: No, he was just--what was he, majority leader then?

Morris: No, but he was in the state senate.

Smith: He was in the state senate, but he was--

Morris: He was on the judiciary committee and--

Smith: No, he carried this because he was the logical person to carry it.

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* See interview with King in this series.

Morris: Yes. And then through that process became somebody close?

Smith: No, I don't think any particular relationships developed as a result of that, if you're talking about the path from there to where he is now.

Morris: Yes, or just in terms of somebody that there was confidence in in terms of legislative process.

Smith: Oh, yes. They always had confidence in him, and he was very cooperative and very helpful.

Judicial Appointments

Morris: Would you have been involved in things like discussions about the process of appointing judges?

Smith: Very much so. This major appointments task force, so-called, which is just a label slapped on the group when they performed that particular function, continued to be active and interested in appointments as they took place during the term. For example, there are spots like the Public Utilities Commission that expire every now and then by law, and the question is, whom does the governor appoint to fill those vacancies. And of course, as far as judges are concerned, a governor in this state will appoint approximately 100 judges a year.

Morris: Good heavens! Because of retirement or increases in the numbers of judges.

Smith: Well, both. Everything. And that means that, you know, a two-term governor will appoint maybe 800 judges. That's a lot of judges. We set up a system whereby there was a committee, very informal, and unpublicized, made up of leading judges, leading lawyers, and leading lay citizens. The most valuable were really the judges because the judges knew more lawyers and their qualities than either the lawyers or the laymen. The laymen really were not of much help, just because they didn't have the information. The judges were the most valuable. But these were set up--

Morris: From the appellate level, maybe?

Smith: Well, appellate level, or trial level as well. They had these groups that were set up in each county.

Morris: Attached to the bar association?

Smith: No, independent. They would just advise the governor. It was just an informal mechanism to advise the governor. The governor always sent his recommendations to the bar association after they were made.

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Morris: And of course that was a continuing process.

Smith: You were constantly looking for new names to put into the pot. Yes, it was a continuous process. Now the other members of the group didn't involve themselves much in this process, because it was primarily a function involving a legal background. I was the only lawyer, so I became involved in that function. The others had no real interest, involvement or background to handle that.

Morris: What kind of criteria did your judicial appointment group work from or evolve?

Smith: Well, first of all, qualifications and background, talent, ability, what's called judicial temperament.

Morris: What's judicial temperament?

Smith: Well, some judges when they become judges get what is referred to in the profession as "robitis," deriving from their judicial robes, where the power goes to their head and they just really don't have the temperament to judge impartially and preside in an even-handed way. You try to avoid judges who have that difficulty. Sometimes you never know. You just don't know until they get there how they're going to behave. By and large we were very lucky. During the governor's term I think we appointed really an outstanding group, generally recognized to be such by both Republicans and Democrats.

Morris: I understand that some people found Donald Wright turned out to be not what they expected when he was appointed to the state supreme court. Was he one who got robitis?

Smith: That's a vast understatement. In my view and that of many other involved in the process, this appointment was the worst of any made by the governor during his two terms. Wright had worked with us in judicial appointments for several years, knew what the governor's judicial philosophy was and misled us into believing that he subscribed to that philosophy. For example, when he sought the appointment, which he obtained in my view through deceitful means, he told me personally that he was in favor of the death penalty. When the first case came before the court after his appointment he not only voted against it but wrote the opinion. In his case it was not a matter of robitis but of integrity.

Smith: Of course, there's no way of knowing how a person will make decisions once they're on the court; probably they don't know themselves when they're first appointed. Earl Warren is probably the best known example of that. And there's [Byron R.] White--there are people who are probably saying that he's not making decisions as John Kennedy would have wanted.

Morris: What kinds of qualifications or recommendations made William Clark the person to appoint in 1973?

Smith: That was a different matter altogether. Bill Clark was executive secretary, so he was intimately involved with the governor on a daily basis. He was one of the two or three people closest to the governor in Sacramento.

I was not much involved with Clark's appointment. That did not go through the regular process. Governor Reagan knew him so well that he didn't need any recommendation from our screening group.

Morris: Did you have some sort of guidelines as to how many Democrats and how many Republicans you would appoint?

Smith: No, we didn't have any quotas or anything like that. Judicial philosophy, of course, was important. [smiles] But I'd say we appointed, or the governor appointed, somewhere between twenty and twenty-five percent Democrats.

Morris: In the sixties there was also in the air the concern that there be women and minorities, black and Hispanic and whatnot appointed. Was that a factor in--?

Smith: Yes, it was always a factor. You always tried to balance it. But during those days the pools from which women and minorities could be chosen were so small. There weren't very many women lawyers to start with, to say nothing about--

Morris: They were still in law school. [chuckles]

Smith: --women lawyers who had reached the point where they'd qualified to become judges. And the same thing was true of minorities.

Morris: I see. How about the development--

Smith: But we were always looking for them. That's true, and that's true in Washington. You know, they talk about the fact that there are so few women and so few minorities. The fact is, there are. But there are very good reasons for it. We lean over backwards to try to find them, but the pool is small and those that have the compatible judicial philosophy makes it even smaller. And we neither here nor there appointed people just because they were

Smith: women or minorities. [President James E.] Carter, I think, did. We did not. We searched out people who had the qualifications and found just as many minorities and women as we could find, and did quite well. But the numbers are small. But that's not because of a lack of effort. Of course, the people on the other side like to harp on those figures. They know as well as we do what the reason is, and they're perfectly legitimate reasons. I'd say we probably engaged in more affirmative action in those--and not just for judges, but for appointees generally--as anybody ever had. But we didn't compromise for that purpose.

Morris: On the judicial philosophy, is this the view that one should pay less attention to the current state of society and more to the original intent of the law?

Smith: No, that's a current distortion. It's a hard concept to get across except in simple terms, and simple terms don't mean too much. The general idea was to get away from judges who made law as distinguished from interpreting it and applying it.

Morris: Would you give me an example? Because I do find that a hard concept to--

Smith: Well, it's both easy and hard. Because without any doubt there are gray areas. I would say the Rose Bird [Chief Justice of the California Supreme] court is a classic example of a court that set itself up as an unelected legislature. And it just, irrespective of what the law was, imposed its own views upon society. The death penalty is certainly an example, which ultimately was the demise of that court, which was a very happy result in the view of a lot of us. Because you had a separate, independent legislature, beholden to nobody. If they made a mistake only they could correct it. Through the regular legislative process, if a mistake is made you can vote those people out of office. You can't do that with the judiciary.

I remember, for example, one situation--this goes way back--where at the very time the legislature was debating whether to pass a law which would prohibit apartment-house owners from limiting the rentals of their apartments to families that did not have children--at the very time the legislature was debating that, that issue was presented to the [California] supreme court. And instead of deferring to the legislature as it should have done, it decided the question.

Morris: I see. Even though they knew that there was a piece of legislation pending.

Smith: Yes. But whether they did or not, it wasn't their business to make that law. Their business was to interpret and apply laws that had already been made by the legislature or the constitution. And so

Smith: to the extent that judges do this, they are in effect--I don't think this is too strong a term--destroying representative government.

Morris: That's interesting in relation to where we are now, where what one is hearing is that the legislature is not acting, therefore the people or groups of citizens are introducing more and more initiative measures.

Smith: Well, that's an entirely different question, because an initiative--and that's true, I think that is true--but an initiative measure is part of the democratic process, as is the legislature. In other words, it's only in certain areas where a court should act irrespective of what the legislature has done. And that has to do with the protection of rights guaranteed by the constitution. Now of course, this is an endless battle, because where you draw that line is very hard to determine; it's very hard to determine.

So when you talk about judicial philosophy you're talking in very general terms, that generally speaking we wanted a judge who went into office starting from a premise that his function was not to make the law, it was to apply law already made and there. That's very hard to do sometimes. You just really don't know. We've seen it happen so many times on the U.S. Supreme Court where people have gone in assuming that they were going to act in a certain way and they acted quite differently. Maybe even they didn't know they were going to act differently until they got there.

Morris: Or until they dealt with the facts of specific cases brought to them?

Smith: Well, yes, and that's their business, of course.

Morris: Speaking hypothetically in the apartment house case, given the separation of powers, how does the court say the legislature is not doing what it should?

Smith: They don't say that. That's not how they go at it. They will either develop a constitutional right, which really is the worst sin, because then there's no way to change it, you know, if it's wrong. There's absolutely no way to change it if it's located in the constitution. The legislature can't change it if they find it that way. Or they will just find--in that particular case I think they applied the Unruh [Public Accomodations] Act. I may be wrong, but if it wasn't the Unruh Act it was some act like that that had nothing to do with this subject. But they interpreted it so broadly as to apply to this situation, which was nothing more than just plain making law.

Morris: I can see where it's an issue that engages many lawyers over a lot of time.

Smith: Oh, sure. Well, actually it was part of the [Robert] Bork nomination squabble, that issue, and on and on.

Morris: Could it have come up in a Democratic administration, or was this peculiar to the kinds of---?

Smith: Oh no, it comes up in any administration. Except that by and large the Democratic administrations---or not Democratic administrations--but there are so many Democrats who like the results the courts have been producing, and therefore, in effect, advocate more power to the judiciary. The point I've made is that if the same groups, the Lawrence Tribes of the world, didn't like the results the courts were producing, then they would be taking the positions that the Republicans by and large take. Namely the courts should not be expansive, and that they should be applying the law instead of making it. So to a certain extent it depends on whose ox is being gored.

Morris: Right. So that over time you could suppose that a similar body of discussion might arise, coming from another point on the political spectrum.

Smith: Oh, yes. If you've got a Supreme Court which starts really tightening up and saying, that's Congress's function, it's not ours, and if these very same people don't like that, then those same people will start changing their viewpoint about whether a judge should make law or just apply it.

Morris: When you're talking about the United States Supreme Court, the members of the court have to decide whether or not to hear a case. That's a specific act. In the state court process---

Smith: Same thing.

Morris: ---the state court can refuse to hear---

Smith: Supreme court.

Morris: ---state supreme court can refuse to hear a case. Is that the point at which they say, we refuse to accept this---

Smith: Oh no, no.

Morris: ---because we feel this should be dealt with---

Smith: Well, that could be. Sure, it could be there. It doesn't have to be there, but it could be.

Morris: Okay. This is a fascinating discussion that's really out of my area of expertise. I'll let somebody else come and ask you about that.

VI 1968 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

California Favorite-Son Delegation

Morris: I would like to ask you about the 1968 presidential campaign. I understand you traveled with Mr. Reagan on some of the exploratory efforts.

Smith: Yes. When he went into that convention it was really a contest between Nixon and [Nelson] Rockefeller. He had been governor for less than a year and a half. But everywhere he went, he evoked such enthusiasm that it sort of became contagious. And I don't think he ever intended to run or declare for the presidential nomination that year. But he got such receptions from the delegates. When you go to a convention, you know, you go around and you talk to all the delegations and--

Morris: I'm thinking about earlier in the year. Didn't he go do some travels through the south and up in--?

Smith: He made speeches around, but he wasn't running for anything at that time. He was just making speeches around. He wasn't out campaigning for delegates, not in '68. We had a favorite-son delegation here. I was chairman of it.

Morris: On the ballot?

Smith: On the ballot.

Morris: And that prevailed over the Nixon and Rockefeller delegates?

Smith: Well, it wasn't a Nixon or Rockefeller slate. They would not have been foolhardy enough to come into this state and run against a--

Morris: Sitting governor.

Smith: Yes, favorite-son delegation. So we had Nixon supporters and we had Rockefeller supporters on that delegation.

Morris: There were some comments that various groups, particularly in the south, early on had promised that they would support Mr. Reagan and then when they got to the convention they ended up voting for Mr. Nixon--there are people who think that that nomination could have been put together for Mr. Reagan in '68. Did you think it was serious?

Smith: No, I think people mix it up with '76. He wasn't out campaigning for delegates in '68.

Morris: He may not have been. Were some of his adherents--

Smith: Oh, there might have been people out there. That's true, there might have been people out there who were very enthusiastic about him, and so on. And there were. I mean, when you get down to the convention, as I say, you can go around. We all went around and talked to various delegations. I think had the situation been somewhat different, there would have been a significant number of people who would have gone for him. He did go out and he made speeches, but there was no campaigning for delegates. He didn't declare for the presidency at all until, I think it was the Monday or probably Tuesday of convention week.

Nixon and Rockefeller Chances

Morris: Why did he do it then, do you think?

Smith: Well, there are probably several reasons. One of them was the remarkable reception he was getting, visiting these various delegations. And the other was, well, Governor [James] Rhodes urged him to declare.

Morris: The governor of Ohio?

Smith: Yes. Now the reason that Rhodes urged him to declare--the point I tried to make down there, but I don't think very successfully, of course--was he was hoping to split the Nixon vote. If Nixon declared, that would split the Nixon vote, not the Rockefeller vote. And Rhodes was a Rockefeller man.

Morris: So he was hoping that if he could start a Reagan boom, that would in the long run increase Rockefeller's chances.

Smith: Yes. It would knock down Nixon.

Morris: I see. And you didn't think that that was likely to happen.

Smith: Well, I didn't really think he should declare. But there was another reason why he should, and that is the same reason that launched John F. Kennedy. He had a little boom going for him in 1956 for vice president. He was then an unknown senator. But he got a lot of publicity out of that. It was '56. And that really launched him for the presidency. So you could make the same case for Reagan in '68. Except for one thing, of course, and that is whoever was elected in '68 was going to be there for eight years. At least that was the assumption. That was always the assumption. In Kennedy's case, he only had four years to go, because the office was going to open up in 1960.

Morris: Right, regardless.

Smith: Yes.

Morris: But Mr. Reagan already had a great deal of visibility as governor of California. Going through the literature indexes starting in January of 1967 there are all kinds of articles in the general periodicals about Reagan as a national candidate.

Smith: Oh, yes. There are two reasons for that. One of them is, any governor of the state of California is automatically a candidate, just like any governor of New York is. And secondly, he had a glamour about him that created an interest far broader than any normal politician. I mean, his background as an actor alone was an extremely appealing thing to a lot of people. So there was no question about the fact that he was different. When he moved to Sacramento I can remember reading that all the news services were sending twice as many people to cover him in Sacramento as covered any other governor up there before. There was a genuine national interest. He was written up in Life magazine, a big spread in Life magazine, before the primary, which irritated all of the other candidates, like Lock Waters, who is now a federal judge, who was running that year. To say nothing about George Christopher, who was the principal candidate. This was fabulous publicity, and it was good publicity. It was done only because he was such a unique individual on the political scene.

Morris: Were there some in the kitchen cabinet group who were not terribly happy with Richard Nixon as a Republican presidential candidate?

Smith: No, I think the big concern about Nixon in '68 was whether or not he could win. There was heavy doubt among a lot of people as to whether or not Nixon could win. Because after all, it was only six years after he had said, "You won't have Nixon to kick around any more," and he couldn't even win the governorship of the state of California, lost the presidency. Just a lot of people never thought he could win. And there's a good chance he could not have, had it not been for what happened at the Democratic convention that year.

Morris: The troubles in Chicago?

Smith: Yes. So that was a very genuine concern. And that was the concern.

Personal Security

Morris: I came across a couple of comments and discussions of the '68 campaign, that there was very heavy security for Mr. and Mrs. Reagan. Was there more on visits to other states than in Sacramento?

Smith: No, it wasn't--he had his own security. But the heavy security was because of the threats of the Jane Fondas and company. As a matter of fact, the first time I ever smelled tear gas was at one of--I guess it was the '72 convention, not the '68 one. It could have been the '68 one, but there were all kinds of threats and organizations put together by, well, you remember, the Chicago Seven that disrupted the Democratic [convention], and there were attempts to disrupt the Republican [convention] as well. The group was led by Jane Fonda in, I guess that was '72. Maybe she did it in '68, too, I don't know. But this was the period of the Free Speech Movement and all of the disturbances, uprisings, and violence. So I think everybody down there had security. I know we had a lot of security in '72 for that reason.

Morris: More than was regularly available or regularly laid on in Sacramento, just in going about the regular--

Smith: Oh yes, but it didn't apply just to Reagan. It applied to everybody at the convention.

Morris: Yes. And it seemed to be political rather than somebody making an attempt at doing physical harm?

Smith: Well, there was a little of each. There was actually physical turmoil down there. That's why I say, they used tear gas at one point, and it was the first time I'd ever smelled it.

Morris: And you don't forget it, do you?

Smith: No, you don't forget it. So it was a little like a [U.C.] regents' meeting, surrounded and noisy and rebellious and sometimes violent.

VII EARLY EXPERIENCES AS UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA REGENT

Appointment in 1968

Morris: Were you appointed to the regents before or after--that was also in '68 that you went on the U.C. Board of Regents.

Smith: That was December of '68, after the convention.

Morris: After you had survived the political wars?

Smith: That's right. Only then there were some more. [chuckles]

Morris: What kind of conversations did you and Mr. Reagan have about your accepting appointment to the U.C. Regents?

Smith: Well, there really wasn't very much. He just asked me to fill the vacancy created when Buff [Dorothy Buffum] Chandler retired. I said I'd be honored to do so. That was about the extent of the discussion. [laughter]

Morris: That's short and to the point! Now, how come you felt you were able to take that appointment when you hadn't felt you could join the administration?

Smith: Oh, because this was not a full-time--it turned out to be almost full-time, or could have been later on when I became chairman. But that doesn't require you to move to Sacramento, it doesn't require you to give up your principal occupation or anything like that. It's a part-time position. So as a matter of fact, that fit in very nicely.

Student Activism: 1966 Campaign Issue, Continuing Headlines

Morris: And at that point were the regents' meetings in different parts of the state, so sometimes they were here in the Los Angeles area?

Smith: At that time they rotated between Berkeley and Los Angeles. No, as a matter of fact, more than that. They really rotated them on all the campuses, because that's where so many of the disturbances came from. I think one of the reasons Buff Chandler retired a couple of years before her term expired was because she probably got fed up with the rough stuff that was taking place on the campuses. Actually, to get to a regents' meeting you were jostled and pushed and all this sort of thing. It is hard to revisit those days, but they were tough. Actually, one of the reasons we stopped visiting all the campuses was that. Later on it was reinstituted, but we finally had to leave Berkeley. My first regents' meeting was in the regents' room at University Hall in Berkeley, which had seating for maybe twenty or thirty people. And the interest in regents' meetings grew so dramatically that we moved off the campus, actually, and into that site at Laguna--what do you call that?

Morris: In San Francisco?

Smith: Yes, it was on Laguna Street.

Morris: Oh, the U.C. Extension.

Smith: The Extension center. And down here the same thing, the extension center here. So we rotated between those two locations. Because that way you could provide more security, more access, and it was larger in terms of space available and so on.

Morris: When you came on the regents, was the controversy already going about whether or not Clark Kerr should remain as president?

Smith: No, that had been long since resolved.

Morris: He'd already left.

Smith: That happened at the very first meeting that Governor Reagan attended. And Governor Reagan had absolutely nothing whatever to do with it.

Morris: Really?

Smith: But because it happened at the first meeting he attended, naturally all the press and everybody assumed that he marched in there and--

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Smith: —to do with the firing of Clark Kerr. That was accomplished by the then existing Board of Regents; that is, the Board of Regents as it existed prior to the time he was even elected. Because the board apparently had become dissatisfied with him [Kerr], and the foundation for that action had been taken by the then existing board that he [Reagan] had had nothing to do with, I mean in terms of appointing. And that's the fact.

Morris: He wouldn't have had any advance—

Smith: I don't even think he knew it was going to happen at that meeting.

Morris: Had some of the friends and associates in the kitchen cabinet been thinking that Kerr should go?

Smith: Oh, there was great dissatisfaction with what was going on on the U.C. campuses. As a matter of fact, if you may remember, that was the principal issue in the election campaign. And so there was no question about the fact that the public thought, or at least the large majority of them thought, and the Reagan group thought, that a lot needed to be done there. That's probably one of the prime reasons why it was assumed that when he showed up at the first meeting, he fired Kerr.

But the interesting thing is, he couldn't have done it even if he'd wanted to. He didn't have any control over those regents. They were all independent. He hadn't appointed any of them. So he couldn't have done it even if—he had one vote out of twenty-four.

Morris: Well, it's kind of first amongst equals.

Smith: Well, it's still one vote.

Morris: Right.

Smith: And he had not appointed any of the members of the board at that point. So there's no way he could have done it, even if he'd wanted to. But the fact of the matter is, whatever he may have wanted to see happen—and I'm sure he was anything but unhappy about it—the fact is, he had nothing to do with it.

Morris: Did he continue to come to regents' meetings frequently when you were on the board?

Smith: Yes, very much so. Actually, it's hard to remember it now, but that's where all the action was.

Morris: At regents' meetings?

Smith: In those days a regents' meeting was front-page news every single time. We used to fret over the fact that if somebody threw a rock through a window, you'd get headlines. If you debated a ten-year medical school plan, you wouldn't get a mention. And that's the way it went. It was literally so—now you read about a regents' meeting once in a while but not very often. But in those days it was front-page news every single time.

Morris: Did you get to feel that the discussion over student activism was outweighing the kinds of decisions that you've mentioned?

Smith: Oh, without any question, for years. For years during that period we dealt with all of this trivia and nonsense. You had to sort of push aside the host of issues that were created because of this, in order to get to the kinds of issues we should have been dealing with.

The Angela Davis Matter

Morris: Facilities planning and academic—

Smith: All the things we're doing now. Take Angela Davis. My god, the time that was taken up on that case—endless. I was responsible for that. Nobody ever would have heard of Angela Davis if it hadn't been for me. [laughter]

Morris: Really? Did you feel she shouldn't be allowed to lecture at UCLA?

Smith: I shouldn't have put it that way. I left the room for about five minutes, I think to make a phone call. If that phone call had been ten minutes instead of five minutes, nobody ever would have heard of Angela Davis. Because when I came back in they had just about decided the issue. And I asked a question. I said, "Don't we have a bylaw which says that anybody who's a member of the Communist party cannot be—" something, a faculty member or have tenure, whatever it was.

Morris: You sign something to that effect when you go to work for the university. I didn't realize it was a bylaw of the university.

Smith: No, it was a bylaw at that time. And she was an acknowledged member of the Communist party or a communist, I don't know; whatever it was. So I said, "Well, now, wait a minute. Whatever the virtue of that bylaw is, if it's on the books it seems to me we should either enforce it or repeal it. We as a governing body cannot have a provision in the bylaws and just willy-nilly ignore it." And that sort of got the train of the thing going in that direction. Nobody was willing at that point to debate whether the

Smith: bylaw should be changed or not. Besides that, it requires a certain procedure, notice, and everything else. But everybody agreed that since it's there, we ought to enforce it. That's what thrust Angela Davis on the scene.

Morris: Well, how did a matter of a visiting lecturer's retention get to the Board of Regents level anyhow? I thought that that usually was handled at a specific---

Smith: Well, the question came up of whether or not her contract should be renewed. And there were elements on the UCLA faculty who thought it should not be, because they didn't think she was qualified. I can't remember exactly how it got to the regents.

Morris: The faculty senate doesn't deal with things like that?

Smith: Well, they normally do.

Morris: Yes.

Smith: But these weren't normal times.

Morris: So that the Board of Regents in some cases serves as a review of---

Smith: Well, they had the authority to do it any time. The only reason that the faculty does it is because the regents delegated it to the Academic Senate. They could reverse that any time. But they're not likely to. But in any case I don't know exactly how that particular case got up there. Probably because it was high profile and controversial.

Morris: And a hot potato. Nobody wanted to be responsible.

Smith: That's right. That's probably how it got up there. Everybody wanted to take the easy way out, which was to renew the contract and avoid a fuss. But I didn't think that was the right thing to do.

Morris: But some people at UCLA felt the same way you did and urged that it go forward to the regents?

Smith: Well, I can't be sure of that. I know there were certainly differences of opinion. Although the chancellor's viewpoint was it should be renewed. But I think that was because he wanted to take the easy way out.

Morris: That was Mr. [Charles E.] Young at that time?

Smith: Yes.

Morris: Had other regents beside Mrs. Chandler resigned from the Board of Regents rather than stay around for all this social activism?

Smith: No, I don't think so. I think she was the only one. Quite a while later, but for a different reason, Phil--I'm so bad on names. He'd been regent for a long, long time. I think just for personal reasons not connected with this, quite a few years later, Phil--

Morris: I can look that up.

Smith: Kirby?

Morris: Phil Kirby is a writer down here.

Smith: Phil Boyd. [pauses to think] That doesn't sound quite right either. Well, it's something like that.

Morris: Let me check.

Smith: He gave a lot of land to the Nature Conservancy in Palm Springs. Boyd, sure, it's Boyd [Philip L. Boyd].

Term of Office

Morris: At that time you had fourteen-year terms, didn't you?

Smith: Sixteen.

Morris: Was that an issue that you felt strongly about? At one point there was a ballot measure that cut that down a few years.

Smith: Yes. Well, I don't know, strongly--there were other provisions on it in that proposition that we didn't like. But it passed overwhelmingly, I think. Cut it down to twelve years. See, the sixteen years was very cleverly established in the old days, because that way no two-term governor could pack the board if you had a sixteen-year term. And the history had been that the universities that had long terms for their governing boards had been by and large more preeminent than those that didn't. Now, you can say there was or wasn't a connection between the two. But the University of California, certainly at that time, was the premier public university in the world. That's a pretty good record. So you don't change something that has produced that result unless there's pretty good reason to do it. But the idea of sixteen years--in the public mind that's too long; it's just too long. So they voted overwhelmingly to cut it down. But there were other provisions there too that had some effect.

Governor's Education Liaison Alex Sherriffs

Morris: I see. Did you have much contact with Alex Sherriffs?

Smith: Oh yes, that's right. I'd forgotten about good old Alex. He was sort of a character. He was the Education Secretary during—well, let's see. He then went to the state university system. Is he still there?

Morris: I think he retired a couple of years ago.

Smith: Oh. Well, that's right, he was the governor's representative to the regents and the other segments.

Morris: Right. I wondered whether because he had higher education as well as kindergarten through twelfth grade and all the other things, if he could stay up enough on higher education issues to be really helpful?

Smith: Oh yes, he was on top of it. He threw himself into this job. He knew the names and numbers of all the players and all the issues.

Morris: Was it a problem that he had been a vice-chancellor at Berkeley?

Smith: Oh, I don't think so. I don't think it made any difference. Well, it was probably helpful, I suppose, in the sense that he had that background. But he was in effect the governor's liaison to the institutions. He reveled in the job, he loved it.

Morris: Is that why you call him a character?

Smith: Well, just because, you know, he is so eager and interested. He sort of has that—I was going to say aggressive personality. That's not quite what I want to say. But he was always involved in everything. Sometimes we had to tussle with him, and so on, which is okay.

Morris: You felt he was maybe suggesting things that the regents were not ready to consider?

Smith: Oh, well, you know, you have differences of opinion on this, that, or the other. But by and large we got along very well with him.

Morris: How about the Master Plan for Higher Education?

Smith: We did very well on the budget during this period. There was a lot of screaming and hollering on that, and the governor had the image of trying to cut down and squeeze and so on. But actually during that period the university did very well, relatively speaking, to other competing needs in the state, very well.

Morris: Because of the baby boom generation, the number of students?

Smith: No, I'm talking about just allocation of resources to the university as distinguished from other uses. People thought that the governor, because of the fact that it had been such an issue in the campaign, would starve the institution and so on. But he didn't in any way. And actually it did quite well.

Morris: Were there those in the legislature or elsewhere who did want to use the budget as a way of saying UC has been bad?

Smith: Oh, I'm sure there were. Not many, but some.

Morris: In terms of the troubles at Berkeley and the other UC campuses, was it stronger there than at the Cal State campuses?

Smith: Oh, yes. Well, of course, I never saw the Cal State campuses; I didn't see what went on there. But so far as I can tell, just by remembering, most of the action was--

[Secretary enters, tells of appointment]

Smith: (Gee, I didn't realize. Time goes fast.) Most of the action was on the UC campuses.

Lessons Learned; Students and Decision Making

Morris: Do you think that its working through that process strengthened the university in any way in dealing with--?

Smith: I have asked academics whether or not they could see any virtue or advantage, any gain or benefit, that came out of this whole so-called Free Speech Movement. Normally when you have that kind of an uprising and that kind of turmoil, it's for a cause or something is achieved as a result of it. And uniformly, every single one of them say nothing good came out of that period. You'd think, well gee, having gone through it you learn from that experience and so on. I don't know of anything good that came out of it. I think it was very damaging to higher education and to the academic world.

Morris: At Berkeley and elsewhere?

Smith: Everywhere. I don't know any gain or advantage that came out of that ghastly period or experience.

Morris: Even on the organizational level? One of the issues was that students were saying, we would like a role in decisions about how the university is run.

Smith: I don't think that produced it. It happened, but I think it would have happened anyway. If anything, this would have had the opposite effect in terms of decision makers.

Morris: Postponed getting a student member on the Board of Regents, for instance? It's kind of ironic when you think that a university in general is supposed to train young people to think for themselves and speak up about things that they disagree with or would like to know more about.

Smith: But see, this wasn't that kind of movement. This had nothing to do with that.

Morris: In terms of questioning their elders?

Smith: They've always been able to do that. But this--for one thing, so much of it was led not by students but outsiders. A large part of the leadership was not made up of students, it was made up of, I guess, sort of professional revolutionaries. At no time, for example, at the regents was it a matter of expressing viewpoints or opinions or exercising the right of free speech or differing or standing up to--nobody ever would have raised a question about that. That isn't what happened. It was mindless disruption, for purposes of disruption, not to achieve goals or ends. There was no way to focus on--if you wanted to concede, what would you do?

Morris: That's true.

Smith: It was just mindless disruption and all of that with no positive benefit that I can see. Do you see any?

The University and the Vietnam War

Morris: I'm interested in the process. It looks to me like the university maybe was a convenient place of expression of more general concerns. I was thinking in terms of the anti-war demonstrations, which were sort of before and after, how the issues seemed to have gotten sort of all lumped together into various demonstrations. The young people who for one reason or another were protesting what they felt was Nixon's war, for want of a better term, in Vietnam, and not wishing to go themselves and not feeling that it was a cause that they could support.

Smith: Well, all those things are perfectly legitimate. But that isn't the way it was manifested. If somebody wanted to protest the war and all of that, they could do that in a perfectly peaceful way.

Morris: And true, the University of California can't do anything about whether the young men of the class of 1968 are going to be drafted or not.

Smith: Right.

Morris: But it's there as an example of the establishment that's accessible and visible.

Smith: Whatever the goals were, they certainly didn't achieve them.

Morris: As you say, it's a large and complex question as to what they were trying to achieve, with many people from different points of view.

Smith: You take the Vietnam War. As a matter of fact it was the Democrats who got us into the war, and it was Nixon who got us out of it. It's not looked upon as being that way, but actually it was Kennedy and [President Lyndon B.] Johnson that got us into that war, and Nixon got us out. Now I don't think Nixon is necessarily entitled to any great kudos because of that. I think the politics of the situation were such then that whoever was in there would have to have done it, because it turned into an unpopular war. But I don't think it was unpopular because of anything these disruptors did. On the contrary, I think probably if anything that had an adverse effect.

But in terms of just the academic institution, the university, prior to the time this happened, the university was the crown jewel of this state. It had no trouble getting money and it expanded beautifully. It was highly regarded. I never thought during those days that I would ever see it become the principal political issue in a gubernatorial campaign. And the popular viewpoint turned against the whole academic community during that period. I suppose it's recovered, but I'm not sure it has. I'm not sure that the University of California now is as revered as it was during that period.

Morris: Well, for one thing, the Cal state system has grown. It's a question I sometimes wonder about in terms of the Master Plan for Higher Education. You know, to what extent that does represent a challenge to the University of California system?

Smith: Well, you're always going to have that competition. They're always going to keep pushing because they want to become a University of California.

Morris: Right, they're little brother and big brother.

Smith: That's right. So you're always going to have to do that. But I'm talking beyond that. I'm talking about, as an institution, UC could do no wrong in the eyes of the people of this state before

Smith: '64. And revered is not too strong a word. That's exactly what it was. That has not been the public sentiment, or it was not during all of that period. It may take a long time before you ever get it back.

Morris: Would part of that be that no longer are the majority of college graduates in the state graduates of the University of California? You know, with all the influx from other states we have a lot of people who've gone to college in other states; we now have hundreds and thousands who have gone to--

Smith: Oh, I don't know. There could be all kinds of reasons. But what I'm really thinking is sort of the image; the image in the public eye. Somehow that's very tainted. And I don't know how long that taint will last. It is such a remarkable institution, made up of so many thousands of different worlds and no way for anybody to really appreciate it. And yet the people of this state really did for so long. As you say, maybe part of the dilution is just because of the fact that we're growing so fast and so rapidly in so many other areas that it's sort of being swallowed up to a certain extent. That could be.

VIII A COMMENT ON PROPOSITION 1, TAX LIMITATION IN 1973

Morris: Could we end up with maybe one quick summary comment on that tax proposition in 1973? Were you involved in that at all, in the Proposition 1 campaign that Mr. Reagan sponsored?

Smith: Oh yes, well, Proposition 1 was the John the Baptist for Proposition 13.

Morris: [laughter] But you didn't know about Proposition 13 then.

Smith: No, true. But that was the effort, to get something started. I mentioned about the fact that tax reform had been a long and key issue, and it was. And Proposition 1 was one way to get at it. The trouble with Proposition 1 was it was too complicated. People didn't understand it. When Howard Jarvis came along he put it in very simple terms. [chuckles] And people understood it, although it took a little education and it probably took Proposition 1 for Proposition 13 to pass. The way it was prepared and the way it was presented was just too complicated. I think by and large people voted against it because they didn't really understand it.

Morris: Were Spencer and Roberts consulted in putting it together and presenting it to the public?

Smith: I don't remember. I don't remember who handled that. My recollection is they did not.

Morris: Were you involved in that campaign at all?

Smith: Not much.

Morris: Was it one that the kitchen cabinet--

Smith: Yes, to a certain extent. Certainly we all supported it.

Morris: Right. But it hadn't really generated in your discussions with Mr. Reagan?

Smith: Oh, yes. But I just can't remember how that thing was put together or who ran it. I do remember that we all supported it, financially and otherwise. But it just didn't sell. It was an idea whose time had not yet come.

Morris: Well, there's that theory of legislation that very seldom do you ever get a major piece of legislation through on the first time.

Smith: Yes, well I think that's probably part of it. Plus the fact, as I say, it was complicated, and I don't think people really understood it. They were suspicious of it.

Morris: I asked Paul Gann that question and he said, "Oh, we took a lot of our language from Mr. Reagan's language."

Smith: It's simplified, yes. Well, I'm going to really have to go.

Morris: Okay, thank you very much.

Transcribed by Elizabeth Eshleman
Final Typed by Shannon Page

TAPE GUIDE -- William French Smith

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RONALD REAGAN GUBERNATORIAL ERA, 1966-1974

Government History Documentation Project

The Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era Project was carried out by University of California at Berkeley in cooperation with University of California at Los Angeles, University of California at Davis, California State University at Fullerton, and Claremont Graduate School. Interviews are grouped by the institution which produced them.

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Project director, Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era Project (1979-), Bay Area Foundation History Projects (1974-1977, 1986-), Volunteer Leaders Series (1978-), Cutter Laboratories Project (1972-1974).

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