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Edmund Gerald Brown, Jr.

*Jerry Brown: A Life in California Politics*

Interviews conducted by  
Scott Shafer, Martin Meeker, and Todd Holmes  
in 2019

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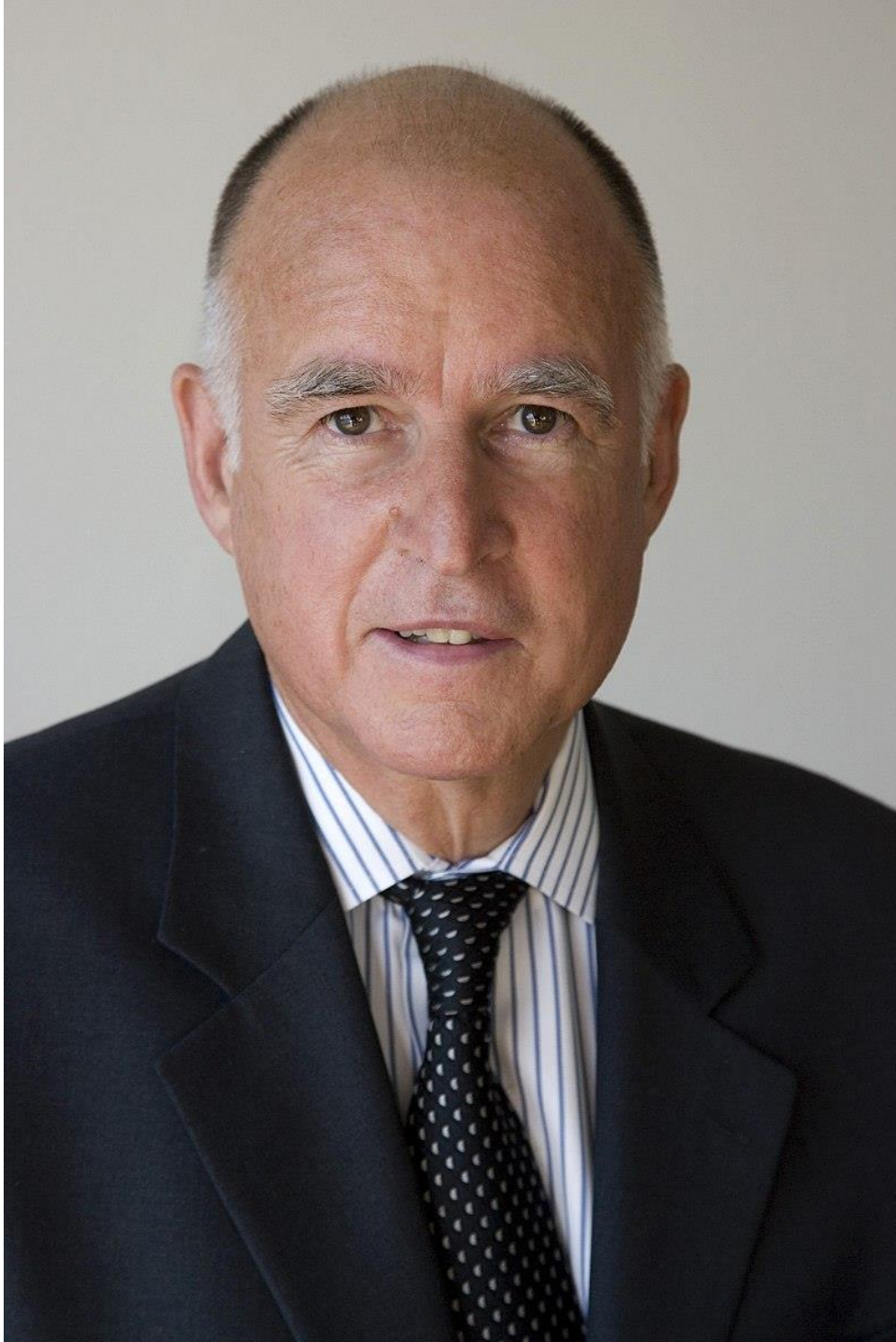
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Jerry Brown in 2006  
Photograph courtesy the State of California

## **Abstract**

Edmund Gerald “Jerry” Brown, Jr. was born 7 April 1938 in San Francisco, California. Brown’s father, “Pat” Brown would eventually serve as California Attorney General (1951-1959) and Governor (1959-1967). Jerry Brown was educated in Catholic schools and attended Santa Clara College before leaving to join Sacred Heart Novitiate as a seminarian, which he left after three years. He completed his undergraduate education at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1961 and then went on to graduate from Yale School of Law in 1964. Brown’s career as an elected official began in southern California in 1969 when he was elected to the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees and then continued for nearly the next fifty years through a succession of high offices. He was elected: in 1970 to serve as California Secretary of State; in 1974 and again in 1978 as California Governor; in 1998 and 2002 as Mayor of Oakland; in 2006 as California Attorney General; and, finally, in 2010 and 2014 as Governor of California, for a third and record fourth term. In the midst of, and in between these offices, he ran three times for President of the United States (1976, 1980, and 1992), he once was the Democratic Party nominee for the U.S. Senate in California (1982), was elected chair of the California Democratic Party (1988), and ran his own non-profit, populist, quasi-political organization We the People out of his communal living space in Oakland, California in the 1990s. In this oral history, the following topics are discussed at length: family background and upbringing; education, religion, and friendships; the political career of Pat Brown; college, seminary, and law school; California statewide elected offices, including Governor of California; campaigns for elected office, including for US President; election reform; taxation, budgets, and deficits; law, the courts, and criminal justice reform; immigration; the environment and climate change; education reform, charter schools, and higher education; Oakland, CA; popular culture, journalism, and political campaigns; political philosophy, theories of governance, and applied politics.

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## Foreword

By Governor Gray Davis (Ret.), 37th Governor of California

Governor Edmund G. (“Jerry”) Brown was the longest serving governor in California history, and one of the most consequential. First elected in 1974, he championed a major solar initiative (first-ever tax incentive for rooftop solar), and signed legislation prohibiting any new nuclear power plants in California until the federal government certified a safe way to dispose of nuclear waste. To this day, the Federal Government has yet to do so and no further nuclear plants have been approved.

Governor Brown also negotiated and signed the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, a first of its kind in California and the Nation. Even today, it remains the only law that creates and protects the rights of farmworkers to unionize and collectively bargain. None of the other 49 states has been able to pass similar protections for some of the most vulnerable workers in our country.

In March of 1976, Jerry announced his run for the presidency and won primaries in California, Maryland and Nevada, and accumulated the second highest number of votes going into the convention (2,449,374). His late entry into the 1976 democratic presidential primary precluded him from catching Jimmy Carter, who accumulated the requisite amount of delegates to secure the nomination and become president.

Jerry Brown left office in 1983 and did not return to the governorship until 2011, 28 years later, making him California’s youngest, oldest and longest-serving governor. His third and fourth terms featured a remarkable turnaround in the state’s financial standing. He inherited a \$27 billion deficit but left office with a \$29 billion surplus (\$14.5 budget surplus and a \$14.5 billion “rainy-day fund”).

In an effort to restore the State’s fiscal stability, Jerry sponsored and campaigned for the passage of Proposition 30, a voter-approved tax increase that raised \$6 billion. Tying his fiscal and environmental stewardship together, in 2012 Jerry signed into law the first in the nation government run cap-and-trade program, creating in excess of \$9.3 billion to fund emission reductions and programs that protect the environment and promote public health.

He left the Governor’s office and public life in early 2019, enjoying a higher approval rating than any governor since Ronald Reagan.

To understand Jerry’s expansive worldview and insatiable curiosity, it is helpful to take stock of where he has been and what he has done. The son of a Governor, he lived in the Historic Governor’s Mansion, attended parochial high school, studied at Santa Clara University, joined the Sacred Heart Jesuit Novitiate seminary, received his Bachelor’s Degree from UC Berkeley and his law degree from Yale. In addition, Jerry has practiced private law at Tuttle and Taylor, was elected to the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees, California Secretary of State, California Attorney General and four times as Governor of California. He has run the State Democratic Party, served as Mayor of Oakland and ran three times for president. He’s traveled



the world, studied Buddhism, and worked with Mother Teresa at her Home for the Dying in India.

When I was running for governor, people asked me what does it take to be a successful governor? My answer (in jest) was “rain in the north and a strong economy.” Obviously, the governor cannot affect the weather. As for the economy, state tax incentives can only affect the economy on the margins. In the main, economic expansions and recessions are a result of the business cycle and function largely outside the Governor’s control.

But that is not how the public sees it. They give great credit to a governor when the economy is improving, but hold him fully accountable when the economy is in recession. Every governor from Ronald Reagan has experienced a slowdown or recession of some type. Reagan, Jerry Brown in his first two terms, Deukmejian, Wilson, myself and Schwarzenegger have experienced the ups and downs of the economy.

But when Jerry Brown was inaugurated for the third time in 2011, the economy turned positive and remained positive for his entire eight years.

That was a great relief to the public whom had experienced an unemployment rate of 10%, the loss of thousands of homes to foreclosures and financial downgrades, as conditions deteriorated in California.

This economic rebound was a critical factor in rescuing California from nearly a decade of deficits; however, it took more than good luck to turn California around. Jerry Brown brought the fiscal discipline necessary to turn the corner. He had reached out to almost every legislator as soon as he was elected for the third time, explaining that the path of more borrowing and larger deficits was not sustainable.

Despite hundreds of hours of collaboration with the legislature, their initial budget was a disappointment to him and was clearly not in balance. After much deliberation he decided to do something that has never happened in California: he didn’t just veto parts of the budget as most governors in the past had done, he vetoed the entire budget!

Sacramento was in shock!

After a number of heated meetings, he and the legislature produced a second budget with numerous reductions that was in balance, and put California back on the path back to solvency. As a result of that budget and previous cuts, some 30,000 teachers had been laid off, many classes had been canceled as well as almost all after school programs in California. In his 2012 budget, the governor and legislature restored some, but not all, of the cuts made during the previous three years.

That same year, the Governor gambled that he could persuade voters to pass Prop 30, which generated \$6 billion additional dollars that paid for these new teachers and professors and restored many of the classes that had been eliminated in previous years. In fact, the voters believed Jerry Brown when he said California could not cut anymore. They believed him when

he said that most of the taxes would fall on the wealthy and that Prop 30 would put California back on the path to greatness.

The voters passed Prop 30 and gave California a fresh start.

A governor without Governor Brown's discipline and well-known frugality might not have convinced California voters to increase taxes by \$6 billion. Without Jerry Brown's leadership, cooperation of the legislature and the strong economy he inherited, California might still be waist deep in deficits rather than the 5th largest economy in the world. Jerry Brown exited the stage in January 2019. By the time he left, California had new problems, including homelessness and poverty; but he and the legislature solved the problems they inherited by righting California's finances and helping rebuild its economy.

### **Frugality and Good Fortune**

Before Governor Brown was inaugurated in 1975, he told me he did not want to be driven in a limousine, but preferred instead a car normally assigned to a legislator or cabinet officer. When I conveyed that message to the director of general services, he told me they had 1974 Plymouths available in three colors: gold, white and blue. I opted for blue, envisioning dark blue or royal blue.

After the Governor delivered a 7-minute inaugural address, we started walking across Capitol Park for our trip to San Francisco. There was only one car waiting for us – and it was not the dark blue Plymouth I anticipated but a powder blue Plymouth! No California governor has ever been a driven around in a powder blue Plymouth. I was beyond embarrassed!

“Is that my car?” Governor Brown asked. “I’m afraid it is,” I replied.

But to the Governor's great good fortune, the public warmed up to the idea of a powder blue Plymouth; they began to take pride that their Governor had chosen a less expensive and less imposing looking car as his official vehicle. By the end of Jerry's second term, the blue Plymouth became almost as recognizable as the Governor.

Another example of the governor's frugality occurred about three months into his administration. We were just finishing our morning meeting, when I mentioned to the governor that I had asked General Services to come over and not replace, but repair a 10-00:00:05inch hole in the rug adjacent to his desk. “Why would you do that?” he asked. “Because it's unseemly to have a hole in the governor's rug.” The Governor answered: “That hole will save the state at least \$500 million, because legislators cannot come down and pound on my desk demanding lots of money for their pet programs while looking at a hole in my rug!”

That told me not only was the governor genuinely frugal, but that he also understood the power of his frugality to fight off excessive demands in the budget. It gave him the moral authority to ask for big cuts when the state was \$27 billion in debt at the start of his third term, and the courage to veto the entire budget when they did not make those cuts.

Jerry Brown was the best and possibly the only leader who could overcome the challenges that California faced in 2011 *and* lead the state back to the 5th largest economy in the world.

When he walked out of his office for the last time in January 2019, only the United States, China, Japan and Germany had larger economies than California.

## Interview History

By Martin Meeker, Charles B. Faulhaber Director, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library

There are very few individuals who are what might be called a “shoe-in” for an Oral History Center life history interview. Governor Jerry Brown is one who easily qualifies. Brown’s career as an elected official began in Southern California in 1969 when he was elected to the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees and then continued for nearly the next fifty years through a succession of high offices. He was elected: in 1970 to serve as California Secretary of State; in 1974 and again in 1978 as California Governor; in 1998 and 2002 as Mayor of Oakland; in 2006 as California Attorney General; and, finally, in 2010 and 2014 as Governor of California, for a third and record fourth term. In the midst of, and in between these offices, he ran three times for President of the United States (1976, 1980, and 1992), he once was the Democratic Party nominee for the U.S. Senate in California (1982), was elected chair of the California Democratic Party (1989), and ran his own nonprofit, populist, quasi-political organization We the People out of a communal living space he custom-built in Oakland, California in the 1990s. For the historians at UC Berkeley’s Oral History Center, the question was not, “Should this interview be done?” but rather, “How might it be done at all?”

Edmund Gerald “Jerry” Brown Jr. was born April 7, 1938, in San Francisco, California. At the time of his birth, his father, Edmund Brown Sr., whom everyone knew as ‘Pat,’ already was deeply involved in the law and politics of San Francisco. He had a thriving law practice and had run for San Francisco District Attorney, with assistance from local players including William Newsom Sr., grandfather to the state’s current governor. After initial failures, Brown Sr. was elected district attorney (1943), then California Attorney General (in 1950 and 1954), and finally Governor of California in 1958 and 1962; he attempted to win a third term, but lost to Ronald Reagan in the watershed 1966 state election.

Pat Brown married Bernice Layne in 1930. Smart and educated at UC Berkeley, Bernice Layne Brown gave up an anticipated career in teaching for the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker, and was a forceful presence in the family and in the life of her only son, Jerry. Jerry Brown described his youth as a world apart from that of adults, not concerned with big issues or the problems of the day. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, he developed a yearning for something more meaningful in his life as he grew into a young adult. He was educated at Catholic parochial schools and after high school choose to attend Santa Clara College (now University), a Jesuit school, before abandoning that route in favor of a life in the Catholic priesthood. He lived for three years at the Sacred Heart Jesuit Novitiate seminary before then wanting a deeper engagement with the world around him, which led him to UC Berkeley in 1960. He graduated from Berkeley in 1961 and immediately was accepted to Yale Law School, which he completed in 1964. Jerry Brown clerked for California State Supreme Court Justice Mathew Tobriner while he studied for the California Bar Exam, at the time living in the California governor’s mansion near the end of his father’s second term. Approaching the age of thirty, Jerry Brown moved to Los Angeles, where he joined the Tuttle & Taylor law firm and would soon make the initial steps beginning his career in politics.

## **The Oral History Project**

Working as an interviewer with the Oral History Center (OHC) since 2004, I was long aware that Jerry Brown had not yet sat for an oral history and that it would eventually need to be done — I might say that it was one of the interviews I personally wanted to work on and see to fruition. Then, in 2018, with the end of Jerry Brown’s fourth term as governor in sight, the OHC began the planning process, yet still without the necessary financial resources in place to make it happen. Because the University of California does not underwrite the Center’s oral history projects, we worked to secure funding for this interview, which clearly was going to be longer than most. In this context came a call from Scott Shafer, the senior politics editor with San Francisco’s KQED. Shafer inquired if OHC had begun “the governor’s” oral history. Shafer and I arranged to speak, during which he shared his hope of producing a multi-episode podcast series documenting Brown’s political life (see [kqed.org/podcasts/jerrybrown](http://kqed.org/podcasts/jerrybrown)). I was intrigued with the notion of partnering with KQED and, especially, with a political reporter whose work I greatly admired. I recognized that adding additional people and institutions to the mix might complicate the process and potentially change the outcomes, but Shafer and I decided that a partnership might be mutually advantageous from several angles, so we drafted a working plan.

First off, we assembled a project team, the core members of which would be myself, Scott Shafer, KQED politics reporter Guy Marzorati, and OHC political historian Todd Holmes. Additional KQED staff, most notably Queena Kim, would participate by managing the recording of the interviews; OHC staff, most centrally Jill Schlessinger and David Dunham with the capable assistance of Berkeley undergraduate JD Mireles managed the production of the final transcript and the preservation of the recordings. The project team agreed to schedule all meetings and interview sessions at the convenience of the governor with the mutual agreement of all interviewers. OHC pledged to manage the paperwork, transcription, editing, reviewing, and finalization of the complete interview transcript. OHC, as a research unit within The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, would also preserve, archive, and provide public access to the transcript and audio recordings. It is worth noting that OHC typically video records its oral histories, but in a planning meeting with the governor in January 2018, he made it clear that this was to be an audio-only “oral” history. Because KQED needed broadcast-quality recordings for their podcast series, KQED assumed responsibility for that portion of the work.

The project team recognized that a great deal of preparation and background research were going to be essential for a successful oral history. OHC oral historians and KQED staff agreed to collaborate to develop an overview interview outline at the commencement of the project and then, as the project unfolded, interview outlines in advance of each interview session. This exchange helped the interviewers establish not only a shared agenda, but also a unique method in which two, three, and sometimes even four people were asking questions of the governor. Still, we recognized from early on that collaboration was key. While one interviewer might take the lead in one portion of the interview or another, overall the research and interviewing responsibilities were shared.

With a general plan in place, the final piece required was the formal agreement of the governor to participate in what we anticipated would be multiple recording sessions resulting in roughly a forty hour interview. In fall 2018, Shafer and Marzorati worked closely with Evan Westrup, then press secretary to the governor, to present our plan. With Brown’s tentative consent to

participate, Shafer, Marzorati, Holmes and I met the governor in the historic mansion on what was one of his final days in office. The governor's schedule was packed with nonstop exit interviews but he took the time to meet with us, during which we discovered that, while interested, he was not yet quite sold on the idea. He asked several tough questions about the process, our agenda, and the anticipated outcomes. He was keenly aware that his father had done a life history interview with OHC (then the Regional Oral History Office) which was released in 1982 — and he later told us that the existence of that oral history was key in his decision to participate in one himself. In the months leading up to the end of his term, Brown proved reluctant to discuss his “legacy,” but he ultimately agreed to do the oral history.

This oral history is appropriately the first interview of the newly relaunched California State Government Oral History Program ([sos.ca.gov/archives/admin-programs/oral-history](https://sos.ca.gov/archives/admin-programs/oral-history)). At the same time the Brown interview was in the planning stages, we were working with the Center for California Studies at Sacramento State, the California State Archives, and the California State Librarian to get the state legislature to renew funding for this program. The program first was established in 1985 with a vote of the state legislature. The law said, “The Secretary of State shall conduct under the administration of the State Archives a regular governmental history documentation program to provide through the use of oral history a continuing documentation of state policy development as reflected in California’s legislative and executive history.” The program was initiated in 1986 and in the ensuing decades scores of elected officials, appointees, and key government staff were interviewed. The program continued until 2003, when funding was pulled due to the state financial crisis that year and was not immediately restored when the state budget returned to balance. For the fiscal year 2018–2019 state budget, Alex Padilla, California Secretary of State, secured funds to relaunch the program administered by the State Archives. The reinvestment in the California State Government Oral History Program was essential in getting this interview completed and now available as a benefit to the public.

The formal interview sessions began on February 4, 2019, at the Mountain House III, Jerry Brown’s historic ranch in Colusa County, California, which is where all interview sessions would be recorded. A total of twenty interview sessions were conducted between February and October 2, 2019, when the final session was completed. Sessions ran between, roughly, ninety minutes and three hours; on some days two sessions were recorded, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Typically, the project team convened at the Mountain House on Monday mornings, interviewed throughout the day, and then spent the night in the nearby town of Williams; we would then record another one or two sessions on Tuesday before returning home that afternoon.

The original plans for the interview called for each main interviewer to focus on distinct chapters in the long biography. While this did take place to a certain degree, a variety of factors led to a more improvisational structure. Todd Holmes was set to play the lead role for OHC, while Shafer was to be the lead interviewer on the KQED team. However, in June 2019, Holmes was forced to attend to an ongoing family medical emergency, so his role, unfortunately, became more limited in subsequent sessions; while Holmes contributed significantly to the research and questioning in the first several sessions, and continued to make important contributions to background research, he was unable to attend a number of interview sessions in which he was to play a lead role. When Holmes had to step away, fortunately Shafer was able and willing to fill in any gaps. My planned role as interviewer for this project was to focus on certain specific

issues such as Brown's engagement with new ideas and unconventional thinkers, his fiscal policies and approaches to taxation, his years relatively out of the spotlight between 1983 and 1998, and then his terms as Mayor of Oakland and California Attorney General. Shafer thus became the lead interviewer for this project, asking the majority of questions, pushing the governor on issues from election strategy to his relationship with singer Linda Rondstadt. Shafer brought his in-depth and on-the-ground knowledge of California politics, particularly of the players, the issues, and the trends to this project. Although working largely behind the scenes, the role of Guy Marzorati deserves attention: alongside myself and Holmes, Marzorati contributed greatly to the extensive research dossiers and interview outlines that guided this project. He also conducted numerous background interviews with Brown associates which both informed our questions as well as contributed to the KQED podcast series (we anticipate including these interviews in the OHC collection at a later date). Readers of the transcript will also see occasional contributions from Marzorati as well as Queena Kim and Evan Westrup. I also want to acknowledge the good fortune of having Miriam Pawel's then-just published group biography of the Brown family, *The Browns of California* (2018), as a key resource.

The KQED team uploaded digital audio files for each interview session and those were shared with OHC. OHC then oversaw the transcription of each interview session. Draft transcripts were edited by myself and Todd Holmes. When editing the transcript, we kept the governor's words unchanged in most every instance, making only minor edits to fix errors or improve clarity if our task was clear. We did edit the transcripts in two more substantive ways: first, the governor would sometimes appear to finish a response at which point a question would be asked, but then he resumed his original answer; this created a number of unnecessary disjunctures in the transcript which were easily resolved with the removal of the out-of-place questions (which were subsequently asked, usually verbatim). The second substantive edits came with removing "off the record" content or other extraneous conversation: the KQED audio engineer would begin the recordings prior to the official beginning of the interview and thus captured some material that was not intended for public release, so this was cut; similarly, the interview was sometimes interrupted by external sounds (phones ringing, dogs barking, guests arriving), so these were deleted from the final transcript as well.

Edited transcripts then were provided to the governor for review and to approve. Evan Westrup took the lead on ensuring the timely and thorough review of these transcripts. The governor made very few edits throughout the roughly 800 pages of transcripts. OHC staff then prepared a final transcript, which entailed entering Brown's edits, preparing a discursive table of contents, and assembling the additional material included in this document. Former Governor Gray Davis, who served as Brown's chief of staff between 1975 and 1981, generously contributed a thoughtful and thorough Foreword to this oral history. Shortly after the release of this transcript, it will be cataloged and archived by The Bancroft Library. It will be available on the websites of the Oral History Center and the University of California Berkeley's online library catalog ([ucblib.link/OHC-jbrown](http://ucblib.link/OHC-jbrown)). We anticipate by late spring 2020, the complete audio recordings of the interview (edited to conform to the lightly edited transcript) will be available for users to listen to on the OHC website. Moreover, the recordings will be synchronized with the transcript to enable users to search full text content in this time-based media. All of the oral history materials (recordings and transcripts) will be deposited with the California State Archives and available to users through their website as well ([sos.ca.gov/archives](http://sos.ca.gov/archives)).

## **Considerations of the Interview**

A question often heard by oral historians is: what is the difference between journalism and oral history? It is not the easiest question, but there are a few points upon which there is some agreement. Oral history interviews are, by definition, recorded, preserved, and made accessible, in some fashion and at some date, to the public — to researchers who may wish to quote from the interviews and from other researchers who want to confirm the use and context of those quotes. Many oral historians provide the interviewee, or the “narrator,” the opportunity to review the interview (recording and/or transcript) prior to its deposit in an archive or release to the public. This arrangement allows for candor in an often long-format interview because the narrator knows she or he will be able to edit, seal, or otherwise prevent material from public release. This is not standard operating procedure for journalists. Although simplifying the matter, journalists let those whom they are interviewing know if the conversation is “on the record” or “off the record;” rarely are interviewees given the opportunity to review and change quotes made “on the record.” This posed a challenge to the project team at the onset, but an easy compromise was made early on: the governor would in fact be given the opportunity to review and correct the final transcript, but everything on the recording that was deemed “on the record” would stay “on the record” and thus would be available for KQED to use in their podcast production. This created the potential for tricky moments down the road if the governor made substantial edits or embargoed portions of his interview. Fortunately, Brown is experienced, to say the least, with media engagement and understood that everything recorded was the on record. While he chose his words carefully, electing to discuss some issues obliquely or not at all, he remained engaged, thoughtful, and largely candid throughout the long interview process.

One additional way in which oral history methodology and radio journalism ran up against each other is the issue of silence. Oral historians are taught time and again to allow potentially awkward silence to happen in an interview. We are told: don’t immediately jump to a new question after the narrator finishes their response. As a void, silence likes to be filled and it is often productive to allow the narrator to fill that silence. Something new, unique, or thoughtful might be added. I’ve used this technique many times and it does tend to produce results. Silence for radio journalists, however, is the enemy: questions are asked quickly to keep the audience engaged and the interviewee talking and, perhaps, a little off balance. Moreover, this oral history featured two and often three interviewers. As a result, Jerry Brown’s oral history was in some ways more like a lengthy but still rapid-fire radio interview than the kind of collaborative and slowly-paced interviews oral historians typically create. So this interview, this transcript is very much a hybrid document that resides at the boundaries of radio journalism and oral history.

As much as the circumstances of this project proved unique for oral history, the narrator himself was far out of the ordinary as well. We are fortunate to have a nearly forty-hour interview providing ample evidence of the uniqueness of this subject, but I’ll venture a few observations here. Jerry Brown, I found, to be a man with a largely unwavering set of core values and principles who sometimes appears to choose contradictory ways in which to express those drives. I am not the first to observe his belief in the value of frugality and in the virtue of austerity. And sure enough, these twin strands are woven throughout this story, from entering the seminary, to refusing the usual trappings of office when he became governor (such as limousines), to even rejecting (and vetoing) his own party’s budget when he considered it profligate. Brown recognizes at a profound level that we live in a world with limits and therefore it is virtuous to



learn to live with those limits, making the most of the precious resources, opportunities, and time that we have. There is a very neat intersection then between his Catholicism and his interest in and real engagement with Zen Buddhism, which came to a real meeting point in Japan in the 1980s when he met with Father Lassalle, Jesuit, and Yamada Roshi, a Zen Buddhist leader. At the same time, points that might be considered contradictions appear in his narrative. For example, Brown himself has expressed great distrust of major social institutions. I think the long-running distrust between Brown and the faculty and administration of the University of California system comes down to the former's skepticism about the value and fear of the doctrinaire aspects of formal education (along with his suspicion that university professors fail to appreciate the value of austerity). Why then would a man so critical of large social institutions spend his life seeking to lead them? Brown offers answers to this critical question throughout the oral history. Perhaps most important among these is that Brown seems truly comfortable inhabiting these apparent contradictions.

I have conducted hundreds of oral histories, but engaging with Jerry Brown was a new experience for me. Partly this was due to the fact that there were often three interviewers in the room; partly it was Jerry Brown himself. As a lifelong politician, Brown has ample reason to be suspicious of journalists and, based on his wrangling with professors, he feels largely ambivalent about academics as well. So while Brown already knew Scott Shafer and he knew of the Oral History Center through his father's interview, the interviewing team was still regarded as "the journalists and the academics." As will be evident when reading the interview, Brown sees journalists as reducers and simplifiers while academics are mired in their concepts and jargon; neither group has a great track record of explaining the world — especially the world of politics as it really is. For example, in session eleven, I made the observation to the governor, "You certainly had a domestic policy through line in your first two terms of governor." He responds quickly and dismissively, "Wait, let me just back up to your *through line*—that's another one of your metaphors." Yet, then proceeds to offer a very thoughtful answer of the question. This type of interplay marked the entire interview process: sometimes it was productive and interesting, while at other times it became a little trying. But I think all recognized that this was the way in which Brown has always thought and engaged with others, friend and foe alike: not satisfied with pabulum or fuzzy thinking, vigorous discussion and pointed debate were necessary to push any project forward. That spirit certainly reigned in this oral history interview.

### **Contributions of this Oral History**

The purpose of oral history interviews is to create, preserve, and make accessible first-person accounts of lived history. Although Oral History Center staff regularly offer interpretations and analyses of their interviews, the prime goal in this center is to create documents (recordings and transcripts) that are not beholden to a single historian's research objectives but rather attempt to seek information and ideas on a wide range of topics relevant to their narrator's interests and expertise. To the extent that this is possible, we like to project and consider things that future generations might be interested in, and then ask our narrators to respond. So, any consideration of the contributions of a single oral history will be limited knowing its likely contributions today.

Speculation of future uses of this oral history aside, there are at least three main areas of study of the life of Jerry Brown, and politics much more broadly, that might be impacted by the contents of this interview from today's vantage point: the historical trajectory of key social and political issues; the influence of creative and unique ideas upon Brown and his agenda; and what might be called the philosophy of *realpolitik* — of how politics really works, at least according to Brown. In this oral history, we questioned Jerry Brown about many of the key social and political issues of today and of decades past. We explored a variety of issues in the context of his first two terms as governor (1975–1983) and then how those issues disappeared, reappeared, or morphed during his second two terms (2007–2019). A short list of these issues includes: taxation, criminal justice, education, the environment, and immigration. One example of a particularly revealing exchange comes with Brown's own narrative of the People's Initiative to Limit Property Taxes, better known as Prop 13 (1978). In his telling, he rebuffs critics from within his own party who disliked his embrace of the reform after it was enthusiastically passed by voters, saying, "I never could quite follow that [criticism]. It's the *law*. Now, no one seriously said you should subvert the law — what does that mean?" He further details what he did to prevent the passage of the law but then also the actions he took so that when the law was implemented something other than disaster would strike. Secondly, we asked Brown about a variety of esoteric thinkers he has engaged with and how those individuals and their ideas influenced his work of governing, a topic little explored by historians to date. Stewart Brand, Ivan Illich, Gregory Bateson, Sim Van der Ryn, and others appear in this transcript as Brown relishes in their ideas and even explains how they were made (or were attempted to be made) into programs and policy. Finally, and I think most importantly, this oral history, taken as a whole, represents a kind of philosophy of politics and governance. This philosophy manifests in the many pithy phrases he utters ("If nobody's complaining, then there's no issue, no one does anything") as well as the longer and often substantive disquisitions on the central themes and pivotal moments of his half century in public service (such as the decision to run for president in 1976 and 1980 and what he learned from those defeats).

This oral history now joins OHC's already major collection of interviews in California political history. In addition to the aforementioned life history with Governor Pat Brown (and the much larger "Goodwin Knight and Edmund G. Brown Gubernatorial Eras in California" project), OHC has conducted oral histories with California Governor and US Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, Secretary of State March Fong Eu, as well as major projects on the Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era and Women in California Politics. As previously mentioned, the Jerry Brown oral history is the first interview of the newly relaunched California State Government Oral History Program sponsored by the California Secretary of State, State Archives.

## Interview 1: February 4, 2019

01-00:00:00

Shafer: This is Monday, February 4, 2019, and the first recording with Governor Jerry Brown. We're at his ranch in Colusa County, right?

01-00:00:10

Brown: Yes.

01-00:00:11

Shafer: And with Cali and Colusa [Governor Brown's dogs] outside—that we might be hearing from time to time. All right, Governor, first of all, I just want to ask you just in general, you've been out of office now a month. How has the transition been for you?

01-00:00:28

Brown: Excellent! It has been one of the best transitions I've ever seen.

01-00:00:33

Shafer: How so?

01-00:00:34

Brown: [laughing] Well, there's not any problems, so that's good.

01-00:00:38

Shafer: Has it been a period of just sort of letting go then?

01-00:00:42

Brown: You know, I've been asked that question—I don't know quite what that means. Because each day seems similar to the previous day. We change only slowly over time. So I'm only going an hour, sixty-five miles, from the capital. I had moved from Oakland into the mansion a few years ago, and now we've moved all our stuff from the mansion to the Mountain House. And this is a structure and a home we just built, so there's a lot of putting things together, and a lot of work to complete this house, and it has great historic significance to me, and even, I think, to others. So that is exciting in itself, and it requires a lot of work.

This thing just didn't happen. Even to find the place where to build the house took a few years, and we had a lot of—it offered a lot of choices, so all over here, twenty-five hundred acres. So we decided to put it exactly where the stagecoach hotel was about a hundred yards off in that direction, and there was a barn right there, and you've probably seen the picture. I don't know whether that picture is in here. [Brown looks at photographs in the book: Miriam Pawel, *The Browns of California: The Family Dynasty that Transformed a State and Shaped a Nation*, 2018.]

01-00:02:26

Shafer: Where would it be?

01-00:02:27

Brown: Let's see if we can find the picture—it must be in the early part. [leafing through book]. All right. Do you see that mountain?

01-00:02:33

Shafer: Yeah.

01-00:02:36

Brown: That's that mountain right there [pointing to a hill to the northwest of his home]. So that barn we burnt down, so we're like right here. So if you want to call it a transition, it's been a continuous effort for the last five years, but in my mind for over twenty years, to do this. And so completing this—which we haven't completed yet—and working on it, is very exciting to me. So it's hard to think of leaving one thing as though that's an end, when what I'm beginning is, in some ways, equally as exciting as being governor. It's a different experience and different reality.

But it *is* reconstituting a place and reinhabiting a place that my great-grandfather [August Schuckman]—and others before him—came here in the nineteenth century. So to be able to give new life to a place with such historic significance is very exciting. And it's exciting because whatever brought people here, there was a certain logic. And the logic was that there was a lot of flooding going on in Sacramento, so people—my great-grandfather among them—were seeking higher ground. And this was a place where, because it was all done on horseback and stagecoach, people stopped to get new horses, fresh horses, and maybe stayed overnight on their way to the mines or on their way to spas. And there were a great many spas in Colusa and Lake County in the nineteenth century. But then that fades away, the spas decline, the mines exhaust themselves, the car replaces the horse, and therefore the functioning of a stagecoach disappears, a stagecoach stop, and the homesteading declines. The wheat price declines, the soils don't produce the wheat as well as they do, the prices change, and it goes from homesteading, with many plots and a lot of activity, a lot of families, a local school here—it goes into pastureland, principally sheep, and now it's become cattle.

But there is a certain new vitality. I have a neighbor a mile and a half away, and she and her husband are building an organic cheese dairy, which will take many years. And so that is *also* a new beginning, so I really feel I'm embarked upon something new and something exciting, but something that's very much *rooted* in the past, in my own family and California's history. So given all that, I would have to say I don't feel a real change from what I was doing in Sacramento and what I'm doing now.

01-00:05:56

Shafer: Well, let's talk about a different thing.

01-00:05:57

Brown: Oh, there *is* a change, but it's not what you would think. You know, it's not going from the important to the trivial, or the unimportant, or the remote. It's very much in the midst of action and, we can say creativity, in a way that I find very exciting.

01-00:06:22

Shafer: Yeah. Well, let's talk about the beginning of you. Which was, I think, April 7, 1938?

01-00:06:27

Brown: Yeah, I have no recollection of that.

01-00:06:30

Shafer: [laughing] Well, others do, fortunately. But you were born toward the middle end, beginning of the end maybe, of the Great Depression. You were born a few years before World War II began, Pearl Harbor. What are some of your earliest memories or your neighborhood and life in Forest Hill on Magellan Ave.?

01-00:06:52

Brown: Oh, we didn't grow up in Forest Hill. When I was born, my parents lived at my grandfather's house on my mother's side, Capt. [Arthur D.] Layne.

[side conversation deleted]

01-00:07:03

Brown: All right. So we lived [in San Francisco] at Seventeenth and Shrader, and that was my [grandfather] Capt. Layne's house. And after his wife died, my mother [Bernice E. Layne Brown] and father [Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, Sr.] moved in there so my mother could help my grandfather. And we lived there until sometime in 1941. My grandfather died in 1940, and so it's at that point my mother's sisters and brother wanted to sell it, and they didn't want to sell it to *them*, so therefore they had to sell it on the market. And therefore they had to leave, and so they moved to Forest Hill. So I do remember moving to Magellan—that's the other place I stayed until I left to go to college and then to seminary. But I did like that house at Seventeenth and Shrader. I do remember it. I remember my room. I've been back there since. It's kind of a sunroom. I remember my grandfather, Capt. Layne.

01-00:08:13

Shafer: He was a police officer/a police chief.

01-00:08:14

Brown: He was a police captain in the San Francisco Police Department. Other than that—it was a big house, but just a few childhood memories. So then we moved to Forest Hill, and it was smaller and probably it was foggy, it had a sense of grayness, because it was probably foggy, as it was most of the time.

01-00:08:40

Shafer: Yeah, and—as I said, the war—you moved the year of Pearl Harbor.

01-00:08:45

Brown: I don't remember Pearl Harbor. Even though December, we moved in in the early part of '41, and I remember that, but I don't remember Pearl Harbor.

01-00:08:56

Shafer: Were there things that your family did that were related either to the war or to—?

01-00:09:01

Brown: Well, the air raids, where they put up that special kind of paper that blocks out the light. So there would be air raids. We had an air raid warden. He would come over, and it was someone who lived on the block and checked to make sure there was no light showing, and there'd be these drills. I do remember that. I remember my sisters [see full names below] and mother would play canasta during these things, and we had to keep the light from escaping, and so I do remember that. I remember rationing—I mean the ration cards. That was interesting.

01-00:09:39

Shafer: And did it seem like you were living in a kind of—I won't say deprivation, but that you were a part of a larger effort that was with the rest—

01-00:09:48

Brown: No, no. I did not have that sense at all. I didn't feel deprived. Although if I compare what is available today with *then*, it's not even close. There's hundreds of thousands of different options and products that you can get in stores. Things were a lot simpler. The bread man delivered, the milk man delivered, the ice man—we didn't have ice, but the people across the street had ice, so an ice truck would come by. So it was exciting, it was interesting—there's no bombs around, there's no crime, there's no turbulence, so it seemed. Well, it was all that I knew, so it seemed completely normal to me.

01-00:10:46

Shafer: You had two older sisters [Cynthia Brown Kelly and Barbara Brown Casey Siggins], and eventually a younger sister [Kathleen L. Brown] as well.

01-00:10:50

Brown: Yeah.

01-00:10:52

Shafer: Were you sort of the favorite kid for a while?

01-00:10:55

Brown: No, I wouldn't say I was the favorite. Maybe somebody thought I was. But I grew up in the pre-helicopter-parent environment. So my mother had plenty to do taking care of her three children, and then her four children. My father was fully engaged in his work, first as a lawyer, then seeking offices. He got elected district attorney, and their lives were full of their activities—and our lives were the lives of children. So we played and we went to school. The only times we were together were when we'd have dinner or when we'd take a trip or go on vacation. Otherwise, I think there was a pretty—you know, not an impenetrable line—but there was a demarcation. Adults had their parties, they had their conversation, and

they had their activities, and then there's children, and the children went out to play and went to school. I don't think there was a lot of overlap there.

01-00:12:13

Shafer: I think your dad became DA in San Francisco in '43. So you were five or so.

01-00:12:17

Brown: In '43, I was five—yeah, well, it was November; I was five. I was in kindergarten.

01-00:12:22

Shafer: Yeah, what do you remember?

01-00:12:23

Brown: Well, I was in kindergarten—I was in Miss Pon's class. Miss Pon taught me and all three of my sisters. Well, I remember the election. I remember the little cards that he would hand out with his picture on it. And I remember going into the voting booth, because San Francisco had the electric voting machines, and you'd pull the curtain and then you'd move the levers to indicate your vote. I, of course, found that interesting.

01-00:13:00

Shafer: What was interesting?

01-00:13:01

Brown: Well, just the machine! I mean there was a curtain. You'd go into—someone, a block away, it was their basement, and people would line up. It happened only on Election Day, so that made it interesting. The first election I would probably remember would be November of '43. And I started kindergarten in January of '43, and when my father won, I think, Miss Pon had everyone draw a figure, I think maybe of clowns or other things, and she put it together in a booklet, and we gave it to my father as kind of his gift for winning.

01-00:13:53

Shafer: [laughing] Clowns? [laughter]

01-00:13:54

Brown: Yeah, well—it might not have been—that's kind of my memory. Just figures—people, persons.

01-00:14:04

Shafer: Did it seem to you, as a five-year-old, you know, your dad—as you go to the voting booth with your father, did it seem to you, and to your siblings, like a big deal? What did it seem like?

01-00:14:15

Brown: No, I wouldn't call it a big deal. It was just—a deal. It was just a lot of those things you do, like go to the grocery store. It was something different.

01-00:14:22

Shafer: But I mean him getting elected.

01-00:14:24

Brown: Oh, getting elected—I don't have a great memory of it. He did it again, which I remember more of that. I don't remember the election that much other than his little card that he handed out, and I have some of those posters to this day.

I remember the swearing-in, which was on January 8, 1944, and we sat on the steps inside there on the rotunda. And Mayor [Roger D.] Lapham was being sworn in, and my father as well. So I do remember driving to the city hall. I have a clear memory of that because I asked my father whether [Matthew A.] Brady, Matt Brady, the five-term incumbent that lost, would he be there—would he be sworn out as my father would be sworn in? So they didn't call it an inauguration, they called it a swearing-in. Actually, I have a picture, not a very distinct picture, but you can see all the people gathered in the rotunda in San Francisco City Hall.

01-00:15:46

Shafer: And did it seem to change *your* status at school? Did your friends treat you any differently?

01-00:15:52

Brown: No.

01-00:15:53

Shafer: Not at all?

01-00:15:54

Brown: I don't know that they even knew about it—well, it certainly was not very salient. I think for a five-year-old, who is district attorney is not of significance. [laughter] And *was* not, as far as I can remember.

01-00:16:08

Shafer: Talk about your parents. Your dad, obviously, was running for office, I think by the time you were born.

01-00:16:15

Brown: Yeah.

01-00:16:16

Shafer: And your mom was a stay-at-home mom, but she had gone to college also. She went to Cal, I think.

01-00:16:21

Brown: Yeah.

01-00:16:22

Shafer: Talk about your two parents and the roles that they played in the family.

01-00:16:28

Brown: Well, they played the roles of husband and wife, and mother and father. My mother did the cooking; my father did not spend any time in the kitchen. And everything seemed to go along. I think things that interested me was when we'd go on vacation to the Russian River or to Yosemite. That was exciting, that we



would do as a family. And of course the first few years we did it, there was no Kathleen—my youngest sister. She came along in 1945. So I enjoyed the vacations together, otherwise it was just pretty normal. And we had a lot of kids on the block. I once counted over, I think, forty-five kids on the block, just on Magellan Ave., that one block, the 400 block. So I'd spend most of my time out on the street.

But I do remember the trips to Yosemite. I hiked the Ledge Trail, and I think I was five that year. And it's now closed, because it's too dangerous. That's where the Firefall—from what is it, Glacier Pt. You go from Camp Curry, and you hike straight up the rock. We didn't intend to, my father just—"Let's take a walk," my mother and my father and myself, and we ended up going to the top. And I remember that because there was no food. This was during the war, so it might have been '42. So we got up there, and all you could get is peanuts in the machine, and then we came down the Four-Mile Trail. But for someone who was four or five, it's about a mile and a half up. My father had to push me up some of the trail—it was a little scary. And then we walked down the Four-Mile Trail, which was much easier, so I remember that. I remember Yosemite. And I remember going to Twain Harte; I learned to swim there. I wasn't that interested in school, so vacation and playing were my principal interests.

01-00:18:57

Shafer: Why weren't you interested in school?

01-00:18:58

Brown: It wasn't that interesting.

01-00:19:03

Shafer: And you're talking about like kindergarten through third grade, or what?

01-00:19:07

Brown: Kindergarten through eighth grade, I think. [Shafer laughs] Or beyond! I mean, it was pretty pedestrian and routinized. I wouldn't use that word at the time, but looking back, there's not a lot of surprise in school.

Actually, I liked kindergarten better, because I remember they'd paint and I liked that. You could paint with a little easel, and you had your little things and you'd slop it around. That was all right.

01-00:19:40

Shafer: Did you paint anything memorable?

01-00:19:42

Brown: No. I couldn't paint. I had no talent in that area.

01-00:19:46

Shafer: Yeah, so it sounds like your mom and dad had a, what for the time was a pretty traditional relationship.

01-00:19:52

Brown: It seemed pretty normal to me.

01-00:19:55

Shafer: Yeah, but your mom, as I mentioned, she had gone to university and was very smart, I imagine. Did it seem to you either then, or looking back, that she made some sacrifices?

01-00:20:08

Brown: That I don't know. Could be. I mean she didn't have a career, but I think on the whole Magellan Ave., that whole block, if there was one woman that worked, I'd be surprised.

01-00:20:22

Shafer: And what about your dad?

01-00:20:23

Brown: It was a very different—they were all families. I think one, two, a few didn't have children. They were all, with a couple of exceptions, married. So there are no single women or single men, so it was a pretty normal, middle class 1940s America.

01-00:20:50

Shafer: Do you feel like your mom and your dad—they obviously played different roles in the family. Like how would you say each of them shaped you and your siblings? What are the traits?

01-00:21:01

Brown: Oh, just a pretty normal life. My father was at the office—as he would say—making money. I asked him, “What do you do, Dad?” He said, “I make money.” One time we were driving by the [San Francisco] Mint, and I said, “Oh, is that where Daddy works?” And she said, “No.” But yeah, so he would come home, he'd read his advance law reports, the loose-leaf reports that come out of the appellate cases. He'd read those, or read the paper or magazines. We had afternoon papers in those days. And then we'd have dinner and we'd talk, and that was pretty ordinary, I would say.

01-00:21:46

Shafer: Did you talk about his day or your day, or did you talk about bigger things?

01-00:21:48

Brown: I can't remember when we did, but—

01-00:21:50

Shafer: No memory, and what about your mom?

01-00:21:51

Brown: We'd talk about what's happening, as the district attorney. There was just general conversation about what's going on—I mean, no particular topic, but a full exchange among my sisters, myself, my mother, and my father. There was no one quiet person there that I can think of.

01-00:22:18

Shafer: Yeah, and do you feel like your mom—you probably spent more time with her, I imagine.

01-00:22:25

Brown: Yeah, we didn't spend *time* with her. I didn't stay in the house very often. I was out playing or visiting other people's houses. We didn't just sit around and talk to my mother or my sisters, that just wasn't done. People were doing things. My sisters were doing things, and people would be home for dinner.

01-00:22:49

Shafer: I remember my childhood. My dad wasn't around very much, but I did—

01-00:22:53

Brown: Oh, my father was around! Every night he was there.

01-00:22:55

Shafer: Yeah, but I remember talking to my father about politics. I mean, that's one of the reasons I got *interested* in politics.

01-00:23:00

Brown: I don't remember talking about politics. I might have—maybe the district attorney, people would call on the telephone, and I'd pick up the phone, because he'd be at the dinner table and he said, "You go answer it," and then I would go tell him who's calling. So there would be activities around the DA's office. There were a lot of family welfare issues that he dealt with as district attorney, and we'd hear about it. Not the details, but just certain women would call and complain about this or that. I do recall that, but I don't remember any partisan or substantive issue.

01-00:23:36

Shafer: And what about religion in the family? Your dad was Catholic; your mom was a Protestant. How did that kind of—?

01-00:23:43

Brown: It didn't come up very much. I would say there was zero talk of religion.

01-00:23:49

Shafer: What about going to church?

01-00:23:50

Brown: Oh, at some point I know I was at West Portal, so that was only a block and a half away. They said, "Now you've got to go to catechism class," so I started doing that. And I can't remember when we started going to church, but we'd go to church every Sunday. My mother would often come, and we'd go to St. Cecilia's for the most part.

But that's it. We'd just go to church, and that was it. There was a kind of a flamboyant pastor, Msgr. [Harold E.] Collins, and I guess when my father was

DA or attorney general, probably DA, he would always tell him to come down and sit in the first row, so it was a little bit of a show.

01-00:24:38

Shafer: A flamboyant—what do you mean?

01-00:24:40

Brown: He would just talk. He always said St. Cecilia's is the greatest and the best of all the other churches, so he was a booster. Maybe that's what I would say, not a flamboyant, but a booster. And we would sometimes go to St. Brendan's, depending upon the Masses. You could go to the 9:00am Mass; you had a 10:15am Mass; you had a 12:15pm Mass sometimes—depending on where it was most convenient, and we would drive.

01-00:25:10

Shafer: And did it seem like you were going because your father wanted you to go? Or because it was like some politicians—

01-00:25:16

Brown: No, we'd just go because that's what you *did*. You go to church on Sunday—you go to school, you go to church.

01-00:25:26

Shafer: Oh, so it wasn't for show, in terms of, like some politicians will go to church—

01-00:25:29

Brown: Well, it might have been, but it didn't strike me that way.

01-00:25:32

Shafer: Yeah, and what about catechism class? Obviously, you became more interested in Catholicism.

01-00:25:37

Brown: Yeah, I would go to St. Brendan's, in the basement of the church. They had two nuns, and they taught catechism class. We had our little Baltimore Catechism, and so I remember going through that for a few years. Then, in 1947, I transferred from West Portal and went into the fifth grade at St. Brendan's, so then that ended catechism class, because we were in a Catholic school and we had religion every day.

01-00:26:06

Shafer: And did you remember that being more interesting, or not?

01-00:26:10

Brown: The biblical stories—they had an easel, and they had pictures of the different stories from mostly from the New Testament, maybe from the Old Testament—I found that very interesting, yeah.

01-00:26:30

Shafer: Did you find it interesting because the stories were interesting, or—did you believe them as like truth?

01-00:26:35

**Brown:** Yeah, well we believed Adam and Eve were the first parents, and they'd gotten—the serpent, the sin, the Garden of Eden—all that, yeah. Mortal sin, venial sin, crucifixion, resurrection, grace, communion, confession, seven sacraments—the whole nine yards. It takes a while to get all that. But from catechism class, starting in the 1940s, and then going through high school, Santa Clara, the seminary, up until I went to Berkeley in 1960, that's probably fifteen years or more of regular Catholic religious instruction.

01-00:27:25

**Shafer:** And we're going to get to some of those later things in a bit. But do you remember, as you were young, going through religious training?

01-00:27:35

**Brown:** No, we made our first Communion. I remember that. We have pictures of that. We went out to Lakeside after that, and we had our little short pants and a little white sash on our arm, and we got our rosary beads and a little missal, so I remember that.

01-00:27:53

**Shafer:** But I mean was there a point where as you were studying [snapping fingers] that something clicked for you?

01-00:27:56

**Brown:** No, what do you mean it clicked? It was what it was, so it was part of the landscape. It was just part of reality; it didn't seem separate.

01-00:28:08

**Shafer:** And did you engage with the church in a different way than your siblings, or not really?

01-00:28:13

**Brown:** I can't tell. They were a lot older than I was—I think my sister Barbara is seven years older than me, and Cynthia was five years. That's quite a difference. So we weren't sitting around discussing religion or theology or politics. Barbara had her friends, Cynthia had her friends, and I had *my* friends, so a sort of normal differentiation.

01-00:28:47

**Shafer:** Yeah, and your friends—you mostly hung out with boys in the neighborhood?

01-00:28:51

**Brown:** Yeah.

01-00:28:52

**Shafer:** And who were some of your friends?

01-00:28:54

**Brown:** Well, there's Mark McGuinness, Peter Roddy, Mark's brother Michael [McGuinness], Charlie Corsiglia, Mitchell Johnson.

01-00:29:08

Shafer: And what did you guys do when you were hanging out?

01-00:29:13

Brown: Well, we played hide-and-go-seek in the early years, running around to all the different houses and backyards around. And then we'd play hockey on the street. There weren't that many cars then on Magellan Ave. You could actually play hockey with roller skates. And then we'd play touch football. And then we, at some point, rode our bikes and we'd ride different places. And it evolved as we grew up.

01-00:29:49

Shafer: Did you consider yourself an athlete or were you interested in sports?

01-00:29:51

Brown: No. Well, I mean we played—that *was* sports. West Portal didn't have any organized sports that I knew of, nor did St. Brendan's. This hyper-sports thing is a recent invention. There was the Pop Warner league, which I went one day to try out for, but I didn't have any interest. So normally, you could go to school and there was not uniforms or—parents were not taking their kids to games. That started in high school.

01-00:30:31

Shafer: You were the only boy. You had three sisters. What was that dynamic like, and did you wish you had a brother?

01-00:30:40

Brown: Yeah, I did, because there wasn't a lot to talk about with my sisters. And they were older, so they had different activities, certainly, growing up. And I was probably not very interesting to them. My friends in the neighborhood were not their friends. They had other people they liked to be with. So there's quite a differentiation. The school creates graded differences, so that when you're in the second grade, you're different than the third grade *and* the fourth grade, much less eighth grade. So schooling, unlike, I think, being on a farm or being in an earlier period in history—or being on this ranch—you stick to your grades. At the school you didn't want to talk to the younger ones; you didn't want to talk to the older ones. You knew who they were; you saw them, but that was that.

I also noticed that the people in school—I've reflected on this recently—most of the people I spent time with, they lived in the neighborhood. And we'd go to school, and it was rare that somebody just from the school would come over and play. That was true at West Portal, and that was true at St. Brendan's, where I went. So school just occupied your time. And in class you didn't talk—nobody talked in class. The teacher talked, or you answered questions or raised your hand. And then we'd play—at recess and lunchtime, there would be, obviously, playing in the yard. And then when we went home it was more of that. The people that I gravitated toward were the people in the neighborhood.

Mark McGuinness was on the corner, and they had a little basketball court, and I'd say that's a predominant activity after a certain age.

01-00:33:14

Shafer: You said you were reflecting recently on the fact, I think, that the kids all had grown up in the neighborhood? Is that what you were referring to?

01-00:33:19

Brown: No, I was saying that I didn't form friendships with people in school, if they weren't living within a block or two of my house.

01-00:33:32

Shafer: As you were reflecting on it, what did you think?

01-00:33:36

Brown: Just that schooling is an odd institution, and it controls and occupies your time and forces you into these exercises. And then when you leave it, it's just there, and you pick it up again the next day. So I guess I was reflecting on the fact that schooling did not create the conversations or the interaction or the being together *with*, that maybe being at Santa Clara did, where you have a twenty-four-hour environment, and you had a chance to eat meals with people, like at Santa Clara or in the seminary or at the International House at Berkeley. There was an opportunity to have discussions, get acquainted with people, whereas these schools, these grammar schools, you just go, and you do your pupil activity, and then you go home. And the only real interaction is sometimes you go to school, come and go with certain people, or I would get rides with various parents. My father and my mother didn't drive us to school. You could even walk—it was only, I don't know how far, probably less than a mile. But if I could get a ride from a neighbor, I would, and then you would talk to people and meet people. Otherwise, it was a kind of a controlled existence, in that sense.

01-00:35:20

Shafer: Did you find that confining at all?

01-00:35:22

Brown: I don't think I really thought about it. I didn't find it particularly invigorating, sitting there in class. It was interesting enough. It was all right. But it seems to be, if I can compare, and I don't know that I can, but it seems like school is a lot more important today. I mean, my parents wouldn't ask me, "What happened at school today?" Maybe they did, but I don't have a recollection of that. And there wasn't any great emphasis on it—I'd get my report card and they'd take a look at it, and that was that. Today we have all this data collection, and we have a statewide computer with all the different performance metrics for all 6 million children. And there's a band of academics that want to look at this very carefully, and people are judging neighborhoods and schools by the metrics on the state exams. So that's all an invention of more recent decades.

01-00:36:27

Shafer: And you think that's a mistake?

01-00:36:29

Brown: Well, I'm skeptical that regimentation and standardization is the pathway to wisdom, knowledge, and creativity.

01-00:36:45

Shafer: Well, in that regard, I think it was a biography of your dad, you're described as being a rambunctious handful, and I think maybe it was another member of your family, maybe your godmother, called you—

01-00:37:00

Brown: Not my godmother. That would have been my aunt.

01-00:37:04

Shafer: She called you a hellion. Does that ring true for you at all? [laughing]

01-00:37:07

Brown: Oh yeah, because when you're young, you have a lot of energy. You want to run around. You don't want to sit—so we were always outside running around doing one thing or another.

01-00:37:18

Shafer: No more so than the other kids?

01-00:37:20

Brown: No. What are you talking about, five, six, ten, twelve? You're in constant motion.

01-00:37:28

Shafer: What's the worst thing you did as a kid, would you say?

01-00:37:31

Brown: I don't think there was anything particularly bad, little notable things. I wrote my name in the cement that hadn't dried yet, down the street from our house. Thrown a few dirt clods at neighbors' houses. I hope I can throw it at that house or something. That's fun, to provoke people. [laughter] The whole game, the challenge is the excitement and to avoid boredom, which school represented in some respects. And that's why most kids are glad to get out of school and go play. That's what childhood *used* to be. Today it seems like school and sports is the controlling mechanism.

01-00:38:20

Shafer: At some point you, I think, got interested in boxing?

01-00:38:23

Brown: No, that's not true.

01-00:38:24

Shafer: Oh, it's not true?



01-00:38:24

Brown: We had senior fight night. My senior year, they had a fight night for seniors. And I participated in that, but it was a one-night, three-round experience, and they had four or five other fights the same night.

01-00:38:40

Shafer: Describe what they were.

01-00:38:41

Brown: Oh, it's a fight, it's a boxing match. You have these big boxing gloves that kind of weigh your hands down, and I was in a three-round match, and I won and that was good. But that was my first and last experience as a boxer. [laughter]

01-00:38:55

Shafer: So you just had one fight?

01-00:38:56

Brown: One—well, it's only senior fight night. It's like the junior prom or senior fight night. That's just one of the things they did in those days.

01-00:39:07

Shafer: And did you have like a good left hook?

01-00:39:09

Brown: I can't remember.

01-00:39:10

Shafer: You don't remember?

01-00:39:12

Brown: Well, no, it wasn't that sophisticated.

01-00:39:16

Shafer: So it was in like a boxing ring with the whole thing?

01-00:39:18

Brown: Yeah, in a ring in the gym.

01-00:39:19

Shafer: This is a Catholic school campus?

01-00:39:20

Brown: In the gym. With all the kids standing by watching.

01-00:39:24

Shafer: And the school sponsored that?

01-00:39:26

Brown: Yeah, it was *at* the school, in the school gymnasium, an event called the senior fight night. And it was voluntary, of course—some people did it, some people didn't.

01-00:39:37

Shafer: Yeah, and your one match, who was that against?

01-00:39:40

Brown: Peter Roddy.

01-00:39:42

Shafer: And what happened?

01-00:39:44

Brown: Well, I knocked him down, and I won on points. But he got up, so it wasn't a knock out. But I won. I think that was good. I hadn't done that before. Before—*or* since!

01-00:39:59

Shafer: [laughing] I remember when we talked a few weeks ago, we were chatting about the fact that you wished you'd had a brother, or you would have liked to have a brother.

01-00:40:07

Brown: Well, because it's kind of boring just being there—there wasn't always somebody to play with. That was the big thing. *Play* was just the name of the game—and who you play *with*. So I liked to be with others.

01-00:40:25

Shafer: You mentioned, I think, going over to Bill [William A.] Newsom's house, and he had a bunch of brothers.

01-00:40:30

Brown: Yeah, I went over there—I think I only went over there once or twice. Well, they had six children, as I recall. Three boys and three girls. And they had three stories in their house, which I found interesting, because we only had two, so that seemed like a big house to me.

01-00:40:48

Shafer: Yeah. Kathleen was born, I think, in '45.

01-00:40:51

Brown: Yes.

01-00:40:52

Shafer: What do you remember? Did that change? A lot of times in a lot of families, the youngest person gets all the attention, so suddenly it was a new youngest person, a little infant girl in the family. What did that change?

01-00:41:05

Brown: I don't know that it changed too much. You know, an infant is an infant—a young boy is not paying much attention to his baby sister, I can tell you that. [Shafer laughs] We're out there riding our bicycles or playing touch football or basketball.

01-00:41:27

Shafer: You weren't dotting on your little sister or anything like that?

01-00:41:29

Brown: No, no.

01-00:41:31

Shafer: Nothing like that, no.

01-00:41:32

Brown: There wasn't a lot of dotting in my family.

01-00:41:34

Shafer: What do you mean?

01-00:41:36

Brown: Well, just what you said. You conjured up an image of dotting, and I said that's not something that I had much experience of.

01-00:41:44

Shafer: Yeah. So talk more, a little bit more about your mom. She was around, and your dad was working a lot. What was she like as a mother?

01-00:41:52

Brown: Um—fine! I wasn't into making any comparisons, so it was fine. We didn't have a lot of fights, things were pretty, you know—life was relatively simple. Certainly during the war, and afterwards, my mother had her activities. She took care of the house. As my sisters got older, they started doing cooking as well, and we had to wash the dishes or dry the dishes. That's something that I did somewhat, although I wasn't that diligent. So that's all. My mother was in a bridge club with some of the women in the general neighborhood, and their husbands were friends of my father, and they would have parties occasionally. And that's pretty much it, except for when we went on vacation, and then we'd go to different places.

01-00:43:02

Shafer: A lot of times in families the one parent will be more strict, or one will be—like what—?

01-00:43:08

Brown: Oh, I think they were kind of equal—my mother was around more, so she was more of the disciplinarian. But I stayed out of their way, so I didn't have much colliding in terms of, "don't do this," or, "don't do that." It was a pretty simple life. You could go out the door, and you'd run around for hours, and then you'd come back and go to dinner and go to bed. There was no television. There was maybe a—no, we didn't listen to records that much. You'd have the radio; they had the 5:00pm programs—*Tom Mix*, and *Captain Midnight*, and things like that. But I would just sit there and listen to it from 5:00 to 6:00.

01-00:43:53

Shafer: Do you remember listening to FDR's fireside chats, or anything like that?

01-00:43:57

Brown: No, I did not listen to that. I remember the 1948 election, when [Harry S.] Truman won. I do remember that, because my father and this fellow Homer Potter, who was running the Truman campaign, he lived around the corner. I'm in touch with his son, of the same name. So yeah, I had moments where I paid attention to elections.

I remember when Roosevelt died. I remember when the atomic bomb went off. I just remember that day one of the ladies was walking down the street saying the rosary, and Mrs. Potter, as a matter of fact, talking about how Roosevelt died. And then the kid across the street, who was a year ahead of me at St. Ignatius, came and said they dropped the atomic bomb. I asked him what that was—I can't remember what he said, but it seemed to be like a big thing. So the big world events—I remember Manila, I remember the name *Manila* on the map and then, when you're reading the newspaper, they'd have the arrows of the armies, in the war against Japan, the war against Germany. So I picked up on those things, but it was pretty remote. It wasn't like living in Europe during a time of war. This is a very kind of secure, safe, clean, healthy environment, where there's no crime, death is relatively rare, and everything's just fine. So that's my childhood, as it came up.

01-00:45:49

Shafer: Despite the blackouts of the windows and the drills?

01-00:45:51

Brown: Oh, that was fun! Yeah, the war—that was fun, and the rationing; the little ration cards looked interesting. They had some kind of pictures on them—they were like something you might collect, and just like milk tops were kind of interesting. You know, we'd take the milk and collect a certain amount of milk tops—or match books. See, life was relatively simple. [laughing] It seems very different than it is today.

01-00:46:20

Shafer: You had to find your own fun.

01-00:46:22

Brown: Yeah. Now, my neighbors have three children, I think five, seven, and ten. The baby was born, I think, just before they bought the ranch. And they work there on the ranch. They're homeschooled, and they're milking cows and feeding chickens and turkeys. And so that's another world—a very different world, that I find very instructive to how that would work. And I'm very impressed. I like being here, seeing people, and the people in the neighborhood, our neighbor whose cows run on our land. A lot of physical work.

And I think back when my great-grandfather August Schuckman was here, and my grandmother [Ida Schuckman Brown], they had a blacksmith's shop—they had to make everything. There was no electricity. There was no well—they got their water from the rain in a cistern. But there was a lot of physical labor. So my

experience was much more convenient—just go to the grocery store. Yeah, there were no supermarkets. I can remember when Safeway started, I think after World War [II]—in '45 or something. It was very simple and limited, compared to what it is today, but it's still extremely easy living, I would say.

01-00:48:02

Shafer: Speaking of which, I seem to remember that your parents, or your mom—the kids would get allowance in exchange for chores.

01-00:48:13

Brown: I didn't get a regular allowance, and I didn't do regular chores. Whatever my sisters did—that was more the girls' job, to clean and take care of the house. My job was just to play and cause trouble.

01-00:48:30

Shafer: So you didn't make a decision like—well, I'll forgo the allowance, but then I don't have—?

01-00:48:34

Brown: No. It wasn't that well organized. It wasn't that precise. It was a certain ease, you know. It was not a regimented life, let's put it that way. Even though dinner was a regular occurrence and school was a regular occurrence, it was not a regimented experience.

01-00:49:02

Shafer: Looking back, or even at the time, did you feel lucky that your sisters had to do all the cleaning and stuff, when you were out?

01-00:49:06

Brown: No.

01-00:49:07

Shafer: No?

01-00:49:08

Brown: I didn't think it was a man's job, a boy's job in the first place. So it was more gendered—our rules were clearly more gendered than they are today.

01-00:49:16

Shafer: What about like taking out the garbage or cutting the lawn?

01-00:49:17

Brown: Oh yeah, taking out the garbage—yeah, you had to do certain things.

01-00:49:20

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. Your dad, during this time, must have run for reelection, like in '47 or something?

01-00:49:27

Brown: He ran in '46 for the attorney general, so it came pretty quick—he was sworn in in January of '44, and he was running for attorney general in '46.

01-00:49:42

Shafer: And he lost that race.

01-00:49:43

Brown: He lost that race. He won the primary, which was something, because the candidate for governor lost the primary, I think, in '46, because we had cross-filing. The candidates can run in both parties.

01-00:49:55

Shafer: Do you remember at any point campaigning with your dad? Were you around? Would he take you to rallies or stuff?

01-00:50:03

Brown: I think I went to a few events. I remember going to a [Adlai E.] Stevenson event. That would have been '52. I remember a radio—they used to do live radio broadcasts, so I remember that. My world was the child's world. My father was doing his thing, and I knew about it, but it was a different world. It was a different domain. My father didn't come to school, or come and watch me play basketball at Mark McGuinness's house, or ride a bike, or throw a baseball or something. He had his world, I had my world, my mother had her world. It all was integrated, but there were different roles.

01-00:50:59

Shafer: And that was just the way families were then.

01-00:51:00

Brown: That's the way it was. I think that's the way it was for everybody, at least on the block as I experienced it.

01-00:51:07

Shafer: Do you remember dinner time? Were there lively discussions?

01-00:51:11

Brown: Yeah, I think I remember that as discussions, talk. I remember more not wanting to eat my vegetables than what they were talking at the table. That was a more serious matter.

01-00:51:25

Shafer: So did they talk politics and stuff, or not?

01-00:51:27

Brown: Yeah, oh, they talked. Yeah, my father talked about politics—that's what his main subject matter was for most of his life, maybe *all* of his life.

01-00:51:37

Shafer: Really? So that was really his main interest?

01-00:51:42

Brown: Yeah, I think. Certainly, there was, whatever it was we were talking about while we were eating, like the district attorneys, there were campaigns, and there were campaign contributors. There were labor union people, and there were judges and

different court cases. It's not very precise in my mind, but it all unfolded without major events.

01-00:52:22

Shafer: And your dad ran again for AG in 1950?

01-00:52:27

Brown: He ran for AG in '50, yes, and he won.

01-00:52:30

Shafer: So you would have been twelve or so at that point?

01-00:52:35

Brown: In '50? Well, yeah, in June, I would have been in the eighth grade. No, I would have been the seventh grade.

Oh yeah, I remember who he ran against. He was defeated by a guy named Frederick [N.] Howser. But Howser lost the primary because he got in trouble with some gamblers, or a gambling boat, in the vicinity of Catalina, and the *LA Times* jumped on him. So Frederick Napoleon Howser was defeated in the primary by a guy named Edward Shattuck, and my father beat him, in '50.

01-00:53:18

Shafer: And do you remember that being a big deal, or how did you think about it?

01-00:53:20

Brown: Yeah, I guess it was. Yeah. I didn't go to the swearing-in—I was probably in school. Because school was the predominant function.

01-00:53:35

Shafer: I'm getting that.

01-00:53:37

Brown: Yeah. Well, that's how they take care of you; that's how they occupy your time.

01-00:53:41

Shafer: Yeah, do you feel like you had a good education? If you were in the eighth grade, was it more like rote memorization stuff?

01-00:53:48

Brown: I think it was a pretty good education. It was clear. I've reflected on the fact that I don't think I ever heard an incorrect English sentence spoken, growing up. My parents, their grammar and syntax were without any errors.

I had the same nun in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades, Sr. Roseen, O.P. [Order or Preachers, also known as Dominican Order], who I kept in touch with until the end of her life, which was only a few years ago, and she had perfect handwriting. You'd use control paper to learn how to write. My handwriting wasn't that great. In fact, I had to work a little extra. It was the Palmer Method in West Portal, and then in St. Brendan's we got control paper, which I'd never seen before, with

three lines. And some [letters] would only go up one line, like a *g*, small *g*. But if you had a *j*, it would go up three lines. And so it was all of this lined paper—I do recall that.

And in the eighth grade we had diagramming sentences, which I was not very good at. I didn't like it. But we knew what the seven parts of speech were, and we did our multiplication tables. And in some schools today, they don't get that, some of the lower-performing schools. So I would say, in general, it was a clear, coherent education, so that was fine. Yeah, it wasn't one of these Waldorf schools where you get a lot of different experiences and enrichment. These nuns—and they're all nuns. We had no non-nuns there, and the school was brand new. Fifth grade was the first year it opened. It was a brand-new building. They seemed a little foreign to me, because they came out from Chicago. They talked a little funny from my point of view. It was different than West Portal—it was a little oppressive. You asked me if it was *good*. I think it was a good education, but oppressive. They knew if someone caused trouble in the neighborhood, they'd call the nuns, and the nuns would then call you to account in the classroom. So it was pretty orderly, and there was no fooling around in the classes that I can remember. Yeah, and so it was a good, clear foundation, I would say.

I mean I always marvel that people don't know the parts of speech—and today they've kind of deconstructed that, and they don't think of it in quite that rigid manner, but we had to.

01-00:57:14

Shafer: What are the seven parts?

01-00:57:15

Brown: There are seven. What are they?

01-00:57:17

Shafer: What are they?

01-00:57:18

Brown: You know what they are. [laughter]

01-00:57:19

Shafer: You're talking about nouns, verbs, adverbs, something like that?

01-00:57:21

Brown: Yeah, the nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives—did I say adjectives? Prepositions, conjunctions, interjections. Is that seven?

01-00:57:35

Shafer: Yeah, very good.

01-00:57:36

Brown: Now, you don't know that, do you? Did you know the [speaking to Holmes and Meeker]—[laughter]



01-00:57:39

Shafer: They're academics!

01-00:57:40

Meeker: I went to a Catholic high school, so that was drilled into me.

01-00:57:43

Brown: I learned that—well, I didn't remember it, but I've looked it up in Google, in recent years. So that's why I sometimes like to ask people, "Do you know the seven parts of speech?"

01-00:57:54

Meeker: Because you have smart-alecky interviewers asking you that? [laughing]

01-00:57:59

Brown: But it does give a coherence. And similarly, I think there was a clarity there. I have my English text from Santa Clara, *Reading for Understanding*, edited by Fr. [Maurice B.] McNamee, and I look at it from time to time. And I marvel at the, I guess *clarity* is the word, or it was a world view that was coherent and in place, as opposed to the kind of postmodernist deconstruction of the world we have today, where you don't have that. We had a world that was clear, and you were right and wrong. And you knew what was a venial sin, what was a mortal sin, and you had to go to church on Sunday. You didn't tell lies, you're not supposed to steal—it was a pretty clear—it's kind of what you think of the 1950s.

01-00:59:04

Shafer: Did you rebel against that at all?

01-00:59:06

Brown: No.

01-00:59:07

Shafer: Not at all?

01-00:59:08

Brown: Well, I don't think rebellion was even in the ballgame. There was no thought of that. It was a very stable world, and it just was what it was. The exciting times were after school, summer vacation—that was it. And so I liked summer vacation, Christmas vacation, Easter vacation, and recess much better than I liked school. So that was just playing. You all go outside and run around—you know, exuberance. Sort of like these dogs do [referencing his two dogs.] They don't like to sit around.

01-00:59:44

Shafer: Burn off energy.

01-00:59:45

Brown: Yeah.

01-00:59:46

Shafer: At some point you got interested in debate and elocution, I think, right?

01-00:59:50

Brown: Well, I was on the debating team. Yeah, I did find that interesting. So in the debate team, the National Forensic League, St. Ignatius was there, and we'd go to tournaments at various high schools. People from the valley—Merced, Ripon, Bellarmine, Lowell—were active in all that.

01-01:00:16

Shafer: Do you remember some of the things you debated?

01-01:00:18

Brown: Yeah. We debated free trade, we debated universal conscription in a time of war. We debated whether NATO should become a federation, which they ultimately did in the Common Market, of sorts—not entirely. I think we debated the Electoral College. Each year, in those days, you'd have one topic for the entire year, and you'd be given either the affirmative or the negative, and you'd find that out a few minutes before you went into the debate. I didn't go to too many, but I went to enough.

01-01:01:03

Shafer: How did you prepare for them?

01-01:01:05

Brown: I didn't prepare that much, but you had books, you had magazines—*Time* magazine, *Newsweek*. And I also did the freshman elocution contest, which I won, and the sophomore oratorical contest, which I won. I still have the medals sitting in one of my boxes, one of my 250 boxes.

01-01:01:27

Shafer: What does one have to do to win an elocution contest?

01-01:01:30

Brown: You have to convince the judges that you're better than the seven or eight other contestants.

01-01:01:36

Shafer: But I mean, how do you do that?

01-01:01:37

Brown: I don't know—I just did it. I practiced, and that was that. But there were far better debaters than me at St. Ignatius High School.

01-01:01:51

Shafer: Really?

01-01:01:52

Brown: Yeah. And Lowell had some good debaters. [Supreme Court Justice] Stephen [G.] Breyer was a debater there. The guy I appointed judge—he's still a judge, Stu [Stuart R.] Pollak, was a debater. And we had people at St. Ignatius. Fr. [John] Coleman was a debater. There was a team, with [Marc E.] Leland and Breyer, and Lowell. Our team was Coleman and Bianco. There were others that were good. I was more back in the pack somewhere.

01-01:02:35

Shafer: [laughing] That's a little surprising.

01-01:02:37

Brown: Well, it may be surprising, but it's true. But I did learn a lot. You learn to express yourself. In order to do these topics—some of them are alive today, debated today—you have to read contemporary journals, which I did. At that time I guess it was just basically *Time* and *Newsweek*.

01-01:03:04

Shafer: That was it.

01-01:03:06

Brown: I would think that was—and I'm trying to think of what else there was. Oh, *U.S. News & World Report*.

01-01:03:15

Shafer: Wasn't there *Look* and *Life*?

01-01:03:17

Brown: Yeah, but they weren't going to give you arguments.

[side conversation deleted]

01-01:03:34

Shafer: So your given name was Edmund G. Brown, Jr.

01-01:03:38

Brown: Right, right.

01-01:03:39

Shafer: Everyone calls you Jerry.

01-01:03:40

Brown: My mother did.

01-01:03:41

Shafer: How did that come about?

01-01:03:43

Brown: I don't know. I was Jerry when I first became aware of things. I think my mother didn't want me to be called Eddie, so she decided to call me Jerry.

01-01:03:54

Shafer: Did people call your dad Eddie?

01-01:03:56

Brown: No, no. They called him Pat. My grandmother, his mother, called him Edmund. And I think his sisters called him Edmund. Connie [Constance Brown Carlson] did, his sister.

01-01:04:14

Shafer: And one other thing—just sort of random, but I remember reading, I think it was from the oral history that your dad did—you have a distinctive voice. I don't know if you're aware of that or think about that, but you have a very distinctive voice—a little gravelly. And your dad mentioned that you had, I think, polyps or something? Were you aware of that?

01-01:04:34

Brown: I remember people talked about that, but it didn't go anywhere.

01-01:04:38

Shafer: They talked—?

01-01:04:38

Brown: Well, they didn't do anything. I always had kind of a husky voice. So, I don't know whether some doctor said, "You have polyps in your throat." But my father didn't want to have any operations, so I didn't have any operations growing up.

01-01:04:59

Shafer: Yeah, so that was that.

01-01:05:00

Brown: That was that.

[side conversation deleted]

01-01:05:02

Shafer: I think you graduated in '55 from St. Ignatius [high school]?

01-01:05:03

Brown: I did.

01-01:05:04

Shafer: Yeah, so talk about that school. Why did you go there?

01-01:05:07

Brown: Well, originally I wanted to go to [Archbishop] Riordan [High School], because it was a newer school, and some of the kids in my neighborhood were going there. But then my father said to me, "You can't go there. You have to go to Lowell." I said, "Well, I don't want to go to Lowell. I want to go to a Catholic school." So then he said, "Okay, we'll compromise and you'll go to St. Ignatius, because they have more tradition." He thought that was important. So I took the exam, and I got accepted. So I went to St. Ignatius, and that was over on Turk and Stanyan, so it was near where USF is today. So that was that for school. And I found that much more interesting than St. Brendan's. St. Brendan's did have a sense of confinement, so it was strict, and most people were glad to get out, at least at that time. But I remember, talking to one of the girls who was a couple of years behind me, and she commented how she didn't like the eighth-grade teacher, Sr. Alice Joseph, who I found pleasant enough. But they were strict. I found St. Ignatius much more interesting. You had different teachers—we had only one teacher. I

had one teacher, Sr. Roseen, for three years, and I had Sr. Alice Joseph for the eighth grade, the final year. But in St. Ignatius, we had *many* classes. I count more than two hundred kids in the class, so it's bigger. My class was in the twenties, at St. Brendan's—pretty small. It was a new school.

01-01:07:09

Shafer: And you just liked what, the diversity of—?

01-01:07:11

Brown: Yeah, well it was more interesting. The ideas were interesting. The Jesuits were interesting. The course matter was, there was more intellectual content and more stimulation. I liked school better in high school, for sure.

01-01:07:34

Shafer: Why didn't you want to go to Lowell?

01-01:07:36

Brown: I wanted to go to a Catholic school. I guess I got that influence at St. Brendan's, and it left its mark.

01-01:07:45

Shafer: Despite the confinement—

01-01:07:49

Brown: Well, yeah, I don't think I connected that to high school.

01-01:07:56

Shafer: Yeah, so I want to ask you a little bit more about the debate stuff. You'd mentioned some of the topics that you debated, and you said you didn't find out until right before the actual competition which side you were going to debate. Did you have a preference?

01-01:08:12

Brown: No. I can't remember. I can't remember.

01-01:08:15

Shafer: But I mean in terms of something you agreed with. Was it more fun to argue a position you agreed with or disagreed with?

01-01:08:21

Brown: I'm trying to remember what I—what free trade/reciprocal trade. Those were the two—a federation or a confederation for the European nations. The Electoral College or *not* the Electoral College. I don't know that we were, that that particular process led one to a fixed belief in one position or the other. It was more figuring out ways of articulating the case, and we always divided the case into facts and logic. Logic was the arguments and the coherent thoughts you'd put forward, and then facts were usually citations to *U.S. News & World Report*, or something. I don't think there actually were facts, we called them evidence, that's it—logic and evidence.

But as far as having a deeply held opinion of any of those four topics—even today people talk about the Electoral College, and getting rid of it. I remember the arguments that America was founded as a group of states, it wasn't just the people—it was the states. That's what the electoral college represents. Of course at that time, it wasn't as it is today, these small states—at least we didn't perceive it in quite the same way you would today, with the one man/one vote, which we didn't have in those days, so it seems less supportable. But at the time, that wasn't the point. The point was to win the debate! And to win the debate, you had to convince the judge you did a better job than your opponent, and this was happening frequently. So it wouldn't be just one debate—it might be three different debates on a one-day tournament, or more. I can't remember now.

01-01:10:39

Shafer:

Other than the debates, describe what was a day like at SI.

01-01:10:44

Brown:

A day like at SI—well, I would go over there. Usually I would hitchhike to school, until I got a car I think in my senior year. And you had your Latin, math, English, history, religion, public speaking, ROTC in the second year and the third year. We had recess, we had lunch, and we came home. Schooling didn't capture my attention all that much.

01-01:11:19

Shafer:

Even in high school?

01-01:11:22

Brown:

Yeah. Oh—even *ever*. School is a confining experience, because you're being told to think like somebody else is thinking, so I didn't always respond to that. Some teachers did more than others. I had different experiences in different classes. So yeah, I found it interesting. I liked algebra, I liked religion, I liked chemistry, I liked history, especially world history. So yeah, those were topics I liked.

01-01:12:00

Shafer:

What about student government? Did you ever think about—?

01-01:12:02

Brown:

No.

01-01:12:03

Shafer:

Not at all?

01-01:12:03

Brown:

No. I was a yell leader for a couple years. But at that time, I think when I went, they said, "Okay, you want to be a yell leader? Show up at room," whatever, and like there were two people there. So it wasn't quite the organized activity that it is today. Things were a little looser. I would say that society was more organized, but the activities in school were not as regimented as they are today.

[side conversation deleted]

01-01:12:45

Shafer: You mentioned your maternal grandfather who was a police captain.

01-01:12:49

Brown: Capt. Layne, yeah.

01-01:12:51

Shafer: Yeah, and then your paternal grandfather [Edmund Joseph Brown]—whole different kind of—

01-01:12:55

Brown: Yeah, he was an entrepreneur—because he even had a movie theater, had a photo arcade studio on Market Street, and he had a couple poker clubs. Different jobs over different times in his life. Of course, I didn't know much about that. He died, I think, in '41. I only saw him once. I knew the other grandfather better, even though he died in 1940. I was only two and a half, I guess, but I do remember him.

01-01:13:37

Shafer: There's a little bit of irony, I guess, that your dad became DA?

01-01:13:41

Brown: Right. And they have a story that may be in here, but one of the daily newspapers had a big screaming headline that my father had incorporated his father's gambling clubs, and I think there was some question as to their legality, although they were certainly tolerated—slot machines were tolerated too. When I was a little kid, and we went up to Twain Harte and we stopped along [the way], there would always be slot machines in the stores, and I think Earl Warren was the one who took that out. So I think a poker club certainly was there. And bookmaking was clearly illegal, but that was pretty common. These were clubs, so probably it was illegal playing for gain, yeah, gambling. But I think it was pretty much tolerated.

01-01:14:44

Shafer: Was there any—I don't know, for lack of a better word—*attitude* from your mother's side of the family?

01-01:14:50

Brown: Not that I could tell. No, I learned about that really later. I never thought of my grandfather as having a gambling club. I think I learned that much later in life.

01-01:15:03

Shafer: And then what about your grandmother, [Ida Schuckman Brown] who died, I think, in '74?

01-01:15:07

Brown: 1974, yeah, in December.

01-01:15:09

Shafer: What was she like?

01-01:15:11

Brown: What was she like? She was—hard to tell. What are people *like*. If you ask me what are *you* like, I'd be hard-pressed to give you an answer.

01-01:15:23

Shafer: What do you remember?

01-01:15:24

Brown: Or even what is Evan [Westrup] [Westrup, Brown's communications officer, who was in the room] like—what are you like, Evan?

01-01:15:27

Westrup: Depends on the day and the company.

01-01:15:30

Brown: Evan, what is Evan like? Yeah, he plays a lot with his cell phone. [laughter]

01-01:15:33

Westrup: Almost as much as you.

01-01:15:36

Brown: Yeah. How many hours—did you get your report?

01-01:15:37

Westrup: Well, yeah, I'm sure we're competing.

01-01:15:41

Brown: [laughter] Yeah. So what was my grandmother like? Well, she took care of us. She knitted us robes and pajamas, and she would go to her grandchildren, because she had four children, and they all had [her] grandchildren. They lived in the Bay Area, San Francisco or Marin County. And so she would come to dinners, and she would babysit us when we were younger. She liked to clean my fingernails with a toothbrush, and I did not care for that. We talked about religion. She was not happy with the Catholic Church at *all*. She was very anti-Catholic, so we would argue about that. And when I was very young she used to read me Bible stories, and I remember the pictures—Moses in the bulrush[es], and the destruction of—with Lot's wife looking back, Adam and Eve in the garden. I remember all those stories, crossing the Red Sea. I liked that very much. I liked the Bible stories. And she used to talk about the Mountain House and how wonderful it was, so that left an impression on me—although she left it when she was eighteen.

01-01:17:01

Shafer: Well, I was going to ask about that, yeah. So she went to San Francisco, right?

01-01:17:03

Brown: She went to San Francisco. She was the youngest of eight kids. Interestingly enough, all eight kids are buried in the Williams cemetery, as is her mother and father, August and Augusta [Fiedler] Schuckman. Her sister Emma [Schuckman Allen] got married—I think was married by eighteen—yeah, was married by then and had a child, and they lived around the corner, out about a mile and a half, which is still a part of the ranch. It's called the Allen Place. Emma married a guy



named Rufus [R.] Allen. So she's gone. The boys are gone, so she might have had to have done more of the work—or maybe there wasn't much going—so she obviously wanted to get out. But she always told me the Mountain House was wonderful, and interesting people would stop by. And I'm sure if you're living out here, whoever stops by had stories to tell. That would be a very exciting experience. But I think the talk of the Mountain House kind of dropped off after I was relatively young. I don't remember it coming up again until my father took me. My great-grandfather died in 1907, and his brother Frank had taken over the Mountain House.

[side conversation deleted]

01-01:18:30

Brown:

So yeah, Frank [J.] Schuckman took it over. I think he moved out of here sometime in the 1920s, maybe after World War I. As soon as the car came, the stagecoach stop didn't work anymore—and not having any amenities, no electricity, no well. They had a big water tank out here, and I saw that—that was still there in 1960 when I came. But the hotel stood—nobody was in it—probably empty, from probably the late '50s or '60s. And the barns became very graffitied, and pretty soon an arsonist in the neighborhood burned it down, in '71. But I saw it in '60, and my father bought it with his brother and four businesspeople, so that became Rancho Venada.

[side conversation deleted]

01-01:19:26

Brown:

That became Rancho Venada, and Harold [Harold C. Brown], my father's brother and four guys—so they bought the ranch in 1962 from the estate of Frank Schuckman. He had left it to twenty-two heirs, including my grandmother. So then they bought it, but they didn't do anything with it. When we took over the records just a few years ago, we calculated from the annual reports that they had only invested \$1,250 in that period. When they took it over, the blacksmith's shop disappeared. The remnants of the gas station disappeared. The hotel was burned down. There were four barns, and this barn was pretty good, but then they started stealing the metal off the roof, and because of that it started collapsing, so I burned that barn down. But I did get a chance to walk through it and see it. And so that was interesting. But this Mountain House—it was the second Mountain House. My grandmother was in the first Mountain House, and there's a picture of her. And she scratched her face out of the picture. She's there with her brothers.

01-01:20:48

Shafer:

This is the grandmother who left?

01-01:20:50

Brown:

Yeah, that's Ida. That's my grandmother.

01-01:20:52

Shafer:

Why did she scratch her face out [of the picture]?

01-01:20:54

Brown: I don't know. She probably didn't want to be seen, maybe she didn't like it at that point. But she did when she talked about it. It was very exciting the way she described it. But as I said, that was when I was younger, and we didn't hear much about it until I came and visited in 1960, and then I didn't really see it again until probably the '90s, when I moved from LA to Oakland and had a chance to come up here and visit. But all that was here was the four barns.

01-01:21:23

Shafer: You know, earlier I asked you what your grandmother was like—and I mean the fact that she had six siblings—or seven or eight of them?

01-01:21:30

Brown: She had seven siblings. One died young.

01-01:21:32

Shafer: Seven siblings, and she was the only one that left. What does that say about her?

01-01:21:37

Brown: Well, she was independent. She was independent, and her grandniece, I guess, Patricia Schaad, who lives in Williams, told me that her grandmother, Emma, said to Patricia—Patricia was her granddaughter, and she lived out at the Allen place and then moved into Williams. And her Grandmother Emma said, "Now, Patricia, you be content with your life." And Patricia then said, "But Ida always said you be *discontent* with your life." So that definitely marked a difference.

Ida was an explorer. She went to different lectures and took my father around to that, and she had a lively interest in religion. If she was anything, she'd call herself a Unitarian, but she was a free-thinking person. I noticed, when she said that in 1948 she voted for Henry Wallace, and I remember there was a proposition on the ballot. It was called an anti-feather-bedding initiative. I think it was maybe 1948 or 1950, and I remember her sitting and talking to my grandmother about it, and she said, "Oh no, that's a bad thing. This is not good." It was the railroad's effort to reduce the number of employees, and it turns out that some of her brothers worked for the railroad, and her nephew, Victor [C.] Schuckman—who later changed his name to Creason—but Victor worked on it and lived in Dunsmuir. So my grandmother had what I'd call a liberal perspective. She thought the churches should be turned into childcare centers. She didn't like the big Catholic cathedrals and the wealth of the church. So she was a freethinker, and I think an inquisitive person.

01-01:23:45

Shafer: You said she was upset with the church. Was it for those reasons?

01-01:23:47

Brown: I don't know whether the word is *upset*—she disagreed with the Catholic Church, that's all. I don't know the different reasons of why it all happened, maybe going back to her husband and whatever the hell it was. But she definitely didn't like the Catholic Church as an idea. She liked religion, but not the church of Rome.

01-01:24:17

Shafer: So you, obviously, had a different point of view. Did she try to talk you out of that?

01-01:24:21

Brown: No. I tried to talk. I tried to talk *her* out of her anti-Catholicism, but that didn't go anywhere.

01-01:24:29

Shafer: Yeah. You guys want to jump in and ask some things?

01-01:24:32

Meeker: Sure. This is Martin Meeker, and I'm picking up after Scott Shafer. So Governor, I'd like to ask you a little bit more about politics. Was there a point, growing up, that you came to realize that your dad's job was different than others, that it was unique in some important ways?

01-01:24:56

Brown: I wouldn't put it that way.

01-01:24:57

Meeker: Okay.

01-01:24:59

Brown: No, I mean I knew he was the district attorney, and nobody else on Magellan Ave. was elected to any office. But no, I don't know that different was—it just *was*. I'd visit him in his office down on Montgomery Street, which was where it was at that point. I went to some of the picnics that the district attorney's office had, so I talked to the deputies. But no, I guess I didn't *know* what other people did. I mean, I knew that Peter Roddy's father was in the coffee business, and I knew that John Haster's father was in the insurance business, and Mitchell Johnson's father was an assistant chief counsel at the Bank of America, and that Mark McGuinness's father was a doctor, and that Charlie Corsiglia's father ran a pharmacy. So that's just the way it was. I didn't stand back and frame it in the way you described it.

01-01:26:14

Meeker: Well, you know, all of your friends' dads had to do their jobs in order to keep their jobs, but your dad was the only one whose fellow citizens could fire him.

01-01:26:24

Brown: Yeah, well—that's a nice generalization that you're making, but it's not one I made as a child.

01-01:26:29

Meeker: Okay.

01-01:26:31

Brown: That's a little later articulation.

01-01:26:34

Meeker: Well, I think in this day and age, the children of politicians are both highly scrutinized, but also shielded in some ways from public scrutiny.

01-01:26:49

Brown: Well, first of all, there wasn't that much public scrutiny in those days. The press is a lot nosier today than it used to be. And so we used to get, for example, free passes to the theaters and to Whitney's at the Beach, and today you wouldn't do that—and no one thought anything of it. So, I don't know, it was just normal. A district attorney, he's not president, he's not a governor—it is an elected position, but there were eleven supervisors, there's the mayor, there's a lot of people in city government, so I didn't distinguish it as anything. The district attorney was the DA, that was what that was, and I'm sure I could frame it in various ways, but it seemed fairly ordinary at the time.

01-01:27:58

Meeker: Did your mom or dad ever sit you down and say, "Hey, Dad's job is kind of unique. Watch out!"

01-01:28:04

Brown: No, no. Not even close! That kind of a conversation is totally alien to my memory of growing up.

01-01:28:13

Shafer: I just wonder though, and you were a little older at this point, but I seem to remember from your father's oral history, that you wrote him a letter urging him to think about running for the senate.

01-01:28:25

Brown: Yeah, that was when I was in the seminary. That would have been 1957 or '58.

01-01:28:31

Shafer: Okay, we'll get to that later.

01-01:28:33

Meeker: And I'd also like to ask you—

01-01:28:34

Brown: And that reflected my general interest in national/international as opposed to *local*.

01-01:28:42

Meeker: A little bit more about SI, and a little more about Catholicism. You said that your dad had urged you to go to Lowell, and you wanted to go to SI—or to Riordan.

01-01:28:52

Brown: No, I wanted to go to Riordan. We compromised.

01-01:28:54

Meeker: The compromise was SI.

01-01:28:55

Brown: I didn't think of St. Ignatius. By the way, Homer Potter told me, which might have influenced me—he was two years ahead of me, so he was already at Riordan. And he said he went to Riordan because they were going to build a swimming pool, which, to date, they haven't built yet. So that might have been one of the reasons I wanted to go to Riordan.

01-01:29:20

Meeker: Just thinking about Catholic education as opposed to public school, was there something that you, in particular, had in your mind? Was it just that it was familiar, or was there something else that you can remember about—?

01-01:29:31

Brown: Well, and a Catholic education presented a Catholic *view*, which in that pre-Vatican II, 1950s period was a very comprehensive framework, and it was the framework that was something that I had learned, and I thought that was the correct way of looking at the world, so I wanted to continue in that tradition, under the guidance or auspices of the church.

01-01:30:14

Meeker: Can you describe what that framework was, at that time?

01-01:30:19

Brown: Well, the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ, who is the son of God, and we've had popes for the last two thousand years. And popes have bishops, and bishops have priests, and the priests serve in parishes, and the parishes do baptisms and confessions and communion and Mass and the other sacraments, and that's part of the ritual or the routine of life. So that struck me as an important aspect of my reality at that time. So I didn't see any reason not to follow through on that.

01-01:31:02

Meeker: That's the superstructure of the church, if you will.

01-01:31:05

Brown: Yeah. Well, as opposed to—?

01-01:31:09

Meeker: What about the *beliefs*? What about the doctrine? Were there parts of learning the faith at that time that were particularly intriguing or meaningful to you?

01-01:31:22

Brown: No—well, it was *all* meaningful. That was a thoroughgoing story of the way things are, the way things have unfolded, and so it's an identity group. A rather big identity group and one of long standing, so I think it was very normal. In fact, I'd say most of the kids in my class at St. Brendan's went to Catholic school, both the girls and the boys. So that was the norm.

And there were parishes. They were very distinct, and the parishes had their local Catholic schools, and there was a number of boys' schools—there's only three

really: Riordan, St. Ignatius, Sacred Heart. I think there was another one—St. James—but that was not as familiar. And then you had all the girls' schools, and that's just the way it went for people who went into the Catholic grammar schools. And that was the whole point. The church—that's what their plan was, and the plan was executed fairly successfully in the 1950s.

01-01:32:44

Meeker:

What about distinguishing between good and evil? Was that a big part of education?

01-01:32:49

Brown:

Not good and evil, I think sin—there was sin, there was grace. You get grace by going to Mass and communion. You commit sins by being late for Mass or, you know, being disobedient or stealing things or something like that. So yeah, there was a rather detailed moral code that was part of the catechism, because we studied the catechism, and the catechism is pretty comprehensive. Seven sacraments, seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, cardinal virtues—it's a pretty detailed schema of things, which I think was a good thing, because it gave a framework. It's not this kind of amorphous floating set of identities that often kids experience today.

01-01:33:53

Meeker:

Did you feel like you lived pretty close to the virtues and to the sacraments?

01-01:34:02

Brown:

I mean, it was a pretty simple life. I think it was just—it was the norm. So I don't think people thought about being holy or not holy, it was just—this was reality. Just like you're an American, you're not an African or Chinese. You're not a Hindu. You're a Christian, and a Roman Catholic at that, so those are the identities. So, today we have a lot of different identities, but it's similar to that.

01-01:34:45

Meeker:

Was being a Democrat an important identity for you?

01-01:34:49

Brown:

I don't know if it was important. It was something that I accepted, that certainly I identified with. My eighth-grade nun, Sister Alice Joseph, didn't like Truman and didn't like [Dean] Acheson, and I think spoke about losing China to the Communists. And I disagreed with her on that, basically from my father's talk and conversation. So yeah, I had an independent view. Not independent of my parents, but independent of the nuns—this one nun, she's the eighth-grade nun, what she talked about. The others did not. The other *one*. There was only two; I only had two nuns.

01-01:35:34

Meeker:

What did it mean to be a Democrat, say in the 1950s, before you head off to college?

01-01:35:40

Brown: What did it mean to be—not for [Thomas E.] Dewey and not for [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. So that—I mean, those were the candidates.

01-01:35:53

Meeker: So what did Truman and Stevenson stand for?

01-01:35:56

Brown: Well, they were Democrats.

01-01:35:57

Meeker: Okay.

01-01:35:58

Brown: Yeah, they're supposed to be the common man against the big business or something, that it was just relatively simple and traditional.

01-01:36:10

Meeker: Labor would play a big role in that in the 1950s.

01-01:36:13

Brown: It *did* play a big role, but not in my mind. There were no union members on Magellan Ave. If we lived in the Mission, we probably would have seen a lot of trade. I mean I knew about trade unions, particularly the building trades, because they were active in the campaigns.

01-01:36:38

Meeker: So did these professional circles around your dad—and I assume labor unions would have played a role in that—did those professional circles ever bleed over into your own social life growing up?

01-01:36:53

Brown: No—how? What would that be? I didn't go to any bar association meetings. We used to go to the district attorneys convention, which was held—I remember doing that. That was fun. Yeah, we went to the Tahoe Tavern, went down to the Hotel Del [Coronado], so I remembered it more as, in that kind of spirit. Not the way DAs perform today, discussing all the different criminal laws that they want or want to protect. That's very substantive—I saw it from the eyes of a young person.

01-01:37:46

Meeker: It was like a family boondoggle or something, huh? [laughing]

01-01:37:48

Brown: Not a boondoggle. The word *boondoggle* didn't even show up. I'm sure I must have heard that one later, in college or something. In fact, I don't know when I first heard *boondoggle*, but I certainly don't remember it in high school.

01-01:38:01

Meeker: You said that there were some debates.

01-01:38:05

Brown: That's much later, that may be kind of anachronistic to apply that—growing up it all seemed: this is the way it was, so there wasn't a lot of discrepancy.

01-01:38:18

Meeker: You said that you had debated a little with your grandmother about Catholicism.

01-01:38:22

Brown: I wouldn't say *debate*—discussed.

01-01:38:26

Meeker: What were the critiques that she would have had?

01-01:38:29

Brown: I think I mentioned those. The money, too much money spent on churches—

01-01:38:38

Meeker: How would you respond?

01-01:38:40

Brown: Maybe the intolerance, the dogma—probably that would be it.

01-01:38:43

Meeker: How would you have responded to those critiques?

01-01:38:45

Brown: I don't think I got into the details, just—Catholicism is the one true religion, and there it is. But you don't argue with your grandmother that much, you know. So you'd have a discussion, but it's not like we're talking about it now.

01-01:39:05

Meeker: So you graduate high school, I believe, in 1955.

01-01:39:07

Brown: Yeah.

01-01:39:10

Meeker: You know, just kind of at the beginning phase of some of the cultural tumult that San Francisco sees in the mid and late 1950s, with the Beats and North Beach.

01-01:39:21

Brown: That was not in '55. That came while I was in the seminary.

01-01:39:24

Meeker: Okay, okay. So you weren't exposed to any of those cracks in the—

01-01:39:29

Brown: I did not know that Allen Ginsberg and [Jack] Kerouac were down there on Grant Ave. until I left the seminary.

01-01:39:39

Meeker: Well, there were some Bohemians down there. Were you ever exposed to any of that kind of stuff?



01-01:39:44

Brown: Not until after I came out of the seminary. I did go to the Co-existence Bagel Shop in 1960. I went to a jazz poetry club, and I remember going to that, and it was kind of the last—they were closing down. That must have been very soon after I left, in 1960. I don't know which one it was. I think it was poetry and jazz, but it was closing.

And the Co-Existence Bagel Shop closed very soon after—maybe in '60 or soon thereafter. So the longer you're around, the more you see the passing quality of things. They try to keep North Beach alive, but it was a bit more lively in the early 1960s and late '50s. And I got to know Gary Snyder in recent years. He's a good friend of mine—he was definitely a part of that scene. I've had a chance to talk to him about it.

01-01:40:54

Meeker: You got to know him after this period of time?

01-01:40:57

Brown: I met him first in 1974 at the Zen Center. Dick [Richard D.] Baker had invited him for a meeting on energetics, and that's when I met Stewart Brand and Gary Snyder.

01-01:41:15

Meeker: Well, we'll certainly want to ask you about that later.

01-01:41:21

Holmes: This is Todd Holmes. Governor, a lot of biographers and historians have written that the dinner table discussions in the house, particularly as you were getting into your teenage years, sparked your interest in politics. I wanted to ask you, when do you recall your engagement with politics beginning to surface?

01-01:41:43

Brown: Well, I don't think I was really engaged in politics. I certainly went to a few events of my father's. I went to some Stevenson [events—I remember the Stevenson campaign. I met Stevenson briefly when he came to speak in San Francisco. I liked hearing him speak. I watched his convention speech in 1952. I thought it was very exciting, very moving. So that was '52. So yeah, the presidential campaign I noticed. My father ran as a favorite son against [Estes] Kefauver, and Kefauver won. So I noticed that part of it, but I wasn't that political. High school was not political. The Jesuits didn't talk politics in their classroom. My history teacher spoke out against farm subsidies—Mr. Corwin. I remember that—it's probably the most political thing I heard. And then at Santa Clara, there wasn't a lot of politics. You know, the life of a student, a child, a teenager, a young man, that has its own fullness without having to get into a lot of adult issues. And in fact, even today you find that people can vote at eighteen, but not a lot of participation, and that's because there's a lot of vitality in doing the things that you do when you're sixteen or eighteen or twenty. So I think that my interest, I think that came later.

01-01:43:44

Holmes: Would you say during your teenage years, and thinking here particularly in high school, did religion engage you more than politics?

01-01:43:51

Brown: Yes, I would say so. But basketball engaged me even more. [laughter]

01-01:43:56

Holmes: That's fair. What are some of your earliest memories of the—

01-01:44:02

Brown: Oh, and the Olympic Club. We used to go down to the Olympic Club, and I guess that we played basketball or swam. In those days, you just jumped in the pool and splashed around. You didn't have lanes that you had to stay in, and you had diving boards. You'd jump off the diving board—the high dive, the low dive. So now it's a little more regimented. You're supposed to do your laps.

01-01:44:25

Meeker: The Dons were pretty good back then. Did you go to any USF games?

01-01:44:28

Brown: No, but I knew about them. I knew about Russell, [William F.] "Bill" Russell and [K.C.] "Casey" Jones, [Harold L.] ["Hal"] Perry—we knew about those guys. And I knew about Ollie [G.] Matson, the USF guy that won eleven games. I did see a football game at Kezar Stadium. I used to be a fan of St. Mary's, but they were already kind of dying on the vine when I started seeing them. But I was very excited about Herman [J.] Wedemeyer. In fact, I even got my mother to give me a jersey, a number eleven, so that was exciting football. Although I got interested in football from Peter Roddy. He's the one who told me about it. And then USF—I forget what, it must have been '50 maybe, when they played their last game. They were undefeated. So that was interesting. I never went to a basketball game, but I knew about them. They won the NIT, I think—National Invitation Tournament—in New York. So that was something.

But it isn't this hysteria that you have today—everything is more hyped, because of the media, and it's more saturating of our minds. So that when you read back, you know, we did other things.

01-01:46:00

Holmes: You went to high school during the 1950s. What are some of your earliest memories of the Cold War?

01-01:46:06

Brown: Of the Cold War—well, I remember the invasion of South Korea. I was at Camp Royaneh, not too far from the Russian River, so I remember that. I remember following that war, and the Americans almost got pushed out, and then [Douglas] MacArthur going in, and then MacArthur getting fired, and the Panmunjom discussions. Those were definitely news events that I followed with interest. And I remember Eisenhower running and saying he would, I don't think—visit Korea? He said something. And so I did follow those. But I found Stevenson a lot more

interesting than Eisenhower at that point. Not only interesting, I found his speeches exciting, which I can't say about any other politician, but definitely Stevenson. And Stevenson was the one who helped get the whole movement of Democratic clubs started in the 1950s. [Alan] Cranston got his start in that, and there were hundreds of Democratic clubs that would endorse in the primary, and that got going with Stevenson. A lot of people came into politics through that. Now, I wasn't that active, but I did follow it. Now, that'd be 1952—yeah, that'd be '52. Also Truman was not very popular when I was in grammar school, but we knew about Truman. He got a lot of bashing in the general media that I probably noticed.

So I think pretty early on I started following current events, either because of my father, what he talked about at the dinner table, or maybe the debate team. You had to read papers and magazines to stay on top, because we had not only the topic, but we had something called extemporaneous speaking, which—they'd give you a topic and you'd have thirty minutes to work it out. So yeah, I *was* interested in current events. Probably a combination of my family, my father, and the debate team. The debaters would talk about current events, I would say, more than a lot of other people would in the school. That was at St. Ignatius.

01-01:48:50

Holmes:

To follow up on that, you had to participate in ROTC during high school.

01-01:48:55

Brown:

Right.

01-01:48:56

Holmes:

Which was largely standard for both high school and land-grant universities during that time.

01-01:49:00

Brown:

Well, it was mandatory. If you didn't get Greek, which I didn't, then you had to take ROTC for two years. And I had to take ROTC at Santa Clara. That was mandatory then.

01-01:49:12

Holmes:

What was your experience with that, or impressions?

01-01:49:16

Brown:

It wasn't all that serious. We had to wear our uniform, I think, once a week and march around. I remember we had to watch some movies the Army put out. We studied—I learned about the M1 rifle, that it weighed 9.5 pounds. I learned about the unity of command and different formations that you would proceed in. I learned what a squad was, and a battalion. But in general, it was not taken all that seriously. It seemed to be a lighter experience than in chemistry or geometry or Latin that we had to take at that time. All of our courses were required. We didn't get our first choice until, I think, senior year. We got a choice—one, I think, one choice. We only had one language: Latin. No other language, and we only had two sciences—that was chemistry and physics. We didn't have biology, let alone

earth sciences. So it was a fairly limited curriculum, but it seemed plenty, full enough, from my point of view.

01-01:50:49

Holmes: Well, many people say—and as you've demonstrated much throughout your career—you've been strongly independent and usually don't like to take orders, and so I was just wondering how ROTC fit with that personality?

01-01:51:00

Brown: Well, it wasn't too onerous. It was only like an hour. You'd have an hour's class, so you sit—it's no different than any other class. You had, in fact, more discipline in the non-ROTC classes than the ROTC classes, so it was not a militaristic spirit, in any event. Not as much as the Oakland Military Institute, I think.

01-01:51:32

Shafer: We'll get to that. This is Scott Shafer again. You said when you were talking about high school, and somebody wanted you to go to Lowell.

01-01:51:39

Brown: Yeah.

01-01:51:40

Shafer: And you wanted to go to Riordan, and you ended up at SI. You said that the reason was that you thought that the church had the correct way of looking at the world.

01-01:51:49

Brown: Well, those are my words now. I don't think those would be my words in 1951, when I was thinking about going to high school.

01-01:51:57

Shafer: But it must have, in some form, gone through your mind.

01-01:52:02

Brown: Well, it's an identity. So, you know, if you went to Catholic school, you're more likely to root for Notre Dame than for USC. These are just facts. Or you're more likely to root for St. Mary's than for UC Berkeley. So this was the group that I was a part of—I didn't stand back and look at it in a sociological sense. It just was the world, as I experienced it.

01-01:52:42

Shafer: So when you said you didn't want to go to Lowell, it was because you wanted to root for the Catholic teams?

01-01:52:46

Brown: Yeah, probably.

01-01:52:48

Shafer: Or was it bigger than that?

01-01:52:48

Brown: Not root for them, but I was using that as a metaphor. I think we're being much more conscious than we are when we just grow up—it just *is*. You're not looking at a whole range of alternatives. Even today, when people talk about going to college, they apply to ten colleges—some people apply to twenty. That's unheard of. I applied to two: Santa Clara and UC—that was it.

01-01:53:20

Shafer: So when you were talking about, I think, current events, and you said that one of the nuns talked about blaming, I guess, the Democrats for losing China?

01-01:53:29

Brown: Truman. Acheson, Truman. Yeah, I think so.

01-01:53:32

Shafer: And you said you knew about that in talking with your dad—so what other kinds of big issues did you talk with your dad about?

01-01:53:44

Brown: I don't think there were any big issues. It's more simple: the Democrats versus the Republicans. Democrats are the good guys, Republicans are not as good, so it's pretty basic, and not the kind of nuanced slicing and dicing that we are taught to notice as we go through the hyper-schooling process that people are now subjected to.

01-01:54:14

Shafer: Your dad was a Republican, right?

01-01:54:17

Brown: He was. I didn't know that at the time. Yeah, he was a Republican, and changed, I think, in '34, and he talks about that.

01-01:54:25

Shafer: All because of FDR?

01-01:54:27

Brown: That's what he *said*. I was not born, and he didn't talk about it. He didn't talk about being a Republican.

01-01:54:37

Shafer: But he must have talked about, I would think, what it meant to *him* to be a Democrat later on?

01-01:54:42

Brown: No, I don't think he did—it was just we're Democrats. There were a few Republicans in the neighborhood. Of course, he was running for a nonpartisan office: DA and attorney general. Well, the attorney general was partisan. But it didn't have that flavor, like when you're governor, or like the legislature. It's far more partisan. Until 1960, when my father was governor, the rule was cross-filing. And as a matter of fact, until 1956, when the Democrats got control of the legislature, the ballot title didn't even appear in your name. So you didn't know

whether [Earl] Warren was a Republican or Democrat. He appeared on both ballots, as did my father when he ran for attorney general. So this first step was putting the name Democrat or Republican underneath the name, and the second was abolishing cross-filing. So we've had an evolution toward a more demarcated partisan system. It didn't exist when I was growing up.

01-01:55:53

Shafer: Your dad ran against Estes Kefauver in—was it '52 for vice president?

01-01:55:56

Brown: Fifty-two.

01-01:55:56

Shafer: For vice president?

01-01:55:57

Brown: For president.

01-01:55:58

Shafer: Oh, for president.

01-01:55:59

Brown: He ran as a favorite son. I don't know if they knew about Stevenson then. Let's see, in June Stevenson really wasn't the nominee. They were talking about a lot of people at that point—Kefauver, even Eisenhower. Well, as the attorney general in '52, he was the only Democrat in office.

01-01:56:31

Shafer: And do you remember when he ran and he lost, was it a big deal, or not so much?

01-01:56:35

Brown: Not a big deal. No. See, we didn't have the media that you have today, so the newspapers don't cover it. Well, first of all, a favorite son campaign, what is it? It's why Kefauver won. Kefauver was a real candidate, and he'd had his Kefauver hearings, and he had his coonskin cap and he was around. So he was a national figure, had identity—had face and name recognition. So that's why, I think, they tend to vote for a real candidate. And the favorite sons, I think, were more in the convention states. So it didn't quite work in the primary—at least it hasn't worked yet.

01-01:57:24

Shafer: Yeah. And then one more follow-up kind of question. Several times, as we've been talking this morning, you talk about—"well, that's the way it was," or "that was just normal."

01-01:57:35

Brown: Yeah, well because you're framing it fifty years later, and using categories that I don't recall as being operative in the same way they might be in 2019.

01-01:57:47

Shafer: But my question is, and maybe it's the later part of your life, but at what point did you stop wanting to conform.

01-01:57:57

Brown: I don't know—I don't know that I ever did or didn't. I mean, I do have a certain aversion to dullness and boredom, so that inclined me to seek out a certain measure of adventure and excitement. I don't know that I thought about it. I didn't wear funny-colored socks or something. I was pretty conformist. I'd say the 1950s were very conformist.

01-01:58:30

Shafer: Yeah. I think we're good up to this point. Do we want to keep going? I think the next chapter is seminary. It's up to you what you want to do.

[break in recording, side conversation deleted]

01-01:58:45

Meeker: So what we're going to start, just a little bit now, and certainly not finish, is your college and then seminary years. So you applied and are admitted to Santa Clara University in fall—

01-01:58:59

Brown: And UC too, but I chose Santa Clara.

01-01:59:02

Meeker: Well, let's talk about that whole decision-making process.

01-01:59:06

Brown: That phrase, *decision-making process* is again, a recent invention. We didn't think of a decision-making process in 1955.

01-01:59:16

Meeker: What *was* the process then?

01-01:59:19

Brown: It wasn't a *process*! You could apply here—and yeah, I want to go here, I don't want to go there. A lot of my friends were going to Santa Clara. I wanted to be away from home, but I didn't want to go that far away. I wanted to go to a Catholic college. It was that simple, and a number of my friends went to Santa Clara. So today, it seems to be totally different. You know, you want to go to some school because they're rated highly by *U.S. News & World Report* or they're excellent in some field that you're trying to pursue. You just go to college. I thought I might be a lawyer. That was probably an assumption or possibility, but beyond that, even what the major would be, I didn't think about that. The world seemed to be simpler.

There were fewer people applying to all of these schools. They were a lot cheaper. UC was essentially free. Santa Clara was very modest. So it wasn't as momentous, and you didn't feel like if you don't make the right decision, your life

is going to be affected. It used to be on the basis of making the football team that you liked to root for. Or I liked it because Santa Clara had the mission there—it was pretty. It was a pretty campus, and it was close to Santa Cruz. It seemed like a good place to go.

01-02:00:54

Meeker: Had you yet considered seminary while in high school?

01-02:00:57

Brown: I think I had thought about it from time to time.

01-02:01:01

Meeker: Had you shared that idea with your family before graduating high school?

01-02:01:05

Brown: I don't know. Possibly, possibly—yeah, probably did.

01-02:01:14

Meeker: So the decision to go to college rather than seminary right after high school.

01-02:01:21

Brown: That wasn't the way I put it. I wanted to go to college. I wanted to go to Santa Clara. It seemed like an adventure—these schools were relatively confining. St. Ignatius was less confining than St. Brendan's, but Santa Clara seemed like a much more expansive opportunity.

01-02:01:40

Meeker: Did you live in a dorm?

01-02:01:41

Brown: Yeah.

01-02:01:43

Meeker: Tell me about that.

01-02:01:45

Brown: Well, I lived in Kenna Hall, and when I went there, there were two roommates with bunk beds, and then a single bed. And you're assigned your roommate. You didn't pick it. You were not allowed to have a car. You had to have your lights out by 10:30pm, and the senior student that lived in the dorm would come around and make sure the lights were out. It was all boys. There was about 1,300. It had a fair number of priests—I had a priest for French, I had a priest for religion, and I had a priest for English. So yeah, I thought it was pretty exciting to be there—you eat in the cafeteria, went through the line, and you went to classes. You didn't have as many classes. It wasn't like being in school for six hours. You'd go for a period, I don't know how long it was—maybe a couple of classes a day. I enjoyed it. I liked it.

01-02:03:17

Meeker: Did you experience it as a kind of a natural progression from high school? Or did it feel like a big break from what your life was like in high school?



01-02:03:28

Brown: I don't know. Well, it was a break—I don't know how to compare those two things. There's obviously a break. You're not home. Up to that time I'd lived at home, so now I'm living in a dormitory with a bunch of guys, and that was interesting. It was exciting. It was a full-time engagement with ideas, with the subject matter, so it was more interesting, I would say, than high school.

01-02:04:12

Meeker: Do you remember there being classes or teachers who were exposing you to ideas that *did* seem new to you, that were novel at the time?

01-02:04:23

Brown: Well, taking psychology and logic. Those were kind of novel. English, I had a guy named Father Perkins. Since I have my textbook I can review what I learned. But it was far more—well, I don't know if it was far more orderly, but it seems more orderly to me than education. There was a point of view, and it was a Catholic point of view. I mean if you have a priest, and he's teaching you psychology or logic, it's all related.

And in one of the essays that's in this book—it's on my shelf right now—was one of the chapters from John Cardinal Newman's book, *The Idea of a University*, and I always remember that. And they also had, in the same book they have articles by [Robert Maynard] Hutchins, who was the boy-wonder chancellor at the University of Chicago. And there were essays by Mortimer [J.] Adler, and others: "What Does It Mean to Go to College?" And of course, it *meant* something. There *was* an idea of college.

Cardinal Newman said theology was the queen of the sciences, and everything built up in kind of an architectonic framework, with theology being at the top. So there was an order, which I think is good. It served me well, having a sense that the world hangs together in a certain way, so it's not quite as episodic as I would say postmodernism tends to be.

01-02:06:35

Meeker: Was there anything in that first year at Santa Clara where professors might have been challenging or questioning Catholic orthodoxy?

01-02:06:45

Brown: No. There was no questioning Catholic orthodoxy. That didn't show up. We had a philosophy professor—I didn't take that, but I heard one of his lectures in the evening, named [Frederick D.] Wilhelmsen, and he had a big German accent. He later went to teach in Texas, but I found him exciting. And he talked about—"Celebrate reality. Don't *tinker* with existence." I just remember that. I'm just listening to him talk. I don't know if I fully understand what he was talking about, but he was exciting.

01-02:07:25

Meeker: Can you say that again? Celebrate reality, but—

01-02:07:28

Brown: No, I said it. You're recording on your machines.

01-02:07:30

Meeker: [laughing] I'm trying to grapple with it right here though.

01-02:07:32

Brown: Well, you don't have to grapple with it. You can reflect on it later. But it seemed exciting at the time, and he had a German accent. So I had never had a teacher with a German accent, and I only heard him once, but I recalled it.

So all those, the essays, just in this book, the short stories—they were interesting, and I still remember them. Not all of them, just these are ideas that I live with, I came to understand. Mortimer Adler was a Thomist, and he wrote a book called *The Paideia Project* [*The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto*], which I didn't know about then—it didn't exist. But there was this certain excitement there. I read *Portrait of [the] Artist [As a Young Man]* by James Joyce. So it was an intellectual adventure, I would say—for *me*. Not that I was any great student—I wasn't. I didn't study *that* much, but I liked it. And I became acquainted with Dylan Thomas. So it was intellectually another level up from high school, for sure.

Now, in today's world, it would look very confining—a 1950s all boys, virtually all Catholic, with a heavy emphasis on a Catholic perspective in almost everything—that would be unheard of today. But at the time, that was the norm, and it felt right at the time. And I still think it was a very positive thrust for a young man in my position.

01-02:09:37

Meeker: You said most of your professors were priests?

01-02:09:39

Brown: Not most, but more than you have today. Today, it's virtually none. Then, as I said—I mentioned there were three.

01-02:09:46

Meeker: Did you look at priests as a group of people, as more like an intellectual group or as spiritual leaders?

01-02:09:56

Brown: I think more intellectual probably—whatever that means. Because they were in class. One was teaching us French, the other was teaching us English, and the other one was teaching us psychology one semester and logic the next. So what's the connection between religion and those courses? Oh yeah, we had another guy teach, Father Martin taught religion. So yeah, only in the religion class did you get a taste of religion. But I think the coherence of the presentations is more noticeable now, looking back, than at the time, when it just seemed that's the way the world *was* at a Catholic college, whereas today things are a little more secular, more careerist, and more vocationally oriented. Whereas then it was very clear we

were getting a liberal education. We were not getting a job. We were learning the basics of education.

I think that's a distinction that was very self-evident—I mean it was very, very clear. This is before Silicon Valley, before computers, before all that stuff. There's no Intel, there's no Apple. I don't even think there was an HP at that time. This is, you know *The Organization Man*, by [William H.] Whyte, I think, or *Why Johnny Can't Read: [And What You Can Do about It]*—that was another book in the 1950s. Eisenhower is president. Elmer [E.] Robinson is mayor of San Francisco. Santa Clara is a Republican county, so it's a very different world than what we have today.

01-02:12:05

Meeker:

At what point in that first year at Santa Clara did you start considering going into seminary?

01-02:12:10

Brown:

Well, I thought of it during the summer before I went to Santa Clara. I worked in Idaho at a lumber company, and I had time to think about things out there in the forest. So that inclined me, and then I think sometime during my second semester I decided that's what I wanted to do. And I visited a novitiate, and I thought it looked pretty interesting to me.

01-02:12:34

Meeker:

Was there a precipitating event or a—?

01-02:12:37

Brown:

Not a precipitating event, just a general sense that I wanted more depth in my life, and I thought the seminary would be a path to something deeper and more intense, more meaningful.

01-02:12:55

Meeker:

Was there anything that you were learning, or any people you were engaging with at Santa Clara that were kind of sending you in that direction?

01-02:13:03

Brown:

No—no, more from the teachers I had at St. Ignatius. The Jesuits were probably the only people who had any intellectual depth that I encountered. Everything else was rather garden variety, mundane existence, whereas the Jesuits—there was a point of view. There was an historical thrust to what they were doing. It seemed that way to me. So it had more meaning than just the normal get a career, get married, make money, die. I mean, I could see that, even then—that's not enough. And so the seminary had, as a pathway to the divine or the life of the spirit, seemed to me a more profound journey than the one I was on, headed toward graduation at Santa Clara.

01-02:14:12

Meeker:

Well, this is certainly after-the-fact-type thinking, but that's not too far away from the way in which people like the Beats, at the same time, were starting to talk about the reality of their existence.

01-02:14:26

Brown:

Yeah. Well, when we were in the seminary, one of the fathers—Father Meehan, who was the assistant—he came in and told us about the Beats in San Francisco. And I remember him saying something about gargling with razor blades, and he of course put this down. I think he put the emphasis on *beat*, not beatitudes. But I remember even at the time I was interested. The Beats struck me as interesting. And later, when I had been in the seminary for a couple years, one of my friends in the seminary, Peter Finnegan, who is a friend of mine, he had a visitor. And in fact that visitor lives—I was talking to him recently—but he came and he was talking about [Albert] Camus and the absurd for an hour. And he talked about it, and I found that very exciting too.

So one of the first things I did, when I left [seminary] in January, was to go to North Beach, and I was interested. That interested me. Not that I followed through on it that much, but I remember the poem. I remember, I think in some of Allen Ginsberg's poetry he talks about Robbies [Robbies Cafeteria], so when I was at UC, I remember being at Robbie's, and I would think about Allen Ginsberg, kind of in my own mind. I would live those thoughts.

01-02:15:53

Meeker:

Were you a pretty voracious reader growing up?

01-02:15:55

Brown:

No, no. I think I read three books, four books when I was in high school. I can always remember them: *Kristin Lavransdatter*, *Mr. Blue*, *Treasure Island*—maybe another I can't remember.

01-02:16:11

Meeker:

Did that change when you went to college?

01-02:16:13

Brown:

I read more, but basically, you get assignments, little pieces that you're supposed to look at, short stories, and I did that. But no, I wasn't a big reader. I mean I read things, but I wasn't consuming massive amounts of literature.

01-02:16:33

Meeker:

What about at seminary?

01-02:16:35

Brown:

Oh, there we read more. We were in silence the first two years. The first half hour we read, after breakfast, was [Fr. Alphonsus] Rodriguez, [*Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*] In fact, I have the book here. Not a very interesting book, by the way, but we had to read that, half an hour a day. And then, in the afternoon we'd read fifteen minutes of *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, which is a very classic book from the fourteenth century. And then we

would read a half an hour in the evening, after dinner, which was a little lighter reading—biographies of Jesuits, mostly Jesuit saints. And that was it. But that was a solid hour and fifteen minutes every day, without fail. We didn't have television and radio or newspapers, and we didn't go to movies. With less stimuli, reading was more accessible and more attractive. So that's definitely a point. The more distraction, the harder it is to zero in on a difficult book.

01-02:17:59

Meeker: Can you recall for us the conversation that you must have had with your parents when you let them know you wanted to leave Santa Clara and go to seminary?

01-02:18:08

Brown: Yeah, we had a couple conversations. My father didn't like it. He was opposed to that, but when I was going in, he was off to the convention, Democratic Convention of '56. And I didn't talk about it that much with my mother, but I know she didn't like it. So it was a little painful to make that break, but I thought it was an exciting prospect for me.

01-02:18:37

Meeker: The conviction you must possess to make that kind of a leap—

01-02:18:42

Brown: Yeah, because you have to have something. I couldn't say any more—I *did* it, and that's what I wanted to do. And I left with the same zeal that I went in with!  
[laughter]

01-02:19:09

Shafer: This is Scott Shafer again. You know, I think we've all kind of probed to see when were you interested in politics, and it's not entirely clear. But I wonder, like a lot of people now, parents and adults will say, "Well, what do you want to be when you grow up?" Did people ask you that?

01-02:19:24

Brown: No.

01-02:19:25

Shafer: It wasn't a thing?

01-02:19:27

Brown: I don't think so. The closest I came to politics was probably the debate team, and the necessity for observing current events, and then, of course, the elections. Since my father was usually running, I would get the ballot pamphlet, I'd notice it. So I was aware of ballot measures. I was aware of candidacies. I knew who the statewide candidates were. I knew Frank Jordan was secretary of state. I noticed the judges that were on the ballot in San Francisco. I knew the mayors, from Lapham to Robinson to whomever the next ones were—

01-02:20:10

Shafer: [George] Christopher—

01-02:20:11

Brown: [John F. "Jack"] Shelley, maybe, or was it Christopher?

01-02:20:13

Shafer: Christopher.

01-02:20:13

Brown: Christopher and then Shelley—so I would follow those things. I had some interest, but I didn't want to run for student government. I was more interested in ideas, I'd say, the ideas that had come up in the courses that I took in college.

01-02:20:38

Shafer: So when you get to a certain age and you start to think, "Well, what am I going to do next?" Obviously, for you, it became the seminary. But did you think beyond that, like, "What did you want to be when you—?"

01-02:20:48

Brown: No, that was enough.

01-02:20:50

Shafer: You wanted to be a priest.

01-02:20:52

Brown: Priest, teacher, Jesuit. So it's not just a priest, it's a member of an order that is worldwide. There's a general of the Jesuits in Rome, and it has colleges all over the world: South America, Asia, Europe, Canada—all those. And I've visited many of these colleges, not *then*, but since. So that was exciting. It's a world. And in the seminary, of course, you're looking at history, the history of the Jesuit order. When you read *Lives of the Saints*, St. Ignatius, the other Jesuits, Peter Canisius—this was during the Reformation, Ignatius—I think the Jesuits started in 1540. Luther was 1517, I think? And so through religious studies, I got a lot of European history, and so that was very broadening. So it isn't just about San Francisco and my back yard, it's history. Francis Xavier went to India, tried to get to China, died on an island off China. He was a Jesuit.

The narrative, I'd say, of the Church, of the Jesuits, was intellectually opening and illuminating for me. So I think it helped me to transcend my parochial perspectives from Magellan Ave. Well, certainly that's true in the seminary, and that became true at Berkeley, the University of California.

01-02:22:55

Shafer: It seems like religion, in a way, was your window *out*.

01-02:22:58

Brown: I would say so. Yeah, you could say I rebelled by a greater conformity, which religion is, and which it certainly was in 1956. But it was also, not just conformity, it was a depth of ideas and perspectives and historical events that gave meaning and shape to reality as I encountered it. So this was not the news of the day, which even today I marvel at how the focus is barely at the end of the week, let alone the end of the world, which doesn't exist at all. So the quondam,

the trivial, and the banal very much occupy the common imagination, and I have found it more to my liking to try to seek out different perspectives and a greater depth of understanding.

So anyway, college was an opening, and religion was an opening—the Catholic Church, the history of the Catholic Church is very much connected with European history and the spreading of the West throughout the world. Now, it was a perspective that, in the multicultural age, is completely different today, that kind of view. The decolonization of the West, that goes in with the de-evangelizing of the Church. So there's a decentering now. It isn't Europe spreading and dominating the world, it's all of these different cultures and countries and perspectives vying for attention and influence.

So even at that level, I suppose that's somewhat unusual for me even to think about these kinds of things. But I've been thinking about them—they're the kind of things that show up at high school. That's what some, not all of the teachers, but some of the teachers would talk about. And certainly in college, we're in the dormitory and we're talking all the time. And then in the seminary, we didn't talk a lot—the first two years we could talk after lunch and after dinner, but what do you talk about? You talk about what you're reading. And we're reading about stuff that is not about being in Santa Clara County. It's about the last thousand years, two thousand years, or longer, just the whole Biblical and classical tradition.

The world was very simple in those days. Adam and Eve started it, and along came the Hebrews. And then all of a sudden you get Moses and the Promised Land. And then we have the rise of Greece, classical culture. Then we get Alexander the Great; we get the expansion of Greek culture through Alexandria. And then we get Rome, and then Rome falls and we get Christianity. And we get the, some people call it the Dark Ages. We were told it was the Golden Ages, where Catholicism reigned in all the lives at that time in Europe. And then we get the Middle Ages. Then we get the Crusades, then we get the Enlightenment, and then we get the Industrial Revolution. Then we get modernity—and here we are. [laughter] So the world was very coherent, whereas today, it seems more fragmented, for sure, because we're not looking from one point of view, we're looking at *many* points of view. And so I think the framework, the curriculum, the perspective was very helpful in looking out at a fragmented, confusing world, to have an orderliness in one's existence. So I find that order is very helpful in the face of chaos.

01-02:27:45

Shafer:

You took psychology in college, you said, right?

01-02:27:48

Brown:

Yeah.

01-02:27:50

Shafer:

So what is psychology from a Catholic perspective?

01-02:27:54

Brown: Well, the only thing I remember from Father Behan's class—Fr. Behan, I remember him—he said, "Intelligence is the ability to perceive relationships." So I remember things that different teachers say, so I found that very interesting. "And how quickly you can see relationships, and the more relationships you see, is a measure of how intelligent you are."

01-02:28:24

Shafer: Give an example. What kinds of relationships? Human relationships?

01-02:28:28

Brown: *All* relationships. Well, I'd say my wife is very intelligent, and one way that manifests itself is when she's driving down a block, she will see maybe a block or a block and a half ahead, that a car has gotten over in one lane and she's already shifting to the other lane, so that's perceiving the relationship of her with that. Now, you can also perceive relationships of ideas. It could be political, it could be artistic, it could be human, being able to relate what people do, size them up. So that is intelligence.

Now, how does religion fit into it? I'd say at that time the world was very orderly. It all fit. Europe was kind of the mother ship as it were, and we're in America, and the Church is going to evangelize the world and we're kind of waiting for that to happen. That does not appear to be the case today. But it was a good base in the face of Berkeley, where it's like a massive supermarket, where you can pick and choose, this course, that course—and there was no defined authority. So most of the time growing up, there *was* an authority for almost everything—or *for* everything for that matter. So that, I think, has given me a certain confidence to size things up.

01-02:30:06

Shafer: Just coming back to psychology, is there a—?

01-02:30:11

Brown: Well, I'll tell you what he did. He talked about—yeah, this is very traditional—the cognitive and the appetitive. So the cognitive was your ideas, talk about cognitive therapy. The appetitive was the desire. And the conative related to will or action. So the education I got—everything was in its place—you had the will and the intellect and the memory. You had these different aspects of the mind, so we just had to figure it out. And it was in the book, or the priest knew about it, and we could figure it out. Today, we don't have that same confidence that there's an orderly substratum that we can all arrive at that will illuminate our lives. It's much more of a—you think this, and I think that, and maybe tomorrow we'll think something else. So it's much more in flux.

01-02:31:24

Shafer: The idea of sin, I imagine, did not enter into your teaching in psychology.



01-02:31:31

Brown: No, they did not talk about sin. That's an issue, because you have these Jesuits who are committed to saving souls and bringing people to the Catholic Church, and they're just teaching a secular topic. That's true. You could ask why, what's that all about? In fact, there are many today who think the Jesuits shouldn't be in the universities, they should be out there working with the poor or more social action. So they didn't always connect. In high school we had physics, how did that relate? It was pretty religious—you have a crucifix in the front of the classroom, you've got a priest who's in a Roman collar. So that *surrounds* you. But nevertheless, these are the secular courses. And I suppose as you get through it, then you're into your business, and the more religious aspects fall away for 90 percent of the people.

01-02:32:43

Shafer: Sometimes you hear debates about can you believe in God, and all that goes with that, *and* believe in science? Did you see a conflict in that?

01-02:32:51

Brown: No. But that was a debate. When I was in college and in the seminary, there were Catholic intellectuals who'd bemoan the fact that there were so *few* Catholic intellectuals, that it's an immigrant church. Where were the Catholic writers and scientists? But no, they reconciled science with God. There was no debate, since we're in a Catholic school and everybody's on board—this is something that happens later when you're at a public university. And I suppose today people don't even talk about it. It's not as much of an issue.

01-02:33:43

Shafer: You said that the first couple of years you spent mostly in silence.

01-02:33:46

Brown: Well, yeah. You have silence from the time you get up to the time you go to bed, because you have meditation, you have class—you can talk in class as part of the class structure. But that's the point. Two years of *formation* they call it. The Jesuits had, then, a fifteen-year formation. You had two years in novitiate, two years in the juniorate, which was the beginning of college, then you went to three years of philosophy, which gave you your BA and MA—master's degree. Then you taught in school, like at a high school for three years, and then you went to four years of theology, and you were ordained after the third year, and you then completed your fourth, and you went to one more year—or ten months—of reflection. And after fifteen years, you were fully cooked, as it were, and out you went to the world. [laughter] So today, things have changed quite a lot. So I'm very conscious of the fact that the world has changed. The churches were packed, and there was a Mass said at 6:15, 7:00, 8:00, 10:00, and 12:00, so there were five Masses in each of these parishes, and they were pretty full. Today, it's far less than that.

01-02:35:12

Shafer: So when you were in the seminary, how often did you go to church, so to speak?

01-02:35:16

Brown: Oh, you go to Mass every day.

01-02:35:17

Shafer: Just like once a day?

01-02:35:18

Brown: Once a day, yeah.

[side conversation deleted]

01-02:35:22

Shafer: So the Jesuits take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

01-02:35:27

Brown: Right.

01-02:35:29

Shafer: So which of those was the hardest for you?

01-02:35:31

Brown: They weren't particularly hard. I mean, you're in the seminary—it's all part of the program. It's totally controlled, so *that's* the norm. So that probably becomes more difficult when you're out there as a priest or a teacher, or something. But the order, the bell rang at 5:00am, at 5:30 you started your meditation. An hour later you go to Mass. After Mass you go eat, in silence, then you clean up in the kitchen. Then you come back, and along your day, every 45 minutes the bell rings. Now that was the novitiate. The juniorate, it's a little looser, because you're going to courses. And there's no visitors. So you're living this world—what other world is there?

01-02:36:27

Shafer: So obviously, you left the seminary. What was the process of leaving? What was it that made you decide to leave?

01-02:36:34

Brown: Well, first of all, I think the life itself became less real to me after three years or so. I wanted to get out into the world and be part of the more rugged existence of being on one's own, making money, and living the life of a normal human being. This was kind of a hothouse of detachment. And then the doctrines, you know, seemed less plausible, so I didn't want to be part of that. So I just decided I'm going to leave, and I did.

01-02:37:25

Shafer: And did anybody try to change your mind?

01-02:37:28

Brown: No, no. I think they were glad to see me go, as a matter of fact. [laughter] I was sowing a bit of independent inquiry. I did do a lot of thinking and discussing, with some, not with everybody.

01-02:37:51

Shafer: And that didn't go over too well.

01-02:37:52

Brown: No, because it's a very tight, conforming environment, and I appreciate that. It can be helpful, but it's more for a period than for a whole lifetime. Although we do have monasteries. Now, we don't have the monasteries like earlier, you know, there were thousands and thousands of monasteries in Europe and Mexico. And now they're there, but there are very few—just like all these great cathedrals. Something built those cathedrals. That took a lot of belief; it took a lot of work for many, many years, to get a cathedral built. So that was an idea, a faith, a collective belief that manifested itself in real action. And now, this change in belief is changing the nature of Catholic schools, Catholic life. And so the university and the Church itself, they're all going through lots of crisis. But so also is democratic governance. There was a fellow named Christopher Dawson, who we were taught about, and he related Europe to the Church. And I can't find him having said this, but my teacher in the juniorate said, "This guy was a great Catholic historian in the 1930s,"—and he said that, "Europe is the Church, and the Church is Europe." Now, the Church is in crisis, and Europe is in crisis, and the Jesuits are in crisis. There is a certain undermining of the hegemony of the West and many of its institutions, so I think they can be studied in tandem, as I often do. I continue to be interested in the world as I have experienced it earlier in life, and how things are going today.

And certainly thinking here, sitting here in front of this hill where we have pictures of my great-grandfather, I can think of what it took to get here for him, what they did, and how the world was a very vital place, and then how it kind of disappeared with the car and World War I, and whatever. But in some ways, it can be restored—and I'm doing that. I don't think my olive business will compete with the stagecoach stop. But he was in the hospitality business, and I'm somewhat in the intellectual hospitality business.

01-02:40:58

Shafer: [laughing] What does that mean?

01-02:40:59

Brown: Well, I will have people here. We're talking today. We're discussing serious matters. So when they came to get their horses refreshed, I'm sure they sat around the bar a hundred yards from here talking about whatever they talked about. And when you're out here, most people around here are cowboys. They deal with their cows, and they're very physical and very friendly, and you get to know people. So Peter Coyote and others—I don't know whether it was Gary Snyder or what—but there was something called the Reinhabitory Theater. And that was the idea of inhabiting, but then reinhabiting. So I'm reinhabiting this place, where my grandmother started. And it'll be something different, but it's reinvention, it's creation, but anchored in what's gone before. So I find that interesting.

01-02:42:05

Shafer: Last question, and this is sort of which of these is different from everything else. You mentioned that you worked in a lumber company in Idaho?

01-02:42:15

Brown: Oh, the Ohio Match Company.

01-02:42:16

Shafer: Yeah. How did that happen? What was that like?

01-02:42:19

Brown: Well, my father was a good friend of Norton Simon. They went to Lowell together. An entrepreneur—a rather well-known one—and he owned the Ohio Match Company. So together with my friend Bart Lally, we went up there in the summer of '55, after graduating from St. Ignatius, and worked a couple months out there.

01-02:42:43

Shafer: What did you do?

01-02:42:44

Brown: Oh, we were kind of helping out with clearing the roads, being kind of assistants. We didn't cut any trees, but we were right there in the lumber camp helping them.

01-02:42:57

Shafer: Yeah, was that exciting?

01-02:42:59

Brown: No. [Shafer laughs] It's not exciting.

01-02:43:01

Shafer: Anything else? All right, I think we're good.

01-02:43:04

Marzorati: You now, I wanted just to clarify—I remember your mother and father talking about *not* giving you a waiver to enter the seminary—

01-02:43:11

Brown: There was no such thing as a waiver. I think that's when I was in high school. But they kind of—what shall we say—characterized it in later years, maybe that way because they were opposed to it. But I've never heard the word *waiver*.

01-02:43:33

Shafer: Just one other thing. You obviously left the seminary, but I think it has had an impact on you, and I think you would agree. But when you look back, like what do you think of those years, that time in your life?

01-02:43:44

Brown: Well, everything has had an impact. I did run for the same job my father had, and I'm living in the same place where my grandmother was born and grew up. She

wasn't quite—she was born about a mile down the road, a couple miles down the road. So there's a lot of things that influence.

01-02:44:02

Shafer: Sure. But is there something in particular that you think of that you took with you from the seminary?

01-02:44:06

Brown: Oh, from that one—because I take from a lot of things. I even visited my political science professor on my honeymoon. [laughter] Yeah, he lived in Mendocino, Sheldon Wolin, so yeah—I do *look* to the past while I'm trying to create something in the future.

So what did I take from the seminary? What did I take? An appreciation for the common life. I was interested in intentional communities like Synanon and Delancey Street. And my experience at the seminary showed me the value and the strength of a common life of people together. In part, creating the Oakland Military Institute is a way of combining the military framework with, not the religious, but the social. Socializing, of having ritual and common ideas and common vocabulary and common gestures and rituals together. So what did I take from it? I took a lot from it. And I certainly took friends. I'm still in touch with a number of people who were in the seminary. Some left and some are still there. So it leaves an imprint, because it's an intense experience, maybe analogous to being in the army or something—or maybe even college, for some people.

People whose lives are very individualized—you have your one house, your wife and your kids and your job—and every day it's similar and it's somewhat isolated. But that's why people probably like to go on vacations, or they go on cruises, because now they're in a group. And the seminary is definitely a group. It wasn't very big—I think there were thirty guys in my class, and there was a class behind me of thirty and then above me, so it's a relatively small, isolated group, where you have an intensity, because you're seeing the same people day in and day out. So I appreciate the value of that.

01-02:46:48

Shafer: Good.

01-02:46:49

Brown: All right?

01-02:46:50

Shafer: Very good.

01-02:46:53

Brown: All right.

## Interview 2: March 18, 2019 [morning session]

02-00:00:24

Holmes: This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today is March 18, 2019, and we have the pleasure of sitting down for our second session with Governor Jerry Brown. We are here at the Brown ranch in Williams, California, and I am joined by our partners from KQED: Scott Shafer and Guy Marzorati. Governor, thanks for spending another day with us.

02-00:00:47

Brown: Sure.

02-00:00:49

Holmes: In our last session we ended talking about your time at Santa Clara University. And between Santa Clara and going to the seminary, you took a trip to New York?

02-00:01:00

Brown: Yes.

02-00:01:02

Holmes: Can you tell us a little bit about that?

02-00:01:04

Brown: Well, I went with two other friends, Frank [C.] Damrell and Peter [M.] Finnegan. Peter is now deceased. We went to New York, Washington, and Boston, so we visited the capital, we met some friends of Frank's father, who was a judge in Modesto, and we went to New York City. Peter Finnegan knew someone, I think at Finch College, and we heard a talk there by Eleanor Roosevelt, in a small living room. She stood up and she spoke, and that was very interesting. And then we went to Boston, where Frank had an aunt, and then we came back.

02-00:01:57

Holmes: Was that your first time on the East Coast?

02-00:01:59

Brown: Yes.

02-00:02:02

Holmes: How did you think it compared to, say, California.

02-00:02:06

Brown: Well, I mean New York was exciting. Also, New York would allow you to purchase alcohol at age eighteen, so that was one of the first things we did was to buy a few six packs of beer, and we went down to places in Greenwich Village. I remember being there and having a beer there, and went to different restaurants. I think we might have seen a play. I'm not sure. But well, New York City is so much more dynamic and full of people and cars and tall buildings, there's nothing like it in California. San Francisco is getting a *little* more like that, but in 1956,

San Francisco and New York were totally different, so the East Coast was very interesting to me.

I think I went up in the Empire State Building too, so that was a thrill, and I think we went and climbed the steps at the Statue of Liberty. I remember doing that, and I can't think of another time when I would have, so it was probably then.

02-00:03:29

Shafer:

I'm just wondering, you're sort of on your own really, with your friends, away from your family. A lot of kids would kind of go a little wild or be—?

02-00:03:38

Brown:

No, when I was on my own, going to the Russian River, going to Idaho to work in the Ohio Match Company lumber operation—I was essentially on my own at Santa Clara. You have your own room and people aren't—well, they *did* check on you there. We did have rather closer surveillance than you'd have today. But nevertheless, my parents would not be aware of what I was doing.

The world has changed. I've often remarked on that, because I hear the conversations between people who work for me or work with Anne, and it's always very odd to me, these daily conversations. Of course, we didn't have phones. It was a long-distance call from Santa Clara to San Francisco, and you'd have to go down and get a pay phone, so it was a little bit more cumbersome. But there just wasn't the connection, and the same was true of high school, or even grammar school. Parents, at least my parents, were not involved at all—and most parents were not involved. I was a yell leader at St. Ignatius. I guess they called them cheerleaders then, and I can't remember parents at all being there, being at the games. I just don't remember any of them ever being there.

02-00:05:20

Shafer:

What was Greenwich Village like?

02-00:05:23

Brown:

Well, it was interesting. Of course it was not as developed. It had fewer people, cheaper beer and food, more room. It was 1956, both in Greenwich Village but also at Santa Clara, there'd be a bar or restaurant, kind of an older building, not a lot of people in it. I wouldn't call it run down, but not this kind of modern, shiny restaurant/bar look that is more common today. I guess there was more space than there were people. And I don't know that to be the case, but there was some reason that rents were cheap, that people could have establishments with a much cheaper entry fee. Probably the insurance was minimal, the health inspections—I'm speculating—were not much. So the barrier to entry was much different, and therefore very modest people could operate very modest establishments, and I certainly found that in Greenwich Village. I just have a memory of being at a bar there, and the picture of it looks old fashioned today.

02-00:06:56

Shafer:

What do you remember about it?

02-00:06:57

Brown: I just remember the tables, the chairs, the bar, just old fashioned. So there are a few around San Francisco like that, even today. But not the same way.

02-00:07:10

Shafer: Did you hear any music?

02-00:07:11

Brown: I did hear music. Not during that trip, but later when I was at Yale I went to Greenwich Village, and I think I heard Bob Dylan at Gerde's Folk City. I didn't know he was Bob Dylan, but I remember just from what he looked like, and I remember he had a little railroad cap on, a little conductor's cap, and he was playing—and I'm pretty sure it was him.

Holmes: Well, before we leave that section, you said you also went down to Washington, DC during that trip? Is that correct?

02-00:07:58

Brown: Yes, yes.

02-00:07:58

Holmes: What was your impression of DC? That was your first time there, in the nation's capital?

02-00:08:08

Brown: Hard to say. I think we went and saw the Senate or the House. We had some lobbyist that had taken us around, or a lawyer—I don't think he was a lobbyist, he was a lawyer, kind of an insider. You know, it was a lot of politics, nothing that unusual to me.

02-00:08:34

Holmes: Okay. So then in August you enrolled there at the Sacred Heart Novitiate? And this is founded in 1887 in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Can you discuss, maybe, your decision to enroll in the seminary?

02-00:08:55

Brown: Yeah, well, I'd thought about it before, over the years, and I decided to go to Santa Clara, and I liked Santa Clara very much. And I would just make a point of Santa Clara that I applied to two colleges: UC Berkeley and Santa Clara, and I decided to go to Santa Clara. But I would distinguish that from the custom today, which is at least five or six—and maybe ten. And I guess the difference is that there's more people and not so much college, I guess. And I think that it seems to be fewer spaces, fewer seats, relative to the number of the people who want to go, and therefore the getting in is, I think, much more difficult than it used to be. When I applied, it was just: yeah, you can go to Berkeley if you get fifteen Bs in fifteen solid subjects, as they call them—that's it. They didn't have AP then.

So I decided I wanted to go to Santa Clara. Some of my classmates were going there. I had no idea as to Santa Clara having some—they were an engineering



school, but I was not interested in that. And so I didn't have a particular course matter or particular line of study leading to a particular line of work. I hear a lot of young kids today, they say, "I want to go to *this* college, because *this* program is the *best* program." So there was no *U.S. News & World Report*. That didn't even come up. We knew more because Santa Clara used to have a football team. And it was a Jesuit school, I knew that, and it was a pretty campus. So I think there were maybe twelve, or maybe more, kids from St. Ignatius. So it seemed like a good thing to do. They were all going there—far more than were going to UC. So I only point this out because it seems like the decision to go to college is totally different today than it was then. The idea that my mother or my father would take me to Santa Clara, much less to Berkeley, and show me around wasn't a thought that even entered anybody's head. And so somehow between then and now, these notions have evolved and have become standard. So that was the way it was.

So I went to Santa Clara. We lived in a dormitory, which I liked. We were assigned roommates—first I had three people. And then I was able, after a semester, to pick a roommate, and I picked this guy Frank Damrell. So it was, as I recall, about 1,300 undergraduates, I think, in the day school—all boys, in the day school—and that seemed like a pretty good-sized school to me. And I did like it, but after being there for a while—and I was thinking I'd want to be a lawyer—but then I decided no, I'd rather go to seminary. I met, one of the guys that I was in school with had a brother who was at the novitiate

[side conversation deleted]

Yeah, so I went up there one day, and we looked at it. It looked pretty interesting to me, and it was a different dimension. I didn't know quite *how* different it was, but it was the full-time practice of preparing to be a Jesuit priest. I'd had encounters with the priests because of St. Ignatius and then Santa Clara, and that idea of the schools was very congenial and it seemed interesting. It seemed intellectual, and then the seminary seemed solid. I had a sense that this would be a place where I could dig into the deeper meaning of things. I don't know starting when, but certainly when I was at Santa Clara, the reflection on life and what it all means, those were important questions to me. And so the material pathways of normal living seemed not exciting, and somewhat boring and pedestrian, or mundane—something not exciting and not very deep. So I thought the seminary would be something different and profound, and so, then I just had the idea that's what I'm going to do, so then I did it.

02-00:14:56

Shafer:

I think you were seventeen when you decided to do that, right?

02-00:14:57

Brown:

Yes, yeah, probably seventeen.

02-00:14:58

Shafer:

And I think you had to be eighteen to do it without your parents?

02-00:15:01

Brown: No, we don't know that to be the case.

02-00:15:04

Shafer: Would you have gone into the novitiate faster, or—?

02-00:15:06

Brown: No, because you can't—in those days, the customs were very defined. It took fifteen years to complete your training, and the beginning was the novitiate—two years. And that always began the evening of August 14, and August 15 was the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and that's when, two years later, you take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. So no, there's no going in before. Today I think there's more flexibility. It's not fifteen years; it's a shorter period of time. Novices are not right out of high school; they're usually in their mid-twenties or older. So that too, through the late 1960s, radically changed in many, many ways. When I went there, it was up on that hill, [pointing to a photograph] as you can see, at the big white building. And when you look back into the Santa Clara Valley, in 1956 it looked a lot different than it does today, a very vast plain there that you could see, especially from the hills, and we hiked in those hills. So that was the story in August of 1956.

02-00:16:40

Holmes: What was your parents' reaction when you told them that you wanted to join the seminary?

02-00:16:41

Brown: Well, they did not agree. They didn't like that idea. They wanted me to finish college. So we talked about it—not a great deal. But I decided no, I'm going, so that was that.

02-00:17:03

Shafer: You know, just looking at the calendar, it seems like your decision to do that was roughly the same time that your dad's political career was really, you know, taking off. He was talked about as a potential candidate for president even or—

02-00:17:16

Brown: Well, he ran as a favorite son in 1952 against Kefauver, but it wasn't that successful—like Kefauver won two to one, as I recall. And then in '56, I think Stevenson and Kefauver ran. But I think the convention was right around the time, right around that time, in August.

02-00:17:37

Shafer: I guess I'm just wondering was your decision maybe—?

02-00:17:42

Brown: I don't think it has anything to do with what my father was doing. It's more my being in school, in school with Jesuits, having hours and hours of contact and conversation. And seeing it as a different way of life—it seemed definitely a higher-order undertaking than going through school and getting out and getting a

job and things. That seemed to me not as interesting. The novitiate was more mysterious—just a wider horizon in my mind.

02-00:18:42

Shafer: Where did you see it leading?

02-00:18:43

Brown: Well, learning to be a Jesuit, and that was one of the powerful religious orders in Roman Catholicism. And the Jesuits are teachers, missionaries, they go to different parts of the world. They're involved in advocating and strengthening Christianity in the world. And of course, things were a lot different in 1956 than they are today—or even ten years ago. The missionary spirit is different. And now, with decolonization and multiculturalism, the notion that we're going to send some guys from America over to Korea or Burma, or even Africa, and say now we're going to convert everybody—or try to—that doesn't have the same resonance. And in fact, there's much more of Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries just being present and trying to do good works in those countries. But I would say that the shift from missionary activity defined as converting the pagans, as they often were called, or the unbaptized, and then shifting to well, everybody, has a different path and we have to respect that. That's a sea change in the way I understand Catholicism.

02-00:20:36

Shafer: You've mentioned the vows of poverty, obedience and—

02-00:20:38

Brown: Chastity.

02-00:20:38

Shafer: And chastity. Which of those was the hardest?

02-00:20:41

Brown: No. They're not particularly hard, actually, because you're in a peer-pressure environment. It's a totally isolated environment, so there's no radio, television, newspapers, girls, entertainment, you don't have that. So you have reading, you have exhortation, you have meditation, you have the Mass, you have minor bits of manual labor—it has a kind of medieval quality, that is quite full in and of itself. And so your normal well, what is it like not to go out on Friday night? That doesn't show up, because that's the world I was choosing. And so it's not hard, because everybody else is doing it. In fact, to do something *else* would be to depart from the norm.

02-00:21:48

Shafer: You know, when I think of the person you became as an adult, questioning everything, looking at things in different ways, it seems very different from the structured environment. Was there a point where you got tired of that or just felt it was too confining?

02-00:22:04

Brown:

Well, I think my inquiring mind was evident much earlier than that. In fact, I remember one time in my eighth grade, Sister Alice Joseph said to me, after I'd asked her a certain question, she said, "Do you stay up nights thinking of these questions?" So I guess, from that, I was asking a lot of questions.

I don't know where I got my sense of being able to discern when evidence is not present. And I do have that sense that most of the time people are operating on belief. There's a lot of talk of evidence-based—in fact, I was just talking to somebody this morning, that there's a bill asking for evidence-based, that all programs at the Department of Corrections shall only be evidence-based. And I'm very skeptical of that, evidence-based, because it's just another belief system. So we have a lot of beliefs, and it's not just the fanatics in ISIS that are in belief, there's a lot of belief in our own society.

So I guess I developed that because of the extreme conformity and uniformity of beliefs in the seminary. And even there, there was some questioning. Not a lot, but of course the nature of religious belief is that it's not verifiable. The idea of ritual is that you perform the same movement or gesture over and over again, for hundreds—maybe thousands—of years, and that you do it in the group of believers and that there's no variance. If you think of the Our Father, or you think of certain Jewish prayers, they haven't changed in thousands of years. So the key is invariance expressed in a community of believers, and that it not be verifiable.

I believe that economic growth will be 4 percent next year. Now, that would be verifiable and refutable. I believe in God Almighty, hell and heaven, and the saints—well, you can't verify that and you can't verify that Moses promised to make the people his own back there. I was just reading about that in Ur to Abraham, that was his compact, give them the land. Well, they got land there and that's still a controversy. So the belief, the articulation, whether it's at the Mass or what they call litanies, where you have certain responses. Someone says something short, a prayer, very short, like a phrase, and then you respond—those are called litanies. So these are things that bind the community together, but they're not something you question, because there's nothing to question. You have no basis to question it. So it's not empirically-based, but through that, I certainly did have my questions and my doubts about things as time went on.

It was a very intense experience. And I suppose that with all intense experiences they tend to wear off, and as then they wear off, that intensity, that fervor, diminishes. And then as it diminishes, you see things in a different light. And so yeah, I did have that experience, and that's probably the essential reason why I left. But I also have carried that spirit with me. So when I'm in a room with people, I don't say I relate it back to the novitiate, where everybody said the same thing and believed the same thing. But there's a little bit of that—or maybe there's a lot of that—whether it's the legislature, whether it's the governor's office, whether it's a family gathering, whether it's this group right here. I find that groupthink, which was a term developed first, I heard, in connection with the

Vietnam War, and that all these best and bright people went along. They called that *groupthink*. And then now we hear terms like *peer pressure*.

But I think we're social animals, and the need to be bonded together is facilitated, is fed by, common understandings. And those common understandings are *beliefs*—and I don't care whether it's the *New York Times* or KQED—there's a string of beliefs. And other people have different beliefs. You see that in foreign policy, and I could elaborate on that. But I don't take things, generally speaking. If it's a proposition, that if you say something and you put that into some terms—it's an assertion. Okay, but what? How do we know that's true? And there's a lot of that stuff. One of the things that interests me, *did* interest me, that people would say that brain science *tells* us. And they often use that phrase: research *tells* us. It's kind of like—God told me. I often plug in *God* for *research*, and it tells you that the brain, by three, you've got to start preschool, kindergarten's too late. And so I've looked at some of the studies, not in a deep way, but I came across a study that challenged that. And there is a professor that debunks that, and debunks the studies on which people rely, even though they've never looked at the study.

I'm trying to connect the evolution of my way of looking at the world. And it's not that I'm sitting here doubting everything, because we accept things for granted. But I'm impressed with how much *belief* there is. The *New York Times* editorial pages would be different than papers in Britain, say the *Guardian*. There's just a lot of belief going on. I don't care if it's the Democrats, the Republicans, the Socialists, certainly the Communists, the right wing—there are a lot of beliefs. And if you sit down and list their beliefs, they'd say, "Now, what can we prove?" You'll find it's very little. And then you get down to probably look at the conflicts in the world that lead to these wars, and you say, "Well, it's about beliefs." In the First World War, Germany believed one thing, Russia believed something else, France believed something else, and pretty soon they're killing each other. So you'd say, "Well, if we'd just get the facts right." Well, it may not be about facts.

02-00:31:01

Shafer:

[laughing] Isn't that what the climate deniers are saying?

02-00:31:05

Brown:

Yeah, well—they're denying that which we have a lot of scientific evidence on. But I would say that the conflicts in the world, say the Russia-America conflict right now, there's a lot of belief about things, not just about forms of government, but interpretation of events. And so as the interpretations get more and more divergent, and people feel more and more strongly about them, and then they internalize certain emotions, the next step is killing people. I used to think, "Well, we're going to get to a point where—gee, if we get over the Vietnam War everything's going to be fine." But it doesn't appear that that pathway has been pursued by the countries of the world.

02-00:32:00

Holmes: Governor, I wanted to ask a little bit more about your experience at the seminary. Maybe starting with what was your first impression that first year of life in the seminary?

02-00:32:11

Brown: My first impression was that it was a little awkward coming in. Most people all had their cassock on, and the thirty new men that came in with me, we didn't get our cassock for, say, a week. And how you file into the dining room and do some of the things that you're assigned to do—wash dishes or other kinds of work—it took a while to get into the routine. But within a week or two, it all felt very natural. And then a year later when the next crew came in, I could see that they were awkward. They didn't quite get how to be at the table, because we're in silence, and they'd look around—you're not supposed to look around. It's called *modesty of the eyes*, or some people call it *custody of the eyes*. So you're not supposed to. This is a whole other world, where your whole focus is interior. You're trying to establish a relationship with the spiritual world, with God, and not with the normal stuff that most people, that *all* people, deal with. So that was an impression of that.

It struck me as very medieval. There is a concept of the will of God. And the will of God was told to us as expressed through the rules, of which we had fifty-two rules, in a little rule book, and through the directions of the superior, Father Master—that was what he's called, the master of novices. And so that idea that following the superior was following the will of God—I'd never heard that concept before. In fact, I haven't heard much of it since I left. But that is a fundamental concept, that the church carries on the tradition of Christ; that the Jesuits, under St. Ignatius, were formed by the church; that the Jesuits appoint superiors, and the superiors there are running things, wherever you are, in a novitiate or a college or something. And so it's a very hierarchical program, and it's tied in with divine sanction. So I found that—and find that—difficult to accept. But that's what it was. And evidently, that's been around a long time. So there was a lot of practices, Catholic practices, that when you get into reading the *Lives of the Saints* or other materials on the church history, you find, “Oh yeah, this has been going on for a long, long time.” But just in the normal education and growing up, we didn't hear about that stuff, so that was a very different kind of world.

But it was an interesting world. The fact that a group of people were involved in something that was intellectually stimulating, spiritually challenging, was not boring in any sense. And if you think about it, the individualism of modern life is very powerful. And people try to overcome that by taking trips. You find a lot of the older people, they want to go to Rossmoor, or they want to be in a communal situation. So on the one hand, everybody wants their little private house; but on the other hand, they do a lot of things, like go to a noisy restaurant to be subsumed into this collective experience. So that's part of the power of this novitiate: it's a collective experience. And because you're wearing the same

cassock, the same cubicle you sleep in, the bell rings at 5:00am, the bell rings every 30 or 40 minutes to do something else. So you're all doing it together, and that in itself is a very—I don't know if I would say *exciting*, but as an antidote to the extreme individualism and skepticism of the modern world, I would say that, obviously, was very welcome in my imagination.

02-00:37:28

Shafer: At what point did you begin to think maybe it wasn't the life for you?

02-00:37:31

Brown: Well, after about three years, maybe a little before that.

02-00:37:37

Shafer: Like was there a moment?

02-00:37:38

Brown: No, not a moment. I began to read different things. After the novitiate, we started to get exposed to books. In the novitiate it's only the New Testament. Not as often, but we also could read part of the Old Testament, and we read lives mostly of Jesuit saints. We have a book, I don't know if I showed it to you, because I have it here, by [Alphonsus] Rodriguez, the *Practice of Perfection*. That's what we're reading. So you do that for two years, and then you walk across the building to what was called the juniorate, and this was like college. And they had a library with a lot of good books in it, so I started reading things like that.

And I don't know when it was, but a guy came—I think it was after I started thinking about leaving. But he came to visit my friend Peter Finnegan, because we could have visitors there. I didn't have very many—I think almost none—except my parents once a month. And this guy, his name was Neil, and he actually lives down the street from my nephew. But he was reading Albert Camus. I can't remember whether I saw him or whether Peter Finnegan related it to me, but he talked about the absurd, that he elaborates in the *Myth of Sisyphus*, and that whole idea I found very exciting, the idea of the longing of the human heart for meaning, and the utter silence of the universe in return. And so, I took a liking to Camus.

There was another book that I got there called *Spirit and Reality*, by a man named Nicolas Berdyaev. And Nicolas Berdyaev was an Orthodox Christian, Orthodox Catholic, Russian, who was around Russia in the time of Lenin, but he left. He didn't like Lenin's materialism, and he went to Paris. He died shortly after World War II, but he wrote a number of books, and I read two of them: *Spirit and Reality*, and one was *Slavery and Freedom*. Anyway, he was somewhat interested in the Holy Spirit, and the phrase, *spiritus spirat ubi vult*, or, "the spirit listeth where it wilt," is the way the King James Bible has it. And the spirit is this free, unconstrained divine presence, and he was focused in this book, and it's a somewhat complicated book to say the least, but he also criticized Jesuit obedience and Jesuit asceticism. So here was a guy writing, and his writing seemed very fresh to me, seemed very alive compared to Rodriguez, which seemed very dead. So that was the beginnings—and I still have the book. I've got

a copy that I've kept with me, and I've gone back and tried to read. It's not that easy to read. But I think the very notion that this Russian was talking about Christianity, and doing so in a way that not only implied, but expressly required or described this freedom of the spirit that could not be constrained by blind obedience, which was the essence of the Jesuits. So that gave me pause.

Then I also came up with another book—which I also have to this day—called *Man in Search of Himself* [*Man's Search for Himself*], by Rollo May, and he lived in the Bay Area. He was from New York, and this was an interesting book. And in the book, he talked about Erich Fromm and Nietzsche, and other people. But it was an exploration of awareness, and how most people were going through life without any sense of themselves, without any ability to really know what they feel. He was a psychotherapist. So between the *Spirit and Reality* and *Man in Search of Himself*, that did open up a more—a more open orientation toward things. And therefore, it made the Jesuit framework feel confining and not as real as it appeared a couple years before.

02-00:43:20

Shafer: So you decided at some point then to leave?

02-00:43:24

Brown: Yeah.

02-00:43:24

Shafer: Yeah, but you didn't leave right away, right? You decided, but then you stuck around —?

02-00:43:27

Brown: Well, I don't know if I was deciding, so—

02-00:43:30

Shafer: And when you finally left, how did you feel about the decision? What did your parents say? What was that transition like for you?

02-00:43:41

Brown: It's hard to remember these things. We're talking decades and decades ago. Yeah, I told my father. His response wasn't that clear. Now, I've read about it in the books where they quoted him. I did not get that at the time. He didn't seem—I don't know what I would say—it's just like he wasn't sure, or something, almost like a slight. It seemed a slight negative, yeah, just slight, but not some empathetic response. And the leaving is difficult, because you're in this bonded community, so it's very anxiety provoking. So I definitely mulled it over for, I don't know, several weeks—maybe even a few months. I'm not sure how long it was.

But when I left, I remember I went to the Jesuit provincial, Father Carroll, and he lived in the house on Lyon St. where [Dianne] Feinstein lives. That's where the Jesuit house was, the provincial's residence. And he gave me a little piece of paper and said, "When I give you this piece of paper, now you're not going to be a Jesuit anymore," and his little clock chimed about that time, I think, if I recall



right. I remember walking down the stairs—you know at the end of the road it's a dead end, rubs up against the Presidio, the eucalyptus trees and the fog and the dew, the moisture from the trees was there and evident. And as I walked down the stairs, there's a stairway you walked out. I thought it was like we're leaving Communist China, because I'd been in a totally controlled environment, and now it was totally open. So yeah, that was my experience—a real liberation kind of feeling.

02-00:45:55

Shafer: Hold that thought. Before we get to that, I want to kind of go back a little bit. In 1958 you were still in the novitiate, right?

02-00:46:03

Brown: Yeah.

02-00:46:03

Shafer: So your dad is thinking of running for governor. He's attorney general. And if the accounts are correct, you try to convince him to run for the senate.

02-00:46:15

Brown: Well, I wrote him a letter, and the letter speaks for itself, and I haven't read it in years, so I hesitate to comment on it.

02-00:46:22

Shafer: [laughing] Letters won't work on the radio though, yeah.

02-00:46:25

Brown: Well, if we had the letter—

02-00:46:26

Shafer: What do you remember about your thinking about that? How did you think about it?

02-00:46:31

Brown: Well, how did I think about it? Well, I thought about the senate as being more international, and I was a young Jesuit novice. We're thinking about the world. The Jesuits started, I think, around 1541, and within fifty years, they're all over the world, with universities and advising government ministers and what have you. So this is (a), it's historical, it's European, but it's also very worldwide. You might call it global today. And so the governorship seemed more parochial to me, more mundane. What is a governor going to deal with? Compared to, you know, these are serious issues—war and peace, the large questions. Those are what interest me. And I think after my father *was* elected, Khrushchev came to California, and to Disneyland, and he came to San Francisco, and they had some kind of a dinner for him. And I wrote my father a few thoughts on what he should say to Khrushchev. I'm interested in the Russians, so I'm interested in Khrushchev as well as Berdyaev.

But this perspective is not the perspective of the governor's office. As the governor, they want you to deal with bills, and they want you to deal with roads

and schools and water and taxes and crime. If you get out of that box, then you're not doing what you're supposed to. So I've always had a certain amount of tension—I was looking at the world, thinking it's very dangerous. We might blow it up. We certainly felt that way with the Cuban Missile Crisis, and in fact, we almost *did* blow it up, but I didn't know that in 1958.

But I did know the world, and we spent a lot of time reading about the lives of Jesuits. Matteo Ricci went to China and made contact at the court there, in China. Francis Xavier went to India. And they were all involved in the politics of Europe. So that's interesting. That's more of an international focus. You might think well, we're sitting away in that mountaintop there, but the books we're reading are very historical and very international, and because we're not going to movies and we're not going to TV and we're not running around going skiing or something, the books and ideas have a lot more weight, and I noticed that, and I liked it. I really started reading more, because that's what you could do: read, think, and talk, and those are the big thoughts. Well, some people talked about little silly things, but I always would be talking about large issues, and I'm still doing that.

[side conversation deleted]

If I see somebody that there's some relationship to some issue I'm interested in, I just launch right in, whether it's climate change or prisoners or Russians—big issues have always been important. As a matter of fact, the novitiate dealt with much bigger issues than Santa Clara dealt with. At Santa Clara, you're studying English, religion, ROTC, French. Okay, so that's pretty mundane. Now we go to the novitiate, we're talking about saving the world. Not talking about saving San Jose, about saving the *world*, you know, India, China, Africa—that's a big thought. So that's kind of my orientation.

02-00:51:13

Holmes: Were you able to hear news about when your father was running for governor?

02-00:51:18

Brown: No, no.

02-00:51:20

Holmes: It was just maybe on the monthly visits?

02-00:51:22

Brown: No. Monthly visits—which I was not interested in. I was very absorbed in this path of perfection, religious pathway. But I did know the evening that he was elected, they let me come and watch the television for fifteen minutes. That's it. But we didn't look at the outside—we weren't interested, and the outside information was not pleasant. It wasn't on what we were talking about. We were talking about virtues, prayer, meditation, contemplation, lives of the saints, the rules. That's why I went there, that's what I was interested in, and that's what most of the other people were interested in. So the *world*, as we called it—that falls away. That's lower order.

02-00:52:25

Holmes: Well, Governor, let's talk about after you left the seminary and started at UC Berkeley, in January of 1960. Could you discuss that transition, because you went from being in a very closed seminary up in the Santa Cruz Mountains to a very large public university. What do you recall of that transition?

02-00:52:50

Brown: Well, first of all, I would say I don't use the word *transition*. It's one of these new terms you've developed. Not you, but it's common—recent. But I do know that it was different.

[side conversation deleted]

02-00:53:06

Shafer: Actually, before you start, help us with some dates. When did you start at Cal? Was it January of 1960?

02-00:53:12

Brown: Yes. Sometime in January, mid-January. Well, I started there, and I went to see Professor [Gerson W.] Rabinowitz, who was the head of the Classics Department, and he evaluated my transcript from Santa Clara, which also contained the work I did at the novitiate, since it was affiliated with Santa Clara, and I had over ninety units. So I didn't need too much more to graduate. In fact, I needed, I think three courses, nine units in classics, so that's what I did. So that's the first thing I did. And because I only needed nine units in my major, then everything else was optional. And I originally thought I wanted to be a psychiatrist, so I enrolled in chemistry and physics, but after about ten days I saw that was not for me, especially the lab. I was just not something I could really do. So then I shifted to psychology, and so I then took a couple courses in psychology, and I took other courses as well.

I got into the I-House [International House], had a room there. And they, of course, have a cafeteria, and so that's similar to Santa Clara, in that sense, sort of group dining, and I got to meet different people there. And yeah, it was very different. Berkeley was so vast. I kept thinking like it's a supermarket, where you open the catalog and look at almost anything, and so that was a difference. It was interesting courses. I had a lot of interesting courses at Berkeley, and a lot of interesting conversations at the I-House. So it was quite a bit different, and it created a certain amount of anxiety.

But that's what it was, and then pretty soon it's time for the summer. I guess that was 1960, that would be when the convention was, and so I roomed with a couple of guys, graduate students, and one of them lives about forty minutes from here. He's a farmer, and he was studying that stuff. And so did Frank Damrell, with me, so I met some people. And it was different, in that Santa Clara and the novitiate were all very focused. You take whatever you want. Go look in the catalog. Now, most people have majors, so they're constrained, and they have requirements, but I had done all that. Oh, I think I had to do a physical ed. course, so I took that, and

I had to take—what else? Oh, I hadn't had history, so I had to take a history exam, and I passed it. So I didn't have to take a history course. Then I needed a math class, so I took a statistics class. I think I didn't do very well in it, but I passed it, so that was all right.

02-00:57:16

Shafer: Why did you choose I-House?

02-00:57:18

Brown: My sister had gone there, and she talked about meeting interesting people from different countries, so that was good, so I liked that. But there was a lot of politics, you know, in Sproul Plaza—the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. There was a group of students supporting farm workers, and I went with them to Stockton one day, and we picked strawberries for a morning. And then we met a labor organizer, the predecessor to [César] Chávez. Then we met with Dorothy Day the next day and she talked. She's always on pilgrimage, going to different places, Catholic Worker houses, strikes—that was her whole life, so that was pretty interesting. She was a pretty famous figure. She became more famous, I think. But I remember asking her, "How could I learn more about what you're talking about?" And she said, "Well, read *Paths in Utopia*, by Martin Buber." So I've read *Paths in Utopia* twice, as a matter of fact, about utopian Socialism. So that was a pretty interesting experiment. And there was a lot of political discussion around the campus. It was exciting. It was not Free Speech Movement yet—that came later. That came after I graduated from Yale. But it seemed like there was a lot of ferment there, just talking to the people at lunch and dinner, from different countries—just very interesting.

02-00:59:25

Shafer: What was it about the farm worker issue that caught your attention?

02-00:59:29

Brown: Well, just the fact of farm workers, and we were going to go there and see what their conditions were like. I don't think I realized that Dorothy Day was going to be there as well, but she was.

02-00:59:41

Holmes: And you mentioned you met—was it Larry Itliong, the head of the Agricultural Organizing Working Committee?

02-00:59:50

Brown: I think I met him later, when I lived in LA and we went on that march to Calexico. I joined it partway—I think that's when I met Larry Itliong. Chávez didn't start in '60. There was a guy named [C. Al] Green, who worked for the AFL, and they were trying to organize the farm workers, and they were having a tough time. And they never did, until César came along.

02-01:00:25

Shafer: What was it like going to Stockton and picking strawberries?

02-01:00:31

**Brown:** Well, it was hard work, and I don't know that we really were sent out in a serious way—probably the growers were suspicious. And there were guys who were hard up, hard luck kind of people. I don't know that these were migrants that we saw. I think these were more down-and-outers kind of, that would pick for a few hours and then quit. But we talked about it, and there was a group that went there from Stiles Hall—that was the spot that it started from. Oh, this was the time of the HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee] demonstration. I didn't go to it, but some people from the I-House went there, and they talked about it when they came back.

02-01:01:24

**Shafer:** What were they exploring at that point, the HUAC commission?

02-01:01:28

**Brown:** They were just holding a hearing, as they did, although I think their hearings were probably winding down, but this was still a time when they took testimony, and then of course people, students would protest, and that caused a conflict, and they dragged them down the city hall steps.

02-01:01:50

**Shafer:** That was in San Francisco, right?

02-01:01:51

**Brown:** Yeah.

02-01:01:53

**Holmes:** And I believe it was called SLATE, which was the student political committee.

02-01:01:57

**Brown:** SLATE, right. Yeah.

02-01:02:05

**Holmes:** Did you have any interaction with SLATE or its affiliates?

02-01:02:08

**Brown:** No, no.

02-01:02:10

**Holmes:** There was no inclination to get involved in student government at that time?

02-01:02:13

**Brown:** No, no. Just studying, and talking to people, and taking it all in.

02-01:02:21

**Holmes:** You mentioned the political fervor there at Berkeley, which as you were mentioning, this was before the free speech movement. As the son of a governor, did that—?

02-01:02:33

Brown: No one knew I was the son of a governor, for the most part. Maybe at the International House, but not on the campus.

02-01:02:41

Shafer: You preferred it that way, I assume?

02-01:02:44

Brown: Well, I would have to announce it or something. It's just not something that shows up. It's not something people notice—or didn't notice, at that time.

02-01:02:54

Shafer: Different world.

02-01:02:54

Brown: Different world. They knew my father was the attorney general, at Santa Clara. But Berkeley's a lot more impersonal, or you're not talking to very many people. It's a pretty small subset of people whose names you actually know and you talk to more than once. That's one of the big differences. It's pretty impersonal, and then, certainly the I-House, where I met people—I did meet people there. In fact, I marvel that I took a class, we studied the play *Alcestis*, by Euripides, in Greek. And at the end of the semester, I didn't know the name of anyone in my class. When it was over, people just walked away. So, I noted that. That seemed a little different at Santa Clara. We lived there—we were there in the evening, went for breakfast, and so there'd be, I guess, three meals that we'd share together. Whereas, when you take a Greek class three days a week—there it is, and then you're gone. But it struck me about the impersonal quality of the university.

02-01:04:08

Holmes: In regard to the political environment there at Berkeley—I know a lot of the coffee houses around campus were places for a lot of political discussions. Did you interact in those kind of discussions?

02-01:04:19

Brown: I'm trying to remember. I stuck mostly at the International House. There were some coffeehouses later, but that was when I came back.

02-01:04:29

Shafer: I want to ask you about an issue that you obviously have cared about your entire life, but which really emerged when you were at Cal with your dad, and that's the death penalty. I believe it was May of 1960, and you contacted your dad to talk to him about the pending execution of Caryl Chessman. Can you talk about that and why you felt so strongly about that issue?

02-01:04:56

Brown: Well, I guess I'd never encountered anything quite so directly as an execution, and then Caryl Chessman, of course, was this famous character that wrote that book about his experiences. And as it turns out, he hadn't murdered anybody, but he did commit a horrible rape, and he'd been there a long time. So he became somewhat of a heroic figure in the minds of a lot of people. Letters came from

Brazil and all over, I think even from the Vatican or something. So it just struck me that killing him, at that point, didn't seem right to me. So I talked to my father about it, and he said, "Well, I can't do anything about it." I said, "Well, you can ask the legislature to abolish the death penalty." So then he finally said, "Yeah, I'm going to do that," which kind of surprised me. Now, at that time, I guess he didn't have the idea of having an indefinite reprieve, he thought it was limited.

It was an awkward situation, because Caryl Chessman's lawyer, I think an ACLU attorney, had already applied to the Supreme Court for a recommendation of clemency, and they voted 4-3 to *deny* clemency. So the law is pretty clear, that if you've been convicted of a felony before the murder crime, that you're looking at the death penalty. You cannot be commuted by the governor. In fact, I asked the Supreme Court, on nine occasions, and they said no. So those people didn't get commuted. These were life-without-parole types, although I did several hundred. So my father couldn't do anything about it, and the legislature certainly didn't like it. The legislature felt he threw the hot potato on them, and so they voted it down in committee. And I didn't know any of that. I'd been living this isolated life for almost four years, so I didn't have the sense of the world of Sacramento, and the world of political beliefs. I just had one sense—well, you can't kill this guy. That doesn't seem right.

02-01:07:46

Shafer: How long was the conversation? Like what do you remember about it?

02-01:07:48

Brown: I mean—not that long.

02-01:07:50

Shafer: Was it brief?

02-01:07:52

Brown: No, it wasn't—two minutes, and it was an extended conversation.

02-01:07:54

Shafer: And for your dad, was it more about the political considerations? Or was it more—?

02-01:07:59

Brown: I can't speak—yeah, well you asked me to get into *his* mind. I think it was about the moral aspects of—he probably knew this was not a death case. And, of course, today it wouldn't be a death case under the laws of California. So it seemed like a senseless kind of execution, and today we *would* say it was rather senseless, although the people after he commuted him—after he gave him a reprieve, thousands of letters showed up in the governor's office, and we heard from the *other* side, which was pretty extensive.

02-01:08:46

Holmes: In the wake of that decision, your dad—well, many believe that that hurt him politically. I think he's booed at the Winter Olympics.

02-01:08:58

Brown: It hurt him, but not so much as to enable Richard Nixon to win the election two years later.

02-01:09:06

Holmes: That's correct.

02-01:09:09

Brown: So yeah, definitely at that time, it didn't help. From a political point of view there was definitely damage.

02-01:09:20

Holmes: What was your view of that damage?

02-01:09:22

Brown: What do you mean *my view*? Whether I thought it *existed*, or whether I thought it was unfortunate?

02-01:09:34

Holmes: In regards to the damage.

02-01:09:35

Brown: It's kind of a reality.

02-01:09:36

Holmes: I guess you're correct on that. I mean what was your perception.

02-01:09:41

Brown: You mean what was my reaction to it.

02-01:09:43

Holmes: That's correct.

02-01:09:47

Brown: That's a little different than a *view*, I would say. [laughter] Well, I'm trying to remember. It definitely seemed like a big controversy. And yeah, I was surprised at the reaction, definitely. I was coming from another, simpler world, and it just struck me this was surprising in its intensity.

02-01:10:20

Holmes: To follow on that, did it give you a new appreciation for the position of your father as governor, in weighing in on these kind of issues?

02-01:10:30

Brown: I think I probably thought more about the *issue*. Do I think about how my father felt about life as governor? I might have, but I can't remember if I did, imagining how he saw things. That's a pretty sophisticated state of mind, which I don't know that I attained in 1960.



02-01:10:58

Holmes: Maybe in regards to his position as governor on these kind of issues—you're coming at it from a moral standpoint, and that his job requires more complexities than just what he may morally believe.

02-01:11:12

Brown: Right, so what—?

02-01:11:17

Holmes: Did this situation give you maybe a deeper appreciation for the position that put him in?

02-01:11:23

Brown: Well, I would say that the fierce negative response was surprising, so I got to see that, and obviously that's not a pleasant situation to see your father in that kind of negative, hostile public response. So yeah, I saw that. I mean, it's different than wandering around with your eyes cast down saying Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I mean, that was one world, and this is the world of outside and California in 1960. So I did see that, and I saw a lot more things, in the succeeding months and years, about how the world worked.

02-01:12:14

Shafer: You're going to hate this question, but if you had it to do over, would you have—knowing now—?

02-01:12:18

Brown: That's a counterfactual that I can't—

02-01:12:22

Shafer: [laughter] I thought I would try.

02-01:12:23

Brown: Would I do it over again? Might not have, because it caused trouble. Well, certainly because it didn't go anywhere. But I had no *idea* it would go nowhere, and I thought my father would probably know that. So that's a hard decision to understand, if he fully understood that there was no votes, then why would he do that? Yeah, so what were the options? You have a vote, get delayed by moratorium, or which we see now—indefinite reprieve—but somehow that didn't come up. So that's very undeveloped—I can't tell you why. Either he underestimated it, or at the moment didn't think about it, or was overcome by the morality of it—a lot of things. The trouble with the death penalty is that it has a finality to it, so you always are hesitant to pull the trigger, as it were, because you can't unpull it. So there's not many things like that in what governors do, so it's difficult to say. And I certainly didn't understand the full gravity or the implications as I would now.

02-01:14:01

Shafer: You were about twenty-two, I think, at that point, and your dad was the governor of the state of California.

02-01:14:07

Brown: Yeah.

02-01:14:08

Shafer: And you pick up the phone on an important issue that he probably understood maybe better than you did.

02-01:14:14

Brown: Well, I hope he understood it better than I did.

02-01:14:17

Shafer: And yet you convinced him to change his mind. That's kind of extraordinary.

02-01:14:22

Brown: Well, it is. It's very extraordinary, but it happened.

02-01:14:25

Shafer: Do you think your argument was that, like what—?

02-01:14:27

Brown: Well, my argument was great, obviously. Well, this is the argument if you can have—if there's a chance to save somebody, you take that chance, and that chance was to let the legislature decide. That was the idea. Now—had I had the insight of Nancy McFadden, who could always read the legislature, or of [Jesse M.] "Jess" Unruh, who could count votes, as they say, which is an art of knowing what someone's going to do, in many cases better than the legislator himself or herself. I don't know whether he would have done something that didn't go anywhere. So he must have felt, in that moment, that he had a chance to do something. And that was good. I think it was very admirable. It was part of his moral—not just moral, his human empathy for the underdog. I think it's built in part on that he was a lawyer and a prosecutor, and I think he understood the case, and there was a bit of a lynch-mob mentality at that point.

Oh, the lynch mob, I have to say, that victims feel the same way now. In fact, I have friends who've had people [in their lives who have been] killed, and they don't want to see any kind of clemency. They feel it very strongly. So I guess until you've had *that* experience, you're focusing more on the death of the perpetrator rather than on the death of the victims, so there's two life experiences there that have to be understood together.

02-01:16:19

Shafer: Just for a moment, I'm going to jump ahead a few years, because your dad *did* lose. Four years later he lost—or I guess it would be six years later at that point. And to quote [Frederick G.] "Fred" Dutton, is Humpty Dumpty—you couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again after the Chessman thing.

02-01:16:39

Brown: Although they did. That's not true, he won substantially. Nixon was ahead substantially, double digits, I remember one poll, and he [Pat Brown] won, ran a very good campaign. But there were other things. The Vietnam War was heating

up, the Sproul Hall protests, the arrests of six hundred people dragged down Sproul Hall, the Watts Riots, not being in the state. Glenn [M.] Anderson was not all that decisive, although I don't know how you *would* be decisive in the Watts Riots more than they were. So, the cycle turns. Eight years of what is exuberant spending all of a sudden becomes too much. The budget was only like a billion or two, and Reagan was able to exploit a feeling that wow, this thing was never this big. Well, it's true it was never that big, because of eight years of Democrats. And under the previous governor, [Goodwin J.] Knight, there was a lot of deferred programs and needs, and my father started filling those—and he raised taxes on a number of items. So that wears down.

Now, after Reagan, then I got elected, so then what do you attribute that to? So there's a pendulum swing. You go from Bush to Clinton, Clinton to Bush, Bush to Obama, Obama to Trump—those are pretty different people, and so that happens in state government. There is a swing. So part of it is the individual, his personality and how he's perceived in these stories that unfold, and then there's issues of the times. And then there's just a certain hope that whatever the problems are, they could be better under a thing called change. And change is a relatively empty term, but it's something that people feel—don't even need a definition. "Time for A Change." That worked well against the Democrats in 1952, "Time for A Change." So that's what happened. I think all those factors explain Reagan's victory.

02-01:19:37

Shafer: The convention of 1960 was in Los Angeles, right?

02-01:19:40

Brown: Yeah.

02-01:19:41

Shafer: Jack Kennedy got nominated there. Did you say you went?

02-01:19:44

Brown: No, I did not go.

02-01:19:44

Shafer: No, you didn't go. What do you remember about that though?

02-01:19:49

Brown: Well, I remember what we read in the papers, the certain chaos with the delegation going in different directions. And part of that was, I think—and I don't know what it all came from—but I think my father tried to have the different candidates represented in the [California] delegation—Stevenson, Kennedy, Johnson. But, of course, it turned out that it didn't work so well, because then they split three different ways, and he couldn't deliver it like Governor [David L.] Lawrence of Pennsylvania, or [Michael] DiSalle of Ohio, or [Robert B.] Meyner, I guess it was, in New Jersey. These people had a more eastern discipline and control, which probably never happened in California, and that's probably what happened. You can reflect on how much my father knew about it, how much he

was thinking one thing and the other—who knows. You'd have to check his history to find that out. I don't know.

02-01:20:59

Shafer: You know, a lot of young people of your generation were really drawn to public service because of JFK and the Peace Corps and other things—what effect did his election have on you?

02-01:21:11

Brown: Well, I thought he was an exciting candidate. No one since then has had the same charisma, the same presence. He was a very exciting person to encounter, and his speeches had a right measure of dignity and irony and humor—seriousness. A combination that I haven't seen since. Maybe a little bit in Gene McCarthy. So what did—well, I don't know. I was going to law school and that was my focus at the time. I'm very interested in the issues, but I wasn't joining a lot of things.

02-01:22:01

Holmes: What do you recall from that campaign between Nixon and Kennedy? What stands out to you?

02-01:22:08

Brown: I think the debate. I think when Nixon talked about Truman swearing or something, and telling Kennedy he should do something about it—I kind of remember that. Quemoy [or Kinmen] and Matsu—I remember that, those two islands. Kennedy looking pretty good. I remember watching the debate.

02-01:22:31

Holmes: He tanned very well in Florida.

02-01:22:33

Brown: Is that what it was?

02-01:22:33

Holmes: Yes.

02-01:22:35

Brown: Yeah, well he was pretty pasty-faced otherwise probably. No, he looked good, and there was the excitement, the first thousand days, and [Arthur] Schlesinger and [Theodore C. "Ted"] Sorensen—they promoted this thing, the whole Camelot—again, after Eisenhower. So you had Communist Korea and corruption, and then Eisenhower came along, which was unusual, because he just wasn't that partisan, and he tried to hand it over to Nixon. But again, it was time for a change, get America moving. There had been a recession in '58, and Kennedy was very vigorous. And Nixon didn't have the same charisma, even though he had a lot of experience. And he had that strange aspect to his presence, to his face and his personality. But then again, just a few years later, he wins. So that's the way these things go.

02-01:23:43

Holmes: Your father worked in support of Kennedy during that campaign. Did you get a chance to meet the Kennedys?

02-01:23:50

Brown: Yes, I met—Teddy came out to the governor's office. I had time to speak with him. It's interesting, when Teddy came out I had a book on capital cases that I was thumbing through, and I showed it to Teddy Kennedy when he was waiting to talk to my father in the back office there. And then I met Jack Kennedy. He came down and gave a speech—I think his speech was in Oakland, late in the afternoon/early evening. It was very interesting to see. I noticed one thing, Jack Kennedy—some woman came up to him and said, "Can I have your handkerchief?" And he, very dignified but firm, said to one of his aides, "My assistant will give you one." Yeah, but he wasn't about to take out his handkerchief, so I always thought that was very self-composed. I also asked him about China, Red China. I said, "Why don't you recognize—are you going to recognize Red China or let China into the UN?" And he said something about our vital interests, and I remember—now what's a *vital* interest? We hear about that often, vital interests, a very vague term that covers a lot of ground.

02-01:25:25

Shafer: How did it strike you, if at all, that you had opportunities to talk to the President of the United States? Your friends didn't, I assume.

02-01:25:35

Brown: No, but, I don't know how that would. You ask me did I reflect on that and say something or think something?

02-01:25:47

Shafer: Well, like boy, what a privilege.

02-01:25:50

Brown: That's a level of self-consciousness that I don't, I didn't—I mean, obviously, I knew it was because my father was governor, and going to the governor's mansions, and you were going to the governor's conference. I met Eisenhower, Hershey, Pennsylvania, at a governor's conference—briefly, but nevertheless I got to meet him. Met Truman, met Stevenson—all these people came by. Met [Charles] de Gaulle at the Fairmont Hotel, but my father was doing the talking. I met Tito in Yugoslavia, so these were things you get to do. That's just the life I've lived.

02-01:26:38

Holmes: Did you ever get a chance to meet Robert Kennedy?

02-01:26:42

Brown: No. Never met Robert Kennedy. But I have a book that he signed that I'm told is very valuable. [laughing]

02-01:26:54

Shafer: In '61 you graduate from Cal, and the commencement speaker was the governor.

02-01:27:01

Brown: Right.

02-01:27:03

Shafer: Yeah, what do you remember about that?

02-01:27:04

Brown: I don't.

02-01:27:04

Shafer: Nothing?

02-01:27:06

Brown: No. No, I can't remember that. I think Clark Kerr was there giving out the degrees. It was a big crowd in the Memorial Stadium, so there were a lot of people there. I don't think people were listening to the commencement. I don't think the kids were that excited.

02-01:27:25

Shafer: How did you feel?

02-01:27:30

Brown: Well, it's always a little embarrassing to have your father there talking, because it's a little stressful. He's going to give me my degree? I probably would have felt that same way if he'd come to my school, which he never did. Oh, one time I think he came to Santa Clara, when Goodwin Knight was giving a talk. But you know, you're in that vast sea of people. It's the whole school graduating. They don't do that anymore. They break them up into different schools. Political science has their own graduation; English has their own graduation. I gave commencements at both, and they're just these little—it's not the same, the big one was big. So that's all.

Yeah, I don't know. I should reflect on that more, when people ask me to give commencements, because the kids are not that interested. In fact, I gave a commencement at Berkeley, the Political Science Department, because I knew the professor that asked me, and she'd had the same teacher I had, Professor Wolin, and I wrote out the speech and thought it through. But either it wasn't given that eloquently, or the students had other things on their minds, but I don't think students are that interested in commencement speeches. Now, maybe from Kennedy or from somebody—Steve Jobs or something. But short of that, I think it's very hard to give a commencement speech. I certainly don't recall—other than just sitting in this big sea of people waiting to go up on this artificial stage, get my diploma, and get a picture with Clark Kerr and my father.

02-01:29:29

Shafer: You still have that photo somewhere, I'm sure?

02-01:29:30

Brown: No—it's around somewhere. It's probably in one of my boxes.

02-01:29:36

Holmes: Well, Governor you then, after your graduation from Cal, head over to Yale University for law school in, I believe, 1961. What inspired you to go to law school?

02-01:29:51

Brown: I couldn't think of a better alternative. And that was not my original idea. The original idea was thinking of becoming a psychologist, but I soured on that idea. The reality of it didn't, after meeting some psychologists and finding out about their work, it didn't touch me that much. So law seemed fine, and Yale—after the first six months you could choose any course you wanted, so I thought that would be good. And I'd been at Berkeley, so now to go to the Ivy League, and to study at Yale seemed like an intellectually exciting thing, which it was.

02-01:30:37

Holmes: What was your impressions of the school?

02-01:30:40

Brown: By the way, I should say that the notion of knowing in high school or college what you're going to do—I didn't have that experience. Although I did study to be a Jesuit. We were told at Santa Clara that we were getting a liberal education, particularly in English class, Fr. Perkins, we had a book called *Reading for Understanding* [by Fr. Maurice B. McNamee]. Not reading just for information, but reading for understanding. And we read essays by Mortimer Adler, by Robert Hutchins, who was the young chancellor at the University of Chicago, promoter of the great books. We read articles by John Ruskin, by Cardinal Newman on the idea of the university, and other essays and short stories. But the message was we're getting a liberal education, we're broadening our mind, and the idea of what job we were going to take was *very* secondary. Now, engineers—maybe they had an idea; maybe people in business. Many of my friends looked down on people in business. That seemed kind of the easy path that you do that.

So I also saw Yale as a more liberal arts kind of school, but more professional, more concrete. Today people are very vocationally oriented. I meet people who came to work for me, I said, "What did you study?" They say, "Studied communications." *He* studied communications, Mr. Evan [referencing to assistant Evan Westrup in room.] I said, "Why did you study communications?" "I suppose I thought I could get a job." Well, not him—but somebody, somebody else said that. [laughter in background] So I just didn't think of what I was studying related to getting a job. I thought my job was to broaden my mind, to learn the best writings on ideas in history and philosophy, and things like that. So that was a different world. And Yale was a very free place too, although it was rigorous. There were a lot of smart people there, very smart people. In fact, I've noticed that each school I went to the people seemed to get—well, let me put it this way, the people who come out of Yale tend to be rather successful. And their wives tend to be rather successful. They found museums or theaters or hospitals and do all sorts of things, so yeah. I didn't realize it, but Yale is at the epicenter of American power, or at least it was.

02-01:33:57

Shafer: Yeah, and I know you met, probably, some people who were important in your life going forward from there, like [J.] Anthony Kline, Tony Kline.

02-01:34:02

Brown: Yes.

02-01:34:05

Shafer: How did you guys connect?

02-01:34:07

Brown: Well, I think he was in the same Entry, we called it—Entry, I think, Entry L. This was a residential hall right on campus, so he was one of the people who was there.

02-01:34:21

Shafer: Yeah, more so than at Cal did you find that you were engaging in campus life and the life of the school?

02-01:34:28

Brown: No, at Cal I was engaged—particularly at the International House. There was a lot of things going on there. At Yale, of course you had the cases, you had politics, you had the *New York Times*. I didn't read the *New York Times*, that was an experience I never had. But at Yale, oh yeah, read the *New York Times* every day. So that already orients me to the national/international issues. And of course, the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of '62, we really did—I did, thought it was over. Maybe I should get to Vermont if it's going to get worse. That was a real nail-biter. And it turns out now, in retrospect of course, that the Russians had nuclear-armed weapons, and had we made the wrong moves, we might have had a full-scale nuclear war and killed billions of people. That might have happened. So I didn't know that—we know so much more now how close we were to catastrophe, but even at that time it was pretty scary.

02-01:35:45

Shafer: You mention that with each successive school you went to—it sounded like you were about to say the people got smarter. [laughing] Did you feel intimidated at all when you got to Yale?

02-01:35:56

Brown: No.

02-01:35:57

Shafer: Not at all?

02-01:35:58

Brown: No, I felt that most of them were better than I was at their study habits and the way they attacked cases. They were good. They'd stand up in class, and they always knew quite a lot.

02-01:36:13

Holmes: What was your impressions of not just Yale, but also, the surrounding city of New Haven? The city is quite different than, say, San Francisco.



02-01:36:25

Brown: Yeah, this is before, I think this might have been before redevelopment, or it was just in the middle of Mayor [Richard C.] Lee's redevelopment. He'd written a book on—no Dahl, I think, wrote a book on democracy, Robert [A.] Dahl, and New Haven was the model. But I didn't spend a lot of time in the surrounding area. I didn't have a car, and I was pretty much, you know, there at the school. Did a lot of talking.

02-01:36:59

Shafer: You did?

02-01:37:01

Brown: Yeah, a lot of listening—but a lot of talking. Well, it's very interesting, all the different cases and criminal law, constitutional law, labor law, the conflicts of law among different states, psychology and the law—all that. Psychiatry and the law actually—that's what it was.

02-01:37:24

Holmes: Was there a certain focus in law that you were gravitating towards at that time?

02-01:37:28

Brown: I liked labor law. I did like labor law. I took psychiatry and the law, and I had Anna Freud as the teacher, Sigmund Freud's daughter. She and another woman taught the course. That was interesting. The only thing I can remember is that she said that men and women were different in this respect: that a woman could bond with a baby not her own, but men seemed to require their own physical child for them to really form an attachment. I don't know whether that's true or not, but I remember her saying that, so it's an interesting gender difference if it is such.

02-01:38:10

Shafer: It seems like psychiatry and psychology, that's really interested you in the course of your—

02-01:38:14

Brown: Well, yeah, yeah, and we had another guy teaching—oh yeah, in psychiatry and the law they had Jay Katz and a guy named [Joseph] Goldstein. Jay Katz was a psychiatrist. I took two courses: one was criminal law, and the other was psychiatry and the law. But we had this question of, which was very interesting in criminal law: What *is* a crime? Who is a crime against? And also, insanity defense, which comes from the McNaughton [or M'Naghten] rule of common law. And then they had a couple that would change it, and it's a little different—the McNaughton rule is: Did he know the difference between right and wrong? If you don't, then you're insane, the insanity defense will hold. The other one is: Did he do this crime as a result of mental illness? Now, the reason I'm bringing this up is these matters, these topics, were always brought up and then they were dissected. How do you know if it's a mental illness? What does that mean? What's the causation there? And so the whole notion of the insanity defense was questioned—along with everything else.

The law school case method was to look at a set of facts from a case, and then explore the outer limits of what the rule of law *could* be. And one guy, Fleming James, who taught me procedure, he said that, “Your task here,” I think he might even have said *the answer*. “If you want to have an answer to the question here, it’s the range of arguments that an astute lawyer could make given the facts of this case.” So that’s a very different orientation. What is the rule in this case? Because you’re studying law. What’s the law? And the law is the range of arguments that an astute counsel could make. Now, someone who has an absolutist view of the world would be jarred by that, but I found it congenial to my somewhat skeptical mind. So it’s argumentative, and you’re learning that trade—of making the best arguments you can. Of course if you’re a lawyer, you have a case, you have a client, you’ve got to make the best arguments you can. And so cases were not viewed as: “The rule of this case is—.” But rather, each case was an opportunity to explore possible ways of looking at the facts and interpreting them, so that fit in with my general intellectual development.

02-01:41:23

Shafer:

Well, how do you think that whole orientation way of thinking about things, how did you take that with you from Yale into public service?

02-01:41:32

Brown:

Well, I did exactly that. I look at the range of possible arguments or interpretations, and it is my experience that most people have an argument. But there was another teacher—I don’t want to bore you with all my teachers, but it kind of indicates that I remember my teachers. At least I remember some things. [Friedrich] “Fritz” Kessler was a teacher of contracts. He taught me second-semester contracts my first year at Yale. He later went to Boalt Hall Law School. But he said, “Every”—he had a German accent, which I can’t imitate—he said, “Every rule has a counter-rule.” So you’d read a case, and this is the rule. Then you’d read a case that was very similar, but it would have a different rule. And so that idea that every rule has a counter-rule, that’s interesting to me. That’s significant. And I link it back to some philosophical axiom or notion. I don’t know whether it was Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas, or where the hell it came from, but the term is *coincidence of opposites*. So it’s a coming together of opposites. It’s a little different than *every rule has a counter-rule*, but again, it’s similar, like in the Zen world that something—it’s not one; it’s not two. That’s a Zen saying, *not one, not two*. So what does that mean?

The goal at law school, I think, was to develop your understanding of how judges have written these opinions, so you could understand how legal arguments need to be made, whether you’re making them in a courtroom or advising a client. But you really begin to look into material, look into stories and fact situations, and see the full range of possible interpretations. And that sensibility, or that perspective, has grown with me. In fact, it’s even growing now, as I was reading a review in the last couple of days, a review of a book on Gandhi. It was in the *Times Literary Supplement*. And the author, I think made some points, and then the reviewer made points about that. And I was just thinking boy, there are so many books

written, and the books change over time, the perspectives on people change. So if they're changing over time, that means they could change right away. It's just we won't *know* it, or we won't express it for a while.

But that means if you get all the interpretations of people—they'll write books on Kennedy, they'll write books on Johnson, on Clinton, or any other historical figure—they're different biographies, and they don't seem to ever finish. So where that's true over time, it should be true *in* time. So you could say whatever somebody is saying, there is probably a whole different configuration that you could lay out. And if that's true of writing about somebody—writing about me or talking—it's true about *most* things. So then you kind of start edging into postmodernism and deconstructionism, and those are fields that I don't really spend much time on. But all these things seem to fit together as a way of looking at life in its complexity, and making sense of it, but not making sense of it by being simplistic or arbitrary—it's this or it's that. No, it's this and it's that, and probably several other things in between.

02-01:46:00

Shafer: Well, how do you arrive at the truth though?

02-01:46:04

Brown: Well, that's a good question. That's what Pilate asked Jesus. What *is* the truth?

02-01:46:10

Shafer: What's the answer?

02-01:46:11

Brown: [laughing] Well, you know, scientists don't talk about truth. They talk about evidence; they talk about verification; they talk about the null hypothesis. But they don't talk about truth. Truth is kind of a quasi-religious subject now, I would say. People talk about *my* truth, which is a very strange term—*my truth*—and then you aren't bringing it into relativism. So truth is what we think is, what the state of the world is. What did Wittgenstein say about whatever is the case, or whatever the world, all the facts? I can't tell you what it is. But people have been trying to state that question for a long time. [Wittgenstein, in Proposition 1.1 of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, writes, "The world is the totality of facts, not of things."]

Certainly, we can say what error is, because we can then say, "Oh, we know the facts are different than you're saying." I think we ought to be trying to avoid error and correct things as much as we can. But I think we're definitely into approximation. Now, obviously, you know truth. If you pull a trigger, and you've got a gun and a bullet, and you fire at somebody, they're going to die. That's the truth. And so there are a lot of basic truths, but in between there are a lot of interpretations. That's why the literate people love words like *hermeneutics* and *sympiotics*, and they love to complexify, and the point is that it has become very counterproductive. In fact, the whole liberal arts, I think, has suffered, and I think it was much simpler. Now, maybe everybody says that, but if I look at my

*Reading for Understanding*, it's a lot simpler than some of the writings that I've come across recently. So I think truth is a good goal to pursue.

02-01:48:27

Shafer: You know, while you mention the Cuban Missile Crisis, and your dad's reelection was right around that time, against Nixon. How much attention were you paying to that?

02-01:48:38

Brown: To what? To the election?

02-01:48:39

Shafer: To the '62 election. Like what do you remember about that?

02-01:48:43

Brown: I remember the Hughes loan. Nixon's brother got a loan from Howard Hughes. My father's campaign made a big deal out of that. I think Dick Tuck put it in Chinese and followed Nixon through Chinatown—*What about the Hughes loan?* in Chinese. [laughing] I remember Nixon, I think did talk about capital punishment. Or maybe he gave a speech at Davis on that. He might have talked about Communism. I'm not sure. But he once referred to the capitol as the statehouse, which now sometimes people use. But at that time, no one ever referred to the state capitol as the statehouse. There's the executive mansion, which they now call the governor's mansion. He seemed a little bit—not using the right words, and I don't know whether the electorate, they probably couldn't have known that.

But for whatever it is, the campaign was pretty solid. My father was physically very energized. He lost some weight, and it all seemed to fall together. I didn't know at the time, but *no* governor has ever been denied reelection for a second term in the history of California. That's true, and that continues true today.

02-01:50:26

Shafer: Wow.

02-01:50:28

Brown: But I didn't know that then. So that gives you a little bit of a boost there. And I think the reason for that is you have enough time to have some accomplishments. You have the legislature working with you, and whatever it is that caused you to defeat your opponent, gives you something to do that has some consensus behind it, and so you do it. So that works for four years. But now you've been there eight years, and no one ever tried to run for a third term except my father, Earl Warren, and myself, and I ran twenty-eight years after the first time I left office. So after eight years, the things accumulate. And Earl Warren was running during World War II, and he was an unusual figure and bipartisan. So anyway, I think that played a certain role into it, because you're the governor and things were good in '62.

We had the Cuban Missile Crisis. That kind of froze things in the campaign, and Nixon kind of liked to close strongly, and he couldn't really do much because the Cuban Missile Crisis shut everybody up. I remember Tommy Kuchel was the Republican candidate for the Senate, an incumbent, and he flew back to Washington, and he put on his pilot's helmet with the thing you strap over with little goggles up above his eyes, and that was a very good—what we call a *photo op* today. We didn't have that term then. But he flew back to Washington for that picture, and it was very effective. I think he was going to win anyway. So that was the campaign. I remember the debate, when Nixon said, "Are you saying I'm a crook?" Or something like "Are you saying I lie?" I forget what he said. And my father didn't really rise to the occasion. He didn't respond. I thought Nixon got that—that was pretty good.

02-01:52:38

Shafer: What should he have said, do you think?

02-01:52:42

Brown: Well, I think he had to be more accusatory instead of backing off. But it proves that debates aren't always that relevant, because how many people actually see them? These little moments, they can be big. I noticed that moment. But it just seemed to be a good campaign, because the water plan was popular, and the freeways, labor felt good. What became a problem was not *yet* a problem. And there was no dissonance, there was no Watts Riots, there was none of these social/civil rights activity, which didn't turn into a pressure on the Democratic governor like it did in '66.

02-01:53:34

Holmes: What was your impression of Nixon? Earlier you had said that it was a really hard-fought campaign. Your father came back to win by—I think about 300,000 votes.

02-01:53:45

Brown: Three or four points, I think, three points, four points, something like that.

02-01:53:49

Holmes: But what was your impression of Nixon during the campaign?

02-01:53:52

Brown: Well, I always thought, you know, Tricky Dick. His face always looked a little strange. I remember meeting him at the Giants Stadium, and I thought his handshake was a little weak. I think he had a hot dog. I remember seeing the mustard. I don't know whether it got onto his hand, but I still remember that mustard and the hot dog, and shaking his hand. But I met him several years later, and we had a very good conversation. And he did look quirky, but he seemed very insightful. And I think the turn to China was pretty bold. Of course the prolongation of the Vietnam War was scandalous and bad. Henry Kissinger thinks he had a better sense of strategy than any other American president. That's what Henry thinks. Hard to say, because he took over, and he said he had a secret plan,

then he kept the war going, went right to the end there until *after* him. So, but I understand you can't retreat.

Bush, the second Bush, some evidence, not conclusive, of some kind of weapons of mass destruction allowed him to go in and pulverize Iraq or bomb them and disrupt and all that came out of that. So the tolerance for some kind of setback is very low, even if you have to blow the world up. I think that's a very somber thought, that the ego or the face, maintain face, whatever you call that in America, that'll have to be. So if the Chinese want to push us somewhere, the Russians may have to respond, because of this psychological quirk. And if we respond, we may kill billions of people. So Nixon didn't want to say, "Okay, we *did* lose in Vietnam—we get the hell out of there." But if he'd said, in '69, "This is a dumb war. I'm getting out." I don't know if the Vietnamese wouldn't let him or he didn't want to have that defeat. So it was better to kill, I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of people, rather than have that appear to be what actually happened. Now is not as clear—except to people who carefully look at it.

02-01:56:44

Shafer: We're going to take a break in a little bit, give you some time off to have lunch or whatever. But you've talked about Vietnam. How big an issue was it while you were still at Yale, and what was your impression of it? It was Kennedy's war, and then it was LBJ's war.

02-01:57:11

Brown: I think I remember President Kennedy talking about Laos, and that was a problem. In '62, there was a picture of my father bowing down to some Laotians, and it turned out the picture was doctored, and the campaign made a stink about that. I don't know that it was Nixon, but it was some part of his extended campaign operation, or some independent. So Laos was an issue. I remember Indochina and the Viet Minh and the defeat of the French. I just remember advisors going in there, and I didn't think that was a good idea. So I wasn't *for* the Vietnam War from day one. After Johnson's big victory, I think somebody wrote an article for the *New York Times*, a more conservative author and said, "This is going to take about 500,000 troops, which is what it took." Well, it took that, but it didn't work. So I guess that would have been when—1964/65? I do remember there were some Vietnam protesters at my father's campaign headquarters in '66. Yeah, they showed up, but it wasn't news.

02-01:58:49

Shafer: There was the whole domino theory. You just didn't buy into that?

02-01:58:53

Brown: No.

02-01:58:55

Holmes: Or the Gulf of Tonkin resolution?

02-01:58:57

Brown: When was that? That was '65?

02-01:58:58

Holmes: 1964.

02-01:59:00

Brown: Is that '64? So I would have been back at Berkeley then. I remember the atmospheric testing was an issue, and that was a big issue. Edward Teller at a debate, I think, with Linus Pauling, and he was for it—didn't say it was a problem. I remember the Kennedy speech at American University, and that was very impressive. I've gone back to read it—it *is* impressive. You never hear a speech like that today.

02-01:59:32

Shafer: What was the focus of it?

02-01:59:34

Brown: That we all breathe the same air, our children want the same thing, so we've got to stop these weapons, stop this testing, stop these terrible weapons. You'd never hear—it's not even thinkable today that somebody—very eloquent. So then to Vietnam, and Johnson was not as attractive as Kennedy. His, when he spoke, he didn't have the eloquence, didn't have the charm, from my point of view—and I don't think he did. So then that war really started heating up. I got active with the California Democratic Council in August of '67—I don't think Vietnam was an issue.

02-02:00:26

Shafer: Yeah, we'll come back to that.

02-02:00:27

Brown: I don't think it was an issue in '66.

02-02:00:30

Shafer: It was right around that time that you went to Central America.

02-02:00:33

Brown: Yeah.

02-02:00:34

Shafer: You went to Mexico City, I think, and then you went elsewhere. Why did you go down there?

02-02:00:39

Brown: I wanted to learn Spanish, and I thought I might not have another chance. So I thought between working with the California Supreme Court and going to work in a law firm, I should spend four or five months—and I did. I traveled all over different towns.

02-02:01:00

Shafer: What do you remember about that? Did it make an impression on you?

02-02:01:07

Brown: Well, I stayed in Mexico for a month, then I went to Central America. And I went to Nicaragua. There's no Sandinistas at this point that I knew of. We heard, when we went to El Salvador, that fourteen families ran the place. It was all tourism kind of stuff, and I went with the Advertising Council, to the five Central American countries. Then I went down to Venezuela, and one of my friends had a cousin there, and so I stayed at their house. Then I went over to Colombia, and then down to Chile where there was a Chile-California program, so I did something with that—not very much. And then I circled back and got back around, I think, March or April of '66.

02-02:02:11

Shafer: One big thing we haven't asked you about, Governor, is the assassination of President Kennedy.

02-02:02:16

Brown: Yeah.

02-02:02:17

Shafer: You were at Yale at that point?

02-02:02:18

Brown: I was at Yale.

02-02:02:20

Shafer: Yeah, what was that like on campus? What do you remember about it?

02-02:02:24

Brown: I remember I was in a class on the Uniform Commercial Code, when the teacher dismissed the class. And it was shocking, of course, and I went down to Washington. I don't think I went outside, but I watched it on television. My father was there and a couple of other people. They flew to Washington. But I remember they talked about it on television all day, and that gets a little tiring. But it was very moving, obviously, very moving. No president had been assassinated, that I can think of, in that time. So yeah, it was unbelievable. It had a big impact. I can't say it changed my life, but it was a major event for those few days. I didn't stay around the campus. I went to Washington.

02-02:03:33

Shafer: And why did you go down there?

02-02:03:35

Brown: Because my father was going back there, and I thought I'd go be part of the ceremony or be part of the process, closer to the process.

02-02:03:48

Shafer: How did it make you feel about the world? You know, like suddenly this guy who was so charismatic and articulate and inspiring is suddenly *gone*.



02-02:03:59

Brown: Well, I don't know what I can say about that. Yeah, it's always shocking that someone that young and vital is gone. I think these things have longer-term consequences. So at the moment, there's the funeral, and that famous horse and the boots backwards, and the little son there saluting. All that was very memorable and very dignified, and so was Jackie. So that world seems very removed from where we are today, for our president, for our president's wife. Even the stories that have been written about Kennedy have turned darker than was the case then. So it was, I think, a very high minded, almost glorious moment—that I certainly felt. And then it was over.

02-02:05:10

Holmes: Governor, in the years after John F. Kennedy's assassination, there was many theories and discussions around the assassination itself. As a man who thinks outside the box, who doesn't always take the typical story or questions it, what was your reaction to these various theories that were thrown about?

02-02:05:33

Brown: I don't know that I thought about that. There's Oswald—I remember watching on television when he was shot by [Jack] Ruby. I remember Mel Belli went down there to defend Ruby. I don't know if I talked to him or not, but I heard him talk about it. I was not a conspiracy theorist. A lot of these things have come out later, which we didn't know about. You know, Oswald went to the Russian embassy, and there's this stuff with the Mafia in New Orleans—there's a lot of smoke around there, but we didn't know any of that then.

02-02:06:22

Shafer: Do you think the fact that Earl Warren was the head of the commission that investigated it, did that give you more faith, do you think, in the findings?

02-02:06:29

Brown: I think it was the fact Kennedy's dead. That was it. It wasn't the precursor of some invasion or some foreign intervention. So I don't know that I thought any more about it.

02-02:06:48

Holmes: Well, Governor, before we take a break we just wanted to also ask, in 1964, during spring break, you went down to Mississippi?

02-02:06:58

Brown: No, in '63 on spring break.

02-02:07:00

Holmes: Oh, was it '63?

02-02:07:02

Brown: Yeah. Well, but the Mississippi *summer* was in '64.

02-02:07:04

Holmes: In '64.

02-02:07:05

Brown: That was a year later.

02-02:07:07

Holmes: Okay. Can you discuss your impression of when you went down there. You also talked with the governor as well?

02-02:07:14

Brown: I did. I did that for my own personal safety, since it definitely felt dangerous. There was a guy named Bill Higgs who gave a speech. So I said, "Well, I'd better come down." He said, "Come down to visit." So me and another Yale law student, Ozzie was his name, we went down there, and we visited a few places. He was filing a couple of lawsuits—I think I might have helped him with a lawsuit, which was kind of the purpose for going. I remember being in Greenville, I think. He was a lawyer—maybe a lawyer—and there were only three lawyers, black lawyers, in the whole state. And this guy, I remember he pulled the shades down, and I think he served some Pepsi Cola—and I think he even served some bourbon. But this is before [Michael] Schwerner and those guys got killed. But it definitely felt like we were in a very dangerous foreign country, and that's why I went to see the governor, just to say, "Hey, I'm here. Don't do anything to me." And he called my father, and he told my father, "Get him out of here." Soon thereafter I went to New Orleans, and flew back to New York, and then to Yale.

But I think you really had a sense—I had a sense—I'm trying to be concrete about it, but there was fear. You were really kind of watching out when you met with people. I believe I met with Medgar Evers. He hadn't been shot yet. I didn't meet with [James] Meredith, but I did meet Evers. It's just a normal kind of town, but the division between black and white was so strong. And the denial of votes—I was focused on the denial of voting rights. There was no voting, essentially. This is before '64, when you had the freedom delegations, so this is a year ahead of time, and there's nobody else down there. I went there because it seemed like, "Boy, this is a piece of history." I had to see this for myself. And yeah, that was the mood, at least what I sensed to be the mood.

02-02:10:01

Holmes: How did this impact your—I don't want to use the word *view*—maybe a deeper understanding of the civil rights movement? Before then, it was maybe what you saw on TV or what you read in the newspaper, but to actually be there in the South.

02-02:10:18

Brown: Yeah, well it was quite shocking the way it was. And of course we go back to Yale and another kind of life. We had an African American guy there who was studying to be a lawyer. He was very active in this, and yeah, there was a lot of things. I remember him telling me about Emmett Till. I didn't know who Emmett Till was, but *he* did. Emmett Till died in '56, and I was in law school in '61. I must have heard about it fairly soon thereafter. But he'd talk about, in the South, that there were black farmers that had horse-drawn plows. He said it's like a

hundred years ago in the United States of America, kind of making that point: “What the hell is going on here?” So that was a perspective I hadn’t heard before.

But I’ll tell you, I did have the feeling that this is something that I, as an outsider, I wasn’t going to affect. It was going to take the people who were *there*, because it was just so alien, and we drop in, we leave—we’re not going to affect anything. So then I came back, came back to Yale, and we talked about law and whatever we talked about then.

02-02:11:50

Shafer:

Did that seem like a safe refuge, in a way, from the world at that point?

02-02:11:55

Brown:

Well, school always is. It’s an artificial environment, where ideas and cases—for me, it’s very stimulating, because the professors are smart. Not all of them, but a good number of them are pretty eloquent, and they’re interesting. It’s not the normal conversation. Spending a week at Yale, going to law school, is not like your normal week, because everybody is very intelligent, and they’re exercising their intelligence on subject matter that is interesting and challenging. So it doesn’t get any better than that, from my point of view.

## Interview 3: March 18, 2019 [in the afternoon]

03-00:00:25

Holmes: This is Todd Holmes, with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is March 18, 2019. We are sitting down with Governor Jerry Brown for his third session in the oral history, and I am accompanied today by our partners at KQED: Scott Shafer and Guy Marzorati. Governor, thanks again for sitting with us today.

03-00:01:00

Brown: Sure.

03-00:01:02

Holmes: I'd like to pick up where we left off and maybe talk about leaving Yale Law School to clerk with California Supreme Court Justice [Mathew O.] Tobriner.

03-00:01:17

Brown: Mathew Tobriner.

03-00:01:20

Holmes: How did this opportunity arise?

03-00:01:25

Brown: Well, I visited Matt Tobriner. He recommended me to Yale Law School, so I got to know him prior to his recommending. I went and had lunch with him. He's an old friend of my father's. They go back to the Russ Building on Montgomery St., where they had their law offices in the 1930s. I can't tell you how—I might have just called him, or something. I don't know how it happened, other than the fact that I knew him and I'd met him, and I think a law clerk was something—a clerkship is something you think about at Yale.

03-00:02:06

Holmes: And how do you recall your experience? What stands out to you in that clerkship?

03-00:02:13

Brown: I had to do a lot of writing every week. You prepare memoranda for the judge, basically for their weekly conference on whether or not to take a case or not. And also you can be called upon to help write opinions. But Mathew Tobriner did a lot of his own writing, so I wrote, but he wrote, obviously, more. And I would say that I got more experience writing there than I'd ever done before. That was the number one time, for me, for writing. And of course in those days, we had those old typewriters. And so we typed it on yellow paper. That's how it all went. So that was a very, very important experience in writing.

And I got one lesson from Mathew Tobriner. He always wanted me to change the passive to the active. He didn't like the passive—and I've always learned that, that if you really want to be clear, you put it in the active voice. If you want to be a little less clear, then maybe the passive is appropriate.

03-00:03:34

Shafer: Mistakes were made.

03-00:03:34

Brown: Yeah, mistakes were made, yeah. [laughter] So that was very good. And I got to read a lot of cases, and I wrote the memo. The most famous memo I probably wrote was, without question, the case of one man, one vote, which was presented to the court—and not something that people in Sacramento were thinking about. But the Supreme Court had already ruled on one man, one vote, and so this was a case where someone from Los Angeles challenged the composition of the state senate and said that too had to be one man, one vote. And I said yeah, you've got to take a look at this. But I was the first—I wrote that down and came up with that, and they went along with it.

03-00:04:30

Holmes: Were there other cases that you recall working on during your clerkship?

03-00:04:39

Brown: Some search-and-seizure cases, I think. We had a case every week! So a lot of them. Yeah, I did search and seizure, consent to a search, or viewing—seeing in plain view the contraband—those are some of the cases I remember.

03-00:05:12

Shafer: While you were clerking, were you also studying for the bar, or did that come after?

03-00:05:16

Brown: I was studying for the bar. I think I took off a little while and studied for the bar. Then I flunked it, and then I took off again, went to Sacramento, studied for the bar and passed.

03-00:05:30

Shafer: A lot of people have flunked the bar. Were you surprised that you did?

03-00:05:32

Brown: No. In fact two members of my class at Yale flunked the bar that year. Or was it from Yale? Somebody from Harvard did, yeah. And another guy from Yale did.

03-00:05:46

Shafer: What was it like studying? What do you remember about studying in the governor's mansion?

03-00:05:51

Brown: Well, I remember studying at the—I forget—the Mayfair Hotel across from the German-American Hall, which was the culinary academy. I stayed at that hotel, and I found it pretty boring and pretty difficult to pay attention to the notes. And the classes weren't bad, the review classes. In Sacramento, I didn't take a review course. I just reread the notes that I already had, and I got a little bit of help from a lawyer who worked at the Department of Corporations. And

that helped. He was a bar coach or bar-exam teacher, and he helped. It only took a few times, and I got the idea pretty quick.

03-00:06:40

Shafer: Did your dad try to give you any advice about the bar? [laughing]

03-00:06:44

Brown: No. No, the bar changes—there's too much change.

03-00:06:47

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. Was there anybody clerking with you that you became close to that you stayed in touch with?

03-00:06:55

Brown: Richard [M.] Mosk was a clerk then. He was there. I think the guy who clerked with me was a guy named [David H.] Melnick—I don't think I've seen anything of him since I left. He's a lawyer in San Francisco.

03-00:07:15

Shafer: And when you were doing the clerking, did it help shape your thinking about what kind of law you wanted to practice?

03-00:07:25

Brown: Not particularly. No, that wasn't clear in my mind at that point.

By the way, I was in a car pool. Frank Damrell was there, and he was working for the attorney general. And then the next year, '65, Tony Kline came, and he was there for a few months. And then we had a guy named Paul Halvanick, who I made a judge. He was working for the attorney general, living in Berkeley. And then we had another guy named—[Demetrios P.] Agretelis, Demitri Agretelis, and I appointed him a judge [in Alameda County]. So I basically, I appointed three members of the car pool out of five. One wasn't a lawyer. But we commuted, and different people would take their car for that week, so we shared and it worked very well. So that was interesting to commute. I always wondered why people weren't commuting, because it was so easy. And of course it's cheaper, because you're only paying the tolls and the parking fee once a week. You divide it up. So if you have five people, it's one-fifth each, every week, for five weeks.

As far as the law—I like criminal law, but I didn't want to go into the prosecutor's office nor the public defender. I looked at labor law. I interviewed with [Stephen P.] "Steve" Reinhardt, and one other firm, and then Tuttle & Taylor. And I met [William A.] "Bill" Norris, who became a federal judge later, and through him I decided to go to Tuttle & Taylor, which was a firm of only about thirteen or fourteen, but then it went up to about seventy. It became a very prominent firm in downtown Los Angeles.

03-00:09:32

Shafer: When you were studying for the bar, at the mansion, did you get to see your father working more closely than you had?

03-00:09:37

Brown: A little bit. There were dinners; there were conversations. There was the famous meeting with Jess Unruh. They were arguing about who's going to run for governor, and that was an important meeting for me, just listening to them—it was very exciting. And because of that, my interest, it was so spontaneously stimulated that I thought at that point, "Yeah, this is something I'd like to do." I like to think right then and there I said, "Yeah, I think I like politics, and I think I'll find a way to run for governor." So I decided right then and there, because the study for the bar exam is not very exciting. It's rule bound, you've got to do a lot of memory—it's drudgery, it's not interesting. I mean it *could* be interesting, if as you master the material it gets interesting. But then the excitement, the drama of these campaigns—and then there were other things that came up, like news stories that I would hear about. So I got a little view of the governor's office, and I talked to some of the people in the office.

03-00:11:03

Shafer: What do you remember about—or you described it, I think, as an argument with Jess?

03-00:11:08

Brown: Well, it was just talking. Unruh wanted to run for governor, and my father said no—that the party needed *him*. So each one was expressing their views. I don't know that the content of the conversation was interesting, but just something about the intensity, or maybe just the subject matter, interested me. And not interested me just intellectually, but it had a certain emotive feel to it, impact.

03-00:11:43

Shafer: And these are two powerful men, obviously, going head to head.

03-00:11:47

Brown: Right. Well, they were just by themselves, sitting there, on the first floor.

03-00:11:54

Shafer: Yeah, what was your impression of Unruh?

03-00:11:57

Brown: My impression of Unruh was: he's a tough character. Maybe a little mean, very smart. I didn't know him that well then. He was fighting with my father. I came to understand the legislature fights with the governor. It's a part of what the process is. But when I was governor, I had a chance to meet with him on a couple of occasions. So he was a lot older than I was and a lot more formidable. But I remember speaking with him at Frank Fat's in a booth, and I thought to myself, the man was *very* quick—I mean *unusually*. I don't know if there's anybody that I've met *since* that was that quick. Maybe Willie Brown.

But Unruh had an incisive quality that I can see why he would emerge as the leader. He was intimidating, but he was insightful.

And what I most noticed and marveled at was that—and I can't remember the incidents, but he wanted me to do something for him. I did it. But then in talking about it, he was able to frame the encounter in such a way that it looked like he was doing *me* a favor, even though *I* was the one—or whoever the other person was—did *him* the favor. And at that time I saw how, in this legislative encounter, struggle, it's all about negotiation—it's not *all* about, but one of the skills is negotiation, and I think Unruh was highly skilled in that.

Now, he was tough, and his image was not as good as it could be or it might have been. But he was a guy from Texas, went to USC after World War II, and he rose to the top because of, I think, his just brute intelligence, and emotional intelligence, and real drive. So, I don't meet too many people like that.

03-00:14:27

Shafer:

So as you were listening to that conversation that the two of them were having, who would you have sided with? I mean, who made the better argument, do you think?

03-00:14:40

Brown:

I can't remember the content. I really just found the encounter very fascinating—not fascinating, exciting. And that's not an analytic description, it's just a statement or a description of my state of mind. Even though politics in itself is not always attractive to me, because it is the same old rhetoric and it's not the most visionary undertaking in the mundane give and take and detail that you have to indulge in, but I thought that was exciting. So, there were other things that were interesting. Hearing my father talk with [William E.] "Bill" Warne on the water plan. So it was interesting, but it's kind of a blur right now, because I was studying for the bar. I'm a student, I'm not in the life of Sacramento, didn't know anybody.

So there it was. I just studied and would come down and have dinner—my father had dinner at home. We had a woman there, a maid, that did the cooking, and it was a perfectly fine house. That's why I never know what the hell people are talking about when they said it's a fire trap or unlivable. I know when I told Maria [Shriver], I said, "Maria—you ought to live there. It's great!" she was shocked, and my wife was shocked. But then when I looked at—you know, the water above the first floor wasn't there, the toilets weren't working. They let it go—forty years, run down. It shows you've got to keep places up. But it was still quite a place. I remember, I don't know whether it was when I was there for the summer, but there were dinners that they had, and I found those—I mean, it seemed like a perfect thing to do. And that's why I moved back in, because I could see that was really an opportunity for



the governor to make relationships and to have impact, to the extent that the meetings and socializing can do.

03-00:17:21

Shafer:

It's interesting that that one conversation that you overheard really sparked your enthusiasm, and you knew then that politics is what you wanted. And it's interesting, too, that you decided you wanted to be governor, because just a few years earlier you were trying to convince your dad to run for the senate. But it was this—you wanted to be governor. That's what you wanted to be.

03-00:17:42

Brown:

Well, the governor was *there*. [laughing] If he'd been a senator, it might have been a different story. Also, the path to governor was a little easier. Another Democrat, Tom Lynch, was the attorney general, and he lost, and I could see the path to the secretary of state. The guy had been there since 1942, Frank Jordan. So I said well, that's viable. Either he can be beaten, or he won't be around. So I figured I could do that. It seemed doable, practical.

I don't do this all the time, but I get ideas. I'm going to Santa Clara, I'm going to join the Jesuits. I'm going to Yale, or I'm going to LA. That was a big discussion in the car pool, "What the hell are you going to LA for?" I said, "LA's where it's at." In fact, there was a play, or maybe a novel, entitled, *What Makes Sammy Run?* Do you know that one by Budd Schulberg, maybe?

03-00:19:00

Shafer:

Hmm, don't know.

03-00:19:00

Brown:

You might look it up. Yeah, I'm going to make it big in LA! That's the money, the media—that's where it's at. Now, I knew that because my father used to live there during the summer and would carry on political activity during the summer. And a lot of the powerful people behind him were from LA. Now, San Francisco and Silicon Valley have become *more* powerful, but in those days it was savings & loan and other kind of people down in LA that made it. So it is unusual. In fact, it's hard for me to even believe that I said, "Okay, yeah, I'd like to be governor." And I don't know—I may even be making it up, because we're talking about 1965. That's a long time from now. But I also remember when I got my mother to give me the shares to this ranch, I said, "Okay, I'm going to restore the Mountain House," so that was 1998. And now you're shooting in Mountain House III. So I do things like that, not through a process, not through a stakeholder process. Right, Evan? We don't do too many stakeholder processes. We probably *should* have. [laughter]

03-00:20:27

Westrup:

We did a number. You didn't always know about them. [laughing]

03-00:20:30

Brown:

Yeah, I think that's very important. People often ask me what's your process? Someone said the other day, "Now that you're not the governor three months,

have you experienced *closure*?” Whatever the hell that might be. [laughing] Or I think *you* asked, “How is your transition?” You know, like there’s something *called* a transition. It sounded like an initiation into the Eagle Scouts or something. I’m not quite sure what it is. But the reality is not as framed with such exactitude or formality. And I experience things in a flow of life and experience and feelings and ideas and opportunities. So that’s why these questions to give order to life always strike me as a little overdetermined.

03-00:21:38

Shafer: [laughing] Apologies. I want to just be sure I understand what you’re saying about that conversation with Jess Unruh.

03-00:21:43

Brown: Yeah.

03-00:21:45

Shafer: So was it pretty much *then* that you saw the path to being governor was through the secretary of state?

03-00:21:51

Brown: I can’t remember. I had my eye on the secretary of state for a long time. [laughing] I used to look at the ballot pamphlet when it came out, because elections were—my father was always running for something, so I would notice the election, the primary and the general. And I noticed the ballot pamphlet always had Frank Jordan, secretary of state, with the great seal. I always thought that was such a great title—*secretary of state*. And then, at some point—I can’t tell you when—I thought well, I’ve got a good name, Edmund G. Brown, and [if] I put secretary of state under it, that’ll be a good path, and it was. That was the idea. And a lot of it is luck, because I was the only Democrat. There was no lieutenant governor Democrat, there was no attorney general Democrat—at that time. So it was a unique opportunity, and because the office had been, essentially, in the hands of two people since 1913—Frank Jordan and his father, with a slight interregnum of a guy named Peek, Paul Peek—there were a lot of things not done. And so it opened up the opportunity on the elections, and particularly the campaign reporting, which basically wasn’t very strong at that time.

03-00:23:21

Shafer: Yeah, we’ll come back to that story. Yeah.

03-00:23:21

Holmes: Well, Governor—we do want to talk about you entering politics, but before we get there, I wanted to talk a little bit about your dad’s governorship.

03-00:23:30

Brown: Yeah.

03-00:23:30

Holmes:

How deeply were you engaged? I know you had a lot of your own things going on, but how much were you engaged with his two terms as governor?

03-00:23:44

Brown:

It's hard to say. I went to a few governor's conferences. I came up to Sacramento probably for some family dinners. Maybe Thanksgiving or maybe Easter, Christmas, because that's where they lived. They lived in the mansion. That's where everything took place. Of course the legislature was out of session then, so I wouldn't be involved really. I'd sometimes come up with an idea or two. But the governor's [office]—it's organized, with all these professionals and departments and agencies, so those things run in their own universe.

During the campaign things are a little more open. There are campaign rallies and things. I did a little get out the vote in '62 in San Francisco, came home from Yale. I think I was doing a pretty good get out the vote—I remember where I did it, in LA on Bixel St. And I remember going to this one old apartment house. I had my little list and knocked on the door, and I think this couple must have been in bed, "Hey, you've got to come out and vote." But I didn't think that probably happened. Then somebody else, I knocked on the door and—"Oh yeah," they didn't respond too much. I might have gotten one person to go vote. And so that gave me a certain skeptical view of get out the vote, because I could see how *hard* it was, even for the son of the governor, totally motivated, to move people who otherwise had not decided to vote. So I was involved to that extent.

I was down in LA shortly after the Watts riots. I think I was in the hotel which was called the Town House. Now it's the Sheraton, on Wilshire, where [Warren] Christopher met with my father and formed the idea of the McCone Commission, and he suggested [John A.] McCone. That was Christopher's idea. So I listened. Not a lot I could add to that, and I went and visited San Quentin at some point, and Vacaville. I think I visited the juvenile facility as well, but I was doing that for my own understanding, my own learning about the system. Because at that point, when I wanted to be a psychologist, I wanted to go see how the group therapy programs worked in prison, and so that's what got me to that.

But as far as a role in the—yeah, for whatever reason, I don't think I was that active in the campaign. There's not much of a role. I mean you're either raising money, you're putting out press releases, you're doing scheduling, you're going from event to event—then you've got to pick one of those, and you've got people doing that.

It turns out in my campaigns we *did* have a lot of volunteers. And in presidential campaigns there's such a need for getting all around to a lot of

rallies. But in gubernatorial campaigns, particularly now, it's mostly media, press releases. Although now, it's less press releases—now it's tweets.

03-00:27:43

Holmes: Your father addressed a lot of issues during his two terms as governor. One was the California State Water Project.

03-00:27:50

Brown: Yeah.

03-00:27:51

Holmes: The addendum to the Central Valley Project that was started in the 1930s. Do you have any thoughts on that? It was, on one hand, it was a massive undertaking—billions of dollars passed in bond.

03-00:28:05

Brown: \$1.9 billion, I think, which is a lot of money in today's dollars.

03-00:28:10

Holmes: Sure. It was a lot of money, especially in in 1959.

03-00:28:17

Brown: Well, the budget wasn't even \$1.9 billion, I think.

03-00:28:21

Holmes: [laughing] Yeah. What were your thoughts in regard to the state water project?

03-00:28:26

Brown: Well, I think he voted on that when I was still in the seminary. I think that was 1959. A lot of his more important initiatives: the taxation, [California] Master Plan [for Higher Education], Clark Kerr and all that, I think that was done while I was in the seminary. I've read about the master plan and how they negotiated with the state colleges, but that was just more of a label, a title. And the same thing with the water plan. This water plan—it's not obvious, and you really have to go study it, the pumps and the channels, and all the rest of it, and all the different tributaries and the water rights. And I don't think I realized that the California Central Valley Project has a pipe, and the California Water Project has a pipe. I'm not sure how long they parallel each other, but there's a lot to that. And once it was done, then they started building it. It was a campaign statement. It was something that was done because it was *needed*. My father felt strongly about that. But after it was over, it was just something you talk about, the great water plan. And then after he was done, nobody talked about it. It was very little talked about.

03-00:30:00

Holmes: You also brought up the master plan. Both projects are *huge* undertakings, and even decades later, are looked at as California leading the way in these type of government-sponsored projects that benefit the state. Later on in your political

career, did your father's undertaking of these kind of large projects also open up your horizons?

03-00:30:31

Brown: I'm not sure.

03-00:30:34

Holmes: About other large projects?

03-00:30:36

Brown: I mean a project—they're all about the same size on television.

03-00:30:43

Holmes: [laughing] That's true.

03-00:30:43

Brown: And that's the only time you know about them, unless you're going to go sit there and follow the canal. And the water [project]—it was a controversy during the time of obtaining the votes. And I remember during the Kennedy election, when Kennedy lost—although I think he was ahead on election night—he lost on the absentees, where the bond won. And my father was very excited about that. It barely won. So that was a political issue, but I didn't fully grasp the significance.

The Metropolitan Water District, what the hell is that? And this little guy with a hat, Joe Jensen—he was like [Jeffrey] Kightlinger—he was the manager. And that was a big deal! The Metropolitan Water District—I didn't really know what that is. It's a big umbrella organization with a lot of water districts—very important. So they wanted the water. Then a lot of these growers wanted water, but I didn't know any growers, so it's a bit remote. It sounded important—it *was* important! It still is, and we're still fighting about it. But it's complicated, and it's expensive and has a lot of facets. That's why it has taken so long on the completion, with the tunnels. They'll spin wheels for another couple of years on that.

Well, my father did get the bond, and he got the bond with the power of the Department of Water Resources to make the decisions without the legislature. Now, I don't know whether that was in the bond or the Porter-Cologne [Water Quality Control] Act, but they said the legislature didn't really have a say in the water plan. So that was off-budget, as it were, and they just *did* it. So that's why that system worked pretty well.

But these issues—you know, what's hot? The Rumford Act [California Fair Housing Act] was a big thing, in '64, the fair housing. I remember going down to LA, and there was a housing tract that a guy I was staying with had said, "Come on down." I was in LA at that time, so we were going to go protest. I went down with him. I think it was at like 92<sup>nd</sup> and Avalon. And I remember a young couple, and they said, "Don't do this. This is the only place we can afford, and this is our house, our dream house," whatever the hell, and

she had a baby in her hands. I remember I could see the anguish on the part of the people who wanted the neighborhood isolated, segregated. But we protested, so that was that.

And then when '64 came along, Unruh said to my father—my father, I remember him saying to me—“That Unruh. He licks his finger and puts it up to the wind, and he said, ‘Pat, it’s not time for this.’” And my father said, “Oh no, this is the right thing.” So he did it, and then it passed overwhelmingly. And this was the beginning of the [Samuel W.] Yorty Democrat or the South Gate Democrat, which at that time were mostly white people, they weren’t Latinos like they are today. And they were right on the edge, facing the African-American population. So that was a big deal, Prop. 64. Now, that was memorable, although that was in November, I was in South America in November, or maybe I was just leaving. So that was a big vote.

Unruh thought my father went too far. Then the people voted for it. And both the California and the Supreme Court found a way to invalidate it, the same way with [Proposition] 187. But you wonder what the Court would do today. But today, it’s something that’s accepted, although people are talking about housing. They don’t talk about segregation, they talk about marginalized groups, they talk about the affordability crisis, they talk about the schools. So that was a big problem, and it’s still a problem in one form or another. But life was a little simpler then. You know, you just do the right thing.

But then the initiative—that was the beginning. So you not only had the initiative to kill fair housing, then you had the initiative to bar health and education for immigrants, undocumented immigrants. Then you had Prop. 13, then you had the one on affirmative action [Proposition 209]. then you had all these crime bills. Capital punishment passed a couple of times. In fact, there have been nineteen initiatives imposing more draconian penalties in one form or another—it’s eighteen or nineteen, and three now, in recent years, going in a more lenient direction.

So I think '64 was a breakup there of the Democratic coalition. It was a beginning—civil rights wasn’t as prominent. Of course we hadn’t had the environmental movement yet. We didn’t have the women’s movement. The Democratic Party was a more coherent group. But still, Republicans managed to win, even though the Democrats were more unified. [laughing]

I don’t think I was that active in that—not in '64. I got out, I was studying for the bar. Let’s see, in November I would have finished for the bar. I was working in the court. And that’s kind of the world, and it was called the kid’s world or a young adult’s world. So that’s why I always think that younger people tend not to vote. Their lives are exciting. They’re exploring, and life’s opening up, and they don’t want to sit around and read newspapers and get into these issues of one party yelling at the other party. So I was not as active—the only thing that drove me into politics was the Vietnam War, and I

joined the activists in the Democratic Party, called the California Democratic Council, and that was in '67.

03-00:38:14

Shafer: Yeah, we'll get to that soon. I want to ask you about something else from 1965, which was the beginning of the grape strike, and César Chávez's rise, I guess, within the farm worker movement.

03-00:38:26

Brown: Yeah.

03-00:38:27

Shafer: What do you remember about that? I know you had worked with another farm labor leader earlier—?

03-00:38:33

Brown: I didn't get involved in that until later, maybe '67, '68. I knew a woman who took food up to the farm workers every week, and there was this march to the border. That might have been '68, maybe '69, I'm not sure. That's when I got involved in that.

03-00:38:58

Shafer: A little later on, yeah.

03-00:38:59

Brown: Yes.

03-00:39:02

Shafer: Okay. Let's maybe talk about 1966?

03-00:39:04

Brown: Yeah, the law firm was a pretty busy time. It was challenging. It took time to get all that stuff done.

03-00:39:13

Shafer: The election of your dad versus Reagan. Having been at Berkeley, and he made Berkeley—Reagan—sort of the centerpiece of his campaign against your father. Going into that election, did you think your dad could win or would win?

03-00:39:31

Brown: No, I didn't think he could win. I didn't think he could win before I went to South America, and I expressed that view, but he said, "Somebody's got to run." He was not a man that liked to ruminate and reflect—and maybe I like to do that too much, but that question was closed. I don't know what the factor was. When I was at Berkeley, that breaks through the noise. When you take six hundred kids and have the [California] Highway Patrol and drag them down the steps of Sproul Hall, that sends a message. There *is* a problem, otherwise, why are you doing this? So you don't have to think about it. It's an iconic signal, message—and not a good one, from the point of view if you're

the chief executive and order is supposed to be your responsibility. This was *disorder*. And then, of course, we had the Free Speech Movement—they had obscenities on signs.

And then you had the stuff of the welfare abuses. I think if you check, welfare starting the first year of Kennedy, maybe later, it really increased, more than two times, even though the economy was growing. The welfare rolls grew significantly, because some of the legal changes, they loosened up, and so there was a welfare growth. And then the Watts riots, and all that specter—so when you're the incumbent, that's bad news. When you're the change man, like Ronald Reagan—. He was always impeccably dressed. His suits were pressed, his hair was properly trimmed. And he was a matinee—I don't know if he was an idol, but he was a matinee figure that could easily slide in. So he was something they didn't quite know what to do with.

That was the political environment, a pretty tough environment to beat. And of course no one had made a third term. In fact, no Democrat had made a second term. Like second terms only started somewhere around Hiram [W.] Johnson, [he] was the first governor to get a second term. [Earl] Warren had three terms, but Warren was *sui generis*—he was his own kind. So that was a tough uphill battle, a third term.

03-00:42:40

Shafer:

How did your family, how did you, how did your dad react to the loss?

03-00:42:43

Brown:

I'm sure he didn't. It's never easy losing but he had a pretty remarkable buoyancy. He bounced right back. He had a good sense that he called his Irish sense of humor. So I remember that night he was feeling down, so that was poignant. But he got going, and did things, talked to people, got some law business going, and he was pretty dynamic, pretty active. They said about my father, and his brother, that they were go-getters. That was the phrase: go-getter, and he didn't stop just because he lost. I think it was kind of hard to pull away. He had a more literal belief in the democratic agenda, as it were. And I kind of see different sides of these issues and programs, and see some of their paradoxical consequences. But he really felt that what he was doing was right. And he felt, in later years, that Reagan was wrecking the government and putting the government down. And *government*, for him, was a good word. And government for Reagan was not a good word, and it became, even for Clinton, not a good word.

So I see these things as—you know, they're waves. The tide comes in, it goes out. And the wave of government enthusiasm—my father called it *responsible liberalism*—I think Fred Dutton gave him that term. Well, responsible liberalism, that didn't work in 1966. They didn't want liberalism, and they didn't want to take responsibility for all these things that my father thought were important. So the water plan didn't count, master plan—that was the



sense of disorder in getting things back on track, when things *worked* in California. That was the Reagan idea for governor, and it was, I think, the Reagan idea for president.

03-00:45:08

Holmes:

What were your impressions of Ronald Reagan?

03-00:45:12

Brown:

I had lunch with him right after I was elected secretary of state. He served a hamburger on a tray, and a Coke, and we talked. Distant. It was really like being in the presence of a movie star. He wasn't like just chatting. It wasn't normal political talk. He was a little distant, and you felt the formality of it all. But he certainly *looked* the role. He played the role, he *was* the role, quite exactly. And I don't know what he was like as a human being. They say he was very friendly and was good to people on an individual basis. I know he had this notion that freedom—I remember listening to a speech that he gave in the governor's race, that if we don't stop socialism or the forces of what, anti-Americanism, the people who are in the coal mines, slaving away, will never forgive us. So he had these dramatic ways—they were dramatic, but they weren't threatening to the people he was winning over. So he spoke in—and this is not the best word, but it'll have to suffice—he spoke in more generic terms. He didn't talk about bills or numbers. It was always large issues, and you'd have to look at what he said. He was a good storyteller, he had a good sense of humor. I think he was a good writer, had a good way with words. I also saw him talk after he became governor—I don't know if I mentioned, I went to Carl Greenberg's retirement dinner at the Century Plaza.

03-00:47:25

Holmes:

Remind us who that is?

03-00:47:25

Brown:

We haven't talked about that.

03-00:47:26

Holmes:

No.

03-00:47:28

Brown:

Carl Greenberg was the political editor of the *LA Times*. A name that everyone in your position would know. [laughter] But like everything else, in time everything passes. So he was there, my father spoke and gave his talk, and then Reagan spoke—something about Hollywood, being an actor, the stars, the *dream*. I can't remember it, but it was a beautiful speech. It wasn't long, I just remember the word *stars* and *Hollywood* and maybe the word *dreams*. And so that was exciting. Just listening to him was exciting—I thought, anyway. Other people didn't. Democrats didn't like the sight of him.

But he had that image, and then later as president, the “Morning in America.” You could see that it was morning in California, from his cinemagraphic rhetorical presentation. So that was interesting, and he had a sense of humor.

He was against withholding, and then he had to adopt withholding. So he said, my feet are in concrete. He said the sounds you hear are the cracking of concrete—or something. Good sense of humor. So then he went for withholding.

03-00:49:12

Shafer:

Withholding being—?

03-00:49:14

Brown:

Withholding the income tax. They didn't withhold before Reagan. So he had something. His ideological antipathy to the Russians was pretty strong. He used the word *evil empire*. It's a strong phrase. And yet, after talking with George [P.] Shultz, and I presume others, he decided he could work with [Mikhail] Gorbachev. I think [Margaret H.] "Maggie" Thatcher liked Gorbachev too. So they [Reagan and Gorbachev] had their meeting in Reykjavik, and I guess he was prepared for that. That may have been the last meeting between a Russian and American president where they talked with such congeniality.

So whatever it was, he certainly was rigid when it came to a lot of democratic political ideas. But in the overall story—and of course his—he cut the taxes and built a pretty big deficit up, a huge deficit. He started that. Built up a lot of military, and came in there with Caspar Weinberger and the Committee on the Present Danger, and he really fanned the flames of fear. I don't know what impact, but it had *some* impact. But anyway, he could pivot. In the same way, but different, Nixon pivoted to China after making a career of attacking Red China. "Who lost China? [Dean] Acheson, Truman"—that was Nixon's game. So, they're very different men, but they were able to be effective on some things. And other things they did, particularly the deficit and the unions; he certainly was not friendly there at all. And so I'd contrast that with the polarized environment that we're finding now.

03-00:51:35

Shafer:

In '66, it seems like your father thought that Reagan would be the easier of the two.

03-00:51:43

Brown:

Some people around him must have thought that.

03-00:51:45

Shafer:

He didn't? He wasn't sure about it?

03-00:51:47

Brown:

Maybe he was. I mean certainly the people around him did, because they were thinking [George] Christopher, mayor, solid guy. Was he a lieutenant governor, Christopher? I'm not sure—

03-00:52:00

Shafer:

No.

03-00:52:01

Brown: No, he ran for lieutenant governor. But by that kind of traditional calculus, Christopher had a strong biography, but they didn't calculate the mediagenic quality of Reagan, the visuality, and also the sound of campaigns, that Reagan mastered. So they didn't understand that—and also that you don't have to be a professional. I guess they didn't have an actor before—although we did have George [L.] Murphy. He was elected in '64, I believe, right?

03-00:52:44

Shafer: Yeah.

03-00:52:44

Holmes: Yeah, to the senate. [John V.] Tunney beats him in '68.

03-00:52:51

Brown: No, but he was beat by [S.I.] Hayakawa.

03-00:52:54

Holmes: Not Murphy.

03-00:52:54

Brown: Murphy beat somebody. Oh, Murphy beat [Pierre] Salinger, and Salinger beat [Alan] Cranston. So Salinger was the Kennedy [press secretary]—right there in Camelot. You'd think he was really someone. He wasn't; he didn't look that good. He was a little overweight and a little short. He didn't look like Reagan, who was a man of great stature—in looks, anyway. So yeah, the actor won in '64, and the actor won in '66. So now you can have Trump, you can have other people. So it's open now. We're into this new media world, and I think Reagan was one of the pioneers.

03-00:53:40

Shafer: What did you take from Reagan? Did you look at him and did you learn things? You're obviously very different people.

03-00:53:47

Brown: Well, I learned that Democrats who leave deficits and spend too much money lose elections. At least that happened in one instance, because he was pounding away on the mountain of debt—he had a specter. And of course, in some literal way it's all very silly, because the budget was a billion or two, and now it's \$200 billion. Now, depending on whether you're talking about the general fund or the overall budget, but that was the mood. These are *moods*. These are widespread shared beliefs, and he was able to flow with those beliefs and make his mark in that context. And other people, for whatever reason, don't pick up on that contemporary belief system, but he was pretty good at it. His moment was *then*, at that moment. But he also had the histrionic ability. The acting ability was pretty good.

03-00:54:51

Holmes:

Well, it's interesting too, considering that if you look at when Reagan left office, he also left a mountain of debt and also raised taxes during those eight years.

03-00:54:58

Brown:

Well, he did raise taxes. Taxes weren't the bogeyman for Republicans they are now. I remember Tom Quinn told me once that Sam Yorty told his father, who worked for Sam Yorty, that people don't mind taxes. I can't remember the context, but I remember the statement. And I think taxes are always a problem, but they're nothing like the article of faith that they have become for Republicans. It is almost their *key*—bigger than some of the religious issues. In fact, tax now *is* a religious issue. In fact, all issues are religious: abortion, gay marriage, climate change, taxes—they're all evil in some profound way that was never the case on normal issues. So that's what happened on that. Yeah, I think that idea you've got to watch spending.

And I didn't know, as I do now, that the business cycle is so regular and so inexorable, because it goes up and it goes down. I don't know why this wasn't obvious to everybody. Since the time of Reagan we've had a lot of recessions and a lot of recoveries. So if you chart that, you can see the regularity. And we know, from finance analysts, that the deficits are much bigger now than they would be under Reagan. Reagan's deficit, I thought, was \$500 million on a \$24 billion budget. But it turned out that he didn't have a deficit—he was already in a recovery. And that's the problem with the budget. The budget is a moving target; it's a moving reality.

So I took over in January. That budget was put together in December, and they make a forecast. I forget what it was, but I would say, "Whoa, tax revenues don't look good." But over the next year, they started pouring in, so we had a \$5 billion surplus, and we didn't *know* that we had that, because I'd reserved a couple billion for property tax relief, so that doesn't *show* as surplus. But when my property tax solution failed, then that money that was held aside went back into the deficit number, and the thing popped up to around \$5 billion, and that's how it grows so quickly. That's how it's growing now. It grows very quickly until it stops growing. And [George] Deukmejian had the benefit of a recovery and a very large job creation, and then it fell apart in the recession that [Pete] Wilson experienced, which was very big and very challenging—and he had to raise taxes. And then the same thing happened to [Gray] Davis, and the same thing happened to [Arnold] Schwarzenegger. And I thought it would happen to me, but it didn't.

03-00:58:14

Shafer:

Yeah, you had good timing.

03-00:58:16

Brown:

That was very good timing. Both Deukmejian and I were fortunate that it was basically recovery all the way.

03-00:58:27

Shafer: Let's talk about your move to LA, 1966 was it? What year did you move down to LA?

03-00:58:35

Brown: '66, to be in my father's campaign.

03-00:58:37

Shafer: Yeah, and so you worked at Tuttle & Taylor?

03-00:58:39

Brown: Yeah.

03-00:58:40

Shafer: How did you choose that law [firm]—?

03-00:58:42

Brown: Sixth and Grand. Well, Bill Norris. I knew Bill Norris. He worked on my father's campaigns. He was vice president of the state board of ed., so I'd run into him. He came in to talk to me when I was a supreme court law clerk, and I said fine, I'll come down and interview. I did, so he made an offer.

03-00:59:02

Shafer: What did you think of working in a law firm?

03-00:59:07

Brown: I liked it. I wanted to learn about business. I didn't know anything about business, so that was my chance. We defended businesses—not defended, more, we did some litigation, but a lot of it was business, securities filing. We had to file with the SEC. You had to check everything out and make disclosures. It was tedious. It's not my normal cup of tea, but the people were honest, they were hard working. And probably my greatest experience there was I wrote my first memorandum. I'd been writing memoranda for thirteen, fourteen months in the supreme court. This was twenty-five or twenty-seven pages, and Bill Norris sat me down and he started crossing out. By the time he finished, we were down to seven pages. I couldn't believe it. It was a shocker, because nobody had ever given me that level of editing. And that left a very strong impression. I thought these were put together pretty good. But no, so he just crossed it out. So, that affected how I did things for the rest of my time—and still, as governor. I view a lot of things that are the equivalent of twenty-five pages, and they're worth, at best, six pages. And that's kind of what I experienced most of the—not most of the time—the overwhelming time of people presenting things.

03-01:00:51

Shafer: Well, you were known for your short state-of-the-state speeches.

03-01:00:54

Brown: Well, but I was taught by a guy who went to Stanford, was at Stanford—Warren Christopher, smart guy. That's what he thought. He was a federal

judge, and he was a clever guy. He was a good lawyer. He was a top lawyer by far.

03-01:01:16

Shafer: So you moved to LA, and you'd said a while ago that you saw that LA was where it was at—

03-01:01:27

Brown: Oh, from a political point of view.

03-01:01:29

Shafer: So say more about that.

03-01:01:30

Brown: Well, I'd go to fundraisers during my father's '66 campaign—well, I guess I lived down in LA. I lived at his place on Muirfield Road. He rented a house there, and so I stayed there during the campaign, probably when I came back from South America, from March through the election, through the end of the year. Well, I already had the law firm there, but it just seemed like more exciting. San Francisco, this is before, you know, the Grateful Dead and the Jefferson Airplane. This hadn't happened yet—I *think*. Yeah, '64—no, it's not around yet. So LA seemed more exciting to me.

03-01:02:18

Shafer: Was it like partly the Hollywood thing?

03-01:02:21

Brown: No, not the Hollywood thing. More of the business, the political. This is where—well, Unruh was from LA; Gene Wyman, my father's fundraiser, was from LA; [Lew] Wasserman was from LA. People that I met through him were in LA.

03-01:02:39

Shafer: [Howard] Berman-[Henry] Waxman.

03-01:02:41

Brown: Well, they came later.

03-01:02:42

Shafer: A little later.

03-01:02:43

Brown: I didn't know about them then.

[side conversation deleted]

03-01:02:51

Shafer: Yeah, so 1968, big year. LBJ decides not to run, and you got connected with Gene McCarthy.

03-01:03:03

Brown: Yeah—well, yeah.

[side conversation deleted]

03-01:03:13

Shafer: Well, we were talking about 1968. The war, obviously, was heating up and protests were heating up. Lyndon Johnson decided not to run for reelection. But before we get to the presidential campaign, were you eligible to be drafted?

03-01:03:38

Brown: Well, I was eligible—let's see, they didn't draft you after twenty-six, so I was twenty-seven when I graduated. I had a deferment to go to law school, and that's the only deferment I had, was law school. Of course when I was in the seminary, I also had a deferment. So yeah, no one got drafted out of law school that I remember.

03-01:04:05

Shafer: Did you ever think what you would have done if you'd been drafted?

03-01:04:06

Brown: No. I hadn't thought about it.

03-01:04:08

Shafer: No. It never came up.

03-01:04:08

Brown: Never came—well, it didn't happen. But I remember when I was in Chile, at somebody's house on some evening, there was a guy named Maurice Zeitlin, who was a teacher—activist kind of character. And he was saying how the CIA, they're bombing this and bombing that, and how bad Vietnam was. I remember thinking—the guy is a little extreme. So that was a thought in my mind. At least I heard that. Then, when I got back—this would have been the early summer of '67—so I think, it wasn't the Tet Offensive yet, but they were bombing.

[side conversation deleted]

03-01:05:22

Brown: I just went to law school. I think that's 2-S or something, and I was twenty-seven when I got out. So, that's the last I heard of it. I didn't have a deferment after I left law school, but they weren't drafting at that age.

I remember I called up John [L.] Burton or somebody from CDC [California Democratic Council]—might have been somebody else, I can't remember. But they had a convention, and the CDC was an activist wing of the Democratic Party. Alan Cranston was an instrumental guy, and they were instrumental in my father's nomination in '58. And so they were having a convention, and I proposed a resolution to stop the bombing and start talks

with North Vietnam. I don't know what it said, but we worked out a resolution. I think there were two resolutions. One further out than mine. And we had a bunch of people, and I spoke on it, and it was just kind of cease bombing/start negotiations. That's what it was. And so it passed, and I gave a talk.

That was August, and out of that came the peace slate '68, with [Gerald N.] "Jerry" Hill and a lady named Jo Sedita. And so that got formulated, and we put the peace slate on the ballot. I'm not sure whether McCarthy was part of that peace slate, or whether we endorsed him later, but the peace slate signatures qualified. I remember going down and appearing at the registrar, and it was in the newspaper. We qualified. And then McCarthy was coming around, and we picked him. It was very exciting. He lost in New Hampshire, but did pretty well. And then, it looked like he was going to win Wisconsin, and then Johnson pulled out, and then [Robert F.] Kennedy jumped in, and then it got more muddled. So I was in the McCarthy campaign.

03-01:08:01

Shafer:

What was it about McCarthy that you liked, besides the antiwar position?

03-01:08:05

Brown:

Well, first of all, he *was* the antiwar candidate, before Kennedy. So that gave him a certain purity, clarity, persuasiveness. And I liked his speeches; he was eloquent. He spoke in a very high-minded way, kind of akin to Stevenson in some ways. Bobby was a little more razzle-dazzle—just a different kind of speaker. McCarthy was a little cool, and people remarked on that. And I liked him; I got to know him. He had a reporter named Shana Alexander that would show around, and we'd sometimes have a drink after one of his speeches. He did a lot of talking, and it was fun to talk to him. He'd been studying for the priesthood briefly.

So the peace slate was all very exciting, going against Johnson. But somehow, when he got out, he didn't realize it, but after a few days or weeks it became a very different kind of race. And then with Kennedy, it became difficult, and Bobby was able to win California—and that was that. I was there on the night of the assassination. I was at the Hilton. That's where McCarthy was. In fact, I was sitting next to Robert Lowell when we heard that Kennedy had been shot. So that was another downbeat, as far as politics is concerned.

And then we went back to the convention, and I was an alternate delegate, alternate Kennedy delegate, which wasn't much of a role. But I spent time talking to McCarthy, talked to some of the other people. I didn't get involved in the activities down on the ground, in the park. I had a friend of mine, who was filming there. I met him, and I can only remember he said, "Electoral politics sucks." And he was doing a film. Of course, he moved to Canada and never came back. In fact, I'm still in touch with him, but I haven't seen him in years. So then I came back, because the convention didn't seem too



satisfactory at that point. But there was going to be a Humphrey vote, and there it was.

03-01:10:54

Shafer: And your father was supporting Humphrey at that point?

03-01:10:55

Brown: Yeah.

03-01:10:56

Shafer: You and your dad had a disagreement about the war too, right?

03-01:11:01

Brown: We did a show where we took either side. Of course, it was very easy, because I'm on the outside; he's on the inside, and Johnson was very nice to him. So, I can see now that I'm an incumbent, that there's a very different positioning than when you just come out of the wilderness and you start saying things. It's easier.

03-01:11:28

Shafer: [to Holmes] So do you want to talk about the first campaign?

03-01:11:32

Holmes: Actually, yeah, in a minute, but I had a follow-up question in regard to your father's support for LBJ, and then later Humphrey.

03-01:11:40

Brown: Right.

03-01:11:41

Shafer: Some reports were saying that he thought that this splitting, this support for McCarthy was helping the Republican's chances.

03-01:11:50

Brown: He never said that to me. See, a lot of people make comments based on plausibility. You can say well, Democrats are divided. That's helping the other guy. Well, that's a general statement. But empirically, is that true? Did it happen? And I can tell you it didn't happen.

03-01:12:17

Holmes: How would you compare—?

03-01:12:18

Brown: Because that's a political-science comment. My father was not a political science kind of thinker. He was a down-to-earth politician. He'd be more, "Do what you think is right," or something. That would be more of his point of view, not some political calculation.

03-01:12:39

Holmes: Before we move on from the '68 campaign, what were your observations or even your own feelings about Kennedy and McCarthy going head to head in

these kind of elections? Because in many respects, a lot of people would say they held the same positions.

03-01:12:59

Brown:

They were very different though. Kennedy appealed to more working-class minorities, Hispanic, African American. Kennedy won Indiana—that's a tough state. McCarthy won Oregon, a little whiter state. Kennedy was a little more working class—was able to appeal to the more of a working-class type. McCarthy was a little more highbrow. So yeah, he probably didn't connect with that part of the electorate, as witnessed by the results. But it was still a close election. And McCarthy, I would say, got some of his votes from the conservative areas that were not very pro-antiwar. Like I think he carried Kern County, and I haven't looked to see some of the other places. But I would bet that people knew that Kennedy was the Democrat that if you were a conservative, you didn't like—even a conservative Democrat, of which there were a number.

03-01:14:24

Shafer:

Do you think, looking back on it, you could see the beginnings of a racial cleavage within California?

03-01:14:35

Brown:

Oh, you could see that in Prop. 14 in 1964.

03-01:14:41

Shafer:

The housing.

03-01:14:42

Brown:

The fair housing. Yeah, so that was four years before. And even in the Reagan election.

03-01:14:51

Holmes:

You mentioned Kern County. Do you think also, with Robert Kennedy, because of his early support of Chávez and the farm worker movement that—?

03-01:15:00

Brown:

That might have—maybe that was it. Could be. There weren't many Latino voters then, like there are now.

03-01:15:09

Shafer:

I think the first political position that you had was you were appointed to the LA County Delinquency and Crime Commission.

03-01:15:18

Brown:

Right.

03-01:15:20

Shafer:

You were appointed by Kenny Hahn, I think.

03-01:15:21

Brown: Right.

03-01:15:22

Shafer: [An LA County] supervisor. Was that an issue that you had a particular interest in?

03-01:15:30

Brown: I have an interest in criminal justice, but it was obviously something to—actually, it wasn't the first position. My father appointed me, in December of '66, to the narcotic evaluation advisory. It was an advisory board to the Narcotic [Addict Evaluation] Authority, I think in Norco or Corona, where they had an institution for civil committed addicts. And they had a special board, and that board existed until after I was governor. I wasn't on the board itself. I had an unpaid position for just advisory. So that was the first thing. That didn't amount to much, but I met [Raymond K.] "Ray" Procnier, who later became the head of Paroles [Board of Parole Hearings, appointed by Pat Brown], who later became the head of [California Department of] Corrections. We had a meeting in the prison. I don't know how many meetings I went to—not very many. But I got a sense of things, and that was helpful, because I'd visited prisons before. This gave me another chance at that.

The Crime and Delinquency Commission—I didn't think of it in political terms. It was something to talk about, and what did I have to offer, so that was something. And gangs were an issue, delinquency, which I didn't understand at the time—I understand now—these committees have limited impact, limited reach, limited authority. But I went to the meetings, and I think a former trade negotiator, Hill—not Hill, but she was a Republican type, and she was on the board, and she was pretty good. Not Norma. She was a trade negotiator, I think, under Reagan. But anyway, so it was interesting. I did that, and that was instructive. These were all opportunities to learn about how government worked, what this process was, and so I was trying to understand, just how does the political government process work? Most people don't really have an idea of what it is, but after you sit on a few commissions, work in a few campaigns, you begin to get a sense of what this activity is.

03-01:18:18

Shafer: And seeing it maybe up close, as a member of the commission, did it give you sort of a—I don't know what the right word is—not *inspire* you necessarily, but did it make you feel like, government *matters*. It's important, it does things—or did it seem like kind of make-work in a way? Because you said it wasn't really going to have much of an impact.

03-01:18:36

Brown: Well, I didn't know what it would do, but I learned things. It's hard to tell. These advisory commissions, they do reports, and supervisors listen. It's part of their political outreach; government just can't be in a room. It's got to have connectivity to the electorate, although the connectivity is very thin and very

shallow in that sense. But I was interested both because it was something that I was able to do and say I was in, and it was interesting, it was on crime. Crime was a big deal. Reagan ran on crime, I think. So I thought that was a good position to be connected to.

I wouldn't say that it had a big impact either way, but it was valuable in the sense that it gave me a window into that county criminal justice system. And also, I had a chance to talk to Kenny Hahn, who had been my father's friend. But I got to talk to Hahn, and he was definitely a character out of the old system. You know, he talked: "Here's my black representative, here's my Catholic representative." He had all these bodies, all these people, that were in charge of these various ethnic populations and voting blocks. So that was a pretty overt inclusion of your political constituencies, that I thought—well, he didn't make any bones about it, and in an old-fashioned way. Today, they're doing the same thing, under the rubric of inclusivity and diversity. He didn't have either of those words, but he knew he had to have links, he knew he needed his blacks and his Mexican Americans and whatever—his pastors, and he did it.

So the reason I say that—when I went in to get sworn in, he walked me down the hall and pointed at the pictures of all these various people. He's in charge of this group, he's in charge of another group. It seemed old fashioned at the time. I won't say unsophisticated, because it was sophisticated at one level. But it wasn't sophisticated as you would see in a UCLA graduate seminar, where people would talk with much more high-blown language. This was just his gut-level understanding of how you get elected in the city of LA.

03-01:21:52

Shafer:

What did you take from that?

03-01:21:54

Brown:

Well, I thought he was a little bit of a caricature, to some extent. But then you knew he won, so I don't know what to—

03-01:22:06

Shafer:

That wasn't lost on you.

03-01:22:09

Brown:

No. But he was old fashioned. It wasn't something *I'm* going to do. I wouldn't do it that way. I wouldn't talk about—yeah, it seemed a little not right, to say, "Oh yeah, this is my black liaison," or something. You want to pretend you're kind of open to everybody and somewhat colorblind, but making sure you're covering all your bases. I think we like to be a little more dexterous in our maneuverings. He was just simple and right out there. So there was an honesty and a transparency that has been made more difficult by all the political correctness, the rules of all this behavior. You can do this, but you can't do that. I think we've added on a lot of taboos and rules in the last forty years, all in the guise of improving public trust. But it hasn't done that. It hasn't made

the process any easier—a little bit in some ways, but not really in too many ways. Not much.

03-01:23:25

Shafer: You mentioned that Reagan had gotten elected, of course, on this sort of clean up Berkeley, and there was concern about crime. And Reagan was definitely sort of a tough on crime kind of guy—

03-01:23:36

Brown: And I don't know that it was about issues either. It was like there's a chance for something new. Maybe in today's terms we'd call him a shiny new object, and that seems to be very important. That hope springs eternal, and here's somebody we haven't seen. He's talking good, he's looking good, and he can bring together all the contradictions and make them sound not contradictory. And that's what he was able to do, and he kept that going for most of his governorship—for all of his governorship, I think.

03-01:24:11

Shafer: At the same time, I think Sam Yorty was sort of a tough-on-crime mayor of LA, right? Is that fair to say?

03-01:24:19

Brown: Well, he was there with Police Chief [William H.] Parker. It was Parker, and that's what they called him—his last name. The LAPD were tough. They didn't have the same size as other cities, I understand they had a smaller police force, but they made up for it by their tough policing. And so Yorty backed the police, and they would align against my father from time to time. So maybe that's another reason I thought of LA as being of some power.

03-01:25:03

Shafer: But I guess my point was going to be that there you are suddenly on this commission, this crime commission and you're in this environment of—

03-01:25:10

Brown: A big anticrime—yeah, there's a big law and order, definitely. It's hard to remember now, it's been so long ago. But that was the idea, to try to deal with that, come up with ideas.

03-01:25:23

Shafer: I guess what I'm wondering is—you were obviously thinking about running for office, at that point, very much?

03-01:25:28

Brown: Yeah, I was, yeah.

03-01:25:29

Shafer: And you were thinking: here's an opportunity for me to meet people and make a name for myself and to be able to say, when I run for office, I did this on this commission. So how did you think about what you might do on that commission that might help you?

03-01:25:43

Brown:

Well, you know, I was looking for problems to solve: “Oh my God, these gangs are getting out of control. We’ve got to crack down on it.” I wasn’t sure how I was going to do it. I didn’t know. But I certainly thought that I could do something, but it wasn’t clear to me. And obviously, it’s an advisory commission, so you tell the supervisors. But you highlight problems—you expose—so I knew that was a possibility. You could highlight gang activity. This was a time, by the way, when predators, young predators, they’d say, “These characters were incorrigible people. We’ve got to lock them up for a long time.” It wasn’t three strikes. That came in the 1990s. But they were in the beginnings of the law-and-order mode, which didn’t exist during early Reagan, didn’t exist in my father’s time, didn’t exist, I don’t think, under Knight and Warren. So this was part of that.

And Yorty was a political character. He originally had been a left-of-center Democrat as an assemblyman, and then he became a conservative Democrat. So he got more conservative. I think he got elected on separating the garbage. I don’t know if you’ve read that. But yeah, he was going to stop this separation of garbage. That was one of his issues, against [Norris] Poulson. And then, of course, when he was running against [Thomas J.] Bradley, it added a real racial element, but I don’t think he had that in the beginning. It became an opportunity. You know, in politics, it’s like a market. And you have opportunities, and you either seize them or somebody else seizes them, but you can’t stand still. Somebody else will jump. So it’s like Bobby Kennedy. He waited, but then McCarthy jumped in.

03-01:28:03

Shafer:

That’s a good transition, I think, to your running for Community College Board of Trustees maybe. The legislature separated out community colleges from K-14.

03-01:28:12

Brown:

Yeah.

03-01:28:13

Shafer:

So how did you—and obviously that wasn’t—you didn’t think that was going to be your final stopping point. [laughing]

03-01:28:17

Brown:

No.

03-01:28:18

Shafer:

How did you see that?

03-01:28:20

Brown:

Well, it’s very interesting. I had met this guy before, maybe in the McCarthy campaign. I later made him a judge. I was down in the hotel, down there in downtown, the old hotel—

03-01:28:46

Gust Brown: That must have been The Biltmore?

03-01:28:48

Brown: The Biltmore, the Biltmore. And I don't know, I was walking out of a meeting. We had some meeting. Bill Norris had a meeting called Committee for California. I don't know if that was it—may not have been. But anyway, I met this guy, and he shook my hand. And I said, "What are you shaking my hand for?" And he said, "Well, I'm running for office." I said, "What are you running for?" "I'm running for the Community College Board of Trustees." I said, "What the hell is that?" He said, "Well, it's this new board we've got in LA." Hmm, pretty interesting. So I walked out and I said, "Hey, that's what I'm going to do," so I did it. Just that simple.

03-01:29:26

Shafer: Yeah, and you and 132 other people I think, right?

03-01:29:30

Brown: Yeah, because it was a new board. So politicians *love* to go where there's no incumbent. I think it was 134 counting myself.

03-01:29:39

Shafer: Yeah, I think you're right. So that was your first time *you* were on the ballot, right?

03-01:29:45

Brown: Right.

03-01:29:47

Shafer: So how did you think that through?

03-01:29:49

Brown: How did I think it *through*?

03-01:29:51

Shafer: Yeah, I mean—how you were going to present yourself on the ballot, how you were going to campaign?

03-01:29:57

Brown: Well, first of all, I went to my friend Richard L. Maullin, who I'd met in Bogota, Colombia, who died last week, and he was at RAND, and he introduced me to this guy. And I got a little bit of knowledge about program budgeting. I had a little interest in education. And I had a little skeptical view of education as well as a deep appreciation for it. But so I got a few ideas. We're going to make the budget connect with the policy of the program as well as the money. So I did have a little bit of substance there. And I didn't have much money. I went through my father's campaign list, and I raised \$15,000 for the primary and \$15,000 for the general—approximately \$30,000. So I did one mailing. I did a few radio ads, and I had maybe twenty billboards that said, "Brown, Trustee," or something like that. And that was it. Now, I

don't know, but I was Edmund G. Brown, and it was alphabetical, so I was pretty early up. And my father had only been governor three years before, I probably had 95 percent name ID, so that helps—I came in first.

By the way, that not only worked then, but it worked several years later [in 1998]. When I ran for mayor of Oakland, I came in first. And there were eleven other candidates—two Latinos and nine African Americans. And people said how are you going to win in this city? I said, “Well...” I did. [laughing] I knew it looked pretty good, because something that most people don't realize is that voters like to have a familiar name, somebody they know something about, as long as it's not negative. So that obviously made a big difference in those elections.

I had no idea whether I'd come out first [in the trustee election]. I had no idea how it would work out. It turned out that a guy named Kenny Washington, an African-American guy, same name as the famous football player, he came in somewhere in the top fourteen. And then we ran off, and then we had seven. And of the seven elected, it was Kenny Washington and me, and then there were four—a group of four very conservative people, including [Michael D.] “Mike” Antonovich and two other people that became assembly people, conservative Republicans. And one guy who'd run for congress against George [E.] Brown and lost. So there's four—a block of four conservatives, and they did whatever conservatives do, campaigning in South Gate and all those other places there. The school district had a lot of conservative areas: Burbank, Glendale, and that kind of thing. It was bigger than the city. And then a guy named Wyatt, and Wyatt was kind of an independent, and we'd worked together.

Now, how they elected—it's all very mysterious to me—one of their conservatives didn't make it. So that's why I've got a healthy appreciation for how it's difficult to really understand elections, and what makes *what* happen, particularly in these little ballot races when you're covering a territory almost as large as LA County. Not quite as large, but going from Bellflower all the way up to the Antelope Valley. That's a lot of territory. So how the hell do the voters know? Well, they somehow figure it out, and the conservatives were able to communicate their message. But my name ID and Kenny Washington's name ID—and then Mr. Wyatt, he was a former military man, maybe that's how he won. But there we were, there are the seven members of the board, so that's how it all happened.

03-01:34:50

Holmes:

What do you recall of the political environment in the Los Angeles area during that time, particularly around education. I know you had the blowouts in LA high schools during '68.



03-01:35:01

Brown: Yeah, that guy who chained himself to the door, that Mexican-American guy. Do you know what his name was? He was a teacher—Saul, Sal—I forget his name. [Salvador B. “Sal” Castro]

03-01:35:16

Gust Brown: Is it Ruben—

03-01:35:18

Brown: Ruben Salazar?

03-01:35:19

Gust Brown: Yeah.

03-01:35:19

Brown: No, I think he was killed. He was killed.

03-01:35:21

Holmes: That was an *LA Times* reporter.

03-01:35:25

Brown: This was a guy who was—no, they were marching. There was some marching. This was, I guess, before busing. I don’t know—was this busing yet? No.

03-01:35:41

Holmes: This would be ’69. You also have student activism as well, both high school as well as your community colleges.

03-01:35:46

Brown: Yeah, but the activism at the community colleges—that’s pretty invisible. You’re talking about LA. It’s so big, it just doesn’t make it in the *LA Times* and it doesn’t get on television. So there was a lot of noise, a lot of things happening, but I don’t know what the mood was. The mood was what, in ’69—we’re talking about Vietnam then. And then after I’m elected, there’s Kent State. I remember that. There’s Chávez boycott of lettuce; that’s an issue the conservatives didn’t like—boycott lettuce in the cafeteria. We had a resolution. They of course voted that down. Yeah, it was kind of a board that interfered with the management rather than provided any particularly positive guidance, because none of them were educators. They didn’t know anything. I mean, they knew things as a citizen, but there they were—very political. And three of them—well, myself, [Robert C.] “Bob” Cline, and Marian La Follette, and Antonovich, all ran for office. So these *are* springboards. You’ve got to start somewhere, and school boards often are, to city council, to legislator, and beyond.

03-01:37:11

Shafer: To what extent were you, in that election, testing the brand, the Brown brand?

03-01:37:17

Brown:

Well, first of all, I never thought of myself as a brand. That's a new concept. We used to, in those days, have things called *companies*. Now we don't have companies—we just have brands. And that is because we're more attuned to the label, to the image, to the name, rather than the thing named. So it's not the people. It isn't the building. It's not even the product. It's the Gap, it's Amazon, it's Oracle—it's the brand, right? And that kind of is another way of talking about name identification. So the name is getting a little bit unhooked from the reality.

So I would frame it a different way. I was running because I knew this was about 35 percent of the statewide electorate. So obviously, I thought I could expose my presence to the voters, and they've got to know who you are. So that's why I decided to run. At one point I had thought about running for congress, in the seat that Glenn [M.] Anderson ran for, and we did a poll—we didn't do a poll. We *looked* at this particular seat, and I noticed that Sam Yorty did pretty well against my father. And based on that, I decided not to run. I can't remember what the voting was, but I think he might have beaten my father there—it's that Long Beach, Lawndale, Hawthorne kind of place. So I was thinking of that. But then the fundraising—how was I going to do fundraising? So the junior college board sounded—no, I could handle that. It's not as good as being in congress, but it's good enough. So I jumped, and I did it. I did know at the time that I was going to run for secretary of state. Clearly. I knew I was going to run for governor, so this was just the pathway I chose. And it was a pretty clear path, and I followed it and was successful—in some ways, relatively simple.

03-01:39:56

Holmes:

What was the role of your father in the campaign?

03-01:40:00

Brown:

Well, the role of my father was he had his name, and he had been governor of California up until January of '67. And I was running in the primary in March of '69, so that's not too much longer. So that's number one.

Number two, he had his fundraising list, and those are the first people I called. I got it from his accountant, his campaign accountant, Jules Glazer, and so we started there. I don't think he had a lot of advice—it wasn't my father's cup of tea. My father had been governor, he'd been attorney general, he'd sued Arizona. He was interested in the water plan, higher education, roads, freeways—this was the meat and potatoes of his responsible liberalism, or what he thought—he saw government as helping and doing important things. This junior college board thing was off to the side. He wasn't thinking name identification—I don't think he was thinking that. So he wasn't that interested, nor was he that interested in secretary of state. I think he thought I should have run for state senate or something. But of course state senate might have been harder, because a lot of people might have been known in a senate

district, but they couldn't have the reach from Sacramento to San Diego. That you only could do if you had a name, which I had.

03-01:41:45

Shafer: And so really, that election was in part, I would imagine, you were testing whether the Brown name—?

03-01:41:51

Brown: No, I wasn't testing.

03-01:41:52

Shafer: No?

03-01:41:53

Brown: I was *advancing*. Testing, you're saying that maybe it wouldn't work.

03-01:41:59

Shafer: Well, I guess your father had just lost, so was there some sense that maybe the Brown name—people are *tired* of Edmund G. Brown.

03-01:42:08

Brown: I can't remember. I don't know what my thinking was, whether it was testing—I don't know whether that's relevant. I must have thought it was a good-enough chance that I should do it. And the chances of losing were not great, and if that did occur, it wouldn't make too much difference. But I thought the junior college board, education, that seemed like—I have a whole lot of ideas on education and always have. Even to this day it's interesting.

The community colleges—I've appointed people there. We have an online university, very innovative, so we're doing a lot of things. I wasn't thinking of this at the time—I was really thinking more of the political, but now I see the community colleges as very important. And the notion of going to Santa Clara and spending \$65,000 seems very odd to me, unless you're extremely affluent, because you can do the same thing virtually for \$12,000, because you can go for free. You've got to live at home, and two years later you're on your way to UC if you're any good—or a state college. But you don't have that rah-rah Old Blue, or whatever the hell it is. But this is a very expensive luxury right now. So I don't think I appreciated how valuable the community colleges were.

We had different controversies there. They wanted to create a central police force—they used to have it by campus, so I termed this the *supercop*, and I opposed it, but I lost. They liked the supercop—the conservatives did.

03-01:44:12

Shafer: Knowing that you were going to be running for secretary of state and then governor, did you champion things that you thought you could parlay?

03-01:44:22

Brown:

Well, I don't know, *parlay* makes it sound like a poker game. [laughing] A lot of it was just how it struck me. I didn't want to centralize policing. I've had that same feeling, that you have to be careful about how much coercive authority we let loose in the society. And we wanted to memorialize the Kent State killings, and of course the conservatives didn't like that. And the boycott lettuce—that was political.

Oh, yeah, and they'd always be taking trips, and I voted against a lot of trips. And now, I might not even be right about that, because academia is all about taking trips, going to conferences and giving papers. When they came out at the end of the meeting, they'd have pages and pages of conventions. I said my God, we don't need this, and I'd vote against a lot of them. But I supported the teachers' union, which you might say is politically sensitive. It was the American Federation of Teachers. What else? Oh, I opposed their purchasing new wooden desks, because I thought the expenditure was excessive, even though it was only \$25,000, but I thought our metal desks were adequate. We didn't need new wooden desks, that was my thought. I was kind of the fiscal watch dog, which just came naturally. But also, I was aware of the '66 campaign and how the bloated state government was a problem. I was aware of that.

But even today, and I guess it's just part of the way I see things, and the way my wife sees things, because we're careful. Just spending for the sake of spending is not something I think is a good thing. It's not one of my habits, and government has a tendency to overdo things, because you've got the purse, and you just keep spending away. There's a lot of substantive reasons against that.

But I do think that in exuberant times, doing a lot of spending, if the economy goes down, and instead of a big surplus you have a big deficit, people will look to your various items of spending. And things that don't look that necessary will be viewed as part of the problem of why we have such a big deficit, even though most of that problem—by far—is the economy, the market system. But nevertheless, as a leader, you're not positioned well if you are exceedingly exuberant prior to the downturn. I would say that was certainly not something that Davis and Schwarzenegger got right. Of course, Reagan spent a lot. His budget went up more than my father's and more than mine, but he was always fighting. But fighting more on welfare, fighting one *segment* of the spending. Whereas I've tended to fight *most* of the segments, except where I think it's worthwhile: tunnels, trains, climate change.

03-01:48:14

Holmes:

Well, and on that note, many have discussed your time on the board of trustees as a mixture of fiscal conservatism and also being a social liberal, and this is something that has carried on throughout your political career, these

two characteristics. Do you think there's an influence, particularly of fiscal conservatism, from your time in the seminary?

03-01:48:40

Brown:

Could be, yeah. Probably, but I think it's more of growing up through World War II rationing. We never had any hardships. We had ration cards, when there was not enough butter and meat and milk and potatoes. But there wasn't much in the stores. And you didn't have balloons, because the rubber was used for the jeeps, and you didn't have caps because they told us you couldn't have this during wartime. So I remember that. And we didn't have all the building. You didn't have all these houses being built. And I thought that was the normal—so my awareness, born in '38, in '42 I'm four, '45 I guess I'm seven. I'm kind of noticing things. There's not a lot of stuff going on. The Doelger homes hadn't been built yet. Marin County was the country, down the peninsula was the country. So it was a more static world. You didn't go out to dinner. There weren't a lot of cars on our block. We grew up on Magellan Ave. A few, but not many. You go there today, you can barely get by, there's cars on both sides. So I guess the excess, and then tied in with Vietnam—that was all just spend more, throw more at it. Watergate—there was a lot of excess. And then we had the inflationary epidemic. Nixon in '69, '70, '71—that was a little more inflationary.

So there were external reasons why a certain prudence in spending, along with the Jesuit notion. They had a notion in the novitiate called *tantum quantum*. *Tantum* means so much; *quantum* means how much? And so the notion was, as they explained it, how much is necessary, so much should you take. Don't take any more than is needed. Don't take any less, but don't take any more. So that doesn't quite fit the capitalist model of excess. You buy what you don't need with money you don't have. That seems to be the model. Certainly the federal government, that's the model. The seminary certainly had some impact, but I think it built on my own sensibility and my own experience.

You know, growing up, we didn't have ice cream except on birthdays, or maybe now and then. It's not that we couldn't afford it, it's just this hyper-amazing existence that we now have, with anything, and everything, and more—that's foreign. That's a new development of our national culture and economy. And of course, since the economy is 65 percent consumer spending, if the consumer doesn't spend—. In fact, I've often had the idea that the worst threat to our market economy is if people have long, enduring relationships, so that all of a sudden divorce stopped, okay? Every time there's a divorce, there's now two households where there used to be one, and all of a sudden, that would cut the market *massively*. [laughing] So we depend on this proliferation of relationships, of spending, of needs. So I have that, that goes around in my head—and that's all. So luxury does feel a little uncomfortable to me.

03-01:53:02

Shafer: We're going to wrap up in a minute, but I want to just ask you about one thing before we go. Because when we start tomorrow, we can start with the secretary of state race, I think. But where were you living in LA? Were you in Laurel Canyon at that point?

03-01:53:16

Brown: No. I was on Sunset and Lucile, the second house in and the second floor of a two-story building. I was next to Ted's Grocery Store. And that's where I was when the moon shot occurred, when a man landed on the moon, and Kennedy had Chappaquiddick. I think those were the same weekend, so I remember that. My apartment was \$85 a month when I moved in, and I never met my landlord. I got the apartment from the friend of a friend, a girl that I knew. It was her sister, and she moved out, so I moved in. I had a \$75 a month apartment, and I moved up to \$85, two bedrooms and a balcony. Now, that's probably a pretty fancy neighborhood, Echo Park. So that's where I lived, and then later I moved to a more respectable apartment later, when I was running for secretary of state. And then after I was secretary of state, I bought the Laurel Canyon [house].

03-01:54:32

Shafer: The reason I ask, is because I want to ask you about sort of a seminal event in '69, which was the Manson murders, the Tate-LaBianca murders?

03-01:54:42

Brown: 1969—when was that? What month?

03-01:54:45

Shafer: It was in '69. I don't remember the day or the month. We can figure that out, but it was—I think it was in the spring or summer? [others speaking off-microphone] It was August.

03-01:54:58

Brown: August '69, so I was already on the junior college board.

03-01:55:01

Shafer: Yeah, What do you remember about that? Had you heard anything about the Manson Family before this?

03-01:55:09

Brown: Oh, they caught them pretty soon after that. Yeah, well no, I hadn't heard about them. No. It was pretty horrendous what the hell had happened. Yeah, that was a big event in LA, definitely. And that certainly intensified the concern about crime. So yeah, I can't—that wasn't quite in my—what I was doing.

03-01:55:46

Shafer: Did you know people that were, you know—?

03-01:55:47

Brown:

No, didn't know anybody connected to it. I later came to know Vincent Bugliosi, and helped him a little bit in his campaign, but he lost. Very close. I've gone back to see him, so I did know about that. But no, other than that.

03-01:56:11

Shafer:

Okay. I think that's good. We're good for today?

## Interview 4: March 19, 2019 [in the morning]

04-00:00:04

Shafer: It's Tuesday, March 19, [2019]. We're at the ranch in Colusa County with Governor Jerry Brown and Todd Holmes. I'm Scott Shafer here with Guy Marzorati, Dan Newman, Queena Kim, and this is what—session four. So, we got through the 1960s, pretty much, yesterday. And so we want to pick up with your decision to run for secretary of state. And it sounded like that's something you'd thought about for a while, but tell us about the thinking that went into that.

04-00:00:47

Brown: I don't know exactly *when* I thought about that. Probably, well, a few years before—I can't tell you exactly when. I think I said it yesterday—that there was a long-time incumbent that wasn't going to be there for a long time, that might be vulnerable—or might not, as the case may be. That seemed to be an office that would have less competition, and therefore would be easier to win, and yet would still be a statewide office, and one in which I thought I could do good work in.

And I was very interested, particularly in the campaign disclosures, which I first came into contact with when I began to file my report after the junior college board election, and I noticed that the reporting requirements were very lax, that you could use abbreviations. And as I looked at other committee filings or at names, like Good Government Committee, with no addresses, it was totally obscure and certainly not transparent. So that gave me the idea: I read parts of the Code of California, and I noticed the secretary of state had the responsibility to take all these reports. And certainly, I presumed that that meant that he should make sure that they're *accurate*. So that idea became part of the interest and what I intended to do.

So, and also at that point, Frank Jordan died. And Reagan did not appoint a popular assemblyman by the name of George [W.] Milias. Instead, [he] elevated the deputy, [Henry Patrick] "Pat" Sullivan, and he wasn't running. So there was a field. I didn't know that before I started running, because I started before that. I wanted to get into statewide office, and that was the pathway.

04-00:03:41

Shafer: I'm curious. Did you look at other offices, like did you evaluate all the other statewide offices?

04-00:03:46

Brown: No, no—you talk in terms of brand testing and evaluation, and that's not the way I experience political decisions. I mean you look at them, and things seem obvious or not, and then you make decisions based on what your objectives are, what your desires are. So I don't think it's as formulaic or as structured as your question might imply.

04-00:04:17

Shafer: Well, I'm just thinking about your strategic thinking.



04-00:04:20

Brown: Well, I don't know. I didn't even have the word *strategic thinking* back in 1969 or 1970. It's about running for office and winning, and doing whatever you said you were going to do.

04-00:04:43

Shafer: You mentioned, Governor, that you were reading the election code, and of course sort of, you started digging into—

04-00:04:50

Brown: Yes, I did.

04-00:04:50

Shafer: Yeah, so tell us more—where did you do that? How did you do that?

04-00:04:54

Brown: I just picked up—I was at a law firm, just picked up—go to the shelf. You go to the codes of California, and there's probably two volumes on election code. You take out the index, and you look through it, as any lawyer would do. So I looked up all the sections that dealt with campaign reporting. And I did further research as I went along and found out that California first adopted its Purity of Election[s] Law back in the 1870s. It was modeled on an English law. So I knew about that. I don't know when I came to know about it. I brought a lawsuit—a [California] Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Superior Court*. I brought it in the superior court, I lost, I took it on appeal to the supreme court. I argued it myself, and I won in a unanimous decision, that held that the campaign disclosure laws required the reporting, by name, of donors to a ballot-measure campaign. Now, this was in November of 1970, so I've skipped ahead to the election, so maybe I'm a little ahead of myself there.

04-00:06:23

Shafer: So you argued that after you got elected?

04-00:06:27

Brown: Yes, I brought the lawsuit—maybe, probably after I was elected. But in terms of the campaign, which was interesting. It was a pretty simple campaign. But I did go around the state. Tom Quinn helped me. I met him during the junior college campaign, and so did Richard Maullin, and there wasn't a lot of attention. I think John Tunney was running for the senate. That was the more glamorous race—by far. And so this was a quiet undertaking, and the only thing really of interest was that the son of the former governor was running for secretary of state. So other than that, it was pretty mundane stuff. People had not run for these offices, like controller and treasurer, in the normal political way. They weren't the actions they became later—people wanted to be controller and then run for governor. The only office that was a stepping stone was attorney general—and maybe lieutenant governor.

04-00:07:39

Shafer: And of course there was no term limits, so that was part of it too.

04-00:07:40

Brown: There were no term limits. People would get those jobs, and they'd keep them a long time.

04-00:07:44

Shafer: Yeah. Do you remember, when you sat down with Tom and Richard, what did they talk to you about, in terms of—as you thought out that race?

04-00:07:54

Brown: I can't remember. Basically, you have to make as much news as you can that's favorable, in as many media markets, as often as you can. And you raise as much money as you can, which is rather modest. It's pretty simple business. I know today people complexify it with a lot of consultants, but at the end of the day, it's very simple. You have a candidate, you have an electorate, and you communicate by whatever means you can afford.

04-00:08:27

Shafer: Easier when your name is Edmund G. Brown, Jr.?

04-00:08:29

Brown: Obviously. Or if your name's Tunney, or if you're a movie star—all that's helpful. Or if your father was president. All these things help, this is from Adams, whose grandson was president. I think the Harrisons—didn't we have two Harrisons as presidents? So, yeah, this is an old story.

04-00:08:55

Shafer: You said you tried to make news, you went out and you made news. How did you do that? Do you remember?

04-00:09:05

Brown: Well, I'm going to do it by writing—by press releases, which Tom Quinn was very adept at. And I think those might be in the archives of the secretary of state. But we put out a lot of press releases, and would write them by fixing on a lead of some kind that would be catchy, and Tom and I'd work that out. Even while I was secretary of state we released more press releases, that I still have available. And he and I would do that, talk on the telephone, and work out ideas.

And where do you get the ideas? You get the ideas from the news. Tom had a news service, City News, and it came over in rolls. And the AP or the UPI would roll out. And so you'd read the right thing, and you'd clip out stories. And then, even though the story might not relate to something that I wanted to talk about, it would be the *form* of what could be a story. Senator So-and-So called for something. Well, then I could take that out and say, "*I call for something, or Brown called for something.*" So the news, which I didn't understand then as much as I do now, is a predictable process, and the news people are tightly constrained. Most of them don't realize it, but they're somewhat robotic in their slavish adherence to the news of the day. So that if you want to make news, you have to ride on the news of today, or today we might say the tweet of the day.

There, things were a little more primitive. We weren't as sophisticated, but that would be the idea.

I may be mixing up my governor's campaigns. Yeah, probably the secretary of state's campaign. But we could go to San Diego, and the same day you could go from San Diego to Los Angeles—maybe even to San Francisco. And you could take the same story, and the term was *relead* it. So you'd take something from four paragraphs down, and you move it up to the top paragraph. But you keep a similar story, and then you wait till maybe a different guy is on the desk.

[laughing] And so then you get that story out, and it runs again. Now, how often those things ran, and whether I'm accurately stating—well, I am actually stating what happened, but as to what the actual impact is, that would take a deeper analysis which nobody has made, and I doubt if they ever will. But that was the general idea, to try to make news in *different* media markets. That's the way people looked at the counties. And you go into the small ones—Fresno had media, as did Santa Paula, Santa Barbara, as did Monterey. Rarely did we go to Imperial County.

04-00:12:33

Shafer: How did you get around between cities?

04-00:12:34

Brown: Drive or fly. Take an airplane. They had more planes in those days. I think you had regular service to Fresno. You still do, but I think there were more planes in those days. I went to Lone Pine once. I think that was in the governor's race. A guy flew me in his plane. That's the only time I've been to Lone Pine.

04-00:12:55

Shafer: You looked at the codes, and you realized that this had been a sleepy office for a long time. What did you see when you looked at those—?

04-00:13:07

Brown: Well, I also saw that my father had written an opinion. Well, there was a case against my father as attorney general, and the case held that you *didn't* have to report things accurately. And then there was an opinion that my father wrote, which basically made that point. And in fact, that was prior to the case—I think, *Warden v. Brown*. It came out of Oakland, a court of appeals case. And then there was this prior attorney general's opinion, which doesn't have my father's name on it, but it was during his tenure. So I asked him about it. I said, "What's this about?" And my father said, "Well, I talked to Governor Warren about how we report things, and Governor Warren said this is how we do it in California."

04-00:14:05

Shafer: And that was that?

04-00:14:05

Brown: That was that. And so now we have voluminous regulations and fines. But if you'd ask me, is it more honest? I'd want to reflect long and hard on that question.

04-00:14:20

Shafer: We'll come back to that.

04-00:14:24

Holmes: Governor, what was your father's reaction to your plan to run for secretary of state? Because as we were just talking about, the office itself was sleepy. It was largely looked at by many as a paper-pushing backwater or, kind of the state clerk

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04-00:14:38

Brown: Well, I don't think that's accurate. It was not looked upon by many—very few people looked upon it. In fact, I'm probably one of the few people, but not the only one. There was a guy who was a lawyer. I'm trying to remember his name—Schlei, [Norbert A.] Norb Schlei who—a blessed memory. Norb Schlei ran for secretary of state during the time my father was running against Reagan, and he had the same idea—or he had the idea first: to run for secretary of state and be the only guy elected. And he got more votes than my father, but it didn't work. It was a sweep. So only [Thomas C.] “Tom” Lynch was left. But Norb Schlei was a big corporate lawyer, a serious man from a law firm in Los Angeles, and so that validated the idea as well. No one probably remembers that—not even Dan Newman remembers it. Norb Schlei was the pathfinder because he talked about it in a bigger way.

Well, first of all, the last guy to run, in 1958—a guy named [Enrique] Henry [“Hank”] López won, and he was the only one that lost. So everybody won, except Henry López, and people always felt there was certain discrimination about that. And then in '62, Frank Jordan won again. So the memory does not go back far enough to remember when the secretary of state was some kind of a controversial or well-known office and people didn't particularly think about it, because it was just essentially corporate filings, maintain the trademark—it was more like a county clerk, and elections were handled by a registrar of voters or county clerks.

04-00:16:52

Shafer: And so as you thought about it and looked at the code again, what possibilities did you see?

04-00:16:58

Brown: Well, I saw the possibilities of enforcing the campaign law, and that already was a breakthrough thought. Because the secretary of state was often sued, so there were cases against Jordan that you can see in the casebooks. But he's always a defendant, somebody suing on a law to invalidate an initiative or something like that. In fact, that's mostly what it is. And I'd read some of those cases. At Yale Law School, I read all the ballot-measure cases, I believe—all the cases that challenged ballot-measure elections. And I would come across the name *Jordan*, a case called *Epperson v. Jordan*—I remember that case. There were many others.

So now, what I proposed to do was to have the secretary of state as the plaintiff, if necessary, and making candidates report their contributions. And when I sued, I sued as Edmund G. Brown, Jr. But it wasn't clear whether I suing in my personal capacity, or as secretary of state? And the reason I did that, I wasn't sure that the secretary of state had the *authority* to bring lawsuits. And the general rule was in order to have that authority, you have to have a duty under law, and the only duty under law was receiving campaign documents. But the question that was not determined: did the secretary of state have a right to reject, or demand in some way, that the campaign filings be of a certain quality and completeness? That question had never been raised since the beginning of the law, as far as I know. And I looked at a lot of cases, because it was part of my *Brown v. Superior Court*. And a fellow that looked at it, [Daniel Hays] "Dan" Lowenstein, was the lawyer. We wrote the brief. He wrote the brief, principally. But so then the Supreme Court ruled that I did, in a footnote, that I *had* the capacity to bring a lawsuit, and that was the first time that was ever stated. I was already secretary of state by then.

04-00:19:35

Shafer: So you really envisioned changing the office from like a passive office to a more proactive one.

04-00:19:40

Brown: Right.

04-00:19:42

Shafer: Yeah. Essentially, you made the secretary of state's office a combatant with politicians.

04-00:19:52

Brown: Right.

04-00:19:54

Shafer: So how did that go over?

04-00:19:56

Brown: [laughing] Well, it didn't go over well with politicians. It left a lingering distaste among many incumbents, and there was always this tension between diplomacy and news. In order to make news, you need something more strident. To be diplomatic and work with your colleagues, you need things that are more respectful and accommodating—and so that was always the tension that I experienced.

04-00:20:33

Shafer: How did you resolve that tension?

04-00:20:38

Brown: In different ways at different times, but we definitely made news. [laughing] And when you tell people, particularly when I was secretary of state, and say you have to report all this. I developed a rule book on how a campaign report should be filed. The assembly and the legislature took away my office, but I already had a

downtown—I just moved from Beverly Hills to downtown, so that wasn't a problem.

04-00:21:12

Shafer: They took it away as punishment?

04-00:21:12

Brown: Yeah. And they tried to stop me. They had a big meeting—Willie Brown, and they all came in, and they were quite exercised about the whole thing.

04-00:21:24

Shafer: Yeah. How did you feel about that?

04-00:21:25

Brown: Well, it's unpleasant. It's always unpleasant. It was unpleasant when I vetoed the state budget and had to go into the Democratic caucus and listen to the emotional outrage of the people. It's not just a disagreement, I guess in today's lingo you might even call it a *microaggression*. And I would call it that because the people who work on the budget, they identify with that, their product—that's *them*. So when I reject *it*, I reject *them*, and they feel aggrieved at that. But they got over it. And I worked at the diplomacy. I don't know that I ever quite got over the first eight years, because (a), I came in aggressively in this political reformism, which is not congenial to the long-term incumbents, and (b) I was so much younger than everybody else. And they knew a lot, and they knew the ways of the legislature—ways that I had not been part of or familiar with.

04-00:22:39

Shafer: You're talking about when you were governor.

04-00:22:40

Brown: Yeah. Or secretary of state. I once went to a guy—Senator [Alfred H.] “Al” Song—and I was looking for more things to do, and there's a statute on consumer protection. It's a very powerful statute, that allows the attorney general, and any local city attorney or district attorney, to bring an action under [California] Civil Code § 17200. And I thought, “Well, I think the secretary of state ought to be included in the list of people that can bring those lawsuits.” So I went to Al Song, and he was not too excited about that, but we put it into a bill. It only got a couple of votes. And now I could see how powerful this is—and it's an instrument that *is* abused, and I saw that as attorney general. Where zealous people go out and sue businesses, and they get funding for their office. So they collect tens of millions of dollars—in aggregate, well over a hundred million in fines, from the enforcement of laws that aren't always that clear. And I never could make up my mind: was the attorney general abusing this law? Or were the companies not doing everything they should do, and was the punishment appropriate? And I still have that question.

04-00:24:13

Holmes: Governor, you announce your candidacy for secretary of state in March of 1970.

04-00:24:18

Brown: And there's a column in the *LA Times* on that. Did you read that?

04-00:24:21

Holmes: Yes.

04-00:24:23

Brown: It's by Carl Greenberg, I think.

04-00:24:24

Shafer: Yeah, we have it in the pile of stuff here.

04-00:24:27

Brown: Yeah, I think that's Carl. That was the guy whose retirement I went to.

04-00:24:29

Holmes: And in that candidacy you threatened to refuse to certify any election of a candidate who fails to fully report campaign donations, as we were just discussing.

04-00:24:41

Brown: Right. That's what I would say is a lead.

04-00:24:46

Holmes: I was curious, because in some respects you're somewhat playing right into that theme that we saw Ronald Reagan make during his governorship, like the citizen-politician fighting against the career politicians.

04-00:25:03

Brown: Well, that seems to be an effective strategy.

04-00:25:06

Holmes: Did that come into your calculation?

04-00:25:07

Brown: What? The comparison with Reagan, or just the citizen-politician?

04-00:25:10

Holmes: The citizen-politician.

04-00:25:11

Brown: Well, that was his term. That's a Reagan term. And he was using that, obviously, to contrast with my father, who was the professional politician, and he kept saying Reagan's an amateur, and that underscored what Reagan wanted to portray himself as. And you're asking me what?

04-00:25:33

Holmes: Did that factor into your—?

04-00:25:34

Brown: *What* factored in?

04-00:25:34

Holmes: Did the citizen-politician, the combating the career politicians, factor into your strategy?

04-00:25:43

Brown: I mean, it's pretty obvious to me you're using language that doesn't quite tally. Obviously, if you have an office that nobody even knows what they do, and you're running for it—so there has to be some reason. And if they're not reporting, and you have a lot of examples of completely vague and not amply disclosed contributions, and then if you say, it's my job to collect it. And, "Okay, what's the enforcement?" "Well, I'm not going to certify your election." Now, that's an arguable position—but that's a position.

You could run to say what a nice fellow I am, and these are my two dogs, and what have you—and some people do that. And I remember talking to my friend Peter Finnegan, he was running for supervisor. And I looked at his brochure, and it had his wife and two kids. And I said, "Peter, that's not going to cut it. You're going to have to have a position here. What do you have to say about Mayor [Joseph L.] Alioto? What do you want to say about city hall? But just you, your wife, and your two kids? That's *not* a theme that is going to touch the voters."

So this was a more succinct way of saying I would be serious about enforcing the law. Now, how that would have worked out, obviously I would have said to the people, "Fill out your campaign report." And we did send out a letter to 134 candidates, most of whom were not incumbents, [instructing them] to file reports. A lot of the losing candidates never bother to file. But yeah, that was a strong statement. You'd have to read whatever happened to that in the follow-up—I don't know. But I did write the collaboration with Common Cause and the People's Lobby—Proposition 9, the Political Reform Act of 1974 [ed: this created the Fair Political Practices Commission]. So a lot of that was followed through. And that was a bold assertion.

04-00:28:05

Holmes: I guess what I was also getting at is that Reagan made a statement in his political career, that he was going to combat, if you want to use that colloquial term "the old boys' network," the way things were done in Sacramento.

04-00:28:18

Brown: Yeah, but look—when you're an *out*, the game plan is to get the ins *out*, and to get the outs *in*, however you want to state it. And Reagan put it one way. Thus it ever is. If you look at my father's kind of campaign poster that I have, running for DA—I think it was 1939—it says, "new and competent." It's new—*shiny new object*. That's very important, whether it's president or dog catcher. Even though, I would say, that experience can be very, very important.

04-00:29:03

Shafer: Maybe a different way, and I don't know if this is—?



04-00:29:04

Brown:

Well, I think I answered that, didn't I? Sure, I mean you're either on the side [or the other]. Now, think of it as a football game. You've got USC on one side, and Notre Dame on the other side. They've got different flags, they cheer for different plays. That's the way it is. So obviously, when you run, you don't say everything's wonderful. You say, "Time for a change!" And then you have to establish—what do you mean, time for a change? Well, you can attack the old-boy network. And when I ran in '92 for president, I was a lot more aggressive than that—*too* aggressive, I would say. So that's the dilemma. You have to be within the tradition, within the framework, which Reagan did, in a way much more than Trump. So Reagan *was* the establishment, but he was able to identify my father as part of the problem—and it isn't just government. Government becomes part of the [problem]—these become metaphors. Just like the Republicans—Obamacare became, it's a metaphor, because oh, this was this problem, and the Republicans got all riled up about it. But was it really Obamacare, Affordable Care Act? Or was it just the propaganda, feelings about Obama, feelings about the world, feelings about social change, and you have to speak in more concrete terms. This is not theoretical physics here. This is concrete—this is a human undertaking and stories are what it's about.

04-00:30:58

Shafer:

I wonder, you know, your dad, of course, lost in 1966. And there's been a lot said about his desire to maybe try it again, to take Reagan on. Can you tell us about the family discussions around *that*, versus you running—?

04-00:31:14

Brown:

Okay. So first of all, you've heard these politicians say, "I have to talk it over with my family." I have *no* experience of that. I never heard my father talking to my mother—should I run?

[side conversation deleted]

04-00:32:05

Shafer:

You said talking it over with your family, you had no experience of that.

04-00:32:08

Brown:

I didn't. I mean, maybe my father and mother when they were alone with the door closed talked about running for things. But I have a feeling that my mother appreciated my father's work and role, and that's what he did. He ran for office and held office. I don't ever remember him talking to *me* about it, or talking to my sisters. You know, "Should I run, girls?" But I do remember him, not talking about it. First of all, these kind of in-depth conversations weren't the kind of things we had—this wasn't a political science course. So yeah, I think he questioned secretary of state. I think he, at one point, if I remember correctly, said, "Why don't you run for the state senate if you want to run for an office?"

04-00:33:06

Shafer: From an oral history that your mother did with Bancroft, she was talking about this, maybe the conversation she was having with your father, she says, "If you think that two Browns can be elected on the same ticket, you're crazy."

04-00:33:20

Brown: Oh, that's about *him* running for governor?

04-00:33:21

Shafer: Yes.

04-00:33:24

Brown: Yeah, I don't know. He didn't seem that serious. I think he mentioned it, but it was more in a non-serious way, to me. He didn't say, "You know, I'm really thinking about this." It's more—he was in a business, he was starting to make a little money and he didn't have a lot of money. He was beaten pretty solidly, so I don't know, maybe he was more serious. And also, I think you maybe tell different things to different people. Maybe you imagine, you know, you could run or something. People say to me, "Why don't you run for president?" They say, "Oh, you've got to run!" [laughing] I go, "Yeah, it's probably a good idea." I mean you might just *say* that—and I don't know, so that's my mother telling it, or maybe he said something to her. That's possible. But it wasn't like a big competition—it's me or you. As far as I know, that never occurred.

04-00:34:28

Shafer: Yeah, do—so you were talking about—you looked at the codes. You saw the potential for the office, the disclosure was a big part of that, and I'm just wondering—?

04-00:34:36

Brown: I saw that after I saw my father's campaign treasurer fill out my campaign report for junior college board. And instead of using names, he scrambled them all and used initials, like Jay Smith, and he scribbled—in fact, some of it was just write them like names in a circle. I can't remember exactly. But that struck me. I said, "How do you do this?" He said, "That's the way we do it." And so I thought, well, that doesn't seem right to me. That's when I started investigating it, and that's how I got onto that question.

04-00:35:10

Shafer: When you say it didn't seem right to you, what do you mean?

04-00:35:12

Brown: Well, I mean you read the code! It says report the name of the donor and the amount, and it was pretty clear that you had to do both, and they somehow separated. So he'd put a total amount at the bottom, but he wouldn't put the amount next to the donor.

04-00:35:29

Shafer: So it was useless to the public really.

04-00:35:32

Brown: Well, the whole thing is a bit use[less]—I mean, it's all written for the newspapers to write stories, and they always write the same stories like they found it out. But all they did was read the campaign reports. And it does deter people from doing crazy things.

04-00:35:49

Shafer: So, I'm just wondering the extent to which that idea, of forcing politicians to fill out their disclosure forms in detail, and properly, and all that—how much of that was your own personal conviction? And how much of it was like—I don't want to say political expedience, but you saw that as—versus seeing that as a good issue. And it could be—they could both be true.

04-00:36:12

Brown: No, I thought it was a good issue, because people were concerned about it. It seemed like an obvious violation of the law. It couldn't, to me, be any clearer. It says, "report the donation." But they didn't report the donation in any sense of the word that made sense. I thought it was important, the role of secret money in politics. This is a legitimate point, that I really thought was important and did corrupt the process. So yeah, I was onto that. And then, I got into this idea before Watergate. Because Watergate was what, '73?

04-00:37:02

Shafer: Reagan was '72, I think.

04-00:37:03

Brown: Yeah, okay, I'm running in '70—I was elected in November of '70, and I guess I spoke about it before then. So I thought it was very important, and then Watergate made it even *more* important, at least temporarily, till other things came along.

04-00:37:26

Holmes: Governor, if we're looking at 1970, and on this same topic, you have Jess Unruh, who changed his name for the election. I think he dropped the e [from Jesse], but was also known as Big Daddy, who was notorious for these very kind of campaign donations and the funneling of money into the political system that you were discussing. And then, on the other hand you also have Reagan, who was better known, and particularly at this time, for what they called the *kitchen cabinet*, his business advisors, who funneled a lot of money into his campaigns and played a large role in his administration. Did that also factor in as well?

04-00:38:06

Brown: Also the Fox Ranch, that Reagan got some kind of deal on that. At least that's what I thought. I mean money is a big thing. Money talks, and it influences elections in a way that is contrary to the textbook idea of what a democracy is supposed to be about. So obviously, it was an issue that not a lot of people were talking about. In 1970, I don't think anybody was talking about it. The guy from Shasta County, back in the 1870s, that passed the campaign disclosure law that—it kind of, it went away. No, the role of money and the size of the money, I think, it's changed over time. It's not a topic that's been of great interest.

There's a federal judge [John T. Noonan], who wrote a book called, *Bribes: The Intellectual History of a Moral Idea*. Now, that's an interesting book. So he points out all the practices that happen. But it's something that's always been condemned, and corruption now, in parts of the world, is very severe—Mexico, parts of Europe. It's pretty intractable and corruption often accompanies the decline and fall of governments. So it is a real cancer. On the other hand, absolute purity is, in a capitalist system, where money's the currency of the realm. Money, it's about money. People really think about it—how much money can I make? What does he want to get paid? It's very important. So in our capital economy, it's an ever-present tension, but it's real.

[side conversation deleted]

04-00:40:34

Shafer: So, where were we? Oh, disclosure. At some point, either after the election or during, were there politicians who said, "Jerry, can't you just lay off?"

04-00:40:56

Brown: Well, I think in the campaign, as I recall, we sent out video. We were going to send it out, and we were going to name a couple senators. And we showed it to my father, and he absolutely blew a gasket. He said, "You can't do that." So we pulled it back, and we toned it down.

04-00:41:17

Shafer: These were two incumbents?

04-00:41:18

Brown: Yeah, incumbents.

04-00:41:20

Shafer: Were they Democrats?

04-00:41:21

Brown: Yeah.

04-00:41:24

Shafer: And you—but you, if your dad hadn't—you were ready to go with it?

04-00:41:26

Brown: We were ready to go with it, and as I said, there's always a tension. Tom Quinn wanted to make news. He was a news guy. I was a more political guy, so I always said, "Gee, I think we ought to tone this down." So I toned down a lot of things, because this is the tendency, even prescinding from politics, it's hard to have a sharp, incisive mind, and it's hard to have a sharp, incisive sentence. Relatively rare, I found out. In my entire *life* it's rare. So, to get through the clutter, even in 1970, you needed to call attention, in a very succinct, catchy, memorable way that touched a chord. That's what you had to do, and we did that. Not as much as Tom Quinn would have liked. [laughing] Because I had to tame him down all the time.

04-00:42:34

Shafer: Do you remember what the slogan for the campaign was?

04-00:42:36

Brown: No. I don't know if we had a slogan. Did we?

04-00:42:39

Shafer: Time for a change? [laughing]

04-00:42:40

Brown: No, I don't know, was there a slogan? You'd have to go look at the campaign. I don't think there was a campaign slogan. There was an ad I've seen that we put out. It was a print ad, but it was much calmer. That was a very mild ad.

04-00:43:02

Shafer: I can imagine some people thinking Pat's son is really self-righteous with all this stuff.

04-00:43:12

Brown: Well, you always think that, but corrupt people think that too. They don't like that. You have a continuum here, and people who were doing what they're not supposed to, would not like anybody who calls them to account. On the other hand, you can get on your high horse and be pretty obnoxious and overbearing. So, like everything else, wisdom is the middle path.

04-00:43:38

Shafer: Do you think you ever crossed a line?

04-00:43:40

Brown: I don't know if I did. You'd have to give me an example. Cross *what* line? I mean, we have many lines—what's the line? The legal line? The ethical line?

04-00:43:52

Shafer: Well, it sounds like that video—you thought the video was over the line.

04-00:43:56

Brown: My father did. I don't know that it was—I think it was accurate. No, we didn't do anything that wasn't accurate, but not everything that is accurate is prudent. Because it might create more backlash or more political opposition. So this is not about just truth and error, good and evil—it's also about being effective. And in politics, you do need allies, so you can only burn a certain number of bridges, and you have to build a far greater number of alliances. Which, by the way, to make news is not to build alliances. News is its own thing. It's based on shock, man bites dog—new, that's what it is. But not everything that is new is good. Or, certainly not everything that is new makes everything that *is*, and people that *are*, feel good.

04-00:45:01

Shafer: Did you feel, because hypocrisy can be deadly for a politician—

04-00:45:04

Brown: Yeah.

04-00:45:04

Shafer: Did you feel, as you were running, and then when you became secretary of state, a certain obligation to make sure that you were sort of setting the bar in terms of disclosure, and that kind of thing?

04-00:45:15

Brown: I think I disclosed everything. I did disclose everything. I didn't think of hypocrisy. I don't think that came up. I did think, when I became secretary of state, I noticed that in Frank Fat's [Restaurant], the lobbyists would often host the various elected officials. And the way they hosted them, they'd come by and say, "I'm your host tonight," and they'd put their business card on the table, and then that was paid for. So I barred that in Proposition 9, and I thought that was an abuse. You might call it the gravy train. On the other hand, you can go so far. I think in the White House, the president has to pay for his own meals, and then what's a personal meal and what's a presidential meal? I think they take it to a point that—I don't know. Who paid for Winston Churchill's brandy every day during World War II? [laughter] So I think to discern the proper path, I certainly did not understand, in 1970, what I understand in the twenty-first century, after having looked at—over decades—at various political actions and reactions.

04-00:46:51

Shafer: You mentioned Willie Brown a couple of times yesterday, and I'm wondering if you can think back to a conversation you had with him, if there was one, where he said—because he came from a different point of view on this stuff, I would—

04-00:47:06

Brown: Not originally. When he first went to the legislature, he proposed a bill that lobbyists would have to wear large badges that identified them as lobbyists.

04-00:47:16

Shafer: That's what John Cox said.

04-00:47:19

Brown: That's what Willie Brown said, and it's in the *LA Times* if you read the clips. Have you seen it?

04-00:47:23

Marzorati: Yeah, yeah. It's also in the biography too, on Willie Brown.

04-00:47:29

Holmes: And his oral history as well.

04-00:47:31

Brown: So you're not reading Willie Brown's oral history, obviously.

04-00:47:33

Shafer: Not yet—*Basic Brown: [My Life and Our Times]*, is that the one? But, so he changed at some point?

04-00:47:40

Brown: Or *evolves!* Look, this is a situational world. The world is—the world of Eisenhower is not the world of Clinton. Things change over, certainly over decades, and they even change over years. The world of campaigning without television—the 1950 campaign didn't have television, '54. So that may have put a premium on making relationships with labor unions, with newspaper editors, with fraternal organizations like the Elk and the Moose and the Knights of Columbus. And so those are relationships, and you build relationships by having meals together, having a drink together, having a cigar together, going on a trip together, and the question is who pays for those?

So in the more rarified—and I say *rarified* if I can put quotations on that—environment today, then all that's illegal. And to some extent, you don't need to do those things, because you don't need the relationships as much. You need money, and you need media—and you communicate. Now, you do build your things, and you find work-arounds. Things just change. You can use words in 1950 that you can't use in 2000, so we're constrained by the flow of fashion and fad, and you ignore it at your peril.

04-00:49:40

Shafer: So, you mentioned that your budget got cut. That was sort of like payback to you from the legislature.

04-00:49:45

Brown: Yeah, but it didn't matter much because I had a very lean budget anyway. [laughter] I didn't *need* very much.

04-00:49:52

Shafer: How did you found out they were cutting your budget?

04-00:49:52

Brown: I don't know. They told me, or something. But it was a gesture, it didn't really have any impact. I mean, how do you cut the secretary of state? We have functions. You have to follow the corporate finance—all the financing documents. Security interest—if you want the equivalent of a mortgage in property or inventory, you've got to file a piece of paper of record, and that's with the secretary of state. So then we have a little bit of election—you've got to file the campaign reports. You can't take away the filing cabinets. And what do we have? We had a few lawyers. They didn't take those out, the election lawyers—only a couple. That time we had a couple. I only had two exempt positions. I think the secretary of state has many, many more now.

04-00:50:43

Shafer: But I mean clearly, they were trying to send a message.

04-00:50:46

Brown: Oh, they were sending a message, yeah. I guess in today's jargon it's *signaling*.

04-00:50:53

Shafer: [laughing] And did you get the signal?

04-00:50:56

Brown: Well, not particularly. No. It may have been for internal consumption—who knows what the message is. Maybe the message is the speaker showing he's protecting his members. But maybe he's constrained. I don't know what Bob Moretti was thinking. He's not alive today. But he might have been thinking I can't do *too* much—it'll look bad. But I have to do something for my reputation and for my house, as they call it. So I don't know. We rented a place, a building—it was a private building. The rent was not any higher. In fact, it was a little lower, but of course it was to an outside party. Then we just went down to the old Sierra Building, and that was fine.

04-00:51:47

Shafer: So there were other things on the ballot that November. John Tunney beat George Murphy. Reagan got reelected. How would you describe the political environment that year?

04-00:52:03

Brown: The political environment in '70? I think violence. Is that the Weathermen by 1970? Campus unrest. A group of students blew up a computer in Fresno. There was other violence. So disorder was out there, definitely. That was still part of the landscape.

04-00:52:34

Shafer: How do you think that affected what voters were looking for?

04-00:52:36

Brown: Certainly, you do not want to be a soft on crime, wishy-washy character. So that was the environment then.

04-00:52:57

Holmes: In the race between Reagan and Unruh, what do you recall about your view of that race, meaning did you think that Unruh had a chance to beat Reagan?

04-00:53:04

Brown: No, no—in fact, when he came within 500,000 votes, that was considered pretty good. The only thing I remember from that campaign is that Reagan marched up the driveway of Henry Salvatori, and called out Henry Salvatori in some way.

04-00:53:21

Holmes: Unruh did?

04-00:53:22

Brown: Unruh did, to Reagan. But it was tough. Reagan was a star, and there was this mood. In 1970, Nixon's still popular probably—yeah, he certainly was popular against [George S.] McGovern two years later. It was hard for a Democrat, I think, even though the Democratic registration was very high.

04-00:53:52

Holmes: When you were, in that general election, I think one of only two or three Democrats that were elected?



04-00:53:57

Brown: To what?

04-00:53:59

Holmes: In 1972 statewide office.

04-00:54:03

Brown: I think the only—oh, Tunney was elected. And maybe Tom Lynch, as attorney general?

04-00:54:09

Holmes: Wilson [C.] Riles, I think.

04-00:54:10

Brown: Wilson Riles was an independent, and who was the attorney general? Oh, I think [J.] Arthur Younger was elected. Yeah, Tom Lynch did not run. So yeah, the only statewide elected was myself, except for Wilson Riles—that's a nonpartisan office [state superintendent of public instruction].

04-00:54:28

Holmes: A final question on Unruh: when we look at this campaign, he's trying to wage a populist campaign against Reagan. And he's trying to shed, I think, many years of rumors—or at least speculation about his behavior when it comes to lobbyists and the inner workings of Sacramento. Do you think, or did he ever speak to you, about your campaign against campaign finances?

04-00:54:57

Brown: I can't remember. I didn't have much contact with him. I had a little contact with the Tunney campaign. That was in LA. But I don't remember much contact with Unruh and Reagan. I had very little.

04-00:55:10

Shafer: How did John Tunney strike you?

04-00:55:14

Brown: Well, he was a friend of Teddy Kennedy. Very upbeat. He was very attractive to the folks, particularly in Hollywood. He had a lot of support there. So he was a more glamorous candidate.

04-00:55:37

Shafer: Did he seem substantive?

04-00:55:38

Brown: I couldn't tell. I mean he was sufficiently glamorous that that was the overwhelming impression. But vigorous, dynamic. He was a good candidate.

04-00:55:52

Shafer: So you win, and you get sworn in on January 4, 1971, and Earl Warren swears you in. How did you come to that—how did you decide to have him do it?

04-00:56:05

Brown: Well, I knew who he was. I thought that would be quite historic, memorable. My father knew Warren. They had become friends. So why wouldn't he? If you could have Earl Warren swear you in, why would you say, "I would rather have the clerk of Sacramento County." Or who would you say? A judge?

04-00:56:39

Shafer: Your father.

04-00:56:41

Brown: Well, I didn't even think of that. See, normally you had judges swear you in. A judge swore in my father, Chief Justice [Phil S.] Gibson swore him in as attorney general. I think we have a picture of that. So it seemed to me that you have a judge. Well, if you have a judge, you could have the chief justice—why not have the chief justice of the United States? So that was my thought. But it wasn't a big show. It was a very modest. By today's productions, it was pretty simple. I think it was in one of the rooms in the capitol. There weren't a lot of people there, I don't think. But certainly, there was—maybe a hundred, a couple hundred.

04-00:57:24

Shafer: Was there press there?

04-00:57:26

Brown: Yeah, there must have been press. But I don't know if you read the next day in the [*Sacramento*] *Bee*, I don't know if you see anything. There must have been. Because the swearing in is usually the governor. So yeah, I'm sworn in on the same day, I was sworn in. So the governor is the story, is the news.

04-00:57:46

Shafer: Do you remember your first conversation with Governor Reagan as secretary of state, or that early relationship, like what was that?

04-00:57:52

Brown: No, I just called him—I think I went in and talked to him about my budget. I wanted to expand it to include a few election lawyers or something—something like that. I think I only talked to him once.

04-00:58:07

Shafer: The whole four years?

04-00:58:07

Brown: Yeah.

04-00:58:08

Shafer: Really?

04-00:58:09

Brown: Well, that's more than governors normally talk to secretaries of state.

04-00:58:13

Shafer: [laughing] And then, of course, Watergate happens. And I don't know if we want to jump ahead or not, to Proposition 9?

04-00:58:24

Brown: Oh yeah, that was '74. That's four years later. There were a lot of lawsuits we brought. Brought a lawsuit against Nixon's notary public, [Frank] DeMarco [Jr.], for falsifying his income tax returns. And we had a hearing, and took away his notary public. In fact, he did falsify the returns. He did sort of take advantage of a tax exemption that had expired. Very crude violation of the tax law. Tom Quinn uncovered that—I never verified it, but Tom Quinn claims that somehow he was able to find the typeface of the typewriter, and that typewriter was not made in the time when the tax law was operative. Now, that's what he said—whatever it was, they figured it out somehow. So that was a lawsuit.

I also filed a claim with the Federal Communications Commission, to ask them to provide free time—five minutes each night, on all stations—for major candidates. And I also asked the postal service to provide a certain number of free universal mailings. Those filings, for all I know, are still there in the archives. They've never been acted upon, but they were good ideas at the time. That was before social media.

04-01:00:04

Shafer: You were basically sort of flexing, using the office in a way that it hadn't been used before.

04-01:00:07

Brown: Right.

04-01:00:10

Shafer: And to what you told us yesterday, that you decided when you were listening to your father and Jess Unruh talk, that you decided you wanted to be governor?

04-01:00:19

Brown: I think that's when I decided. You know, it was a long time [ago], so the mists of time are getting denser. But that's what I believe.

04-01:00:32

Shafer: I mean at some point, I imagine that you and Tom were thinking okay, how are we going to *parlay* this—no, you don't like that word, it sounds like a poker game. But how are you going to use this office—

04-01:00:43

Brown: Parlay, I think that—isn't that a racing term?

04-01:00:44

Shafer: Parlay—I don't know. I thought yesterday you objected to it.

04-01:00:49

Brown: No, I didn't. You didn't use the word *parlay* yesterday.

- 04-01:00:49  
Shafer: [laughing] Oh, I didn't?
- 04-01:00:51  
Brown: No, you didn't. Did you remember hearing him say—?
- 04-01:00:55  
Marzorati: Parlay, yeah.
- 04-01:00:53  
Brown: What?
- 04-01:00:53  
Shafer: Yeah, I did.
- 04-01:00:54  
Marzorati: You have to pick a couple winners in a row to win. [laughter]
- 04-01:00:58  
Brown: Yeah, whatever. I don't know what *parlay* means.
- 04-01:01:00  
Shafer: [laughing] We'll get the transcript.
- 04-01:01:00  
Brown: That's why I don't know what it means. [laughter] I think it means racing. No, we knew about my running for governor before I was sworn in as secretary of state. So, yeah, our whole orientation was make sure that was the path I was on.
- 04-01:01:16  
Shafer: Say more about that. How did you have that—what did you talk about?
- 04-01:01:20  
Brown: I mean I can't recount a conversation from more than forty years ago. But we did, in the office, that which the office had a legal obligation and right to do. And in so doing, we certainly got a lot of attention. And we traveled around, and that's where we put out press releases. And as I remember, I'd deliver a release myself. I'd go to the *LA Times*, drop it off, go up to UPI, go up some backstairs and drop off the release. That's how you had to drop things off, you just didn't send them out electronically. So we did that, and you'd have to look at the number of releases. But my impression was that we had the eighteen-year-old vote. I think I filed an amicus brief on that—might have filed an amicus brief on the Spanish ballot. We did a number of things. And we went to political meetings, went to county clerk meetings, talked with the county clerks.
- 04-01:02:39  
Shafer: Did you feel like you were building bridges to, you know, constituencies at that point, like labor?

04-01:02:44

Brown: Yeah, I would think so, to African Americans. The guy who owned the black paper in LA [*Los Angeles Sentinel*]—[Leon] Washington [Jr.], Mr. Washington. He and his wife [Ruth] had that paper. I would go down and visit them. Yeah, we went to different newspapers around the state.

04-01:03:15

Shafer: So with some of these lawsuits that you filed, did you write—?

04-01:03:17

Brown: There was more of a media program—old fashioned. Go to the different counties, because the media was—became more and more important. In the old days, you'd have to go to all these places and even in 1970, you still had to go to a local media market. But you were going to the media. You weren't going to the county clerk. Whereas my father had said his whole idea was you go visit the editor and the judge and the county clerk, of each county. But of course each of these counties was so small that it's a different perspective today.

04-01:03:58

Shafer: How you decide which cases to, you know, file an amicus brief or to file a lawsuit?

04-01:04:02

Brown: Yeah, because they were related to the secretary of state. They were germane to the job. I didn't just pull something out of the air. It had to be related to what we were doing.

04-01:04:15

Shafer: And one that you could get in the news with, I assume?

04-01:04:19

Brown: Well, if it was noteworthy, it was newsworthy. I mean it's difficult to do something important in a totally obscure way. That would be kind of a form of political mortification that I think is inconsistent with the calling.

04-01:04:39

Shafer: I wonder, in the '72 election—you weren't on the ballot of course. But there were a number of issues, including Prop. 22, which was an anti-UFW initiative. It would have banned boycotts.

04-01:04:52

Brown: Oh yeah, we worked on that. I helped explore—there was some fraudulent signature gathering, and I held a press conference and exposed that and the farm workers were very happy about that.

04-01:05:10

Shafer: And had—did they come to you and suggest that, or how—?

04-01:05:12

Brown: Yes, yes. I think at some point in time I'd gone to La Paz and visited Chávez.

04-01:05:19

Shafer: Yeah, what was he like?

04-01:05:22

Brown: I thought very impressive. I saw him first in my father's house on Muirfield in the '66 campaign. He just walked through the room. He had a plaid shirt on. At La Paz, it was one of these places with a lot of fervor—nuns and young people and everyone very much in the cause. So it has that spirit of common endeavor, kind of a kibbutz/novitiate kind of feeling, which I am drawn to, so I liked that. I remember sitting around on the rug drinking herb tea with him and a number of his associates. He just had a way—there was a charisma there. Undoubtedly. A lot of people just don't have charisma. I don't want to compare him to Mother Teresa, but Mother Teresa had charisma too. Simple of dress, simple of manner, very direct. Now, César, I can't tell you all the different—he had had a soft voice. But the fact that he was—the Madonna, the flag, the *huelga* [strike], the whole movement—it was a movement. And so that was very attractive, because I thought they were doing something. You have the most oppressed workers, and they were lifting them up, and they were doing it not in a bread and butter trade union way, but in a *movement* way. So, yeah, I was very impressed by that.

04-01:07:22

Holmes: When was the first time that you met César Chávez?

04-01:07:27

Brown: I guess when I went to La Paz, when I was probably seeking their endorsement for secretary of state.

04-01:07:37

Shafer: Oh, and what was La Paz?

04-01:07:37

Brown: La Paz is where the farm workers had their headquarters. Outside of Bakersfield.

04-01:07:42

Holmes: It's a town.

04-01:07:43

Brown: That's where César is buried.

04-01:07:45

Shafer: I thought he was buried in Delano. Maybe not.

04-01:07:47

Brown: No, Delano is where they started, but they went off to this former sanitarium and established a whole operation.

04-01:07:51

Holmes: It's up in the Tehachapis.

04-01:07:56

Shafer: To what extent did you see him, and that movement, as kind of an emerging political force in California?

04-01:08:06

Brown: Well, he had a lot of followers—he had people all over the world. They had people boycotting in Canada and London, the longshoremen refusing to unload California produce. He had this march—I don't know if I, I don't think I met him on the march, but I was there. And Tunney, I think, came to that march—and Mondale, down to Calexico. It was a crowd. I don't know, five hundred, a thousand people? I don't know, maybe five hundred, but it seemed like a long line of people, walking several miles along the road, you know, carrying banners. Well, that's not something I encountered before. So yeah, I found it interesting. No, more than interesting—it was *moving*. He was somebody of conviction, moral purpose, with all the ritual and emotion and feeling that is far different than just working on legislation in Sacramento or going to your political rally. This had more of a religious feel to it.

04-01:09:32

Shafer: A cause.

04-01:09:34

Brown: It was a cause, and there weren't a lot of causes. There's the civil rights movement. There was the farm worker movement, which—I saw the two as similar.

04-01:09:44

Holmes: Governor, they marched to Sacramento in 1966.

04-01:09:47

Brown: Yeah.

04-01:09:48

Holmes: When your father was running. I think your father was down in Los Angeles, spending Easter Sunday with the family.

04-01:09:57

Brown: Actually in Palm Springs.

04-01:09:58

Holmes: Yes, Palm Springs, you're right.

04-01:10:02

Brown: At Frank Sinatra's house. I guess that would be a reportable transaction under Proposition 9. [laughter]

04-01:10:10

Holmes: He was not there to meet with them on Sunday, and Chávez made news about that, and we were just talking about news. Was there a lesson for you learned in seeing that? Because Democrats were very slow to support the movement until probably 1968.

04-01:10:32

Brown:

Well, first of all, it wasn't too popular in a number of places where there were farmers. Chávez was not a force that was welcomed by the farming community, so you had to choose—and politicians don't like to choose. They like to add, not subtract. So I assume my father was hesitant to be in that divisive role. And he was someone, through the water plan, who had a lot of farmers who liked him. I don't know how many that would be by today's calculations. It might have been smaller than he thought, but he did have a constituency. And so he just said Easter was a time to spend with the family. That's what he told me—and he said that, and we talked about it. I thought that he should have been there. I thought that *then*. Now, I'm not sure.

04-01:11:26

Shafer:

Why the different—?

04-01:11:27

Brown:

Well, I'm just thinking from his political point of view. Now, he probably could have embraced the movement, because the movement was growing, it was part of the Democratic Party, but it was very antagonistic to the growers. It was labor and capital. The Mexican farm worker versus the non-Mexican grower. And that's very divisive. On the other hand, the farm workers didn't have any rights. They had the short-handled hoe. They didn't have unemployment insurance. So—it was a cause. I mean I can see why he would conclude that, from a political point of view. I mean you *are* in politics, and you try not to do things—you try to avoid things that lose you votes. I mean, that is a fact. This is a game of numbers. If you get fewer votes than your opponent, then you lose. So you can never ignore any action that would move votes against your position. And I don't think any real politician ever does, no matter what they say.

04-01:12:53

Shafer:

I'm wondering, you know, looking back—it sounds like now you can see why your father did what he did at the time. And I'm wondering—?

04-01:13:00

Brown:

Yeah, it seemed like that was the cause, and he should have been with that. And I don't think I experienced how people felt about the farm workers. When I became governor, no legislator in the valley would be seen with me. And that was actually the [California] Agricultural [Labor] Relations Act, but they did not want to be—when I wanted to come into town, they avoided me. So this was a polarized—that's what they said, and that's what they did. And I don't know whether it was the same in '66, but it wasn't quite that bad, and I probably didn't even appreciate that. But it was a drawing of a line.

04-01:13:45

Shafer:

I guess what I'm getting at is you were—when you were in college and when you're in the seminary—

04-01:13:48

Brown:

Yeah, yeah.



04-01:13:49

Shafer:

And when you're studying for the bar—you were pretty idealistic, I think, and maybe you feel you still are. Like you tried to get your father to stop—you tried to stop an execution. And I'm just wondering, looking—are there a lot of issues where you look back now and you say—you understand better what he did than you did at the time?

04-01:14:10

Brown:

Well, let's say understand—how much can you understand if you're sitting in an isolated mountain top talking to no one except fellow Jesuits, and reading nothing except the Bible and Jesuit biographies, and talking about a life of perfection? How much does that equip you to deal with labor relations or workers' compensation or pensions or highways or racial matters? I mean it did give you some moral guidelines. But the world of politics—there is a prudential issue here. I mean, if you are right and the other guy is wrong, and then ultimately you go to war. And when you go to war, you have to kill people. So that's not good either.

But it would be very difficult—I think about that. How would World War I have been prevented? Could Russia have looked at the ally Serbia, and it was being invaded by the Hapsburgs, Austria. They said, "We've got to come to their aid because they're our orthodox brothers." I suppose that was a moral issue. That was the *right* thing to do. And then the French—oh, we've got an alliance. That's the *right* thing to do. And the Germans say we're allied with Austria—and I'm sure they thought it was the *right* thing to do. Well, fifteen or twenty million people were killed after that. And George [H.W.] Bush thought it was *right* to bomb Baghdad. That was a morally correct position. But we didn't have ISIS before that. So you have to beware of the consequences of your actions, whatever labels you affix to them.

04-01:16:12

Shafer:

We'll maybe take a little break in a second, but I want to—maybe just one other thing about—because it became important on the ballot, Prop. 20, which was the coastal commission act [California Coastal Zone Conservation Act of 1972], yeah.

04-01:16:20

Brown:

Right.

04-01:16:22

Shafer:

What do you recall about that? What was your position on it? Did you think it was a good idea? How did you—?

04-01:16:29

Brown:

Yeah, it sounded like a good idea. I didn't get actively involved in that. There was a lot of opposition from business. I remember a guy named Alan [G.] Sieroty, I think, who was active in it. So yeah, I didn't know exactly what it was, but I knew they were protecting the coast. But I came to understand the Coastal Commission in greater detail years later. So I tried to focus on what I was doing. And my job was, in 1972, well, I was getting ready to run for governor. I met a guy named, he

was the senator from Siskiyou County, way up there in, I think, Yreka. Senator Collier, Randolph [E.] Collier. The Silver Fox. And so I would be popping off on one issue after another, and he came up to me and he said, “You’re talking,” I can’t remember the exact words, but the effect, the sum and substance—“You talk about a lot of issues. Let me tell you something. Every time you take a position, you’re going to lose votes. So think about it, and don’t take a position on everything.” [laughing] I don’t know when he told me that, but I would have to say those are wise words.

Now, if you take *no* positions, then you’re nothing. If you take nothing but positions, you’re all over the place. So you are creating an impression, and the impression is made up of your actions and your words, and so you have to be conscious about that. You can’t be just—oh, “I’m here, and I’m doing”—just thinking about the first level. You do have to see it in the larger picture. I think most politicians instinctively have a sense. In fact, most of them are too cautious, I would say—they’re very cautious.

04-01:18:56

Shafer: Risk averse.

04-01:18:57

Brown: I’d say they’re very risk averse, on things like the gas tax and the cap-and-trade bill—they weren’t jumping on—in fact, most of these bills that we passed, it was hard—hard pulling.

Interview 5: March 19, 2019 [in the afternoon]

05-00:00:00

Shafer: This is the beginning of session five. Scott Shafer with Todd Holmes and Governor Brown, and we're up here at the ranch in Colusa. So—1973-74. You're starting to—thinking about running for governor.

05-00:00:13

Brown: Yeah.

05-00:00:15

Shafer: There were others who wanted to run, and did run for governor that year. You know, how did you assess the field when you looked at who was running, what the climate was? It was post-Watergate—Nixon was resigning that year.

05-00:00:30

Brown: I don't know about assessing the field. The main focus was on what I was doing in the campaign. You look at other candidates, and you read polls, and think about this one and that one, but that's more of a journalistic approach. You know, let's assess the candidates. Well, each candidate is thinking about himself and where he's going. [laughing] And what he has to do, and what *his* problems are. So—

05-00:01:03

Shafer: You didn't sort of size up the other Democrats?

05-00:01:07

Brown: Well, I mean instinctively—I size up things and I have a political mind, and so any kind of political phenomenon is something that is drawn to my attention. But yeah, I don't know what that would mean. I mean, obviously, [Joseph L.] Alioto was a dynamic character, a very forceful speaker, and he was very charismatic in his own way.

05-00:01:35

Shafer: Well, maybe more so the climate, you know—that era. The country was going through a lot of turbulence. Reagan was done. He'd done two terms. Like how did you see this as a good time for you?

05-00:01:50

Brown: Well, there wasn't an incumbent, and I was the only statewide officer. I think it was a good time. I can't remember if we took some polls, but I think I showed good enough. That was just a trajectory. It doesn't work the way you think it does. You know, I was secretary of state; I want to run for governor; I'm running for governor. [tapping on table for emphasis] What does it take? Let's do it. So there's a lot of just operational—raise the money. That's endless. Go from one place to the other, traveling around, scheduling very, very—

05-00:02:30

Shafer: Routine.

05-00:02:31

Brown: No, very intensive, very activity filled. So sitting around pondering—I guess that's political *talk*. You know, let's sit around in a bar and talk about the candidates. But the candidate is more interested in advancing *his* cause—or her cause. That's the way *I* experienced it. Or at least the way I remember it.

05-00:02:52

Shafer: Yeah, and how did you think about advancing—like what was your path?

05-00:02:56

Brown: Well, the path is all very simple. You have to make news, raise money, and avoid mistakes. This is simple stuff. [laughing] Not simple—well, a good part of the political environment is already given. It's *thrown* in front of you, and then you enter it. So you don't alter what people are thinking. Oh, you do a little bit, but that's it. You go someplace, you give a speech. What are you going to talk about? In fact, I think I gave one written speech at town hall. I think I quoted that famous essay on the closing of the frontier. Tom and I spent time writing it, and I just found that a written speech takes a lot of work, and it doesn't make any difference to the press release. And I kind of marveled at that—first of all, even the speech itself. In those days, we could get a press release out and printed by AP, or sometimes the other newspapers, and then that would be the same as giving a speech. But we had to go to places. And I guess there wasn't that much coverage to begin with, except for secretary of state stuff. It's hard to get coverage, even then. Now harder even, today—even harder.

So I remember what Tom said. He says you've got millions of voters. So the candidate knows two hundred people, five hundred people—two thousand? Meets, shakes hands—five thousand, ten thousand—some number like that. Okay. There's millions and millions and millions more. The only way to get to them is through some mass media, which is newspaper stories, radio programming, television—or you pay for it, in a thirty-second ad. Or you might write a letter. That's it. And therefore, the most important thing is you need to have enough money to do that. And that's what all campaigns are now built on. Although that alone doesn't do it, because there has to be—the candidate and the time have to fit, and that's something that you don't invent. You fit the time, or you don't.

05-00:05:33

Shafer: Well, talk about that. How did you fit the time, do you think?

05-00:05:38

Brown: Well, I mean I was a reformer. We had Reagan there for eight years. He was a Republican, so I was different. I was the change. So the political reform was something, but it wasn't enough. You know, in the primary, because the ballot measure was on the ballot—and once that passed, that issue, I think, faded. And at the same time, the election got a lot closer, so it became Democrat/Republican. And then [Houston I.] Flournoy could attack on harvest-time strikes, public employee strikes, capital punishment, this and that. So yeah, a lot of the issues

were not favorable to me, I would say. The political reform was, in the primary. But in the general, it then shifted. And Nixon pardoned by Ford, threw the Republican candidates back—Flournoy back, even though he had nothing to do with it. But after that wore off—and it did appear to wear off—then it got closer and closer. So it was a close election, and it wasn't clear how to run that election.

05-00:07:01

Shafer: Talk about Prop. 9 [Political Reform Act] because—

05-00:07:04

Brown: Prop. 9, I want to emphasize, was strictly up till June. Then it passed, is over. And as we know, one thing about news is it *rots* fast. It's like a ripe fruit in the sun. It's gone by the afternoon, or what we'd say, by the news cycle. So you have to constantly be moving. And that particular issue, which I hadn't really thought about that much, really did disappear. There was probably some residual in people's minds, but it wasn't the decider when it came to Flournoy.

05-00:07:43

Shafer: How did Reagan, Governor Reagan, feel about Prop. 9?

05-00:07:47

Brown: I have no idea.

05-00:07:50

Shafer: He didn't react, as governor?

05-00:07:51

Brown: I don't know. Is there any written evidence of what he said or thought?

05-00:07:56

Shafer: Well, I think he—it was around that time that he pushed—

05-00:07:58

Brown: He probably didn't, he didn't endorse it, I don't think.

05-00:08:02

Shafer: It was around that time he pushed for making the secretary of state's job nonpartisan, and maybe—

05-00:08:05

Brown: He didn't push very hard. Well, he couldn't—the Democrats controlled the legislature. He pushed for that, but it was a bit halfhearted, I thought.

05-00:08:21

Shafer: Talking about the times, and there was a lot of turbulence. You were very young. You were thirty-six, I think, when you were running. How did you see that—as an advantage, a liability, something you had to overcome?

05-00:08:33

Brown: Yeah, a little bit something to overcome, a little young. The other candidates were more experienced. So yeah, the whole question of experience becomes an issue that obviously everybody wants to know.

05-00:08:51

Shafer: Did you see it as like, well, on the one hand I'm inexperienced, but on the other hand, I'm young, and that's dynamic and new and different? How did you see that?

05-00:08:57

Brown: I was talking on more of the things, more of the political reform in the primary. And then issues did become difficult in the general but the idea of thinking about, "Oh, I'm young, I'm not young," I don't know what you do with all that. It's winter, it's fall—okay. It *is*. So, I don't think that goes anywhere.

05-00:09:24

Shafer: Looking back on it, do you think it was an advantage? Or—

05-00:09:29

Brown: I don't know about that. Why would that be relevant? What if I were ten years older? I didn't look that much different ten years later. I'm not sure. That's an interpretation of one aspect of a candidacy. It is what it—it's there.

05-00:09:50

Shafer: Yeah, talk about, if you would, that your campaign headquarters on Sunset. Where was it, what was it like in that—?

05-00:09:57

Brown: It was abuzz—it was lots of activity, a lot of people, like typical gubernatorial campaigns. A lot of fun. A lot of meetings. A lot of constituency groups coming in. But again, the most part was media. You have to reach the millions and millions of people, and you can't do that knocking on doors. You can only do that through news, or through the purchase of advertisements. And that's what we did—make news, raise money, buy ads.

05-00:10:35

Shafer: What kind of people did you attract as volunteers, do you remember?

05-00:10:40

Brown: No, some of them, we had a group from Immaculate Heart College showed up. Some of them are still my friends. Some Latinos went on to become leaders in the labor movement, or become legislators or businesspeople. So you know, it was just a wide group. I'd have to get the roster out and kind of go over it.

05-00:11:15

Shafer: But I mean because of Watergate, did you—I mean a lot of people were just turned off to politics. But did you feel like it—?

05-00:11:20

Brown:

I think that's another one of those little memes. Most people are not interested in politics. Well, not most, but a lot of people aren't. And then some people are. And young people, you know, if I go speak on a campus, then some of them would be excited and say, "Gee, this would be fun. Let's do it." And campaigns are one of the more open institutions. They don't fingerprint you when you come in, they don't do a back—at least we didn't, do background checks. Don't check your grades, don't find out do you have a degree in something? And people come in and they could do almost anything. Research, work in press, work in scheduling, drive people, secondary scheduling, help build crowds. So there's a lot you can do. And people with skill came in. Jodie Krajewski [Evans] came in, and she helped raise money. She was good at that, and she was very young. And you get right in there. If you were good—if you can raise money, or if you can write a press release, you would just go right to the top, I would think. Now, maybe other campaigns are more rigid. But they tend to be kind of open. If anything, they usually have too many people in them, and I tried to keep it fairly modest in size. Because every dollar you spend on an organization, you're not spending on the media.

05-00:13:06

Shafer:

So that was the main thing, the TV—and radio.

05-00:13:09

Brown:

Well, if you're thinking of communicating with eight or nine million people, is there another way? You can go get a megaphone and stand down on Pershing Square and start yelling, but (a), it won't be effective, and (b), nobody's going to hear you. So there is only *one* road, and it's called news and money—and the candidate, and his or her intelligence and values and charisma. But those are the mechanics. In football, you've got to get the ball from where you are to the other guy's goal line. That's what you've got to do. So when you're there, you've got to get the vote—or people don't know who the hell you are, to vote for you, not for the other guy. That's it. A subset of voters is very informed. And then as it goes down the spectrum, they get less informed. But they're all affected, one way or the other, by a campaign.

It's my view—this is not an archival factoid—but I would just say that campaigns, in many cases, although not all, are just the candidate, the issues, and the other candidate. Sometimes you win because the other guy's so bad. Sometimes you win because you're just what is wanted at that time. And then other times, you get these very clever campaign advisors and consultants, and they help you shape a campaign. But I would say that's sometimes, but not always.

05-00:15:03

Shafer:

Did that happen with you?

05-00:15:05

Brown:

Well, I don't know that we had campaign consultants.

05-00:15:08

Shafer: What about Tom Quinn?

05-00:15:10

Brown: Well, he worked in the campaign. He was employed by the campaign. That was his job.

05-00:15:18

Shafer: But he was part of like image making, and that kind of thing?

05-00:15:21

Brown: Well, he wrote press releases, and he also directed the campaign. Yeah, he was a campaign *manager*. That's a little different. Consultants offer advice, and I don't want to get off onto that whole story. But it was a simpler structure. And the only people that were professional were the cameramen, and they did the commercials—and the pollsters, I think, for the most part. Is that it? Maybe the mail house. But today, if you take Meg Whitman's campaign, there were over 150 employees, so it's getting layered and hierarchical. And government's getting like that, so there's a lot of layering. And I think we had a flatter organization, simpler. It was Tom Quinn, Richard Maullin, myself.

05-00:16:20

Holmes: Governor, there's always a lot of talk about coalitions, when we look at party politics. When your father ran in 1966 to when you're running here in '74, I guess the coalition of the Democratic Party had shifted quite a bit. What were your observations on that—the coalition, if we want to use that term—?

05-00:16:44

Brown: Well, coalition sounds like the British government. You have a coalition of the liberal party and the conservatives. Now you're talking about an electorate, where people aren't in a parliamentary hall cutting deals. So the party was different. You had Earth Day. You had something called the environment. You had the assertion of black power, of civil rights. That became something different, so that it was simpler than in Truman's day, or even the '58 campaign. Yeah, there is more of a fragmentation, and today it's even much more so.

I kept thinking of the black/brown coalition. That's what Tom Bradley—he had a guy, Maury [Maurice Weiner] that was one of his advisers—and their whole deal was to get the Mexican Americans and the African Americans working to elect Tom Bradley. And I guess that was embryonic of what's going on today. You know, that's kind of a social-science way of looking at it. And campaigns are getting very micro targeted, but I don't think we thought in micro-targeting terms—swing voters. I didn't know about the swing voter.

We knew about the voters in South Gate that had voted against fair housing, and voted for Sam Yorty in the primary, that there was a conservative Democrat. And Yorty got about 43 percent of the vote, as I recall. So that's a factor, so you're always thinking, "Well, how do we get to people in South Gate?" Because you're not going to win if you lose all of what were called the Yorty vote, you're not



going to get elected, so somehow you have to get that vote. And that gets complicated when these things get divisive, and you get issues like abortion and cross-town busing, and things like that that politicians do like to avoid. And when you're from a particular district, you champion one side or the other. But when you're running statewide in a very diverse state, you tend to want to be more generic, and then that has its own challenge. And so, obviously, I've followed in that tradition, as do all candidates who turn out to be elected.

05-00:19:27

Shafer: Coming back to the primary for a minute. Prop. 9—you embraced it, you supported it. And I think your two opponents, [Joseph L.] Alioto and [Robert] Moretti, did not. Did you use that, do you remember—against them?

05-00:19:40

Brown: Well, I don't know if they—I think [Jerome L.] Waldie endorsed it. [John F.] "Jack" Henning, from the AFL-CIO, denounced it—in terms that have turned out to have some truth to them. But did I use it?

05-00:20:00

Shafer: To differentiate yourself.

05-00:20:01

Brown: I can't remember. Well, obviously, I would use that. But whether I took an ad out—use it *how*? Use it in a speech to two hundred people? Or use it in an ad that goes to two million people? I hate to be so picky, but details matter, as to what we're talking about. You have a lot of conversations. When you're in a campaign, you're going every day, talking politics. And yeah, the fact that we lost the endorsement—that highlighted political reform. I was on the good side.

05-00:20:38

Shafer: And I can imagine, in an election like this during the middle of Watergate, where you would use it to say look, these guys are part of the old system.

05-00:20:46

Brown: Well, I don't know that I attacked them as much. I don't think our ads attacked *them*—I'm not sure. Someone would have to go back and look. I think this *attack* is more recent. Well, I mean it comes back. It's been around in California a long, long time. But the goal was to get known and win over a majority of the voters. And a year before I started, I think I remember seeing a poll, I was around 35 percent, and when the vote came in, I was around 35 percent, a year later, after all the activity. So that's my point, that things get fixed. I represented a certain loyalty, fondness for the Brown—the memory, the Brown memory, the name, kind of. Maybe the political reform, maybe younger—it was a combination of those factors.

05-00:21:48

Shafer: Did you—you've mentioned TV a few times, and I don't know—you may not remember exactly what the slogan was, but you know, how did you—I know

you're not going to like this word, but how did you like—*package* yourself. How did you convince all these voters?

05-00:22:01

Brown: You should go collect the films, and go look at them. You can see for yourself.

05-00:22:06

Shafer: Well, we'll do that. But I'm just—what's your recollection?

05-00:22:11

Brown: Well, in a very attractive way, I thought. Although I've listened to some of the ads, and the voices get a bit distorted, so they seem a little bit hollow to me right now. But I think that's the sound. The sound doesn't last long on recordings. Did you know that? Have you heard things from thirty years ago?

05-00:22:29

Shafer: Yeah, it deteriorates.

05-00:22:30

Brown: Big time. I'm sure political reform was part of the primary, I would think. Obviously, that was a big defining issue, I would think. But it's hard to remember. I've had a lot of these campaigns. I've done a lot of ads. Yeah.

05-00:22:52

Shafer: So Tom Quinn—there's a quote from Tom in the *LA Times*, and I'm not sure quite what the date is, but here's what he said, "We wanted," looking back on the campaign, "We wanted to avoid any discussion of substance. We found obscure, boring issues, and talked about them. Jerry's real ideas were dangerous."

05-00:23:15

Brown: That's Richard Maullin, isn't it?

05-00:23:17

Shafer: It was Tom Quinn, I think, in the *LA Times*. So what is he—?

05-00:23:20

Brown: That was at a conference. That's, again, the political campaign manager talking, you know, like he's in charge—which really isn't true. The candidate is the one that runs the campaign, for the most part. That was an overstatement of the obvious point, that strikes at harvest time and giving public employees the right to bargain, which would imply the right to strike, or capital punishment, were not winner topics, so you do want to avoid that. So, that's the avoidance of unnecessary controversy. Now, the ads were meant to be exciting, meant to be memorable, not to be boring, but to not being a flame throwing, extreme candidate. You could go into a debate or something and say, "Look, I'm standing here, and I tell you, if I'm governor, we're going to have strikes from Stockton to El Centro at the height of harvest, and that fruit's going to rot, unless César Chávez is an equal bargaining agent with the farmers of California." You could say that, right? But you'd be a damn fool.

05-00:24:50

Shafer: Not a winner.

05-00:24:52

Brown: Well, why would you even say it, anyway? It's not even diplomatic. The whole notion of collective bargaining was framed in terms of a secret-ballot election of choices. So, I think, looking back, I had a lot of the ideas in this campaign. I don't want to say *all* the ideas, but *most* of the ideas.

05-00:25:20

Shafer: What were the ones—what are the ones you're most proud of.

05-00:25:25

Brown: These are not things you're proud of. It's all situational. When you're at a dinner, talking to your wife twenty years ago, what is the thing you're most proud of? I mean, that's a silly question.

05-00:25:39

Shafer: Or what kind of ideas are you talking about?

05-00:25:42

Brown: A lady, Mary Ellen Leary, wrote a book called *Shadow Politics*, or something. Do you know that book? [*Phantom Politics: Campaigning in California*]

05-00:25:45

Holmes: Yes.

05-00:25:47

Brown: You've read it, or looked at it?

05-00:25:50

Holmes: I have.

05-00:25:51

Brown: Okay, that's what that whole book was about, right? And the book was kind of boring—it *was* boring. [laughter] She was a very nice lady, a friend of my father's. She had dinner at our house one time. But she was upset there wasn't enough substantive debate. But, it's hard to have a substantive debate in a press release. There's, well, all I can tell you—the question is what am I most *proud* of.

This is not a business of walking around patting myself on the back, “Boy, am I proud.” Of *what*? You know what I mean? It's a very exciting, engaging activity—politics, campaigning, and serving in office. And it certainly has always struck me that I'm doing something valuable and important—and that's it. That's what we, that's what they call, in Buddhism, *a gaining idea*. It's extra. You've added it—you don't need that. Just sit, you know? The rivers flow, the mountains are here. So, campaigning, governing, we're just here. We're doing it. And there could be a moment that is a—but also, being proud, see that, to me, connotes gloating or some kind of vanity, that strikes me as not virtuous or not—and almost *leading* to problems.

05-00:27:38

Shafer: Well, you just said that you thought of most of the good ideas, so I thought, you know, what *were* they?

05-00:27:44

Brown: Well, whatever ideas there were, they were good because they won! They're certainly the ideas in the secretary of state's campaign. Those were my ideas. We had the idea of, I think if you look at that first press release, clean skies and good schools. What was the third one? Energy. I think it was Governor Cuomo who said, "You campaign in poetry, and you govern in prose," so there's a little poetry there, I would guess. But they did hint where we were going. I did stuff on education, I did some on clean air. Dramatic, more moves—more state intervention to reduce air pollution than any other state, and then that evolved into doing something about climate change. So talking about clean air, coming out of the smog of LA—that was an important idea, and that idea lived.

We also had an idea—it really wasn't my idea. It came from Ken Gostein, who's now dead. He was a reporter from little minor magazines. He was an unusual fellow who just showed up somehow. And we proposed train systems, from downtown LA to the San Fernando Valley, and to San Bernardino, and to Long Beach. That all came to be, and I'm still promoting trains. So trains and clean air. Those are two important ideas that I've promoted. I don't think the campaign did that many substantive issues, if you go back and see the commercials. I don't know if they exist anymore.

05-00:29:50

Holmes: There's television archives.

05-00:29:52

Brown: Have you ever looked at them?

05-00:29:54

Holmes: Not from this campaign specifically, no.

05-00:29:57

Brown: So I think that, as they say in the law, *res ipsa loquitur*. The thing speaks for itself. So I think it would be good to look at that. But also, you've got the newspapers, but those are just the stories of the moment. I don't know if there was that much press. Remember, I was ahead by, in some polls, fifteen points, sixteen, seventeen, something like that. So do I want to call attention to the opponent? [laughing] Even the Warriors, when they're ahead, do they keep shooting? Like if they were behind? No, right? And does any candidate? I don't think so. I mean candidates may *say* that, or a political scientist may say that, or a journalist may say that. But generally speaking, it's a contest, and you have a winner and a loser. So when you're ahead—now, you have to be careful. If you're ahead and you don't say anything, pretty soon the other guy starts saying things, and you start slipping, because people think there's nothing there. So you have to be mindful of that, and I think I was.

05-00:31:05

Holmes: Governor, it seems that you were also, as you were just describing, somewhat following Randy Collier's advice, of—

05-00:31:15

Brown: Not as much as some people would think I should have.

05-00:31:18

Holmes: The four key areas of education, environment, economic growth—

05-00:31:23

Brown: By the way, when you look at contemporary candidates, and I know this is not what this is all about—I won't mention any names—but people who have taken a lot of positions over their lifetimes, they can run into trouble. And if they had taken fewer positions, they might have gotten just as far but be in a better position. Well, that's the voice of experience. Randy Collier was the longest-serving state senator, over thirty years, so he had his thoughts. But I did pop off on a lot of issues.

05-00:31:55

Holmes: So looking at these four areas: education, environment, economic growth, and political reform. In addition to those, did you also speak in regards to the Agricultural Labor Relations Act—with the UFW and farm labor—during the campaign?

05-00:32:18

Brown: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm sure I said—not clear. You'd have to look at the record. You know, that's the whole thing, even when you're elected. How many issues can you put before the legislature?

05-00:32:40

Holmes: Well, because you did pass that the following year, in 1975.

05-00:32:45

Brown: Yeah, well, right. But did I run and say I was going to pass a gas tax? No. In fact, in doing the gas tax, a lot of legislators didn't want it. And should I have had a press release? Would that have been the more upright thing to start? I'm running for governor, Meg Whitman, and yes, I'm going to do—well, I said you wouldn't have any tax without a vote of the people, so I couldn't have done it in the first four years. I didn't say that for the second term. This is an art as well as a science, and people who have never practiced the art may not understand all the ingredients that go into doing a good job. Anyway, so I must have said something about farm workers, but I don't know that I highlighted that.

05-00:33:42

Holmes: Well, that was my question, because I know there were some statements—I think they're more press releases, but I think they were delivered by the UFW more than—

05-00:33:49

Brown: About what?

05-00:33:51

Holmes: About the Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

05-00:33:53

Brown: Well, we didn't even know what that was at that time. That's a whole story, by the way—there are *books* written on this topic. César Chávez didn't even *want* a labor relations act, but he was pushed in that direction by [George] Meany and the AFL—at least some people say that. That whole story of the function of law and how it works, it's a very important question. I did ally with the farm workers. I took away the short-handled hoe right away, and I signed a bill in my first year and said at my state-of-the-state speech that we should have collective bargaining for those who work in the fields. I did say that, but whether I said that precisely before, I'm not sure.

And by the way, those aren't issues. Issues are the news of the *day*. You have to understand: the American media, the Western media in general, is *very* constrained by news of the day. Now, I may be overstating that, but that's the way it strikes me. And so you have to roll with the news. And I don't know that agricultural relations was—it's maybe an issue in Fresno or Stockton, but it wasn't in most other places, in the big media markets.

05-00:35:23

Holmes: Well, I mean we can get to that, but it was—they were waging national boycotts for—

05-00:35:27

Brown: They were.

05-00:35:28

Holmes: Since '68. And by the 1970s, it was—

05-00:35:32

Brown: So the question is are you for boycotting grapes, yes or no? Yeah, I probably did avoid that question. Are you for boycotting lettuce? I said we should not buy non-UFW lettuce for the cafeterias of the junior colleges. I said that. So I always wanted to be measured, and because this is not a college oratorical contest, where you're there to excite the audience—you're there to communicate your position, what you're running for, why you're running, but to do so in the most effective manner, and that's what every candidate does. And the game of the reporters is always to get you to say something that you shouldn't say, if votes is what you're trying to get. Now, a reporter can say, "Well, votes—you shouldn't try to get votes, and you should try to say something that I want you to say, or that I think would be hard for you to say. Or I'm a sadist, and I just enjoy your squirming"—I tend to think that's also part of a journalistic mentality.

But nevertheless, the democratic system is not perfect, and the campaigning is not a perfect correlate with the governing. George Bush said that in some way he was going to do something about climate change, and as soon as he was elected, he switched that off, because that's where the Republicans were. So like it or don't like it, it has a long storied history in modern American politics.

05-00:37:22

Shafer: You mentioned the 2020 election, in passing. Beto O'Rourke, last week, said that he was born to run this race for president.

05-00:37:33

Brown: Yeah.

05-00:37:35

Shafer: Do you feel that at all, looking—at the time, did you feel like this—?

05-00:37:28

Brown: That sense of destiny is not a storyline that grabs me. Born to—yeah, I mean I had a lot of advantages, and I think I benefited from those advantages. But when you say *born to*, that could be interpreted that it's your destiny. And if it's your destiny, there's a certain metaphysics behind that. Did God ordain this? Is it built into the structure of the physical laws of the universe? Is it some cultural configuration? Or is it just a feeling that you have? Or something else? You'd have to ask him. That's an interesting question. But I would never say, "I was born to be governor." Definitely, that strikes me as a very alien thought.

05-00:38:36

Shafer: California's a big state, and you've talked a lot about the importance of mass media, but there is traveling around and shaking hands. Of course as you got older, you campaigned in different ways.

05-00:39:02

Brown: Yeah.

05-00:39:03

Shafer: But in '74, what did you like most, and least, about campaigning?

05-00:39:09

Brown: I think I liked most of it. There wasn't anything I didn't particularly like. I had fun going on trips, going to small towns—particularly going to these small towns. They were fun. Yeah, I think the whole thing—it was exciting.

05-00:39:30

Shafer: The glad-handing and all that stuff?

05-00:39:32

Brown: It's not glad-handing. If people come up to you, they want to see you, talk to you, it's obviously flattering to your sense of yourself. What's not to like? Have you ever had hundreds of people pushing to shake your hand? And if they did, I'm

sure you wouldn't say, "Oh no, I'm sorry. Please stand back." [laughter] So no, I don't think it's bad at all.

But I'll tell you I tend to think that a lot of this activity, so called touching the flesh, is just for the cameras. Even the so-called rope line, for the president. That's a camera phenomenon, because it's such a small subset of the electorate. So I find that a little questionable. I do. Yeah, so in that sense, maybe I didn't—well, it's also maybe the enthusiasm too. The enthusiasm builds, it spreads. People say, "I went to a rally. It was exciting." Yeah, that's true.

These cell phone photos have really taken over a major part now. You used to be able to talk to people. Now, for the most part, they want to get that picture. And to get it, it often will take five or six seconds. So that means, if you see ten people, that's a minute just taking those ten. So before you'd shake hands, go down the line. It's of the evolutionary process of campaigning. And in general, I think it was pretty good. But I did feel performing for the media was difficult. So that's why, when you're being observed, it's hard to not be conscious that you're being observed. And if you're being observed, you're not fully engaged in what it is you're engaging in. So I think that's a challenge that I'm sensitive to.

05-00:41:40

Shafer:

Yeah. Here's a—this is a quote from one of the articles in September of 1974. It says, "Brown promises to pursue a constitutional amendment to merge the senate and the assembly." And then there's a quote, "Jerry Brown has been," this is from the senate president pro tem, James [R.] Mills, I think, at the time.

05-00:42:05

Brown:

Jim Mills, yeah.

05-00:42:06

Shafer:

Jim Mills. [reading aloud] "Jerry Brown has been attacking the legislature since the beginning of his campaign, and it seems apparent he intends to continue. It's time for him to stop, if he wants to develop a close working relationship with the legislature." Does that ring true?

05-00:42:20

Brown:

Yeah. Yeah, obviously. [laughing] You can't keep attacking the legislature and working with them. But—those are ideas. I don't know where that idea came from. So maybe I overstated it when I said most of the ideas. There were a lot of ideas that came in from different sources. So that's a reform idea. When you're trying to figure out a reform, you know, do the Political Reform Act, everything I'd thought of, and other people had thought of, and Common Cause—it was in the initiative. So now, what's the next one? Well, create a unicameral legislature. Both houses are kind of redundant. One used to represent the more rural areas. But it doesn't do that anymore, after one man, one vote. So yeah, I don't know—what is your question?

05-00:43:09

Shafer:

Well, I guess, did you feel—?



05-00:43:10

Brown: Is your question do I think he's right, and I'm wrong?

05-00:43:15

Shafer: Did you feel, given who you were as secretary of state and the times and Watergate did you feel like it was to your advantage to be seen as running against, you know, the government?

05-00:43:26

Brown: A little bit. Well, a little bit. Right. There's an element of that. You know, Clinton ran against the government, and Reagan said, "Government is not the solution, government is the problem." So that was in the air. That was the environment, and since I've been around a while, I've seen different things get in the air. And *government is the problem*, was a meme that they got hold of. They also got hold of the window of vulnerability, that the Russians had more missiles. It turned out to be completely untrue. So there's a lot of things, true and untrue, that become common wisdom. And just like news of the day, you can't deviate from the common wisdom as a mainstream candidate.

It is an error, I've thought, to talk too specifically about the mechanics of government. And it's also an error to talk too much about Democrat versus Republican. In California it's always been a more centrist program. Earl Warren always was trying to bridge the gap between Republicans and Democrats. My father tried that. He said, "I want to be governor in the tradition of Hiram Johnson, a progressive Republican, and Earl Warren." So yeah, that was the spirit.

Now, the legislature periodically runs through these scandals, and they're up there, and it's just the way it *is* in democracy. I don't care whether you're in Brazil, or whether you're in some country in Europe, the Ukraine, where you have endemic corruption. This legislative body is fodder in media circles. See, we're talking '74: you had the Arab oil embargo; you had the Vietnam War—what did we lose, fifty-five thousand, and the Vietnamese lost at least two million? That was pretty serious—that was government. That was the best and the brightest. Then we have Nixon, and we have Watergate, and we have the manipulation of the CIA and what have you. And then you have all these other things about government.

So yeah, since government is more and more part of our lives, government is going to be more and more part of the problem. And people felt that, certainly in '74, because, well, the price of gasoline went up, the president was impeached, and we lost the first war in history. So that's going to make people feel pretty restive about government. And that's true today, being in the Afghan war for now going on seventeen years, people are going to say wait a minute. This is a big problem. And that went—I think a lot of—behind Trump. If you're asking me does anybody talk about government as the problem? In one form or another, they *do* that.

Now, my father didn't talk about that, and Nixon didn't talk about that when he ran for governor. That was their era. But we're in a different time, and people think definitely of the government. Reagan could say, "I'm here from Washington, and I'm here to help you," or something, and everybody laughs. So I don't know if they would have said that a hundred years ago, nor would they have said that during the Depression, so it's just one of the memes that we've got to live with.

05-00:47:39

Shafer: When that was happening during the campaign in '74, did you think, "Well, if I win, when I win, I'm going to have to work with these guys, and I'd better—?"

05-00:47:47

Brown: Well, yeah. Well, I started working with them. I had some legislative endorsements. Not many, three, but they were powerful. But I think this idea of government, nothing *works*. And we have that today: the schools don't work, health care doesn't work, can't afford to buy a house, too much crime in the streets. So democracy feeds on this discontent, and it *is* escalating. So I think that's normal.

I don't think I shied away from activism as a leader in government. I mean, there were always things we did. And Henry Ford [II] came out to California my first year and spoke to Tom Quinn, who was then the head of the Air Resources Board. He [Ford] complained California was going to mandate a significant reduction in sulfur emissions, and he asked us not to do that, but we did it anyway. So that's government, coercively pushing for a certain objective that's in the public interest. So yeah, government is very important, and I believe it's important. But at the same time, people think it's a problem—but they want it to do something. So there are a lot of contradictory streams and elements that you have to negotiate as a leader of this thing, government, which has so many different shapes and forms.

05-00:49:28

Shafer: At that time, I think you were hanging out with—define *hanging out* the way you want—Natalie Wood, Shana Alexander—

05-00:49:39

Brown: Let me tell you, Natalie Wood and Shana Alexander have nothing in common. So hanging out with them, in regard to politics?

05-00:49:49

Shafer: Well no, just personally, as part of your personal life.

05-00:49:53

Brown: So what's the question?

05-00:49:53

Shafer: I guess as a bachelor running for governor, you had opportunities to you know, have dinner or lunch or whatever, with whoever you wanted to. I mean did you feel—?

05-00:50:07

Brown: Not whoever I wanted to. That's a *big* overstatement. But more than the guy down the street. First of all, Natalie Wood was somebody that someone introduced me to. I did go out with her a few times. Shana Alexander was someone who followed McCarthy and was a person who would sit around, as I've mentioned before, and we'd talk about politics and other things. She was a sophisticated person. I think her father was a music producer, or something or other. Anyway, she was interesting. And McCarthy enjoyed her company, and I enjoyed both of their company. Maybe three or four times, when there were rallies in California. So those two events seem very different to me.

05-00:50:49

Shafer: I guess part of the context of the times too was, you know, drugs. People were partying. LA was very—there was a lot of glamour, it was glitz, you know, and you were in that world, right? I'm just wondering, did you see yourself as part of it, or apart from it?

05-00:51:14

Brown: What world? See, that world already is—that's a construct, if I ever saw one. Yeah, there's millions of people living in Los Angeles, and more in California. Yeah, in the world, being a part of—I didn't think of myself as being a part—or *not* a part. I was just going about my business. I'm a lawyer at Tuttle & Taylor, I'm secretary of state, running for governor, talking to people, trying to make friends, raise money, look good, do good—keep going. So “this being a part of” is a way somebody writing a book or a treatise about some era, and you've got to fill in with that kind of imagination. But as an actor, as a player, down there on the field, you're blocking and tackling and running. You're not thinking about well, what's going on in the stands? That's my metaphor explaining that, yeah. [Shafer laughs] You've got to get down on the field. And you've never been on the field. You don't *want* to know what it's like on the field. [laughing]

05-00:52:42

Shafer: Um, did you use drugs at all?

05-00:52:44

Brown: No.

05-00:52:45

Shafer: Never?

05-00:52:47

Brown: No, I'm not going to say all of my habits, of which are not perfect. But it's not a topic that I've indulged in. And I've gone this long, and I don't intend to change it now.

05-00:53:01

Shafer: Okay. What else? [laughing] I want to ask you about another thing that was going on in that time frame, which was Patty Hearst. Patty Hearst was kidnapped in 1974, from—you know, she was in San Francisco, got kidnapped, newspaper heiress, went missing for a good part of the first year you were governor. How did you think about that, how did that play into—?

05-00:53:30

Brown: I have no idea how I thought about that. And that's a very interesting question. *How* do you think about it? I think, but *how* I think, that's another question. I think I followed the story. It was very interesting. Symbionese Liberation Front, the burning building, Patty Hearst. The picture with a machine gun. Yeah, that was all very interesting. But I'm not sure how I would think about it—I mean as a what? I don't even know where to go with that question. Are you saying that you can extract some social meaning from that, or some cultural conclusion? I don't know—you can say different things. You can talk about her father and the times. I don't know, but those are very sophisticated thoughts, that certainly didn't come into my head. And what year was this?

05-00:54:21

Shafer: Yeah, '74.

05-00:54:22

Brown: In '74, I'm running for governor. I've got to worry about Alioto, Flournoy. I raised millions of dollars—everything else is kind of out there. It's *way* out there. It's a newspaper story. It was news of the day, and it went on for days.

05-00:54:40

Shafer: Years, a couple years.

05-00:54:41

Holmes: And to piggyback on that, could you discuss the change you saw in the counterculture during that time, which I think dovetails with the Patty Hearst kidnapping? Because we went from having, say, activists in civil rights or even hippies—if we want to use that term—against the war to, by the early 1970s—as you mentioned earlier—the Weather Underground, heavy drug use, and even violence coming into that. What were your observations on the changing of activism during that time?

05-00:55:20

Brown: Well, now you've conflated a lot of things, for sure.

05-00:55:26

Holmes: I'm a historian. I'm pretty good at that, Sir. [laughing]

05-00:55:28

Brown: Conflating. Hippies and antiwar, those are a little different. I remember when I was in Berkeley, and some girl talked about the hippies—and she met hippies in Mexico, or something. I think I heard that term in '64, and I said, "What the hell—what's a hippie?" But that's the first time I ever heard that. The first time

ever heard the term *beatnik*, I was in the novitiate, and the assistant—Father Meehan was his name. He was the assistant to the master of novices, said, “There’s this beatnik movement. They’re talking about chewing razor blades.” I remember being kind of interested in this. This is kind of interesting. What is this all about? Hippy, I didn’t know what to say.

[break in recording]

05-00:56:12

Brown: What was the last question?

05-00:56:14

Shafer: We were talking about counterculture, hippies, and all that stuff.

05-00:56:20

Holmes: Yeah, the changing of activism, from say the mid-1960s to by the time that you’re running for governor,—this turning of say civil rights activism to violence, to the Weather Underground—activism had certainly changed.

05-00:56:39

Brown: Yeah, and then I was in a pretty—you might say conventional path. Antiwar through the peace slate, ’68, on the ballot in ’68, running for the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees, running for secretary of state, running for governor. These are very mainstream activities. You don’t run around with a feather on your head, or a bandana, or earrings or something—at least you didn’t at that time. And the people I hung out with are people who were related to what I was doing in some way. This is not an avocation. You know, “Oh, let’s go run for governor!” It doesn’t work that way. This is what you do! This is the activity. And you get up in the morning, and before you go to bed, this is what you think about. And that’s what *I* thought about, and that’s how I got to be governor at the age of thirty-six. So you can’t go wandering off over here or there. I *saw* things.

05-00:57:54

Holmes: That’s what I was asking, more about your own observations.

05-00:57:57

Brown: But I didn’t see much. I wasn’t in San Francisco, so I missed that. I came down to LA, left in October of ’65 from San Francisco, and didn’t go back to live there until the end of ’88. I think I was in Elysian Park once, and they had kind of a little “be-in” of some kind, and there was a couple lying under a blanket having sex or something. That’s probably the most hippie-ish thing that I personally observed. And there was a few psychedelic shirts and tie-dyes, and that kind of thing.

But running for office is a discipline in itself. You go from starting at the starting line. It’s quite strenuous, so that’s what you do. It’s politics. It’s office holding, it’s parties—Democratic parties. I would go to events for Technion, or the Hebrew University, at the Hilton Hotel. I remember once going there when—who

was the prime minister in '74? The Israeli prime minister—but anyway, it was actually the fall of the Shah. That was later. It must have been about 1980.

05-00:59:32

Shafer: That was, yeah, it was '79.

05-00:59:36

Brown: Who was that—who was the prime minister in '78?

05-00:59:40

Shafer: Menachem Begin, maybe?

05-00:59:42

Brown: Menachem Begin, probably. Was that Menachem Begin? [ed. note: Begin was Prime Minister of Israel from June 1977 to October 1983] Yeah, I think he was there. Yeah, it was Begin. I remember passing by him and talking about Iran, and he said the Shah was such a good man, such a friend of Israel. I just remember that, sitting there at the dais behind—kind of talking in his ear. That's what I extracted from Menachem Begin. [laughing] That the Shah was a friend of Israel.

So that's a far cry from the Jefferson Airplane, which I never saw, or even the Grateful Dead. So yeah, it was more something you read about. But then, in LA, I don't know if LA was the same way as San Francisco. LA was a little more diverse. Yeah, I mean I was in Laurel Canyon. I met Mama Cass once. I stopped by her house during the day. But that was that.

05-01:00:48

Shafer: It seems like, almost like you were in the eye of the storm, in a way. There's all this cultural and political upheaval going on, and to hear you describe it, you're saying, "Well, I was focused on running for governor."

05-01:01:03

Brown: Well, I read the *LA Times* every day. And so I had a running commentary. When you're talking about the campaign, there's nothing more important than winning in November. So do you think things that aren't going to help you win are all that interesting? You know, I wasn't going to football games—or maybe I went to a movie. I don't know. I doubt it. I mean, this is what you do. Maybe it's kind of hard for you to think about it, but it's a full-time job. And then if you don't have a family, you don't have a wife—what else is there to do? I don't want to just come home and turn on the television or something. Got to get out there and make hay, make friends, raise money, talk to people. That's what you do. Maybe that's a revelation. But it's very exciting, by the way. Very exciting. I found it such. And certainly not boring.

05-01:02:01

Shafer: What is it that's exciting?

05-01:02:03

Brown: Just the whole—it is exciting. Now why *it* is exciting, I'll have to leave to philosophers and psychologists.

05-01:02:13

Shafer: Yeah. I want to ask you about a moment in the primary in that year—

05-01:02:18

Brown: By the way, I could maybe elaborate. It seems like two plus two equals four. This is important. The governorship of the largest state in the union—that's not chopped liver. And the issues—every issue that government deals with. And then, the problems and being asked these impossible questions. So it keeps you on your toes. It's exciting. It's anxiety provoking, and it's certainly engrossing. I think that should describe why it would be something that one would be drawn to. But whether drawn to exciting or not, this was the path I was on. So it wasn't like a job in the brokerage business down on Spring St. waiting for me. You know, there wasn't a winery that I was going to operate. There wasn't a law firm that I wanted to join. So there wasn't anything else. This was what I was doing.

05-01:03:27

Shafer: No plan B.

05-01:03:28

Brown: No plan B.

05-01:03:29

Shafer: Yeah. I want to ask you about a moment in the primary. I think your opponents, Alioto and Moretti, were wanting to debate, and I think you were maybe—I don't want to characterize it, but maybe not that eager to debate?

05-01:03:42

Brown: Kind of like Feinstein today. How many times did she debate? Once, right?

05-01:03:47

Shafer: And it wasn't really a debate, but—yeah.

05-01:03:48

Brown: Yeah, okay. So—

05-01:03:50

Shafer: So it was a strategy, maybe?

05-01:03:52

Brown: No, well who says that debating is a requirement for being governor? That's just—that's a—that's a construct. It's a thought.

05-01:04:02

Shafer: But it's become tradition.

05-01:04:06

Brown: Not for winning candidates. A lot of losing candidates like debates. And maybe other candidates like debates. Kennedy/Nixon—that was a good series of debates.

05-01:04:18

Shafer: But what I was going to ask you about—I think you were doing consecutive press conferences, in 1190, at the capitol. Moretti—

05-01:04:26

Brown: Oh yeah, Moretti barged in. Yeah.

05-01:04:29

Shafer: What happened?

05-01:04:30

Brown: I don't know—he was there, we had a little impromptu debate.

05-01:04:35

Shafer: I mean he barged into your press conference, or—?

05-01:04:37

Brown: So what else is new? What—so what are you saying? Should I be aggrieved? I mean what does that mean? We were in a contest. Why not? He's trying to make some news—that's *news*. You guys *love* that. The reporters love that. So obviously, I understand it. But then, he's there, so now you've got to have a little debate.

05-01:05:00

Shafer: You didn't feel like, sort of, you know, sandbagged?

05-01:05:03

Brown: What does that mean, sandbagged? I mean you're in a contest to be governor of the state. All is fair in love and war. You know, hopefully it's all legal. But people do stuff.

05-01:05:17

Shafer: Did you kind of admire it in a way?

05-01:05:19

Brown: No. Didn't admire it—didn't like it, particularly. But I thought well, that was clever. I could see it. I don't think you understand. I mean we're in a contest, and people are running around and it's a contact sport—and this was a pretty mild campaign, for the most part. I do remember one thing Moretti said. He said something about, if I couldn't get around to meet everybody else, my next thing I'd like is for everyone to meet *you*. And I said, "Well, Moretti, you're not that good looking." I do remember that comment.

05-01:06:00

Shafer: What did he mean by that?

05-01:06:01

Brown: He meant that I was not pleasing to the voters. And I don't know whether he meant *he* was pleasing to the voters, which I didn't think was the case. I think my campaign, the language, the topics, was alien to his world that had served him well in his rise in politics. So he identified his thoughts with the thoughts of the



larger electorate. And so he said, oh, if we just get all these ideas—probably because if you just talked to everybody, I'd win. Which I think was pretty far off, and maybe was, it's showing that he wasn't in touch with the electorate, as it is. In touch with the legislature—and it is a club and a close-knit group, and you have to have a close-knit group to be very effective. So the very skills and emotions that work in the legislative body, can be very counterproductive for the electorate, as a whole.

05-01:07:11

Shafer: You were quite a debater in high school.

05-01:07:13

Brown: Not really. I *was* a debater. I wouldn't say *quite* a debater.

05-01:07:18

Shafer: You were a debater in high school. [laughing]

05-01:07:20

Brown: Yeah, well, I'm being accurate.

05-01:07:21

Shafer: Yeah, so did you, was there a part of you, that you, in the campaign, either in that moment—where you wanted to debate? You wanted to sort of show him?

05-01:07:29

Brown: No, I wanted to win. So these are all means to an end. [laughing] Debating is a stressful kind of undertaking any way you look at it, particularly in a high school debate. You had eight minutes, then you had your rebuttal. And no, actually, I find it very interesting, and that was exciting. But the trouble with a debate is you can say something stupid, or you can look weak, or you can look awkward, so that—it's not a controlled environment. Political handlers would never allow things like that to happen again. So, there it was, it was a moment, it was a spontaneous moment, at least for me—

05-01:08:18

Queen Kim: Do you remember that moment? Is it something you can visualize? Were you at the lectern?

05-01:08:23

Brown: I can't—I haven't thought about it much.

05-01:08:25

Kim: Yeah, it's just not a big searing memory.

05-01:08:28

Brown: It's not a big searing memory. I mean, if you ask me what *is* a searing memory, I'd have to reflect on that. Actually, looking at the elk on my hill out here is a memory. They're not there now, but they were there. A few days ago there were about nineteen of them up on that hill.

[break in audio]

05-01:08:45

Brown: All right. Searing moments! That's good. Have you had a searing moment? That's my searing moment.

05-01:08:51

Marzorati: It happened right there in [Room] 1190? He just walked right in?

05-01:08:54

Brown: He [Moretti] walked right in. That was life. Now we've got everything all guarded and protected.

05-01:19:00

Kim: Where is—what is 1190?

05-01:19:02

Brown: That's just the room.

05-01:19:03

Shafer: That's a conference room in the capitol, just down the road from the governor's—down the hall from the governor's office.

05-01:19:09

Brown: I don't want this all to be so subjective. Don't you want more the historical—you weren't asking all these questions of my father. I don't know—I didn't read it. These are just ponderings.

05-01:19:28

Shafer: He's one of the strands. Well, it's your take on your life.

05-01:19:32

Brown: By the way, I read a book on historiography. I got it from my grandniece who teaches at Michigan. She gave me a book on theory and history, and I got the key word in history: *temporality*. [laughter] You see, these are all social sciences. You have anthropology, you have sociology, and you have history. What's different about history? Temporality, right? It's the times, the sequence over time.

05-01:10:05

Holmes: Yeah, change over time.

05-01:10:06

Brown: I didn't know that before, when it's so obvious. Did you know that?

05-01:10:09

Shafer: No.

05-01:10:10

Brown: So that's what interests me. Then when I heard that, when I picked that book up—and then they have things like the *social turn*, and then the *cultural turn*. There's such a language that didn't exist—you asked me about rock and roll. I'm more interested in language, that is now new, that didn't exist before—and that people

use as though this is an obvious description of reality, and not many years ago, well, this didn't even exist, this term, right? There's a lot of theory, and it's breaking down. The social sciences are deteriorating, degenerating, into more and more abstract theory about the theory about the theory—and it isn't very concrete. And graduate school is a complete dysfunction, because everything you learn disables you from teaching undergraduates. Because you're learning things that people are not going to want to learn, because you have to keep *new*. Your doctorate has to be a new thesis, right?

05-01:11:34

Holmes: Mm-hmm.

05-01:11:36

Brown: What happens if there is nothing new in the world? Well, there would be no newspapers, I guess.

05-01:11:41

Kim: We'd be out of a job!

05-01:11:45

Brown: So a lot of this is just make-work for college graduates. But we've got to do something. This is your welfare, and then you have all the people who do the real work, with their hands. And you guys are just spinning little webs of silliness. [everyone in the room laughs] [interruption in recording]

[break in audio]

05-01:12:04

Brown: I have to amend what I said about charter schools. I mean I know I've read books about homeschooling. It seems like the ability to shape the lives of your children yourself, without a paid intervener, in some kind of institution, sounds like more liberty than not. But a lot of people would recoil at the idea—and I've never done it. But it does take a certain type of person. And it's just different people. The next-door neighbors have turkeys. They were slaughtering turkeys yesterday, and one of their helpers is a friend of theirs, and she came up. She had a one-year-old, so they have five children, and they're doing independent study at home through a charter school, so they're in fact doing homeschooling, five people. But how many young ladies do you know who have just had five children, because the oldest is only eight or nine, ten or something.

05-01:13:15

Shafer: The governor is just blown away.

05-01:13:18

Brown: Blown away, but it's just interesting to me. There's a lot of people, particularly around here, who do physical work. They work with their hands, and they fix fences, they chase after cows. There's a guy on a machine that went up there, he's probably going to put salt in for the cows, whatever. So they're outdoors, and they're doing stuff. That's very different than going to the office and writing

about it. There's a guy named Ivan Illich, who was a friend of mine, and he wrote a book called, *Deschooling Society*, which I was very excited by. And I read another book by Paul Goodman. He wrote the book, *Growing up Absurd*, which everybody read at one time—which you've never heard of.

05-01:14:00

Shafer: Never heard of it.

05-01:14:01

Brown: In the 1960s, very well-known guy, very well known. He wrote a book, which I came across at the Yale bookstore called, *Compulsory Miseducation*, and you can imagine what that's about. So I've always thought alternatives were a good idea. But they can't be on a very widespread—you've only got a million people in homeschooling, and there are 60 million kids in the country.

05-01:14:27

Shafer: Getting to the election of 1974, so it's you and Houston Flournoy.

05-01:14:37

Brown: Houston I. Flournoy, yeah, I think it was.

05-01:14:42

Shafer: Yeah, what—what do you remember from that campaign?

05-01:14:47

Brown: I remember we had a debate in Irvine, worked pretty well.

05-01:14:53

Shafer: What were his, like, strengths and weaknesses did you think?

05-01:14:59

Brown: His strength was I think he had some of the issues on his side, but he certainly didn't want public-employee unions to be striking the government. I think that was not popular. You put it to a referendum. He was older. It's just the Republican brand was more solid, I think, in '74, except for the fact that it wasn't so solid because of the Nixon impeachment. Had Nixon been a success, it might have been a very different election. There would have been no Watergate.

05-01:15:42

Shafer: Was he on the defensive because of that, do you think?

05-01:15:45

Brown: He was. I mean the campaign was; I don't know if he personally was. Well, they got caught up in that. Yeah, with the Ford pardon, that becomes the news of the day. And that's it, over and over again. So—and he was a Republican, so that was a problem. And he was very obscure—he wasn't that well known. He got elected in the Reagan landslide, so he lucked out. He lucked in, and against me he lucked out—or didn't luck out, but he got thrown out. It was a very close election. He was gaining, according to the polls that we took. We took daily polls at that time.

So what do I think? We would try to put out a press release before each debate, about a point I would make in the debate, to try to make sure our point got captured by the news or the television. And that seemed to work. And then—yeah, what was there? He would say his little talking points. I kind of found it difficult to find what my real points were going to be. I think he had government, too much government, big government, taxes—just the same approach—maybe a little more so than Reagan. And that was still popular at that time. It was still popular, because Deukmejian and Wilson won on essentially that same message.

05-01:17:33

Shafer: How many debates did you do?

05-01:17:37

Brown: I think we did six.

05-01:17:38

Shafer: Six?

05-01:17:39

Brown: I think we did six. Yeah, they weren't all of the same type. But on radio—yeah, we did, and we did some debates in the primary, so I debated. So this whole idea of we don't want Brown to say anything, well, in a debate—of course the key is you don't want to make a mistake. Was it Gerald Ford—1976, so that came later—but he said Poland wasn't behind the Iron Curtain. Is that the biggest thing he made a mistake in? You know, you can't remember a name—anybody here at this table could forget a name, but it [a mistake] becomes bigger than life. So yeah, people don't want to make a gaffe, so you are being controlled, except being interesting and provocative at the same time. That's the challenge. So I think we talked about stuff. He asked his questions.

But you know, there is a tension. The press are doing their job under the First Amendment. I want to give all the deference to that that is appropriate. [laughing] But there's also, in the more recent idiom, the idea of clickbait, and so the reporter doesn't just want to get information to the electorate, although that's what he puts in his head. But he also wants to get news, and get something flashy and first. So everybody's trying to promote their particular cause, even though that's not the way it's framed.

But I think the journalists asked a lot of questions. I answered a lot of questions. I remember the first question, the day of my press conference—see, you probably didn't read that story. That was opening the first day, my press conference in LA.

05-01:19:45

Shafer: The first day of your being governor?

05-01:19:48

Brown: No, campaign. Was it the primary, or the general? I think it was the primary. Anyway, the story, if I recall right, it was written by Richard "Dick" Bergholz, not that I remember all these little things. [laughing] But I do! Well, that story, I

have some interest in, because I'd sent him my press release, which I haven't read—I don't think I've read it in forty-five years. I would combine all the agencies that dealt with the environment into one agency, and the ones in energy in another agency—we kind of said that. It was a press release kind of idea. But I didn't know, institutionally, how that was going to work. In fact, I had a relatively thin grasp of all that, but I liked the idea of it! Here we have all these different departments—they should all be unified. It's called government reorganization—actually, a very boring topic, and one we did some of.

But Bergholz said to me, “Now, you say you're going to reorganize these energy departments, environment, all into one department. Now tell me, what is the first step that you would take to do that?” And I said, “The first step, what—?” I suppose I'm going to pick the telephone up and call somebody? Call a meeting? I'll be damned! I couldn't figure out what's the first step. And my face got a little red, and I thought: I really blew that one! I didn't say it quite as openly as I'm saying it now, but that stumped me.

05-01:21:39

Shafer: What did that tell you?

05-01:21:40

Brown: Well, I don't know what it told me then, but it would tell me today that I should have had a more developed idea, or I should have had a better verbal way of handling it. And the way I learned to handle that in later debates, as I got a little more adept at this, we used the concept of *pivot*. So step back, restate the question, and then take off on your own aspects.

So how we would reorganize it? How you would do that? My first thought was, “Well, I'd have all the relevant parties in the room, and we would talk about it.” But I think what he means is how would the geothermal department be matched with somebody in the Department of Water Resources—I'm not sure. So the truth is, I didn't know enough about the departments, and of course in a campaign, the people who are—like Tom Quinn—know less than I do. And we knew more than anybody else. But unless you're there, and we're not there, because that's Sacramento, and what are you going to do? Call up Reagan's department heads? Or you could call some analysts, and we could have. But that isn't relevant. In a campaign, you're rushed for time, you've got to get it out, it sounded good. It isn't a bad concept. Consolidation certainly is better than fragmentation. It's kind of a tautology. It's obvious.

05-01:23:27

Shafer: Well, kind of show too like—you weren't for bigger government, you were for maybe more efficient government?

05-01:23:33

Brown: Well, yeah, bigger government wasn't on the table, in any event. But you had to be for something. You've never run for governor, but if you're running for governor, you say, “Now, what the hell am I going to do?” Well, how do you find

that out? Oh! Well, if you're running for governor, you must know. Well, I must know, *why*? Why? Well, maybe I know now. I've been sixteen years as governor, four years as attorney general, and four years as secretary of state. But if you ask me some things—and a lot of things I don't know about—a *lot* of things! In fact, almost *nobody* knows very much about government, and the number of people who do are very limited. There are a few staffers in the legislature.

But, so, yeah, I didn't think of that question. It seemed like a reasonable proposal. I don't know how Bergholz came up with that question. "What's the first thing you'd do?" Maybe that was a good question. What's the first step you'd take? I mean the first step is so simple. I guess it did illuminate the fact that I didn't have a plan. I guess that's what it did. Do you have a plan of how you're going to make the skies bluer? Find out how he's going to do that? Well, I'm going to appoint Tom Quinn to the Air Resources Board, and he's going to figure it out.

05-01:25:00

Shafer:

Well, I wonder if you think like, sort of that these ideas in the campaign are less about what you're going to do, and more about who you are?

05-01:25:10

Brown:

Well, they are related to what you're going to do, because you can't say I'm going to open an embassy in Moscow. You can't do that, so you have to talk about what government can *do*. So I think that's a good question to ponder—what's the first thing you would do to bring that about? I don't even think it was in the paper, by the way. He made some veiled reference to it, and if you read the story, he pooh-poohs it a little bit, but it wasn't a harmful story. So that was that, at least I still remember it, not that I've been thinking much about it. But what's interesting to me is I still might have a hard time answering that question. And you know, I've been governor, successfully, for sixteen years. So you would have to say well, you don't need to be able to answer that question to be an effective governor. We know that now, empirically. But probably a little bit of extra research—and we didn't have that many people. We're just outsiders. We didn't have all these people—maybe Dan Newman would have done a little more research. [laughing]

05-01:26:26

Shafer:

Given you some talking points. [laughter]

05-01:26:30

Brown:

So think about what's the first thing you'd do? [laughing] I would really like to go back and get that question, but we don't have a transcript, and it didn't show up that much. But anyway, it's a hell of a question to ask an opponent and what you don't realize is if you just start talking, the TV will just play it, and you just kind of motor on. That's another way to do it. So, there is knowledge, there's tactics.

05-01:26:57

Holmes:

Governor, can you talk a little bit about—especially here in the general election, which I think dovetails with the story you were just retelling—about the advisors in your campaign? I believe you had Warren Christopher?

05-01:27:12

Brown: A little bit.

05-01:27:13

Holmes: Stephen Reinhardt?

05-01:27:15

Brown: Yeah.

05-01:27:17

Holmes: And then also someone, I think who was with you for quite a while, Jacques Barzagli?

05-01:27:22

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

05-01:27:23

Holmes: Can you discuss a little about them and their role in the campaign?

05-01:27:28

Brown: Well, Christopher, I think talked to Tom more than he talked to me. And I think he might have advised us on the debates. And he was the kind of a guy that you'd run an idea by, and you could feel confident of him. Reinhardt was a labor lawyer, and he did something pretty damn impressive. He got the culinary endorsement for me. How the hell he did that, I don't know. But they endorsed me, not Alioto. Now, I guess they did it because they thought I was going to win, and they wanted a winner. But after it was there, they never really asked me anything.

05-01:28:18

Shafer: For anything, you mean?

05-01:28:20

Brown: Not for the workers. I think Herman Leavitt, known as *Blackie* at that time, a few years later wanted to be on the racing commission, so I didn't appoint him. But that was it. I signed a few bills, but he didn't lobby me on the minimum wage or anything that related to—today there'd be a lot more. But he got the endorsement, so that was pretty important. Steve talked a lot with Tom. Jacques was a guy who—a sister of an old girlfriend of mine said, "Oh, you've got to meet this character." And they were making a movie, and he was an assistant director, and they said, "He's a very clever guy." So he came along, and he had a good sense of commercials. He had a different sense, different insight.

So we had Tom, who had his news—make it not as explosive, but make it—don't worry about the senate, don't worry about anybody else, just news, you've got to make news. Richard was a political scientist, had a PhD, and he'd have his view. Sometimes I'd agree, sometimes I wouldn't. And then Jacques, he would maybe have a different idea. And then I had all these different opinions, and then I'd have my own idea, and then we'd argue about things, and so that's how that worked.



I remember what we'd argue about. I remember we made a commercial, and we had one commercial we filmed, and it was the lighting that had me turning around or something—Jacques liked that commercial. And I said, "That looks pretty dramatic. I kind of like that. The lighting made me look very—I don't know—[laughing]. It was a very interesting commercial." But Tom, he said, "This is *awful!* This is a terrible commercial." So I didn't do it, so it's just kind of a risk averse—very important to hear what could go wrong, and then avoid it. I kind of look at the down side and say, "Okay, now, how do we stay away from that?" And so then, either Tom would say something wasn't good, Jacques would say something—and they often were very different. So yeah, it was interesting.

And he had a sense that I thought was good. He didn't really listen to the words. He wanted, you know, in a speech, he wanted to know what was the impact? He'd worked in movies with [Jean-Luc] Godard—at least he said he did. I never saw it. And then he came over here. So, that idea was kind of a new thought. It's not your *words*, and I tend to be kind of word conscious. But it's the *impact*—what's the impact on the audience? So he would kind of note that, and he might say, "You know, that didn't work," or something. So that was helpful. It was nice to have a diversity of opinion, and those three—they were around a lot, and they chimed in a lot, so that's kind of the way it worked. I guess other people had consultants. I don't know who made our commercials. I think maybe we did—. I don't know where *they* are today. They were friends of Richard Maullin.

So that's how that worked—a lot of this stuff is media. This is putting on a performance every day, and a lot of your performances don't go anywhere. So you both want to attract, win over, and avoid bloopers or blunders—so that's the name of the game. And it's hard to go through a campaign without blundering. It's hard to go through the governorship without stepping in something, and for some reason, this last eight years there weren't any blunders that I know of. That's very unusual.

05-01:33:00

Shafer: You must have learned something the first time, maybe?

05-01:33:02

Brown: Well, I learned something, and I'm pretty knowledgeable—and imaginative. And I do think, although I've repeated—my question, what's the first thing you'd do?

One of my advisors—this is why I have a little bit of a jaundiced view of advisors. Wilson [A.] Clark, [Jr.] was a smart guy, kind of a boy wonder in the energy-environment field. I don't know that he went to college, but he wrote a very fine book on alternative energy. [*Energy for Survival: The Alternative to Extinction*] It was cold in the Midwest, and he said, "You've got to order California gas to be sent through the pipelines to the people in the Midwest." He wrote that up, and so I had a press conference. And I said, "Today I've ordered that the gas lines—the Southern California gas company send this gas," whatever it was, PG&E. And Dan Walters raised his hand and said, "Governor, the PUC

ordered that yesterday.” [laughter] So my face, once again, got rather red, and that was a screw-up. So, but of course Wilson Clark didn’t appreciate the niceties. They went, “Oh, here’s something the governor ought to do. It’s a good idea.” And they have their own idea of politics—and that’s the governor is going to look good, or whatever was in his mind. He is just one of the, as we sometimes say, the little people, trying to come up with things.

And so, based on that, more than probably Bergholz’s question, I did develop a healthy concern and skepticism for things that could go wrong. And I couldn’t put a lot of confidence in what people told me, because Wilson Clark—no one knew more about energy than he did. We could write good plausible press releases, Tom could, but that didn’t mean that he could figure out *this* thing. There are things that you’ve got to think about, you’ve got to turn around in your mind and see it like a kaleidoscope, and look at it. So that’s how I learned—that is a characteristic of how I’ve governed. I don’t know how common it is, but I don’t care who that person is. I always say, “Now, wait a minute—what is the *basis* of that?” “Oh, well, I read it.” “Well, you read it *where*?” You try to eliminate error that can put error in *my* mouth as I speak it. And yet at the same time, we did a lot of things, so it wasn’t that I was paralyzed by doubt or skepticism.

I think that’s a very important part of how I governed, and it’s also part of the way I tried not to get on all these issues. You know, how many issues can the system take? How many issues can the legislature take? How many issues can your image, your persona, if you’re all over the place? If you notice, a person like Reagan—something I could learn from Reagan. Reagan had a unified image. There was something about the guy. I mean he was not just against government, but he was for America, a better America, an America where we didn’t have bloated government and welfare queens, and we didn’t have the evil empire. He was able to speak—it wasn’t a hundred things you thought of when you thought of Reagan. And yet, when you’re in the legislature, they passed twenty-four hundred bills—they introduced twenty-four hundred bills. They dropped twelve hundred on the governor’s desk. And then to talk about them, you’ve got to think about them. And then you’d begin to speak like that, and no one knows what the hell you’re talking about, and it’s all very mechanical. So it *is* important, so I am conscious of that. There were, remember, a lot of good things. But that’s why, and now maybe I’m rationalizing, but I do think you can only do so many. Now, we did a *lot*—really quite a lot. I think, historically, I think it’s more than anybody.

05-01:37:40

Shafer:

And we’re going to get into that.

05-01:37:42

Brown:

Yeah, we will, but I’m now thinking of the process by which we did that. I both was hesitant, cautious, but bold in some ways. The term that somebody used, that I liked, “Don’t be like a dog that barks at every truck that comes along.” You know, save your bark.

05-01:38:10

Shafer: Pick your trucks carefully.

05-01:38:12

Brown: Yeah, but they're all exciting, and the media's going to put a microphone and say, "Well, what do you think?" And the tendency is you don't want to say—well, I've got to have an idea. I'm not stupid. And like—want to hide. But if you have an idea about everything, and this reporter is not worried about destroying your public personality, because he needs his clickbait—or whatever we might have called it twenty years ago.

05-01:38:35

Shafer: Governor, I sense a lot of hostility to the media. [laughing]

05-01:38:39

Brown: None, no, but I have the same—that's another point. [Shafer laughs] You interpret honest conversation with hostility but that's just science. That's inquiry, as opposed to advocacy, and most people *live* in advocacy. But I think the preferable path is to live in inquiry.

05-01:39:04

Shafer: Here's an inquiry. Why do you think that the—you were ahead for that whole election?

05-01:39:09

Brown: I was ahead with a diminishing lead.

05-01:39:12

Shafer: Yeah, and so what was that about at the end? Why did the lead—?

05-01:39:15

Brown: First of all, what is that about? What is the behavior of millions of Californians who I don't know? You're asking me a very sophisticated survey research question, which obviously, I don't have the answer to.

05-01:39:29

Shafer: Do you have a hunch?

05-01:39:30

Brown: A hunch? A hunch is what? A hunch is worth nothing. Yeah, and I used to have more opinions about these things. But the more I know, the more I know there are variables that are not easily encountered. It's hard to tell.

First of all, I may never have been that much ahead in any real—well, I was ahead, that's what the polls said. But what was the strength of the approval, and what was it based on? You'd have to look at the polling, and you'd have to know—are these Republicans who just went back to their normal being a Republican, voted for Flournoy? Tom and Doug Fagan would be writing press releases talking about campaign reform of one kind or another. And I did a number of the releases. But the lead, I couldn't see it. It didn't move the crowd.

And so I, when I speak, I have to engage the crowd in such a way. And it just—it always felt like I was running out of things to talk about. And what was there to talk about, really? A Republican says, “We’re not going to renew taxes, and we’re going to lock them all up. And we’re not going to let those unions take over our government, much less take over our food supply.” You know what I mean? That’s an aggressive forward-moving line, but that is not available to whatever the Democrat was.

So somehow we had to be progressive; we had to uplift the downtrodden. We had to help all these constituencies, but we couldn’t encroach upon the conventional sensibilities—and we couldn’t raise taxes. That’s a box. And you can talk about the environment. First of all, that wasn’t that interesting. What are you going to talk about? Well, clean air. We’ll have good schools. What are you going to talk about? Are you going to pay the teachers more money? How are you going to do that? There was a big issue, *Serrano v. Priest*, and that was the case that equalized spending among school districts. And to equalize [spending] you weren’t going to lower districts, you had to raise them. Well, the raising all districts—and they had ones in Emeryville, Beverly Hills, that were outliers, because of the value of property—billions. So they say what are you going to do about that? And where was the money? And you have to just dance around the issue. Now, we did find an answer to that, which I found later when I was governor.

But why we lost [support]? I think, it’s hard to tell. I was better known. I think the primary had more news. I think I was a more—the name, it’s probably something to do with, you know, with Nixon and Ford and the idea of giving the pardon. People didn’t [think] it was right. A lot of people. And I think that the Flournoy issues had more traction at that time. But now, do we know that for sure? No. And did I know a lot at the time? No, I know more *now*. So I’m saying things to you now that I didn’t realize in the same way during the campaign. In fact, it was a surprise to me. We’ve gone down in the polls. Well, we’re still ten points ahead, and then a couple of days later—now we’re seven points ahead. And then the day before the [the election], we’re like three points ahead, or even, so that was not a helpful message.

05-01:43:39

Shafer:

And I think it was the closest governor’s race since ’46, right?

05-01:43:43

Brown:

What was it, 1.7?

05-01:43:44

Shafer:

2.9.

05-01:43:45

Brown:

Oh, 2.9?

05-01:43:46

Shafer:

2.9, I think.

05-01:43:47

Brown: Well, 2.9 is not bad. [Shafer laughs] So there's been a lot of closer elections than that. Tom Bradley's was only what, 0.3?

05-01:43:55

Shafer: Yeah. You were not married then. And—which is somewhat unusual, I guess. Most candidates tended to be married.

05-01:44:04

Brown: Except Grover Cleveland. [laughing]

05-01:44:07

Shafer: And James Buchanan.

05-01:44:08

Brown: Oh, I didn't know about James Buchanan.

05-01:44:09

Shafer: Yeah, he was a bachelor.

05-01:44:10

Brown: And he founded the Democratic Convention, you know.

05-01:44:14

Shafer: Grover Cleveland?

05-01:44:15

Brown: He started the idea of the Democratic Convention. No, I thought Buchanan did—maybe he did. I can't remember.<sup>1</sup>

05-01:44:21

Shafer: Oh, he was mayor of Buffalo. I'm from Buffalo.

05-01:44:23

Brown: Oh, that's why.

05-01:44:24

Shafer: [laughing] But anyway, to come back to my question—and there were, rumors were spreading that you were gay.

05-01:44:32

Brown: Yeah.

05-01:44:33

Shafer: And Alioto at one point said you were effeminate, and then he said, "Come out of the closet and debate," kind of hidden messages.

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<sup>1</sup> The first Democratic National Convention is said to have developed among President Andrew Jackson's "Kitchen Cabinet," and was promoted in 1831 by the president's supporters. The convention was held on May 21, 1832.

05-01:44:42

Brown: That was a concern, at that time. Obviously.

05-01:44:46

Shafer: How—what kind of concern?

05-01:44:49

Brown: What do you mean what kind of a—not winning, that’s all. There’s only one concern in this race, okay? Don’t get arrested, and win. [laughing] Now, I’m putting it a little too bluntly, but this was not a time when gay was a popular topic. In fact, when I met with some gay activists in San Francisco, we met in the basement, and it was a very quiet meeting. Nobody knew about it. This was not in the mainstream, not even in the Democratic mainstream. So we figured Alioto would play that, and you imagine in the worst-case scenarios, that this could be a problem. That’s all. So you try to—what can you do about it?

05-01:45:47

Shafer: And you thought that could be like a deal killer, or something, with voters?

05-01:45:51

Brown: A *deal killer*. No, this is about an image, which people who don’t know who the hell I am, hear and read about things, and they either like me more or like me less, and vote. That’s the way the system works. So this would be, in the minds of some voters, not a trait that would incline them to vote yes.

05-01:46:11

Shafer: And how did your campaign counteract that?

05-01:46:13

Brown: Well, there was no way to counteract it. Oh, we could go throw stuff at Alioto, and they did some primitive opposition research. I mean pathetic compared to what they do today.

05-01:46:36

Shafer: What did they have?

05-01:46:41

Brown: They have all of these campaign reports and stories—nothing, not like it is today, where they go back and get property tax records—it was utterly amateurish. And so you had the *Look* story on Alioto.

05-01:47:01

Shafer: That was sort of implying that he was—

05-01:47:04

Brown: Moretti had certain deals. Why did he get this contribution from the racing people, or what about this? I know after the campaign, at that UC symposium, Quinn and maybe Maullin, but certainly Quinn, they would say, “Oh yeah, we had dossiers, and we were going to do this.” It was primitive research, from public records, that we didn’t use, in part, because it wasn’t that effective. And what was it? You look at all that research—I threw it all away, years later—but

there's not much there. And even Alioto—what *is* there? He won the suit against *Look*. So that was that. I think they overstated that case, that Tom did, for whatever reason, because news is always a little bit exaggerated. I always notice, like an AP story, you say something that has certain qualifications. But then when the AP translates it, it's sharper. It's more black and white, because you've got to get the news. You've got to get the mind, and got to get in. Tom had worked in Chicago, a very hot town. It was very tough on the mayor, and so that's kind of the way it was.

And there was the other problem—going negative has its own risks, because there are all these people that liked Alioto. I mean, he got 18 percent, and Moretti only got about 11 [percent], I think, so they weren't that much of a threat. And there wasn't that much material—now today, you take something, and if you have enough money, you make a mountain out of a mole hill. Or as some people say, you take a thread and you weave a rug—and that can be done, à la Willie Horton. So you don't need a story that carries itself, but you can, by the context, do quite a lot of damage. But we didn't have that money, and we didn't have that sophistication. We had an agreement on not spending, so we were not spending a lot of money. No sides were. Things just weren't that much money in those days. People didn't *think* they could spend all this much money, and donors didn't think they should *give* all this much money.

05-01:49:58

Holmes:

Governor, by the time you're running in 1974, the Democratic Party, the one you grew up seeing, that your father operated in, had splintered into a number of different factions, or at least in comparison to perhaps what we observe historically.

05-01:50:17

Brown:

Well, I'm sorry, but it was factions before. In Southern California, you had the Stevenson/Paul Ziffren crowd, and you had the Unruh/Carmen Warschaw group—you had different elements.

05-01:50:32

Holmes:

The Burtons in San Francisco.

05-01:50:34

Brown:

They came a little later, but yeah.

05-01:50:37

Holmes:

In running this campaign, how did you overcome some of these factions? Was that part of the calculation, or were you just running your campaign and seeing where the chips—

05-01:50:50

Brown:

More of the latter. What do you do about that? You just avoid dividing people by saying things that divide people. That's why they always think politicians talk funny, speak with a forked tongue. They're trying to get people to vote for them who, if in one room, would probably fight with each other. So if you're only

going to get one group, that's not politics. That's factionalism. That's activism. But the less glorious route, of majoritarian elections and governance, is something else again.

05-01:51:36

Holmes: Would you say that it was more or less difficult in 1974 to do that than say, to speak from, again, your own experience, in 1970?

05-01:51:45

Brown: 1970? It was easier. Well, it was easier for me. What are you trying to compare?

05-01:51:55

Holmes: Just to see the change over time, sir. Would you say that there were more factions to navigate in 1974, than perhaps in earlier times, in the Democratic Party?

05-01:52:10

Brown: Uh, I'm not sure. You had building trades, you had different unions. You had regional—north and south, urban and rural. I'm not sure of that. It certainly seems a lot more fragmented today—and we *are* more fragmented. Multicultural, we're breaking up into tribes. I always thought when Timothy Leary had the Human Be-In at the Polo Grounds, in 1967, said something about the fact that we're going to retribalize. And I said, you know, there's a lot to that, and we've been retribalizing ever since. [laughter] That's the way I saw it. But so, it wasn't so bad in '74. What was bad, for a Democrat, was that the mood was not for government. Now in '74, I don't know exactly why that was, but there was still a conservative mood. You know, look at these states, like Alabama or Missouri. Missouri used to elect a lot of Democrats, and then they've become very conservative, so these moods take over. We used to have a Democratic governor in Utah, and today you'd find that not likely. George McGovern was elected from South Dakota. So, the mood is not stable, and politics isn't about—thank God—these life-and-death questions. You know, Shiites and Sunnis, or Hutus and the Tutsis.

I mean those things end up in—or the Bosnians, Muslims and the Serbs—I mean that's warfare. So it's not satisfactory that our politics have a certain banal quality, a certain rubbed off the edges, but it's better than war. That is the alternative. If everybody is going to go to the barricades, saying my issue is life and death—well, that means I've got to shoot you, or you've got to shoot me. So politics is more of a game than that, and it's a game that also creates a government that is accepted as legitimate—at least it has up until now. How long that lasts, that's another question.

But so, I don't think '74—the issue was not the fragmentation of the Democratic Party. The issue was the emerging majority of the Republican Party, as well described by Kevin Phillips, and earlier described in the analysis of the 1964 election in California by Howard Elinson, and I think in his PhD thesis, which I'm sure you're aware of. [laughter] He wrote on South Gate. He was a partner of Michael Berman, Howard Berman's brother, and they were the first people, that I heard of, that talked about the importance of what they called the South-Gate



Democrat, and that they were for some economic issues the Democrats were associated with, but they didn't like the social. And then you had all that Vietnam War—where the guys working on buildings wore their American flags, and they didn't like the antiwar protestors. So that war thing was a real division. But that wasn't the big division in '74. It was just the rising concern about issues that favored the Republican, the conservative view of things.

05-01:55:24

Shafer: I want to ask you a question about post election—so you win by about 3 percentage points roughly, and there's a quote in the *New York Times Magazine*, where you told your father, "I almost lost because of you."

05-01:56:37

Brown: That was Mr. [Richard] Reeves's quote. It's an incomplete quote.

05-01:56:43

Shafer: What's the complete quote?

05-01:56:44

Brown: The complete quote is something to the effect that—whether I said it before or afterwards—I won because of my father, and I almost lost because of my father. So that's the point. But Reeves had a theory that I was a very clever politician, but a very unlikable politician. He had kind of the Moretti view, although I've talked to him since then, and he's a pretty good writer. But that whole thing of father/son, that kind of Freudian narrative, I don't think—there are differences. But I meant it, and I can remember saying that. I was a little surprised when they viewed it that way. I was trying to be a little ironic, and a little self-deprecatory, if you really listen to the idea. That the name certainly was a big factor of getting there, so that's what I was saying. It was close, and maybe it wasn't my father. Maybe it was just the Democratic ideas. Those issues that Flournoy could jump on, which were similar to Reagan's.

05-01:58:06

Shafer: About big government?

05-01:58:07

Brown: It isn't big government, it's bloated government. It's welfare spending, it's Trumpian, that is some of the same thoughts. It's that some people are working hard all day, and then they look at other people that are not working as hard, and there's resentment there. So, and then there's fear—and there is fear of big government, when government is into everything. I mean I think this is not an illegitimate concern, and that I share that concern. I mean this rush to institutionalization is not something that excites me.

05-01:58:52

Shafer: What do you mean by that?

05-01:58:53

Brown: Well, that's to get your child just as quickly as you can to a civil-service bureaucracy, to be shaped by endless ever-changing rules, as opposed to being

brought up in your family or your neighborhood. They want to get it in the institution, and then they want to measure, according to many metrics, and they want to put it in a computer called CALPADS [California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System], and that data will follow you, every year, until after you graduate—and probably beyond, to see how successful your later life has been, and they can then judge preschool based on that. And they're going to spend endless sums of money, until there's a recession, and then they're going to cut all the programs back.

That's why maybe I like homeschooling, because people—"Oh, well, we're taking care of our kids." Not everybody can do that, but the idea that the government—it's a dangerous idea. Maybe in Scandinavia it works because it's a very small, homogeneous culture. But in a culture of great difference, trying to run everything through the government machine—and maybe it's better than I think it is. I was brought up differently. In our Catholic school, we were on the lookout for the government, the secularism, and we wanted to be in a good Catholic school where we learn the truth, as opposed to those other places. So I have a little bit of that *us and them*. We're us—what is that, yeah, that us and then there's the world, and the world is this place which is really screwed up. So that is a little bit of how I frame that in my mind.

So yeah, first of all, government costs a hell of a lot of money. And to do everything would take—will take massive tax increases. And we know every time you do that, it works for a while, but then it doesn't work. I mean they don't have labor governments in England; they don't have labor governments in Germany; they don't have a labor government in France. And they didn't have a labor government in Spain until six months ago, and that's hanging on by a thread, and we don't have a labor government in Brazil. There's a rhythm here. And so that's why, I think, keeping within certain boundaries—and that makes it hard because certainly today, unlike '74, the demands on the Democratic Party candidates are, if totally embraced and financed, would require *massive* increases in taxes, even though people say just the rich, and oh, we'll take—and then people wouldn't do that. It would never happen. But so then that's kind of the imaginary, it's like the Trump imaginary has things that will never happen, the Democrats have something—not similar, but analogous.

05-02:02:07

Shafer: This is going to seem really out of left field. But on election night, when you won, there was—one of the performing groups was a barefoot Sufi choir from Berkeley. And I'm just—

05-02:02:20

Brown: Yeah, the Sufi Choir.

05-02:02:21

Shafer: Yeah, what—who were they?

05-02:02:22

Brown: I'd met them before. I'm interested in Sufism—I'm interested in things like that. So their bare feet—have you ever seen, been to, never been to a dance show? Have you been to an Indian dance show, usually—Indian from India, they often have bare feet? I guess—that's not unusual.

05-02:02:48

Shafer: Yeah, in Hawaiian dancing they do that too.

05-02:02:52

Brown: The Sufis are a very exuberant, colorful group. It's a subset of Islam, goes back to the eleventh or twelfth century, and I came into contact with Sufism, and I found it interesting, and I met the choir. [William] Allaudin [Mathieu]—the head of it, I put on the Arts Council. He's quite a good guy. He's a noted musicologist. So yeah, and I liked the sound of it.

05-02:03:25

Shafer: I guess I asked about it because it's not a—

05-02:03:29

Brown: Well, it's better—I could have had a jazz band, I suppose. But if you ask me, I would rather listen to the Sufi Choir.

05-02:03:35

Shafer: Exactly, and it signaled that you were a different kind of candidate, I think. And you may—you may reject that notion.

05-02:03:45

Brown: I also had a big sign on the wall that said, *Age Quod Agis*. Did you know that?

05-02:03:48

Shafer: No.

05-02:03:49

Brown: It was a big banner, and that's the slogan of the Oakland Military School, and that's what they said in the novitiate, *age quod agis*—that's the Italian pronunciation. And what that means is do what you're doing. Do what you're doing. So you're drinking a glass of water? Drink the glass of water. [rapping on table for emphasis] If you're putting down a pavement over there—do that. The same with all these other things.

05-02:04:14

Shafer: What does that mean—what did that say about governing?

05-02:04:17

Brown: Well, it says more about living, which is to fully attend to that which you're doing, and don't be so divided and scattered, which is becoming increasingly difficult in a scattered world.

05-02:04:43

Shafer: And was that a conscious thing, or was that, you know—?

05-02:04:46

Brown: It was my idea. It wasn't Tom Quinn's idea; it wasn't Maullin's idea; it wasn't Jack's idea. I liked the Sufi Choir. In fact, I went once to a place where they were doing Sufi dancing. I liked it. I liked—*jai rom* is what they were singing, and they would keep repeating that, so that's all.

05-02:05:08

Shafer: So you say it was your idea, and you thought it was a good idea—why?

05-02:05:12

Brown: First of all, I won, and I could do it. And it added a certain, I don't know, mystique, a certain spirit. I am aware of the oppressive banality of the everyday politics, the repeating of the same speech, the performing. And now we have this later stuff about how everybody is so great and amazing, which is very unhistorical. People didn't talk about how everybody was great and amazing. There was a little bit of praise, but nothing like the super-praise we get today. So that's a fresh, human, artistic, real piece in the celebration, so I thought that's the way I would do it. And I had them there at my prayer breakfast too. In the *Chronicle*, the great *Chronicle*, with all its multiculturalism, seemed to be shocked. But that shows a certain intolerance and a certain lack of understanding of different cultures, so this would be an early example of insensitivity to a different way of doing things. I thought I'd create a good feeling. I had a good feeling, so I figured others would too. I think the sound was good. You should listen to it on your phone—go check it out. [laughter]

05-02:06:53

Shafer: Did you feel like you were pushing the envelope a little bit?

05-02:06:56

Brown: No, no, because it's a campaign, then it's over. It is not news. It is not going to go anywhere, and it didn't.

05-02:07:02

Shafer: Is it surprising to you that here we are, all these years later, talking about it?

05-02:07:06

Brown: Well, it's surprising because nobody's talked about it—you're the first people who've brought it up since 1974. In fact, nobody brought it up. A little bit at the prayer breakfast, because that was in the morning, so that fits in a little better with the news cycle. But a campaign—you know what happens in a campaign. The returns start coming in at ten or eleven, so the Sufi Choir is after the newsies are in bed. [laughing] I thought it would be good for the people.

05-02:07:33

Shafer: What do you mean?

05-02:07:35

Brown: Motivating the people there.

- 05-02:07:38  
Shafer: Do they have instruments? What kind of instruments do they play?
- 05-02:07:41  
Brown: They have some instruments. It's dancing.
- 05-02:07:57  
Shafer: Governor, we talked yesterday about the letter that you wrote to your father.
- 05-02:08:03  
Brown: Yeah. You've got it? Can we read it?
- 05-02:08:04  
Shafer: Yeah, would you read it? Yeah.
- 05-02:08:13  
Brown: Yeah, I think there is an excerpt. Oh, I don't want to read it. You can read it. You want me to read it into the record, as it were?
- 05-02:08:19  
Shafer: Yeah, yeah.
- 05-02:08:20  
Brown: Why?
- 05-02:08:21  
Shafer: Well, because, in the end, this is going to be a produced—it's not going to be just you talking. It's going to be produced with other people, and with music, and it's—
- 05-02:08:29  
Brown: Will you have the Sufi Choir?
- 05-02:08:32  
Shafer: Maybe—we absolutely will. [background talking and commenting about the Sufi Choir]
- 05-02:08:37  
Brown: They've got records, call [Allaudin] Mathieu. Peter Coyote knows how to get hold of him. He's in Sebastopol.
- 05-02:08:51  
Shafer: The fact that they're barefoot will be lost on the radio audience.
- 05-02:08:55  
Brown: I never even thought of that. That never even came to my attention. And I think the—bare-chested, that was what they might have known, because that's news! That's clickbait.
- 05-02:09:08  
Shafer: Early clickbait. [laughter]

05-02:09:11

Brown: Everybody is in the business of grabbing eyeballs today—got to grab attention, grab votes—so the politicians, “*You* politicians are always trying to get votes. We newsmen—we’re only trying to get news.” So that’s why we work together.  
[laughter]

05-02:09:30

Shafer: It’s symbiotic.

05-02:09:31

Brown: Anyway, there’s an analogy there, which I think a little self-reflection—and some reporters, there’s a guy they were talking about at the campaign—anyway, the guy who wrote about—I don’t even know if I can see this, oh yeah, with my glasses.

[Side conversation deleted]

05-02:09:46

Brown: I can edit this right now and tell you what you’ll use. All right, you want the whole thing? Let’s see: [reading] “The basic question seems to me to boil down to this: Where will you have the best opportunity of doing the most for God and country, which two ends are necessarily the same? As senator, you would have six uninterrupted years, untroubled by election entanglements, to devote to your work. You would be the only senator, of the majority party, from the biggest state in the union, if the population continues to grow at the present rate. If you are really interested in national health insurance, and flood/calamity insurance, capital punishment, and other sundry plans that you have talked to me about in the past, you’d do far more to further these ambitions as one of our national leaders. To wit, a senator. In my opinion, if you are ever to emerge from local politics—by that I mean California politics—you will have to do it pretty soon. The question you must answer is where can I do the most in solving these problems? Will I be able to do more as a senator or as a governor? When you come right down to it, I can’t say much about your political future, except that you have a duty to God and your neighbor and your religion, upon which your decision ought to be made in accordance with. Please excuse inaccuracies in this brief analysis, as I have only experienced them far away from the political scene. With love, Jerry. P.S. My advice; make a retreat, and ask God’s help. You can’t do it all alone.”

05-02:11:21

Shafer: Does that bring back any memories for you?

05-02:11:23

Brown: No. [laughter] No, not really. It’s interesting, a little formal. Not as chatty then.

05-02:11:37

Shafer: How old were you?

05-02:11:39

Brown: Eighteen or nineteen.

05-02:11:40

Shafer: Eighteen, yeah. That's—not a lot of eighteen-year-olds write letters like that.  
[banging sounds]

05-02:11:44

Brown: Is that true?

05-02:11:46

Shafer: I never did.

05-02:11:47

Brown: I don't think it's true. I think for some of these things, the state *is* better. I think my point, or at least I think my point is. And when you're dealing with things fifty years later, it's much harder to know. But I thought the national, the world, because—and the Jesuits were talking about it. We're talking about the world, you know? Souls, the missionaries, the Church. It's not a state. A state seems very local. We read history, the history of the Jesuits, and that was exciting stuff, very interesting. So the senate is dealing with that. And I think we were dealing with nuclear/atomic questions, and Cold War, Russia—that was big stuff. I think that's why I was interested. And the senate is a higher—it is, in some ways. But on the other hand, you don't do anything. You just sit there and vote.

05-02:12:51

Shafer: Yeah, especially now.

05-02:12:53

Brown: But I didn't think of that.

05-02:12:54

Kim: Do you agree with your younger self there?

05-02:12:57

Brown: I think there's a time and place. A governor's got a lot—but these things are not that available. Let me be precise. What you can do, depends upon what the circumstances are that you find. [tapping table for emphasis] The work to help immigrants, that we are doing now, could never have been done when Pete Wilson was governor. And you couldn't even get elected with those ideas. Now, change in population already—and then with Trump. So, as governor, it's pretty challenging. There's a lot of stuff that can go wrong. The spending, crime, congestion—now it's affordability of houses. That's not something the government's going to solve. It's not going to solve it very easily.

05-02:14:06

Shafer: It's—a lot of it's outside your control.

05-02:14:10

Brown: Well, that's right, there is a lot. Now, as senator, you're a speechifier, I guess. So it really depends on eloquence, and I think my father knew he was better suited, his preparation to—district attorney, attorney general—to be a governor, now that I would think about it. That fit him pretty well. I think that's true.

## Interview 6: May 6, 2019 [in the morning]

06-00:00:00

Shafer: This is interview session six, and it's May 6, 2019. We're with Governor Jerry Brown, and Scott Shafer from KQED, along with Martin Meeker and Todd Holmes from The Bancroft Library. So Governor, we left off last time—you'd gotten elected governor the first time.

06-00:00:12

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:00:13

Shafer: And so it's January of 1975 or so; you're about to take office. What do you, what's your sense of—when you were taking office, what were you—what was the mood in Sacramento? It was a very different administration that you were following. You know, what was—?

06-00:00:31

Brown: What was the *mood*? You know, that's a very subjective question.

06-00:00:39

Shafer: I mean what were you—did you have goals?

06-00:00:41

Brown: I don't know if there was a mood in Sacramento. Gerald Ford was the president. We didn't have an impeachment, but we had Nixon resigning. So we had Watergate. We had the winding down of the Vietnam War. A lot of the aftermath of that. So, we thought, I think there was a recession in '73 - '74, so there was still a sense of the recession, even though a recovery had already started. So it wasn't an exuberant spending mood. So, it's hard to say. I mean we've had eight years of Reagan, so he was a noticeable person, and so that sets the stage for something different. And that's basically what I was doing, trying to be something other than Reagan, what I call the *new spirit*, which was a sense of revitalization, of making government more responsive, because there was the same discontent there is today. There is *always* discontent. I meant the whole election system is based on trying to arouse, or find, discontent, and then after having done that and being elected on the basis of it, you then have to respond. Now, you *were* discontent, and now I'm going to show you how you don't have to be discontent anymore. So you want to lower taxes, or at least not raise them, and make things happen.

If you read my inaugural speech, it's pretty simple—brief. And I guess that was the mood—I mean that was *my* mood, kind of trying to make government a little more immediate, more real, not as cliché ridden, of overstated—kind of the certain emptiness of political rhetoric. So I was trying to purify that and get it to be more down to earth and more real. Now, of course, when you're there, the normal process takes over and things continue, even if slightly different.



06-00:03:20

Shafer: And the phrase *new spirit*, because that's one that you used a lot, did that mean something to you in terms of, not just outward symbolic things, but the kinds of people that you wanted to bring?

06-00:03:32

Brown: Well, Reagan followed a Republican line, and so that opened up the possibility of bringing *non*-Republicans into government, which I did. He was more of the traditional majority white view of things, so that opened up the possibility that I could bring in minorities. Also working to help the farm workers, give working people some rights, and not letting government get out of control. That was basically what I was up to.

06-00:04:20

Shafer: One of the first decisions you made was where to live, and you decided—?

06-00:04:27

Brown: So basically, I'm not exactly satisfied with that mood story, because mood is—you know, it's like mood music. It doesn't tell you a lot. So I don't know if that's a very good question, and I think that's why my answer is not what I would think is all that important.

06-00:04:47

Shafer: Well, I guess what I was getting at with the question is like what was the zeitgeist?

06-00:04:52

Brown: You'd have to go back and see some contemporary—you could watch old films or—I don't know how you'd find that out. How many years ago is that? Yeah, but that's a distortion, because you can't possibly remember. Well, who was thinking about what when? In 1975? There was the legislators. There were Republicans, there were Democrats, there's old ones, there's young ones. So I think the most significant part is the Vietnam War was winding down. There was not a great sense of deference to institutions, and the military had suffered a lot of loss of credibility, and it was having its own institutional, internal problems, so I don't know that I can add anything to that. I think that's something people could look at for themselves.

06-00:05:50

Shafer: So one of your first decisions, again, was where to live.

06-00:05:53

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:05:54

Shafer: And you considered living in the Governor's Mansion, where—

06-00:05:57

Brown: No, I didn't consider that, because it was ridiculous. I hadn't really thought about the old mansion. The old mansion was perfectly fine—at least it was in 1966. I

didn't go over and look at it, so I don't know how it was in—but they'd pretty well neglected it, so that probably wasn't a viable option. It was a park, and I was by myself, so it would be a little awkward. The new mansion was even more awkward, because it was in the suburbs. I don't know whether it was twenty minutes away or twenty-five minutes away.

06-00:06:41

Shafer: In Carmichael, I think.

06-00:06:42

Brown: Yeah, so it had to be furnished, and to furnish it and operate it over four years would be millions of dollars, so that wasn't within the spirit of things. So there was really no choice. An apartment made sense. Now, when I came back the second time we had an apartment over P.F. Chang's. We had a one-room apartment. So there's nothing unusual about that—and by the way, that's what people do—it's called condos. And that's where most housing is being built in the city. Now, if I had a family, that would have been a different story.

06-00:07:19

Shafer: So you ended up choosing to live in an apartment building near the capitol. Right across from the capitol.

06-00:07:24

Brown: A state-owned building right next to the capitol. And then when I later went back and stayed at the mansion, it makes a lot of sense. That's probably why they bought that mansion, because the governor can be present in the capitol, can invite people over, and it's not a big trip to go to the residence, so that's why—although I didn't entertain in the apartment. So that's an interesting thing. My father said, "You have to be able to entertain." I said, "Well, I'm not going to do that this time."

06-00:07:57

Shafer: Because—?

06-00:07:58

Brown: Well, how do you entertain—how do I do that? You have to have an entertainment assistant, or something. It just didn't fit in. So if you're in the mansion, and you have a maid and a cook and a gardener. Okay, then you have staff and you make things happen. Well, if you don't have any of that—of course Reagan didn't, he dismantled all that—then you have to recreate it. If you recreate it, then people start writing about that, and that becomes the dominant theme, and that was totally contrary to what I was trying to communicate. So I'd say it was all pretty well determined, once I laid out my campaign, and just being a single person, as I was, then everything else had to fall into place.

06-00:08:52

Holmes: Speaking of new spirits in Sacramento, were you also trying to strike a difference from your predecessor Ronald Reagan in regards to a more frugal lifestyle?

06-00:09:06

Brown: Well, I did sell his jet—I did not sell his jet. He rented a jet, which at that time was a rather large sum, \$600 an hour, and I thought that was excessive. Particularly, I thought it was excessive because having lived in Los Angeles—and I lived there, and I traveled to the capital because I was secretary of state, and I would take PSA, which is now replaced by Southwest. It was perfectly fine. You just have a ticket, you didn't have all that preliminary stuff. You just walk on, get there in less than an hour and walk off. Why in the world would you ever need a private jet? Now, if you're going to go to Modoc, yeah, it'd be nice to have—but then the jet's too big. So it seemed to me there was no basis for a private plane. Now, my father had a plane called *The Grizzly*, but that was a DC-3, and I probably might have used it if that was the tradition. But Reagan had a Lear jet, I think, that he flew around on, and I thought that was a little excessive for the time.

06-00:10:09

Shafer: A lot was made of the fact that you lived in an apartment. I mean, I think the reports at the time seemed to suggest that you were sleeping, I think, on a mattress or on a futon?

06-00:10:18

Brown: I wasn't sleeping on the floor. I was sleeping on a mattress, which I presume you do too. And I still do.

06-00:10:23

Shafer: [laughing] Was it on the floor?

06-00:10:24

Brown: No, there was some kind of a frame.

06-00:10:28

Shafer: But there was a big contrast between the previous two administrations.

06-00:10:32

Brown: Well, if you read about Nancy Reagan, her bed was taken by Air Force One, when they traveled to foreign countries, so there was a more elaborate situation.

06-00:10:46

Shafer: But how—I mean obviously, between that and the car you chose to drive, the blue Plymouth instead of the limousine that the—

06-00:10:54

Brown: Yeah, I did the limousine because the credibility of government was low, and I didn't want to project the arrogance of power. And a big limousine with one guy in the back seems excessive to me, and just the iconography of that is not good. From a political point of view, or from a human point of view, it's not needed. So if form follows function, I said just take whatever car. I didn't know it was going to be blue. I didn't pick the blue car, Gray Davis—or he didn't either, just pick whatever car is in the car pool. So I tried to keep a more ordinary—whatever they call it, the arrogance of power, the elevated status of the politician, because the politicians are servants of the people. And I remember someone gave me some

descriptions of prior inaugurations, and I think Jefferson walked in the mud, or something, to his speech. I think we've forgotten how simple things were. They say that Harry Truman—I don't know if it's true—drove back to Independence, Missouri. So people didn't have these big book contracts, or flying around in private jets, or living in mansions and having all this other stuff. There was a simpler view.

In that sense, I'd say that the governor's mansion is a nice place, three stories, pretty nice. Swimming pool, nice yards and trees and plants, but it had the legitimacy that previous governors had conducted their business that way. So Reagan said no, that won't work, and they got their friends to buy them a private home, so Reagan lived in the fabulous forties. Nice house, nothing spectacular. But that Victorian house seems to bother certain people. Now, if you're coming from San Francisco, well, these are great! A lot of people look to find a restored Victorian house, for whatever reason. That's how it got abandoned, so that was left for me to have the apartment.

And I was very aware of the skepticism and disdain for politicians, and I didn't want to feed that. I think it *does* get fed by certain kinds of behavior that are pleasurable, but the average guy who is not doing so well—and we had, the first year we got to 10 percent unemployment, and people were marching. The AFL-CIO had a march on Sacramento I think, in the first six months. So I think at that point, you don't want to have ostentatious kinds of indulgence. And basically, I came up pretty simply. My parents had a nice house, but simple. And being in the seminary was even simpler yet, so the accoutrements of power, if taken very far, became distasteful to me, and I think distasteful to the people as—witness the popularity that I enjoyed.

06-00:14:33

Shafer: So to what extent was it just that's you, that's who you were, versus being—it sounds like you were somewhat aware. I mean you couldn't not be aware.

06-00:14:39

Brown: What do you mean unaware? I've been running for governor four times, I'm unaware of the consequences of political gestures and moves? To state that proposition is to refute it.

06-00:14:50

Shafer: No, I said you were—I was going to say you weren't unaware. It was a double negative.

06-00:14:56

Brown: Well, but you're implying that this was unusual, to *be* aware, that most politicians run around totally unaware of the consequences and what people are thinking, right? Wrong. Maybe in your business you're not aware, but I doubt that. So I think that's a silly question. I have to push back on it, because you can't take it seriously. Do you know how much money politicians spend on calculating how they're coming over? I mean there's a lot of investment here. There's consultants,

people whose whole career is just spent doing that. So, I didn't do much of that. What are you going to—how much is just naïve, what do you call it, artless moving around, and how much is conscious, right? Is that, I think—

06-00:15:53

Shafer: That's your phrasing, not mine.

06-00:15:55

Brown: What's that? Well, I'm just trying to put in clearer English what you're trying to say.

06-00:15:59

Meeker: Well, think about Reagan and the jet and the limousines. There may be a certain part of—

06-00:16:04

Brown: Well, Reagan *liked* that.

06-00:16:06

Meeker: Well, maybe there's a certain part of the population that likes to see their elected officials have those trappings of power.

06-00:16:13

Brown: There are, there are. And that's why it's hard to govern in this state, because there are some that like it, and some don't like it at all, and they yell epithets at you as you go by in your limousine. So those are all true. That's right. I mean there's not a one unitary interpretation of this.

[Side conversation deleted]

06-00:16:33

Brown: I wanted to make the point that Ronald Reagan said, once, that he couldn't imagine a person running for president had they not been an actor. So that was the point, right? To be an actor is to be *coached*. Reagan said that he couldn't imagine running for president by anyone who had not first been an actor, and I think that speaks to the issue of being able to communicate to a broad audience.

06-00:16:47

Shafer: So politics is part performance?

06-00:16:50

Brown: *Part* performance? So is journalism, so is being a professor. Performance is built into existence.

06-00:16:58

Holmes: On that point, Governor, you were just making the point that for you it was almost natural to see these moves of living in the apartment, you know, form and function—

06-00:17:10

Brown: Yeah, well, I could go spend a million dollars, furnish a house, and I'm not, who—I'm going to go to the stores? Or am I going to have my secretary do that? How am I going to do that? How would you go about furnishing a huge house like the mansion?

06-00:17:27

Shafer: Politicians do it all the time.

06-00:17:30

Brown: Do they? Well, they have wives, and they have staffs of one kind or another, which I didn't have. Yeah, if you're Rockefeller or Reagan, you can do all that. And by the way, that wasn't really the *mood*, in the post Vietnam/post Watergate, spending a million dollars on furniture, I think it would be not a smart move.

06-00:17:54

Holmes: And from what you recall, was that your decision? Or was that a discussion among you and your key advisors, coming into office in 1975?

06-00:18:05

Brown: I don't know, who would be my advisors? They sat down and they told me that these were the things you should do? No, there's no advisors.

06-00:18:13

Holmes: It was you then?

06-00:18:15

Brown: I don't know—I'm sure I talked about it. I can't, first of all, we're all part of a— influences. And I talk to people—I'm talking to you, so I wouldn't say it's solely—what are you trying to get at? That we have a 9:00 meeting to discuss where the governor should live?

06-00:18:35

Holmes: No, I was just trying to have you discuss how those decisions were made.

06-00:18:43

Brown: Oh, how you'd make the decision? I can't exactly—I'm sure I talked about it.

I brought a lawsuit, as you know, against the construction of the new mansion, that it was on an Indian burial ground—or adjacent to a burial ground, a Maidu burial ground—so that'd be the second reason not to live there. So that sounds like it's a no-brainer, as they say, in the political world. Even though it was unusual, because it was contrary to the Reagan regal way of operating.

06-00:19:17

Shafer: And you were fine with that, obviously.

06-00:19:19

Brown: Well, I did it. But by the way, for Reagan—it worked for Reagan. He got to be president but he was a Republican in a different time.

06-00:19:29

Shafer: So let's talk about the inauguration. How did you plan for it? And what did you see as being—like what did you want to—?

06-00:19:37

Brown: The inauguration.

06-00:19:39

Shafer: January of '75.

06-00:19:40

Brown: I don't think we had an inaugural ball. I don't know if there was a big plan.

06-00:19:43

Shafer: Well, the ball, I think, was canceled.

06-00:19:45

Brown: Well, no, it wasn't canceled—it wasn't *planned*. Balls just don't happen. You have to have a committee, you have to raise money, you have to get a band, you have to book an auditorium. [tapping table] So yeah, if you don't do anything, it didn't happen. So I just showed up, and it was very exciting by appointing people. And by the way, who was I going to *take* to the inaugural ball? Or was I just going to go by myself? Who would have the first dance? So yeah, I think not having a ball was much simpler, and I definitely could think that one through. And again, the ball was in a time, sometimes it's not a time for that, and it was a little bit of that mood. There are certain times when you have to be more somber or more serious, so that's why things were more simple.

06-00:20:42

Holmes: Which again is a big contrast to Reagan, who had four inaugural balls.

06-00:20:47

Brown: Right, so yeah, but each governor likes to do it differently than the one before him—but also, the times change. That's why they go from Pat Brown to Ronald Reagan. Times change. They went from Reagan to Brown; they went from Brown to Deukmejian. So these are just the swing of—the *mood* as you call it—the pendulum, and politicians respond to that.

06-00:21:11

Shafer: So you were sworn in at the capitol.

06-00:21:13

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:21:14

Shafer: And you gave a relatively concise speech—eight minutes I think it was?

06-00:21:17

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:21:19

Shafer: How did you think about that? What did you want to convey in that speech?

06-00:21:23

Brown: I conveyed all that I had to say.

06-00:21:25

Shafer: What did you want to say?

06-00:21:27

Brown: Well, what I said. Read it. I thought about it, I wrote it, and after I—that's about all I can put together. And I think the brevity was—there weren't a lot of great programming, there wasn't—first of all, the whole thing of programs. You know, Reagan and my father, they used to have a general session every *other* year, and they had a budget session—they'd alternate, okay. So when you have your general, when you have a budget session—I think even in the main one, they'd kind of list the governor's programs. I remember my father would always have a list, and he'd say, "Well, I got 70 percent of that." But, and I thought to myself, if you tell them what the programs are, then the legislature can hold you up and start giving you a little bargaining, so it's better not to put everything on the table, and then work it out as you go along. So that really did shape the way I thought. But there wasn't a lot to be said. If you go back and look at what were the issues right then—there was the issue of taxes, in which I said no. And there's the issue of a deficit—and what was there? What were the issues? That was a good question.

06-00:22:56

Shafer: Well, I think you called for the repeal of the oil depletion allowance.

06-00:22:59

Brown: Yeah, that was a tax break that people had talked about in Washington, but if you remember the other side, what did they talk about? Banning harvest-time strikes. Well, I'm not going to do that. That's what Flournoy said. Banning strikes for public-sector workers—well, I'm not going to announce that. So then what other things are there? Well, there was the Planning and Conservation League, I believe, or the Sierra Club, wanted comprehensive statewide land-use planning. I made some gesture, some hint of that, I think. And there was the idea of protecting our agricultural land, and so I made mention of those things. But there was not a long list. And there's always little things, because the legislature will pass anywhere from a thousand to fifteen hundred bills, but every bill is not worthy of a topic at a state of the union or inaugural speech, so it was limited. But that was what I think was appropriate. Instead of just talking, talking, talking.

I think I'm probably the only one, among all the governors, that has gone back and read governors' inaugural speeches, and I have them all, going back to Governor [Peter Hardeman] Burnett, who I quoted, the first governor of California. So I read them, and I found a lot of them wordy. And I've read the ones *since* I was governor the first time, before I started doing it the second time, and I still find a lot of wordiness. So to get clear, persuasive, authentic language is challenging. And so sometimes being brief is more straightforward than just going



on and on, which is not only formulaic, but it's—it's puffy. It's a lot of surplus. So that does not convey a lean, elegant government, which I wanted to do.

06-00:25:19

Shafer: To what extent did you feel like—and you've given eight state-of-the-state addresses—but did you feel like that was something you didn't even really—?

06-00:25:26

Brown: I think I gave seven, as a matter of fact.

06-00:25:27

Shafer: Was it seven?

06-00:25:27

Brown: I combined the inaugural with one, so you might check that, just to be precise.

06-00:25:30

Shafer: With the budget, that's right. To what extent was it something you just sort of like dreaded or didn't really want to do?

06-00:25:38

Brown: Actually, I think there were eight the second time, seven the first time, but I'm not sure of that.

06-00:25:43

Shafer: So what like—when you gave these speeches, or even the inaugural speech, was it something like *uh*—I mean what was your—?

06-00:25:48

Brown: Yeah, *uh*. I mean you have to do it.

06-00:25:51

Shafer: So you didn't see it as a vehicle to put your program out there as much as something—?

06-00:25:58

Brown: Well, no, the inauguration, that's more of a celebratory idea. But if you go back and read the inaugural speeches of governors, much less the state-of-the-state speeches, they're not particularly inspiring. And so they try to make up, with words, for their lack of content or inspiration, so they're not as important as you think. And they're less important now. The newspaper—they used to be done, the stations would carry them, and that was—when I was governor, they still were carrying them. They don't do that. So I found them more of a discipline for myself, to think through what it is I was going to try to do that year. But does the legislature *listen* that much? Does the press really pick *up* that much? I don't think so. So it's a different world than the Lincoln-Douglas debate, where people stood for hours, and they went back and forth, or—I imagine what that must have been like.

06-00:27:05

Holmes: In your address you pledged to cut government by 7 percent—

- 06-00:27:11  
Brown: No, the governor's *office* by 7 percent.
- 06-00:27:14  
Holmes: The governor's office?
- 06-00:27:15  
Brown: Is that what—are you sure?
- 06-00:27:17  
Holmes: Well, we could go with governor's office, but—
- 06-00:27:20  
Brown: Well, it is what it is. You're asking me to remember, what was that—forty-three years ago? That's a long time ago. I think it was my own office by 7 percent, but I'm not sure.
- 06-00:27:27  
Shafer: That makes sense, that makes sense, yeah.
- 06-00:27:30  
Holmes: But I wanted to ask, is when Reagan came in, he did the famous cut—
- 06-00:27:36  
Brown: Trim and squeeze.
- 06-00:27:37  
Holmes: Squeeze, yeah, by 10 percent. Your thoughts on—?
- 06-00:27:41  
Brown: But his budget grew 13 percent a year, for eight years, on average.
- 06-00:27:47  
Holmes: Which was the point I wanted you to discuss, in the sense that he never really cut, trimmed, or squeezed. It actually went up.
- 06-00:27:54  
Brown: Well, he did, he squeezed. But the California economy when I was first governor, I think the GDP—approximately, because we don't always measure gross domestic product—but it was like at \$350 billion, thereabouts. Now it's \$2.8 *trillion*, so the state budget is within that larger economic framework. So you can cut and trim and squeeze, but in a dynamic state like California, that is growing in population, in cars, in jobs, and in financial transactions, it *is* about growth. But we don't always know that.
- 06-00:28:42  
Holmes: So did you see Reagan as a fiscal conservative, by his record?
- 06-00:28:48  
Brown: Not particularly. I mean he cut welfare temporarily—he didn't really cut welfare, because it all grew. You're in a dynamic economy. This is not like a corner grocery store, where you can say, "We're not going to sell chocolate bars

anymore; we're going to just sell potato chips." No, this is one of the major economies of the whole world, extraordinarily complex, and it's constantly in motion. And therefore, the state budget, which is a subset of this larger economic reality—yeah, you can work at things. But Reagan did get the idea over that government spending is a problem and it has to be contained. That was certainly one of the memes of that era, and I had to deal with that. You have to give proper obeisance to the pieties.

And there's a context. Like just this morning, I was in Wikipedia reading about structuralism, and its history, and its evolution into post-structuralism. But the notion of structuralism is that there's patterns, there's a structure—and that human beings show up in the structure, but the real explanation for what moves history and people and ideas are these larger structures. And I would say that, without embracing that view totally, that describes a lot of how you should try to understand California.

06-00:30:44

Shafer: You came into the governor's office from being secretary of state.

06-00:30:48

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:30:49

Shafer: And you ran for secretary of state sort of as an outsider, in the sense that you were critical of politicians—

06-00:30:55

Brown: I ran for the second time [in 2010], for governor, as an outsider. It was an outsider's mind. Insider's—what did I have? Insider's knowledge/outsider's mind, something like that. We had a good slogan like that, for the same thing.

06-00:31:10

Shafer: [laughing] That's a good trick, to run as an outsider after four years.

06-00:31:14

Brown: I did. No, I mean after eight years.

06-00:31:18

Shafer: After eight years. So to what extent did you take the themes of, that you had running for secretary of state—clean up government, more disclosure of campaign, sort of running, in a way, against the system.

06-00:31:30

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:31:31

Shafer: To what extent did you, once you got into the governor's office, especially in that first year, did you want to, with some of the symbolism and also things you were doing, want to follow up on that?

06-00:31:41

Brown:

Well, you always run against government. Who did Ronald Reagan run against? Pat Brown. Who was Pat Brown? He was the governor of California. So whatever was there before, then you see—we're not going to elect you unless you can do something different. If it's just perfect the way it is, then you keep what's there. So there is that, just built into the system. But of course there *were* differences. Reagan vetoed unemployment insurance for farm workers. He did certain things that were good, I think, as well.

So the trouble is that governors are conscious of trying to do good things. So then when someone wants to be governor, they've got to find out, well, what are the good things that haven't happened yet? And that's sometimes very difficult, because if something is good, and people think it's good, then anybody who is governor is going to do it, unless there's some ideological blockage. So basically my ideas, I think where the newness came, the political reform, the helping of farm workers, the attempt to lift up the lower paid, the not further advantaging the already well off. We did that with the oil depletion allowance and a few other things, and insurance, the home office exemption—we tried to create a more fairness. And that's certainly the story of the Democrats even today.

And then the environment was important. Earth Day was, I think, 1970. The Stockholm environmental global conference was 1972 [United Nations Conference on the Human Environment]—which I didn't even know about at the time, but these were ideas. Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*—so these were ideas that were circulating, and that would be part of a more, of a, I don't know if I want to call it a reform agenda, but words like *reform*, *innovation*, *new spirit*, *change*. That's what I was working on, and also hiring, bringing in women, minorities, public interest lawyers, and all the rest.

06-00:33:58

Shafer:

And it seems like you also came in with a fairly healthy skepticism about government, and government programs, like the Great Society, for example.

06-00:34:08

Brown:

Well, that was the mood, if I could use your "mood" word. There were a lot of writings—there was something written in the early seventies about prisons, and the title was, "Nothing Works," and if you go look that up in Google, you can see that, "Nothing Works." People wrote about education, raising questions about does education really achieve the goal of equality? In fact, there's a book that I'm reviewing right now called *The Meritocracy Trap*, which says meritocracy is a sham. So it goes. So there's always, in the American intellectual tradition, a lot of skepticism, which I think is warranted, because certainly if you're in the Vietnam War, and more than two million people are killed in a far-away country, who don't even understand, on issues we're not very clear about, that's serious stuff. And yet, that's what happened.

So that became a word that someone coined, *groupthink*—they're all thinking about this. And I remember hearing Dean Rusk in Los Angeles talk, during the

Lyndon Johnson administration—in fact, it was at Lew Wasserman’s house, at a place where he showed his films. I remember the former secretary said, “We’ve got to get our message,” somebody said, “You’re not getting your message out.” So people were interpreting the problem with the Vietnam War is that Johnson wasn’t getting his message out. Well, of course, I thought, “Well, wait a minute, the whole idea of war—this is wrong. It’s a mistake.” So if you have a whole country going in one direction, and then you say wait a minute, that’s the wrong direction. Well, if you see that enough, then you have to be somewhat—you have to have your eyes open, and that’s what I’d call it.

So you’re being skeptical. See, I don’t like the word *skeptic*, but you have to be discerning and inquiring, and not gullible, or the word I would say—*credulous*. There’s a lot of credulity. People say I heard that, and then they say it. Well, I was trained differently. Both the Jesuits, by my education, both at law school, both in the court—so I had a fairly vigorous training in questioning and probing. In fact, the whole casebook method in law school is to try to understand cases, not from what’s apparent, but dig into it.

It’s also, at the time, you know, when Freudianism was predominant, and Marxism—and what are those two about? Freud talks about latent, you have these latent, the unconscious, so you think you’re doing one thing on the surface, but there’s something behind. And then Marxism, we have the superstructure, but then you have the underlying means of production. So there were a lot of intellectual ideas that said whatever—the appearance, but then there’s the reality. So that, being aware of that and being trained in that, and then in the things that I’ve read and learned, the teachers I had—so obviously, when somebody says something, I don’t take it necessarily at face value.

And then when you’re in politics, where there’s so much exaggeration and distortion and outright mendacity, then to be credulous, you know, like you’re going for your Eagle Scout Court of Honor, that would be very naïve and silly. So I did bring a certain amount of inquiry, and I would say that has only grown over the years. It hasn’t diminished. Because I haven’t gotten more reason to take things at face value.

But you see, the reason I hesitate to use *skeptic*, I’m also a person who’s promoting ideas, you know. Let’s give the farm workers the right to control their destiny. So that’s all. Whether it’s criminal justice reform, environment, high-speed rail, solar energy, space exploration development—I’m looking, I’m in some way driven by ideas and visions. Not visions, that sounds too grandiose, but there are things I want to do, and I go to a lot of effort to accomplishing them. On the other hand, and maybe—yeah, but along with that is a questioning of what *is*. That’s just like some people say, “Oh, what we need to do is to get a comprehensive report on the behavior of every child, and put it into a computer and track them for twenty years.” Okay, as soon as I hear—totalitarianism, I hear then. Other people hear progress, and we’re going to ameliorate the class differences and disparities, and everything’s going to be fine because we’ll have

all this data. Well, number one, people aren't going to look at the data very much, and number two, what's it going to be used for? And who is [it] going to be used by?

When I see things, I do see things differently than a lot of people do, because that was just in my background, my education, the fact that I'd seen—my father was a governor. I was in a four-hundred-year-old religious order that was all over the world, that dealt with government officials and kings and potentates, or whatever. And just reading history, just being a lawyer, and so you have to kind of see beneath the surface of things.

06-00:40:32

Holmes:

Governor, how did you strike a balance between wanting to bring in your own ideas, but also balancing that with your own skepticism of government programs? I mean, were there certain government programs that, when coming in as governor, that were already in place—both maybe nationally and the state level, that you were very questionable of?

06-00:40:52

Brown:

Well, there's a whole skepticism about did the War on Poverty work? Didn't work because we didn't do enough? Or did it fail because we didn't do enough, or did it fail because it was wrongly conceived—or did it, in fact, work? Those are three possibilities, and we're not going to go discuss which one I think is most plausible.

06-00:41:16

Meeker:

Why not?

06-00:41:20

Brown:

Well, because you could spend an hour doing that, and even then you would still—to some degree, the poverty program worked. It trained a whole cadre of people who had been on the margins of society, and they got political and civic skills, and they advanced, and ideas advanced. And things got better. On the other hand, we have more poverty than ever. So it didn't work in that sense. Was the design wrong? Was there not enough into it? All of the above.

06-00:41:49

Meeker:

There was a fascinating interview you did with William F. Buckley.

06-00:41:52

Brown:

Yeah.

06-00:41:53

Meeker:

That you actually seemed to enjoy. [laughing]

06-00:41:55

Brown:

Well, I even enjoy talking to you people. [laughter]

06-00:41:59

Meeker:

Despite some political differences—

06-00:42:03

Brown: When you say political—despite, but that kind of—the assumption in your question is that political differences are really big.

06-00:42:11

Meeker: Okay.

06-00:42:12

Brown: In somebody's mind. But there's religious differences, there's emotional differences, there's biological differences, there's ethnic differences. You know, there are so many different things that fill out your mind and your life, so the fact that somebody's a Republican and somebody's a Democrat, that's only one little piece of the total configuration that describes a possible relationship. So I don't think you should be surprised that one would enjoy talking to William Buckley. He's educated; he played the harpsichord; he was an interesting raconteur. He wrote a book called *God and Man at Yale*. It was pretty interesting for a young undergraduate. So he was an interesting person, as opposed to being a dull person or an uneducated person, or a person full of clichés, so that's why I think it would be odd *not* to enjoy an interview with William Buckley.

06-00:43:12

Meeker: Where it seems like we're sort of retribalizing as a society, and that there is an expectation that two people of different political leanings would *not* want to speak with one another?

06-00:43:27

Brown: That's only in your limited journalistic world.

06-00:43:31

Meeker: I'm not a journalist.

06-00:43:32

Brown: Okay, well, your limited academic world. I think we're highly partisan right now. With Trump it's gotten more partisan. But we had other periods that are partisan. People always—you fight for one thing, you collaborate on another. So, but your question was did I find it surprising, it looked like I was enjoying it—as if maybe I should have suffered more during the interview? I'm trying to understand the question, so I can respond to it.

06-00:44:08

Meeker: No, I actually agree with you. I think that frankly, I would much rather have an interview with William F. Buckley, than somebody who maybe is closer to me but not as interesting. I think that his questions were—you guys seemed to be having fun.

06-00:44:26

Brown: Well, it is a fun—it's a show. It is a show, and he was a showman. So that's part of what it is. That's why Ronald Reagan said he can't imagine running for president if you hadn't first been in the movies. What did he mean? He had training as an actor, that you're adept at make-believe, and you have a sense of

fantasy and imagination and play, and are very flexible. So that's what all those things mean. And so Buckley was a showman—his gestures and his pomposity, just the whole way he carried himself off, he was one of a kind—and maybe very much an important part of his success.

06-00:45:07

Meeker:

He also seemed to be very interested in you, and what you had been saying about the era of limits, and perhaps being a new kind of Democrat, a new kind of politician. In particular, for instance, the conversation started out about busing, and then it continued to Great Society programs, for instance.

06-00:45:37

Brown:

Right.

06-00:45:38

Meeker:

In which you said that the manpower programs were great providing jobs to people who were training. But they weren't necessarily creating new jobs.

06-00:45:51

Brown:

Well, yeah, right. Well, they weren't thought through that much. Manpower training—that started way back in 1959. And it's a good idea to train people, but I was skeptical of that. But it wasn't just a nihilistic turning away from the need to train people. I emphasized apprenticeship. Apprenticeship, when I was governor, grew to be very extensive. In fact, we even introduced it, for the first time, with hospital assistants, lower paid, lower-skilled people, to create a track by which they could become nurses—on the job. So instead of having to pay money to go to college, they could actually be employed as a lower-paid hospital worker, but then in a joint apprenticeship program with the hospital and the Service Employees International Union, they could be part of a training program. Okay, so that's training. That's not a different—and manpower training *did* do some good things, but you had to tie it into work.

So I created something called CWETA: California Worksite Education and Training Act. And what that did was to give money to business, to hire people that they wouldn't otherwise hire, because they weren't skilled, and bring up—and help them get the skills or to increase their skills. And not only that, one of the last things I did was to create the online university. And the first program of the online university is a coding program for low-skilled hospital workers, so they can develop a new skill and get their certificate and get paid more money. So yeah, I don't look at manpower training and say well, hey, there's a problem here, leaf-raking, or something. CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act], that was another one. No, I did something about it. And I'm still, right up from 1975 all the way to 2018, still working on the same program. So a lot of these ideas I started before I was governor, I've continued—and even working on today, after being governor.

So if you try to look at a problem, like a scientist looks at a problem, and he doesn't get a solution necessarily with just—he has to have something, he has to



come up with something different. So he experiments, he tries, and that's how we make progress. That's how you get new medicines. That's how you do things—how people win games; they learn new plays. So it's kind of obvious. If you take what *is*, you never create what isn't. So that's why they say leadership is putting the ball where it *isn't*. It's not just managing the obvious.

So skepticism is part of that, but I think it's more not taking the world as you—no, taking the world as it is, but then trying to go beyond that. And besides that, all these problems always persist because the human beings are the same. So it's a combination of, I like to say, you want change, but you want continuity. We're here at the Mountain House III, and we now have lithium ion batteries and photovoltaic cells that are providing your electricity. My great-grandfather didn't have that. So it's continuity, but it's change. So they both go together. The discerning the errors, and the getting through the surface to break through and to get new ideas, new ways of doing things, but on the other hand respecting tradition and what has been, because that's also important.

06-00:50:10

Shafer: And that's a great transition into your appointments and how you decided to staff your administration.

06-00:50:16

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:50:17

Shafer: Which from the outside looked more like change than continuity, but how did you think about that?

06-00:50:21

Brown: Yeah, that's what—it was more change than continuity. That's true. First of all, what was my thinking? That's like there's a lot of thinking going on. I mean there are problems, and you respond to problems. So you've got to fill positions.

06-00:50:41

Shafer: But you didn't have your staff, say—bring me fifty very suitable people for—?

06-00:50:48

Brown: No, it doesn't work that way. Who worked in the campaign? Who do we know? Who are people we want to have more diversity? Who do we know who are African American? Who do we know that—Mexican American. What women do we know. So there is a campaign. You know, it doesn't start on day one. And so through the campaign, you meet people. Josh Groban volunteered for my campaign—for nothing, and eventually became a judge on the supreme court. Rose Bird drove me in my campaign. She became chief justice. So the lesson is volunteer in the campaign if you want to get into government. [laughing] But we looked up things. First of all, the governor appoints a few people, and then the rest of it is done by other people, to a great extent.

06-00:51:39

Shafer: But it seems like you weren't looking for conventional appointments.

06-00:51:42

Brown: No, but I took from the people I knew. Gray Davis worked in my campaign. Richard Maullin I appointed to the Energy Commission. Tom Quinn I put as kind of the embryonic EPA—it didn't exist at that time, situated at the air board. Tony Kline I had known at Yale, so he became my legal affairs secretary. And then I met new people through Tony Kline and others. You know, so—and I was a young man, thirty-six, so most of these people were younger than I was—that's a different thing than when you're elected governor at seventy-six, so you have different friends, and you've met a hell of a lot more people.

I think that's one of the problems of so young: there are a lot of things you don't know—and you don't know you don't *know* them. So there *were* some ideas that people presented to me, which I rejected. Not friends of mine, but there were some people that put together some names, and some of these names might have been pretty good. But I was looking, I was looking. I always have a sense that government needed to be charged up. It needed more creativity, more openness, more freshness of thinking, so that's why I was looking for that.

06-00:53:09

Holmes: Governor, and again, to go back to Reagan. Reagan's administration, and certainly his appointments, were known to be affiliated with the Kitchen Cabinet.

06-00:53:19

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:53:20

Holmes: Meaning his group of business advisors. And in that process, most of those appointments, from what I understand from the oral histories of those who worked in the administration, that many of them did not even meet Ronald Reagan until they were sworn in. It was largely a group of business leaders who selected that administration. How would you compare to the process of your selection, as well as the choices?

06-00:53:45

Brown: Well, Ronald Reagan was buoyed up by the Kitchen Cabinet, by the conservative mood, by the high councils of capitalism, if we can call it that. I think that's more grandiose—Henry Salvatori and Vernon Orr, these other people. They pushed Ronald Reagan. But I had no such counterpart. The Democratic Party is much more fragmented and much more individualistic, so I had to find the people who I could find.

06-00:54:20

Shafer: But that gives you more freedom too, doesn't it?

06-00:54:22

Brown: It gives you more freedom. And Reagan didn't get that personally engaged anyway. He delegated a lot, and so the businessmen—and yeah, he was not in it.

It was very different than what I did. And his way was effective, because he had a structure. They agreed. There was a common outlook, and so that worked. In mine, it was more of a creative, experimental—a lot of differences, a lot of different thinking, which creates more tension, and it's more difficult. That's why the conservative base is where the country starts from, and then sometimes you can get a little more liberal deviation, but it tends to want to go back to the conservative base.

06-00:55:11

Holmes: Your administration, when it was selected, was also known as one that there was not much business representation, and that it also dovetailed with your efforts, as secretary of state, against what they called *the third house*, against special interests and money.

06-00:55:25

Brown: The lobbyists. Well, business and lobbyists are different. The businesses who have lobbyists are a certain kind of business, and then there are just normal businesspeople. Now today, of course, there's more engagement with government. More people have lobbyists than probably did forty-five years ago. But yeah, we wanted to—the idea to make it a better government—clean, I do not like the word *clean* government, but to get away from special interests. That's always an ideal. Earl Warren talked about that. He said, "Send your lobbyists—don't hire lobbyists. Just come up here and tell us what you think is right or what you need."

So there was definitely, as a young person I wanted this new spirit. We don't want to have all the entanglements of the past. That was the spirit. Of course when you do things, people have to know what they're doing. So if you have an insurance commissioner, who I appointed at that time, you wanted somebody who knew about insurance. Sometimes I appointed people who *didn't* necessarily know, and that didn't always work out.

06-00:56:42

Shafer: Did you do that to shake things up?

06-00:56:45

Brown: Well, to try to create some—there was a lot of discontent with government. Half the people didn't vote—well, they still don't vote. How do we restore public enthusiasm and confidence for government? That was what the effort was.

06-00:56:58

Shafer: Yeah, and Reagan was kind of a nine-to-five kind of a governor.

06-00:57:03

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:57:04

Shafer: You were more of a five to nine.

06-00:57:06

Brown: Yeah.

06-00:57:07

Shafer: The meetings went later, and things kind of revved up as the day went on. Can you talk about that, the cycle of a day in your administration?

06-00:57:14

Brown: Not really. I can't remember that. The only thing I can say is I don't like a lot of meetings, because I think they're formulaic. And I think the overscheduling of leaders, of CEOs, is a modern business phenomenon. And if the leader wants to be able to understand where things are going, then he has to be able to have time to think about it and inquire, discover, get into the depth of things. And so, if you're going from meeting to meeting, it becomes very superficial, so I didn't do that.

And I was learning though, too, learning about these things. It was complicated, you know. You think about water—there are a lot of things about water that I don't fully understand at the level I'd like to. They're very complicated. In fact, I remember signing a bill on education. We were going to do more money here, we were going to do this—and I would say, "Well, how do I know? What is that *really* going to do?" And I had no basis, because this is going to affect people that are far away. That's the trouble with state government. You're making rules that are affecting people from the Mexican border to the Oregon border. And what is the reality? You don't know that.

And of course the people have been at it—you know, when you become governor, it's like coming into a movie halfway through. There are staffers in the legislature, there's people in the various departments, and there's journalists who have been following all this stuff. And most people aren't following it—even candidates for governor. You just hit the issues that you had in your campaign. So I had to learn a lot of these things—it was an opportunity to do something. So in order to do something, we had to have people who knew what they were doing, but we had to have—we want to do something different. And one of the things I always want to know—*what* can we get by the fact that I'm governor? If I wasn't governor, and things would happen anyway—okay, that'll be done anyway, so they don't need me. What I need to do is what wouldn't happen, but for me? So I was always looking at what I could add. What am I adding here? So that required something different.

Reagan had confidence that his business people could make it all work, and his Republican people—so it was a more steady government. But when you look at that, it turns out to look not that much different than the Pat Brown government, because that's just the way bureaucracies work.

06-00:59:57

Shafer: What do you mean it was a pretty steady government? You mean compared to, that yours was more kind of like avant-garde? Or what do you mean?

06-01:00:11

Brown:

Well, that's a good question. It was pretty predictable. I think he had his principles, and the thing runs—it's a machine. So a government just runs. The legislature has bills, and the governor is looking—were they too expensive? If they are, they veto them or cut them down. There are problems, the federal government passes bills, then you've got to respond to that. Medi-Cal is all part state, part federal. So you just have—there's a bunch of stuff that's just in government, and different people deal with it. If you're Medi-Cal; you do Medi-Cal. Fish and game; you're doing fish and game. National Guard; DMV; highways. So they just go, and it's all run by professionals. And then you have people who temporarily come by, and they are the spokesmen, and they can push things, nudge things a little this way, a little that way.

So I wanted to nudge things a little more. But in order to nudge things a little more, you have to know what that little more should be. That's not evident. You don't just get that by reading the newspaper. So you've got to explore. So you bring in new ideas, you bring in people, and they talk. And people you bring in from the outside, they're not connected to government themselves, so it isn't all that immediately applicable. So that becomes—translation. Some people say boy, this is the way you ought to run the welfare—and we see that a lot. Audit reports—“let's change this.” But government only moves within narrow grooves, unless there's a crisis.

And so Reagan presided, and he showed up. And I say it was steady—it was, pretty much ran itself. And there were a few things that he liked to talk about, and that's what he would do. I had a desire to do more things and make more changes. Now, at the end of the day, there's not as many big changes as I might have thought, but that was my orientation as I started out—and it *still* is my orientation.

06-01:02:33

Holmes:

Governor, you mentioned that before you gave your inaugural address, that you read the previous addresses, and which is—

06-01:02:44

Brown:

Not all of them, but a lot of them, yeah. In a little packet; they were all copied. Yeah.

06-01:02:50

Holmes:

And you're known for doing your homework, more times than not, when you're coming into a position or addressing an issue. Coming in as governor, you've mentioned Earl Warren. Your father was also governor. Were there certain models or lessons that you looked to certain governors or administrations on what *not* to do, or something you wanted to try to emulate?

06-01:03:14

Brown:

Well, you always look at things. My father's campaign manager, Fred Dutton, always said, “Pat, you govern from the center. It's the Hiram Johnson, Earl Warren, Pat Brown tradition.” That was the way he sized it up. So what I

noticed—I did think Warren, because he was elected when I was old enough to think about politics—I thought he looked the role of governor. He was very dignified. I was impressed by that. Earl Warren had real gravitas, in today's terms, so that was important. But Reagan also had that capacity, in a different way, but he presented himself well. So that's pretty important, to be on a steady course and present yourself well, and not get buffeted by the news of the day, and the reporters' questions, and the interest-group demands. So on the one hand, you have to respond to the cacophony of claims and demands and alarms. On the other hand, you have to be steady and engender confidence. So yes, looking back, I'd say Warren had that aura and sensibility that I perceived—and Reagan did, to some degree, as well.

06-01:04:44

Shafer:

Did you feel like you, compared to them, didn't have gravitas because you were younger? Or did you, was that—?

06-01:04:50

Brown:

No, no—well, I was looking to that. You asked what I looked to. They certainly were ones, but you look to Kennedy and Roosevelt. You look to the people who are the more towering figures in the political world.

06-01:05:09

Shafer:

Was there anybody that you felt like you were modeling?

06-01:05:13

Brown:

No, I don't—this modeling stuff. That's an academic kind of—modeling. Sociologists talk about that, or the business people say, "I have a business model." People don't have a political *model*. They have a political personality, and they have a political shtick, or whatever you want to call it. I wouldn't dignify it—no I wouldn't even distort it by the term *model*, because that's so vague anyway. I think when I say *model*, I think of model airplanes.

06-01:05:43

Shafer:

So what would you say—?

06-01:05:44

Brown:

Did you ever make model airplanes?

06-01:05:45

Shafer:

I did, yeah.

06-01:05:47

Brown:

Yeah, well that's what I think of as a model. [Shafer laughs] You open the damn thing up, and you've got to rub it, you know, with the sandpaper. [making rubbing sounds] So that's what I know about modeling.

06-01:05:55

Shafer:

Well, to use your phrase then, what was your—what is or was—?

06-01:05:58

Brown: My what?

06-01:06:00

Shafer: What is or was your political personality then?

06-01:06:02

Brown: It's not that plastic. You show up as you *are*, and deal with the world as you find it. It's not that conscious. You don't sit back and—that's the way consultants talk.

06-01:06:20

Shafer: That's what Reagan did though. You talk to consultants, it was about imagery.

06-01:06:25

Brown: No, but Reagan did a lot of that himself. Reagan was playing Reagan. He was a sportscaster. He did that ad for Arrow shirts, and his shirts always looked good. [laughing] I always noticed that about Reagan. I liked—his shirts were always—I liked the collar. That's because he was an Arrow shirt model. So he *was* a model, in that sense. So, but politicians—strong politicians—are not puppets. They're driving their own destiny, to a great extent. And I think the profession of consultants gets a lot of attention, because you can talk to them, and they sound off on all the things they're doing, but a lot of it's self-serving.

[side conversation deleted]

06-01:07:16

Holmes: One of the major pieces of legislation that was passed during your first year was the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act.

06-01:07:23

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:07:31

Holmes: How did you strategize about that, in regards to your relationship with Cesar Chávez—you had known Chávez before you came into office.

06-01:07:38

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:07:41

Holmes: And you were—you campaigned in support of the UFW.

06-01:07:44

Brown: Well, I don't know that I campaigned—I campaigned with their support. I campaigned for the rights of farm workers, but it was not a front-and-center issue in the campaign.

06-01:07:57

Holmes: You're correct on that.

06-01:07:59

Brown: In fact, if you read Mary Ellen Leary's book about—what is that, *Shadow Politics*, or what was it called? [*Phantom Politics: Campaigning in California*] There weren't a lot of issues that were front and center, which there never are. Yeah, she was, anyway, so that's—

06-01:08:15

Holmes: Richard Nixon, in 1972, had actually proposed to put farm workers under the National Labor Relations Act.

06-01:08:23

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:08:25

Holmes: Did you agree with that position?

06-01:08:26

Brown: I hadn't really thought about it at the time. But so, all this—I didn't understand the intricacies, although I do think I understood that Chávez did not want to have the farm workers under the NLRA. He felt the business co-opted it, and it wouldn't serve farm worker needs. As a matter of fact, he wasn't even that interested in the state Agricultural Labor Relations Act—at least that was a question. He certainly expressed concern about a state law. But as I hear the history, that George Meany was pushing him to have some kind of, come within some kind of labor law, because the AFL-CIO was supporting him, and they didn't want to just be paying for a crusade. They wanted a normal labor union. And Chávez, of course, *liked* a movement or a type of crusade. So there was a tension there. And I really liked the idea of the movement too. I was impressed by that.

06-01:09:31

Shafer: What did you like about it?

06-01:09:33

Brown: Well, it was something real. It was real; it was people that were organized about something important. A group of people that I didn't know, farm workers, people speaking Spanish. And it had pageantry, nuns and priests and volunteers, and food caravans going to La Paz, marches along the road with banners. This was a little—it's more interesting than—a lot of politics is just talk, you know, and it's not that interesting. But so I thought that movement was—well, it's like environmentalism. That's another *dream*, about a better world, a more beautiful world. So that's why I liked the movement. It's like being a missionary or something. It has some romance to it. And that was the beginning of that. Of course they had struggle with the Teamsters and the growers, and it was highly fraught politically, because the Central Valley did not—and in a lot of parts of California this is very toxic.



06-01:10:57

Holmes: When you were—from the union’s point of view, meaning not the Teamsters, but the UFW—you were a welcome presence after eight years of Reagan, who opposed the UFW.

06-01:11:10

Brown: Right.

06-01:11:12

Holmes: And actually used the tools of government to try to undercut their movement.

06-01:11:16

Brown: That, I doubt you can write about that, how much—I mean they did—a lot of books are written about this. But this is when you come after somebody that people don’t like, then they’re very open to liking *you*. That’s part of the way it works, until things don’t work out as well as they wanted. And that’s kind of the story of politics.

06-01:11:42

Holmes: But when we look at the movement too, one of the central features, outside of the marches and Chávez’s fast, was also boycotts.

06-01:11:49

Brown: Yes.

06-01:11:53

Holmes: Do you recall your position on that, because most unions were prohibited, or at least *limited*, to wage boycotts. Did you think the boycotts—?

06-01:12:02

Brown: Well, that’s not exactly true. A consumer boycott is always allowed. What was *not* allowed was the secondary boycott, and I’m not going to get into what that all was. Although I remember the junior college board [Community College Board] voting for a measure that was defeated, to not use non-union lettuce in the cafeterias, so that was a proposal, and I sided with the farm workers, and the four conservative members voted the other way—or maybe it was five. I can’t be sure—it was maybe five to two. So in the boycott, yeah—well, I hired LeRoy Chatfield, who was active in the boycott.

So a boycott was a scary movement, and that’s why it was effective for Chávez. He had it very well organized. And it was difficult—no one had been able to organize farm workers before. I think I mentioned before, I went to Stockton with the support group for organizing the union—I think the AFL was trying to organize farm workers, and they didn’t succeed. And Chávez came along, and the boycott was a very powerful instrument, not just the strike, which was the focus. Harvest-time strikes, which for some reason were not an effective instrument, but the boycott was. And the boycott was in Canada, it was in England—it was all over the world. And it was longshoremens—it was longshoremens in other countries. So there was a lot to it. And then there was boycott lettuce, and that was—so that became very polarizing, and as a politician, you don’t like

polarizing. I tried to avoid getting on this side or that side, but I did support the farm workers. I supported them by saying we want secret-ballot elections. That was the key. We're going to have an election, and the farm workers will decide for UFW, for Teamsters, or for no union. So that was a more principled position that I embraced, as opposed to saying—running around saying boycott lettuce, which I don't think I publicly participated in.

06-01:14:43

Holmes: Because if we look at the politics during the boycott, it's interesting to look at—California growers supported your father his first two campaigns as governor.

06-01:14:53

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:14:54

Holmes: But then by the time we get to the boycott, which is happening by '66 and then later, that support had shifted almost unanimously to Republicans. Did you see this political polarization that—?

06-01:15:08

Brown: Obviously. That's the whole name of the game in politics. If you don't see the polarization, you're going to—then you're blind, and you're not in politics. You're somewhere else.

06-01:15:20

Shafer: Well, in terms of that polarization, what were you hearing from growers?

06-01:15:24

Brown: I talked to a few growers. I had some grower support. I had Richard Rominger. I talked to him yesterday. He was secretary of my Department of Agriculture. But the farmers are mostly Republicans, and the areas were very Democratic at the time. Kern County was Democratic, Fresno was Democratic, and then all of that shifted. But this became another issue. These are the things that happen. Environmentalism divided the building trades from others. The war in Vietnam divided the Democrats—McGovern Democrats from the Humphrey Democrats. So politics is about getting a majority, and if you get too much divisiveness, it's hard to get a majority, and then the other side wins. And then they start getting divided, and then you come back and *you* get to win. That's just the way that politics works.

06-01:16:29

Holmes: What do you recall of your role in the creation of that, of negotiation or going between UFW, Teamsters—

06-01:16:41

Brown: During the campaign it wasn't a big issue. And during the secretary of state, we had an issue about Proposition 22. It was a grower initiative, and I called out there were fraudulent signatures, fraudulent statements made, so I pointed that out. But in terms of the—negotiating with the growers, that's what unions do. As far as the—the only negotiation *I* did was on the bill.

06-01:17:09

Holmes: That's what I was referring to.

06-01:17:11

Brown: And we had a lot—and LeRoy Chatfield did a lot of that outreach. We brought in all sorts of people, and to make the issue salient, because it isn't on everybody's mind, if you think about it. These farms are in very isolated areas. Most people in the urban areas don't know about it. So we brought in a lot of people. We brought in growers. We talked about it, and we listened. I spent hundreds of hours on that. And yeah, I listened and we modified, and then I came up with a proposal. And then we changed it, and then we got agreement, and then we voted. It was kind of dramatic. We did it at night.

06-01:17:56

Shafer: What do you remember about the vote?

06-01:17:58

Brown: Well, the vote was kind of after the fact. The key was the agreement. We got a lot of grower groups either didn't oppose, some of them even supported, and then we got the unions and the farm workers, and that was it. It was basically the UFW and some key grower organizations. That was the whole discussion. Everyone else was more observers.

06-01:18:25

Holmes: What about the Teamsters? I know there was conflict between the UFW and the Teamsters during this time.

06-01:18:29

Brown: They have a huge conflict. The Teamsters allied with the growers and took all their members. So yeah, that was a big conflict.

06-01:18:38

Holmes: And were the Teamsters a part of the negotiations of this bill? Did they oppose this bill?

06-01:18:44

Brown: In the beginning they were against it, but they came in. It was the growers, basically. The lawyers for the UFW, and lawyers for the growers—key growers. That's how it was put together.

06-01:18:58

Holmes: What was your relationship with Chávez by this time?

06-01:19:00

Brown: Well, Chávez is a distant character. I met him on occasion, and we talked. But he's not a guy you're sitting around having a burger with. No, he was distinct, he was somewhere else, and we had meetings, but not very many.

06-01:19:22

Shafer: So there wasn't a personal affinity so much?

06-01:19:25

Brown: Well, there was some affinity. I think there was an affinity. I think he trusted me more than he did—he didn't trust politicians, but I think we had a certain relationship. We talked. First of all, I don't know whether he talked to any politicians. So we had an extended discussion. And then I knew his lawyers, and LeRoy Chatfield, of course, knows people too.

06-01:19:53

Holmes: When the bill passes, and it—the actual—

06-01:19:59

Brown: The bill passed because there was an agreement with enough growers, and the UFW, that everybody said okay, now it's time to have it. And that's the way bills pass, is just key parties come to agreement.

06-01:20:11

Holmes: The operations of the ALRA—it ran into funding issues a few years after—do you recall that?

06-01:20:18

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

06-01:20:24

Holmes: There was also, it seemed to be, in regards to trying to refund it, opposition, particularly, if I'm correct, within the senate. Do you remember the—?

06-01:20:33

Brown: Yeah, well, obviously. The farm workers won elections, the growers didn't like it, and it was kind of a messy process. They had hundreds of elections, and they weren't geared up for that. And we did the bill in a special session so we got it faster. They weren't really ready for it. So that created turmoil, and each side—even to this day, you have these election disputes. And the farm workers say one thing, and the grower says something else, and thus it has ever been. It's kind of like between the landlords and the tenants' groups. One says rent control is just what we need, the other says it will destroy any new housing—and they keep these same arguments going for decades.

And you have—in California, you have rural Democrats, and so they are sensitive to the farmer concerns, and they wouldn't fund the bill, so it went out of existence. The whole board I appointed was gone; they had no money. But then Chávez got a ballot measure on, and based on the force of that, the farmers tactically decided we'd better let our rural Democrats vote for it. That's kind of the way it works. Legislators have different interest groups they look to, so it was refunded, and that's how it got refunded again.

06-01:22:02

Shafer: Can you—you mentioned the dramatic negotiations that happened late at night.

06-01:22:03

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:22:06

Shafer: Can you just describe those a little bit? Like what was the—were people shuttling between—

06-01:22:09

Brown: Yeah, between rooms, and I would go between rooms and talk to them.

06-01:22:11

Shafer: Yeah, just—so can you, so talk about it.

06-01:22:12

Brown: Well, you described it. There it is. [laughter]

06-01:22:14

Shafer: But you were there.

06-01:22:16

Brown: Yeah, I was there. It went on for a long time. I did a lot of listening, a lot of time—unusual, I don't think any governor before or since has spent the amount of time that I spent on that bill—or even on other bills. And I don't know whether it's a good idea or not, because these other governors seem to spend very little time on the details, and they do pretty well. So I may get into that because I enjoy it, as well as being needed.

But I did have to forge—I had to build confidence in both sides, and that was difficult—and I did that. So I thought that was—that was an achievement. But of course then, in the operation, it became difficult, because there's a conflict. Growers don't want a union telling them what to do, and the union wants to be able to have a voice in its conditions—and a strong voice—and that voice will be different than the employer. So it's basically; it's conflictual by nature. And we find the same thing with the labor movement more generally, except for the public sector, where because of the political involvement of public-sector unions, there's more support. But out in the private sector, you're talking 6 or 7 percent of the workers are in a union. That indicates how difficult it is to organize unions. The same is true for the farm workers. There hasn't been—there's been some organizing, but not very much, ever since that—after '81 or '82.

06-01:23:49

Holmes: Two questions on that front. In regards to the negotiations, did you feel that there was, or do you recall, that there was maybe some parties that were asking too much or were not being as agreeable as others?

06-01:24:06

Brown: Yeah, well like what—well, yeah, there's always—that's, in government they're all—everybody's asking for the moon, and you negotiate through—this is democracy.

06-01:24:16

Holmes: Did you find one side much more difficult to work with than the other? I'm trying to find a—

06-01:24:22

Brown: I can't tell you. They're all—they're all making claims, and the workers though, the UFW was the one looking for the law, and they had—they were very popular. And so the new Democrat—the Democratic majority, so the growers were under the gun, and they had these boycotts, and so they wanted something to settle down. And so they wanted something, but they wanted it as little intrusive as possible, so they were trying to create it weak, and the union was trying to create it strong. So there was the conflict, and we got something that was—that people thought was reasonable. But of course it's just words and language, and then as it carries on, then people had—they had other problems down the road. But eventually, the law is still in place, after all that time, and it's just as strong as ever. But there is not the movement, and there's not the César Chávez.

06-01:25:24

Holmes: On that—and my second question is on that point, is as you mention, in particular if you look today, how much, how many, or very little farm workers are under an umbrella or the protection of a union.

06-01:25:36

Brown: No union, yes, very few.

06-01:25:39

Holmes: There have been those who have charged that Chávez's aim of a social movement, rather than a more traditional labor union has—I guess, in the long run, did not benefit farm workers as much as we would like to think.

06-01:25:57

Brown: Well, there are at least three books on that topic.

06-01:25:59

Holmes: Yes.

06-01:26:00

Brown: I'd say four. I think you should consult those.

06-01:26:03

Holmes: I've done so. My question is I wanted to get your opinion on that.

06-01:26:08

Brown: Yeah, but that's—yeah, this is not an examination on the writings of others. This is fairly detailed stuff. What did Chávez do? What did he think? It's a very interesting story about what happened when the board was reestablished, and how anxious César was to have these elections, and was it—that's a whole historical period. But you can say that in the first year there was tremendous enthusiasm—not all elections, but most of them, the majority, were won by the farm workers, maybe two-thirds. One-third, either no union or Teamsters. So it was very exciting, very impressive, but it didn't sustain itself over time. And that's because it's different—you had difficulty dealing with a lot of undocumented people, you had people who don't have a lot of confidence. The grower, the employer, is very strong—but that's a whole story of how that happened. And, you know, and there

was a big surplus of labor. When César—as I understand it—now you’re asking me to opine on historical materials, which—I’m only an amateur.

06-01:27:21

Holmes: Well, I’d just like to hear your feelings. You were there.

06-01:27:25

Brown: But it’s a product of—look, in the 1960s, when César came to the fore, there was a labor shortage. And then, over time, there became a labor surplus, and those factors—so there were a lot of factors involved, including the personality of César, and the way he wanted to organize a top-down union, and whether or not there was enough democracy and decentralization to be effective. All of those have been written about, and people have some very strongly held opinions.

06-01:27:58

Shafer: You pointed out a moment ago that no governor, up to that point and maybe since, had spent as much time as you did on this issue.

06-01:28:06

Brown: On this issue, or on most other issues.

06-01:28:08

Shafer: Why this one, what was—?

06-01:28:10

Brown: That interested me. I thought it was right. Remember, we had the civil rights movement, and that was mostly in the South, and that had interested me. That was going on when I was in law school. I was on the East Coast then, so it was a little more immediate. So this was *our* civil rights movement. That’s why it—people were saying—there was the movie *Harvest of Shame*. [Bobby] Kennedy had come out. There’d been the fast. So this had a certain—this was not bureaucracy as usual. It wasn’t just another, you know, billion dollars for this interest or this sector. It was a human—a very human story with people who did humble work in the fields. You can still see them if you drive down Highway 20 here. So that—I think it has all of the elements of drama. And then I think you had the earlier stories of John Steinbeck. And so there was the whole story of farm workers, novels and movies, and the Kennedys. Kennedy is shot—the whole, so there was a lot of romance in this, as well as an underlying reality that our food depends on these foreign laborers who don’t make—who were getting very low wages. And relative to what they do, *still* low wages.

06-01:29:43

Shafer: Did you—earlier you were saying how governors come/governors go, and the bureaucracy is there when you get there.

06-01:29:50

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:29:50

Shafer: And it's there when you leave, and you kind of change things around the margins, but you look for things where you, whoever that person is, whoever the governor is, can really make a difference, that it wouldn't have happened if *that* person wasn't governor.

06-01:30:02

Brown: Right, and I want to say in that context—You've got the complexity, whether it's education finance, whether it's Medi-Cal finance, whether it's the highway system—these are complicated. Whether it's water, the tunnels—we spent \$240 million just on the preliminary environmental analysis, and now they're going back to square one. So when you realize there's that much study and evaluation and facts, and alleged facts, and then you say the governor—okay, you have a few minutes or a few hours—yea or nay? If you have a very clear mind, you have to understand—well, it's not clear here what the consequences are. So that—but what's clear is that there's a certain continuity that is maintained. So governors have a rather thin impact, for the most part, and it's more drama—and that's probably why Reagan talked about it's important to be an actor.

06-01:31:12

Shafer: But in that regard, did you see this issue as one where gee, another governor might not do this, so it's—

06-01:31:18

Brown: Well, that was a part of the democratic constituency, you know, the—

06-01:31:23

Shafer: There are a lot of issues that—

06-01:31:25

Brown: Yeah, but there are not a lot of issues—first of all, farm workers were all, for the most part—there were some Filipinos, there's some Arabic, but for the most part, you're talking about Mexican immigrants. This is a very big part, an emerging element in California. It's very big. You can see this got bigger and bigger. So in 1975, you look at it—this was a very big piece of California that *was*, and was to *come*, and that certainly did not escape my notice.

06-01:31:58

Shafer: So how much of it do you think was *that*, and the drama of it, versus like in your heart feeling this is really important because of who it affects and these—?

06-01:32:08

Brown: All of those things are put together.

06-01:32:10

Shafer: They're not separable?

06-01:32:11

Brown: I don't know—well, make that distinction for me again.



06-01:32:14

Shafer: Well, I mean on any issue. Politicians can see what the pluses and the minuses are, in terms of their own political future.

06-01:32:23

Brown: Yeah, and what other things do they see?

06-01:32:27

Shafer: Well, what their own inner convictions are.

06-01:32:29

Brown: Abstract ethics. Ordinary conviction or consequences. I mean you can cut this thing seven different ways, if you want to look at it.

06-01:32:39

Shafer: But how does this issue cut for you?

06-01:32:41

Brown: Well, I explained it. I mean it was a) these were people who were basic to our existence, namely providing—picking the food. And secondly, they were a foreign group, for the most part, coming here to work on a basic part of our economic and social life, namely harvesting the food. And you had Chávez, who was a romantic figure, very interesting, very charismatic. You might even say mystical in one sense, or maybe not, but certainly that was an aura. So what, why wouldn't—that just, I'd met Dorothy Day, and all of my upbringing would be—would say this is an important thing to do. And politically, I don't know that it was—it had some, that would be hard to evaluate—I mean it's polarizing, so whatever you get, you lose something on the other side.

06-01:33:46

Holmes: By the time this passes, California—as well as the nation—had already experienced ten years of various boycott campaigns.

06-01:33:54

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:33:55

Holmes: Were you hoping that the ALRA was going to at least ease up on some of this?

06-01:34:00

Brown: Yeah, well that was the point. That's why the growers signed the law, to put it into a legal framework. That's why Chávez had some doubts about it, how effective it would be. That was the goal, secret ballot elections. Peace in the fields. That was the story.

06-01:34:17

Holmes: As well as, particularly as you were talking about the mood, to use that term once more, you know.

06-01:34:22

Brown: What? Of what?

06-01:34:24

Holmes: We just had a recession. Unemployment was high, that another round of serious boycott campaigns would—

06-01:34:32

Brown: Well, boycotts weren't that visible really. In Sacramento, I don't think that was salient.

[side conversation deleted]

We were trying to prevent, we're trying to reduce the controversy between farm workers and farmers. By having a legal framework that they themselves could work out through secret-ballot elections. And that was the idea. So it was solving what was a problem, and that's good because people think—they elect you governor, solve these big problems. And here I felt well, we had a problem—now we've got a solution.

06-01:35:09

Holmes: But also as governor you have to keep an eye on your agricultural economy, which at this time was still the primary industry as well, right? And that the boycotts were hurting the agricultural economy over the last decades.

06-01:35:19

Brown: Uh—that wasn't clear. I don't know—is that true? I don't know. Well, it would hurt certain individual growers, that's for sure. That was the point. That's how they saw—you know, the boycott did go away, for the most part. So that was not a problem after the bill passed.

06-01:35:35

Meeker: I think we're going to switch gears a little bit, for a moment, before we break for lunch. In 1975, you signed what was described as a consenting adults law that had been carried in part by Willie Brown, which changed the sodomy laws in California.

06-01:35:54

Brown: Yeah.

06-01:35:55

Meeker: Which basically legalized private consenting homosexual behavior. I'd kind of like to go back a little bit. I mean, I know that you were raised in San Francisco. When was the first time that you encountered gay and lesbian people as like a politicized group.

06-01:36:14

Brown: Right—probably when I was running for governor, I meet with some of them. Some of the San Francisco leaders, I think.

06-01:36:24

Meeker: Was that a surprise to you, to see this new constituency maybe emerge on the scene?

06-01:36:32

Brown: Well, I don't, yeah—I mean the Vietnam War was a new constituency, the environmental movement's a new constituency. You pick the newspaper up because it's new. That's what the whole business is—news, without the *s*. So yeah, that was certainly another—I mean the Vietnam movement wasn't that great either, but my father was campaigning against Nixon, and I remember there were people picketing his campaign office. Well, you know, when you're running a tight campaign, you don't want people picketing your office. So all these things are problems. Politicians want everything to go good, to win by acclamation, so you've got to maneuver through them all.

06-01:37:15

Meeker: And so all of a sudden, a heretofore unrecognized group appears on your doorstep and says we want rights too!

06-01:37:23

Brown: Yeah. They were pretty modest in the beginning.

06-01:37:27

Meeker: What were they asking? Do you recall?

06-01:37:29

Brown: No, no—I think—no. To avoid discrimination. Remember, this was a defensive campaign at that time. They put the Briggs Initiative on, that was, was it—?

06-01:37:46

Meeker: Seventy-eight.

06-01:37:47

Brown: Okay, that was '78.

06-01:37:48

Meeker: That was a little bit later.

06-01:37:49

Brown: But that was to be treated fairly like everybody else, not to be discriminated against.

06-01:37:55

Shafer: It was decriminalizing too, right?

06-01:37:58

Meeker: Well, 1975 was decriminalizing.

06-01:37:59

Brown: Well, I don't know. I don't know if that was front and center. That bill, the consenting bill wasn't billed as strictly a gay bill. It was just consenting adults. That is to say that's pretty neutral. That's the way they sold it, but then we got it by one vote. And Mervyn Dymally was hiding in the bathroom, and we had to go get him. [ed. note: story revised later in the transcript] He was the twenty-first vote. So it passed and signed without a lot of fanfare.

06-01:38:39

Meeker: You said that the lieutenant governor was hiding in the bathroom. Did he just not want to be associated with this culture?

06-01:38:46

Brown: Yeah, obviously. Look, I know you have to pretend you're naïve, but you like to avoid the divisive issues. The issues you want are 80/20, and you want to be on the 80 side. That's the way it works. If you get on the 20 side, like busing or some of these other things, then you're cooked, and that's what happens. So sometimes you can't solve a problem, but at least you can avoid it, and deal with the problems you can, and then over time—*things work out*, as they've done with gay rights.

06-01:39:19

Meeker: Did you have to convince the lieutenant governor to go out—?

06-01:39:24

Brown: I didn't convince him. They did the bill. I just signed it. That's one thing, most of the bills we leave to the legislature, except the ones I get involved in.

[side conversation deleted]

06-01:39:37

Brown: The farm worker rights in Fresno—it's just another, the social issue. The social issue is challenging for Democrats. This is Trump versus Hilary. And how much diversity do you want? Well, obviously, in the swing states they didn't want as much as they felt Hilary wanted, so it's still an issue.

06-01:40:05

Shafer: You said you signed the bill with little fanfare. Was that because it wasn't a big deal or because you felt—?

06-01:40:10

Brown: No, it wasn't as big a deal as it became later, but it was important. It was important. But it was a pretty low key kind of effort, I think.

06-01:40:18

Shafer: Why did it become a bigger deal later?

06-01:40:21

Brown: You tell me. Ask your journalist friends. They weren't paying attention, I guess. It wasn't a movement. You'd have to go read the paper. Go read the paper. What do they say? It had a different mood to it, didn't it? Did you go read any stories? On the bill, it was very small, aren't they?

06-01:40:43

Shafer: Yeah, it seemed like Willie Brown and George Moscone were the big advocates for it.

06-01:40:48

Brown: Well, they were coming out of San Francisco, and they were absolutely safe, and they could do what they wanted to do. That's different if you're Senator [Walter] Stiern from Bakersfield, from Buttonwillow. In Buttonwillow, they're not going to like that. They're not going to like a lot of things Democrats—and that's why they're all Trump—and they're Republicans right now. You see the problem. If you push these sensibilities in an election too far, you get Mr. Trump, or you get Brexit.

06-01:41:28

Meeker: It's interesting in this exchange we have, because you are identifying certain types of questions as journalist-type questions.

06-01:41:37

Brown: Well, that's part of the game.

06-01:41:38

Meeker: Well, and those types of questions maybe are us thinking about the political calculus of something, right?

06-01:41:44

Brown: Right.

06-01:41:45

Meeker: Like what's to be gained by sticking your neck out here.

06-01:41:49

Brown: Right.

06-01:41:49

Meeker: Is it an 80/20 situation? Am I in the 20 or am I—?

06-01:41:51

Brown: That's the way they talk about it.

06-01:41:53

Meeker: So is that never done?

06-01:41:55

Brown: Well, I heard a podcast the other day, which I found disgusting. It was all about Bernie Sanders—20 percent of his votes went for Trump, comparing Sanders with Elizabeth Warren, and then this one—all, all data. There wasn't a *scintilla* of substance in the entire podcast, by very serious people. So anyway, I don't know if that's quite relevant to your point, but we're really into the tactics *too* much. I think there are values and substance that are very important.

06-01:42:35

Meeker: So in terms of a political calculus around something, is that not how—do you not think in those terms?

06-01:42:44

Brown: In what terms? In politics—everything is about politics! If you're in journalism, you can think about something else. But if you're in politics, you run for election. And if you don't get more votes than your opponent, then you lose. And you're not there to lose, you're there to win. Win—of course, to try to do what you *want*.

06-01:43:08

Meeker: So that's a calculus, right? That's a deciding—

06-01:43:10

Brown: Well, it's common sense.

06-01:43:11

Meeker: But that's also a deciding of where you might sit on an issue vis-à-vis where it might end up and how that would impact people.

06-01:43:19

Brown: Yeah, first of all, a lot of these issues—how do you even know what they mean? They're not always that obvious. You know, and not every issue is a moral issue, right. People have different views. So what are you trying to get at? Well, how this is—the merits? Or is this a philosophy course on what is the abstract—are we going to be a deontologist or a consequentialist? One decides issues by what is the *right* thing, the duty. The other says well, what will work? What are the consequences? Well, you've got to think about both. In some ways, I still don't, what is—you had a point. I want to get the full *richness* of this question, because I'm not sure there is a lot behind it.

06-01:44:11

Meeker: Okay, it was in the context of the consenting adults bill, right?

06-01:44:15

Brown: Yeah, right.

06-01:44:16

Meeker: And what I'm trying to get at here is that here's something that is pretty new in the realm of politics—

06-01:44:23

Brown: Very new, yeah.

06-01:44:25

Meeker: —and in the public sphere. You've got this group of people saying hey, there's a law out there that's unjust, that's criminalizing natural human behavior. You, as an elected official has the opportunity to go out on a limb and say—

06-01:44:40

Brown: Right, right.

06-01:44:41

Meeker: “You guys on the fringe, you're right. I'm going to sign this.” Are you thinking like okay, this *is* a moral issue, I'm going to sign it. Or are you thinking, huh,

there's an interesting new constituency in the electorate and I'd better pay attention to this constituency?

06-01:44:56

Brown: Oh. Yeah, that's a binary kind of—is it this, or is it that? It's neither. You look at a situation, and then you have your categories you can bring to it. But, first of all, it's a moral issue—you'd have to study a lot of philosophy to know what's moral and what's not moral. I mean it's a human issue, and you look at it, and there are—every *day*. Do you cover undocumented people with Medicaid—Medi-Cal. Does [Angela] Merkel let in people who are knocking on the door? Do you let in refugees, or do you put up barriers? Is that a moral issue? Is that a political issue?

06-01:45:36

Meeker: Well, what is your decision-making process then? How do you get to the point of responding to these different ideas?

06-01:45:42

Brown: You make decisions. You look at things, you talk to people, you read, you ponder, and you decide. So the decision is an act of your intelligence or—and your will. That's a whole—when we talk that way, there's a whole discussion of—in fact, you can, I could give you a book on decisionism! Which is not a very popular idea. But yeah, I don't think you can—it's not a *process*. I mean there is a process, because your brain has a process, but you're not conscious of that. All you're conscious of is you're talking to people—just like we're talking here. And it'll show up, and a lot of these bills show up, and people get very excited about things. And some things are not as—whatever the bill was in 1975, things look a lot different in 1982. And they look a lot different, you know, twenty years later. So it's hard when you look backwards—and that's part of what you're doing this. You're trying to see how things were very different. Very different—that we can say.

06-01:46:54

Shafer: Your adulthood began in the seminary, and obviously you—

06-01:46:58

Brown: But I think these categories—is this economic? Is this social? Is this moral? Is this theological? Is this egocentric? Is it altruistic? Those are all categories. And then you have the problem—you've got to decide. You can say yea, or you say nay. Well, you can have a variety—well, if you're going to say no, that would be—what would be the consequences of that? Or do want to think about it? Okay, they voted for it, sign it, go on to the next thing.

06-01:47:26

Shafer: But some things you don't have to think about that hard, right? I mean every bill—

06-01:47:30

Brown: It's like Harry Truman. You know, they said he didn't lose a moment's sleep over dropping the bomb on Hiroshima. What was his process? Did he have a process?

Did the damn thing just happen? Did they have it, so they've go to use it? So those are all interesting questions, but we could spend the whole time just trying to—it doesn't go very far, is what I'm saying. And I would say I think about this more than most people. And my conclusion is, if I think back on what was my state of mind—first of all, you can't remember. That's impossible, forty-three years later. So you're making decisions, and they're coming fast. Now, some you have more time, some you have less time.

06-01:48:15

Shafer: I'm just wondering that, with this particular bill—or maybe the farm workers, for that matter—?

06-01:48:21

Brown: These bills are not even comparable. The farm worker bill was days and days, with press conferences and meetings with the press and meetings with the—this bill just pops up, I don't know where, and pretty soon there it is on my desk.

06-01:48:37

Shafer: Did it happen at the end of the session, or something?

06-01:48:38

Brown: I can't remember that. Did it happen at the end of session? I don't know. You guys have got to do more work then, because I don't think it was—

06-01:48:48

Holmes: I think it was May 12.

06-01:48:49

Brown: I think it was pretty quiet. See, you're seeing it with the eyes of today. 1975 was a lot different.

06-01:48:53

Shafer: My question, though, is to what extent do you feel like your—the Catholic teachings, being in the seminary.

06-01:49:05

Brown: Yeah, some.

06-01:49:05

Shafer: Like how did that affect the way—?

06-01:49:06

Brown: I have no idea. I have no idea how these affect—I mean they obviously have—I'm interested. I'm interested in theology; I'm interested in monasticism. I was talking to a friend of mine just Sunday, just yesterday, who was in the seminary with me—how did I start talking to him? Oh, there was something, "Tell me," I sent him an email, "Did you—what was it like?" It was something about—Oh, it was about the controversy among medievalists.

06-01:49:40

Shafer: Oh *that*. [laughing]



06-01:49:42

Brown:

The medievalists of color, and they were protesting at a medievalist meeting. They said there are too many white people, and the medievalists of color walked out and wouldn't go to the meeting. So I sent it to this guy, because he was in the seminary, and he stayed much longer than I did. I said, "What do you think about this?" And he said, "Well, it reminds me, when I was studying philosophy, I had a couple weeks off, and I read one of Thomas Aquinas's main works in Latin—and I even had 250 footnotes in Latin." And then I called him up, and we talked for a half an hour, and I said, "Don, that's really interesting. Would you send me that thesis? I'd like to read that." So he's going to send it to me.

So if you ask me, am I interested? That's pretty interested, isn't it? Sixty years after being there, I'm still following—so I'm very interested. And we were discussing the medievalists and the people of color, and they were fighting—was there enough diversity among the medievalists. [laughing] And they were also talking—it was in the *New York Times*, that the right wing, and the people in Charlottesville, are using medieval symbols and costumes. So somehow, the medieval is now becoming caught up in the whole racist and white supremacy, and so this becomes part of the discussion. But it did lead me, not to a discussion on the contemporary issue, but rather—oh, this is pretty interesting. You read about Thomas Aquinas, which I don't fully understand that well, and I would like to get that, and we can go over it and we'll talk about it. So yes, I'm very I am interested.

In fact, I went to the theology at Berkeley—not to your little organization, but to the—you know, the—

06-01:51:29

Meeker:

The Graduate Theological Union.

06-01:51:30

Brown:

The Graduate Theological—yeah, I went to the Jesuit office, and I talked to those guys, and I asked them, "Who's your man on monasticism? Early monasticism. I want to know more." Well, they gave me a name, but he wasn't there. And he's from Sacramento. And I called him over to the governor's office, and we spent two hours. And then a few weeks later I brought him to the mansion, and we spent another two hours talking about early monasticism. So you ask me—am I interested? I am interested like no other governor is, in the topic. And I'm still interested. In fact, the guy's going to come out here, Mr. Expert on—he studies, knows Latin and Greek. So I have a certain investment in that topic, and it interests me.

06-01:52:12

Shafer:

I was going to move on a little bit?

06-01:52:13

Meeker:

Yeah, please do.

06-01:52:15

Brown: But it has changed. It *really* has changed. You know, the church has changed, the seminary is not a seminary for young people. It is now a place for old and dying priests, and the world is changing. The number of people going into the pursuit of the priesthood—so the world had changed, and the West is changing, and that interests me too. And the dominance of men is changing, and the whites are changing—so it's all part of that world that interests. So these are ways of getting at change. And so theology is one way, and politics is another way, that's all.

That doesn't quite go with your point, but it's not like I've got a little—oh, I learned something in Catholic school, and therefore I've got to deal with capital punishment or gay rights—or even welfare, and that's all going to dictate—it doesn't work that way.

06-01:53:12

Shafer: Well, what I was really going to ask is did anybody from the church come to you to try to get you to veto it?

06-01:53:17

Brown: No, no.

[long side conversation deleted; conversation revisits Brown's remark about the passage of the Consenting Adults Law at the conclusion of session 7]

06-01:53:18

Shafer: Well, you said it was a tight vote, and the last vote a holdout.

06-01:53:22

Brown: Yeah, okay. Yeah, it was a very close vote, and one of the senators that was not present, Nate Holden, they had to go looking for him. And actually they found him—I think he was in the men's room. I don't know that for sure. People have told me that. But they located him, and he came in and he voted. And that was—made it twenty-one votes in the senate, and that enabled it to pass. But I think that indicates that this was a controversial vote for the senators at that time.

06-01:53:58

Shafer: The implication being he was hiding. He wasn't just—he didn't have to just go to the bathroom, he was hiding.

06-01:54:03

Brown: Oh, right. [laughing] Well, people—they talk about ducking votes, in general, okay? So obviously, this might have been one of the ways he was ducking that vote. Now, in later years, I'm sure he had a very different perspective. But at that particular hour, in 1975, things looked a little differently—particularly some of the churches, the black churches, I think. And this, remember, was not being sold as a gay rights bill. It was being sold as consenting adults. So it was an issue of sexuality, sexual morality, and it was breaking new ground—obviously. The Supreme Court didn't take it up for many, many years later, and that's the way it was at that point in California.

Interview 7: May 6, 2019 [in the afternoon]

07-00:00:00

Shafer:

This is session seven, May 6, 2019. Scott Shafer from KQED, with Martin Meeker and Todd Holmes from The Bancroft Library oral history project. So Governor, let's pick up—we were just talking about the legislature. Talk about your relationship with legislators, because I think when you got elected, maybe there were some who thought well, it's going to be Pat Brown III, like the third term of Pat Brown. And there were maybe certain expectations—but talk about your relationship with the legislature.

07-00:00:37

Brown:

Well, that's a big topic. I was there for eight years, four years before as the secretary of state.

[side conversation deleted]

I would say that I think the expectations in the legislature were colored by their relationship with my predecessor, Ronald Reagan. He vetoed many of their cherished bills, and they were looking for a Democrat. When I say *they*, not just legislators, because they have their own interest—whatever they may be, they're very involved in their district or the particular issues that move them. But I would say that democratic groups, like labor unions, like environmental groups—perhaps some other activist constituencies—they were looking to achieve what was denied to them by virtue of the governor's veto—and by his conservative philosophy. So I think there was that.

I don't know that people were expecting another term to be like my father's, because I was different than my father. I look different. There's a huge difference in age, and a lot of the people that were with my father had gone on. Also, the time was different. Just as my father's time, when he started, there was the right-to-work law, there was—the labor movement had 35 percent of the electorate, and he came in with over a million votes. And then, of course, after eight years, then Ronald Reagan himself came in with a million votes, so things change. And then after eight years of Ronald Reagan—Watergate, Vietnam, a lot of feelings of disenchantment with government. So I was coming in as someone who's going to make change, and they weren't, probably, clear on what that was—but they probably didn't know quite *what* to expect.

And there is a gap between the legislature and the governor. That's just the executive power separated from the legislative power, and they're different domains. The legislators have their own way of getting elected. They're very local in orientation, and in how they got to where they are. The governor does not need the same groups, but rather reaches statewide, will have individual people of influence and wealth that will back him up. It's just a different

world. And you don't go to hearings, and you don't have the same backslapping process that is a legislative collective body.

So that being said, there's probably not a lot of thought other than now we've got a Democrat—let's get my bills passed. And that, I would say, after having done it so many years, legislators are very interested in *their* bill. And since there's 120 of them, there's 120 different views of things, and so the governor and his life is only a part—and maybe a small part—of what legislators are thinking about. So I would say that the expectations were not very deep one way or the other, but because they were older, they'd been around longer—I came in out of the blue, as it were, secretary of state. Before that, they hadn't heard of me, and then I was all of a sudden governor. Obviously, they were there longer. Some of the real veterans felt that my attack on lobbyists and secret campaign money was a veiled threat at them, so that created issues.

But we passed a lot of bills; we got along with people. I worked with Speaker [Leo T.] McCarthy very closely. And in general, I think there was a good working relationship. But there were differences and tensions, I think because of the age, the fact that I came from a statewide perspective and the parochial issues that dominated Sacramento were not familiar to me. They weren't things that I had to deal with. I lived in Los Angeles, I went where I had to go to get elected, and this was not Sacramento. I had three legislators that supported me, and that was good—that was all. But even those supporting me doesn't make the difference. When it comes down to the general election, which was very close, these are TV ads about topics that are either working for you or not, and the closeness of the election suggested that whatever I was presenting, it was acceptable—but only by a couple of percentage points.

07-00:05:55

Shafer:

Do you think the fact that your primary campaign was, you know, pretty intense with the speaker, Moretti—did that have something to do with it? Was there pullback in the legislature?

07-00:06:04

Brown:

Well, but he was gone by that time. And then he was looking for a job, so I had to give him a job on the Energy Commission.

07-00:06:12

Shafer:

But presumably a lot of his friends were still there.

07-00:06:13

Brown:

Well, yeah, but look, the problem is they've got to raise money. And at that point they raised a lot less than they do now, but I was making it more difficult by saying you've got—they didn't report it all, they didn't disclose it accurately, and I pushed them to do that. And that was difficult for them. It was a change in the temperament—not in the temperament, in the way things were done. And they were not done that way. In fact, I think I mentioned before, the way the disclosure laws were interpreted—very loosely. And that

allowed a flow of money that was not as precisely regulated—even closely regulated or known. So I was pushing against the envelope.

But I would say that now that we have the Fair Political Practices Commission, and people file millions of pieces of paper on conflicts of interest, and on donations, and several reports a year—that has not retarded the increasing flow of money and influence. So that's something to reflect on: that reform can make change, but in altering the fundamental equations of our political economy—not so much.

07-00:07:33

Shafer:

I wasn't expecting to ask you this, but looking back on it, do you feel like that measure and the creation of the FPPC maybe didn't do what you thought it would at the time, or was it more of a—just a political issue to run on? I mean are you—?

07-00:07:47

Brown:

Well, I definitely thought there should be more honest disclosure. I didn't fully grasp how detailed and intrusive the bureaucracy gets, and how minor its activities are. I mean most of the people who run into trouble are amateur candidates. They're not the big pros, the big corporations—they all have lawyers, and it is a lawyer's game now. It can be very complicated. So this is a problem with a modern society, and it's true of the labor law. The labor law used to be union shop stewards representing workers. Now it's high-paid lawyers for unions, fighting high-paid lawyers for corporations—or for the government. And it is true that we are in a movement toward ever greater legal intrusion and legal complexification, and so the political reform got caught up in that process, which continues to the current day.

07-00:08:52

Shafer:

Some of the early newspaper clippings from your first few months in office suggested that Republicans were quite happy with you, and that some—many Democrats, especially liberal Democrats, were *not*. Do you recall that dynamic?

07-00:09:09

Brown:

Oh, I remember there was different dynamics. I appointed a Mexican American, Mario [G.] Obledo, who worked in public-interest law—and two of the Latino members didn't like it, and they had a press conference, because I hadn't consulted with *them*. And to tell you the truth, I hadn't even thought about consulting with them, but that's the way that you handle politics. You've got to consult and talk to a lot of people. Well, I didn't have a lot of old hands, and we weren't used to doing it all that much, so that was one thing. The other is that yeah, I wanted to keep government within limits, and I'm very aware that people get wary. If the taxes go up, the spending gets to be viewed as too excessive, that's bad. Politically, it's a bad thing.

And also, I was feeling my way about—what is really needed? What do we need here? Like even in education, I said, “Well, before we get more money, we ought to get more reform.” Well, now I understand reform is a more problematic term—much more of a let’s get them the money, and leave it more to the teachers. But still, the legislature, to this day, continues on micromanagement. They want more rules, more laws, more instructions from the central office—namely Sacramento, on what the teachers should be doing after the door is closed. And now I understand much more deeply than I did before that there’s a limit to what one can do from the state capital or the nation’s capital. There *is* a lot you can do—you can build high-speed rail, you can build roads, you can require electric cars. But in terms of shaping social/human outcomes, that’s more difficult, and that very much is embedded in each community, in each school, in each family.

And yes, the state does make changes by what it values, and what it spends money on, and what it regulates. But I was a little skeptical. I wanted to understand these programs, and what I didn’t understand—they’ve been working for these for years. So I come along and say, “Hey, wait a minute. I don’t think I get this. I’m not sure, so I’m doubting this.” So I would slow things down, and that’s been my general view. It was true in ’75; it was true in 2018, because I’m trying to manage and ride the tiger, and it’s very difficult. Just two years before I took over the state had a \$60 billion deficit. Today it’s got a \$21 billion temporary surplus, with a \$14 or \$15 billion rainy-day fund, but in three years, that can reverse itself. So it’s not a stable environment. And therefore, I wanted to move more cautiously and understand things that the old-hand legislators already understood, at least to *their* satisfaction—and they wanted *more*.

But I would say—and I think I give some weight to their view for sure—but even today, when I look at the legislature, they want to do more and more stuff. And I know now, because I’ve had more time at it, they don’t fully grasp what are the consequences, because you can’t know, so you’ve got to be a little more cautious. And because we have problems, the Democrats presented themselves as the problem solvers, that we’ll get it solved. And their tools are law, regulation, and taxes. And by more of all those three, they will get, whatever your problems are—solved. But I don’t believe that, so we need to have a more thoughtful and in-depth analysis when we do large things. And so that was a tension. They knew what they wanted, they wanted it—and I had to say no.

But I would say my time as governor, my ninth term—or my ninth year, the first year of the second-time around, I had to veto the whole budget. And I had to go to the Democratic caucus in the assembly and the senate, and they were very emotional, very unhappy, and berating me and emotionally battering, as it were. But you have to still lay down a demarcation, and the only difference now is that I was able, because we had more money—I balanced my noes with yeses. And I did spend more time in working with them, and since I was

older and they thought I knew a few things, and they were more ready to work with me—maybe even defer sometimes. Now, the first time around, when I'm thirty-six, and they're all in their fifties or sixties, that equation didn't present itself, so it created tension.

07-00:14:31

Shafer: So you think it was a resentment—who's this young whippersnapper?

07-00:14:35

Brown: Well, I don't know if it's a resentment, but there's always a fight with the legislature, they just are. My father and Unruh fought; Gray Davis and John Burton fought. I happened to get through the whole thing with very few fights. Oh, we had fights, but there was very good will on all sides. Well, one thing—we had a hell of a lot of money.

07-00:14:54

Shafer: You're talking about the second time.

07-00:14:56

Brown: The second time around.

07-00:14:57

Holmes: In that first time, were you afraid that perhaps your relationship with the legislature was going to be damaged because of your time as secretary of state?

07-00:15:07

Brown: I didn't think of that. I thought of it as a reencounter. They were difficult—I mean they're difficult because they didn't do what *I* wanted, and they thought I was difficult because I didn't do what *they* wanted. And in the separation of powers, you have an inherent tension, so don't be surprised that it's tense. You can't all agree. Now, with Obama and Mitch McConnell it went to an extreme, where he says his only job was to get rid of Obama. That's pretty extraordinary. Now, we had our own party, but they have their own—their own ways of doing stuff.

[side conversation deleted]

07-00:15:44

Brown: What I'm saying is yes, there's tension. There's tension at the national level more than ever before, at least in my lifetime. And so we had tensions, and some of them more cranky than others. I got along very well with some senators and assemblymen, and not so well with others.

07-00:16:05

Holmes: In that first year or two of office, you were discussing, in a sense, your learning curve of how to deal with the legislature.

07-00:16:14

Brown: Well, and how to deal with issues. Like, for example, I vetoed an education bill, and I partially, I trimmed it down, because I was afraid we were headed for \$500 million deficit. It turned out we weren't, but it looked like we were. And that's part of California's whole problem, that it's always volatile. You've got too much, or too little, and you don't always know where you are. So I wanted to finish four years without a deficit. But they're not worried about that in the same way. And we'll see right now they'll work it out and get it—thus it is ever the same.

07-00:16:51

Shafer: You were, of course, as governor, on the Board of Regents as well.

07-00:16:54

Brown: Yeah.

07-00:16:57

Shafer: And I think it was maybe three months in, in March or so you went to the regents, and somebody presented some grand—

07-00:17:03

Brown: Yeah, that was the squid, the university plan, the five-year plan, which I called the *squid process*.

07-00:17:09

Shafer: Say more about that.

07-00:17:10

Brown: Well, it's in very vague terms. I'm sure I didn't give it the full—in fact, I know I didn't give it enough consideration, given all the smart people that worked on it. But it did not seem illuminating to me, and my finance department that analyzed it thought it was just a formula for expansion and more money. And I think the university still does this. It's its own world, and it keeps expanding. Now, having said all that, there's a lot of very wonderful things that go on in this world. But as far as trying to manage it and hold it to account, that's a whole other story, because it's huge—and you just find that right now. UC's got a big deficit, and they buy a stadium for \$325 million, and they don't put up a penny; it's all borrowed money. So, yeah, we're not going to get into that. [laughter in the background] But my view is they need a leaner operation.

I understand that money makes a difference, and if you go over to Stanford, they have a hell of a lot more money, and it really does a lot of good things. So I mean there are two arguments here, and I've always taken a more fiscally prudent approach, and I think that creates tensions with the regents, and it creates tensions with the legislature. And it creates tension within the Democratic Party, because this is something—this is a field that Republicans are supposed to occupy.



07-00:18:54

Shafer: Fiscal conservatism?

07-00:18:56

Brown:

Well, yeah, that—yeah, not spending programs, I mean. And the Democrats are becoming more—as the society becomes more unequal, they want more programs, but in order to get more programs, ultimately, you have to borrow more or tax more. And if you tax more, you're going to find yourself maybe not in power, and then the Republicans are going to come in and you're going to start all over again. So you can't avoid the necessity of dealing with a political electorate that only will go so far, whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. That's why we change from one to the other. And so if you're interested in more longevity, you try to beat the odds, and to do that you've got to take a little of the fire from the opposition and incorporate it. That's just the way that—Clinton did that, in ways, not—that I don't always agree with, but he was able to survive in a difficult environment because he was not a stereotypical Democrat.

Now, that's just a function of reading the electorate. There's nothing absolute or ultimate about these kind of ad hoc political judgments—where *are* we? And that was the tension with my father and Jess Unruh. When is it time? Was it too soon to have a fair housing bill? I think Unruh thought it *was*. But my father wanted to—is it the right thing? Let's go do it. And then we got the initiative in '64, and repealed it by 60 percent of the vote and created the first Reagan Democrat. So you could say, "Well, is that the right thing to do? Is that the wrong thing to do?" And you could spend many hours pondering which way. And in the heat of battle you do things—and well, Unruh went along with it.

But then after a while, if it didn't work, then people don't like that either, and they say, "Oh Pat—*Pat*, look what you got us into." So you have to be careful not only in what *you* want to do, but what the legislature wants to do. And if you do too much that they *don't* want, and they continue to not want it, then you're going to create so much resistance and opposition that you're not going to get *other* things that you may want. So it's a very sophisticated, multi-faceted environment, where there are many players, many issues. And things don't stay the same, they're constantly changing.

07-00:21:31

Shafer: Plus, you've got the voters.

07-00:21:34

Brown:

Well, the voters are part of, that's part of the equation. The politicians are just reading the voters' thoughts, for the most part. For example, property tax was not a big issue in 1975. In 1978, that was it. So this is the great dilemma. All the things you're talking about today—four years later they're totally different. And what you thought was great, pretty soon is coming up bad. So

that's what makes it interesting, exciting, and why it's difficult to stay too long in politics.

07-00:22:10

Holmes: Well, in regards to the UC, Governor, you came into office wanting to change Sacramento and do things differently.

07-00:22:17

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

07-00:22:19

Holmes: And from the legislature's standpoint, here we have a Democrat as well as a UC alum not going along with increasing funding.

07-00:22:27

Brown: Yeah. Yeah.

07-00:22:30

Holmes: Or even—as I think you even proposed, to freeze and cut funding to UC.

07-00:22:32

Brown: Well, that was the professors' salaries, that I thought they should get—you know, even today this professor called me and there's a pause. I said, "Where are you?" He said, "I'm in Sweden, on sabbatical." So there's a lot of that, and I think it's wonderful. But it's, I thought—remember, I was at Berkeley during the—well, not, I wasn't there at the protest against the [House] Un-American Activities Committee—the Fair Play for Cuba. Then I came back a couple of years later. I lived near the campus when I worked for the supreme court—that was the Free Speech Movement. That was when—"take the machinery; there comes a time when you've got to put your body in the machinery and stop it, slow it down." That was Mario Savio, so I felt this juggernaut.

I read a lot, and I seek out independent intellectuals. The university is an institution, so it has its own bureaucratic imperatives. And so I was pushing against that, just like I do in Sacramento—and there's always a tension. You can't have just charisma, but you have to have bureaucracy. And if you don't institutionalize something, it won't last. But as soon as you institutionalize it, you lose all the flavor and the fervor. So that's why Mao Tse-tung, I guess, had a cultural revolution. That's what he said: you're trying to keep the fervor. César Chávez tried to generate more enthusiasm, but the enthusiasm wears down. This is the aging process, and some of us don't quite accept that, and so we're always trying to rev things up and create more—more dynamism, I would say. I don't want to make it sound like we're just excitement junkies, but I want something to be alive, fresh, not stale.

I had interesting professors. So, but they were not your go along, get along. I remember my last class, 1961, Mark Schorer, contemporary British literature. He's smoking on a cigarette, and he finally gets to the end, and he takes his

cigarette and he drags, exhales, and he says, “Sorry, this class ends on a downbeat, but that’s the way it is.” And he walks off the stage. So that was my last class at Berkeley. So this is not cheerleading the institution, or cheerleading the Democratic Party—or cheerleading *anything*. This is a world in change, in ferment, and if you ask me where we are today, there’s even *more* ferment going on! Or maybe different ferment, because there was a lot of ferment in the sixties and seventies. So that’s why the regental dignity and process didn’t always catch my allegiance, as it did to others, who were so happy to be a part of it.

Now, of course, in retrospect—and I now appreciate the *old* regents, because in the old days—this is a bit of a caricature, but it gives you the tone, they would go to the beautiful home of Clark Kerr there in Kensington, and they’d have brandy with Nobel laureates, and the next day they would sit at the fifty-yard line—and they don’t do that anymore. Okay, so now it’s all very serious, it’s not as much fun, and the regents are a different breed of cat. And in truth, the university is not the regents. The university is the classroom, it’s the research lab—that’s the university. And up on top, the office of the president in Oakland, that’s a whole other ball game—important, but that’s not the spirit of Berkeley. Even the Berkeley campus is too big, or is big, and you’re looking at the Physics Department or the Classics Department or the Anthropology Department—that’s kind of where Berkeley lives, and UCLA lives, and all the rest of them.

07-00:26:56

Meeker:

Were some of these ideas coming from your conversations with the independent intellectuals that you’re engaging with? These are people who might have taught at universities, but maybe didn’t have the full tenure-track package?

07-00:27:11

Brown:

Yeah, I’ve known a lot of non tenure-track professors there.

07-00:27:13

Meeker:

Well, like I’m a non-tenure-track researcher at the University of California, so I might have a critique of the professoriate as a class. I recognize that I don’t get the summer off, for instance. [laughing] So I can see how some of these folks would develop a meaningful critique of the way in which intellectualism is institutionalized and given all sorts of goodies at the university.

07-00:27:41

Brown:

Also, you get your own ideology too. Today there’s a lot of themes going through the university. Remember, this was the period of the New Left, and there’s a fellow named [Milovan] Djilas. He was a Yugoslav, in the time of Tito, and he wrote a book called *The New Class: [An Analysis of the Communist System]*. And this, *The New Class*, was quite heretical within the Communist world, that a class was created by the cadres, by the people who were running the Communist state, and they were serving themselves and not

the people, and that was a very radical idea, and he was put aside by Tito, I believe.

But so the *new class* was generalized, so you could have a new class of professors or other Mandarins. So I read those ideas. And I didn't know him in 1975, but I got to know Gregory Bateson. One of the books that I gravitated to—and I don't quite know how or why, but I know it was at Yale, so that was before I was governor. I went into the bookstore and I know I picked it right off the shelf. It was called *Compulsory Miseducation*, by Paul Goodman, who also wrote *Growing Up Absurd*, which is a book everybody read. Today, nobody's heard about *Growing Up Absurd*, but that was the mood at that time. And, of course, existentialism was already passé, but it was still something that I encountered—the absurd. So these are all these ideas trickling into my mind. And when you're in the seminary, you know, there's no football games, there's no dancing, there's no entertainment—except ideas, in books and conversation. So you do a lot of talking and a lot of thinking.

So if you get to someplace, “hey this is the center of thinking”—but the thinking isn't all that exciting. They're talking about parking lots, or bond indentures, or pension return. That's what the regents talk about—or other things. Anyway, so I wanted to kind of inject a certain humanism—like separate the weapons lab. Should the university be in the business of making/designing nuclear weapons? I remember Gregory Bateson said, “Well, I don't think the university should be in a business, but I'd rather see them making pants than nuclear bombs,” and he voted to separate the university. Of course, Mr. Henning, who came from the AFL-CIO, voted for it, because he's part of the labor movement.

So it's a very comp—it's not complicated, but it's a mixed bag of many points of view, and I represent whatever I represented. It wasn't the same crowd. Remember, these were all Reagan's old people. Some of them were my father's friends too: Fred Dutton was on there [the UC Board of Regents], for example. Ellie [Elinor R.] Heller and Norton Simon—so, but it was a different world. It wasn't something I knew much about. I guess you might say I was on a tear to cut back the spending. Not cut it back, because we weren't going to cut anything back—I didn't think we would. But to hold it in line, so we could have a four-year period without going into the hole again. And I knew that when that happens, then that undermines ones political credibility—it didn't help my father, it didn't help Gray Davis, and it didn't help Arnold Schwarzenegger. So this, like it or not, that people say the governor is in charge of the books. When the books look bad, then *he* looks bad. [rapping on table for emphasis] And there's another person standing in the wings saying, “You know, titch-titch. I think we'd better get in there and correct things.” So I was trying to avoid *that* situation.

And by the way, you can't do it by just cutting a few things. You have to create the intellectual groundwork to delegitimize all the spending, because

when the spending shows up, whether it's at the regents or in Sacramento, it's got a whole bunch of momentum behind it, and it's all good. So it's very hard to push it back. So you almost have to create your own intellectual constructs to undermine the plausibility of what they're asking, and we'll see how that works right now.

07-00:32:18

Shafer:

How much of it, do you think, was wanting to—I was struck by the sort of similarities of vetoing that first budget the second time you were governor.

07-00:32:29

Brown:

Yeah, yeah.

07-00:32:29

Shafer:

Going to the—one of the first regents' meetings, and sort of like blowing it up in a way, blowing up their plan. I mean how much of it was sort of like wanting to—like sort of like lay down a marker, like we're—this is different. We're going to—things are going to be different.

07-00:32:41

Brown:

Well, I—yeah, I know, but I don't think about laying down—of course I didn't know what a marker was then. See, what I did, and maybe it was a mistake. I think it had limitations, but I didn't hire, or appoint, a finance director, and that was usually the big thing that governors do.

So I did the budget. Normally, he never did the budget. I did that myself—now, not just myself, but with two outside consultants: [Leonard] “Lenny” Ross, who was a very brilliant man, and a guy named [Edward K.] “Ed” Hamilton, who worked in New York and was a consultant. With those two as my consultants, I then had the finance department, under men named [Edwin W.] “Ed” Beach and Roy Bell, and they were there under Reagan, and they were there under my father. And so we went over, for three weeks, the budget. And I found it very interesting, learned all about this stuff. We had ten-/twelve-hour meetings in the finance office there in the Capitol. And so I got pretty friendly with the finance department, and they were always—they were frustrated by the university, because they'd never know what the hell the university is doing, and they always felt they were hiding the ball. In fact, the finance department thinks that *still!* [laughing]—and they probably are, because that's the tension between finance and these substantive agencies. So I was influenced by finance, and I think somebody, maybe it was Fred Dutton, said, “You should never have a finance man as your chief of staff.” So, because they say no to everything, and you have to have that tension between the push—the do, or maybe the *vision* in today's lingo, and then you have the counterpart, which is: “Well, what about the finances?”

But I was very much interested in the money and holding the money down. I was influenced by, you know, by Reagan's success, and how in government you can spend all this money, and people want it. But then after you spend it,

somebody comes along, “Why are you spending all this money?” And they don’t think of all the good stuff; they just think of generic government as out of control. And that was a stronger feeling, and it was still predominant in 1975. It was strong enough that you did get sixteen years of Republicans. So it was not a notion you could just say, pooh-pooh, just go for it—whatever the Democrats want, just spend. And we maybe are going to try that again, because the Democrats are even *more* into spending, because of who represents them now. And you can’t do that, I don’t think, unless people like just these taxes all the time.

07-00:35:29

Shafer:

But not appointing a finance director, that’s so outside the box too.

07-00:35:35

Brown:

Well, because I sat there, and I said, “I can figure this out. What do I want a finance director for?” No—first of all, we have a finance director—it’s called the civil servants. They had been there, they had gray hair, they were smart. They knew all these things: why do I want an intermediary between *me* and the experts? And I thought that way even as attorney general. We took one guy, [James M.] “Jim” Humes, put him in charge. And to the extent I needed senior legal advice, I had Anne [Gust Brown], and everything else? Just leave it, let the professionals do things. Because I had enough confidence—if there are some new ideas, I’ll figure them out, or I’ll get them from somebody. And I don’t need to get my new ideas from the institution. I want the institution to shape them, but I’m constantly collecting thoughts, and encountering people on all manner of things. So even rewriting, I would say probably up until last year I’d say I rewrote, in some fashion, 90 percent—80 percent of every press releases. I’d rewrite the *lede*.

07-00:36:53

Shafer:

But the second time you were governor you did have a finance director, so why the difference?

07-00:36:58

Brown:

Oh, but I took the one that was there, [Ana] Matosantos—she was right there.

07-00:37:04

Shafer:

There was no one there the first time?

07-00:37:08

Brown:

No. They leave. First of all, it was Reagan’s person, and he left. So I kept Matosantos because Ana was more in the middle, and then we got [Michael] Cohen. Cohen wasn’t a political guy. He came from the legislative analyst. So those were very akin to what we had before. Ana, I don’t know what her background was, but she was more the institutional person. I learned that, especially in those three weeks in November, they really lay out the issues. They are there, and then—decide. What do you want to do? Who could decide better than me? Because I’m the only guy that has to make the decision. So if you bring another person in but I didn’t see the utility of that.

Now, when we're talking about all these other things, the Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture—yeah, you've got to have department heads. But on the money, even there, all these different departments were getting professionals, so who would be the professional—that's one of the characteristics of state government. You have to have people who know the state government, but then you also want to have enough outside influence, or fresh air, that you can do things that are outside maybe what people in the government are thinking. But the thing is so complicated—it is very expert driven, and you'd better have the experts. That's true of the attorney general's office. The attorneys that have been there know how the system works. We're run by expert agencies—the Department of Insurance, the Department of Water—this is not for a bunch of journalists saying, "Why don't we just run the department of—why don't we build a couple of tunnels?" [laughing] No, it doesn't work that way. When you spend hundreds of millions of dollars, you need really good engineers.

So we had really good people—those two guys, and I liked the fact that they served under my father, and they served under Reagan. And to me—who is this outsider? Who was I going to bring in? Who did I know that I wanted to entrust that to? Not my campaign personnel—they don't know what the hell is going on in state government. They know less than I do. So who was it? Some other character that would come from where? Now, had there been some wonderful person, I might have picked him, but that didn't exist. And I think we did have wonderful people—it's called the civil service leaders of the Department of Finance.

07-00:39:42

Shafer:

We've talked for a lot of today just about how unconventional your office was the first time you were governor.

07-00:39:50

Brown:

I don't know—do you think it was unconventional? Well, compared to *Reagan* it was unconventional. Because he was very structured. You know, when he did his veto messages or he signed bills—because the same guy worked for me that worked for him—he said that he'd have the *sign* box and the *veto* box, and he would just sign or veto. There wasn't a lot of engagement. And I think a lot of the governors are like that.

07-00:40:18

Shafer:

I guess my—but my question is do you—there was clearly a different style in the governor's office than had been seen ever before in California.

07-00:40:27

Brown:

Well, first of all, nobody remembers before Pat Brown, then—then it's ancient history from there on in.

07-00:40:32

Shafer:

Do you think—you know, the late-night meetings, the—like bringing in people who didn't necessarily have expertise but had good ideas and were smart—maybe winging it a little bit more, not being so driven by a schedule, this—were there downsides to that?

07-00:40:50

Brown:

Sure there are downsides to that. By the way, a lot of the people I brought in—I brought in Ken Kesey just to give a talk. I brought in [E.F.] Schumacher. I brought in the head of the—Arthur F. Burns, the head of the Federal Reserve. We brought in Herman Kahn, who wrote *On Thermonuclear War* or *Thinking About the Unthinkable*, on how to fight a nuclear war. So we had interesting people. I'll emphasize what I just said—the grooves of the government run in a certain way, and the people who have mastered that are the people who really have to operate things. People can have an idea, but taking an idea from the outside and then putting it in—it does take translation. And it's not that difficult—no, I mean it's not that easy. So what was the question about?

07-00:41:38

Shafer:

Well, the different style that you had. What were the downsides?

07-00:41:43

Brown:

Oh, the downsides? The downsides—

07-00:41:47

Shafer:

Either for the people working for you, or for the state, or for your own political—

07-00:41:51

Brown:

Well, politically—probably a more predictable, duller, kind of a more Deukmejian style has maybe a little longer shelf life. If you have a little too much flash, it burns out quicker. So I would definitely say—move more slowly.

07-00:42:12

Shafer:

Hmm. And—when you say *burns out*, do you mean just people, it's—people can't keep up, or they get tired of it? Or what do you mean?

07-00:42:17

Brown:

You get overexposed. I've often told the story of Aristides the Just. As they were going through, you know, kick him out—ostracize. They drop a little pebble in the box if they want him ostracized—out—and he was Aristides in Athens, went by, and this lady drops an ostrakon, a pebble, in the box. “And why are you doing that? Why are you exiling me?” The woman says, “I'm just tired of hearing of Aristides the Just.” [laughter] I always remembered that—just tired of the name. Meg Whitman spent a hundred million dollars before I spent my first million, so I was the fresh face for the media people.



07-00:43:11

Shafer: Yeah, so speaking of fresh faces, which you very much were in that 1975-'76, when did you begin to think—maybe I'll run for president?

07-00:43:22

Brown: Well, I always had that idea in the back of my mind. I don't know how long, but it certainly wasn't like a momentary thing. But when? I probably thought it more seriously when I saw who was running. First of all, Ford didn't look strong. It turns out he wasn't. The candidates didn't look that strong—kind of like the way it is today. So why are there twenty-one candidates? Because it all looks possible. It doesn't look shut down.

07-00:43:54

Holmes: On that same note—Ronald Reagan threw his hat into the ring in 1968, and many criticized him for that. You know, "You were too early, barely into your governorship, and now you're throwing your hat in the ring." Were you aware of that, but also aware that you were risking the same thing by maybe throwing your hat in in 1976?

07-00:44:23

Brown: Yeah, I was aware that Reagan—but I didn't think he lost a lot of ground for that. You must have done some good research to find much negativity to that. These conservative folks were happy with him, and he did pretty well. No, I probably knew it was a risk, but you know, you're younger, and then you're ready for more bold moves.

07-00:44:45

Shafer: Well, you said you'd been thinking about it for a long time—

07-00:44:49

Brown: I didn't see any great downside, I guess I didn't. I probably should have, but I didn't.

07-00:44:52

Shafer: Why do you say you probably should have?

07-00:44:56

Brown: Well, because you don't know the whole situation. You know, when you can perceive, you live, four or five presidential elections, you get a better sense. Certainly, I didn't have that perspective, but you know, governor of a bigger state—that's what politicians do. They're always moving, in one form or another. So it seemed like a possibility. And a lot of the issues that I liked were presidential, that would interest me—even high-speed rail. That's a presidential issue. Nuclear war, that's a presidential issue. Climate change—same thing, or you would call it *the environment* in those days.

07-00:45:38

Shafer: So did you—you felt that you had something to add to the national conversation. Were you also sort of—

07-00:45:44

Brown: Well, we didn't use the phrase *national conversation*. That word *did* not exist at that time, and I don't think we were talking about adding—we were talking about *winning*. See, you guys are always off onto these kind of marginal academic constructs, like something called a national conversation—whatever that might mean. No, it's an election. And the Maryland thing—I'm not even sure how it all came together, but it did.

07-00:46:14

Shafer: Mmm. Were you bored being governor at that point?

07-00:46:19

Brown: Well, I found some things more interesting than others. I think I can put it that way.

07-00:46:24

Shafer: Was that a yes?

07-00:46:25

Brown: [laughing] No! No, I've—I found it more interesting this time around. I think I did because there are more clear issues. There weren't as many problems then. The second time around, it was a real clear problem. We had a \$27 billion deficit. Do something. What was the problem in 1975? Getting out of the deficit? What was the problem—it wasn't the oil depletion allowance. It wasn't collective bargaining. Maybe the farm worker was a problem, because Chávez marched and made it a problem. But how many problems were there? More money for schools? Staffing standards in the mental hospitals? It was pretty mundane stuff, from campaigning.

07-00:47:14

Shafer: So it wasn't that challenging.

07-00:47:18

Brown: Well, it was challenging, but the challenges were more subtle than I picked up at the time.

07-00:47:22

Shafer: Hmm—say more about that.

07-00:47:24

Brown: Well, I mean there's nothing you get done very quickly. It's all working at it slowly. And I had ideas that, and when it's on mental health, I'd studied—actually, I took a course from Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, at Yale. I read a book on *The Myth of Mental Illness*, by Thomas Szasz—and I met Thomas Szasz. In fact, there's a dialog with him and me in *CoEvolution Quarterly*. So I was always a little skeptical of mental health—but again, that's an idea, so we have all these ideas. Now, you have people in mental hospitals—they're climbing the walls, so what do you do? And how much money do you spend? How much staff do you need, and what kind of credentials do they need?—and all the rest of it. And what's the fire and life

safety? When you start managing, it gets into detail after detail after detail. But most of the intellectual world that I deal with are these rather grand ideas, so there is a gap between the grand idea and the mundane operation of a hospital, a prison, or even a particular office in state government.

07-00:48:43

Shafer:

So as a younger man, you found that less—more frustrating maybe?

07-00:48:47

Brown:

Well, not frustrating, but I was looking for things that would not have happened but for my being there—but what were *those*? I had to figure out what those were. They weren't self-evident. You don't just go around and have a whole pocketful of ideas about what the state of California should be doing. And people have a hard time writing their campaign platforms. If you read them, they're usually rather vague, and so they're not much of a guide. And as there weren't that many issues—and what were the issues? Statewide land-use planning, the Peripheral Canal, which wasn't an issue except for a few people. You know, these little things are made up—things were real stable. Ford was president.

07-00:49:38

Meeker:

There were some things that you tried to make issues, right?

07-00:49:40

Brown:

Yeah.

07-00:49:41

Meeker:

Energy being one of them, and renewable energy.

07-00:49:42

Brown:

Yeah, right.

07-00:49:43

Meeker:

That wasn't an issue?

07-00:49:44

Brown:

No.

07-00:49:45

Meeker:

But that was something that you began to put on the table.

07-00:49:46

Brown:

Not an issue, but it was there. That was an idea. We definitely dealt in energy. I had a lot of energy advisors. A guy named Wilson Clark—I don't know if I mentioned him—at the Energy Commission. We had Sim Van Der Ryn in the Office of Appropriate Technology. We had people at the PUC that were changing incentives, to try to get more renewable energy, more independent distributed energy. So yeah, those were a lot of ideas that turned out to be very much on the mark, which one couldn't hardly foresee at the time. Energy always interested me, but energy was not that *interesting*. You know, and

what was interesting—like the first meeting, one of the building trades came into my office with the president of PG&E, a guy named [Frederick W.] Mielke [Jr.], and Bobby Georgine, president of the national building trades [Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO]. He came over and he said, “We want to make sure we can build Diablo Canyon. That’s what the building trades want—build Diablo Canyon.”

So here we’re talking about energy regulations, different kind of fuels, more efficient appliances, all that stuff—by the way, *those* took a long time. To enter the building standards took nine years before they were promulgated, from the day I took office. So these things take a long time. But we got them done, and now they’re even more stringent and more intelligent.

So, I do think that the ritual—I came to appreciate that—the ritual of governor is important. Certainly, Reagan enjoyed that, and you need to enjoy that. I think of it as the pope in his popemobile—what does the pope do when he drives by? He waves; he just waves. Okay. [laughing] A lot of what governors are supposed to do is just wave—other people will take care of it. But I didn’t find that challenging, so I was looking for what else do you do besides wave to your constituents?

07-00:52:01

Holmes:

[laughing] Governor, what was the initial reaction of those in your cabinet, as well as even maybe your father and others, to your decision to run for president, as you began to explore that possibility?

07-00:52:15

Brown:

I don’t think I *heard* a reaction.

07-00:52:20

Holmes:

You just told them that you’re going to run for president?

07-00:52:22

Brown:

I just do it, and we did it. And we won! Yeah, I remember how.

07-00:52:24

Shafer:

Yeah, how—?

07-00:52:28

Brown:

So—it was bold. But first of all, I didn’t see why not. I can still be governor, and it was interesting. It’s a story. You’ve got to have a story here. Now, Deukmejian did, besides locking people up, in a way that I think went *way* over the deep end, but in general just being there. As long as the economy keeps growing, you’re relatively popular. Stay out of the way. That’s the conservative way.

But another way is to do interesting things, do important things. That’s kind of the Teddy Roosevelt approach. And I’d never read about Teddy Roosevelt, but I know he charged up San Juan Hill, and I think he went hunting in Africa

or something. But you've got to have a little romance in running for president. Obviously the people in Maryland thought it was pretty good, and I talked about all the things I was doing: the environment, spaceship Earth—these were the kind of terms I used. Planetary realism, that was one of the concepts and still we haven't quite reached planetary realism yet. Today in the *New York Times* they're talking about five hundred scientists who are reporting that a million species are going to be extinguished at the rate we're going. So we are not planetarily very realistic in the way we're conducting things.

So that was interesting—not interesting, but it's important, it's worthwhile, and if you want to have your conversation, you've got to be somewhere. [laughing] And that was a way to do that, and also I thought there was a possibility, and also then you would participate. In the old days, you'd go to conventions, and there was more room to make your voice heard, even if you weren't going to make it.

07-00:54:30

Shafer:

You—last time you were telling us how, and you kind of qualified it a little bit, but that you had decided you wanted to be governor when you were—I think in the mansion—?

07-00:54:38

Brown:

At least that was one idea, and I don't know how serious that—I mean I can't tell you, that was on a sign on my wall from that day forward.

07-00:54:46

Shafer:

Yeah, but in terms of running for president, like do you remember was there a moment?

07-00:54:51

Brown:

No, I don't think there are these moments. No. That's the Freudian theory, that a trauma in childhood affects you the rest of your life. Now people pooh-pooh that, and they don't think there was one event. They think it's more of a pattern or a condition. I do remember that event in the mansion. I recounted that, I think. That's true. Yeah, well, anybody who's running for governor is thinking about being president. Why not? I mean governors—if you can have a governor of Arkansas, you can have a governor of Texas—or a mayor of South Bend, Indiana.

07-00:55:31

Holmes:

Or in 1976, a governor from Georgia.

07-00:55:34

Brown:

A governor from Georgia, right. Certainly, that was part of the thought process. If one governor from a smaller state can be plausible, why not the governor of the bigger state? So yeah, that was part of the—I'm sure, but I can't remember at this point.

07-00:55:53

Holmes:

You ran an unconventional administration since coming to Sacramento. In many respects, people will say that your first run in 1976, for president, was also unconventional, not participating in many of the primaries—

07-00:56:10

Brown:

I was too late. So that was that. Yeah, that was too late. But it was the idea that things could happen. So you thought—well, why not? It wasn't that clear what the outcomes were going to be. Other people thought—what about Senator [Henry M.] Scoop Jackson? He failed? What about [Morris K.] Udall? He failed. Why were they running? They couldn't even get off the ground. So in that respect, not bad. I mean, I did, in the California primary I beat Jimmy Carter—I think 57 or something to 26—you check it out. It was a pretty big victory. So there was something *there*. People wanted to hear what I had to say, and I thought what I was saying was important for the country and for the Democratic Party, so I *did* have something to say, and it was not the same.

07-00:57:09

Shafer:

And you were—and you were at the height of your popularity.

07-00:57:10

Brown:

Right.

07-00:57:11

Shafer:

Right? It was like—I think you were in the eighties, probably, at that point?

07-00:57:14

Brown:

No, I don't know about eighties. It was—they polled differently. It was good, fair—you have to look at that. The polls were—

07-00:57:22

Holmes:

Well, you had like 7 percent disapproval, so if you wanted to look at it that way, at least eighty-something thought you were decent.

07-00:57:29

Brown:

Yeah, but I don't know—I don't believe that. But I think they polled it—the question was different. And of course today things are so polarized, the Republicans never go for a Democrat. And a Democrat's not going to go for a Republican, so it's very polarized today.

07-00:57:45

Holmes:

We were just talking about how weak, in many respects, the Democratic field was, which gave you at least some inspiration—this is possible. Did you also feel the same way about the Republicans? I mean this is right after Watergate, and no one—

07-00:57:58

Brown:

Yeah, well the Republicans were weak.

07-00:58:00

Holmes: No one thought Gerald Ford was actually a very strong candidate to begin with.

07-00:58:04

Brown: Right, so obviously, that was one of those moments. Probably too soon, but how many times do these moments come along? So I decided to take advantage of it. Could I have decided not to? Yes. I'm not saying that—maybe if I had more senior advisors, and took more time, I might not have. And would that have been a good thing? I don't think it was, I think it turned out all right.

07-00:58:32

Shafer: I think one of the high-water marks of that was the Maryland primary.

07-00:58:35

Brown: Yeah.

07-00:58:35

Shafer: In which you stunned Jimmy Carter.

07-00:58:36

Brown: Yeah.

07-00:58:38

Shafer: You know—can you say what you remember about that, and what that was like? I mean—

07-00:58:42

Brown: Just it was exciting, and there were big crowds. And I guess what I was saying had a resonance, talking about the environment, talking about—kind of demystifying government. That was really what we were talking about. And with Nixon and Vietnam, there was a desire for more authenticity, and kind of putting down the pretentious quality of campaigning, which is what I was doing—and yet have some substance.

07-00:59:19

Shafer: Yeah, and one of the people who was instrumental was Nancy Pelosi.

07-00:59:22

Brown: Yeah.

07-00:59:23

Shafer: Can you describe what was the connection there, and like how—did you call her? Or how did that work?

07-00:59:26

Brown: Well, I'm not sure. But she was a friend to Leo McCarthy, and Leo McCarthy was the speaker, so I think Leo was the man who brought that about.

07-00:59:36

Shafer: Yeah. And do you—like did she have an instrumental role? Obviously her dad was—

07-00:59:41

Brown: Well, it was her brother [Thomas L. D'Alesandro, Jr.]. He was the former mayor. Her father [Thomas L. D'Alesandro III] was the mayor, but so was her brother, and I stayed at their house, and he definitely guided me through the whole campaign. He and [Theodore G.] "Teddy" Venetoulis. Yeah, they were there—and very key to the whole thing. Why even Maryland? They came *up* with the idea of Maryland.

07-01:00:02

Shafer: What do you mean?

07-01:00:02

Brown: Well, I think—what I mean—just what I said.

07-01:00:05

Shafer: Came up with the idea of Maryland meaning—?

07-01:00:08

Brown: To run in Maryland. There are fifty states. The first state I ran in was Maryland—why Maryland? Well, because of Pelosi.

07-01:00:13

Shafer: They thought it was winnable.

07-01:00:17

Brown: They did, and I had no idea whether they were right, because we didn't take a poll. It probably wouldn't have shown anything anyway.

07-01:00:26

Meeker: Was the ultimate strategy here to force the decision in the convention, since you weren't able to enter into other states?

07-01:00:38

Brown: Well, that other people would follow. If I had gotten on the ballot and won in Oregon, and depending upon what the—yeah, the last—there were three states.

07-01:00:59

Holmes: And Rhode Island as well.

07-01:01:00

Brown: Well, I won in Rhode Island. Yeah, it's a possibility. But probably a write-in vote was a—yeah, probably if you looked at the mechanics, it obviously was not in the cards. But you can look at it—I wasn't deterred by that. So it was possible, but we didn't have a way—and you can't tell today who's going to win, so you don't know. It depends on what fits the moment. Is [Joe] Biden the steady man for the hour? Or is it going to be somebody else that kind of



seizes on mistakes and stuff that happens? So there is contingency, so that would be the idea of why it had possibilities.

07-01:01:49

Shafer: What impact do you think your running had—you talked earlier that there was some tension, you know, between the Democrats especially. And you—and then you went off and made a huge splash nationally.

07-01:02:01

Brown: Yeah.

07-01:02:01

Shafer: I think I told you once, my father—you were the only candidate my father ever sent money to. And you know, but when you came back, you sort of came back to reality.

07-01:02:10

Brown: Right.

07-01:02:12

Shafer: And so what was that reentry like?

07-01:02:14

Brown: Hard to remember. When we came back, we had that Chávez—had to deal with that. The Teamsters and Chávez fighting. I tried to get those two together, and tried to get the two unions—that didn't, couldn't make any headway at all. And then Chávez put that thing on the ballot. I think there was the funding, so there was the funding to get the board funded—if we could get the Teamsters and the farm workers to stop fighting. I tried very hard, and that didn't succeed. And then finally, that ballot measure—

07-01:02:58

Holmes: Proposition 14.

07-01:02:58

Brown: —that I got involved in, against my better judgment. It went down pretty strongly.

07-01:03:08

Shafer: Can you maybe describe just the role of the farm workers in your campaign? Did they help you?

07-01:03:13

Brown: Which campaign?

07-01:03:13

Shafer: The presidential campaign.

07-01:03:17

Brown: Yeah, they helped in Rhode Island—definitely. They helped in Rhode Island; they helped in Oregon. Marshall Ganz, he was working for the farm workers.

So yeah, they were the active, the organizer. That was it! We didn't have our own independent organization. So that was pretty amazing in itself, that we were able to—I mean in Rhode Island we said vote the undecided slate. We put out a little piece of paper, "Vote the Undecided Slate. Beat Carter." Because we had people in every precinct, every poll, so that was a lot of farm workers. And when they're farm workers, they're not farm workers—they're part of the boycott or the greater farm worker support group, support network, so that's who that all was. And a lot of people would go to La Paz and then—or support the farm workers in some way, and they all came into the campaign. So I had César's support.

[side conversation deleted]

07-01:04:16

Shafer:

In addition to talking to you, Guy and I have been interviewing people—your sister we talked to, Gray Davis we've talked to, Jodie Evans is her name now, but she worked for you for many years. And especially Jodie described those months, when you were running for president, as catching lightning in a bottle. I mean it was—for *them*, it was a very exciting time.

07-01:04:41

Brown:

Very exciting—well, it *is* exciting.

07-01:04:43

Shafer:

So, I didn't hear that—

07-01:04:43

Brown:

I didn't know about that. I was just the candidate.

07-01:04:45

Shafer:

Oh, come on.

07-01:04:46

Brown:

I don't—I mean you just give talks, and all I know is they've got a microphone, and you've got to say something, and you try to avoid saying something stupid—that's the key. But well, when you win a primary for president it's exciting. And there were important issues. I mean the environment, you had foreign policy questions. It's a real education, in effect—it used to be. I don't know if running for president today is like that, where they ask you a lot of pretty serious things. But obviously the candidates—I mean the campaign volunteers, people like campaigns, even for governor—for mayor even, so I don't know what you can say about it. It has a life of its own—long hours, a certain amount of excitement, a bad press story that people get worried, what do you do? So there's drama, and that's better than lack of drama.

07-01:05:52

Shafer:

You know, to me it sounds—it sounds like it's a very intellectual answer, but was there—?

07-01:05:56

Brown: Well, I'm an intellectual character, so—I'm not going to emote on your question there. But it's tiring. I mean the whole—it's campaigning, it's exciting, because basically the candidate is the center of attention, so most people like attention. *You* people like attention. [Shafer laughs] So if you get a lot *of* it, you're obviously going to feel better than if you get none. So in the middle of a campaign, there's that. And then there's content. Then there's emotion, you know, there's crowds, and it's a challenge to rev people up. Sometimes you do, and sometimes you don't. But candidates—they're all working, and there's a camaraderie. It's like working on a play or something. You know, you've got the stage scenery, you have the drama each day after day. It's a drama—and it's like a jury trial, which I've done. So they're alive. It's not just one person—it's a real-life drama. That's a campaign.

07-01:07:05

Holmes: But Governor, also—in reflecting on the campaign in 1976. It's not as if—you know, you had name recognition in California.

07-01:07:17

Brown: Yeah, but not in Maryland. It was zero, zero.

07-01:07:17

Holmes: My point is, in the sense of when you're able to attract crowds, when you're able to get that kind of energy—

07-01:07:22

Brown: But we had television—I don't know how many television ads we had. That makes a *huge* difference. And then Carter is out there campaigning in different states. I have one state, one place where you focus. In the military they always say the other force may be stronger, but if you can mobilize your limited forces where you're greater than the adversary, then you can defeat them. That's exactly what happened.

07-01:07:46

Holmes: But can you also describe a little bit of—because, correct me if I'm wrong, you probably experienced that before, of going to a different state and having people out there cheering *for you*, when you're only really known in California.

07-01:07:59

Brown: Well, yeah.

07-01:08:02

Holmes: So could you describe, maybe, your experience?

07-01:08:04

Brown: They cheer right now with these candidates. You know, if you get media, you're in the media, either through ads or stories or whatever, the news—and people like to see—there's a celebrity quality. So people say, "Hey, I saw him on—he looks just like he does on television," or something. They show up.

Then if you say something that they respond to, then they applaud, they get excited. But, you know, that's what's—I mean it's just a funny kind of process to pick candidates.

07-01:08:38

Meeker: Did you feel like you needed to figure out how to translate your ideas from California to the rest of the country?

07-01:08:45

Brown: No. What you've got to figure out is what can win the election? What am I doing? What do I stand for? You can't be for anything. I can't take Ronald Reagan's ideas. I'm a Democrat. So—what was I doing? I talked even about the low-flush toilet, that this is a symbol of conservatism. I talked about that in Maryland. The people liked that. And the limitations—that some people interpreted that maybe as fiscal limitation, other people interpreted it as environmental limitation. But in a time of excess—in that period, I think people were ready for some limitation.

07-01:09:26

Shafer: Do you think like, in some ways, do you think your message resonated, in particular, because—the country was probably exhausted in some ways: Watergate—

07-01:09:35

Meeker: Vietnam.

07-01:09:35

Shafer: The war, of course. The resignation, assassination attempts twice—we'll talk about that another time.

07-01:09:48

Brown: It's hard to remember. You know, you should consult the record, to the extent there is a record. It's hard to say. You know, you get up there and give speeches. I gave a lot of speeches in Maryland. I gave a lot in Rhode Island. I gave some in New Jersey, some in Oregon. They were generally pretty well received. But they were in '92, for that matter. So I ran a fairly decent campaign.

07-01:10:17

Shafer: Yeah. When you came back here, or to Sacramento, do you feel that—I mean I know you don't like that word—was there a price to pay for your having been gone and being in the spotlight?

07-01:10:30

Brown: Wasn't, not immediately—no, not really. I don't think there was—maybe there was *longer* term. No. And it might have set in motion that I went off running for president, and maybe that says, well, when we see problems in state government, maybe that *combined* creates disaffection. That's quite possible.

07-01:10:54

Shafer: And how so?

07-01:10:56

Brown: Well, how so? Just the way I described it.

07-01:10:59

Shafer: Like a sense that you're—didn't have your eye on Sacramento?

07-01:11:02

Brown: Well, that could be, but I'm interpreting it. I was still pretty popular at the end of the summer. But you know, these things, they go in—you know, if you don't do anything, that's a problem. And if you do do something exciting, then you do another thing that's exciting—at some point *that* is a problem. So I would say that the campaign—it didn't take that many days, it was over pretty—I think it worked okay. Now, when you're winning, it works pretty good. Then when it's not going anywhere. Then people say, "What the hell are you doing *this* for?" I can't tell you what the opinion is—I'm not polling each week, and you can say well, here's what we think.

07-01:11:56

Shafer: But you did win the California primary, so obviously, it was resonating here.

07-01:12:01

Brown: It was resonating. I'm doing fine in June. Now when we had that ballot measure, I campaigned for that through television. That didn't go anywhere, and Tunney lost. Now, what was that all about? That was '68. Tunney lost that time, didn't win it.

07-01:12:19

Holmes: He did—in '76, and he *blamed* it on Prop. 14.

07-01:12:25

Brown: Oh, with the farm work—well, that's why I tried to get Chávez to get off. It was not helpful. I don't know how much that did, but they did have the idea of these farm workers jumping over the fence into your back yard, and they were darker-looking people, so that scared people—kind of like an early Pete Wilson ad, and it was damn effective. And we know what happened in [Proposition] 187, and that was what more than a decade, a decade—or two decades later. So, and that was an effect of that, and Tunney got caught in it. And that's because Chávez wanted what Chávez wanted. That's not what Tunney needed, or what I needed—and they didn't need it anyway. So it was not helpful for him. It did not help him, but that's what he wanted, and so it was kind of hard to buck him.

07-01:13:17

Shafer: He—he went with you, I think, to the convention that year?

07-01:13:20

Brown: No, he was *there*. He went there. He seconded my nomination, so I thought that was pretty good.

07-01:13:28

Shafer: Do you remember how many delegates you had? I don't know if we have that written down here, let's see.

07-01:13:31

Brown: It's somewhere. Not that many. I mean you'd have to know how many delegates were there?

07-01:13:40

Shafer: I think—you needed 1,400 maybe, for the nomination?

07-01:13:42

Brown: Yeah, I think we only had 285, something like that.

07-01:13:46

Shafer: Yeah, did you feel when you went to convention that there was something you wanted to accomplish?

07-01:13:49

Brown: Well, how do you end it? It's hard to unwind those things. That's the problem. But no, we went to the convention, it wasn't—yeah, well, that's a good question. How to be relevant at the convention in which you have no chance. And you have to endorse Carter, so that was, you know, it's a—but they always have primary candidates. They usually pull together, so usually it works out. But it's hard to remember all that stuff, you know?

07-01:14:26

Shafer: Yeah.

07-01:14:27

Holmes: How did you feel?

07-01:14:27

Brown: I wasn't *in* the convention, because I just went that last time and announced the vote.

07-01:14:34

Holmes: How did you feel about having to, or choosing to endorse Carter?

07-01:14:39

Brown: Well, you know, I'm not going to endorse Ford, so that made sense. You know, you want to get back on the program. It was enough—that game was over. That horse had run. [laughing]

07-01:14:53

Shafer: Was there any interest in—on your part, or did anyone around you suggest that maybe you'd be a good VP?

07-01:15:00

Brown: No, I wasn't looking for VP under Carter.

07-01:15:05

Shafer: Because—?

07-01:15:05

Brown: Or anybody. Why? Well, it's kind of a derivative function. Governor is a good job, it's a big job—a lot of stuff going on, a lot of things. Vice president, what do you do? It's just completely different. We crafted, in just our energy and appliance standards, that was pretty—and our 55 percent solar tax credit—those *still* resonate.

07-01:15:35

Shafer: You can do more.

07-01:15:37

Brown: Cogeneration, you can—well, it was a sufficient province. That's all. I guess some people wanted to do that. But cabinet officials obviously is a funny business. You know, or even now when I see these people, they come out and—well, “what are you doing really?” Give talks or? The way I approach government, really getting in and working stuff out. You know, like some of these criminal justice reforms. You really think through a measure and get it in the legislature, and against the odds you get it passed. Where can you do that?

07-01:16:16

Shafer: Yeah, do you remember having any, you know, any thoughts about—I mean Reagan gave Ford a real run for his money. Did that—you know, inspire you?

07-01:16:26

Brown: Yeah, that did. Yeah, well of course—of course you always think that yeah, there's something that can be done later, sure.

07-01:16:31

Shafer: What do you mean, done later?

07-01:16:33

Brown: What do you mean later? Well, yeah. You know about the elections—they happen every four years, right? [laughter] So it's not like the end. It's just the end of chapter one. Then there's chapter two, so—

07-01:16:43

Meeker: How did you decide to build or maintain a relationship with Carter when he becomes president?

07-01:16:50

Brown: I went out and stayed in the Lincoln Bedroom. That was a good start. And we talked. But these guys have a hard time, I think. When you run against them, you exchange words, so that leaves a certain residue probably.

07-01:17:03

Meeker: Right, so in debates or on the campaign trail you're—

07-01:17:05

Brown: We didn't debate—I don't think we debated Carter.

07-01:17:07

Meeker: You didn't?

07-01:17:07

Shafer: No.

07-01:17:08

Meeker: No, okay. But on the campaign trail you're saying certain things about Carter's record to put yours in front. So what is that relationship like then, afterwards?

07-01:17:21

Brown: It's not a relationship, it's a competition.

07-01:17:23

Meeker: Okay. And did it remain a competition for the next four years?

07-01:17:26

Brown: Like a relationship sounds like, "let's have a relationship." That isn't the way it works.

07-01:17:32

Meeker: Or—or like colleagues or friends?

07-01:17:39

Brown: Well, California's way is a lot different. Even Obama, they've got people in Washington and New York, and they're all interacting there. We're five hours away here, so we're a little bit off to the side—and maybe I was off to the side because of the way I did things.

07-01:17:59

Shafer: Hmm. When you came—you wound down the presidential campaign, you come back to Sacramento. And Bill Lockyer is quoted in one of the clips saying, "The honeymoon is over for Brown and the Democrats." He criticized you for your unorthodox style of governing, said it was hard to get things done, felt you were lecturing sometimes too much.

07-01:18:23

Brown: Yeah. Well, hard to get things done is *true*. Because if I want to do something—if I wanted *not* to get what they wanted to get done, then it was harder for them to get it done. So that was a perfect description of the problem—from his point of view. But they got done whatever they got done. They're totally in charge of their house. They do things. The governor doesn't have—I mean on the gas tax bill, and cap and trade, we had a lot to do with it.



But for most of these bills, they're doing what they want to do. And that was certainly true when I was governor the first time.

So there was nothing that didn't—and when they say that, that's a meme—not a meme, that's just a way of talking. If you want to get in the news, you can't criticize the local city council. You criticize the governor, because you've got to attack up. You can't attack down. Because of running, that opens up that avenue, that makes it plausible, and people will write about it. And people will do it because—I don't know why they do that. Lockyer or—because they have their own, their own needs, their own relationships. They have a whole world that I know more about now than I knew then. Lockyer is from Hayward, and there's a whole group of people in Oakland and Berkeley, and that whole world, and Lockyer was part of that. But they have [Nicholas C.] Petris, these different people. So he might have had something he wanted. I can't tell you what it was, but nothing strikes me.

Because they can talk to—Gray Davis was there. What do you need that you're not getting? Nobody ever says, “Well, we need the governor to help us with this vote.” Or maybe the parks—are we saying the parks didn't open up in time, or the income tax reforms didn't go out? Or what are you talking about? It's part of the drama, where the legislature—I get attacked. So they did that—look at Gray Davis. Didn't they attack him? And of course they grumble, the Republicans grumbled about Arnold. That's part of what the legislature does. They're trying to strive for recognition, but I don't want to recount the legislative game.

But there it was. But there was always a little tension, because they're running. They've got to raise their money—they raise their money from people who want things. And they try to keep it a little bit unclear, because you've got to keep it unclear, otherwise, if you do something for money, you're already committing a crime. So it's all kind of obfuscation, to some degree. And my effort to say let's make this clear: where's the money coming from? When's it coming in? Let's keep a current record—that crowded their style. It crowds *any* style.

That is the American way of politicking in a mass market. If you have 10 million voters, you can't shake their hand—not even close. You've got to send a message. So if you're in the legislature, you've got to send mail. It's *all* mail—and a few other little things. And statewide, it's all television. Now it's more social media. But that all costs money—and how do you get the money? It's far more than you—how do you get it? You get it from raising it from people who are interested. So they kept it, so we didn't quite know what that was all about. We didn't make a big deal out of it.

Then with Watergate, and then during secretary of state I made—because I noticed, because it was the secretary of state's job to follow all these things, and they're all vague. So why have it? And we had a purity of election law.

When you have the purity of election law—things were a lot different in the 1880s, I presume—but it's still the same game. Government allocates the goods, and so who gets what when? And there's a lot of competition for that. Lowering taxes, funding schools, are broad things. But then you have more narrow things: how many racing dates for Los Alamitos—or whatever the hell the case may be. So that means people are lobbying you.

So I guess that's all by way of saying there was nothing that running for president made difficult. But I think it gave a chance for them to express irritation, and they didn't need to avoid that. And maybe they felt when you say that, then you had to pay a little more attention to them. It's a way of getting attention, and so if they have a bill, you've got to be a little nicer to them, because you don't want them to be more mad at you. So I can't tell you why he does all that.

Lockyer, in later years, was pretty friendly with me. But all these older guys were, like Nick Petris—a lot of them didn't like, a lot of it—it came on the money thing. They had programs; they wanted that money. And I was concerned that we're going to create a deficit, and I did want to avoid that. That was the clash. And as long as you keep spending—but you can't keep spending. This is the problem.

And Arnold found that—both Davis and Arnold were at the top of their game—and crash. Okay? So we're at the top now. In fact, this is an economy that never, never goes south. But it always has; it always will. So, it's very hard to manage. You have all this money, and the whole thing of politics is showing *need*. So there's all these needs. Well, and then you have all this money, and you're not going to take care of the needs? [laughing] It doesn't even feel right, unless you're a conservative Republican. So that's why to hold it off is difficult.

07-01:24:31

Shafer:

People want to spend it.

07-01:24:33

Brown:

They want to—yeah, but they don't want to spend the money, they want to do *good*. They want the classroom to be better, they want the mental hospitals—well, now we shut them all down. But yeah, they've always got an idea. And there are ideas, but they're virtually *unlimited*. You can almost reinvent the whole landscape of California, but of course you can't, because you have a limited amount of money.

And the trouble with a limited amount of money—it's not fixed. [tapping on table] It's changing all the time. It's either going up, or it's going down. And the fact that it went up, doesn't mean it's not going to go down. And the fact that it goes down, doesn't mean it will go up again. So here you are trying to save money, and then all of a sudden the money goes *up*! Or here the money

goes up, and then—it's very hard to manage, because it's a zigzag, and people are very present-focused on their needs, and the whole system runs on manifesting your needs. You get up here and say, "Look. Look at what I need." [claps hands] And so that, and there *are* real needs. And what is a real need to you, is not a real need to the other guy. I mean California, there's a lot of money, and there's a lot of lobbying, and there's a lot of knowledge. So it's a heavy—it's intense. I think other states must be simpler.

07-01:26:02

Shafer: Yeah, a lot smaller.

07-01:26:03

Brown: Or maybe I think they are, but maybe they—what do I know?

07-01:26:05

Shafer: All right. We're going to leave it there for today, I think.

07-01:26:07

Brown: Yeah. Okay, good. All right.

Interview 8: May 7, 2019 [in the morning]

08-00:00:01

Meeker: This is Martin Meeker interviewing Governor Jerry Brown, with my colleagues Todd Holmes from UC Berkeley, and Scott Shafer from KQED. This is interview session number eight, I believe, and we are here again at the Mountain House III, and today is the seventh of May 2019.

08-00:00:32

Meeker: I've got a big topic here, and it's something that's already come up many, many times. It's something that comes up constantly in the course of our conversations, and that's the world of ideas. You've not only engaged with ideas from thinkers all across the spectrum over the course of your life, but you've met a number of these individuals and employed even more than a few of them, particularly in your first two terms as governor. When you look back on your education, your engagement with ideas, do you see this as a continuity, as something that evolves over time? Or are there moments of epiphany, when you encounter an idea or a person that awakens something new in you?

08-00:01:41

Brown: Well, first of all, I don't think that question is entirely clear. It's an either/or—and are you saying was there a moment in time when all of a sudden I started getting interested in ideas, but there was a previous period when I wasn't interested in ideas? That's the way I heard the question. So I wasn't sure what you were trying to get at—or like do you want to say what was my first inspiration? Or what—you're not clear in what you're wanting to say.

08-00:02:13

Meeker: Okay, let's start over. I know that seminary must have been seminal, if you will, in your life of ideas.

08-00:02:23

Brown: Yeah, it was—well, it's always—so was high school.

08-00:02:26

Meeker: Okay. Well, I guess can you look back, and can you see a moment where you engaged with an idea or a thinker that was awakening to you, in some way, that said huh, this is fascinating.

08-00:02:38

Brown: Awakening. Well, I don't know about awakening. I think awakening is quite a bold claim. I think we're asleep most of the time, but—you see, you can't even formulate that question in a way that I can make use of it, but I get the idea. You might say—what were the stirrings of my intellectual curiosity? That's the way I would frame it.

08-00:03:01

Meeker: Exactly. Okay. Thank you for helping me out.

08-00:03:09

Brown:

I can remember being in eighth grade at St. Brendan's, and we were talking about venial and mortal sin. And I asked Sr. Alice Joseph, I said, "Well, if you steal pennies, at what point does that become a mortal sin?" [laughter in background] And she said, "Do you stay up nights thinking of these things?" So obviously, I was already, at that point, asking a lot of questions. I don't know, I've always been—well, in high school we had interesting teachers. I think religion was a more interesting topic, because there was a lot of history there—history of the church, history of Europe in one form or another.

And then Santa Clara—Santa Clara was interesting to me. Not only is it so interesting that my English textbook, from my first English course—I still have. It's sitting over there on my bookshelf—*Reading for Understanding*, by Fr. Maurice McNamee. And I just had occasion to be looking through it this week. And, no, I didn't always have that book. I got it off of Amazon. But a couple of my friends from Santa Clara—this would be the class of '59—also got that, and we talk about it, *Reading for Understanding*, which is opposed to reading for information. So that was itself very interesting. And Fr. Perkins, who was my teacher there—there was a series of essays, and I remember that. One of them was by John Cardinal Newman, and the question was: what is the idea of a university? What is the idea of a university. So he has his thoughts on it, but that was interesting. And right at that moment in school, whatever the courses I'm taking—they're pretty interesting. Now, I was not a great scholar. I wasn't doing lots of homework. I was doing what a lot of kids do in school—enjoying themselves.

But then in the seminary, of course, where you don't have as many outlets, so that's an occasion for more reading, but very narrow reading, because you're highly limited in the novitiate. And then after that, of course, we were able, after two years, to read a wider variety of books. And when I went from the novitiate to the juniorate, I went to the library, started looking at these books. And the first book I grabbed was a book by S.I. Hayakawa on semantics, called *Language in Thought and Action*. But it might be a little different than that, but that's the general title. And it was a study about words, and it talked about the abstraction ladder. And the abstraction ladder was, you know, if you talk about—you're talking about Colusa, that dog, and then the next level up is *dog*, and the next level up is *mammal*, and the next level up is *creature*, and then next level up is *thing*. So I thought that was very illuminating. And then that influenced how I was thinking about religion and church and faith—and all that. But this is how my mind works, but I connect it back to things.

So, my father talked about this man Hayakawa, who talked about something called semantics. And this would have been when he was attorney general, so I was probably in high school. And at San Quentin they were going to do classes in semantics, which I think was an early forerunner of what they now emphasize in prisons, called cognitive therapy, where they get people to think more clearly about themselves and about the issues that they have. Well, in semantics, you *are*

trying to think about things. And he talked, Hayakawa, about prejudice, and how prejudice was an overgeneralization. So if you want to talk about a Jewish person, well, you have Jew 1, but then there's Jew 2—there's cat A and maybe there's cat B—I can't remember how he put it. But you generalize, so you say, "All cats are such and such." And in this course on semantics, he taught no—concrete. And I had a priest that emphasized the concrete, I think. And then talking with [Gregory] Bateson, and Bateson talked about "kill the nouns." I'm reviewing a book on meritocracy, and meritocracy—it does all this stuff. But we know meritocracy is just a reification—it's an abstraction. It doesn't do anything; *people* do things.

I'm just going a long way around to explaining—this, well this is interesting. You have—what's a university? What's a mortal sin? What are levels of abstraction? What can we see? What can we feel? So it's this sort of a, kind of an introductory empiricism, to try to see how the world is working. That's why when you said about *skeptical*—well, it isn't exactly skeptical, when you notice that one dog is not another dog, or one person has certain attributes, but is not the same as another person that has *some* of those attributes, but not *all* of those attributes. So this gets to the idea of discernment and clarity. And so I find that interesting in itself, whether it might be a question, which I might say well, that really isn't—can we clarify that?

So I've been doing that a long time, and I've met people who are very smart, whether it's Bateson or Ivan Illich, or other people that I've talked to—or even just my teachers. I've found them very illuminating, and it didn't stop. So a lot of people, I guess when they finish a class, it's over. But for me, it's never—never over. This book, I looked at it and I didn't like it when I first encountered it, but I'm still coming back to it. There may be something there. [rapping on table] And I ask people—you're the first person I've met, since I met Richard Walker for breakfast in Oakland, that has ever *heard* of Richard Walker! So then I found that exciting, that the conversation or the inquiry could be extended and shared with other people. So that's what I find interesting. So that's the life of ideas.

08-00:10:43

Shafer:

And how did you incorporate that into your time as governor the first time?

08-00:10:47

Brown:

Well, that's why I had Stewart Brand come, and his job was just to bring people over to speak at the governor's office. I didn't do that the last time—so that was interesting.

08-00:10:57

Shafer:

What kind of ideas?

08-00:10:58

Brown:

All kinds—from Ken Kesey to Arthur Burns. I don't know if you remember Arthur Burns. He was the very distinguished Federal Reserve man, I guess under Nixon. So all these things are pretty interesting, you know—like education. What

are we talking about here? What can we expect? And so most of what people are talking about is regurgitating something they heard. But I like to examine—well, I heard it, but what's the claim? What proposition is contained here? Then I like to look at what it *is*.

08-00:11:41

Meeker: These are big questions that you're bringing up.

08-00:11:43

Brown: You know what I'm finding now, in education, they say, "Well, kids, by the time they get to kindergarten, it's too late if they come from low-income families—so better start at [age] four." But the brain science maybe says you've got to start at one—well, if you've got to start at one, you've got to get the whole state to take over. Right after you're out of the womb, you'd better get your institutionalization of the rest of your existence, which I think is really what's behind it. Because there's a pressure for a conformity, for institutionalization, and I think people think they're doing good, but they're also creating, perhaps, a monster without even realizing it. So I think of those ideas. It may look good on one side, but you turn it over, it looks a little differently. So my mind is always looking at that, no matter what anybody tells me, I would say okay, let's turn it over a bit, and maybe there's another side to it. So that's just the way I functioned before. I've been doing that, I guess, most of my life.

08-00:12:44

Meeker: These are big questions that you're wrestling with. For example, the question of what is a university? What should a university be? And over time, the thinkers that have helped you find an answer to those questions, or move in the direction of finding an answer, are thinkers that many would consider iconoclastic—

08-00:13:03

Brown: Right.

08-00:13:03

Meeker: Or outside the mainstream. And you mentioned Ivan Illich, Bateson—both of those individuals were never closely associated with a university, but had a lot to say about what a university should be.

08-00:13:19

Brown: And they taught at universities, or they were guest lecturers at universities.

08-00:13:22

Meeker: Yeah, yeah. So is that characterization of people like that, as iconoclastic, a characterization that you would agree with?

08-00:13:34

Brown: Yeah, I mean iconoclasm is a whole other story. So I don't want to get into that, because I don't know that much about it. I'm talking about the whole war over icons, which is where that term came from. But I'm interested in building structures too, and creating institutions and making them work. But I have a certain—yeah, I do have a theory. There is a tendency, and you'd have to say that

about—say iconoclastic, but not taking things at first, at surface value, wanting to take things apart, break them down, see what they look like. And certainly, I took naturally to the debates about the university. Clark Kerr wrote a book called *The Megaversity*—the multi-universe—*The Multiversity*, [Ed. note: for the concept of the “multiversity” see *The Uses of the University*, 1963] and he talked about how a university is a bunch of departments connected by parking lots, or parking privileges, or something. From the time that Newman wrote *The Idea of a University*. That was the question—what *is* a university? What are we supposed to be doing here? So those were the questions that I got at Santa Clara my first year—right after high school.

08-00:15:12

Shafer:

Now, how did you incorporate that into governing? Because some people can hear this and think, well, that’s all very interesting, but it has nothing to do with governing.

08-00:15:20

Brown:

Well, governing, you’re constantly operating on assumptions. [John Maynard] Keynes said that we’re always carrying out the thoughts of some dead economist without even knowing about it. Well, action is following from thoughts and ideas. And so I like to know well, what are we trying to do? What’s the assumption here, right? So if you say you have to have early education, is that because the parents need to work, and we need to do something with the kids? Or is that because the kids actually need an organized setting, and is that good or is that restrictive? So today, there is a tendency to want everything very organized—don’t give anybody too much free time. It’s one thing after another. Well, I was brought up in a freer environment where we didn’t have that. So obviously, I raise the question: what is this all about? Where institutional frameworks occupy the time of children from their very earliest years—and maybe continuously.

So yeah, that’s governing too, because we’re doing things, whether it’s in healthcare or education or—let’s take something more fundamental, or not more fundamental, but easier to understand—let’s say punishment. We have a system of criminal laws. By some measure, we have over five thousand separate criminal statutes, and we’ve been increasing the time to be locked up, over the decades, so that if you commit a murder you’d probably—on average—eleven years, absent other kinds of circumstances. So now, it’s more like fifty years—until recently. I say, what is the right—how much pain to inflict? How much punishment? The idea of pain is by a guy named Nils Christie, who wrote a book on gulags, western style [*Crime Control as Industry: Towards Gulags, Western Style*] and it was a critique of the whole punishment business.

But that’s very practical, where you had a prison system that had twelve prisons when I was governor, and by the time I came back, we had thirty-four prisons. We went from 25,000 people in prison, to 173,000 under Schwarzenegger. That happened around the country. So these are ideas. They said well, there’s only a few juvenile predators, and if we can lock up those juvenile predators for a very



long time, then that will solve that problem. And the same thing with adults. We have three strikes; we can get them locked up. And if we can have enhancements—and so, but then your question—is that fair? Is that accurate? Does that really protect public safety? So that’s very practical.

So I did challenge that idea, and we passed a number of laws, even to the point of passing an initiative, Proposition 57 [2016], to get the earlier parole for a number of inmates. And other people said, “No, that’s not right,” particularly people in law enforcement. And many people said we need *more* time in prison, we need *more* punishment, and punishment is best exacted by time in a cell. Okay, now that is the predominant thought, and it captured Deukmejian, Wilson, Davis—and the whole country, as a matter of fact—Bill Clinton, the entire world adopted this idea!

Well, I have different points of view, and I’m acting on those points of view, and it’s extremely practical. The mandatory gun enhancement. I passed a bill—very hard to get it through, to say the judge should have discretion to oppose that extra twenty-five years for use of a gun—or not, and many other bills that provide for earlier parole. So that came through ideas, and, well, knowing about Nils Christie. I met him through Ivan Illich, he came to my building at the We The People organization in Oakland. So—*ideas lead to action*.

Same thing with the environment. I’ve read about certain things. In fact, I read an article—I’ve been trying to find it, because it was the first article—I really became acquainted with the environment as an issue, and it was sometime when I was secretary of state. I believe it was when I was secretary of state, and it was an article—I thought in *Foreign Affairs*, but I can’t find it. And it talked about different views between humanism and realism—but it was about the environment. And I remember it saying that we live on a very thin soil below and a very thin atmosphere above. I’d never thought of that before. That’s pretty interesting, so that’s where I started. I can’t remember, but they had two different things. One was about humanism and one was about pragmatism, but I combined them and made it *planetary realism*, and I coined that phrase out of this article. And that framed up, for me anyway, or highlighted, the environment as a very important idea. So that came as an idea more than my experience of the physical world, so I went from idea to physical reality.

08-00:21:35

Meeker: It seems like a fair number of these thinkers you crossed paths with at the San Francisco Zen Center?

08-00:21:43

Brown: Yes.

08-00:21:44

Meeker: Tell me about that place, and why was it such a locus of new thinking?

08-00:21:53

Brown:

Well, first of all, when I was—in 1974, in June, when I won the primary, right after I won it I went to Vina [The Abbey of New Clairvaux], a Trappist monastery, for a couple of days with two people. In fact, two people I knew, they were Jerry Hallisey and Jacques Barzagli. We went there for a couple days. I've gone back there many times since then. Anyway, after the November primary—in the November election I won, I decided I wanted to go to a Zen monastery. And I don't know where I heard about—I saw a movie about different religious groups, Sufis and Buddhists, and different things. And so somewhere I heard about Tassajara. I think I've talked to you before about hearing Aldous Huxley. Did I ever talk to you about that?

08-00:22:45

Shafer:

I don't think so.

08-00:22:46

Brown:

Well, I went to a symposium on the mind, when my father was governor, at UCSF. It was about the mind, and different people talking about it. The brain, science, somebody in philosophy. Anyway, the luncheon speaker was Aldous Huxley. He was a very tall guy. And he said there's something—and this goes back to education, that education is—I don't remember his exact words, but there was something profoundly wrong with education. And we're not educating the whole person, and there's another aspect to the human being that needs—whether it was training or nurturing or attending to—whatever the words were, he was saying that our education is all wrong. I don't know if he said *all* wrong, but there's some other aspect to human beings that is profoundly important, and that's what education should be dealing with. So after he gave the talk, I went up to him, and I said, “Mr. Huxley, what could—how can I find out more about this?” And he said, “Well, read,” I think it's “*Zen Bones and Flesh*.” [*Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*] Well, okay, so that's when I got *Zen Bones and Flesh*, and I got ahold of that book, and I think I was interested in Zen before that, but at least that gave me a more immediate access to this. So that was 1961 probably.

So now, in 1974, I wanted to spend a couple of days in a Zen monastery, so that was Tassajara. I just started driving there, and it was closed for the winter season. But when I got there, they called up to the roshi, who was Richard Baker, and he got in his car from San Francisco and came down to meet me, and we spent a couple of days there. And then I got to know him, and they had a meeting at the Zen Center a few months later. I can't remember when, maybe before I was inaugurated or not. Anyway, at this meeting he had some people talking about energetics, following in the philosophy of Howard [T.] Odum, which you may or may not know about, but you can look it up in Google. They were there, but also Gary Snyder was there, and Stewart Brand was there. And so there was a whole gathering—it was not a religious meeting, it was really an intellectual meeting. So from that, I got to know Gary Snyder, who I later appointed to the California Arts Council, and I got to know Stewart Brand, who I had as my paid consultant on thinkers, and so he brought in people to the office, and we'd have gatherings.

And one of those gatherings, for example, Herman Kahn, who would be generally viewed as a conservative, talked about thermonuclear war in a way that was quite disturbing to people. So we brought him up, because Steward Brand is a rather provocative character. And so we had—I don't know if it was a debate, but it was a discussion with Amory [B.] Lovins and Herman Kahn. And Amory Lovins is this little guy with a slide rule on his belt, and Herman Kahn is this big heavy guy—he had to wear sneakers because he was so heavy, I guess. We adjourned to the back office, which is the governor's back office—where [Gavin] Newsom handles most of his business now, and we went on till probably one thirty [in the morning]. Herman Kahn, I found very fascinating. So that's kind of my idea of what a university is, but that isn't what—

08-00:26:38

Shafer:

Who else was there?

08-00:26:39

Brown:

Well, Gray Davis, it was the whole governor's office was there. But then we only had a few people that were in the room. Fred Branfman was there. But not everybody was interested in these ideas. But I found Amory Lovins and Herman Kahn talking—that's pretty interesting. I bet you would be very interested in hearing his, Kahn, I remember him waving his hands, "If we want to, we could run the Mississippi backwards." You know, you know—we can solve this problem. Give it a decade, or give us a decade, one more decade here or decade there. He was a big thinker. In many ways he was correct. There is a tremendous potentiality in human thinking or in human capacity. And Amory was much more of a little slide-rule guy—and he's still going, and he's still providing very interesting, important ideas. So yes, there's a kind of—just intellectual, you could call it a curiosity dimension.

But there's also a practical application, and that goes back to the idea—what can I do as governor that wouldn't be done, but for me being here? But for me to do it, I don't have all the ideas in *my* head. I've got to go find them. Where do I go find them? Well, I find them from people who apparently have ideas, and who are doing things. So that was the basis of all these different—that's why I felt the need to bring in ideas, bring in new people, because everything in Sacramento—and Washington—they're all organized. The oil companies, the Sierra Club, the teachers, the psychiatrists, the university—everybody. They've all organized, and they're ready to pounce on government, to get either money or regulation, one way or the other. So that is what *is*.

But if you want somebody that *isn't*, then you have to go somewhere else and have to look. And, by the way, Gregory Bateson explained this, and he inscribed his book *Mind and Nature: [A Necessary Unity]* to me, and he said, "The new only comes out of the random." And I thought what does that mean, the new only come out of the random? But I've been thinking about that, because he probably inscribed that in 1979. So if everything is orderly, if all the pieces are here, then nothing really very new comes out of that. So it's really more spontaneous. I

guess that's what evolution is. It's something mutates, something occurs that wasn't predictable. So one has to, if you want something new, you have to have a certain amount of randomness.

But randomness goes against the order which people are *expecting*, so that's why people of what I would call more predictable—more, I'd call them smaller minds. “Well, wait a minute Brown. What are you doing over here? Don't you know that your job is to just wave and let all the forces play out, and then you sign whatever those forces are, and you push them a little here, a little there?” But if you really think change is important, then you have to have other sources for your thinking or for your initiatives, and that's what I was trying to do, and I still try to do that.

08-00:30:12

Meeker:

So this meeting at the Zen Center is particularly interesting to me, because you have Stewart Brand, and you have Gary Snyder. And the historian in me looks at those two individuals and sees yes, they can meet in the Zen Center, and that might be a reasonable meeting ground. But they're very different—like I see Gary Snyder more in the Schumacher/Wendell Berry kind of thing.

08-00:30:37

Brown:

Right, yes.

08-00:30:38

Meeker:

Where let's be very skeptical about technology. We have to—

08-00:30:41

Brown:

Very local. Get them to take care of your land.

08-00:30:44

Meeker:

And then you have Stewart Brand, who—I would also put Sim Van der Ryn and other people in that camp, that is more willing to explore how technology—

08-00:31:00

Brown:

More technology oriented, definitely. That's why Stewart had an article in the *CoEvolution Quarterly* on space colonies.

08-00:31:06

Meeker:

Right.

08-00:31:07

Brown:

Which I found interesting. And he's very strongly supportive of nuclear power, and that's very important. So those are different—

08-00:31:17

Meeker:

How did you, as a thinker, contend with those ideas that—

08-00:31:21

Brown:

Well, that's what happens. It's what was, in an earlier philosophy, called the coincidence of opposites. That was a term in medieval philosophy. So we have different people. We had Huey [D.] Johnson in the environment, and then we had

Richard Rominger in agriculture, or we'd have [Russell L.] "Rusty" Schweickart, who I also met through the Zen Center, was pushing technology, whereas Huey Johnson was more to stop technology or slow it down. So it's embodied in my philosophy: Protect the earth, but explore the universe. So these were in a different—they're *both* important.

08-00:32:13

Shafer:

Can you think of a major policy initiative or law that came out of this process?

08-00:32:20

Brown:

Well, the Arts Council. Gary Snyder and Peter Coyote, and a number of other artists. That's the only time, before or since, that we had an Arts Council only of artists. That's what it was. We had the Office of Appropriate Technology—that's Sim Van der Ryn. That was abolished by Deukmejian, but it lasted for eight years, and a lot of ideas came out of that.

08-00:32:47

Meeker:

Can you define what that was, and what the Office of Appropriate Technology was charged with doing?

08-00:32:55

Brown:

Well, it had some of the flavor of Schumacher—smaller scale, more appropriate technologies that people could use, as opposed to always wanting the large technology. I know Sim Van der Ryn was always talking about the sewers—I don't know if they're sewers, but piping. And we had a billion dollar clean water grant in California, for San Francisco, and they're spending a billion dollars to move water around, waste—and he was saying we could localize the collection of waste.

Well, that wasn't that practical then, but today we are talking about microgrids for electricity. And now with the fires and all these wires, there's going to be more interest in generating electricity locally, and there may be a way that we could localize a lot of things. For example, we collect water on the roof, which is not a new idea. They do that in many parts of the world, and my great-grandfather collected water—that's where I got the idea, because he collected water from the roof, and I think they used it for drinking. So that's a localized idea. Now, the battery is becoming cheaper, so we're able to use that.

Well, so the appropriate technology—earlier, the bicycle was an appropriate technology. When I was governor the first time, I was surprised to learn that there was a concept called a non-motorized unit. And a non-motorized unit was a person walking or riding a bicycle, as opposed to a car or a truck. But the very flavor of that gave the power of the impersonal, bureaucratic juggernaut, called the Transportation Department. I knew at the time, talking about bicycles would be laughable and embarrassing and shocking. Well, today now, it's being taken seriously. And in certain parts of the world—you go to Holland, you see a lot of bicycles around. I've seen them in Bremen, Germany, and other places in the world. So it's coming. It's good from an energy point of view, it's good from a

congestion point of view, it's good from a health point of view. But at the time, the car was much more in the ascendency.

So those were ideas that came out of the Office of Appropriate Technology—or at least the people associated with that. And they put out a thing on trees—OAT as we called it, Office of Appropriate Technology, and then we came up with the idea of urban forestry, planting trees. We gave grants to different cities to plant trees. Well now we're talking about sequestration and capturing carbon, but those were ideas that we implemented. So yes, there were ideas that were more general and were not applicable, or not—you can't put them into practice that fast, and so there was a time lag. Many of the things in 1975 become more plausible and credible thirty years later. But that's part of my impatience too, that you have an idea, and people would come and talk, but you couldn't apply it.

08-00:36:44

Meeker: You have a Bateson office building as well.

08-00:36:45

Brown: Yes.

08-00:36:46

Meeker: It was one of the things that came from it.

08-00:36:48

Brown: Yes. The Bateson [Building], it was called. I named it—it was my idea to name it after Bateson. But that was an idea to put rocks in the basement, and the evenings are cool—even around here. It can be ninety degrees during the day, it will be in the fifties in the evening, so you can take that cold air and you can blow it through, and then instead of mechanical air-conditioning—well, it didn't quite work. I think they got fungus, and whatever, so there were things that didn't quite work. And Sim had ideas, but they couldn't always be operationalized. But nevertheless, it's a good idea. And we have a whole-house fan here. If you look up there, in the evening, when the temperature will drop from maybe a hundred to seventy, we can open the windows, and this fan can blow the cold air throughout the whole house, instead of an air-conditioner. Now, we can do an air-conditioner too, because we have plenty of batteries, and we have all this sun, so we have the mechanical too.

But those were ideas, and we need *more* of those things. But government is not in the business of ideas or innovation. Government is in the business of doing what the majority is ready to approve, so it has to be pretty obvious. And you're dealing with the dominant structures of power are what they would call, in today's lingo, the hegemony of the obvious and those in power. And now, today, of course, everybody's trying to disrupt the hierarchies and the hegemonies, and bring in new forces, new sensibilities, new ways of being. Well, in one sense, I was trying to do that on a broader scale.

08-00:38:36

Shafer: There were a lot of people, as you know, who got frustrated with that.

08-00:38:40

Brown: I don't know—were there a lot of people who got frustrated? I thought most of the people who worked for me were pretty excited.

08-00:38:44

Shafer: But—say the legislature, and others, who maybe were more—

08-00:38:48

Brown: Well, if you have a lobbyist who says, “We want this bill, and we want it now.” And then Brown is talking about something else, then yeah, it's frustrating. I mean this is raw power here. People are paying their money, and they're making donations, and they're getting active—they want action! So if all of a sudden you say no, well that doesn't—people don't like that.

08-00:39:08

Meeker: So, for instance, the stopping of freeway construction might have been an area in which people were frustrated?

08-00:39:14

Brown: Right. Or they wanted more freeway—and there was no other alternative. But of course as soon as you build a freeway, it's going to get totally crowded, but you don't have an alternative. We didn't have trains—I did propose trains during my campaign in 1974, in LA, a whole series of local trains that are now existing. They're going from Pasadena to LA, from the Valley, from Long Beach. So that's happening. But how do you go from an idea to a reality? And—that's much harder. So we went from the red line in LA, whatever it was called, I think they said GM did something to buy up—or the tire company, somebody, there's some dark view of how that all happened. But then we went to freeways and cars, and now we're trying to unwind from that. And as a matter of fact, we will have to reduce, certainly fossil-fuel dependency, to zero, and that's going to mean a lot of big changes. And such an idea, although it wasn't quite—it wasn't as precise as that, was behind the idea of a different way of doing things.

Now, for a governor, you can only do that within limits, because they want the governor to preside—well, it's not clear what the people want the governor to—because different people want different things. And so there's no *one* way to do this. But I tried to introduce—I liked whatever you call it, new things—I wanted something fresh and that was the idea of a new spirit. I want something—let's see what better way is there to do this? That was the thought. And so there's still a lot of desire for change. In fact, people kind of want a shiny new object. That's what they keep saying, they want something new. Well, that has a bad—that novelty, it means you never can stick with anything. But on the other hand, if you have *no* innovation, then it's pretty—it's dead.

So maybe I was pushing, but I didn't have the institutional capacity to do all the things that all these thinkers were suggesting, but I found these thinkers more interesting than just the bureaucratic operation of everyday activity in government. But, of course, I recognize that there has to be an institutional inertia

by which things hang together. But if all there is is institutional inertia, then you have death. So I was trying to find a way to inject a vitality and imagination and change into a system that seemed rather moribund, whether it be the state, the university, the way of moving around—or anything else. So we were looking for alternatives, and people all say they want change. But in reality, people are looking for the obvious—the obvious being give people more money. They want more and I can understand that. We do want more, but then maybe we want better, or we want a different qualitative outcome—as opposed to just more of the same.

08-00:42:50

Shafer:

Looking—looking back on it, do you feel like you struck the right balance between injecting and dissecting all the new ideas and the practicalities of governing?

08-00:43:00

Brown:

Well, but what are the practicalities? The government just *runs*. There's no—it just *is*. You know, if you add up the state system, the state educational systems, the universities—California has 350,000 employees. And the governor is not *running* the 350,000 employees.

This is all going—and so there's things to be done. You know, for example, if you want the Department of Motor Vehicles to register everybody automatically [to vote], that's an idea. There's an idea called motor voter that was going on *years* ago—I think the first time I was governor, if I'm not mistaken. But then to actually implement it, so that everybody who gets a driver's license, automatically registered—*very* complicated. But we do, we tried—so that's something new.

Now, that was an idea that had a lot of people pushing it. You know, the Democrats wanted more people enrolled, and the Department of Motor Vehicles said, “Oh, we can't do that.” Well, we pushed ahead. So was that too fast? Well, we had some problems, but the Democrats won seven seats in California. [laughing] So maybe whatever the problems were, we got more people voting. Was that the only reason? I'd say the motor voter probably did more for electing—well, I don't want to say it was a partisan idea, because it just got people voting. But then that's an example, and now we're fixing it. In fact, that woman that Newsom has working on it, worked for me. She's there right now, trying to pull it all together. They've got old, lumbering computers. You really can't snap your fingers. Well, that's a very mechanical example of an idea, but the mechanical inertia—you can't get it quite that easily, and this computer is a problem.

Or if you're talking about in the prisons, we created something called a rehabilitation credit, that you could get, and I said, “Well, why can't we make it retroactive, if people did things that we could now call rehabilitation credit, why couldn't we apply it retroactively?” They said the computers can't do that, and without computers, we can't apply good credits, because there's 127,000 people



in prison. So until we get a new computer, we're going to have to not do that. So that's a very graphic example of how the system—there is inertia.

Now, if you want to take, like schools, which I've seen now, because I've been around since even before [Maxwell L.] "Max" Rafferty. I remember when the superintendent was called [Roy E.] Simpson, and then he was called Rafferty, and then he was called [Wilson] Riles, then he was called [Bill] Honig. So I've seen it all come in waves, and then people get ideas. But you know, the kids and the teacher—you know, that is not so amenable. That's why I've gotten into arguments and had differences with the Obama Administration, because they wanted to micromanage, I thought. And they wanted to set rules and all sorts of accountability, and I don't think you can do that.

So that's an example of yes, we want change—but how are you going to execute change? And I think that's a good example. You have 7 million kids in California, 7 million, K-12. You have 330,000 teachers, I think. And now you're going to put some things in writing? And how are you going to get that out to those 330,000 teachers? And even if they got the email, or they get the copy of the regulation, how do you know they're going to follow it? And then if they don't, how are you going to find it out? Are you going to get 330,000 auditors to go check the 330,000 teachers? I mean, the truth is the teacher, and the kids, and the parents, and the peers—that's where the schooling is going. And you can nudge it, maybe a little bit, or not.

And so I think, in general, there's a lot of grandiose thoughts about how the government can socially engineer kids. In fact, that's the premise of a lot of stuff. I'm dubious of that, but I do think there's a lot to be done. But what can be done, and what can't be done? And what consequences *are* there if the problem—how can you manage 6 million people? Well, the way you do it is you get measures, and we're going to measure—maybe we measure, well, we'll give you these tests, standardized tests. We measure—did you come to school on time? Did you get in trouble? Do you sit up straight? Whatever—how did you do in spelling? How did you do in arithmetic?

So you get all this data, and you feed it into a computer, and then you develop certain algorithms, and then you measure. Okay, these people deviate from the norm we've set. But if you think about what that engineering means, it means you're reducing the human being to an artifact of this gigantic computerized state intervention, which they're, "We have to do it, because these kids are falling behind, and if we just do it in the right way, they won't fall behind, and we'll have an equal, wonderful society." So that *is* the current premise. And I'd say, "Well, you've got some thoughts here, but I would be very cautious and careful in implementing such *massive* control here.

I mean we know that we can do it with eye recognition—in fact, I was in an airport and they said, "Well, go down this line." I went down the line, and they said, "Put your chin in—we want to see your biometrics." I said, wait a minute, I

don't think this has been done by me before, and I don't like this. It reminded me of the *Minority Report*. [laughing] Then they said, "Oh, you haven't done this before?" "No." So I hadn't gotten—this is called CLEAR, and I hadn't done CLEAR yet. I'd done the other one, where you get your ID, or whatever the hell it is, but they wanted fingerprint and the eye—the iris. And it made me think about that. But that's basically where we're going. We'll get everybody's biometrics. We get everybody reduced to a profile, and then when the profile is captured in various data profiles, then the algorithms will work it. And then we'll get some artificial intelligence, and we just press the damn button, and everything will work. That's kind of the nightmare of what the progressive imagination has now degenerated itself to, in my opinion.

08-00:50:09

Shafer:

And you saw your role as pushing back against some of those assumptions by putting people in agencies and places?

08-00:50:17

Brown:

No, to reduce categorical programs, create the local-control formula, in which we allocate money based on evident need, like low income, speaking a language other than English, or number of foster-care kids, and we give you more resources. And then we set up a process by which you develop a local plan—and you work it out. But people get furious at that! But wait a minute, we have to have control, and it has to be reporting *in*. You have to report in to headquarters—headquarters being Sacramento. And then we need these rules. And oh, you gave me that money, but how do they spend—where did each dollar go? Let's trace the dollars. And so when you start tracing the dollars, you have a very big control system. Most people don't think of it that way. They think of it as being responsible and accountable, and making sure you get what the dollars are supposed to get. So those are, I don't want to get into the idea of accountability, and its excesses and the consequences—the untoward, the unexpected consequences that it has. But those are ideas—and I'm trying to match for you *idea* with actual *action*. So it's not just ideas.

Now, I'm now giving you examples from my more recent governorship. So in the beginning, well—we couldn't always put it in. We had a satellite idea—a Syncom IV satellite. It would have been very effective. We're now using that all the time—privately paid-for satellites, but we could have had one for \$5 million, I think. And we don't know how well it would have worked, but it was going to go up in the shuttle. But then when Prop. 13 came along, everyone said, "Okay, we can't be having a satellite. A satellite seems like it's too much." Like the high-speed rail—for some people, that's too much.

Maybe I could, and this is not accurate, but maybe an analogy—convergence to the mean. You have to converge to the obvious, or to ordinary thinking—or what some people might call *mediocrity*. So that never was very congenial to me. I want to have excellence and interest and aliveness and creativity. How do you run a bureaucracy with 350,000 people? Well, there's a tension there. So you do need

the petty pace of every day—what did Shakespeare say? There's a quote from *Macbeth* about that. Each day we need a little of that. And maybe we need a lot of that. In fact, that's most of what you get! But that's not what I like. So I was out of sorts with the role there, in that sense.

And anyway, as soon as I would like one thing, then I want to go into something else. So I don't like to stick too long, although I do stick on ideas. I'm sitting here in the shadow of the mountain where my grandmother was born. So I would say that's a lot of continuity. But in one sense, it's a radical change, because nobody else in the Brown family ever thought of going back to their roots at the Mountain House, except me.

08-00:53:40

Shafer:

Do you think that that restlessness that you're describing fueled your run for president in '76?

08-00:53:45

Brown:

Yeah, well, yeah I'm—sure. Because—I'm not going to get these issues solved at a lower level for—you know. Planetary realism is hard to execute in Colusa County, although you can do a little bit of it. [laughter in the background]

08-00:54:06

Shafer:

It's hard to execute in Washington though too.

08-00:54:08

Brown:

[laughing] Yeah, very hard. But we have the California-China Climate Institute. We've got things we're doing. And you know, just last week I had some kid, the son of someone whose father is in the Russian cabinet, who used to be a governor, who I met at Stanford—the father, that is, and the son. So we're working on building bridges, so we can avoid blowing up the world.

08-00:54:34

Shafer:

This is a little bit off, a little bit of a digression, but we were talking about this last night. Like—do you think of yourself as a politician primarily? Or as a thinker, or at least—

08-00:54:46

Brown:

I don't know. I don't think of myself in that sense. I'm sure I think of myself, because you do—we all do, and politicians do more than most, but politician is not a nice sound. It doesn't sound good, and people like to be statesmen or public servants, but *politician* is a pejorative term now. So obviously, I'm not going to think of myself in those terms. But I do know I enjoyed campaigning.

[side conversation deleted]

One time when I was mayor—the strong mayor charter amendment, which I had sponsored when I ran for mayor [of Oakland], came up for renewal, because I only put it in for six years. I put in a sunset clause, which is very unusual. No one ever had a charter amendment with a sunset clause, but I did that because I

thought it would make it easier to get early acceptance from the voters. So when it came time to do it, I think the city council put it on the ballot as Proposition P, for a vote either to extend or to eliminate.

And so I said I think I'm just going to experiment with this. I'm going to run this campaign entirely myself, and so I raised the money—it didn't take too much. I got the endorsements that I wanted, from the police, from Barbara Lee, from the chamber of commerce. I had a poll taken, because I knew the pollster. No, did I have a poll taken? Yeah, I did have a poll taken. And then, I decided on what the mailing was—we'd mail certain things to a few Republicans, certain things to others. So I picked the voter files, because I know on my cell phone I have the name of a guy who does voter files, called him up, and said this is what I want to have, Democrats over this age, whatever. And then I wrote the brochure, and then I went to the printer, Autumn Press, and said help me put this into a brochure, and he did. And so I did the entire campaign. It was a campaign of one, and I won.

But I just wanted to show there's no mystique to that. So why do I say—I enjoyed that. Because there had been such a proliferation of consultants, I just wanted to see could I do this all by myself, with absolutely no other help? And I did. So I think the only thing I had was I had the lawyer—a friend of mine volunteer, file the campaign reporting. That's the only thing that another human being did. And it's kind of like automatic. So now we have these worlds where you have nothing but consultants. And then when we ran our campaign for governor, it was a little bit—it wasn't quite the same. We did have people, but they call it the mom-and-pop operation. What people don't get is if you have experience and you have skill, and you know a lot, and you get a few people who are equally skilled in various ways, that's a lot! And you can have a hundred people who just around with their head cut off, and it's very inefficient.

So that's why I've been lean, not lean, well, lean maybe, because excess is thought of as—and this is a bit of a diversion. But I remember being in one of my classes in high school, St. Ignatius, and the teacher said something about the Mona Lisa. That if you added to the Mona Lisa, you wouldn't make it better—you'd make it worse, because the Mona Lisa was *perfect* just the way it was. So there's something that, enough, when you do something right, you can't add to it—you just make it worse. But there's a tendency to always want more, and always add more. So when is enoughness—this is something that Illich taught, a principle of satieity, a principle of enoughness—and that applies in all of life.

First of all, that's an idea. Secondly, it's kind of how I was oriented. I always kind of recoil from massive, you know, building things for no reason. I like it—a little, but simpler is elegant. There's something about that. Even modern construction, form follows function—all that stuff. So these are ideas, but the concrete of those examples are what affected how I attempted to operate in politics, as governor, as mayor—whatever.

08-00:59:39

Shafer: Another—another idea that you grappled with was the Coastal Commission.

08-00:59:44

Brown: Right.

08-00:59:45

Shafer: Which was a big deal at the time. Can you maybe talk a little bit about that, and how that came about and how—?

08-00:59:51

Brown: Well, it came about because people passed a proposition in 1972, which I had nothing to do with, and then it came due, because it did have a sunset clause and we had to renew it. So we had to renew it, and I'm governor, so I've got to renew it. And it's an environmental issue, and it seems that it's a good thing to do. So labor was objecting, because it was blocking construction, so I worked hard to get labor on board, made some concessions, negotiated. I think we won it by—I think we had one holdout. A guy from Long Beach finally voted yes, so we got it done.

08-01:00:26

Shafer: How did you get labor to—what were the compromises? Do you remember?

08-01:00:28

Brown: I can't remember. Something, yeah, maybe where at the locals—so the state Coastal Commission would give the local governments more authority.

08-01:00:39

Shafer: You get a lot of credit for forging that compromise at the—

08-01:00:43

Brown: I don't think I got a lot of credit. I think I got very little credit. In fact, I've never read anything about it.

08-01:00:47

Shafer: Do you think you *deserve* more credit? [laughing]

08-01:00:48

Brown: You're the first one—well, I thought it was pretty clever, but no one talks about it.

08-01:00:53

Holmes: Well, it was in the newspapers. I mean that's why you—

08-01:00:54

Brown: What?

08-01:00:56

Holmes: In regards to—in 1976 when it passed.

08-01:00:59

Brown: Was it in the newspaper?

08-01:01:01

Holmes: In a few things written on the Coastal Commission, that you were the one credited with coming in at the eleventh hour.

08-01:01:05

Brown: Well, I'll tell you, the credit didn't last very long.

08-01:01:07

Holmes: [laughing] No.

08-01:01:08

Brown: People have forgotten. That's, by the way, another example—there's so many things that just happen. As someone said about history—one damn thing after another. And there isn't a lot of memory. That's what this is about.

08-01:01:25

Holmes: Yeah, well, we were talking yesterday, and you were making the point, especially say, with the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, that very few governors get involved with legislation, and—

08-01:01:36

Brown: At the level I did.

08-01:01:37

Holmes: Yes, and the Coastal Commission—the [California] Coastal Act, as it was passed and made permanent in 1976, was another example of you getting involved.

08-01:01:46

Brown: Yes, I'm getting more involved than most governors. But the complexity of the law at hand, whether it's the Coastal Commission or the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, still had many more elements that, if truth be known, I did not fully grasp. And this is a very important point: that the current governing in a mass society is of such complexity that only experts, on very narrow topics, know the full details.

Now, it *is* true that I would focus on particular issues and then responded by getting—for example, would land levelers be covered by the Agricultural Labor Relations Act? So as they were represented by the building trades, and they didn't want to be in the UFW—they wanted to be in their own union, so we had to carve land levelers out of the ALRA. And we had Stephen Reinhardt there, who was a lawyer, later became a federal judge, and Rose Bird. I remember sitting in the back, in one of the rooms at the end of hall—it's where Evan's [Evan Westrup's] office was—but this was 1975, working that out.

And so there was a union security clause. What are the grounds by which a union could expel somebody from the union and require the employer to terminate them? And the Agricultural Labor Relations Act gives far more power to the union, but then we put in a conscience clause, that would mitigate that power on the part of the union and give more weight to what an individual wanted to do. So that's pretty detailed, and I would often get into that. But even those details,

which were more detailed than any governors ever got into, were still a fraction, and a subset, of all the details that constituted the law itself.

So I'm very aware that this vast universe of legal rules is very vast. I'm impressed when they say that well over 95 or 96 percent of the universe is dark energy and dark matter, and I feel that way about government a lot of times.

08-01:04:25

Holmes: Well, you know—yesterday you were saying when one holds elective office, they look at the winds of public opinion.

08-01:04:34

Brown: Yeah.

08-01:04:35

Holmes: And if we look at, say, Proposition 20 when it passed—it passed by a pretty significant majority in 1972. Four years later, we then have, in a sense, a holdout within the legislature to make it permanent.

08-01:04:47

Brown: Right.

08-01:04:49

Holmes: I mean you mentioned the building trades—this is an interesting case where you would have labor *and* developers largely on the same side.

08-01:04:57

Brown: Right. Well, they were on the same side.

08-01:05:02

Holmes: What did you see the root of the opposition in the legislature—?

08-01:05:06

Brown: Well, it's his job. First of all, you can talk or you can have Earth Day, and talk about let's have a—you know, the Clean Air Act. Let's have the Air Resources Board Authority. But then when you start putting it down and saying, "No, you can't build that." Or, "No, that diesel truck has to be retired, because the emissions of NOx, nitrous oxide, is too high—too much sulfur. Too bad. I know you spent \$100,000 on it, but go get another one." That *really* runs into opposition, which is understandable—and we're still doing that. And so these ideas that were introduced under the time of Nixon as president, Reagan as governor, were *ideas*. But now, we started to operationalize them when I became governor, and that's when the rubber hit the road, and people resisted. But the ARB—Henry Ford himself—I guess Henry Ford II came out and said, "You can't do that! We can't meet that standard, that sulfur standard." The truth is, we exceed it by several orders of magnitude now. So it *was* possible, but they said we couldn't do it.

So that's true—but that's not the point about the feasibility. The point is that you get an idea—get that abstraction again. But then when the abstraction is made

operational, is made concrete, it applies to a *given industry*. It applies to two thousand jobs. These are real, and you can find that out. You know, you talk about a big project, if you build a nuclear power plant, we know the carpenters, the operating engineers, the electrical workers, sheet metal workers, laborers—if you have a project, they can tell you exactly how many. Now, when you go to the union leader, he knows those are his members, and he’s going to fight like hell to get that project. Now then, on the other hand, you have a few people—maybe some movie stars, maybe some rock and rollers, maybe some other kind of characters—“*No!*” But then you have other people, with real lives and money at stake, and they say, “Yes, we want this.” So that’s the conflict, and you have to kind of weave whatever you can between them or among them, and get something done.

08-01:07:45

Holmes: Your father was part of an organization that actually opposed the Coastal Commission.

08-01:07:51

Brown: Right.

08-01:07:52

Holmes: I think it was Michael [R.] Peevey, and others.

08-01:07:54

Brown: Yeah, CCEEB [California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance], yeah.

08-01:07:57

Holmes: Did you ever discuss with him his opposition to the Coastal Commission?

08-01:08:0

Brown: No, not to my—he had CCEEB. He liked that. He liked to build things, and when *he* was governor, no one talked about the environment. They talked about conservation, but then ecology and the environment came after Earth Day. That was a new thought, 1970—he left in late ’66/early ’67. So yeah, he was in that—he liked that organization. And he’s just trying to, he was being practical, from his point of view.

08-01:08:35

Holmes: In the first four years of the Coastal Commission, where opponents often said the young agency was going to stop development, which actually, if you looked at the statistics, it seemed to just maybe size down and get concessions from a lot of developments that were proposed.

08-01:08:53

Brown: Right.

08-01:08:55

Holmes: How did you rank or evaluate the Coastal Commission’s—?



08-01:09:02

Brown: I—I didn't. The coast—well, you know, the coast stretches from Oregon to Mexico. That's a lot of—that's a lot of stuff.

08-01:09:10

Holmes: Did you think the agency did a good job in its first four years? Or at least worth going to bat for on a—

08-01:09:15

Brown: I thought it was. Yeah, I thought it was a good job, but did I *know* it was a good job? No. How can you know? I don't know—from Pismo Beach to Crescent City? I mean there's a lot of stuff going on. We've got the farm labor, we've got running for president, we've got this, we've got that—we've got taxes. I mean there's so much going on, that I think it's hard to evaluate. And people were looking at it from a different point of view. If you think the world is being destroyed, which in many ways it is, you will think the Coastal Commission didn't stop enough. If you're some kind of a developer, and you want to build a hotel or a golf course, like Clint Eastwood, then you're going to think they're very oppressive.

08-01:09:54

Holmes: You had your own run-ins.

08-01:09:55

Brown: Yeah.

08-01:09:56

Holmes: With the Coastal Commission.

08-01:09:57

Brown: Well, because they wanted to give access to people's front yard. And people live on the beach, and there's some very strange characters living on the beach—I can tell you. And so I thought, felt when Linda Ronstadt's sea wall, and the other people on Malibu Beach, they had to fix their sea wall, or see their whole house go out to sea—I think that's reasonable that they be able to do that, without saying now we have to give up some of our property because you've got the power. So I did call that bureaucratic thuggery, and I still stand by that.

08-01:10:35

Holmes: And that was also, in connection with the sea wall, was also the Agoura-Malibu fire. There was also a fire that threatened Malibu, I believe, in 1978?

08-01:10:47

Brown: Maybe, yeah. What about it?

08-01:10:49

Holmes: Well, it's usually that your phrase, or your run-in with the Coastal Commission is not just—is also connected with that fire at least?

08-01:10:56

Brown: It could be. It could be. But they became that. They had the same guy who was there, for the whole—

08-01:11:02

Holmes: Peter Douglas?

08-01:11:03

Brown: He was there forever. And a lot of people think they're very unreasonable. And I think—and I think they're arguable. You know, right now they're fighting over that beach down there. So you can look at it differently—

08-01:11:17

Shafer: Martins Beach [in San Mateo County].

08-01:11:19

Brown: Right. No, that's another one. This is that beach down there by the Hollister Ranch. I used to live in LA, and I'd drive along the coast, and you'd drive along the Pacific Coast Highway, and there's miles of beaches totally empty. Drive down there on a weekday, there's a lot of access here. Get out of your car. So other people, they want access—and by the way, I rented an apartment at Topanga Beach, and it was owned by the state already, it was owned by the athletic club, LA Athletic Club. They sold it to the state, and then the state tore all the private houses down, so now they've got an ugly parking lot, and they don't have any houses. But it's still a rocky beach that only a few surfers want to use, and a few surfers used it before anyway—so how much was accomplished by that?

And this goes to the whole issue of how much park do we need, and are we maintaining the ones we have? And what's wrong with having some private ownership, because you can still use the beach. My idea was biased, because I rented an apartment right there on the beach, Topanga Beach. I thought it was pretty good, and no one ever stopped anybody from driving down the road—and it's still the same road. It hasn't been improved. The difference is there's no houses, which I don't think is an improvement, and then up above there's a little parking lot, which they could have built anyway. So I wonder—and a lot of this stuff on parks—people wanted to unload on the state and get a nice cash settlement.

08-01:13:04

Holmes: You referenced Peter Douglas who had written the coastal act, or is one of the authors, and then served as its executive director for twenty-six years. You're also known as a champion of the environment. Similar to him.

08-01:13:18

Brown: Yeah—different than him, I would say.

08-01:13:21

Holmes: Discuss your—I mean what do you recall about Peter Douglas and—?

08-01:13:25

Brown: I don't recall anything about Peter Douglas. I really don't.

08-01:13:29

Holmes: Did you have any run-ins with him on the Coastal Commission?

08-01:13:31

Brown: I don't think so—well, maybe just that couple of—from a distance, from afar.

08-01:13:36

Meeker: How would you say you're different than him?

08-01:13:38

Brown: I have no idea. I don't know him that—well, he was a staffer, and he's trying to implement one thing called the Coastal Commission. I'm trying to run a whole state, with a thousand interests, not just a single coastal interest.

And by the way, it is a fair dispute that these people want to block growth and block people—there's a reason to that. E.O. Wilson, who I met at Berkeley, at the Forestry Department a couple of years ago, said half the land should be reserved for the animals, for the species' habitat. So that means half our land should be in parks, so I hadn't thought of that before. And well, of course we couldn't manage half of it, or we would have a hard time doing it.

But I'm very aware—or at least I'm focused on the fact that California only had 300,000 people for 10,000 years—or thereabouts; we don't know for sure. But now we have 40 million people, and 30 million vehicles spewing carbon emissions, among other things—carbon monoxide. This is not healthy. People say you know, we don't want any more people. People say, well that's fair, but how do you adjust to that? How do you deal with that? So these regulators are trying to create pure air and pristine beaches, and more land for habitat—and other people are trying to just get their project approved. So it's just a conflict. And you could say, when you drive up this highway, all the new plants that are going in—where's this water coming from? And so you can make an argument that we're overpopulated.

Now, if we lived simpler lives, and we shrink down our cars, and we don't use fossil fuel anymore—and maybe we walk, and we have more elegant density, and we spend more time in ritual than in wasteful activities that have to be disposed of in landfills or burnt in incinerators, maybe we can—but that's not the way it works. Everybody that comes into town wants a household, and when you have a household, you want a car. Want a car, then you want a stove—and you want a this and a that, and material. And pretty soon you've got a waste stream, pretty soon you've got carbon emissions that are growing, not reducing. So yeah, we have a big problem on how to handle population, how to handle our affluence—the way it's currently constructed—and we are on a collision course with absolute disaster. So we *do* need big, big changes. And these people like Peter Douglas, in their own way, were trying to slow the juggernaut down. So to that extent, I agree

with him. But in the immediacy—whether Clint Eastwood should get his golf course in Monterey, well, that seems like a different question.

08-01:16:58

Holmes: Last question on the commission, Governor. Your successor, Deukmejian, was renowned for saying that if he had the votes, or was able to, that he would have wiped the Coastal Commission off the map.

08-01:17:10

Brown: Yeah—well, I didn't know he said that, but—I didn't pay attention to Deukmejian. [laughter]

08-01:17:18

Holmes: Do you agree with that sentiment? Or what are your thoughts on that sentiment?

08-01:17:21

Brown: No. Well, I just said—just the other way around. We have to get to zero carbon emissions, by—I think we said 2045, is what my executive order said. We've got a long way—in fact, I was just on the phone with the woman who is the president of SimpliPhi batteries, and I was talking about more batteries, and what kind, and how we could handle that, to even reduce our emissions further. But that's going to take a lot, to replace all the cars, and all the gas stoves and all the gas dryers, and not let somebody else use them, because we don't want them to emit—that's a big, that's a big undertaking. That's got a lot more than Peter Douglas ever could imagine. It's a massive transformation that we're going to *have* to do. It's going to be like World War II. It's going to take real presidential leadership, and obviously, we're going in the opposite direction.

08-01:18:25

Shafer: Yeah, I want to change the subject to crime and punishment a little bit. Two big things. You signed, in '76, you put an end to indeterminate sentences.

08-01:18:35

Brown: Yeah.

08-01:18:36

Shafer: And of course that led to some of the things you were talking about—mass incarceration. What was it about—why did you decide to sign the bill? What convinced you to sign it?

08-01:18:47

Brown: Well, they said the legislature was going to pass it, and they were determined to get it. And we were being sued because the parole board had unlimited discretion, and people felt that that discretion was applied in such a way that people were denied, based on race or arbitrary factors. And some of the people who were bringing these lawsuits—one of them was Tony Kline, for example. And there's a famous case, the Rodriguez case, that was won against the state and an aspect of the indeterminate sentence—so this idea that there were disparities and we needed a fairer system.

Now, I had my doubts about doing the change, and that's why I adopted a more—a form of determined sentencing by administrative order, and I wanted to see how it would work. But when I did that, the legislature felt—and these were older guys and more experienced than me—said this is a legislative matter, “You can't *do* that in the executive branch.” So there was a question, and the liberals, the prisoners' union lawyers, and the prison lawyers—this was the thing to do at that time. So while I had my doubts, I said, “Well, okay, I'll go along with that.” Also, the parole board decisions were all associated with the governor, so every time somebody gets out on parole, and most people *did* get parole, they'd go commit crimes and they're blaming me. So why not just turn it over, give it to the judges, the judges make a sentence—that's it.

Now, what I didn't envision, at that point, was that the legislature, once you took it away from the professional parole board that would decide, in a sentence that could be seven years or life, it's going to be seven, ten, fifteen, twenty, forty—or forever, as in the case of Manson and Sirhan. They've been there forever—been there a long time, that is. I didn't realize that the legislature, every year, was going to *up* the sentences, and they did. And a crime would happen, they'd give it a name for—often a woman or a child who was killed—they'd give it that name, and they'd pass another bill. And if they didn't pass it, the people had an initiative, sponsored by people whose families were murdered, or deputy DAs, or ambitious politicians who want to use it to run for office. And there have been over twenty initiatives, most of them lengthening sentences. So all that was to come.

08-01:21:45

Shafer:

Enhancements?

08-01:21:46

Brown:

Well, three strikes, the Victims' Bill of Rights—making the children criminals go to adult court, not on the say-so of a judge, but on the direction of the district attorney. So there was a real shift of power to the prosecutor. There was a proliferation of hundreds of new laws, with longer sentences, and enhancements that you could tack on to even the new longer sentences with these enhancements. Then they added to that, by taking away credits. They used to get a credit—one for one, and then pretty soon, in the case of murderers, they took away *all* credits.

So I didn't also realize that if the prisoner does not have an ability to shorten his or her sentence, they lose incentives, and so the rehabilitative possibility is greatly diminished by the fixed sentence. And the unfixed sentence, which could be affected by the behavior of the inmate, was a very important idea that got lost in the shuffle—because all the focus was on disparity. And this was an idea then—today we don't like disparities. But the fact is, we're all disparate. And the *crimes* are disparate—it isn't just the crime, which may be robbery one, robbery two, robbery three—it's all robbery. But robber one is not the same as robber two, and looking back to Hayakawa's book on semantics, that cat one is not cat two. And Italian one is not Italian two—everything is concrete and individual. So you need,

in today's lingo, a more nuanced understanding of what it is we're talking about. And we have just the opposite—highly overgeneralized, emotional reactions to bad things.

08-01:23:48

Shafer: So you're saying that when you signed it, although you had misgivings, that it was primarily in your mind, and in some of the advocate's minds, about removing that bias that—

08-01:23:58

Brown: Yeah.

08-01:23:59

Shafer: That prosecutors, or judges, or the parole board—

08-01:24:01

Brown: No, the parole board. They were the ones.

08-01:24:02

Shafer: Parole board, yeah. And so you saw it sort of as a way of leveling the playing field.

08-01:24:07

Brown: And I saw it as getting out from not having to be responsible for the parole board—or so I thought. See, everybody went to parole. Well, not everybody, but most of those people didn't even have a date. They would wait for the parole board to set a date, and then they would leave. Not just murderers—robbers, burglars, dope sellers, and all the rest.

08-01:24:28

Shafer: So part of it was to get that off your plate, is what it was.

08-01:24:31

Brown: Yeah. It's always mixed. It's never one thing. Multidimensional, you might call it. And by the way, what's happened is the very disparities that people asserted—and we never did an empirical study, but they asserted that the parole board was guilty of bias, because but, 80 percent of the people—maybe higher than that—serve, for murder one, only eleven years. The average was eleven years for—whatever it was, it was relatively small. And yes, some people were held in jail, but maybe those weren't just people who the board was prejudiced against, but maybe they really felt they were bad and dangerous, and they *should* have been there.

So what happened is, by that group getting very effective political and legal representation, instead of only keeping 10 or 15 percent in for a long time, they keep all 100 percent in. So the very disparity has now been codified, and it's called the criminal law. It's called the California Penal Code. Whereas before it was just a very general mandate to the parole board—you decide, after a minimum period, when you think someone's ready to go home. And they said, "No, we are going to—ab initio, from the beginning, from the day that the crime was committed, and the judgment is rendered, we're going to say what the

sentence is.” Before, you never *knew* what the sentence was until the parole board told you what it was, and that level of uncertainty was too much. People don’t like that, and they don’t like vesting that broad authority. And the legislature likes rules. They want to micromanage. They like commissions. Governors like department heads that serve at his or her pleasure. So those were some of the tensions that I began to see along the way here.

08-01:26:30

Shafer: One other big issue, that is something that’s followed you throughout your life really, is the death penalty.

08-01:26:41

Brown: It’s followed me, but it never caught up with me. [laughter]

08-01:26:43

Shafer: That’s true. In ’76, the California—the Supreme Court invalidated California’s law, the death penalty law, and the legislature wanted to fix it, reinstate it, in a way that was constitutional. And you said, sort of almost at the very end of your secretary—of your state of the—

08-01:27:04

Brown: Yeah, I vetoed that.

08-01:27:06

Shafer: Yeah, so how did you, how did you—you saw that train coming down the tracks, and you wanted to put down a marker—

08-01:27:15

Brown: Yeah.

08-01:27:16

Shafer: So how did you think about that? Was that an easy call for you?

08-01:27:20

Brown: I don’t know—I can’t, I mean—so I didn’t like capital punishment, and I laid out my reason in a very brief veto message, that you can quote—it’s well crafted, that says what I thought, and I’m not going to elaborate on that. The death penalty is being abolished in many places, but you have these heinous crimes, and people get outraged, and so the death penalty is part of dealing with that. And you have a problem in a democracy; people want it, but it’s very divided now. They wanted it a lot more in ’76 than they want it today, but we don’t know what they’re going to want five years from now.

And it *is* true that when we had the death penalty, there were fewer people serving life sentences. And now that we’ve done away with the death penalty, put it this way—we didn’t have life without possibility of parole, called LWOP. Now we have 35,000 people in that. We have more than anyone else. So some way, there were few executions, but people weren’t as bothered. And now, without the death penalty, people want longer and longer sentences. In fact, people always say that’s the alternative. But locking somebody up for forty or fifty years, till they’re

hobbling around in their senility, that's not a very attractive alternative either. So there's no easier answer here, that I can see.

08-01:29:10

Shafer: So the legislature, so you—

08-01:29:11

Brown: And there's no easy answer, and when your world, which I didn't see at the time, but we're in the business—governments, including America, are in the business of doing a fair amount of killing. You know, we had the Vietnam War, we had the Iraq War—the president, it was Obama—I think now Trump does more every week, selects a dozen or so people for execution by drone attack. And so the sacredness of life is more honored in the breach than it is in the observance, and so that affects people. So to focus on death penalty, but not drone attacks or not—well, we don't like Saddam, so let's have a shock and awe—now, 100,000 people have died since then. That's a lot of capital punishment. So I'm just saying it's a difficult topic, and, you know, it is not something I have a lot of easy answers on.

08-01:30:20

Shafer: You were talking yesterday about how a lot of issues are 80/20 and you want to be on the 80 side. I mean a lot of issues are 45/55, but the death penalty was—you were on the wrong side.

08-01:30:30

Brown: Fifty-two/48—oh, I was on the wrong side for that one?

08-01:30:31

Shafer: Yeah. And you knew that, I guess. Or is that like a—?

08-01:30:36

Brown: Well, you know that. You know you don't have every issue the way you want it. But you try to minimize the fallout and the impact.

08-01:30:44

Shafer: And how did you do that?

08-01:30:47

Brown: I did it by how I did it. Vetoes the bill, they overrode it—so, but we never had any executions. So I never had to face the possibility of what would I do if someone was there? Would I give them clemency, or would I not? I always said, "Well, I'm going to look at it, and I'll figure that out when it happens." It never happened.

08-01:31:08

Shafer: Yeah. Did—one of the things you did around that time was to appoint Rose Bird to the supreme court.

08-01:31:16

Brown: Yeah, yeah.



08-01:31:17

Shafer: Which was, more in—maybe more in retrospect became controversial?

08-01:31:22

Brown: Yeah, it did become more in retrospect, although it was a little controversial, but not as much as it became.

08-01:31:28

Shafer: Talk about—what was your thinking about appointing her to that position?

08-01:31:31

Brown: Well, first of all, I thought she did a very good job with the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. Very orderly, very lawyerlike, and so I thought she could do the job. And I'd been a clerk, and I thought well, it's the court, and they're rather slow moving, and she's a smart lawyer. I think she'd add a dimension. I think it's a good idea to have the first woman chief justice—good, I'm going to do it. I hadn't thought that, say, that she had certain personality traits that ran into tension with the other members. And then the insurance industry got pretty upset at her, and the death penalty was their big argument. But they made some decisions that definitely were not taken well by certain aspects of business, and that's why they got after her.

But she, obviously, did not want to approve any death penalties, so she reversed and got the court to go along with sixty-five reversals. So when you put that all in one piece, that's pretty unprecedented, because people before—people my father had appointed: [Roger] Traynor, [Matthew] Tobriner, [Phil] Gibson, [Raymond] Sullivan—these were good, these were good liberal people—they all upheld death penalties. So then, the move maybe became—the consciousness at the time, at least in the mind of Rose Bird, was well, this is not fair. But just a few years before, people who were just as liberal minded as her, but liberal minded maybe from a couple of decades earlier, didn't see it that way. So then, what she tried to do became the basis of the campaign, and they threw her out and two others. But that was not foreseeable at the time—no way did I think of that. And I thought she was somewhat of a conservative person. She lived conservatively. She was not some hippie type, so I thought she was more conservative than she turned out to be.

08-01:33:47

Shafer: So, so there was never any discussion about the death penalty with her before you appointed her?

08-01:33:52

Brown: Uh—no. In fact, only one guy I started to talk to about the death penalty, Otto Kaus, and he was a distinguished court-of-appeals judge, and I started to ask him about it and he started to talk, and I said—I don't really have any business asking him this. He's going to be a judge—let him judge, so I never asked again. I know Gray Davis asked everybody, but I didn't. You look at their overall judicial capability, and if they have the broad mind, the legal acumen—that's enough. And you can't really dictate—there's something inappropriate to dictate the case,

because each case is different. So I didn't think about it—I only did it in one case, and I stopped—in the process, I said I don't really want to do this. It seemed out of place. Because you're asking somebody—you're a judge, you've been doing this, but I want to know how you're going to judge in this hypothetical case. Well, that's not the way judges—you've got to look at all the facts. So it seems not appropriate to probe into that. Because if you're going to ask about the death penalty, well, you could ask about abortion, you could ask about mandatory arbitration—or you could ask about a lot of things, and maybe I do, because there are differences. The Supreme Court votes five to four on a lot of things, so that proves political philosophy is pretty important.

08-01:35:26

Shafer: I'm surprised, I guess, that—you're saying you thought she would be a more conservative chief justice?

08-01:35:31

Brown: Than she *was*.

08-01:35:32

Shafer: Than she was. In like—in what way would she—?

08-01:35:33

Brown: Well, she was a conservative person—in her dress. In her manner, her punctuality, her stickler for detail—these were all what I consider conservative traits.

08-01:35:45

Shafer: And how did you think that would play out on the court?

08-01:35:48

Brown: Well, I thought she'd be a fresh mind, and it would be a positive addition.

08-01:35:53

Shafer: But the conservative part?

08-01:35:56

Brown: Well, I thought she'd be—I didn't get into all the ideology. I wasn't thinking of that. I thought she could handle the work, and she did. She was a good lawyer. She could do that. But the politics of handling those six men—and bringing a woman into that man's role there was shocking to the system. Just like when I appointed Adriana Gianturco to the Caltrans, those are thousands of male engineers. They'd never seen their director be a woman. So those shocked the system, and so probably the more prudent thing, if one is going to do that, to do it with a more conventional appointee, that would create more simpatico with the existing sensibilities that are in the court.

08-01:36:49

Shafer: So it was part of your thinking when you appointed her that she *would* sort of shock the system, in a sense?

08-01:36:54

Brown: Well, I thought she would spark it, and add some vitality to what seemed to be a rather slow-moving organization. Now, in retrospect, I can see the court's job *is* continuity, in a way that the executive job isn't. Now, the executive has to have—continuity is *very* important. You can't have chaos in a society, because it'll lead to authoritarianism, so you have to maintain a certain degree of security and confidence, and the court has to do that more. The court is the custodian of the legal tradition, so they're there, not making momentary political decisions, but they have their own unique role. And it's very different than the legislature or the executive, which are far more politically oriented. But what the court's role is, that's a whole other story. Scalia had one view, and probably Stephen Breyer has another view, and [Felix] Frankfurter had a view, and Justice [William O.] Douglas had a view, so there are many views as to what the court should do. But whatever they are, they are very different than the other two branches.

08-01:38:09

Holmes: Governor, you're known as a fiscal conservative, and we see this from your time in seminary throughout most of your years in office.

08-01:38:20

Brown: I know we call it *fiscal conservative*, but I guess that word kind of sounds like a Republican. But I think profligacy is never a virtue. So the question is is that we're doing? Are we making wise investments, or are we being profligate and stupid and wasteful?

08-01:38:41

Holmes: So maybe another way is, is—when it comes to the expenditure of state money on things, from you know, the governor's mansion, to selling the Cadillac limos—

08-01:38:53

Brown: Well, yeah, I don't think people hire you just to have fun, you know, and to goof off at their expense and have a bunch of parties. And certainly, that wasn't the case at the time of Watergate and the end of the Vietnam War.

08-01:39:09

Holmes: But I want to tie this to your opposition of the death penalty. Because one of the arguments, I guess, in favor of the death penalty is that without it, the prison population, particularly as you were just mentioning—life without parole, LWOPs, escalated significantly.

08-01:39:27

Brown: Yeah.

08-01:39:28

Holmes: Which is—you know, I think for each inmate, in today's terms, is probably between \$30,[000]-\$40,000 plus a year, to maintain them in prison.

08-01:39:36

Brown: Right, but the death penalty is more on a value/emotional/human level on how you see it. Are you focusing on the victims? Are you focusing on the perpetrator?

Are you focusing on some other sense of morality? And besides, we have had very few executions. We've only had thirteen since my father left office in 1967. And before that, maybe the height was maybe ten in a year, so we're not talking about a lot of people. The murderers are like 2,000 a year, so the number executed was never more than a handful. And then how do you make that fair? So there's a lot of things you can say about the death penalty.

08-01:40:32

Shafer: Did you ever think of what you would have done if one of those death warrants had come across your desk?

08-01:40:36

Brown: Well, I thought about it, but I never came to a conclusion, since I didn't have to. And one of the principles is don't decide something that you don't have to decide. That's a principle of Supreme Court jurisprudence. Don't rule on the broadest grounds; rule on the narrowest grounds. That's just the way the Supreme Court works, and I think it's true about politicians. You don't want to be *so* cautious—that's bad. But to be flailing around deciding too many things, that's also bad, and it creates chaos, and that's not what leaders are known for. Think of John Kennedy. You don't think of lots of things. You think of the Cuban Missile Crisis or you think of his speech at the American University—so there's only a few things. So that means you don't have to be deciding a lot of things. You decide too many things—in fact, there was a guy who was governor—[James A.] Rhodes, Jim Rhodes of Ohio, who was governor when my father was governor. I remember my father telling me, he said Governor Rhodes said, "Pat, every time I'm in the office I get into trouble. That's why I spend as much time as I can on the golf course." [laughter] So that was a humorous way of saying, "Don't try to get involved in everything."

08-01:42:15

Shafer: I wonder if we can just go to another topic, totally unrelated, one which you had to deal with both times you were governor, and that was the drought.

08-01:42:25

Brown: The drought.

08-01:42:26

Shafer: Yeah, in '76, '77. How big a problem—like what did you see as your job as governor during that time?

08-01:42:36

Brown: That drought was about, you know, having a pipe across the Richmond Bridge, and Marin County running out of water, and this and that. Droughts come on slowly, so it's not like a mass murder or something that all of a sudden hits you. So it's slow, and there are not that many options on how to deal with it. You know, you can not flush toilets, or something, and I remember in Oakland you were supposed to do fifty gallons per person a day, or something. So you get these conservation measures. And you know, we'd have press conferences, and that's about the way—it didn't seem all that real to me.

The second time around, we got a water action plan, we developed a bond measure for storage. We had the tunnels, we'd have some recycling—so I think the second time around, we had a more sophisticated response. I think we have better technology now. Also, with climate change, it's a more serious matter. The drought was just something that's going to happen—it's going to go away. Now we get the drought, and we say, "Ooh, maybe this drought could be *really* long—go on for decades." As we find out, it *did* in California history. But now with climate change and the fires, it has a much bigger dimension. So the drought plus the fire—I don't know that we had the fires back in the seventies. That complicates things. So it makes it more serious.

08-01:44:43

Shafer: Yeah, and thinking of it through the frame, which you described, of what can I do as governor because *I'm* here, as opposed to—?

08-01:44:51

Brown: Not that much. Right. Then you can get a pipe—Caltrans is going to approve putting a pipe across the Richmond Bridge or something. I just remember that one thing.

08-01:44:52

Shafer: Yeah.

08-01:45:02

Meeker: The restrictions were pretty stringent—If memory serves, in 1976-'77. In terms of—

08-01:45:11

Brown: Oh, the flush toilet reduced the amount of water by half.

08-01:45:15

Meeker: Well, individual residents' water was turned off in many locations.

08-01:45:19

Brown: I don't remember that.

08-01:45:20

Meeker: Yeah, and it's interesting. I mean of course living through the recent drought—

08-01:45:25

Brown: I just remember the toilet—at the Zen Center they said don't flush, so people would let the toilet go for a while before they flushed. Around here, so far we've got enough water, so I flush the toilet each time. [laughter]

08-01:45:43

Meeker: Is it one of those instances that individuals' actions are important, but only if everyone if all individuals do those actions?

08-01:46:01

Brown: Well, I mean like the lawns, and drought—if you notice, on the outside there, we've got some drought-resistant plants. So yeah, we spend a lot of money on

lawns, and now they're recycling—a lot of the golf courses recycle their water. So we're going to have to reuse the water. That's true. Because most of the water goes to agriculture. It goes to almonds, walnuts, rice, so, that's—the individual is still 15-20 percent, or not even the individual, because those are industrial companies and cities. So, but the individual has to play their part.

08-01:46:39

Meeker:

What's the role then, of the governor, of the state government, in creating a culture so that people would, in fact, act in their own self-interest, which was—?

08-01:46:51

Brown:

Well, we passed laws. We had the water board—we did all those executive orders, the Water Action Plan—what else can you do? And of course some people say, the conservatives will say, “Build more dams.” And then the liberals will say, “But recycle all the water.” The truth is, that if you go to 100 percent recycling, you're still going to need—we still, I believe, have promised more water than we have, so we're going to have to adjust.

And now, the groundwater management was something—well, I created the Water Commission, under Chief Justice [Donald R.] Wright, and that came out with a lot of ideas that we didn't implement until my second term as governor. And now the Groundwater Management Plan is going to make *drastic* changes. I don't know if drastic—but substantial changes in California. Every county has to have an entity that measures the amount of water being used, and now they're going to have to recharge the groundwater. And they're drawing, they're exploiting, they're taking water out, more than is being put back by the rain, so they're going to have to stop that. And that's going to require fallowing, you know, hundreds of thousands of acres. This is what's going to happen over time and that'll work out. So the pricing of water, and through being able to exchange water by having pipes, and a water market. But at the end of the day, we have to be more efficient and more creative with how we use water. And again, if we have more people, and we want to have as much water as you have, you can turn it into commodities for export. So we are going to have *limits* there, and that will provoke tension.

Interview 9: May 7, 2019 [in the afternoon]

09-00:00:02

Meeker: This is Martin Meeker with Scott Shafer and Todd Holmes, interviewing Governor Jerry Brown. This is interview session number nine, and today is May 7, 2019.

09-00:00:17

Shafer: So Governor, we want to talk to you about property taxes. 1977 begins, and you've got your state-of-the-state address, and your focus on property tax has a problem. So that issue was percolating, and people were aware that it was an issue. Describe what the issue was in your mind. What did you see?

09-00:00:32

Brown: The property taxes started going up. I think principally because the assessments started going up, so it started slowly. It seemed to be a local government problem, but then in certain areas like Santa Barbara people were hit harder and the protests got louder. I started doing something about it at the end of '76, came up with a circuit-breaker plan that would reduce property taxes, but do it in relationship to the income of the homeowner. That was the idea, and the legislature was not in a big hurry. And so when I proposed some ideas, then they were the ones that developed the bills. And I kept saying to my finance department, "No, we've got to come up with a bill," and they waited for the revenue and taxation committee in the legislature. And so that took a while, and it became a very laborious process. They wanted to add on rent subsidies and higher payments for general relief for welfare recipients, and things like that. So anyway, to make a long story short, the bill finally got out of the assembly, then it got over to the senate. It took on more and more baggage, and so by the time of the last day, I believe, of the session, it failed. It took a two-thirds vote and couldn't get it.

09-00:02:15

Shafer: How did you push?

09-00:02:17

Brown: Well, pushed—what does hard mean? I mean if you're lifting a weight, I understand that 150 pounds is harder than 120 pounds. But when you're talking about the legislature, you're talking about Democrats, Republicans, liberals, moderates, conservatives, so there's a built-in resistance to any kind of tax, and there wasn't enough desire at that point. And so it died, and, well, at that time I certainly didn't know a way to get a property tax. And each time the senate would add something, and then the assembly—I think they even added an increased tax of capital gains. So you've got more than just pure property-tax relief, and so they had to do it again. But by the end of the year/the beginning of the new year, the Jarvis initiative had qualified. And so that gave more momentum, and we did get a two-thirds vote for—oh, it turned out to be Proposition 8, but it was not enough relative to what [Howard] Jarvis was offering.

09-00:03:26

Shafer: So now we're in 1978. What was in the version that didn't get—it failed at the ballot box, but how was it different from Prop. 13?

09-00:03:36

Brown: Well, it had a lot more stuff. Prop. 13 was just roll back property taxes on *all* ownerships: commercial, agricultural, industrial, apartment owners, and home owners. And limit future taxes, after rolling them back to what they were, I think, in '76, that you could only have an annual increase of 2 percent unless the property exchanged—was sold. So that was more far reaching. Ours was limited to home owners.

09-00:04:09

Shafer: And it had some renter relief too.

09-00:04:11

Brown: And a little bit of renter relief, I think.

09-00:04:18

Shafer: In 1977, you knew that property tax was going to be an issue, because you had it in your state-of-the-state address.

09-00:04:26

Brown: Well, no, I wouldn't say that. It wasn't that big an issue, I don't think. It grew. So—the question is when was it obvious? When was it red hot? Later.

09-00:04:39

Shafer: When?

09-00:04:40

Brown: Well, I can't tell you when. You'd have to go look in the newspapers, read it.

09-00:04:44

Shafer: But like was there, you know, nowadays, when people are out collecting signatures—

09-00:04:47

Brown: Originally there was no notice of Jarvis at that time, in '77. It wasn't until he emerged.

09-00:04:53

Shafer: And was it when they filed to collect the—?

09-00:04:58

Brown: Well, first of all, the assessors were assessing homes at a higher rate, in various counties at various times, and that then created the fear that there was going to be a property tax increase, which there *was* in various places. So the property taxes were dramatically going up in various places, so the more that happened, the more the issue became salient. Originally, in 1975, nobody was talking about it. I mean some people were, but it was pretty marginal. And then somewhere in '77/early '78, it became much harder. And then in the



campaign, with Jarvis debating people—as he called them, “bum of the day,” on Channel 7 in Los Angeles, that got to be a big issue. And the turnout in the primary was very high; I believe one of the highest ever. I think it’s the highest that is, before or since, and it was decisively passed. And most of the politicians, even Republicans, had opposed it, because they couldn’t imagine how you could live with a two-thirds cut in the property tax. And of course we did, because the inflation also affected the income tax, and so there was a lot of money. But we were able to bail it out. But it did mean that we started to rely on the income tax more than property tax.

09-00:06:24

Shafer:

And it was a temporary bailout too, I mean, right?

09-00:06:27

Brown:

It was a temporary bailout. But it wasn’t temporary, because we started providing money for the schools and the counties, and that was adjusted over the decades. So it was permanent, although it changed.

09-00:06:41

Holmes:

You say it wasn’t completely on your radar when you came into office, but wasn’t there a Proposition 1 that Ronald Reagan was grappling with? I think it even supported—

09-00:06:51

Brown:

That was to limit government spending.

09-00:06:56

Holmes:

There was also another—at least initiative or discussions of initiatives dealing with property tax during this.

09-00:07:04

Brown:

There were a number of measures, and Jarvis himself had an earlier measure that he couldn’t get qualified. And then he did, and that often happens. Something doesn’t work one time, but they come back two or three times and they get it. So, yeah, it takes on a momentum. We have the so-called car tax. That started in 1935, and then all of a sudden, during the time of Wilson and Gray Davis, had become unacceptable all of a sudden. So these moods out there in the electorate, and they’re driven by changes, the taxes *were* doubling. They were going up in some places, and people just said no. But the state had no control over that. That was the local assessor, the local school board, the local city council, the local board of supervisors. So it seemed like it wasn’t a state issue, until it became that.

09-00:08:05

Shafer:

It was happening, in some ways, locally, because it was the local assessors. It was happening at the local/the county level. To a—do you think to a certain extent Sacramento was sort of either insulated from it—and by Sacramento I mean the legislature and yourself—unless you had constituents who were complaining about it?

09-00:08:23

Brown:

Well, that's *always* the case. If nobody's complaining, then there's no issue, no one does anything. So I mean people don't reach out and invent something out of nothing. It also was less of a problem. In 1969, the average price, I believe, if I recall right, the median-priced home in LA was \$69,000. Okay, that started to rise in the early/middle seventies, and the taxes also rose. But people living in their house didn't feel they were richer. Their home was just given another number. You know, instead of \$100,000, it was now \$300,000. But then the taxes are going to affect them. And they, without doing anything, they saw an increased tax bill. And that was not something Sacramento/the state government was thinking of—this is your local people. But because they made it into an initiative, that gave it a statewide character, and so it couldn't be ignored.

09-00:09:24

Shafer:

Did you feel that—I mean as I remember it, and I was not living here at the time, but it was framed as something to help seniors, because they were living on a fixed income. Obviously, that was one—

09-00:09:33

Brown:

Well, that was one thing.

09-00:09:34

Shafer:

Yeah, there was much more to it than that.

09-00:09:36

Brown:

Well, everybody who paid property taxes. And then you had the apartment owners, and you had others that would benefit from it. Look, the taxes passed—went up too quickly, and people revolted through the initiative. It's that simple. Had the taxes been slower, it might have not happened or would have happened much later.

09-00:09:56

Shafer:

Looking back, do you think there is something, like in '77, that might have been done to—?

09-00:10:01

Brown:

And maybe '76, maybe. But that wasn't a problem then. The legislature doesn't want to act unless there's pressure. We presented the legislature, last year—2018, a measure to change inverse condemnation. But the insurance companies didn't want that, and the consumer lawyers, the trial lawyers, didn't want that. So the legislature doesn't want to get involved with bailing out, as they called it, the electric utilities. So now the governor creates a commission, and they come in with the idea to change inverse condemnation, which I proposed—but at the time people didn't want to touch it. Now, whether they will or not, I don't know, but it's illustrative of the fact the legislature doesn't move unless somebody puts a fire at their feet. And the people are property owners, teachers, unions, doctors, hospitals. So whenever any ox gets gored, they organize with more intensity. And they get news

stories, and then something becomes a problem that wasn't a problem before—and now is a problem—and now they get to act. It's a relatively passive instrument, the legislative body.

09-00:11:26

Shafer: So you obviously opposed Prop. 13. To what extent did you see it as, you know, *your* ox being gored?

09-00:11:34

Brown: Well, it was the local government, but it had nothing to do with the state.

09-00:11:39

Shafer: Did you see it as a—this, the movement, I mean by the time the primary happens, it was like a tax revolt, right? They were on a—

09-00:11:44

Brown: Yeah. Well, then it became more general, but in the beginning it was local government. That's why I said it was the local government—I'm not going to get involved in that. That's a no-win situation. But I did see it as an anti-government move. I even thought about supporting Prop. 13, but all of my constituents were against it pretty strongly.

09-00:12:04

Shafer: Why did you think about supporting it?

09-00:12:05

Brown: Well, it was a very popular revolt against this behemoth called government. The trouble is, it seemed *way* overreaching, and in many respects it was, because it put the state in the business of funding, through the income tax, a lot of local services. And that becomes a big problem. It becomes a problem because the costs are driven locally, but the funding has to come statewide. So the state has to pay the bill, but it can't control the bill. Yeah.

09-00:12:44

Shafer: To what extent—when did you realize, you and your team, that it was going to pass?

09-00:12:52

Brown: I would imagine a month before the election—something. I can't tell. It could be three weeks, it could be six weeks. I mean that's—

09-00:13:03

Shafer: I know that you cleared, at one point in late May, you cleared all your appointments to focus on it.

09-00:13:05

Brown: Right. But I mean that's just an empirical question. What day did the polls say *what* that came to my attention? So I don't think that's a very interesting question.

09-00:13:16

Shafer: But clearly by the end of May—

09-00:13:19

Brown: Well, by May it was pretty clear that it was going to pass.

09-00:13:21

Holmes: Did you give it much credence when it first—even when it qualified for the ballot did you think, did you think this—?

09-00:13:27

Brown: I didn't think that much about it, I don't think.

09-00:13:29

Holmes: Did you think it was going to pass?

09-00:13:29

Brown: We had enough problems at the state level. We were trying to fund the *Serrano v. Priest* decision to have to equalize school districts. That cost a billion-plus, so we didn't have the money for *that*. So how in the hell are we going to come up with a bill of \$6-7 billion, is what they were talking about. So that seemed unthinkable at the time—*unthinkable*. But it became doable because of the incredible growth and inflation, so a dollar was not a dollar. They got cheaper, and we got more of them. I mean the income tax was rising 18 percent.

09-00:14:09

Shafer: And inflation was really high too, I think.

09-00:14:12

Brown: The personal income rather, the measure. Yeah, it got to be what—10 percent?

09-00:14:17

Shafer: Or more, yeah.

09-00:14:18

Brown: Okay, then the income tax collects a lot of that, so that gave us money. But then the income tax is very volatile, which everyone talks about. So there are times when income tax collections drop. Today, the stock market's going down. If it continues to go down, there will be losses of state revenue. Property tax *rarely* went down. Until the 2008 recession, it didn't go down since the Depression. What I mean by that, it's a stable source of revenue that's there to pay your schools, police, fire—and what have you. And now, if you take that away and you say we're going to get it out of capital gains—and right now, 47 percent of the income tax, which is approximately half of state spending—that comes from 1 percent of the people. I think it's five thousand people pay almost half the income tax. What if those five thousand leave? So it's very unstable—and yet any other tax will be opposed.

- 09-00:15:25  
Shafer: Was the portion of it that included property tax, do you think that was—?
- 09-00:15:29  
Brown: What do you mean *the portion that included it*?
- 09-00:15:30  
Shafer: Of Prop. 13. It covers—commercial property, and now there’s talk about— and there has been for years, of splitting that off. So I’m just wondering, what was your take? Do you think that that was—I mean it wasn’t the focus of the campaign at all.
- 09-00:15:47  
Brown: What? No.
- 09-00:15:48  
Shafer: That it was going to help commercial property owners.
- 09-00:15:50  
Brown: Right. Jarvis worked for the apartment owners. That was their intent, obviously. But it was the homeowner too. He was a homeowner. He lived on Crescent Heights in a very modest house, so he could identify with those people. And Jarvis, by the way, worked for [Senator Reed] Smoot, I think, in Utah, who was the author of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff. So he has an interesting background.
- 09-00:16:26  
Holmes: Governor, so this passes and qualifies for the ballot, and it’s gaining steam. How much does this begin to factor into your own campaign for reelection, which is also happening that same year?
- 09-00:16:40  
Brown: What does *factor in* mean?
- 09-00:16:41  
Holmes: How much did you begin to think about, in your running for reelection, to have to address Prop. 13?
- 09-00:16:50  
Brown: It’s hard to remember.
- 09-00:16:51  
Shafer: Do you mean the primary?
- 09-00:16:52  
Brown: The primary was—I was attacking it.
- 09-00:17:04  
Holmes: [laughing] So, you’re getting ready and you are running for reelection.
- 09-00:17:10  
Brown: Yeah.

- 09-00:17:12  
Holmes: Prop. 13, you realize—
- 09-00:17:13  
Brown: Are you talking about the primary? After June or before June?
- 09-00:17:15  
Holmes: Yes, yes.
- 09-00:17:16  
Brown: Yeah, well that's a disjointed question. You can't answer it that way.
- 09-00:17:20  
Shafer: Before or after the primary?
- 09-00:17:21  
Brown: You have to pick.
- 09-00:17:23  
Holmes: You mean that—okay, yes, before the primary.
- 09-00:17:25  
Brown: You see, people don't think. Well, they just blather. That's very interesting.
- 09-00:17:29  
Holmes: [laughing] Well, I'm an academic. As you say, we blather quite a bit—as do politicians. So you say by May that you realized that it was going to pass?
- 09-00:17:43  
Brown: Right.
- 09-00:17:44  
Holmes: And then what was your strategy going forward into the reelection, because you had a—?
- 09-00:17:48  
Brown: Oh, you mean after—after it won?
- 09-00:17:49  
Holmes: Yes.
- 09-00:17:53  
Brown: Oh, to make it work. Just to implement it. It's now the law.
- 09-00:17:55  
Shafer: Well, and to survive—and for your own political survival too, I think.
- 09-00:17:58  
Brown: Well, yeah, we got it. Now you've got to make it work. It's the law. People adopted it overwhelmingly. So that was the strategy. I brought Arthur Laffer up, I brought [George P.] Schultz. We had meetings, yeah, with all these people—how do you implement it? And so we bring these people, you create a certain amount of atmospheric, and roll up our sleeves and implement it. Of

course the people who are implementing it are the gnomes in the Department of Finance, and they're figuring out things, and what they figure out becomes the solution. But again, that solution is done by experts.

09-00:18:40

Meeker: You brought Laffer up, who's known as the architect of supply-side economics.

09-00:18:44

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

09-00:18:46

Meeker: What was your interaction with him? How did you—?

09-00:18:48

Brown: He was there, he's very voluble and expressive, and he was always very excited about Prop. 13 and gave me a lot of credit for making it work.

09-00:18:59

Meeker: What did he contribute in terms of helping you implement it in that critical period of time between the primary election and the general election in November?

09-00:19:13

Brown: Well, everybody contributed to the atmospherics, and then we passed the bailout AB 8 or 9, or some damn thing, and that became the bailout, and at least for the moment things were taken care of. I mean, that's the way it works. First of all, if you just went to your gnomes and said, "Come up with a response," you would never see them. So you have to make visible this arcane process deep within the bowels of the Department of Finance. You do that by bringing in visitors. They come in, you talk to the press—this is what we talked about—and there's a certain amount of back and forth, and tension. And then presto, we get the bill. The legislature votes on it, then we have it, I sign it, we have a press conference—[clap]. Done, move on to the next thing. So what do they contribute? They're part of the public discussion—that's all.

09-00:20:12

Shafer: The attorney general was on vacation in Hawaii when it passed. And so—and as you say, your team took advantage of that.

09-00:20:23

Brown: My team—Tom Quinn. It was his idea.

09-00:20:26

Shafer: So tell me how he did that. What happened?

09-00:20:27

Brown: We did some ukulele music, and I did a few radio ads. And that was the main thing.

09-00:20:42

Shafer:

But it indicated, I think—it certainly got everyone’s attention. It focused everyone, because you did that pretty—

09-00:20:46

Brown:

We think it did. But we don’t know. Unless you’re surveying on a regular basis, you don’t know what, does what, how. But it didn’t hurt. Yeah, we all thought that was clever. But the main point is I was an incumbent, and every incumbent has always won reelection in California for a second term—with one exception, Culbert Olson, when he was beaten by Warren—and he was a very unpopular guy. So reelection has proved, for very clear reasons, you dominate the media. The number-one problem was this Prop. 13, and as governor, I get to deal with it. And by signing the bill—we had Prop. 13, so we got the benefit of that, but I signed the bill. So at least for the short term, we took care of all the problems. What’s not to like about that? Okay, now you’re a candidate—you’re out there as attorney general, you have nothing to do with that. We had some press conference with Edward Teller about forty nuclear power plants. Well, that wasn’t germane to what was there. So a lot of that’s the incumbent factor, and then we did our work appropriately, and it was successful.

09-00:22:10

Shafer:

Looking at the clips from the *Times*, there was one note of a labor leader, who was unnamed in the clip, but he said, “It seems like Jerry Brown was with us opposing Prop. 13, and then he switched sides to become the general of the supporters.”

09-00:22:28

Brown:

Yeah, right. Well, that’s one of the themes. [laughing] But I never could quite follow that. It’s the *law*. Now, no one seriously said you should subvert the law—what does that mean? I mean, that’s an impeachable offense. So what do they mean? Implement it, but put on sackcloth and ashes, and say, “Oh, this hurts me more than it hurts you?” Well, that’s stupid. I had to do it; I did it! So the war was over. We lost, and it’s never nice to lose. You’ve got to move on to the next fight.

09-00:23:05

Meeker:

What about a lawsuit?

09-00:23:07

Brown:

Based on what? It’s a constitutional amendment. A very fundamental document of California, called the California Constitution is amended. It has, in it, Prop. 13 now. That was it! As they say, get a life, and move on to the next thing.

09-00:23:24

Holmes:

Did you also, in its wake after it passed, didn’t you try to fashion yourself as a born-again tax cutter?



09-00:23:31

Brown:

Well, first of all, I was opposed to taxes when I ran for governor. And that did embody the way I felt. The trouble is it went too far. So it's an idea, but it's an idea I thought was completely impractical. And in many ways, it was counterproductive. But I can tell you that if we didn't have Prop. 13, we would have had something else. Property taxes would not have doubled, and tripled, and quadrupled—and nothing would have happened. Not when you have an initiative, and you could just roll it back. So it was inevitable, we probably should have seen, and the only answer to stop [Prop.] 13—I've thought about this—would be to have my own counter-initiative ready, early in 1977. Well, (a) I didn't have the funds, and (b) I wasn't geared up for initiatives like I became later in my second round as governor, where actually, I participated in six initiative campaigns. And won all six, by the way, which had never happened in the history of California. In fact, it's so obscure that you probably didn't know about that. And Schwarzenegger lost four—five initiatives. I won six, and you didn't even know it, so that shows you the thin quality of the California historical consciousness. [laughter]

09-00:24:59

Holmes:

Oh, *please*.

09-00:25:04

Brown:

[laughing] Well, it's true.

09-00:25:07

Shafer:

Pushing back, you think of yourself as someone who looks into the future.

09-00:25:14

Brown:

Yeah, sometimes. We didn't see 13, because it wasn't a problem yet, until the people started reacting. Yeah, now, and who's supposed to tell me that? The Department of Finance dealt with the state budget. This was *off* budget. It's another item. And it became a state budget when, all of a sudden, the local property tax was reduced by two-thirds. We just couldn't sit there and say okay, police and fire and schools: close. We had to do something. And then it became a *state* budget problem. But the state Finance Department was not in the habit of looking at local property taxes and local assessments and local programs. Well, we got in that business, and the state is *now* in that business because of various formulas whereby the state provides funding at the local level. That's why the budget—they say it's \$200 billion all in, but the general fund's only \$130 [billion], and the rest of that are built-in local spending programs that have made up for the lack of property taxes, at least in part.

09-00:26:25

Shafer:

So I want to read a quote from a legislator at the time, Art Agnos, who represented San Francisco.

09-00:26:31

Brown:

Yes.

09-00:26:32

Shafer:

And he says, referring to you, [reading] “His behavior, in the post-Prop. 13 political arena has been shameless. It’s one thing to accept defeat graciously, but another to politically prostitute yourself and those who have caused so much damage to the constituency, which has been so loyal to your political career—black, Chicanos, the handicapped, and the poor.”

09-00:26:52

Brown:

Yeah. Well, he’s representing his district. That’s spoken like a fellow from San Francisco would. [laughing] That’s pure political rhetoric.

09-00:27:02

Shafer:

So there’s no truth to—and he wasn’t the only one who said—

09-00:27:07

Brown:

I don’t follow that at all. I mean, that’s kind of like academic. Let’s have a debate about Prop. 13 for the next five years.

09-00:27:15

Shafer:

That sounds like something you’d relish.

09-00:27:17

Brown:

No, you have to *govern*. People are saying, you know, govern, be serious, stick to the job. Do your knitting. I did, but I did it in a way that I won by twenty-one points. And where is Art Agnos now, by the way? Well, he ran for mayor—one term, so maybe you have to look a little broader if you want to stay for a second term, which I did.

09-00:27:42

Shafer:

Well, I have Maxine Waters too, if you want to—[laughing]

09-00:27:45

Brown:

Oh, Maxine Waters. They all do it, but that was the left. But that’s easy for them to say, because they had Prop. 13 already. Now they have it, their constituents are quieted down. Now they can start beating the drums for all the programs they want, and then more spending. But they’re not beating the drums for increasing the income tax. No one there talked about—oh, we lost \$6 billion; now let’s go find it in state taxes. They don’t talk about it that way. That’s part of the idea. As this one fellow, James [R.] Mills, who’s still alive, San Diego, he had a kind of a funny sense of humor. He said, “You know—” and he was exaggerating, but he said it nevertheless, he said, “I vote for every spending measure, but against every tax measure,” and he chuckled. Like that’s *your* problem, Governor.

So I don’t even say that all of them think it through. A lot of them don’t do the arithmetic. It’s the emotion, the noise, the thematics of a given issue. So 13 threatens all these public services. Art Agnos was a social worker, so all he stands for is funded, in many cases, by the property tax. Now it goes away, and I’m exuberantly making that work. He interpreted that, in some way, as attacking, or aggressively inconsistent with his particular social-welfare

sensibility. But we're talking about the state, we still have the state issues. He's there—did he propose anything as a legislator that would do something to get whatever he's worried about? He didn't like the rhetorical positioning. Well, that's fine, if he wants to be a campaign consultant. But that's, I would just say physician, cure thyself, is the way I would say it to that.

And by the way, I would acknowledge that maybe I was a little too exuberant in my implementation rhetoric. Because the legislature voted for it. I would bet Art Agnos voted for that, and so did Maxine Waters. They probably voted for it, right? So they had no complaint on the substance. But also, you have to tend to your constituents. How do you *tend* to your constituents? You don't give them food baskets, like maybe Mayor Daley did. No, you give them rhetorical packages, and that's exactly what they were doing.

09-00:30:43

Shafer:

Did—at some point, in—after the primary and before the November election, Howard Jarvis cut an ad. Was that something—

09-00:30:51

Brown:

Yeah, I think we asked him to. Yeah, I knew Howard Jarvis.

09-00:30:57

Shafer:

Was that a coup? Because he didn't exactly endorse you. He did one for your opponent as well.

09-00:31:01

Brown:

Well, yeah—well, it was good. What are you asking me? It speaks for itself.

09-00:31:07

Shafer:

I mean—were there high fives? [laughing] Maybe they didn't high five back then.

09-00:31:10

Brown:

Well, we don't do that. That was a good, we try to do all that you do. That's all it is. It's a business. You've got to do what you need to do and that was perfectly consistent with law and morality. It didn't cost anything.

09-00:31:24

Shafer:

When you say, "maybe my rhetoric was a little too exuberant,"—

09-00:31:29

Brown:

Well, because then, then one of the ads of [Evelle] Younger was a washing machine—wishy-washy, wishy-washy. So I think that stuck over time, but it only stuck maybe because I didn't have new wars to fight. And in politics, you've got to be battling something. Reagan was battling Communism, the evil empire, the welfare queens, the people who are going to do bad things to the American way of life. So he was always a crusader on behalf of the people. You *need* an adversary. If you want to be a protagonist, you must have an antagonist. And so *I* became the antagonist for some of the liberals, but also for the media. And then I was running for president, so these are all

rhetorical opportunities. They don't amount to anything in the real world. I mean it is the real world of rhetoric, but it's not the world of substance. So it isn't as though some critic was saying, "Well, you should have created this program." If they thought that, they would have introduced a bill, and then we could have talked about that. It fighting, but when I ran for—as I said, most of those people all supported me.

09-00:32:48

Shafer:

Yeah, when Prop. 13 passed, it created a kind of crisis in Sacramento.

09-00:32:53

Brown:

Right, well we thought it did. But the truth is we had a lot of money—we had a big surplus!

09-00:33:02

Shafer:

Two-and-a-half billion, I think.

09-00:33:04

Brown:

Yeah, it was bigger than that, because we'd already reserved a billion and a half for property tax relief, so that was another—that wasn't there, so you add that to the \$2.5 [billion], now you've got four. And because of continuing inflation, it got to be five. It's like the budget now, they say—oh, it's January? All of a sudden we realize we've got even more money. When California's going up, it *really* goes up; and when it goes down, it *really* goes down. That's why it's hard to manage, and that's why you always need money. And so that's why it's very difficult. I call it *riding the tiger*.

09-00:33:40

Shafer:

I wonder if—you know, you were saying earlier that sometimes being governor wasn't that exciting.

09-00:33:48

Brown:

Yes.

09-00:33:48

Shafer:

You know, and I'm wondering if this passage of Prop. 13 created sort of a reason for you to get—?

09-00:33:55

Brown:

Well, it was a little more exciting for a while, but things get not exciting pretty quickly. And once it's done, it's done—and you've got to go on to new things. Well, then what was it? That was '78. Then we had '79. I'd have to go look and see what we did in '79.

09-00:34:22

Shafer:

Anything else about Prop. 13, guys?

09-00:34:25

Brown:

There's a lot of talk about 13, all you can say about 13, I don't know—like everything else, this takes four historians working ten years to figure anything

out. But I would say, without doing that, that the property taxes in California—well, number one, we never experienced this kind of inflation. This is what did in Jimmy Carter, and that was the *malaise speech*, so called. And then Reagan, with [Paul A.] Volcker, put us through the wringer, squeezed out the inflation, and then we went on. But while you're undergoing it—very hard to deal with it. And so the property tax revolt, or concern, was embedded in that larger inflation that also got Reagan elected.

But going back—and if you just leave out the inflation factor, the assessors were able to, with greater discretion—I was going to compare it to the indeterminate sentencing, but in some way, it allowed them a lot of discretion—and it was a scandal. And up to this point, assessors would keep the homeowner taxes down. And then when there was a shortfall, because the city council or the school district needed more money, they could assess the properties according to their judgment. But because they started playing favorites, and because of favors given—they low-balled the assessments for some business—they reformed it, and they wanted to make it determinate, fixed. So it became 25 percent of assessed value, for *all* property, no matter what.

Once you did that, and the homeowners' taxes started going up in ways that the industrial properties didn't—local government was powerless. Before, they could have sheltered that by shifting more of the money, like a split roll, but they had a de facto split roll, because they didn't have to be as uniform in the application of the property tax. So by making it rigid, you took away the temptation and the opportunity for corruption, but you also made inevitable the tax revolt. Just like when we took away the discretion of the parole board, I guess we made inevitable the legislative reaction of unending escalation of more punishment and more time in prison.

So, but it goes to the idea that we can't trust officials. And how do we know we can't trust them? Because regularly, there is a certain amount of corruption. It might be a small amount, but once you have the corruption, the press—and maybe some others—demand action. And what is the action? It's to take away the capacity for the corruption. What does *that* mean? That means take away discretion. That means limit the leadership and the decision-making ability of the leader. And so what that does is it makes a reaction less vigorous/less creative, because they've said, abstractly, this is the rule, without ever knowing about the tax revolt, or without ever knowing about the demands for more and more sentencing. They didn't know that.

That's why I always, I have to look at—oh, this is a reform. To what end? And what are the consequences? And it's very hard to see more than six months, let alone six years or twenty or thirty years in advance. Now, with a perspective of that, I can see that. And I've looked back on these things, and I can see that we do need leaders that have discretion. But on the other hand, under the rule of law, we want rules. But leaders act by making decisions, and

they don't go to some kind of machine that says just push the number, and the decision comes out. They think it through with all of the informality and intuition and experience they have. But that is something that the political system recoils against, and that's why—whether it's the War Powers Act—we don't want the president to decide. And we don't like the idea of the president, one guy—Trump, tomorrow, could say, "I'm pressing the button," and he could end human civilization in a day. "Boy, we're got to have some rules on that, but we don't." We probably will get them one of these days. But on lesser matters, I think it's very important to give more running room for the people who have the decision. Because a business does that. Government's getting more rigid; business is getting more flexible.

09-00:39:42

Shafer:

It seems like partly what you're saying too is that there's sort of this law of unintended consequences.

09-00:39:46

Brown:

Yeah, well, we—no, all the time.

09-00:39:51

Meeker:

Do you have any thoughts you'd like to share on the current efforts to modify or overturn Prop. 13?

09-00:39:59

Brown:

Just that I think that there's no support for that. There might be support for some kind of split roll, but that becomes its own problem. I mean there will certainly be a battle, except the people who would have to pay it will spend tens of millions to fight that.

09-00:40:15

Meeker:

What do you mean by *split roll*?

09-00:40:16

Brown:

Oh, that means that property can be appraised—could be given a different value for agriculture, apartments, home owners, utilities, industrial, operate cement factories. They can treat it differently. And the whole idea of the reform is to treat it all the same.

09-00:40:37

Shafer:

Yeah, and I think the ballot—the ballot measure would remove commercial property from the protections of Prop. 13.

09-00:40:43

Brown:

Right. Well, some of them just annually appraise it—there's different variations. But they say once you go down that road, you're going to get variations, and pretty soon your uniform property tax will be a Swiss cheese of exceptions. That's the way it is in other states. So that's the argument against it. I mean there is an argument for it. You have to find taxes, and there are still people who want to give tax breaks, and so then—nobody really wants taxes, except the liberals want to tax the rich. But the rich can move, so

this is a problem. There's inherent limit, particularly with the initiative in California on how much you can push the electorate.

09-00:41:31

Shafer:

Yeah, so just following through—in 1978 you're on the ballot in November. You're running against the attorney general, Evelle Younger. And did you feel at any point that, you know, your reelection was threatened?

09-00:41:48

Brown:

No, no. Not after a month or so, after we got Prop. 13 taken care of. But it's not about my feelings, by the way. People take surveys. You can read them, Younger can read them, and you just see what it is. And if you have any political judgment, you sense that. And then you validate it with the surveys that the papers put out all the time.

09-00:42:14

Holmes:

By embracing Prop. 13 after it passed—

09-00:42:18

Brown:

Well, I don't know if I embraced it—we do take an oath, “I swear to uphold the Constitution.” And that includes all the laws.

09-00:42:26

Holmes:

By not critiquing it?

09-00:42:28

Brown:

Well, that's a funny kind of embrace. I embrace you because I don't attack you. I wouldn't call that an embrace. I'd call that the absence of a continuing attack.

09-00:42:39

Holmes:

So the absence of critique on your end also seemed to take the wind out of your opponent's sails.

09-00:42:45

Brown:

Maybe—well, we're not going to relitigate an issue in the primary. No, the newsmen, the arbiters of our destiny—ha, ha—they're already tired. They move on to something else. So there's nothing you can do. And a lot of things in campaigns, they're determined by events. There is a lot of focus on campaign consultants and campaigning, and in many ways it's already done. It's the event, or it's how the candidate strikes the electorate, or what the positioning of the candidate *is* for the issues that become salient. Because issues have different values/different weight at different times. But you, as a candidate, are just who you are and what you've done. And so you only have certain maneuverability. And I think Younger was caught—I think it was close, polls would say it was close on primary night. But by the general election, it wasn't close at all, and that's because the function of government is to solve problems. This was already, by all-media focus, a big problem, and by all-media focus it was done. What else is there to do? Game over.

09-00:44:09

Shafer: So you won by 1.3 million votes.

09-00:44:11

Brown: Twenty-one percent, I think—something like that.

09-00:44:12

Shafer: It was a landslide, I guess, by any measure.

09-00:44:14

Brown: Yeah.

09-00:44:16

Shafer: Which was obviously a much bigger margin than you were originally elected by in 1974.

09-00:44:19

Brown: Yeah.

09-00:44:22

Shafer: And it was also bigger than the margin, I think, that Reagan had against your father in 1996.

09-00:44:26

Brown: Might have been. He had about 19 percent, maybe 18/19.

09-00:44:30

Shafer: Yeah. Is that—like what did you think was the mandate from the election for you?

09-00:44:34

Brown: Uh—zero. In other words, I don't believe in mandates. It's what's happening today. Don't tell me what happened a month ago—what's going on today? And then what are the consequences of the battles today? So yeah, you can't take your mandate. That's a total construct with no basis—I mean there's some basis. If you're very popular and you ran on something, you can keep that momentum going, but there's no particular mandate there.

Well, there was still the mood of anti taxation, and we changed the income tax and a few other things like that. We had some tax reductions further, keeping in the spirit. So that's not entirely true. I think we indexed the income tax. I think it was the people that did away with the inheritance tax, and we also did away with the inventory tax, or reduced it. So those were things. And that was kind of the spirit of the tax revolt. But then the tax revolt—it wins, and you can't live on yesterday's issue. That's like fighting the last war. It doesn't work that way. It's the moment—what's hot *now*. What's going on? 9/11 happens, people react. Before 9/11, that was one thing. So then he reacted, and Mission Accomplished, so that worked very well.

09-00:46:08

Shafer: Until it wasn't.



09-00:46:09

Brown: Until it didn't work. Well, it didn't work well for Iraq; it didn't work well for the future.

09-00:46:16

Shafer: To what extent did you feel like the results, which was a comfortable reelection, fuel your ambition for running for president?

09-00:46:24

Brown: Well, I thought that gave me a certain momentum, but that's not true. It doesn't give any momentum at all. Those people in New Hampshire didn't know about that.

09-00:46:37

Shafer: But in your mind it did?

09-00:46:39

Brown: Well, I can't tell you—but I mean it certainly didn't dissuade me, because I've already done it once before. And, what works in a campaign? You know, that's a good question. That's why, I think, later on—how did [Michael] Dukakis do well? He was from Massachusetts, so he could win that primary. So you have to be relevant to the Eastern Seaboard. So that's why the comfortable win—I suppose you could, if I'd been more clever, I could have used that and worked the media, and had my agents talk to all these reporters and others, and say, "Look at this, this guy Brown. He's a—." We didn't; we didn't do that, so that was, if there were any errors, it was the lack of national operation that could have sold all that. So it might have been sold, but of itself, it didn't go anywhere.

09-00:47:44

Shafer: No. Why wasn't there more of a national, organized national effort?

09-00:47:48

Brown: Probably because I had a campaign, then it was over. I didn't really run with professionals, so we didn't have an apparatus. Once I won, it was over. Maybe I underestimated what it takes for a national campaign.

09-00:48:11

Shafer: We talked to your sister a couple of weeks ago, and she told us that if you'd been married to Anne at that time you would have been president.

09-00:48:18

Brown: Yeah. Well, I probably wouldn't have run. [laughter] Yeah, there's a lot of pathways to being president, or to being governor, and you can't tell.

09-00:48:28

Shafer: But I guess her point was that—I think—that she would have provided some structure and some of those—the apparatus that you didn't have.

09-00:48:36

Brown: If she was interested in it, which I doubt. Yeah, we might have—might have, if yeah, if I'd spent time flying off to Washington and not going to the Zen Center, and not talking to Gregory Bateson or Stewart Brand, but going around Washington and New York and hobnob with various people of power and money. Yeah, it probably would have been better, might have been more credible, to be part of the process. I think that's true. I wouldn't know what I know today.

09-00:49:17

Meeker: You mentioned in the '76 campaign that one of the issues that seemed to resonate with potential voters in Maryland were composting toilets. [laughing]

09-00:49:26

Brown: Yeah. Not composting—low flush.

09-00:49:30

Meeker: Low-flush toilets.

09-00:49:31

Brown: Because I signed that bill. So that was the thing. Again, when you're governor, you can *do* things.

09-00:49:36

Meeker: Well, you had a lot of forward-looking ideas, some of which folks in the East Coast liked to call *flaky*.

09-00:49:43

Brown: They didn't call it flaky at the time. They didn't call them flaky in Maryland.

09-00:49:50

Meeker: This is going back, but there was the *Rolling Stone* article from 1976, that I think used that word, so—

09-00:49:57

Brown: Maybe.

09-00:49:58

Meeker: And it was pretty snarky.

09-00:49:59

Brown: Who wrote that one?

09-00:50:01

Meeker: I think that was Joe Klein.

09-00:50:03

Brown: Yeah—I don't remember. Well, that's the East Coast. And there was, from that point of view, an institutional familiarity. You know, there's big labor—there's Meany. They called him Meany—they didn't use his first name. You know, there's the Jewish community, there's the *New York Times*, there's

various people. So if you want to be their leader, you've got to be around and familiarize yourself. So I didn't do enough of that. So I enjoyed the outsider, but the outsider wasn't enough. Now, Reagan was an outsider, but he was an insider, because he had the money behind him, and he had the conservative movement, such as it was, whereas I didn't have some liberal movement. First of all, it didn't have the same power as the conservative movement, so there was no liberal movement. And it's much more fragmented, and that's what makes the Democratic constituency very hard to negotiate.

09-00:51:05

Meeker:

Well, so in '76 you had these outsider ideas, but then in 1980 you are identified, you know, with the tax revolt. Was that an idea that you felt you could use?

09-00:51:17

Brown:

I thought it would work, but the tax/balanced budget/anti-taxes—that doesn't fly with Democrats. Democrats want more spending. They don't want more taxes, but they want to hear about programs. Or, well, it's not clear what they want. Every election's different. And even the [Ted] Kennedy/Carter—what was it all about? I guess it was Carter's incumbency beat back Kennedy, and Kennedy didn't have enough of an issue. They asked him, "Why are you running?" But he had a hard time telling. That's because when these people run, they run because they want to run—and that's the truth, no matter what anybody tells you, as far as I know. Now, they may have a thought in their head that they're running to give back, or they're running to save the republic—or maybe that's what Washington did, but I wouldn't ascribe that to lesser politicians. But you do need an issue, and the incumbent—I can't remember what Kennedy, how Carter pulled that off—yeah, there wasn't a lot of issue there. I mean you can blame Carter, but it was easier for a Republican to attack, as it turned out, with Reagan. So the fact that Carter was weak was true, but it didn't make any difference for a Democratic attack. It really said you're weak, and that's why we're going to have a Republican. That's just the way it is.

09-00:52:52

Holmes:

Governor in running for reelection in 1978, the tax revolt aside, did you notice a change in the California electorate? I mean you had now been in public service and elective office for eight years.

09-00:53:07

Brown:

In '80?

09-00:53:08

Holmes:

No, in '78, when running for reelection.

09-00:53:09

Brown:

Yeah, four years, yeah.

- 09-00:53:12  
Holmes: Well, and then counting—if we counted secretary of state.
- 09-00:53:13  
Brown: So yeah, what?
- 09-00:53:15  
Holmes: Did you have differences in alliances, or different segments of the electorate, that you had to think about in running for elective office?
- 09-00:53:26  
Brown: Well, it's different. 1978, what is it, 1978, you've got Carter, you have—that's our world. And in 1970, you had Nixon as president, and Reagan as governor, and what are people talking about?
- 09-00:53:47  
Meeker: In 1978 you have the Briggs Initiative, which was a kind of a big deal.
- 09-00:53:51  
Brown: Uh—but that was the primary, wasn't it? I don't recall that in the campaign.
- 09-00:53:57  
Meeker: No, the Briggs Initiative was in November.
- 09-00:53:59  
Shafer: November, yeah.
- 09-00:54:00  
Holmes: Proposition 6.
- 09-00:54:01  
Brown: Well, I think both Younger and I opposed it.
- 09-00:54:03  
Shafer: Oh, really?
- 09-00:54:04  
Brown: So, but that made it a non-issue.
- 09-00:54:06  
Meeker: Reagan came out in opposition to it as well.
- 09-00:54:08  
Brown: At the end, at the end. He put out a one-word statement that was very vague.
- 09-00:54:12  
Shafer: And I seem to remember a video of you and Jimmy Carter. He was campaigning in California.
- 09-00:54:16  
Brown: Oh, I told him to attack it. Was that about the Briggs Initiative?

- 09-00:54:18  
Shafer: Yeah.
- 09-00:54:19  
Brown: Could be.
- 09-00:54:19  
Shafer: Yeah, what do you, how it—what’s the story?
- 09-00:54:23  
Brown: No, I just was telling him, “Just mention this.” I think—yeah, and somebody said well, you ought to—I think someone might have told me. I think someone *did* tell me. I don’t think I thought of that spontaneously.
- 09-00:54:34  
Shafer: And it looked like, on the video, you just kind of whispered it in his ear, and he said it as an afterthought, yeah.
- 09-00:54:39  
Brown: Yeah, yeah.
- 09-00:54:39  
Meeker: Did Carter even know what it was? [laughing]
- 09-00:54:41  
Brown: I’m not sure. He probably did. He knew a lot. Carter was a campaign junkie, as it were. Even though he was kind of a reformer.
- 09-00:54:54  
Holmes: In your opposition—I remember in our earlier sessions you—Randy Collier, the Silver Fox from Siskiyou County gave you the advice of—
- 09-00:55:05  
Brown: But that had nothing to do with the Briggs Initiative.
- 09-00:55:06  
Holmes: No, but the job at the campaign, you know, is not to do things that lose you votes, meaning—
- 09-00:55:11  
Brown: Well, no—but everybody says that. That’s like two plus two equals four.
- 09-00:55:15  
Holmes: [laughing] Okay.
- 09-00:55:16  
Brown: That’s fundamental to any politician.
- 09-00:55:17  
Holmes: But in regards to staking a public position on too many things—
- 09-00:55:23  
Brown: Well, right.

09-00:55:25

Holmes: What made you want to take a public position on the Briggs Initiative?

09-00:55:29

Brown: Well, that was the liberal side of the equation. This is the vast majority of people that I knew, this was overreach—and it was unprecedented. You're going to go look into teachers' backgrounds and tell them who can teach and who can't? It became an unliberal thing. And then there's Briggs. John Briggs was not a favorite in the legislature. He did a death penalty initiative too, so he was a wild man. So it was not a responsible—it wasn't the serious elders of the community saying we need to protect our children by this initiative. It was John Briggs, a *clearly* right-wing politician looking to make a move, and so, therefore, it became obvious to oppose that on many grounds.

09-00:56:27

Shafer: I was going to say when that was defeated there was a sense of jubilation, you know, in the gay community.

09-00:56:32

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

09-00:56:33

Shafer: For sure. And a sense that maybe the gay community was beginning to flex its political muscles.

09-00:56:39

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

09-00:56:40

Shafer: Did you see it that way? That there was a constituency that you know, like—

09-00:56:44

Brown: No, I saw the fact that we had a political debate on something related to gay rights. That made it a political issue, and it, in effect, took it out of the shadows and put it into ordinary public discourse, so that was the big thing. It domesticated the issue, as it were, and made it less exotic. And that's the important milestone. Here we had another issue—are you a yes?/are you a no? Whereas before that, the whole topic was fraught with concerns, and something very unusual, not mainstream. So that's what it did. It went from the margin to the mainstream.

09-00:57:29

Shafer: Yeah, or it began to, anyway.

09-00:57:32

Brown: Well, no—on that issue it became mainstream, with Reagan and the newspaper editorials. People writing about it—writing about teachers, gay teachers, voting yes, or voting no. So that was quite an educational exercise, if you think of the initiatives. They can have that value. And that had value for gay rights, unlike the nuclear freeze initiative. That also passed—well, one

was defeated, one was passed, but I don't think that provided any educational—it didn't go anywhere after that, so I just contrast those two things. An initiative *can* be the beginning of a much larger political understanding, or it can be a dead end. I think the nuclear freeze was somewhat of a dead-end quality because there were not enough people behind it.

09-00:58:33

Meeker:

Well, did it raise the—did it raise the issue for gay rights, for you?

09-00:58:38

Brown:

Well, it raised the issue. No, it took the issue from the margins and made it a more ordinary, garden-variety topic, so it did that.

09-00:58:51

Holmes:

And for you as governor, did that make gay rights an issue that in the future that you would address?

09-00:58:58

Brown:

Yeah, because you would talk about it, easier to talk about it. I did talk about it in my inauguration in 1979. But in 1975 I didn't talk about it, but it was a different ball game, different issue.

09-00:59:12

Meeker:

You know, in 1978 it wasn't really clear which way the political winds were blowing on this issue. I mean, you look at Anita Bryant and her success in Florida.

09-00:59:22

Brown:

Right.

09-00:59:24

Meeker:

And was there serious concern in the liberal political scene about this becoming an issue that could be used against Democrats?

09-00:59:41

Brown:

I'm not sure. I'm sure in conservative counties Republican politicians were thinking about it, and Democrats were thinking about it as well in the same way. I'm sure people in Fresno were thinking about it differently than San Francisco or Los Angeles.

09-00:59:54

Shafer:

It's interesting that something was put on the ballot to *hurt* gay people ended up helping them politically.

09-00:59:59

Brown:

Well, because it hadn't even been debated before. It wasn't talked about. Now it's just another thing. Do you remember the proposition?

09-01:00:10

Meeker:

Prop. 6.

- 09-01:00:11  
Brown: So it was Prop. 6. So you've got Prop. 1, Prop. 5, Prop. 6, so now it is what I call a more garden-variety issue, and that helped that issue.
- 09-01:00:22  
Shafer: So later that year, Harvey Milk and George Moscone were assassinated. Jonestown happened a couple of weeks before that.
- 09-01:00:30  
Brown: Was that before that?
- 09-01:00:31  
Shafer: Yeah, yeah, first it was Jonestown.
- 09-01:00:34  
Meeker: They all happened after the election.
- 09-01:00:35  
Brown: That was '78?
- 09-01:00:36  
Holmes: So it's all November of '78.
- 09-01:00:37  
Shafer: Yeah, it was mid-November, Jonestown, and then November 27, I think, was the assassinations. Do you remember where you were when that happened? How you heard about it?
- 09-01:00:46  
Brown: Which one?
- 09-01:00:47  
Shafer: Moscone.
- 09-01:00:47  
Brown: They happened on different days.
- 09-01:00:50  
Shafer: Well, Moscone/Milk.
- 09-01:00:51  
Brown: I was in Sacramento.
- 09-01:00:53  
Shafer: And Moscone, of course, had been a state senator. And I don't know what your relationship was like with him.
- 09-01:00:59  
Brown: I knew him. Well, my brother-in-law knew him, because he went to St. Ignatius, and he played basketball. But I didn't know him that well.
- 09-01:01:05  
Shafer: Yeah, well, when you—like do you remember how you heard about it?



09-01:01:09

Brown: Yeah, I think I was having breakfast with Linda Ronstadt in Sacramento, and the state police came by and said, "We've had an attack in city hall," so we've got to be here to—I don't know what they—we left, and—

09-01:01:25

Shafer: How did you—do you remember how you reacted?

09-01:01:26

Brown: No.

09-01:01:29

Shafer: Finish your breakfast?

09-01:01:31

Brown: I don't remember that. I remember I was with Linda Ronstadt. I do remember that. I *think* I remember that, but I'd have to go ask. I mean, you know, our memory plays tricks with us. I think that's the case.

09-01:01:44

Holmes: Did you ever meet Harvey Milk?

09-01:01:50

Brown: No, no. I didn't go to San Francisco that much. I lived in LA, so I went from LA to Sacramento, and San Francisco was a political event. Sometimes I went to the Green Gulch.

09-01:02:05

Shafer: In Marin.

09-01:02:06

Brown: But I didn't get into the political process of San Francisco very much. Well, I didn't get into the process of LA, Tom Bradley, either. I don't think I ever went to city hall. I mean when my—the day I was inaugurated. The same thing like the lieutenant governor, you don't talk to the lieutenant governor that much. You know, the governor has plenty to do, and it's a nice full sandbox of activities—and that was enough.

09-01:02:39

Holmes: The 1960s had its share of political assassinations.

09-01:02:46

Brown: Yeah.

09-01:02:47

Shafer: The 1970s also proved just as violent. What was your read—

09-01:02:51

Brown: What happened in the seventies?

- 09-01:02:53  
Holmes: Well, we have these assassinations—the Zebra killings, the Zodiac killer as well, all of which happened in California. What was your—?
- 09-01:03:06  
Brown: They were before, right?
- 09-01:03:07  
Holmes: Mm-hmm. That’s correct. Did you—
- 09-01:03:10  
Brown: SLA—yeah.
- 09-01:03:11  
Holmes: Did you think much about the escalating political violence that you saw during that time?
- 09-01:03:18  
Brown: Well, that was a little more when I was secretary of state, I think. They blew up a computer in Fresno—so it was going on for—I think, when was the SLA? That was—
- 09-01:03:30  
Meeker: Seventy-four. SLA was Patty Hearst.
- 09-01:03:35  
Brown: And the Zebra killings—that was San Francisco, wasn’t it?
- 09-01:03:38  
Shafer: That was earlier, yeah. Art Agnos was shot, actually, by the—
- 09-01:03:40  
Brown: The Zodiac? Yeah, that was in San Francisco. Well, I lived in LA or Sacramento, went to the state—
- 09-01:03:51  
Holmes: Well, I mean, I guess maybe another way to put it—
- 09-01:03:54  
Brown: I didn’t know Art Agnos—and wasn’t, what’s his name—Leo McCarthy. Wasn’t he shot too?
- 09-01:04:02  
Meeker: At Jonestown—oh, Leo Ryan.
- 09-01:04:04  
Brown: No, Jonestown was someone else.
- 09-01:04:08  
Holmes: I guess it’s just to say that if we look back at, say, Earl Warren’s time in office; your father’s time in office, political assassinations, or this type of political violence, was not really part of the stable environment.

09-01:04:20

Brown: Right.

09-01:04:22

Holmes: But in the 1960s and 1970s it was. Did you think about, you know, this escalating violence that you saw?

09-01:04:29

Brown: Well, I think the greater shock was the assassination of Kennedy. *That* was a big shock, because it had never happened in my lifetime before. And then Bobby Kennedy, certainly. That was during the McCarthy-Kennedy campaign in California, so I remember that. But I don't know what to say about these events. You know, they happen—synagogue, Florida, the bar, the schools—and you know, what—I mean they're definitely—they are symptomatic of something in our society that is not good. But as you see, around the world, you see these assassins—these suicide attacks. So yeah, there is something—a loosening about the fabric of society. Now, it's a little different. I mean Harvey Milk, that guy Dan White, he went a little crazy, I guess. People do strange things, like that thing in the Simi Valley. It happens, so I'm not sure what you're looking for. I mean actually, if you ask me, I fear more a nuclear blunder and a hundred million people get killed than—okay, these things seem to be more random. You know, things go on in people's heads. We have all these people running around, so stuff happens.

09-01:06:10

Shafer: Well, and there were two of those incidents in—going back to 1975, one of them with President Ford in Sacramento.

09-01:06:17

Brown: Right—right, when I was there. Squeaky—Fromme. Well, you know, what—he walked across, they said he was shot—or they shot him, but everything carried on, and we went on our business. It didn't really ripple the waters that much.

09-01:06:34

Shafer: Didn't you have a meeting with him after that?

09-01:06:36

Brown: Yeah, I think we did.

09-01:06:37

Shafer: He came into the office or the governor's mansion?

09-01:06:38

Brown: He was pretty calm.

09-01:06:39

Shafer: He was pretty calm?

09-01:06:40

Brown:

I think so. I have a picture with him. My nieces have a picture with him, so I know some have it. Well, maybe I'm a little abstract, but I find the threat of a big blunder more real to me than some immediate killing. I mean that's happening every day. We have two thousand killings, so divide 365, what's that? 6 a day? There's six homicides a day, not counting—we're not counting suicides. So people are dying, people are being killed, and under terrible circumstances. But I'm more focused on these large historical—since I can't do anything about that. And you know, they did it. What could you do? No one could do anything about it. I mean what could you do about Dan White?

09-01:07:46

Shafer:

Well, they did some things. I mean—they put metal detectors at city hall. They—

09-01:07:52

Brown:

Oh right, so you do all that. But I'm saying prevent *that* one, because you're asking react to that. But react with what kind of emotional activity or investment?

09-01:08:08

Meeker:

Well, what about discourse? You know, when I interviewed Willie Brown, he talked about the Milk/Moscone assassinations. Granted, it was in his own back yard of San Francisco, but how these really had a psychological impact on him where he describes—one, giving up the idea of running for mayor in San Francisco until much later.

09-01:08:29

Brown:

Oh, he did.

09-01:08:30

Meeker:

Yeah.

09-01:08:30

Brown:

Well, it didn't affect Feinstein that way.

09-01:08:32

Meeker:

Right.

09-01:08:33

Brown:

In fact, she did a commercial on it, so she went with it, as it were, right? That's the big commercial—the grabber. Isn't that—was that, is that the one they call the grabber? Where they show the news footage of Moscone, and then she takes over and is speaking as president of the board of supervisors. So it became a political advertisement.

09-01:09:00

Shafer:

It served her well, yeah.

09-01:09:02

Brown:

So I'm not quite sure—see, these politicians are a strange breed, so don't try to apply your normal human sensibilities to the political animal. They react differently. [laughing]

And I say—I am more worried about the destruction of climate change, at the mass migrations because of the lack of food production, and then mass migrations going to America and the rest of Europe—what we're seeing *already* in Europe, and what that's going to do to democratic governance, what it's going to do to just completely upend our world. Plus, while we're waiting, as the various countries—particularly Russia and the United States build new exotic nuclear weapons and speak ill of each other and conjure up all sorts of bad things about the other, we're raising the probability that we're going to have a big blowout. And we're not talking about one person or ten people—we're talking *millions* of people, quite frankly. Something can be done about that, and I'm *doing* something about that.

But I am more impressed with these large cataclysmic events: World War I, World War II, the extinction of the Indians. Things that happened maybe in this neighborhood. When I think about these mountains and kind of—Californians going around shooting men, women, and children for—you know, hating the Indians. What I was reading in that book, *An American Genocide: [The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873]*, about Indians—what are they? “Insects in human form,” and one of them called them that—it sounded very much like the Nazis. So those big threats that are very much present in human history are not absent today, from the point of view of threats. And if you live in Syria or Iraq or Afghanistan, they're happening to you right now. So the question is, is that local activity, of which we're so involved in as Americans, or the American government, is that going to spread through this escalation of all this anti-China, anti-Russia, anti-Iran, anti-this, anti-that? And that same thing's going on over there—anti-America.

So what one can do is try to deal with that, and I am actively engaged in both those issues. So maybe that's more abstract, but to me it's very real, because (a) it's very serious, hasn't happened yet, so we might be able to do something about it—I might be able to. So that's why I'm directing my energy, very much so—and so that's the way I respond to that immediate—and a lot of these, this business of public grief. And I know that's a role, and some politicians take to it. You know, they go to fires like fireflies. They want to put on their flak jacket. And other people want to go to tragic events and grieve. I even heard someone say, “Well, that politician, he's one of the best grievors there are.” [laughter] Okay. Well, that doesn't sound very nice. It sounds a little cynical, but there's an aspect of that. And so I would like to—I mean that is a role the president, the governor or mayor, you have to play your part there.

But I think it's *more* important to try to see big issues and deal with them. For example, maybe like the Oroville Dam. If the Oroville Dam broke, you know, hundreds of thousands of people could die, so let's make sure we've got that dam fixed. Or preventing a nuclear accident with Russia or all the other things that could go wrong. And now the threats are getting greater and greater, so it's not about looking backwards or how things—things were comparatively manageable, in all the instances you mentioned. But now with the development of bioterrorism, CRISPR, where the terrorists are going to be able to make various germs that can be airborne, and then you have AI and 3-D printing. If you want to think about it, there's a *lot* to be worried about, and I would rather think about those things than each little event that shows up.

09-01:13:47

Meeker:

So I do want to turn our attention back a little bit to what was going on in the mid to late 1970s, and one of the ways in which people grouped these different things together, these tragedies was a symptom of the excesses of the sixties and seventies.

09-01:14:08

Brown:

Yeah.

09-01:14:09

Meeker:

And maybe the one that is most prominent in that is Jonestown, where you have a charismatic leader, vaguely on the left, exploiting ideas around racial equality, and then ultimately engaged in murder and mass suicide.

09-01:14:32

Brown:

Yeah, that was really unusual.

09-01:14:36

Meeker:

With charismatic leaders, with ideas that were on the edge, did Jonestown give you pause to think about all that had transpired in terms of new thinking and new ideas over the last twenty years?

09-01:14:55

Brown:

Well, Jonestown is very evident that a charismatic leader can be extremely destructive. Yeah, that really was quite an event, because of the magnitude of it. And it does show you that you have to be very careful about people who—these authoritarian leaders. And there were complaints about Jonestown—what's his name?

09-01:15:27

Meeker:

Jim Jones.

09-01:15:28

Shafer:

Jim Jones.

09-01:15:28

Brown:

Jim Jones, yeah, Jim Jones. Yeah, I'd heard some complaints about him.

09-01:15:33

Shafer: He was very politically connected.

09-01:15:34

Brown: In San Francisco, again.

09-01:15:36

Shafer: Right, with George Moscone *and* Harvey Milk.

09-01:15:38

Brown: Well, because they were there, and, like Delancey Street, he would deliver bodies. So from a local point of view, that was something. But that was his—when I was secretary of state the people from Round Valley would write letters and say, “Pastor Jones has asked us to write to you and commend what a good job you’re doing as secretary of state.” I must have gotten twenty-five/fifty letters about that. And I said, “Who the hell is this guy Jones?” And then later on, I heard about it. But again, it’s happening in San Francisco. I’m either in LA or in Sacramento, so I didn’t go down for their elections or local elections. But, you know, these people were desperate, and that’s demagoguery. That’s what happens. Look at Hitler. In some ways, look at what Trump’s doing. So people like to follow these characters. Look at the ISIS people. So yeah, that is quite a danger—mob psychology, mass hysteria. These are real things, and so they could happen again.

09-01:16:51

Shafer: Governor, a couple of times today you’ve mentioned Linda Ronstadt.

09-01:16:55

Brown: Yeah. Well, you mentioned it because that’s where I was.

09-01:16:58

Shafer: Yeah, but I have to tell you whenever I’ve told somebody we’re working on this project, almost everyone says, “Are you going to ask him about Linda Ronstadt.”

09-01:17:05

Brown: Yeah, well, yeah—well, you have. [Shafer laughs]

09-01:17:08

Shafer: So how did you meet and—?

09-01:17:09

Brown: I met her at the El Adobe restaurant one night.

09-01:17:12

Shafer: In LA.

09-01:17:13

Brown: When I was—I guess I was secretary of state then. Yeah. Then I got to know her better after I’d become governor. So went out for several years, and so that was, that was a very—that was a significant chapter in my life.

09-01:17:37

Shafer: What was significant about it?

09-01:17:40

Brown: [laughing] Well, the fact that it happened.

09-01:17:43

Shafer: A lot of things happen. They're not all significant. [laughing]

09-01:17:46

Brown: Well, no, not that many. I don't have too many relationships that lasted that long. In fact, very few, so that was unusual. And she was a dynamic personality, a lot of fun to be with, and that was a whole world—of music, rock and roll, all those—I met Keith of the Rolling Stones. I met different people.

09-01:18:16

Shafer: Keith Richards?

09-01:18:17

Brown: Yeah, no, I think I met the other guy, Ronnie Wood. I think his wife was having a baby—out there at Peter Asher's house, so I met some of those people. So I was peripherally connected with some of the different people.

09-01:18:32

Shafer: I mean that was a window into a very cool culture.

09-01:18:35

Brown: It was cool, but it—yeah. It is, but you know, so is politics, so is being governor. [laughing] So, you know, everything is just different human experiences.

09-01:18:48

Shafer: Can—can you say like what was it about—as you say, you haven't had a lot of long-term relationships with women. That was a significant one. You know, what was—what made it work for the two of you?

09-01:19:03

Brown: What always makes it work is there's an attraction, and also—it's exciting, it's fun, it's not boring. There's vitality there. That it's not the mundane, which is not something that I'm drawn to—the non-mundane, that is.

09-01:19:30

Shafer: And did you have—do you have a favorite Ronstadt song?

09-01:19:36

Brown: Uh—a favorite? Well, I like “Desperado” myself. In fact, we were just listening the other day, and a lot of people sing that song. She has a lot of songs. I liked a lot of her songs. I remarked there are all these great songs. People don't play them that much. That keeps changing. It's like the politics. It just—it burns out fast. But I think those songs have still lasted.



09-01:20:05

Shafer: You went to—Kenya, I think it was with her in 1979. There's that sort of iconic picture of the two of you on the airplane.

09-01:20:10

Brown: In the *Newsweek*, yeah.

09-01:20:13

Shafer: Yeah. You know—how did she react to the kind of—attention?

09-01:20:16

Brown: She didn't like the attention. She was attention averse. Although now she's going around with her book and talking a little bit, but she didn't like publicity; she didn't like the press.

09-01:20:30

Shafer: Yeah. And for you was it like—it gave you—you, and your persona, kind of a glamour, added to it. Was that something you were happy about? Or what—

09-01:20:41

Brown: Well, the reason I went there was Huey Johnson said the United Nations Environmental Program was in Nairobi, "So you ought to go over there to look at desertification." So I said I'm going to go over there. Well, then I said wait a minute—should I bring her? Well, you know—not clear that was a smart move, but I said okay, I think I will—and I did.

09-01:21:04

Shafer: But it became—I mean your relationship became—do you think it was bigger, in the public imagination, than it deserved?

09-01:21:11

Brown: Well, it was and it isn't. You know in politics, people don't vote for your relationships. They vote for where you are positioned in their political concerns. They may talk about the partners and the spouses, but at the end of the day, they voted Reagan for Reagan, not for Nancy. And they voted Bill for Bill, not for Hillary. And the same with all these other people—even Roosevelt. Eleanor was probably the most significant first lady there ever was, but they—it's still Roosevelt, I think. And the same thing with Obama. So yeah, these things feed the narrative, but they don't change the trajectory of the narrative, in my opinion.

09-01:22:00

Meeker: Did you guys have conversations about how—how to best manage the press and how to best manage the attention that was going to come to you?

09-01:22:07

Brown: No. That's a little too—that's more conscious than I think we were.

09-01:22:12

Shafer: She did a fundraiser for you—at least one, maybe more.

- 09-01:22:15  
Brown: When?
- 09-01:22:15  
Shafer: In 1980, I think.
- 09-01:22:16  
Brown: Yeah, with the Eagles? Yeah, we did a couple of those.
- 09-01:22:19  
Shafer: Yeah, how did that go?
- 09-01:22:20  
Brown: The Rolling Thunder Revue, I think. I can't remember which one it was. We did it in San Diego—Jackson Browne, I think. I still see Jackson Browne. He came by to the Capitol.
- 09-01:22:31  
Shafer: Hmm. Is he living in LA still?
- 09-01:22:34  
Brown: Uh, yes, he has a place—yeah. Anti-nuclear, that was a little bit of the theme there. The anti-nuclear—well, I guess that was more with Jackson Browne.
- 09-01:22:50  
Shafer: Yeah, well—and some of that was post-Three Mile Island too, I think, which was eighty—no?
- 09-01:22:55  
Brown: Mmm, no, it was pre—
- 09-01:22:57  
Shafer: Was it?
- 09-01:22:58  
Brown: Yeah, I think so.
- 09-01:23:00  
Shafer: Yeah. What was—what was the, what were the Eagles concerts like for you? Or did you say I've seen it—
- 09-01:23:05  
Brown: Well, they were all very exciting. The thing I noticed, about concerts, everybody was happy. They were all total unanimity. In politics, at best, it's fifty-fifty, so I appreciated entertainers or leaders or religious personalities. They could have the entire auditorium, as it were, in unison. [laughing] Whereas in politics, very divisive.
- 09-01:23:31  
Shafer: So that kind of glow maybe helped you a little bit?

09-01:23:34

Brown:

No, but I appreciated it, and can't transfer it. But I remember being at a meeting in Santa Monica at the Miramar Hotel, and it was a Democratic meeting, and there's a lot of grumpiness at Democratic Party—particularly the party apparatus—they get grumpy. And I remember walking down the hall, and there were all these people. They were dressed much nicer than the Democrats—I mean not lavishly, but just very nice, appropriately dressed for—it was the morning. And they all looked so happy. And I said, "What the hell is this?" Well, it was some religious gathering. I don't know—Jehovah[']s] Witnesses—or something. But they all looked so happy. And then I walked down—and then I go back to these wrangly—so anyway, I have a certain desire for a more harmonious existence, as opposed to the acrimonious and the bitterness that often attends to political activity.

09-01:24:35

Shafer:

Hmm, that's interesting to hear you say that. Because you've obviously been in politics your whole—you grew up with politics, you were in politics. You didn't *have* to go into politics.

09-01:24:42

Brown:

Yeah. I didn't have to. But I don't have to go to the party meetings either. [laughter] But my rallies were all obviously very exciting.

09-01:24:50

Meeker:

Was Linda Ronstadt interested in politics? In your ideas?

09-01:24:54

Brown:

Some. In some. I don't know—she was very focused on music. And I was very impressed with how serious you have to be. I mean—it's work. So I wouldn't say—she is very interested, even today. In fact, I'd say she's more interested, in some ways. Not just in politics, but literature, history.

09-01:25:20

Shafer:

So you're still in touch with her?

09-01:25:21

Brown:

Yeah.

09-01:25:24

Shafer:

Yeah. Anything else, guys?

09-01:25:26

Brown:

No.

09-01:25:27

Shafer:

That's a good place to—

09-01:25:27

Brown:

That's it?

09-01:25:28

Shafer: Good place to stop?

09-01:25:28

Brown: All right!

## Interview 10: June 10, 2019 [in the morning]

10-00:00:00

Shafer: This is June 10, 2019. We're at Mountain House with Governor Jerry Brown, and this is recording session ten. I'm with Martin Meeker and Todd Holmes from The Bancroft Library. I'm Scott Shafer from KQED. And yeah, so just pick up on that if you want to—is there anything about Prop. 13 that you want to add that would—?

10-00:00:18

Brown: Well, after the passage of Proposition 13, I invited a number of groups to come, and a number of individuals to come, to Sacramento and discuss the ramifications, the implications of the new law—Proposition 13. And among the people that came were George Shultz and Arthur Laffer—and others. Of course they're working out of the bailout bill, which I think was AB 8. It was worked out by the staff of the Finance Department, which does so many things in the state government. So they worked it out, and that's all within the budgetary documents to see.

10-00:01:12

Shafer: What did you feel like you had to—you wanted them to address? What was the fundamental problem?

10-00:01:17

Brown: Well, the fundamental problem was that the property tax had been cut by two-thirds, and the property tax funded police, fire, emergency services, schools, among other things. So some source of revenue had to be developed, and that was only the state at that point. The state did have a large surplus, and I certainly couldn't foresee what the succeeding years would be. But as it turned out, we had another recession, and yet the state bailout worked and continues to work. And that was something that I think is of interest—that this is not outside economists. This is the staff of the Department of Finance working to fashion statutory language allocating state revenues that are collected under that law. So what would change was the existing laws that had the local government depending on local property-tax revenue, and we shifted it to state funding. And one of the largest and growing sources over the next several decades was the income tax, and the role of the income tax in financing local government activity.

So from a property tax which remained constant, even growing in recessions, we, being the state, replaced that with state funding which derived from income. And the income tax became increasingly focused on the upper 1 to 2 percent—or more than that, but the bias is toward the richest Californians—and a very small number of them. And that source of revenue changed with the up and down of the stock market, of the economy. And therefore, what was a stable, predictable source of funding called a property tax, which was in the hands of local government elected officials, now was shifted to the legislature. They were facing, for the first time, a two-thirds vote to appropriate the money; and secondly, if the local government

wanted to add to that, they were facing an election of two-thirds of the people. Both of those factors were new, and they put in constraints in government.

Now, since Prop. 13, the revenue has certainly dramatically increased. It's gigantic at the state and local level, but I think the critical variable is not so much the source or the amount of money, but its volatility, and there's where we are today. But the important point was that the decisions were made by professional staff, because the detail and the complexity of the revenue statutes were beyond almost all the politicians, and then secondly, what the staff did, ratified by the legislature and myself. But what they did was make the shift from a stable local tax called the property tax, to a very volatile tax called the state income tax.

10-00:05:06

Shafer: As you said, there was a surplus at the time, so the state was able to backfill a lot of that money.

10-00:05:09

Brown: Yeah.

10-00:05:11

Shafer: To what extent at the time did you and the legislature feel that that was a sustainable long-term solution?

10-00:05:17

Brown: I don't think we think in terms of a long term/sustainable solution. It's not clear that anybody does that. I was always concerned what it would be in a few years. I can't tell you exactly, but I think your question assumes a level of forecasting or future-oriented focus which is generally beyond the capacity of the people who deal with these problems. And not because of their inherent incompetence or limitation, but that's just the nature of what can be known by anybody, much less a collection of government leaders and staff.

10-00:06:22

Holmes: Governor, I wanted to get your opinion on that, because in some ways when we look at Prop. 13, there seems to be a conservative paradox, meaning the proponents of Prop. 13 were able to cut taxes, property taxes. Yet at the same time, it also, therefore, made local governments and local communities, therefore, dependent on the state.

10-00:06:45

Brown: Yeah.

10-00:06:48

Holmes: What was your opinion on that?

10-00:06:50

Brown: It didn't seem like the major issue at the time. Yeah, the problem was that there was a property tax—the challenge was that there was a property tax revolt. People were upset. At the same time they voted the cut in services; I think the voters didn't think the cuts would be made, and they turned out to be right. There were

obviously some cuts, but by and large, government went on its merry way. And every government, I'd say, almost without exception, is spending a lot more money than it was then. Whether it's more money in inflation-adjusted terms for population, that you'd have to look into.

10-00:07:31

Meeker:

May I ask a question? So you had mentioned both George Shultz and Arthur Laffer came and consulted with you as this transition was happening. What kinds of ideas were they providing? I mean they're typically associated with a more conservative side of the perspective.

10-00:07:48

Brown:

Yeah. Well, I invited labor union representatives as well. I don't know that *idea* is the right word I would use. The government functions in an environment of journalistic scrutiny, and so when you have to propose a solution, you have to build support—and you don't build support by just inviting the legislators down to your office. As governor, you have to create some public activity that is reported on by the newspapers and television and radio, and through that reporting, a certain amount of attention, interest—in the vernacular, *buzz*—takes place, and that gives salience to the topic.

So in reality, all this is being done in the bowels of the bureaucracy by what I call *the gnomes*—also, *the staff*—and they're doing it. But in order to satisfy the newspaper people, who need news, and the legislators who need focusing external sources of information, the method I chose—which was similar to what I used in the farm labor movement—was to bring people into the governor's office, after they leave, to walk outside at the door or the outer office and speak to the press. And that was a way of building attention in radio, news, and television—and newspapers, that then becomes part of the discussion. Because absent the news, the government can't function, because people don't know what to think. They're not going to sit there and delve into the documents.

This staff stuff is pretty turgid, and I would say I myself would not have read the actual laws. The laws are beyond the legislators, the governor, the people. That's kind of a mythology: that there are laws being made by representatives of government. The laws are being made increasingly, at every level, by staff. And the staff are trained professionals, who alone know what they're talking about. For example, if you're talking about that bailout measure, would there be fifty people? Maybe there'd be a hundred, two hundred, three hundred—I don't know. But out of 24 million Californians, you're talking about a tiny, infinitesimal subset of individuals who can apply their mind and intelligence to, first of all, understanding it.

As far as about writing it, you're talking under a dozen, although there will be some legislative lobbyists or staffers in LA and San Francisco, some of the larger places, that will look at this. And then they will instruct their lobbyists, and that will create the atmospherics. So there's a lot of show going on. But in reality, it's

a staff function that is looked at by other staffs, in other local government, local governments, and then it shapes into a bill. The bill will have a summary, kind of headnotes that people will look at, and there will be talking points derived, in one form or another. And the talking points will be recited, and the people will take votes, and then it will happen. But I don't want people to think that the legislators and the governor were engaged in some intellectual deliberation, actually going over the provisions. Now, they would talk—I can't remember exactly what, if there were any sticking points or not, but there's where it is.

We had the surplus, which I carefully built up, just like the same surplus I built this last time—relative to the size of budget, \$24 million general fund versus \$130 million general fund, I think it's comparable. It's about \$5 billion. So that was there. Now, some people call that the *obscene surplus*—Jess Unruh did that, because people don't want government to have extra money that it's not spending, because that's the people's money. They should get it. On the other hand, because of the cyclical nature of our economy and the extreme volatility of our revenue sources, if you don't build up a big surplus, you will create a huge deficit. And the deficit now is much bigger than it was when I was governor the first time. And that deficit will be funded by cutbacks on programs everybody likes, on various borrowing and accounting maneuvers that will tide people over until the recovery kicks in, grows several years, and replenishes the state funding sources—and this goes on over and over again.

And it goes on more now because of the income tax being such a large source of funding for important functions like education, but also funding for local government. That's all part of the existing bailout, things like realignment. Pete Wilson had a realignment. I had a realignment on criminal justice, so it's a constant readjusting of this flow of money from the state, the county, the city, the special districts, the schools, with also adjustments in obligations and responsibilities.

10-00:13:54

Meeker:

Can you tell me about the transition from main source of income being from property tax, to income tax at a very top level of earners? Are you saying that that basically comes from staff-driven initiatives that are then introduced to legislators? Because it seems to me like a very strongly political decision, but you're talking about it as being a bureaucratic one.

10-00:14:16

Brown:

Well, first of all, the problem of shifting from property to income was not a problem. It was an opportunity. Either you're going to have police not functioning, schools closing—that's not going to happen, so you have to get state money. The income tax was only a third around that time. Now I think it's about 50 percent. Income tax is about 50 percent, maybe more, and the payers of the income tax, 60 to 70 percent of it, are the top 1 percent. That wasn't true then, but it has evolved. Now, that wasn't a decision anybody made; no one knew that much, not even the experts. I mean somebody talked about that. They warned that



the local government lose their capacity. But that's a total non-issue when people are seeing their property tax doubled and tripled—that's what they want an answer to, not the shifting of power, which even today is probably obscure to except for maybe a few thousand very knowledgeable people. So what you said is a total non-issue in terms of what the focus was.

10-00:15:35

Shafer: So 1979, you've won reelection by twenty points, and—

10-00:15:38

Brown: Twenty? Closer—more than twenty points.

10-00:15:40

Shafer: No, I think it was twenty—maybe twenty-one.

10-00:15:43

Brown: Yeah, well, it's more than twenty. [laughter] I don't know if it's twenty-one. I think it is.

10-00:15:49

Shafer: It was a healthy margin. I think it was 57-36, but anyway—

10-00:15:55

Brown: That's twenty-one, in my book.

10-00:15:56

Shafer: So Miriam Powell, in her book, writes that you delivered your inaugural address on statewide television sounding more like a Republican candidate than a Democratic governor. What is your response to that characterization?

10-00:16:11

Brown: Well, it's the problem of the binary quality of the political mind, the journalistic mind, and our collective thinking. The two items in there—the balanced budget was certainly a big thing, constitutional amendment for a balanced budget. But I was concerned that the inflation would continue, and that government spending keeps rising. And I quoted Keynes about how inflation is like a foreign enemy, but it's undetected until it has totally destroyed the society. I do think that the spending was out of control. I think it's out of control—I think it's excessive. Now, how a big state or a country manages their finances is a complicated and challenging issue to fully grasp. But it strikes me that while the government budget is not like a family budget, nevertheless, you can't keep spending more than you're producing or more than you're taking in.

As a matter of fact, we not only spend more money than the government collects, we also import hundreds of billions of items that we need. I have a little metal basket, a simple little metal basket, and I looked at it and it got here on FedEx, and yeah, it came from China. But I don't know why that couldn't be made in downtown Williams, or maybe even downtown Vacaville. But that, and a million other items, are made more cheaply [in China]. So that elimination of American jobs, and that reliance on foreign countries—and the reliance on financial

technology, financial manipulation and creativity—allows us to mask the fact that we're spending. And we assume we need and *must* spend more than we're willing to pay for, [but] it is not without casualties.

The fact that the middle class was hollowed out, the fact that there's this populism, the fact the rich are getting richer, that the whole society is being shaken—is because the society hasn't learned to live with balance. And I thought that a balanced-budget amendment (and I never said how to craft it) was going to be an exercise that I would engage in, but you have to balance what you spend with what you earn or what you produce. It's the same thing with your body. You've got to balance your calorie intake with your calorie consumption; otherwise you get yourself into a big overweight problem. Well, the society can mask all this. I notice that the Federal Reserve now is talking about lowering interest rates, and just a year ago they were worried about trying to raise them. Well, the proposition that I'm worried about, and it's a conservative idea, fiat money; in France they just made up money, and that ended very unhappily.

For example we, here in California, had more than \$50 billion of deferred maintenance in roads and bridges. Okay? So people say, "Well, we can't afford that." But each year it's getting worse. Now, we did get a tax, but the tax—we barely got it. All the Republicans, except one, were against it. And the Republicans said no tax, but then the Democrats have their own issue, where they want to spend more, but they don't want to balance it with the taxes. So this is an American societal—maybe even Western, maybe even an issue of modernity. People want the goodies. They want the healthcare, they want the education, they want their car, they want their gasoline. They want all the goodies, but they're not willing to balance what they are able to produce.

And if I look right here at the Mountain House—I mean [August] Schuckman came here in 1878, and he couldn't live off growing things or sheep. He had to have a hotel called the Mountain House, and it was designated a post office. I'm sure he got some revenue from that. So he needed multiple sources of income to satisfy—but even that was not enough for his eight children. They had to move on. And all but two left the area. But in America, we're not worried about that balance, because we have something called the Federal Reserve. We have something like China and Mexico, and other places, that will work much harder than most Americans want to work, and they'll accept the wage much lower. And because of ships and planes, we can get those foreign workers to do things that we're not willing to do, at prices we're not willing to accept.

So the balanced budget was a simple idea, but for me it embodied the larger and fundamental concept of balance, or in scientific terms, *homeostasis*; the body can't function if it loses its homeostasis. But the body politic *is* losing its homeostasis. It's getting more and more off keel. It's like a car, or like an engine in runaway, and it's not stable. And you've got to—and one of the things you have to do to stabilize is make sure that your money out-go is equal to your money in-go, and not just made up with borrowing. And borrowing's fine if you

have a source of repayment, but most of our borrowing is just borrowing—invent and make the money, and so far it has worked. [laughing] But we're moving in a direction where I don't think it's working, and I saw that in January of 1979, and I wanted to stop it *then*. And I didn't stop it then, and it's much, much worse.

In fact, I remember going to James Wright, Speaker of the House of Representatives [1987-1989]. I had a little green book, and it showed the federal government spending. And I opened the book, and I just looked at it, and I said “Gee, just a few years ago the interest on the debt was \$20 billion a year. And now, “it wasn't four, five, six, seven years [later], “it's gone to \$60 billion!” And I opened to the page and said, “Look at this! It's gone from \$20 [billion] to \$60 [billion].” He didn't respond too much.

Well, check out the interest on the national debt today. It's in the hundreds of billions, and there's no agreement. “Oh, we're going to put a limit on it”—and they can't. Now, the Republicans say that, but then they spend money on tax cuts; they spend money on military. Then you go over to the Democratic side—“okay, we're not going to let you do that, let us do it for education,” for whatever the Democrats want. So you have a collective official agreement to spend and spend, in a way that will undermine, and possibly destroy, the American system of governance. So I didn't understand all that exactly, but I understood a good deal of it.

And that's what I was trying to say in that speech, if you read it. It was about inflation, and I thought this would be a mechanism to start a national debate. Today, we'd call it a *national conversation*, but we didn't have that term then. I wanted a national debate, and I thought through that we could get the governing institutions, the governing leadership, to confront this problem. And I was not correct: (a) I didn't get elected, but (b) the governing leadership has not met it even now. And if you look to the Democrats or Republicans, they don't have a viable consensus solution [on] how to align our spending with our revenue generation.

10-00:24:54

Shafer:

But at the time there were fellow Democrats who felt like you were cynically embracing the tax cut.

10-00:25:03

Brown:

Well, they think balance is a great act of cynicism. Survival is cynicism. It was true. We've got to take care of our constituents, and we're not cynical. All we want you to do is spend—and borrow and spend, and we'll worry about it—I'll be out of office. And all the people that criticized me are *gone*. Most of them are dead. So they weren't worried about balance. Well, I'm alive, and I'm still worried about it. And it's not getting better, it's getting worse. [laughing] So there.

10-00:25:33

Shafer: So those who—at the time, because they're not all dead. I mean Maxine Waters, for example, was in the assembly—

10-00:25:39

Brown: Jack Henning is dead. He blew his top—yeah, I still remember that. He said, "It was the worst speech I've heard since Herbert Hoover!"

10-00:25:48

Shafer: So here's a quote from Maxine Waters. "The schizophrenic man who is a Democrat today, at his inaugural address he was a Republican. I've been terribly disappointed with the governor, and I was not about to welcome him with open arms."

10-00:26:02

Brown: Well, right, because paying your bills with a fully earned revenue stream is unacceptable. It is completely deviant to the cultural norm of modern America. It is, I'm sorry. And I don't care where you look, they're all agreed, no matter if you're a right-winger or a left-winger, there is no constituency for fiscal restraint. I will assert that. There is no constituency for fiscal responsibility. No matter what they say, they don't mean it.

10-00:26:39

Shafer: When they said you're abandoning your principles. You're throwing the elderly—

10-00:26:43

Brown: No, it is my *fundamental* principle that has never changed. I think it was my great-grandfather's fundamental principle. And I would say my grandmother, Ida Schuckman—I remember she had a Murphy bed, and I remember going over and having what she called a *hamburg*, at her little apartment on Seventeenth and Lincoln Way. And when I opened the drawer to get a fork, I noticed the fork was bent. And I thought here's the governor's mother using bent forks. So hmm, that's something. [laughing] But, we live a balanced life.

10-00:27:21

Meeker: So you're identifying a fundamental part of the American character, and the reason it's like this is because the United States is unique in that our debt is salable. We can continue to produce debt—

10-00:27:42

Brown: So far, till now.

10-00:27:42

Meeker: So you're saying that the fiscal system is out of whack, that we don't want to have a clean fiscal house?

10-00:27:50

Brown: It's out of whack because we're getting some messages from nature. It's called climate change. It's called species extinction, it's called habitat destruction, it's called rising sea levels—so we're getting plenty of notice that we're living an

imbalanced life. And I would have to say, in going back to my great-grandfather over here, there was dozens of families working the land around here and they were growing wheat on homesteads. Right now, the land is only used for cows to eat this imported, exotic grass that we brought from Spain. And you eat these cows—then you bash them over the head and you turn them into hamburger and steak. But it used to be a viable place, with schools and cemeteries and growing families, and it's a shadow of what it once was. That's the imbalanced life. You've can't break the laws of nature, and that's what we are, in effect, doing in so many different ways—today. In America, and in other parts of the world. It's not just the US.

10-00:28:50

Meeker:

So in terms of financial health, the fiscal system is out of balance, in essence, because the monetary system—we can print as much money as we want to?

10-00:28:58

Brown:

Well, that's the mechanism. But the reality—we're *out* of balance. Since the time *Homo sapiens* emerged until 1860, we never had more than a billion people. Now we've got 7.4 billion, and we're going to have several billion more. And we never had any cars—now we have a billion cars. It is totally unsustainable, either through climate destruction or nuclear destruction, we will come into balance. But the coming into balance will be such an overcorrection, that you won't like it.

10-00:29:32

Shafer:

Hmm. Interesting. So around this time, 1979—

10-00:29:36

Brown:

That's a lot more than *interesting*. It's damn frightening. I wish it would wake people up, but so far it hasn't.

10-00:29:42

Shafer:

You're warming up for your speech tonight, it sounds like.

10-00:29:46

Brown:

No, I'm just trying to wake you up, because we're all asleep. We're living in Sleepyville.

10-00:29:52

Shafer:

You, around this time you were getting—thinking, I assume, about running for president again?

10-00:29:57

Brown:

Yes, I've always been thinking about running for president. I think about running for governor—also, I do think about a lot of things though, and that's certainly one of them.

10-00:30:06

Shafer:

But to what extent were you thinking—okay, there's this new sort of tax-revolt mentality. And I'm going to embrace it, and—

10-00:30:14

Brown: Trying to work with that—you know, any politician that's successful has to work with the zeitgeist of his time, otherwise you can't even be heard. It's like even today, if you want to be heard, you should respond to a tweet from Trump. Because Trump, by the journalistic agreement, is the defining factor, the pivot for all discussion. It has to be related to Trump, or you can't get covered. And even if you don't mention Trump, they will bring it into the story to make it anti-Trump, so that's part of the zeitgeist. And if you're talking about the tax revolt, when it was the tax revolt, you've got to deal with that, or what you're talking about looks off the point.

10-00:31:01

Shafer: So when Democrats said, at the time, you're being cynical, was there some truth to that? Or opportunistic.

10-00:31:10

Brown: Wait a minute. Are you saying to deal with the problems that are facing you is an act of cynicism?

10-00:31:16

Shafer: No, but you're saying that there was this zeitgeist, and you had to kind of plug into—

10-00:31:20

Brown: Well, that is what democracy is about. [laughing] It's about the feelings of people. If you want to say, "I don't care what the people think. I'm going to go do what I want." There are people who know how to do that—Pol Pot was very good at that, so was Joseph Stalin. So was Adolf Hitler, and his henchman Goebbels. They said, "I don't care what the people think. I don't care what the zeitgeist is. I'm doing what I want. Anybody who doesn't like it, I'm going to kill." No. In democracy we are interacting through debate, through argument, and through evidence, hopefully. And if the name of the game is tax revolt, and you want to be a politician—you've got to deal with tax revolt. If you want to go deal with something else, that's another line of business. You can write for an obscure magazine maybe.

10-00:32:07

Shafer: Obviously, Jimmy Carter was president.

10-00:32:08

Brown: Right.

10-00:32:09

Shafer: And you were thinking about running, challenging him, as was Ted Kennedy. Did you think of—you were going to challenge him from the right?

10-00:32:16

Brown: No. No, because I also was for getting rid of nuclear power. This was another thing that was emerging, and I thought nuclear power was *deeply* flawed. And it was also connected to nuclear proliferation, because in order to build and

maintain a nuclear power plant for electricity, you have to develop the skills that can be transferred into making nuclear weapons. And so one implies the other, even though they tried to square that circle and say, “No, we’re going to give everyone peaceful nuclear skills, but we’re not going to use them for bombs.” We find out, with the proliferation now to Pakistan and India and other countries, that didn’t work that way.

What I liked about that is what I saw as the connection is fiscal imbalance with environmental imbalance. That it’s all part of human beings living within a natural system, and you have to have balance. And so I thought nuclear [energy]—where you boil water by having nuclear fission, and then generating radioactive material for thousands of years—was *imbalanced*. That’s like spending more than you have. You’re not living in a world that is sustainable; your part is not proportionate to the way the system works. It’s out of balance. So that’s where I saw the key to those two.

But it so happens that the zeitgeist—or maybe I’ll call it the *ethos*—made it very difficult to connect those two ideas, because the small mind does a, “Ooh, you don’t want to overspend. You’re a Republican.” “Oh, you don’t like nuclear power, well you’re a liberal, you’re a Democrat,” or something. So you put the two together, and that creates a certain cognitive dissonance that I was not able to overcome in the 1980 election.

10-00:34:27

Shafer: Hmm. What were, there were—a lot of people, I think, told you that they didn’t think it was a good idea for you to run for president.

10-00:34:32

Brown: Yeah.

10-00:34:32

Shafer: How did those conversations go?

10-00:34:35

Brown: Do you think I can remember a conversation from 1980? [laughter] That would mean I’m not doing much thinking today, because I’m so buried in my old memories. I must have shoeboxes of notes that I spend my time looking at.

10-00:34:48

Shafer: So why did you—why did you ignore all their advice?

10-00:34:51

Brown: Because I was very ambitious. You know, they had good advice—I didn’t listen to it. By the way, if I’d listened to it, I might not have had the focus and the ambition to get to be governor at the age of thirty-six. So if something gets you in one place, it doesn’t necessarily get you in the next place.

10-00:35:07

Shafer: So they were right, that it would have been a mistake to—?

10-00:35:11

Brown: Yeah, they were right. Well, they were right, first of all, because Kennedy jumped in. And I didn't anticipate that. But then I should have jumped out, and I didn't.

10-00:35:19

Shafer: Why?

10-00:35:22

Brown: Well, you know, the human mind is not as flexible as we would like. And sometimes you're going down a course, and you get a little notion you better change course, but you still keep going.

10-00:35:33

Shafer: So is that pride? Stubbornness?

10-00:35:35

Brown: You get your own adjectives. Because you're trying to describe my state of mind in 1980, and you want to come up with an appropriate adjective. Do you think it exists? I doubt it.

10-00:35:49

Shafer: [laughing] What adjective would you use?

10-00:35:51

Brown: Well, I wouldn't use an adjective. I don't think it's useful. I don't know that it's knowable, because whatever you say, it's so far removed. And the context is—so many factors have changed since the time of the Carter: the 1980 campaign, the primary even before Reagan has emerged, that I think it's very hard to say what I was looking at and what I wasn't.

10-00:36:18

Shafer: You say you were very ambitious. Like why did you—?

10-00:36:19

Brown: Well, that's just my little adjective. But you had some other adjective that you like better. But I don't know that any of them will illuminate what you're trying to get at. What is the state of mind that was going—what was my state of mind, and what can we learn for history from elucidating that state of mind forty years later? And I don't think (a) I could give you that factual report, and therefore (b) I don't know that you can make anything out of it.

10-00:36:47

Shafer: Well, maybe say it a different way. *Why* did you want to be president so badly?

10-00:36:52

Brown: Well, why did you want to do this interview? You do things. This is your job.

10-00:36:57

Shafer: But it wasn't your job to run for president.



10-00:36:59

Brown: [laughing] You know, I remember talking to Burt Lancaster once. I had him over to my house when I lived on Topanga Beach. “And people come up to me and say, ‘How is it to be a movie actor?’” And he said, “How is it to have a head?” [laughter]

10-00:37:13

Meeker: Why did Carter deserve a primary challenge for the 1980 election?

10-00:37:19

Brown: Well, I don’t know if Carter deserved a challenge, but I deserved to be a challenger. I deserved to run, because it’s—look at today! You have twenty-one people. When I was running, it was only a couple. It was much more—your question is more appropriate—why are there so many people running today?

10-00:37:36

Meeker: No, no. The question is why—?

10-00:37:38

Brown: Well, I didn’t agree with him on nuclear power. There’s a number of [issues]—the MX missile. I said, “Instead of putting the MX missile on railroad cars, we should build a high-speed rail, build a bullet train, and move people around instead of missiles.” That was actually part of my speech in 1980.

10-00:38:01

Meeker: Some people attribute Carter’s decline to the Iranian hostage crisis. Did you have any particular thoughts about that?

10-00:38:09

Brown: Yes. I thought it was a mistake to bring the Shah into America to get his hospital care. That was not a smart move, and not in the interest of the American people, in my opinion, driven by, I don’t know, some of his friends, David Rockefeller and others, whose names I won’t mention. From a strategic point of view, looking toward America’s place given our previous overthrow through the CIA and the other forces from Great Britain that helped get rid of the democratically elected government, I think we should have been more cautious. Definitely. I don’t think, I *know* we should have been more cautious, and history proves it.

10-00:38:49

Shafer: You said you deserved—

10-00:38:51

Brown: I didn’t deserve, no, it’s not about deserve—just in the sense if you’re an American citizen, and you grow up and you want to be president, that’s what everybody tells you you can do. But had it been better not to run? Yes, *no* question. If I had not run, and prepared in a very thoughtful way a subsequent run for the presidency, I might have made it—but I didn’t.

10-00:39:18

Shafer: So if you had it to do over again, which—perhaps you don’t.

10-00:39:23

Brown: Well, there's no do-overs. [laughter] You can't do it again. You've got to keep going.

10-00:39:29

Shafer: Yeah. So getting back to the legislature. That relationship was deteriorating, and—

10-00:39:35

Brown: Well, it had problems from day one, because I ran on political reform. And political reform means that there's a need for reform, and the people who need to be reformed are the legislators who the governor has to work with, so there was tension right from day one. Also, they were struggling in their own way to be legislators, to be legislative leaders, and I went from junior college board to secretary of state to governor, certainly with the help of my father's experience and name and reputation, and that breeds something less than admiration.

10-00:40:15

Shafer: So you think there was like resentment, or—

10-00:40:17

Brown: I don't like to give all these psychological labels to such a diverse body of political leaders. We're all in the same boat. We see offices; we want to run for them. When we get them, we want to run for the next one. That is the nature of the American system. Now, we like to do good while we're there, or we like to do good at ever higher levels. And that's the way they are; that's the way I am. Why is that? That I leave to you—you UC journalists, you UC-whatever you are, to kind of research all that stuff, but I don't think it's evident.

10-00:40:56

Shafer: One of the issues that came up was a resistance, on your part, to increased salary for state workers.

10-00:41:04

Brown: Yeah, well I'm trying to live within balance. Increasing these salaries is a good thing, but too many goods is a bad thing. And when you have a constraint, you've got to stop somewhere—and all the cuts are always on good things. If you look at the budget cuts under Schwarzenegger and under myself, you're cutting things, most of which are good. Government only does things because they're in the public interest—or at least people think they are. So when you have to cut what government is spending money on, you're cutting what is in the public interest. That's the nature of the beast, and that's why it's so controversial. But government has to live within its means. It doesn't have an open line into the pocketbooks, the bank accounts, of its citizens. It has to pass laws, and in California you have to get voter approval for taxes, so that's why we have to keep with limits.

And other people say that no, and you don't have—as James Mills told me, the senate leader, lives in San Diego. He's still alive. He said, "I vote for every

expenditure, and against every revenue measure,” and then he chuckled. He thought that was very humorous, and that’s often what a lot of the legislature can do. They can get the credit, as they think of it in their minds, of providing more childcare, more roads, more school money, more healthcare, more everything. And then when it comes down to paying for it, they don’t have to worry about it. And then you get a deficit, and you get a new governor, and the governor usually is the one who has to accept it. So the legislature has their role, and the governor has to play the role of a governor. And you know as the machine accelerates, the governor then dampens down the speed, and that’s really what governing means. Kubernao. It comes from a Greek word meaning helmsman [kubernetes].

10-00:43:11

Shafer: At what point—you were out campaigning, and your field director at the time, LeRoy Chatfield said, “Jerry, this isn’t Maryland.” In other words, it was tougher going than 1976.

10-00:43:22

Brown: Yeah, yeah—I don’t remember him saying that, but he well could have. But I also had Marshall Ganz, so we went along, did pretty well, and we started to pick up speed in Maine. So what’s your question?

10-00:43:39

Shafer: Well, when did you start to feel like maybe you should get out, or maybe things weren’t—?

10-00:43:46

Brown: Well, I got out [after] Wisconsin, that was a clear defeat. So but if you haven’t been defeated yet, why—these people running for office, all twenty-one of them [referencing current pool of Democratic candidates for president.] Couldn’t you put the question to them? Why are you doing this? You have no chance. Well, they’re going to let the voters tell them that. And that’s what I did. Now, is that smart? No. Not clever enough.

10-00:44:04

Shafer: What do you mean?

10-00:44:07

Brown: What I said speaks for—it’s clear. It’s crystal clear.

10-00:44:12

Shafer: So the Wisconsin, there was that event with—

10-00:44:17

Brown: Francis Coppola. Great idea, but it didn’t—no, it was a great idea, but the trouble is the chroma key didn’t work. The technology—like the 737 Max, maybe like the software that controls our nuclear retaliatory system. They break down. When they break down, you get little disasters.

10-00:44:34

Meeker: What was the idea behind the event?

10-00:44:36

Brown: Well, the idea is clear.

10-00:44:36

Meeker: What was the great idea?

10-00:44:38

Brown: Well, if you read the speech, it'll tell you what it is.

10-00:44:39

Meeker: Well, I read the speech—I watched it.

10-00:44:43

Brown: Well, I think my speech was fine. The problem was what was going on behind me. It would have been pictures of new factories and clean air. So the idea, which was Francis Coppola's, was to create a visualization of what was being talked about, and communicating more effectively with the people of Wisconsin. So it was an idea, but it didn't work. It broke down.

10-00:45:09

Shafer: How—how aware were you while you?

10-00:45:12

Brown: I wasn't aware of that. I didn't know. I wasn't even sure how much I knew. But you can only remember certain things. I might have known.

10-00:45:23

Shafer: As part of the state-of-the-state speech, you were given sort of a frosty reception with very little applause when you came in, I think. It was obviously—the Demo[crats], your own party, was not happy with you. And Agnos brought a black hat, which was—I think a reference to your having said if you vote for this pay increase, you should wear a black hat.

10-00:45:46

Brown: Did I say that? Yeah.

10-00:45:48

Shafer: Yeah. So like—do you remember that at all?

10-00:45:51

Brown: Not particularly. I can remember—but you've got to remember, the legislators, they're working their side of the aisle. So they're telling their constituents we can get you more money, if the government would just let us. Of course in California, that's not true in many cases, because we have a limit on deficit spending. So at some point you hit the wall, and not only do you not have more money, but then you have to start cutting even what you gave them. But then they can always point fingers, and that is the name of the game is to be able to shift responsibility and identify blame. And that's a lot of what politics is.

10-00:46:28

Shafer: Was there any alternative plan that they presented?

10-00:46:31

Brown: For what?

10-00:46:34

Shafer: To deal with Prop. 13 without cutting? Like revenue, more revenue. Did anybody suggest, "Hey, let's raise this tax."

10-00:46:42

Brown: No, this was a tax-cutting mood. We were cutting the inventory tax. We cut the estate tax. We reduced the income tax by altering the inflationary feature, by indexing the income tax. A problem that is very much inherent here, and which I didn't grasp the way I do today is that regardless of the spending, we are in a cyclical economy, the market economy. It goes up, and it goes down. When it goes down, if you don't have a surplus—which you rarely have—then you're going to have to cut. So I was always in the position of trying to create enough surplus that we wouldn't have to cut.

Because that has been the history: of governors leaving deficits. But that thing wasn't that obvious. And people don't do the arithmetic, generally. The budget's a large item. Very few people understand it—well, in detail, almost nobody understands it. But the more general-type people, the legislators, the governor, they're just talking in more general terms. So I had a general propensity to try to live within my means. That was the way the world worked! You know, we didn't have credit cards. You had a charge account from your local department store. But the unlimited credit card, the way you have today—the borrowing, we're into much bigger borrowing. And so I was more on that pay-as-you-go kind of view.

But that then ran into—you have to say no. And there is no amount of yeses that will slow down the continuing discovery of new demands. So the escalation—because if you look at the stratification between the lowest income, the next level, if you break it into quartiles, or whatever, quintiles—and then you say, "Okay, the bottom 40 percent, they need help." So until you can pull down the top 20 percent and distribute it to the bottom 40 percent, you're going to need more childcare, more programs, more things. Because people don't have enough money to pay for housing, food—that's why we have food stamps. You have an unlimited perceived, and in some ways real, need to shift money. And we don't shift that much, so it's a little bit more, a little bit more. So that's in California. I don't know about Alabama and Georgia and Mississippi. They're doing this at a much slower level, but that's the way government lurches forward. You know, even in Kansas you have teachers' strikes, because they were underfunding. So you create a big hubbub, and they got taxes.

So we do the same thing in California, but there is always the tension between the legislators that are going to overshoot, at least from my point of view, and the governor, who is going to have to explain when the money's not there. So when they focus, the newspapers, which used to be predominant, when they would report stories, they would report a whole list of legislators—120 legislators, or fifty did this, and seventy did that. Now they say the governor, and one or two

legislators. So the legislators basically have a great latitude to spend without consequences, and also the governor can veto. So if the governor doesn't veto, they say it's your fault anyway. So there's an inherent difference between the legislative and the executive branch when it comes to spending. Now sometimes governors want to spend more than legislators. That's true in *other* states, but in California that's not true.

10-00:50:57

Shafer: So you took a very, I think, well-publicized trip to Africa in 1979, with Linda Ronstadt. How did you two meet?

10-00:51:05

Brown: I met her at El Adobe restaurant. In fact, she was reaching up from a table to get something off some kind of a platform, that was above the seats. And I saw her in her cute outfit with her jeans, standing there, and I thought, well, that's interesting. So I went and met her.

10-00:51:31

Shafer: You just walked up to her and said—?

10-00:51:32

Brown: I can't remember. Maybe—she was there. I don't know, I can't tell you exactly how it happened.

10-00:51:37

Shafer: I assume you knew like her music and you knew—?

10-00:51:40

Brown: I did know her music.

10-00:51:41

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. And what do you think was the glue for your relationship?

10-00:51:46

Brown: I'm not going to go down that road. Glue. [Shafer laughs] There was definitely attraction.

10-00:51:55

Shafer: And how did you feel, or how did you, you know—?

10-00:51:57

Brown: How did I feel? That's always a good—

10-00:51:59

Shafer: I know, as soon as I said that, I knew you were going to challenge me on that. [laughter]

10-00:52:01

Brown: No, I think it's good to have feelings about things, but to try to then put them into words and describe them—that's what novelists do.

- 10-00:52:11  
Shafer: There's that iconic photo of the two of you in the plane.
- 10-00:52:14  
Brown: The *Newsweek* photo, yeah.
- 10-00:52:16  
Shafer: Yeah, any thoughts about that?
- 10-00:52:16  
Brown: No.
- 10-00:52:17  
Shafer: No thoughts?
- 10-00:52:17  
Brown: I think it speaks for itself.
- 10-00:52:22  
Shafer: Why do you think—it seems like there's a tremendous public fascination with that. I think I've mentioned that almost everyone I've told that I'm doing this project said, "Are you going to talk to Linda Ronstadt?" Like—*why* do you think that—?
- 10-00:52:35  
Brown: Well, you know why. It's interesting. She was interesting, I was interesting—the two of us were more interesting. That's all. It's a combination, how you put politics in rock and roll, and that was the mood at the time. That music, which is not the mood today, and it's hard to even imagine today. Today we've come so far in so many different dramatic events. But at the time, it was just—first of all, politics is not that interesting. You know, if you're going to talk about the budget bailout bill or realignment, you're going to have a hard time getting the same clicks as a trip to Africa with Brown and Ronstadt.
- 10-00:53:27  
Shafer: And my sense of her—and I don't know her, but what I've read is that she was not—she didn't like the spotlight very much.
- 10-00:53:34  
Brown: No, she didn't like the spotlight.
- 10-00:53:37  
Shafer: Yeah, so how did you negotiate that? Because obviously wherever you went—and wherever she went—you were attracting all this media. Was that—how did you deal with that?
- 10-00:53:45  
Brown: I don't know. We dealt with it. I dealt with it—trying to avoid it when you can.

10-00:53:52

Shafer: Yeah, okay. Anything else about that? So Mike Curb became lieutenant governor. Merv Dymally lost. That was the first time in a long time that people had split their tickets between the governor and lieutenant governor. What did you know about Mike Curb when he got elected?

10-00:54:10

Brown: Nothing.

10-00:54:12

Shafer: Nothing at all?

10-00:54:14

Brown: Well, what I read in the campaign. He was in the music business. Linda Ronstadt knew Mike Curb, so I knew a little, but not very much.

10-00:54:23

Shafer: And he, obviously, thought that he would take advantage of your being out of the state.

10-00:54:28

Brown: Right.

10-00:54:28

Shafer: When—did you, like when did you realize that was going to be a problem?

10-00:54:34

Brown: Well, when did I, do you mean what date? Was I having breakfast and heard that he—

10-00:54:40

Shafer: What was the first thing he did that you remember?

10-00:54:45

Brown: I think it was something with the Air Resources Board or regulation, I believe. But I told Mike Curb. "Mike, look, don't try to play governor when you're not governor. It's not going to make you look very good. And in fact, it creates a bad impression generally, for the governor, you, state government. So why don't you figure out something that's within your domain—for example, economic development." Because the lieutenant governor is the head of the Economic Development Commission, and then we could work on projects that would be valuable and would be useful. But he didn't listen to that, because I don't think he trusted me, which goes back to my point that rarely does anybody ask for my advice. [laughter] Even when it's good advice, and that was particularly good advice, because he might have got the nomination. Instead—when was this?

10-00:55:47

Shafer: 1979.



10-00:55:47

Brown: Yeah, he might have beaten Deukmejian, might have, had he acted in a gubernatorial way. I don't know what he thought. You'd have to go ask him. But there was another path for him. But you know, that's hindsight. There was another path for me, in 1980, so we're not totally clear about what's in our best interests.

10-00:56:13

Shafer: What kind of problems did that cause? I mean he was trying—he tried to appoint judges.

10-00:56:17

Brown: No, there were no problems. It was just a media story. And the legislators could take advantage of that. Anybody who wanted to hammer me could say there's a problem. Just like there was no problem with me being outside of the state, but you have to have something to hang your hat on. You need an ostensible causative factor—oh, this happened because Brown is outside of the state campaigning. Oh, this happened because Curb is making decisions. In truth, I would say there was zero impact, except the political atmospherics. Which by the way, that's to say, it minimizes political atmospherics quite a bit.

10-00:57:09

Shafer: So it was around this time that you got the nickname Governor Moonbeam.

10-00:57:14

Brown: Yeah.

10-00:57:16

Shafer: And there's different stories about how that came about. Mike Royko at the [*Chicago*] *Sun-Times*.

10-00:57:19

Brown: Well, Mike Royko is the one who wrote it, so that *is* the story.

10-00:57:23

Shafer: Did he say it originally? Or—because there was another—

10-00:57:25

Brown: He did say it. I think he did.

10-00:57:28

Shafer: Well, there was another story that Linda Ronstadt was quoted in a *Rolling Stone* article previously, jokingly, calling you Moonbeam.

10-00:57:35

Brown: Yeah, I don't remember that.

10-00:57:37

Shafer: Yeah, did you—I know later, much later—like last time, when you're governor the second time, you sort of embraced that whole thing.

10-00:57:43

Brown: Yeah. What? You want more feelings. Did I feel bad? Did I feel good? You know—neither one. It just is, it's another one of—this is a business. You get obstacles in your way. It's not trouble free.

10-00:57:59

Meeker: Well, if we would ask another politician, they might say okay, "I met with my campaign manager. We decided that we needed to get ahead of this."

10-00:58:09

Brown: Yeah, but you have—that's about a textbook view that you have of the way and I don't operate that way. I don't think anybody else does.

10-00:58:16

Holmes: Did you like the nickname?

10-00:58:18

Brown: No, just not helpful—do you like it? It's not about like and dislike. It's not helpful, right? I mean the idea is to get more votes than your opponent. That's the business. Okay? So that did not help.

10-00:58:30

Shafer: Why did it not help? What do you think it—?

10-00:58:31

Brown: Why did it not help?

10-00:58:33

Shafer: What did it—well. [laughing]

10-00:58:33

Brown: Well, would you want to elect—come on, that's not a very intelligent question.

10-00:58:37

Shafer: What did it say about you?

10-00:58:41

Brown: It said different things to different people, but it was not the gravitas that I would have put out were I to be in charge.

10-00:58:51

Shafer: Yeah, did you and Royko ever—I know Royko came to regret it.

10-00:58:55

Brown: He wrote another story about it, because he liked my speech in 1980. It was a good speech. In fact, I was going to tweet it out the other day, but then we couldn't find the digital copy. I have many copies myself on hard copy, because I talked about some of the same topics we're still talking about, in 1980.

10-00:59:18

Shafer: Another thing that was going on around that time was the oil crisis. You know, Carter, OPEC, and all that.

10-00:59:27

Brown: The oil crisis, right. Was that OPEC? OPEC was '73, and there was another one in '79. There were two.

10-00:59:33

Shafer: Well, there's—and there was rationing, and every other day I think, even and odd days you could get gas. And you know, offshore oil drilling sort of became an issue.

10-00:59:41

Brown: Yeah, well no, it's not an issue in California, because most of the political people were against it, even, I think, Pete Wilson.

10-00:59:48

Shafer: Oh, really? I thought—because Reagan, I thought, was sort of thinking about that later when he became president.

10-00:59:52

Brown: Yeah, but I'm not sure when he was there. This was the Pasadena Coastal Commission. The Santa Barbara oil spill was not—yeah, offshore oil has been pretty dead as an issue in California, until Trump.

10-01:00:10

Shafer: Yeah, did you feel like that was another opportunity to sort of promote environmental causes and remind people—

10-01:00:24

Brown: Well, wait a minute, see, you're talking about the issue of the day. Is the issue of the day an issue for that day? It's kind of a tautology, isn't it? This is the problem. It's like rising housing prices, like the crack epidemic. We're in business to deal with people's felt needs and real needs, so if you can't get gas, that's a big, big issue. You've got to deal with it.

10-01:00:53

Shafer: Do you remember—how do you remember it being felt in California?

10-01:00:58

Brown: The long lines around the gas station—pretty serious. People would get in fistfights, so yeah, that was a big issue.

10-01:01:06

Holmes: Well, speaking of the zeitgeist, I mean I know Reagan in the early 1980s was pushing for more drilling. But—

10-01:01:13

Brown: Was he pushing for more drilling off of California? I don't know.

10-01:01:18

Holmes: Monterey Bay, I know, was one of the places he was looking—

10-01:01:21

**Brown:** That's when James Watt was the secretary of the interior, right? And that became huge. Sierra Club doubled its membership, and it became quite a rallying cry.

10-01:01:33

**Holmes:** Was there any public sentiment that you recall from that time. In the midst of the second oil crisis—so we're talking 1978, '79—was there any kind of public outcry or pressure to increase drilling or self-reliance in oil?

10-01:01:54

**Brown:** I can't remember. I don't think there was any in California. There isn't now. The oil prices went up, but very few people are saying go drill off the coast. I saw that as another example of imbalance. We've created a life that unless, you know, Saudi Arabia and these other oil countries feed our need, then all of a sudden our society starts coming unwound. That's not sustainable, as we now say. But we've handled that. We've had the Iraq War. We have troops in 700 different bases, so we're trying to handle making sure that other people take care of our needs, as opposed to redesigning how we show up in the world in a way that's more sustainable and locally self-sufficient.

10-01:02:51

**Meeker:** You know, this is mainly harkening back to the moonbeam question, and I apologize for that, really what it has to do with is your slogan for 1980, which was, "protect the earth, serve the people—

10-01:03:06

**Brown:** Explore the universe, and serve the people.

10-01:03:09

**Meeker:** So the "explore the universe" part—

10-01:03:09

**Brown:** Tell me, have you ever heard of a better three-point plan for the United States of America, then or now?

10-01:03:14

**Meeker:** I think it's awesome.

10-01:03:16

**Brown:** Even though it is a little general.

10-01:03:20

**Meeker:** Well, let me ask you about that "explore the universe"—

10-01:03:20

**Brown:** I mean you want to protect the Earth. And you'd like to explore the universe, and you'd like to serve the people.

10-01:03:25

**Shafer:** How did you come up with that slogan?

10-01:03:27

Brown: How did I come up with it? I had a cup of coffee. And what does that mean, how did I come up with it?

10-01:03:33

Shafer: Was it your idea?

10-01:03:36

Brown: How did you come up with that question? It's part of the flow here. I thought about it, and I thought how can I state what I think is important? And that's how it came to me.

10-01:03:53

Meeker: Can you talk about the "explore the universe," part of it?

10-01:03:54

Brown: Sure, that was the space shuttle, that's space exploration. It's Landsat, monitoring natural resources, habitat, soil, forests, forest fires—that's a technology that is, then and now, critical to managing our own earthly environment. But it's also this huge—I mean *huge* is not even the right word, but you've got trillions of stars, the whole massive expanse. So the human mind, as it explores in research, locally—new diseases, new materials, new energy technologies—also has to explore where we *are*. I mean right here we're sitting looking at the mountain, at the soil. Scientists have come from the University of California, have drilled holes and put in measurements to tell when the water comes to the trees. They're trying to learn. How do the oak trees survive in a hot summer, in a five-year drought? Where is the water stored, and what is the mechanism? So that's exploring the soil. But then we have to explore the atmosphere. By the way, by exploring the atmosphere we found out about CO<sub>2</sub> and heat-trapping gases, and the ozone hole. And the Montreal Protocol, of course that came after my 1980 [run], but there are so many different examples of exploration, and that's what that was.

And protecting was more conservative—that's, we're trying to preserve. I meant the exploration to be the innovative, the change side, whereas the environment is more the continuity. How do we preserve the habitat, preserve clean air, preserve clean water? And then, that's all rather physical. And then the third point was well, the people, and government is a service, and public servants, so then that should be a spirit in which government sees itself.

10-01:06:12

Meeker: So the exploration represents a huge outlay of funds, as well as fossil fuels, in order to get those space ships up there.

10-01:06:20

Brown: Or other fuels.

10-01:06:25

Meeker: So were you ever in a position to need to defend the—fitting of that rubric within the larger rubric around balance?

10-01:06:35

Brown: Well, yeah again, the binary mind: it's either this or it's that. It's called the two-value orientation. And I first became very aware of the two-value orientation when I read a book in the seminary by S.I. Hayakawa, called, *Language and Truth*, I think [*Language in Thought and Action*]. And he said people like to think it's either this way or that way, but life shows up as multiple values. So the fact that you want to preserve natural habitat, doesn't mean you don't want to understand the heavens, the stars, the way gravity works, the way the earth interacts with other planets, and other things. So all of that fits together. It's the opposite of ignorance. It's seeking truth and knowledge, and uncovering the mysteries of our existence, so the two fit together. In the same way, we're trying to figure out how to protect the environment. We need a lot of science to do that.

10-01:07:50

Holmes: Did anybody push back in regard to that platform? And this gets back to what Martin was asking, in regards to balance of—not just environmental balance with exploring space, but budgetary balance, right?

10-01:08:03

Brown: Well, they do that now. Trying to do the high-speed rail is beyond 40-45 percent of the people, "What do you mean a high-speed-rail train?" In the same way, "Oh, you want a space shuttle, or a space platform?" So yeah, people would say, "Well, why spend it way out in space? You could spend it all here." That is the thought. We can say that about the university. What are you doing all that research for? I think Reagan once said, "We're not in the business of subsidizing curiosity." And I thought yeah, that's *exactly* the business the university is in.

10-01:08:56

Shafer: To what extent did you feel that the rationale for your candidacy was that Carter was thinking too small?

10-01:09:04

Brown: Well, obviously that was the rationale—I said so. He used to allocate the tennis dates in the White House tennis court. I thought that was a little too granular for the presidency.

10-01:09:18

Shafer: He was a micromanager?

10-01:09:22

Brown: Well, yeah, there was some of that. Well, he was a manager. That's true, he was a manager. He managed submarines.

10-01:09:29

Shafer: I'm just curious. You know, in later years, of course, he's become a big advocate for human rights and—

10-01:09:38

Brown: Well, he was an advocate of human rights—he's the one who put it on the map when he was president. That's a hallmark of President Carter.

10-01:09:45

Shafer: Do you feel like, looking back, that he got kind of a raw deal as president?

10-01:09:51

Brown: Well, I don't think of politics as getting a raw deal. There are a lot of deals to be made, and some are better than others.

10-01:10:01

Shafer: So the voters got it right, you think?

10-01:10:03

Brown: [laughing] No, voters don't necessarily get it right. Did voters get it right with Trump? What is democracy is whatever it produces. That's the theory of democracy, right? That the people vote, and then you get what you get. I think President Carter had some good ideas, but Reagan projected the imagery and the presence that more people were satisfied with. Some people say Hoover got a raw deal, that Roosevelt took a lot of his ideas. So I don't find this raw deal business very illuminating. Because a lot of people get a better deal than they deserve.

Did Reagan get too good a deal? Did the killing of 30,000 people in Nicaragua, under the pressure of the United States' support of the Contras—is that something we ought to really take a little more attention to? Or maybe how the Guatemalan leadership and army massacred a couple hundred thousand people—what about that? And even during the Reagan Administration? Or how about the generals throwing people out of airplanes in Argentina, and taking babies away from women that they tortured, and then giving them to themselves? What about that? We don't hear too much about that. But nevertheless, those are facts. And so some people get a better deal than they deserve, other people get a worse deal than they deserve. [laughing] That's the way our system works.

10-01:11:54

Holmes: Governor, you were challenging a sitting president of your own party. What do you recall about the criticism or comments that you received for doing so, particularly from those within party circles?

10-01:12:05

Brown: I don't know. I know too much about the party system, and it's a very loose, porous, amalgam of ambitious people, so I can't remember what people said. And first of all, a lot of what people said are put up to saying that by the person you're running against. And that's been, developed into a fine art. It was very primitive in those days.

10-01:12:32

Holmes: Do you recall people who were supporting your decision to challenge Carter?

10-01:12:38

Brown: There were, there were a lot of people. Not enough, obviously.

10-01:12:44

Shafer: Your New York State campaign director at the time was quoted—

- 10-01:12:47  
Brown: Who was that?
- 10-01:12:50  
Shafer: Sorry.
- 10-01:12:52  
Brown: You don't have his name. I like citations.
- 10-01:12:58  
Shafer: But he said, "*Jerry Brown* means sleeping on the floor, Linda Ronstadt, and a trip to Africa—to people in New York State."
- 10-01:13:06  
Brown: That was 1980.
- 10-01:13:06  
Shafer: '80, yeah. Eighty.
- 10-01:13:10  
Brown: Yeah, I don't even remember who that guy—that's why I wanted to get his name. [Thomas Flynn]
- 10-01:13:13  
Shafer: Did you find though, and kind of alluded to it a moment ago, but did—?
- 10-01:13:15  
Brown: No, see, we didn't get to New York. I mean all it was, was New Hampshire, Maine, and Wisconsin. That was it—over, out.
- 10-01:13:22  
Shafer: But I mean did you find that—whether it was because of the moonbeam moniker or whatever—
- 10-01:13:27  
Brown: No, it's far less than that. There's less there than meets the eye. The presence in the media was minimal.
- 10-01:13:33  
Shafer: Of your campaign?
- 10-01:13:36  
Brown: Yeah. And Kennedy—because of the obvious. Kennedy and Carter—that was the story, and my candidacy was marginal. If I had done better, that would have come up. [laughing]
- 10-01:13:51  
Holmes: Governor, as you mentioned, Ted Kennedy also threw his hat in the race to challenger Carter. What were your impressions of Ted Kennedy? Had you met him before?



10-01:14:04

Brown: Yes, I'd met him before. I thought his speech at the convention was very eloquent, and I marvel at how well he could—it was a written speech, and he read it in a way that I could only hope to. It was quite, quite moving. And the torch—the flame will never die. That was a very powerful line.

10-01:14:29

Shafer: Bob Shrum [Kennedy's speech writer.]

10-01:14:30

Brown: Bob—yeah, but whatever it was, he sure delivered it—and very few politicians can do that.

10-01:14:36

Holmes: How would you compare him to his two brothers, John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy, both of whom you—

10-01:14:40

Brown: I never met Robert Kennedy. I think John Kennedy was the one of the three, had a unique, what shall I say? He had a very charismatic aura and presence, that I haven't seen in anybody else since. Maybe for Republicans, Reagan might capture that. But Kennedy was not an actor. He was a guy who was on that PT boat. He wrote about the danger facing Europe, and he had a good sense of humor. Even though he was certainly an ambitious politician, he comported himself in a way that made him stand out and engender a lot of admiration and respect.

I think his finest moment was in the Cuban Missile Crisis, by avoiding the extinction of humanity. You can't get any bigger than that. And he stood up against the unanimous recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who wanted to bomb the armaments, I don't know what they called them. They weren't exactly missiles, but they were weapons that could reach Florida, and they were already nuclear-armed, which was not known at the time. And had Kennedy followed the unanimous advice of the generals, he would have bombed the Russian soldiers and weapons, and they would have fired then nuclear weapons.

And I know that because I talked to the Russian commander when he came to visit Stanford. I've had dinner with him twice. They would have fired. And if they fired a nuclear weapon at Florida, and killed tens of thousands of people, we would have fired on Russia, and they would have fired on us, and we might have wiped out the human race. That's how close we came. With the unanimous advice of these people here, this forty-five-year-old guy stood up to them. Amazing. So whatever else they say about Kennedy—he certainly had some flaws; he had a lot, like everybody else—but he was pretty amazing, I think. That may be the most amazing moment in American history.

10-01:17:20

Shafer: And it seemed like he—not to digress on that—but he learned from the Bay of Pigs, I think, and that was one of the reasons he overruled the generals.

10-01:17:27

Brown: That might have been—so lucky for the Bay of Pigs.

10-01:17:30

Shafer: Yeah, so I'm wondering what—what lessons did you take from your second presidential run?

10-01:17:36

Brown: I don't know that I took lessons—I mean I certainly understood. In the immediate aftermath, I don't know what lesson. Probably didn't have enough organization. I mean the clear lesson, which I didn't take then and I didn't see this clearly, but the fame, the name of the incumbent president, and the name of the Kennedy—it's not just Teddy Kennedy. It's John Kennedy, it's Robert Kennedy, it's their assassination—that's powerful. And when you have these—it's a phenomenon.

And in some ways, that's why I knew, when I went to run for mayor of Oakland—and I'm not comparing myself to Kennedy, but I know that my father and I and my sister have won every election that ever took place in Oakland, at least the statewide election there. So I knew that I was going to be a very overarching presence in that election. A lot of other people who were running didn't get that. Just like I didn't get that once Kennedy was there, it was over. And I didn't have that much money, but even with money [its] very hard to displace a name. I'd say, even to some extent, Meg Whitman found that out. You can spend a lot of money, but the belief that resides in the voters, the pre-existing belief, determines a great deal. And that's why the media types and the campaign types like to think that the campaign consultant, the campaign manager, the campaign strategist are going to alter the reality. But it's all done. You just show up, and it all unfolds. That was like running for mayor in Oakland.

Now, running for president would be, the negative of that. I was showing up as not the winner, and there was not a way to change that. Now if Meg Whitman gave me her \$175 million, I don't know that it would have made any difference. Because Kennedy was a person, and that Kennedy impression was built out of the prior two assassinations, and that's a power. And then Carter didn't have that in back of him, but he had the fact that he was president. So deeply embedded in the imagination of people, and in the way the media would communicate things, that there was no room. But I see it a lot clearer today than I saw it in 1980, for sure. [laughing] And a lot of people don't see it now. In fact, I was reading a story in the *New York Times* about somebody running for president, and they were kind of wondering what is this all about? Well, I know what it's about, because I've done it.

10-01:20:47

Shafer: What's that?

10-01:20:49

Brown: Well, I said I know what it's about, because people who've run, and they're not smelling the roses, they're not looking out at what's out in front of them. But they

seem to do it—so people have not consulted my 1980 campaign. [laughter] They could look at it, and if that were true, most of those people would stop running for president.

10-01:21:07

Shafer: You make it sound like it's almost—not quite preordained, but like there's this plan that's going to unfold.

10-01:21:12

Brown: The world—well, it's—it is a plan. You see the corn growing there? [Pointing out the window] It wasn't there before. Do you see it?

10-01:21:21

Shafer: Yeah.

10-01:21:24

Brown: Okay, right there. Three feet, some of it. It wasn't there. So was that preordained? Once I put that seed in the ground, and put water—and the sun shined, there it goes! Okay, so but you can't alter—are you going to say I'm going to make different seeds? Or I'm going to make the water? Or I'm going to make the sun? Or I'm going to make the soil? No. There are certain things that are the *factors*, if I could use the word in a different sense, the factors of production, the factors of reality—there they are. And you have to get on the side of reality, because reality isn't going to get on your side.

10-01:22:04

Shafer: Interesting. I mean—that was sort of a criticism of you, wasn't it? That you were not rooted in reality. You were thinking all these big thoughts.

10-01:22:09

Brown: Well, well right, and it proved to be the case. [laughing] I didn't make it.

10-01:22:16

Shafer: What impact do you think the 1980 run had on you politically in California?

10-01:22:21

Brown: Oh, not good. I won by twenty-one points, and then I was into the low forties or maybe worse than that—I can't remember. Yeah, that was not so good. Not good at all, as a matter of fact.

10-01:22:35

Shafer: And like why do you think, I mean what was your sense—

10-01:22:39

Brown: Why do I—do you want me to analyze how the system of the flow of information affected people through survey research? I mean I can do that for you, but I don't know what that's going to prove.

10-01:22:50

Shafer: But I mean do you think it was like—people sort of getting tired of you, or that people don't like someone who reaches and fails, or what?

10-01:22:57

Brown: Well, all of that. And if you got elected to one job, and now you've got to jump to the next one. There's always the problem, they say, "Wait a minute, we like you to do this, not that." And the only way that's overcome is if you're winning, and it's the cause that seems to transcend the office, and those factors weren't present in 1980.

10-01:23:16

Holmes: Governor, you ran for president four years earlier, and didn't seem to have that negative impact.

10-01:23:23

Brown: Right, I was winning.

10-01:23:26

Holmes: Could be.

10-01:23:26

Brown: *Could be?*

10-01:23:29

Holmes: Well, you were, but you didn't win the top spot. Do you think as someone who's encroaching eight to twelve years in elected office, that voters, inevitably perhaps, get tired of politicians?

10-01:23:43

Brown: Well, they didn't get tired of me this eight years, I don't think. Of course exposure is going to run the risk that people get tired of looking at you. I think I told the story of Aristides the Just. Didn't we go through that once? They ostracized him because at least in the minds of some ladies standing there at the polling place, "We're just tired of hearing the name *Aristides the Just*." So there's that factor.

But it's also what your exposure is. So if you limit your exposure, and you try to keep it as favorable as possible—and you're lucky and the economy's good—that's a big part. And how the economy goes, shapes a lot of how people think. Because the guy at the top is associated with the general state of wellbeing. So if things are going well, and you modulate your exposure so it's much more positive than negative, you'll have more shelf life, than if you (a) are all over the media, and (b) the economy sinks—as it will. Unless you have the timing, which both Deukmejian and I had, that for the entire eight years the economy was always growing, and that's unusual.

10-01:25:13

Shafer: To what extent were you sort of tired of the job by that point?

10-01:25:18

Brown: Oh, I was getting a little tired of the job. Yeah, I think I said that publicly.

10-01:25:22

Shafer: Just the routine of it, or what was it?

10-01:25:24

Brown:

No, it wasn't that interesting—well, I don't know. Probably, it was my inability to find the interesting, important things to do. I found that the next time around I had a lot of things to do. You had a deficit, you had screwed-up workers' compensation. I mean all the things we did were needed, and we did them. Now, what was needed in 1982? Well, we were in a recession then. So we weren't going to raise money or raise taxes. So, yeah, I have to go back in time, but I liked it well enough, but it didn't seem to have quite the—I don't say it's the job. It was probably my state of mind at that time. I couldn't perceive the interesting possibilities that were inherent in that particular role at that time.

## Interview 11: June 10, 2019 [in the afternoon]

11-00:00:00

Shafer: So this is interview session eleven on June 10, 2019. Still at Mountain House with Governor Jerry Brown. Martin Meeker and Todd Holmes from the Bancroft, and I'm Scott Shafer. Okay, let's pick back up with 1980. And some of these things may seem very granular, but we just never know where they're going to lead. So it's 1980, the economy is starting to have some problems. And the legislature rejected your appointment of Jane Fonda to the California Arts Council as being too radical. What does that say to you about the, you know—well, first of all, why did you choose her? Why did you think she'd be a good—?

11-00:00:43

Brown: Well, because she was a good artist, and I was trying to make the art council composed of actual working artists that had some skill—had excellent skill. And so she fit into that category as an actress, and she was noteworthy and controversial. But I thought that the Democrats would be able to confirm her, but they wouldn't.

11-00:01:10

Shafer: This is just a legacy of the Vietnam stuff?

11-00:01:13

Brown: Yeah, right. Well, not just legacy, but certain things that she did, and the pictures that were taken in North Vietnam. Those things obviously left a residue.

11-00:01:27

Shafer: Yeah. And so—let's see, by that time you're about 34 percent in the polls, in terms of people saying you're doing an excellent job, so more people—

11-00:01:35

Brown: An excellent—what about good?

11-00:01:37

Shafer: Good was—I don't have that. But it says—that's compared to—50 percent said excellent a few years earlier.

11-00:01:44

Brown: Well, 34 percent, that's still pretty damn good.

11-00:01:48

Shafer: It's not bad. But you're, nonetheless, you're a lame duck at that point. And I'm just wondering—you know, you signed a budget that, in '81, and the—virtually the—actually, I'm trying to—what does this say here, a little over—okay, so the legislature really redid it.

11-00:02:11

Brown: Redid what?

11-00:02:11

Shafer: The budget.

11-00:02:12

Brown: Did they? I would question that. I don't know what *redid* means, because the budget is so massive, that you only change a few [items] anyway. So the *redid* has got to be somewhat of a metaphor or a trope.

11-00:02:30

Shafer: Well, here's a quote from Leo McCarthy in June of '81, he says—

11-00:02:34

Brown: So this is '81—this would be the '81-'82 budget? No.

11-00:02:37

Shafer: Yeah.

11-00:02:37

Brown: July of '81 would be for—

11-00:02:40

Shafer: 1981-82.

11-00:02:40

Brown: To the following—'82, right.

11-00:02:43

Shafer: Yeah, so Leo McCarthy—here's a quote, "He has nothing to do with the decisions that are made. He might as well be spending the session in Hawaii."

11-00:02:53

Brown: Right. Well, he was getting ready to run for the senate, you know. Yes.

11-00:02:58

Shafer: Uh—no, well, he ran in '92, didn't he?

11-00:03:01

Brown: He might have run—

11-00:03:01

Shafer: He wanted to run.

11-00:03:03

Brown: But I ran. [laughing] So there was a little bit of rivalry.

11-00:03:06

Shafer: Well, talk about that. What was your thinking?

11-00:03:09

Brown: Well, no, I mean he wanted to run for the senate, just like Unruh wanted to run for governor. So these things happen—and these are old stories in Sacramento. But on the budget, so this would be in June in '81?

11-00:03:22

Shafer: Yeah.

11-00:03:24

Brown: I mean there were disagreements in spending. Again, because of all the different interest groups. Labor—

11-00:03:34

Shafer: And was that a time when there was—there was less revenue at that point?

11-00:03:36

Brown: Um, well, there's always a risk of less revenue—at least in my mind. So he said I had nothing to do with the budget.

11-00:03:47

Shafer: I guess the point I'm thinking, the point—so he said *he*, meaning *you*, has nothing to do with the decisions that are made. "He might as well be spending the session in Hawaii."

11-00:03:56

Brown: Yeah, well that probably refers to Evelle Younger. I really think he was thinking then of running for the senate. That was an issue. But be that as it may, it does express and reflects a bad relationship with the legislature. That's true. Or a difficult relationship.

11-00:04:14

Shafer: I remember when I talked with you before you left office the last time, you were saying that this time you were—and I know you don't use this phrase, "the adult in the room," but people referred to you—

11-00:04:24

Brown: No, I never did use that. I find it offensive, actually.

11-00:04:27

Shafer: [laughing] Well, so did they.

11-00:04:29

Brown: Because then you're saying they were a bunch of children. So it's disdainful from the point of view of the press, and for me to adopt that disdain would be very counterproductive. And not accurate, I might say.

11-00:04:38

Shafer: Looking back on your first time, did you feel that the relationship with the legislature was based in part on the fact that they were more veteran, and you were newer?

11-00:04:46

Brown: Yeah, well that's part of it. It's many things. There's never one factor only, in our multi-factored world. [laughing] So yeah, there's always a lot of things. I can't tell you exactly what '81 was, what the particular—there might have been some specific issues that he might have had. Housing—we get, it's hard to keep the governor-legislature relationship working overtime. It works usually fine the first couple years. But because there's 120 legislators, there's a majority from one party, so that's at least forty—or often forty-five in the assembly—you've got



forty-five demands. And that assembly speaker is subject to a no vote every day that the legislature's in session. So it's a constant pressure for the speaker to keep his members happy, and the members are happy when they get their projects and their spending programs enacted. And those programs represent what interest groups are bringing pressure on, or engaged with, that particular member.

So the governor is inevitably in a position of saying no, not to a few, but to many, many proposals that, in the minds of the proponents, are very good. So for a governor to say no, they can't understand that, because in their minds it's fine. Now, some abstraction: oh, a few years down the road we may have a recession—it doesn't cut any ice. Now, it turns out that we did have a recession coming, and we had a slight deficit—it was about a billion and a half. But that's the nature—that's the nature of this cyclical up-and-down revenue stream. And it wasn't just the money. There would be other things. Sometimes there were a lot of appointment requests the first time around, far less the second time. So people wanted to have their friends made judges, or their contributors—or workers' comp., unemployment insurance—all sorts of things that I didn't experience the second time, for a number of reasons. So all of that creates antagonism and tension.

11-00:07:16

Shafer:

What role did the Republicans play back then? I know Democrats were in the majority, but I mean now—

11-00:07:20

Brown:

They played a role. They'd join with Democrats on certain bills.

11-00:07:25

Shafer:

Was there more collaboration?

11-00:07:27

Brown:

I think there was. But they were friends. Some of the key Republicans were friends with Democrats, whereas now it's much more partisan. The Republicans don't play too much of a role, although in something like cap and trade, they played a very major role. I tried to get them involved, but the polarized thinking makes that difficult.

11-00:07:53

Shafer:

Yeah. There were people like Ken Maddy and they could work with Willie Brown, and they were more collaborative.

11-00:08:01

Brown:

Yeah, yeah. Well, now they have a lot of noes. No climate change, no taxes—what else? They have a number of other things that they don't like.

11-00:08:12

Shafer:

No high-speed rail.

11-00:08:14

Brown: I guess most of them, yeah, would say that, although not all. See, I would say in that regard, the new always has a very hard time. Because the old, being the status quo, which is education, healthcare, mental health, prisons, law enforcement, pensions, are the existing areas that state government is involved in and is funding. I'd say all of the people in those areas feel that the state needs to spend more money. They felt that forty years ago; they felt it four years ago. That's the way it is.

So if you have some new program that you want to fund, that always is facing the pressure of the existing programs, that all, in the minds of the people, need to be funded, so that's what makes any new program difficult. And the legislature is all organized around these different long-term continuous spending and regulatory actions. So if you say, "Now, let's do high-speed rail," or do some kind of different environmental program, it has to compete with the people who are there. And the people who are there have lobbyists, they have experts, they have friends in the legislature who are permanent staff. They have reporters who have covered the event. And so when something tries to push into something new, it doesn't have the wherewithal. So that's part of the stabilizing of government, but it's also the inertia toward the status quo.

11-00:10:20

Shafer: And what's an example of you bumping up against that?

11-00:10:24

Brown: Well, high-speed rail.

11-00:10:26

Shafer: But I mean the first time.

11-00:10:28

Brown: Maybe the satellite. [pause] The conservation corridor, although they ultimately adopted that. Not so much running up against it, but the trains are running on time, generally speaking. And by that I mean the bills are being passed by the thousands. The hearings are being held, the lobbyists are testifying, the Finance Department is giving their view. And so that whole machinery gets along fine. The governor has a limited role on all that. So if the governor wants to start shaping legislation, you can only do that to a very limited degree, because it's their business. And if you want to get something from them, then you have to give them something. But to give them something takes money. And what you're trying to do is find the money for something new. Well, that's difficult. I mean it's not difficult—it's part of a stability. You wouldn't want constant change every year, because that would lead to even greater problems.

But popular expectation looks to the governor as driving things, and there's a lot of truth to that. But the machinery is all being operated by the legislator or the various departments. And those departments are funded by the legislator, and their funding goes to a subcommittee or a committee, so that committee or

subcommittee chair takes an interest in what is. And so if you start trying to change it, maybe like the ARB [Air Resources Board], give them some new power—well, then you run into resistance. It's very common.

11-00:12:26

Shafer: At what point in 1981 did you start to feel like a lame duck?

11-00:12:30

Brown: I don't know that I ever did.

11-00:12:31

Shafer: You never did?

11-00:12:32

Brown: Well, I don't know what that means. That's an interesting metaphor. I mean I could think of a duck with a wounded leg or something. [laughter] So that's an interesting image, but it doesn't show up that way. I mean do you really think a governor feels like he's a duck? [laughter] So what does that mean? It's just talk. Okay, so you want me to translate saying—what? That no power, people weren't coming to you?

11-00:12:59

Shafer: Well, people are looking ahead to '82. They're looking—

11-00:13:01

Brown: Well, they're always—well, that's true. Other than the first couple years. I can't remember, I don't know. Maybe if you had a story that you could connect to that. That's kind of like pulled out of the sky. So you're just saying, "So you have a year left, so we're worrying about—and then you're like..." No, that doesn't go very—[laughing]

11-00:13:28

Shafer: You don't buy that.

11-00:13:30

Brown: Well, no, I don't think it's descriptive, I don't think it that it ties in to any factual—Are you guys saying my psychic state, or do you want to know some objective characteristics?

11-00:13:40

Shafer: I know better than to ask your psychic state. [laughter]

11-00:13:43

Brown: No, well, but do you want to know how the, what the governor's office, the legislature, the media—what are you talking about?

11-00:13:50

Shafer: Oh, I guess it's just like your own sense of what you can get done. Does it change? Did it change?

11-00:13:57

Brown: No, what you can get done depends upon the issue. I think we did a lot in my last couple years in Sacramento this time. Proposition 13 took a lot of energy out of the system. I mean that was a lot.

11-00:14:23

Shafer: What do you mean *took energy out of the system*?

11-00:14:25

Brown: Well, it was a big move. You know, I don't know what I mean by that, it's true. It's just they do a certain amount of big things, then they want to slow down. They're probably having trouble passing a tax, because they recalled the Orange County senator on the gas tax, so they learn these things. You know, we want to be careful of that. But I still don't get your lame-duck thing. Does that mean you don't get invited to as many parties? Your fundraising goes down?

11-00:14:50

Meeker: There's a presumption, right, that particularly for executives, chief executives of countries or states, that when they have won their last election and there's no more election for them to win, as they're terming out or they will not continue on, that there's a period of time that the power they once had dissipates. Did you experience this in any way?

11-00:15:22

Brown: I don't even experience that description. It's very analogous to this *spend your political capital*, which is another metaphor. You show up, you have this issue, it's different from that issue. What can I say?

11-00:15:35

Meeker: So the whole idea of *lame duck* is a term and a concept that we, as analysts, should dispense with?

11-00:15:42

Brown: Be very careful about it. I mean someone could kind of lose interest and not participate, but what would the lame duck be? So the lame duck started, what—eighteen months to go? Is that where is the lame-duck threshold?

11-00:15:59

Shafer: Well, I think there's a sense that—why should I go out on a limb to help them? They're not going to be around in a year.

11-00:16:04

Brown: Well, why should I *ever* go out on a limb, unless there's something—

11-00:16:06

Shafer: Because I might need something from you. You know, that—

11-00:16:09

Brown: Or because it's something I want. But they don't go out on a limb for that. They go out on a limb if some of their supporters want it, and the main way you get things done is to get the supporters of the legislators pushing for that, which the

governor wants. And if you have only the governor wanting it, there's a special name in Sacramento for that. It's called *governor's pet project*, and anything that is defined as a pet project is something that will be paid for by doing a lot of things for a lot of legislators. So the worst thing a governor can do is have pet projects. It's much better to support other needs that have a strong support basis.

So I think lame duck has some meaning—probably you could point to an historical period when that might be true, a presidency/a governorship, but you'd have to give me a more concrete detail. I mean it is true they overrode some of my vetoes, one was the 16-percent pay raise. But that doesn't mean they're all right. They did the pension loosening under Gray Davis—Republicans voted for that. It cost the system a gigantic increase with no additional revenue, and they said just the opposite. So it was based on a big lie—kind of like the Iraq War. And this stuff happens, like the Vietnam War. All these memes and images and metaphors—that's the way government works. But that's the way it makes colossal mistakes.

So I would say that you don't do as much your last year. That's true. A lot of people working for you are looking for jobs. See, there's not a cookbook that says, "Here's what a governor does in year one, and then there's year five, and then there's year seven—and you'd better get something done in year three, because it won't be done in year seven." Well, yeah, the first year there's more enthusiasm. People are accepting of the fact that you're the governor. And when you get to seven and eight, you've already got a circling of those who want to be *in* there. So some of them have friends in the legislature, and if it serves them right—for example, Mr. Rarick wrote a book about my father. [*California Rising: The Life and Times of Pat Brown*]

11-00:18:48

Shafer:

Ethan Rarick.

11-00:18:50

Brown:

It seemed like he was rather shocked that the Democrats had deferred Republican governor Goodwin Knight's water plan, so that the Democratic governor could take on that issue. Well, that was an example of that. Now, were people waiting for Tom Bradley to do something? I'm not really aware of that in 1982. I mean generally speaking, for one thing, if you're governor for four, you should try to do that which you think is important. And if you're successful, you do it. So now what? Do you just invent something, "Oh my God, we'd better get this done." I mean, and by the way, there's different things at different times. We don't really need the governor to make big actions. That's kind of the conventional myopia—oh, urgency, urgency, we've got to do this, we've got to do that! Pass bills. You know, they're going to pass 1,200/1,300 bills this year. Do we need 1,200 solutions? No, we didn't.

And so the machinery of government is rolling along, and maybe it works a little differently—probably it does work a little differently after a governor has been at

bat. He's been swinging at everything he can hit. So now, he should get it all done by then—or not. And then usually the governor, by the way, is running for another office. Most of them are, you know? So there's just a natural evolution, but lame duck I think had an historical—and it still occurs, but it's not something that I thought of. And I certainly didn't wake up one morning and look in the mirror and say, "Now there's a lame duck." [laughter] I didn't have that experience. And then when you asked me the question, it sounded like you expected me to have *had* that experience.

11-00:20:43

Marzorati: That quote from McCarthy. He's not saying I disagree with Brown; he's saying Brown's not even in the decision-making process.

11-00:20:49

Brown: And if you were running against Brown, wouldn't you like that to be the thought—that here's a guy who wants to run for the senate, and he was irrelevant. That's pure strategy. *You* [talking to former press secretary Evan Westrup] would have recommended he say that probably, if you were—[laughter]

11-00:21:03

Westrup: Don't blame me. It's a good tactic.

11-00:21:11

Brown: [laughing] I'm just telling you. I think it's a little naïve today, of the way government works. Government is run by vicious people that are seeking their advancement, and part of the way you advance is at other people's expense. That's the way it works. A lot of people don't understand that.

11-00:21:29

Shafer: When did you decide you decide you were going to run for the senate?

11-00:21:33

Brown: Late in the game, yeah. I think some of my supporters wanted me to run. I wasn't as interested at that point.

11-00:21:41

Shafer: Really?

11-00:21:43

Brown: Because I wasn't that interested in the senate. I said, "Well, okay—now they're, people are a little tired of me. I'll wait a few years, and I'll come back and do something." Like, I wasn't quite sure. I'd run for president, maybe.

11-00:21:57

Holmes: A third term as governor didn't—?

11-00:22:00

Brown: No, because, first of all, no one, except [Earl] Warren, ever had a third term. It seemed like it would be very difficult. And given my popularity, it would be extremely difficult. So, first of all, you do run out of a certain amount of gas,

because you've done all your best things—certainly within eight years. And secondly, remember you've had to say no. You have at least forty Democratic legislators—forty-one, and twenty-one senators—and you're not saying yes every day. So in the first year you say no, but in the second year you say no—and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth, and the sixth, seventh, and the eighth—that's a lot of noes. Now, some people take that very personally. If you only have five people upset—or ten—that is going to make it more difficult. You're not fresh. There is something about being fresh, and oh boy, we're going to achieve things together, and it seems to work. So there is a little bit of running out of gas.

11-00:23:08

Shafer: Did you—I remember earlier on when we met with you we talked about your—the letter you wrote your dad trying to get him to run for the senate. Rather than run for governor. I mean did you see that you might be able to accomplish something in the senate?

11-00:23:22

Brown: Yeah, oh of course—well, I ran. Yeah, I saw that.

11-00:23:26

Shafer: And what would you—what were your ambitions for that?

11-00:23:30

Brown: Well, high-speed rail? Control of nuclear weapons. You know, other things—building, helping the whole welfare system, and trying to provide income support for people who were at the lower end. No, whatever I campaigned on, it's still the same issues. That's something that a lot of people don't realize. These issues, they're not problems that are solved; they're conditions that are lived with. That's probably a revolutionary idea. I mean Ronald Reagan said that he dealt with the welfare problem, and he provided a solution to the welfare problem, and we're still there, called *the homeless*. So what happened? We've had six governors since then. How do we explain that? Maybe the press was asleep, and they were saying there were solutions, but they weren't providing them. But because of these inherent structural conditions of life—you know, water. Water is a bigger problem now than when my father built the water plan. What happened? Well, we've got more people, we're using more water, and we've got climatic changes, you know, and we're exporting a lot of water to all of these foreign countries. Every ounce of rice is an ounce of water that we're sending out.

11-00:25:12

Shafer: It's interesting, because I mean you're saying that these problems exist, and government doesn't solve them.

11-00:25:18

Brown: No, but it alleviates them. It responds to them. It addresses them. That's why they don't even use the word *solution* anymore. Government addresses a problem, it doesn't solve a problem, right? People use the word *address*. They've substituted that verb for *solve*, so when they address, they can wave at the problem and say, "Hi, we've got a problem here." [laughter] Well, and you are making it better: the

fire is burning, and you've got to pour water on it. You put it out. But that doesn't mean it's not going to start again, or another fire. So it's like history. It's one damn thing after another, and government does that. But because of the nature of change, you're not going to change the conditions, but you will change the personalities. It's more likely that they'll listen to your radio show if you're presenting something fresh, even though the basic essence is very much similar to what it's always been. [laughing] At least that's my perspective.

11-00:26:21

Shafer: Different format.

11-00:26:25

Brown: You say, well, education is still a problem. You'd say, in Oakland, you live in the East Bay—they still have a challenge in the Oakland School District. They've had it for many decades, right? And we'll have a budget problem later, and we have crime problems. So getting to the nature of what government can do/should do/and what's actually happening, I think it takes insight and reflection, so that you can actually describe what it is that's going on, and what we can do about it.

11-00:26:56

Shafer: Yeah. One of the issues that you had to deal with in 1981 was the medfly infestation. And it was threatening crops, potentially billions of dollars in crop loss. How did you approach that problem?

11-00:27:14

Brown: Inadequately. I first heard about it. I didn't know what the hell—I'd never heard of a Mediterranean fruit fly till Richard Rominger, the director of agriculture, told me about it. And I didn't listen clearly enough to pick up on the seriousness of it. And then it diminished, because it was the winter. And then something happened called spring emergence, and they were back. And so spring was something—spraying chemicals seemed politically and environmentally questionable. And even people like Paul Ehrlich from Stanford said this is a bad thing to do, and I accepted that.

In retrospect, I don't know that I would have agreed to that today. I don't think I would have. But it took more immediate action. Whether we could have avoided spraying, which was politically unpopular, we don't know that scientifically. We used sterile fruit flies, and we don't know whether some of the sterile fruit flies weren't sterile, and so it exaggerated the problem. That's one possibility. But whatever it is, that took more decisive action of some kind, and waiting built it up—and we had Ed Meese in the White House, and they were kind of manipulating it, and so it became an opportunity for Republicans to gain. Yeah, so I didn't respond in the way I could have, which would have been spray quickly.

11-00:28:54

Shafer: And what were the, like the—obviously you had the ag interests on the one side, you had the environmental interests.



11-00:28:58

Brown: Yeah.

11-00:28:58

Shafer: And then your own thinking about it. How did those different interest groups come at you?

11-00:29:03

Brown: Well, they didn't come at me. They're just there. I mean it's not like we're sitting there waiting to receive information pro and con.

11-00:29:12

Shafer: But you were getting pressure probably?

11-00:29:15

Brown: No, well pressure from what—people? We're going to call you up and say what? The farmers were a little pressure. The environmentalists—it was just there as a problem. I mean if you can see a problem, and you say wow, if you solve this wrong, that's not going to be good. [laughing] It's going to make a lot of people mad, or it's going to cause cancer, and that's going to make people mad—and that's not going to be good. So just the observation of the problem gives rise—if you want to use those words, which you seem to like to use—pressure. You know, in other words, if there's a fire out there, you could say I'm under pressure to put it out, and that's true of issues. If you don't handle them, they can get worse and cause damage.

So on that, I gave too much—because the malathion, when it got on a car, it chipped the paint and it killed the fish. So I said, “Well, if that's going to go on little kids' bicycles, this doesn't sound good.” But so far, I don't think there's been any malathion cancer deaths, I haven't read about it, so maybe there was some—

[side conversation deleted]

11-00:30:26

Brown: I tried, first of all, to get scientific information. There wasn't that much information. So there was inadequate information probably. But I think, in retrospect, I would say I did not get the experts early enough when I had the time, before—somewhere in the latter part—what year was that?

11-00:30:46

Shafer: 1981

11-00:30:46

Brown: So in '80, which might have been a casualty of running for president, although I'd long since dropped out. I didn't convene the requisite experts in a timely enough, in-depth fashion to enable me to make the best decision possible. So that was definitely an example where delay is not your friend. But on the other hand, if you delay and the problem goes away, that's good too. But that's not the case.

11-00:31:21

Shafer: Do you think you underestimated it?

11-00:31:24

Brown: I don't think I looked at it with the level of scrutiny that I generally like to employ. In fact, I would say probably one of the reasons I am inclined, if a problem seems at all worth thinking about it, to probe more deeply than most people might, if I understand that correctly. Just because I've seen how things—you know, whether it was the medfly, or the fact that I've got a nice water system but the off valve was on. I've learned, over the period of decades, that stuff can go wrong, and it's not obvious. So you have to constantly be probing to see what might not work here. And so that, I would say I take a more proactive, prudential approach to things. I would say the medfly, I learned a lot from that.

I'd say other people haven't, because other people have let things get out of hand too, without jumping in. Also, we know that from the Watts riots. My father was in Greece, but the lieutenant governor, evidently I think they delayed. But then, what isn't delaying—have started shooting? These things become very difficult. It's either too much, or not enough. You're too little/too late, or you're too much/too soon, and you overdid it. So that's just inherent in judgment. And you've got to know, the best way to do the best is to get the best information, think about it, and get the time. And a lot of times you don't have the time, because everybody wants you to do something.

11-00:33:19

Shafer: Were—at that point were you distracted at all by the senate campaign? Or were you not in at that point?

11-00:33:25

Brown: No, I think that was also when computergate was going on. I might have been distracted by that.

11-00:33:31

Shafer: I'm not sure what computergate was.

11-00:33:33

Brown: Well, that shows you how little computergate is left. [laughter] That was the allegation by the *LA Times*, picked up by the Fair Political Practices Commission, that I was using what were very new computers for compiling political names for improper political purposes. That was the charge, and over time they dropped it. But it was a problem, and it *was* concerning, so that was a distraction. Whether running for the presidency might have been distracting by thinking about those national issues? Maybe I didn't give enough depth of attention. I'd have to really go back and look more carefully at it, but the principle is the same. I have a director of agriculture, and he knows a lot. Of course you have people on the environmental side, and they say something entirely different. And then they clash, and you say, "Well, the farmers, you know, those guys in the Central Valley, [but] the enviros—they speak for kind of a universal, the good of nature." But in this case, the economic consequences of quarantining California produce

were large, and the environmental harms were speculative and not adequately based on the evidence. That's what I would say.

Now, someone could call Paul Ehrlich and say, "Well, what *is* your evidence for malathion?" Maybe it kills the butterflies that he's worked on at Stanford. So there were different people. I bring up those factors—say this is inherent in making judgments. You try to get a lot of information here from sound people, but at the end of the day, there's insufficient information, and the leader has to make a decision.

11-00:35:42

Holmes: Governor, when you were first addressed with this issue you decided not to spray initially, siding with the environmentalists not to spray.

11-00:35:50

Brown: Yeah, and then the White House said, "We're going to quarantine all California produce," and all the farmers went crazy.

11-00:35:55

Holmes: Because I had it for my research, that within forty-eight hours, within two days you switched—

11-00:36:01

Brown: Right, and I should have anticipated—well, they did it out of the White House. It was a political move. But it was a good move—it was a clever move, and I didn't see that, so that was not good. I should have been able to anticipate that, and then, so then the question is, you've got to spray. So that shows some deficiency in my decision-making process, if you want to call it that.

11-00:36:34

Shafer: Do you think that your—that your bias was toward more the environmental concerns perhaps?

11-00:36:39

Brown: My bias was to maybe give more weight to the environmental concerns than actually scientifically or politically was merited.

11-00:36:52

Shafer: Interesting.

11-00:36:53

Brown: And I would say when I got to be mayor of Oakland and would deal with some issues, particularly in downtown development, and I could have a real-world feel—using that word, not *feeling* but *feel*—and then I could hear people saying, "Oh, you can't build a five-story building. That's out of character with the neighborhood, in using the [California] Environmental Quality Act." I said, "No, that's stupid." And the Sierra Club, who did not endorse me—and it wasn't just that issue. They were into rent control and a bunch of other things.

But I think at the governor's level, I was giving weight to some abstract claims, that as I got more experience I was able to discern more clearly their validity or their lack of validity, or insufficient validity. I mean I don't want to think of myself as a skeptic, but I do like to understand what are the factors, what are the ingredients of a particular problem. And I've learned that most people have a limited perspective, and therefore, if you hear from one, you've got to hear from others to get the most balanced perspective. And there generally is not any one person you can turn to—or *I* feel that. So I've got to ultimately figure it out myself. In order to figure it out myself, I have to take a lot of time. When you're in politics, you don't have a lot of time, because you're running around giving speeches, you're going to meetings. So that's why I reduced my number of meetings. When I have a real problem, I want to have the time to dig into it, and not get pushed. And we saw that with the electrical problem under Gray Davis. I don't know what the solution ought to be. But I know from the medfly experience, take time, start early, get a range of experts and figure out what are possible pathways forward. And that is, I think, relatively rare.

I don't think that's what the president did on the Bay of Pigs. I don't know that on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, I don't think they applied that—they being the Senate and the House. On the Iraq War, I don't think our sterling leaders, Democrat and Republican, applied the lessons of the medfly decisions. That's what I would say, because that is a very burdensome, sometimes irritating, tiresome endeavor, when you've got to listen, so you've got to shut up. You've got to stop all the little things in your head, and listen. Then you've got to go to the next person and listen to something different. And sometimes they're totally clashing. So if you have two clashing opinions, and you don't, yourself, have the knowledge or the expertise to pick between them—that's extremely frustrating, when you know that the wrong decision, or maybe either decision, is going to be politically negatively impactful. And that's why politicians, I think, like to defer, delegate, or get on with the next thing, because it's hard to get to the bottom of things.

And there's another methodology, which is don't sweat the details: always create a new adventure, a new problem. Trump does that a lot. So you're always going to have mistakes, people are going to get mad at you. Just keep fighting new battles and keep fighting them, and keep going. That also can work. [laughing] For how long? I think there's limits.

11-00:40:54

Holmes: Did the medfly issue have you rethink the use of pesticides in agriculture?

11-00:41:00

Brown: No.

11-00:41:00

Holmes: Because I know—say the UFW [United Farm Workers] on one hand brought that to public attention. At least, throughout their campaigns.

11-00:41:06

Brown: They did, but I wasn't governor then. They weren't bringing up pesticides, when I was there, as much. That happened later. But we adopted the strictest pesticide rules in the country, when I was governor. Before medfly—I think what got me was DB—

11-00:41:26

Meeker: DDT.

11-00:41:26

Brown: Yeah, and of course that got my attention, because it's manufactured by Dow Chemical, and Dow Chemical had a plant in the north bay or San Francisco Bay, and they pulled out, and it became the big example of the bad business climate of California, and how many permits you needed. And that was the same outfit that had the DBCP [dibromochloropropane] —this was made in the Valley, and they found out these men who made it weren't having children. Their wives were not having children, and they run it back to this chemical. And we banned that chemical, and I pushed on that. So that's that story.

So but we were pretty good on pesticides. But of course the farmers later—the pesticide is huge. And then it's very chemistry, science based—it's difficult. Science base to approve, science base to attack. But really the medfly was not—that was not applying the pesticide that would hurt workers. That was spraying, because we applied it—dioxin and some other ones—worse, methyl bromide, which was also used for fumigation. But this was aerial spray, so that had a visual drama that was something I wanted to avoid.

11-00:43:07

Holmes: Well, I know [Brien Thomas] "B.T." Collins, I think, was working at your staff.

11-00:43:11

Brown: He said he drank a bottle of that. [laughter] Yeah, but do we know what that was? Did we have a chemical test of that? It could have been vodka.

11-00:43:20

Marzorati: We talked to Dan Dooley, and he said B.T. threw up thirty minutes after he drank it, so—

11-00:43:28

Brown: Okay, well that could be. Dan has never told me that.

11-00:43:32

Shafer: I moved to California in '81, so that was one of the first things that I remember from being here. I seem to remember you sleeping in like the spray area. Does that ring a bell?

11-00:43:44

Brown: I stayed over at Vic Calvo's house. He was in the spray area.

11-00:43:49

Shafer: And you did that—why?

11-00:43:51

Brown: Well, why do governors go to fires? That's where the action is.

11-00:43:58

Shafer: So it wasn't like if everyone else is going to be exposed to this, I will too?

11-00:44:02

Brown: You have so many layers that you want to add on to every decision.

11-00:44:07

Shafer: Well, you made a decision to do that.

11-00:44:09

Brown: If you go to the forest fire, does the governor go to put the fire out? No. [laughing] Well, that's part of what you do, and it's expected. So there's some kind of solidarity or something to go see it. But that's just what you do. Why do they do all these little field trips on everything? The whole schedule is going to things, and certainly politicians go where the media is. To try to explain it.

11-00:44:41

Holmes: The actual solution to the medfly issue, which is fascinating, at least among some of us who've studied agriculture, because it actually had nothing to do with pesticides, but the introduction of millions and millions of sterile flies that counts.

11-00:44:56

Brown: Well, that's what they say—well, they said no, the sterile fruit fly was to kill the medfly—I think they're doing that with a certain kind of mosquitoes in Africa. But the idea was good, to have them mating, and therefore make the female fruit flies nonproductive, infertile. But the question is, were there enough? There was only one laboratory, like in Costa Rica, that made the sterile fruit flies, so it was quite a process. And you've got to put them in canisters, and they're saying that one of the canisters wasn't sterile. I don't know if that's the same story you got. Now, the fruit flies were introduced by bringing produce from Hawaii, or some other place, where it's endemic. But it's interesting there hasn't been that much talk about fruit flies, has there? They've come back occasionally, but you don't hear much about them.

11-00:45:54

Shafer: It's interesting what you said earlier, that you maybe had a bias or putting too much weight on the environmental arguments. Like how do you know, as time has gone by—

11-00:46:03

Brown: No, that argument. I didn't say that about anything. I'm more careful on how I respond to various claims. So a government is a site of multiple claims. Very few of the claims are 100-percent accurate. Right. I mean you wouldn't expect that the various groups, from oil to union to education to colleges to public television to

the university—they're making all sorts of claims, usually for more money. And then they base that on a whole series of stories, narratives. So I've become more skilled in my discernment of such claims.

11-00:46:54

Shafer: Huh, yeah. Any other take-aways from the medfly?

11-00:46:59

Brown: I think, *discernment* is a word that the Jesuits use a lot, because Ignatius Loyola, in his spiritual exercises, has some passages about discernment of spirits in your mind. And there are certain spirits—you know, you can have the good spirit, the devil, or you know—is this a good inclination? A good impulse—or a bad impulse? And how do you discern? So that concept of discernment, taken from the spiritual life, you can take it to the political life—or even the business life. How do you discern the consequences? That's what makes it interesting. That's what we call judgment. And experienced judgment and knowledgeable judgment is what we'd like to have, but which, because of the complexity of the world and its ever-changing nature, is hard to come by. So most people are neither skilled in their discernment, nor experienced, unless they've had years on task, and then they have at least a chance.

11-00:48:20

Meeker: Well, the question, the follow-up to that is at this point in time, did you understand that you were engaged in a process of discernment?

11-00:48:32

Brown: No, I was just trying to figure out how do I get rid of these damn medflies. [laughter] Can we put stuff on the ground without having to—the main thing was avoid spraying from helicopters, stuff that puts holes in your car, in your paint on your car, and kills fish in the creek. That seemed to be something I wanted to avoid, but I couldn't figure out how to do it.

Oh, by the way, at the beginning it wasn't clear that spraying was needed. Ground application was the other alternative, so if we keep more troops, more ground forces to go after the medfly—it was kind of like the Vietnam War in miniature, but the ground forces could not carry the day.

11-00:49:20

Meeker: Well, I lived in the South Bay at the time, and I was eleven years old. And it was pretty damn impressive, and I thought it was cool. [laughing]

11-00:49:26

Brown: You like it. Right, so that should have been something I should have taken into account.

11-00:49:31

Meeker: Right, but I wasn't a voter at the time.

11-00:49:32

Brown: You know half the people might have been—how many people actually were concerned about it? So here's the question. What's the scientific basis? What do we know? What is the harm, and do we even know? It's probably a range of possible harms to a range of possible recipients. And then when you figure all that out, what really did people think about it? And whatever they think about it, how long will they think about it going forward, versus the agriculture, and all that. So that's a fairly sophisticated set of questions, and I don't know there was a way around it, to act more decisively and earlier. That was the only way.

11-00:50:23

Meeker: Was there polling done to determine what the probability might have been?

11-00:50:25

Brown: No. No, people resort to polls a lot more now than we did then.

11-00:50:33

Holmes: Governor, from some of the reports I read, there was an ecoterrorist group or organization that claimed responsibility for the medfly—

11-00:50:44

Brown: That I don't know—I mean now you've got a good conspiracy theory going. [laughter] It could have been the Republicans. [loud laughter] Meese, I mean you could get some communications with Ed Meese at the White House, or he was over there when they said quarantine California's produce. That was kind of a gun to my head. But were there ecoterrorists that wanted to—what?

11-00:51:08

Holmes: That just claimed responsibility for releasing the flies.

11-00:51:11

Brown: Well, you know, I'd have to have a little more information before that query deserves an answer.

11-00:51:18

Shafer: You mentioned water as an issue that—you know, it keeps coming around, and I wonder if you could talk about Prop. 9, which was on the ballot, I think, in June, maybe at that same time of the senate—

11-00:51:33

Brown: The water quality measure for the San Francisco Bay?

11-00:51:35

Shafer: No, the Peripheral Canal.

11-00:51:36

Brown: Well, it was about the water quality in the Bay. Do you know what Proposition 9 says? No.

11-00:51:42

Shafer: Well, it was to take water around the Delta.



11-00:51:44

Brown: *No. No.* Go look at your notes. [laughing] Proposition 9 was a measure that passed with about 52 or 53 percent—and I don't know if you have that in your notes.

11-00:51:57

Shafer: It was to reject the Peripheral Canal—right?

11-00:52:00

Brown: Oh—what year was this? 1982?

11-00:52:02

Marzorati: June of '82.

11-00:52:04

Brown: No, there was a prior one. Maybe there was a prior one to create water quality, and if the Peripheral Canal went forward, there would be certain environmental quality restrictions on the *use* of that canal as a condition of the canal going forward. That was in place, but now the Sunne [W.] McPeak Salyer-Boswell initiative—is that the one you're talking about?

11-00:52:28

Shafer: Prop. 9.

11-00:52:28

Brown: I don't know, there's been thousands of propositions since that time. At least a thousand, and I can remember more of them than all the people in this room put together but I do not remember each one of them in detail. What was the name on the ballot?

11-00:52:47

Marzorati: The Peripheral Canal Act. [ed.: The Peripheral Canal Act was on the June 1982 ballot as Proposition 9; it was defeated with 67.2% of the vote.]

11-00:52:48

Brown: Is that what it said? No, it was a referendum. That was a referendum, and so it wasn't an initiative. What did you call it, a ballot measure?

11-00:52:58

Shafer: Yeah, well—yeah.

11-00:52:59

Brown: It was a referendum. But what was the title?

11-00:53:02

Marzorati: Peripheral Canal Act, and it would have authorized the building of a canal—

11-00:53:08

Brown: All right, and what did it say?

11-00:53:11

Marzorati: It would have authorized building a canal around the periphery of the Delta, moving water from—

11-00:53:15

Brown: Oh right. I was wondering where they got a title like that, that was the title of the bill. It was fat. What was the number?

11-00:53:25

Marzorati: Two hundred, SB 200.

11-00:53:28

Brown: So SB 200, right. And so that was a referendum, right. And so what was the—

11-00:53:32

Shafer: And so voters rejected it. They overturned it, they overturned it.

11-00:53:38

Brown: Oh yeah, yeah, they rejected it. Yeah. Vote no, that was the deal, yeah.

11-00:53:41

Shafer: Yeah, what's your sense of what the water politics were at that time? I mean this is an issue that's, you know, transcended—

11-00:53:47

Brown: It had more money, and they had the environmentalists as a front. This is an environmental issue. But all the money came from Salyer and Boswell, who objected to the Peripheral Canal because it didn't take enough water from the north and deliver it to the Central Valley. They wanted a bigger pipe, and I think the pipe was 2,700 cubic feet or something. Now, when I proposed the two tunnels—nine cubic feet. One is maybe six cubic feet. We're going down from twenty-three—or some number like that. But that was not enough to satisfy Boswell, so he put up the money. They wanted more, the environmentalists wanted less, and it was that kind of unholy alliance that was able to put it over. And it wasn't that popular, you know, as a—

11-00:54:38

Holmes: And for Boswell, are you referring to J.G. Boswell?

11-00:54:41

Brown: Yeah, and he eventually got into trouble—or Salyer got into trouble. So they wanted more water, and of course they didn't get more water. I knew at the time, this Peripheral Canal was an unusual issue. I first heard about it running for governor. What the hell is the Peripheral Canal? I remember a guy named Tom Graff, who I think was at EDF [Environmental Defense Fund] asked me about that, and it was very important. You know, I think he was against it. And then my own water people, [Ronald B.] "Ron" Robie, who's now a judge, said, "No, this is the project to make the California Water Plan work, because the Delta is unsustainable." I said, "Okay." So they wrapped it up. We worked on it and I didn't fully grasp all of the intricacies—at all.

Big projects that cost money concern people. And I don't know exactly, was the campaign—was it a water grab? Even though it was paid for by a water grabber who wanted to grab more water, or was it just the expense, it's going to cost you money. I don't know how they played the campaign, but it was a very small number of people. I mean you're talking about a handful of people who put that campaign together. But on the other side, the Peripheral Canal, like the tunnels, is remote to the vast political community. It's a very insider kind of thing—even today. So even though you go to the Delta, and people say they don't like tunnels. But the average guy—on my whole campaign, the amount of time that tunnels and Peripheral Canal in my—starting in '75 to 1983—rare, rare. It hardly comes up.

So it's a project that is believed by people who really know, that for the Delta—the pumping of the water that is used throughout California, that it's totally unsustainable today, and you need something to go around the Delta. And water flushed through the Delta, with the pumps, is very detrimental, and it's got to be changed. You can stop it, and then the Delta will collapse, and you'll probably have to take a significant amount—I don't know how much, but agriculture out of production. Okay, that can be done. And there will be water crises in other parts of the state. But I imagine we can deal with it. But it's a sound program, I think, and the opposition is very, very limited.

In fact, the people who opposed, who sought that referendum, some of them are the same people today—the exact same, from Stockton, they're still there. So you might ask why is that? And one of the reasons is they get a lot of water, free water. My father always told me that instead of having to exercise a water right, the water just flows in and they can tap into it. And they're afraid that if that water is not flowing, that they will have to say, “Well, here's my water right. Give it to me from the Peripheral Canal,” or the tunnel, they might not get it. That's what I've heard. But in truth, this is a complicated issue. I grasp it at various levels, but there's a lot of issues that only the experts really are dealing with.

11-00:58:41

Shafer: I'm wondering if your—either your father gave you any advice about water, or if you asked him for any advice about this?

11-00:58:46

Brown: No.

11-00:58:47

Shafer: No, not at all?

11-00:58:47

Brown: No, I mean he talked about water, because he was the attorney general in the *Arizona v. California* case, so that's something I heard about at the dinner table. But to understand the water, the farms, the cities, the habitat, the growth inducement—there's a lot of facets to this.

11-00:59:21

Shafer: You know, you talked earlier about Prop. 13, and how complicated that was. You're talking about water and how complicated that is. In so many issues that are on the ballot, that are just really—the average person has to vote on, but what do you think?

11-00:59:32

Brown: Well, the average legislator doesn't understand it either. The average person—it's hard to understand. Do you understand how we're being cooled now by, with the help of photovoltaic cells and lithium ion batteries. I do not know how to make a lithium-ion battery, and I don't know how to make a photovoltaic cell, but nevertheless, we're enjoying it. So we're in a civilization of immense technological sophistication of which we are totally ignorant. And that's true of politics as well.

11-01:00:14

Shafer: Yeah, but as you're going into 1982 a little further, you got the nomination. You ran against Gore Vidal, which—I know you had him on your radio show years later.

11-01:00:22

Brown: Yeah.

11-01:00:22

Shafer: Did you guys debate at all?

11-01:00:25

Brown: We had one debate.

11-01:00:27

Shafer: Do you remember when it was? Because I sort of have this feeling—

11-01:00:28

Brown: It was at the—was it the Marines Memorial?

11-01:00:33

Shafer: It was in San Francisco?

11-01:00:34

Brown: Yeah, I don't remember where it is. Yeah, you guys have to do—you're a library. You do the research.

11-01:00:37

Shafer: Well, no, I seem to remember it being at Everett High School in San Francisco. Would it have been there? No? It's on Church and Sanchez, but it doesn't matter.

11-01:00:49

Brown: It was not there.

11-01:00:50

Shafer: Okay.

[side conversation deleted]

11-01:00:51

Shafer: Because I seem to remember seeing the two of you there. But again, I was just a kid, and I just kind of came to California. So you ran against Pete Wilson. You said you weren't really that enthused about running for the senate.

11-01:01:03

Brown: Oh, I was in it. I was enthused.

11-01:01:08

Shafer: But the idea of running. You had to be pushed into it?

11-01:01:13

Brown: Yeah, well I mean you have this image of pushes and pulleys and pressures—it's a kind of a construction-industry imagery. I don't know where it comes from. I relate more to ideas. So maybe the option of running seemed like it was a lot, because the fundraising is quite extensive and challenging. There was a time in which I thought it would be good just to leave office. I thought that was good. But I still wanted to come back to office. So I think when I became convinced of—all right, once you're out of office, it's much harder to come back, so it's better to stay in. But I thought it was very difficult to win, because my poll standings. I thought it was difficult, and I was right.

11-01:02:30

Meeker: Who's influencing you? You've mentioned them, vaguely, a few times.

11-01:02:34

Brown: Vaguely. Just the campaign—just whoever helped me in the campaign. You talk to different people.

11-01:02:44

Meeker: Well, you're the one who talked about it. Who were the different people?

11-01:02:47

Brown: I don't have a kitchen cabinet, you know. Reagan had his—

11-01:02:47

Shafer: Like—was Tom Quinn part of that?

11-01:02:51

Brown: Maybe. I can't remember. I've run in many campaigns with many personalities. These campaigns were eminently forgettable.

11-01:03:08

Dan Newman: They were pre-ordained, apparently. [laughter]

11-01:03:11

Brown: Oh yes, ordained. Like the corn—if you've got the seed, the soil, and the sun. [laughter]

- 11-01:03:16  
Newman: Chauncey Gardiner now. Chauncey Gardiner, *Being There*.
- 11-01:03:20  
Brown: No, I never heard of Chauncey Gardiner.
- 11-01:03:22  
Shafer: So you lost to Pete Wilson, 51.5 to—
- 11-01:03:26  
Brown: Forty-six. Or 44 or something. [51.4% to 44.8%]
- 11-01:03:30  
Shafer: What was your case? What case did you make for being the next senator?
- 11-01:03:34  
Brown: Now you're asking me to remember a campaign. I have a couple of my old literature pieces.
- 11-01:03:43  
Shafer: Do you have them here?
- 11-01:03:44  
Brown: I can send them over to you. We should add that to the mix.
- 11-01:03:50  
Brown: Well, limiting the nuclear arms race, definitely was one of them.
- 11-01:03:54  
Shafer: That was right after Three Mile Island too, I think, wasn't it?
- 11-01:03:56  
Brown: Yeah, well—no, the nuclear arms race, the weapons.
- 11-01:04:00  
Shafer: Missiles.
- 11-01:04:03  
Brown: Oh, the nuclear freeze was on the ballot. The nuclear freeze was on the ballot, which again, proved not to be that—that determinative an issue. It's even less of an issue now, even though it's more dangerous.
- 11-01:04:19  
Meeker: Running for senate, you would certainly be asked to comment more on international relations and—
- 11-01:04:25  
Brown: Yeah, right.
- 11-01:04:26  
Meeker: Were those issues that animated you? Were they of interest to you?

11-01:04:29

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

11-01:04:30

Meeker: Because as governor, you were deep in domestic issues.

11-01:04:34

Brown: No, well, I'm interested in international issues.

11-01:04:37

Meeker: Where did you go to learn about these issues? Were there particular advisors or thinkers who you thought had interesting things to say about the international scene?

11-01:04:46

Brown: I talked to different foreign policy people. I remember, in '82, I think I went to Harvard—I think in '80, that was the presidential campaign. I mean you talk to people. It's not that hard. There's a lot of publications, and you get meetings with people. You have your campaign staff that supposedly develops the programming, by whatever magic dark art they deploy. [laughter]

11-01:05:22

Meeker: You certainly had a domestic policy through line in your first two terms of governor, and I think about paying attention to resources, you know, not overspending.

11-01:05:34

Brown: Yeah. Wait, let me just back up to your *through line*—that's another one of your metaphors. First of all, in eight years I probably signed or vetoed up to 12,000 bills. There's a lot of little pieces—now, that's not very useful for campaigning or for intelligent policy discussion. So the big task becomes what general ideas—that's why I came up with the idea of the era of limits. The era of possibilities. How do you make it general? Ronald Reagan made it general. Government's the problem, or *the evil empire*. But government in its functioning, particularly in the legislative process, is very detailed, and those details cannot be communicated to a mass audience. I mean the tweet of Trump is more powerful than a thousand policy papers, because it's quick, you get it out, and everyone is convinced that that's the most important thing to read about. So being governor for eight years gave me sort of an understanding about educational questions and water, and certainly environment and the energy were important. So I did know about things like that.

11-01:07:13

Meeker: Was there an organizing principle that you brought into your thoughts around foreign policy?

11-01:07:21

Brown: Well, when I ran for president in '76 I coined the phrase *planetary realism*. I took two different ideas, and put the planetary and connected it to realism. The planetary was a more visionary feel, and the pragmatism was the more realistic.

And they talk about that in foreign policy. You see a realist—like Kissinger would be a realist. Other people are more kind of idealists—people who started the Iraq War. They were idealists, and their ideal was to make Iraq into a democratic model based on America. Of course that was totally not grounded in reality. So you need to have realism. But besides realism, you need some vision, what's—that is a good question. Besides realism, there are certain preferences, values—and then what do those mean? It's like human rights or democratic elections or environmental stewardship, inclusivity. So there are a variety of words other than just winning and losing. But winning and losing is pretty damn important. You know, like if we lost the Second World War, a lot of those ideals wouldn't mean too much. So you've got to be grounded in realism while you have your ideas about what it is you want to achieve with your realism.

11-01:09:16

Meeker: It's another effort to challenge the restrictive binary that you keep on referring to maybe?

11-01:09:24

Brown: Well, how did you start this question? You were asking about my—how did I know about foreign policy?

11-01:09:32

Shafer: An organizing principle around your foreign policy.

11-01:09:34

Brown: Well, organizing principles are made by academics, not by the people who are organizing, because they're too practical.

11-01:09:42

Meeker: Well, I don't know. I think that when you describe the idea around the era of limits, I think that speaks to the—

11-01:09:48

Brown: That was an organizing idea. And that idea was not—that's an important idea, but as a persuasive idea, it's not adequate. You can't just tell people what they can't have. You have to have a positive. Although you know, if you look at the human presence on Earth with 7.4 billion people, there are some people who say there's too many people. We can't sustain it. Well, that's limits. But are you going to say, "Let's stop it at 7.4"? That's pretty difficult. But then if you say, "Okay, then we're going to have to share more to make it work." And I'd say, "Well, who are we going to take it from to share—and who are we going to share it with?" So the trouble is the organizing principles, other than *more*—that's the big organizing principle. Give me more. I want more money, I want more education, I want more—I want a bigger truck. I want to go faster, I want to be safer. I want more. Okay. But now *more* means war, because my *more* is your *less*—often.

But now in the market economy, we have what is called win-win, so maybe you can *do* that. But it doesn't appear that win—in fact, I would say the big organizing idea now is to get to more of a win-win, but we're not there. We're not there in



the Ukraine. We're not there in Syria. We're not there in Taiwan. We're not there in the South China Sea. We're not there in a lot of places. And the fact that we're not there—when I say we, the US and Cuba, the US and Nicaragua—so Trump and others in Washington want them to do something, and they want to do something else.

So how do get a foreign policy that accommodates to diversity? See diversity is defined more narrowly as racial diversity or gender diversity—or something like that. But in the world we have lifestyle diversity or value diversity. Woman wear the burqa, and some people say, “Well, no, we don't like that. We like bikinis.” And how do you accommodate? Is that something to kill people about, or can we find a way to do something different? And that's the great problem of human history. You know, when the missionaries came, they saw it was a great opportunity to convert the heathen, the Indians. But it didn't work out too well for the Indians because of the diseases. And then later on they just killed them outright.

So these conflicts are the historical patrimony of what we have. But planetary realism is based on the: well, we've only got one planet, and how do we learn to live on the planet? Now, climate change is an example of—everybody's got to work together. It's got to be win-win. That's not the way things are working right now. You know when they had the Normandy celebration—Putin wasn't invited, so he said oh, it didn't matter. He didn't have to be invited to everything. He probably wondered how they excluded a country that lost 20 million people. Was that because they were on the Eastern Front, and Normandy was on the Western Front? Or was this a message that we don't like Mr. Putin? And is that a good message? Is that going to help us get to win-win or planetary realism? Or is that going to just further the acceleration to doomsday, or whatever the next clash is going to lead to?

So I am influenced by even however valid is the population bomb—I don't know how accurate it is. But I do know that resources are not evenly distributed. I do know that resources are extracted in unsustainable, damaging ways. And therefore, if we were really going to be on a path of stability and wisdom, we would be having a different arrangement of stuff and people's relations, and we don't seem to be getting any closer. In fact, we're seemingly moving away from that. So that would be my big general idea—this would be my thoughts, and I think in some way I thought that in 1982. And I'd have to go read. I'd have to go read what I said to be sure, because I may be importing ideas subsequently developed.

11-01:14:56

Meeker:

Well, so if you had been elected in 1980 and inaugurated in 1981, how would you have addressed the Soviet Union? What would have been the application—

11-01:15:05

Brown:

That's a good question. Well, one application, I would say when Indira [Gandhi]—now, there's different points of view. I received Mrs. Gandhi at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles a few months after the Russians went into Afghanistan. I said to her, "Mrs. Gandhi, what should the US do?" She said, "Do nothing." I said, "But Mrs. Gandhi, we can't just do nothing. The Russians invaded Afghanistan." She said, "Do nothing." That was the correct answer. But now, would I have seen that at the time? I don't know.

I don't know whether that was an option. First of all, Jimmy Carter had to cancel the Olympics, cancel the wheat sales—he was on the defensive. In fact, he lost. So it was not a time for boldness, I'd bet, in his mind. And if it had been, probably he might have not been able to sustain it. Then Reagan kept it from there, and Charlie Wilson put I don't know how many billions through the Saudis, and bin Laden developed himself, and then we got 9/11 and then we got Afghanistan, and then we got ISIS—and here we are. So now, did they really think that one through? I don't know—would I have thought it through? Probably would have been very political, because people do act politically. Lyndon Johnson didn't like being in Vietnam, but he didn't want to cut and run. So 2 million people died, most of them from bombs coming from our factories.

So when you look back at history, there's a lot of mistakes. Do most politicians think there are a lot of mistakes? I don't get that impression. So is that because they don't read history, or they read it with rose-colored glasses on? I don't know. So I try to understand it the way it is. And so I do have a general idea, and planetary realism was just a word that was only mentioned, I think, in one or two articles. I think the *San Francisco Examiner* has a copy. And it could have been fleshed out, but I did talk to a wide variety of people.

I'm talking to both, and visited General [James N.] Mattis, at the Pentagon, and I've also visited and talked with Daniel Ellsberg, and they have different points of view.

11-01:17:41

Holmes:

I wanted to ask, throughout our sessions, when talking about campaigns, you have said that the main organizing principles is to combat, challenge your opposition—?

11-01:18:00

Brown:

No, you just need to get more votes than your opponent. That's the only thing you need to do. Everything else is subsidiary.

11-01:18:06

Holmes:

In regards to foreign policy, were there aspects of Reagan's dealing with the Russians—and particularly, if we think about nuclear proliferation and the developing arms race—which I know you were against—

11-01:18:14

Brown:

Yeah, yeah.

11-01:18:19

Holmes: Reagan developed what became known as Star Wars [Strategic Defense Initiative]. He pretty much scrapped the SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] agreements that Nixon—

11-01:18:27

Brown: Yes, SALT II. SALT I was Nixon, SALT II was Carter.

11-01:18:32

Holmes: Were these aspects that were, at least in your thinking, of what you wanted to address within foreign policy?

11-01:18:37

Brown: Yes, and I met with Sidney Drell, who was the number-two man at the Stanford Linear Accelerator [Center], and I think he briefed me, or somehow I spoke with him about SALT II. And some people think the Star Wars helped push the Soviet Union into collapse. Other people would say the logic of Star Wars was what got Reagan not to agree with [Mikhail] Gorbachev that Russia and America should abolish nuclear weapons, and which got the second George Bush to pull out of the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty, which has and is about to ignite an arms race. Because once you say you have a defense, you not only have to build a better defense if you're the other side, but you have to build a better offense so you can overcome the defense. So what was known at the time of Nixon, has now been forgotten or discarded. So yeah, that's a problem. And these issues are very much with us.

From a SALT II discussion, I met Drell—and I think I met Perry then. And when I went down to my wife's reunion four or five years ago, I decided well, since I'm going to this reunion, I think I'll do something interesting. So I called Sidney Drell and arranged a meeting with him and William [J.] Perry, the former secretary of defense. And when I went in to meet Perry, he paused in the meeting and went upstairs and brought down his book, *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*. And I read that book, and I reviewed it for the *New York Review of Books*. So that kind of got me thinking about it again. Well, not that I hadn't been. I wanted to bring that up, because the vilification or the name-calling about Putin—he's a bully, that he's a thug, he's like Hitler. He's the little boy in the class that caused trouble in the back. That is verbally attacking a guy who has control of 7,000 nuclear warheads, that if unleashed would end humanity. Of course, we have the same number. So it was clear to me there has to be an ongoing dialogue that is intense and continuous, that does not exist at anywhere near the depth that it should. And this has gone on under people—both Democrat and Republican. So how did we start on that question? Oh, SALT.

11-01:21:40

Holmes: To thinking about Reagan's foreign policy and the Cold War in regards to when you were running for the senate.

11-01:21:50

Brown:

Well, I should probably give you my speech at the Democratic Convention. It'll outline what I thought, but it's pretty much what I'm saying now. So yeah, I think we've been moving down the wrong lane. We'll pull back? No. So yeah, the détente of Nixon, that was arrived at by Richard Nixon and his wife Pat, staying all night in the Kremlin with Kissinger, and speaking to Brezhnev and their number-two guy. Now, where are we today? I don't have the feeling that Mr. and Mrs. Trump, let alone Mr. and Mrs. Obama are going to go over to the Kremlin and spend a couple of nights staying up late drinking vodka with Putin. That seems far-fetched, and yet it was the fact in 1972. So these are a lot of issues that you don't even read about. Maybe they'll bring them up in Iowa.

11-01:22:47

Shafer:

When we talked with Tom Quinn, he mentioned that in the '82 campaign, that there was an ad that they had tested about social security, that the focus was social security.

11-01:22:57

Brown:

Yeah, it worked well. And we ran it.

11-01:23:00

Shafer:

But that it got pulled because Jacques Barzaghi convinced you to focus on the nuclear issue.

11-01:23:06

Brown:

I don't know if it was Jacques who did that. I think the end of the world is the big issue, okay? The other stuff is—don't sweat the small stuff. We've got to avoid the big stuff. And so I thought because of the Nuclear Freeze campaign, I thought it was more salient, and we didn't take that many polls, and maybe Tom had an instinct or maybe the survey said—it's—clearly was not the issue. And the context wasn't right, because Wilson was not Goldwater, and the Vietnam War was not raging. So it was another one of these things where it's a different context. I mean the [nuclear] freeze would have been a good idea. Of course people would say that the Reagan buildup brought down the Soviet Union, made America the indispensable power, and therefore the nuclear freeze was bad. But it never happened anyway. I still think the nuclear freeze was good, and it would have been good if we could have gotten that understanding with the Russians, who knows what could have happened.

But yeah, if you're asking me, I had a hard time thinking that social security ad could have carried the day. I don't have enough facts at my command to really make an informed judgment. Maybe but in retrospect, when you can hammer home a point, and if the point's a good one, it just might work. So that might have worked, but I would say my judgment is not as acute as it is today. I've had more time to think about things, and I've been in more campaigns. I've read more survey data, and I've seen more issues and ads and campaigns—and successes and failures. So my eye is more seasoned, and I probably would have come to a different conclusion. Yeah, definitely on that nuclear ad. That was a woman who

was probably active in Ploughshares, for all I know. She was an activist in LA, and she'd made this ad and wanted to use it, and I thought it was—I think it's kind of the ultimate issue. So I was influenced—but campaignwise, I wasn't realistic enough.

And that, by the way, is a very interesting thing. How clearly do you see? How good is your eye? I would imagine somebody who buys race horses, when they look at a horse, some have a better eye than others. And they have scouts that go out to the high schools and look for talent, right? And some people have a good eye, and other people don't. Well, that's something to be developed, if you're a politician. To see what the lay of the land—and certainly in campaigning, what works and doesn't work. And so if you look at the last presidential campaign, you'd have to say that the winning side had a clearer eye, at least on enough states that made the difference. So that's a very important ingredient that is not that common. I mean you *see* it in politicians, but it's not the run-of-the-mill politician that can grasp the true impacts of various images and issues and presentations, because that takes a level of detachment and objectivity and training, that a lot of politicians develop. But that's why they hire these high-paid consultants who sit around and they can tell you—this is the way it'll work. [laughing] And there's definitely a field of knowledge there, it's an art, and it takes time to develop.

By the way, that's another discernment, and when I think about that with Kennedy. Should he have listened? I think Dean Rusk was on the side of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Every single one of the people who know *best* said bomb. And Kennedy said I know—where did he get that? So that was really unique, for a guy that young. So the knowledge, and being able to see around the corner, as it were, is really, really important. And that ad did not indicate I was seeing around the corner, for sure. Although it might have indicated that I see around the corner meaning what the world is facing.

11-01:28:29

Shafer: Around the corner—what?

11-01:28:31

Brown: Seeing that the nuclear arms buildup is a serious threat that's worth combating, just not in that particular election.

11-01:28:37

Shafer: Yeah, to what extent did you see—I know you were focused on your own campaign at that point, but did you see—you know, Deukmejian versus Bradley as either an ability to cement what you had done versus to undo it?

11-01:28:51

Brown: No. I'm not into legacies.

11-01:28:54

Shafer: I didn't use the word *legacy*. [laughing]

11-01:28:55

**Brown:** I know, but that's what it is. To tell you the truth, I had enough problems running for the senate. Raising money, in the debates, the ads, I was noticing Bradley, but just from afar. You've got to focus when you're in these campaigns. And as far as what it was—no, I was more focused on going to the senate than what the next governor was going to do.

11-01:29:20

**Shafer:** I mean you knew Deukmejian, because he was in the legislature and was AG, and you—

11-01:29:24

**Brown:** But I didn't know he was going to abolish the Office of Appropriate Technology. I didn't know that. Did you know that? See, even he didn't know that.

11-01:29:31

**Shafer:** He blue-penciled public radio! I remember that. But did you have a sense of Bradley? He seemed to be the favorite. I mean did you know him at all?

11-01:29:42

**Brown:** I knew him. Yeah, I knew Bradley. He's a good guy. But no, I was up in Sacramento; he's down in LA, dealing with LA—mayor issues are not governor issues. They look at things differently. He was for a nuclear power plant in Wasco, Kern County, which I wrote a letter in the midst of a campaign to stop it, and it helped stop it, I think. It was for LA power.

11-01:30:13

**Shafer:** Did you—so you didn't see Deukmejian as sort of like an anti-Jerry Brown candidate?

11-01:30:21

**Brown:** Oh well, he ran against Rose Bird, Brown's liberal judges. You've always got to run against somebody. Why are all the Democrats talking about Trump? That's what they do. So I was the incumbent.

## Interview 12: June 11, 2019 [in the morning]

12-00:00:01

Meeker: Today is June 11, 2019. This is Martin Meeker, with Scott Shafer and Todd Holmes, interviewing Governor Jerry Brown. This is our twelfth interview session, and today we are beginning as you leave office. It is January 1983. It's the first time since 1969 that you are not in an elected office position. What do you want to do with your life?

12-00:00:35

Brown: Yeah—I don't respond to that question, so—

12-00:00:38

Meeker: Why?

12-00:00:39

Brown: Well, what do you want to do with *your* life? That's a general question. It's just not the way I frame things. You get up in the morning, and you have your breakfast and you do your activities. But first of all, I think when you—that's not the question that most people have. To—being in an intense job, and then the day, the next day you leave it, you're not asking some long-range question. I think you'd, I guess some people would—might say chill, or relax, or do whatever. So I think there's just a period of, of I don't know what you would call it. First of all, I can't remember these, most people—in fact, I remember more than most. But very few people can tell you what they did on a day, and how many years ago is that? For over forty years.

12-00:01:42

Meeker: Thirty-five.

12-00:01:45

Brown: So I don't know what that—what do you want? What do *I* want? That's a present-tense question. So you're asking me what I wanted to do on that day, or that month, or in that general period?

12-00:01:59

Meeker: Precisely.

12-00:02:00

Brown: Nothing comes to mind from that question.

12-00:02:04

Meeker: So you know, I guess I think if I retired, and I wake up the next day and know that I'm not going to have to go into work—

12-00:02:10

Brown: Well, it's not exactly a retirement when you lose an election. Somehow retirement is when you get the watch, and you have the retirement party, and you move on to whatever you're doing. What was I, forty-four years old? I mean, at some point, I had a foundation that I created—a couple of organizations. One political action

committee called the Committee for California that was engaged in politics, and we changed the name to the USA Committee and we broadened it out. We kept some of our contributors together, and we raised some money, and we had certain activities and meetings. And then I had another group with a man named Nathan Gardels, and that was called the Institute for National Strategy, and we created a publication called *NPQ*, that was a quarterly.

12-00:03:32

Meeker:

*New Perspectives Quarterly*?

12-00:03:33

Brown:

Yeah, *New Perspectives*, and that was a vehicle to interview various leaders around the world, and in the country, dealing with some of the contemporary issues that I'd experienced both as governor and in politics in some of my campaigns. And then there was another group that was an extension of a commission that I started, the National Commission on Industrial Innovation, and Allison Thomas was the executive director of that. And so that was a group that came out of the Commission on Industrial Innovation, the California commission, and that had been with some high-tech people dealing with innovation. So I continued that, and we incorporated as a nonprofit. So there were actually two nonprofits and one political-action committee. We had an office, and we pursued those particular lines.

12-00:04:35

Meeker:

I think we're going to want to dive into each of those to some greater extent, but I still want to kind of get back to this first six months after you leave office. You know, when you were first elected to governor, the first thing you did is you went off to Tassajara.

12-00:04:51

Brown:

Yeah.

12-00:04:52

Meeker:

And spent some time reflecting on what had come, and what was yet to come.

12-00:04:56

Brown:

Well, I don't know that I reflected on what was to come. I'm independently interested in Zen Buddhism and spiritual practices, so that didn't relate to the governorship. That's a whole other conversation with another group of people, you know, that deals with that stuff, like Tom Quinn and Richard Maullin—a whole different political class, which did not have those particular interests. So yeah, I don't know what the analogy would be in '83, other than those three organizations. And through those, with that framework, we had a lot of meetings. I went to different places, and we dealt with those issues.

12-00:05:47

Meeker:

Well, during this, this general period of time—I'm not talking about the first six months, but within a handful of years, you do, in fact, start to expand and deepen your exploration of spirituality—broadly.



12-00:06:00

Brown:

No, I don't think so. That first year? I might have—I mean I've had a long life, so I've got a lot of activities. There aren't a lot of days that one can go back to. Those organizations produce papers and there's some things we can talk about. I don't know if they have any great significance at this point in time. Though I did have a program, this Commission on Industrial Innovation or that nonprofit dealing with innovation, we had a woman that we hired that worked on a computers-in-school project. And she worked on technology in schools. This was just the beginning of computers. We'd done a tax credit for the donation of Apple computers to schools in California, at the request of Steve Jobs. So I was very interested in ways in which computers and technology could improve learning, could improve education. And so that was the project that—many of the education experts were consulted. She consulted them, and I did as well. And I wanted the important people.

So what we're really talking about is dealing with—what I did was meet with and discuss with thinkers and doers in various fields, the solving of some of these issues that I was interested in. And education is an interest that I've had, and we pursued the inquiry as to the introduction of computers in schools. So there was a group called CUE, Computer-Using Educators. And so this was a very embryonic field, where Apple doesn't exist yet, or rather the Lisa hasn't been created yet, and we're still dealing with Apple. I had an Apple III, and we still had that Commodore, and this is the level we're at. So how could education take advantage of this? And the idea of individual learning, self-paced learning, so that students could go at their own pace. And they could advance from where they actually were, and you could individualize it, instead of having this more general discussion of—just of the thirty kids in a class.

So we did meet with Seymour Papert, and I remember being at a conference in Pasadena. I'd go to conferences and pursue these ideas. And Papert wrote a book called *Mindstorms: [Children, Computers, and Powerful Ideas]*, and he was the creator of LEGO, which is a particular language, with a little turtle, and you could move a little object. So you actually had a computer, but instead of just printing out something, you had a physical object that could move around the ground. And he used a phrase that I thought was very interesting, "The computer is your mind outside your mind." And this was like the early 1980s. So how do we do that? And then there's a guy named Alan Kay, who talked about the Dynabook—or that might have even been Steve Jobs that talked about the Dynabook. That is really what we have now, the powerful book-size computer that all sorts of maneuvers and transactions can be undertaken.

So that's what I was promoting, learning about and promoting, and seeing how we could impact education. I've got to think back in my mind to try to recall that period. It was a time of exploring some of the key ideas that I had in some fields when I was governor. So I had the luxury of pursuing thoughts, and which I continue to do right now. So I guess if you're looking for something salient, I think that's unusual. I can tell you when I was speaking to someone yesterday

about political theory, and they were very surprised that I read political theory for my pleasure. But I do, and I pursue these ideas because I'm able to do so, which a lot of people have done over time, but today things are a little more fast paced. Get it done, get the clicks, get your recognition, get your monthly paycheck—and that pretty well sums it up. Well, I've pursued a different way of doing things, which very much involves meeting with and discussing with major thinkers. So I was doing my own work, exploration, conversations, and reading, and going to conferences. That's what I did.

12-00:11:54

Shafer: I guess just—maybe a different way of asking what Martin asked you at the beginning—so you were out of office. Did you, in some way, feel *free* to explore things that you would have—?

12-00:12:04

Brown: No, I explored things when I was governor.

12-00:12:07

Shafer: But you had all these other responsibilities.

12-00:12:08

Brown: Yeah, but I had all these other people doing things. You don't understand how many people actually work in government, and how many people are there at the governor's office to answer the telephone, to type things out, and then you have all these different departments on all these subjects. And so a great deal of my work as governor is exploring and learning, and doing based on what I learn. So that's what I do. We could take any topic you want. Talk about the environment, you can talk about reading, talk about crime and punishment—this is what I do. I study, I talk to intelligent and wise people that I can identify, and then I take action. If I'm not in office, I can recommend action, or join with others who are influencing government policy. Or if I'm in government, then I exercise whatever authority I have, but I don't cease the ongoing quest and inquiry for greater understanding on these very important areas of human endeavor.

12-00:13:29

Shafer: Were there—was there one or two policy areas that you dealt with as governor, where when you got out, in '83, you thought I'm—now that I have more time, I want to really delve into that more deeply? Maybe education?

12-00:13:39

Brown: Well, I don't really parcel my life out with such specific tasks like that. But certainly the role of technology in education. And also, I worked with the semiconductor industry—not that I *worked*, I wasn't a paid consultant. But I attended many of their conferences, looking at: what was the microprocessor? What were chips going to do to American policy, the position of America in the world? I was interested in that. That's a political question. And now, of course, we're down the road to artificial intelligence. Many, many things, that I was thinking about and discussing with people, have continued to grow in importance.

So when I was in government, then I utilize the knowledge and the context that I'd developed in the work that I had. But that didn't mean that I didn't continue that inquiry, because as a governor, as a mayor, or as an attorney general, only a limited amount of your time is actually writing a brief, signing a bill, giving a speech, raising money. There's a huge amount of time left over. Now, many people spend that with their kids, or going on vacation, or watching television, or going to athletic events or other types of activity—or going out to dinner or whatever. I spent a lot of my time in the inquiry, in talking to people, whether it be Ivan Illich or his circle of friends—or other people. So if you want to go back over the decades, there were various people that I talked to, in various places on various topics. And so there it is. That's all the general, but there are specific activities. So it's a little unusual, and it's probably hard for you to get your categories around, whatever you want to call it, my more unusual path through life.

12-00:16:01

Meeker:

Well, the Institute for National Strategy, I think, was a way in which you were able to organize this kind of activity and pursue the kind of inquiries that you were interested in. You named Nathan Gardels as its first, and I think only, director.

12-00:16:20

Brown:

Yeah, right.

12-00:16:22

Meeker:

Who was he, and why did you select him to head up this endeavor?

12-00:16:26

Brown:

He was there. He was working in my administration. And he was a man of ideas, and I think he'd worked with—well, you'd have to ask Nathan, but he was in my administration when I was governor. He did some work on public pensions and their investment to advance social objectives. And he was very well read. So it was a good fit. We could go to Mexico, and he'd line up meetings with Carlos Fuentes, and Octavio Paz I remember we met with, and a group of other people. And through Ivan Illich I met former president [Luis] Echeverría [Álvarez] and went to different institutes, in Mexico City. And Ivan Illich had a whole string of people coming through Cuernavaca—so that's what it is. So, and Nathan is still doing that. In fact, that's what he's doing even today, working with Nicolas Berggruen, and they've just written a book, and they're out there in the book-selling venture. But they have conferences with China, and they have a whole group of people they've put together. In fact, I'd say Nathan's doing exactly what he did for me, only doing it with this man Berggruen, and before that he'd worked with others. I think he affiliated with the Center for Democratic Institutions, and they blended the institute into that group.

12-00:18:20

Meeker:

So you're somebody that has a healthy skepticism around institutions. Why establish an institution for—?

12-00:18:26

**Brown:** Well, it's not exactly an institution that—If you think of Berkeley, or if you think of UC or the Catholic Church or General Motors, I wouldn't use that same word. It's just a couple of friends working on things.

12-00:18:42

**Meeker:** Okay, so smaller scale/more informal.

12-00:18:45

**Brown:** Yeah, it's not an institution, it's a nonprofit that you get donations to and make it work. But it lacks the bureaucratic architecture that you spend most of your lives in—and I've spent most of my life avoiding.

12-00:19:07

**Shafer:** How was it funded? By donors? Who are the donors?

12-00:19:14

**Brown:** Just the same people who've been donating ever since I started running for office. And new ones, and new people coming up. People get interested in these things. By the way, the reason I got into the technology, I quoted Bob Noyce, who was the co-inventor of the microprocessor, came out of Fairchild. That was the beginning of Silicon Valley. I put him on the [Board of] Regents. I'd met with him on my Commission on Industrial Innovation. I had Steve Jobs, I had [David] Packard. I had the head of National Semiconductor. I had [Leland S.] "Lee" Prussia of Bank of America. These were interesting people. So I got some—not all of them, but some of them on the commission. And then one thing leads to another, and always I had the idea that I'd be back in some public office and would then apply those ideas. So it's always a movement between study, investigation, inquiry—and action, and actually taking these ideas and putting them into practice or executing on them. So in one sense it's very well organized.

12-00:20:38

**Meeker:** Well, and it's fascinating to me the way in which you're describing it, because it sounds to me like a good example of what Ivan Illich talks about in *Deschooling [Society]*, which is a non-institutionalized, highly individualized program of study to get you where you want to go.

12-00:20:58

**Brown:** Yeah. Or just inquiry for the sake of inquiry. This is what some people used to do this. This is what you study. You read—you started out with Latin and Greek, and then you begin to read other writers, and you have friends who do the same thing. And sometimes you're called into the government, sometimes you're not—and there it is! It's pretty simple.

12-00:21:25

**Meeker:** To what extent was your course of inquiry random, or was it highly planned? Was it instrumental?

12-00:21:31

Brown:

Well, you threw out a number of terms. But how can I say—it's *all* of that. Because there's nothing new, as Gregory Bateson said, that does not come out of the random. And that's an important thought. And if you're highly structured, of course, you get nothing new. You just get a rearrangement of what you already have. And if you're going to have any breakthroughs, there has to be a certain openness and randomness, so that's, in effect, the way evolution works. Well, I'm not going to get into the theory of evolution, but I would say that inquiry has to be both directed and shaped, but open to surprise and not shaped—and I try to embody both of those. But Bateson would put it as having both rigor and imagination.

12-00:22:43

Meeker:

This group of advisors and collaborators and interlocutors that you assembled and you were able to engage with is pretty remarkable, in hindsight. I mean you look at everyone from Steve Jobs to Ivan Illich to Willy Brandt. It's a pretty—

12-00:23:02

Brown:

Well, I met with Willy Brandt once.

12-00:23:05

Meeker:

Right, but still, you got a time to speak with these folks. How did you get the chance? How did you *make* the chance?

12-00:23:18

Brown:

How did you do it? I picked up the telephone. I called—what does that mean? I mean how do you brush your teeth in the morning? This is just what one does if you're in my position. I've had a pretty unusual education, through the Jesuits, through the University of California, through Yale University, through my associations, through my roles as governor, and I've been able to make use of those opportunities and contacts that I continue. So even today I have a certain issue that I'm working on at the military school [Oakland Military Institute], so I was just on the phone with Michael Kirst talking about for a student that is, say, two grades behind in middle school, how long would it take to catch up? And how many grade levels can you achieve in a year—or two years? And, of course, he didn't have the answer to that, but it's a very important thing, because we have a gap in California in education that people have been talking about. But the gap hasn't closed between lower-income minorities and the more advantaged groups, Asian and white—and that gap has been the same for twenty or thirty years. So the question is if you find someone who's behind, is there any norm that we could look to as to how long it would take to get to grade level? And then how would you do that?

So that's what I was talking about, and that's a general idea. It has applicability to six million kids, but I'm focusing on the particular charter school—I'm now back as president of the board. So that's an idea—and by the way, that involves technology. I was just speaking, last week, to the president of Arizona State University, who's very big on technology—Michael Crow. He came out and

visited me, and we talked about it. And earlier today, I was talking about one of the board members of the California Community College Board of Governors, and they've launched this online university, and that was a matter of some discussion in the California legislature. So these are ideas; it's always a movement from idea—or you might say theory if you want to give it a fancy name—and actual practice, activities. I was speaking yesterday with a professor at Stanford on the review of the California Penal Code, and what that might entail and how long it would take.

And so, there we go. Now I'm talking to my wife about the tomato plant out there. And I notice on one of the plants there's a lot of yellow leaves, so I'm saying now, "Who can I call that can tell me is that—?" But she said, "Wait a minute, that's the plant that has the most tomatoes on it." I said, "Is that because it's working harder? Or is it actually not getting enough water—or maybe is it fertilizer? Or maybe there's a little disease on there. Well, how do I find out about that?" Well, okay, so that's what I was talking about.

So these were the important matters while you're waiting, but I have so many hours in the day, and these are the things I work on—and what I was working on forty years ago. So to me, it hasn't really changed. I was working, when I was on the Supreme Court of California as a law clerk, working on the penal code. Well, yesterday I was working on the penal code even while I was going down to the Ploughshares dinner being interviewed by Eric Schlosser on where are we on the nuclear movement—I mean where is the movement to control nuclear weapons? And I spoke my thoughts on that, and Ben Rhodes also spoke. He was the national security advisor to Obama. So yeah, I'm a person of ideas, but a person of action—well, they wrote a book on me called, *High Priest, Low Politician*. Ed Salzman wrote that book. [*Jerry Brown: High Priest and Low Politician*] Did you ever see that?

12-00:27:56

Shafer: No.

12-00:27:57

Brown: Well, that's *High Priest [and] Low Politician*. [laughter] So that was one description.

12-00:28:02

Shafer: You know, you make it sound like all these areas of inquiry were—you know, like that's what you've always done, and that's what you continued to do. But when you think about politicians who leave office, the first thing they think about is how am I going to make money? You know, they become lobbyists—

12-00:28:16

Brown: I spend more now, because I have more and I've lived longer, so I've accumulated more. But in those days my house was very low cost.

12-00:28:28

Shafer: But the point is politicians often become lobbyists. They join a law firm, they become a rainmaker.

12-00:28:33

Brown: I did a law business too, later on, after a couple years.

12-00:28:38

Shafer: So it wasn't that you didn't need the money or that it didn't interest you, [it's] that you had low costs, and therefore you could pursue these—?

12-00:28:45

Brown: I have a very low-cost structure. [Shafer laughs] Something that I've encouraged the University of California to adopt in some way, and I've been unable to convince them of that. But, of course, I know they're a big institution. They have a lot of needs. I think that I've had some opportunities, so I've availed myself of them. I did some lectures and speeches, and then eventually I associated with a law firm, Reavis & McGrath, for a couple of years. And then I was party chairman—though that was an unpaid job at the time, so I didn't earn any money doing that. And then I ran for president, then I started *We the People*, so it's just one thing after another. That's what life is. So that is a little unusual, I would say. But that's the way it is.

12-00:29:46

Meeker: I think you've done just a good job right now outlining a narrative of your own biography, and I actually find this period to be quite interesting from the outside. Clearly, I didn't live it, but you term out as governor. It's 1983, you begin what can only be described, from my perspective, as an intellectual quest. You go to Mexico, you go to Europe, you go to the Soviet Union, and you meet with all sorts of fascinating people. Were there moments in that intellectual journey that you could describe as *epiphany*, or moments that you think might help people like me understand what you were going through in that period of time?

12-00:30:29

Brown: Well, no, I can't identify any epiphanies. But I can tell you I certainly had, in the back of my mind, that I might run for office again, might run for president, so I'd like to know, understand as much as I can in case I've been called upon to do things. In fact, I'd say one of the problems that America has had is that we've had people running for president who don't know what the hell they're doing, and don't know history, don't know the nature of other countries or the danger of nuclear weaponry, or the issues of climate change. And all these other topics which I find—or the horror of two million men [in the American penal system] being kept in cages for years and years. These are topics that interest me, so I spend time looking into them. But one way or the other, I'll either be in office or I'll be talking to people in office, and therefore it's very helpful that I know that I have something to say and I've thought about things, because I don't think we're thinking about things enough. Whether it's the prisons, or the danger of a nuclear blunder, the danger of some kind of runaway technology, or the environmental and climate degradation—these are all matters that are highly complex, that

require years and years of study to have even elementary appreciation of. And yet, our survival in any decent way depends on it. If it doesn't sound too pretentious, I've taken this upon myself, to make sure I'm in a position to give proper advice or operate on deeper understandings.

12-00:32:26

Meeker: Well, during this period of time of study, were there any particular issues that were racking your brain, that you thought: here's something that really needs a solution?

12-00:32:37

Brown: Well, I don't think in terms of problem and solution, I really think in terms of inquiry, conversation, curiosity.

12-00:32:46

Meeker: Well, what were the areas of inquiry?

12-00:32:47

Brown: In other words, the mind follows where it will, unless you have a project. I mean if you have a project, and you have  $x$  number of kids in a particular school that are  $y$  number of years behind, then that's a very concrete problem, how to move that. And that's a project I'm working on. So I deal with extremely specific items, like running for office requires a certain amount of money. It requires some answers that you have to put on your web page. It requires that you find people who can help you do it. Those are all very concrete things, but I also very much enjoy and pursue a more general line of inquiry, represented by the books on my bookshelf, and by the names of people that I know. And that's what I do; I talk to people, figure stuff out, and solve problems.

12-00:33:50

Meeker: What was the motivation to go to the Soviet Union in '84/'85?

12-00:33:54

Brown: Same thing: why I had Dan Newman drive me to San Francisco last night for two hours, and have my wife pick me up at 9:00 and get back here at 11:30—the danger of killing millions, if not billions, of people. This is a real threat that is *very* real, and anybody who knows anything about it—I saw Bill Perry last night, and he said, “Be sure and call me.” I'm on the phone today with the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, which I'm *not* on because I'm talking to you, which I should have been on—and so we're going to talk at 1:00. So we're talking about this. Now, what the hell do you do about it? Well, maybe anything we do will have no effect, and we'll have our nuclear blunder—and that'll be the end of it. But as long as we haven't had that happen yet, and there's any way to prevent it—and I'm in a position to do something, then I'm going to do that.

And I felt that way when I went to the Soviet Union—talking about *the Evil Empire*, I talked at the Institute for USA and Canadian Studies. [Georgi] Arbatov, was the man who was the head of that, and I gave a talk. I said, “You know, Reagan's going to surprise you, because they will have a breakthrough, and we'll



be back to détente.” So I said that long before Gorbachev came on the scene. So that interests me. I don’t know if anybody listened. I don’t know if that speech is recorded. I assume the KGB has it somewhere. [laughter] Or you could recover it if we wrote them a note. In fact, I should ask that of the Russian ambassador. I forgot about that. [laughing] But I did directly say that, not that I knew for sure, but I just felt that Reagan might be the person, because of his strong position, that he’d be in a position to speak with the Russian leader in ways that weaker presidents have been unable to do.

12-00:36:05

Holmes: On that, Governor, what was the basis of that opinion on Reagan? Because Reagan came in after the Evil Empire speech, and actually he was—

12-00:36:15

Brown: No, he gave the Evil Empire speech. First he’s elected, then he gives the Evil Empire speech.

12-00:36:20

Holmes: Yes, but what I’m saying is that not only does he give that speech, but he’s also—by at least the historical record—rather antagonistic before and after the speech by the time you’re going to the Soviet Union.

12-00:36:31

Brown: Well, he was talking about that when he was running for governor in 1966. I can’t tell you why—what the basis was. But that’s what I thought, and it was based on something. Maybe my—

12-00:36:44

Holmes: Hope?

12-00:36:45

Brown: No. Possibly because of his positioning, I could tell that he was, unlike other people, he was in a position to open up a dialog with—I guess it was based on the analogy with Nixon, that he was able to open the door to China in ways that others, particularly Democrats, had no way to do. And that is always the problem, that you can have a nice idea, but if your position is such—for example, President Carter had this speech that they called the *malaise speech*, even though he never used the word *malaise*. And it was a very important statement and a very profoundly true statement, but it wasn’t framed in the manner in which the political world can accept. He needed to put a more can-do leadership, we’re going to take that hill kind of framework, which he didn’t do. He was talking about a real problem that is even worse today. But because of that, and the invasion of Afghanistan and the double-digit inflation, and all of the different problems that were going on at the time, he was not in much of a position to say, oh, why don’t—he couldn’t do what Indira Gandhi said. “Oh, they invaded? We’re not going to do anything.” That was, I believe, the absolutely correct position. I think Gandhi, with her more neutral positioning, and her relationship with the Russians and the Americans, was able to see, which our best and

brightest could not see—and which many of our best and brightest do not see even today, which is something I commented on last night.

So we don't seem to be making progress here. In fact, we've gone backwards. But there is a certain rhythm to the détente/hostility/détente and hostility. And then, are we going to be able to make it a third time? And that's interesting to me, and it's of interest to me since the time I went to Russia. And I was very interested in the Committee on the Present Danger. There was a book written called *The Wizards of Armageddon*, about the nuclear arms merchants. So this is a topic I was interested in, and if you're interested in that, you want to go to the Soviet Union and say, "Hey guys, can we find a way to get along here? Or are we just going to blow the place up?" And I still feel that way.

And I don't feel other people *think* that way. They are having so much fun attacking Trump and the Russian interference in whatever, that they just—"Come on, let's pile on!" And by the way, that's not enough. Let's go get China all revved up—this is what Trump's doing. So we're playing like a bunch of high school kids irritating the hell out of people that can blow the world up, if we get into miscalculations. So to me it seems all rather insane, and it has for quite some time, probably since the day I walked into the seminary, if not the day I walked out. I don't know quite when I got such clarity about our predicament, but it's one that gets me up in the morning to work on. But I'm working on the three big ones: climate change, nuclear annihilation, and the incarceration of so many young men of color—and schooling, how do you get schooling going? Those are four.

But I'm also trying to figure out how to grow tomatoes as well—and make good olive oil. [laughter] And the history of my land here, to understand how it all happened.

12-00:40:52

Meeker:

When you went to the Soviet Union, did you find folks there who you felt were going to be receptive to the idea of change?

12-00:41:01

Brown:

I thought they were very receptive. But what does that mean? I mean you can never be for sure. But everybody that went found it a very interesting trip. We took a group of people, and so that helped inform my views.

12-00:41:19

Meeker:

And you also went to China fairly early on in its openness to the West.

12-00:41:24

Brown:

I met with some of the leaders of the politburo. Actually, Mother Teresa had asked me if I could see if I could get the Sisters of Charity, Missionaries of Charity, into China. So I went to China and asked them. I said, "Will you let Mother Teresa in?" But they didn't want to do that.

12-00:41:42

**Meeker:** Tell me about your engagement with Mother Teresa. When did you first have an interaction with her?

12-00:41:48

**Brown:** When I went to India. In 1987.

12-00:41:51

**Meeker:** Do you just show up on the front doorstep?

12-00:41:52

**Brown:** Yeah, that's exactly—that's what I do. I don't need your vast apparatus to—now sometimes that doesn't work, but it works pretty good for me.

12-00:42:06

**Meeker:** So you just show up and you—?

12-00:42:07

**Brown:** I flew to Calcutta with no advance notice, although I think I knew a place to stay. There was a place that some—well, a little, a hotel there. So that's where—I went with another individual.

12-00:42:26

**Meeker:** Who did you go with?

12-00:42:27

**Brown:** I went with a psychiatrist who was very interested in Mother Teresa, and his wife was the head of the Association for Humanistic Psychology. They're from California. And I brought the son of one of my close friends. His son wanted to go, so he went too.

12-00:42:55

**Meeker:** Did you just intend to stay for a short period of time when you went?

12-00:42:57

**Brown:** Yes, yes. Right. It's not a place you want to spend too much time. It's very hot. Calcutta was very hot in the time that I went there, but it was one of the cool periods.

12-00:43:11

**Meeker:** I know that you've written about it in *Life* magazine, and talked about it in other places, but I'm wondering if you have any impressions that remain seared in your memory of the experience?

12-00:43:23

**Brown:** Well, so many people living on the streets and cooking—the fires, cooking their food. And I don't want to romanticize that, but somehow it fit in a little better than what I see in the streets of Oakland or Los Angeles. I don't know exactly why, but I remember Mother Teresa saying that the poverty in America was much worse than the poverty of India. And I think she meant that because she saw the Indians having a certain religious or spiritual orientation that allowed them to

hang together, accept—I'm not sure of what it is—and it may be just not fully understanding. I'm sure I didn't understand what life was like for the Indian people that I noticed, because I didn't speak the language, and they're in a far different world than I was. But I found that interesting. Well, I found it also interesting because of the—not interesting, but she just took care of the, what did she call it, the poorest of the poor. But they didn't take care—and put them in a high-tech hospital. It wasn't a unionized work force. They didn't have a lot of pills and chemicals. And she's been criticized for that, but it was just human beings helping other people in distress.

12-00:45:06

Meeker: Almost like a hospice.

12-00:45:09

Brown: Yeah, like that, but without all the framework. Without the planning and the structure, or whatever those words are that you like to use. So this is kind of the Ivan Illich view of the world, of informal, convivial, outside the highly institutionalized structures that are increasingly governing our lives. Even as I was coming back, I always marvel at MapQuest and looking at it, and they know there's traffic up ahead. They know where I am, and they know where the traffic is. And I said I feel—I'm pretty well surveilled here. [laughing] They really know where we are. So the tightening and the controlling, which is marching ahead, you know, is sobering and ominous.

So that's one of the topics that interests me, both because I don't like to be too tightly controlled. In fact, I was just recalling with my wife, when we got the piano up here. One of my favorite songs was a song that my mother played on this very piano that you're looking at: "Don't Fence Me In." So, and we are learning to play that on the piano. [laughing] So I'm looking at these structures, which are very important in one level—discipline, clarity, framework. On the other hand, the freedom to be able to explore and to live is also extremely important, but is very much a luxury today.

[long side conversation deleted]

12-00:47:08

Shafer: Just coming back to Calcutta. What was it that attracted you?

12-00:47:12

Brown: Mother Teresa, and the idea of Calcutta, and its difference with Japan and Kamakura, such a different world. And then Mother Teresa was a very extraordinary person. I tried to get her to come and do a prayer breakfast but did not succeed.

12-00:47:30

Shafer: What was it about her that you felt compelled to see?

12-00:47:32

**Brown:** Just who she was. She was a strong woman, extraordinary woman. One of a kind. I think she was someone I wanted to meet, someone I wanted to be in the presence of. And I did that, and I found her very impressive, inspiring. Just her presence, her being, what she's done. Starting from nothing, one person she helped get off the street. And creating this institution that's all over the world, several thousand women working as Missionaries of Charity.

12-00:48:15

**Shafer:** Did you get an impression, being with her one on one, did you get—?

12-00:48:19

**Brown:** I spoke to her a number of times.

12-00:48:21

**Shafer:** Yeah, what was she like?

12-00:48:23

**Brown:** What was she *like*? You know, it's like—what are *you* like or what am I like? I don't know how you explain that. All I can say is she was very—I'd say she spoke, the way I would characterize it, she spoke with authority. Whenever she said, "You go over there and work at the home for the dying," or you do something else, she seemed to speak with a level of authority that I find extremely unusual and rare—or maybe nonexistent elsewhere.

12-00:48:59

**Shafer:** There was criticism of her, I think—

12-00:49:01

**Brown:** There was a lot of criticism of her.

12-00:49:02

**Shafer:** Did you think any of it was legitimate?

12-00:49:05

**Brown:** Well, which one? Christopher Hitchens?

12-00:49:06

**Shafer:** Well, I think there was criticism that she was anti-abortion, for example.

12-00:49:10

**Brown:** Well, was that a criticism? Well, that's what she believes. She would criticize you for being pro-abortion, so then you're criticizing that, someone's criticizing you, so then where are we? So are you just saying that's the self-evident position, or are you just noting the difference?

12-00:49:33

**Shafer:** I'm just noting that that was one of the criticisms. I think there may have been criticisms around HIV, although—

12-00:49:39

**Brown:** No, she wanted to open an HIV clinic in San Francisco, and the Board of Supervisors were giving her a bad time. And when I was in Calcutta she said, “Would you help me open an HIV home?” I think it was near the Panhandle. “And we ask for no money. We just want to take care of people.” I went to the, sat in the thing, in the Board of Supervisors, never been to a local government meeting before, and I was shocked! And some lady got up and said, “What if they flush the toilets, and the AIDS virus gets out on the street?” And the liberal—and they said, “Now, let’s delay this hearing till next week.” And I thought, you can’t even take a free gift from Mother Teresa to take care of one of the great epidemics of our time, and you’ve got to think about it. So that furthered my skepticism about the capacity of local officials to make obvious decisions, but they ultimately did it. Mother Teresa had a hard time, and she asked me to go—I think they already were going to decide, or maybe my presence helped. I don’t know. But this is not something they wanted in their neighborhood.

12-00:51:02

**Meeker:** I think some of the criticism had to do with birth control as a means for population control, particularly in a place like India.

12-00:51:10

**Brown:** I don’t know.

12-00:51:13

**Meeker:** That’s my understanding—

12-00:51:15

**Brown:** Well, that’s the doctrine, so first of all the doctrine is to tell little children that if they have sexual thoughts and they die, they can burn in hell and be tortured. Doesn’t that sound like something that all liberals should rise up and stamp out? But that’s been a belief system, you know, for a lot of people for thousands of years. So the world is more various than we nice people in America like to think it is.

12-00:51:49

**Meeker:** Did Mother Teresa speak English?

12-00:51:51

**Brown:** Yes. She spoke fine English. Well, the British in India; she was there at an early age.

12-00:51:58

**Meeker:** Well, you said she spoke with authority, and I’d love for you to tell me, was that something in—?

12-00:52:03

**Brown:** I can’t—I don’t know what you could say about that. It’s just some people seem to be talking from talking points, a script. Other people seem authentic. You know, you just can have examples. You know people might say, I can’t remember exactly, but if you look at the movie *Patton*, and you say, “Patton, he talks with

authority.” He’s not wondering, “What’s the cost benefit here? Let’s get the data.” You know, they don’t talk that way. You know, he said, “I love war, and we’re going to beat Montgomery to the town there in Sicily.” But that’s a military authority.

But there’s other authority—that’s all. I would just say she was a convincing speaker that had a power, and other people, when they talk, aren’t as persuasive. I mean if you haven’t had the experience, then I can’t explain it. But I have the experience that some people speak with more authority. In the Bible, in the gospels it said Jesus, he spoke with authority. That’s there. You can go check that out if you want. So to me it’s like a—it *is* the statement. Now, if you want another statement to explain the statement, then you’re going to be losing meaning, not adding to it. But there are people, and there are not that many leaders—and certainly political leaders. I mean there can be teachers. There are people who command attention, and people who want to follow. And this is not always good. So you can speak of authority—Jim Jones probably commanded—so this doesn’t mean that it can’t be bad, but some people have it, and other people don’t, maybe you can learn it, maybe not. But obviously for somebody who wants to lead people, that’s a good quality to develop.

12-00:54:27

Meeker:

When you wrote about your visit with Mother Teresa in *Life* magazine, the article’s interesting, in that the first half really is you describing your experience there. The last bit is you really reflecting on the potential application of what you learned and observed there to American politics. And American politics seems to me fairly well removed from—

12-00:54:55

Brown:

Right, it’s a stretch. But that doesn’t mean it’s not an interesting or important thought. How do you apply it? And whatever I said there is probably the best I could do, and may not be that convincing.

12-00:55:12

Meeker:

Well, it’s about compassion, and maybe the big question in this might be an unanswerable existential question, but what is the role for compassion in the American political system?

12-00:55:24

Brown:

Well, that’s too big a question. Not only too big a question, it doesn’t—yeah, I wouldn’t know how to respond to it at that level.

12-00:55:34

Meeker:

When you were in Calcutta, were you actively thinking about politics and what was happening vis-à-vis—

12-00:55:42

Brown:

Well, look, I’m always thinking about politics, about religion, about meaning—or whatever. So it’s hard for me *not* to. But I wouldn’t say I was systematically—like you would take a course, saying okay, how do you apply this to that? I’m also

just doing it just for the experience, just living, you know? Part—not a part, a big part of life is just getting up in the morning and smelling the flowers. Okay, here we are. You know, pretty soon we're not going to be here. So if you're aware of that, then you say well, I'd better pay more attention. And just paying attention and seeing—seeing what is. That's an obvious point of departure for a thinking person.

12-00:56:42

Holmes: Governor, you were working for Mother Teresa, for about a month, correct?

12-00:56:50

Brown: Yeah, about that.

12-00:56:51

Holmes: How did that experience impact you?

12-00:56:53

Brown: That I don't know. *Impact*, these are those—how did my three sisters impact me? Or how did my mother impact me? I'm not a causative collector.

12-00:57:02

Holmes: What did you recall from that experience?

12-00:57:08

Brown: What did I *recall*? Just what I told you, and what I wrote in the article. I'll incorporate the article by reference. I really sat down, and I did exactly what you're asking me. I thought about it, and I typed it up. So that's it—I'd rather read it, and that might stimulate some thinking.

12-00:57:30

Meeker: Did *Life* solicit the article from you? Or did you shop that?

12-00:57:33

Brown: No, I think they solicited it. I think they did—well, I didn't know anybody at *Life* magazine. So they must—they did.

12-00:57:44

Holmes: You also traveled to Japan to study Buddhism. Now, were you there for about six months?

12-00:57:51

Brown: Six months.

12-00:57:53

Holmes: What inspired you to visit Japan and study Buddhism?

12-00:57:57

Brown: Well, first of all—you mean like that as opposed to other things?

12-00:58:02

Holmes: Yes.



12-00:58:03

Brown: Or just in general, what—

12-00:58:04

Holmes: Yes. Well, you made the conscious decision, Governor, to go there and study.

12-00:58:10

Brown: Well, remember, I went to Tassajara because I was interested in Zen Buddhism. I saw a movie once—I heard Aldous Huxley talk about *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, when I asked him what he was talking about. So I've had an interest in that. I'd been in China. How did we do that? I was in Japan, so I went to the Jesuit university, Sophia [University], and I said, "Who knows anything about Zen Buddhism?" And so they said, "Fr. [Heinrich] Dumoulin, he's a German, and he's written two books on that." And he was the academic, and so we talked for a period, and then he said, "But you ought to meet Fr. [Hugo Enomiya-] Lassalle, because Fr. Lassalle is really the practitioner of Zen meditation." So I went and met with him, and actually, I took notes from my conversation, which I have. And that was interesting, because I'd been a Jesuit, and he was a Jesuit father. And I got to know him—I made two retreats under his—he was the leader of that. And I found him interesting, because he was in Hiroshima when the bomb dropped, and he walked out, and I asked him about that. So yeah, what did you ask me, why—what prompted me to do that?

12-00:59:31

Holmes: Yes.

12-00:59:32

Brown: Well, I would turn it around and say why not? I mean—you ask why, and I ask why not.

12-00:59:38

Holmes: Well, I asked what inspired you to go there.

12-00:59:40

Brown: I'm inspired about everything. Why not? Why don't you find out about the oak trees? Why don't you find out about why that tomato plant is brown? [laughing] It just is. Everything is—it's a matter of great surprise and interest. So yeah, Zen enables one to, you know—what can I say about it? It is a practice at variance with the Western mind that wants causes, impacts, plans, with just following your breathing. That's it. And then you can read about these Zen stories, and they try to make you think. What's the sound of one hand clapping, or something. [laughing] So I find that extra—that's interesting. And what about that? What does that mean? What is it? And so that's curious. I mean I don't need any great inspiration, because I find life very inspiring in itself, and all the multiple aspects that may be available at any one time. So since I have the time, I can just jump on a plane, and there I am. Buy my ticket—it was only \$600 roundtrip, not too hard to handle.

12-01:01:03

Meeker: One of the things that I find really interesting about this is the syncretism of it. You know, with Lassalle being a Jesuit Catholic, but also being a practitioner of Zen Buddhism.

12-01:01:16

Brown: Yeah, well he would distinguish Zen meditation as not the doctrine of Buddhism, but merely the practice of zazen, and some of the ways in which you direct your attention to—well, stilling your mind and being quiet, as it were. So there were interests in this. Yeah, there are other Catholics, there were Catholics in Kamakura when I was there. There were Jews, there were Catholics, there were Buddhists, there were atheists, so it was quite a crowd that showed up there.

12-01:02:02

Meeker: Did you consider yourself a Catholic at this time?

12-01:02:06

Brown: Well, that's a whole other consciousness. I don't know how to answer that question. You mean do I believe in the virgin birth, and limbo and purgatory and plenary indulgence? I mean there's the whole—it's a wide thing. I'd say I have a very deep Catholic formation, as to what I—what part of that whole tradition? That's a whole other question.

Just like the life of Francis of Assisi. I'm reading that book. It's pretty—it's very interesting. So what do you have to say about him? There's good, there's bad. Mother Teresa—it was not her choice by any matter or means. She didn't like anybody working there if they're together outside of marriage. That's not going to fly with Mother Teresa. So that's one of the reasons I like Mother Teresa, because you're getting the full program here. And I saw what something was pre-Vatican II Catholicism, which has disappeared, at least as far as I know. Maybe it exists in certain pockets, but that's the way that—and that's true of America. Fifties America is gone, so there's a constant change, and so I'm just interested in how things happen and what it is. So whether being a Catholic—all these labels. What team am I on, is what you really want to know. It's a team, it's an identity, right?

12-01:03:58

Meeker: Right.

12-01:03:59

Brown: And identity is a big thing today, right? So who do I identify with? Well, that's a whole other story. [laughing]

12-01:04:05

Meeker: Well, for some people the doctrine is essential. For other people it's maybe a familial or cultural heritage.

12-01:04:13

Brown: Yeah, but I know a lot about this organization, its doctrine, its history, its saints, its flaws, its current dilemmas. So it's a very complex bag, and I do have a certain respect for tradition. Here I'm sitting in the Mountain House III. Nothing could be

more traditional than that. But we're sitting here with the benefit of lithium-ion battery cooled air, which is certainly a bold breakthrough only possible in the last few years. So yeah, I don't have anything to say about what I *am*. I'm not even clear—what I am. I'm like eighty-one—is this a matter of checking our privilege, or what? What is that? So I like to be open to the world out there, not navel-gazing and coming up with labels for myself. I leave that to other people.

12-01:05:17

Meeker:

Did someone like Lassalle prove a good model for you, in sort of like a Whitman way, where he can be sort of complex and draw from different traditions?

12-01:05:27

Brown:

No, I would say Lassalle was a wonderful human being. I remember the Zen teacher, which is Yamada Roshi. And he said, "I'm Yamada—I'm Lassalle's teacher in Zen, but he's my teacher in personality." And he was a wonderful; he had a great laugh; he was ninety years old. He just had a wonderful smile, was just being present to good people. That's—what else is there in life, but finding friends, finding people that you can spend time with and do things. So I spent a lot of time with him. I spent two six-day retreats where we were in total silence, but you have a certain amount of time when you talk to him—but that just is what it is. Some people like to go to a Warriors game, and they get very excited about that. I found going to Japan, and meeting Fr. Lassalle and Yamada Roshi very, very exciting—or not always exciting, but that's what I wanted to do.

12-01:06:46

Meeker:

Why leave? Why not stay and become a monk?

12-01:06:48

Brown:

Because I have a variety of interests, not just one. And I'm not Japanese, and I'm not a missionary.

12-01:06:58

Holmes:

Governor, when you were in the seminary, meditation was also a part of—?

12-01:07:02

Brown:

Oh, you have one hour every morning. 5:30, the bell rings.

12-01:07:11

Holmes:

How would you compare the experiences of your mediation experience when you were in seminary versus—?

12-01:07:15

Brown:

Well, it's Ignatian meditation versus zazen. And Ignatian practice is to imagine, use the imagination and visualize the life of Christ, the wedding feast at Cana, or the crucifixion, or the horrors of hell, or the beauties of creation. So there's much more imagination. And then through that contemplation to move, as the Ignatian practice would say, the will, to resolving to correct your faults and follow the path of perfection all that more intensely. Whereas in Zen, it's following your breathing, or what they say: following *mu*. And that's the first koan: does a dog

too have Buddha nature? That's the first question, and the answer is *mu*. And now, what does that mean? [laughing] And you can reflect on that a long time.

That's a different practice than Ignatian meditation, very different. But there are parallels in the Catholic tradition. One of them is embodied in a book called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which I'm sure you're familiar with. And that was written in, I don't know, the fourteenth century. And in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the author, the unknown author, counsels the practitioner to focus on a one-syllable word, and that's very much like *mu*. So in that, there are mystical traditions within the Catholic Church—or maybe the Orthodox Church, where there are parallels.

In the Jesuits, the Latin phrase was *agere contra*: go against self. In the Buddhist tradition, the self is the illusion. The illusions are endless; I vow to cut them down. So what is the self? What is that idea? And the illusory quality of that, dealing with—a focus on that, to me, seemed parallel to saying the self is the obstacle, and that's certainly what they say in Ignatian asceticism. The self is the object, the self wants, desires, needs, reacts to. And the idea being is to—the Jesuit idea—the foundation, as it's called, is indifference. It's called Ignatian indifference, and the idea is to overcome what are called inordinate attachments. Inordinate attachments. And that's almost anything you prefer or fear, and the idea is that you're indifferent to that. That's very similar to a Zen approach, where you're trying to reach a state of detachment. No, not detachment, *nonattachment*.

So in the Buddhist tradition they talk about nonattachment; in the Catholic tradition they talk about overcoming attachment—or detachment. So there it is, and then from the secular realm they'd say both are bad, because you're not engaged in the passionate consumption of what the marketplace has to provide. So there's where it is. Now, it's all very interesting. It's not—interesting is the wrong word. It's part of the life puzzle or challenge.

12-01:11:26

Meeker: I'm having a bit of struggle formulating a question. But this is—

12-01:11:30

Brown: Well, right! That's good then, maybe, maybe some progress here. [laughter]

12-01:11:36

Meeker: I guess what I'm thinking here is about this not detachment, but sort of de-attachment from one's self and one's identity.

12-01:11:51

Brown: And that's a very good exercise. If more people could separate themselves from their identarian passions and attachments, they could find life a little more manageable.

12-01:12:05

Meeker: So as you were practicing this, did you also simultaneously learn more about yourself and who you are?

12-01:12:11

Brown: Well, the self may be an illusion, so there's nothing to learn really. It's a set of delusions. So I found that very instructive, but learning about yourself—I don't know, that's a—who was that, know yourself, know oneself?

12-01:12:32

Meeker: Know thyself.

12-01:12:33

Brown: Yeah, well, I don't know, scholars talk about it means this or it means that, so that whole line of inquiry is not one for a quick answer.

12-01:12:45

Meeker: Well, if you get to the point of seeing the self and self-conception as a delusion, how then do you go back to the practical political world of the United States and present yourself to the public?

12-01:13:00

Brown: Well, certainly with greater clarity and to see through the nonsense. I mean there's a tremendous amount of propaganda, and whether it's marketing, whether it's memes or fashions or fads or lines of thought or positioning—that's another word we use in politics, *positions*. What's your position? And so you have to have one of those. You have to have *many* of those. [laughing]

I'd say it's a very useful—Zen meditation is supposed to be for itself, without a utilit[arian]—without, as they say in Buddhism, a gaining idea. It won't work if you're trying to *get* something out of it. In fact, that's the whole point. Getting off of trying to *get* something, and just being. They talk about the rivers are rivers, and the mountains are mountains, and you can get up or sit down. It gets to be very—I can't explain it more than that. You'd have to get into it, and I'm not sure I'm very adequate at that. But whatever else there is, that practice, that exercise, is extremely useful in seeing things.

And certainly, when you're in politics, you want to see things. You want to be able to size things up. What's the story here? What's somebody telling you? What's this program? What is this? You know, what is this Russian collusion? What is America as, you know, the—what are we, the indispensable power? What is this conflict with China? And then you can break them down into pieces, and where do you start from? What's your point of departure? Well, if you reflect or you—there's a certain of these spiritual practices. This is not just spiritual, there's also a whole path of [George] Gurdjieff. That's a whole other world which we're not going to talk about. But [P.D.] Ouspensky—these are all very interesting people. There's libraries full of books on these topics, which I've only touched a tiny, tiny fraction, but more than most in my line of work. But I'd say it's very helpful to shuttle between the active and the contemplative, the inquiry and the action. And it's good, yeah, as long as it doesn't become paralyzing.

12-01:15:33

Meeker: So when you come back in 1986—actually, Jerry Brown is kind of on the ballot again. [laughing]

12-01:15:41

Brown: When was that? Not in '86.

12-01:15:42

Meeker: Well, '86 in terms of the judges, the recall.

12-01:15:50

Brown: Oh yeah, I wrote an article that played in most of the papers, on Rose Bird and the court, did you ever see it?

12-01:16:00

Shafer: Haven't seen that.

12-01:16:01

Brown: It was in the *LA Times* and the *Chronicle*.

12-01:16:04

Shafer: Hmm, I'll look for it.

12-01:16:05

Brown: Research, guys. [paper rustling]

12-01:16:09

Meeker: [Laughing] You always say it's a long life and there's a lot there, so we're doing our best. So when you come back in '86, Rose Bird, [Joseph] Grodin, and [Cruz] Reynoso are on the ballot and end up being voted out of office. How did your recent experience in Japan and Calcutta influence the way that you personally would have responded or thought about—?

12-01:16:42

Brown: Well, I don't know. You could say that about how does—about eating breakfast, how did that influence?

12-01:16:48

Meeker: Well, did it give you additional perspective, or were you able to, you know, in fact separate yourself from what was happening in the political sphere?

12-01:16:55

Brown: Well, no, it's very simple. Rose Bird had a certain number of positions, had a certain personality. And that set in motion reaction, law enforcement, the insurance industry. [Richard J.] Riordan put up \$300,000 to defeat her before he became mayor. So this is politics. You know, in *The Godfather*, I always liked that part when they're coming down, the helicopter is shooting, and one of them says, "Godfather, what is this?" He says, "This is the business you've chosen." Something like that. Well, this is politics. This is what happens. It's combat. So you've got your academic, you have your thing here, and the politicians have their thing. So there's many stories, there are many, many dramas.

I don't know, when you say react to it, it was unfortunate. But I could see the—the trouble you're in. That's one of the dangers in politics. I tried to do many things, but I was very much aware, most of the time, that if you offend a sufficient number of people, then that's going to have reaction and you won't be able to do what you're doing, because you'll be defeated—or you'll lose the support of the people you need, since you always need more people. There are very few things you can do solely by yourself, so you need to have the acquiescence, and hopefully the enthusiasm, of many other people. The people that are close to you, and then the people that could maybe affect it in a wider net.

12-01:18:55

Shafer: One of the slogans that the opponents of the judges, justices used, was they called them *Jerry's judges*. Did you feel like it was in any way a referendum on you?

12-01:19:05

Brown: I didn't—yeah, well. Look, I read the polls. This is my work, so I know how it works.

12-01:19:16

Meeker: What do you mean?

12-01:19:17

Brown: Well, what I mean is when people want to run for judge in San Francisco, they say that's a *Schwarzenegger judge*. When they want to run for judge in the eighties, in Orange County, they say that's a *Jerry judge*. And it worked pretty well. Over thirty times judges were recalled that I had appointed. In fact, a couple lost recently, one or two I think, in Placer County. I think it's only two. But that's the way it works. If somebody's a friend of Trump, and they're in the Berkeley City Council, it is an absolute surety that if someone runs and says that, that person will be defeated. So this is part of how politics works.

12-01:20:06

Shafer: But beyond that, were there takeaways for you, that you used when you became governor the second time?

12-01:20:12

Brown: Well, I guess if you're a supreme court judge and you overcome the—reverse sixty-five death penalties, there is a high likelihood that there will be a recall. There will be a vote against you at the next opportunity. At least in that period—I mean that's, you know, just like Gray Davis. If the lights are going out and the bills are doubling, you've got a problem. This is like two plus two equals four. We're in a social environment here, and there are many beliefs and many needs, and if you're on the wrong side of enough of those needs and beliefs, then you're replaced by somebody who associates with the opposite.

12-01:20:59

Shafer: I remember before you left office, we talked with you about Rose Bird, and you said something that it gave you a different understanding of the way the—what the courts are for and what judges are for.

12-01:21:10

Brown: Yeah.

12-01:21:12

Shafer: Can you talk about that?

12-01:21:13

Brown: No, I just that I think I found when I was a clerk, it didn't seem as innovative and as bold as I thought would be good, so I thought a little more creativity would be in order. And I didn't appreciate deeply enough the conservative role the court plays to articulate the consensus norms that the society lives by. And the courts do break new ground, which is always controversial, like the *Brown v. the Board of Education*, or the right to counsel. And these cases were very controversial, by the U.S. Supreme Court, and that's why there were all these bumper stickers, "Impeach Earl Warren," and he became quite the *bête noire* for the conservatives.

So I do think the court needs to protect many interests in society, and they just have to be wise about what they do. So it's not enough to say *I think*, you've got to know: what is the society thinking? And this is a whole debate about when do you plug in your own values? Oliver Wendell Holmes had some thoughts about this, so did Felix Frankfurter. Earl Warren was more, "Hey, this is the right thing, so we're going to do it." Other judges are more deferential. There's a question, "What is the role of the courts?" And that's a debatable topic, and there's some people who see a more restrained role. That was usually the activists versus restrained, modest, and now we have a new doctrine, called the original meaning, and that's a way of keeping some restraint on the judges.

So going back to California, since they are put on the ballot, at least every ten years they get a vote yes or no. They have to keep an eye on what the voters are thinking. Now, people would say, "Wait a minute: you're supposed to interpret the law." But words are not self-defining, and they're defined by their context, and that context changes over time. So you talked about Mother Teresa against abortion. Well, my father was not for abortion. It never came up. It wasn't an issue then. So things are happening all the time, and they're changing, and the court changes with that. You know, they had the Dred Scott decision—I think it was 1857, and then we had a civil war. But then we had all this Jim Crow legislation. I guess what I understand now is the court needs very experienced, very thoughtful judges, who have to make these tough calls on the cases that are very controversial.

And the more polarized the society is, the less the judges can really work. In fact, democracy can't work very well if it's too polarized. A monarchy, or an imperial situation, you can have more diversity. But with a democracy, too much diversity means there's not a *we the people*. There's many, many different *wes*, and therefore there's no consensus. And if there's no consensus, how can you say, "You, the people, tell me what you want." And they come back and tell you five different things. So then, that's instability, whereas if you have an Austro-Hungarian Empire, you can have a peasant in Galicia, and you can have a squire



in Budapest, and they're all under the same authority. But because they don't vote, their differences don't register in destabilizing the regime. Whereas when you turn them all into a European Union, and you have somebody in Hungary thinking one way and somebody in France thinking another, now things begin to get rocky. And that's really a central question of where we are today, because we love democracy—but we love our individual opinions, and those two clash at some point.

12-01:26:23

Shafer: Do you recall any conversations you had with Rose Bird or Cruz Reynoso or—

12-01:26:27

Brown: About?

12-01:26:28

Shafer: —afterward, after the election?

12-01:26:29

Brown: No.

12-01:26:30

Shafer: No?

12-01:26:31

Brown: It's not a pleasant topic. I wasn't going to say, "How do you feel, guys?" [laughter] No, that's not good. "What are you going to do now, on your first day as a non-justice?" Maybe that's the kind of question *you* might ask, but I wouldn't.

12-01:26:52

Meeker: Well, we skipped over a few things, and one of them was the 1984 election cycle. Was this something that you were paying attention to?

12-01:27:04

Brown: Well, that year the convention was in San Francisco. Yeah, I did pay attention to that.

12-01:27:09

Meeker: And you attended the convention.

12-01:27:11

Brown: I attended that. Well, did I attend? I don't think I was a delegate. But I was there.

12-01:27:19

Meeker: You know, it's an interesting election for a number of reasons. Reagan is extraordinarily popular, you have the whole Gary Hart thing that came down, and the Jesse Jackson candidacy.

12-01:27:33

Brown: Yeah, I saw Jesse's speech on television. I thought it was very exciting. I thought it was very moving, when he talked about going from the outhouse to the White

House. That was a moving part of that speech. And I saw [Mario] Cuomo, and I thought he was moving. But Jackson, at a more gut-level way, I found more moving, but they were both extraordinary in their own respective ways.

12-01:28:00

Meeker: Well, it's interesting, what you just were referring to in terms of we the people, a commonality to make sure that democracy works. But then, you know, with the Rainbow Coalition and the first woman candidate [Geraldine Ferraro as first female VP candidate], you're really starting to see identity politics, if you will, becoming a central feature of the Democratic Party reality and platform.

12-01:28:25

Brown: And then you see the election of Ronald Reagan, the election of Donald Trump—we're still *e pluribus unum*, not going from one to many. So that's still the dilemma. And I think that dilemma was very much expressed by make America great versus we'll all be stronger together—all those different identity groups. And the majority opted for Hillary's point of view. But in the critical states of the electoral college, it worked the other way—very closely. But nevertheless, it came out for more of the unity. By the way, it's interesting that even *melting pot* now is a controversial term.

12-01:29:19

Meeker: It's seen as assimilationist.

12-01:29:21

Brown: Right! That used to be a good thing. I mean the immigrants—we've got to assimilate. They forgot about their homeland, their language, and they assimilated. And now we think: let's be as different as we possibly can, and agree on as few things as possible, and we will be able to dominate the world.

12-01:29:42

Meeker: Our commonality is our difference.

12-01:29:45

Shafer: You're skeptical about that?

12-01:29:46

Brown: Oh—completely. If we're going to just fight among ourselves, we've got to find a way to be very autonomous and secure, and just argue about everything. But if you're going to be saying to every part of the world you'd better do like we do, first of all, you'd better have a clear idea of what that is, and secondly—yeah, you're going to have to have a clear idea. If the idea keeps changing, and you go from Clinton to Bush to Bush to Obama, and Obama to Trump, and Trump to who knows where, that's not going to be a good formula for global dominance. Not that I'm saying global dominance is a good thing, but it seems to be what a number of politicians seem to subscribe to.

12-01:30:36

Meeker: So in 1984, when diversity does become more a central feature of the Democratic Party platform, did you see this as a potential concern?

12-01:30:46

Brown: I don't know. I was very impressed with Jesse's speech. It certainly was inspiring, but that is the American dream—I mean that's a very powerful idea, that becoming—coming to America. I can remember seeing that movie *Yentl*—did you ever see *Yentl*? I saw it with Barbra Streisand and her mother, by the way, and that was an interesting little byplay between those two. [laughter] But what I remember about the movie was when the fog was lifting and the boat is coming in, and the Statue of Liberty, and all these huddled immigrants—and that is such an exciting idea, that immigrants have arrived in the land of freedom. That's a *very* powerful idea. That's what defines America—but that's still a powerful idea. But now, that's not—okay, and so basically, well, I mean how do we do *what*? The idea of what we're doing is changing, and it's being, as they say in academia, it's contested. Or this is where we are on it. And it's a balance. You've got diversity, homogeneity, unity, difference. That's very important to understand the difference, but very important to forge common understandings.

12-01:32:26

Shafer: In some ways Gary Hart was sort of the Jerry Brown of the 198[4]—

12-01:32:30

Brown: Well, he was the man of new ideas at that time.

12-01:32:32

Shafer: Did you identify with him?

12-01:32:34

Brown: Not exactly. I know Gary Hart. He was in my class at Yale, and we've talked as recently as a couple of weeks ago, because people are trying to get us to do a talk at our class reunion in October, and I'm resisting that. So I called Gary, and said, "Gary, are you even going?" And he wasn't sure. So, generally, yeah, this is the problem: I like new ideas, but I also like tradition, and, whether I like it or not, I'm very aware of the power of the status quo and tradition. So Gary would have his idea of a new, different military and, when he talked about new ideas, it was similar to my idea of the new spirit. It was a sense of stagnation that we had to overcome, and he was trying to do that—and so was I. Differently, but the same general problem.

12-01:33:41

Meeker: It's interesting that you say that you sort of like new ideas, but you appreciate tradition. Because it's almost like a cognitive dissonance for you when you were running against Carter—

12-01:33:52

Brown: It's the coincidence of opposites, which is a traditional doctrine. I think—doesn't Blake talk about beware of the man with one idea? Blake said something—something on that order. ["I fear the man of a single book"] And the other fellow, [Walt] Whitman, didn't he say something about contradicting himself?

12-01:34:23

Meeker: Yes.

12-01:34:27

**Brown:** Whatever it is. ["Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)"] So I'm aware of these fellows, and so they all say something important.

In fact, somebody said the other day: I was meeting, I went to a Japanese festival in the American River about the first Japanese that settled in 1869. They had a tea company, and they ultimately lost the land, but they were celebrating the first Japanese woman who's buried in America. I was there, so we were sitting there, and one lady came up to me. She said, "Oh, Governor," whatever. I said, "Well, what's your name?" She said, "I'm nobody." And I said, "Oh yeah, that reminds me—Emily Dickinson had a poem, *I'm Nobody! Who are you?*" The contradiction, the reason I think of Emily Dickinson is because when we studied Whitman, we studied Dickinson. But the differences, difference is just part of what life is, but also the unity is the coming together. So I guess what made me think of that was she was saying, "I'm a nobody," and I'm a somebody. But I wanted to bring to her attention that she's somebody. And that's exactly what Emily Dickinson said: how dull, like a frog, is it to be a somebody. It's a very good poem, and so that's a bit of a contradiction too. I like contradictions, actually.

12-01:34:06

**Holmes:** Governor, what was your evaluation of the Democratic ticket in 1984, of Mondale and [Geraldine] Ferraro, because—

12-01:36:14

**Brown:** I didn't think it was as strong as it could be. Of course I've thought about that most of the time. That's been my general orientation since the election of Kennedy.

12-01:36:26

**Shafer:** What would have made it stronger?

12-01:36:31

**Brown:** I think it would be difficult. Reagan, what was it, the recovery was in, Reagan fit the mood. He definitely fit the zeitgeist. He knew how to talk. He spoke very—to the point. He didn't speak in this, this issue talk, you know? He had a drama—he was dramatic. So that was hard. It was going to be hard to beat him.

12-01:37:01

**Holmes:** I can't help but ask another Reagan question. Going back to our earlier discussion of the nuclear arms race. You had mentioned in your trip to the Soviet Union that you thought Reagan had the personality to bring back détente.

12-01:37:19

**Brown:** Or maybe the positioning to do that, and the personality.

12-01:37:23

Holmes: Well, but then it was also his administration that initiated the Star Wars defense system, [the Strategic Defense Initiative] which completely undercut, not just many of the treaties that held up détente—

12-01:37:34

Brown: And still is undercutting it.

12-01:37:36

Holmes: But it also undercut, even before détente, that mutually assured destruction. What was your opinion of the Star Wars defense during that time?

12-01:37:50

Brown: [sigh] I didn't believe it. I don't know. I'm not a physicist, but Bill Perry, who is a mathematician and former defense official in two administrations, says that the offense can always overwhelm the defense. So the better your defense, the stronger your offense has to be. So it's essentially a formula to stimulate the arms race. On the other hand, to sit there and say, "Oh, we're totally vulnerable and there's nothing we can do about it," that's hard. That's a hard pill to swallow, but that's the truth. That *is* the truth.

I remember saying once in a speech in LA, that, "Oh, you know, there are Russian submarines right out in the ocean there." And Dick Bergholz, from the [*Los Angeles*] *Times*—[loudly] "What do you mean there are submarines outside there?" He thought he had a big story there, and I just presumed that there were submarines out there, as our submarines are off of Russia and China. I mean the world is awash in potential destructive capabilities, and everybody's going along having a good time about it. So yeah, the Star Wars was going to say don't worry folks, it's okay. You know, we're taking care of it. We can put a bubble over America, and the world can go to hell. That's what they think. And there are a lot of people who think that at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, and Sandia, and Los Alamos, and they're busily working. Even as we speak, they are working on stuff like that.

I don't see a big majority saying, "Stop." Because if you say stop, then the next thing you say, "Well, we'd better talk to the Russians—and the Chinese, and the other nuclear powers." Okay, then if you talk to them, they're going to want something. But they're going to want something that you're not going to want to give them. So there it is. And people would don't want to say, "Well, we'll blow the world up." They'll say, "No, we'll deter everybody, and we'll just keep—but we have everything we want. We can lower the taxes, we can borrow the money, we can build the weapons. We can insult everybody, and we can be on top of the world." That's obviously a very unstable edifice, that I would like to stabilize, and I'm working to achieve that goal. Well, whatever impact that could be.

## Interview 13: June 11, 2019 [in the afternoon]

13-00:00:09

Meeker: Today is June 11, 2019. This is Martin Meeker, with Todd Holmes and Scott Shafer, interviewing Governor Jerry Brown. This is interview session number thirteen. Let's pick up with what we've titled on our outline, "Jerry Brown's return to public life." And I'm not entirely sure that's an accurate statement or not, but Miriam Pawel, in her book, reports on a top secret survey that you conducted in advance of 1988, exploring—

13-00:00:48

Brown: Top secret?

13-00:00:49

Meeker: Well, that's actually the word she used.

13-00:00:51

Brown: Well, that's if you don't pull it out as a press release. [laughter]

13-00:00:55

Meeker: Yeah, well, this is what journalists do, right? They use words like *top secret* [laughs].

13-00:00:59

Shafer: I've never written those words, *top secret*—

13-00:01:03

Brown: We don't have top secrets in the state government.

13-00:01:05

Meeker: So, there was a survey that you commissioned: can you tell me about the survey?

13-00:01:10

Brown: I can't remember. Tell me what it says. I can't remember.

13-00:01:13

Meeker: Well, my understanding the survey was in anticipation of a possible presidential run in 1988.

13-00:01:21

Brown: No, I don't think so. Who said *that*?

13-00:01:24

Meeker: That would've been Miriam Pawel.

13-00:01:28

Shafer: Well, I think it looks like it was a question sort of testing your public image, you know, six years after you left office.

13-00:01:33

**Brown:** Uh—'88? I don't remember that. I mean, I've put questions on surveys from time to time. And I've had a lot of surveys. It's not like you commission a big thing—somebody's doing a survey, you say, "Hey, will you put a question on for me?"

13-00:01:48

**Meeker:** How does that work?

13-00:01:49

**Brown:** I said it precisely. [laughter]

13-00:01:54

**Meeker:** So, like, you know a pollster and they're—

13-00:01:55

**Brown:** Well, you know everybody—I mean, it's all, well, yeah. Yeah, we know a lot of pollsters. Richard Maullin was in the polling business. We had a number of them, [Patrick H.] "Pat" Caddell, different people. So I don't remember that. I don't think in '88—you're saying in '88?

13-00:02:11

**Meeker:** Mm-hmm.

13-00:02:12

**Brown:** Well, I don't know—what's the source of that? Eighty-eight—now when would that have been? That was the [Michael] Dukakis campaign.

13-00:02:19

**Shafer:** It was before you became party chair.

13-00:02:21

**Brown:** Yeah, that was after Dukakis. I think I ran for party chair. I wasn't taking a survey then. I don't believe that. I'll have to go find that. I mean there's so damn many little pieces she asked me to look for. So many little factoids that—I just didn't have the energy.

13-00:02:48

**Shafer:** When you said earlier that you assumed, or you thought, that you would always get back into public life—?

13-00:02:53

**Brown:** Yeah, I thought the party, because I knew it was—well, I don't know how I looked at it. The position was opening, because it revolved north/south. And so the leader, I think, was Peter [D.] Kelly [III], and he was the southern guy who was going to go to the north. I said well, I'm about ready to move back north so, I'll move back north and sell my house and become party chairman. So, I don't think you do a survey, unless I did a survey of the party. Maybe it was a party survey.

13-00:03:32

**Shafer:** I seem to remember that you thought about getting into the senate race in '92.

13-00:03:35

**Brown:** No, that was '92. Now, we're in '88, before—that was before. I think I took a survey about whether—how—what would I do if I ran as an independent? That's after the president—and I think that's later. And the answer, of course, does not come out very high. Lacking the party label is not a pathway.

I've read the stuff about [August] Schuckman. I'm interested in not what my life is, but how the guys lived out here without air-conditioning and without a well. That to me, as a human moral challenge—that's impressive. Especially when you hear all this safe space, you know, marginalized whatever. You know, some German that came out here, didn't speak English. That says something, that human beings are individual in their capacities. I think that's a very important lesson that we have to keep in mind.

13-00:04:46

**Shafer:** Given that you always felt like you'd get back into public office—

13-00:04:49

**Brown:** Yeah, I did. I did, that was clear. You know that *LA Times* story said I will return, as my—

13-00:04:54

**Shafer:** So, did you feel, during that decade of the eighties, and maybe early nineties, that to some extent you had to repair your image?

13-00:05:05

**Brown:** Well, I don't know what that means. You have to *win*. I mean, image sounds like, you're like, I've got to fix this cup of coffee because it's broken or something. You take a survey. Yeah, you guys talk a funny language that I don't talk or think.

13-00:05:22

**Shafer:** Well, how would you put it?

13-00:05:23

**Brown:** Well, I wouldn't put it that way. I did see, in some of the public surveys—you know they take surveys, you know the Field Poll and different polls. Or other people take them, and they share them with you. But I was a little surprised. I knew my popularity had declined. I thought after I was away for a couple years it would improve, but it actually got worse. I think, now, whatever you say about survey data that's thirty years old, you have to be careful. Because unless you've got it in front of you, you know, but I tend to remember that. I tend to think that was the case. So that surprised me—it's not that easy.

13-00:06:08

**Shafer:** To come back?

13-00:06:10

**Brown:** Yeah because, well one thing, when you leave, and the next guy is [George] Deukmejian, a Republican, he's going to say, "Oh, that's Brown. His judges, the..."—you know, they're blaming. So blaming is a very important part of



politics, very important. And it's shifting blame from yourself. If you don't master that art, *you* become the scapegoat. And whether you like it or not, whether it appeals to your Berkeley sensibilities, that's an important, management tool that every politician either consciously, or unconsciously, masters. But in this case, I don't know how much Deukmejian—but I think they talked about the *gigantic* deficit, which turned out to be about a billion dollars, after a few years, when you look back at it.

But yeah, I think I decided that elective office was going to be difficult. And that's where I think I got the idea of the party chairman. That's one I think I could *win*, because they're Democrats, and I would be, you know, the more prominent in doing that. And I had some money left over from the senate campaign. So that's why I chose that one.

13-00:07:26

Shafer:

So it sounds like something you felt was doable, as opposed to something you really wanted to do?

13-00:07:30

Brown:

Well, you see, most people don't want to hit their head against the wall. Some do, you know, if they're a little crazy. So, because you asked like, you want to achieve something? You want to have a successful set of interviews; everybody likes to succeed. So, same thing running for office; you don't run to lose. So therefore, you want to know: is it possible? Now some of these guys running for president, they seem to be operating on some other criteria. And there *are* other criteria. You can advance your name. If you're a lawyer, you might get some more business. You might meet people. It might be a good warm-up for something else.

But I did not see an office—I was feeling that Laurel Canyon kind of reminded me of Forest Lawn [Cemetery]. It was very pretty up on the canyon, but I only knew my neighbor—I think the time I encountered him is when he shot a squirrel, or something, near my backyard. And the ones on the other side of me, I didn't know. There was one couple that I knew at, down my driveway across the street, and they were very nice. I spent time with them. But it wasn't like *here*. You notice that guy who just walked in? I met him at Granzella's a few weeks ago, and he invited me to a lamb feast. And I went there, and then he came because they want to build a house, and they want to see what mine looks like. So they show up. That didn't happen in Laurel Canyon. People don't show up; it's just not done.

So, but it's not just showing up—it seemed very dead to me. It was very quiet, and I didn't notice that probably when I moved there, because I was secretary of state. I was spending time in Sacramento; I was running for governor; then I *was* governor. Every Monday, I'd take off for Sacramento. So, and then there were activities, and going out with Linda Ronstadt, being out at her house. Okay, now when all that quiets down, it gets pretty quiet. I didn't see running for mayor of

Los Angeles, so I decided to move. And the party chair struck me as a very good idea. I had no idea of what the party entails, that you don't really control the party. The party is itself, with all of the different individuals who've been going there for years, and you don't dislodge them. So, anyway, you serve them more than they serve you, for sure. [laughing]

13-00:10:17

Shafer:

Yeah. Well, I expect you're not going to like this question, but when you did the other things that we talked about earlier—

13-00:10:23

Brown:

What?

13-00:10:24

Shafer:

Going to Calcutta, doing the Zen, all those things.

13-00:10:25

Brown:

Yeah, right, right. Yeah.

13-00:10:28

Shafer:

Did you see that, in any way, as part of helping the public see you in a different way?

13-00:10:36

Brown:

I'm sure I was—that could be, that's an aspect. Everything I do, you know, that's just the way. If you're a political animal you know what things have what ramifications and implications. If you don't know that, then you're very dependent on political consultants and you're a very anxious and vulnerable human being, because you're in a business which depends *totally* on what other people think of you—namely, the voters. So, you have to know that. Now, whether people get married and have children—it's because it looks good. Or whether they have that in the back of their mind, or whether they climb Mt. Everest or do different things—

But, I certainly didn't go—I went to Japan as part of my general quest to understand—same reason I went into the Jesuits, not a particularly different reason. I also, in the kind of clean, kind of simple, pure environment of sitting in a very nice, clean Japanese zen-dō with rice paper windows, with a nice tatami mat and the black cushion, it all seems—that path to enlightenment, okay, that's one thing. Now, what about Calcutta? [laughing] What about the streets of Calcutta? Okay, I wanted to see how enlightenment works in another venue, so that's part of the reason I went. Also, Mother Teresa was this saintly kind of figure, and I'm interested in that. You know, what is holiness? What is sanctity? Does it exist? What should it look like? So, I wanted, because certainly, I spent a good part of my life chasing after that, so if there's somebody who says *that* person has it, I want to go talk to them. I went to see Yamada Roshi. He's this guy who supposedly has some enlightenment, so—

13-00:12:54

Shafer: So, I think you did some interviews, some media interviews, when you were in Calcutta?

13-00:12:58

Brown: No, well I did, Ken Rich ran me down—he was there with Deukmejian, and he tracked me down in Kamakura.

13-00:13:06

Shafer: Yeah, but I remember it was in the news that you were there, I mean—

13-00:13:13

Brown: Yeah, a *Life* magazine guy just—wasn't, until a guy from *Life* came around. No one else knew about it, I don't think.

13-00:13:20

Holmes: But you also did a telephone interview with the *LA Times*.

13-00:13:24

Brown: Uh, maybe. I don't remember. Seems that—it could be. Who was it with?

13-00:13:30

Holmes: That, I don't know. But I know it was in the *LA Times*, that's all.

13-00:13:33

Brown: What was it? Did you read it?

13-00:13:35

Holmes: Yes. Well, it was a lot of the same material that you would write about later. You were discussing your experiences—

13-00:13:41

Brown: Maybe toward the end I talked about it. Well, yeah, I talk about things. I talk about my ranch. Life is public/private, it's all kind of an interconnected thread here.

13-00:13:57

Shafer: What I'm trying to figure out is so you earlier, a moment ago, you said that you were aware of the ramifications of, you know, going to a place like Calcutta is—

13-00:14:04

Brown: I'm aware of what I'm saying to you, and what someone might use it for and what would be the impact, if any. I am aware of that. I've already thought about it, even as I answer your questions, of what I say and what I don't say.

13-00:14:18

Shafer: [laughs] So what did you think would—?

13-00:14:19

Brown: So if we are a conscious political personality, I mean, that's the business we're in.

13-00:14:24

Shafer: So was there a way in which you thought your visit to Calcutta could affect your image in some way, did you think?

13-00:14:31

Brown: Yeah, well, I think if—well or my life experience. I don't separate—

13-00:14:35

Shafer: Those are two different things?

13-00:14:36

Brown: Well, not for *me*. You are what you are. I mean, unless you shut the door and become something else, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, or something. Somebody used to say, I used to like that phrase: "Everything you do is a full presentation of the self." Just the way you lean on your elbows, just the way you scratch yourself. [laughing] If you look *clearly* at that, that will say volumes about who you are. So, if that's true about the smallest little gesture—yes, everything you do, to the discerning eye, is revelatory. Now, to the not-so-discerning eye, it still reveals something. So that's the world we live in. We have appearances. In fact, some people think there are *only* appearances. You know, there are schools of philosophy that some people believe in the, I think—content, something called the *ding an sich*, or something, the thing-in-itself. And the phenomenon, or the outside—and is there an inside? Now people today, a lot of people say, "Well, there's no inside. It's just a lot of onion peels that we can pull back endlessly." So yes, I had many reasons to go to Calcutta.

13-00:15:59

Shafer: What do you think your going there revealed about you to the public?

13-00:16:03

Brown: I don't know what it revealed—revealed an aspect of myself. This is a true—I'm interested in every aspect of Calcutta, India. I also went to Bo—not Bodhigara, that's where Buddha has his enlightenment. I went to Benares, on the Ganges, and we knew a fellow who was a Brahmin who had a temple there. And some friends had met him before, and he'd come to California. So I also took an air-conditioned, second-class train for fourteen hours and went up to Benares, spent a few days there, from Calcutta. It's all part of—that's one of the holy cities of Hinduism. So yeah, I think, it says what it says. I think I wrote in that article in the *Sacramento Bee*—I think I answered that question.

13-00:17:22

Meeker: It's a slightly different but similar question. About this same time, when you start appearing more regularly in the public again, you present yourself, sartorially, in a slightly different way.

13-00:17:37

Brown: Right, well it kind of looks like *this*, doesn't it?

13-00:17:39

Meeker: A little bit, yeah.

13-00:17:40

**Brown:** This is what I wore last night, because I didn't want to wear a suit. My wife doesn't like me wearing my suit, because it hasn't been to the cleaners in several months. [laughter]

13-00:17:50

**Meeker:** Well, is that how you got to the turtleneck and the double-breasted suit, like where did those come from? Were those thought-through decisions, or did they just happen?

13-00:18:00

**Brown:** Well, certainly, in the presidential campaign, I was against the *whole* system, telling them they've got to change it, throw them all out. That was not a totally thought-out idea, by the way. But it was part of the whole insurgency that I was leading at that time, or promoting.

13-00:18:35

**Meeker:** So you recognized the power of—?

13-00:18:38

**Brown:** Well, I don't know how much power there is.

13-00:18:40

**Meeker:** Right, or symbolic power of a personal presentation.

13-00:18:44

**Brown:** Well, everything is symbolic. You want to drive a limousine? Want to sit in the back with a couple of CHP [California Highway Patrol] guys in the chase car, and a few in front, with machine guns, or whatever they—AK-47s? [laughing] That communicates things. Flying around in a jet plane? Ronald Reagan was doing that. That's an upgrade from the old *Grizzly Bear* that my father had. So we speak not just in our words, but we speak in what we wear, and where we show up, who follows us, who precedes us. That's called context, and today there's no word more used than *providing context*. So yeah, I did provide context.

13-00:19:30

**Meeker:** Or who painted your portrait, and how that turned out?

13-00:19:33

**Brown:** Well, that was another one of these kind of random things.

13-00:19:39

**Shafer:** How'd it come about?

13-00:19:40

**Brown:** It came about because, first of all, you've got to have a portrait. I wasn't that excited about it. In fact, I was going to see Andy Warhol, but I thought that was a little too far out. The California Arts Council, Marcia Weisman I think the chair of that, said you ought to do [Don] Bachardy. And another lady who's a friend of mine, Ulrike Kantor, who ran an art gallery, between Marcia and Ulrike, they

said, "Pick him," so I said fine. Yeah, that's what the Arts Council thinks? I'll go along with it. I had no idea, I never saw his works before.

13-00:20:20

Meeker: Oh, you had never met him before?

13-00:20:21

Brown: No, never met him. Was very surprised and a bit shocked when I saw what the result was. I know you guys always think formulaic, get the plan, have your advisors set up the meeting. I don't work that way.

13-00:20:36

Shafer: So did you, when you saw it, did you think, oh my God, this—

13-00:20:39

Brown: Yeah, I thought it was a little too far out. My father said you can never run for office again. He said that.

13-00:20:45

Meeker: Really?

13-00:20:46

Shafer: Because of the—?

13-00:20:47

Brown: Because of that painting. He said, "You've got to get another one." If you look at his painting, it's not very distinguished. He wouldn't sit for it, and they just painted his photograph—and it wasn't good. I thought when you put it [the portrait by Bachardy] in the right light, it looked pretty good. With the right lighting, it adds a lot of color, it's interesting.

13-00:21:07

Shafer: Did it capture your first governorship, do you think?

13-00:21:09

Brown: Well, I don't know, did it capture—it's a painting, it's art. You have to decide that. It's interesting, that if you look at the way they are, they haven't been able to deviate. They have to take photographic-like paintings.

13-00:21:24

Shafer: What are you going to do—?

13-00:21:25

Brown: I've thought about that. I have to get to that.

13-00:21:30

Shafer: Do you think you'll go back to the more traditional?

13-00:21:33

Brown: No, I'm going to look for a good artist—if Andy Warhol was alive, I'd ask him.  
[laughter]

- 13-00:21:40  
Shafer: Why didn't you—why did you think Andy—?
- 13-00:21:41  
Brown: I thought he was too far out.
- 13-00:21:42  
Shafer: Too far out?
- 13-00:21:43  
Brown: There are limits. I probably should have. But, I do have a photograph that he took of me, in *Interview* magazine. But he didn't see it—didn't think it worthy of a painting.
- 13-00:21:55  
Shafer: He might have taken you to a photo booth and liked—have you been, there's a great Warhol exhibit at the MoMA [Museum of Modern Art].
- 13-00:21:59  
Brown: No, no, he was actually at a fundraiser. At [Diane von Furstenberg's] house, near Central Park. That was 1976. And there's an interview in *Interview* magazine, which I'm sure you can find. I haven't seen it. [Allard K.] "Al" Lowenstein brought him. You ever heard of Al Lowenstein? [sounds of assent] He was the guy who brought him.
- 13-00:22:21  
Shafer: Allard?
- 13-00:22:22  
Brown: Allard Lowenstein was another one of the characters that have come through my—there are many, including Michael Harrington. Ever heard of Michael Harrington?
- 13-00:22:32  
Shafer: Yeah, he's that antinuclear guy.
- 13-00:22:33  
Brown: He's a socialist Democrat.
- 13-00:22:34  
Shafer: Socialist, yeah.
- 13-00:22:39  
Meeker: I'm trying to think of his big book that he wrote.
- 13-00:22:41  
Brown: Ah yeah, that very big book, called *The Other America* [1962].
- 13-00:22:44  
Meeker: *The Other America*, that's right.

13-00:22:45

Brown: It began the whole focus on poverty. And the last time I saw him, he was getting out of a cab. We took a ride uptown toward his apartment, and he got out, and I said, "Michael, what do we do with all these unemployed people? They need jobs. What's your answer?" And he said "Build trains. Build trains." That's exactly what he said, as he walked onto the curb. So, I have many influences that flow through my mind, because I ask a lot of people, a lot of things. I ask people, you know, what's going on?

13-00:23:22

Shafer: Yeah. Well, that's actually a good point for me to ask about Jacques Barzagli. How did you meet him and—?

13-00:23:29

Brown: I met him through a sister of an old girlfriend of mine, and they worked on a movie where she was with one guy and this guy, Jacques, was the assistant director. The movie producer was a man named Stanton Kaye, who I'd been introduced to by Tony Kline—and who is still a friend of mine. And Linda said, "Can you help this guy?" In fact, she wrote me a letter right after I was sworn in as secretary of state, so I met him, found him interesting, said ok. That's how it happened.

13-00:24:08

Shafer: She wanted you to help him get his foot in politics?

13-00:24:12

Brown: No, just get a job. Just—yeah, kind of the basics.

13-00:24:17

Shafer: But he stuck around for a long time.

13-00:24:18

Brown: He did. Well, he was in and out. He came and—go on.

13-00:24:24

Shafer: What influence did he—what was his, like, portfolio, would you say?

13-00:24:27

Brown: So, but *influence*, of course, is that strange word. You know, people were looking to my father's influence. I think maybe my grandmother had influence. I was thinking about that. See, I had a variety of contentious advisors that did not agree. Richard Maullin would have a view, and Tom Quinn would have a view—and then Jacques would have a view. I found it very helpful when these very insistent people—they came pushing, you know, it's tiring to have to push back. So I would like the group around me to fight among themselves, to push, and then I could rest a little bit, and observe or decide for myself. So, often Jacques provided a different perspective, whether it's on a TV commercial or a different strategy of one kind or another. So, he provided a, I would say, somewhat creative view. Not totally literal, and not to be taken, you know, 100 percent, but it was a catalytic—he provided a catalyst for a lot of things.



13-00:25:42

Shafer: Can you think of one or two things that—where he had a really big impact?

13-00:25:45

Brown: A really *big* impact?

13-00:25:46

Shafer: Or an idea that he had that you embraced?

13-00:25:54

Brown: I'm trying to think of what that idea is. He had the idea of this building in Oakland, and a building that, as a center—his idea was a beehive of nonprofits, which I thought was interesting, because I was always interested in different experiments. I'd met [Charles E. "Chuck"] Dederich at Synanon; I'd been to La Paz with [César] Chávez, whose goal was really cooperatives, and we talked a lot about that. And I was impressed with old Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, which I first became acquainted with through the Catholic Worker Movement. Well, I met Dorothy Day once, and she gave a talk. She was kind of a Mother Teresa figure too. Different, but a strong Catholic. I think a pro-life Catholic at that, but antiwar, more pacifist. But, I said to her, "Well, where can I find out more about what you're talking about?" And she said, "Read *Paths in Utopia*," which was a book by Martin Buber, I think it was written in 1945 and published later. And so I got that book, and I've read that book twice. And in fact, I've been looking for it. I don't have it currently in my possession.

But that was a book of the utopian socialists, [Pierre-Joseph] Proudhon, [Joseph] de Maistre, three or four of the intentional communities, and he felt that the good life, the best life, was the cooperative life. And, he ends his book *Paths of Utopia*, after studying these different social thinkers, these utopian thinkers—there's four or five of them. I'm sure you've heard of them before. They're pretty well known. He ends up, between talking about the kibbutz as *the* model for, basically, human existence. The total communal/cooperative effort, like the kibbutz, that's what he was promoting in 1945. And he said, really the choice is between Moscow and Jerusalem. Jerusalem represented the kibbutz; Moscow represented the centralized, institutional state, which, obviously, he did not like at all.

So, I was always interested in: can you create a cooperative society? And, certainly in the sixties, that became quite—something that has faded away in many respects. So I thought this building where I was thinking of having first a public-interest law firm, then we got the idea of a sustainable roof garden. We also had a reading. We read Martin Buber *I [and] Thou*, and there was a guy who came for that group. And I hadn't talked to him in twenty years. But I met someone who came to the We The People building, and she gave me his number, called him and he said that, "Of all the things that have influenced my life, the reading of *I [and] Thou* has been one of the important aspects of my life." So at that point, I said I'm going to take it off my shelf and read *I [and] Thou* again. So, that was the idea.

Now, what I learned, of course, when I went down to see César Chávez in La Paz, about six months before he died, he was there. There weren't too many people. He had the, what he called *the tortilla priest*, who said Mass, and we had breakfast. And César was lamenting that the different people that lived in La Paz, they all wanted to have their own refrigerator. They wouldn't live with the common kitchen and common table. Now that struck a chord with me but, because of course in the seminary we had a common table. And at Santa Clara we ate in a dining room, and at the International House we did. And at Yale, I lived there. So, I've always liked the common dormitory living situation, with a common table, and you see the same people over and over again, and the continuing conversation. So it's kind of like one conversation after another going on many years. And as a matter of fact, just here a month ago, I had two guys from the Jesuits, and Michael Murphy, who founded Esalen. And they came up and we spent several hours talking, continuing the conversation from the fifties, so I have many conversations that continue.

And so that was the idea of We The People, and that this would be, kind of mobilizing the progressive—we didn't call it progressive, but kind of a reform kind of culture, political, and demonstrating it in the life that we were there. We had an auditorium. I had at least a hundred speakers: Ivan Illich, he came for the Oakland Table, which is a very interesting concept. Also, the Buddhist scholar from New York, Robert Thurman. I don't know if you know who Robert Thurman is. He came, and we had a number of people on organic gardening. We had that fellow from The Farm, Ina May Gaskin, who is a midwife. She's delivered over twenty-five hundred kids, and it was The Farm; they all moved out to Tennessee and lived on The Farm. And so, we had dozens of people come in and talk. I think [Theodore B.] "Ted" Taylor, I think, one of the nuclear scientists came.

So that was the idea. We had the common table, that table that I have in the barn. Those were my two dinner tables, and we could seat fourteen people [at each], and that would be twenty-eight people. And so we had the auditorium, we had some people for dinner, we would talk, I had the library. And, so that was the idea, and Jacques helped conceptualize that, or at least promoted—I wouldn't even say conceptualize it. I did most of that. But then of course, it didn't quite work out the way—it's not that easy. People *do* want refrigerators. [laughing] People do rebel from say—okay, here's the dinner. Are we going to drink at the table, are we not going to drink? What time is dinner? So, this idea of adults living together is quite challenging, and it normally requires some orthodox hierarchy. I think the orthodox kibbutzes lasted longer than the liberal kibbutzes, because this idea of okay, what do you think? This is what I think. What does Harry think? That is not a way you build a coherent, functioning, sustainable group in society.

And so, I have always been interested in—not interested, I've been attracted to those kinds of approaches. And it's a practical, because I've lived it, certainly, that way in the seminary. It's a very collective kind of life. And I've also studied

it. Ivan Illich gave me a book: *From Maindeville to Marx: [The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology]*, by a French anthropologist called [Louis] Dumont. And Dumont, he also wrote a book called *Homo Hierarchicus: [The Caste System and Its Implications]*, and he also wrote several essays on individualism. And I, so I took an interest in this, because Dumont says that the modern society is essentially about individualism. But that's a radical break, because all human societies before that have always been *socially* oriented, holistic, you might even say tribal. And people had their whole identity in the group in which they found themselves, in which they grew up. And those socially shaped and determined societies, holistic societies, always had hierarchy. There was always hierarchy. And then when you go to individualism, hierarchy is verboten. What is emphasized is equality. And so we want to have a kind of a horizontal authority structure. And of course, he's questioning the viability of this, because of course, we don't have hierarchy, but we have class stratification, so we didn't really escape the hierarchy. It was reconstituted in a very atomistic, individualistic world. So that was Dumont, and Illich was the one that put me onto that.

So I have ideas, and then I have lived activities, and I try to go between the idea and the reality. And there's not a lot of people—well, there *are* a lot of people doing that. And I found things from like, Gary Snyder, who built his house. He had twenty-five of his people, who like Gary Snyder's poetry. They built his house out there on the ridge, and I ultimately bought a place near him. And I've gone to stay, visited the Catholic Worker when I have been in Philadelphia, when I was running for president—also when I was in Los Angeles and also when I was in Oakland. So this, to me, was a very romantic idea. Friday night, Dorothy Day on Chrystie Street, the Catholic Worker in New York in the Bowery, they'd have—Friday night was clarification of thought. And so people would come, and [Thomas] Merton had showed up there in the early forties, and intellectuals and workers and poor people, alcoholics and drug addicts. So they were all there, and that sounded pretty interesting. So I wanted kind of a milder version of something like that. That's what the [We the People] building was. Now, and we achieved some of that, but ultimately, the personalities conflict.

13-00:37:18

Shafer:

[to Meeker] Do you want to talk about the party chair a little bit?

13-00:37:20

Meeker:

Yeah, I mean, I think we want to get back to some of these issues later on in the narrative, but—

13-00:37:25

Brown:

The party is not a communal exercise.

13-00:37:27

Meeker:

[laughing] Right.

13-00:37:28

Brown: There's a high degree of individualism and assertion of individual claims.

13-00:37:33

Meeker: Did you know, when you were preparing to run for party chair, that it was going to involve a great deal of fundraising? Did you know that was part of the job?

13-00:37:39

Brown: Yes. I thought that. I figured that, yeah. I didn't know it was going to be as difficult. I did not know. I just thought it was like fundraising. All the fundraising I did, you're running for secretary of state, governor, president, senate—okay. When you're running for the party, it's a different ball of wax.

13-00:37:59

Meeker: How did it differ?

13-00:38:00

Brown: Well, because it's a party institution. Who's going to give to that? Now, as it turns out, they have gotten a lot of money because of the link with the legislature—and I raised some money. I had [Mario] Cuomo out one time in LA; I had [Lloyd] Bentsen out in San Francisco. But what I didn't understand is the party is very much connected to the legislative leadership. And so, they want to raise the money for their legislative campaigns. So what the function of the party is at that time wasn't that clear. The laws have changed a little bit to give the party an advantage in fundraising. [John] Burton took care of that. So the party can make unlimited donations to a candidate. It can only raise a maximum of \$27,000, or whatever it is today, for the candidate fund. But if they build that fund up—and they did it with telemarketing to get what we call *small dollars*—and they build that thing up, and with that fund they can give \$100,000 to a candidate or they can spend it for a candidate. So, it has a function very much tied into the legislature, at that time. But I wasn't part of that.

So I'd come in, and usually they were a figure that was very much a dependent on the legislature. But I was running this insurgent campaign, now the head of the established party. That, in itself, was not a good fit. Even though the party talked about a lot of—right now, it's a lot of progressive talk. But it's essentially the organization supporting the status quo, the incumbents. So, they're in tension. The people who want to shake up the world, and the people who want to stay in office. And the job of the party is to keep the ins *in*, and the outs *out*, which is not the idea of a lot of the people who come to the conventions.

And it's a totally different party now. When my father was there, the party consisted of the appointees of all the Democratic office holders, and the unsuccessful seekers after the state legislature or the state office holders. So it was only a few hundred people, three-or four hundred, and they only met once a year—and they couldn't endorse in the primary. I don't want to go through the whole history of the party, because it has changed. But then Leo McCarthy, as part of his, I believe, campaign to be a US senator—that never happened—he

broadened the party. So, pretty soon, from a party of 400, it goes to a party of 2,400. And that's where we are today. And it's quite an expensive management task, even though it is very disconnected to the essential work of parties, which is money and media and the candidates giving speeches. So, we're in a very candidate-centric kind of politics, and the party is more of an institution.

Now, when I was there, with Burton, we became pretty good friends, and they helped me very much when I was running for governor. But when I was there, Feinstein was running against Wilson, and she was not successful. I had Marshall Ganz, who had helped me in some of my presidential campaigns. And we were going to register—the registration gap was 11.4 percent, if I can remember, between Democrats and Republicans, and, so we're going to close that gap. That was our idea, and so we hired twelve people. Now, as it turned out, by the time we got to May of the November election year, the budget was looking like it was going to be a million dollars a month. I could not raise that. And the legislators weren't going to channel their money into my registration campaign, because they have their own—and again, this was another one of these somewhat utopian ideas.

Marshall is a theorist of organization. He was the organizer of the boycott, and he's a professor now at Harvard. And he helped [Barack] Obama do the caucuses, and he's teaching this at Harvard. So, he wanted—not the typical registration. The typical registration is what you might call *day labor*. You get people who, for two dollars a card, or three, they register people, and they bring in their cards and you pay them. But, what I found is—I had no idea about these things. The people who do this are not *party* people; they're like the people who circulate petitions, are cowboys, who travel around, and they can stand on the street corner with an ironing board and get people to sign petitions or register to vote.

Well, Marshall had the idea that we were going to build leadership in every part of the state, and that's what the party would be. We would build up a leadership cadre of the Democratic Party, and they would register people. But they would be a permanent staff, and this would really be the basis of rejuvenating the party. I'm sure Marshall may have a different interpretation, but he'd worked with Chávez and they had all of these organizers. But Chávez paid \$5 a week, plus living in a dormitory. Now, when we come over to the party, people want a normal salary, they have to have a car. This gets very expensive. And the organization of just the people-resource expenses, it's not sustainable. And then, you have to go to the same characters, you know—who provides the money? The companies, the trade groups and the unions, and rich people who like to do things in politics. And the party is not a hot ticket. Marshall's dream excited *me*, but it didn't excite the funding base, at least not to the extent that *I* could do it.

I raised, I think, more money than is normal. Normally the party is there, and the legislators have bills. They have life and death on a lot of things, so *that* power then, through various legerdemain, is translated into donations into the party, and then streamed back into the elections. That's the way our wonderful system works. But it's very legislative bill-oriented, even though there's never, you

know, a complete tie-in. It has to be sufficiently diffuse that it passes the rules of campaign raising and spending.

And it didn't fit the idea of the Marshall Ganz, the old César Chávez—we're going to have true believers out into the neighborhoods and public square organizing this new, value-directed party. That's a wonderful idea. [laughing] Just like We the People is a wonderful idea, and living together and doing good is a wonderful idea. But then human nature sinks in, and *I* want and *you* want, and it's all different and it's difficult. And it tends to converge back to the market—and what are you selling and who's buying, and so it's a little more practical. That's why, because I have seen a very large range, I have a very clear eye as to what's possible and what's *not* possible.

13-00:45:52

Shafer:

Was there a way in which being party chair colored the way you looked at money in politics?

13-00:46:02

Brown:

Well, I started out with the Political Reform Act, even when I was secretary of state. I had two experiences. Maybe I talked about them. When I ran for the junior college board, I went to my father's accountant, and I said, "Let me get the campaign report." I want to go ask the people who gave *him* money. So he showed me the report, and it was a circle of names, an initial and last names, with an aggregate amount at the bottom. I said, "Well, that's a funny way to report these names. I want to know who gave more, and who gave less, because I want to call the ones who gave serious money." That's the way we do it. Didn't I explain this to you at an earlier date? So then, and it turned out that that's the practice in California. So that's the thing I cleaned up as secretary of state, and then I put it into the Political Reform Act.

So, I saw the problem of money, but I also know what money did. That's why I didn't want limitations, because I knew that Gene McCarthy was financed by a man named [Arnold] Hiatt, and a few other people—Blair Clark. These were very wealthy men. They were able to keep him going. When it came to McGovern—Max Palevsky; he was writing out big, huge checks that kept Carter going. So I knew this idea that we're all going to raise little amounts of money—it doesn't work, because you need the money *fast*, and you don't have time to build it up. So, that's why I didn't put a limit, but I saw the inherent problem.

And then as I got to look at it, and particularly as party chairman, I got to understand, maybe once again, the problem. I did talk about the *bane*—I didn't use the word, but the bad influence of money in politics. And I said we're going to clean it up by making it all discoverable, making it all known. Of course, the trouble in making it transparent—then everybody sees the money flowing, and it makes you feel *worse*. So the press loves transparency, because you get clicks out of it and you get to sell papers. But of course it doesn't—they always say *do* it to restore public confidence, but it has the exact opposite effect, because it reveals

all the [laughing] foibles and flaws and warts of the system, and it just undermines confidence all the more. So, that's a paradox.

So the system did seem, to me, definitely in need of repair. And so I based that campaign in '92 on cleaning up the system, and the symbol of that was to only take \$100 [donations]. That was really a way of telegraphing the idea that big money was destroying the country, and we the people would have to take back the country. That was the idea. Others have tried that, [Ross] Perot, in some way; Trump in different ways. Pat Caddell was always looking for a candidate to do all that, to be a reformer. Gary Hart was that, so everybody's been looking for the, as I called it once, *the man on the white horse*, to come in and fix things. But, we now know that men on white horses are not to be trusted too naively.

13-00:49:30

Shafer:

How did you settle on the \$100 limit? We interviewed—is it Jodie Hicks?

13-00:49:33

Brown:

Jodie Evans.

13-00:49:34

Shafer:

Evans, rather, who said originally you wanted it to be \$250, and she talked you down just to a hundred.

13-00:49:40

Brown:

Well, another guy did too, Joe Costello. Costello was a guy there. It was in her house; I can't remember who it was. It seemed impractical, but it was more memorable. So you could remember \$100. That's the reason why.

13-00:49:54

Shafer:

That was the main thing?

13-00:49:56

Brown:

Well, communication is the main thing, right? And you've got to keep it simple. Even Pepsi, now Pepsi beats the others cold, right? Join the Pepsi generation. That's not a convoluted—of what the ingredients are. No, I mean you have to communicate, as I like to say, when I try to get people to write more clearly: subject, verb, object. See Spot run. That's the basic paradigm, and you can elaborate that, but don't get too far away. It's like Hemingway. [laughing] The old man got up, walked down to the shore, picked up his fishing line, got into the boat and started paddling. It's that simple. I read *Old Man and the Sea* with that idea. I read it as an exercise in rhetoric and how you communicate.

13-00:50:52

Meeker:

And write vigorous prose.

13-00:50:54

Brown:

Vigorous but brief. Now, when I studied Latin, of course, you studied Cicero and the grand flourishes of Ciceronic prose. That's something different, so there are differences. And when they prefer one to the other, it's part of the shift, and something I very much focus on, that there are fads and what's current. And right

now I think simple, muscular prose is what we need, and there are people who make it too complicated. I fight against that. But there are some very eloquent people. If you read Cardinal Newman or [Thomas Babington] Macaulay—these guys write grand sentences. But to write grand sentences, you've got to be very smart and you have to be good at it. And most people aren't, because they haven't been educated.

13-00:51:52

Shafer: A lot of people felt George Bush was not vulnerable. I mean at one point I think, in 1991, his approval rating was like 90 percent after the Gulf War.

13-00:52:00

Brown: I said he was more popular than George Washington—and then he *wasn't*. So that was certainly a lesson in political volatility.

13-00:52:12

Shafer: What goes up can come down.

13-00:52:14

Brown: Well, Kissinger was Super K. He had a picture in a Superman cape on the front of *Time* magazine [means *Newsweek* magazine]. I remember that. And then it was a few years later the Republicans—he was now the Lone Ranger. No one wanted to talk to him. Of course he's still around, and he's still giving advice, because he has a very profound sense of things. So, things come and go. That's what you get the longer you're around. When you start, you think this is the way it is. Well, after you wait ten years, you might know it's another way. And if you wait another ten years, it'll be yet again something different. Then you have to understand how to, how do you function in a world that is ever-changing? And I understood that even when I was on the debate team. I had a closing which I think has been written about. And my closing, whether I was arguing for the affirmative of a proposition or the negative, I'd always close and say, "What we need is a flexible plan for an ever-changing world." And that was my formula on the debate team. [laughing] And I found that was pretty useful all the way along the line.

13-00:53:27

Shafer: Before we get into the '92 race, I just want to ask one more thing about the party chair. Which was after Feinstein lost to Pete Wilson in 1990, I think John Burton wanted you to step down as—?

13-00:53:39

Brown: Right, well, John Burton did not like the idea that there was an independent political personality in charge of the party. He did not like that at all. Subsequently, when I ran for governor, he was extremely friendly—so as people get older, they know there's not much time left, so they start— And the Burtons were, of course, close to my brother-in-law, Joe Kelly. They were friends; I think they played basketball together.



13-00:54:10

Shafer: Did he feel like you were, like having someone well known was a distraction from the candidates?

13-00:54:14

Brown: No, no. It's a threat to power. The legislature has their dark arts, and do you want a reformer sitting in charge of the treasury? I think that caused anxiety. Now, he might have had other ideas, felt I wasted money—he probably thought Marshall Ganz was a big waste—that idea. And as it turned out, it was wasteful. [laughing] Like everything else in politics, you look at it, and you've got a point there. And then when you turn it over, there's another point. But some points are more sustainable than others, and Burton had some good ideas on that.

13-00:54:49

Shafer: Did he think you were partly to blame for Feinstein losing?

13-00:54:52

Brown: Well, that's part of blame management. And that's very important. I say that humorously, but I'm dead serious. If you can't figure out who to blame when something goes wrong, you're going to be blamed. And a lot of times you can't solve the problem, but you can certainly unload it on somebody else. [laughing] And so they had that view, which I thought was ridiculous.

And they said I spent too much money, which was an ideal—it was this idea that [Alan] Cranston had hired Marshall, and they had this nonprofit, and they were hiring people, you know, registering Latino voters and all the rest of this stuff, through nonprofits and through political action committees. But then that guy in Arizona, the savings and loan, Lincoln Savings, got—that one, then Cranston—but he was building a political operation with Marshall as the architect, and so I picked that up. In fact, Cranston, when I was running for party chair, really made that a condition of him endorsing me, that I would hire Marshall. So once you hire Marshall, now you're spending millions of dollars, and that's not going to make Burton happy *and* the legislative group.

I knew there was going to be a deficit, and I didn't want it hanging around me. So I actually had a contract written, that Larry Tramutola and the others—that they were solely responsible for the fundraising between the primary and November, and Anne [Gust-Brown] helped me write that contract. So it was her first job. No, not her first, that was her second job. She also helped me defend against somebody who said that I unfairly kicked him off the stage because I kept him to the one-minute standard, and he was a Latino and said that I had discriminated against him. So we went to court, and we prevailed. It was dismissed. [laughter in background]

But the business of Feinstein and Wilson: First of all, the mood—it was still that conservative Deukmejian, President Bush. And as I recall, now, you have to look at, you don't really know about these things unless you *really* get polling data, really analyze it, and have somebody who has *really* good judgment. Those are

almost impossible conditions, and this many years later, it is virtually impossible. It can be done to an approximation. [laughing] And so doing that, I would say that somehow Feinstein said something about a sales tax. And Wilson really hung that around her neck, that she wanted to raise taxes. So that was the, I thought—the tax. He said she was a taxer, and that thing worked. That was the mood then. Although she did the capital punishment—and you could look back at that, and she gave a speech and got booed and had it filmed. That’s pretty intentional, isn’t it? Do you think she realized what she was doing?

13-00:58:15

Shafer: Of course she did.

13-00:58:16

Brown: Okay. Is that good or is that bad?

13-00:58:20

Shafer: Clever.

13-00:58:22

Brown: Well, it worked better than [John] Van de Kamp, who was a little more straight and kind of moving in a world that doesn’t exist.

So I think they blamed it on the turnout registration. But I always find, just for what it’s worth, registration—and now the Democrats and Republicans have sunk [money into it]. And I think these are the enthusiasm—what ignites, what gets people to vote. Trump, they say, got more turnout at this recent election in Orange County. Can we build a political grouping where you pay a decent salary, and give people a car and have them drive around the districts to bump up registration? Some shaggy kid saying, “Will you sign up with the Democratic Party?” That’s very ineffective, just like door to door—they say the *field* operation. Well, I remember Assemblyman Tom Bane once, smiled—strange bird—and he said, “Yeah, my field operation is the US Post Office.” So, by mail, you know it’s there. It doesn’t have any other flaws. It gets there.

So that’s the problem with registration. You can do it in a small district for a limited period of time, but it’s not even clear that the people will then vote. What you need is excitement, anger. You had the Trump voters who turned out. You have the anti-Trump voters who turned out. Then you had Wilson and [Proposition] 187, and then the backlash from that. That mobilized more people than all our registration drives combined, because that is a message coming across the media, reaching into homes and minds and hearts, and touching people, and now they react. That’s a lot different than just knocking on the door and, “Hi. I see you’re not registered to vote.” And you have a little—some character. I don’t know what they’re going to look like. They’re not usually in a tie, and looking like they’re—they’re from the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They look a little more scruffy—usually. [laughter in background] And so, I think that’s a hard business to succeed at. That’s my view.

13-01:00:47

Holmes: Governor, speaking of the 1990 election, outside of Feinstein there were other Democratic losses, and one of—

13-01:00:54

Brown: Well, there was a Democratic win too. [Sal] Cannella. We won the Cannella race, in the Valley. That was a big deal.

13-01:01:04

Holmes: One of the critiques was also the lack of TV advertising by the Democratic Party.

13-01:01:15

Brown: Up to that point, I don't think the—are you aware of any TV ad that the party ever bought? I'm not. And they may be there, but I'm just not aware of it. That was never viewed as the party's job. The party was essentially on registration, and when you run for governor, what the party always says, "Now, how much money is your campaign going to give to the registration drive." And we always say, "We don't want to give you any money. We want to put it on TV." And so the party was more the registration mechanism.

13-01:01:45

Holmes: Because I know some people were trying to at least—

13-01:01:48

Brown: Who?

13-01:01:59

Holmes: In the stories I read from the 1990 election.

13-01:01:52

Brown: A lot of these stories are advocacy pieces. But go ahead, what did they—?

13-01:01:56

Holmes: Well, in the sense that they were saying that you were not convinced that TV ads were going to be effective with the voters.

13-01:02:03

Brown: No, that is cuckoo. I'm *totally* impressed with TV ads. TV ads make a big—when I showed up in Maryland, and massive crowds and adulation and excitement—those were TV ads that paved the way. No TV ads? But who said that? There's a story behind here, but it's distorted, and you've got it half-baked.

13-01:02:25

Holmes: It's not, well, half-baked. It was a biographer. Actually, it was the biographer, Chuck McFadden—

13-01:02:33

Brown: And what did he say? What did it say—who *said* it though? I've got a pretty good memory on this stuff.

13-01:02:40

Holmes: Well, that's fine. I can show you the page and you could read it.

13-01:02:43

Brown: Yeah, so they were saying the party would take out a TV ad. What would the TV ad say?

13-01:02:46

Holmes: They were saying as chairman of the party that you scorned TV ads for candidates during the 1990 election.

13-01:02:53

Brown: With what kind of money?

13-01:02:54

Holmes: Maybe that was the issue. I don't know. Not to spend money on TV ads, but to put the money into something else.

13-01:02:59

Brown: I can tell you when I ran for governor, the party did not take out a single TV ad. And besides, the party only did what the candidates wanted. The party is not an—that was really the problem of my chairmanship, that I was somewhat autonomous. Only somewhat, because I very much was constrained by the party, the people in it, and what they want and don't want. And then the legislators and the other forces that make up the Democrats. Whatever this is has me *very* curious.

13-01:03:29

Holmes: It's right here. [reading] "Brown proved adept at bringing more money into the party, expanding get-out-the-vote drives and improved grassroots organizing, but he scorned heavy campaign television advertising, just as he had in his 1974 gubernatorial race against Houston Flournoy. Oddly, for a political practitioner of his acumen, and one who had mastered the art of simple-minded political symbolism, Brown had difficulty believing that elemental, broad-brushed television spots could really influence voters, whom he thought were much too judicious, informed, and thoughtful to be swayed by television commercials."

13-01:04:10

Brown: Okay, that's a very confused statement. [laughter] First of all, I *did* take out TV ads. And if you read the history of the '74 campaign, particularly the Mary Ellen Leary piece—it's not how I avoided *news*, but we were buying TV ads. That was critical. That may have something to do with—there's probably some statements that he picked up, probably related to Marshall Ganz, that we had to build the grassroots. We had to build the organization through the party building; generic ads for the party wouldn't do much. But when you're talking about a candidate, the TV is—so there's two points there. TV or what—mail? Or TV or paying bodies to go knock on doors? But is that for the party registration, or is that for a candidate election? What do we call that, you've mixed all that together, and it's not—

13-01:05:12

Holmes: I didn't write it, Sir. [laughing]

13-01:05:18

Brown: You'd have to unpack it into its constituent elements, and then I could tell you, as I just have, what the elements are.

13-01:05:25

Meeker: I think one last question about your term as party chair, you've mentioned a few times the interaction you had with John Burton. What about Willie Brown?

13-01:05:34

Brown: Uh—a little bit.

13-01:05:38

Meeker: It's interesting, his name has hardly come up in this interview.

13-01:05:41

Brown: Well, he's around. He called me last week. Yeah, I can't remember. The party is its own thing. I was in the party, and I went around and I was all enthusiastic. And we had these E-Board meetings, which I'd never heard of before. And you had to put them on and they cost money, and every time you spend money, you've got to raise money. The party had some money to do telemarketing, so that helped create a base of funds. But I think the Burton thing was only a limited—I talked to him a couple of times. I don't know whether it related to Feinstein—well, Willie Brown came in, because Feinstein listened to Willie for some reason. Because he didn't grow up in San Francisco. And I think she probably viewed me as more distant, a little more, you know, just not as, not as—I don't think I created as much comfort. And maybe Willie—he was around, and she thought Willie really knew stuff. I thought, myself, that I understood statewide campaigns better, and I think I would have been a better counselor, but I didn't have that credibility at that point—in her mind. And because I'd been in LA and, also, I was the son of the person who gave her her first political job—and Willie was active on that. But Willie, I think—was he the speaker in that—?

13-01:07:20

Meeker: Mm-hmm.

13-01:07:21

Brown: So Willie, of course, you know there's the—

13-01:07:25

Shafer: He was sort of the poster child for the term limits at that point.

13-01:07:29

Brown: Right, but you know that there's an inherent conflict between legislative elections and gubernatorial elections. You know what that is?

13-01:07:38

Shafer: Money.

13-01:07:40

Brown:

No. That's only one part of it. Money is always a conflict. The gubernatorial candidate wants to get out base voters, like African Americans—hardcore, really strong Democrats. Now, the way it works, there are a lot of those hardcore Democrats, who are grouped in one assembly district, that's going to vote overwhelmingly for their local assemblyperson. So from the point of view of the legislature, putting one penny into that district is a total waste. They need to put money in a *marginal* district, where the registration is critical to winning by a few points in a more marginal district. The trouble with a marginal district—those are less-reliable Democrats. They may vote for the other guy! They might vote for Wilson, okay? I don't know whether that was perceived by people. It was totally perceived by me, because I knew, when I was running for governor, I want to get as many African-American voters, as many hardcore Latinos—not a lot of Latinos were Republicans. But the black vote, particularly, was so vital. And for the legislators, they might want to get votes, you know, in eastern Yolo County. Well, those votes are chancy for a Democrat, for the statewide—but crucial, because the legislator can run on a more conservative platform, and each of these different districts run on different—one might be anti-tax, one might be pro-tax.

I remember I was very shocked and scandalized, when I saw an assembly candidate in the '68 Democratic primary, in the black neighborhoods, running with the assemblyman's name and Bobby Kennedy's name. But when they got into the Upper West Side, they had the assemblyman's name and then they had Gene McCarthy's name. I said, well, how can you do *that*? Well, that's the way the mail game works. [laughter] So that's an illustration that legislative races are *different*, because they're so different—like in Orange County. You want to get out certain votes, but if you're running for governor, you want to get out the votes in South Central LA, you want to get out the votes in Oakland and Richmond, and things like that. So those are just some of the nuances that I thought were relevant.

But I think the campaign—first of all, it's hard to get people out to vote. So who knows what that election was, but there was a little blame. And again, I think it was this idea of Marshall. It's a little bit of this utopian, let's build a political party. But the old hands, “No, what are you doing? This is about registration, the money, getting it done, getting in the elections, and you're off on some toot that is not real.” So I think that was a fair difference, that I understand better now than I did then.

13-01:10:45

Meeker:

Well, so 1990, you're kind of running this insurgent campaign, realizing that you're hitting your head against the wall. Then in '92, you decide to run an insurgent campaign for president.

13-01:10:54

Brown:

Yeah, yeah. Well, because I thought it might be interesting. I mean I thought it was possible, because there wasn't a candidate. I thought Bush—I don't know whether he was losing popularity, but I thought he was vulnerable. There were a lot of Democrats running—

13-01:11:10

Meeker: First you had considered the senate.

13-01:11:12

Brown: I considered the senate. But paradoxically, I thought it would be easier to run for president, because if you can win in New Hampshire, then that propels you to the next state. The trouble with the senate, you've got to win the first election, which is the *only* election.

13-01:11:26

Shafer: The primary.

13-01:11:28

Brown: Yeah.

13-01:11:29

Shafer: And you were looking at Cranston—the Cranston seat, as opposed to the [John] Seymour seat? Yeah.

13-01:11:34

Brown: Maybe.

13-01:11:35

Shafer: Yeah, so did [Barbara] Boxer's entry into that—?

13-01:11:39

Brown: Well, she was already in there.

13-01:11:40

Shafer: Oh, so you were thinking of jumping in even though she was a—

13-01:11:45

Brown: Well, I think I thought that before her—I can't remember. But I think that's when I polled about running as an independent, and I found that did not work.

13-01:11:57

Shafer: For senate.

13-01:11:59

Brown: Yeah. And then I didn't have enough of the connections to the money, to the institutional money. And I thought that senate could work, and I didn't think the \$100 could work because it only works if you've got publicity. It only works if you get on TV and say, "Call 800-426-1112." But you can't do that in a state race because you don't get the same coverage. A presidential—there's more coverage, you've got to start in a smaller place. So the idea was correct, but the execution did not succeed.

13-01:12:35

Shafer: In terms of the senate race, did you have any hesitation about jumping in given that it was the Year of the Woman?

13-01:12:43

Brown:

Well, see, you think in these clichés—the Year of the Woman. I thought more in terms of what are the chances? And I thought my chances were not sufficiently good that I would want to do it. So I just look at the situation. I'm not advocating a cause, my cause is my candidacy, and what are the other candidacies? And just looking at what's the strength and what's the weakness? And I judged: there was more strength in other people than there was in me. That simple. I thought about running for mayor of Los Angeles. I sat around with a bunch of liberals, talking about it, and every one of them had a different idea. I said my God, this is four million people—I think Oakland would be easier. It's only 400,000 people, and it's a more liberal city. That's what I thought then, so I did. That's how that worked, but that was a few years later.

So the task at hand has to be appraised, and I did not have a lot of sources of money. If I'd spent more time cultivating the moneyed interests, instead of going to the Zen Center or talking to Ivan Illich or those kind of things—there's a price to be paid for that. You know, so that happened.

13-01:14:09

Shafer:

Do you think that was sort of similar to what you were saying earlier, that Dianne Feinstein felt more comfortable with Willie Brown?

13-01:14:16

Brown:

I think so. I mean she feels very comfortable with me. She performed our marriage, so she's gotten quite friendly in recent years. But we're all getting older, so we feel we have more in common now.

13-01:14:32

Meeker:

What were your impressions of George H.W. Bush? Why did you think he was possibly vulnerable and you could defeat him?

13-01:14:43

Brown:

It's hard for me to remember. I met him at a football game once, I think in Michigan at the Super Bowl. He seemed like a nice fellow. He dropped into the suite where I was. I guess it depends where on the trajectory he was. I think we were in a recession by then. The Gulf War was not going so well.

13-01:15:11

Shafer:

No, the Gulf War went well. It ended—

13-01:15:13

Brown:

But at that point, at some point his popularity started going down.

13-01:15:16

Shafer:

Yeah. I think it was the economy.

13-01:15:18

Brown:

The economy really was tanking. People were really upset in '92.



13-01:15:22

Meeker: Well, they also stopped by not taking—what's his name out, from Iraq, like they pushed the Iraqis—

13-01:15:30

Shafer: Oh, Saddam Hussein?

13-01:15:32

Brown: Right.

13-01:15:33

Meeker: Yeah, right, they left Saddam Hussein in power, and I think that—

13-01:15:36

Brown: I don't think that had much—

13-01:15:38

Shafer: [crosstalk] I think there was a sense he was out of touch with—that he more focused on foreign policy.

13-01:15:41

Brown: Oh, because he didn't know how to go through the checker? You know, that checker's not that easy. [laughter] I've had a few problems going through. Yeah, getting my credit card in, and now they have that different kind of marker on the credit. So if you don't do that too often, it's very understandable, because I put my credit card in the wrong way and the guy said, "No, you put it in this way." [laughing] That would be very embarrassing if there was a photographer there.

13-01:16:08

Meeker: In this campaign there's Bush, who would, of course, be the general election opponent. But there's a field—not a field like we see today, but certainly a field of Democratic candidates. And when you entered, was it apparent that Bill Clinton was going to be the front runner?

13-01:16:26

Brown: No, no. Not at all.

13-01:16:28

Meeker: Okay. Who were you looking at?

13-01:16:31

Brown: I didn't know. I don't know. It's hard to tell. Maybe [Paul] Tsongas, because he was from Massachusetts. And Dukakis—he was following Dukakis, I guess, because he was right next door, and that gives you name ID. So that might have been—we didn't operate on precise data or analysis, and we started out on a shoe string and started slowly—and then we built up.

13-01:17:01

Meeker: Did you start out with the We the People theme? Did you already have, fleshed out—

13-01:17:04

**Brown:** Yes, that was an insurgent campaign. Take back America. And that was a good theme, because it's been picked up by more than one candidate.

13-01:17:15

**Shafer:** What were you—taking it back from whom?

13-01:17:17

**Brown:** From the special interests, the confederacy. Corruption—campaign consulting and campaign donations, or something. I had a great line there. Actually, it was Caddell's line.

13-01:17:35

**Meeker:** What was his line?

13-01:17:37

**Brown:** Confederacy of campaign consulting—I have it. It's written down. I put out a tweet the other day. You didn't see it?

13-01:17:47

**Marzorati:** [in the background] A confederacy of corruption, careerism, and campaign consulting.

13-01:17:52

**Brown:** That's pretty good! It's just as good today.

[side conversation deleted]

13-01:17:57

**Brown:** And campaign consulting. [laughs] Yeah, that's a good line. The campaign consultants don't like that, by the way. Do you know how many people that touches in the political establishment? I think we advanced by stepping over everybody who was running the show, so that was exciting. And a lot of people didn't like that. I did put that out in a tweet. It was a minute of my speech.

13-01:18:23

**Meeker:** I'll look it up. The thing about the 19[92]—

13-01:18:24

**Brown:** You're not following me on Twitter, which is a mistake, because I'm putting out something that—on Thursday.

13-01:18:30

**Meeker:** The thing about the 1992 campaign that I find so interesting is this is really the first time, in a long time, that there's really a populist insurgence on a national scale. And you know, in preparation for today I went online, and I was looking at *New Perspectives Quarterly*. It's still being published, and a very interesting publication, and Nathan Gardels has what I think is a pretty useful definition of populism, so I'm going to read it. He says, populism comes “when an unresponsive elite forsakes average citizens in a system legitimated by popular sovereignty. Demagogues who fashion themselves as tribunes of the people ride

the rage to power. They inevitably end up wrecking what has been painstakingly built. This is an old story going back to the collapse of the Roman republic.” You know, in 1992, not only is there you, with the We the People campaign, that to me is populist—maybe not exactly in that definition, but in some manifestation. You also have George H.W. Bush, with his primary challenger Pat Buchanan. Also riding a populist wave.

13-01:19:49

Brown: Yes.

13-01:19:50

Meeker: And then you have the outside candidacy of—

13-01:19:53

Brown: Perot, yeah.

13-01:19:54

Meeker: —Ross Perot. Were you divining the sort of populist sensibility? Or was this something that you were—like the zeitgeist that you were tapping into?

13-01:20:03

Brown: Well, that’s what I was talking about in ’74 in a milder version. The new spirit.

13-01:20:08

Meeker: Yeah, it seems a lot different to me, the 1974 approach and rhetoric.

13-01:20:13

Brown: Well, what—certainly the legislators thought it was directed against them. They took personal umbrage. But it was different, because the system had grown worse. You know, the money, the inequality, and then the recession. Of course all of that’s been compounded. If you go back, it hasn’t gotten better. It’s gotten much worse. But what is your question? Did I divine—I’m not in the divination business. [laughter]

13-01:20:45

Meeker: Okay.

13-01:20:46

Brown: I had a water diviner who found a well out here, but it was very salty and we had to move on to another spot. I don’t know how the divination—I saw the little rods, but no, I’m not a diviner.

13-01:20:58

Meeker: Well, I guess there’s different ways in which populism can manifest.

13-01:21:01

Brown: But some people think that I do see with some clarity, what’s going on.

13-01:21:06

Meeker: Can you perhaps provide a summary of some of the things that you found in 1992 to be key issues of paramount importance?

13-01:21:17

**Brown:** Well, we had this careerism, campaign consulting—and what was the third one?

13-01:21:24

**Marzorati:** [in the background] Corruption—

13-01:21:26

**Brown:** [laughing] Yeah, and I could throw in cronyism too. [laughter] I mean, it's just inherent in the state of, in what we might call—I don't want to use a Marxist term, but late-stage democracy. That's a nice term. I can put on my academic hat. Yeah, it's just where we are. You've got a lot of money, you've got a market that—well, now I'm reading what happened later. But there was a lot of people hurting, and Bush seemed to be above all that. And you had Reagan, who was certainly attacking labor unions. He's the guy who wanted to take away food stamps, wanted to take away food stamps at Christmas, or something like that. I mean the same way Truman and Dewey had a certain populist aspect. But I think there had been a heightened sense of a need for reform. Gary Hart had a lot of that. And so what I'm trying to get what the question there is, that—I mean the system, it's yeah, on the national level, it's always open. If you're an out and you want in, you have to just have to prove the ins should be thrown out. So then you look around and see well, what are the flaws here and what it affects. And that's it.

13-01:23:20

**Meeker:** What was your strategy for actually doing that, given that you were going up against such entrenched interests?

13-01:23:27

**Brown:** The strategy was to get into New Hampshire, Iowa, and start trying to—what was my strategy in Maryland? It was just—all of a sudden I was there, and I started winning. Well, I thought: why, that could work again. Well, it didn't work as well. It worked to a point, and it caught on a little bit. But the amount of resources that you need is far more enormous than I thought you needed. Well, look at Jimmy Carter. He just was running. You know, he put up a picture of Martin Luther King when he was governor, and he was out of money, and he had the Allman Brothers do a couple of concerts—and he kept going. And then he was the alternative to [George] Wallace, and Max Palevsky sent him some real money. So there are these things that happen that you can't foresee with some strategic meeting in an office somewhere. You have to get out on the field and take advantage of what happens, so that was the spirit in which I was running.

13-01:24:34

**Meeker:** Well, a lot of commentators thought that you were, you know, a non-candidate, a non-story. Then you have this full hour on Phil Donahue the day before Connecticut. You win Connecticut, and then the next day Sam Donaldson brings you in for an interview.

13-01:24:51

**Brown:** Yeah, what are you saying? Are you lamenting, or are you—?

13-01:24:55

Meeker: No! I'm curious. So what, tell me about the—

13-01:25:00

Brown: Curious about what? About how this—about reality?

13-01:25:03

Meeker: I guess so. [laughing] That's not a bad thing to be curious about.

13-01:25:04

Brown: Well, there it is. It speaks for itself. If you're not a winner, you don't get covered. And you don't get into the debate unless you have certain poll numbers.

13-01:25:13

Meeker: Well, so tell me, tell me about the—

13-01:25:14

Brown: How do you get poll numbers? Money or interest.

13-01:25:16

Meeker: Right. Tell me about the Phil Donahue interview.

13-01:25:20

Brown: I can't possibly remember the Phil Donahue [interview]. There's a tape of it. You can go read it.

13-01:25:24

Meeker: I watched it.

13-01:25:25

Brown: I can't remember it.

13-01:25:26

Meeker: [laughing] Okay.

13-01:25:27

Brown: Recently, or—

13-01:25:28

Meeker: Last night, yeah.

13-01:25:30

Brown: Well, it was in Sacramento. I do remember it was in Sacramento. We walked around. I can remember those two things. And I like Phil Donahue. What was interesting about it?

13-01:25:45

Meeker: It was that it was so highly unscripted, and that you were there for an hour, and so there was a lot of opportunity for a whole wide variety of questions for you to really be tested. And it would be hard for me to imagine, in this day and age, a presidential candidate exposing themselves to that kind of unfettered questioning process.

13-01:26:05

Brown:

Well, that's what people *did*. First of all, before, there was no live television. There was no TV. And then there was TV, and there was long-form TV and long shows. And then there's just thirty-second commercials. And now there's controlled candidates. So it had kind of an evolution, and I've been around for the whole thing, as a rather young child, but now as an older person. I've seen it develop. I mean I've seen my father do a radio show running for—yeah, I guess I did see him. Well, I heard it—a live show on KFRC. You know, you buy time. You take out an ad in the papers. Yeah, “Listen to—Edmund G. “Pat” Brown is going to talk about the office of the district attorney.” And then they turn the damn thing on, and you talk. Now, I guess they write something down, but it's live, so there was a lot of that.

13-01:27:00

Shafer:

When you think of your three runs for president: '76, '80, and '92, what do you think distinguishes 1992?

13-01:27:08

Brown:

More of an attack on the status quo—clearly. And not raising the money. That's huge. Most candidates are spending a huge amount of their time talking to people with money—either rich people, groups which are another form of rich people, or unions. Or if you're a Republican, you're talking to the Koch brothers, you're talking to [Sheldon] Adelson. I mean there's just a relatively small subset of individuals who control the flow of campaign money, and you're in their living rooms, you're in their offices, and *that's* what you're doing. So when you really perceive that, and you realize this is a subset of probably less than 1 percent—1 percent was something I used in the campaign. It became more popular later in the Occupy movement. But then when you don't do that, and all you do is do \$100, and you do it with an 800 number, or you do it in grassroots meetings that is a totally different method and experience.

13-01:28:16

Shafer:

And is that by necessity or was that actually a strategy?

13-01:28:19

Brown:

Both strategy *and* necessity.

13-01:28:23

Shafer:

How—how well did it work?

13-01:28:24

Brown:

Well, you saw how it worked.

13-01:28:26

Shafer:

I mean how much did you raise, do you remember?

13-01:28:28

Brown:

\$5 million or so, which they matched, so it turned out to be \$8 [million] or \$9 million. It was plenty of money. We could have used a little more, but I think that was not the missing ingredient. The other ones, I'm surprised, that fell by the

wayside. But Clinton had contacts and resources. I attribute a lot to that he had more staying power.

13-01:29:00

Meeker: Because of Walter Shorenstein and those sorts of people? Is that what you're talking about?

13-01:29:04

Brown: Well, I haven't analyzed it enough to know. But I was the outsider, and so there was a whole swath of people who were not in my corner.

13-01:29:15

Shafer: You made a lot of enemies in that campaign, do you think?

13-01:29:16

Brown: I don't think—actually, not that many, given I was attacking everybody, I have an awful lot of friends. [laughter]

13-01:29:24

Meeker: Maybe two enemies? Bill and Hillary Clinton?

13-01:29:27

Brown: Well, I don't know if they're an enemy. I had a nice talk with Hillary before I endorsed her. I don't know. They may be more emotional—I don't see politics as one where you get all personally aggrieved about people who are your competitors. Yeah, I find that very strange. I find it even more strange when presidents say, "I've got a personal relationship." Well, it's nice. I mean Churchill lived in the White House for six months. That was very unique. So whether it's the competitors—I mean it's a business, it's a sport, or it's an action. And you want to be effective, and you can't be effective if you get all emotional about it, and all of a sudden you're all ego bound. That's a distorted lens from which to enter the fray.

13-01:30:17

Shafer: There was that moment in the debate with you and Clinton that—it's probably one thing most people remember from that.

13-01:30:23

Brown: Well, I don't know if—I don't think anybody remembers '92, but since they play that clip, they can see it, and then it's easier to remember.

13-01:30:29

Shafer: What do you remember, you know, about that moment?

13-01:30:32

Brown: I thought Clinton was pretty clever, because he shifted it from him to his wife, and attacking a woman is not a nice thing. So I thought he must have practiced that. He probably had more practice—he *did* have more practice than I did. And he was good. He was smart, even though my essential charge was correct. The

Rose Law Firm did have representation, through corporate commissioners who were appointed by Bill Clinton. But that all of a sudden got—

[side conversation deleted]

13-01:30:55

**Brown:** I was surprised that he was forceful, and I was just as forceful as I could *back* to him. But it could be done better. Probably needed more practice. I would say practice makes perfect.

13-01:31:09

**Shafer:** Do you think he had a—he was clued into it, that you were going to ask it?

13-01:31:13

**Brown:** Maybe. I don't know how, but he might have been. Why, do you think there are spies in my campaign?

13-01:31:18

**Marzorati:** That was Jodie Evans's theory.

13-01:31:21

**Shafer:** Yeah. [laughs]

13-01:31:21

**Brown:** Okay, well, Jodie—well, if there are, I mean there's a lot of dirty tricks in politics, and I'd say I find it very curious that everybody's blaming Putin, when every one of those characters have people working for them that have done similar activities—or at least analogous activities.

13-01:31:41

**Shafer:** Yeah. Did you talk to Clinton after the debate?

13-01:31:43

**Brown:** No, I don't think so.

13-01:31:47

**Meeker:** On the Phil Donahue show, one of the things that I found to be notable was he—

13-01:31:55

**Brown:** This was way before, wasn't it? This was just with me, or it was with Clinton?

13-01:32:00

**Meeker:** It was just with you, and it was just before the Connecticut primary.

13-01:32:04

**Brown:** Boy, I don't remember that.

13-01:32:05

**Meeker:** You know, so a bit before the California primary, probably a couple months before that. And you know, he didn't pull any punches. I mean he certainly asked some hard questions and really forced you to explain, for instance, a flat tax. You appeared to actually relish these hard questions.



13-01:32:24

Brown: I don't know if I did or not. I'd rather have easier questions.

13-01:32:27

Meeker: Yeah. Tell me about the flat tax. Where did that come from, and—?

13-01:32:33

Brown: That came from a simple idea that taxes were an issue, and I wanted to say something about taxes. But it's so damn complicated that it's not something you can do in politics. I knew how complex taxes are, and they've only gotten more complex. So just put it on a postcard, and you'd eliminate so much—so many lawyers and accountants and complexity. And also, the idea that law is so complicated that only the experts understand it. That I find always offensive. And today, I find the same thing with the criminal law, that nobody can understand it except the DAs, the district attorneys. So I thought the flat tax would be good, and since it would lower taxes on the rich, I, in some of my speeches I'd combine it with a wealth tax. So if you put the two together, you could create progressivity—at least that's what I said. I'd say today you'd have to have a flatter tax, but it's very hard when somebody's paying 36 percent, and so everybody's going to do 13 [percent], while the guys at the top—it's quite a windfall. So you have to somehow—because of the inequality, it makes it difficult to avoid a progressive tax and get the job done.

13-01:33:50

Meeker: Well, also because today, you know, those on the lower rung effectively pay no taxes or get a refund, with the earned income tax credit.

13-01:34:01

Brown: Right, so—yeah, and it's worse today than it was then. I think the stratification is more obvious today than it was in '92.

13-01:34:11

Meeker: Would you think it would be worth exploring something like a flatter tax than we have today?

13-01:34:16

Brown: Well, I certainly think we should have a simpler tax. How you deal with the fact that the top 1, the top 10 percent have gotten much, have increased their share of national wealth and national annual income? That has to be dealt with. In fact, I just wrote a blurb to a book called, *The Meritocracy Trap: [How America's Foundational Myth Breeds Inequality]*, where I briefly, in a blurb, opined on this topic. And you'll see that book—it'll be out in a few months, by a professor from Yale, who talks about how the rich are able to give their kids such enormous advantages that they get into the best colleges, and then they get the best jobs. And the best jobs are eliminating the middle-level jobs that supported the middle class. And he says that negative-feedback system has to be broken.

13-01:35:05

Meeker: It seems like in '92 you were opposed to the tax code being used as a method for redistribution of wealth in the United States.

13-01:35:16

Brown:

Well there are so many other factors. I was against NAFTA, because I saw what was going to happen. The American businesses move to Mexico, pays two bucks an hour instead of \$25 an hour—and that's what happened. If you notice the latest worry—and now everyone is quite upset at Trump's 5 percent tariff, because that's a tax on American business. Because General Motors makes a million cars in Mexico and sells 800,000 of them up in the United States. So it really wasn't a trade treaty as much as a framework that allowed American employers to rent Mexican workers by firing American workers. That's what Perot talked about and Trump talked about, and I talked about. I opposed that. So that's another element of the inequality, the global economy and the meritocracy that emphasizes degrees and skills that are only held by the few.

And the taxes—once things are earned, it's hard to take them away through taxes. But the question is are they really earned? Is the president of a major bank worth \$20 million or \$40 million? By what he did, and then all the people working for him? And so the gap between the CEO used to be twenty to one or thirty to one; now, it's 300 to one. So that has to be attacked, and that's enormously difficult, enormously difficult. So I don't think you can put the whole burden on taxes. So you run a society where people really think that the president, the CEO of this company is worth a hundred million a year—or \$20 million. And then you're going to take it back through the taxes? I think you have to start earlier, and say how do we allow these disproportionate salaries to be given to the very few, when the whole enterprise depends on government? For example, in these companies that depend on intellectual property—intellectual property is worthless if you can't defend it. And you can only defend it with government, with law, with the FBI, with the courts.

And so if it's a publicly protected and therefore constituted good, the public ought to make sure that it *is* a good. And I would assert it's not a good—it's a bad, and it's creating more and more dissension. And so yes, I think taxation is where you ought to look, but you've got to start earlier. And you've got to start also, as this book on meritocracy says, you can't require four points to get into all these fancy schools. You should make sure that a significant percentage of the admittees are ordinary people. Otherwise, you get this vicious circle, where from the earliest moments—maybe even before conception—the rich are pouring massive training and cultural efforts into their children, and they prime them right up till graduate school, then they go over to Goldman Sachs or Google, or wherever they go.

And then, the example given in this meritocracy book would be, okay, if Wall Street can create mortgage securitization, and then when you have your bank, you don't need as much of a middle manager. You can automate it. And then you're not going to hold on to it anyway—you sell it. And I'm not quite sure whether that's the best example, but there is the sense in which the wizards of Wall Street are creating this enormous wealth, and that wealth is created by eliminating functionality that has provided the basis of middle-class living. For example, Lordstown, Ohio was a very important auto plant. Well, they closed it, because

they can make it in Mexico. The same is true of banks. Now you can do it online, and it can be done with various forms of computerized programs, software. But who invents that? Well, obviously the guy who invents software that can replace ten thousand middle-level bank managers. Well, he ought to make a million dollars a year, while the bank managers maybe made \$70,000 a year or \$80,000. Those are gone. So now we only get the ones at the bottom, we get few at the top, and we have this mass discontented group that is fueling populism.

Now, that's the task, to get at that, and you have to hit it at many levels. The school mania, where they're testing and they're putting people through their paces in a way that the more affluent can do much better. And then when they do much better, that's validated by the jobs they get. And then by the jobs they get, they're viewed as being worth more, and they have to pay them enormous sums. Whereas fifty years ago the top man, and the second to the top, made a wage closer to what the middle-level guys were making, the online people, and we didn't have all this stock options and a lot of stuff that allows people—and people didn't have the pathology, like the tax break basically fed an enormous buyback of stock. Well, who owns the stock? The very wealthiest people. They were given tax breaks, and then on top of the tax breaks the corporation—and they bought their stock back, and who did they buy it back from? The stockholders, which represent the top few in the country. So the problem of inequality is in part taxes, but it's embedded in a much larger structure of compensation, perceived merit, education, trade, and all the rest of it.

13-01:41:46

Shafer: We're almost out of time.

13-01:41:48

Brown: Yeah.

13-01:41:49

Shafer: But a couple more things about the 1992 campaign? At one point you talked about maybe having Jesse Jackson as a running mate for vice president. Yeah, how did that come about and why—?

13-01:41:59

Brown: That was a bad idea.

13-01:42:00

Shafer: How did it come about?

13-01:42:01

Brown: Well, because we're on the margins, and that's a long ball that I threw out there, and we thought, you know, it was a chance to try to create some difference and win some votes. It had a very marginal effect in—obviously, in New York, it was a disaster.

13-01:42:29

Shafer: And why him?

13-01:42:30

**Brown:** Well, I knew Jesse Jackson, and I thought he did very well in his own run for president. I knew there was a risk, but it didn't seem, at that point—you know, when you're that far out, you feel you can take more risks than when you're getting close to victory.

13-01:42:51

**Shafer:** Like Sarah Palin.

13-01:42:52

**Brown:** Oh, maybe so. Yeah, people make judgments that are not so well thought out.

13-01:42:57

**Shafer:** You—that year you lost the California primary to Bill Clinton.

13-01:43:01

**Brown:** Yeah. Not by too many points—like four.

13-01:43:03

**Shafer:** Yeah, it was like forty-six, forty-one, or something. What did you make of that?

13-01:43:08

**Brown:** I made that he's on a roll. He's the winner. I thought I did pretty darn good for having no television ads, and having no chance to win.

13-01:43:18

**Shafer:** At that point you were out of money? Or—

13-01:43:21

**Brown:** No, we had money. I don't think we took any ads—I finished with a million-dollar surplus.

13-01:43:29

**Shafer:** And did you see it as a—you know, I mean it was your home turf. You know, there was the whole—

13-01:43:33

**Brown:** No, that's not the way it works. In presidential campaigns, when you're not—now, if you're not a winner, you're not going to win even your home state. I did that against Jimmy Carter, but it was a little earlier. I did beat Jimmy Carter, and that was kind of a phenomenon. Why was I winning, when I wasn't a perceived winner? That was earlier. I was a new phenomenon on the block. But that was a longer campaign year. You had negative ads, but it was mostly that Clinton had sealed the nomination, and that gives you legitimacy. One of the things that one pollster told me in the seventies, he said, "One of the best predictors of whether you're going to win or not is a poll that asks people, 'Who do you think is going to win?'" And the person who they think is going to win is often the—I don't know how often, but this person said that's your best indicator of how you're doing, whether they think you're going to win. So the obverse of that is if they know you're not going to win, they're probably not going to vote for you unless you have a very strong ideological hold. People would vote just as a statement.

13-01:44:45

Shafer: So you went to the convention in New York with 596 delegates—a pretty good haul.

13-01:44:51

Brown: Well, not too many second candidates have had that many since then, have they?

13-01:44:55

Shafer: Yeah, so what did you—going into it what did you think you might use that for, those chips?

13-01:45:02

Brown: No, there's nothing to use other than to make points, say what I said, lay out the issues. By the way, I'll find that speech, but it's still pretty solid. Oh, '92—I put it on the, that's the one I tweeted out, a piece of that. So no, it was just the idea—I thought we'd get some things in the platform.

13-01:45:26

Shafer: What was the most important to you?

13-01:45:28

Brown: Well, I wanted to put a limit on campaign spending, raise the minimum wage and index it, and oppose NAFTA. Those were some of the things but the Clinton people, they didn't have to deal—they had all the votes. So I thought that maybe that we would get some, they'd have to make some, that—

13-01:45:51

Shafer: Concession.

13-01:45:53

Brown: Some arrangement, that we could at least win something, and that would be positive, I guess.

13-01:46:00

Meeker: Was an endorsement a bargaining chip in this, in terms of getting some things on the—?

13-01:46:04

Brown: Well, we didn't talk about the endorsement. I wanted those issues more than my—I wasn't, I was in a more insurgent stage at that point, so I wanted some issues that I tried to get on the platform, like no NAFTA unless working standards, labor standards, and also environmental standards. Well, they're still talking about that. That was a good idea. but they didn't want to do that.

13-01:46:37

Holmes: What about eliminating the Department of Education? So—we see this, I believe it was in a 2016—

13-01:46:43

Brown: I opposed that in 1980, I think.

13-01:46:47

Holmes: But you called for the elimination of the Department of Education in 1992.

13-01:46:53

Brown: Um, well—maybe I did, okay. Well, I fought Arne Duncan on Race to the Top [federal education grant], so I'm pretty consistent on that. What are you asking?

13-01:47:04

Holmes: I'm asking what was the motive behind calling for the elimination of the department?

13-01:47:09

Brown: What's the purpose of the Department of Education? I mean the state Department of Education—all it is is a pass-through for the federal department. Then you get down to the classroom, and you get down to these gaps between the richer neighborhoods and the poorer neighborhoods. So what is the federal government—yeah, we like some of their money, but what can they do? What can the federal government do in the Department of Education? Honor teachers, a few hundred teachers? Can it—what? Issue regulations? But who's going to issue the regulations for sixty million students and three million teachers?

And I went back there to meet with Arne Duncan. I walked down a long hallway, and I looked to my left, I looked to my right, and when the doors were open I saw these people on their computers. I said, "Yeah, that's who the Department of Education is: young people sitting at the computer sending emails: 'Do this, or don't do that. Oh—audit exception. You missed this rule.'" So it's a regulatory framework from afar, or as I say, "Issuing commands from the bunker out to the classroom, where the teacher shuts the door and has to face twenty-five kids." That's the issue, so they build up this imperial court, where they go through their gestures, and I'm dubious of it—and I'm dubious of it now.

And that's one of the reasons we tried to eliminate some of the state programming, categorical programs. I'm suspicious of distant authority micromanaging human relations, which seems like an obvious to me. But people think, "Oh, education is important! So let's do something." Well, where are we standing? Are we in the classroom? Are we down the hall in the principal's office? Are we at the local board of education office? Are we talking to the elected representatives? Are we talking to the appointed superintendent? Oh no? Then are we in Sacramento? Are we talking about the state board? Are we talking about the state *department*? Are we talking about the education committee of the assembly? The education committee of the senate? On the state legislature? Or the governor? Oh! Are we talking about Congress, or the Department of Education, or the committees in Congress, or the president? That's a *lot* of cooks in the kitchen, and they're very far from that classroom.

And being in Oakland, having these two charter schools, here we are. *What* are we going to do about it? And how do we recruit the teachers? How do we work with them? How do we get the kids motivated? You know, all of that. What do we

do with problems? What do we do with dope on campus? What do we do with sexual activities, harassment or bullying—whatever. How do we do all that? Then the parents come in, and you know, it's one thing after another. So that reality is so present to me that I find it totally delusional to sit in a department with thousands of people working on their computers, purporting to control. Now, there's only one way they can control, and that's to standardize and turn kids into little widgets, and you can prescribe widget behavior from three thousand miles away.

## Interview 14: July 8, 2019 [in the morning]

14-00:00:00

Shafer: It's Monday, July 8. We're here at the Mountain House with Governor Jerry Brown; Scott Shafer here, from KQED; and Martin Meeker from Bancroft Library. And Governor, we're going chronologically, as you probably noticed, and I think last time we talked a bit about '94—basically coming right up to your run for mayor. But I think we want to go back to something from that last conversation?

14-00:00:22

Meeker: Right, so I've read through the transcripts of our last interview and found the conversation illuminating. But I felt like we never really got to the core of it, which was this notion of the *We the People* campaign. It was a phrase that was used throughout your presidential campaign.

14-00:00:39

Brown: In '92.

14-00:00:41

Meeker: Correct. And then also continued, you know, in the *We the People* organization when it was headquartered in Oakland. Can you tell us how *We the People*—it's a powerful phrase with a lot of resonance in American history, but how was it you selected that as a theme of your campaign?

14-00:01:01

Brown: When talking about running for the senate in '91, and then switching to running for president, the whole notion of the—not the notion, but the breakdown of contemporary politics, the emptiness, the feeling which is very much alive today, that there's something wrong with the government, with the Congress, with the way American politics works. So that idea of take back America, really taking on the established political order, that was the idea of it. I'm not sure who, how we got into *We the People*, but Pat Caddell was someone I was talking to. In that first speech that I wrote—he had a lot to do with it. It's one of the few times somebody's ever written a number of paragraphs that I then incorporated into a speech. That was when I left the Democratic Party and talked about the corruption of money in politics.

And certainly, I experienced that, because the overwhelming imperative to raise money as the party chairman, and how crucial that was, just for registration. Just to get people to *register* takes money. And if you do it the old, traditional way, which is you pay a dollar or two, or something, for each new card of valid—of registrations, that's one way. Marshall Ganz, who was a professor of organizing at Harvard's Kennedy School, and was a major figure in César Chávez's work, feels that you have to build leadership and teach people the art of organizing. And he wanted, through the party, to create a group; a cadre, as it were, of leaders and organizers that would go out to register new Democrats, but at the same time



would be a point of organization in the various communities. And we had, I think, up to twelve or fifteen organizers.

The difficulty is that unlike Chávez, where they earned \$5 a week, plus they lived in a dormitory, or housing was provided, we had to pay a normal wage, and people had to have a car, and you had to have expenses. So when multiply that times thirteen, you're talking about a *lot* of money. You're exceeding well over a million dollars a month just for organizing. I didn't know how to raise that money. I couldn't. So that's why I had to stop that organizing drive, and that was much to the dismay of the people. But I had no way of bringing money in as party chairman. The legislators, through the fact that interest groups will pay them campaign donations—and whether you want to call it a tribute or a support for that view, certainly labor and various industries and professions will spend millions and millions of dollars. As a party chairman, operating just as a leader of the party, there isn't that power of either being a governor, or being a speaker of the assembly, or other major committee chairmen.

So I can raise a certain amount of money—which I did. I think I raised more than anybody else, but it's only a couple millions. To run these campaigns costs tens of millions. So that experience gave me a very front-row seat in the way elections are run. And I think as governor and candidate for president; yes, I raised money. But I guess the substance of the offices I was running for obscured—in a way that being mere party chairman did not. So the enormous need to accumulate, save, and then transfer money. Then that was really the launch pad for going against the whole system, which could only be done by changing the regime in Washington

14-00:06:22

Shafer:

So you had been in politics at that point when you took the party chair job, for almost two decades. Are you saying that the experience of being party chair was sort of a revelation to you about money in politics, and therefore created this need to sort of take back our politics?

14-00:06:39

Brown:

Well, that would be hard to say. I ran for secretary of state on trying to limit, particularly, the influence of what I called *secret money*. So we did that with Proposition 9, the Political Reform Act of 1974. But that didn't stop the flow of money. And in the governor's race, we limited the general election to under \$2 million, in an agreement with Houston Flournoy. That's unthinkable today! So that wasn't a big thing. And then when I ran for reelection, it was very easy. The money virtually *flows* in. Then there was the experience of the senate, where I did have to work very, very hard to collect these thousand-dollar checks.

14-00:07:35

Shafer:

In '82—or '81?

14-00:07:38

Brown:

Eighty-two, probably '82, '81-'82. So yeah, did I know this? I guess, yeah, I mean this was politics, as I understood it, and it was an evolution. I don't think the

money was anywhere near as prominent when my father was running, or at least as I saw it and understood it as a young boy. But then I got into it. But at some point you might say enough is enough. I mean it kept escalating, and it *has* escalated. I mean the whole notion of Jimmy Carter running with matching funds—Obama didn't want matching funds because he thought he could raise a billion dollars privately. So the limits, the normal behavior—and also, the money wasn't as publicly disclosed as much.

They say that Ed[win W.] Pauley, from Pauley Oil, a friend of my father's, put on the board of regents by, I think, [Earl] Warren, kept Truman's train running. They say that every day—and I haven't verified this—but I have heard that the Truman campaign would have to call Ed Pauley if they couldn't keep the train going, the whistle stop. So yes, he had the money. But did we *know* about it? Somehow it seemed more contained or more normal.

But as we fast forward to '92, it just seemed more excessive, more corrosive. In '92, what struck me, and maybe I hadn't focused on it, [was] that people who can write a thousand-dollar check, let alone a ten-thousand-dollar check, are what I call part of the *1 percent*. I used that term *1 percent*. I don't know if anybody else used it. But it struck me—well, who can give you a thousand dollars, let alone five thousand? Or the amounts that they spend to give to the party, like \$34,000, whatever it is—you're talking about a very, very narrow slice. I don't know if that was the case. There were always rich people. You know, there was rich people and there were some good fundraisers. But somehow the money seemed to be a smaller part, because you had unions, you had clubs, Elks Club, various—there was more structure outside of pure media.

With television, and with the demise of the political organization, which people billed as a reform, it actually inserted money in the absolute paramount position, because the only way to get media exposure, whether it's TV, radio, or newspapers, is you've got to buy it, for the most part. Or you can create stories, and then you figure out ways of creating news events, but you've got to have that money. So by '92, it was much worse, and the system seemed unbalanced. And that's what I was running against, even though I knew, because I knew the system, I couldn't really envision how another system would work. And I think I said at one point, "They must go," kind of referring to the whole Washington elected establishment. But then of course how would it work? I never really figured that out or came to a conclusion: what is the alternative?

But I persisted in attacking the status quo, which was and is still a province of a relatively small number. Now, with the internet—Bernie [Sanders] and others have shown they can get money through the internet. That's something new. But it's still the big players, the Koch brothers; the Democrats have their counterparts, it's still a small slice of the very richest having an outsized, disproportionate influence on the process. I mean that's a huge influence. I mean if you talk about Russian influence—that's completely trivial to the influence of the top 1 percent in America. And yet, the democratic idea of *we the people*, the people being in

charge, has to be very much corrupted by that notion. So that was the idea of a more populist alternative offering people a way, through an 800 number—we didn't have the internet then—how people could rise up and take back their government.

14-00:12:51

Shafer:

You know, you mentioned Pat Caddell. And part of my—when I asked was being party chair a revelation in this regard, is wondering how much of landing on *we the people*, and the whole populism and take-back-our-government idea, a shift in you philosophically, versus seeing it as a politically opportune—?

14-00:13:16

Brown:

Well, I don't know how you distinguish those two. I mean, if you have an idea that has no political resonance whatsoever, then it's not a political idea. It's some personal predilection, but it's not something you can use in the public space.

14-00:13:3

Shafer:

But I mean you were running against Bill Clinton, who in some—

14-00:13:35

Brown:

But I ran the same thing, you know, the money, in 1974. You know, I was attacking the role of money, and the idea of the Political Reform Act was to limit expenditures more than contributions. So the idea was I understood the role of wealthy people and organizations in politics, but I thought if we could limit the spending, then that would limit their influence. Because, like an arms race, if you have a limit, you'd only use a hundred. That's different than ten thousand. But that was struck down in the Supreme Court [Buckley v.] Valeo decision, [which] said you couldn't limit expenditures. That was free speech. Once you couldn't limit expenditures, then the corollary to that was independent expenditures. You can't limit those either. So the only people you can limit are politicians themselves. So, basically, we've succeeded in marginalizing the candidates, but we haven't marginalized the interest groups. In fact, we have empowered them, enfranchised them, with the only true unlimited license to spend as much as they want in whatever way they want.

14-00:15:03

Shafer:

Without reporting it, in many cases.

14-00:15:05

Brown:

Well, they can report it though, so they report it. But if you spend enough, reporting's not going to have much impact. So I think it got worse. I thought Prop. 9 was going to take care of a lot of this money in politics, but it didn't—and it hasn't. And therefore, by the time we got to '92, by the time we got to '90—I was trying to build a popular base inside the Democratic Party. But it's pretty clear that the—and I knew that, but I experienced it firsthand: the party is an institution that operates in its own groove. And it's very much separated—not very much, but separated from the candidates. The candidate has to raise money, build a story, create campaigns. And the parties, these groups of people that meet a few

times a year and come together and pass resolutions and fight about things—but they don't impact elections, for the most part, certainly not statewide elections.

In fact, Dianne Feinstein, when she ran in '90 for governor, she used the party as a backdrop to speak for capital punishment, get booed, film it, and use it against Van de Kamp in the primary. So the party really—at most is a prop. Then later on, because of the way the campaign donation rules operate, it does become a partner of the Democratic incumbents. And so that is important. But it still, nevertheless, the role of money seemed to me it was a way of talking about the imbalance in the American political world/the American society. Now, money's not the only thing, but money is always there, whether you're talking about actions, mobilizations of one kind—issue mobilizations, candidate mobilizations, money is a big, big piece in a capitalist society. That's where it goes. So I thought it was true, the distortions and the influence of the 1 percent, and I thought well, people could see that, and that was the basis. And I did win some primaries—not 50 percent, far below that, but more than Clinton and some of the other candidates. So yeah, it had a point, and certainly Bernie had essentially the same campaign I had. More than, what is it, twenty-five years later. So the topic is there. It hasn't gone away. But how to mobilize, obviously, it needed a campaign, or even the We the People organization, as building a different kind of understanding of our political system. Neither of those were enough to get the job done. And obviously, with Trump sitting there right now, with Obama losing massively the Democratic presence in Congress, all that indicates that there's plenty of distortion by the few who dominate in our society. But it's not clear on how to correct that or how to overcome it. But I was working on the very themes that people are talking about today—even the themes that Trump is talking about was part of my populist campaign in one form or another.

14-00:19:10

Shafer: To what extent when you were pushing back on all the money in politics? Did people—because like not all the 1-percenters are Republican, right? I mean—

14-00:19:18

Brown: No, a lot of them are Democrats.

14-00:19:20

Shafer: And so what—to what extent did they say, you know, “Jerry, can you tone that down?”

14-00:19:24

Brown: I didn't talk to them that much. The key experience in running for president on a hundred dollars is you don't go to fundraisers. I did have a few for a hundred dollars. But the absolute overwhelming experience of politicians in America is the fundraiser. In fact, people say that you're supposed to spend several hours a day in Congress. You go down the street, a phone that isn't a government phone, and you've got to be on the phone dialing for dollars. That's a very powerful imperative. So yeah, it's a good issue. It's a good issue politically. It's a righteous issue grounded in the times that we're now in. And the democratic system is

being pulled apart. Now it's being pulled apart, not just by money; it's being pulled apart by conflicting philosophies and ideologies and identities. So that wasn't as clear in '92. You didn't have as much identity politics as you have today.

14-00:20:36

Meeker:

Governor, it's a rare politician who self-identifies—or at least during a period of your career—as a populist. Usually, *populist* is a term that is used derisively to an opponent. Is populism something that you think can be a force for good?

14-00:20:56

Brown:

Well, I think populism *has* been a force for good. There's a book on populism, I think written by a guy named [Lawrence] Goodwyn, about the populists—the rural populists. Now, some of that got into race-baiting. But a lot of that, those popular ideas, were incorporated into the Democratic Party, and maybe in the progressive movement in some way. So I mean populism has been around. Even the word, in Latin—*populares* were the people opposed to the—to the *optimates*, the *opti*—the greatest, the best. And you had that conflict in the Roman republic, so this is a very old story between the few and the many.

But the institutions, the power of money, just in how the bailout transpired. It was a bailout of *banks*. But I don't know how many millions of people lost their homes. There was no bailout of *that*. There *could* have been, and it wouldn't—I don't know how. It could have been part of the expense you would have had to bail out a lot of people. But if you look at what happened, the government could have gotten its money back in some way, but there was no political thrust. And different analysts will explain why that is, but I think we're still very much under the thumb of a very powerful dominance of a small minority.

Now, you always have rule by the most educated, by the most wealthy, by the families that are in a better strategic position. Certainly, somebody who's working off Hwy. 20 today, picking the row crop there, they're not going to have the same access as the Koch brothers—and that's just the way it is. The accumulation of power—it'd be like in Rome, different people had their armies. But democracy is supposed to be about the people governing. And the people are very much controlled—not all 100 percent by any means, but by the prevalence of these very small power groups that dominate the society.

I mean, we do have a hierarchical world. By the way, all societies are hierarchical, and maybe we want to go back to it. How do you create a real democracy? And what does *democracy* mean? Sheldon Wohlin, for example, doesn't think a state can ever be democratic. He coined the term *fugitive democracy*. It happens occasionally, like in the Philippines, when the people power put in [Corazón] Aquino and threw out [Ferdinand] Marcos. That would be an example of democracy working. So this is a big topic, that political scientists write papers and debate and have seminars—and I don't think that's what you want. You want to see where did this fit in.

But I'm very aware, I've studied, I'm in touch with serious political thinkers. In fact, I just got a book yesterday from Wendy Brown, who is a professor at Berkeley, and she's writing a book on neoliberalism, which is, you know, a serious treatise. So I do work in the world of ideas, and I also work in the world of politics and elections.

14-00:24:45

Shafer:

We're going to spend plenty of time, at our next meeting probably, talking about your last time as governor. But on the money thing, I remember you being criticized by some environmentalists, the keep-it-in-the-ground people that—about your taking money from the oil industry. And I think your comment—I think you might have told *us*, was, “Well, I'll take their money and spend it on raising taxes on the wealthy to fund education.” So I'm just wondering though, is that a—a transformation when you think about money and politics? I mean you have, I think what, fifteen million or so in your political—?

14-00:25:19

Brown:

Less.

14-00:25:20

Shafer:

Less than that now, now that you're paying Evan [Westrup] out of pocket. [laughter] But—you know, so I mean just wondering, like is it different—have you evolved on that question?

14-00:25:36

Brown:

Is there a list of sources that you shouldn't take money from? That's the question? By the way, no one ever thought of that in my first race for governor. Not taking the money from an oil company wasn't even an idea I'd ever heard before—or tobacco companies, for that matter. Of course they weren't as stigmatized as they are today.

That's a whole new part of identity—in some ways, it's risen with identity politics. There's some money is not as clean as other money, I *guess*. They say that. But when you look at politics, and you look at the way interest groups perform, they want *action*, okay? And some people have money, some have a union, some people care about the environment—some of them have money. Some of the people that are involved in Planned Parenthood—they want action. And if you don't do what they want—well, you won't get endorsed, or you won't get money that influences them. So we're talking now where we have soda money—should you have a Pepsi-Cola? For some people, that's bad. Oil, obviously, we *say* it's bad. And it *is* bad for the environment, but we use eighteen billion gallons every year in California. And all the people who are critics—almost all of them burn oil and buy oil. And they're giving money to—they're not *taking* money from the oil companies, they're *giving* money to the oil companies, which I would assert is worse, by any argument. So, I mean, if you want to talk about fracking, I can tell you why I didn't bother fracking. I think that's a very thoughtful decision.

14-00:27:23

Shafer: Yeah, we'll get into that. Yeah, and we'll do that when we get—

14-00:27:26

Brown: Unless you want to ban the use of oil—and if you ban the use of oil, you wouldn't be here today, would you? No, you wouldn't be here.

14-00:27:35

Shafer: It's a long bike ride.

14-00:27:37

Brown: [laughing] It's a long bike ride. I grant you. But insurance companies—where are you going to draw the line? If it's legal—my father used to say, "You can't sprinkle holy water on campaign money." It just is what it is. [Shafer laughs] I mean that may sound not in today's mood. And really, it's so hard to raise money for almost all candidates. Any money you can get is great. The only reason you wouldn't take it is you think your opponent could use it against you, and it would cost you more in votes than you would *earn* in votes with the money you got. So I don't think it's much principle involved. There could be. I mean tobacco was hurting people. I got that. But cars: fossil-fuel cars. Why don't these—"oh, I'm not going to comment on today's world," but statutes, stories, where do we stop here? And privilege—the people who make a certain amount of money. How can they do that, when you've got other people sleeping in tents—or not tents. So it's getting very confused today, how the world works. And it seemed a lot simpler in the early campaigns that my father was in, or that I witnessed. And compared to today, where everything seems to be a hot issue—

14-00:29:17

Meeker: Well, Governor, in '92 you did limit contributions to \$100.

14-00:29:21

Brown: Yes, I did.

14-00:29:22

Meeker: And later on you didn't have that upper limit on your contributions.

14-00:29:27

Brown: Yes. Because I have experimented with a \$100 limit. I don't know if anybody else has. Because I not only ran for president, I ran for mayor of Oakland twice—and I ran a ballot-measure campaign called Measure X, all limited to \$100, but we didn't have to. And what I learned was that if you limit to \$100, because you're running for mayor, it's not like Bernie Sanders can send out some statement based on *I'm going to give free healthcare to everybody*, and he raises \$20 million. No, and there isn't that kind of reach, and there wasn't, certainly when I was running for mayor. You don't have that internet—well, we didn't have the internet the way we do today. And secondly, a mayor as candidate can't raise that kind of money. So you go around and you have fundraisers for \$100, and it's the same people who show up: the developers put on—you raise \$20,000 instead of \$50,000, but it's the same people wanting the same things, and it feels identical. So based on that, I thought the \$100 limit, which was a powerful message to say,

“Look, we’re not the same as the status quo. We are serious, and we want to change it in a more fundamental way.” That was the point. It was a message to signal that this was a campaign *different* from the other campaigns.

14-00:30:51

Meeker:

So one last question on populism, and that is you know, you’ve identified it as a potential source of good, and I appreciate that. But it does have a tendency historically, and as recently as 2016 one might say, kind of unleashing dangerous animal spirits into the public sphere. How do you balance those two forces if you’re working in a language of populism?

14-00:31:17

Brown:

Well, okay, all right. Here’s the problem. If you want to mobilize the people you have to mobilize, you don’t mobilize them with pabulum. You don’t mobilize them with political-science treatises, and you don’t mobilize them with policy papers. You’ve got to speak to people where they are. You have to—there has to be an identity. I mean in this day and age when everybody’s into identity politics, you certainly have to assume that a successful political leader wins identification from millions of people. That’s what it’s about, and that’s why Trump is supported fervently by his base. And other people—Bernie gets that too. And people are reaching. You can’t mobilize people on just logic. It’s not possible. So there is passion in politics.

Now, once you stir up passion and feeling, then it can go the opposite way. And that’s why I think it was—I was trying to think the other day, who was the writer that talked about how democracy devolves into the mob, which then leads to the tyrant, and the aristocracy devolves into the oligarchy? I think it was Polybius, but maybe you guys can check that in The Bancroft Library.

14-00:32:49

Meeker:

Well, it’s certainly a concern the founding fathers had.

14-00:32:52

Brown:

Well, they didn’t like democracy. Democracy was not a positive—if I remember Federalist No. 10, the republic was the idea not the democracy. And you only had people who could vote who had property, it was only men, it wasn’t Indians or blacks, so that was a hierarchically structured society. Now we’re trying something else. It’s one man—or now you’d say one person/one vote, and it’s a mass electorate. It’s not a few electors getting picked by the respective legislatures. This is 100 million people. This is 20 million people in California. There’s only one way you talk to these people, and that’s *massive sums of money*. And there’s only massive sums of money from people who *have* large sums of money, unless you can, in a populist way, stir up such strong emotion that ordinary people say, “Here’s my check,” and they send it to you. And I got a lot of checks from people for \$100—students, ordinary people. So I think the idea of populism—it has real value. But you also need a certain group that can be in prominent positions in society.



This is one of the unthought-out things in our politics. What is the role of hierarchy, which we have plenty today—whether it's in a union, or whether it's in a church, or whether it's in the government or in business? And what is the role of the ordinary member, the ordinary citizen? And that is not a completely stable relationship at all. It keeps moving. And because there are a lot of people who are feeling very disadvantaged, they're looking for a leader. And I think populism can get out of hand, that's the strong man. You're one step away from fascism. Well, that's where we are, and that happens. But how else can you run for office, other than you're the candidate of the elite? You know, Reagan's kitchen cabinet. They pick him, they do all the fundraising, He didn't have to worry about it—and there he goes!

Now, you're standing there—okay, I don't have that kind of money. I've got to get it. Well, then you've got to be a populist. And if you're going to be a populist, you're going to have to appeal to emotions. You cannot appeal—if anything, Hillary's policy papers—there was a certain wonky quality, as we would say today, which couldn't stand the power of the rhetoric of Trump.

[side conversation deleted]

14-00:35:53

Brown:

At least it couldn't in certain swing states. It obviously worked—Hillary worked quite well in Orange County in California—not so well in Ohio.

14-00:36:04

Shafer:

She did get more—four million more votes.

14-00:36:07

Brown:

She did get more, and that's something. We keep forgetting about that. [laughing] But not in the four states where she needed to get them.

[side conversation deleted]

14-00:36:13

Shafer:

So we want to get to your race for mayor. But, in 1996 your father died. And I was reading an article about the funeral, and Pete Wilson was there. He was the governor. Your sister, who had lost to him a couple of years earlier was there. And I just wonder, what do you remember about the eulogy that you gave and the thoughts you had as your father passed?

14-00:36:36

Brown:

Well, I did say my father—because it's true—that he thought, he said to me, on more than one occasion, his proudest achievement was giving non-citizen people, mostly Filipino and Mexican workers, the right to get state pensions, which today we call SSI. And he did say that. Now, some people interpreted that as a slap at Wilson. I wasn't even thinking of Wilson. I was just thinking what could I say, that my father said, that would be relevant during this talk in the church. And that's all I said. It was pretty simple. People don't realize it today. If you are here

legally, before 1960 or '62, you couldn't get SSI. My father signed the bill that you could.

14-00:37:36

Shafer: I mean so much has been said and written and speculated about you and your relationship with your dad. You know, when you boil it all down, what is the essence of that relationship?

14-00:37:49

Brown: Well, I don't know. I don't have an essence. And I don't have to see an essence. In fact, I'm just reading a biography of Kafka, and he had quite a sour relationship with his father. In the first hundred pages, that's what we're talking about. Now, that's one thing. This is a topic that people like to write about. In fact, this guy writing the book is Miriam's father [Miriam Pawel]. But my father is—was different. He had a different. You know, his grandmother never went to—I don't think she went to high school. It was a different era. There was no television. He felt that he couldn't go to the university because he had to work. He and his brother were, as they say, go-getters. They were out; they were hustling. And so action and doing and getting ahead was very, very important. So I had more of an inclination, more of a tendency to think about ideas, and I didn't hustle as much as he did.

14-00:39:14

Shafer: What do you mean?

14-00:39:15

Brown: I had jobs, you know, a paper route, or selling popcorn and candy bars at Kezar Stadium during football games. But he was much more *driven*. So I came up in a different world. And then in the seminary, he would always say, "Well, when are you going to go out and *do* something? Are you going to become a teacher? What are you—?" He could not understand or appreciate contemplation or meditation or reflection. In fact, the story is when he went to his first retreat, I think in 1940 or '41 at El Retiro, the Jesuit retreat house in Los Altos—and he had to sneak out and get a newspaper. That's completely contrary to the notion that [laughing] you're going to spend three days in a retreat and you're not going to read the damn newspaper! Well, he was very much interested in that, so that's a different view.

And the relationship that I see between sons and fathers today is *so* different, so profoundly different. I mean my father did his running for office, being district attorney. That was when I was growing up till I was, I think, in the eighth grade, and then he ran for attorney general. But he did his adult thing, and I played with my friends in our neighborhood—Forest Hill. And I wasn't in an organized soccer team. One day the Pop Warner league had some tryout by Kezar, on the green next to Kezar. So I went for a couple hours, and it wasn't quite for me. [laughing] So that was the end of that. So there was no organized—my father didn't *take* me to games. As a matter of fact, when I was in the freshman elocution contest and the sophomore oratorical contest—which I won—I had to get the neighbor to give

me a ride, because my father was off somewhere. And I liked that fact, because when he was at home, then you know, you can't go out after dinner. You had to give an accounting. But when they're not around, you pretty much can do what you want to do. And I certainly like doing what I like to do. But we went on vacation together—that was always nice. And I don't remember much conflict growing up.

Now, in running for office, he had a different view. For example, when I was going to run for governor—I may have told you before—we had a film made, a commercial, where we attacked two Democratic incumbent senators for their corruption. And we showed it to my father, and he was just appalled. Just emotionally, “This is unthinkable!” [laughing] So we didn't put it out.

14-00:42:18

Shafer:

He just thought that was like dirty politics, or what?

14-00:42:19

Brown:

Just unthinkable you'd attack a Democrat. It wasn't his world, I think. It was just a different—I mean they made fun of Nixon and the Nixon loan. They had—Tricky Dick. They were going after Nixon. In fact, they had signs, but that was Nixon. He was the opposite—he was the other side. So I think my father had more of a loyalty—maybe because he was always doing well. And the only people who would be the insurgents, you know, the anti-Vietnam people, the California Democratic Council—they were perhaps, you know, pushing *him* in a direction he didn't want to go. So my interest—and certainly the money in politics was something that didn't—and for him, *getting* the money was the problem, not getting the money *out*. It was just not a thought. And so I think there were some different ways.

He once told me that when you campaign, go up there to Redding or go to—I think he said Redding or Chico—the first thing you do is go in and meet the city clerk. Go meet the people at the courthouse. Meet all the courthouse people, then go meet the editor of the newspaper. That's what you do. So in my world, knowing that Redding is a very small fraction, and knowing that it's all media and you've got to make stories, you've got to make news. And you've got to make news in all of the different parts of California. And we thought of California as divided into media markets. The LA market was the biggest; San Francisco was the second biggest. Then you had San Diego and Sacramento. These were the main media markets. Well, he didn't think in those terms. They didn't. And I remember he would get Allen's clipping service, and he would be reading stories. You know, you could have the *Redding Searchlight*, or you'd have a *Eureka Standard*—he'd go, “Look at that. Boy, that's a pretty interesting...” I said, “What? That's a waste of time.” Those have no meaning. So he was imbedded in his time, probably the same way I am.

So then when I get into office, he wants me to—you know, this is a new spirit, young people, we're doing things.

[long side conversation deleted]

14-00:44:56

Brown:

There were just different issues. I don't think the word *environment* existed when my father was governor. Earth Day was 1970. He lost to Reagan in November of '66, so a lot of things changed. He was supportive of Lyndon Johnson. I was the peace slate '68, ultimately for Gene McCarthy in that California race. So there were some differences, but they're not psychological. Or there's not—both his propensity to action, to what I considered more conventional thinking. I'm interested in, you know, he's not interested in—he probably would never know who Ivan Illich is or Gregory Bateson, or even Stewart Brand. So these were people that I found interesting. Or Buddhism—what is Buddhism? Or what's meditation? He wouldn't even—those words wouldn't even come to him.

I remember sitting in the firehouse and having a dinner—I bought a firehouse in San Francisco. This would have been '89. And I set up a little table, and I went out and got some sushi. He said, "What's this?" So it's a different world. His mother grew up right where we are now. That's where she grew up, and then she goes to the city, and it's just different. I remember in her place on Grove St., where the guy upstairs, I remember, was a [streetcar] conductor. And I remember he had the little coin [machine] that you strap onto your belt. And I remember he had that machine, and I thought boy, I'd like to get one of those. [Shafer laughs] Have dimes and nickels, and what have you.

14-00:46:41

Shafer:

Perfectly full of coins.

14-00:46:43

Brown:

Well, a streetcar conductor, living upstairs from me—I mean maybe in Oakland I lived in some low income—not that low income. But when I—

14-00:46:58

Shafer:

Eclectic.

14-00:46:59

Brown:

So, what I'm trying to say is his world was very different. It wasn't as polarized as it is today, and it's just a different world. I remember he'd get all the newspapers. I remember getting the Moose publication. The *Moose*, and then it was the Eagles. Just driving back from the river in Clear Lake, we turned onto Hwy. 20—there was a Moose Lodge. I haven't heard of Moose Lodges in years, but these were real things that you had to deal with. These were points of contact to an electorate. So, I'm just saying we were in a little different worlds. His people seemed a little bit old fashioned to me. We'd use a phrase that I wouldn't have used then—*cutting edge*. We didn't have that word *cutting edge*. That's only in the last twenty years. So it was just a different sensibility, and it's hard to compare.

But I was *very* conscious of the fact that I had the same name as my father was absolutely—that was it. Without that, I was nothing, and I didn't mind that. My

whole life I've benefited from the fact of my father's achievements. No question about it. And I appreciate that. But I also knew, in running for governor, that he lost to Reagan by a million votes, so is this going to work or not? And that's why I said, "I won because of you, but I could have lost because of you." So it's inherent, in my paradoxical mind, that I could live with the idea that this is the plus and this is the minus. Now, as it turned out, it wasn't much of a plus in the general, but it was a big plus in the primary. Then, as I got down to the end there, and Flournoy—it was a very close election.

14-00:49:07

Shafer:

You know, I don't want to—I know you don't like, and you've already said that you're not, you don't want to talk about the psychology of it. But I wonder if either consciously or subconsciously—I mean you talked about the Allen clipping services, and how you looked at those and thought oh, that's a waste of time. I mean was there—?

14-00:49:26

Brown:

Well, I liked them—I'm interested, if it was something interesting or the *LA Times* or the *Chronicle*.

14-00:49:33

Shafer:

Yeah, but I guess what I'm getting at is like do you feel like maybe there was, consciously or subconsciously, an effort to be different from your father? Not just that you were different, because you were from a different time, but because you want—?

14-00:49:45

Brown:

Well, I don't know what that would accomplish. It's not to be different. It's to appeal to the electorate. And you can say one thing, that if Reagan wins by a million, then whatever my father was presenting was a million votes less attractive than what Reagan was—[laughing] So that's just a fact. Now, that's a fact. Now, so what do we say about that? I could see the value of Reagan, of the way he could talk, the way he looked, the way he spoke in very ordinary terms. Early on I don't think it was my father. It was more the legislators. They talk in these bill numbers, and there's certain language. And there's even a language that people use today—even today, often. The language of, "That's an *issue*." Well, ordinary people don't use the word *issue*. I don't know that Reagan talked about issues. He talked about stories. You know, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you," and he'd get a big laugh out of that. Or he'd talk about a lady who drives a Cadillac and she's on welfare. These were very graphic, these are picture words.

So, no, I mean my dilemma was that I was only what, thirty-six years old? And how could I convincingly portray—how could I present a candidacy that people would buy just four years after they had voted for Reagan? How does that work? And the way it worked—barely—it worked, but it might have worked the other way. Had Nixon not resigned—had Nixon been president and had there been no Watergate, I think Flournoy would have had a very good chance I wouldn't have

had. So I didn't know that. When you start to run, you don't know all those things.

So anyway, he went to a father-son communion breakfast maybe once in four years. And that was very enjoyable, and it was something. But it's nothing like today, where parents center their lives around taking their kids to soccer games and going to tournaments. I mean that was unthinkable. I was on the debate team, and they'd come by on the bus to pick us up. We'd go to Merced or go to Modesto, I remember, for debates. I overslept, and they had the bus go right over to Magellan Ave. in Forest Hill, and a guy came up and knocked on my window. I was on the first floor. [laughing] "Get dressed. You've got to get going." So I got dressed, and got out of there, and was on the bus. But my parents weren't, "You know, you've got a debate tomorrow." I don't know if they even knew! But I don't even know if I told them. I wasn't interested in telling them.

So the world of young adolescents was not connected to the world of adults like it is today, and that was fine then. It just seems, to me, far more natural. In fact, I find it rather odd that people are so interested in their children's soccer games. Particularly, I notice at the river, the Russian River, people used to go for the whole summer. And now, they've got to get back for soccer practice, and so the beaches are empty. So we've had a real cultural shift. Not one that I'm totally in sympathy with.

So all I'm saying is I think—and I'm trying to imagine the relationship. I think it's overplayed. In fact, I'm in 110 pages on the Kafka biography, and I'm questioning: is this a little bit of Freudianism, which people don't believe anymore? That's the trouble when you're eighty-one. You've seen too many of these stories and fads and conventions of understanding change—radically. And so there we are. So I do have a kind of a distanced view of a lot of the things that you want to bring up.

14-00:54:27

**Shafer:** Yeah. Well, that was terrific. So around that time you're thinking of running for mayor, and you told us, I think last time we met—

14-00:54:36

**Brown:** I hadn't thought of running for mayor when I moved to Oakland.

14-00:54:37

**Meeker:** You know, I kind of think we haven't asked about the We the People Oakland part.

14-00:54:41

**Shafer:** Okay, go for it.

14-00:54:44

**Meeker:** Well, certainly, the running for mayor in 1998 happens, but in a context. And that context is your move to Oakland. You're setting up the We the People Foundation.

14-00:54:55

**Brown:** Yeah, I moved to Oakland, yeah, and I was very conscious—I was in San Francisco, and I wanted to go to Oakland. In part, because it would be less expensive; in part, because I thought the politics were more working class, and that would fit better with how I wanted to be perceived and noticed. I thought it would be better. And I thought it would be easier—now, I wasn't thinking about mayor. I was thinking maybe senator—who knows what—it was ill defined. But I would be back running for office again, that was very clear. I had not ended my political interests, but I thought Oakland is a more working class place, town. It would be a better spot than the San Francisco scene, as it were.

14-00:55:42

**Shafer:** And you'd looked at LA as well?

14-00:55:44

**Brown:** I looked at LA, running for mayor of LA, because that's a big spot, a big job. But it seemed too expensive. And I got into a meeting of activists—maybe that was not a good measurement. But they all had their little issues. We sat in a circle, and one after the other, when I talked about running for mayor, every one of them just had their particular activist issue. And I thought to myself, I can't master this group. And then the money. And ultimately I decided—when I thought about running for mayor, I was already *in* Oakland. I thought, oh, Oakland is just like LA. There's only, in a factor of ten—Oakland is 400,000, LA is four million. But you have African Americans, you have Latinos, Asians, you have whites—you have all the different conflicts, and I knew I'd always done very well—I wasn't going to go run in Fresno or someplace. So I had this idea that yeah, being mayor of Oakland would be good. And I obviously knew I was going to go beyond that. I didn't know exactly where. In fact, I remember talking to Tom Quinn. He said, "That's embarrassing, to run for Oakland."

14-00:57:08

**Shafer:** Why?

14-00:57:09

**Brown:** Oh, because it's just small. You've been running for president. What are you talking about, running for mayor? That doesn't feel right.

14-00:57:16

**Shafer:** Was that part of the appeal to you?

14-00:57:18

**Brown:** No. First of all, you've got to be in office if you're going to run for the next office. But more importantly, because of my sense of what the media is, if you're a mayor in Oakland or a mayor in LA—it's the same size on television. You know, you look the same. You're a mayor—Oakland, LA. Now, they are bigger. That's a little oversimplified. But I thought the challenges were similar. If you can fix the downtown, if you can deal with crime, budgets, there was a way—to do the work of Oakland was probably easier and more manageable and more understandable, because it's much smaller. But it's still the same issues that you

have in LA, and that's true today. But easier to deal with because it's just fewer people. And by the way, the elections are cheaper—a hell of a lot cheaper.

14-00:58:32

Meeker: You mentioned the multiracial nature of Los Angeles and Oakland. But Oakland was a bit more—well, less multiracial, in the sense that African Americans approached—[crosstalk]

14-00:58:45

Brown: Oakland, yeah—

14-00:58:46

Meeker: —I think, 45 percent of the population.

14-00:58:47

Brown: I think they were a little less than that.

14-00:58:48

Meeker: A little bit—maybe 43 [percent].

14-00:58:49

Brown: Forty-one, something like that. But they had been 49 [percent]. It's been going down.

14-00:58:55

Meeker: But the largest of those four ethnic groups was African Americans.

14-00:58:58

Brown: And you had an African-American mayor, and then you had an African-American police chief, fire chief, so it was quite a dominant—and the school board.

14-00:59:05

Meeker: Not to mention the history of the Black Panthers.

14-00:59:07

Brown: Yeah, right.

14-00:59:08

Meeker: And that whole thing. So you're going into a city that has a really strong, both African American elected class, as well as activist population, as well as population.

14-00:59:19

Brown: Right.

14-00:59:20

Meeker: What were you thinking about in terms of that?

14-00:59:22

Brown: I was thinking that I always got a very strong vote among African Americans, and I'd always won Oakland, and that I'm by far better known. So this is not a question now where I'm—in my father's name. My name itself is very well



known, and very popular, among Democrats. So I felt confident that unknown African-American candidates didn't have much of a chance, because you can't beat somebody with nobody. And you're nobody until your name recognition reaches a certain critical point, unless there's some overall issue. And in truth, in Oakland at that time—and even today—there wasn't that much media. You had the *Oakland Tribune*, the *Chronicle* gave it a little bit, but not much. So there wasn't much news.

And you know, I did a couple mailings, which may not even have been necessary, because I mean Edmund G. Brown, Jr. on the ballot, in Oakland, versus x, y, and z. It doesn't matter—and two were Latino and nine were African American. But they weren't public personalities, so that was like an obvious.

14-01:00:40

Shafer:

Do you think that your We the People radio program played a role in heightening your name recognition or engagement in that community?

14-01:00:48

Brown:

No, no, not when you know the ratings of KPFA.

14-01:00:52

Meeker:

[laughing] What were the ratings of KPFA? How many people were listening to that show.

14-01:00:55

Brown:

Maybe a thousand. I think I had a very well listened-to show.

14-01:00:59

Shafer:

Well, you had a national show, right? On Pacifica.

14-01:01:02

Brown:

Yeah, maybe two thousand—I don't know, but very small. And that reached all the way up to Santa Rosa, American Canyon. That was not just people in Oakland, Emeryville, Alameda, Berkeley. But the We the People wasn't just an electoral idea. I mean that was based on the idea of CIDOC [Centro Intercultural de Documentación], the Center for Intercultural Documentation that Illich set up. I didn't know much about it, but I liked the idea of it. The developing of ideas—also, the other thing, besides Illich was more—I knew more about, was Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. And they had their house on Chrystie Street, I think St. Joseph's House or Marian House—I'm not sure. But Friday night, they'd have clarification of thought, so they had down-and-out people from the Bowery in New York—but they also had intellectuals. Thomas Merton went there. And so there was intellectual exchange, and so that interested me.

So, I'd come out of the seminary—you know, books and conversation, among other things. You're not going to Tahoe in the seminary, and you're not going to a shopping mall—they were just kind of coming into their own—to buy stuff. You're not going to the soccer game or the football game. You're not watching television. So it's basically exchange of ideas, prayer/mediation/reflection, what is

the pathway to spiritual perfection? Or, as we might say in Buddhism, *enlightenment*. Getting on a path of what is important in life.

So now We the People was a place after that '92 campaign: "Okay, let's bring people together with ideas." And I also was influenced by Gary Snyder. When he built his house in Nevada City, his followers built it for him! They all camped out for six or eight weeks. And people would follow his poetry and his speaking. And so I noticed these people—and I don't want to compare them, because they're all different. But Illich, Snyder, Bateson—maybe even throw in Stewart Brand, although he was a little different. But he had his *Whole Earth Catalog*. They had a group of people in Sausalito. These were idea-centered efforts, undertakings. And so I thought at We the People—we had a couple hundred speakers. We had a big auditorium. We had a library. I had all my books in that library, and it filled a whole big room. So that was the idea, to discuss, to come to understanding—I still had the idea that politics was about ideas. So if you get the ideas right, if they're right for the time, then that's going to shape the society. So I was always kind of connecting the thought and action—or Ignatius Loyola calls it contemplative in action.

Now, in talking with some of my ex-Jesuit friends, we talk about, "Can you really be a contemplative in action?" In other words, if you really want to be a contemplative, don't you have to become a Benedictine? If you want to become an activist, maybe there's not going to be a lot of contemplation there. So that's an open question right now.

But I have to say, when I think about political ideas, I see them a little differently now, with the populism, with the identity politics. It's not about ideas. It's about who people think they are, and who they identify with. So it's not, in the words today, evidence based, or even logic based—it's identity based. And when I say *identity*, you know, the Trump voter, or the [Marine] Le Pen voter, or the Brexit voter, or the Hungarian voter who has put in [Viktor] Orbán. This is different than ideas influencing elections. Now there are ideas—the idea of the strong man, fascism has an idea. I used to think that more, that ideas—so people who knew about the nature of—we didn't understand Vietnam. It was a mistake. Ho Chi Minh wrote a letter, I think, to Truman or something, or Roosevelt. Said, "We're going to follow your Constitution." And we thought no, this was Russian and Chinese Communism taking another advance. We've got to stop it. I thought ideas were very important to clarify that. But I see more and more that ideas don't—they're not the idea. I mean if you think of presidential debates. They're not probing into climate change. They're not looking at the role of America in the world. What is our military spending? What is it based on? Do we need to spend more money than all our potential adversaries put together, more than twice or three times. So yeah, this where do ideas fit in?

We the People was a place of ideas. And then Illich came over a two-year period, and he came up with the idea of Oakland Table. We have a lot of materials that were presented there. And some of his people are friends of mine, and we had

speakers there and we'd talk about different things. And there is that idea of creating—I had a platform in progress, and that was an attempt at that. Illich once said, “What you need to do is write seven essays.” I think it was six or seven. “And these would be the pillars. You have to write what are the key points that undergird our common political life.” And so I'm always, “Okay, what would these be? And what would an essay like this look like?” Now, I haven't produced those seven essays yet—I may yet produce them. But I was very interested in ideas moving people, moving the society, the culture. It appears that we're in a much more demagogic era, where it doesn't feel like a contest of ideas. It feels like a contest in imagery and political iconography, trying to scare the hell out of people in various ways.

14-01:08:59

Shafer:

One of the ideas that you had kicked around and thought about as you were beginning to run for mayor was the idea of the Oakland—and I may be mispronouncing it, but the Oakland Ecōpolis? Ecōpolis?

14-01:09:10

Brown:

Ecōpolis, yeah. And a couple of professors from the Midwest wrote a piece on this, and I put it up on the webpage.

14-01:09:15

Shafer:

What did it mean to you?

14-01:09:18

Brown:

Well, it was a vision. It was a—well, what's the *plan*? I'm going to run for mayor. I want to have an idea. So I don't know where I saw these guys. I don't know whether they had the term *ecopolis* or not. And I asked them, can you write a paper? Now, it turns out it's so romantic or so abstract, or the imagery—sailboats sailing down the estuary, and gardens producing the food—which, by the way we do, farm to fork. We do things like that today. But it was an attempt to have a platform, but it was not as grounded as I thought was necessary, so it really wasn't that practical.

14-01:10:10

Meeker:

Were you a fan of like Ernest Callenbach and his *Ecotopia* writings?

14-01:10:16

Brown:

No, but I knew about it, I had the book. I knew about it. Richard Register, this is another guy, and he's been around here the last few months talking about his ideas. Well, that idea of, there were books—*Ecotopia* was one idea, but Wendell Berry—

14-01:10:47

Meeker:

*Small is Beautiful*. [E.F. Schumacher]

14-01:10:48

Brown:

And *Small is Beautiful*. There were a lot of these ideas. But then when you try to apply them in the world of teachers' unions, highway construction, prisons, the budget, the tax system, Medi-Cal, then it becomes quite a gap between these

ideas, which I found always interesting. And it was always a big part of the time that I spent. But then trying to apply it is something a little different.

14-01:11:19

Shafer: So you were talking earlier about how now we're about identity politics, but when you were running for mayor, I mean there was a sense that Oakland was a black city that needed a black mayor.

14-01:11:32

Brown: Well, a little bit, but who said that?

14-01:11:34

Shafer: Well, I think there were leaders in the black community.

14-01:11:36

Brown: Yeah, but how did they disseminate that idea?

14-01:11:40

Shafer: Well, later on. I mean they urged Ron Dellums to run, for example. That's getting ahead of things, but—

14-01:11:45

Brown: Right. But Ron Dellums was an *icon* in the East Bay. He was very well known. And Barbara Lee, who worked for Dellums. So, celebrity politics, or you can call it name ID. Dellums was a celebrity. But when I went there, yeah, the black community had its organization, had its churches, had its people. First of all, I had a very good grounding in my policies and my politics. So yeah, some of them were disappointed, and I think that was a definite—a factor.

14-01:12:27

Shafer: Did you feel like you, going into the race, knowing that—

14-01:12:30

Brown: I didn't think that. I thought the black vote was a plus, in my opinion. See, I always would get 90 percent of the African-American vote, so this was good.

14-01:12:39

Shafer: Did you feel—I mean there were people, including Libby Schaaf who felt you were a carpetbagger, you know, coming in from—

14-01:12:45

Brown: Well, I knew that was going to be an issue.

14-01:12:45

Shafer: I mean did you feel like that, and the risk—

14-01:12:48

Brown: Did I *feel* like it?

14-01:12:49

Shafer: I don't know, not feel—I know you don't like the word. [laughter]

14-01:12:51

**Brown:** What does that mean? I moved to Oakland. I didn't say, "You know, I'm a San Franciscan, but I'm going to go to Oakland—and I'm a carpetbagger." You don't even—why? I can move there. And it's cheaper, and people are buying lofts—and I'm there. So what more is there to talk about?

So those are just terms that people use. That has very little connection to reality. First of all, unless it's going to be in the *Chronicle* and the *Tribune*, pounded day after day, it doesn't exist. One little story by a group of people who said, but there was—it said something, but it didn't barely happen. First of all, there isn't that much campaign news disseminated in the media. Radio, television, newspaper. No, it's just not there. So how are they going to know? They're not connected. The more people knew about me and I did the mailing. No one else did a mailing. I did two newspaper mailings, but did that work? I'm not sure. I'm not sure it wasn't just that they knew who I was.

14-01:13:51

**Shafer:** You know, you thought about running for mayor of LA, quickly looked at SF and then dismissed it. The media made a big deal of the fact that you were running for what Tom Quinn said was something that was, you know, punching below your weight, you know?

14-01:14:07

**Brown:** Yeah. He'd want to say that.

14-01:14:09

**Shafer:** Yeah, and so did you feel like that was part of, maybe, the appeal? And—like you said, you knew you weren't done with running for public office.

14-01:14:15

**Brown:** Well, I thought it was a good next step, and I enjoyed it. I liked being mayor, in some respects, more than governor, because I was building. My idea of bringing ten thousand people downtown, which—I didn't have a commission. I didn't have all these commissions. I'd just say, "That's an idea. Let's do it." I got a good police chief. I thought we were making progress on crime, but later on it turned out we weren't. But I liked being in Oakland. You didn't have to jump on a damn plane. You'd see the neighborhoods—it was very grounded and very real. There were street corners, there were grocery stores, neighborhood parties. First of all, I was fighting crime and I was trying to bring in development, bring in people. Because downtown, there was one restaurant, Le Cheval. And now they have fifty restaurants in the downtown area. But that wasn't true—they never really recovered from the earthquake and the '92 recession.

14-01:15:23

**Shafer:** What did you know about city government when you ran for mayor?

14-01:15:29

**Brown:** I know if I've been governor eight years and the secretary of state, that seems to me to be more than most people are ever going to know. So—

14-01:15:37

Shafer: But it's different.

14-01:15:39

Brown: It's different. It's different. Well, I think what's different is the city councils. That if a group of people come and make noise, it affects the city council, even though by any strategic political analysis you can say these people only represent a small fraction of the vote. But they definitely get intimidated. And they do some pretty, it seems to me, pretty wild things.

I remember one condo project that was fifty feet. The height limit was forty along Telegraph Ave., and one of the councilmen said, "No, you've got to," councilwoman in this case, "you've got to take off two or three condos." That was the margin of difference. So the guy couldn't make it, so the project stopped. But the idea that people could say fifty-three condos, whether it was above the fifty foot—I don't know. I would go drive down the street and look and say what, forty, fifty, sixty feet? And I thought—what was Paris? Saint-Germain-des-Prés, that street—I think it's Boulevard Saint-Germain. I looked: they're like about six stories I think. It looks fabulous, right? If Oakland could only be Paris! But the idea of six stories was a horror. It was degradation. It was interfering with our community.

So then I got the idea—I understood how people don't want to change, and they are very much protective of the way it is. So I had a different view. I thought this should be a much more vibrant city. We're right next to San Francisco. And it turned out, that's the way it happened. It was probably inevitable. I mean the next two mayors weren't that solicitous for business, but it happened anyway, because it was good land and good weather, and right close to the Bay Area.

14-01:17:43

Shafer: So when you ran, I think you talked about ten thousand homes, and people moving—development, generally.

14-01:17:48

Brown: Development, yeah.

14-01:17:49

Shafer: Schools, public safety. And I think arts and culture, maybe?

14-01:17:53

Brown: Yeah, arts and culture—see, I thought I could do those things. And we did. We had public art, a lot of that—these festivals. We started a festival. There is that festival in the fall. I started that because I thought it was doable, and then I decided I wanted to have mayor appointments on the school board. But I took a poll, and I found that people didn't want a majority of mayor appointments. It wasn't a sophisticated poll, but it was enough. I said okay, I'll put *three* on. I put three on, and I run a campaign. I worked with Don Perata, and he had other candidates in Alameda, some other things on the ballot. But basically, we spent over \$200,000, and the other side had one little mailing—and we only got 52-48.

So that told me that the idea of a mayor taking over schools is going to be very difficult, and it couldn't work, because there was too much opposition, too much neighborhood feeling. Even the strong-mayor initiative that lost twice, that was problematic. And I was able to win it because I think people were tired of the incumbents and the status quo. They were looking for a change. But on that school thing, that's why I did three. And then they took my three—and I think they separated them, and they put under their name, *mayor's appointee*. And then when there'd be the normal debates or discussions or conflicts in the school, they'd say, "Well, we have these conflicts because of the mayor's appointees." Now, I don't know how much of that was disseminated, but that thought was there, and so I thought it got to be a we/them, and that became problematic.

And that's why I knew, when Mayor [Antonio] Villaraigosa was going to try to take over fifty schools, I thought boy, this is not going to work so well, because even if the schools aren't working, they do provide jobs, they do have identity, and the parents went there as kids. They're not going to want to turn it over to somebody downtown. And there is that feeling, the neighborhoods versus downtown. You find out in Sacramento that strong mayors had difficulty, because people think it's the mayor taking over the town, and they liked their fragmented—yeah.

14-01:20:19

Shafer: What was your thinking when you—about going for the strong mayor? Was it that you didn't want to have to be—like preside over the city council?

14-01:20:23

Brown: I did not want to go to the city council every day, every week. That was absolutely the most important.

14-01:20:32

Shafer: Why was that so important?

14-01:20:34

Brown: I don't want to sit there five or six hours. That's not what I've done, it's not my thing. Just sitting there looking and listening? No, I don't want to do that. And then secondly, I did want to have some influence on the city manager, the police chief, and so I did it. A guy who lived at We the People wrote the Measure X, wrote the terms. I said keep it simple. I want it on one page, want to make it seem like a very small adjustment. So all it was was, "The city manager shall be appointed by the mayor and shall serve under his direction and at his pleasure." That was it. Everything else remains the same. So, and that was the idea, to keep it simple, because before, they'd have these elaborate ballot pamphlet measures: because if the mayor's going to do this, the mayor's going to do that, it creates an impression of some kind of power grab, whereas I tried to prevent that. But I did think I'd have more influence than if I had to argue with the city council.

Now, it turns out, the city council determines the budget. The city council confirms appointees—key appointees, not all of them. And so the city council was

very much—it's still a city-council-run government. And you don't have a foreign policy, and so I'm very aware the legislative branch is powerful. But I thought the strong mayor would be good—and there was a stagnation. I mean Oakland was at a stagnation because the economy was stagnant. And you had the rise of crime and deterioration, and East and West Oakland have a lot of rundown houses. And the problem is that people don't have money, and they can't fix them up. But now we have the other side—the way you fix them up is you bring in people with money. But then it gentrifies, and people get pushed out, and they don't like that. That's why I once said, that irritated some of the activists, “Well, you have slumification, or you have gentrification, so maybe we can find something in the middle?” But it's very hard, because it—

14-01:23:00

Shafer: They called it *Jerrification*, I think.

14-01:23:02

Brown: No they didn't. [laughter] Besides, if they said it, where are they going to get it printed? The big thing is there wasn't a lot of media exposure in that town. And you had [Phil] Matier and [Andy] Ross; you had that other guy that lived in Oakland and wrote—

14-01:23:19

Shafer: [Rick] DeIVecchio.

14-01:23:20

Brown: No. It was another guy.

14-01:23:21

Meeker: Oh, the guy who wrote for *Berkeleyside* eventually?

14-01:23:23

Brown: No, that was a marginal character. He's still around. [laughter] No, this was the guy—he was an African-American guy. I think he wrote for the *Chronicle*.

14-01:23:32

Meeker: Oh, Chip something?

14-01:23:34

Brown: Chip Johnson.

So there was something, I don't want to overstate it. First of all, when nothing happens for—it was a very repressed, depressed economy. I think the general plan envisioned like 450 units a year. That was it. And they spent a lot of time on the planning, what was it, the estuary plan, and there was no building going on, because nobody wanted to build in Oakland, because you couldn't get the rents to support the investment. And so I wanted to cut through all that, and I made a lot of changes. I wanted to get people in there. I brought the Irish builders over from San Francisco, got on a bus, said, “Look at all these places. Why don't you build something?” And they started doing that, so that was very direct. And I did find that when I look at other leaders, that I see something, I say that makes sense, and



I start to do it, or I try to do it. I think, for most political people, they have a lot of staff, they have a lot of layers to figure out what to do.

14-01:24:46

Meeker: Were you paying attention to what Willie Brown was doing in San Francisco?

14-01:24:49

Brown: No, no. It's amazing how San Francisco is over there, and what—no, I mean it was different fights.

14-01:24:55

Shafer: You collaborated on the bridge though, I think, didn't you? Or clashed on the bridge, I remember.

14-01:25:00

Brown: Well, he didn't like where it was going to land on Yerba Buena Island. I just wanted an iconic bridge. I thought it looked like a freeway on stilts. And finally they picked this one, which wasn't the one I was promoting, but I thought we should have a better—why not? You're going to spend billions of dollars—let's make it great. I'd even had [Santiago] Calatrava come over and give an idea. He came to the We the People building and left off some of his bridges that I thought looked good. I don't think we delayed it either. I think that's a myth. The process just took a long time.

14-01:25:42

Shafer: I wonder, you know, when you ran for mayor, a lot of people were skeptical that you would stay four years, let alone eight. And you did stay for eight, of course.

14-01:25:53

Brown: And I found it very invigorating, very interesting. I thoroughly liked that, because it was very concrete. I had my two charter schools that I had started were starting. Bringing development. When you can see nothing's there, and all of a sudden someone builds a five-story apartment building, that's pretty exciting, to go from nothing to something. As governor, you're dealing with laws, pass a farm labor law. You pass a workers' compensation law. You pass public members on the licensing boards. But nothing happens in the first few years. But in Oakland, things actually could happen. And there were other people who would fight it, like say, "Oh, don't! You can't. It's too tall or it's not this is not that." So I became adversarial to a lot of the—

## Interview 15: July 8, 2019 [in the afternoon]

15-00:00:00

Meeker: Today is July 8, 2019. This is Martin Meeker with The Bancroft Library, and Scott Shafer with KQED, interviewing Governor Jerry Brown. This is interview session number fifteen, and I'll let you begin with the—

15-00:00:16

Shafer: All right. Well, let's get into your time as mayor. So you dispensed with a cadre of lesser candidates. What did you get in that primary, that first election? Sixty-something?

15-00:00:33

Brown: Yeah, 59 percent.

15-00:00:34

Shafer: Fifty-nine percent. So—and you, as you prepared—

15-00:00:41

Brown: I won in every precinct except two Latino-oriented precincts. I didn't get a majority, but at least I got more than anybody else in all but two precincts.

15-00:00:50

Shafer: [Ignacio] De La Fuente got—

15-00:00:52

Brown: Two, the only two precincts.

15-00:00:53

Shafer: Two, yeah, yeah. So what did you—how did you, going into the job, you had been governor, you'd been secretary of state. How did you think about the job?

15-00:01:01

Brown: Well, I thought of it probably in terms of being governor. You know, you have a budget, you have proposals, you have a legislative body called the city council—and then you have the problems. And in Oakland, the problems were an underdeveloped downtown. There are pictures of downtown Oakland in 1946, or before, where it looks very vibrant—and it didn't have that feeling. Where Forest City apartments are now, around Twenty-Third—

15-00:01:35

Meeker: Twentieth.

15-00:01:36

Brown: —or something, and Telegraph, there was a place, some kind of an old rundown department, grocery store or something. But wherever I looked, it was really the remnants, the remains of an earlier vibrant city. So that, to me, bringing in economic development—and I couldn't conceive of what business I'd bring in. But I did think if we could bring in the people from San Francisco, in effect make it like a bedroom community to San Francisco, we'd have people, we'd have

money, we'd have spending. It would give a vitality—by vitality I mean there'd be life on the streets, and it wouldn't all just be—I thought it was kind of dreary.

Now, there were many neighborhoods out there where people were probably perfectly happy in Oakland. But when you go to West Oakland and East Oakland, the houses don't look that bad, but there's a lot of, what should we say, it's not a vibrant middle-class city. It had a lot of poor people, a lot of crime, the schools weren't very good. There weren't the indicia of a normal American city, as I experienced growing up in San Francisco in the forties and the fifties. It all looked very different. So I wanted to restore some of that activity. And also, because I've been in Paris and London and New York City, I thought, "Well, let's get some density here" and I wanted market-rate density. I didn't want to just subsidize people to come in who had no surplus money, because then they would just live in their little apartments and wouldn't have anything, any money to spend, and so there wouldn't be much visible economic activity.

15-00:03:41

Shafer: So that was a conscious decision, to not do as much affordable housing, or—?

15-00:03:44

Brown: Right. I just wanted market rate. I thought that Oakland already had a lot of affordable housing, which it did, just the nature of it. So that has a different—just to say that today sounds very different than it did in 1999.

15-00:04:00

Shafer: Why?

15-00:04:01

Brown: Well, because now the pricing has gotten so high that a lot of people are priced out, and they're paying much more—if they can afford it at all, they're paying a much higher sum. So there was a much greater affordability, but it had a lot of downsides, in the sense that it wasn't what I would call a normal, ordinary American city that you would have seen in the fifties in terms of people living in their houses, going to the store—there were many department stores in Oakland. The last one left was Sears, and that's gone now. So there was that outmigration. Anne has this book on Detroit that she's reading, and that started declining way before 1967, and we have it around here. Where we're now sitting is just land for cows that chew on the grass six months out of the year, but there used to be homes and schools and cemeteries—it was a vibrant place. So I think Oakland had some of that demise that we see all over America, and I wanted to try to bring it back or at least create something as good as I thought a vibrant city should be.

15-00:05:28

Shafer: And what did you think, you know—and maybe you didn't think, but what made you feel—not feel, what made you think you were the person to do this?

15-00:05:38

Brown: Well, I didn't even think of that. I ran for mayor, and there was a problem. There were issues, challenges. I knew something about it. I'd been a governor, so there

was something I could do. Why would I think—well, I mean I would have an idea that oh, Harry over here, he should be mayor? I mean that thought never came into my head.

15-00:05:56

Shafer: Well, I guess—no, I guess, you know, there are politicians who are confident. And there are people who are—you know, they want to check things off with lots of people to get consensus.

15-00:06:07

Brown: Yeah.

15-00:06:08

Shafer: And I mean—where would you put yourself on that scale?

15-00:06:10

Brown: Well, I'd check with a few people. But you know, I don't think of it that way. What was the alternative? I mean obviously there was nobody of any consequence—no one who was at all known running for mayor. I *am* known, therefore, it was going to be easy. It was just like when I ran for secretary of state. Those offices were not thought of as stepping stones to further political office. They just weren't. People ran for them, and they are minor people to begin with, and they end it as minor people—controller, secretary of state, treasurer. They just weren't important offices. And all of a sudden now they, in the world of politics today, they've become important platforms for people to launch themselves.

15-00:06:58

Shafer: And to what extent did you feel like you had to rehabilitate your image at all, in a statewide way, and that doing this, not just for four years but for eight, would do it?

15-00:07:09

Brown: Well, I never thought about whether it would be eight—I didn't think it through that much. But obviously, I hadn't won statewide since 1978, so yeah, there was work to be done.

[side conversation deleted]

15-00:07:25

Shafer: So, you said you had won several elections statewide, but, you know, as you yourself have said, when you left office in 1982, I think the phrase was *the voters were tired of me, and I was tired of the voters*.

15-00:07:36

Brown: Yeah.

15-00:07:37

Shafer: So I mean—to what extent did you, as you thought—you clearly thought you were going to run for higher office. You didn't know which ones, but like how did the Oakland mayorship—?

15-00:07:47

**Brown:** Well, in some ways that's a silly question. It's an office. It's an important city. There were important problems. Therefore, it was an opportunity to really do something in the political world.

15-00:08:01

**Shafer:** And did you feel like an obligation again to—because there was all this oh, he's not going to stick around.

15-00:08:04

**Brown:** No, I don't get this obligation stuff. I know people always say that. But people run for office because they enjoy that, they know how to do it, and they run.

15-00:08:22

**Meeker:** Did you consider the potential pitfalls of taking on this job as Oakland mayor? You know, I think about Ron Dellums, and his long-term reputation certainly wasn't helped by his failed one term. Did it seem like a risk?

15-00:08:41

**Brown:** I can't remember. I can't remember.

[side conversation deleted]

15-00:08:48

**Brown:** I'm sure I thought there was risk, because you can have things go wrong. You can have riots, you can have scandals. I don't know. But it didn't seem that daunting to me. So the risk of that whole line of inquiry just—

15-00:09:10

**Shafer:** It doesn't resonate.

15-00:09:11

**Brown:** Not *at all*, no. I mean the only question was is running for mayor of Oakland, is that—Tom Quinn's critique was, at least—that was definitely something I thought about.

15-00:09:24

**Shafer:** Like it would somehow diminish your image, or—?

15-00:09:27

**Brown:** Yeah, but not that clear. Just—yeah, why? Would you run for mayor of Albany, or—?

15-00:09:35

**Shafer:** Albany, California.

15-00:09:36

**Brown:** Yeah, or Milpitas. But I thought Oakland, because it was right in the Bay Area, was of greater significance, more than its size.

15-00:09:47

Shafer: In your swearing-in speech, which was short—I think three minutes—you said, “Everything will be made right.” Do you remember what you meant by that?

15-00:09:57

Brown: No, in fact that seems a bit of an overstatement. Do you know what preceded that?

15-00:10:03

Shafer: No, I don’t have the whole text. The city had been, you know—for a long time, the city of Oakland had, many would say, been mismanaged. I mean there was the Raiders deal, the Coliseum. I mean there were a number of things, fiscally, that got screwed up. How did you think about those things? How it got to be that point, and how you would change it?

15-00:10:24

Brown: Well, that just is the environment. It opens the way for a challenger. That’s the way I saw it. Definitely, it seemed a mistake, bringing back the Raiders and not being able to sell those boxes, and having the City of Oakland and the County of Alameda on the hook. That did not seem smart to me.

15-00:10:51

Shafer: Did it seem like, you know, just mismanagement all the way, like up and down the political chart?

15-00:10:55

Brown: Well, I see things as more of these larger forces. And Oakland, because of its declining state or economy, the empty buildings that were there, they wanted some boost. And the Raiders was a memory of what people thought were probably better times, so let’s bring it back. And it’s all of that boosterism that you see in stadiums. You see it with San Francisco getting the Warriors or getting stadiums in Los Angeles. The Rams coming back.

15-00:11:40

Shafer: Although San Francisco didn’t pay anything. Which is not relevant anyway, but—

15-00:11:52

Brown: No, but the same mismanagement. I think it just gets to be, it was just an enthusiasm, a misplaced enthusiasm, and therefore people overlooked the risks. And the ability to look down the road at risk is not a predominant virtue that you see in politics, and it just looked like this would be good for Oakland, in the minds of the people who did that. And then, people like sports. Sports occupies a good part of the time of millions, if not tens of millions, of Americans. So what could be better than getting what we look at every week on television, and then getting it to our Oakland here and getting that boost? So it was a very, kind of traditional boosterism. Let’s recapture our former glory.

15-00:12:52

Shafer: In terms—

15-00:12:53

**Brown:** In that sense, it made sense. Now, did they miscalculate on the boxes? Well, they miscalculated, but also in the sale of the ticket licenses and how that was all set up. I mean you can get some business team to go examine that, but things just happen. Things aren't as carefully planned out. And people, once they start down a road, you may see some warning signs, but you keep on going. So I think that is a technical point that you really need to have someone give you a technical answer to.

15-00:13:31

**Shafer:** In terms of the housing, you had set this goal of ten thousand new units downtown. And as you say, you wanted to focus on market rate. I mean to what extent were you feeling, hearing criticism from people who say, "Well, what about people that can't afford that?"

15-00:13:47

**Brown:** Oh, I—almost none. Almost none, didn't exist.

15-00:13:51

**Shafer:** Because it was just a different time financially?

15-00:13:53

**Brown:** Because there was so much abandoned buildings, things were so run down that people wanted a boost. And certainly the middle-class people that show up at house meetings, they wanted it. Now, maybe there were some people who were living in the neighborhoods who have adjusted, and the fact there were empty buildings there, maybe it didn't bother them so much—or they wanted it. But the idea that the government was going to pay for the housing for a significant number of people, that's a relatively recent idea.

15-00:14:28

**Shafer:** And that's something even as governor you resisted, I think, to a certain extent.

15-00:14:31

**Brown:** Well, the cost of real estate is in the trillions. And the amount of money that cities can muster up are in the millions, and the state can muster up is in the billions—but that's still a fraction of the fourteen-million units of housing. So it's just one of the anomalies of the capitalist market, that you either had a position of—things aren't doing so well. You have vacant housing, people moving out to—now they're moving in. Now the prices are bid up, and now it overshoots the mark. At least the mark that would enable most people to buy in. And that's the instability of our particular economic system right now.

15-00:15:25

**Shafer:** And how did you think about revitalizing downtown in terms of retail? And—I mean did you have, like a plan? Or was it—?

15-00:15:35

**Brown:** You see, I don't find these plans particularly helpful. I mean yeah, you always need a plan if you're going to build a building. But overall plans—if you were in

the Soviet Union, and your name was Lenin or Stalin, you can have a plan and you can carry it out, and the people who don't do it get shot. So that's one thing. But now, when you formulate a plan, and your plan is to invite in capitalists and entrepreneurs, "come in and spend your money here," you're totally dependent on the market. And if the amount of money invested would not bring back a return, it won't be made. So you can write all the plans you want. I was very aware that planning is a small piece of the free-market system, and it all depends on value. Now, I thought that by marketing Oakland as closer to San Francisco than San Francisco was to itself—which is if you get on at West Oakland, you're in downtown San Francisco in less than six minutes. That's certainly better than if you come in from the Sunset or from West Portal—or even from Glen Park. So Oakland had a strategic advantage called location, and I wanted to work with that.

I didn't know how you could bring in stores. I know that depending upon when you're asking me during the eight years—but I remember taking a guy from Trader Joe's, and driving him around to three or four sites. And no, they don't want to do it. I said, "This looks like a good site. Why not?" And finally I got Whole Foods to come, because I knew the CEO and president. He was a supporter of mine, and I convinced him that it would be okay. And it turns out that it is one of their highest-grossing stores in Northern California. But at the time, Safeway was leaving downtown. They had a store in Montclair, but it was very hard. Things leave. If you look at Williams, California, you know, there's not a theater. There were fraternal organizations, grocery stores, hotels, and the flight to the suburbs, or out of these urban environments, whether it's Oakland or Williams or Detroit—this is part of the restless outward push that we see in America. So I was trying to say no, Oakland's different. And by the way, I didn't have a plan—I said ten thousand because one thousand seems trivial, a hundred thousand is not believable. But ten thousand seemed enough. I just came up with that idea, and that's what we did.

I talked to people, but you couldn't get—I got The Gap to put in a store. They wanted to go to one place, and we couldn't get the lease—it was very hard to move Oakland forward, because of all the restrictions, which are now many times more stringent. So I kind of rested on the idea of condominiums and apartments because of the proximity to San Francisco. We didn't need jobs. We had all the jobs we wanted. They were just across the bay, so that was my idea on that. And department stores—I mean even department stores are shrinking everywhere, even in San Francisco, Stonestown. So even then I could tell we're not going to get a Macy's, because I would ask people. Obviously I knew—Anne worked at The Gap. I talked to people. I guess I went to Vegas for some retail operation, and cities would go and pitch their city, and I would pitch it, but I could tell that was a hard sell. So people that had surplus income, that would spend it and could revitalize Oakland—that was my strategy. And I think it was absolutely sound, and it still is. Today you just have this problem that housing prices are bid up so much that it's very difficult for average people to respond, buy in.



15-00:20:02

Meeker: What were people, like, for instance, the representatives of Trader Joe's saying? What were their concerns? Why did they not want to move in?

15-00:20:08

Brown: Oh, they don't tell you. They drive around and they don't see the market there. They do market surveys, and by their surveys, it doesn't translate to a viable business. And that's only happened when you get more people with disposable income. If you have only affordable housing, and people barely can make it living on Section 8 housing and checks from the government or something, well, then you're not going to get any stores. It's not going to happen. So that's the reason why market-rate housing was so important. And the prices that exist today were absolutely unimaginable back in 1999 or 2000 or 2001.

15-00:20:48

Meeker: When Whole Foods agreed to go in, was it based on a projection of growth downtown, these ten thousand people?

15-00:20:54

Brown: I don't know. They have their surveys they don't share with me, but they—no. It wasn't based on that. I think they had some confidence in me. And their numbers must have—and it was located enough, there were enough middle and upper-middle-class people that were close by the store. But even there, when they're trying to put in some housing, the local opposition stopped that. They were trying to remove a tree or something, and they couldn't get that out. And I actually called the guy whose house it was and took him out for a cup of coffee and said, "Come on. Will you give Whole Foods the right to go dig under your land?" It wasn't a tree. They had to put in some cabling to anchor their parking lot, and the guy was saying no, and I talked him into it. But the resistance is very, very strong. To do anything—do *anything*, unless it's some government-funded operation. So there was then, and there's probably far more now, except the money just overwhelms it.

15-00:22:01

Meeker: What do you attribute that kind of resistance to additional development in the downtown areas to?

15-00:22:11

Brown: People get used to a certain surrounding. They get used to the way things look. They're habituated, and then somebody comes along, and it's going to be more than a change than they feel comfortable with, so they oppose. And when I say *they*, it doesn't take a hundred. It takes ten or twenty, or even fewer, and they make noise. And they belong to the Oakland Historical Society or the Sierra Club or the Lake Merritt Citizens Alliance, or something—that's not the name. But things like that—and they protest. That's what they do. And not just downtown. They built an apartment on the lake that they all opposed. Now, it passed. One of the local councilmen, John Russo, voted against it, even though—he went to Yale. He's a pretty smart guy. And why *wouldn't* you want a twenty-story—and the lady next door said it blocked her view, so they had to chop it down a couple of

stories. Very few people can block. There was another one. There was an old warehouse for old fire equipment, right on Lake Merritt. It would have been a great place for a building, and they wouldn't do it. "Oh, it's historic; it's the fire department. We can't do that."

So—great resistance. The only reason they didn't resist downtown, because there were not a lot of people living there, and therefore, there wasn't the neighborhood activism. Although after a while people would say, "All you do is talk about downtown. What about the neighborhoods?" But now if you go out to Eastmont Mall, it's still pretty challenged—today. If you want to look at a grocery store, there's one on the other side of the freeway in West Oakland, but not much. And you talk about food deserts. Well, why? Well, you just have to analyze it, but that's what happens in a lot of places.

15-00:24:08

Shafer: And just a big-picture question, like politicians come into office. They have ideas.

15-00:24:13

Brown: Yeah.

15-00:24:14

Shafer: They have thoughts about what they want to do. How do you think about like when to push forward against resistance, and when to back away?

15-00:24:23

Brown: Well, I thought because, you know, in 1992 I ran for president. There was a big recession. People were very unhappy with George [H.W.] Bush. He went from over 90 percent to in the thirties. And then a lot of that was the economy, and it was prolonged. And then we had that earthquake, and you had downtown buildings that had crumbled. The city hall was vacant for several years. People were in the mood for something that looked like it was working. So it was the time to push. It was. But that didn't last very long, because by the time I was finishing up, the neighborhood people certainly won over Dellums, and I think [Jean] Quan as well, and there was no forward thrust. However, because the market then had caught on, the market just overwhelmed the political, and people were willing to put up with it.

I got rid of the Economic Development Department, and the planner and all the rest of it. I wanted to get projects approved, get 'em going, because there was nothing there. There were thousands of people there, there were buildings, they had various stores, but it wasn't downtown Market St. as I encountered it in the forties. It didn't look like New York City. And I remember telling somebody—and I figured well, you've got to have density. I call it *elegant density*. I remember being in a house meeting, and I said, "God, look at New York, how vital it is." Some lady with a New York accent raised her hand and said, "Look, I came here to get *away* from Manhattan. I don't want that here."

Earlier you raised that question, why do people resist? They really resist. And I went and visited one of the women who was on the Oakland Heritage [Alliance]. I went and visited her house. She was a nice lady, she had long gray hair, was probably in her sixties. There were a lot of antiques in her living room. I remember looking at the chairs. There was an old comfortable chair with an antimacassar on it. I know the word *antimacassar* because I looked it up once. That's the little doily that's supposed to keep from getting oil on the couch. And the lighting fixtures, really old. I said oh, now I get it! [laughing] Now I know why they don't want any new development. This is their reality. This is a lot of what it is. So—that's just one lady, and—

15-00:27:04

Shafer: But they want to preserve what they have.

15-00:27:06

Brown: They want to preserve. Yeah. I can understand that. I'd like to preserve this. I would not want to look at a twelve-story condo out my window here. [Shafer laughs]

15-00:27:15

Meeker: One of the major developments that successfully went in was the Forest City Uptown Oakland development.

15-00:27:21

Brown: Yeah.

15-00:27:23

Meeker: Right across the street from where Sears is in a redevelopment area. Do you have any insight for us, to tell us how such a major development actually happened? Can you tell us—?

15-00:27:35

Brown: Well, the head of Forest City—

15-00:27:37

Meeker: Who's that?

15-00:27:38

Brown: The head, the president whose name escapes me, but they were from Cleveland. They had a model. He liked affordable housing, because he liked the subsidy. And somehow, they subsidized 20 percent of the units, in various ways. And that's another thing. If you give the very low, low or you give the moderate—it makes a big difference in how much you have to make up for it in the subsidy. So I think his model was to subsidize, and then to get a break from the city on what they call *increment financing*, and he got \$40 [million] or \$50 million out of that. But it was *very* complicated. Nobody could—there was only one guy who worked for me, who worked for the city—he understood it. He was negotiating with them, and very hard and I couldn't understand the financing. And I kind of like projects where people just put up ten condos, twenty condos—much simpler, and took no city money. But this did take giving rebates on the property tax. But it was risky,

and they felt they had to have city money or they couldn't make it. Now, it turns out that it's probably a darn good investment now. But at the time, no one was doing that. In fact, many of the people who built large projects, they went bankrupt, and somebody else took them over. Several projects.

And I remember that people would only build stick housing over a garage, and the most you could do with that wooden frame is four stories. And—so that was limited. I said, “We've got to have more than that!” So I noticed that Portland or Seattle and somebody said they had five stories. The importance of the stick housing, the frame, is it's much cheaper before you start going to steel girders and concrete—it gets much more, the price escalates. So I called a big meeting—the fire marshal, the builder, the planner, and we got the guy from Seattle. We were on the phone and I said, “Oh, you can build five stories. It's safe. You can do that.” But that took quite a push, to get another story.

Then we had one of these buildings they built in Jack London [Square] after they'd already converted a few old buildings, but this was a brand new building. I think the guy went bankrupt, and somebody else had to come in. And that happened in another building. I'm sure I know of at least four buildings where they didn't make it, so it's very touch and go. And the expenditure to build is very similar to San Francisco. The only thing that's cheaper is the land, but you can't get the high rents. San Francisco rent is much higher. So you have a dilemma, in paying the same price housing, and only the cheaper land, and when the land gets too expensive, then Oakland, you have to—I mean that's just the system of the market. So anyway, I was interested in that form of economic investment.

And some of the people complained—later on, as it gets going—in fact, we had one woman who's a friend of mine. But she went activist, and she was a very attractive lady, and dressed conventionally—and pretty soon she's got a scooter, and changed her hairstyle, and became an activist, and would protest about how we're bringing pollution and destroying the city. But you're talking about a very small number of people. And so that was an insight to me, how much noise, heartfelt opposition, could come from so few, when unlike the governorship, I could make up my own mind.

I could drive down the street, fifty feet, sixty feet, seventy feet—that looks okay to me! And particularly when I lived in Berkeley, and I used to go to restaurants on Telegraph Ave., and you could go from Sather Gate—and have a trolley car and go all the way to the estuary. But in order to do that, you need, to really make sense, you need taller buildings and density. But people *really* resist that. So we've never done that, and maybe somebody will someday. It's all the pressure now of the market. And a big part of this was Silicon Valley, with all these young people making all this money, and they can come in and they pour money in from the private sector, and the private sector responds with condominiums and apartments.

15-00:32:27

Shafer: Yeah, let me read you—I want to read you a quote from 2002, *The Nation*, you were—so that would have been you were running for reelection probably in 2002, right?

15-00:32:34

Brown: Right.

15-00:32:35

Shafer: So you said, “Here’s the pro[blem]”—

15-00:32:37

Brown: Who is it? Who is the writer?

15-00:32:38

Shafer: Oh, I knew you were going to ask me that. I could get it for you, but I don’t have it. [Marc Cooper, “Mayor Jerry Brown, Take II,” *The Nation*, Feb 28, 2002]

15-00:32:40

Brown: Yeah, all right.

15-00:32:41

Shafer: But it was from 2002, and you said, “Here’s the problem. We’re making real progress in Oakland, and the Left simply has no rhetoric for progress.” And then you said, “The Left only has a rhetoric for victimization. They can’t stand success. Some people are just more comfortable managing misery.” What do you make of that?

15-00:33:02

Brown: Well, it’s pretty damn eloquent, I would say—and to the point. [laughter]

15-00:33:06

Shafer: You stand by that.

15-00:33:07

Brown: I couldn’t add to it.

15-00:33:09

Shafer: Can you talk about why you, what it—?

15-00:33:11

Brown: Well, that’s self-evident, isn’t it? That’s very clear. I wouldn’t change a word.

15-00:33:15

Shafer: You think that’s still true today?

15-00:33:18

Brown: Well, I mean, you know, in rhetoric there’s always an exaggeration. The people who are of more liberal, or you’d call left persuasion, certainly can talk about progress. But I can tell you in Oakland—we’re not talking about Bernie Sanders. We’re talking about *Oakland*, and people complaining because you’re going to exceed the fifty-foot height limit. So that was the Left; this was not a Left that

gathers in Washington DC, it was a different world. It was a localized set of players. And I just didn't think the opposition had any real thoughts. That was my thought. Now, today there's new problems, because of the price of housing and schools. But I think there's a lot of truth to that. Now, if you just say it's all the market, then that's pure neoliberalism, and we have a lot of books written about that topic. So I won't go any further than to say as applied to Oakland, in that year—that's right on.

15-00:34:37

Shafer: Yeah. I want to talk about the police department.

15-00:34:44

Meeker: There are still some things I'd like to talk about in terms of urbanism.

15-00:34:45

Shafer: Yeah.

15-00:34:47

Meeker: So one of the things that happens downtown, also probably would be considered in the success category, is a number of historical renovations and preservations, the Fox Theatre being an important one.

15-00:35:01

Brown: Yeah, right.

15-00:35:02

Meeker: The Rotunda Building and Sweet's Ballroom.

15-00:35:03

Brown: Right, right.

15-00:35:04

Meeker: I think in a lot of these you partnered with Phil Tagami?

15-00:35:08

Brown: Well, he *did* it.

15-00:35:09

Meeker: He did it, yeah. Well, can you tell me what, what—like what is the relationship for city government and city leadership in helping those kinds of things happen?

15-00:35:18

Brown: Well, Phil Tagami did the Rotunda Building before I was mayor. And he got a good loan from the city, and he put it together. It had been empty for a long, long time, so that's all to the good, and there was no opposition there. Everybody was for that. Remember, you couldn't get any major project without *buying* it. You had to give people very attractive loans to get them to take the risk. You had to mitigate the risk, lower that risk, or people were not going to put hard-earned money—and besides, most of the money is not them. They have to go to investors and say, "Look, we have a winning investment here." Well, it has to be a winning investment, and these guys very clearly calculate.

The Fox was a totally different thing. I never imagined how we could handle that Fox. I almost consider that a miracle. It had been dark for thirty years. Homeless were living there. There were camp cooking fires inside. It was crazy! And Phil was able to get a lot of money sources, market-rate credits, historic credits—all, he had over thirty sources of revenue, and he put that thing together. So that was something. I mean that, to me that's all good and amazing.

15-00:36:42

Meeker:

In your conversations with Tagami over the years did you get a sense that there needs to be kind of these synergies happening, where you have an overarching—in other words, to what extent do you think your vision for a revitalized downtown made these other smaller things happen that you maybe didn't have any role in?

15-00:37:06

Brown:

Well, I certainly wasn't thinking about the Fox Theatre when I ran for mayor. I had to find a place for the art school. That was the Alice Arts Center, and we had to expand, and the Alice Arts Center had some local dance troupes, drummers, or whatever, and I wanted to convert the whole hotel to an artist's—like art downstairs, and artists could live upstairs. They wouldn't buy that. That was politically not on the radar screen, because the people who were there, they're Section 8, they're low income, and they made a lot of noise and that stopped that.

So we had to go to the Fox, and I never thought the Fox was possible to get all the financing for that. I still don't, to this day, quite know how they did it. It's pretty amazing. Well, they had these market-rate tax credits, there was a lot of things. We were going to get some bond money from a Statewide Park [Program] cultural bond, and then we were going to get \$5 million—we won it. I actually went up there and made the argument in Sacramento one evening; Phil finally turned it down, because he said it would take three more years and we'd have to pay \$3 million. To get the \$5 million would delay it, and it would cost a couple million, two or three million to do it, so that was another example. But he did get market-rate credits that Bank of America bought, \$22 million, then the city put up redevelopment money. We had redevelopment then. So it was many, many sources, very creative, and I think that Phil really put that together.

15-00:38:48

Meeker:

Can you talk about your work with the Oakland Redevelopment Agency? Because it certainly comes into play during your time as governor.

15-00:38:53

Brown:

No—redevelopment is just the city council. They were coterminous.

15-00:38:58

Shafer:

It was a useful tool.

15-00:39:00

Brown:

Oh, you're talking about the mechanism?

15-00:39:02

Meeker: Yeah.

15-00:39:03

Brown: Well, I think for the Fox, that's the main part. What else did we do in redevelopment? They spent a lot of money on the city activities, which is somewhat questionable. They brought in the stadium, the Raiders. That was probably redevelopment.

15-00:39:16

Shafer: Did they build any housing?

15-00:39:19

Brown: They had to spend 25 percent on affordable housing. But of course I was interested in market-rate housing. That was the problem. Oakland had a disproportionate number of residents who could not contribute very strongly to a growing economy. That's it. So I wanted to balance it off. I didn't ever see that it was going to turn out the way it did, where many people felt they were driven *out* of Oakland. That's an unfortunate byproduct that I hadn't quite envisioned. And to this day I'm not quite sure, because if you don't have the market-rate housing—and you're not going to get the market-rate housing without the prices going up and up and up. The alternative is you can get subsidized housing, but that's never more than a hundred units a year at the high point. And market-rate housing depends on—market-rate housing, because that redevelopment or—increment, that growth of the real-estate value comes from the market rate. So you just cannot have all subsidized housing, 100 percent. It cannot work. The maximum you get is 20 or 25 percent. And that only depends on the market driving higher and higher, so there's a built-in paradox in the whole redevelopment use of funding for housing. I mean it's a dilemma. I'm not offering the answer here, but—

15-00:40:58

Meeker: Can you tell us about your vision for the Oakland Army Base?

15-00:41:02

Brown: I didn't have any vision. I mean we were trying to develop it. Retail, housing—I wanted to put a casino in there—anything to get money moving around. Yeah, I was driving by Middletown, which is in the middle of nowhere, south of Clear Lake, and they've got a casino, so why can't Oakland have one? But people didn't like that at all. The liberals didn't like it, the black ministers didn't like it. And we probably couldn't have pulled it off anyway, because of the requirements.

15-00:41:33

Meeker: You know, when you're trying to get these projects going, and you mention these different local neighborhood interest groups the black ministers, the liberals. Who do you actually go to?

15-00:41:43

Brown: Well, black ministers like some things. But not other things—nobody was unified. It's not a unified Left against the city hall. It's many people—like the



preservationists were more an older white crowd, okay? But then if you had some neighborhoods, it might have a racial component to it. It depends. It's a variety of forces that lift their head up. And, you know, but that's part of municipal politics. It's more difficult to navigate now than it was in 2000.

15-00:42:26

Meeker:

Okay. Summing up a question in terms of the transformation of downtown Oakland: I lived down there at this time and would see you around sometimes. And it was always surprising and nice to see the mayor of the city walking the city streets. You had mentioned this vision you had when you were first elected, of a city that was a bit quiet and not much happening, versus how lively it was in the 1940s. How did it change over the period of time that you were mayor? Did you walk down the street, you know—

15-00:43:02

Brown:

Well, it just changed through the market-rate investment. Through the rise of real estate in San Francisco. And then that money slops over into Oakland. That's what happened. It is a change, and now I'm a little more aware as I've come to the Mountain House here. I can think back 125 years at all the changes that take place. But I remember going down by the post office. There was a bar called Esther's Orbit Room, and that was, I would say, a remnant. It's closed—been closed for many years. But I used to go in there. I knew Esther [Mabry] and knew the bartender. But it was basically a bar where blacks frequented, but not very many. On a holiday they get a few more people. But it's sad. The building is deteriorating. And that was true of a lot of, a lot of club[s]—a lot of places; they don't die overnight. They kind of slowly wither away. And so that's what I wanted to see. You know, they talked about that area, they had black jazz clubs or something. I don't know whether that was in the forties. So the idea, if you get enough people downtown, then they'll be able to support more activity. That was the idea.

15-00:44:26

Meeker:

Well, what was your personal experience of walking around downtown, let's say during the end of your two terms?

15-00:44:30

Brown:

Well, there wasn't much there. It's just not like a downtown. It's not like walking down—being on the streets of Greenwich Village or something. It just was totally different.

15-00:44:48

Meeker:

What about after eight years of being mayor, how did it feel?

15-00:44:51

Brown:

Well, there were new places, they had new restaurants. They put a restaurant in the flower market across from the Fox Theatre that never was there before, they've added some up on Telegraph Ave. There were some in Old Town. So you could see the beginnings of revitalization, as I would call it. Other people would call it gentrification. I'd say there are some who said, "No, it's better." I don't

know what they would say—it may depend upon where they live and who they are, so there are many different perspectives. Living up in the hills of Oakland and Montclair, that’s one thing. Living in West Oakland or living in East Oakland, Sobrante Park—those were all different experiences. I remember talking to a lady in Sobrante, a black woman, and I can’t remember how I ran into her. But she said, “As soon as I come home at night I shut the door, and I don’t come out till the next morning.” There were a lot of people who were prisoners in their own house. So that kind of gets your attention. We need to do something about that. That’s why I thought a market-rate investment would be good. Not just downtown, but throughout the whole city.

15-00:46:07

Shafer: And was part of that, her comment, was that public safety as well?

15-00:46:10

Brown: Oh, no—that was *all* about public safety. That’s what she said. She’s afraid to go out at night. And there were plenty of crimes—plenty of murders. I mean the murder rate in Oakland—and we had a hundred murders for 400,000 people—what is that? Is that—twenty-five to 100,000, isn’t it?

15-00:46:29

Shafer: It’s a lot—it’s high.

15-00:46:30

Brown: Okay. New York was like six or seven, LA six or seven, San Jose four per 100,000. So there was a lot there, and how do you prevent that? Well, I think you have to add more economic investment. I think that helps—a lot. In fact, it’s crucial.

15-00:46:52

Shafer: You asked earlier who wrote that article. It was Marc Cooper, by the way.

15-00:46:54

Brown: Oh yeah, Marc Cooper. He was being positive.

15-00:46:58

Shafer: Yeah. So, in terms of law enforcement, I think when you came in there was one police chief, and you changed police chiefs.

15-00:47:08

Brown: I did.

15-00:47:11

Shafer: How did you approach the police department, because obviously I mean—it’s hard to look at it. I mean now there’s all kinds of other layers but back then, how did you think about—

15-00:47:21

Brown: Well, we thought we needed more data-driven policing. Where was the crime? How do you respond to it? There was a lot of institutional inertia, so I felt we

needed a more sophisticated effort to getting at the criminals. And I remember the city manager, Robert Bobb, an African American, and his assistant was African American. I talked about it, I think, in my inaugural speech, about driving crime out of Oakland. He said, “No, say driving *the criminals* out.” I’d never talked about crime in the person of human beings, *criminals*. And so Robert Bobb, who certainly knew what he was talking about, that’s how he put it. But this problem with these gangs, they have a gang—the Nut Case gang. They killed several people.

15-00:48:21

Shafer: That was the actual name?

15-00:48:22

Brown: Yeah, the Nut Case crowd. And so you have a lot of these little crews up there, in Ghost Town. They’ve been going on for decades. So you’ve got to push that out, if you can. As soon as they go to prison they come back. And when there isn’t much other activity, selling dope is—on the street corners. And then they have wars and fighting about that, and then you have killing. Most of the killing was done by people who had one kind of a record or another. So that was a, that was something; I wanted to have less crime. When you have four times the crime rate of most major cities, then that’s obviously not good, and you’ve got to stop it.

Now, today you have a lot of hostility toward the police. I was very sympathetic to the police. I’ve worked with the Oakland Police. I think they did a good job. But what they actually do, and shootings and arrests—we had cases where the police would say they didn’t do something, and we’d have to settle the case. We had a number of those. So what they actually do is difficult. We did have the Riders, and they supposedly were guilty of making some criminals fight themselves or planting dope. There were questions. But generally speaking, I supported what the police were doing, because I had this sense that—I didn’t have a sense, I had house meetings. People *tell* me they wanted more police protection.

15-00:50:03

Shafer: To what extent did you see the—your goals for economic development linked to getting—?

15-00:50:08

Brown: They were tied in, of course. More economic development probably means—when you have very depressed economic conditions, then crime is one of the only businesses that are viable. You can always sell dope, and you can always rob and burglarize.

15-00:50:24

Shafer: So, to get the investors’ confidence you felt like you had to get that under control?

15-00:50:27

Brown: Yeah, and even today there’s still a lot of retail theft. You can take those drug stores downtown. They have huge retail shoplifting. It’s very hard to stop.

15-00:50:40

Shafer: Yeah. A friend of mine is the CEO of Macy's, and he says that they have—I think it's like \$15 million worth of stuff stolen every year, just in the Union Square store in San Francisco. It's crazy.

15-00:50:53

Brown: Right. Well, I passed a bill to try to deal with retail theft, and that's another issue. There's a lot of crime that's not prosecuted anymore, and people don't know what to do about it. And if it's dope, and they're addicted, then you've got to deal with their addiction. If they're organized gangs, they're very invested in their criminal behavior. So about the only people you can really influence are the one-off thieves who aren't totally embedded in a criminal mentality.

So it *is* daunting, and right now there's a focus on the police being bad, but my focus was that criminals were bad and we wanted to eliminate—get them in prison, get them off the street. I even tried programs where we brought them into the Oakland jail. We'd let them go, but we'd put a monitoring system on them. We would try to get them job counseling. And then the Corrections Department called me up one day about four o'clock and said "You have no right to put electronic monitoring—that's the province of the prisons." They cut them off, so that ended that little program.

15-00:52:13

Shafer: When you thought about the public safety issues and the police department when you came in, you wanted to change chiefs.

15-00:52:26

Brown: Yeah, because I don't think he was effective.

15-00:52:28

Shafer: Some people, some mayors want to bring in somebody fresh from outside. There's usually the rank and file, and the union hates that.

15-00:52:34

Brown: No, the rank and file liked this guy.

15-00:52:35

Shafer: Richard Word.

15-00:52:37

Brown: Yeah, he was very popular. He was in the union.

15-00:52:40

Shafer: Okay, so, so—at that point did you consider somebody from outside?

15-00:52:44

Brown: No.

15-00:52:44

Shafer: No. For that reason? Or just—

15-00:52:46

**Brown:** Yeah! Well, first of all, obviously, you need the confidence of the men and women, and he seemed like a pretty good guy. I'm removing one African American—we have another one who is a captain. That seemed like a good move to make, and he [Wayne Tucker] was a very good guy—until he ran into trouble with the council, and he got tired and he left. Because it's very frustrating, whether you're running a school or you're running the police department, it's not easy.

15-00:53:20

**Shafer:** Any sense of how that differs in Oakland? How is Oakland unique? You know, like I think San Jose is a fairly easy city. San Francisco, not so much. Where does Oakland, would you say, in terms of getting things done, neighborhood—

15-00:53:34

**Brown:** Well, San Francisco is more effective than Oakland. Oakland's got real problems in their schools. Yeah, I think the crime is much better than it was, but that can be just people moving out. That is something that when people in the—housing stock improves and people move in, there's less support for the criminal activity. If you have only houses that are run down, that does foster an environment where criminals can thrive. And that is just a dilemma, because people will say, "Well, now you're just gentrifying." But if you don't try to improve the housing stock, you leave a lot to the criminals, and that's real too. And people talk about the police, but for the most part the police have a very tough job. They had a tough job. They had a tough time in the schools. The scores in many Oakland schools are pretty bad.

15-00:54:32

**Shafer:** Do you think that that appreciation for the police and what they do, do you think that was something you didn't have as much when you came in as mayor?

15-00:54:39

**Brown:** No, I wouldn't say that. I often was endorsed by rank-and-file police. But I mean the mayor deals with the police chief. Crime is a problem. If you've got sixty murders—sixty-six murders my first year, or eighty, then it goes up to ninety or a hundred—wow, well, you want to roll that back. And you're not going to get Whole Foods to come in and open a store when—well, there was not too far from there a Vietnamese lady that somebody came in and held her up, killed her, shot her. And those things become very tragic, and that doesn't build much of a city.

15-00:55:18

**Shafer:** In terms of the Riders scandal, I think that broke in 2000? And as you said, there were allegations of falsifying reports and—

15-00:55:26

**Brown:** Yeah, but of the three that went to trial, one escaped to Mexico and the three were—they dismissed, they couldn't convict them.

15-00:55:32

**Shafer:** So you think they were exonerated?

15-00:55:34

**Brown:** I wouldn't say exonerated, but they didn't have enough evidence to convict them.

15-00:55:39

**Shafer:** And do you think they were just like four bad apples, and the rest of the—?

15-00:55:44

**Brown:** I don't know what to say about this really. Criminals are not that nice. And I'm not saying some criminals aren't wonderful people in their own way. But they maim, they intimidate, they traffic young girls, they burglarize, they're very violent, at least a very small number, but enough to terrorize a city. So now the police have got to deal with that, and they have more and more restrictions on how to do that. So, I'm not saying that—and there's a lot of feeling in this, but how do you make your city safe? That's a big question, and—

15-00:56:22

**Meeker:** What is your answer to it?

15-00:56:23

**Brown:** Well, my answer is I thought that the police chief from New York, [William J.] Bratton, was good. He had targets; every day they would, or very frequently, they would check how they're doing. They'd measure—

15-00:56:45

**Shafer:** That's very controversial. It *was* very controversial.

15-00:56:47

**Brown:** I don't know if it's controversial. The fact is, they did an—look at the crime rate in Oakland—I mean in Manhattan. Look at the fare jumping. They were pretty effective. So I do think you need to have authority. Right now, things look a little bit out of control in a number of these places.

15-00:57:09

**Shafer:** What did you mean—when you're talking about Riders?

15-00:57:10

**Brown:** Certainly, if you drive down and you look at all the tents, those weren't there before. I remember one particular corner, that we had to clear that out. We took the benches out, and now it's fully encased, on Grand Ave., near San Pablo, fully encased with tents. It's like a tent city. These are problems. How are we going to solve them?

15-00:57:37

**Shafer:** But in terms of the Riders case, you were saying that there's—criminals are violent, they're nasty. Like how does that relate to what those four—?

15-00:57:45

**Brown:** Well, because it's a war. The cops are under—they're being shot at. And yeah, you've got cops that get the power of the gun, and they're not as sensitive, probably, as say a social worker or somebody who's engaged in psychotherapy. You know, they stop a guy. They might blow their head away. There were four

cops who were killed in Oakland one time. They were chasing somebody, and then they'd stopped a car, and the guy killed two Oakland cops. And then they chased him into a building. He was standing there, and he killed two more cops. Well, this is pretty serious stuff, and now everyone says the cops are bad. Well, there's no easy way to get criminals. And there are criminals, whether they're dope crazed or damaged or just plain badass, if you don't handle it right, you can have your head blown off.

15-00:58:47

Shafer: But just to be clear, you're not saying that planting evidence and falsifying—?

15-00:58:51

Brown: No, I'm not saying planting—no, of course not. That's a crime, testifying falsely, like people say cops do. And cultures develop, and maybe it's hard to get a conviction. You know, the murder rate, I think, in some of these cities, they only solve 30 percent of the murders. So that would say if you want to murder somebody, you've got a pretty good chance of getting away with it. So that's a problem. I don't think people like to look at the reality. And that's why people move to the suburbs, and they get in nice enclaves where they don't need to worry about it. But when you're in the real firing line, where you have gangs that have been there for ten/twenty years, the grandchildren are still being arrested by the same cops, it's a different world. And so I wanted to make the city safe. Without that, where are you?

15-00:59:43

Shafer: I'm just wondering, did your dad being DA and then AG, did that have any influence?

15-00:59:47

Brown: No, it's just common sense. You know, your own safety is—well, I lived in Jack London [Square]. That wasn't too bad. But my wife, who lived on Telegraph, she'd be harassed walking home from the Gap. I mean, it's not nice down there in the, in places where there's a lot of desperation. And you can give all the explanations you want.

But when you're just there, it's—I remember a lady across the street. And some guy came up to me, and he was giving me a bad time, and she defended me, said, "Don't blame the mayor. It's your problem. He's not doing anything." So this lady, who was a heroin addict, I think. She had four kids. I remember two of their names—Chardonnay and Xavier. There were four of them, and they were yelling and screaming, and somehow they were right across the street from me, right under my window. So I got to know her. And finally, she got out of there and got her mother, who was disabled, and packaged some different kinds of aid and she got herself—and I actually, I had someone drive her out to a new apartment, so I helped her. And then I'm running around the lake or something, somebody slams on the brakes and said, "Hey," what did he say? "Number three," or number four, "is dead." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said this woman's—"The

father of Xavier. He was killed this week.” I said—okay—I mean it’s another world.

So there was another apartment, and this thing was really run down, really pathetic. And then a block away there was another one where they’re just dealing. You could tell they were dealing dope out of that. So I had some control of the Planning Department. So I called the owner. He was an Irishman from south of San Francisco. I said, “Hey, clean this damn thing up, or I’m going to have it declared a nuisance and we’re going to tear it down. So do something.” So he sold it, and the guy did fix it up. This was just two blocks, next door to me, and two blocks down you had two real hotbeds of activity, criminal activity. It is not what you think in your—wherever your nice middle-class dwelling is. This is very different.

15-01:02:26

Shafer: I live in the Mission, so—[laughing]

15-01:02:28

Brown: Well, the Mission is pretty nice—

15-01:02:30

Shafer: So did that give you sort of street cred with the—

15-01:02:33

Brown: With who?

15-01:02:34

Shafer: With the community.

15-01:02:38

Brown: Well, what does that community mean? Do people go to the city council meetings? People I meet when I go to the store? People when I go to a city/a neighborhood meeting? People didn’t even know about that. I never told anybody about that. But I did look at the laws of nuisance, and I said, “Can we really declare it a nuisance and just tear the damn thing down?” Well, we never got that far, but I always wondered about that. We had another one two blocks away. Graffiti all over the brick building, empty. We called the owner up—let’s get him out of there. Well, there’s no owner, and there’s back taxes to the county of three hundred grand. So the county says, “You have to pay the three hundred [thousand], or else.” He said, “Forgive it.” “No.”

Well, to the best of my knowledge, it’s still there. We’re talking twenty years later, because, first of all, this is right in Ghost Town, where there were gangs—probably still a certain amount of it. But you needed to help a developer develop that, like we did Forest City. But this required the county to waive the—they wouldn’t do it. So there’s a lot of, one issue after another. If it isn’t the local neighborhood activists, it’s the city, the county—now, when it was just under my watch, I could put pressure on people, and I did.



15-01:04:06

Meeker: Oakland's a unique city—

15-01:04:10

Brown: The guy next door to me—it had an owner. I knew who the guy was. In fact, he contributed to my campaign. And I think his brother ran it. I said, “Look, you’ve got to clean this place up. You’ve got to fix it.” He ultimately did, but I said, I said, “We’re going to send the police guy who does building inspections, and you bring yourself—money, whatever money you need, and you give those tenants whatever they need to get out.” And he actually did, and it came out, as far as I know—he handed out the money and they left. And then he fixed it up—very modestly, I might say. There it is. Well, these places don’t have garages, so when you have to park your car on the street, that’s already a stress.

Down the road there were several halfway houses—many halfway houses. And I visited—I went to lunch once. I went to dinner at one five blocks from my house, four or five blocks down Telegraph, and I was talking to one guy. And he said, “Oh yeah, I just got out of Pelican Bay.” “Well, that’s good. How was it?” [laughter] “Good to be out.” But, so it’s a different world. I mean there were at least three or four parole halfway houses there, and this is where people go. Oakland is the place—they’re not going to Forest Hill. They’re not going to Montclair. It functions in the larger social ecology, in a way, and then when you try to change that, you’re pushing against a lot.

And the police have a role in that. And the planning—there’s a lot of slowness. I mean the bureaucracy—I remember Willie Brown called me and says his wife Blanche, who he’s still married to after all these years, he says, “She’s living in a nice house.” She got a condo over at Lake Merritt. “She can’t get her building permit.” I said, “Let me check it out.” “It’s been months.” I said, “Okay.” I went over to the Building Department, and I said, “Who’s got the one—?” I had the address. I said, “Where is this?” He said, “Well, it’s so and so.” I said, “What floor is he on?” “He’s on the third floor.” So I run up there, march up to his—his desk is a mess, and he’s got orange peels and papers all stacked. And I started rifling through, and I couldn’t find the damn permit.

So I went downstairs and said, “Hey, let’s get this thing going. What’s the problem?” And the guy at the desk tells me, “Well, we have an ordinance, and the ordinance is you have to recycle building materials from a—” So, when they remodeled this place, they had a lot of building materials. You have to show that you actually recycled them and didn’t dump them. And, for some reason, the builder had not satisfied that requirement yet. So, I told Willie, and we got it done. But I’m just saying—nothing *moves*. And so I don’t think there are many elected officials who take such direct action. Now, it’s true it’s Willie Brown, but even if somebody asked me, I would do that. I mean I did that with pardons. I’d meet people who’d say, “You know, my son—I need a pardon. It’s been thirty years,” whatever. I would do it. Because there’s a lot of layering, an entourage,

and parceling out these functions—and yet things are so complicated, and everyone's afraid of making a mistake, that it definitely slows things down.

So I liked being mayor, because I could walk over to the Planning Department, and I fired all these people and appointed Claudia Cappio, who'd worked in Emeryville. Emeryville, by the way, was growing and Oakland was just totally stagnant, because they didn't have the same oppositional forces. And so this woman I put in there, head of economic development, and we really started doing things. And we were able to deal with CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act]. There's an urban infill exemption of two-hundred-or-less units. We were able to move that. But before that, they weren't moving it.

I lived at Twenty-Seventh and Telegraph, the old Sears Roebuck Building, and I was on the top floor. And we had the first floor, and we had a little balcony outside. That was very nice. And then on my second floor, where the bedroom was, one bedroom—but it was set back. “You know, you've taken five hundred square feet out of this apartment. Why is that?” And the planner said, “It's the setback ordinance.” So you want to set it back, it has a different aesthetic. Well, at that point I said, “No, let's get this—this is another five hundred units. You would have brought more money into the city, more—.” Why bother? Now, maybe if I went back there and looked again, maybe I'd think maybe the setback was good. I don't know. But at that point, I was looking for jumpstarting things. And so when I would see things like this, I'd say, “Why? Why set it back? First of all, we have a balcony, or we've got a porch. So how do you *know* it's set back?” You can only see the setback, or if it wasn't a setback—I don't think you would notice it as much.

There are so many—there was another case. Phil Tagami was complaining. We had a guy, our economic development negotiator, and they were arguing about what kind of tile to put on the sidewalk that led from the Rotunda Building into the plaza. And I thought to myself—all this stuff for *tile*? Why do we need tile—just cement, just put it in there. What the hell difference would it make? And so they're arguing about it, and they spend all this money on stuff. I don't know what I'm talking about now, but Union Square. I thought the old Union Square was fine, and now they redid it. They did the same thing in Pershing Square down in LA. I thought it was fine. No, they changed it. Maybe if I knew all the pieces, I would agree with them. But I can tell you, if you take all these practices—planning practices, police, habituated behavior—and you get a lot of stagnation.

So you may think, well, the police are a bunch of cowboys. Well, it's not about being cowboys, it's about knowing how to deal with criminals. How to catch them, who's going to catch them. You know, by the way, the seniority, the way it works is, the people who go out in East Oakland on Saturday night are the rookies. The guys who've been around for twenty years and know their way around, they're working, you know, during the week.

15-01:10:53

Shafer: The football game. [laughter]

15-01:10:54

Brown: In the morning! Yeah, so everywhere you look. And I often would say to myself, now, the criminals, they can move from West Oakland to East Oakland—this is asymmetrical warfare. The cops have a post and bid, they've got to bid for their task a year in advance. And then you have a policeman, community policing for each precinct. Well, there's fifty-two or fifty-four precincts, many of them aren't having any crime. You've got to know where the crime is—I thought. Now, of course if it goes too far, then people say, "You are picking on us. You're being disproportionate." On the other hand, you've got to go where the crime is.

So there's a lot of contradictions, that when you are actually in the city—and I'm in the city. I drove my own car. I did not have any guards. I had no driver. And Anne took the BART over to Gap and came to our little apartment, and so we encountered the street. And I would rather have a safer place than a less-safe place. It's just that simple. So I didn't have to learn that from my father or from reading the newspaper. It's just the way—this is what makes sense to me. This was common sense. Now, my grandfather was a police captain. That's true. My father was a DA. So, I thought well, they always said he was such a man of rectitude. My father said that someone brought over a cake or something, somebody, and my mother said, "No, we can't take that." He wouldn't accept any gratuities whatsoever. So I had come from a background which is orderly, which is not the kind of the chaos which I see in parts of urban America. So I definitely would like to make things a little more regular, if I could call it that.

15-01:12:50

Shafer: I know that as governor you talked about the fact that the legislature passes a thousand bills, and there aren't a thousand good ideas. You know, the implication being there's a lot of laws we don't need.

15-01:13:02

Brown: Well, no question. The bills are there because they're a legislator. That means they make laws. They're in the law-making business, and people think they're trying to solve problems, but they're trying to pass laws. Sometimes they solve a problem; sometimes they make it worse. Sometimes they create their own problems.

15-01:13:23

Shafer: One of the big laws was California Environmental Quality Act, which Reagan signed, I think.

[side conversation deleted]

15-01:13:28

Brown: CEQA. Reagan did sign that. He did, yeah, probably.

15-01:13:30

Shafer: So—you, as governor, I think toyed with the idea of trying to reform CEQA—?

15-01:13:39

Brown: Well, let me tell you, when I was mayor I sought a bill that would exempt downtown Oakland, from Lake Merritt to the freeway, and maybe from Twenty-seventh to the Estuary, I said, “I want a three-year period of *no* CEQA. Just let us do that.”

15-01:14:00

Shafer: Is that special-interest legislation? [laughing]

15-01:14:02

Brown: No, I wanted to do it there because I didn’t—now, as it turned out, we were able to, the law, they watered it down so it had no effect. We had a law. They exempted us from a couple of CEQA provisions. But they did it in such a way that the lawyers for the developers said, “We can’t be sure that we’ll be sued anyway,” because there’s other parts of the CEQA law that we think could override the exemption that I got. So it turned out to be useless, and I would say that people were scared to death to even put that bill in.

But what *I* was impressed by was that we have, in Oakland, a Planning [and Building] Department. And when you go in to build something, you’ve got to show your plans to the Building Department. And you have—what is it, aesthetic element to it—design review. You have to go through design review with the Planning Department, and they invite the neighbors in to criticize your report, the neighborhood. “Do you like this?” I remember when I built my loft downtown the Port printed a thing that said, “There’s too much verticality. You need some more horizontal elements.” So I had to change the awning, which irritated me, because that cost me more than I wanted to pay. I think it was another \$5,000. So that was design review. Then you go to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is a design review subcommittee of two or three of the planning commissioners. Then after they go through design review, it goes to the Planning Department, and the Planning Department votes yea or nay. Then if somebody wants to object, they go to the city council. And in the city council meeting, they start renegotiating it.

Now, why do you need CEQA, where you’ve got a judge in Hayward, so we’re going to try the whole damn thing over again, after you’ve run that gauntlet? So I said to my planning director, the second one—the first one I had to ask to leave because it was too static and stagnant—I said, “Have you ever seen anything that CEQA has improved in our downtown? And she said no. Now, maybe she’s wrong on that, but that’s what she said, because we have a lot of checks and balances. We have very active neighborhood people, so that’s why I thought CEQA could have—it’s a very blunt instrument. On the other hand, to deal with climate change we’re going to have to reduce car use. We’re going to have to do a lot of the damn things that are a lot more powerful than CEQA.

So, do you understand how the CEQA looks a little different than if you're talking about a forest versus—will this development add to traffic? Yeah. If you have more people, you have more traffic. And I said the problem is we don't have enough traffic. Now, maybe it's too much, and I do feel that when I leave Williams, the traffic seems very intense. But traffic was what we didn't have enough of downtown. In Oakland.

15-01:17:21

Shafer:

Do you think it was almost like too much democracy in this process?

15-01:17:27

Brown:

Well, that's a whole question—democracy. First of all, democracy is very much influenced by special interests, so democracy is already highly limited. I would say that to allow a handful of people to hold up projects—I don't know how you could say that's democracy. It's not a vote of even three square miles, where you just say, "Well, let's vote on it." So I do think we have a lot of special interests. Now, the biggest special interests are the large economic powers that shape the whole society, you know, whether it's the bailout that went to the banks, but not to the homeowner. But you have, at the local level, you have liberal/left-leaning, that has what they want in their organizations, and they want to stop stuff that they don't want. So sometimes I think they're wrong.

And there's no easy way out, like should you be able to contract out the parking at UC Berkeley? Is that a diminution of good union jobs? Or is that just, you know, an important economizing maneuver that will give you more money for the academic enterprise?

15-01:18:58

Meeker:

Why is labor even part of CEQA?

15-01:19:01

Brown:

Oh, labor *is* part of CEQA.

15-01:19:03

Meeker:

Yeah, but why is that?

15-01:19:04

Brown:

Well, I was giving you an example of how an interest group on the left can pressure people.

15-01:19:09

Shafer:

That's like the environmentalists versus labor a lot of times, isn't it?

15-01:19:12

Brown:

Well, labor uses CEQA. The pipefitters pioneered this when I was governor the first time—or maybe it was when I was party chairman in '89-'90. They will sue a project. They will sue. And if you give them a labor agreement, a project labor agreement where you have to hire all union, they'll drop their suit, and you'll save a year or two. This is also used by developers. If one competitor is going to come near another one, they'll use CEQA. So it is now a blunt instrument used for

totally collateral purposes—union agreements and competitor, trying to block competition. And it's also used to flesh out important environmental concerns, so there's a real logic to CEQA. The problem with all these things is they work, and in some cases they don't work so well—and that's true of everything.

15-01:20:10

Shafer:

Including the schools, which I want to ask you about. You came in, obviously schools were—I think education has been an interest of yours for a long time. And two of your signature legacy projects—I know you don't like that word, but are the Oakland Military Institute and the arts academy [Oakland School for the Arts]. Talk about why you felt it was important to go that route.

15-01:20:34

Brown:

Oh, because I couldn't take over the schools. It was obvious to me that that would not make it in a vote of the people, and the only way I could have done that was to [pass] a charter amendment, which people could do today saying the mayor appoints all the members of the school board. I don't think that could pass. So I decided to create some charter schools to deal with the challenges of urban education, with a lot of English learners, people who don't speak English at home, people who are very low income and who are not doing that well in the public school. I wanted to see how I could do, and I must say we're still challenged.

15-01:21:14

Shafer:

Many people felt that Oakland was an unlikely place for a military academy.

15-01:21:20

Brown:

Right. Well not, I think, many people. I think the president of the school board, Dan Siegel, thought that, and he had enough people to block it. Yeah, they said they don't want a military—even though America spends more on its military than all its competitors combined, multiplied by two or three. And there it is. And even candidates running for president have very little to say about it. So that's a total disconnect in my mind. You can't have a military school—of which we had many fifty years ago. But we're not even going to talk about—there are so many now, taboos. You can't do this, you can't do that. I mean that's where liberalism is running downhill.

15-01:21:59

Shafer:

Well, what was it about the idea of a military academy, because you took—

15-01:22:02

Brown:

Just the structure, the honor, the hierarchy, the competitive quality, the pride, the uniforms—and the marching, the ritual. That's all.

15-01:22:14

Shafer:

But did you think in some ways it was an echo of your schooling in the—?

15-01:22:18

Brown:

Yeah, a little bit. We had ROTC. We didn't pay too much—I had three years of ROTC. It was required then. At St. Ignatius everybody—not everybody, but most people, took ROTC. When I went to Santa Clara, in 1956, you took ROTC. There

was no choice. But it wasn't about ROTC or the military. It was about creating a structure in a very chaotic world. So it is, it is a good—there are many military—there's not a lot, there's probably forty military schools in America. There's three or four in California.

15-01:23:03

Shafer:

And who did you see benefiting from the military academy?

15-01:23:09

Brown:

Kids who are in the Oakland schools doing very poorly. The goal was to have a prep school that they could go to, a first-rate school, where they don't need to—and that is a problem. If you look at the state scores, people in low income—not all low income, but many low-income communities have very low performance results.

15-01:23:33

Shafer:

Did you see that in any way as a—sort of a supplement or a replacement even for a family structure—or lack of a family structure?

15-01:23:41

Brown:

Well, it's a different structure. I mean when I grew up, I think there was one house that had what we called a divorcée, a woman who was divorced. One that I know of. Everyone else was two—most had kids, lots of kids. And it was pretty structured. There were no big events. So that was kind of a middle-class environment. Nobody seemed to be particularly rich. No one seemed to be poor. People went to school. Some went to City College because they didn't get into Cal. But it seemed event free.

When I walked through an Oakland school one day, there were all these guys walking around, and I said, "What are they?" They said, "They're hallwalkers." They're just walking around. And then you go up, and I looked at the—I don't know whether it was AP or it was a chemistry class on the third or fourth floor of Oakland High School. And these were mostly Asian people, and this is the—I don't what, it was a chemistry class though. So I see the hallwalkers downstairs. I see the elites getting their chemistry, and they're on their way to college. I thought well, I'd like to combine this, see if I can't create a school that will work for a broader range of kids. That was the idea.

15-01:25:07

Shafer:

That was the idea, yeah. And do you think that the opposition to it was—and you said it was just Dan Siegel, but you know, there were, I think a bit—

15-01:25:14

Brown:

No, there were a few.

15-01:25:15

Shafer:

Yeah. I mean do you think—?

15-01:25:15

**Brown:** Well, because it's military-bad. It's the same thing—soda pop-bad. There's all this *bad*. And I don't know what it's driven by, but it's not very functional, so why would they say that? By the way, a lot of these people—Dellums was in the military. Barbara Lee's father was in the military. A lot of these successful African Americans had parents who were in the military, so what are they talking about? Was that bad? Do they apologize for their parents? No. There's so many contradictions on the left and on the right. It really does speak to the chaos of our current moment in the West. I won't even limit it to America.

15-01:26:00

**Shafer:** Who was it that said consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds?

15-01:26:04

**Brown:** Yeah, that was Emerson in his book, in his essay, "Self-Reliance." [A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds...]

15-01:26:10

**Shafer:** So that's sort of like just human nature, in some ways.

15-01:26:13

**Brown:** Well, is it? Why would people—I don't know, you'd have to say it—

15-01:26:21

**Shafer:** [laughing] We don't want to go down that road.

15-01:26:22

**Brown:** There is a narrow-mindedness. There just is. In fact, they're so narrow-minded that we can't even talk about many topics. They're too hot. So now we have the right wing going off the deep end, and we have the left wing having its own deep ends. I wouldn't say they're equivalent. But it's troublesome that there not be a more centered body of participation and discourse, that at least on the surface is more rational.

15-01:26:55

**Shafer:** Yeah, and then the arts academy as well [Oakland School for the Arts]. What was your thinking there?

15-01:27:00

**Brown:** Just that the military was going to be more rigid. I thought we needed something more creative. Or more spontaneous, and it is really different.

15-01:27:12

**Shafer:** In both of those, do you think, is there a commentary about teacher unions and the—? Is there, in your embrace of charter schools, was there some, you know, I won't say indictment, that's too strong a word, but an implied criticism of teachers unions?

15-01:27:31

**Brown:** No. First of all, the problems in the schools, I don't think are the teachers union. It's just the school. They keep having more superintendents, new tests. The state



tests have changed three times. We've gone from TerraNova, to the STAR test, to the current Smarter Balanced. That's just three. We've had various fads that come every ten or fifteen years and yet these kids, they're two and three years behind, in a good part of urban schools. I don't know about the rural ones. So I wanted to create a school where I could create more favorable conditions. That was the idea. And there is hostility. Even the art school. There was more hostility to the art school than the military school, because they said, "Well, just support the arts program at Skyline," and support it throughout. I said, "No, I want to create an academy where arts is the dominant theme, and attract the best talent we can by using auditions." That is very antithetical to certain views in Oakland, and I presume elsewhere: "That's not right." Now, if it's a football team or a basketball team, then selecting the best is what you're supposed to do. But if you're talking about an academic institution, no. You want to make sure you have enough of every kind that you have what you have, and it doesn't work.

15-01:29:06

Shafer:

Is that relatively new, do you think?

15-01:29:08

Brown:

Yeah, well, I think you used to have these unified school districts. Well, the school seems to be—I can't tell over time. These big school districts are impacted by low-performing kids, and they go home, the parents—maybe it's a one-parent family. They don't have the income. The mother/caregiver changes jobs. You've got kids who are homeless, kids who are in foster care. There's a lot of stress that you can understand. So the school is only part of that, and that's what the teachers keep saying. And it's a very difficult job.

And also, now we mainstream, so you've got kids who are emotionally given to outbursts. We have kids with authority defiance syndrome. [oppositional defiant disorder] You have to accommodate that, so you have to be careful what you say to them. And we have one girl who is very emotional. She has an attendant with her at all times, to calm her down. So you put enough of these people in a classroom, and then you say you have to be very careful about the discipline. Well, then you lose control. So I wanted to try to create some schools that would be able to do better. And even then, it's very challenging.

15-01:30:31

Shafer:

Because the charter schools are exempt from some of those things?

15-01:30:34

Brown:

Some. Every year they're trying to reel them back in, so they'll be just like the regular public schools. And it's right now the union has taken up that cause. But they all want to regulate outcomes, even though the regulations don't produce the results they want. Not for a year, but for *decades*. I mean Oakland and Inglewood are back in trouble again. And it's very hard to get—

15-01:31:02

Meeker:

[crosstalk] What do you mean by regulate outcomes?

15-01:31:04

Brown:

What? Well, you'd be able to score on the tests—I mean they all measure, now we measure everything. So we know exactly who's in the bottom twenty/who's in the top twenty, what schools. Where are they? So there's a great hunger for more and more data. In fact, that's always been a bill that I opposed, and now they've passed it. They want to get the data from pre-school and follow it through college—and beyond. Now, that's very similar to what they're doing in China, with the social credit card, so they can tell how you're doing. Now, they say that's to close the gap. But we've been measuring, and the gap doesn't close. So what are we going to do about that? So I thought I'd work that out with these two schools, and I find out that even running these two schools, we have some of the same dilemmas. It's not that easy.

So you're talking about a global set of habits, ideas, and ways of behaving that makes it difficult. So if you're in Saratoga or Los Gatos, you're going to have one kind of high school. If you're in Oakland, you're going to have another. Now, I just read an email from this school in East Palo Alto, that is a low-income/minority school that's doing very well. In fact, somebody said, "You ought to look at this," which I will. So there are exceptions, but it's pretty challenging.

15-01:32:31

Shafer:

To what extent, did you come into office thinking I can really fix the schools, or have an impact on the schools?

15-01:32:39

Brown:

No, I never—

15-01:32:40

Shafer:

You never felt that.

15-01:32:41

Brown:

No. Well, I've been governor for eight years. I've seen it. I was around. I mean I've seen or looked at schools first under a guy named [Roy E.] Simpson, then Max Rafferty came and said we're going to go back to basics. Then Wilson Riles came along and said we're going to deal with culturally disadvantaged youth. And then Bill Honig came along and said, no, we're going to have standards. And then on and on and on—there we are. Jack O'Connell came along and said we're going to close the gap. That was twelve years ago, and the gap is still the same. I mean these are deeply imbedded social patterns.

[side conversation deleted]

15-01:33:20

Meeker:

Just one last question.

15-01:33:21

Brown:

What. Well, you're really supposed to have asked about me, not my philosophy of things.

15-01:33:26

Shafer: Well, what's the difference?

15-01:33:27

Brown: Well, it's a big difference.

15-01:33:28

Meeker: Well, this is your philosophy, and that is the application of Ivan Illich's ideas to charter schools and to your approach to improving the schooling experience for Oakland kids. How *did* you do that?

15-01:33:44

Brown: Well, I don't know that I *have*. Illich is a critic of institutionalization, and he uses it as the example of institutionalization—schools. And the idea that there is a class, usually thirty/thirty-five people, that each day you consume another little package of information, very standardized—he doesn't like that idea. But I'm not sure how to—I'm thinking about it. But it's hard. I think a certain amount of discipline and regimentation is helpful. On the other hand, I think a certain amount of creativity is—that's kind of why I created the art school and the military school. But the art school needs discipline, and the military school needs creativity.

So I think it's the larger—from Illich I take the idea of the *danger* of institutionalizing people, in a way that standardizes them, from a central authority. What we think we're here, we think—I hear that about China, but more and more, there's standardization. And when I went to school—well, I went to a Catholic school, but we didn't have SATs. I don't think they, they didn't require it then. We didn't have certificated teachers. I think we had a principal and a vice principal, and we had a lady or two in the office. That was it. And now, we have armies of specialists, and of trying to remedy all of the ills of the modern society—and yet these ills continue. So I think Illich is pointing out the danger of institutionalization, you know, like we're all in an army, we're all saluting and marching. I think that's the danger.

And increasingly, you have these regimented tests, and in many ways I don't like the tests, but I feel for some of these kids from low-income neighborhoods, kids of color. They need to do well on tests for them to go further. I remember I had a teacher in English, and one of his test questions, the only question one semester was, "Write your impression of a green leaf." And I've thought a lot about that. What *is* my impression? My answer was pathetic. This is sixty years later, and I still think, when I look out at the trees—do I have an impression? Am I sensitive enough to even notice, in the way that—I'm sure Van Gogh saw a lot more than I'm seeing. So is there any way I can develop that sensibility? Well, that's a good question, if I can remember it, because that question was given in 1955, and now we're in 2019.

So that's a good—and I remember a question of—well this, I guess, is different, but Sheldon Wohlin had a question, "Explain Marx's theory of power." Now, I

looked in his books, and I'm trying to find theory of power, and I read Wendy Brown—so I thought that was a good question. But I still don't—what *is* Marx's theory of power? Of course Bateson comes along and says, "There's no such thing as power. There's only the idea of power." And the reason why there's no such thing as power is we're all on an interactive system, so you can't unilaterally impact things, because you have to go with the flow of the system that you're—and it's, I don't know. [laughter] So my only point is that stimulating questions are a very important part of education, and if we're reducing everything to an SAT test—but I might be out of sorts.

I mean now the important point is to have as little free time as possible, to have as regimented an education as you possibly can. Going to the schools that are rated, get a rank, know where you are. I think to myself, we have six million kids. If we take the scores, we might be able to rank all six million. So some group of kids will say, "You know what? We're the absolute worst." And then another group of kids, "We're the absolute best." And we rank everybody. And I often ask parents, people, contemporaries. I say, "How many children do you have?" "I have three." I say, "How do you rank them?" And most people can't rank them, of course.

So, as I think Einstein said, "Not everything that can be measured is worth measuring." What is it, "Not everything"—whatever it was, measurement is very important, is the foundation of all science. In fact, I remember that being said in a physics class in 1954. The guy had a big ruler like this, some kind of a measuring stick, and he said, "Science begins with measurement." And what the hell does that mean? So, but I've been thinking about that. So we're in measurement mania right now. So between measurement, and spontaneous creation—you know. I don't want to lose this—and reading the Kafka biography, they had a really mechanical, regimented Austrian education that isn't very attractive, and he certainly didn't like. And the smart people seem to have to—school is not their thing. Right? But you need structure. These are all alive/open questions. That's why we don't need to close the question, because it's still open. But I think we should be on guard against excessive institutionalization in all aspects of our collective—of our lives, and we have a lot of that.

## Interview 16: July 9, 2019

16-00:00:00

Shafer: This is July 9, [2019]. We are at the Mountain House with Governor Jerry Brown and Martin Meeker from Bancroft Library, Scott Shafer from KQED, and this is interview session sixteen. So Governor, we were talking about your mayoralty, and I think we left it off talking about the charter schools. And we wanted to delve a little bit more into the school stuff. You wanted to appoint a different school chief than was there, and I think you supported George Musgrove, I think his name was?

16-00:00:35

Brown: Yeah, he was there for a while.

16-00:00:36

Shafer: Yeah, and the board pushed back. They wanted Dennis Chaconas. What did the school district need? Like what were you trying to accomplish?

16-00:00:46

Brown: I thought that there was not nearly enough focus on raising the achievement levels of the students in Oakland. There was talk about lots of things. But there still—to this day—is not the focus on achievement that I think is crucial.

16-00:01:09

Shafer: And does that include testing? I mean what does that entail?

16-00:01:12

Brown: Yeah, well, we have a state testing system, and the schools in Oakland do very poorly. And now, if you're going to be successful in getting to college, you're going to have to do better on those tests. So they have to prepare these kids. And yet, probably the majority are below their grade level—probably the majority of students in Oakland schools do not achieve the grade level that is expected.

16-00:01:42

Shafer: How much of that is poor teachers, how much of it is, you know, bad administration, poverty—all those things?

[side conversation deleted]

16-00:01:49

Brown: It's all those things, but there are schools in California where the kids come from very low-income families, with some of the same challenges in Oakland, but they achieve at the appropriate grade level. So that requires great leadership, great teachers, and creating an atmosphere in the school where learning is emphasized and learning is encouraged by very thoughtful and creative ways.

16-00:02:278

Shafer: Why did you think Musgrove was the guy versus Chaconas?

16-00:02:32

Brown:

I just thought Musgrove knew how to manage. You know, in retrospect, I think Musgrove was an effective person, and I thought he could do better for the school. It turns out that Chaconas left in a few years, and the school was financially quite stressed. Of course, so have people after him, so there's a basic problem in Oakland that their desire to spend outruns their available money. And the problems of lack of discipline, lack of inspiring teachers—lack of *whatever*, I know it's a very tough job for a teacher, so it's all of those things.

I mean the fact is there's a gap based on income in America, in California, between the kids from better-off families compared to the kids with not-so-well-off families. And changing that gap is not business as usual. You have to get good school leaders and good teachers, and you do need the money to make it all happen. So as we talk, it's still a contested matter in California, and they're still talking about it. *They* meaning the state board, the politicians, the legislators, the advocates. They keep talking about—well, the kids need this, they need that, and the fact is there's a gap between the middle and upper-middle class, and what we might call lower-income families and their kids. That's there. That's why I wanted to put a stronger man at the helm, and he had his problems. But every superintendent *since* then has had problems, and Oakland today is still facing bankruptcy and low scores. So that's why I came up with the idea of creating some schools that I could shape to deal with the problem. And I would have to say that we're still struggling. We have not achieved the goal, but I've gone back. I'm now the chairman of the Oakland Military School, and I'm going to work to raise their scores, and I can say it is not easy, but it is very challenging.

16-00:05:00

Meeker:

Can you talk about that a little bit more? You have closer insight and information on the Oakland Military Institute [College Preparatory Academy] as well as the Arts School. [Oakland School for the Arts] What are the things that you think can be done in those specific settings, and that specific location, to—?

16-00:05:21

Brown:

Well, the Arts School is doing well, although—it's doing well, and it attracts a more middle-class clientele because of its requirement of some artistic skill in order to get in, so their scores are much higher. The military school has struggled with the concept of what is a military school? What is the framework? What does it do. And my original idea, and my continuing idea, is the discipline and inspiration of—a military framework should be the catalyst that enables these kids to attain grade-level performance. That has not happened yet, but I'm now back—have attended two meetings and spent literally a hundred hours probing into the scores, the personnel. And I will say that long before the—no, not long—within the next couple of years, I hope to achieve the goal that I set forth in 2001.

16-00:06:42

Meeker:

What was that goal? Can you articulate it?

16-00:06:44

Brown: A prep school in Oakland that would enable kids from all backgrounds to get into college. Now, it is getting kids into college—70, 80 percent get into college, four-year college. Many of them go to two-year colleges. But I would like to see it perform at a higher level, and I think the assumption I'm making is that the military model is a very powerful ingredient. But because of the general feelings about the military and the discipline, and what have you, there has been a reluctance—there has been, and because it's part civilian, part military, it has been difficult to implement. So it's, this is a very live issue as we talk.

16-00:07:33

Meeker: When you've done this study, what have you found at the Military Institute? What answers are you getting in terms of why—?

16-00:07:39

Brown: I don't think the discipline is adequate. And I think the framework of teaching does not draw on the best we understand about teaching today.

16-00:07:54

Shafer: When you say that discipline is not adequate, what do you mean?

16-00:07:57

Brown: Just what I said.

16-00:07:59

Shafer: But what does that look like? What would adequate discipline look like?

16-00:08:00

Brown: Well, that looks like—people don't wear the uniform properly, when they're late to class, fighting on the schoolyard, talking back to teachers, not marching in the manner that the California Cadet Corps expects. So now this is the great challenge. How do you bring that about? Well, tune in—I'll tell you in two years.

16-00:08:33

Shafer: Why is that so important to you?

16-00:08:35

Brown: Because of the very challenge of education. What do we do about the gap? I mean we've got, now, a gap in healthcare; we've got a gap in housing; we've got a gap in education; we've got a gap in income. Now, I would like to see, myself, how we can best encourage and inspire and educate kids who don't do as well as more advantaged children do in our state. And I believe that instead of just focusing on six million, which is California, focusing on six or seven hundred is better—it's a more manageable number of people, and I think all of the issues of the larger six million can be found in the subset of a charter school.

And there are schools that are doing much better than other schools, so we do have examples. But it's still, all these decades later, we have—there has been improvement. There has been an increase in the performance on state tests, but of course what happens is the tests are changed. We had something called the

TerraNova test, then we went to the STAR test, and now we're at the Common Core Smarter Balanced Tests. And so these are three separate regimes, and there's a turbulence. There's a churning in the education world, maybe driven by textbook publishers, maybe driven by the cult of innovation—whatever the case may be—or maybe by the frustration of not achieving what is desired. But I would say that the same debates that took place when Wilson Riles ran against Max Rafferty continues, with the same issues today as it did back in the 1970s.

16-00:10:53

Shafer:

How tough was it to attract quality teachers to Oakland?

16-00:10:56

Brown:

It's hard. First of all, the housing prices are very expensive. Now it's hard because the conditions are difficult. You know, the goal is to take whatever students apply—and even students that are disturbed and impaired, the goal is to mainstream them. And even when they're in class and create disturbances—it's very difficult to manage that. And I know that—well, first of all, I have nieces that are teachers, and so there's a frustration out there. And it's not paid anywhere near what the job is worth—and how tough it is. I think the general—I'd just say—I was going to say the general laxity, but maybe that's a little too old-fashioned a word. But somehow, there has to be a greater discipline.

Now, it may be that a lot of kids are not that interested in what the standards are. They'd be more interested in other types of learning, and we're trying to do that with career education, career technical education, but it's a continuing, churning of the latest idea, book, technology, program, teaching style, accountability measure, metrics—it's just bundle of ever-changing stories, that I've encountered since the day I ran for the junior college board and talked to some people from RAND about education. And then becoming governor and appointing Mike Kirst as the president of the State Board [of Education], he served eight years under my first administration, eight years under my second. And yet these same stories are told over and over again, and the reason why that continues is that most people haven't been around very long, so that they forget that this is an old story, not a new story.

So something doesn't work, pass a law. The law then leads to a regulation. Then after a decade or two there's so much regulation we try to pare back the regulation and tried something else. Then you try something else and they say, "Well, the schools—they're getting out of control. They're not performing. We need more state control." So you go back—we're kind of in that trend. Under the local-control formula, we stripped away a lot of categorical programs and prescriptions from the state, and gave more authority to the local school. Now people are saying, "Well, that authority's not being used right. The extra money's not going to where it is best needed." So now we need new rules. And new rules are commands from the bunker, from the capital, that have to be enshrined in either a personal email to the school, or a regulation, or a law at the legislature—or *all* of



that. And it *is* all of that, and the story then continues, and that's where we are today.

16-00:14:25

Shafer: When I talked to Libby Schaaf, she told me that—I asked her if you'd given her any advice when she became mayor. And she said something to the effect that—I'm paraphrasing, but, "He told me don't think you can fix the schools, because you can't."

16-00:14:39

Brown: Well, she hasn't.

16-00:14:40

Shafer: [laughing] She followed your advice. But I mean do you feel like that's—?

16-00:14:43

Brown: And what about in Los Angeles? [Mayor Antonio] Villaraigosa said he was going to fix the schools, and they just had a huge strike complaining about all sorts of things going on.

16-00:14:54

Shafer: Did you come into office as mayor thinking maybe you could have a bigger impact than you did?

16-00:14:59

Brown: Well, it goes back to a conversation that Ivan Illich told me about, with Bruno Kreisky, the Chancellor of Austria. And this guy, the Austrian president said to Ivan. He said, "Ivan, stay out of the school business." So that's been a cautionary light that I've had for many decades. But I'm *in* the school business, and very much so: the local control funding formula, that Proposition 30, the extra tax revenue; the fighting of the Obama Administration around the Race to the Top; the veto of the bill that would say that willful defiance is no longer a cause for expulsion. So I would say I'm up to my eyeballs in education. But I still recall the admonition—be careful of the education business, or don't get into it—but I'm into it.

Oh, by the way, I would just say, in general, that since the Vietnam War and since Watergate, and in the last, I don't know, thirty or forty years, there's great skepticism. *The Public Interest* magazine, that I think has ceased publication, but it would crank out all manner of critiques on education. There was an article that was actually called, "Nothing Works," about the prison systems—forget rehabilitation, it can't work. And I read much of that stuff, and it fit in with my general skeptical, doubting frame of mind. So that's kind of the environment. And we have, you know, President Trump, I think, operates in that environment, and is in some way a reaction to people who want more certitude, who feel the loss of roots, of boundaries, of structures that—they identify with the normal American way of living. So we're in a turbulent period that is expressed politically, but you can see it educationally, and you can see it in changing forms of behavior—and there it is. So that's what I've lived with in all the time I've been in politics, and

even though I see all these questions, it doesn't stop me from trying to provide answers.

16-00:17:39

Shafer: So when the Oakland School District got into trouble, Gray Davis was governor, and the school district got a loan of, I think, \$100 million, and that gave them control over the school district.

16-00:17:49

Brown: Yes.

16-00:17:50

Shafer: To what extent did you embrace that, think that was a good thing?

16-00:17:53

Brown: I thought it was a good thing. [Randolph E.] "Randy" Ward was the trustee. But here we are. It's not that easy to fix, so I think we're facing some of the same problems. I assume there's been some improvement. I haven't followed Oakland closely enough. But the trustee—he had to have a guard with him.

And so the reduction in students from 53,000 to 37,000 means you've got to close schools. But closing a school is closing a place of tradition, a place of memory, and that's not good either. It would be better if they could be left open and somehow worked at a lower overhead. But the way systems work, you can't just keep a school open on a lower overhead. What is needed now is incredible. It's not just teachers. You need all manner of assistants, counselors, this and that—and so it gets very expensive. But I see the closing of a school—it's like closing a church. This is where people grew up. Very important. So I understand the resistance. There's deep resistance to closing schools, but the money they have can't support the number of schools they currently have, unless they figure out another way. Maybe to share them with other institutions or something. So these are basic problems of declining enrollment that many inner cities, many city—urban centers face. And that's not just California. You can find it throughout the country. Baltimore, Detroit, just to name two.

16-00:19:43

Meeker: What was the degree of interaction you had with either Chaconas or Ward?

16-00:19:50

Brown: Not much.

16-00:19:51

Meeker: Not much?

16-00:19:52

Brown: Not much. Look, it's an autonomous government. The school board is elected by the people of the area, the jurisdiction, and they are in control. So it's just like me giving a call to Willie Brown and saying, "Willie, I have some advice for you." That's just unthinkable. It's not done. If I call the mayor of Berkeley and say, "Here, I've got some advice," they're not looking for advice. And you have

enough problems in your own city—just like you don't call the governor of Nevada. Now, sometimes we do. I talk about cap and trade, and climate change. But in general, people are focused on their own jurisdiction, and there's plenty—I mean there's something out of the Bible or something, "The evil of the day is sufficient thereof." And so the problems of our jurisdiction are enough to keep us busy.

16-00:20:45

Shafer: I was going to transition to some other things happening around this time. So—the dot-com bust happened during your first term. It was around 2000 roughly. It went on, but started then. What kind of consequences did that have for Oakland, in what you were trying to do there?

16-00:21:03

Brown: I can't—I don't recall. I don't know.

16-00:21:07

Shafer: Really?

16-00:21:08

Brown: Yeah, I don't think there were a lot of dot-com people—there weren't a lot of dot-com companies in Oakland.

16-00:21:14

Shafer: So it was more San Francisco probably?

16-00:21:16

Brown: Um—you know, some companies rose and fall, but—

16-00:21:21

Meeker: Well, there were a couple new Shorenstein buildings that were built downtown that they had trouble filling around that point in time.

16-00:21:27

Brown: Did they? But then they filled them.

16-00:21:29

Meeker: Well, eventually—right.

16-00:21:31

Brown: Well, that's the amazing thing. The economy roars back, at least it has up till now.

16-00:21:39

Meeker: Well, shortly after the dot-com bust, or really kind of in the same period of time, we have the attacks of 9/11. Can you recall what—

16-00:21:48

Brown: What—yeah, but I don't know 9/11, yeah, I don't know that Oakland—I think Oakland kept growing through all that period. Slowly, but it did.

16-00:21:59

Meeker: Well, 9/11—

16-00:22:00

Brown: Well, that made all the more important by we want to get people building downtown, get some cranes. At one point there were no cranes in Oakland. You look across to San Francisco, there are ten cranes. Or you look in other cities. So yeah, it really was a place where developers could not find justification for investing their money, and then it changed. I helped the change, but certainly the recovery of Silicon Valley, and its unprecedented expansion, spilled over. And that's a big part of what Oakland is about—and Berkeley too, for that matter.

16-00:22:38

Shafer: How much of the developers' reluctance to invest in Oakland do you think was just a lack of faith in leadership?

16-00:22:44

Brown: Well, that was true. But, also, the return on investment wasn't there. You put up a building, if you want to make it ten stories, well, then it's like a third more expensive when you go to a concrete building as opposed to a wooden frame. So they weren't ready to do that. That was a big deal, when someone built one in Jack London, and they went bankrupt. They had to bring in a new builder. The only things that were built, if you look in Oakland, if you went there in 1995 or 1998, it was government-subsidized building, senior housing. That was what they built, something that had government subsidy. There was nobody who said, "Oh, I'm going to take my money and go build something in Oakland." They didn't do that. But now, that has certainly become the rule. But they've done it at the expense—that now a lot of people are priced out.

16-00:23:43

Shafer: Yeah. One of the things you'd grappled with during this time was Jacques Barzagli.

16-00:23:47

Brown: Yeah.

16-00:23:48

Shafer: First of all, we've talked about how you met him and that—but what was he, what did he—I'm trying to think of how to say this. Like what role did he play in your career in politics?

16-00:24:01

Brown: Well, he was a provocative person. He was a great one to hash out ideas. He helped when I was governor. He was instrumental in establishing the California Arts Council, which was important. He attracted Gary Snyder, Peter Coyote. They had a level of flair and artistic capacity that I don't think it's ever had since then. And so I found him an interesting person to talk with. I don't find that many people that interesting.

16-00:24:48

Shafer: Why are you looking at me? [Meeker laughs] [Shafer laughs]

16-00:24:49

Brown: Yeah, well, I'm just telling you there's a certain mundane quality about ordinary interchanges. And I am attracted to people with fresh ideas or at least different perspectives, because I don't rely on just one point of view, and I don't, myself, like to have a point of view without challenging it, even myself. So I have always had—I mean just going to the seminary was a very against the grain kind of idea for me. But then leaving that very stable environment, where everybody thought more or less the same, and then all of a sudden—no, I'm thinking very differently. And then going to Berkeley and then to Yale Law School, I developed a certain curiosity and desire to probe into different things, whether it be books or people or different things. And when I found Synanon—I only visited a few times—I found it very interesting. Delancey Street, the Catholic Worker movement. These interested me.

16-00:26:13

Shafer: And he was a way of bouncing ideas—?

16-00:26:15

Brown: Well, he was an idea guy, yeah—a critic. He was certainly against the grain. He would have a response that other people would not, so *that's* valuable.

16-00:26:25

Shafer: Can you think of an example?

16-00:26:26

Brown: And as I said in my campaigns, I had these people, Richard Maullin, Tom Quinn, and Jacques, and there would often be three different points of view, so I found that useful. And as a politician, I sometimes would take some amalgam of all three.

16-00:26:41

Shafer: Was there kind of a—almost like a creative chaos, in a way?

16-00:26:44

Brown: Well, chaos doesn't sound attractive. But if you're totally programmed and structured, there's not much room for new ideas. In fact, Gregory Bateson inscribed his book *Mind and Nature*—he inscribed the copy that he gave to me, and in the front page it said, "The new only comes out of the random." So that sounds a little like chaos. And in Greek mythology, chaos precedes cosmos. So yeah, you need a certain random quality in order to let unexpected perspectives emerge, and we did a lot of things together. It was adventurous.

16-00:27:37

Shafer: Can you think of like an area that his thinking was really, in particular, provocative to you? Is there something—you mentioned the arts council, but was there a—?

16-00:27:46

Brown: No, I'd just say that he had a point of view that—and I had many different—Jodie Evans, her points of view have evolved in recent decades. But I don't have one set

of opinions that I associate with. Although there is a certain tendency, if you look at the people that interest me.

16-00:28:12

Shafer: Iconoclasts maybe?

16-00:28:13

Brown: Well, yeah, but very accomplished. Bateson, Illich, Gary Snyder, August Coppola—Francis Coppola’s brother. That guy seemed to know whatever you raised, Dante, Shakespeare, postmodernists. He’d read a *lot*. And, in fact, I don’t know that I’ve ever encountered anybody who had read as much and could tell me something. So I find that I like that. I like to look at—you know, even this book I just—*In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*. This is not on the KQED recommended list. But it’s interesting. It’s going into the issue of where are we, in the culture, economy, politics of 2019? So that interests me, but that was the same thing in 1975 when I said we’re going to bring a new spirit to Sacramento. Somebody asked, “What *is* this new spirit?” Well, it’ll unfold. So it’s an adventure, a discovery, trying to deal with the same problem we’re dealing with today, and that is the discontent that is roiling the American system of government—and the European. This is not something that is new. It’s been around, and as I say, that I am very taken with key ideas, and I mull them over for decades.

For example, I still recall [laughing]—maybe I’ve said it before in these talks, but Mark Schorer, the very famous teacher in Berkeley. My sister had him—I didn’t know that then, but I know it now. But I took his class in modern British literature. And I remember his last day on the stage. Did I mention that to you? Well, he would be smoking a cigarette, and he was up there in Dwinelle Plaza—Dwinelle Hall, one of those halls there. And he took a drag on his cigarette and he exhaled, and he said, “This is the way the world ends, on a downbeat.” No, he said, “This is the way this *class* ends, on a downbeat.” [Shafer laughs] And he took a drag, another drag on his cigarette, and he said, “But that’s the way it is.” [laughing] Well, that says okay, now what are we going to do about that? [Shafer laughs] And Bateson, in the *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, has an essay that says if we don’t shift our relationship to nature, to the overall ecology, that in twenty years you’re going to have mass destruction. Well, we didn’t have twenty years. That would have been 1990, but here we are in 2019 and we’re getting closer.

So there’s a general discontent that seems to be more intense than in other periods of history, but it calls forth a lot of fresh thinking or good thinking, and so it isn’t the cliché. You can’t pick up the average debate in Congress or Sacramento and say okay, I think we’re going to find the answer here. It’s not going to be there. It’s going to be more on the margins: the poets, the independent scientists. So that’s why I found Stewart Brand interesting. In fact, he came to—I heard him. His job was just to bring interesting people to talk in the governor’s office. And we had Ken Kesey, we had Fritz Schumacher, and we had Arthur Burns [two-time chair of the Federal Reserve], I believe—and Herman Kahn. A very diverse group of people. But out of all that conflict of different ideas, I try to perceive

what's a good path forward. Sometimes it has no application at all, but it's interesting. And sometimes it does.

16-00:32:31

Shafer: So in terms of Jacques, he ultimately left. You actually, I guess, asked him to leave, or he left—?

16-00:32:36

Brown: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I did.

16-00:32:38

Shafer: But he left the city.

16-00:32:39

Brown: No, I asked him to leave.

16-00:32:40

Shafer: Yeah, and there have been allegations of sexual harassment and inappropriate things that he had done.

16-00:32:43

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

16-00:32:46

Shafer: How aware of that were you? Did you ever talk to him about it?

16-00:32:49

Brown: Not really. First of all, there's been a real shift in cultural mores, you know. Men are being held to a standard that was not much of a—it was not the same standard thirty years ago. And that's all to the good, and that's where we are. So he definitely had a way that—that would not be acceptable today—or at least had a way then.

16-00:33:20

Shafer: And did you just—did you just feel like this is too much of a cost to you politically or—?

16-00:33:25

Brown: No, but he got into a verbal argument with his wife, and she called the police, so I thought that was enough. That was it.

16-00:33:38

Shafer: Yeah. Did Anne have any role in any of that?

16-00:33:41

Brown: No. I mean Anne had her own ideas, which you can ask her. She's very clear and doesn't take too long to come to conclusions. [laughter]

16-00:33:58

Meeker: Did that end your friendship with Barzaghi?

16-00:34:01

Brown: Yeah, yeah. It did. Well, I don't want to get into all of that, but I think in the governorship there was more room, there was more—I think there was more scope for him to make a contribution. Municipal government is a narrower kind of venue, and there just really wasn't a role that would work at that point in time. Very different than the 1970s, where we had a freewheeling—it was just a different thing. I mean we didn't have Ken Kesey lecturing at Oakland City Hall. It just wasn't the same thing—it worked, I think, in the governor's office, and afterwards we did certain things. He came with me, went to Japan, so that was interesting.

16-00:35:00

Shafer: Do you think because you knew him for so long and he was such an integral part of your, you know, personal and political life, that you had, perhaps, blind spots about him?

16-00:35:13

Brown: Well, I don't think, he didn't—I think probably more, I think, over time, either he became, he did more—he became less acceptable, or the world changed, or both. But I think it was different, whenever that was, 2004 or '05, than it was earlier.

16-00:35:42

Shafer: Yeah, and so—when you say he changed or he became less acceptable, do you mean that his behavior changed, or like it got worse, or—?

16-00:35:51

Brown: Well, first of all, I don't think there was a real contribution, didn't really fit. And I think he probably experienced that, and I think that frustrated him. He was a bit too controversial, so that's just the way that goes down. But as far as his behavior, I'm not going to comment on that.

16-00:36:16

Shafer: Yeah, what—what was it like having to tell somebody who'd been so close to you—?

16-00:36:21

Brown: Well, that's not—it's not easy. But on the other hand, it was such an obvious—once you call the police on a domestic violence claim, even if the wife then withdraws it or it doesn't turn out to much, that was enough.

16-00:36:37

Shafer: Crossed a line.

16-00:36:38

Brown: And I think—yeah, and I think there was a—yeah. So, yeah—these whole discussions about men and women and what—harassment, they're always difficult to deal with. And they're not always as obvious as they become later, when you go around and you start asking people, “Well, what did he say?” And, “What happened?” Then the stories come out in ways that certainly didn't—don't appear before one of these incidents.



16-00:37:15

Shafer: So you're up for reelection, and you run—you had token opposition, I think, from Wilson Riles, Jr., and you got 63 percent of the vote. Did you see an irony at all, in the fact that you were portrayed as the conservative in that race?

16-00:37:33

Brown: Well, I think Oakland was changing. I think the stagnation that was due a lot to the economy, and also maybe to the politics of the time. But there was a real felt need in action, in development, in stronger public-safety measures. But over time, then that was experienced by some as, as not what—going against things. They didn't like that. So Riles became the advocate for rent—we *had* rent control, but for greater rent control and for—it wasn't very clear where he was going, but he was the advocate of the discontent from a more left perspective. But I still—we got a lot of liberal votes, I would think. But it becomes—what did you say—is it paradoxical?

16-00:38:36

Shafer: Well, did you find it ironic, you know, that you were portrayed as the conservative in that race, or relatively conservative.

16-00:38:43

Brown: Well, I don't think I was portrayed—the conservative/liberal didn't work in Oakland.

16-00:38:49

Shafer: Shades of blue, I guess.

16-00:38:50

Brown: Well, no, I don't think it was that ideology. It was—Riles, there were specific issues. The only one I can remember is rent control, and maybe there was another one.

16-00:39:01

Shafer: Was there sort of a discontent in the African-American community?

16-00:39:03

Brown: Yeah.

16-00:39:04

Shafer: That was part of it as well?

16-00:39:05

Brown: Yes. I think that was part of it, definitely.

16-00:39:08

Shafer: And what exactly was the complaint?

16-00:39:10

Brown: Well, I met a woman, an African-American woman, getting off a plane in New York City. I remember walking up the gangway. She said to me, "Mayor, why are you driving the blacks out of Oakland?" I said, "I'm not doing that." She said,

“Well, you’re raising all the rents.” And she, I think, felt *I* was raising the rents. But the rents were rising because Oakland was becoming more attractive as a place, and there was all this surplus money flowing out of the growing prosperity. But that was felt as a change. Once I compared it, I said I looked at the outward migration of African Americans from Richmond and from San Francisco—and from Oakland. And it turned out that by a slight amount, there was a greater percentage of migration from Richmond and San Francisco than there was from Oakland. And yet the people in Oakland are not looking at Richmond, they’re just looking—“oh, there’s fewer members of my black church, or now there’s all these new people coming in,” whether they be Spanish-speaking immigrants or white yuppies. The world was changing, and it has continued to change, so that creates its own feeling, its own reaction.

16-00:40:31

Shafer: And that’s part of the sort of dynamism you wanted, isn’t it, in Oakland? You know, to have more of a sense of—

16-00:40:35

Brown: Well, that’s what I wanted, but I certainly didn’t want things to become so expensive that you can’t even have retail stores. All you can have is, you know Silicon Valley offices with all the enormous money they make, and that’s happening in San Francisco. How do you even have a little grocery store or a shop if somebody from Facebook or Google, or the future Facebook and Google, can pay so much more? So there is a dilemma here. The prosperity has its own negative consequence. Of course, the other side is if there is no prosperity, and you have 10 percent unemployment and you have empty spaces, that’s another problem. And you can see that in parts of Detroit. I saw that in Baltimore when I was campaigning in ’92. I saw it in the South Bronx in 1976 when I was running for president, just appalling rubble, just incredible. Children playing in what used to be a stairway, it’s just a rubble of bricks, but still connected to a brownstone. So there is this decline, and then there’s a rise. But the rise comes from a market-driven influx of capital, and it also has its own destructive consequences. And that’s what people felt in Oakland. Some people felt that in Oakland—other people didn’t.

16-00:42:01

Shafer: Well, and that—another word for what that woman on the plane was describing is *gentrification*, right?

16-00:42:07

Brown: Right, but that’s an interesting word. Does that mean anything that’s better, that’s come from a nongovernment source? I mean there’s a certain ideology there. If your medicine has to be government medicine, if your housing has to be government housing, if your schools have to be government schools, that’s a very different America than we’ve had up till now. But there are people who, whether they realize it or not, that’s what they’re advocating. Now, on the other side you can point to capitalism, the rise of the 1 percent. The CEOs are now making many, many, *many* times more in their income than the average worker in their

company. These are all big problems—scandals. And how to manage that is what we’re listening to—how Trump has one way, and Bernie Sanders has another way. And neither way is acceptable to a majority of the people yet.

16-00:43:05

Shafer: You won that election handily. But you also lost some support in the flatlands, I think, you know to Riles, from four years earlier.

16-00:43:16

Brown: Well, I think a third of the precincts I did not win. In fact, I went over and—I looked at the worst precinct. I think I got 36 percent of the vote. I went around and I looked and I saw in one place, it had a peace flag hanging on the window. And someone else down the street, they said, “Oh yeah, this guy was—he used to sell—provide us our dope.” I think they said that it was pretty convenient. Hmm, so okay, this is a different. [laughing] This was right near Berkeley. Oakland near Berkeley on Shattuck Avenue. I walked down that street, and I said okay, they’re not going to like a crackdown by the police or—whatever.

And that’s still reverberating to this day. You had the Occupy movement. They wanted to sleep over in the city—in front of the city hall for several weeks. And then finally they got them out of there. We still have these—although you have more—you have a lot of unresolved dilemmas. And prosperity is a dilemma and *lack* of prosperity is a dilemma. Either way you look at it, you’ve got to manage, but in a different way.

So when you’re looking at that vote, I thought that was some disapproval. But the fact is, the overwhelming majority—by a *huge* amount, liked what I was doing and continue to like it. Now, that doesn’t mean there isn’t a vocal group. But I don’t see any way, as a politician, that I can be the favorite of a third instead of the 60 percent. Someone might say, “Well, we’d like the third—what the third thinks is really what the right path is.” Well, that might be. That’d be a good course to teach at the local junior college, but it’s not a viable governing road map.

16-00:45:16

Shafer: But it’s interesting you actually deliberately went to the precinct you did the worst in.

16-00:45:19

Brown: Yeah.

16-00:45:20

Shafer: Like what were you—?

16-00:45:21

Brown: I just wanted to see what it looked like. [laughing] What are these people thinking?

16-00:45:23

Shafer: Did you knock on any doors? [laughing]

16-00:45:26

Brown: I also went to the precinct that I got 85 percent, and that was up in Montclair. And I said okay, there's a difference there.

16-00:45:31

Shafer: Did you knock on any doors? [laughing]

16-00:45:32

Brown: No, no. I just, I just smelled the environment. I can figure out what's what. But these were the differences. Because the downtown people—well, it's almost like—I don't want to call it a game, but there are *roles* that are socially assigned. And there's the role of the dissident, the role of the opposition, and then there's the role of the majority, of the status quo. And I was working with the status quo, or I was working with a governing majority.

16-00:46:08

Meeker: So when you were walking in that neighborhood in North Oakland, and you're saying okay, these people are sending a message that says we feel like we're not being—our problems are not being paid attention to—

16-00:46:18

Brown: Yeah.

16-00:46:19

Meeker: —did, in your second term did you say—okay, maybe I should pay some more attention to this?

16-00:46:25

Brown: Well, I am paying attention, but the murder rate is also going up. It was rising in the last few years that I was mayor. I said what the heck—how do we take care of that? And so that was a challenge. It's like schooling. What can the government do, and what do the people do? And now the crime rate is going down, and the Oakland police have been under the control of the federal monitor, for now, fourteen years. And they're still not viewed as having achieved the culture that the federal court wants. So these are dilemmas. People want public safety, but they don't want any police misconduct. And so these are issues that people have to face. So when you said *a message*, what *was* the message? I didn't say, you know, what more are we talking about? I think a lot of these things are symbolic. There may be—I think people vote, they identify. So possibly, if you've got a peace symbol in the window, then somebody's saying the government is insensitive. It's not listening to us. Maybe that fits the way *you* feel about things.

16-00:47:58

Shafer: Or you have a military academy.

16-00:48:00

Brown: Yeah, but I don't think many people know about that. I think the military academy is *totally* obscure.

16-00:48:05

Shafer: Really?

16-00:48:06

Brown: Yes, no doubt. I mean maybe some people—nobody's thinking about the Oakland Military Institute, except me. I'm thinking a lot about it, but I don't think they are. And people don't know about it. You can ask them.

16-00:48:18

Shafer: Really? I'm surprised.

16-00:48:19

Brown: Yeah. Well, because you're so engaged in the KQED world, you think people know those things. [Shafer laughs] But go down the street and ask five people. Some of them won't even know what KQED is. [laughing]

16-00:48:34

Shafer: Well, *that* wouldn't surprise me.

16-00:48:35

Brown: Yeah, well, because we live in different—the very, the knowledge consumers, the information consumers, are a class apart. And then there's the ordinary people—they're getting a different message.

16-00:48:49

Shafer: You mentioned the court oversight of the police department.

16-00:48:53

Brown: Yeah.

16-00:48:54

Shafer: And then of course the state stepped in with the schools. And when you were governor the last time the prisons were also—had oversight.

16-00:49:01

Brown: Right.

16-00:49:03

Shafer: What are your thoughts about that? You know, the courts coming in, Thelton Henderson with the police department, for example, and really imposing their will?

16-00:49:11

Brown: Well, I still have questions about the police department. How to understand the best way to police. And there's a real challenge to how we do that. And it has been a challenge since the Detroit riots, where the police invaded—came in and arrested people for some minor gambling or something. And then the Watts riot,

which was the highway patrol arresting some guy for breaking the driving rules. And then things explode. So this is hard stuff.

I would say, about the intervention of the federal courts in the prisons was absolutely a positive outcome. I thought the money spending was out of control. But the fact that the Supreme Court, five to four, validated the idea the California prisons were overcrowded and had to be reduced—had to be reduced because people weren't going to build a new prison. And then that, implemented by the three very liberal judges, *very*, very liberal judges—that outside force was absolutely necessary to what we did in the realignment and the reduction of prisons. It's extraordinarily hard to reverse. In other words, California had 25,000 people in prison, maybe a few more—it fluctuated. And then, by a series of laws and initiatives, all attempting to crack down on crime, the prisons exploded 500-600 percent, depending from what date you measure it.

And now to go the other way, because you're always talking about a dangerous person—a Willie Horton, the proverbial axe murderer. Because if you start reducing from 173 [thousand], say to 125 [thousand]—what is that? That's over 40,000, 45,000. *Of* that 45,000, that maybe was imprisoned, how many of them are going to do something really bad? The odds are those 40 [thousand]—if you were picking odds, you *know* something bad has to happen. And not *one* thing, many things. So once that happens, then people start screaming. People will run against the candidate, will blame him. And so then the opposite is lock more and more people up. But even if you've locked up 300,000, there's a million felonies a year. There's 2,000 murders a year. You know, less than half are ever arrested, and a smaller number are—

16-00:52:05

Shafer:

Solved.

16-00:52:06

Brown:

A lot of—most of them are convicted. I'm just saying, it's very hard to manage, because one crime on television, repeated over and over again, becomes the prevailing reality. And if you had something to do—by releasing that person, it's your fault. Just like [Gov. Michael] Dukakis; even though he had no idea about that weekend furlough, that was the [1988 presidential] campaign, and he lost. So everybody knows that. So the only logic to prevent that is to have endless increases in prisons. Now, that was the rule until the mood shifted. And it shifted because—you know, you can only go so far, and then you usually get a backlash or a reaction. So now the word *mass incarceration* has been put into the vocabulary. And with the Court, and with the mood, things have changed.

But I can tell you, in getting bills passed as governor, particularly the second time—very difficult. It really took all the skill and effort at my command to get, for example, the felony murder rule changed a little bit. To get the idea that you can have a twenty-five-year enhancement if you use a gun in the commission of a violent crime—to get that restored to a matter of discretion by the judge, instead

of being mandatory. That was very difficult to make that happen. So just in general, this is a very fraught area, and the police as well. So the outside intervention becomes an autocratic imposition on the popular will, and it is—I think it *is* necessary. But now, when it gets to something like busing, does that work? No, that certainly broke down in California.

16-00:54:10

Shafer: Judge Thelton Henderson oversaw the police department. And—you know, he was pretty tough on the city for—

16-00:54:16

Brown: No, he was.

16-00:54:17

Shafer: And here he's a liberal icon. African-American judge. What are your thoughts about him?

16-00:54:23

Brown: Well, I visited Judge [Henderson]. I thought we were ready to get out of the case. He didn't think so. And I thought well, we're doing everything we can. We're spending more money on health care. We spend \$18,000 a person on healthcare, more than any prison, I'm sure, in the world—and more than most people in the free community. We give everything, from sex-change operations to colonoscopies to, you know, psychological examinations. This is first-class healthcare. Okay, far better than they're going to get when they go back on the street.

16-00:54:59

Shafer: But Henderson was the police department, wasn't he?

16-00:55:01

Brown: *And* the prisons.

16-00:55:02

Shafer: Oh, he did both? Oh, that's right.

16-00:55:0

Brown: The Plata case. [*Brown v. Plata*, 2011] But now—I came, over time, to realize that without the courts we could not have any real prison reform. It can't happen. So the democratic system is such that the vicious crimes that are committed by the few, become the threat to the many. And without a court saying thus it shall be, the politicians will never do it.

16-00:55:35

Shafer: You think that's true for the police department as well?

16-00:55:38

Brown: Yeah. But, now, how you manage the police department, that's always a question in my mind. What do you do? You've got vicious criminals out there that kill people, that rob, maim, steal. How do you deal with these people? They're not

following the Marquess of Queensberry rules. You know? They're not Eagle Scouts. And I don't know the answer to that. They're working it out in Oakland, and maybe we'll know in ten more years, after they've been through it.

Now, with all the reforms they're putting on—they have a lot of reforms. When you draw your gun, you have to file a report—just to *draw* your gun. That's called a *use of force*. And then you've got to stop and call in the sergeant. And if you're on the street, anybody in an apartment house that might have seen it, you're going to go knock on doors and contact witnesses that you think saw the use of force, and then fill out the report. Well, that being the case, how many times are people going to draw their gun? And if they're not going to draw their gun, are they going to get out of their car, or are they going to keep on driving? So that's called *de-policing*. Now, other people would say it's working.

And, in fact, in Oakland the crime has come down. So I'd say this is a matter that warrants *careful* study, and I'm not, since I don't have a police department. I would be in it a lot more. But there is something strange in a court order that goes on fourteen years, has the same two lawyers represent the plaintiffs, who sit in meetings every three months, quarterly, and they discuss their improvements. And they're still working on a computer that will identify misconduct. And again, it's this quest for endless data. We want to know early signs of police misconduct, but they never can get that computer right. They can never get it inputted—this takes a lot of work. It's parallel to, by the way, the quest for data in education, where now the authorities want to get the data in preschool, maybe in childcare, and get that data—and with the data, they're going to change behavior and get the people who weren't doing what we want to start *doing* what we want. And that's the same thing in the police department, this endless data.

But what often turns out is when you know more and more, it doesn't make you more satisfied. But it makes you want to know—you're always identifying problems, and it's never quite working. So this idea that you have 700 policemen / policepeople, and you're getting the data in a constant flow. It's inputted, it's managed, and everything is just hunky-dory—well, that's a utopian idea, but I don't think it's happened yet. Until that happens, they're going to be under the thumb of the judge, maybe like the prisons.

But I like the Oakland cops. I like the Oakland Police [Officers'] Association. I always had a good relationship with them, and that was my sense of what a mayor was. But that was before a lot of—before all these killings that have been all over the county, and before Ferguson and all that. So it's now a different environment, and I think time will tell if they can actually work toward a viable reformed police department.

16-00:59:22

Shafer:

I mean that's kind of a general theme of government, isn't it? And democracy, where—it's a pendulum.



16-00:59:28

Brown: Yeah.

16-00:59:29

Shafer: You know, like something terrible happens, and you pass three strikes. And then you see—but that was excessive. Or you go from Bush to Obama or—

16-00:59:34

Brown: Yeah, that's exactly what's happening.

16-00:59:36

Shafer: And I mean in laws, passing laws as well, in government—governing. You just—you do what you think is the right thing, or it's a reaction to something. But like—what you did with criminal justice reform. You came back to change some of the things you did the first time.

16-00:59:51

Brown: Yeah, but a lot of things that were done were done after I left. I created the fixed sentencing, and that had two major flaws that I didn't fully appreciate. One is that by having a fixed sentence, you take away the possibility of incentives for good behavior, namely reduced time, based on the behavior *in* prison. That's opposite of a fixed sentence. And the second thing, the flaw of the fixed sentence, was that the legislature did the fixing. And therefore, based on any bad crime or news stories, more new crimes and greater punishments will be added endlessly. And that, starting in 1980-'81, it continued. It never stopped. So we went from twelve prisons to thirty-four prisons. And in fact, the latest prison was built under the receiver. It's supposed to be a hospital prison in Stockton. So that's the thirty-fourth, I think, prison. That's a big number. So when is enough enough? And in some minds, the state's gone too far. And they want to go back to more incarceration. But that's going to run into a lot of heartburn. So I don't see that happening as yet. I don't see it happening, and I think our prison systems reinforce crime. I think there's a lot of room for more reform on who goes to prison, what they do in prison, how long they stay there. I think we're still at a very primitive stage in our incarceration business.

16-01:01:38

Shafer: So at some point you decide you're going to run for the attorney general.

16-01:01:42

Brown: Yeah.

16-01:01:44

Shafer: To what extent—?

16-01:01:45

Brown: Well, I was termed out. I termed myself out, since I put on my own term limits as part of the strong mayor initiative.

16-01:01:52

Shafer: How did you decide to run for AG?

- 16-01:01:56  
Brown: How did I decide?
- 16-01:01:57  
Shafer: Yeah, I mean like, or—?
- 16-01:01:58  
Brown: Well, tell me—give me another choice.
- 16-01:02:00  
Shafer: Well, as I was saying, well, did you—?
- 16-01:02:01  
Brown: These things fall into place, you know? Something's available, and I'm a lawyer, so—
- 16-01:02:10  
Meeker: Well, in 2004, there's speculation that you were interested in Barbara Boxer's senate seat. The guy who wrote the Oakland ecopolis article suggested that you were even considering a presidential run in 2004.
- 16-01:02:27  
Brown: Well, I always consider runs for a lot of things. But it didn't seem viable.
- 16-01:02:31  
Shafer: Which one?
- 16-01:02:33  
Brown: Running for president/running for the senate. See, I've had the good fortune of running for offices for which there was no popular incumbent.
- 16-01:02:48  
Shafer: That's a good strategy.
- 16-01:02:49  
Brown: That's called timing. It's called luck. So Bill Lockyer was termed out. Okay, so that's—
- 16-01:02:59  
Shafer: Was that a job you wanted?
- 16-01:03:01  
Brown: Yeah, I thought it'd be good.
- 16-01:03:03  
Shafer: Why?
- 16-01:03:04  
Brown: Just because I'm a lawyer. I'm interested in legal questions. Anne was a lawyer, and we talk a lot about law. And it worked out very well, because she played a real role there—unpaid role, but a role that was well respected within the office. And she knows how to run a law firm.

- 16-01:03:24  
Shafer: Talk about the role she had in the campaign.
- 16-01:03:27  
Brown: Well, it's just simple—the campaign for attorney general?
- 16-01:03:31  
Shafer: Yeah.
- 16-01:03:32  
Brown: Well, when I told her I wanted her to run the campaign, she said, “I never ran a campaign.” I said, “Look, I know all about campaigns, and you know all about management. Put the two together—we can't miss.” And that's exactly what happened.
- 16-01:03:43  
Shafer: And like to what extent were you concerned, as you were running, that—you know, the rising murder rate in Oakland could be a problem?
- 16-01:03:51  
Brown: Yeah, that was a big problem. It didn't turn out to be, but it was a big problem.
- 16-01:03:54  
Shafer: You were concerned about that?
- 16-01:03:55  
Brown: I am concerned—I was, yes, and I never felt that the police leadership was doing all that it could. I felt that if you had a guy like Bratton, we'd bring the crime rate down. But even today, the way you do that—stop and frisk, focused policing—those things now are more problematical.
- 16-01:04:18  
Shafer: Yeah. Before we get into the AG stuff, your mom died right around this time, 2002. She went to Lowell, I think, High School?
- 16-01:04:26  
Brown: Yeah.
- 16-01:04:27  
Shafer: She went to Berkeley.
- 16-01:04:28  
Brown: Yeah.
- 16-01:04:29  
Shafer: Something not a lot of women did during that era.
- 16-01:04:32  
Brown: And she graduated when she was nineteen, I think.

16-01:04:34

Shafer: Yeah. Talk about your mom. What does she mean to you, and what role does she play in the family?

16-01:04:43

Brown: Well, this was the traditional 1940s/1950s role of a woman taking care of the family, taking care of the house, while my father, as we used to say, made the money. And I remember driving the car with my mother and we passed the [San Francisco] Mint, and she said that I said, "Oh, that's where they make money. Is that where Dad works?" [laughter] She said, "No, he makes money a different way." I guess he was a lawyer then. So she was there. We had a very traditional family. We had dinner every night, and the mother and father were there—except when my father was out, which became more the case when he was running for attorney general. She organized vacations and organized the dinners, bought the furniture. My father just did his political work. That was what he did, and she did everything else. It was a different kind of world. I've heard my sister, I think—or maybe my mother, I can't remember—that she liked the house on Magellan because it was a block away from West Portal Grammar School, so we could all walk there, which we did. So she planned. But, to the best of my knowledge, she never *came* to West Portal.

16-01:06:05

Shafer: You just walked.

16-01:06:06

Brown: We walked, ourselves. So my mother didn't have to engage in all that stuff.

16-01:06:12

Shafer: You know, I think—all kids, after they grow up they think of what they got from each parent, you know, if the parents were around. Like what do you think you got from—?

16-01:06:21

Brown: I have a hard time figuring that out. Yeah, I don't know what—I'd say the main thing is a certain confidence that life has an orderly structure. Because for growing up, there weren't any traumas or any turbulence. Things were very much just one day after the next. It all kind of was working in that middle-class world. And yeah, I don't know what I would say for—

16-01:07:04

Shafer: What about your—like frugality?

16-01:07:06

Brown: Well, that's just the way things *were*. You know, in 1945 there was rationing in California. And we didn't have suburbs yet. The suburb boom hadn't started; hadn't had any cars built since 1941. So it was a simpler—you didn't go out to dinner. Going to a movie—maybe you'd go on Saturday. The kids would go. My family didn't go.

16-01:07:35

Shafer: But I mean your—I think your frugality has followed you throughout your career.

16-01:07:39

Brown: Well, but it was a simpler life. You didn't have that much stuff. I remember there was a little boy, a boy that was in my class in West Portal. I remember going to his house. His father was a doctor, and he had a whole room full of toys and things—and wow! I'd never seen anything like that, but that was not common. There just wasn't that much stuff around.

I remember taking a box, a cardboard box, and playing in it when I was very young, like a little machine or something. Playing with a cardboard box, or taking a can and putting a waxed string on it to make a walkie-talkie. There wasn't stuff. You didn't have new stuff. It was a big deal when they—we had an old refrigerator, and they got a new one. Oh boy! We got a new one—I think we got one new one, and we got a new stove—but that was it. From my consciousness, being in that Magellan Ave. house, 1941, leaving seminary in '56, there wasn't a lot of change. So now, when you can go into these stores—Walmart, Amazon—endless opportunities to buy millions of different little objects. It's a different world. So it does seem more alien, that's all.

I don't know if my mother was frugal. We weren't exuberant in the spending, and they didn't have money to *be* exuberant. They had to be careful. My grandfather, I think on my father's side, died without funds. He had to be supported by his four children. My other grandfather, he died—well, first of all, my grandmother, my mother's mother died, and my father had to take care of the widower, my grandfather. So life was just kind of more basic. You didn't have the surplus that we have today.

16-01:10:08

Shafer: And what about your mother's attitude about your father running for DA? Like how does she—?

16-01:10:12

Brown: I can't—I don't think—that was just, I don't think there was an attitude. He was just running for DA.

16-01:10:20

Shafer: Well, I had read she was not—she didn't want him to do it.

16-01:10:22

Brown: Oh, did she? I don't know. I have no idea. She never expressed that. I don't think she expressed that—or attorney general. Now, maybe yeah, running for reelection—I don't know. She might—maybe not have liked it. See, I knew she liked being the first lady. I think she liked that. So there wasn't a big discussion. You have to understand. You can't read today's world—the parents did not interfere or partner in our games or schooling. And the family did not give my father advice on what he should be doing. That just didn't show up. So when I read about politicians who say, "I have to check with my family," I have no

experience of that. (a) I don't have a family, and (b) that wasn't the experience that I had growing up.

16-01:11:15

Shafer: Nobody asked you.

16-01:11:16

Brown: Nobody asked me. No, it wouldn't even be thinkable. It would be—not even thinkable. Just like I find this business of parents taking their kids on a tour of colleges—I have no experience in that. Ours was pretty simple. My sister went to Berkeley. I don't know—she just went to Berkeley. I don't know if there was a tour or not. I applied to Berkeley and Santa Clara. I wanted to go to Santa Clara. My parents wanted me to go to Berkeley, but I went to Santa Clara. But there was no tour involved. So there was more of a demarcation. There was, you know, shopping—you went to the store several times a week. You didn't have big refrigerators. We didn't have a freezer. You had a little thing, a little compartment in the refrigerator, but you didn't have a freezer. So the world has really changed in the meals taken outside, in the travel for entertainment and vacations, for the objects that are bought and paid for. This is a very different world than the 1940s and '50s in which I grew up. So—a little backward maybe, in the ways of today.

16-01:12:33

Meeker: During your second term as mayor, the state of California experienced some pretty important stresses in terms of the energy crisis as well as the state budget crisis.

16-01:12:44

Brown: We did when I was governor too. I remember—'73, I was secretary of state. I remember that's when I got my Plymouth. Frank Jordan had a Cadillac, which I was driving around. I kind of liked my Cadillac. When I took out Natalie Wood, at least I could pick her up in a Cadillac. [laughter] But then when the energy crisis came, I turned it in. I said, "I'd better get a more modest car." So I got a Plymouth. That's where the Plymouth started.

16-01:13:15

Meeker: Did the state budget crisis or energy crisis have much impact on you and your governance of the city of Oakland?

16-01:13:22

Brown: Well, that was '78 when that happened, '79?

16-01:13:23

Meeker: No, I'm talking the 2003-2004—

16-01:13:27

Shafer: The brownouts and stuff.

16-01:13:28

Brown: Oh, the brownouts—no. No, didn't have an effect. That I can remember.

16-01:13:35

Meeker: But this then also parlays into the discontent with Governor Gray Davis, and his ultimate recall. Were you engaging much with Governor Davis at this point in time?

16-01:13:51

Brown: No, no.

16-01:13:53

Meeker: Even though he was your former chief of staff?

16-01:13:55

Brown: Yeah, well, it's—yeah, not particularly. I think he supported the Oakland Military Institute and appeared at the hearing before the state board. That was a very important move, so that was helpful.

16-01:14:13

Meeker: What about when he is subject to the recall? You didn't decide to throw your hat in the ring and—?

16-01:14:20

Brown: No, I didn't get involved in that.

16-01:14:23

Meeker: Did you make any public pronouncement in terms of endorsements of either him or—?

16-01:14:29

Brown: I can't remember. I try not to get involved in everything. The term that is used is: don't bark at every truck that comes down the street. [laughing] Pick your trucks. Now, some people would say that's too limited a role. But I can tell you, if you're on everything, you're going to get scattered and diffused and—

16-01:14:59

Meeker: What were your impressions of Arnold Schwarzenegger when he announces on *The Tonight Show* that he's going to—

16-01:15:06

Brown: I didn't see *The Tonight Show*. I'm not a great TV watcher, except for news, that I can't even look at—although less now. What did I say about—just that he, you know, I liked his accent. [laughter] I think he presented himself well. It's interesting. I mean that's different than wonky policy-oriented stuff. You know, there's a lot of that in the Democratic Party, because, you know, maybe ideas are important or *policies* are important. There's that word *policy*, which I don't care for. But Arnold, like Reagan, presented himself in a more interesting human way. It was more like a movie, so it's more pleasant to watch. It's a drama. You're having drama here. So if you're not good at drama, you're going to come over—you're going to come across as dull. By the way, that is a difference, with television where you can actually watch it, and no television, where you read about it in the newspaper. I mean there's always been a certain drama in politics. I

think Jimmy Walker, didn't he—the mayor of New York. Didn't he do tap dancing or—?

16-01:16:32

Meeker: The Gentleman Jimmy Walker! The nightclub mayor.

16-01:16:36

Brown: You've always got to have a certain amount of showbiz, so Arnold had that.

16-01:16:40

Shafer: Hmm. What did you, I mean he did the whole—we're going to blow up the boxes and are going to get rid of the car tax, which caused a big hole in the—

16-01:16:50

Brown: Yeah, but nobody knew what that was all about.

16-01:16:54

Shafer: But did you, as someone who was a student of government, someone who'd been in government, think this guy is really simplistic?

16-01:16:59

Brown: No.

16-01:17:01

Shafer: Really?

16-01:17:03

Brown: No, because, first of all, this budget is very remote. Very few people understand the damn budget—very few, even in government. So the fact that he says blow up the—no, I certainly didn't think he was going to blow up the boxes. I saw that as rhetorical, because are you going to blow up the Fish & Game [California Department of Fish and Wildlife]? Are you going to blow up the police? The highway patrol? Are you going to blow up the finance department? No. In fact, government has a structure, so if there's a discontent, you want to say we're going to do zero-based budget or we're going to blow up the boxes. Oh, those are nice things to say, but the inertia of government is overwhelming.

16-01:17:47

Shafer: What do you mean by that?

16-01:17:49

Brown: I mean it tends—what is done, tends to *continue* to be done.

16-01:17:54

Shafer: By the bureaucracy?

16-01:17:56

Brown: Well—unless you're going to reinvent everything. I mean do you wake up in the morning and say, "I think I'm going to try on a new identity. I'm going to change my name, I'm going to do the—." No, you have continuity rather than change—unless there's a crisis.



16-01:18:10

Meeker: So when the recall gets on the ballot, do you think here's the citizens of the state of California going a little crazy again? Or do you think that this was an appropriate—?

16-01:18:21

Brown: I don't think in those terms.

16-01:18:23

Meeker: No?

16-01:18:23

Brown: It just was. I can't remember how I—it was kind of amazing, because it had never happened before.

16-01:18:32

Meeker: So at least there was some surprise that okay, here's something new?

16-01:18:35

Brown: Yeah, well it's a *big* surprise.

16-01:18:39

Shafer: Right—and also right around this time you closed *We the People*, I think, and you moved in with Anne.

16-01:18:47

Brown: Well, she had lived at *We the People*. She'd already moved in.

16-01:18:49

Shafer: But you moved somewhere—you moved together.

16-01:18:50

Brown: Moved to 27th and Telegraph.

16-01:18:51

Shafer: Yeah. What difference did having a consistent relationship like that—?

16-01:18:58

Brown: Oh, I mean it's just the difference between *not* having a consistent relationship. I mean I don't know what—

16-01:19:04

Shafer: Your sister has told me that if you had married her earlier, you would have been president.

16-01:19:07

Brown: Well, that's probably true. But she wouldn't have wanted to marry me probably, or I didn't want to get married. So I don't know. I can't speculate on that. Definitely makes a difference. It's been, it's always been, it's been very exciting, very—it's been good in every sense. So we've been working together very closely.

16-01:19:35

Shafer: She challenges you a lot?

16-01:19:37

Brown: I don't think she challenges me. She *cooperates* with me. [laughter] But that's in part—I mean we're not stuck in opinion for no good reason. If someone has a, if you have a, say—I can think of something. And if she says, "Now, wait a minute." Well, okay, if she's right, she's right. She's very flexible. I don't want to use the phrase, I don't like the phrase *evidence based*, but we do look at reality—what is the nature of the case? So that makes for so you can work out things—you don't have to have too many disputes. And a sense of what's important and what isn't. So some people get very excited about silliness—we like this table, [tapping table] but we don't like that table, so let's really fight about it. Well, we don't do that. We generally agree. I mean when we talked about what kind of a car are we going to get, you know, all electric—well, we got a partially electric car. But she wanted this car. I didn't. I said, "Well, I don't know. We should be getting a different car." But after a while—fine. It turns out, we were hauling a bunch of stuff the other day, and I said, "You're right. We needed a car with a lot of room in the back." [laughing] So, I've learned. I think neither one of us are so stuck that we get hung up on things in a way that would cause friction. There's not much friction.

16-01:21:15

Shafer: Yeah. You said you don't like the phrase *evidence based*. Why?

16-01:21:20

Brown: Uh—because I don't think—they talk about we want courses, we want methods, that are evidence based. Okay, I don't think there's that much evidence based, like on—rehabilitation is a big evidence based—that's the one. Since you don't know the difference between right and wrong, get evidence. So we'll have science tell us. But usually in social science, there's a lot of slippage. It's not like two plus two equals four or gravity falls so many feet per second per second. And therefore, I think you have to formulate what you want to do and not wait for some evidence based. Although you have to see if something is working.

I like the idea of getting the facts, but I think there's a certain fetishizing of what people think are evidence—think is evidence. I don't think we always know. What is the evidence-based way of having a childcare center? Everything is now referable to something that they call evidence. (a) I don't think the evidence is that conclusive, and (b) I think human intuition and artistry has to play a big role in things while we should be assessing the facts as best we can, so it's not an either/or.

By the way, I just want to say I do have some reluctance always emphasizing data, because we're just collecting a lot of data—and schools particularly. On the other hand, data is how you figure out things, like climate change, like prostate cancer—like a lot of things. Data really does illuminate what's going on. So I just

have to leave that there, that data is very important. [laughing] And data can be an obsession. So both those will have to sit together.

16-01:23:48

Meeker: Oakland has gained a reputation for being a center of violent street protest. It seems like—

16-01:23:55

Brown: You're talking about the violent crime or the street protests?

16-01:23:58

Meeker: I'm talking about the protests.

16-01:23:59

Brown: Okay.

16-01:24:00

Meeker: And so going back to your second term, in April of 2003, there was a named antiwar protest at the Port of Oakland in which—

16-01:24:11

Brown: A *named*—?

16-01:24:12

Meeker: Well, I mean they called it an antiwar protest. At the Port of Oakland, and streets were shut down.

16-01:24:19

Brown: Yeah, right.

16-01:24:20

Meeker: There was a standoff, and the police used what the protesters called excessive force.

16-01:24:29

Brown: They used what is called less-lethal weapons. That can be—we find out later it can be lethal.

16-01:24:36

Meeker: When something like this happens, when a major protest hits the streets, to what extent were you, as mayor, brought in on crafting a civil response to it?

16-01:24:48

Brown: Well, the police organized the response, and I had confidence in Chief Word. And whether or not—yeah, obviously, we didn't understand. These little bean bags, if they hit you in the chest at a close range, they can kill you. I didn't know that at the time, and I didn't know what the standard was. Later on, I read, I think, the Israelis had perfected these less-lethal weapons. I think maybe Northern Ireland used them, so I got more of a context. And the police, I think, were not very well informed on the whole process. So my focus was always: reduce crime. So this was a whole other police activity, and, I mean, how do you deal with riots? How

do you deal with protests like that? I mean I don't think you can just let a group of people take over. You have to keep the business going, and that was the business of shipping.

And basically it passed over—I mean it didn't continue. And Chief Word had enough credibility that it didn't turn into what it might turn into if it happened today. There wasn't the activism as organized, although that was an organized protest. But, in the aftermath, they brought lawsuits. They had a couple meetings of the city council. The police did their after-incident report, although I don't know that they really analyzed it as well as they should have, and we went on. Handling protests did not seem anywhere near the importance of reducing the murder rate and reducing the crime rate. That was what my focus was. I still think that's important.

16-01:26:47

Meeker: You know, over the five to ten years after that protest, however, these kinds of protests became much more frequent, much more violent.

16-01:26:57

Brown: After I'd left Oakland.

16-01:26:59

Meeker: Correct. Yeah.

16-01:27:00

Brown: We didn't have any more since—we didn't have any of those. There was no Occupy, there was no anarchists in downtown Oakland when I was mayor.

16-01:27:08

Meeker: So you don't see any continuity between what was—?

16-01:27:12

Brown: Well, I see there's a group of people. This is another complex phenomenon, is why I don't like to offer opinions on complex social realities. But one guy I remember—I don't know how I got to see him, but somehow I was over at the restaurant workers headquarters. It was there in downtown, before downtown was redeveloped. And I remember talking to him, and he belonged to what he called Olim. That means *hereafter*—it was this Latino, although we didn't use the word Latino at that time, grouping, and they did stuff.

And then the next thing is he's sitting out under the tree, the oak tree on the lawn out there in front of the city hall. And then the next thing I know Dolores Huerta is saying, "Hey, you'd better go out and talk to that guy." So I go out and talk to him. In fact, I wrote a proclamation celebrating his protest in some way—I can't remember exactly—and I went out and handed it to him, and he cried. He was so moved. And then I told him—I think later, he was a peace and justice advocate. I was at an event at Castlemont High School, and there he was. He was a hired peacemaker of some kind.

What I'm trying to say is this guy was a full-time protest person until he got his job, in a government job there. So there are a lot of people who are available for protesting, and they believe, they—it's called the movement. And this has gotten more—it's more in evidence today. The movement, of course, was very active in the anti-Vietnam days, but then that went away. And now there are new movements. But are there—the Occupys—and then Occupy Oakland, what happened? It didn't go anywhere. They come and they go. And it's very difficult to know how to respond to those protests.

16-01:29:41

Meeker: Well, you have an ideology, the anarchist ideology, that manifests itself in the black bloc, which became a very visible and destructive element.

16-01:29:51

Brown: Yeah, is that still around?

16-01:29:53

Meeker: Yes, absolutely. In Oakland and Portland, and all sorts of places.

16-01:29:58

Brown: But is it in Oakland or Berkeley recently?

16-01:30:00

Meeker: I left Oakland, in part, because of it. [laughing] So—

16-01:30:03

Brown: Okay, so it's not been around, but it could come back.

16-01:30:06

Meeker: Yeah. I mean it's certainly active in Portland right now.

16-01:30:10

Brown: Is that right? Oh, about the—homeless or the immigrants?

16-01:30:15

Meeker: Yeah, there's things going on up there. I guess what I was trying to get at was, in your perch at city hall, as you start to see violence on the streets in terms of protests, what are your interactions with the police? Are you working with them to develop—

16-01:30:36

Brown: Well, let me give you an interaction: I think on the Oakland urban warfare. I think that was it, not the military school, but I'm not sure. There were protests. I was in my office, and the protesters were trying to break in. And John Betterton, who was my chief of staff, was there. And he hid in the closet in the mayor's office, and I held the door. But I couldn't hold it—they pressed in, and they were right in my office. It just so happened that the police were having a meeting in my outer office, so then they stormed in and they dragged these people out and down the sidewalk. And then that evening KPFA calls and they said, "We want to talk to you about this thing." I said, "I'll be glad to talk to you." And then they switch me

on a live—to a guy in jail. [laughter] And so we had a debate on KPFA about whether we handled them with excessive force, and I maintained we did not. Yeah, I was there—I was holding the guy back. And so I guess it took some force. They were using force, and the police used force. Now, whether it was too much, I question that.

So yeah, I do think order is very important. And protest has a place, but if you get too much turbulence, it reminds me of Weimar Germany, and I don't want to see the Brownshirts fighting with the Bolsheviks. The antifa fighting with the anarchists, or whatever those right-wing people are—or the right-wing people, whatever. If you get too much of that, you will get an authoritarian response, and I think we're flirting with that in some ways in the United States.

[technical interruption asking Gov. Brown to repeat the story about the protestors at his office door because he knocked the microphone while telling it]

Yeah, okay. Well, I was in the office, and these protestors broke into the office, and I was in my own office, and they were pushing on the door, and I was trying to lock the door, but I didn't get it locked, so I was just holding it, and they were able to push in—and they stormed in the office. And one of my people working for me, John Bennerton ran and hid in the closet before they got in. [laughing] So it was just me, and I think Jacques was there. And somehow it worked out, and then the police came. And nothing got too bad, but that was my experience with protest, and then the allegation that there was excessive force. But I find it very hard to take the notion of excessive force when someone actually forced the door open against my attempt to stop them from doing that. I thought well, force seems to be what is in evidence today.

So I do make the generalization that this disorder in the streets can reach a point where people will seek a so-called strongman. We certainly see that in the Philippines. It may be different, but we see something like that in Brazil. Trump has those characteristics. And it could go even more authoritarian if chaos and anarchy seems to threaten ordinary people.

16-01:33:56

Meeker:

So when you've got the Proud Boys fighting against the antifa, or the Brownshirts fighting against the Bolsheviks, what's the appropriate response of a city mayor working with the police chief?

16-01:34:10

Brown:

Well, I think you've got to create order. And I know the left position is that it's always the Right's fault or the police's fault. And the fact is, you've got to find a way to chill people out. It's not just at the riot, but before that. You've got to find a way of draining the hostility, whether it's the right or left; you've got to calm them down. If the streets is where the action is, then somebody's going to do it—it'll have to be the army or whatever. People are not going to stand for widespread continuing disorder. Maybe in Berkeley, maybe in Oakland for a while, but

eventually, through the democratic process, you're going to get somebody who says, "I'll take care of that."

16-01:34:57

Meeker: Like after the port protest, was there any attempt by city hall to ameliorate those concerns, and therefore defuse the situation going forward?

16-01:35:12

Brown: Well, I know there were protests. There were meetings of the city council, and the seats were all filled, and there was a lot of talk about it. But I think—just over time, other issues come along. So that's the point. And the press has to have new news. News is what hasn't happened. So that protest—that happened. After a couple weeks there's something else going on, and then something else beyond that. So if you find a way to wait it out or somehow alleviate the sharp feelings, then it goes away. At least I think that's what happened. Now, did we do anything in the police department? I certainly met with the police and said, "Guys, you've got to train yourselves to deal with protesters." I was very concerned. I did not want another one of those to happen. And as far as I know, another one didn't happen.

16-01:36:09

Meeker: Well, not during your time there, but certainly a lot of these happened after the fact.

16-01:36:13

Brown: Right.

16-01:36:14

Meeker: With the Oscar Grant protests and Occupy Oakland and—

16-01:36:17

Brown: Right. That all happened afterwards.

16-01:36:20

Meeker: Yeah, did you follow that very closely? Was that something you were interested in?

16-01:36:23

Brown: I followed it, but, you know, it's hard to know. All these stories are the police did something, somebody dies, and you have two sides. And the police have their view. And the police are going after criminals, so I think you've got to give them a certain amount of weight. A lot of weight. On the other hand, because of the racial divisions, there is a lot of feeling in the black community and perhaps the more liberal community—maybe in the Latino community as well—that they're being treated differently and unfairly, and that is a very widespread belief.

I reflected on the fact that when I would do house meetings in running for mayor in 1998, and I would do it—I didn't have as many, they were harder to schedule. But we did have some meetings in the black community, in what you'd call middle-class housing, mostly in East Oakland. Invariably, the theme would be,

“We need more police protection. We don’t feel safe.” But at the same meeting, usually a black gentleman would stand up and say, “But, the police—I was stopped.” And he would give his story about how he was treated disrespectfully and unfairly by the police. So we got both messages: we need more police protection and, by the way, the police are harassing African-American men. So we had both those stories, and that’s why I think being a mayor and being a police chief, being a policeman—it takes a lot of training and a certain amount of luck to avoid greater problems.

And probably a lot better training. I often wondered, why do the police have to get all their gear and their helmets and all that stuff—couldn’t we have some unarmed, very clever police individuals that could go grab somebody in the crowd and extract them? I thought couldn’t you do that? But the police don’t like to take off their guns and like to have their helmets. I often thought if they were trained enough, they should move quickly and grab the people who are violating the law and threatening to throw bricks, and what have you. But that idea has not gone any further. But it’s one I’ve entertained.

I did talk to the police. I can’t remember exactly what the outcome, but like all these things, you can have an idea, you can have a story, you can have somebody say something in the newspaper. And when you try to go to an institution that is very structured, and they say, “Now we’re going to change things.” When you say *we*—who’s we? Are you going to have training sessions? Are you going to have off-sites? Are you going to have all seven hundred people in the police department—hell, that’s going to take years. Who are going to be the experts that come in and do it? Are you going to lose interest after six months? Modifying behavior is never that simple—for oneself. I mean you add ten people, much less five hundred people, it becomes very difficult. Then when you have a whole police force or a city, things just don’t change that much. Now, I know maybe that doesn’t sound upbeat enough. But I do think we have to recognize the continuities that exist, and when there’s enough of a threat, you can respond. In a crisis, you can sometimes do things you couldn’t otherwise do.

16-01:40:39

Shafer:

What role do you think race plays in these incidents of police use of force or deadly force?

16-01:40:45

Brown:

Well, I think race plays a big part. Race is very obvious. There are strong identities. The policemen have their—what you might call their blue identity. They see the *us and them*. They’re dealing with criminals all the time. They don’t stop, usually, driving down the street and say what a fine fellow you are. They’re usually stopping because there’s a problem. And a lot of the interactions are with minorities, with African Americans as well as Latinos. And that creates, that does create a sense—and historically, there have been deeply racial prejudices in the police departments.



16-01:41:29

Shafer: And racial profiling is just part of that? Driving while black, that kind of thing?

16-01:41:33

Brown: Well, that's a whole other question about profiling and—you know, crime is not even across all neighborhoods. There is more crime in some neighborhoods than in other neighborhoods. This is a fact. So you're going to have more police deployment. If you want to look at the murders, murders in Oakland, there are very few white people that are murdered. They're mostly African American, like 75 percent. Mostly just—gang killings or murders of one kind or another. So this is a fact. Now, there's just a lot of racial history, racial violence, racial prejudice, the police misconduct—all of that. It's just is what it is, and you have to work through it as best you can.

And so now, what's the answer? The answer is data, and to collect data. So when you stop people, you write down—what is the perceived identity? And do you think this person is black, a Latino, Arab, transgender, nonbinary, man, woman, how old? And you write that down, and that takes you a couple minutes, and then that is coded. Hopefully, you have a computer in your car and it goes right in, and it becomes part of the massive database. Then six months or a year later, people come—and let's look at this. And lo and behold, you have more black people in that database than white people. Okay, then now the argument begins. What's going on? And we're still in that process. I remember we did collect data—*boxes* of data have been written down. And, I was told—I never really checked into it—that no one looked at those boxes. The person who was supervising it became an expert in racial profiling. And he is, to this day, an expert that you hire to come in and help formulate your racial-profiling program, which any way you look at it is to collect data, to develop certain principles.

But if you're going to go to Oakland, and you want to stop street prostitution—okay, well, I mean drive around. You're not going to go up to Montclair. [laughing] You're just not. So I don't know what you have to say—but even to talk about it is problematic—any good politician would be well served *not* to discuss it, because it's not that easy to talk about. There are very strong emotions on all sides.

16-01:44:25

Shafer: I want to change the subject a little bit. You, during the—I think it was during your second term, changed party—or you had been, I think, registered as an independent or no party preference?

16-01:44:32

Brown: Yes.

16-01:44:33

Shafer: And then you switched back to the Democratic Party.

16-01:44:34

Brown: Yeah.

16-01:44:35

Shafer: Like—did the party change? I mean because you left because you were disenchanted with it?

16-01:44:39

Brown: Yeah, I thought that we needed a real change/shake up. But when I'm running for office, I knew you can't run as an independent, and that was a nonstarter.

16-01:44:48

Shafer: For attorney general.

16-01:44:50

Brown: For attorney general.

16-01:44:51

Shafer: So it was a more pragmatic decision.

16-01:44:53

Brown: Well, I mean we're not in the business of failure. I don't know what that means—*pragmatic*. To do anything else would be totally foolish, and would be not the decision of any person who had any knowledge or experience about the process. So it wasn't open as a free idea—oh, let's think about running on Peace and Freedom Party, or let's think about just being an independent. There may come a time when that works, but it wasn't going to work for that office at that time.

16-01:45:25

Shafer: But you know, some people might see that episode of changing, and then changing back, as just—you know, opportunistic.

16-01:45:30

Brown: Well, everything is—what's the opposite of opportunistic?

16-01:45:36

Shafer: I guess just being—accepting what happens.

16-01:45:40

Meeker: Altruistic, perhaps?

16-01:45:40

Brown: Just not knowing, just not looking at consequences. I don't know what that means. So if you're astute, and you do something that works, then you frame it with the pejorative word *opportunistic*. But if you do something stupid and completely fail, then we just call you a fool. [laughter] So somewhere between fool and opportunistic, I hope I can follow a wise, enlightened path.

16-01:46:05

Shafer: Fair enough. [to Meeker] Do you want to move on to AG?

16-01:46:11

Meeker: Well, let's round up the Oakland mayor story. I think, as you approach the end of your time as mayor, you had had this reputation—and if you look at all of the

media when you're running for mayor, that reputation comes back, the flaky Governor Moonbeam kind of thing.

16-01:46:41

Brown: What—when I was running the first time?

16-01:46:42

Meeker: Right.

16-01:46:43

Brown: Well, luckily, there was very little media in that campaign.

16-01:46:45

Meeker: No, no! You got *60 Minutes*; Lesley Stahl came out and did a whole thing on you.

16-01:46:49

Brown: Oh, she did that. That's true.

16-01:46:51

Meeker: So, I mean that was part of it. The *New York Times* covered you. There was a lot of interest in your return as mayor, and part of that discussion—

16-01:47:00

Brown: And she covered that house in West Oakland.

16-01:47:03

Meeker: Right, yeah, when you were walking.

16-01:47:04

Brown: And I determined I was going to fix that house. It took about four years.

16-01:47:08

Meeker: But you did?

16-01:47:11

Brown: I did. Now it's rented out. But it's very challenging to—you know, because of the receiver. And I called the receiver. I said, "Where are you? What's going on here?" And they couldn't get a bid and—you know, it's not that easy. These things are because there are multiple factors contributing to the way things have turned out. And now to reverse that, you really have to bring to bear a lot of force, and I could do that on a few things where I could personally intervene. I knew that—yeah, I think a lady from San Jose owned that apartment. I think I called her, and then there was some court monitor, and he had his own idea of what he wanted to do—and I had my ideas. And then we got another court monitor—I can't remember how it all worked out—but fixing up an apartment at the particular neighborhood is not a really hot property—maybe now, but it wasn't then. So it becomes—they have to get the money. I can't even remember how they got the money.

But the people who own the properties aren't putting money into them because they're not making that much money, and people trash the lawn or whatever, and

so fighting back is difficult. Just like—what happened to Detroit? What happened to Baltimore? What happened to the South Bronx? What happened to East and West Oakland? Reversing all that—it just grows, year after year after year, and then all of a sudden, oh my God, what’s going on? And for the most part, but not all, Silicon Valley just brought in billions and billions that was put into the hands of all these people, and they started moving and buying and spending. And now this is where we are. And it’ll be something—who knows where Silicon Valley—that may be a bubble. It may pop, and then it’ll slow down, and who knows how it’ll all happen. If you look at the main street of Williams, it’s not what it was a hundred years ago. [laughter] And I said today, even Colusa, I’m told Colusa had a shoe store. There’s no shoe store in Colusa today. So the world is in constant motion.

16-01:49:38

Meeker: Colusa has Amazon now, so they’ve got a shoe store.

16-01:49:42

Brown: Yeah, but they don’t have a movie theater that’s operating, just like Monte Rio has a movie theater that’s a Quonset hut, but it doesn’t show any movies.

16-01:49:59

Meeker: So by the end of your term, two terms as mayor, does it seem like to you that your reputation has changed in the eyes and minds of Californians? Have you finally graduated from the Governor Moonbeam moniker?

16-01:50:18

Brown: Well, I don’t know how Fox News would cover it. But I think my time as Oakland mayor was successful. It coincided with a rising wealth. Of course I got out of town before the collapse in ’08, and I was able to wait it out as attorney general. I actually went against Countrywide and did different things. And then when I ran for governor, the recovery had already started—and the recovery hasn’t stopped. So I’ve had a certain charmed life when it comes to political choices.

16-01:51:05

Meeker: After you finished your term as mayor—is there something that you would have hoped that people would have learned about you and what was important to you?

16-01:51:21

Brown: No. I don’t think people are paying a lot of attention to me. I’m flattered that you’re here asking me all these questions. But I hope somebody reads all this. Maybe fifty years from now, but things—I’m very impressed with the flow of events. And yes, I remember Oakland, and I remember being very excited every time there was a new apartment or condominium being built I said, “Wow! This is really *something*. A new restaurant is opening.” But then it went on and just became commonplace, and then other things happened. Dellums came, Quan came—and now Libby Schaaf is there. So boy, that just seems like a long time—a *long* time ago. And even the attorney general, I think it’s barely memorable. But that’s true of anything. If you ask somebody, “What did you think of the

Deukmejian years?” You can’t find one in five thousand that could even comment on that! So that’s just the way it is, unless there’s something really bad—and then people remember that.

16-01:52:30

Shafer: [President Herbert] Hoover in the Depression.

16-01:52:32

Brown: Yeah, and he got stuck.

16-01:52:35

Shafer: What—bad timing. What do you think, as you look back on those years as mayor—?

16-01:52:42

Brown: By the way, when you say *bad timing*—we all say that. But that’s a profound statement. Could Hoover—you know, if he, if we didn’t have that Depression, would he have been elected? We wouldn’t have had a [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt.

16-01:52:58

Shafer: Yeah. No, that’s probably true.

16-01:52:59

Brown: But then I guess that it was going to come sooner or later.

16-01:53:03

Shafer: That’s when your dad switched parties, right?

16-01:53:05

Brown: Yeah—well, after that, ’34 I think. Which, by the way, is an interesting statement, that it took two years for him to change. [laughter]

16-01:53:14

Shafer: He was not convinced at first?

16-01:53:15

Brown: [laughing] I don’t know. Well, I think the local Republican establishment was strong, and my father was very interested in local politics, so why would you go contrary?

16-01:53:29

Shafer: Sounds like your decision to switch back to the Democratic Party—practical.

16-01:53:34

Brown: Well, but I don’t understand—are you hypothesizing a parallel universe where reality doesn’t intrude, and you have some idealistic set of norms and images? [Shafer laughs] That seems preposterous.

16-01:53:50

Shafer: When you think back on your eight years, you know, do you have—you probably won’t like this question, but like what are you most proud of?

16-01:53:59

Brown: Yeah, that's a good question. I would say I take the most pleasure in being in this Mountain House, and having restored it after all these many decades. So that, I find—building the house, living here, planting olives—this is, and blending them with the olives that were here 125 years ago—I find that very, I find that enduring. And when we got married, Anne used the Bible that her parents were given by her grandfather, by the name of Baldwin. And he inscribed it, and one of the—it says, “Look to the hills.” He’s talking about the Bible, and how it isn’t power and property, but it’s the words of this Bible. And then he has this line, “Look to the hills.” And every time I look to that hill out there, I think that this is almost prophetic. [laughing] And I told that to Anne just last night. I said, “Anne, this has been prophesied by your grandfather.” And she said that her father said that her grandfather was the closest thing to Jesus Christ that he could imagine. That was her grandfather.

16-01:55:23

Shafer: That’s a statement.

16-01:55:24

Brown: [laughing] That’s a strong statement! But that’s what she said. And so we talked about that sitting out there in the shadow—not the shadow, because the sun was going down. So now, if you talk about what—We’ll have to see. You know, if that high-speed rail ever gets going, and people riding on that would be quite a—that would be something real.

16-01:55:49

Shafer: Yeah, what about as mayor, your eight years as mayor?

16-01:55:55

Brown: Well, there’s the restoration of Oakland as a viable and attractive place, but I’m very aware that the surrounding economy very much did that. I anticipated that, and I helped encourage it. I mean I like the fact that when I was mayor that Whole Foods was there. That was a big boost. You know, because to go from driving Trader Joe’s around and striking out, and then to getting Whole Foods—and then a couple years later, after I’m mayor, Trader Joe’s has two openings—two places. So it was changing. But remember, it was just a few years before that Safeway was leaving the flats, you know? And an economy grocery store came in. Safeway went, and another Safeway store is a church. So it was a growing prosperity, and we didn’t have all the problems of the antifa, or whatever that—the Occupy discontent was. So we didn’t have that. But I don’t know—I always say that people don’t write books on governors. They certainly don’t write them on mayors—at least books that are read.

16-01:57:10

Shafer: Teddy Roosevelt.

16-01:57:11

Brown: Teddy Roosevelt was a president though.

16-01:57:14

Shafer: Wasn't he mayor of New York?

16-01:57:15

Brown: No.

16-01:57:16

Shafer: Or police commissioner. I guess he was police commissioner. Is there anything, when you look, that you came into office really wanting to do that when you left office you felt—you know, you'd fallen short, you were disappointed?

16-01:57:26

Brown: No, well I would say I'm proud—I would say the—climate change, we really—I was able to keep Mary [D.] Nichols as chair and real continuity in the legislature.

16-01:57:43

Shafer: But again, I mean with Oakland. Just with—

16-01:57:45

Brown: Oh, with Oakland?

16-01:57:50

Shafer: Yeah. Schools?

16-01:57:52

Brown: Well, the two schools are there. But I think all of that's very much of a work in progress. So I'd say Oakland—it was a great time. I I really liked being mayor. I liked that We the People building. That was interesting. I liked Twenty-Seventh and Telegraph. I liked it more than Anne did. She wanted to move up on the hill, and that was a nice place, but I liked being downtown more. And then I liked—I mean it was finished. That was eight years, now it's time for something else. I didn't think I was going to run for governor. But after four years being a lawyer, I decided I would rather be the client. And the other thing that I'm interested in besides, as governor, is certainly the prison system and improving it. We've done a lot of things in the prison system, both by getting people out sooner, but also trained. We've now had our first class of firefighters that came from prisoners who worked on fires. And that's controversial. A lot of resistance to that. So yeah, those are things that interest me.

16-01:59:00

Shafer: What—you said you weren't sure you wanted—you didn't know you wanted to run for governor when you were—?

16-01:59:03

Brown: I didn't.

16-01:59:04

Shafer: Really?

16-01:59:05

Brown: I didn't think of that at the time.

16-01:59:06

Shafer:

Huh, I think a lot of the public perception, I think—

16-01:59:08

Brown:

Well, I don't care about—what *is* the public perception? [Shafer laughs] People who read the *Times Literary Supplement*? And at times you read the *East Bay Express*. I mean a different kind of crowd—and the people who don't read either one. They just get their iPhone. So I don't know. There's a lot of—there's public—people don't talk about the public anymore. They talk about publics. They've made it a plural, which I always found rather odd. But I guess it reflects the fragmentation of our time.



## Interview 17: September 9, 2019

17-00:00:02

Holmes: This is Todd Holmes with the UC Berkeley Oral History Center. We are sitting down today, again, with Governor Jerry Brown. Today's date is September 9, 2019. I am joined by Scott Shafer and Guy Marzorati from KQED, as well as Queena Kim from KQED, and Martin Meeker for UC Berkeley Oral History Center. Governor, thanks for sitting down with us again. We are going to start off looking at your run for attorney general. But before we do that, I wanted to get your thoughts on some of the state of politics in California prior to your 2006 run for attorney general. And that would be the recall of Gray Davis, which happened in 2003. What were your thoughts on Davis's recall, because it was one of the first times in, at least California history, that a governor had been recalled?

17-00:00:55

Brown: I saw it as a perfect storm: during Gray Davis's administration, the deregulation, which happened under Pete Wilson before he was even elected, set the stage for the disruption of the system, through Enron, through various gaming—and through whatever other pricing phenomena occurred. The result was that the energy prices shot up, an historic high, I believe, and Davis was unable to respond adequately. And then, after the dotcom exuberance gave way to the dotcom breakdown, or fall in the market—and the elimination of all those businesses—that then, with the volatile state income tax, created a big deficit and Gray's popularity sunk. And it just so happened that this very wealthy Republican qualified the signatures.

17-00:02:11

Shafer: Darrell Issa.

17-00:02:12

Brown: Yeah. There had been attempts to recall Reagan, and I think there were scattered attempts on other governors, but nobody had the willingness to put out the money. And that's a phenomenon that has become increasingly the situation. There weren't as many self-financed politicians, I don't believe, when I ran in 1974. It might have happened a few times, but it wasn't normal. It became more the norm—big money into politics grew, and that's a whole other story. But it was different. So because of all those factors, the recall was there when Davis was very unpopular, and so that was it. It was inevitable.

A lot of the time—no one else knows whether they'd be recalled. You know, Wilson was unpopular at a certain point. I wasn't *as* unpopular, but I was in the low forties. Could I have been recalled? I don't know. Could others? Culbert Olson—could he have been recalled? He ran into a lot of unpopularity, and he lost his election—the only one to lose a reelection, Culbert Olson, until my father lost, but the only one to ever lose a reelection after one term. So, popularity giving way to unpopularity is regular. It is normal. What is abnormal is a recall waiting to *seize* that situation. So that's what happened.

17-00:03:57

Shafer: I'm just curious, do like—he had just gotten reelected, you know?

17-00:04:01

Brown: By a very small margin.

17-00:04:03

Shafer: True. But do you see that as just politics? Or was there an unfairness to it, or does fairness just—?

17-00:04:08

Brown: Well, wait a minute. Like what? Do you want to go ethical, metaphysical, political—what realm do you want to talk in?

17-00:04:17

Shafer: Well, that's what I'm asking. Is there a fair or unfair in politics?

17-00:04:23

Brown: I would say there's many ways to characterize political events. Is it unfair that England is floundering over the Brexit question? Is it fair/unfair that Merkel had to announce her retirement because of the unpopularity of immigration? Is it unfair that the Italians are fighting the same thing, based on immigration and other factors? Is it unfair that the Congress is polarized, and that Mitch McConnell is pursuing an agenda—first against Obama, and then to basically validate Trump? These are phenomena of our time. And I don't know how you want me to characterize them—they *are*.

What I would say is democracy, I think someone came up with the phrase, “the distemper of democracy.” That was used forty or fifty years ago. So I would say there is discontent. The discontent can be analyzed—either a slowdown in the economic growth, or the inequality, or the anxiety, the uncertainty, the rising of debt. So there's many burdens, including just the way the world shows up for people in modern democracies, although Sudan is having issues, Hong Kong is having issues. So these things—it depends on where you want to look at it. I like to see things not as isolated one off[s]. So I would say the Davis recall was not a deviant to the pattern, which has become more general in the subsequent decades.

17-00:06:24

Holmes: The successful recall of Gray Davis led to the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Some had joked, at that time, it was another actor turned politician.

17-00:06:32

Brown: Yeah.

17-00:06:32

Holmes: And this time in the governor's office, after Reagan. What were your impressions of Arnold Schwarzenegger?

17-00:06:42

Brown: Well, I don't know that I ever saw one of his movies, but I thought he was a very effective speaker on television. He was an actor that had a sense of timing, his German [Austrian] accent gave him a certain interest that raised him above the normal boring clichés and mannerisms of many politicians. And he was a celebrity. So we know that being well known and celebrityhood is a way to do that—[John V.] Tunney, the boxer's son, became a senator in California. Ronald Reagan became a governor the first time out. Trump was a television star. So the drama and the acting that's going into televised politics is becoming more general, so Arnold is part of that wave. So he's the second actor, the second actor to follow a Democrat—to be preceded by a Democrat and *succeeded* by a Democrat. So there it is.

17-00:08:06

Holmes: In some respects, some had claimed that Arnold Schwarzenegger's governorship—you could see at least an attempt to return to a moderate Republicanism.

17-00:08:16

Brown: Yes, clearly.

17-00:08:19

Holmes: What were your impressions—and particularly his engagement on the issues?

17-00:08:22

Brown: Well, I think he tried to be, he was—I think he was positive, and you could say progressive, on the environment. I think he was a more centrist kind of personality. He tried to do what the Republicans like—restrict union dues from the public-sector unions. He had a number of initiatives, but they didn't work. And that too is not unusual. Reagan had an initiative that went on a special election. And the speaker, Bob Moretti, led the campaign against him and it was defeated. Curbing overall expenditures, even though everyone, not everyone, but a lot of people think that too much spending becomes a popular issue, to curb it. And yet, when the people had a chance, all the different flaws of an expenditure limit were brought out, and he was defeated. With all the public-sector unions, of course, joining the fray to defeat it.

So Arnold ran into the buzz saw of more Democratic politics, and the Republicans didn't, many of them didn't like him: (a) he didn't spend maybe enough time with them, but (b) he didn't follow their orthodoxy, so that weakened him among Republicans. And the Democrats, because of his stance against public-sector unions, and the nurses and others, he became kind of a negative icon for a Democrat. So he got caught in the middle, and it proves the point that even though the parties have their flaws, having the base that occupies 40 percent plus of the electorate is very helpful, and may be absolutely essential—at least so far.

As we see in France, where Macron came with a whole new crowd. He's low in the polls. And then we have the guy in the Ukraine, which broke through all the

old parties and created a new one. So that's what Schwarzenegger was trying to do, but it didn't work in California. The old ways were too powerful.

17-00:10:57

Meeker: In 2006, you run for attorney general of the State of California. At what point did you decide to enlist in this campaign?

17-00:11:10

Brown: A year or two, maybe a couple of years before. I hadn't really thought of what I was going to do after the mayor—I thought I might run for something, senate, president, something or other. But then, that became an obvious opportunity. I'm a lawyer. My father was attorney general, and it seemed like a natural next step.

17-00:11:31

Meeker: You hadn't practiced law in a good number of years however. Did that give you any trepidation about entering into this race?

17-00:11:39

Brown: No, but I had practiced law, three and a half years at Tuttle & Taylor, which was the top-rated firm in LA. I did bring some lawsuits as secretary of state; I participated very actively in drafting those lawsuits. In fact, I argued a case for the Supreme Court on the campaign-disclosure laws of California. I also helped write Proposition 9, the Fair Political Practices Act. And as governor, I considered more than eight thousand separate bills that were proposed legislation. Many of them I signed into law. So in that process, which is a unique process, very few people do that, because we have very few governors. But having a team of people to explain, discuss, argue about eight thousand laws, and then reading a number of paragraphs or provisions of those laws—that's good experience.

Also, I helped craft the strong-mayor initiative. I conceived that idea, and I had a friend who lived at my We the People headquarters who actually wrote it. But I was very much involved in that. And I also then brought an action that ultimately went to the Court of Appeals—well, I argued it personally before the Fair Political Practices Commission, that I attempted to strike down a conflict-of-interest provision that was a regulation adopted by the commission. And although I lost before the commission, we then got a lawyer and we won on appeal. And that bar on my being able to opine and participate in economic decisions within five hundred—I guess it's within five hundred feet—or I think it was fifteen hundred feet of my place in downtown Oakland. I won that, but that was a legal question. And so in all these experiences, I felt unusually prepared to be an attorney general.

17-00:14:01

Meeker: There was a lawsuit that attempted to disqualify you from the race.

17-00:14:04

Brown: Right.

17-00:14:04

Meeker: Was that a marginal effort, or were you really concerned about that?

17-00:14:07

Brown: I most certainly was concerned about that. I researched it, and we had a strong case that an inactive member of the bar is a member of the bar, and therefore it should be upheld. So—it was a Republican lawsuit. Also, the notion that you had to have five years of experience in California law, that was adopted, I think, in 1966. And I always thought it was questionable. A lot of these rules, these barriers to entry, I've always thought were a little dubious. But if you ask me, yeah—oh, you have to be concerned. You never know what the legal outcome is, but I thought we could win—and we did win.

17-00:14:52

Meeker: Was this the first election that Anne played a significant role?

17-00:14:53

Brown: Yes.

17-00:14:55

Meeker: What was her role?

17-00:14:57

Brown: She was the campaign manager. Well, [Averell] “Ace” Smith was also the manager, but Anne helped raise the money, helped organize things—organize the campaign and structure the activities. We had people—I think [Joseph P.] “Joe” Trippi did some of the film, and Ace was there every day working. But Anne was also there every day working.

17-00:15:25

Meeker: You didn't spend a whole lot of money on this campaign.

17-00:15:28

Brown: I think it was \$5[million] or \$6 million was all I could raise. Oh, that was highly challenging. It's not that easy to raise that money. So no, that was a full-time effort for maybe a year or a year and a half. That's all I could raise, and [Rockard J.] “Rocky” Delgadillo kept pace. He had a very good fundraiser, and he was city attorney, and he was able to leverage all that. So yeah, I found it challenging. And I didn't spend all my money, by the way. I did save a few hundred—I didn't save enough, but I did.

17-00:16:09

Meeker: This would have been another Northern versus Southern California primary campaign, that we seem to be seeing a lot of in the Democratic Party.

17-00:16:15

Brown: Yeah, but I had connections in the south. I'd lived in LA for twenty-three years, and lived there as governor, but no, I guess that's true. I don't know if you want north and south. A lot of it's known. You know, you talk about the known Newsom/Boxer/Feinstein, myself. I mean we were all well known. So is it

north/south? Or is it just name identification? I would tend to say it's more name identification, just the circumstances of who ran.

17-00:16:50

Meeker: From your recollection, what were the key issues in this campaign?

17-00:16:57

Brown: [slight pause] Yeah, it's hard to say what the key issues—I mean the issues were the TV ads. Whatever those TV ads were. Take a few surveys—I mean basically the issue was I was better known than Rocky Delgadillo. I don't think the attorney general—I don't think people in these so-called down-ballot offices—there could be an issue. Crime is always kind of lurking. Rocky Delgadillo tried to make abortion an issue, but that didn't go anywhere. First of all, it's hard on \$3 [million] or \$4 million of TV ads—we spent \$8 million the last week against Whitman, so \$3 [million] or \$4 million in a whole campaign doesn't get you too much communication.

17-00:17:49

Shafer: I think you were the first candidate for attorney general, who opposed the death penalty, to win.

17-00:17:55

Brown: Right, but I didn't emphasize that.

17-00:17:57

Shafer: Well, of course not. But I'm just wondering—like how did you think about it? Because your opponents were going to raise it, right?

17-00:18:03

Brown: Well, did they? Rocky Delgadillo didn't.

17-00:18:04

Shafer: Well, that was in the primary.

17-00:18:06

Brown: And I don't know how—they'd try to bring up some of my liberal positions. But again, the Republican fellow—

17-00:18:18

Meeker: [Charles S.] "Chuck" Poochigian.

17-00:18:19

Brown: Poochigian. I mean, he was an unknown character from Fresno. He had a hard time getting the word out. I think I've mentioned before in these interviews, but a classic case was when Gray Davis ran for treasurer in 1974 against Jess Unruh. Jess Unruh lost to Reagan, but he was on the ballot. He was a somebody, and the old rule is you don't beat somebody with nobody. And so the somebodies generally prevail. I was the somebody, and Poochigian, from the point of view of public awareness, was not anyone that people were familiar with.

17-00:18:58

Shafer: And other than seeing it as a political opportunity, because it was—I know you’ve mentioned before that you’ve never, I think—I could be wrong. But I think you said you’ve never run for a seat that wasn’t open. You never ran against an incumbent.

17-00:19:10

Brown: Well, certainly, that was a certain luck too, that continued—

17-00:19:17

Shafer: Well—and strategies.

17-00:19:18

Brown: That was a strategy, but I didn’t create that. I didn’t create term limits so that Lockyer could vacate to open the space for me. I didn’t get Elihu Harris to say, “Well, I’m not going to run for a third term as mayor.” So they were there, and it was just part of the—being fortunate.

17-00:19:35

Shafer: Yeah, but how did you think of the office of attorney general? Did you see it—were you already thinking about four years down the—

17-00:19:41

Brown: No, I was not.

17-00:19:41

Shafer: Not at all?

17-00:19:43

Brown: Well, I might have been, but not the way I remember it. I thought it would be a very good office. I’d enjoy it. Anne was a lawyer—I like legal questions. So I thought it would be—and my father was attorney general, and I always remember that he *loved* that office, and that when he had it, he was very popular among a wide swath of people. Once you get to be governor, you’re a Democrat, you’re not a Republican—and the issues have that partisan glow to them. And it’s very different than attorney general, which can be everybody’s friend. Just like the district attorney can be everybody’s friend. In fact, my father’s supporters, when he was running for district attorney, were a much broader and included conservatives, some of whom, many of whom maybe were there for attorney general. But now when you get to governor, you’ve got to take stands. And there are labor unions and there’s taxes and all. There’s oil, and there’s north/south, there’s water. All that becomes very partisan, much sharper. You, whereas AG is a—I knew that it was an office, I just remember my father loving it a lot. And I thought well, this would be a good office.

17-00:21:05

Shafer: And did you see—like when you ran for governor the first time. We’ve talked about this.

17-00:21:09

Brown: Yeah.

17-00:21:10

Shafer: That you looked for things that you could do that—but for you not being there wouldn't happen.

17-00:21:15

Brown: That's after I was elected, I think.

17-00:21:17

Shafer: Right, but did you think—like did you think of the, like as you thought about attorney general, did you think—other than I think I like this, did you think—oh, I could do this, that, and the other thing—or not really?

17-00:21:26

Brown: I don't know if I thought—first of all, you have to understand I spend a lot of my time reading and talking to knowledgeable people. I want to emphasize that. I read a lot of material, and what I don't read, I gather from knowledgeable people whom I spend a lot of time with. So I'm not taking the kids to the zoo or soccer games or watching the Raiders play the 49ers. I do that occasionally, but very occasionally. I'm not watching sitcoms. I'm not going to the movies. So when you're however old I was, I think I was in my 60s, right, that accumulates a lot of knowledge. And I'm certainly reading the *LA Times*, the *Chronicle* frequently, and so I'm knowing a lot of things. So whatever there is to know—I knew the attorney general had water. I knew there was issues of criminal justice. I knew there were environmental issues. So I knew all those, so it wasn't like I had to get briefed on, or that I said this or that—no, I mean the job was there.

I'd come from an older school. When my father ran, the only thing I can remember him saying [is] that he didn't like the incumbent, and that he was more able. That was the phrase they'd use—he's more *able*. But he didn't talk about giving back. He didn't have some issue. He was running for DA—well, I think that yeah, he thought the guy was somewhat corrupt or something, the DA that he ran against in 1943. But in general, running for office is an activity that often lawyers, or people who are interested in politics, do. And if you're a Democrat, you have certain things that you're drawn to. And if you're a Republican, you have other things you're drawn to—and that's the way it is.

Now, it has become kind of a cliché or a common undertaking to say, first of all, you've been urged to run, and to give various rationales for why you've been urged to run and what you're going to do. But that isn't the way I've experienced the political world. You know, when John Kennedy ran, what did he say? He said he's going to get America moving again. But I don't know, was that why he was running for president, to get America moving again? Or was he running because he wanted to be president? Is there any doubt? He wanted to be president. If you could be president, you might want to do that. And how much rationale, in your own head, would you need, if you could have "Hail to the Chief" when you walk



into the room. [laughing] If you could have Air Force One. If you could deal with war and peace. Right—so I think these jobs are sufficiently attractive that you don't have to have a whole series of whatever you call these things. Things you're going to do, or things you think you need to do, or things that people are calling out to be done.

Now, there are occasions when they jump. Like when [Roberta F.] "Bobbi" Fiedler ran against James Corman in LA, and her campaign was bus stops. So she was very clearly running to stop busing, okay? I think Quentin Kopp had something like that when he was running for supervisor. So there are occasions when it's clear—maybe stop the war in Vietnam. That was when I was part of the campaign to stop Lyndon Johnson in '68. Okay, there are clear goals. But there are a lot of times—no, that office is there. I'd like to do it, and I think I can. And of course if your father has been doing that, it's kind of a natural thing. So maybe if you've never had any family involved, it might be more remote. But when it's just been part of the environment, and people talk about it, and the people may not all be politicians, but they're labor leaders, they're contributors, they're—whatever.

So it seems to be, maybe you have relatives that were in the press business or maybe the—I talked to the woman who built my fence. And she's welding there, and she has a little welder in the back of her truck. And I said, "What does your father do?" She said, "Well, my father was a welder." Okay, so I don't know if she asked herself if she was going to do good, because fences are important—good fences make good neighbors. I think she probably became a fence builder because it was an opportunity. It was there, and she knew how to do things. She liked to—so I'm saying that being governor may not be that much different than fixing fences.

17-00:26:16

Meeker:

So you are elected by a substantial margin in November of 2006. You get started in the following January of 2007. Can you talk a little bit about process? You're entering into the position of—

17-00:26:29

Brown:

You know, I want to warn you on process. It's not the first thing I think of.

17-00:26:34

Meeker:

[laughing] I've heard that.

17-00:26:35

Brown:

Well, because I don't know exactly what it is. A process—you know, when you go to take an academic course, what are the three this or the five that—you have a lot of process questions. But when you're down on the playing field, you know, if you're a football player, they throw the ball, and if you can block it or catch it, whatever the case may be. If you're attorney general, stuff happens. Countrywide is sitting there—can we go out and sue them? Or, whatever, there was a number of—the cases are there, the issues to deal with. The waiver, which is still an

issue—the EPA waiver. It allows California to impose more strict standards. Applying that to greenhouse gases—that was an innovation, and the Bush people resisted it. As attorney general, I represented California in advancing the claim that the waiver was appropriate.

17-00:27:32

Meeker: We'll get to those issues in just one moment. I think the thing I was most interested in is you, as attorney general, top attorney for the State of California—

17-00:27:40

Brown: Yeah.

17-00:27:42

Meeker: You have a number of attorneys, presumably, working for you.

17-00:27:45

Brown: Yeah, right.

17-00:27:46

Meeker: Who is setting the agenda there?

17-00:27:48

Brown: The agenda sets itself. First of all, the attorney general has to defend all the different departments—the prisons, there's a whole prison law section. You have a tort section. You have regulatory, you have anti-trust, you have the guns, you have the gambling. They had two people. So it's all running, and then you hear about cases. Lockyer had something he called packages, and every week there'd be packages, and the attorney general was supposed to sign off on those with his signature. So that really sets the agenda. I was interested in the environment, so I did part of that. I was interested in prisons, so I did some of that. So I mean you don't show up on a blank slate. You know, you show up in the second act of the play. It's been running before you got there, and it's going to run after you leave. So there, you step on the stage and you start—you get in the play, get in the action. Now, I had ideas, and then we drove things. In fact, the Countrywide—the staff was not moving on that, and Anne played a major role in that. To push that, because that was something they weren't ready for. So there were things that I knew because of my experience, that I could—that I could do.

17-00:29:12

Meeker: Well, the Countrywide thing hadn't really erupted yet in 2007.

17-00:29:16

Brown: Yeah, no. Well, I don't know. Tell me what happened in 2007.

17-00:29:20

Meeker: Well, the Global Warming Solutions Act enforcement passed in 2006.

17-00:29:26

Brown: Oh, we had letters, yeah. Ken Alex had a lot of the environmental section. We would file letters; when people did their general plans, they had to include

consideration of greenhouse gases. So I think that was a unique—I don't know, I think Arnold may have done that. I'm not sure. But I did maybe 120 of those—over a hundred letters. And so that was something I very much was engaged in.

17-00:29:56

Meeker: There were antagonists who attempted to overturn that particular law.

17-00:30:02

Brown: Right.

17-00:30:02

Meeker: And so you, as attorney general, were in charge of combating that. Who were the antagonists, and what were the issues?

17-00:30:08

Brown: I can't remember. Maybe like—give me a—

17-00:30:10

Meeker: Well, the California Chamber of Commerce was one group that sued.

17-00:30:14

Brown: That was on Prop. 26?

17-00:30:15

Meeker: Yeah.

17-00:30:16

Brown: Yeah, that was a campaign. Yeah, we had a whole series of events. If you know what they are, I can probably comment on them, but I haven't thought about them much over the last ten years.

17-00:30:26

Meeker: Well, the Chamber of Commerce sued, claiming that this act formed an illegal tax on business.

17-00:30:32

Brown: Oh, that was the cap and trade.

17-00:30:33

Meeker: Yeah.

17-00:30:36

Brown: Then I guess I don't particularly remember that lawsuit, but I knew the chamber—yeah, that went on for a few years. We ultimately won that—later. Maybe we won it when I was governor. I think it took a long time. I remember when I was governor, like just a couple of years ago, there was a final decision—maybe three years ago. And that's when we did an extension.

17-00:31:03

Meeker: Well, the cap-and-trade provision was a key provision of that act and also one of the more controversial ones.

17-00:31:09

Brown: The question was, was it a tax?

17-00:31:11

Meeker: Yeah.

17-00:31:11

Brown: If it's a tax, it would have to have a vote of the people.

17-00:31:14

Meeker: Yeah, and it was ultimately decided that it wasn't a tax.

17-00:31:19

Brown: I can't remember. It was decided, it was upheld—I mean whatever it was was valid, but we felt that it was expiring in 2020, and therefore we had to go get it renewed. But I don't think it would serve any great purpose to try to remember the lawsuit and its fine points.

17-00:31:42

Shafer: You said—and of course it is the job of the attorney general to defend agencies and laws.

17-00:31:47

Brown: Right.

17-00:31:48

Shafer: And ballot measures.

17-00:31:48

Brown: Right, and most of these are the thousand deputies. The thing is a machine just running—it's running fulltime.

17-00:31:54

Shafer: But one decision I suspect came up to you is Prop. 8, and whether to defend it, because that was a case where you decided *not* to defend it. Can you talk about that decision? Marriage equality.

17-00:32:10

Brown: Right. Yeah, yeah, there was a challenge on that. Yeah, there's many iterations of the gay marriage business. I think it just became, I can't—what was the circumstance that Prop? Where was the—oh, this was on appeal to the Supreme Court?

17-00:32:33

Shafer: No.

17-00:32:34

Brown: Well, it became that.

17-00:32:36

Shafer: It became that. But so it, but it was, so—

17-00:32:38

Brown: I didn't appeal.

17-00:32:38

Shafer: Yeah.

17-00:32:38

Brown: And the question was did we have a duty to do that, because how do the proponents ever get their day in court? And then they let the intervenors—and that's, I do remember. But there were many iterations of the gay marriage thing.

17-00:32:53

Shafer: Well, the one I'm thinking about was the federal law. So the state Supreme Court upheld Prop. 8.

17-00:33:00

Brown: Yes. And we argued to invalidate it under fundamental fairness, and we lost. It was not a very impressive argument before the court.

17-00:33:10

Shafer: So then it came up in the federal courts.

17-00:33:12

Brown: Right. By that time gay marriage was developing greater strength in the public mind.

17-00:33:16

Shafer: And so how does that—I mean if the AG's job is to defend laws—I mean Kamala's [Kamala Harris] been kind of hit on this, and she says, "Well, it's just my job to defend it." How do you decide? It must be a—it's got to be a fairly—

17-00:33:28

Brown: Well, Lockyer upheld the ban on gay marriage.

17-00:33:30

Shafer: Right, exactly.

17-00:33:30

Brown: He did, and I think I continued that.

17-00:33:34

Shafer: Upheld the ban.

17-00:33:35

Brown: Yes. And then when Prop. 8 came along, we moved to strike it as violating a fundamental fairness of the Constitution. And then the federal case was actually—there was a trial.

17-00:33:55

Shafer: Right.

17-00:33:55

Brown: And there was a finding at the trial level. And then it went up on appeal. And we—yeah, we did. Well, we didn't—I think when the Prop. 14 was there, [Thomas] Lynch did not—in fact, I think he opposed it before the Supreme Court. That was the fair housing in 1964.

17-00:34:20

Shafer: But I mean it's a rare thing, for an—

17-00:34:22

Brown: It is a rare thing.

17-00:34:25

Shafer: Yeah, and so I'm assuming that there was some discussion about it, because it doesn't—it's certainly not something you left to the deputies. I mean that was a decision you would—

17-00:34:31

Brown: Right. It was a political decision.

17-00:34:33

Shafer: Say more. What do you mean?

17-00:34:35

Brown: Well, this was the vibe at that time. So, it seemed like that was the right thing to do. That marriage equality had become recognizable and supportable, and it was assimilated into the whole regime of rights. And so, at that point, I didn't think we should uphold the law.

17-00:35:04

Shafer: It was part of the zeitgeist?

17-00:35:06

Brown: Yes, it's part of the politics, it's become something that seemed reasonable, seemed right.

17-00:35:15

Shafer: Was that a tough call?

17-00:35:20

Brown: No, no. Why would it be a tough call? In the state of California, for the Democratic Party? I don't think so. Maybe if you were in Colusa County, running for county district attorney it might be a tough call.

17-00:35:32

Shafer: Could be your next career.

17-00:35:34

Brown: Yeah, no—I don't want to go to the office every day.

17-00:35:37

Meeker: Were there individuals who you engaged with on this particular issue?

17-00:35:42

Brown: I can't remember—I don't know. Maybe the lawyers did. We didn't. We've got to decide a lot of things. But that didn't take a lot of thinking. It didn't seem like—

17-00:35:55

Shafer: Prop. 8.

17-00:35:57

Brown: Well, we'd been down that road before, went up and down. First you defended the ban, then we attacked Prop. 8. So this was after several years of debate, so it's been pretty well—it's been well argued and thought about by the time that case came up. And it also was at the trial level, so there was a lot of talk here. This wasn't all of a sudden a big surprise. You had time, a lot of time to think about it.

17-00:36:29

Meeker: There's one element of the legal maneuverings here, and that is that this eventually becomes the Perry decision at the US Supreme Court. And the Perry decision was really decided on a technicality, in that those who—

17-00:36:45

Brown: You mean they dismissed it.

17-00:36:46

Meeker: Right. They dismissed it, because basically those who were advocating for the position were determined, by the US Supreme Court—

17-00:36:56

Brown: Not to have standing.

17-00:36:56

Meeker: Not to have standing. If it had been the State of California supporting it, there would have been standing, and it could have, in fact, decided the national issue—

17-00:37:09

Brown: Right.

17-00:37:09

Meeker: —two years before. Were you thinking about these potential implications at the time?

17-00:37:16

Brown: Well, I mean the implications were the mood was to not defend. Prop. 8 became very unpopular in liberal/progressive circles. So who wants to touch that thing?

17-00:37:32

Meeker: Okay, so defending it, even though it could have meant an earlier constitutional settlement of it—

17-00:37:37

Brown: That would be so subtle. Who would understand that?

17-00:37:39

Meeker: Okay, so that was untenable.

17-00:37:39

Brown: And that would be reviled in certain quarters. And what politician likes to be reviled, at least while he's in office? [laughter]

17-00:37:50

Meeker: Did you hire your own attorneys, or was it just a continuity from Lockyer's time?

17-00:37:57

Brown: [James M.] "Jim" Humes was the head of the civil division, and I promoted him, and there used to be two. There was one section by exempt appointee, and then there was Jim Humes, and I think there was a criminal law section. You know, I made Humes one over all, and then Anne was my senior advisor in all this. But I did not bring in this host of lawyers like subsequent AGs did. I think we had nine exempt appointees, and I don't think I got more than seven. And they were more press and appointments. So yeah, I didn't feel that—the attorney general is a law office. It has political dimensions, but I felt I knew politics enough that I didn't need a lot of assistance in that realm. The intersection between the law, and maybe my political interests, I thought Anne could handle. In terms of managing the office, Jim had the experience. This world of the attorney general is a specialized field, and there are many different aspects of how that office works.

And therefore, to me, it only makes sense to take the people who are there and know what the hell they're doing, just as when I became governor. And I thought to myself—someone proposed a former Bank of America guy to be my director of finance. I thought well, wait a minute. We've got these fellows, Ed Beach and Roy Bell, and they'd worked under my father's guy and under Reagan, and I said well, why don't they just work directly for me? So I am very sensitive to, and aware, that the civil service, the bureaucracy, the institutional activities of government are highly specialized and are full of senior people, and therefore, to bring in amateurs is hazardous. Now, we do do that in the health department. But corrections, we always take to professionals from within. So, and anyway, I did not see any need to bring a lot of political advisors, and subsequent AGs have felt that need. I didn't see what the point was.

Just like Lockyer, because he was a legislator, loved to go over to the legislature and promote bills. I thought we had enough laws. I didn't have any interest in promoting more laws. I thought my job was enforcing them or advocating or suing different people, or the president, or whatever.

17-00:40:46

Shafer: Quick last question about Prop. 8. Schwarzenegger originally, I think, supported it, and then by the time it got to the US Supreme Court he flipped and said no.

17-00:40:52

Brown: Yeah.



17-00:40:53

Shafer: Did you two have a conversation about that at all?

17-00:40:55

Brown: No, I doubt it.

17-00:40:57

Shafer: You doubt it.

17-00:40:57

Brown: No.

17-00:40:57

Shafer: Okay. Another issue that comes before the AG, of course, is the death penalty, defending it or not. And of course you have a long history of being against the death penalty. There were no executions. There was a case that came up involving Albert Brown, Albert Greenwood Brown. I think there was a protocol issue about the drug protocol. How did you, as AG, think about that? And did you think what can I do to stop an execution?

17-00:41:28

Brown: Or defer. Well, we did. But I'm not quite sure how that—we defended. The attorney general's job is to defend the death cases on appeal, and he does that—and we did that. And Lockyer did that, and every other AG has done that. That's just the way it is. You defend because people have a right to a lawyer. And the lawyer is not the DA; the lawyer is the attorney general. So we did that. I think as AG we defended all the cases, without question.

17-00:41:54

Shafer: But—did you think about ways to defer the executions?

17-00:41:57

Brown: I'm not sure. I don't remember that case.

17-00:42:05

Shafer: Uh—okay. We'll come—I want to come back to that whole thing when you're—when we get to the governor's office.

17-00:42:08

Brown: Yeah, as governor, we certainly were not in a rush. But as AG, I don't know how that would come out, because the AG—the line, people, under the head of the criminal division, they handled all that. And they're fairly conservative lawyers in that division. There was a guy from Berkeley that they called—I think they called him Dr. Death or something, but he was in charge of the death penalty—and all the criminal cases. But that's what they do. They defend all the state agencies. It's not appropriate to start injecting politics in that.

17-00:42:49

Meeker: I think we need to talk a bit more about the environment during your term as AG. It's very interesting looking at the history of legislation and law in the United States, how much environmental protection comes through the courts.

17-00:43:07

Brown: Yeah.

17-00:43:10

Meeker: Twenty-seven of your first seventy-six news releases were on environmental issues—press releases.

17-00:43:17

Brown: Where? From the AG's office?

17-00:43:19

Meeker: Yeah, yeah. So clearly, this was a driving concern for you. Did you have a philosophy about how you wanted to litigate rather—protection of the environment through the AG's office?

17-00:43:36

Brown: Well, the AG had a very strong environmental unit. I think it goes way back to Evelle Younger's time, though I'm not sure how Deukmejian and Wilson performed that. But under Schwarzenegger, there was a very strong environmental group. I didn't bring any environmental lawyers into my office. They were there. And they were the ones who were, you know, championing all these cases. I'm sure I encouraged them. I spent time with them. I don't know that other AGs even spent the time that I did. But I knew the environmental lawyers. I talked to them on these letters, because they'd have to get my approval to send them out. And I don't even know, after I left, whether they even sent out those letters to local jurisdictions. Oops, you didn't go look at—you have to make sure, in your formulation of your plan, that you take into account emissions. And that was under the Environmental Quality Act when looking at general plans. And then when the EPA lawsuit—that was a big deal. I remember arguing that both in Washington, before the EPA, and in Sacramento. So I had to talk to the people, the lawyers, about that. And then we had one on automobile emissions, which we lost, and which was kind of dubious, but I thought was worth a try.

So I did get into those lawsuits. That was a field that was available. It was important, and it could be done. I thought that was more important than some of these other lawsuits. I mean some of these things—I know they were after, they were trying to stop Clorox from advertising on—using the Red Cross somehow. They had some formula, and some of the deputies said that you can't do that. Clorox is a toxic chemical, or some damn thing—and I opposed that. But there was a lot of, and then there were these cases where the disposal of returned turpentine and oily rags and different toxic things became a great bounty opportunity for the AG and deputy district attorneys. And I went along with it, but I was not excited about it.

So there's a lot of mundane things, a lot of little garden variety consumer issues, that I thought were not big issues. That's why the environment struck me as a big issue, as did the Countrywide case.

17-00:46:19

Meeker: Well, the big issue was the federal waiver.

17-00:46:21

Brown: Yeah.

17-00:46:22

Meeker: And this would have been the Bush Administration EPA. Can you describe what it was like engaging with the Bush Administration EPA?

17-00:46:28

Brown: Well, I don't know that I ever engaged with them. We were just engaging with my lawyers and the paper they file. It's the same thing today. Trump's trying to do the same thing, more aggressively and more—not as professionally.

17-00:46:41

Meeker: Did the Bush Administration seem like an antagonist toward this cause, or were they just asking to be pushed along?

17-00:46:48

Brown: Well, they didn't want to grant the waiver. I don't know where they stood on the case. You know, the question, under the Global Warming Solutions Act, or maybe it was under the vehicle emissions Pavley bill. I think it was the Pavley bill, which regulated auto emissions based on greenhouse gases. The question is, was a greenhouse gas a pollutant? And that was a question, and it was different than sulfur or oxides of nitrogen or carbon monoxide, all that. So those are called criteria pollutants, and the greenhouse gases is something different. CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, chlorofluorocarbons, black soot—those were greenhouse gases. California was a plaintiff as well as Massachusetts, and it became Massachusetts v. the EPA, and that was won by one vote: [Justice Anthony] Kennedy, five to four. Had that gone the other way, we couldn't have regulated greenhouse gases. So that's how close it is. So if that were the Supreme Court today, they probably would have said no. Greenhouse gases are not—what they had, they said an endangerment finding. And they're not endangering—like sulfur and carbon monoxide. So yeah, that's a very fragile ruling, and I'm sure Trump is going to try to get that one going again.

17-00:48:21

Meeker: Do the attorneys ever get entrepreneurial, particularly around issues in the environment, in which they'll bring—

17-00:48:26

Brown: They get very entrepreneurial when it comes to going after Home Depot and Target, that they didn't have the proper procedures under the toxic waste laws. And I thought that was overly zealous.

17-00:48:39

Meeker: Okay, and did you try to rein their activity in?

17-00:48:41

Brown:

I did try to rein it in, but not very successfully, because they're very confident and—you know, they want their \$25 million fine. And I thought it was excessive. But then, on the other hand, it's toxic material, and the lawyers were all enthused about it. But I did try to slow that down, but I didn't. You always wonder now are you trying to protect big business? So that doesn't sound good. But it did seem excessive, and there was a bounty. The DA gets money and the AG gets money. And these are big rich companies, so why not grab money? But at the end of the day, they didn't pay \$25 [million]—I think Walmart paid \$40 million, and they put in an 800 line you could call if there was a problem, as I remember it, but very interesting.

The Home Depot case—I said where is the, what's the harm here? And they had a little video of an explosion, some kind of a big container of some kind, a large—one of these kind of things that you put garbage in. They said, "It exploded." I said, "But is anybody hurt?" They said no. "And were any animals killed?" "No." "How about a mouse?" "No." And so that was it. So I said, "Is this \$25 million, for what—? And—[making a growling sound], they said, "They're a big company. They don't notice it unless—you've got to sock 'em hard enough so they notice it." I'm told by Home Depot they spent \$25 million defending, and maybe they were wrong. I'm sure they were wrong in some sense—well, they were. But how wrong? So at the end of the day, I think they have a book on how to treat returned Roundup, and there are some serious chemicals, and they have this book and they have the 800 line, and they've trained their people. So that's a good—but how good? And so I wondered about that.

So part of my skeptical mind: you know, this adversarial system, people get charged up. So yeah, the companies are trying to minimize costs, the AG's trying to protect the public interest. And it becomes very hard to thread—I found it hard to thread my way through the competing claims. In fact, Mickey Kantor called me and said, "I want you to meet with the lawyer from Home Depot." And I called our lawyer, and they said, "Oh, you can't meet with that lawyer. You're undermining us." So then I got a call a week or so later, and they said, "They're in the outer lobby." I said, "Okay, well, I think I'm going to meet with them." So I called the lawyer and I said, "Get up here so you can sit in the meeting." So anyway, they made their case, and they made the case that it was stupid, this rule was. And I kept saying, "Well, what do you think about that?" He [the AG's attorney] wouldn't say much. So, was this a perversion of justice? Did the attorney general's meeting with the lawyers for Home Depot—I thought it was damn interesting! I thought they made a better case than my own side. But I went along with the lawyers, because on balance that seemed a more cautious approach. But do I intellectually know where the real best point to land? No.

17-00:52:00

Meeker:

In terms of the broader—

17-00:52:01

**Brown:** I don't know. And you have so many darn cases. Normally, attorney generals don't get that level of detail. But because I'm a lawyer, and I'm very curious about things, I pushed it. But at the end of the day, they probably—the AG and the DAs probably collected over a hundred million, just on this one—because people didn't follow the rules. And they didn't put it—they had people hauling it to a dump, which is not a Class III, or whatever the hell the thing was, and that's a lot more expensive. They were trying to save money, but didn't. What it is I still don't know, but I'm curious about it, and I'm—and the AG might have been right. Home Depot and Walmart and Target, they fought like hell, and they finally had to pay money. So it gets to be a contest with the lawyers. But I think it's worth more objective people studying it and saying, "Well, what's the best way forward?" On the other hand, the generic idea there are too many toxic chemicals—yeah. That's a danger.

17-00:53:01

**Meeker:** Governor, in terms of the broader scheme of things, on the issues around the environment, so this might have been—

17-00:53:05

**Brown:** But I do want to underscore my concern that the complexity of these issues are not resolvable in the normal amount of bureaucratic time that you are allotted—or that you can even allot for yourself. You can't sit around and say, "Oh! Let's spend the next couple of days going over this issue." No, there's too many other things. Everybody's busy. They go home at five o'clock, they have other cases. So I basically deferred to the professionals. But I still harbor doubts as to where the wise path forward is.

17-00:53:42

**Meeker:** So while this might have been small potatoes in the broader scheme of things, in terms of climate change, were you able to engage with the—?

17-00:53:46

**Brown:** You're talking about the waiver.

17-00:53:48

**Meeker:** Yeah—no, no. I'm talking about the Home Depot stuff.

17-00:53:51

**Brown:** The oily rags?

17-00:53:52

**Meeker:** The oily rags. The waiver is bigger potatoes, right?

17-00:53:57

**Brown:** Much bigger.

Wait a minute—you know, whether you dump turpentine in a class—one kind of dump or a highly regulated supertoxic dump, it's not that big a deal, in my opinion. Climate change is affecting the whole world for generations. I mean it's

the difference between infinity and finitude. It's *so* different. And that always interested me. And I read an article—when I was mayor maybe? No, before I was mayor—somewhere along the line. No, it was way before I was mayor. It was in LA, I think. And I remember the EPA or UN, somebody did a study, and they said the number one concern, where you really got people riled up, were toxic dumps. But actually, when you look out at the issues, I think they talked about deforestation, climate, maybe the oceans—I'm not sure. But the things that people were most focused on, were the least damaging, from a fundamental sense.

And even today, climate as climate is not a salient issue. That's why Schwarzenegger liked to talk about his air pollution poisoning your lungs. But the idea that you're going to trap heat and warm the planet over decades, that is still an issue that is not available or debatable in contemporary politics, in the broad sense. And so you always have to link it to either anti-Trump, all companies' misbehavior, or asthma inhalers for millions of poor kids and elderly. If you just try to talk about CO<sub>2</sub> rising and growing to 410 parts per million, whereas not too many decades ago it was 350 parts per million, you get nowhere. There's no traction. And that is the tragedy of where we are. We've got a big problem. It's getting worse. But it can't easily be talked about in its true terms.

17-00:56:19

Meeker:

Did you have any other ideas about how to use the attorney general's office to fight the threat of climate change?

17-00:56:24

Brown:

Just what we did. We had some pretty imaginative and aggressive people. And I did talk with the environmental section. There's no question. That was the section that I spoke with, paid attention to, and many of them came over when I became governor.

17-00:56:42

Shafer:

So 2008 there's the mortgage meltdown, 2008-2009.

17-00:56:44

Brown:

Yeah.

17-00:56:46

Shafer:

And you—Countrywide was a big player in that, and your office filed a lawsuit.

17-00:56:51

Brown:

Yes. The last day before they were taken over by—federally regulated by Bank of America, then we couldn't sue them. But it turned out, he got indemnified and you couldn't make them pay any money anyway, so they settled. Bank of America settled.

17-00:57:04

Shafer:

What were your thoughts about the importance of that case?

17-00:57:07

Brown: Well, I thought it was important. Yeah, mortgage meltdown. What—big important[ce]. Millions of people were—I don't know how many people were losing their homes, but it's pretty amazing. It's a horror that it happened. We still never did right by people. You know, all the banks get bailed out, all the rich people get taken care of, and then—I don't know how many millions of people lost their homes.

It's pretty incredible, to this day. It probably feeds Trump's populism, and it was an example of the Democratic Party as well as the Republicans being pretty sensitive to the powerful and not sensitive to the vast number of struggling homeowners. In part, because it's so much easier to take care of the banks. You just shove a little mysterious money to them. I don't know how it all works, but they do it. To all of a sudden forgive the debt of millions of people? That would have taken a radical, bolder kind of political move which didn't happen. Never happened—to this day.

17-00:58:17

Shafer: Is that something you would have liked to have been able to do, as AG?

17-00:58:21

Brown: Well, I stuck with my role—that's a complicated question. How do you do that? You know, you're talking many hundreds of billions. I don't know how far I thought through that. I knew we wanted to go after Countrywide, and there was a lot of resistance in the office to that. The consumer division was not making any progress. In fact, the people who were there, ultimately had to be removed, and Anne decided all that.

17-00:58:49

Shafer: Why were they resistant?

17-00:58:52

Brown: Just because they hadn't done it before. It seemed beyond the scope of the office, beyond their capacity. Assembling the facts—it was hard to prove, the fraud. It was not something that was possible. It was easier to find someone argues in a motel, it's \$50 a night, but when you get there it's really \$58. Then they go after that sign stuff and oily rags. There's a lot of routine stuff that a lot of the lawyers do, and it's become—there's a lot of stuff going on. And it's a function of all these laws that we're getting, which I've, you know, I've expressed my concern about the excessive legalization of our lives, and that shows up in the attorney general's office enforcing all these rules. And for the people who get enforced against—it's expensive. And they're not all big oil companies or big banks. Now, there are a lot of little things. So we have problems of Wells Fargo, and there's these phony accounts, whatever they were doing there to generate revenue. But then there's just a lot of ordinary people, and then they get caught in the maw of the legal process driven by the AG, so I was sensitive to that.

There was this thing called [California Business and Professions Code] §17200, which means you can't defraud, and you don't have to show any damage. You can just say it was a fraud. You know, like there were the famous cases, like—roofs, they said the roof won't discolor. So then they sued. It started discoloring, and they'd sue on that as a general fraud. There are several cases on §17200 that—it's a very broad statute, and the AG can be suing people all day long, so it does take restraint, from my point of view.

17-01:01:02

Holmes: Governor, in regards to taking action against Countrywide, as well as Edward Jones, how would you compare that kind of action as attorney general versus, say, on the federal level of the Obama Administration?

17-01:01:20

Brown: Well, I think the Obama Administration, the federal authorities, have more power—a lot more power. The comptroller of the currency, the banking regulators, commodities exchange—those people have real power, and the AG was limited. And that's what we faced right from the beginning. This is a very difficult matter to bring by the attorney general. We were a bit player.

17-01:01:46

Holmes: On that same note, so what was your view of the Obama Administration's actions in dealing with the financial crisis? Because according to most records, the DOJ didn't issue any indictments—

17-01:02:00

Brown: Well, because they were hard to prove. White-collar crime is a lot harder to prove, you know. It just is.

17-01:02:05

Shafer: As a political matter though, like as you said, Trump kind of uses that to, you know, stir up the populists' resentments toward the wealthy, or whatever. I mean do you—?

17-01:02:18

Brown: Well, I mean the fact is that since the 1970s, the CEOs have had a gigantic increase in their salaries and benefits relative to the average person working in their companies. And the number of billionaires, the number of people with private airplanes, all the concentration of wealth—and that is causing a lot of trouble. And on top of that, you have people with big student debts. The housing prices, and certainly the job market, the destruction of businesses as new businesses emerge—all that is creating a lot of anxiety.

Now, whether Obama could have—yeah, I mean some people say that he should have taken on the banks, the Wall Street—I've thought that. I've heard it, but I did not take the time to probe how you could do that. I think you'd have to ask Elizabeth Warren about that. That's her specialty. But that didn't happen. And Obama's a smart guy, because he couldn't—he didn't, he'd feel he had to save the economy, or Bush did, and then Obama. They thought they were doing the right



thing. It just so happened that since things were stabilizing, McConnell and the Republicans—and I suppose the Koch brothers, and the other people who play in that Republican game, just decided well, they can destroy Obama and the liberals and bring about a conservative regime, which is really what they've done.

So could Obama have been more of a populist? That's what some people say. But I don't think that is an obvious—to really speak knowledgeably, in the way that I like to understand things, I did not do that. I had plenty to do as governor of California or as attorney general. I think I spend more time on issues than most people—I mean most people in my profession. And yet, you can't know everything about everything, and so whatever the federal government is supposed to do, that's them.

And, for example, the Glass-Steagall—should that have been, under Clinton I think they got rid of that. Okay, I knew about that. I talked to him a few times. But did I *dig* into that? No.

17-01:04:50

Holmes: What was the Schwarzenegger's Administration response to you, as attorney general, going after Countrywide?

17-01:05:00

Brown: They didn't say anything. You know, you've got to understand, every politician is advancing his career. They're fully occupied with either raising money, making noise, going to fires, or doing whatever they do in their private life—and they're not sitting around having civics discourse with their fellow politicians. It's a fairly individualized business—certainly at the executive level.

17-01:05:28

Holmes: What was your relationship or interaction with the Schwarzenegger Administration as attorney general?

17-01:05:32

Brown: It was good. We got along with them fine. I think he wanted to build eight prison hospitals with yoga studios, and I wrote them a letter and I said you shouldn't do that, and he didn't. He only built one. And then we couldn't fill the damn thing when I became governor.

17-01:05:52

Shafer: There's an old joke that AG stands for *aspiring governor*. Did that apply to you?

17-01:05:58

Brown: Well, not when I first ran. But particularly in the prison area, I felt I'd rather be governor to handle the substantive for that. That interested me—because it interested me, because when I—well, first of all, when I was governor and before, watching Reagan, there were times when there were only eighteen thousand people in California's twelve prisons. And they would also go up, because it was kind of a moving target. The prisons went up, then went down, because of the indeterminate sentence, and they could adjust it. It was under twenty thousand for

a few years under Reagan and under me, although at the end of both our administrations it got closer to thirty thousand—or maybe with me it might have gotten above.

So then when I see under Schwarzenegger it's 173,000, and you've got thirty-three prisons. And wow, that's a *huge* increase. And if you look at the crime rate, which I do—and I would say okay, let's see the criminal statistics from the FBI. And the AG put the—I used to put those out. My staff did, the professionals. And in many ways the crime rate's no different today than it was then. Now, the actual number may be a little higher, but it's not 100 percent, and yet the prisons went up 500 percent. I've read material on this, that they say it's not the crimes, it's the crimes reported on television that drives these laws. And so that interested me, in being governor. Do something about it, and I did when I was governor. Did quite a lot, as a matter of fact.

17-01:07:47

Shafer:

So, I think it had been twenty-four years in between your two times as governor. How did you—did you think, how did—did you think differently about the office going, you know, the second time running in 20[10]—

17-01:08:03

Brown:

Well, yeah—how old was I in 1974—

17-01:08:04

Shafer:

You were thirty-six.

17-01:08:05

Brown:

And then what, in 2011—

17-01:08:07

Holmes:

Seventy-two.

17-01:08:09

Brown:

Seventy-two. So you haven't got to be seventy-two yet. You don't know what that looks like, but it's different than when you're thirty-six and not married, a young governor. That's one world, okay? The whole world opened up. So yeah, it looked different.

And also, I'd been mayor of Oakland. And I got a first-hand view of different constituencies—Sierra Club, antiwar kind of people, anti-height people, “fifty feet's too high,” I think we've talked about this before. When I was mayor, I was shocked, when I would say, “You know, don't you want to be like New York City, and tall buildings and thriving restaurants, and late at night people are on the streets?” This lady with a New York accent says, “It's why I came to Oakland, to get away from New York.” So I did see that whether it's the union that we have to negotiate with as mayor, the environmentalists—so called, because they weren't talking about toxic material, they were talking about the height of buildings or where you're going to put an apartment, or the people who opposed the urban warfare exercise that I approved, or the Board of Education that voted down my

military school that I proposed. I developed a more nuanced understanding of movement activity. And just because you have a lot of enthusiasm and the flag is of the left or of the progressive, that doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to agree with it.

They built that building on Lake Merritt, and it was one of the first buildings during—starting in the recession of the late eighties and the earthquake, nothing was being built. You're talking about a couple hundred units a *year*. And the downtown, there were just empty little places. It was pathetic, if you compare it to what it is today. So I wanted to get things going. And then I remember this one thing, the progressive representative Russo, John Russo, he represented them and then he became city attorney. He voted no. And the local people thought that they didn't want a building on Lake Merritt. And then the people who lived in the apartment next door made them bring down a couple of stories so their view would be preserved, and this was called the environment, but it didn't sound that way to me.

And so I was promoting the building of condominiums, apartments—I wanted more people in downtown Oakland. That was my ten thousand—and we probably have pretty close to that now, because that was the way I grew up in San Francisco. I'd been east to Yale, I'd go to New York City, walk out at night at eleven o'clock in the summer. It's warm, and the streets are full of restaurants—it's activity. So I saw trying to say, "Oakland, come on!" [laughing] It's like Williams or something. There's nothing going on there. So that was where I was coming from, and a lot of people resisted that. Just like the military school, "oh, you know, we can't have a military school." Well, I wanted a framework of discipline, of honor, of enthusiasm, as a counter pressure to the kind of behavior that was leading to very low performance on the part of many low-income kids of color. So I thought I had a practical, clear idea. And people, for very abstract ideological grounds, in my opinion, opposed me.

So that's when I developed a keener eye for who I'm going to listen to, and who I'm not. So they can't just wave their flag and say, "I'm on the side of the angels. Do what I want." What I find is that everybody claims they're progressive or they're environmentalists or they're pro-poor people, and say, "Now, gimme. I want money and I want rules. I want the coercive arm of the state to push around the people that I'm currently fighting with." So I developed a more nuanced view, and that's why I vetoed a number of bills that liberal legislators liked, because they didn't make sense to me. And a lot of that was based on my experience in Oakland. And my greater life experience—as I saw more, and I lived in different parts of the world and talked to a variety of people, I brought a more experienced eye to these questions.

17-01:12:48

Shafer:

So did it make you more skeptical then, of groups like the Sierra Club, perhaps?

17-01:12:56

Brown: Well, *skeptical* is one word. I think more clear and more comprehensive in my understanding of what was at stake.

17-01:13:05

Shafer: But it's—you said you had a more nuanced view of these grassroots groups.

17-01:13:08

Brown: Well, because people make a general thing. You know, no cap and trade? "No. We're the Sierra Club. We say no. And we're progressive, we're green. John Muir founded us. We have trails. John Muir Trail." You know, stop—well, no. Cap and trade, I thought, was a reasonable step that Schwarzenegger made that Democrats agreed with, and I wanted to renew it. But Sierra Club said no, as well as a number of other people. Just like the NRDC says no on the tunnels. But what is the real objection? I listened, but unless you're just knee jerk and someone raises the flag. It's kind of a yes, sir/no, sir.

And a lot of the ones in the legislature do not think, and they go along. I remember talking to a legislator recently, about the bill that would subject Catholic priests to interrogation about matters that were expressed in the confessional. And this guy happened to have been a Catholic, and I said, "Well, why did you vote for that?" He said, "Oh, I didn't want to vote for it." I said, "Well, did somebody call you? Did some powerful person or—?" "No. It's just—that's the mood." That was the mood. Now, it later got held up by another legislator, but I found that very interesting. That here's a bill that he wasn't even drawn to, but it was the mood. So there's a lot of mood music in the legislature, and if you take it seriously, you're going to do things that I don't think make sense.

So therefore, I reserve the right to think for myself, and I did that. Now, because these things are complicated, they have many elements. You can never be sure, absolutely sure, because there's too much going on here. Here in Sacramento, you're talking about things all over the state. But I did have enough, because unlike when I was governor the first time—I didn't know the full implications. There was just a lot that's hard to grasp, even though I was secretary of state, my father was governor and attorney general—I knew a lot. But there are so many of these bills. They're coming by the hundreds! And can you have an informed opinion about every one of them? The answer is no. And they are directed mostly by interest groups of one kind or another. Sometimes they're good, sometimes they're bad. So I would just say my capacity to evaluate, discern, and judge, increased significantly from the age of thirty-six to however old I was—seventy-two.

17-01:15:50

Shafer: And what about the fact that you were married—how did that change things?

17-01:15:57

Brown:

Well, it changed things in my life. I'd go home earlier than I did when I was not married. Yeah, I mean it changed a lot of things. But Anne was quite collaborative in what I was doing. For example, on the veto that I did of the change of the statute of limitations bill, whether or not you could sue an organization for not properly controlling—in this case the priests—and I vetoed that bill, but it was kind of complicated.

It's complicated because the statute of limitations had been changed not once, but several times, increased, given more time to bring lawsuits, and allowing lawsuits to be brought, even though the case might have been thirty years old—or older. So I said this doesn't make sense to me. But Anne said, "You've got to sign that bill." Everybody in the office said, "You've got to sign that bill." My legislative leader said, "Oh no. You've got to sign that." I said, "Well, I don't know about this bill. I think this doesn't seem fair to me." Because the church had spent—I don't know how many, over a billion dollars at that time.

So I gave it to my wife, and she read the cases, because there were a number of cases on the statute of limitations. Finally, she said, "You know, you're right. This is not fair." They opened it up, they said everybody bring your lawsuit in. The church didn't defend, they had no adversarial—I guess they argued about it, but they paid out. So now, a few years later they say, "Now, let's do it again," say they wanted to open the statute. And after Anne read it, she said, "No, I think that makes sense." So she helped me write that veto opinion. She wrote most of it, as a matter of fact. I wrote the part about the Roman law, that they had limits on when you can bring—I thought it was good, because I wanted to get the idea that putting a limit, even on a case that might have been justified if timely brought, is still righteously restricted. And this didn't happen like twenty years ago, but thousands-of-years-old judicial systems have done this. So I found that interesting. Anne helped, and so I vetoed it, and that was that. By the way, there wasn't much noise one way or the other. But I think that's an example of how she played a role, and being married, at least in terms of the office. And she helped—she urged me to do, pick Nancy McFadden. And that was a big thing.

17-01:18:45

Shafer:

She knew her from having been—

17-01:18:46

Brown:

No, I don't know. I think she just met her. No, I think my sister Kathleen came up with the idea of Nancy McFadden.

17-01:18:52

Shafer:

So California was kind of a mess, and there were all these articles—like is it governable?

17-01:18:57

Brown:

Right. There were all these articles.

- 17-01:18:59  
Shafer: California crackup.
- 17-01:18:59  
Brown: And by the way, they've all been forgotten now.
- 17-01:19:01  
Shafer: Yeah, but before we get to that—
- 17-01:19:03  
Brown: This is completely forgotten. Nobody even knows that's—you have some prehistoric memory nobody else does.
- 17-01:19:10  
Shafer: [laughing] So—you had been governor, and you had been mayor.
- 17-01:19:12  
Brown: Yeah.
- 17-01:19:12  
Shafer: And you had been AG and—so you had a chance to think, maybe learn, from being governor the first time.
- 17-01:19:19  
Brown: Yeah, yeah.
- 17-01:19:20  
Shafer: So how did that affect the way you were thinking about what you might do the second time?
- 17-01:19:24  
Brown: I don't—that's too, I can't respond.
- 17-01:19:27  
Shafer: Well, I mean for example, I know we've talked about the determinate sentencing and—
- 17-01:19:33  
Brown: Oh yeah. Well, that one.
- 17-01:19:35  
Shafer: So that's maybe too specific. But you ran commercials saying, with some very clear specific things that you would do and wouldn't do.
- 17-01:19:42  
Brown: Not really. I just said—
- 17-01:19:44  
Shafer: No tax increases without a vote of the people.
- 17-01:19:46  
Brown: No smoke and mirrors, be honest about the budget.

17-01:19:50

Shafer: That's pretty vague.

17-01:19:52

Brown: And no new taxes without a vote of the people. That was it. Pretty general. There it was. So no, I did not know how to solve the deficit. In fact, I thought about the idea of—what is this going to mean? Because having a deficit is not going to be very popular or pleasant. But I decided I wanted to be governor anyway, but I didn't know how I was going to solve it. And we went about it in restricting—cutting, cutting a lot of popular programs, that if you really look at it, you'd say, “gee, do you really want to do that?” But we did. And then, of course, the business cycle came back. And you never know. Just like people don't think there's going to be a recession, people forget there's usually going to be a recovery. That doesn't mean it'll really happen. But that recovery came, and then we got the tax increase, and the problem got solved. But the economic recovery was *really* important.

17-01:20:50

Shafer: Did you—was there any doubt in your mind—?

17-01:20:53

Brown: About what?

17-01:20:54

Shafer: Like about whether you wanted to be governor. Did you want to go—at that *time*?

17-01:20:58

Brown: Well, that—I don't. No, after being attorney general, somewhere, after a couple of years, yeah, I want to be the governor now. Looked like that would be—it would be good to do that. Yeah, it looked interesting. I mean from the environment, from prisons—that's, I mean the budget was the least interesting

[side conversation deleted]

17-01:21:18

Shafer: [Jerry Brown returns the interview area.] All right, Governor.

17-01:21:18

Brown: All right.

17-01:21:22

Shafer: So, there's a primary. And this is before the top two—and Newsom had already been in, he was in. You decided to get in afterwards, and he stayed in for a little more—

17-01:21:31

Brown: Well, I knew I was going to get in, but I didn't want to run too soon. I wanted to raise money as attorney general.

17-01:21:36

Shafer: Take advantage of that.

17-01:21:38

Brown: Well, I don't [know] if it's an advantage, because you can raise less. But there's an advantage in not starting the campaign. Certainly, if the campaign—you start it too early and you're spending money, you're getting scrutiny, there's back and forth. You don't need to. It's so long, that's a real infirmity in our political campaigns.

17-01:22:00

Shafer: So when Newsom jumped in, I mean did he say—did he talk to you before he jumped in? Like, “Hey, are you going to run?”

17-01:22:05

Brown: No. You think all these people talk. They don't talk. No one talks to me, really. I mean candidates—they just do what they want. They talk to their little intimate circle, and then from there they decided whatever the hell they're going to do. I mean Rocky Delgadillo didn't call me and say—do you?

17-01:22:25

Shafer: Yeah, but you had a relationship with Newsom. I mean your family—

17-01:22:29

Brown: No, I didn't. I didn't even know Newsom existed till when I was down in LA. I mean he was conceived and born while I lived in Los Angeles. I don't think I saw his—I made his father a judge, but that was like in the seventies.

17-01:22:42

Shafer: Right, but he was mayor when you were mayor, wasn't he?

17-01:22:45

Brown: Right, but you know, we don't pay a lot of attention. I don't know whether you know it or not, but politics is a very self-referential business. And you like to read stories about yourself, and only about others insofar as they relate to something that might interest you, or if it's a general topic. So San Francisco had their activities, and I'd read about [Aaron] Peskin, and this one and that one, but I was interested in my 10K [plan] and the murder rate and what have you. So he ran, I remember I was already mayor when he ran. But I remember when Willie Brown appointed him, but I don't remember when I became aware of his existence.

17-01:23:24

Shafer: But clearly, you were aware of his existence when he was running for governor, when you jumped in, right?

17-01:23:28

Brown: Yes, but I mean do I know mayors in LA? I mean yeah, I meet them from time to time.

17-01:23:34

Shafer: Okay, did you, how did you think of his candidacy when you announced you were running? Did you think this is something I have to dispense with?



17-01:23:40

Brown: Did I think?

17-01:23:41

Shafer: Did you think it was like something to brush off your shoulder?

17-01:23:43

Brown: I can't remember. That obviously didn't deter me. I was running one way or the other. Yeah, I thought he could—that if I'm strong enough, that he might not run.

17-01:23:56

Shafer: That he would drop out.

17-01:23:58

Brown: Well, yeah, because, he had a pathway, which he took, and it worked out, and exactly what I said.

17-01:24:05

Shafer: Lieutenant governor.

17-01:24:07

Brown: Yeah, why not? And in fact I told his father that.

17-01:24:10

Shafer: That he should run for LG?

17-01:24:11

Brown: Yeah, and I think it turned out to be correct.

17-01:24:15

Shafer: I remember talking to you when he was still in the race. And you were running, and you said something along the lines of, "Well, I don't need a political consultant to tell me what kind of hair gel to use." It was kind of disparaging, kind of a back of the hand—

17-01:24:30

Brown: Well, but that's just normal gossip. [Shafer laughs] That doesn't mean anything. That's a little bit silly.

17-01:24:35

Shafer: I mean did you view—?

17-01:24:37

Brown: No, I don't think that was a serious political observation.

17-01:24:43

Shafer: Was it indicative of, you know, that you thought maybe he was a lightweight at the time or needed more experience?

17-01:24:49

Brown: No, but I don't get those thoughts. The people are there, but my father thought Reagan was a lightweight. Is that—this lightweight/heavyweight, this, that, and

the other thing. No, that is another person there that you need to evaluate what that means and react accordingly. So all this kind of personality, kind of like young girls in grammar school talking about things. That isn't the way it works. It's somewhat professional.

17-01:25:18

Shafer: [laughing] Somewhat.

17-01:25:19

Brown: Well, because there's a lot of emotion in politics. So where there's a lot of amateurishness, and there's a lot of a lack of evidence to what you're doing, there's a lot of uncertainties. So, I can't recall exactly. Obviously, I'd prefer to have him not in the race, because Meg Whitman had a lot of money. And it turned out it was pretty crucial that I could sit there and save the money, because I only raised \$35 million, and she spent \$173 million. So a primary race where I spent a lot of the money, which I might not have done—but he would have had to do something. I don't know how much more he could have raised. I don't know that it would have—how much would *he* have raised? It's not that easy for a primary: \$5 million?

17-01:26:01

Shafer: Well, especially after you got in, right?

17-01:26:04

Brown: Right, but I was thinking of getting in, I think, before he got in. But I strategically did not want to jump in too soon. First of all, because you're doing your AG, and you have to do the attorney general. There's a job, you do things and you make news—and you can raise money. Everything's going along fine. Why create another set of responsibilities called running for governor, when you can quietly pursue that objective?

17-01:26:30

Shafer: On paper, Meg Whitman was a fairly attractive candidate. You know, CEO, moderate—

17-01:26:38

Brown: What is on paper—you mean the record?

17-01:26:40

Shafer: Yeah, well—the image. A woman, different kind of—not a career politician like you were/are.

17-01:26:50

Brown: Yeah.

17-01:26:50

Shafer: How did you assess her as a—?

17-01:26:52

Brown: I thought she was very formidable, until my first focus group. And then it turns out that she didn't come—we ran her commercial, we ran one that I prepared for that, and then we ran a [Steve] Poizner. Poizner did not do well. Of course, it's only like fifteen or twenty people, so I was kind of dubious of the whole operation, what it really proved.

17-01:27:16

Shafer: What did it tell you?

17-01:27:18

Brown: Well, we ran her commercial. I was doing better, and these were supposedly swing voters.

17-01:27:26

Shafer: And what was it—?

17-01:27:27

Brown: And I didn't believe it. I was skeptical, but I think Jim, the guy who was doing our polling, and his wife, I think they were impressed with that. That she didn't do as well, and that I seemed to do well. But I didn't know what that meant. Maybe because I did the little video piece that we used—well, I prepared it. We just took one of her commercials. So it came out that I had a very good chance. But I didn't take that to the bank with me. I mean—that was, at least I didn't feel more anxiety, but I didn't feel that much confidence.

17-01:28:10

Shafer: There was kind of a key moment in that campaign, where it was reported that she had hired an undocumented immigrant—

17-01:28:19

Brown: Yeah.

17-01:28:21

Shafer: —as her housekeeper, didn't pay her properly, I think, then fired her. I've worked in campaigns, and I've worked in government. I know those things don't just pop out of nowhere. How did that come about?

17-01:28:35

Brown: I think this maid complained, and so she got—she, no, she actually initiated this, as far as I know.

17-01:28:44

Shafer: We talked to Steve Glazer about it.

17-01:28:46

Brown: Yeah.

17-01:28:47

Shafer: [laughing] He was a little cagey, as I remember, but—

17-01:28:49

Brown: Well, we had nothing to do with it.

17-01:28:50

Shafer: Really?

17-01:28:51

Brown: Nothing to do with it. No.

17-01:28:53

Shafer: But the timing was really helpful. It was right before the debate.

17-01:28:56

Brown: Yeah, but I didn't—it happened. She contacted some people, and then it all unfolded. She got that lady, what's her name—the lawyer.

17-01:29:11

Shafer: Gloria Allred.

17-01:29:12

Brown: Gloria Allred. And of course, I knew Gloria Allred. I knew her in my last campaign.

17-01:29:17

Shafer: You must have kicked your heels when she hired Gloria Allred.

17-01:29:22

Brown: Well, that was a point. But here is the problem. It's very contextual. Poizner was attacking, going to the right of Meg Whitman on immigration. Whitman was feeling she had to do something. You know, you're in a primary, you've got to win. Your consultants always are pushing you—so she was caught with that. And how did she handle it? You know, she didn't handle it as well as she should have. But those things are not easy. A lot of people hired illegals—a lot of people, and I guess ever since that Zoë Baird—

17-01:30:09

Shafer: Baird, yeah, the attorney general nominee.

17-01:30:11

Brown: I remember we were looking for gardeners in Oakland, and everybody you hire, they're speaking Spanish. "Let's not hire a gardener." Well, how the hell are we—we're not going to be sure of this. But we had all that lesson, you know, and Whitman probably never ever knew who Zoë Baird was. Well, I followed that and it was under Clinton, I think, for AG. So, you know, that was a very unlucky break for her.

17-01:30:42

Shafer: And a lucky one for you.

17-01:30:43

Brown: A lucky one for me. Now, I think I would have won even without it—

17-01:30:48

Shafer: Although that issue—

17-01:30:48

Brown: Because she never got more than two points ahead of me, as far as I know. Now, there's polls—you know, I read the polls on Real Clear Politics, and you've got Biden ahead of Sanders and Warren by twelve/fourteen points. Other polls, they're neck and neck—and they're so different. So polls give me a lot of unease, because they seem to—they're accurate. But having said all that, a preliminary skepticism about polls, they did seem to show that the race was close. And since she was taking all those TV ads out, and she was so attractive—I found that curious. In fact, it is hard to believe. Every week during the summer—this was later—that she was just ahead by a few points. We were both in the low forties, really interesting. So I said, "Well, let's not spend any money. Nothing's moving, so let's not rock the boat."

And then as soon as I started spending, I went up a point after a week, by our own internal polls, and I kept rising. So that was kind of a textbook case of looking at the poll, reacting to it, sitting tight, and then when the time came—because I didn't have the luxury of \$173 million. I had maybe \$28 million/\$25 million. I ultimately got to \$35 [million], but I had to be very careful. One of the things you learn, that most politicians, a lot of them do not get—I don't know that I got, I didn't get until later in life—most people aren't paying attention. And so if you're advertising too soon, well, that's a complete waste of money. But when everybody's talking, and all the political class thinks there's a lot of reacting going on in the electorate—now, maybe there is. See, that's why it's a very uncertain business, and it's a judgment call.

17-01:32:54

Shafer: But here's a headline from the LA—July *LA Times* of 2010: "Brown's Frugal Campaign May Be Too Little, Too Late."

17-01:33:02

Brown: Well, they would say that, because that's just journalism. You've got to write stories. [Shafer laughs] And who was saying that? They want to write that, and then they go get somebody to say that.

17-01:33:11

Shafer: Garry South.

17-01:33:12

Brown: Well, Garry South has never said an intelligent word about me in his entire life. [Shafer laughs] I met with him once, and I decided not to hire him. That was when I was running for governor, or maybe AG.

17-01:33:24

Shafer: Yeah, he was Gray's guy.

17-01:33:26

Brown: He was Gray's guy. By the way, that's another thing—certain reporters, that was the *LA Times*, yeah?

17-01:33:34

Shafer: What were you going to say, certain reporters—?

17-01:33:35

Brown: Well, I said certain reporters used certain spokesmen. He's the go to, you can get a quote from this guy. So there's a certain artificiality about the whole thing, which I understand so well now, that I didn't understand once.

17-01:33:50

Shafer: And another issue for her was that she didn't bother registering to vote, I think, till she was forty-six years old, or she became—

17-01:33:58

Brown: Well, that happens. A lot of people do that. I didn't do that, because my father ran for attorney general, the first time I knew, was 1943. And he would take me to the polls, which was around the block from Magellan Ave. It was around the corner. We had to walk around the block. It was the polls, the curtain, and you shut the curtain—it was that San Francisco voting machine. That was a big thing. So that was 1943, and then all of a sudden 1946 he's running for attorney general. And then in 1950, he's running for attorney general again, and in 1952 he's running against Kefauver for president. And then in 1954 he's running for reelection, and then in 1956 he's on the ballot as a favorite son. So every two years, starting when I was in kindergarten, my father was running almost every two years, so I was sensitized to voting, and voting was fun. I liked to go, I liked to walk there, and people were there, and the voting machine—I thought it was pretty neat, so that was my experience. But now, if you're a businessperson, and maybe your parents weren't voting or weren't whatever, you might not have that experience. So, I'm not saying it was out of civic duty, it was more out of personal experience.

17-01:35:19

Shafer: What's it like—you know, you're running for governor or any office, and you're—it's like you're in the ring against somebody, and you're boxing, you're sparring, you're going for the knockout ultimately.

17-01:35:30

Brown: Well, I don't know if you're going for the knockout. That's questionable.

17-01:35:33

Shafer: What do you mean?

17-01:35:35

Brown: Well, if you go for a knockout and you miss. So, maybe it's just better to go for a series of jabs.

17-01:35:41

Shafer: Just win on points.

17-01:35:43

Brown: I mean your homerun hitters strike out a lot—I think.

17-01:35:48

Shafer: But how did you think, did you—was it sport kind of? You use a lot of sports metaphors.

17-01:35:55

Brown: No. Well, it's in part sport—it's a game, it's called a horserace. That's all that a journalist can frame. Who is ahead, who's behind, who's doing what, how much money you have, who are your consultants? So there's a lot of that. Although people talk about politics: what are you doing it for? What's the issue? But that as a piece, but the who's ahead thing is easier to follow, and it's more congenial to the machinery of the press.

17-01:36:23

Shafer: I mean how much does it interest you, the strategy, the formulation of the commercials? The—what you're going to—

17-01:36:30

Brown: Some—somewhat.

17-01:36:32

Shafer: How?

17-01:36:33

Brown: Well, it's interesting. I mean I certainly participated. Sometimes I would write commercials, write text.

17-01:36:38

Shafer: That's more involved than a lot of candidates.

17-01:36:41

Brown: Well, I'm more involved, yeah. Yeah, I know the system. I've been doing it a long time. When I ran, I didn't have a lot of people. You know, I didn't have vast—well, I guess my '74 campaign had a lot of people, but it was pretty hands on with me and Tom Quinn. Then, of course, as it got later in the game, since I'd done it a lot, obviously I had confidence in my own judgment. And therefore, just because someone's a political consultant, it doesn't mean I think he's going to know more than me. He might, based on what he says, so it's a little different to have these people. I was running for campaigns when Joe Trippi and Glazer were probably in college. In fact, when I was running for president, I think Glazer was at San Diego State. I don't know where the hell Trippi was. So when you're older, and you've been doing this, you're more confident. Although, obviously, I listen to other people. In fact, Glazer had one good point, and this is, "Don't give oxygen to the story." I'd never heard that before. In other words, don't comment, because you're just going to add a second day, third-day story, so that was a very insightful metaphor, which I tried to take to heart—

17-01:37:54

Shafer: Although Trump has kind of turned that upside down.

17-01:37:57

Brown: Trump has turned it upside down, right. So all these things are of limited reach.

17-01:38:04

Shafer: So, you win—easily. You win 54-41, something like that, against Whitman.

17-01:38:12

Brown: 53 plus, I believe.

17-01:38:16

Shafer: 53.8 to 40.9, to be exact. [laughing] You pay attention to these things.

17-01:38:21

Brown: Uh—yes. Well, they're interesting.

17-01:38:24

Shafer: Why is the decimal point interesting?

17-01:38:27

Brown: What? Well, because that's what it is. If you don't have an attraction for that, you wouldn't be doing it. You know, some people are more hands off. I got the feeling that Reagan was very hands off. And I think that worked very well, so that he could tell the story and weave the dreams, we will weave a story/a narrative, whatever, and I think he did pretty well at that. So maybe into detail could be a problem, because being too detailed is not the way you present yourself effectively to the public.

On the other hand, if you don't know the details and you get tripped over them, because the people that work for you might have made the mistake, and if you're concerned about that, then you dig in, and that's what I did. I did dig in, and because I'd seen campaigns—my father had been co-chairman of the Muskie campaign. So I've seen a lot of campaigns.

[side conversation deleted]

17-01:39:23

Shafer: You mentioned that your esteem for political consultants maybe was not as high as it was earlier in your life—

17-01:39:32

Brown: Well, there weren't political consultants earlier in my life. Most people did, you know, a lawyer from a law firm, like Evelle Younger, somebody at the local LA, downtown LA law firm, was the chairman of his campaign.

17-01:39:46

Shafer: But you had Tom Quinn.



17-01:39:48

Brown: My father didn't have consultants, I think. I mean there were some professionals who worked for the party. But there were a lot of lawyers, different people. I think Fred Dutton was very instrumental. He worked for PG&E as a lawyer, I think, and he would write memos. So there was a more amateur quality. Now, there were professionals: Whitaker and Baxter with the great campaign against Upton Sinclair and the ballot measures. But this professionalization was growing, and it wasn't in its heyday when I ran in '74—much less in '70.

So therefore it's a new thing that everybody's got a media consultant, and you've got the—even a pollster. I don't know that my father had a pollster. He said, "Oh yeah, I've got a straw poll on this election." They call them straw polls—I don't know where that word came from. But this idea of like when—I guess it was, who was it that had daily polls in the White House? Was that Reagan?

17-01:40:57

Shafer: Sounds like Clinton.

17-01:40:59

Brown: Clinton, was that—but it might have been before him.

17-01:41:00

Meeker: The daily tracking poll.

17-01:41:00

Shafer: I think that was what's his name—Dick Morris probably was doing that.

17-01:41:03

Brown: No, but before that. Clinton didn't start that. But that's an alien—so I'm just saying, the political business of paid people who are—that is their life profession, I think that was much less in the 1960s and '70s, so that's grown.

17-01:41:21

Shafer: Did you resist that?

17-01:41:24

Brown: Well, it always seemed a little odd to me, that you run a campaign, then you run somebody else's campaign. And the campaigns were more like a cause. We were all working because we believed in it. Now you're just a mercenary. I do still feel a little uncomfortable with that.

17-01:41:41

Shafer: Well, and not to digress—Dan's not, Newman's not here, but I mean they have Kamala, they have Gavin, they have you, they have the whole—

17-01:41:48

Brown: Well, they didn't have me exactly, that was for AG.

17-01:41:50

Shafer: Well—what's that?

17-01:41:51

Brown: When I ran for—Ace [Smith] was there, when I ran for—

17-01:41:53

Shafer: Ace, yeah. Well, that's—

17-01:41:54

Brown: He was there. But I was there, in the little office on—were we on Telegraph Ave.? I think we were. But there was Ace, there was Anne, and there was maybe another person. That was pretty small. So Ace would be on the phone over there, and I'd be over here, and Anne would be in there, working on the spreadsheets for fundraising, so that's not like you have a consultant campaign office with high rent, you know, and then you're sending them a check every month. That was not my experience. And even with Glazer—we're right there. And there was Glazer, there was Anne. [laughing] I think maybe Anne was downstairs, in that warehouse, and I was there.

17-01:42:35

Shafer: And what would you do all day?

17-01:42:38

Brown: Fundraise, talk about some press problem or event we're going to do. And you have eternal problems with volunteers, and this and that, and you know. And then I had to do my papers, my policy papers. Like I remember doing the policy paper on the weighted student formula, which became the Local Control Funding Formula. That was Mike Kirst, and he had another guy that helped him on that. Well, I was on the phone, and maybe Anne was typing or—and I was on the phone with Kirst, the speaker phone, working out my education plan. Then I'd be on with Cliff [Rechtschaffen], working on my energy/environmental plan. And then the union—I forget who I talked to about unions, but we actually were typing those in the office.

17-01:43:33

Shafer: Lean and mean.

17-01:43:34

Brown: Well, I know it was lean and mean, but why *not* do that? Now, because you know there's a lot of transaction costs when you have a big professional operation, because it's: this one reports to that one. Certainly in the governor's office, I like to have the, if you would call it, it's not a term I use, but if you take the term *subject-matter expert*. Would you rather have the subject-matter expert talking to a generalist, who then *tells* you what the subject-matter expert says? Or would you like to have the subject-matter expert in front of you, so you can ask him questions? Obviously, the latter is a much superior way to go. So that's what I do.

17-01:44:09

Shafer: Cut out the middle man.

17-01:44:13

Brown: Well, the middle man can be helpful, and I'm not saying—Reagan had a lot of middle men.

17-01:44:17

Shafer: But it suited you not to have that?

17-01:44:18

Brown: In fact, [Robert] "Bob" Williams, who is still alive, who was my legislative guy when I was governor the first time, he said that when Reagan did things they'd have a *sign* box and a *veto* box, and they'd present it to him and he'd just sign or he'd veto. Now, when I got there, I actually would write veto messages, and they might write a beginning and then I'd rewrite it. And I enjoyed writing veto messages.

17-01:44:45

Shafer: More than signing statements?

17-01:44:48

Brown: Well, when you sign, you just sign. You do *occasional* signing statements, but they're not as common—nor as impactful. When you veto, you get people's attention. You get to say stuff. You know, like—not every problem needs a law. That was on ski helmets. So I did enjoy that. I thought I was kind of sending forth my doctrine. As it turns out, my doctrine is not really taken too seriously or even noticed.

17-01:45:16

Shafer: Well, some of them were.

17-01:45:17

Brown: For a flash.

17-01:45:19

Shafer: Yeah, and we'll get to some of those.

17-01:45:20

Brown: I don't think people are collecting my veto messages. Even though I did put some thought into them, and I think many of them are well written and very concise.

17-01:45:31

Shafer: Yeah. We'll take a break in a few minutes. So your inauguration, January of 2011, and you did it at the auditorium. Downtown Sacramento. I know you think about symbols a lot.

17-01:45:45

Brown: Yeah, right.

17-01:45:45

Shafer: So what message did you want your inauguration to send?

17-01:45:53

Brown: I don't know, I think it was about the budget. Well, I didn't want to have some grandiose—I've always been, after the recession of '74, it wasn't a time for grand celebration. And now with a big deficit, a failed state, it's not a time for—so a more sober, sober message is what I thought was appropriate. And that's what I delivered. And the auditorium: we were looking at where the hell are you going to do this? And it just seemed like a—it's a memorial auditorium. It's a memorial to the veterans of World War I. It was right across the street from my apartment, and it was fine.

17-01:46:34

Shafer: Yeah. I know you're not going to like this question. But I was there, and I remember when the oath of office was—you know, you raised your right hand, and I think Anne was holding the Bible.

17-01:46:43

Brown: Yeah.

17-01:46:44

Shafer: And it must have been the—

17-01:46:47

Brown: [California] Supreme Court Justice—was it Tani?

17-01:46:48

Shafer: Tani Cantil-Sakauye. Yeah, she had just taken office, I think, that week also. And of course it begins, "I, Jerry Brown." And you said it with sort of a vigor, and Anne laughed. What was going through your mind?

17-01:47:02

Brown: I have no idea. [Shafer laughs] [background laughter]

17-01:47:03

Shafer: I told you he wouldn't like that question.

17-01:47:04

Brown: Well, I don't mind it. I don't think—

17-01:47:05

Shafer: I mean did you think—wow! It's like been thirty-six years, and I'm doing this again?

17-01:47:09

Brown: Well, it was certainly a pleasurable experience to come back as governor. Definitely.

17-01:47:15

Shafer: Pleasurable how?

17-01:47:17

Brown:

Well, what words do you want? You're talking about a psychic state. Remember, nine years ago, or eight and a half years ago. Well, first of all, it's always a little nerve-racking. You've got to give a speech. They're always difficult. You've got to write it, but if you write it, it's hard to deliver—for me. I find it hard to give a written speech. But it was fun. We had the Oakland art school chorus there [Oakland School for the Arts], and we had some of the military kids there, those two charter schools. So, and that was all—and I liked the—it had a certain tradition. I guess that would be the framework—tradition. And I think, in my speech, probably I mentioned [August] Schuckman, right, coming across the plains. So I have a sense of tradition.

When I walked out the last night—looking at the moon, I just went, “Well, I wonder if my grandmother ever looked up.” In fact, I was talking to one of my cousins. She's ninety. I was over at her house in Colusa yesterday. I said, “Did you ever hear your father,” who actually lived here for a little while, this lady's father, I said, “Did they ever talk about the stars?” And she said, “No, they didn't. They worked so hard. I don't think they thought about those things.” So I think about the tradition, but also the change. So I'm interested in that, and trying to just given the fact that I have this connectivity.

Given the fact that I have this connectivity to the California past and history, I think about it. So I was aware, and I thought it good that my aunt was there. I think she was ninety-eight at the time, my aunt Connie [Carlson]. And of course her grandfather was August Schuckman, and her mother was Ida Schuckman—Ida Schuckman Brown. So I kind of have that—the past having some connection to the present. And then how does it all fit together? Or *does* it fit together? Or can I *fit* it together? So I work on that, even today to—I have a lot of material about the Mountain House, and that old map that I got from Huntington [Library]. So it was on the—it says the Mountain House, in the 1874 map, right where we are. So I think about what was it like then, and it interests me.

Even today, I called Jason MacCannell, who worked with me. He's now working on a project on Native Americans. He worked at the state library for a while. I said, “Jason, can you find me any books on how life was in Northern California in the 1850s, the 1870s?” Well, how did they live? How was it out here with—was it just as hot? How often did they take baths? There was only, I think, one bath—one bathtub in this place. Where did they get the water? They didn't have any wells. I said, “What was it like?” And did they work so hard they just, at night just—I don't know. Now, they did have some parties here. I have records of that. So I'm interested in how people lived then, and then in this modern world how it has evolved, and what do we say about that?

I sent around an article about a woman who was seventy-four, who had a baby, in India. It was in the *New York Times*, and I just sent that around to a few of my friends. Another barrier broken. [laughter] And my friend Don Johnson [from the seminary] sent back a quote—quoting a work by [Edmund] Husserl on human

beings and technology and what this was doing. So I'm very interested in the flow of history, and all of these changes, and I don't want to be just the guy who wants to live in the past. But what is this? Is this a brave new world, in one sense? Or is this emancipation, or is this fragmentation and breakdown? That's a question I have in my mind.

I like sitting here, looking at my mountain up there, my hill. I don't know that I mentioned it before. But in the Bible that Anne held during our marriage, and she read from her grandfather, who in one of the things said, "Read the King James Bible and look to the hills." So we're looking to the hills, and so I'm trying to kind of match the hills that have been there for millions of years with the latest seventy-four-year-old woman delivering a baby. What is that, and where are we going here, and how do you manage it? So that interests me. And I used to do some of that—so in my inauguration, I didn't have all the thought I have now—I have more thought, and eight more years to think about all this stuff. And so this interests me, you know, the uses of the past, the onrushing present, and what it all adds up to.

17-01:52:41

Shafer:

Yeah. Before we take a break, in that regard, as you were taking office, did you look back, in keeping with this idea of a throughline in history to the present, did you look at how other governors dealt with—you know, which was a major crisis in California—

17-01:52:58

Brown:

No, I didn't look to—I did read, as I have a few other times, I read the inauguration and state-of-the-state speeches by other governors. That's where I came across Peter [Burnett], who I quoted in 1982. So I read about those, try to get ideas—what are they, what are they talking about? But I haven't looked at other governors. I did look at some speeches by Roosevelt. I looked at the Lincoln speech—the second inaugural.

17-01:53:29

Shafer:

For inspiration, or what?

17-01:53:32

Brown:

Well, for ideas. When you sit down, and you've got to write it, what do you write? I guess everyone does it differently. And most people have a professional—have a writer, I guess.

17-01:53:42

Shafer:

You wrote it all yourself?

17-01:53:44

Brown:

Yeah, well—and Anne can correct it, and Nancy McFadden would have a role in it sometimes. In fact, all the time.

17-01:53:57

Meeker:

It seems to me, looking back on it, the theme of the 2010 election was elder statesman returning to leadership of the State of California at a difficult time, almost being called to serve: to what extent was this an idea that was tested out, like in these focus groups? Or was it something that was just spontaneous?

17-01:54:21

Brown:

No, this idea of call—first of all, calling. I got there—I felt *called* to the Jesuits. But I haven't had any calling since then. And it turned out that call was only for three-and-a-half years. [laughter] So there may be a calling, and you look back, you can frame things. See, part of what you're trying to—you know, you're trying to influence public opinion, you're trying to get the legislature to do what you—you're trying to find out what's needed, and then you try to make it plausible and acceptable. So then you try various rhetorical devices to achieve that goal, and it is a matter of rhetoric. I have a very superficial knowledge of rhetoric—more than most people, because I've read Cicero and Demosthenes. And I once had a book on rhetoric, and I always remembered the line that if you want to evoke tears, you must feel tears. If you want to evoke anger, you have to be angry. So the role in rhetoric—they had different ways of eliciting various emotions. It was very well refined, and I've never gotten into that in great depth. But at least I have a smattering of knowledge about it.

So I know you've got to *move* people if you want to get anything done. So I did think of that. Now, the reason I invoked—not the calling, but the pioneering spirit, the can do, that I've tried to bring—things look very formidable, if you look at the \$27 billion deficit. That looks pretty formidable. The rising heat-trapping gases look pretty formidable. The international situation, the fragmentation, the stratification, with the well-off getting more well-off, and the middle getting more anxious, and the bottom falling out. Those are all very formidable.

So then you try to get analogies: where was it that people succeeded in the past? And so, the idea that people, my great-grandfather came across in an ox train of people across—that's a thought. Now, so that would be an analogy to dealing with tough problems. Yeah, so that's why I try to invoke that. A first rule of speaking is you have to be where you are. You have to come, if you're a Vietnam veteran, and you're coming to talk the Vietnam War, people will listen to you. If you're a poet who writes about flowers and music, maybe you shouldn't be talking about the Vietnam War. Because you have to have that experiential credibility. And so I was trying to link myself with people who met and overcame great obstacles, to try to rev people up to the idea we can solve this \$27 billion.

Now, in truth, it's solved by the recovery—and even more than solved. In fact, we probably didn't need that second tax increase. We would have been fine. Now, they get so much that it becomes *very* hard to manage. But at the time—well, I won't get into that. So yeah, you've got to inspire. How do you do this? And it's not very easy, if you look at—Wilson had trouble. Davis had trouble.

Schwarzenegger had trouble. I mentioned all the different Democratic leaders that are having trouble. America with Trump, and polarized—I mean it's a daunting and dismaying specter that haunts us. And so there is need for encouragement and can do—we can overcome it, we can take that hill. I think that's very important, and it's very hard, because politics is not very plausible. And most of what people say is not—it's just for their followers. It's very hard to move the so-called swing voters, that one who's not part of the Trump or progressive coalition. Winning them over is difficult.

17-01:59:02

Meeker: You referred to the powerful rhetoric of Cicero, but there's also the figure of Cincinnatus that runs deep through American history.

17-01:59:07

Brown: Yeah.

17-01:59:12

Meeker: People thought about George Washington in that regard, and of course also your father started that political club [New Order of Cincinnatus].

17-01:59:18

Brown: I didn't know that much—he did mention to me, growing up. I didn't know what the hell it was, but I checked him out on Google and got a little more understanding.

17-01:59:28

Meeker: Well, Cincinnatus was the leader who stepped away, correct?

17-01:59:31

Brown: Right, and then he was called back—twice.

17-01:59:34

Meeker: And then he was called back. Your decision to run again, was there any concern about being too old to still play in the game?

17-01:59:43

Brown: Not for me.

17-01:59:45

Meeker: Not for you?

17-01:59:47

Brown: I didn't feel that old. I was seventy-two. It's younger than—

17-01:59:51

Shafer: Half the people running for president.

17-01:59:53

Meeker: [laughing] Right.



17-01:59:54

Brown: Biden and Trump and Pelosi are all older than that right now. So it was actually a good age. I think this infatuation with youth—it comes from we want something fresh, a shiny new object. But it does take a long time to get a trained eye as to what's going on, and you have to—it's good to grow through things. The Chinese do that more. They move people up from mayor of this and mayor of that, and party secretary of this province—and finally they get them up to the politburo. There's a strength to that.

17-02:00:30

Meeker: Are there figures like Cincinnatus that you look to for strength, for inspiration?

17-02:00:36

Brown: No, I don't. I may use that, you referred to—I like the idea of Cincinnatus, because he was called. I even put out a tweet and said, "I'm back on the plow." [laughter] In fact, you can see it's plowed out there. You see that, how it's cut down? See my little weed whacker there? [laughing] So, I was out plowing last night—not plowing, but whacking down the weeds.

You know, I don't if inspiration—yeah, I don't know about that inspiration, of who I—I certainly read a lot of history. I'm interested in it.

17-02:01:14

Meeker: Well, are there moments in your life where you've not been quite sure what to do, and historical figures of admiration have helped guide?

17-02:01:20

Brown: No, it's really the opportunity of what's available. I mean just even restoring this ranch was an opportunity. I mean I had the idea twenty years ago, but it's *luck*. It's luck that my father bought it. It's luck that I could put it together, that I have a wife that loves being here. So it's luck that there was no incumbent in the attorney general, or for governor, or for mayor for that matter.

17-02:01:54

Shafer: Do you think it was, in some ways, looking back on it, luck that you inherited a mess?

17-02:01:57

Brown: Inherited a mess? Well, you want to follow failure, not success—much easier, much better.

17-02:02:06

Shafer: Easy act to follow.

17-02:02:10

Brown: Well, I mean Arnold followed what was perceived to be a failure.

17-02:02:14

Shafer: And you followed him.

17-02:02:16

Brown:

And Reagan followed—followed the recession. So yeah, they jump on that. But that doesn't mean you can succeed. I guess, in retrospect, it's pretty hard for a Republican to succeed—although Deukmejian and Reagan did, and Wilson to a lesser extent.

## Interview 18: September 9, 2019

18-00:00:00

Meeker: This is Martin Meeker interviewing Governor Jerry Brown, session number eighteen. This is September 9, 2019. I am with Todd Holmes and Scott Shafer, so let's keep going.

18-00:00:13

Shafer: All right. You're governor now, again—2011.

18-00:00:16

Brown: Good.

18-00:00:20

Shafer: We talked a little bit about the inauguration and the challenges you were facing. I don't know if you knew at that point you were facing a \$26 billion surplus—deficit.

18-00:00:29

Brown: We thought it was \$16 [billion].

18-00:00:31

Shafer: You thought it was \$16 [billion].

18-00:00:32

Brown: Which is still quite a lot.

18-00:00:33

Shafer: Yeah, so how did you—I mean in some ways, there's an expression, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." Is that the way you thought of it? How did you think about it?

18-00:00:44

Brown: I didn't think of it in those terms. I've heard that phrase. I find it a little glib, because usually if you're in a crisis there's a lot of suffering or there's a lot of anxiety, and so "don't let a crisis go to waste," sounded like you're exploiting it, so it has a slight odorous ring to in my ear. In my nose. But I didn't think in those terms. What I thought was, well, how do you solve it? And I thought the recovery would—I can't, I'm not clear how confident I was that we'd get out of it, but I knew—

18-00:01:21

Shafer: It was pretty deep.

18-00:01:22

Brown: But I knew we had to do the atmospheric.

18-00:01:25

Shafer: What do you mean you "had to do the atmospheric?"

18-00:01:27

Brown: Well, you had to do things publicly, that would be communicated through the media—that would demonstrate we're trying to do something. It has to be real. Those were the cuts.

18-00:01:36

Shafer: And you *did* have to do something. I mean, you had to balance the budget.

18-00:01:39

Brown: We did, but it's not enough just to do it in a secret room. You have to do it in a way that people *know* you're doing it. I mean that's part of governing. It's not just like a business, where you go to the boardroom and decide what to do. It's being covered, so you're acting—it's a play. You're on the stage. So it was very simple. You've got to have cuts, and you've got to—and we had to raise the tax after we did the cuts. And the Republicans wouldn't do that, so then we had to go to the ballot. Really, kind of the script writes itself. Although we never had one quite that big before. Arnold borrowed. We called it the economic recovery bond. It's called borrowing, which we paid off.

18-00:02:26

Meeker: How *did* you determine what you were going to cut?

18-00:02:29

Brown: The finance department does that. They only have a certain number of things. They've got a list. They have the same old list, and they bring it out.

18-00:02:36

Shafer: But the deficit was so much bigger, so—

18-00:02:38

Brown: We didn't have enough, so we still had problems.

18-00:02:42

Shafer: What were the toughest decisions you had to make around cuts?

18-00:02:47

Brown: Probably vetoing the whole budget. That was a tough decision, but it was crucial. Because after that, the legislature became a lot more collaborative.

18-00:02:55

Shafer: What was the message in vetoing it?

18-00:02:57

Brown: That this was a budget that didn't meet the smell test, wasn't a real budget, had a lot of flimflam. So, I had to send it back.

18-00:03:06

Shafer: Smoke and mirrors.

18-00:03:08

Brown: So I guess that was smoke and mirrors. Yeah, I'm pretty well committed against that.

18-00:03:11

Shafer: And so what does that mean, that it was not truly balanced, that it was—?

18-00:03:15

Brown: Right. No, they just had things in it that weren't going to prove out to be true. They needed to do more.

18-00:03:22

Shafer: Like single payer—it had a lot of wishful thinking.

18-00:03:25

Brown: Single payers were not in there.

18-00:03:26

Shafer: But I mean it had a lot of wishful thinking.

18-00:03:28

Brown: Well, and they're always is, in the budget—when you're not in crisis. You can't—you do make some hopeful assumptions. But you've got to also be cutting a few things, and they don't like to cut. There is not constituency for fiscal restraint.

18-00:03:42

Shafer: And so when you said that was a tough decision to veto it—?

18-00:03:43

Brown: Well, because you piss them off. I had to go into the caucus and be berated for an hour and a half, in both houses. That's unpleasant.

18-00:03:52

Shafer: What did they say?

18-00:03:53

Brown: I can't remember. I don't keep a tape recorder.

18-00:03:55

Shafer: Were they yelling? I mean it was—

18-00:03:59

Brown: And by the way, do you know every day has a lot of activity. So if you're there for eight years, times 365, and a few leap years—

18-00:04:07

Shafer: But that must be one of the more memorable.

18-00:04:08

Brown: That's a lot of talk.

18-00:04:10

Shafer: That must have been one of the more memorable moments.

18-00:04:12

Brown: Yeah, there was a lot of irritation, a lot of well, a lot of politics. A lot of politics is people venting their emotions. Instead of discussing things rationally, people like to emote. And they emote anger and resentment and victimization and deep concern, and that's kind of an emotional battering. So usually politicians are insensitive enough that it washes over them. But you know, it's unpleasant.

18-00:04:46

Shafer: Did it bother you?

18-00:04:47

Brown: It bothered me during, while I was listening to it. It wasn't very memorable. But it is a problem because—and that's true of a lot of people. They want a bill, and if you don't give them the bill they get very excited, whether it's a vaccine or some union bill. They all get—it's an emotional battering. Democracy operates on emotional battering of the representative. Either that, or campaign contributions. Kind of a mixture of—yeah.

18-00:05:16

Shafer: And do you think because this was your very first month or two, or year at least, in office, did you feel like maybe you had more latitude than other governors?

18-00:05:29

Brown: Well, it's not about latitude if they sent a phony budget, and then when it blows up I've got egg on my face.

18-00:05:34

Shafer: But I mean the latitude to veto it too.

18-00:05:36

Brown: Yeah, but it's not, but the latitude is to completely—

18-00:05:39

Shafer: Cave.

18-00:05:40

Brown: No! To just—oh, I can do this and make myself look really bad very soon. Is that very smart? So when you look at it, all these things kind of decide themselves, unless you're suicidal. Now, it's not pleasant to be berated, but it's worse to be viewed as someone who can't lead, who can't manage.

18-00:06:01

Shafer: So was it a close—you said it was a tough decision, tougher than the cuts.

18-00:06:04

Brown: No, it wasn't close in that sense.

18-00:06:05

Shafer: Well, I asked you—I asked you what were the—?

18-00:06:06

Brown: No, it was an opportunity. Had they written the budget more carefully, it might have been more difficult to veto it. But because it didn't, even on its face, seem balanced—it was not balanced, on its face. So that was actually lucky.

18-00:06:20

Shafer: What did you hear from Republicans when you did that?

18-00:06:23

Brown: I don't remember. There's not a lot of communication. You think they're all talking there. They're not. They were talking among themselves, and in the staff—it's all, mostly staff driven. It's all staff driven, and the politicians just talk in front of a camera, or in front of a reporter. I mean that's not 100 percent of it, but there is a *lot* of that. Now you meet with the various legislators, that's true. But there's a lot of staff; a lot of this is written at the staff level.

18-00:06:54

Shafer: You, when you were governor the first time, you were big on talking about the era of limits and small is beautiful. And you were known for being—and still are—being very frugal, not wanting to spend a lot.

18-00:07:05

Brown: Well, you know this: both Gray Davis and Arnold Schwarzenegger suffered greatly for their deficits. And you also know that Ronald Reagan made a big thing, in his campaign, about the bloated budget in Sacramento. So that's three out of—what? Three out of six governors? So if you're a normal—past sixth-grade arithmetic, three out of six—that's something. Well, I don't want to make it four out of seven. So that's why I tried to avoid a deficit. That's standard operating procedure for someone who wants to be successful as governor, but it's not to say that's easy.

For Gray Davis, with that going the other way—very hard. In fact, you can't stop the hemorrhaging. And I was told that, by the Department of Finance, just a few years ago, a moderate recession will take \$55 billion from the General Fund over a three-year period. The only thing you can do is not position yourself as a big spender. Because when the recession comes, there will be a general impression that the governor did it, even though it's the impersonal operation of the free-market system and our very volatile rates.

So I wanted to cut the budget. And we could because it was so out of whack, everybody agreed. People did go along with it. The legislature was very responsible, even though their budget turned out not to be so good, and that's why they got even more irritated. Because they did make some very tough decisions, from their point of view, and the constituents they represent point of view. But it wasn't enough. So you could have signed—and then some might have said sign the bill.

18-00:08:53

Shafer: Well, yeah, and when you—when you did veto it, and they criticized you. They berated you.

18-00:08:57

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

18-00:08:58

Shafer: What was the criticism—exactly?

18-00:09:01

Brown: I don't remember. Probably wasn't—

18-00:09:02

Shafer: But I mean were they saying the budget was balanced? You should have signed it?

18-00:09:04

Brown: No, maybe I didn't consult them, or I don't know what—you'd have to read. You have access to the press. Take a look at it. I don't know what they said. Whatever they said, it's not memorable.

18-00:09:16

Shafer: And did you also see a value in sending a message?

18-00:09:19

Brown: Oh yeah, well—wouldn't you? Was there a value? Yes. Could I perceive that it would be a value, or did I not understand? You decide. [laughing] I mean certain things are obvious. If you're going to drink a cup of coffee, you've got to hold on to it, right? If you've got a massive deficit, and they send you something that is fairly described as not what it purports to be, then to go along with it, you become a co-partner in the mess.

18-00:09:52

Shafer: And so, was there also a sense of—you know, a sense of we're not going to do this anymore? We're not going to keep kicking the can down the road, I guess?

18-00:10:00

Brown: Well, you use that phrase. Yeah. Well, I've never heard a governor say, "And I want to announce today, we're going to kick the can *further* down the road." So that kind of—a lot of this stuff is—just answers itself. You can almost paint by the numbers. It's not that complicated. People, though they do generate a lot of emotion, a lot of the interest groups, and they spin up the legislators, and they all get emotional. The air is thick with feeling. And yet, if you stand back and look at it, the answers are often very clear.

18-00:10:37

Shafer: There was, and—not just then, but criticism of you for being like—not sensitive enough to—



18-00:10:46

Brown: Yeah, to—in what sense? In what area was my insensitivity manifest?

18-00:10:53

Shafer: Um—criminal justice maybe?

18-00:10:55

Brown: For which side?

[side conversation deleted]

18-00:10:57

Shafer: I mean I guess my point is, do you feel like your own background, you know, as somebody who grew up—you know, might have been middle class, in a sense—?

18-00:11:05

Brown: Okay, my grandmother, who grew up in this very spot where we are, didn't go past—we're not sure whether it's the fourth or the sixth grade. My father couldn't afford to go to college. So yeah, I had some advantages, because I had a family that worked hard and was lucky. So what does that mean? I can't understand things? In fact, just the opposite. I've had a chance—and a good education and acquaintance with a lot of people, so I could learn things. Do you want more, more progress in reducing the prison population? I'm not sure what the point is, or what point you're trying to make. What I can tell you is the legislature was reluctant, on a lot of the criminal reform bills that I passed.

So where—where do we go with all that? We lost the train of thought. By the way, what was your train of thought? What were you trying to get there?

18-00:11:52

Shafer: You know, I think there was a criticism. That these cuts to programs that would hurt—

18-00:12:03

Brown: Poor people.

18-00:12:03

Shafer: Poor people

18-00:12:05

Brown: But that's what government does. What do we do? We spend—scholarships, Medi-Cal, childcare, Medi-Cal health programs—yeah, that's what it does. When you cut—government is goods. It's a good. When you cut back the good, it feels like a bad. But if all you do is have goods on top of goods, you get a bad also—it's called deficits. And defeat. Deficits and defeat, which is definitely a bad.

18-00:12:35

Meeker: Well, which is a good segue, because deficits appear when spending is higher than income, and California has sort of a unique income structure. Just for

historical posterity, can you explain how it is that tax incomes are achieved in California?

18-00:12:54

Brown:

Well, there used to be a balance. The sales tax played a third, the income tax was a third, and at the local level, the property tax played a very big role. When you took out two-thirds of the property tax, you necessitated another revenue source, and for the most part, that was income—and a lot of that income was on higher-income payers.

It turns out that higher-income payers play in the stock market, or with various other investments that rise quickly and fall quickly. Taxing that results in big gains and big losses. There are taxes like that. They're called *volatile*. In Oakland, we had something called the transfer tax. During the very low period in the nineties, the transfer tax generated in the twenties—\$25 million. And at one point, in the high point, it was like, I think, \$80-\$90 million, because it's a tax on the transfer of property. So if the property keeps getting more valuable, and it keeps getting turned over, that generates a lot of tax. But if all of a sudden you go into a recession and there are fewer sales, then you get less money. Well, in the income, there are fewer capital gains. So the tax system has, because of Prop. 13, become more volatile. So you get more money, everybody forgets about it and, "Boy, we've got all this money. Let's spend it!"

About the time when you've been spending for a few years, it then goes away—and now you have to cut. And I believe that will happen again. It's not certain, because maybe we'll have a very mild recession. But if it happens again, then all the cuts that I made will be brought out again and they'll do them again. And they may try a tax, but we've already tried—we've tried income tax. We've got a gas tax, certain fee increases. It would be very hard to go out and get a big tax—very hard.

18-00:15:08

Meeker:

So the way out of this system: there's different ways you can get out of the deficit system. One is increasing revenues, which is a path that was taken.

18-00:15:16

Brown:

Yeah, taxes. Right.

18-00:15:16

Meeker:

Another one is to try to inspire growth in the economy, which will then—

18-00:15:24

Brown:

No, but the governor can't inspire any growth in the economy.

18-00:15:26

Meeker:

No?

18-00:15:27

Brown:

No.

18-00:15:28

Meeker: I mean isn't that Keynesianism?

18-00:15:29

Brown: No, talk to ten economists and if they don't all tell you that, I'd be surprised. Even the president can't—I mean he can screw things up, maybe with a tariff war. But, no, I mean the economy is the transactions across a globe of Facebook and Disney and tourism—who knows what. So we're the beneficiary of Silicon Valley. Maybe if they break up Facebook and Google, we won't be able to do what we do. People are trying to do that now. So, the economy has its own—it's mostly theatric, what a governor's doing. Maybe even—well, a president can do more serious stuff than a governor can.

18-00:16:14

Meeker: So you didn't see that there was anything you could do in terms of encouraging business in 2010 or 2011 to recover from the financial crisis?

18-00:16:22

Brown: Well, I maintained that fiscal stability would create more confidence, and business would invest. I just said that.

No particular—evidence. Well, I don't like to tell you, because you don't want to know—and most people *don't* want to know, but the economy is out of the control of a governor—and the legislature. Now, they can screw it up in different ways. Long term, yes: maybe the universities, maybe the roads, these things. I think our regulations on renewable energy and efficient buildings, I think those help. Emphasis on low-emitting vehicles, electric cars. There are policies that definitely drive outcomes. But in the short term, three or four years, that is strictly business cycle. In fact, they talk about cyclical and they talk about structural. Well, we're dealing mostly with cyclical, in the short term of a four-year governor's term.

18-00:17:20

Meeker: Well, Prop. 30 then. [Temporary Taxes to Fund Education. Guaranteed Local Public Safety Funding. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.] Let's talk about that.

18-00:17:22

Brown: Yeah.

18-00:17:22

Meeker: So November 2012, the other way to get the government out of debt, state government out of debt, was tax increases. Leading up to this, how did you settle on this as the correct formula to bring to the voters of the state?

18-00:17:39

Brown: Well, I tried to just extend Schwarzeegger's tax in a special election, that might really have been a dumb move. And had the Republicans been clever, they might have voted for it and then denounced it, and the thing might have failed. And who knows what outcome that would have had.

18-00:17:59

Meeker: Can you remind us what that tax entailed?

18-00:18:01

Brown: Well, I think it disallowed family allowances, and there was a sales tax. It was a more regressive tax, but I thought extending it would be easier than a new tax. I thought a new tax would be very hard, so I tried to just—let's extend it. I wanted to do it five years. The Republicans were holding out like for three years. And I never could get—they can't say *tax*. It's like—one governor, a Republican governor, very nice guy said, "Look, I'll work with you on renewable energy, but I can't use the word *global warming*." Said it—can't use it. Well, Republicans can't use the word *tax*, except "I'm against." So they weren't going to vote for it—I didn't realize at the time. I tried very hard; they wouldn't do it. So that just teed up the next one. And obviously, raising on the higher income, where only 1 or 2 percent of the voters are going to have to pay it, makes a lot more sense, although we did have a quarter-cent on the sales tax. That affected people, but pretty mildly.

18-00:19:01

Shafer: I don't know if *miscalculating* is the right word, but you know, thinking you could maybe get some Republican votes turned out not to be true? Was that, do you think, maybe a legacy of how you remembered Republicans?

18-00:19:13

Brown: No, I had no choice. I had no choice—we needed revenue. And I was just lucky that the Republicans didn't give me the vote, because that vote probably would have lost—can't tell. That was a very conservative tax, but they couldn't even do that. So a lot of the Republicans who have money, they actually ended up paying more.

18-00:19:36

Shafer: In general though, do you think that the—sort of the breed of Republican was different your second time as governor?

18-00:19:43

Brown: I don't know—we got the Republicans on cap and trade, got seven votes. That was good. It's more polarized, but it's pretty polarized in England. I was thinking about that just the other day, where they said—the people for leaving the European Union and the people for remaining—they're not changing. So there you have a fixed belief—on both sides. Well, we're getting that in Republican/Democrat. And it seems to be, I don't know, maybe politics was more of an elite game, and among the elites they could come to arrangements.

But now that it's more populist, it's a game—it's an enterprise of belief, and beliefs do not change that quickly. So if you're a Tea Party Republican anti-tax/pro-life, you work very hard at revving everybody up, and they're all emotionally wrought over this. Now, on the other side, if you're single payer/progressive, they're all wrought. So there we are. We're not talking about a bunch of elite politicians meeting in a smoke-filled room. We're talking about

people who are dependent on the believing millions, and those beliefs can't be altered that quickly. And we're in a polarized-belief world, so that's why I would say it's a real challenge for democracy, because democracy, unlike a monarchy or unlike the imperial Habsburgs, depends on a consensus.

If you think of *we the people*—*we* is a coherent body that comes to a conclusion. If *we* is divided right down the middle, there can't be a *we the people*, because it's 40 percent here/40 percent there, and then a random group left. Whereas if you're running an empire in Habsburg, you can have a Hungarian squire in the same country as some Galician peasant, because they're all under the Habsburgs, so there is a unity. But in democracy, you've got to have enough unity. So if you have southern conservatives and northern liberals—well, they were uneasily in the same Democratic Party, and now they're split off. One's in one party; one's in the other. So lack of consensus is a real problem. Lack of consensus is based on populism, on *more* participation. When things were more restricted and more elite-driven, there was more coherence and more consistency. Now that we are dethroning the Eastern Seaboard and white Protestant elites that did things for the first hundred years, it's a new ballgame, and we'll see how it goes. But looking at the world, it's a problem.

I mean this is the difficulty between populism and—where the country and America started out as an elite operation. White men with property. Now, we've come full circle, and it's now everybody votes. But everybody votes is 140 million people, potentially. Well, how are you going to talk to 140 million people? You're going to send them a message. How are you going to do that? You're going to get a hell of a lot of money. Who's going to give you that money? Well, it's either the rich or the masses who are excited by this hysterical message you send them. “Send me \$18 for this week.” [laughing] So there's where we are. It's a dilemma, and it's not just a California dilemma. It's—a global stage in the capitalist evolution is where we are. And whether it's Brazil or the Philippines or England or Italy or America, we're in a very turbulent and exciting time.

18-00:24:04

Shafer:

When we talked to you about coming into the governor's office the first time, you used the phrase that “you were looking for things that wouldn't have happened but for me.”

18-00:24:14

Brown:

Well, that's a thought that I had when I was sitting there.

18-00:24:16

Shafer:

Yeah, and did you have a similar, when you came in the second time, were there things—did you think okay, what can *I* do that *others* might not be able to get done?

18-00:24:24

Brown:

I don't know how you understand that. But the way *I* understand it was there's a lot of stuff going on. What I call more *the ritual*. And there's a legislature, there are the committees, there are the staff, there are the reporters. There used to be, not so much anymore, and they would follow these things. Like the reporters that really knew Medi-Cal, from other reporters knew education. And the whole machinery was just spinning, the wheels were turning. I always think of the governor, it's like they wheel him in. And he waves, like the pope in the popemobile, but there's no functionality in terms of thinking or doing. It's just a wave, just wave—that's all you've got to do. All right, so that's one part of the job, which I now understand is *very* important. It's not one that I was drawn to my first time, but I accepted it more my second time.

However, that doesn't account for everything. There's a lot of other things that are interesting, like realignment. The machinery was not producing realignment. The machinery was not producing Prop. 30. The machinery was not going to extend cap and trade. The machinery was not going to give you a gas tax. So those are things I did, that if I didn't do them, they wouldn't have been done. Maybe they would have been done later, but not during my period. So that's kind of worthwhile. If you're doing something, do you want to just be part of a semi-autonomous repetitive pattern? Or do you want to actually be having some impact based on what you're doing or not doing?

18-00:26:12

Shafer:

Adding value.

18-00:26:11

Brown:

Yeah, adding/doing something.

18-00:26:15

Shafer:

And so were there—this last time you were governor, I mean were there things that you felt, maybe I can get this done?

18-00:26:24

Brown:

When? Just last time?

18-00:26:25

Shafer:

Yeah, I mean like the first time you talked about the Farm Labor Relations Act.

18-00:26:29

Brown:

Yeah. I didn't know I was going to get that done. I didn't know I could get the gas tax done. By the way, everyone's forgotten about the gas tax. See, that's the thing I know all the things you do that seem important? After you're gone, poof! Gone, just poof, like a puff of smoke.

18-00:26:47

Shafer:

But the tax is still there.

18-00:26:51

Brown: Yeah, they're there, but people are on to new things. The key concept today in politics—maybe always—is the shiny new object. If you understand that principle, you've got to keep shiny all the time—and that's why they bring in new people. But sometimes you can reinvent yourself and keep the shine. [laughing]

18-00:27:11

Shafer: Is that what you did in—?

18-00:27:12

Brown: I did. Obviously, I did.

18-00:27:14

Shafer: [laughing] How did you do that?

18-00:27:16

Brown: I was a fresh candidate against Whitman, because she had many times more impressions on television than I did. She spent \$100 million. So when I came on, later in the game, it was more, I think more—I was fresher.

18-00:27:34

Shafer: To what extent did you feel like you had to do that? Like reinventing yourself.

18-00:27:39

Brown: I didn't reinvent myself. You've got to do what you've got to do. You know, you've got to do whatever the story is. We don't create the world. The world creates us, and maybe gives us a little room to move a little left or right. But most things are there. When you drove up here, you had to stay on the road. If you get too far to the left, you would have gone in the—caught in the creek, and it wouldn't have been nice. So you're on the road. Now, what do they call that? Off the trail, but maybe on the path. I don't know if that's the way to frame it. Gary Snyder talked about that. The path is the path of your life, but the path may take you off the road. But you don't want to get off the path. Then you're lost.

18-00:28:23

Shafer: So Prop. 30 was not a slam dunk. I mean you had to—

18-00:28:28

Brown: No, but a lot of people thought we couldn't do it.

18-00:28:31

Shafer: Yeah. How big a role of the dice was that for you?

18-00:28:35

Brown: Well, not a big role of the dice, because what was I going to do?

18-00:28:38

Shafer: Like what was the alternative?

18-00:28:39

Brown: The alternative was to flounder in deficits. So how does that sound? Doesn't sound good.

18-00:28:45

Shafer: Yeah, but you could have lost. If you had lost—

18-00:28:48

Brown: Right, but if I didn't even try, then we had the certitude of failure versus the possibility of failure. A possibility is always better than a certitude. It's that simple. I don't want to make it sound so simple. But in some ways, my wife thought it was a hard sell. But I knew it all depends how the campaign unfolds. You know, you don't know ahead of time. You don't know what catches on.

18-00:29:17

Shafer: When you think about it, about that campaign? What do you think worked? Like why did it pass?

18-00:29:24

Brown: I don't know why. First of all, it's hard to figure out why we, individually, do things. Now, if you want to talk about ten million voters, how it unfolded—difficult. But I would say the fact that thirty thousand teachers had been laid off—there had been a lot of publicity about that. And that we had written the budget that if the tax went down, there was going to be a \$6 billion hit, and that was going to be *more* teachers laid off, because the teachers hadn't been rehired yet. So I think the obvious cutbacks became the fuel for the Prop. 30 victory.

I think that—and also business didn't fight as hard. Business seemed more worried about their business taxes than their personal—and maybe the reason for that is the business taxes, they can go to the office. And the lobbyists—their institutional resources are mobilized to stop even a slight tax of the business, say like on a soda bottle or something. But when it comes to just rich people, they can't go to the office and say, "Okay, call in all the lobbyists. What are we going to do?" So maybe there were a few rich people who put money into it, but I think they were constrained. So that helped too. Had it been a tax on business or an industry, we might have had a much tougher time.

18-00:31:00

Shafer: Was that a strategic decision you made with the budget, to write it that way? To like give yourself an issue, essentially? Or was it just you had no choice.

18-00:31:08

Brown: Well, you can be stupid, but usually you don't get elected governor if you're too stupid. So once you're there, and you've got half a brain, you say, "Okay, what can we do?" So we did it, and the finance department understands the stuff they wrote about. So the elements were that the money funded schools, and there were teacher layoffs. People were talking about it; it became kind of a meme, in reality, as well. And therefore, the receptivity to the tax, when it was only—you had to



make, as a couple, \$500,000 before you paid a penny more. That was not too threatening.

18-00:31:49

Shafer: I know one of your top political advisors told you that with the passage of Prop. 30, your reelection was assured. Did you feel that way?

18-00:31:57

Brown: I thought my reelection, I didn't—I thought it was going to be pretty easy.

18-00:32:02

Shafer: Anyway?

18-00:32:04

Brown: Well, because of the recovery, the deficit's going down. There was a recovery. Things, you know when you—we weren't all the way there. But if you think of it, and I tend to minimize my individual contribution—which my wife says is improper, false modesty. But the fact is, we went from a \$2 trillion to almost \$2.8 trillion. That means, in each year, there was another \$100 billion injected into the economy of California. That tends to make people feel good. So if you're running for reelection, and they've got \$4 billion more—*\$400 billion* sloshing around for the forty million people in California, that's better than if the unemployment's going up to 12 [percent], and now it's coming down to 4 [percent]. So there was a lot of external buttresses to my success. And therefore, I thought reelection—what's the argument, and how do you do that?

And maybe other people weren't as aware. They think oh, we had Republican governors before. We'll run again. That's a problem with [Neel] Kashkari—but he didn't miss a beat. He got himself a nice job in Minnesota.

18-00:33:13

Shafer: Yeah. There were other things you did, of course, to balance the budget.

18-00:33:16

Brown: I was going to think of this line my father used about Nixon running for president. They said he's double-parking here in California while he gets ready to run for the White House. Kashkari was double-parking till he got his job on the Federal Reserve of Minnesota. [laughter]

18-00:33:33

Holmes: Governor, in selling the tax initiative that's going to raise taxes in a state that's commonly known as a kind of—or it used to be known as an anti-tax state. I noticed, in watching this from afar, because I was living on the East Coast at the time, it was interesting to see how you referenced Ronald Reagan and Ronald Reagan's tax hikes. Can you discuss a little bit about that, or—?

18-00:34:00

Brown: Well, yes, he raised taxes. But he was always for cutting welfare and cutting back on certain pet projects of the Democrats, so it always feels he was cutting, even though on average the budget rose at about 13 percent. Part of that was property

tax relief from the state to the local. But in general, it went up, and the corporate tax increased significantly, the sales tax, and the income tax. *All* the major taxes went up under Reagan. But it didn't feel that way, because the Democrats were always demanding *more* money, and always complaining about the cuts. Reagan was perceived as a guy who was cutting progressive programs, so spending didn't matter. No matter what he did, the Democrats wanted more no matter how much he spent. And that's interesting, isn't it? So these stereotypes—he was frugal guy, they said.

18-00:35:00

Holmes: Well, it was interesting, thinking of coming into the governor's office, as we were just discussing before break, of you having not just more experience, but also this sense of history, right? I mean you're referencing your great-grandfather. You're even putting some of the old pictures and posters of your father in the office.

18-00:35:17

Brown: Old campaign posters.

18-00:35:19

Holmes: And in an age where we often joke that the public has a hard time remembering three days ago, let alone thirty years ago, you're referencing Reagan—

18-00:35:35

Brown: What?

18-00:35:37

Holmes: *You* referencing him to justify a tax increase, as a Democrat—

18-00:35:39

Brown: Did I reference—how did I do that?

18-00:35:41

Holmes: Well, I'm saying you referenced that *he* raised taxes. And so, while you're proposing a tax hike publicly—

18-00:35:48

Brown: I don't think I used much of that, not in the advertising.

18-00:35:50

Holmes: No, not in the advertising, but at press conferences—

18-00:35:52

Brown: Well, the advertising is what counts. The stuff you talk to the reporters is blather. If it's not a scandal, it doesn't mean anything.

18-00:35:59

Holmes: Interesting.

18-00:36:02

Brown: You've got to get those commercials. You've got to get it in the brain before they can shut you out. That's it. Just think of it as a stimulus to your—going directly to your cortex. [laughter] Vote yes on [Proposition] 30.

18-00:36:15

Shafer: There were one or two competing ballot measures that were—

18-00:36:19

Brown: Right. They were troublesome. What were they?

18-00:36:23

Shafer: Do you remember the—I don't remember. There was—one was from labor, I think. There was a—

18-00:36:26

Marzorati: [from the background] Munger.

18-00:36:26

Shafer: Oh, that's right.

18-00:36:26

Brown: Munger.

18-00:36:28

Shafer: Molly Munger.

18-00:36:27

Brown: The labor one got off. We got them to take it off.

18-00:36:30

Marzorati: How did you get them to get that off?

18-00:36:34

Brown: Well, the teachers union probably talked to them. I talked to them, but I couldn't convince them, because the legislature—it was [Darrell] Steinberg, maybe the CTA [California Teachers Association]. I don't know.

18-00:36:43

Shafer: What would the—if you'd been, if they had been left on the ballot, what would the—?

18-00:36:46

Brown: Well, we might have lost to all of them. So, the CTA didn't like that. They put up a lot of money for Prop. 30, so they helped. A lot of times the governor can't influence people. I mean a lot of our votes in the legislature came from our alliance with SEIU [Service Employees International Union]. So they really could get votes. The governor—what is the governor? The governor is not real—sometimes. Trump seems to be very real to the Republicans. That's not my experience as a Democratic governor, that the interest groups are *much* better. If

you can get CTA on your side or SEIU, that's better—the building trades, much better.

18-00:37:22

Shafer: Because they have more resources?

18-00:37:23

Brown: They're just taken more seriously. They're there. They're going to the fundraisers. They have their relations. The governor is a more remote figure.

18-00:37:31

Shafer: Yeah. There were other things you did to balance the budget, obviously. One of them was to eliminate redevelopment agencies.

18-00:37:40

Brown: Yeah.

18-00:37:41

Shafer: Which critics said, "Well, he used it when he was mayor or Oakland, and now—"

18-00:37:41

Brown: Yeah, well—so what? We didn't have a deficit when I was mayor. Oh, I guess we did at some point.

18-00:37:50

Shafer: Were the things you saw as mayor, about redevelopment agencies—?

18-00:37:53

Brown: We needed the money! It was \$1.9 billion, and that was money that goes to schools. If we took away redevelopment, you give the money to the schools. The state has to put in less. If you put in less, they have more to pay the deficit down.

18-00:38:07

Shafer: So you're saying it was a necessity. You had to take the money from somewhere.

[long side conversation deleted]

18-00:38:11

Shafer: So, Prop. 30—you had to raise money for that. And later you got some criticism, or maybe even at the time, for taking money from—for example oil, the oil industry. What's your—what's your philosophy about that?

18-00:38:29

Brown: [laughing] My philosophy is you've got to raise money, and as my father said, we don't baptize campaign donations.

18-00:38:36

Shafer: Meaning?

18-00:38:37

Brown: You know, "we don't sprinkle holy water on them." I know that it has become more—there are a lot of industries that people don't want to take money from, but

that's a rather recent vintage. Tobacco is one, alcohol some people don't like, gun companies, they're not as—NRA, and oil companies.

18-00:38:59

Shafer: So you don't really think there's much merit to that?

18-00:39:02

Brown: I don't think oil companies were in the same category as that. I mean after all, Californians use fourteen billion gallons of gasoline every year, so you can't say people *hate* gasoline. *You* got here with gasoline.

18-00:39:14

Shafer: I guess the criticism was that you—that they got something. What *did* they get?

18-00:39:20

Brown: Well, I raised, I don't know, \$75 million, \$100 million? What did they get? They got me. [laughter]

18-00:39:29

Shafer: They get anything else?

18-00:39:31

Brown: Well, I mean that's true of every donation. All the donations, with few exceptions, are people who want something. Even the little donations want you to be single payer or do whatever the hell they want you to do. So it is a paradoxical and somewhat contradictory notion, that you're totally disinterested, like the New Order of Cincinnatus. But you have to raise money, and most of the money's coming from interest groups. Fact. So the press can be very namby-pamby about that, but this is the way it is. There is no successful politician that doesn't take a lot of money.

18-00:40:11

Shafer: And so take us on the inside. Give us a window into that. Like they're—okay, if they're going to give you money for Prop. 30. And did they say—or is there just an assumption, is there a handshake. I mean is there—?

18-00:40:22

Brown: No, do you know how much money? We're talking trillions for the presidency. Those dollars represent desires. This sort of America, if you—the premise of your question is that America shouldn't exist in the form that it does. Because it's *totally* dependent on campaign donations for its most sacred and essential rite: namely, the quadrennial election. If that's bad, then America itself is bad. So live with that idea for a while.

18-00:40:55

Shafer: But is there something you assume they wanted?

18-00:40:58

Brown: I assume—do you think oil companies—what about nurses? Do you think they want single payer. How about building trades—do you think they want to build things? What other groups do we have here?

18-00:41:12

Shafer: So what did the oil industry—?

18-00:41:13

Brown: Developers. Do you think they want to build things? I mean they're talking now about a \$20 billion school bond. Well, the unions want that. You don't even talk to them! They don't talk to you. They all know what the rules are. They're not going to say, "Hey, here's your money. I want—." That's called bribery. You can go to prison for that. But they can give you all the money they want to give you, and all that gets into the mix.

18-00:41:37

Shafer: And do you kind of know what they want?

18-00:41:40

Brown: Well—this is the paradoxical thing on the system. The system is drowning in influence. But we expect our politicians to be fair minded, independent, and not corruptly influenced. Both are true. How do you make—I can't make sense of it, but you'd have to avoid these lines of promising things. I mean oil companies probably would assume, if we don't get an income tax, then maybe they might want to go for an oil severance tax. Maybe. I don't know. I never talked to them about it, but you can imagine that. So if you can get enough taxes from individuals, including oil company executives, maybe they're happy with that.

18-00:42:22

Shafer: What about fracking?

18-00:42:24

Brown: Fracking, I've never heard anybody talk about that. That was my idea. I find it really strange that people who drive to rallies in their cars don't want the oil. Or if they want the oil, they don't want it from Bakersfield. They want it from the Ecuadoran rainforest, where half of the oil produced in that very vulnerable, very delicate, sensitive area, is coming into California. But I haven't heard anyone say leave it in the ground in Ecuador. They're saying leave it in the ground in some tired oil fields in Bakersfield. And by the way, I'm driving to the rally, and you can take your car too. In fact, I think you people brought three cars today. And I saw—

18-00:43:07

Shafer: We came from three different places.

18-00:43:10

Brown: I see three cars.

18-00:43:11

Shafer: [laughing] We came from three different places.

18-00:43:11

Meeker: There's five of us here, so—[laughing]

18-00:43:13

Shafer: We carpooled.

18-00:43:15

Brown: Look: we must reduce the demand for oil and fossil fuels, reduce carbon emissions. If we keep raising our consumption of carbon, as we *are* and have *been*, then we will just suck in more imports. The production, during my administration—of oil—went down 17 percent. But the consumption of oil went up. *How* could that happen? The way it can happen is we import more oil. So, because importing oil is less obvious, the activist groups feel—stop it here. Stop it where I can see it. Don't talk to me about where it's going to come from—as I drive away. Now, the more affluent ones have electric cars, but most of them don't. And I think it's great to try to stop this.

But no, I mean I really think demand—and I've talked, I've argued with [Bill] McKibben. He says it's just like scissors. He's got a scissors metaphor. And you have one blade that is demand reduction, and the other blade which is supply reduction. And you need—you can't have a scissors unless you have both. Well, that's true, if you can reduce production *globally*. But if all you do is say we're going to reduce it in LA County and Bakersfield, Monterey, or whatever—but we're not going to reduce the 340 billion-plus miles, vehicle miles traveled, then what are we accomplishing? But by the way, that is not heard. Stopping fracking is okay, even if you have to import more oil.

I find that what we *really* need—we've got to get battery technology cost down. We have to get [reduced] dependence on the car, the truck—we need electrified trains to be carrying freight as well as people. We need so much! We need a mobilization. And therefore, stopping fracking will penalize some oil companies, but it's not going to change the carbon emissions in California. By the way, the drilling is not the big—it's the burning of oil. That's where most of the emissions come from.

18-00:45:27

Shafer: Yeah, so it's just kind of a feel-good thing for the advocates then?

18-00:45:30

Brown: Well, they wouldn't say that. They say it affects the water, the seismic, people living within twenty-five hundred feet. Oh, those are all good points. I mean they're modest—put it this way. They're moderate points. They're not big points. The big point is we need to transform the global economy, and America should be playing the leading role. And we're not, because of Trump. But California is doing a lot, needs to do a lot more. But mobilizing for the *more* is much more difficult than rallying against fracking or leaving it in the ground, or whatever the

hell they're going to do. So I think it would be very sad if we get a ban on fracking in California, and oil consumption goes up. I wouldn't want that to happen.

18-00:46:16

Shafer: Yeah. Can you talk about realignment? That was one of the things that got done in 2011, AB 109 [Realignment Legislation Addressing Public Safety]—I think that was Steinberg's bill? It was sort of—again, it was kind of this opportunity, in a sense, the Supreme Court. You're under a mandate to reduce prison population. That was a very complicated bill, that I think a lot of legislators may or may not have read.

18-00:46:38

Brown: Well, I don't think anybody read it. It's too hard to read. It's complicated. I always said it was Diane Cummins. It was her idea. She did realignment under Wilson, and she also worked with John Burton, and she worked for me. And she designed the idea.

18-00:46:54

Shafer: Yeah, and so this was transferring responsibility to the counties for low level, non violent—

18-00:46:57

Brown: Lower level—I'd call them lower-level crimes.

18-00:47:00

Shafer: Yeah, and how much of that was budget necessity? How much of it was good policy?

18-00:47:06

Brown: A lot of budget necessity, but there was also good policy. So they said. I mean can I really fully understand realignment? No. I mean I have the general idea. But that has different effects in different counties.

18-00:47:23

Shafer: That—I think that might surprise people that you don't understand it, or that you're not—

18-00:47:25

Brown: Well, I understand it better than 99.999 percent of the people. But according to my standards of understanding, it could always be much greater and deeper. But you have to understand. My standard of understanding is much higher than anybody you know. And that's why I'm constantly inquiring, studying, and what have you. So yeah, the realignment created more responsibility for mental health problems in the jails, for alternative sanctions, for strengthening the probation department. We started these committees that the probation chief ran, with the sheriff and the DA, and other people in the counties. It really put responsibility at the county level for more of the criminal justice system. Instead of the way it exists is felony—DA charges, you plead guilty 97 percent of the time, and you go to prison. No harm, no foul, for the county. They don't pay. Now, when they send



people to the county jail, it's crowded. They've got to let people out, or they've got to build more jails. A lot of times they don't like that, like in LA or San Francisco. So it put the problem closer to where the problem is and where the potential solutions were, instead of letting Daddy take it. *Daddy* being give it to the state. Out of sight, out of mind—you worry about it. It all gets lost in the massive \$100 billion-plus state budget. So I think it had a lot of good features.

18-00:49:06

Shafer: It was also complicated, as you said. And there was resistance at certain levels, at the county level.

18-00:49:13

Brown: Well, yeah, but they went along with it, and the sheriffs went along with it.

18-00:49:16

Shafer: Yeah, but my question is did you feel—I mean whenever you try something, you don't know how it's going to work out.

18-00:49:21

Brown: You don't. That's why I said I didn't fully understand all the elements. See, the only way you understand it is if you go to a county, and sit there and get educated. I mean how much do any of you at this table know about how a county works, in terms of who's arrested, how much time do they serve? How many trials are there, how much—plead guilty. What's bail? What's not? What's going on? And there's fifty-eight different counties, and there's different—like San Francisco sends far fewer people, percentagewise, than Kern County. So there's a lot going on. It's a big state. Forty million people, a million felonies a year. How do you get your hands around that? And I would say I know more about it than most—certainly all public officials at the state level. And the people who know more—I think Diane Cummins knows a lot more. I think certain key people at the county level. So this is the issue: we're dealing with stuff that we can't fully grasp.

You know, we have six million kids. We have 320,000 teachers. What's going on? Do you know? I don't know. You know, that's why I'm doing my military school, and I'm putting—just since I saw you last I put in over a hundred hours, just on that. Far more than I put on this project, by the way, by many times. Because I'm trying to get it right. How do you get low-income kids higher, to be at grade level? Which the state has not been able to do, but I'm attempting to do it myself, through my charter school—or through the charter school that I started. It's not mine, it's the people's.

18-00:51:07

Shafer: Did you feel, you know, I don't know what the word would be, not *worried*—but you know, things could have gone wrong?

18-00:51:12

Brown: Yeah, I said to Diane Cummins that I hope you know what you're doing. I did say that.

18-00:51:19

Shafer: What did you think the risks were?

18-00:51:20

Brown: Well, I don't know. It could blow up. Who knows the risks? If I knew what the risks were, I could calculate them. You don't know. By the way, a lot of what you've got to do in government, you don't know. But most people don't like to live in *I don't know*. So they fool themselves. I'll say it more bluntly: they *deceive* themselves, and they think they know, but they don't. And I'm astounded at the number of people who don't really understand the consequences of what they're working on—of what they're voting on. Because, you have to spend your whole life doing *that*. You can't go to football games. You can't take the kids to soccer games. You can't go on vacations. You've got to spend full-time reading the thousands and thousands of bills that you're considering, and *nobody* is going to do that.

18-00:52:04

Shafer: And therefore what?

18-00:52:06

Brown: It's a crap game that we hope it all comes out okay. Nobody's in charge. That's what I would say. Now, when I was there, I was more in charge than anybody else I know. But even me—there's too many unknowns, too many variables, too many factors, too many elements. And it's complicated just to plant my corn and tomatoes. I couldn't do *that* successfully. Well, being governor of California has gotten a lot more complicated. A lot more unknowns.

18-00:52:37

Shafer: So you just accept that?

18-00:52:39

Brown: Well, I try to keep finding out. That's why I spend a lot of time at this. I talk to a lot of people. And that was basically what I spent my time doing, trying to find out what's going on. And because I didn't need to raise as much money, I could spend more time doing that. But most of the time, in politics, your job is to get your money, and get your face in front of the camera, and try to look as good as you can. That's the job. Anybody tells you different is lying, because I know. Because I've been doing it for fifty years. This year—it's my fiftieth year. In fact, it's beyond fifty. I was elected to the junior college board, and I was sworn in in July of 1969, so this is my fiftieth anniversary in the political business.

18-00:53:21

Shafer: Happy anniversary.

18-00:53:24

Meeker: Your golden jubilee.

18-00:53:25

Brown: And I've thought a lot about it, by the way.

18-00:53:27

Shafer: What have you thought?

18-00:53:29

Brown: I'm imparting some of my knowledge. So I don't want to overstate the lack of knowledge. Because we know a lot, and people will misinterpret and say you're flying by—and you don't even know where you're going. It's like your car. You don't know where you're going. Just put it in MapQuest, and you trust it. And a lot of people use Google, and Google sends you up the road about five miles. And a lot of people who come here, they pass right by—Mountain House III on the gate, a California flag flying. And they go up another ten miles because Google told them to. So that's kind of what's going on in government. They're reading their MapQuest because it's so complicated. It's difficult, and that's the nature of modern society.

18-00:54:15

Shafer: So when politicians get up to sell something, whether it's single payer or realignment or a tax increase—?

18-00:54:25

Brown: We don't know all the consequences, but that's true. Did the people know when they started World War I—did they know what they were getting into? No. Did they know they were going to have Hitler, Lenin, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, and the emergence of Mussolini? No. That the Middle East would be divided, even to 2019, torn apart by the deals that were made after World War I? No, they didn't know that. So yeah, things are going on all the time. Did people know when they expanded NATO that that was going to maybe result in Russia pushing back? Probably they didn't think about that. That was not debated. I know it wasn't debated, because Bill Perry was there in the Cabinet Room, and he said they didn't debate it. Nobody talked, except for him and the vice president. That was the only debate. Big issues are not thought through, in many cases. I mean did Eisenhower know that he was going to get to Normandy? Because the weather wasn't that great. So you've got to take chances. That's all. Hopefully, we take—we're responsible in our choices.

18-00:55:28

Shafer: Your lieutenant governor was Gavin Newsom. And I think in 2011, part of the lieutenant governor's vast number of duties and responsibilities is they're in charge of economic something or other—development, I guess. And he came up with a blueprint toward recovery.

18-00:55:45

Brown: Yeah, right.

18-00:55:46

Shafer: And I think he felt that it didn't get adequate attention from you. I mean how do you think about—?

18-00:55:52

Brown: Well, how about now? Where is that? Has it been used? I rest my case.

18-00:56:00

Shafer: [laughing] But how did you think about that relationship, if you thought about it at all?

18-00:56:05

Brown: Oh, you're talking about the plan or the relationship?

18-00:56:08

Shafer: Well, both. I mean, but in general the relationship, your—

18-00:56:10

Brown: Well, first of all, I know something about governor/lieutenant governor relations. My father had a lieutenant governor. Do you know what his name was? See, you don't even remember. Glenn Anderson, and not one of you know that.

[side conversation deleted]

18-00:56:25

Brown: Okay, Glenn Anderson. It's just that's the way it is. The governor is independently elected. The lieutenant governor is, you know—

18-00:56:35

Shafer: Yeah, he was right. So—should the lieutenant governor's job just be eliminated?

18-00:56:39

Brown: No! It's a good job. He's waiting there. The governor gets killed, he's ready to go. And he's there, and he's—

18-00:56:45

Shafer: Doesn't happen very often.

18-00:56:47

Brown: But we've had it since 1850. Why are we complaining about it? I'm just saying—it's the vice president. Didn't [John Nance] Garner say it wasn't worth a pail of warm spit? Wasn't that—now they're trying to puff it up and make it look important. They drag the vice president out to the press conference, the Rose Garden, the Cabinet Room. But it's still, you know, not worth a pail of warm spit unless there's a crisis. Although who was the vice president under—was that [Dick] Cheney?

18-00:57:19

Shafer: Under Bush?

18-00:57:20

Brown: Yeah. Well, he did a lot of damage. That's another problem, because the president is the visible one. And if you let these less visible push you too much, that's bad.

18-00:57:37

Meeker: Well, did you have regular briefings with your lieutenant governor?

18-00:57:40

Brown: No. No, I never got—did Reagan brief me, secretary of state? I was his secretary of state. No. I had one meeting with him.

18-00:57:48

Meeker: One meeting with Newsom?

18-00:57:50

Brown: Reagan.

18-00:57:51

Shafer: No, no, with Newsom.

18-00:57:52

Brown: Well, but if I didn't—did Reagan meet with—who was his lieutenant governor? Oh, he was—they just don't. It's separate offices. Really. The governor meets with his team, mostly the director of finance and the executive secretary or chief of staff. Whatever you're calling him. And then you deal with people, then you deal with the legislature, you deal with the senate [president] pro tem. You're trying to get a vote. The governor—the lieutenant governor didn't have a vote, unless he's going to break a tie.

18-00:58:20

Meeker: Did you send him off to any funerals?

18-00:58:23

Brown: I think he went to a few funerals.

18-00:58:26

Shafer: In terms of a—you talked about meeting with your team, and that that's what governors do.

18-00:58:31

Brown: Well, you know Gray Davis was lieutenant governor—under who?

18-00:58:36

Shafer: Wilson.

18-00:58:38

Brown: Did Wilson consult him? I doubt it.

18-00:58:39

Shafer: I don't think that he liked him very much.

18-00:58:41

Brown: [laughing] He didn't?

18-00:58:41

Shafer: No.

18-00:58:42

Brown: And McCarthy was lieutenant governor under Deukmejian.

18-00:58:45

Shafer: No.

18-00:58:46

Brown: Wasn't he? He ran later?

18-00:58:48

Shafer: He was never lieutenant [governor]—oh, you're right. I'm sorry.

18-00:58:51

Brown: How quickly they forget. [laughter]

No, we talked, but it's that because the lieutenant governor can't do anything. He has no duty to carry it out. You know, you want to get a vote, you've got to talk to the senate pro tem. If you want to deal with the budget, you've got to talk to the director of finance. You want to deal with the division of industrial relations, you talk to the head of DIR [Department of Industrial Relations]. You want to talk about fish and game? Talk to Fish and Game. Want to talk about Oroville Dam, you've got to talk to the Division of Water Resources, DWR [Department of Water Resources]. Where does the lieutenant governor fit into the scheme? Normally, for the last hundred and fifty years, it hasn't. I think Reagan tried to give a little more boost to his lieutenant governor.

18-00:59:39

Shafer: You had Mike Curb as your lieutenant governor, and he tried to take over when you left the state.

18-00:59:43

Brown: And that was silly too, because he can't take over. I made him look silly.

18-00:59:47

Shafer: Yeah, so lieutenant governor is not an office you ever would have considered running for?

18-00:59:51

Brown: Well, you might. It depends what you've got available. If you want to be in office, you can't be choosers. I mean beggars can't be choosers on what's available. It's a long-term play. I wouldn't want to be lieutenant governor at the age of seventy-two. [laughter]

18-01:00:07

Shafer: It's not a career capper.

18-01:00:11

Brown: Well, you could. Unruh was treasurer toward the end. I thought of going back and running for superintendent of instruction this time.

18-01:00:18

Shafer: Did you really?

- 18-01:00:19  
Brown: Yeah. But then I decided that was a bad move.
- 18-01:00:21  
Meeker: This time, meaning in 2018?
- 18-01:00:24  
Brown: Yeah! Just by—
- 18-01:00:24  
Shafer: And what would your platform have been?
- 18-01:00:26  
Brown: Well, I would have kind of—that’s the reason I didn’t run. I didn’t see any way to really make an impact. But I thought it would be a good—kind of a pulpit kind of job.
- 18-01:00:37  
Shafer: Yeah, I should maybe defer to these guys. But talk—your relationship with the university has been—Fill in the blank—fraught maybe? It’s been—
- 18-01:00:46  
Brown: Yeah. Well, not fraught.
- 18-01:00:47  
Shafer: It’s been difficult. It’s been difficult.
- 18-01:00:50  
Brown: I’m more drawn to independent intellectuals than institutionalized players.
- 18-01:00:54  
Shafer: What do you mean? Say more about that.
- 18-01:00:55  
Brown: I’ve never been more precise.
- 18-01:00:59  
Shafer: So is there something about this university, UC?
- 18-01:01:02  
Brown: No, it’s the university in general. I mean their world, their folkways, their obscure pathways to PhDs. The political—
- 18-01:01:15  
Shafer: Martin’s getting agitated here. [Meeker laughs]
- 18-01:01:16  
Brown: The political correctness. I mean there’s a lot of great stuff going on. The research particularly. But people that I liked, Ivan Illich and Gregory Bateson, were both generally outside the university. Gary Snyder was a poet, a real intellectual, but not really in the university. So there have been people that I’ve known, and the university is in the—the Board of Regents is not a scintillating intellectual venue.

That's not to say that the different research—the Berkeley geologists come up here and drill and look around at the mountains here. They're very interesting. They're very specific. But—

18-01:02:03

Meeker: Is it just the—

18-01:02:04

Brown: Well, it's just the expense. You know, since I was governor the first time the debt built up a trillion dollars. That's a problem. The only way you can prevent it is to lower the cost structure. Well, nobody at the university wants to lower the cost structure. Just like nobody in the hospital industry wants to lower the cost structure.

18-01:02:20

Shafer: So when you say the debt, you mean pensions and all that stuff?

18-01:02:23

Brown: No, the debt—the student debt.

18-01:02:24

Shafer: Oh, the student debt. I'm sorry.

18-01:02:26

Brown: It's a trillion—\$1.3 trillion. It barely existed when I was governor the first time. No one even talked about it. The trouble is government has to take care of prisons. When I was governor the first time, prisons were three. But Schwarzenegger, they got to be eleven. Three to eleven is eight—8 percent of a \$100 billion budget is \$8 billion. The university only gets \$2 [billion] or \$3 billion. So more than double the university is going for an expenditure that didn't exist when I was governor the first time. And you've got the Medi-Cal, and all the costs of that. That's going up. So you have a lot of other needs. There's childcare. There's much more of a perceived need today. You have all these other—you have homeless. You have this, you have that. You've got to pay for housing, you've got to do this—you have so many more things.

The university is shrinking as a percentage of the budget, and how do you make it up? You make it up with tuition. But by the way, more people have to go to school. You have to have more and more people. The theory is that everybody goes to college, even though only a third of the high school graduates ever graduate from college. So we have a lot of demands and desires, and to pay for them, there's a contradiction, because the very people you're trying to help, you're going in debt for decades of their life, including their parents in many cases. So that people are paying more on the student debt of their children than their social security payments—or their social security, I guess. So it's a real contradiction. That's why some people say let the federal government pay for it. It's a real dilemma. That's why I like promoting online—maybe we could cut some costs that way.



It's a bottomless pit when you say everything that the university wants to do, they say it's quality. Quality means fewer hours the professors teach, more staffing for the research, more buildings, more equipment—that's all money. And it seems to be endless, because the research projects that people want way exceed the research money. So there's constant pressure—in fact, that's most of government. Endless need. Endless need and—or endless desire. That's why I always liked the Buddhist vow—desires are endless. I vow to cut them down. [laughing] That's what you're supposed to say every day. In government, desires are endless. I pledge to turn them into needs, and then into rights, and then into laws. [laughter]

18-01:05:14

Shafer: And that's what you were pushing back against.

18-01:05:15

Brown: I push back against that. But it's another good. All we have is goods, but too many goods are a bad.

18-01:05:20

Meeker: Do you see then, the humanities and the social sciences at the UC system, as kind of a luxury in some ways?

18-01:05:30

Brown: Well, I think right now what they're generating is not intellectually exciting. There's a lot of culture wars. A lot of that's going on. You know, there's a lot of that at the university now. And maybe that's some advance. It's all new. So I view, with some suspicion, anything that didn't happen when I was at the university—and that's a hell of a lot. [laughing] So I have to look at it.

18-01:05:56

Meeker: You brought Michael Kirst on, to head your Department of Education.

18-01:05:58

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

18-01:06:00

Meeker: Who you'd worked with for many years. What did you hope that he was going to bring to—?

18-01:06:03

Brown: Knowledge, knowledge. He's been in the education business as a professor for over forty years. They were very knowledgeable.

18-01:06:12

Meeker: He had a perspective opposing standardized testing, correct?

18-01:06:18

Brown: No, not as much as I did.

18-01:06:20

Meeker: Okay. Were you hoping that—?

18-01:06:21

Brown: I went to a school with no credentialed teachers and no state tests, and we did well enough. And we did very little homework—a few hours a week. And I find out that there's—well, some succeed very well, some fail very sadly, and most of the people are somewhere in the middle. So now we can measure, with great exactitude, just what I said. But have we changed the curve? I don't know.

18-01:06:49

Meeker: Well, this is clearly a frustration with the public education system. Its standardization, its—

18-01:06:53

Brown: No, I'm not frustrated. I'm intellectually noticing what's going on.

18-01:07:00

Meeker: Does this translate into an agenda for you, for change or for impacting the system?

18-01:07:04

Brown: Well, I tried to stir them up and get them to think. I do think the university cost structure has to be reduced. Now, can that be done? I don't know. But I do know that when you go to Stanford, they have *lots* of money, and it seems to work very well. So then you go over to the University of California and say lower your cost structure. They look across the bay to Stanford. Well, now what are they doing over there? So I get the point. I've established the principle: More money is better than less money. But if the more money is coming from debt, if it's coming from borrowing—we have to live within our means. It's not a popular perspective. And also, there's a guy who wrote a book and he coined the phrase the *amenities arms race*, and he said in some of these eastern schools, they have gourmet cooking in the cafeteria or the dining room, and they advertise that. And then they have counseling. You know, you can get your therapy at some schools. And then you have the rooms, and the rooms have flat-screen televisions. And there's an amenities arms race. In fact, a guy told me, he said, "If you really want to improve your scores at your military school, move up to the hills and get a campus with a swimming pool, and your students will do a lot better." [laughter] Of course, you will attract different students. [laughing] So that's what everybody's doing. They're all searching for the better students. But how to take students where they are and, you know, make them do better?

18-01:08:44

Meeker: So Prop. 30 allowed for a 5 percent increase in the UC budget. Correct?

18-01:08:50

Brown: Did it? I don't know. No, I never saw it that way.

18-01:08:53

Meeker: Well, it allowed for an increase in funding for the UC system.

18-01:08:55

Brown: No, they never allowed for a 5 percent—but they had cut back. I don't know the numbers.

18-01:09:00

Meeker: Well, my understanding is it allowed for a 5 percent increase, of course—

18-01:09:04

Brown: Oh, I don't think it allowed for that.

18-01:09:05

Meeker: The campuses wanted a lot more, and this resulted as somewhat of an impasse between the governor's office and the UC president's office.

18-01:09:16

Brown: Well, wait, the governor's office and the UC are generally, ever since Reagan, have always been disagreeing. Because remember, this endless spending—and I would say, if you're coming to things that I know about, like batteries and materials—we should be spending billions more, but then who's going to put that up? It probably should be the federal government.

18-01:09:38

Meeker: Well, it occasioned a series of meetings between you and Janet Napolitano.

18-01:09:41

Brown: We did have meetings—well, I was trying to lower the cost structure. I thought if you could make 10 percent of the courses online, then that would save money. Well, that was a nonstarter.

18-01:09:51

Meeker: If you were trying to lower the cost structure, what do you suppose she was trying to do in these meetings?

18-01:09:56

Brown: I think she wanted to make sure that she was the advocate, and perceived as the advocate, of the professors. I think she knew that if she irritated them and got a vote of no confidence, she'd be in trouble. And in many ways rightfully so. The professors *are* the heart of the university, so you want to make sure you're supporting what they need. But if you give them everything they need, you're not going to have enough money.

18-01:10:22

Meeker: I believe one of the things she was advocating for was increased tuition, in order to pay for all of the goodies that the UC professors wanted.

18-01:10:30

Brown: Yeah, well that's the point. The children are packing the load for the professors. They are riding on the backs of the students, even though you wouldn't know that, because when you go to the meetings, the students are all yelling for more—against online, against cost savings. It's not pleasant. It's not easy. Wherever you look, cutting in government—because you're cutting goods. And we do need to

spend probably more money at the university, but the university, from the point of view of the California Department of Finance, don't manage as effectively as the state does. That was true the first time I was governor. It was true the last time. That's just the way—and I tended to take, because finance was right here at my left hand, I took them more seriously.

And then also, the university is so diffuse: how do you even appraise all that? Even if you were sincere on all sides, it's not easy to know what the right dollar amount is. So when people make up stories to get money, they're saying whatever they think they need to say to get the money. And the money, in many cases, is very well spent. But how do you decide that? How do you decide what—more research? I mean probably we should be doing it. They tell me—I've not looked at it precisely—the Chinese are investing in advanced computing and all of these sciences of the twenty-first century, these technologies. Well, we'd better get going—and we're not doing that.

So I'd say the government needs to spend more. Usually, that's the federal government. But you could make a case that the state should be spending that. But then, do you want to spend less on all these *other* things? Because this budget—everybody's pushing, pushing, pushing. Only the governor has to say okay, we have to look at the totality. Everybody else looks at the piece, and that is one of the problems of the government. The needs are endless. Desires are endless, not resources.

18-01:12:33

Meeker: In your conversations with Napolitano, were you two far apart at the beginning of your conversations?

18-01:12:38

Brown: Well, I don't think there was anything that definitive. It's all diffuse.

18-01:12:41

Shafer: What was it like—it's sort of an interesting dynamic, that she was a former governor, and you're the governor of Arizona. I mean did you feel like you maybe had more in common with her, for any reason, because she had been a politician?

18-01:12:54

Brown: No.

18-01:12:54

Shafer: No. Did you think that having had political skills gave her any advantages that—?

18-01:13:00

Brown: No. First of all, to be the president of a university is not that easy. In fact, the last few, people have been kind of discontent with. It's a hard crowd to manage. The professoriate—they're smart, and they have time on their hands and they are discontent. So whoever the president is—ever since [Robert Gordon] "Bob" Sproul, it has been a problem. By the way, he didn't have a doctorate. And he,

you know, what did Sproul get paid relative to the professors, and what does the current president get relative to the professors?

18-01:13:34

Meeker: So you did come up with a solution, a pact. A four-year pact with a tuition freeze and 4-5 percent budget increases every year.

18-01:13:44

Brown: I guess that was it.

18-01:13:46

Meeker: How did you arrive at that compromise.

18-01:13:47

Brown: The finance department, working with their finance guys. This is mostly staff-driven stuff.

18-01:13:53

Meeker: Well, so this idea of a committee of two is a bit overstated?

18-01:13:55

Brown: Well, I wanted to find out ways we could—we did have something, to do a value appraisal. I'm not sure of what the word was. But the idea is to look at what the cost of different courses were by seeing—there's somebody from the East. We brought him, and he gave us a talk. And I think they were doing this at Riverside, and Riverside may have already completed the analysis. But it would allow you to see the different costs of different departments, programs, courses. And that would give you a better handle on how to reduce costs. And that we wanted to do, and that was resisted by the university. They didn't want to do that. That's too mechanical or something.

18-01:14:44

Meeker: Did you ever bring up anything like tenure?

18-01:14:47

Brown: No. Tenure was a political third rail. But it's a problem. Well, they're just doing it with more adjuncts. But I did help the university. I vetoed a bill to stop their contracting out.

18-01:15:03

Shafer: So a lot of your first term was spent on criminal justice reform. Yeah. I'm just wondering, you know, when you were governor the first time, you signed the determinate sentencing law. And there were things—it was a different era. It was a different time.

18-01:15:18

Brown: Yeah, but remember, we had seventeen thousand people in prison. That's a lot different than 170,000 in prison. Because this is the point we get: when is enough enough? It's like you did something bad—maybe a race crime, sex crime, violent crime. Okay, we're good. We're agreed on the bad. Okay, now, what's the

punishment? Five years? A year? Probation? Twenty years? Life? Death? So you have a lot of argument. When something is unpleasant or bad, the reaction is we've got to do something. We've really got to hit this. And then you get these huge sentences, and it's very hard to discern: is that robbery worth two years or ten years or thirty years? And pretty soon it just escalated, and they want longer, longer, longer. Because no one thinks of what it is when you have these gerontology wards, with all these old people, with their walkers. Is that smart? Other people say, "Well, what they did was terrible. Lock them up and throw the key away." That's a meme, but we actually try to manage it. That's the problem.

How do you put a value on government activity, whether it's how much to pay for schools, for universities, for research—or for prison? How do you do that? Fixing the roads is kind of simple. You've got a road, they have engineering criteria, you do it. But so a lot of—a lot of what goes on is the pressure of the various groups. And you could look at them from one perspective, which might be a little jaundiced. You're trying to just advance your own program, feather your own nest. But in the end, maybe they're right. Maybe the highway lobby wants more gas tax. Well, at some point they're right. Professors need more support. Well, they're right. But how do you draw the line? And the line is not where it should be, but it's where a line needs to be drawn given the amount of money we have.

Now, the advocates will say, "Oh, let's go get more money." Or, "Cut some other program." So very few people have a total—well, nobody, really, has the total view. The Department of Finance does. The governor tries to. Maybe the speaker, a little bit. The senate pro tem. So it's hard to manage a \$40 million—\$40 million prison state with all the money that we're playing with.

18-01:17:45

Shafer:

You might say that in the seventies, when you were governor the first time, the pendulum kind of swung to the right. And then it kind of swung to the right again in the nineties, with the Polly Klaas kidnapping, and three strikes, and all that stuff. Did you—?

18-01:17:58

Brown:

And you never can get enough punishment for a terrible crime. That's the emotional response. But if you really think about it, ten years later, do you really want a forty-year sentence? And there are a lot of forty-year sentences. And we signed a bill, that if you're, what was the thing? What is it, I think if you're under, first of all, if you're under twenty-one, after fifteen years you get parole. Well, there are a lot of people who had forty-year sentences, so that helped them get out. Then we have another one—elderly parole. So we curb these things. But on the trajectory before I showed up, everything was: lock people up until they're using a walker. They didn't put it that way, but that's what the gist was. And because of the horror of the moment, reported on television, and the newspaper says, "Do something." And if you do something that isn't harsh enough, it seems like you're not respectful of the victims. But if you are totally feeling about the victims, you're going to have to build a lot more prisons. And we went from

twelve, we now have thirty-four prisons. That was pretty incredible. It's over five—over a 500-percent increase, so this gets very emotional. A lot of government is belief and emotions and feelings. It's not analytical, it's not calculate based on obvious factors.

18-01:19:39

Meeker: Can you intervene in that at all?

18-01:19:41

Brown: What? Well, I did intervene to the extent that I did.

18-01:19:43

Meeker: No, but in the way in which people respond emotionally to these things. Is there a way to—

18-01:19:48

Brown: Once it takes off, you get out of the way.

18-01:19:50

Shafer: Well, I wonder—you know, you were saying earlier how you reserve the right to think for yourself, which, you know—

18-01:19:55

Brown: Not all the time, but more than most. [Shafer laughs]

18-01:19:58

Shafer: So how does that apply do you think? What are some other examples? Is criminal justice for—?

18-01:20:03

Brown: That was one. Well, I pushed it. The legislature had a few that were pushing. They pushed, and then I pushed more—or kept pushing. I think their appetite for more criminal justice reform is pretty limited right now, as far as I know. Probably you haven't heard anything. It's not even a topic, is it?

18-01:20:18

Meeker: Hmm.

18-01:20:21

Shafer: A little here and there, but nothing major.

18-01:20:24

Brown: Well, the cops are—people didn't like the combination of realignment, then [Proposition] 47 [Criminal Sentences. Misdemeanor Penalties. Initiative Statute.] really got the cops spun up, and our people were against that.

18-01:20:33

Shafer: Against what?

18-01:20:33

Brown: Forty-seven. Thought it went too far, too fast.

- 18-01:20:37  
Shafer: Your own team?
- 18-01:20:37  
Brown: Yeah.
- 18-01:20:38  
Shafer: Really? So that was a case where you thought you went out on your own?
- 18-01:20:42  
Brown: No, I didn't support 47. I stayed neutral. So we were pushing. Then we get [Proposition] 57 [Criminal Sentences. Parole. Juvenile Criminal Proceedings and Sentencing. Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.] and I mean it's just—you push, and then they push back the other way.
- 18-01:20:56  
Shafer: Yeah. I'm trying to think where we want to go next. I mean through the course of all that you're appointing judges. A lot of judges. I mean by the time you left you appointed over a thousand, I think.
- 18-01:21:07  
Brown: No, not this time. Did I?
- 18-01:21:09  
Shafer: It was hundreds and hundreds—it was getting up there.
- 18-01:21:11  
Brown: It is.
- 18-01:21:11  
Shafer: It was up in the high hundreds.
- 18-01:21:13  
Brown: I think it was eight hundred the first time, but I thought it was fewer this time. But I don't know.
- 18-01:21:16  
Shafer: And you of course—now you have a majority on the [California] Supreme Court. How did you think—?
- 18-01:21:20  
Brown: I don't know if *I* have a majority. I appointed the majority.
- 18-01:21:22  
Shafer: Appointed a majority, right.
- 18-01:21:24  
Brown: But they have themselves.
- 18-01:21:25  
Shafer: Yeah. You know, you obviously gave a lot of thought especially, I think, to the supreme court nominees. But how did you think about—was what you did the



second time as governor, with judges, was it sort of a continuation of what you started to do, or was it different?

18-01:21:38

Brown: Well, I do a lot more. I had a lot more time, a lot more experience. And the court became much more conservative. The court was a lot more serious and prestigious when I became governor. Reagan appointed some good people. My father had appointed some pretty good people. So then the thing got—we got it, that was pre-polarization. I'd call it a pre-McConnell period. The Republicans appointed, I think, some pretty good people. [Donald] Wright, appointed by Reagan. Today he'd be called a very left of center, couldn't get a vote from the legislature, if you had to—senate Republicans wouldn't vote for him. So we had that very strong right Republican-leaning group, so it was pretty easy to correct that.

18-01:22:28

Shafer: I was struck by how many public defenders you appointed. I mean I think past governors appointed almost *none*.

18-01:22:35

Brown: Yeah, because it's all DAs. It's all politics. The DA—tough on crime. We had the nineties, we had all that problem: Polly Klaas, three strikes, the predators, the cocaine, the craziness. The murder rate went off the charts. Much higher. The crime rate was really high. So that's the game. That's the name of the game right then. So yeah, I thought we ought to balance it. And first of all, a lot of these things are civil cases, and DAs have no experience in them. And then the DAs, of course, the deputy DAs were opposing a lot of things that I was doing. And they're pretty harsh. You know, there are five thousand different criminal provisions. They can throw the book at you. Of course nothing like the federal government. They *really* pile on. So there's a very powerful coercive force on the part of prosecutors that needs to be tempered. And they used to have—and prosecutors, well, it's an adversarial system: public defender versus the prosecutor, so it needs to be tempered. And the judges are the ones, I guess, that have to get in the middle of it.

18-01:23:43

Shafer: Did you think of the role of DAs differently when you were governor versus when you were attorney general?

18-01:23:49

Brown: Well, I worked with the DAs as attorney general, tried to get their support—and as governor. But they're the more hard line of the police chiefs and the sheriffs. When they run for office, they always run on law and order. Depending upon what the crime, it used to be narcotics, then it becomes sexual crimes, and they jump all over that. So there's a certain amount of political manipulation there, which I don't say is just DAs. Governors, congressmen, senators, presidents—everybody, this is a theatrical program here. That's why Ronald Reagan said, and

I think I've said it before, that he can't imagine someone running for president that hasn't been in the movies.

18-01:24:36

Shafer: You—one of the things, again, that you did, that I think previous governors didn't do, is that you declined to—you allowed parole recommendations to go forward for lifers.

18-01:24:46

Brown: Right. Well, when I was governor the first time, that wasn't a law. That was done in 1990. Ira Reiner and Deukmejian, I think, put on the ballot a measure that no lifer gets paroled unless the governor approves. And that was meant to restrict paroles, and it did—very well. That really curbed them.

18-01:25:05

Shafer: Yeah, I think like Gray Davis, I think—reversed every one.

18-01:25:07

Brown: Fourteen.

18-01:25:08

Shafer: Almost all.

18-01:25:09

Brown: He allowed fourteen women to—

18-01:25:10

Shafer: Yeah, after a lawsuit.

18-01:25:12

Brown: After decades in prison.

18-01:25:14

Shafer: Yeah, and so you obviously were making a—were you making a statement? What was it, or was it—?

18-01:25:19

Brown: You're always making a statement. You know, everything you do has symbolic fallout, right? So that's not a very important statement, "were you making a statement." [laughing] Because it's very hard *not* to make a statement—in fact, impossible. There's always symbolism, or there's always communication. But the supreme court in the Lawrence decision, which was close, four to three, ruled the governor—put restrictions on the governor's ability to deny parole. So the environment changed: Arnold Schwarzenegger denied paroles a good part of the time. And he has reversed *hundreds* of times, and his total grant rate, I guess—I'm not sure, but together with the court it got to be about 25 percent, whereas for me it was more like 85 percent—maybe higher, toward the end. Because at the time, when I was governor the first time, the parole board was the final word. So this is a whole new layer that was invented in a very crime-sensitive period. And

by the way, it's done by politicians—it was not done by penologists. Ira Reiner wanted to run for attorney general.

18-01:26:35

Shafer: He was the LA district attorney?

18-01:26:37

Brown: Yes. So they want to do that. They like the idea of locking up criminals, because once you commit a certain crime or a number of crimes, you, of your essence, are no longer just a human being. You're now a criminal, by your essence. So therefore, why should you ever be free? In fact, why shouldn't you be executed? And I think in many places they would execute you—maybe the Philippines or some other places. But here, we don't have quite the stomach for that, so we just lock you up and forget about you. And we're spending *huge* sums of money on this and not on other things. So you have to understand that doing the same thing over and over again at some point becomes insanity.

So we have twelve prisons, then all of a sudden California builds five more. Now we've got seventeen prisons. Okay. Now we built five more, and now we've got twenty-three. Okay, now we build five more—and we have twenty-eight. Okay, now we build five more—now we've got thirty-three. That's where it was. So at what point, in adding five prisons, would you say: have we reached a balance point? Everything else in life has an optimum. It's not just—you eat, right? You didn't eat four sandwiches. By the way, you've been eating sandwiches for years, all right? But you still eat the same number of sandwiches usually. Maybe one time you might eat a little more/a little less. But when it comes to punishment, there's never enough punishment, as long as people are perceiving horrible crimes.

But they don't calculate—well, that's true how I feel today, but what about ten years from now? And what about twenty years from now? And generally speaking, if you build the prisons, they will fill them. If you build the beds, they will come. And so, if they don't have the beds, then they won't send them to prison. And now maybe people will say well, that's—everybody who commits a felony. Well, that's not true. When I was governor I calculated—and it could be off, but it was more or less close. I think something like 8 or 9 percent, something like that, of convicted felons, went to prison. And after my eight years, it was 19 percent. I said wow, we've really doubled in the rate of going to prison. But that kept going. So at some point, when—is it 25 percent, is it 30 [percent]?

So the way politics works is you swing one way, then you swing [back]. They elect Pat Brown, and then okay now Pat Brown, retired him, let's put in Ronald Reagan. Now we do Ronald Reagan, then retired him and put in Jerry Brown. Now we do Jerry—now we've got to have Deukmejian. Oh, we elected him enough, let's do Wilson. Then we're tired, so now we do Davis. Now we're tired of Davis, we do Arnold. Now we do Arnold, now we did me. Now we had the only time a Democrat ever followed a—now we're in completely

untried/uncharted waters. Democrat following Democrat [Jerry Brown succeeded by Gavin Newsom].

18-01:29:44

Shafer: To what extent do you think your training—?

18-01:29:46

Brown: So what I want to say is I think you have to know when is enough enough. It's called the principle of enoughness—or I'll give it another word: satiety. And there is no satiety in the political game, generally speaking. More, give me more. Give me three strikes, give me two strikes, give me one strike—come on, no statute of limitations. So they keep doing it. And then finally somebody comes along and says, "Oh, this is terrible," and then they go the other way. And then maybe there's more crimes, and then we go back. So the way the political body politic maintains equilibrium is going too far and then reversing. So that's the way it—but on the crime thing, it's pretty unprecedented what happened in the eighties.

By the way, the number of felonies went up in the eighties too. It started going up with the civil rights movement in the sixties. The number of felonies per hundred thousand went up. And it kept going up in the seventies and even in the eighties, and at some point began to slow down.

18-01:30:51

Shafer: The number meaning the number of felonies committed?

18-01:30:53

Brown: Per hundred thousand. The rate, the crime rate, definitely went up significantly. I mean not even close.

18-01:31:01

Shafer: But a lot of that's demographics too, it's—and the economy.

18-01:31:04

Brown: Well, no, look, there are books and books written on this topic. And they all conclude with one thought—*more research is needed*. [laughter]

18-01:31:19

Shafer: To what extent do you think your training in the seminary, your thinking about redemption and—those things, your religious training generally—?

18-01:31:27

Brown: Well, that has an effect. I mean every time you go to church you say the Our Father—forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Well, that does have a point to it. Although I find the idea of forgiveness is a totally alien concept now, in many quarters. Because the crime is so horrible, and the victim is so injured, that forgiveness is obscene. I mean for Jesus to say on the cross, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." That would be an obscenity in many quarters today. Just lock him up, execute him, and be done with it. Anything less is disrespectful of the victim. That is a very extreme position, and I've kind of caricatured it, but there's a certain amount of truth—

there is a lot of truth to that. So that's a hard group—that's a hard feeling to oppose.

18-01:32:32

Shafer: Yeah, although this time around almost all the Democrats opposed the death penalty. So there has been—evolution, I think, on that.

18-01:32:38

Brown: Well, the death penalty—it all seems very remote now.

18-01:32:42

Shafer: Well, it wasn't remote for you when you were governor.

18-01:32:46

Brown: Well, it was very remote, because it never happened. And it never happened for Deukmejian either. He had no executions.

18-01:32:52

Shafer: To what extent did you—I mean how did you think about a possibility of presiding—?

18-01:32:59

Brown: I didn't think about it a lot.

18-01:33:01

Shafer: At all?

18-01:33:02

Brown: No, I knew—why think about something if it isn't before you? You can just imagine, even—I was thinking the other day, you know, about this nuclear blunder that can kill millions of people. And I sometimes talk to people about it, and they don't want to hear about it. So people don't want to think about really bad news. So why would I want to think about presiding at an execution. So I thought about it. I don't say I didn't think about it, but it didn't ever get very close.

18-01:33:34

Shafer: Was that by design?

18-01:33:35

Brown: Well, it was by the design of the powers that be.

18-01:33:38

Shafer: Well, you were the power that be. [laughing]

18-01:33:39

Brown: No, that's not true. The power is the system, and I'm one node in this swirling informational exchange. But the system—no. These were the courts. A federal court struck down the death penalty in the Furman case, the whole country. And California then applied that, and it takes a long time. The standards of prosecution and conviction keep getting higher.

18-01:34:05

Shafer: But there was the whole—you know, execution protocol, that went through a process, and it's—

18-01:34:10

Brown: Oh, that was later. Before we had the gas chamber—you're talking about the second time?

18-01:34:14

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. So I mean it seemed like—

18-01:34:16

Brown: Oh, that's true. Yeah, we were very deliberate in our efforts there. That's true. So yeah, it was more that I had my hand in that one. Yes.

18-01:34:26

Shafer: That's what I was referring—that's what I asked, yeah.

18-01:34:28

Brown: Well, I was thinking of the first time. I mean Deukmejian ran in part on the death penalty. He wanted to execute people, but he never got the chance. So he was trying his best.

18-01:34:42

Shafer: Another promise unfilled.

18-01:34:44

Brown: And he appointed the majority of the supreme court. Couldn't get it done. But that's very instructive. There's no question he wanted death sentences carried out, and he couldn't do it. Now, Wilson could. He got five. But you know, there's more than two thousand murders a year. All you get is five? Davis got five. I think Arnold got three, four—something like that. I'm just saying that's the system recoiling from executions.

18-01:35:17

Shafer: Yeah, but there was some strategy involved in the fact that you didn't have to preside over any the second time?

18-01:35:23

Brown: Right.

18-01:35:23

Shafer: Yeah. Can you just, how—?

18-01:35:25

Brown: No, I mean they didn't, they haven't happened yet. Even before the moratorium there was nothing primed.

18-01:35:33

Shafer: But did you think—are there some things I could do while I'm governor, between 2011 and—?

18-01:35:39

Brown:

No, I didn't think, because there were lawsuits at the—they'd be going, they were going on in the background. What I try to do is to focus my energy on reducing the prison population. Both because of the unconstitutional claims, and also because I thought it was fair that people have hope and opportunity to turn their lives around. I feel very strongly about that, and it's still not what it should be. I think we should go further, but there's very little—well, now they're going to do a revision of the criminal law under [Michael] Romano, so that's a good thing. But it's very difficult—only takes a couple of horrible crimes and everybody runs to the legislature saying, "Lock him up."

By the way, to show you the intractability of this dispute, I was visiting a kind of an outpatient facility where one of my cousins is because she broke her arm. And I ran into a couple people. Oh yeah, and it was Cotton Rosser. He's a rodeo guy, and what was interesting, he was in a wheelchair, and he had his wife or somebody pushing him. He said, "Oh, I knew your father. I knew Pat Brown." It wasn't totally clear what he was talking about. And finally it came out that he boarded his rodeo horses here at the Mountain House, and he rented the land, I don't know for how long, and he knew my father, knew my uncle.

And he said, "Yeah, that Brown," and he was talking about my father, but I think he meant my uncle [Harold C. Brown]. "They're always talking about letting that guy out. That guy that buried the kids," I figured out he was talking about Chowchilla. It wasn't totally clear. He obviously had some problems—a stroke or something. So I said, "Oh yeah, I remember that." My uncle always was writing letters, as well as Newsom's father, Bill Newsom, for the Chowchilla kidnapers. There were three of them. Two are out—I don't know if the third was out yet. I said, "Yeah, but I mean how long?" Just yesterday, in this nursing home, standing there in the hallway with a guy in a wheelchair, and this person helping him. I said, "Well, how long is enough punishment? Ten, twenty, thirty?" "Oh, those kids—that kid, the guy that climbed out he got all screwed up. He's on dope. His whole life is ruined." So every time I said, "But how long does the punishment need to be?" "And that kid, his whole life is ruined."

So there was the discussion. And you know, you should never let him out, versus my Uncle Harold. I think he must have known one of the lawyers or something, because he was always trying to get him out. And he was on the same panel with Bill Newsom. That's probably why Bill—because I've, in my box I found a note from Newsom, "You've got to parole these guys."

18-01:38:55

Meeker:

Newsom was the [appeals court] judge in the case.

18-01:38:58

Brown:

Was he?

18-01:38:59

Meeker:

Yeah.

18-01:39:00

Brown: That I don't know. Court of appeals?

18-01:39:03

Meeker: Yes.

18-01:39:04

Brown: Well, one of the judges let him out. All I'm saying is that the inability to come to a consensus was exemplified just yesterday, between those who say—

18-01:39:15

Shafer: Throw away the key.

18-01:39:16

Brown: Well, they didn't say throw away the key, they just kept talking about how injured, how terrible was the consequence of this kid. And you think well, yeah, you were buried inside a cave. Were you ever going to get out, something—I imagine that was pretty bad. So if you think of that and you imagine it, then you don't want to let the guy out. But then when you think of the kids. They were young, how much could *they* think?

18-01:39:44

Shafer: And we know more about that now. And we know more about that—brain, how, judgment of young people.

18-01:39:49

Brown: Well, or judgment. Harry Truman said he didn't lose a minute's sleep over dropping the bomb. But did he think about all the people whose skin was burnt off and the radiation sicknesses for decades after that? I doubt that. So a lot of our minds, we're all just living in—I really see we're living in these little worlds of, these minds of belief. Evidence plays a little role, but it's all: "I believe, I feel, I want, I need." And then you swirl it around with everybody having different views, and there's where you are. That's our politics, that's our world. Now how to manage that, that's a skill.

18-01:40:30

Holmes: Governor, you were just talking about the rising number of prisons, as well as those imprisoned, from the first time you were governor.

18-01:40:40

Brown: Twelve prisons to—it went to thirty-three, and I think we opened another one, and then we had some private prisons too.

18-01:40:47

Holmes: But you were also just discussing, earlier in this session, about dealing with the budget.

18-01:40:51

Brown: Yeah.



18-01:40:52

Holmes: How much does the California corrections—the total cost of that, of not just the officers but housing the inmates, the running of those thirty-four facilities—?

18-01:41:00

Brown: Yeah, very expensive. What about it? It keeps going up, even though Newsom—It's higher now than when we had fifty thousand more prisoners.

18-01:41:08

Holmes: What kind of problem is that for lawmakers, for governors, to try to balance a budget, to trying to craft a fiscal balance?

18-01:41:17

Brown: They don't worry about balancing the budget, because basically the governor does that and the finance department.

18-01:41:23

Holmes: Sure, but I mean—it just seems like, if it continues this trend—

18-01:41:25

Brown: Well, no, because it's all different compartments. When you're talking about that guy who raped that girl in San Diego—whatever the latest horror is, you are a legislator—you want a response. The little analysis, saying this will cost x millions of dollars, you don't worry about that. Only the finance department worries, and they say veto this bill. But they signed them all. I'm sure they were against the three strikes bill, the finance department.

18-01:41:59

Shafer: Really?

18-01:41:59

Brown: I would assume.

18-01:42:01

Shafer: So they're agnostic on the politics?

18-01:42:03

Brown: Well, they do cost.

18-01:42:07

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. Good, thanks. I think we're—

18-01:42:07

Brown: You're done?

18-01:42:08

Shafer: We're good for today. We'll see you tomorrow at nine thirty?

18-01:42:09

Brown: All right.

## Interview 19: September 10, 2019

19-00:00:00

Shafer: Today is Tuesday, September 10, 2019. We're at Mountain House with Governor Jerry Brown. This is session nineteen, I believe?

19-00:00:07

Meeker: That's right.

19-00:00:08

Shafer: With Martin Meeker and Todd Holmes from The Bancroft Library, and Scott Shafer, Queena Kim, and Guy Marzorati from KQED. So, we got quite a ways through yesterday, Governor, your first—or I guess I should say your third term really. But there are a couple things we wanted to circle back to, including education. And you alluded, I think, yesterday to the Local Control Funding Formula, and that seemed like it had some roots—something you'd been thinking about for a while. Talk about that, and why you thought that that was important and how you went about putting that policy together.

19-00:00:42

Brown: Well, when I first heard, it was called the, I think, student weighted formula, some word with weighted formula as part of it [weighted student funding formula]. And what it is, is a reaction to the proliferation of categorical programs, which at the time that I adopted this new law, there were over fifty categorical programs, like—

19-00:01:06

Shafer: And just say what that is.

19-00:01:08

Brown: Well, it's a program under a specific category. It could be special ed., it could be the Miller-Unruh Reading Act, it could be for transportation, it could be for gifted children, it could be for disabled children, it could be hot lunches. What it is instead of giving money in bulk to school boards at the local level, it gives money with specific objectives and rules on how it should be spent. And so what it does, it allows the legislature, or in some cases the Congress, to drive or attempt to drive behavior at the local school-site level.

And the problem is that over the years, these programs multiplied and became very conflicting, and often required applications that required specific research to qualify. And around these programs grew up lobbyists and specialists, consultants, that were hired by the local school districts to get as much of this money as possible. So it wasn't transparent, it wasn't obvious, and it certainly was conflictual, because there are so many different sources of funding, they had many different rules. They had different audit procedures. And when you maybe are playing with forty different revenue sources, you have to hire people at the local level to manage the pursuit of these funds and also their management—and then their auditing after the fact. So it creates a lot of out-of-classroom employees to deal with the complexity of the funding streams.

So the idea was create a weighted formula. And the weights would be, for example: is there a disproportionate number of low-income kids? Is there a disproportionate number of foster-care kids? Is there a large number of kids whose first language at home is not English? Those were the factors we put into the Local Control Funding Formula, so that became a formula that you automatically qualified, once you described your student population. That is contrasted with special employees at the school district level, and for charter schools at the charter school site, having to wade through hundreds, if not thousands, of pages and formulas and various other obstacles to get the money to carry on basic education.

And all of that comes out of our political system, wherein a problem at the local school is perceived as not just a problem in Los Angeles or Berkeley or Sacramento, but a state problem, called the *problem of education*. And then legislators and governors talk about it, and they want to pass bills. And then when they pass bills, they get laws—and the laws then direct behavior at the local level. And over the decades, there have been more and more mandates, prescriptive commands, coming out of the state capital, telling people at the local level what to do. And those commands are embodied, not just in laws, but in regulations that are promulgated as a *result* of the laws. And then, in addition, there are then lawsuits and disputes. Sometimes they're political, sometimes they're legal, about the meaning of these rules, and whether someone complied with them or they didn't.

And so the student weighted formula, which resulted in the Local Control Spending Formula, was a way to cut back these many different programs and give the money in bulk, where if we just give it by formula, it would show up and would make the job at the local level simpler, allowing more money to be spent on kids. Okay, now that's the idea. Immediately, after the law is passed, there are groups that are called *equity groups*. That's what we call them. And they were complaining that there was too much discretion/latitude at the local level, and they weren't spending the money on poor kids and on the kinds of kids that needed the money. So they asked the State Board of Ed. to pass rules to tie the hands of local educators, so that the preferences of the people in Sacramento—the interest groups, some of the legislators, would get effectuated. And I fought those, as did my appointees to the board.

But it sharply puts into relief here, this problem or question: how much should we trust a local school district, and how much should they trust teachers, versus how much we should prescribe in standard lock-step formulas what the teachers and what the school boards have to do? When you make more and more minute prescriptions, you open the way for more and more lawsuits. Because to the extent that there are detailed orders or rules, telling what the school has to do, they're going to miss details. They're not going to comply totally. Because first of all, by now, we're not talking about one law—we're talking about hundreds and hundreds of pages of complex law that very few people understand. Therefore, you're dependent on consultants, dependent on lawyers—and people make

mistakes. And the whole idea of this local control formula was to simplify that, number one. And number two was to get money disproportionately to those in need, as opposed to what it was historically, whereas the most money went to the people with the most expensive property in the school districts.

So that was the idea, and it continues, because schools don't perform in the way the people *want*. In fact, in California probably in most grades in the key courses, less than 50 percent are at grade average. And among low-income kids of various backgrounds, that is more like 20 percent or even lower. So that then says there's a problem, and the answer, when you're in Sacramento, is a Sacramento answer. That is: more money, more rules. And often the more money is tied to very particular rules, which makes it harder to use. But that is the tendency because of the distrust, first of all of the people of California in the public school, and then of the state politicians about how local schools are performing. And they say if the scores are so low, they must be doing something wrong, and therefore we need a law to make them do what's right. And the reality is, is that there's only so much you can do when you're sitting in one city called Sacramento and you are trying to shape the behavior of six million children and over three hundred thousand teachers. And that is why I developed the concept of subsidiarity: let's trust local people. The problem with that is things happen, things go wrong, and therefore, people want more and more rules.

[side conversation deleted]

19-00:10:16

Shafer: Okay. So, it seems like there's a bit of a paradox, because you're saying—you said, if I heard you right, that there's a distrust among people of their local schools?

19-00:10:27

Brown: Yes—no, of education in general, public schools in general.

19-00:10:32

Shafer: And yet, like Prop. 30, that whole campaign was based on the schools—

19-00:10:35

Brown: Yeah, right.

19-00:10:37

Shafer: If you get the teachers' backing, it's important for ballot measures.

19-00:10:40

Brown: Yeah, very, very important.

19-00:10:42

Shafer: So how do you square those things, that people don't trust—?

19-00:10:44

Brown: Well, I don't square them. They just happen to be both true. You wouldn't deny that there are all these rules and laws every year dealing with education—churning, churning. Every year there's more and more—it never stops.

19-00:10:58

Shafer: But that's a Sacramento problem.

19-00:11:02

Brown: That's a Sacramento phenomenon. But there is a general feeling that public schools are deficient. Even though people support them, and maybe because of that want to give them more money, give the teachers more money.

19-00:11:14

Shafer: Yeah, so I mean education obviously is the biggest part of the state budget, almost half roughly. When you were there, when you think about education, it is such a huge portion of the state's responsibility. And yet, like you said, it's so byzantine and there are so many laws and rules. And do you feel—how confident do you feel that government, whether it's state or local, can fix what's wrong with schools?

19-00:11:42

Brown: Well, they obviously haven't fixed it, because the scores—well, they've gone up, but the gap among different groups hasn't changed. There are large discrepancies in the society, and those are manifest in the student performances, so that's a continuing challenge.

19-00:12:03

Shafer: So is it basically a matter of you have to try something, and the local control formula seemed like a—?

19-00:12:08

Brown: Well, local control was to put the responsibility at the local level. At the local level, school board members *are* elected. And yet, the legislator feels that the local schools can't be trusted and they have all sorts of indicia for that. You know, the suspensions of certain kinds of students, or certain kids getting into privileged programs more, white kids getting into these gifted programs, and minorities often—very *much* the case. So then, they have to pass more rules, and they've been passing more rules. Certainly, since probably the time of Max Rafferty and then Wilson Riles, at the time my father was governor, and it has been one churn after another. So it's one of the factors of our modern society social structure. There's a lot of discontent, and it's also reflected in the political floundering of democratic systems around the world. So, in America and in California, the public school is part of that sense of drift and conflict that we see.

19-00:13:36

Shafer: How much do you, of the difficulties that schools are facing, do you ascribe to the changing demographics and the fact that schools now—there are sometimes a dozen different languages spoken in the school?

19-00:13:51

Brown: That's a problem. And the fact is that state scores track income. The higher the income, the better the scores. The lower the income, the worse the scores—with some exceptions. So this is just part of the stratification of society. In fact, a guy's written a whole book on it called *The Meritocracy Trap*. And what he says is that elite education, and the education of more affluent people, results in those affluent people getting the best jobs—and having jobs where a primary function is eliminating mid-level jobs through automation, which results in more people falling to lower levels in the economy and fewer people being at the highest levels of the economy. And that's reflected in our school system.

19-00:14:45

Shafer: Yeah. I'm going to switch gears a little bit and talk about high-speed rail. So obviously, you inherited—that's something you inherited, but something you embraced as well, as governor. And you decided to use some of the cap-and-trade money to basically keep that project alive. Why did you feel that that was so important, and—?

19-00:15:04

Brown: Well, first of all, I felt that getting rid of it would be difficult. So we had a project. It's putting people to work, people voted for it—and then pull the plug on it? That gave me pause. It also gave me pause to go ahead, but I had to choose one way or the other. As a matter of fact, my wife Anne was very big on the high-speed rail. She thought that was good, and—

19-00:15:29

Shafer: So you had a lively conversation about either pulling the plug or moving forward?

19-00:15:33

Brown: Well, we have lively conversations all the time, and that's what everyday life is. It's very alive. But I took a train, I took the Lark to LA, Glendale is where we got off, and then took another train to Riverside, when I was five. It was during World War II, 1943. I liked the train, and we took the Daylight coming back. And I've ridden trains in Europe. I've ridden high-speed rail in France, in Japan, and in China. And it seems quite good to me. So also, your goal with high-speed rail, or the characteristic that we're building, is to make it run on renewable energy, as opposed to gasoline or diesel. So that's a big thing, and so it just makes a lot of sense. And the fact that thirteen other countries have very high-speed rail, and another four or five have moderately high-speed rail in terms of the speed—and I believe China has eight thousand miles of high-speed rail. I heard that term. I didn't verify it—but whatever, they built quite a lot.

America has no high-speed rail except what's going on in California. Some people say well, it's obsolete. We can all get into the hyperloop and go underground like gophers, or something, and be pushed by vacuum tube or something, from one place to another. I do think rail is very viable. It can be made renewable. And I'd even go so far as to say we should be investing in rail for the trucks, to get them off the highway. I can tell you the highways in California—I-

80 is often congested. I went there the other day, was stalled after Vallejo for over an hour for an accident. We need the alternative of rail for both passenger and freight, and we need moderately high-speed rail, but we could use very high-speed rail.

It makes a lot of sense, but it takes upfront money. To get upfront money takes a lot of consensus, which we don't have in this society. And because of the partisan divide, it was okay when Schwarzenegger did it—maybe even when Bush was talking in this vein. But once it becomes a Democratic program, all the Republicans have to oppose it. And because it costs money, it's easily stigmatized. As a matter of fact, the polls show it has a lot of support. But it's very close, like fifty-fifty, forty-five/fifty-five, are the polls that I've seen.

But whether the polls say it or not, you can't keep adding more cars. How many cars can we have? And cars, over the decades, have increased faster than the population, so the rate of increase is faster. And I think the idea of putting people in all this steel and plastic and moving them around by taking fossilized fuels that took millions of years to evolve, is stupid. I mean we didn't think it through, and so we need to substantially alter that. And trains running on renewable energy is one way to do that, but it takes political support—and I did get a fair amount. And we got it through the legislature.

19-00:19:28

Shafer:

I mean the [California] High-Speed Rail Authority has been criticized for mismanagement, and there's been a lot of changeover in terms of leadership. Do you think that's contributed to—?

19-00:19:41

Brown:

Sure, but managing big projects—they're hard. First of all, they write the laws with this specificity, like categorical programs. The authors of the high-speed rail wrote in such a way to make it extremely difficult to actually carry it out, because they dictate so many decisions ahead of time—years before the actual building occurs. So they obviously don't know the future. They're not prophets or fortune-tellers, and so now they are locked into formulas that are a part of the bond issue. And you can't change it unless you go back to the voters. So the very instrument of the bond proposition made it very difficult. That's number one. Number two, the Obama Administration wanted it—pushed it and wanted certain things, wanted to start in the Central Valley, to approve how the speed would work. And then thirdly, all the, through the environmental and other lawsuits, anybody can stop it. We've literally had dozens and dozens of lawsuits. We've lost cases, then we've won them on appeal. And the management of large projects is extremely difficult in America, much more difficult than anywhere else in the world.

19-00:21:02

Shafer:

More so in California too?

19-00:21:04

Brown: More in California. And the project was very confused when I took it over. Whether it was confused because the people who ran it were confused, or whether it was—not just the engineering, but the politics of working out the alignment. You know, you're going to go through—what cities do you go through? Where is it? And each one along the way wants to get in the act. And so there's this hemming and hawing, and the head of the high-speed rail was an engineer. And to put up with the political back and forth—that took another skill set. So I do think we got to that point when I came in, but it's been challenging. And people talk about a cost overrun. I don't know. There's some cost overrun because of the lawsuits, but it's inherently—it costs what it does, and we have a lot of rules that drive up costs.

19-00:22:06

Shafer: Just quickly—I don't know if we can do it quickly. But one of the issues, of course, is CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act]. Not just for high-speed rail, but for a lot of things.

19-00:22:14

Brown: For everything.

19-00:22:15

Shafer: You seemed to flirt early in your first—

19-00:22:18

Brown: Flirt? I wouldn't call it flirting.

19-00:22:20

Shafer: You know, you considered, you considered some sort of reform to CEQA, and you talked about that.

19-00:22:25

Brown: Right, right.

19-00:22:27

Shafer: Obviously, that's a very heavy lift in Sacramento.

19-00:22:29

Brown: Right.

19-00:22:31

Shafer: So what made you—a) how important do you think it is? I mean if you could get that done, as king of California, would you have done it?

19-00:22:39

Brown: I can't tell you how important it is. It's moderately important. But the Environmental Quality Act does provide some value in making people think closer. But it's also used by competitors. One shopping center owner fights another shopping center; that's happened in Southern California. Unions use it to get project labor agreements, which are agreements that make all the workers on a project be part of the union. So they use that kind of gun-to-your-head approach.



And cities, like in the high-speed rail would use it to block—Kings County has been suing the High-Speed Rail Authority for several years. But can you make a change? And the typical is you have environmental support to leave it alone, and you have the labor unions who like the complexity, because that's how they achieve their goal of lawsuit, negotiate, get project labor agreements.

[side conversation deleted]

19-00:23:41

Shafer: Yeah, well, we're talking about CEQA. You know—

19-00:23:43

Brown: Oh yeah, that part is very simple. The environmentalists are a strong force in Sacramento—at least a blocking force. And the labor unions, as well, want to keep the complexity as it is, for purposes of their labor organizing strategy.

19-00:24:01

Shafer: How close did you get, or how hard did you try, to get some kind of a deal?

19-00:24:05

Brown: Oh, we tried there, but it was very painful to get very, very modest changes. So there's no appetite to do that. So it's just not going to happen until—maybe with a football stadium you get a little bit of change. But not a great deal.

19-00:24:25

Shafer: Chase Center seemed to go up overnight in Francisco.

19-00:24:28

Brown: But the other one—they were able to defeat one, and then they got this one, so that happened. How's the traffic, by the way?

19-00:24:38

Shafer: Well, we're going to find out tonight, because there's a ballgame at the—the Giants are playing and there's a Dave Matthews concert at the same time. So that's going to be a—Carmageddon, perhaps. We'll see. CEQA, I think, was signed by Governor Reagan.

19-00:24:54

Brown: Yes, it was. But it was applied to private projects for the first time by the California Supreme Court in a 7-2 opinion called the Friends of Mammoth case. So it wasn't just public projects, it was private projects—housing developments, for example.

19-00:25:11

Shafer: 7 to 2 or—what did you say—5-2?

19-00:25:13

Brown: 7 to 2, no, pardon me, 5-2.

19-00:25:16

Shafer: 5 to 2. So your father didn't have to deal with that, that law.

19-00:25:19

Brown: No, he never had to deal with that.

19-00:25:21

Shafer: What difference do you think that made for the things he got done?

19-00:25:24

Brown: Well, like the water plan. Freeways were cheaper. No, it cost money. But on the other hand, a lot of buildings, a lot of projects, cause a lot of environmental damage, and sprawl has its own problem. And the roads are being built to force people to drive further and further, and that creates carbon emissions, sprawl, and it's not the way you would plan it if you kind of knew where you were going from the beginning. So no one knew, when they did the California Environmental Quality Act, what would happen. It was not thought through. There was the National Environmental Quality [Policy] Act under Nixon, and the California one was just a tagalong after the national.

19-00:26:13

Shafer: Yeah. One of the issues you had to deal with as governor was the drought—and you had to deal with that the first time you were governor as well. Yeah, the bricks in the toilets, I think, was your thing?

19-00:26:24

Brown: Yeah.

19-00:26:27

Shafer: How did you think about that? When you don't know when a drought's going to end, I can imagine it would be a little frightening.

19-00:26:35

Brown: Well, you just conserve as much as you can. Of course with a dam, you don't know whether to let the water out at a certain rate, because it may rain the next year and you didn't need to let it out. And you emptied your dam—or maybe the drought continues and you let too much out, and then you're out of water completely. So they have to manage that, the reservoirs, very carefully. And the federal government does that along with the state.

19-00:27:06

Shafer: And do you think—obviously, you've talked about the Delta tunnels, and that may or may not—

19-00:27:11

Brown: Yeah, but by the way, managing the water is not what politicians do. That's the water experts. So when you say manage the drought—I mean yeah, the governor can call for conservation, set some goals, but most of that's driven by experts.

19-00:27:26

Shafer: But of course you tied it in with climate change.

19-00:27:28

Brown: Yeah, I tied it in rhetorically, but also in some of the policies.

19-00:27:35

Shafer: What, what did you—and this is an obvious question. But what did you notice, before and after Trump was elected, in terms of the progress that California could make, and other states were making, with regional compacts? What changed for you, as governor, when that happened?

19-00:27:54

Brown: On climate change?

19-00:27:55

Shafer: Yeah.

19-00:27:56

Brown: Well, Trump is, as I've read somewhere, he's attempted to terminate over fifty environmental regulations, not the least of which are the mileage standards, the methane standards. The clean air rules that Obama announced. So Trump is on a tear here. He's a one-man demolition squad to prevent any realistic steps being taken regarding climate change.

19-00:28:28

Shafer: That gave you a bigger—gave you a bigger bully [pulpit].

19-00:28:31

Brown: Well, yeah, rhetorically, it does that. It makes the climate change movement more newsworthy, and therefore more salient. But it's not just Trump. Fox News, *Wall Street Journal*, conservative media—virtually the entire Republican Party, Mitch McConnell, the leader of the Senate. All these people are dedicated deniers. Deniers of the science, deniers of any kind of consensus building to deal with climate change, which they just abhor—and it's very dangerous. It's going to cost untold money and suffering because of the willful blindness of all these people.

19-00:29:22

Meeker: I want to go back just a few minutes and ask more about the drought. The drought lasted basically from 2011 to 2017. It didn't really start raining again till the '16-'17 season.

19-00:29:31

Brown: Yeah.

19-00:29:34

Meeker: I think that the drought was officially named in 2014, but there were no major restrictions until 2015. Are these decisions that are made solely by the water agency? What role did you play in this?

19-00:29:50

Brown: No, it's mostly the experts. The governor is more of an announcer. These are complex questions. Governors don't know—I mean what were we talking? Water, precipitation, with a state from Oregon to Mexico? And the weather, knowing what that is—that's very, very expert-centric. Now, obviously, I talked to the Environmental Protection Agency, the state Environmental Protection Agency,

the Department of Water Resources. We talk about it, and there's a political element of how you roll it out and maybe how you pace it, but it's basically you're just listening to the experts.

19-00:30:34

Meeker:

There was, I think, a widespread anxiety amongst the citizens of the state of California in the midst of all this, because it is something that is a bit out of our control, you know. And of course there were all the media reports about the bad actors watering their lawns in Palm Springs. You know, and then here you are up in a pretty arid environment. I'm sure during that period of time there was very little rain, and probably a lot of trees were looking stressed. Are you, at any point, thinking okay, we really need to get on top of this. We really need to ask the citizens of the state to begin to restrict their water use much more than they are.

19-00:31:15

Brown:

Oh, we did. The water board set out—this is really the water board doing this, but I certainly encouraged conservation measures and technological innovation through the water bond. [Proposition 1. Water Bond. Funding for Water Supply, Treatment, and Storage Projects.]. I passed the water bond—that's \$7 billion. There was a lot of money in that for innovation, technology, helping people get through these things like the drought. And water transfers—I mean we have the California Water Action Plan. That's probably the most comprehensive water strategy developed in California in decades, so that's a real plan, and we talked about it, and it was definitely expert driven, but it's something that I encouraged and improved and disseminated.

19-00:32:00

Meeker:

And also new regulations around groundwater. [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014]

19-00:32:04

Brown:

Groundwater was a big deal, to try to get that. It was a close vote. A lot of resistance on the part of rural legislators/Republicans, but it passed. And that's a very important law, but it will curtail a certain amount of farming because of the overdraft in the Central Valley. And as the groundwater management law reaches certain milestones, overdraft pumping of water bringing down the water table will have to be stopped. They'll have to recharge the aquifer, which means they can't put water on their crops, which means you can't produce as much crop—and that will happen. And estimates vary as much as a 10 percent reduction.

19-00:32:51

Meeker:

In the midst of droughts there's always calls for new reservoirs coming from certain quarters. What did you think of those ideas in the midst of this last drought?

19-00:33:02

Brown:

We thought a certain amount of storage is good. Some people like storage under the ground. Republicans like storage above the ground. We put money for reservoirs, to be decided by authorities, that we set in motion by the bond act. And

that's still going on today. So it's kind of an expert judgment. What does it cost to build a dam? How much water do you really capture, and what impact does it have on downstream users? Because whenever you build a dam, you're blocking water—so what happens during the time you block the water? So the theory is you're going to have excess water, because of the rain, and you're capturing the excess, and then you make it available during the drier years. Well, that works, but the cost benefit of a lot of dams is not favorable, and that's why it's so hard to get them approved—because they don't make economic sense.

19-00:34:05

Meeker: When you're working with experts in a rarified field of knowledge such as water management, do you have a methodology or a philosophy that you approach working with these individuals, making some difficult decisions that have broad implications?

19-00:34:20

Brown: No, there's no methodology other than inquire, get relevant people to talk about it, and that's the process. First of all, when you start as governor, you hire good people. You hire good subject-matter experts to run the Department of Water Resources, Air Board, things like that. And then, you have to manage it through good people in the governor's office—and that's what we did. So the Water Bond Act: my administration drafted that, and we got it through the legislature, and then we got it passed. So that was very widely supported. But again, a lot of this is staff driven. The staff of the executive branch. So you know, we talk about representative democracy. A lot of this is technology and scientific based.

19-00:35:21

Meeker: Your water resources chief was Felicia [Marcus]—

19-00:35:25

Brown: She's the water board. [California State Water Resources Control Board] And then we have the Department of Water Resources. One's the water quality, the water permitting, and the other is the building—management of the dams and the building.

19-00:35:35

Meeker: Yeah, so Felicia Marcus was water resources, right?

19-00:35:38

Brown: Yeah, right.

19-00:35:41

Meeker: She stayed until Newsom replaced her pretty quickly. So you have any thoughts on that transition?

19-00:35:49

Brown: No, it's pretty normal. I mean usually you change people. And it's a controversial body, the water board and managing the water. If you look at the historic flow of river—obviously, it's dramatically reduced in modern times. But it's reduced to allow farmers to grow crops, half of which are probably exported to foreign

countries, but it generates money. And so now there's an effort, because of the Endangered Species Act, to restrict the diversion of the amount of water that's currently being diverted. And the water board is going through that process, and that's a very painful, contentious process, because you're taking away something that people have enjoyed.

19-00:36:46

Holmes: Governor, just really quick on that same note, agriculture used to be California's primary industry, before the rise of Silicon Valley. They are also the top water user in the state.

19-00:36:58

Brown: Yeah, they still are the top water user.

19-00:37:02

Holmes: You were discussing those tough decisions. I know agriculture, the agricultural industries were very nervous about any kind of restrictions or any other aspects in regards to water.

19-00:37:11

Brown: Right.

19-00:37:13

Holmes: Did you see this as trying to protect an important resource, but also a really viable sector of the economy? I mean how did you see a middle path between those two?

19-00:37:26

Brown: Well, this is true of all these things, whether it's the minimum wage, the overtime rules—in this case, management of groundwater. We have an overdraft, and the California Aqueduct is sunk in places. It's going down, so you have to deal with that. And people are taking water, but they're taking water by mining ancient water that's been in the ground for I don't know how many tens of thousands of years. So they're taking a resource that won't replenish, unless they reduce their amount of use. So that's what you have to do. It's not just all about planting an almond tree and digging a hole and taking water and selling half your almonds to the Chinese, or wherever the hell they're going to sell them. You have to be good stewards of the land, the water, the natural habitat, the species.

Some people would say the nonhuman species don't count for much, so just forget about it. Other people would say well, you're exaggerating. It isn't all that bad. But I think generally now farmers know that they've got to stop the overdraft. They would just like to get more water out of the rivers, and the environmentalists would say the salmon is about, is on the verge of—in danger, maybe even extinction. There are real problems there. And the other species—there's a risk there. So the question is how much do you want to alter your landscape, and how much do you want to humanize it? Because human beings live in the environment. And at some point the analogy is put forth—and it's like an airplane. You can take a bolt out of the airplane, then you take another bolt, then you take another bolt. When does the plane fall? So human beings are in a

web of species, and you have to respect the interconnection of living forms and cycles of nature, like the hydrologic cycle. So that's got to be managed.

And we're on unprecedented territory, because as far as we know, before the white man showed up, there were never more than three hundred thousand people here. Now, that could be off a little bit, one way or the other. But now we've got forty million, and we have thirty million vehicles, and we're using 340 million barrels—no, it's billion, 340 billion barrels of oil every year—so gasoline and diesel. So then what does this do? And we're cutting things down. The wetlands are 5 percent of what they used to be. Some of the rivers are 10 percent of the flow that used to be. So then the question is how much do we want to alter the environment, and at what cost? And that's what the debate is. The environmentalists want to restrict and even roll things back to where they were. And other people say build—it's about money. The economy, the economy is about—that's what it's about. GDP, make cash, sell, create jobs. Other people say no, the natural environment has to be understood and respected, so that's the conflict. And I am inclined toward thinking we have to do more to protect the environment, not less.

19-00:41:20

Shafer:

I want to ask you about the 2014 reelection. But first, just a big-picture question about staff.

19-00:41:25

Brown:

What?

19-00:41:28

Shafer:

You know, you were governor—the first time you were thirty-six years old. In 1975, you took office and you had a—you had a younger, well, you had a team of people around you. Tom Quinn, Gray Davis, Richard Maullin, and others. Now, second time around you had Nancy McFadden, obviously your wife, and others. How did you—how would you, how do you think about the differences, if any, between the kinds of people you wanted around you the first time vers[us]—?

19-00:41:55

Brown:

Well, it's not about who I—well, I guess it's wanted, but it's really just what happens. It's not like you just sit down, and all of a sudden—blank slate. Oh, who should we have in the governor's office? It doesn't quite work that way. It's relationships, it's who you know—who you know and who they know. So that's how it happened. Now, because I had not been in politics that long—I was secretary of state. Reagan had been governor. It was more uncharted territory.

19-00:42:35

Shafer:

What do you mean it was uncharted territory?

19-00:42:38

Brown:

Well—did I know what Medi-Cal was? Did I know about how the Department of Forestry worked? Did I know about how the fish and game worked? Did I know how corrections, highways—I mean there's an incredible amount of activity. If

you look at the law books of California, the California code, it's millions and millions of words, and who knows what that is? Nobody, really—but some people know more, that have an acquaintance with it.

So, obviously when I come back in 2011, it's a lot different than 1975. So a) I'm older, b) I've had a whole life experience. I've been reading the *New York Times* for fifty years—maybe even the *Chronicle* or the *LA Times* when I lived in the southland. And I've met people. I've traveled all over the world, so I know more, and so also I was mayor and I was attorney general. So that all—and I was governor for eight years before and have twenty-eight years to think about it. So all that produces the result that it did.

19-00:44:00

Shafer: When you say you had time to—?

19-00:44:01

Brown: So I had more experienced people. Mary Nichols was a young lady when I first put her in the [California Air Resources Board], in 19—I think, 77. Diana Dooley became the health department—she was a young lady, had a young baby when she was in her twenties, because she's now in her sixties. So there it is. You just have more and—but the whole government got more complex. It grew. But I would just say I knew—it's just a question of if you work at something, you know more about it, and I certainly knew better. I mean Nancy was more experienced. Gray Davis had worked for the Clintons, had worked for PG&E.

19-00:44:48

Shafer: Like Nancy did.

19-00:44:50

Brown: Nancy did, and Nancy worked for Gray Davis, so those were invaluable experiences—learning. A lot of times we kind of think going to school is where we learn things. But on the job you learn things. If you're a reporter, writing stories. If you're a professor, doing actual research for decades or teaching classes. So that's the same thing with myself and politics. That's kind of like an obvious—it's kind of *duh*. [laughs]

19-00:45:19

Shafer: Well, it is, but on the other hand, you know, as you said, you had a lot of time to think about it between the two times you were governor. You might have reflected, perhaps, on the kind of administration it was, the way it ran, versus the kind you—?

19-00:45:32

Brown: Yeah, I don't think of those—usually it's about issues. The medfly, is it the big, massive deficit? The groundwater? I mean is it a drought? See, this stuff happens and you respond. We're creatures of the news, and news is a creature to some degree—to a great degree—of reality. So you just show up, you get in the ring, and you start punching. It's that simple. You don't have a process. That's academic. If you want to get a master's in public administration, you'll find out



there are four ways to do this and there are three ways to do that. Okay. But when you're *there*, that kind of formal scheme is the last thing in your mind.

19-00:46:19

Shafer: How would you describe the differences between your first time as governor and the last time, in terms of how the office ran/how you wanted it to run?

19-00:46:28

Brown: Well, I think there were similarities.

19-00:46:31

Shafer: Were there differences?

19-00:46:33

Brown: The differences: I think Nancy had a tighter grip than I had earlier on and a tighter grip because a) she was older than when we were there in the seventies. More experienced, more knowledgeable. And she had personal strengths as well, so that made a difference. I think in general Diana Dooley at health—compare her to [Jerome A.] “Jerry” Lackner. I mean there’s no question—he was a doctor. And then we had another lady who’d had a nursing career. Well, compare that to Diane Dooley, who was working in the governor’s office with some supervisory relationship to the Department of Health. That was in the seventies. So now we’re in the second decade of the twenty-first century. So all that just goes to experience. That’s the big difference.

19-00:47:37

Shafer: There was a—I have a sense that, and many who worked for you sense that you—you kind of relished the idea of bringing people in to departments who *didn't* necessarily have a lot of experience, but who—you liked the way they thought.

19-00:47:55

Brown: No, well obviously. You don’t want people who you don’t like the way they think. I mean bad thinking is never good. And my sense was I wanted—I definitely went with—I talked about a new spirit. I wanted to create—you could say, if I were John Kennedy, I’d say get California moving again. Well, there was that sense that Reagan blocked a lot of liberal initiatives, so I was trying to stir that up. Now, did I fully understand the institutional inertia and the complexity of structures, whether it’s the system of roads or whether it’s the system of crime and punishment, law and order, or whether it’s the way different departments interact with the legislator, with the advocate groups? That, as a body of knowledge, is quite extensive, just the way I described it. So did I know all the things? No. But I certainly knew probably more than Ronald Reagan did. And inherently, we have a system of government where you do have amateurs. Unless they’ve come from the legislature, they’re not going to know. Even in the legislature, they only know how to advocate. They don’t know the management, the personalities, the turf battles.

These are all things that you can’t believe until they happen. Who would know that people fight on their turf? I learned that in the first time as governor, when we

merged occupational health and safety. The health came from the health department; the occupational came from the Division of Industrial Relations. [The Division of Occupational Safety and Health was created by a merger of the Division of Industrial Safety with the Department of Health's Occupational Health Branch] So we put elevator inspectors with health inspectors. And I often thought that they wore a different kind of shoes, that the health people were a little more upscale and their degrees were a little more impressive or complicated, and the elevator inspectors and people looking at—

19-00:50:08

Shafer: Pulleys.

19-00:50:10

Brown: What do you call a pump for a car, when you elevate a car? A jack. Yeah, all those are inspected by the state. And then we merged them together, and we wanted to put it under—I think we were putting it under the Division of Industrial Relations. And the doctor, a Canadian doctor, I remember: He quit in a huff. He could not be part of industrial relations, because he was a doctor. And so the turf is very strong, and I found that in many areas. I never heard of turf before. Maybe I heard the word. I don't remember. But when you actually see it, people fight very hard.

It's true with the federal government. CIA fights with the FBI, even though there's not businesses. It's not Lyft fighting Uber. It may be forestry fighting with the water department, or the fish and game department. Even fish and game and Department of Water Resources: they fight about things. And they fight—because it's not money. In business, you can—okay, we'll give you this/we'll take that. But in these agencies, it's beliefs, and they identify—no, it's beliefs and identity. And they identify with their bureaucratic micro-universe, and they fight very hard for it. So as the governor, as the leader of all that, it becomes very difficult. First of all, to deal with it—because you can't deal with details that much. You just have to be more general. But then you've got to get good people who make it work. But the good people themselves take on the identity of their agencies, and then they fight.

I remember once with the insurance commissioner, which I appointed at the time, and he was fighting with the agency secretary about putting a particular insurance company in receivership. And this particular insurance company was friendly with [Howard] Berman and [Henry] Waxman, powerful legislators. So the agency, being a little more political, was concerned. But the insurance commissioner thought this insurance company didn't have enough reserves. And when you look at it, they had money, but this insurance—you have to look further ahead and see whether you have enough for the predicted losses that are going to occur. So I remember getting into the middle of that and getting the political pressure. But I did side with the expert, because I thought he knew more than the agency.

So you get a lot—but you can't do that too often, because you just can't spend your whole time mediating disputes. So you need agency secretaries, you need your leader that works for you and your assistants. So that becomes another problem, where then people—and this is a big problem for governors—and probably presidents, that you then start putting more and more people in the governor's office to police all your cabinet secretaries. So now you have department heads and cabinet secretaries—two layers of government, which, by the way, didn't exist in the sixties. And then you have a third layer, which is the governor's office younger unconfirmed political kinds that are running around trying to keep the lid on. And then they fall over each other. So it can quickly devolve into chaos. Or not chaos—

19-00:53:39

Shafer:

I was going to say, you're making it sound like—chaotic.

19-00:53:42

Brown:

Well, but you don't know, because until it gets in the paper, it doesn't exist. [Shafer laughs] So that's good, I guess, in some ways. So the governor can't possibly know what the hell is going on. So you're very much a victim or a dependent on the people you appoint, and the stuff that comes out. Like the DMV. You know, the DMV it doesn't—oh my God, the DMV, a big problem there. Well, it's a big problem because the legislature wanted them to be doing motor voting and get everybody registered [to vote]—very complicated. So the modern complexity of administration and technology makes it a very challenging environment, which most of the time goes along, and only every now and then erupts into a problem.

19-00:54:37

Shafer:

To what extent did you have or want your staff to basically keep those fires and the chaos away from you, so that you could—no?

19-00:54:46

Brown:

Well, no, but I like to keep away as long as they handle it. But when they keep it away and then it blows up, then nobody likes that.

19-00:54:55

Shafer:

But that distance in order to be thinking about things.

19-00:54:59

Brown:

But, yeah. I mean stuff happens. That's what I keep saying. People don't like that. When I say "shit happens," they say "oh, my goodness." Well, that's true. You can't know what is going on. In fact, I read an article on the global indebtedness of governments, corporations, and households. And it talked about the money supply and repos, and collateral for the repos. And now—was this increasing the money supply or not increasing the money supply? So I called a friend of mine, who'd been my secretary of business and transportation, Alan [E.] Rothenberg. And I said, "Alan, what does this all mean?" He said, "I don't know." He didn't understand—he said, "We don't know." He said that's why I diversify my portfolio, and he told me—he'd worked for one of the Rothschilds, and this

Rothschild said to him, “I keep 10 percent of my money in gold, gold bricks. Most of the time I feel very foolish, but when something goes wrong, then I’m glad I did.” So that all goes to say there’s a lot more uncertainty than people generally like to accept. And so because of my experience of that, I’m usually on the lookout for trouble and try to manage it. Sometimes you can, sometimes you can’t.

19-00:56:35

Shafer: Was that Evan’s [Evan Westrup] job, to flag those things for you? [laughing]

19-00:56:38

Brown: Well, everybody’s job is to see what’s coming down the road.

19-00:56:40

Shafer: So let’s talk about 2014. The economy had turned, was turning around. Obviously, Prop. 30 had passed. Things were much better. No one was talking about whether or not California was governable or not, as they were in 2010. How did you—thinking about reelection, I mean did you expect to have a more formidable—?

19-00:57:03

Brown: No.

19-00:57:05

Shafer: No. Why?

19-00:57:06

Brown: The economy is doing well, the deficit’s going down. No, as a matter of fact, we had the two measures: the rainy day fund [Proposition 2. State Budget. Budget Stabilization Account. Legislative Constitutional Amendment] and the water bond [Proposition 1]. And I only campaigned for them. I had to use my own campaign funds, which I didn’t like, because I was in the ad. And to be in the ad, you can’t use ballot-measure money.

19-00:57:27

Shafer: What was the strategy there? To just focus on the issues and not talk about all the great things you had done, which is what campaigns usually do?

19-00:57:34

Brown: No, just talk—well, yeah, but nobody likes you to pat yourself on the back. That’s never attractive. It’s better to have a challenge, to lead the charge, which I did. And I changed it, it was going to be, if I had the legislature change and number the measures, call them one and two—one and two for you. It was a very memorable. Because I never liked the—in the old days, I don’t think ballot measures ever went over twenty. And then they decided to let it go to a hundred—and beyond. I’ve always thought that was confusing, when you have three digits—so I was very intent. It was my idea. No one else even thought about it. I wanted to get a one and two, because I knew that would be easy to say and easy to campaign.

19-00:58:18

Shafer: So you could just, as governor, make that happen?

19-00:58:20

Brown: Well, I got the—no, the legislature.

19-00:58:22

Shafer: The legislature, you got them to do that.

19-00:58:23

Brown: But I pushed on it.

19-00:58:26

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. So you ran against—there were two, I guess, main Republicans: Tim Donnelly, of Minutemen fame. And Neel Kashkari, who had been in the Obama Administration. Did you care which of those two guys emerged?

19-00:58:39

Brown: Well, look, it would be easier if it was the Minuteman. Because he was ridiculous, and it would have been even easier. He wouldn't have raised any money. But Kashkari wasn't all that formidable. He was smart, he was quick, but unknown. And if you ask people today, who he is and who ran in 2014, I'd bet there's one in a hundred that could tell you. Which, by the way, goes to a real question. What is it with our politics, that somebody can come out of nowhere, win the nomination, and then as soon as it's finished—leave. That's kind of like it was in the early days, when people kind of rode into California and rode out. I think Burnett came from Oregon and before that from the Midwest, and he quit after a year or two, and I think he left California—or no, maybe he didn't.

19-00:59:31

Shafer: I would imagine most governors would prefer to have, as you had most of your time, like a big majority or even a supermajority with your own party.

19-00:59:40

Brown: Well—

19-00:59:41

Shafer: Was there—what are the pros and cons of that?

19-00:59:42

Brown: What do you mean, of your own party or of the election?

19-00:59:44

Shafer: Yeah, of your—no, well to have like an easy—a *vast* majority of the legislature.

19-00:59:49

Brown: Oh, you mean the legislature.

19-00:59:50

Shafer: Yeah. Yeah, what are the pros and cons of that?

19-00:59:53

Brown: Well, the more Democrats you have, then the more moderate legislators you're going to have. The more unreliable, in one sense. They're going to—as the number goes above forty, the districts become more marginal. You get elected in certain Orange County districts, you may not make it. In fact, one guy, one senator was recalled. So there's differences between representing San Francisco and Alameda, and representing the Central Valley. So you're going to get people who are going to be more Republican in their orientation.

19-01:00:34

Shafer: I guess what I'm thinking though, is that they could also send you more things that you may not want to sign.

19-01:00:40

Brown: Well, they may—they do that too. Oh, you mean they could override a veto?

19-01:00:45

Shafer: Well, you have to say—no more. You might have to say no more.

19-01:00:48

Brown: Well, they increase the number of bills. They have far too many bills. And it's somewhat scandalous that the legislature can't possibly understand the bills they have to vote on. They can't, there's too many of them. Challenging. And they have only minutes when they leave—I only get, they only pass maybe a fourth of the bills—maybe a third, I don't know. But so you already winnowed it down, and it comes down to my desk. I have a team. I don't know how many people—twelve? Well, we have professionals, and then we have staffers, and they're going over it. And they write up summaries, and we get letters from all the department heads. We get letters from legislators. So I've got a lot of information, and I work full-time, usually for twelve days, or at the end of the second year—thirty days. So that's a lot of time—and then, and it's still challenging. Less challenging in my sixteenth year than it was in my first year, but still very challenging. So the legislature, particularly with term limits and all, it's quite challenging.

19-01:01:53

Shafer: How often would you sign—

19-01:01:53

Brown: So it's very staff driven, that's kind of what it is.

19-01:01:56

Shafer: Yeah. How often would you sign bills that you really didn't want to sign, but you felt like, for one reason or another, you had to?

19-01:02:02

Brown: Well, I don't know what *had to* means. Do you want to be effective? Do you want to sign bills that make you less effective and irritate people that you need for something else? So this is not about two plus two equals four, and three plus three equals six. You're dealing with human beings, and I mean if I would have applied a strict standard of is this bill needed? Is it clear? I mean I could veto many,

many, many more bills. But the legislature, this is their bill. They like it, they need it. They're trying to look like they're effective. So if you make them look ineffective, that's not going to be very helpful to the relationship. And you have to work with the legislature. The governor is only one element here. Between the legislature, and then the courts.

19-01:02:58

Shafer: Yeah. What about—you had one debate with Kashkari, and I think it was on—was it the NFL “Monday Night Football” night, opening—?

19-01:03:06

Brown: Right.

19-01:03:07

Shafer: Yeah, how did—who came up with that as an option? [laughing]

19-01:03:09

Brown: I have no idea. Ask Evan [Westrup]. I don't know.

19-01:03:12

Shafer: I mean was the goal, do you think, to—?

19-01:03:15

Brown: No, well—I don't remember if we knew about it ahead of the time. I have no idea. That may be known, but I don't remember.

19-01:03:24

Shafer: Yeah, but you felt you had to do one?

19-01:03:27

Brown: Yeah. Well, better to do it than people complain about it.

19-01:03:32

Shafer: About not doing it.

19-01:03:34

Brown: But no, the debates don't get that much coverage, any way you look at it. They're not the biggest thing in the campaign. When I was an incumbent—no incumbent ever lost, except Culbert Olson, running for a second term. Although no one was ever running for a fourth term, so it's hard to kind of measure, hard to know where things fall historically. But obviously, as an incumbent, with a rising economy, with solving the principal problem that was perceived—namely, the deficit, how could there be anything else but a victory? So why would a debate have anything to do with the price of eggs?

19-01:04:12

Shafer: How lucky do you think you were?

19-01:04:13

Brown: Oh, completely lucky! What do you mean, luck is—it's all, you know, it's a *lot* of luck. Now, you can screw it up. George Bush, the second Bush, went into Iraq,

and he did that on his own, which is a total disaster. But then the recession came, and he didn't have much— So, I didn't have a recession, so that was helpful, and no major scandals. No electricity blackouts, no riots in the streets, no mass crime wave—so all that was helpful. The governor doesn't control those things.

19-01:04:57

Shafer: Yeah. One of the issues that Neel Kashkari tried to get traction on, and people like Chad Mayes and other Republicans talk about, is poverty.

19-01:05:08

Brown: Yeah, they talk about it.

19-01:05:10

Shafer: Yeah, what do you think of that strategy?

19-01:05:11

Brown: What do I think of poverty?

19-01:05:14

Shafer: [laughing] No, of that as an issue, of Republicans—because they do keep talking about it.

19-01:05:18

Brown: Yeah, but no one's listening. I mean the Republicans are in support of the current stratification and increasingly privileging the most well off, as witnessed by—the Trump tax cut was universally approved by Republicans. But that tax cut went primarily to corporations, which then—I think half the money or more went to buy back their shares or giving dividends. And the number of people who own stock is a restricted/more affluent part of America. So if they're talking about poverty, they're not being honest, because you can't redirect the wealth of America upward to the few, and expect there not to be more and more people in poverty.

19-01:06:11

Shafer: So that when they say well, look: Democrats control the legislature, they control every statewide office, the governor's office, and there's this growing poverty—

19-01:06:22

Brown: There's poverty.

19-01:06:24

Shafer: This real problem, so they'll say like—

19-01:06:25

Brown: There's really a problem—same as there is in England, there is in China, there is in Brazil, so what else is new?

19-01:06:31

Shafer: So, it's unfair to say Democrats have been in charge and run the table, and control every—?



19-01:06:35

**Brown:** Well, can we ever go and have no problems? That's not conceivable. The whole game of politics is there's a problem, and I can do it better. That's what it means to have an election. It doesn't mean that—well, what was the problem? Was he saying I caused poverty?

19-01:06:56

**Shafer:** No, no, no—just Democrats. That Democrats can't, think they're—

19-01:07:00

**Brown:** Well, let's say that we have more poverty because we have environmental rules, we have high taxes on the rich—and they'd be spending more money creating jobs, which I think is patently absurd. Because they're not spending more money. Why are all the corporations buying their stock back? There's only one reason: they don't know what else to do with their money. They have no ideas. They're not going to invent a new Apple phone—maybe Apple will, but the average corporation is buying back shares. And by the way, that's very nice for the owners, because they get cash. But it's also a statement: why, if a company has money, wouldn't it do more of what it's doing? Well, maybe we have enough of what it's doing, and they don't need any more money. So then why do they need a tax cut? Well, they can get it. And the people who are talking about poverty are the ones who say we need a tax cut—or at least they don't oppose it. So I'd say that's a very bankrupt position.

19-01:07:58

**Shafer:** Yeah. At some point, I think maybe it was—was it the state-of-the-state address, you unveiled your playing cards with pictures of Sutter and Colusa, the dogs. How did that come about?

19-01:08:12

**Brown:** I can't remember. Maybe Evan thought it up. I don't know.

19-01:08:17

**Shafer:** I mean those dogs became—what impact do you think, having those—?

19-01:08:24

**Brown:** Not much impact, and it was nice. I don't think it had impact.

19-01:08:27

**Shafer:** Really?

19-01:08:28

**Brown:** But at least it got that—well, at least a lot of people knew my dog Sutter. That was good, and Sutter had his own Twitter account and Facebook, so that was fun. Now, whether it got the idea over—it's hard for me to tell. It helped reinforce the notion there is a deficit. We had the little cards, what—save your bones, or whatever. We had many little things. They were very cute and they were interesting. I was concerned that the legislature might be offended, that I'm treating the matter so lightly, but it came out fine.

19-01:09:04

Shafer: Well, Holly Mitchell, I think at one point said, you know, “Bark if you don’t like poverty,” I think?

19-01:09:11

Brown: [laughing] But you said the other day, I was thinking after you left, you said Holly Mitchell was upset at what part of the criminal law?

19-01:09:17

Shafer: I was wrong. I was wrong. It was poverty that we were talking to her about.

19-01:09:21

Brown: Yeah, I knew—well, I corrected you on that, right?

19-01:09:22

Shafer: You did, yeah. [laughing] Well, you pushed back. But no, and she did say that she felt like she had to teach you things about what it’s like to grow up in poverty.

19-01:09:31

Brown: Yeah, well that—yeah, that’s a questionable statement.

19-01:09:35

Shafer: Why?

19-01:09:39

Brown: Well, the teaching of—do I have to teach you what it’s like, what is in politics? Maybe. But I think the idea of one human being teaching another is—unless it’s a master/apprentice kind of relationship, is a little bit silly.

19-01:09:54

Shafer: Yeah, okay. Let’s move on.

19-01:09:58

Brown: And poverty: we should all go to Bangladesh then, or places in the world where there’s—go to Burma and see—the distress that’s out there in the world, it’s varying degrees. And so if you say, “Well, you don’t know what it’s like to grow up in poverty.” Well, we don’t know what it’s like—obviously, everyone has their own experience. But even Americans don’t understand what it’s like somewhere else, so there’s a lot of stress out there.

19-01:10:34

Shafer: So the criticism that some—

19-01:10:36

Brown: Well, I think we need to imagine the variety of human experience, you know, and I think there’s a point—if you grew up very poor in a black family, that’s different than growing up in a middle-class white neighborhood. I agree with that. But that isn’t the only blind spots that we have. In fact, I was reading an article that came to me in my email, from a historical site, about a concentration camp for children in Poland, that I’d never heard of before—and so I read it. And I thought to myself oh God, there was a horrible thing during—by the Nazis. And I thought to

myself, well, this is something you ought to know. We ought to know about these things. And I don't think people think about it, because whatever they were doing, in the forties in Germany and Poland, could happen again. And therefore, we should be on the lookout for problems that maybe develop slowly, as they did in Germany. And therefore, not just understanding what black poverty is like, but learning about the different ways human beings have lived and treated each other, and whether those things could happen again—which they obviously could. And are we going—what are we doing to forestall that? And certainly trying to prevent hatred and discrimination, those are all very important things.

But I think we all have a need to be—if you want to say *educated*, or we all have a need to learn a lot more of what's going on to human beings, and not just in California—but globally. Because there's such a difference between how some people live and other people live, and therefore, we don't think about it that much. And certainly in America, where we're sending our bombs over to Yemen and killing innocent people, and hundreds of other situations, I think it's time to learn. And so I would take Holly Mitchell's counsel, and I would generalize it more broadly and say that's a good idea, but we all need to get educated about difference and things that are important, but we don't know about.

19-01:12:56

Shafer:

Yeah. What did you—going into your, into 2015, your second term—you weren't going to, probably, be running for statewide office again—unless you ran for school superintendent.

19-01:13:06

Brown:

Yeah.

19-01:13:07

Shafer:

Which I know you thought about. What did you think—what were your goals for the last four years?

19-01:13:11

Brown:

I don't know about the goals. I know when Evan brings his interns to meet with us, they always say, "What your three priorities for this year?" And it doesn't show up that way to me. I mean there were things I wanted to do. Get the deficit down, and get the cap and trade extended, get the cap-and-trade funding, the high-speed rail, get the dams, the tunnel projects permitted. But they were just there. I mean it's—so, I don't know. I don't sit down at the beginning of the year—well, I do. I guess the state-of-the-state speech, I've got to think of—that forces me to think okay, I'm going to do this. So I say it there. Usually, that covers it.

19-01:13:59

Shafer:

In general, do you think—as you said earlier, politicians—you can't see around every corner. You know, you don't know what's going to be confronting you—like in a month. Some—an earthquake could happen, anything could happen—a recession. How much, as a politician, do you think is about just being able to react in the morning and have good judgment?

19-01:14:20

Brown: Very important, very important. But it's also important to have goals or a plan—a program, so you have some thrust. If you're just waiting there to be hit, you're going to be in trouble. So you've got to be always doing something. Fighting to fix the deficit, fighting to curb global warming. Fighting for renewable energy. Fighting for a more fair school formula. Fighting to make the prisons and the crime-and-punishment system fair. So I did all those things. So you need a thrust. You have to be doing things that aren't done yet, but which the governor can lead people into doing. So yeah, you do have to have that thrust. But at the same time, you have to be looking out: what do you do? And my two classic examples are medfly, which when I first heard about it I said, "Oh boy, I don't want to think about this." So [Richard] Rominger, who was my secretary—

19-01:15:24

Shafer: Ag. secretary.

19-01:15:26

Brown: Actually, I didn't deal with it, because I didn't want to—it just didn't seem pleasant to me. So that's a real lesson. I think Gray Davis, with the energy—I don't know all the facts, but the electricity crisis should have been more—I think that's the lesson. When things are difficult, maybe you take a day or two, but you've got to get at them and bring in the best thinking you can. And then there's other things, you don't even know what you're doing. Like Wilson and deregulation, and Davis in the pensions that let police and fire retire at fifty.

19-01:16:02

Shafer: You think he didn't know what he was doing? Or he was just paying back the unions.

19-01:16:06

Brown: Well, the Republicans voted for it too. Things in Sacramento become obvious. Everybody's for it. So then you do it. And then yeah, deregulation, that was everybody.

19-01:16:21

Shafer: It was unanimous.

19-01:16:22

Brown: Yeah, was it unanimous?

19-01:16:23

Shafer: Pretty much. I think it was. Yeah.

19-01:16:24

Brown: Well, deregulation—I remember, I was just thinking the other day, as a matter of fact, of a guy named [Philip M.] "Phil" Hawley—Carter Hawley Hale, the department store guy—the Broadway in Los Angeles. He came to see me because we had an installment rate, I don't know, 18 percent max on installment debt, credit card debt. He said you have to deregulate. This should be competitive. And I remember thinking to myself—well, you know, there's too *much* debt. If a

person thinks your credit card is too high, the credit card of the department store, then just raise the price, or rather lower the price. But they didn't want to raise the price, because then they couldn't sell as many goods, so they wanted more debt. And the way to get more debt, they said deregulate it and it'll be competitive, and that'll bring it down. Well, that's what he said, and the legislature passed that, and I signed it. But I wonder, when I listen to Elizabeth Warren, maybe we should have kept that lid on the credit. So that's another question, we're talking thirty, thirty-five, or forty years later, these questions are still not entirely clear.

But I can tell you, deregulation wasn't just a meme. It was a belief. Senator [Edward] Kennedy was for deregulating the airlines, deregulate the trucking. And the retail industry wanted to deregulate what had been the credit caps, that you couldn't go beyond a certain percentage interest rate. And now, of course, it's much higher. So that was deregulation. This was a real exciting thing that people thought: deregulate the airlines. Now, I guess it has created a lot of cheaper flights, but it has all this dynamic pricing, that at ten o'clock it's one price, at twelve o'clock it's another price. So, things happen because of the mood, and the mood is driven by technology or different changes in the economy, and the politicians go along. I always think it's like a herd. A wolf appears, a sound, and the herd moves to the next hill or over the cliff. And I feel that's the way politics is. They're just—I don't say cows, but herds that are being driven hither and yon by various signs and alarms.

19-01:19:07

Shafer: So there's a herd mentality.

19-01:19:10

Brown: [laughing] Yeah, I think you could say that. And very powerful, and the media is just—integral to that, because that's called news of the day. And news of the day is almost as certain and as controlled as though it were the Soviet ministry of information. You must report on a silly tweet of Donald Trump. If you don't, your competitor will, and therefore you must report it, or your management/your shareholders—whatever. So in effect, we are prisoners of a certain censorious media regime. [laughter]

19-01:19:48

Meeker: And your first two terms, I think, were characterized pretty strongly by a bunch of thinkers who were not part of the herd. You know, Gregory Bateson and Stewart Brand, and those gentlemen. In your last two terms, it's not apparent that there were any individuals that were of that ilk. Was that type of thinking solely brought by you? Or were you working with other people who are introducing new ideas?

19-01:20:23

Brown: Well, I think the first term was more exploratory. Now, as I get to the third and the fourth term, it's time more to manage and to deliver. Although I would say that my thinking on nuclear became more focused, with my meetings with William Perry and others that I—Kissinger, Shultz, Sam Nunn. So I have spent a

fair amount of time dealing with the nuclear issue. And then of course the climate issue, speaking with people like Michael [E.] Mann, the atmospheric scientist from UC San Diego, [Veerabhadran] Ramanathan, and then people at the ARB [Air Resources Board]. So I'd say climate was an area that was of great interest.

19-01:21:16

Meeker: Stewart Brand is still active with the Long Now Foundation and other pursuits.

19-01:21:20

Brown: Yes.

19-01:21:20

Meeker: Do you follow that? Is that of interest to you?

19-01:21:23

Brown: I was at a SciFoo [Science Foo Camp] meeting, which is a gathering of three hundred-plus people at Google, on one of Google campuses. Stewart Brand invited me, and I went to that. It was very interesting.

19-01:21:36

Meeker: What is SciFoo?

19-01:21:38

Brown: It's a gathering—it's a weekend with three hundred very smart people that are doing very interesting things throughout the world, that Google invites. And you spend three days, and your job for Friday night—there's a big space on a big wall, and people go to wall, and there's thirteen or so spaces for meetings, and a certain number of hours on Saturday and Sunday. And people go, and they write what they want to talk about. And then people come—or don't come. And I did mine on climate change and the danger of nuclear blunder. So those were my two sessions, which were well attended, I would say. [laughter] And I went to many others, and I found it very exciting. And Stewart Brand was there, and he gave a little talk on, I think, repair, and that was very interesting. So, very interesting. And then they had another Foo, I guess—I don't know what *Foo* means, but somebody's acronym. It's a name—they had one in Petaluma. I went there, a few weeks ago.

But I will say: I was reading a book by Ivan Illich last night, and in one of the footnotes it referenced Stewart Brand and the *CoEvolution Quarterly*. But this was in the context of a comment that you couldn't really have gender equality without shrinkage of the economy. This was an anti-growth, very unorthodox—very heretical—that Illich was writing about, and he cited Stewart Brand. And I'm going to ask Stewart whether he—because the *CoEvolution Quarterly*, and the tools in the *Whole Earth Catalog*, that was a little bit of self reliance kind of elegant subsistence. And I think Stewart Brand is now into more of a techno—a lot of technology, a real celebration of technological innovation, almost without limit. In fact, he's working on restoring species that have gone extinct, through DNA technology. So he's even thinking that—no problem, we can bring it back through technology. I'm more skeptical of that. So anyway, I think Stewart

Brand's thinking is different today than it was then. Although even then he was for, talking about—had an article on space colonies, by Gerard [K.] O'Neill, that I found very interesting.

19-01:24:26

Meeker:

That constellation of ideas and thinkers from the 1970s that you were engaged with, looking back on that whole zeitgeist, if you will, does that seem more remote today? Or does it seem like those ideas are relevant today and still being wrestled with?

19-01:24:44

Brown:

Well, I think one of the ideas that I got at that time was the notion of reinhabitation. Peter Coyote, I think, did a play in Nevada City. I remember being there, with Gary Snyder and others. It was the reinhabitory theater, and I feel that I am engaged in reinhabitation of this particular land in this particular place. So I always admired Gary Snyder for going to, as we call it, the ridge up there in North San Juan, above Nevada City, near the south fork of the Yuba River and having his place out there. In fact, I bought some land near him that he looked after. I never was able to build a house there. So now I'm doing this, and I thought this was too dry. There's much more water up there in the Sierras. So I'm doing that. So even this place is something I envision as a center for people with ideas to be talking, and I will do more of that. Of course I have so much challenge in just understanding what's here—the geology, the vegetation, the fauna, the animals, this history, the archaeology, the weather—how to live here. So that is occupying a fair amount of my time, just building this. But at some point, bringing in people will be part of what I do. So I would say the spirit of that time, of the seventies, where I had people like Sim Van der Ryn and Stewart Brand and Gary Snyder—the Arts Council, Peter Coyote and others, but where that's still very much a part of my thinking.

19-01:26:34

Shafer:

One of the bills that came to your desk in 2015 was the death with dignity law. [California End of Life Option Act]

19-01:26:38

Brown:

Yes.

19-01:26:39

Shafer:

Yeah, and which you ultimately signed. Can you talk about how you thought about that bill, as it was making its way through the process?

19-01:26:47

Brown:

Well, I didn't think about it till I think I got it. You know, when you have, I believe I've signed sixteen thousand bills, more or less. So you can't think about too much, too often, because they're coming. But I thought about—yeah, a pill. This whole business of assisted suicide, or what's euthanasia. That was always kind of a bugaboo from a Catholic point of view. But on the other hand, suffering is not something anybody likes. And as you get older, you say well, it's around the corner, and so I thought of it. Yeah, I'd like to have that pill. Whether I would

take the pill, I don't know. But who is government to say you can't do that? So I said yeah, we've got to do that, and people responded very favorably to that.

19-01:27:39

Shafer: Can you talk about some of the conversations you had with people who came into your office to try to dissuade you or—?

19-01:27:45

Brown: I don't know if anybody did.

19-01:27:46

Shafer: Really?

19-01:27:47

Brown: I don't remember, but—

19-01:27:48

Shafer: I would have thought the church, somebody from the church would—really?

19-01:27:50

Brown: No, I don't think so. Well, you know, it could have been. It's not an impression that I'm present with.

19-01:27:59

Shafer: Yeah, so—yeah, the veto, the signing message that you had was obviously very well thought out. And I've pulled up a bit of it here, and I wonder if you could just read it?

19-01:28:10

Brown: Why do you want me to read it? Because it's—

19-01:28:11

Shafer: So we have it for the—

19-01:28:13

Brown: Oh, you have it. [laughing] For your KQED radio program.

19-01:28:17

Shafer: [laughing] That's right.

19-01:28:18

Brown: This is what we call news—and I think you're not supposed to do that—it's called news manipulation. [reading signing message] "In the end, I was left to reflect on what I would want in the face of my own death. I do not know what I would do if I were dying in prolonged and excruciating pain. I'm certain, however, that it would be a comfort to be able to consider the options afforded by this bill, and I wouldn't deny that right to others."

19-01:28:45

Shafer: To what extent did you expect that and the signing of it to get the kind of reaction that it did?



19-01:28:54

Brown: I thought it would be well received, and it was.

19-01:28:56

Shafer: Yeah, was it a hard call for you to make?

19-01:28:58

Brown: I don't remember—I'm not sure. I mean there are so many points, when you're dealing with a thousand bills in a year. Not all of them, but many of them have emotions attached to them. In fact, I have been reflecting lately that politics is driven by emotional battering. Maybe I said that in an early interview—emotional battering.

19-01:29:22

Shafer: Of whom?

19-01:29:25

Brown: Of everybody. I mean of the governor, of the legislators, of the staff. People—they can't buy you, but they can batter you. [laughing] That's just the way it is! So, but I don't remember—

19-01:29:42

Shafer: You have to punch back.

19-01:29:44

Brown: I don't remember being—I thought that was, I don't think people wrote too much about—I think most commentary was *for* that.

19-01:29:51

Shafer: Yeah. Well, I think people were touched by how personal it was.

19-01:29:56

Brown: Well, I like to try to say things in normal language. And there's a lot of tendency, particularly by people who are writing out of the departments for the bureaucracy, to write in a form of English that is not the English we use ourselves. But it's a very specialized argot that people use when they go to the office during the day, and I try to keep that out of my writing, to the extent that I can.

19-01:30:30

Shafer: Is it fair to say that of all the 16,000 or so bills you've signed, that that one had more of a personal effect on you than—?

19-01:30:38

Brown: Well, I don't know if they had a personal effect on me, but—

19-01:30:39

Shafer: Or a potential, you know—

19-01:30:41

Brown: No, but look, you write to be effective, right? So that's one of the rules of effective writing. [laughing] You have to speak personally, so I did that.

19-01:30:55

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. Just another thought about that—the battering.

19-01:31:01

Brown: Maybe that's too harsh a word, but they get very upset. You know, when the farm workers sat in for a couple of weeks wanting the car check bill—you know, they're there.

19-01:31:12

Shafer: The vaccine bill this week, this past week.

19-01:31:14

Brown: Maybe the vaccine bill. I remember the farm workers sitting in my outer office, standing in my outer office, and I think there was one woman who had a baby—I don't know if she was nursing the baby—and a whole bunch of farm workers. I mean they didn't look like the bureaucrats. So they're pressuring the poor farm workers, and I notice one of the labor organizers in the back laughing, smiling at the effect of his battering, or his pressure, if you want to call it that.

19-01:31:47

Shafer: Hard to resist.

19-01:31:47

Brown: So there's a lot of pressure—pressure tactics. Of course people in government try to pressure back—so it works on all sides.

19-01:31:56

Shafer: Well, and in that regard, like one of the things that you became sort of famous for, was the charts at budget time. You know, the May revise and the January unveiling of the budget, and the sky-is-going-to-be-falling-soon message.  
[laughing]

19-01:32:09

Brown: Yeah, well, it hasn't fallen yet.

19-01:32:10

Shafer: It hasn't fallen yet.

19-01:32:11

Brown: I think we're getting close.

19-01:32:13

Shafer: But was that a form of pressuring back, to the legislature?

19-01:32:15

Brown: Well, that's different. That's just: here are the facts. This is the revenue, these are the expenditures. Here's how they've grown. The chart was primarily about history; first of all, there's very little history in government. The number of people in Sacramento who knew we once had twenty thousand people in prison, as recently as the time when I was governor, Reagan was governor—very few

people know that. So whatever is, they think it's always been that way. Well, because I've been around for a while, I know it's different.

One showed the capital-gains revenue going up and down, in big gyrations. And I thought that was important, because—and we were at the up point, and it was up, up, and up. But you could see from the zigzag, it's going to go down. And the other was that we've had nine or ten recessions since 1945. So we have these recessions, and then we have a recovery, but then we have a recession. And I find that during recoveries, people think there's not going to be a recession. But then we *do* think of it. And what struck me—somebody said, and I don't even know if it's true, but it's kind of the way things tend to work, that nobody predicts a recession. But we predict: now we try to chart out a five-year history. I don't think we did that. I think my administration established that, but we always looked down the road a *bit*.

But as you formulate a revenue, even if it's only for eighteen months, which you do in January, you say, "These are our proposed expenditures, and these are our proposed revenues." The revenues aren't in the bank. They're a prediction of what will happen. And the prediction of what will happen is looking in the rearview mirror of what *did* happen. But we never predict—so, for example, in 2008 when the mortgage collapse happened—that wasn't predicted. In fact, I think Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve was very buoyant a few months before this. So the revenue is printed in the budget, but it's based on fortune telling or prophecy or predictions. What if you have that prediction, "Oh, the revenue's coming in. We figure the growth is 2 percent or 2-1/2, or whatever the hell it is." And what if it's zero percent? Oh, then there's hundreds of billions less than you thought there were. Well, is that just a total surprise when it happens? And the problem is we don't know what's going to happen. Something's going to happen.

As it occurred, we always have more money—but at some point you're going to have less money. And so managing that uncertainty is difficult, because—the battering. People are used to being needy, and our needs keep escalating. We need not to have—what is that thing in bread that they don't—?

19-01:35:40

Holmes: Gluten.

19-01:35:40

Brown: Gluten. We need not to have gluten. I never heard of that a couple of years ago, and there's a bunch of other stuff that we need, that we never knew we needed! So maybe that's true. We knew we didn't know we shouldn't—we didn't need cigarettes. Well, that's a good thing.

So we're picking up some good things, but we're getting more and more needy as we go along, at every level. And so that means we've got to spend more money. And when they come, they don't say I think it would be desirable to do x. They

said, "I need—it's unfair. I'm suffering—I need. Give me." And I don't care whether it's the university or the schools, highways. Everybody wants stuff, because government is about money. And that goes back to the principle—more money is better than less money. So whatever money you have, government, if you play it right, can give you more money. And one of the ways you play it is you guilt-trip people, or you pressure them, or you advocate—or you batter them, emotionally speaking. So there's my lesson on how government works.

19-01:36:56

Shafer: Yeah, I liked that. You know there were, in those years when, as the budget grew, there was, of course, pressure to restore cuts that had been made.

19-01:37:04

Brown: Right.

19-01:37:05

Shafer: And then there were demands, battering—whatever you want to call it, to spend money on new things. And among the issues that bubbled up, especially, I think, after Trump got elected, was different public benefits for undocumented immigrants.

19-01:37:19

Brown: Yeah.

19-01:37:22

Shafer: In-state tuition, for example, for Dreamers. How do you feel about that issue? Do Democrats overplay their hand on that sometimes?

19-01:37:32

Brown: They might, but I don't think—we haven't yet. I don't think I did. People felt that getting a good education's a good thing. People got more used to the idea that millions—because there are millions of people here, that there was something normal about that. Therefore, the kids should be able to avail themselves of a good education.

19-01:37:50

Shafer: And then just recently—I mean we're jumping ahead, but Newsom just signed a bill to extend health—

19-01:37:56

Brown: But to healthy people, twenty-six and [under]—

19-01:37:59

Shafer: So not a big expense.

19-01:38:01

Brown: Smaller than if you did it for everybody.

19-01:38:04

Shafer: Yeah, yeah. I'm trying to think here. [to Meeker] Where do you think we should go? You're going to take climate change?

19-01:38:09

Meeker: Well, was there anything else about immigration we'd like to discuss? Another law that was passed was the law that forbade local police departments from cooperating with federal immigration officials. I'd like you to comment on that particular law. Is that one that you still think is necessary and appropriate?

19-01:38:35

Brown: Well, I certainly as attorney general, was not anxious to restrict immigration enforcement. As it became clear that there were abuses by federal immigration, and particularly under Trump, it becomes obvious the states should take a different and more protective role. I certainly didn't want to protect criminals. And therefore, when the various laws that I signed came down, I blocked them until I was able to get amendments that gave the authorities more authority. And as a matter of fact—

19-01:39:20

Shafer: And you exempted the state prisons too, I think.

19-01:39:24

Brown: I did exempt the state prisons. So yeah, every day immigration is sending an incarcerated person back to their country. And, I realize that there are certain ways that if the immigration people really wanted to get somebody, they could, because of the public records and because bookings are public records. Now, the only reason they don't is because they don't have the manpower or the willpower. So they would often go to downtown LA to pick up somebody, but they didn't like to go out to Antelope Valley. So that was the difference. So I didn't like the idea of sanctuary city to the extent that it covered people who were doing bad things. It's certainly my experience in Oakland—there's certain people that were gang people or criminals. And if they were illegal—well, why put up with them? Why should they be here? That was kind of my thought.

So that evolved over time. And they talked about the woman going shopping, or the father driving to work or something. As it became so many people here illegally, working and integrating into the society, then of course you want to tend to treat people that are here, even if they aren't here legally, as more closely to how you treat people who are. And that's how it happened.

But there are people who do serious things, and I think it's pretty obvious that that's not the kind of people that we should be protecting, particularly since they came here on their own volition, and now they're—sometimes they do very bad and serious things. So why should we have to incarcerate them and pay all that money, if they could go back to where they came from?

19-01:41:38

Meeker: Are you at all concerned that any of the laws passed during your administration, in fact made it substantially more difficult for the federal government to deal with those individuals?

19-01:41:53

Brown:

First of all, there was a lot of pressure from the activists. And I was responding, certainly, to that. But also, to the plight of undocumented that came, that work hard, trying to do the right thing. May get caught driving under the influence or get in a fight with their wife or—do certain things. So I thought we should not make it so easy for the immigration authorities. And now under Trump, where they're running around like the Gestapo, that even justifies state protections even more. I don't think we're just—so that's true.

But I was careful to meet with the sheriffs, listen to what they had to say. I did meet, work closely with them. I didn't give them all they wanted, but I gave them a lot more than the legislature wanted to give them. So I always knew the safety valve, that they could make known—well, by just making the public record and just listing when people were getting out. And so the INS could be there. So I thought that was important. I didn't want to shut off the INS completely, like some of the activists. Activists believe, it appears, that really there shouldn't be a border, and anybody who gets by—that's it. They get to stay. So I don't think that's what the people want, and there is a humanitarian crisis.

But we also have to try to govern. And if you look at what's happening in Europe, this migration can really disrupt things, even though, I think—the need is there, and we should be doing a lot more proactively in Central America particularly. Now, what Europe does in regard to North Africa, that's a whole other story—or Syria. So these things are not—there's not a simple answer. So as a politician, I try to find a balance.

19-01:43:59

Meeker:

How do you respond to those activists who are becoming increasingly more mainstream?

19-01:44:03

Brown:

I did respond. I signed some of these bills, but I modified them. After the first Trust Act, I vetoed, and then I did a more restricted bill. The same thing with the so-called sanctuary bill. It was much broader until I made them change it.

19-01:44:24

Meeker:

Do you think that the state has any role in maintaining the reality of the southern border?

19-01:44:32

Brown:

What do you mean? Well, no we don't—we don't, at all, because immigration is a federal matter. Do you mean to send people down to the border and patrol it? I mean does the federal government have to police our local communities? We do have a federal system, so—I mean the Minutemen like to do that.

But I don't think—our police resources are not—there is a federal government. They have increased the border patrol. I mean they've got plenty of money, and besides, the migration northward is driven by a lot of economics. And that's not going to be affected by police, it's going to be affected by the activities in those

countries—El Salvador and Honduras. I think I mentioned, I talked to a priest who was in the seminary with me. I called him. I got his phone number—he's in Honduras. He said a thousand people have left the area where his parish was, because there's no jobs. So if we don't like immigration, we should be doing something about that. And that's our own border. We do have far-flung American presence all over the planet, so right in our own backyard we ought to be doing a lot more.

19-01:45:51

Meeker: Well, there are push-and-pull factors in every immigration.

19-01:45:53

Brown: Right.

19-01:45:54

Meeker: And so, it seems like the kinds of benefits and sanctuary status given to undocumented immigrants in California might be considered a pretty strong pull factor.

19-01:46:07

Brown: Well, I think it's the jobs, because there's very little immigration, I'm told, during recessions. And the immigrants provide a service that nobody else is providing, so that's why they're coming. And why the farmers want them, and why other people need them.

19-01:46:25

Meeker: Do you have an opinion on things like guest-worker status?

19-01:46:29

Brown: I think some form of that—and that has its own complexities. In the sixties, they thought the bracero program was detrimental to American workers. Today people, I think, are more sympathetic to it.

19-01:46:44

Meeker: Because illegal immigration might be detrimental to American workers as well?

19-01:46:48

Brown: No, because there aren't workers here. When you came down Hwy. 20, you saw a lot of almond trees. Well, now it's machines. It's getting to be more and more machines, but it does take workers. You see them. And they're not the people coming out of the high school down here. That's very hard work, and it's just part of the modern world. If you look at all the goods coming from China, which is part of the trade war—why are we doing that? Well, it's cheaper. Why do we have the supply chain? I never heard of the word *supply chain* when I was governor the first time. Now that's everything. So what we're doing is we're renting—we talk about world trade. It's actually renting lower-paid foreign workers to make—to be part of our industrial activities. So you can have people come and do the work, or you could outsource the work and have the people in the foreign country do the work. And it's also a part of that, it's a little bit of—it's both.

19-01:47:57

Shafer: I want to ask you about the 2016 presidential election. You know, it seemed to be Hillary's to lose.

19-01:48:04

Brown: Yeah.

19-01:48:05

Shafer: In terms of the nomination. Did you have an affinity more for one or the other in the primary? I mean who did you vote for?

19-01:48:15

Brown: Well, I endorsed Hillary.

19-01:48:17

Shafer: Who'd you vote for?

19-01:48:19

Brown: I don't remember who I voted for. I'm sure I voted for Hillary. If I endorsed her, certainly I did.

19-01:48:25

Shafer: Why did you endorse her?

19-01:48:28

Brown: Well, because I thought that Bernie would have a hard time beating Trump. It looked like Hillary was a more solid bet. I didn't really want to get involved in it. I mean I have my own races, so I haven't traditionally liked to jump—I remember I got, I was co-chairman of the Muskie campaign. And I remember when he came to Los Angeles, overnight his campaign started collapsing. He made a comment that a black couldn't be considered for vice president, and that didn't go over too well. And then he gave a talk that I attended—and he talked and he talked and he talked. Within a few weeks, his star had begun to sink. So I thought it was pretty clever to jump out and be the co-chair of the Muskie campaign. And he looked like Abraham Lincoln, in some way. So I've been a little more gun shy since 1972.

19-01:49:26

Shafer: So you endorsed Hillary—I think you endorsed Kamala Harris as well, in the senate race.

19-01:49:31

Brown: Yeah.

19-01:49:34

Shafer: Yeah, and those were—I mean my perception was that was a pretty—I don't know if *perfunctory* is the right word, but it was quick. [laughing]

19-01:49:41

Brown: Well, you know, I like to run. So other people's races don't interest me that much, to tell you the truth.



19-01:49:50

Shafer: So you don't see yourself as being part of that world? That you endorsed me, I'll endorse you? And you know—?

19-01:49:56

Brown: No, I'm part of the world of there's an office, I think I'll run for it. That's the world I live in. So it's a little harder for me to be a spectator and be up in the stands cheering the people down on the field. It's not something I've done a lot and it's harder for me to go around and give speeches for other people and say how great they are. I like giving my own speeches. I don't talk about how great I am, I talk about all the vision, all these things, either problems or solutions or alarms. I enjoy making that articulation myself. So when you go for another candidate, it's one step removed. And so you're dependent on validating or endorsing the mind and the articulation of another. So it's not something I've been drawn to.

19-01:50:50

Shafer: How much of that is, you know, maybe not being that impressed by the candidate?

19-01:50:55

Brown: Well, I don't know. But I do think a lot about issues, and therefore what would be the fodder of campaigns. And so my own view is often not present in the articulation of others, because it's somewhat—I don't want to say it's unique, but I find my ideas pretty interesting. I find other people's ideas not as interesting—generally speaking. Now, that's not to say there aren't people who I really find—I like to listen to, but usually they're not running for office. They're writers, thinkers, scientists, environmental leaders, whatever.

19-01:51:43

Shafer: So in terms of that election, I mean a lot of people were shocked that Trump won. Were you?

19-01:51:50

Brown: I thought Trump was making headway. In fact, I talked to Bill Clinton about it a month before, and so I think he was concerned too.

19-01:51:57

Shafer: What made you say that?

19-01:52:00

Brown: Just looking at the—I don't watch much television, but just looking at it, it seemed that Trump had a story. He obviously had a story. Well, it wasn't that good in California, but it was good in the swing states—barely.

19-01:52:14

Shafer: What do you think she did wrong?

19-01:52:21

Brown:

I don't like to dissect these things. I think Trump was perceived as more of a change person, because he was so odd and so different. And he was more in your face. And so I think in those rust belt states—that appealed to people. Just as it turned off people in Orange County in California, by millions. So that's a complex undertaking, that Hillary did so well in Orange County and lost in Ohio and Pennsylvania. That shows you the difference in how people experience their lives, and that's just part of the diversity of America.

So should Hillary have spent more time in Michigan? Probably so. But at the moment, well—first of all, Obama had been in for eight years. And generally, the pendulum swings. So people want: okay, let's get some change here. So Hillary and Obama had been battered and attacked. The healthcare plan was reviled. So then she comes along, and is liable to the sense—well, that's more of the same. So it was more of the same, versus this strange character called Trump. Now, I'm not telling you anything you can't read in the newspaper, but women voters and suburban, more-educated people, were turned off by Trump. Working-class people were intrigued, at least enough of them, to give him those four states. So that's the election. Now, that's all—I don't know, that's just—

19-01:54:08

Shafer:

Well, and the turnout was depressed, I think, for her in some communities. The black community, for example, in Detroit.

19-01:54:13

Brown:

Well, but that's part of the excitement or non-excitement. That's just part of the way it works. Candidates have strengths/have weaknesses.

19-01:54:20

Shafer:

Yeah. So I think that was the same year you had Proposition 57 on the ballot. [Criminal Sentences. Parole. Juvenile Criminal Proceedings and Sentencing. Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.] How did you see that—?

19-01:54:28

Brown:

By the way, that was of real interest to me, because I had something to do with that.

19-01:54:31

Shafer:

Yeah. How did you see that as fitting into what you were trying to accomplish on criminal justice?

19-01:54:35

Brown:

Well, it's obvious. It allowed earlier parole, so it was more of an indeterminate sentencing scheme. And it allowed for credits as governor, and going over lifer paroles, which I went over probably six thousand. I noticed that the credit-earning capacity changed wildly over the years. So if the person had been convicted in the nineties, they might get 50 percent credit. If they were convicted in 2005 or later, they didn't get any credit—or much reduced. So that made me inclined—I came up with the idea to, in fact, I have to say that it was my idea—I think, sometimes I

forget where I get these ideas. My wife tells me I'm constantly using her ideas without attribution.

19-01:55:33

Shafer: [laughing] Taking credit.

19-01:55:35

Brown: So that could be—but that's not important where it comes from, because all the ideas come from somewhere. The idea giving the Department of Corrections the power to set credits—20 percent credit, 50 percent credit. That's all now, not in the hands of the legislature, but in the hands of the correctional authorities. So that was a very important move. And the other piece was earlier parole for people who were not on the violent list, or the so-called dirty dozen. There were twelve statutes that were called out at the time of the determinate sentencing law. Not because they were the only violent crimes, but they were such that people felt we'd better keep these people in longer, and that's what it was. So we said okay, we're going to leave that alone, and we'll take everybody else, even though it wasn't completely clear in the minds of some people.

And the DAs violently, virulently objected, because they said, "Oh, what does it mean?" Of course whatever it meant, it just resulted in people going to the parole board, which I thought almost never could be wrong. Because now you're giving people a subsequent chance, based on more information on how they performed in prison. So that, to me, was a good. And the DAs thought—because they have kind of a cowboy mentality, if they get someone in for forty years, they don't want them eligible for parole. They like that—sixty years, they'd put that in their speeches, or whatever. So [Proposition] 57 was kind of an obvious, although I must say most of the people wanted something else.

19-01:57:31

Shafer: Most of which people?

19-01:57:33

Brown: Most of the prison reformers. Some people wanted a sentencing commission, and the other people thought they ought to handle youth authority only. So I piggybacked on the bill for youth changes, and then added these two elements: parole and credit earning. And then that became a lawsuit, and one judge even thought I couldn't do what I did. But then the court of appeals overruled him, and I could.

19-01:58:01

Shafer: Yeah. You talked earlier about the need to have a thrust, for an administration to keep moving forward. And one of the things that you used in your fourth term was ballot measures—Prop. 57.

19-01:58:15

Brown: And Prop. 53 [Revenue Bonds. Statewide Voter Approval. Initiative Constitutional Amendment]. That was very significant. No one has ever mentioned that. I would imagine most people don't even know what 53 was.

19-01:58:23

Shafer: I'm scratching my head.

19-01:58:23

Brown: Well, it was an effort to stop the tunnels. To require a statewide vote on anything that had, beyond a certain borrowing element then you had to get a vote of the people. It was meant to stop the tunnels, and that was, I think, twenty points ahead, and I beat it by less than a point. So that was something.

19-01:58:45

Shafer: Yeah, it kind of renews, in a way, your faith in voters, doesn't it? That people do pay attention. I mean they're not just—you know.

19-01:58:52

Brown: Well, it renewed my faith in my ability to make a good ad and raise money to put it on the air.

19-01:58:58

Shafer: Was that faith lagging? [laughing]

19-01:59:00

Brown: Well, you don't know until you do it. And sometimes it might not work. I mean that was a close election. But there was no—

19-01:59:07

Meeker: How do you communicate that particular issue to the voters? It's kind of—arcane.

19-01:59:13

Brown: I just said this is bad for California. Go look at the commercial. It's pretty simple. But the other side is that the man who put it on the ballot. He didn't buy any ads. So it was a free-fire zone, so that helped. If he had had ads, maybe it would have—it probably would have turned out differently. So that's another luck—or contingency or circumstance. Those are very important elements.

19-01:59:39

Shafer: I mean among the other thrusts that were—were prevalent in the last couple of years were gas tax, housing—

19-01:59:50

Brown: Cap and trade.

19-01:59:52

Shafer: Cap and trade, high-speed rail. Was that strategic? I mean was that like—did you think, you know, we need to have some things to keep moving forward?

19-02:00:02

Brown: Well, but these are all a given. High-speed rail is already there. You either stop it, or you push it. Cap and trade was already there. You let it expire or you continue it. The tunnels—already there. So a lot of things are there. You've got a deficit. You've got a rainy-day fund. So a lot of this stuff—

19-02:00:23

Shafer: But you have to decide to sell it, try to sell it, be—come out front.

19-02:00:27

Brown: Yeah, but you can't decide to do nothing—at least—and be very successful. Can't just sit there and let stuff happen that is significant and consequential. So that's why I say a lot of things are just given. They're teed up, you're at bat, the ball comes along. You're either going to hit it, or you're going to let it go by—and you can't let every ball go by.

19-02:00:51

Shafer: I'm struck by how many sports metaphors you use, and how little sports you seem to watch on TV. [laughter]

19-02:00:56

Brown: I've watched enough in my life. You don't have to watch them every day to get the idea. I mean I've seen hundreds and hundreds of sporting events in my life. I started going to football games at a very young age.

19-02:01:11

Shafer: And you boxed.

19-02:01:12

Brown: I went to Kezar Stadium to watch when USF went undefeated twelve games and didn't get a bowl invitation. They say because it had African Americans on the team. I went to the Seals Stadium with my father when Lefty O'Doul was the manager. That was a whole other era. It's gone, but I still remember. Three strikes and you're out. I mean that's a metaphor that they still use. [laughter]

19-02:01:40

Shafer: Yeah. In terms of housing, you signed a raft of bills.

19-02:01:45

Brown: Yeah, a raft—that's a good—that's a good term.

19-02:01:48

Shafer: And I think you said—now, don't send me so many next time. [laughing]

19-02:01:50

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:01:53

Shafer: Obviously, that was a big push, by especially—

19-02:01:56

Brown: By legislators.

19-02:01:57

Shafer: By Bay Area legislators.

19-02:01:58

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:01:59

Shafer:

Do you feel like those bills you signed will make a difference?

19-02:02:04

Brown:

They'll make some difference. But the housing market is trillions. The bills are billions or hundreds of millions. So you have the market. Market goes overboard, whether on housing prices, rents, dot-com. There's a tendency to go beyond, and then snap back. But we haven't snapped back on housing. But it's very hard to—you can't really try to lower the price of housing. Because you tell people this is your most important asset, and now we're going to diminish it? That's not thinkable. So then what's the other alternative? Well, they say, if you build a lot more, it should bring the price down. Well, that remains to be seen.

The other one is you can actually give money to people directly or indirectly. So you could have the taxpayers help people buy the homes they can't otherwise afford. That has a very limited reach. So it's very, very limited, this how many—in San Francisco, I've heard the term \$600,000 to subsidize one rental unit—or maybe it's one housing unit. How many can you do that? There's an affordable house, I think one unit in Tiburon, cost \$1 million, to meet their affordable housing goals. [laughter] In fact, that's the way they talk about it. They don't talk about giving everybody an affordable house, they talk about meeting goals, which they have a hard time doing.

So it's just one of those conditions, that pricing has gone up. It's gone up now in Sacramento. But it's going up in Tokyo, London, Paris, the cities, the coasts, those big cities. Maybe it's the low interest rates, the capacity to borrow. We've made it easy to drive up the price. If you couldn't get a thirty-year mortgage at a low rate, the price would be lower. So the price is a function of the money sloshing around, the credit. But if you don't have the credit, then you have a recession, have unemployment, and people say we don't want that.

Well, one of the ways they use is monetary rules, and that means make money cheaper. Let people borrow more and more, whether it's to go to school, to buy a corporation, to buy a house, to buy a car. Now, it's five-six years to buy a car. It used to be you had to save. Don't buy a car till you can afford it. That was save to buy it, now we borrow to buy. We borrow to go on a vacation, put it on a credit card, because the consumer is 70 percent of the economy. And if the consumer stops buying, then the economy goes down. Then you're out of work—then you have a problem. So the whole capitalist economy is based on buying what you don't need, with money you don't have. So that's the principle. I find it not very sustainable. I tried to do my best to warn people, that this is not something we continue doing.

19-02:05:21

Shafer:

Yeah. So—all those housing bills and efforts that were passed, efforts that have been enacted and tried and failed. Do you feel like, in the end, it's going to take a big chunk out of the problem? Is it going to make some real headway? Or is it just really—

19-02:05:39

Brown: Well, this is the issue *now*. Now whether it'll be—if we're in a recession, people may not be talking about housing prices. They'll be talking about jobs. So there's always something to be talking about. But most of these problems are more general, they're more widespread. No one wants to talk about: you either have government lower the value of your home, because that sets the comparable price. Or you have people, through taxes or through bonds, make money available for people who can't afford the very high price of housing. So the answer that is given is have a small number of people get money to buy the house, and call it addressing your housing goal. And that's what we did. We addressed the housing—and we said, “Hi, housing goal.” [laughter] And we did.

19-02:06:39

Shafer: You didn't reach it.

19-02:06:40

Brown: Well, do you think we did?

19-02:06:42

Shafer: No.

19-02:06:43

Brown: Well, but the other one is people move out of San Francisco. They're moving out of Oakland. They do move. There was an article, which I'm sure you didn't read, because you don't read very carefully, about all these people moving to Boise, Idaho. Did you read that one?

19-02:06:56

Shafer: Yeah. I know somebody that just moved back, Corey Cook from USF. He was there and came back. Who wants to live in Boise?

19-02:07:07

Brown: Well, they say it's very nice. And if enough of your friends move there, why not? But it's like this guy—my great-grandfather, Schuckman. How the heck did he get to the Mountain House, which is what it was called when he moved here? He was in a little place called Wüsten, [Germany] a little bend in the road, which I visited. But he didn't stay at the bend in the road. He got on a sailing ship and came to America, and then came west. That's probably not even thinkable today. Say, could you, if you can't afford San Francisco, move to Williams. It's a lot cheaper. Of course there's a lot less to do. [laughter] So these are the dilemmas that people have, and we'd have more people, and we have the same amount of land. So it's not the same: the pioneers could come west and get land and start a life and grow food and get jobs. Today, it's harder. We're in a complicated institutionalized centrally determined, in many ways, society. So we have to deal with these dilemmas.

And housing—it's difficult, because if you want—for example, we have sprinklers. Do you know it was just a few years ago that every house had to put in sprinklers: every new house. Before that, we never did it. Since the white man

came west, no one ever thought of sprinklers inside your house. The old Mountain House didn't have sprinklers—of course it burned down. [laughter] But it was burned down by an arsonist, I think. So okay, then you have sprinklers. Then we have seismic standards. Then we have different kinds of—

19-02:08:50

Shafer: Solar energy.

19-02:08:51

Brown: So what I'm saying, it's not free. It costs money. We have efficiency standards, and they do raise cost, but they also save money. And the way we do all these things is we don't add it all up. Usually, governors add it all up. And we have a lot of needs. We have needs in housing. We have the needs in the childcare. When I was in high school most mothers didn't work. Today, most mothers work, so what's going to happen to the kids? Well, some people don't have kids. Other people have to have childcare. Well, who can afford childcare? Well, then the government pays for it. So working these conflicts out are such that there's always going to be a level of dissatisfaction, which when it gets acute enough, then they put someone new in. And they go through the cycle. That's what it is.

19-02:09:41

Shafer: But endless need.

19-02:09:44

Brown: Endless desire, becoming endless need, becoming endless rights, becoming endless laws, becoming endless spending. Oh, and that's the way it works. And they did have welfare states in Europe that worked pretty good, and their tax percentage was much higher than America's. So I don't think we've come anywhere near what we can afford—if we had a consensus. But we don't have a consensus.

19-02:10:08

Shafer: I want to talk about cap and trade a little bit more. That was a priority for you, to get that extended when it expired. And you needed some Republican votes, because you wanted to get a two-thirds [majority] to—

19-02:10:18

Brown: No, I *had* to get a two-thirds, because it was—

19-02:10:19

Shafer: You had to get a two-thirds to protect it, because of—from the lawsuit.

19-02:10:22

Brown: Because it was a tax, or like a tax.

19-02:10:27

Shafer: So talk about how you went about putting that coalition together.



19-02:10:35

Brown: Well, to tell you the truth, the Republicans came to *me* and said they wanted to do something. They said, “We’re losing younger voters who want to do something about the environment and climate change. Our consultants—,” and they brought in the consultants. So they wanted to do it, so that’s another fortunate outcome, and then I worked with them. Then we had to do it in a certain way, and some people said, “Oh, you’re negotiating with oil companies.” Yes, because I had to get the Republican votes, and two Democrats voted against the bill. And if we had no Republican votes, we wouldn’t have had the cap-and-trade bill.

19-02:11:10

Shafer: Were you surprised that the Republicans came to you?

19-02:11:14

Brown: Well, surprised, I don’t know if *surprise* would be the word. I was very happy that they came to see me.

19-02:11:21

Shafer: You would have had to go to them otherwise.

19-02:11:24

Brown: Yeah, and I don’t know, if I had gone to them that might have had a different flavor. They might not have done it. So it’s very important that their consultants, for whatever reason, poll numbers or whatever, had them come down and see me. And of course the Republicans revolted against the ones who did it, which I think, in the long term—I think the people who were for cap and trade will prove out to be the more popular.

19-02:11:48

Shafer: What did the fact that the Republicans were involved in the room, they were in the room—and I think there were a lot more in the room that ended up voting for it—

19-02:11:54

Brown: Right.

19-02:11:56

Shafer: So what did they get that you would have—you know, not have put in the bill?

19-02:12:01

Brown: Well, we put a lot of money in for agriculture, \$250 million. And most of the Democrats don’t know a pig from a cow. I don’t mean that literally, but they’re not farm sensitive. They’re more urban sensitive, you know? It’s like if you go to the Stonyford Rodeo, you won’t find a lot of SEUI [Service Employees International Union] members in the audience—I don’t think. [Shafer laughs] At least they don’t have that purple shirt on. So there is a divide, and the Republicans needed me to respond. Of course some of these people, like the dairymen, endorsed the bill. In fact, the Western [United] Dairymen drove, their lobbyist came up with a written endorsement to give to Devon Mathis, so that was very important. So the Farm Bureau and the farming interests were very helpful. Of

course then when it came time for divvying up the cap and trade, Democrats weren't so sympathetic, so I had to push very hard.

19-02:13:07

Shafer: For Ag. interests.

19-02:13:08

Brown: Yes.

19-02:13:09

Shafer: Yeah, what did Ag. get, that \$250 million, like what was that—?

19-02:13:13

Brown: Well, I mean there is money for biodigesters, and that's good on cap and trade. So the pollutants that come out of dairies—we spent, I don't know, \$60 million in the agricultural field, and there are others, other things. It was money to innovate, which was precisely what cap and trade was supposed to be about.

19-02:13:39

Shafer: Did you anticipate at all that Republicans would pay a price for working with you?

19-02:13:43

Brown: No, no, because I don't talk to them that much. I couldn't believe—

19-02:13:49

Shafer: But you think about politics.

19-02:13:50

Brown: I couldn't believe that cap and trade—first of all, I doubt whether most Republican voters even know what cap and trade is. So how do you they get—the Republicans tend to get stirred up. Of course the Democrats are getting stirred up too, through these enthusiasms. So the people who were able to take Chad Mayes, take him out of the leadership position—they weren't able to defeat him. I don't think any of these guys lost their seats. So it was more the activists.

19-02:14:20

Shafer: Chad Mayes says it was that photo he took with you, that was more painful—

19-02:14:26

Brown: Well, he decided to do that. I thought at the time maybe it was not so smart.

19-02:14:30

Shafer: Yeah, and he said he would do it again, by the way.

19-02:14:34

Brown: I remember when the farm worker issue was very hot, that Democrats in Fresno did not want to have their picture taken with me. So I am very aware of pictures, and sometimes they're not favorable.

19-02:14:49

Shafer: Yeah. Relationship with the legislature.

19-02:14:51

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:14:52

Shafer: There was a sense, and I know you—you pointed out to me that you never used this phrase, but a lot of people described you as the grownup in the room, the person—

19-02:15:00

Brown: Well, literally that was true. I was older than everybody else.

19-02:15:04

Shafer: Yeah, but they were also grownups. But the point—

19-02:15:07

Brown: But I had grown more, because they weren't in their seventies. [Shafer laughs] For the most part, I think one lady was in her seventies.

19-02:15:14

Shafer: But the point being that you had sort of gravitas, you had knowledge.

19-02:15:18

Brown: No, I don't know about—no, but it's the governor—there's one governor, there's a hundred and twenty legislators.

19-02:15:22

Shafer: But do you feel that there was a deference from the legislature to you?

19-02:15:26

Brown: I don't know. I don't feel much deference. But they were very friendly, and certainly more friendly than they were the first time I was governor. Of course I was this young kid at thirty-six—or not young kid, a young man. So, yeah, I've been around. I've won a lot of elections. So that impressed them probably.

19-02:15:45

Shafer: Other than being twice as old, did that—?

19-02:15:47

Brown: Well, the legislature is a different game. They have people pounding on them. They are battered by various interest groups that come to see them, local interest groups, the unions, the environmentalists, the childcare, the this/the that. And they keep pushing them, and they don't say, "Oh, would you think it good if you did this?" No, they say, "We're victimized, we're," they make it sound—a horror. "And you'd better do it, or else." So then they're pressured, and what the hell, they just vote yes, and it comes down to me. And then I look at it, and I'm not as subject, because I'm more removed. At least I feel more removed. And most of these people are small fractions of the electorate. So if you look at it from a purely political calculation, most of these interest groups are not that strong. But they feel very strong to the legislators and to the city councils, that often respond to pressure.

19-02:16:49

Shafer: Do you feel that you dealt with legislators differently because of the experience that you'd had the first time?

19-02:16:56

Brown: Well, I had a strong hand. I don't know if I dealt with them differently. Well, because I was very aware that when I would veto bills, I didn't think that was bad. The legislature wasn't that popular when we started. Of course when we ended, they were very popular. So sometimes the vetoes are important, not only because of the subject matter, but because in general people like some independence. Slavish conformity to a political class is not something that endears you to people. So knowing that being—vetoing some bills does connote independence, if you do everything the legislature wants, then you're not going to look like a leader or a governor. If you don't do enough of what they want, they attack you, even in your own party, and then they say you can't lead. So either you can't lead because you don't give them what they want, or you give them everything they want and people *know* you don't lead. So between one and the other, you've got to find a path forward. And it turned out all right. And I wouldn't veto everything that I might like to veto.

19-02:18:15

Meeker: One difference between your first two terms as governor and your last two terms was the passage of term limits in the state legislature.

19-02:18:23

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:18:25

Meeker: Do you think that that had a significant impact on the corpus of the body?

19-02:18:28

Brown: Yes. I think we've traded arrogance for ignorance.

19-02:18:36

Shafer: Say more.

19-02:18:39

Brown: [laughing] Well, we had people who knew a hell of a lot. But they certainly were very confident in their assertion of power and maybe overbearing. On the other hand, when we struck them down, the people, through the term limits—then we got this revolving door of short-termers. And that's been corrected somewhat by the amendment to the law. But there is a problem. If you're around too long, you begin to act in a certain way that may—it entitles, you have more authority, more power, you can push people around. On the other hand, if you're a short-termer, you don't have a sense of history, you don't know your way around. I think there's merits on both sides. But I'd say long-time service is very important, as we find in the executive branch—as even in Congress. And the Republicans have a term limit on their committee chairs. I don't think that's very wise. I think, in general, these wise old committee chairs kept America going, and I think you've got to be careful in messing with that.

19-02:19:52

Meeker: Do you think that further reform is called for? And if so, what would it look like?

19-02:19:55

Brown: Well, reform—you mean to go back to un-reform the reforms?

19-02:19:59

Meeker: Or to push further in the direction that the recent reforms—?

19-02:20:02

Brown: Oh, you mean to get more people—well, we could have a lottery, like they did in Athens. [laughter] I think that would be difficult. I mean there's no easy way. As I say, you either get people who don't know enough, who are insecure, or are constantly running for the next office—that's called term limits. Or you have people that endure a long time. Although even under the regime of no term limits, there was turnover. But in some districts, they'd stay forever. Adam Clayton Powell was there forever. John Conyers, the other fellow from Michigan, [John] Dingell, he was there for a long time. So maybe they stay too long. But on the other hand, with term limits, maybe they don't stay long enough. So I'd say there's no way without downsides. That's called life.

19-02:20:56

Meeker: Do you think that the commission that draws boundaries is effective?

19-02:21:02

Brown: So far it has worked for Democrats in California. Is it a good thing? I tend to think it's a good thing. But you know, America has had gerrymandering for a long time. So—

19-02:21:16

Shafer: It's gotten more extreme though, now.

19-02:21:18

Brown: Maybe it has. Well, it started getting extreme in California.

19-02:21:21

Meeker: Well, and the Supreme Court has just endorsed it.

19-02:21:22

Brown: I think even actually before [Phil] Burton, the Republicans did a big gerrymander. So I think this commission has some positive. But I'm just wary of trying to say this reform will produce unmitigated good. I usually think that it's always a mixed bag.

19-02:21:38

Holmes: Did you think that that kind of gerrymandering that we see, that we're still trying to deal with, do you think that plays a part in the hyper-partisan character?

19-02:21:51

Brown: What do you mean, because they save seats? I don't know. But you know, when you keep a party in power with a lot of gerrymandered seats, then things build up.

And often they get—somehow they sweep them out at some point. But they have done some pretty clever gerrymandering in the South, and I think in Wisconsin. So yeah, we need some change. But now, do we want the Supreme Court to do that? The one man, one vote? We got along fine with that. One man, one vote—well, we got along *differently*. And now we have it—so I think all these things, just like the primary. The primary puts money as one of the primary ingredients, whereas the convention system put political bosses, so called. And political bosses got us Roosevelt, got us Truman, I'd say Adlai Stevenson. And now we have twenty candidates running around with their emails, Twitters. So there's not an easy way: I think historians need to write about this. And politicians don't have any deep and thoughtful answers to these kind of questions.

19-02:23:08

Shafer:

Do you think the electoral college should be changed/gotten rid of?

19-02:23:12

Brown:

Well, that was a debate topic when I was in high school debate. Resolved: The electoral college should be abolished—and I argued both sides. So it does seem weird that someone who wins by millions of votes, and loses because you can—it's kind of like gerrymandering. Yeah, and there may come a point where—yeah, it's not all—it has problems with it.

19-02:23:40

Shafer:

Yeah. In terms of Trump's election, California has become what they call the state of resistance.

19-02:23:50

Brown:

Yeah, right.

19-02:23:50

Shafer:

You know, de facto, through things like sanctuary—like SB 54, and all kinds of things. Lawsuits—more than fifty, I think, by now. What do you think of that? I mean did you feel as governor you needed to modulate that a little bit? Or you pick your fights?

19-02:24:09

Brown:

Well, I think *resistance* always was a word that I thought was overblown. I mean the first time I heard *resistance* was the underground: Camus and these people were in the resistance in France. Now we're talking about resistance from well-fed politicians. So it seems a little off, to me. Secondly, resistance is kind of a negative. You resist the occupation. Well, I get the analogy, but I'd rather just take the thrust of what we want to do. Like we're fighting on climate change. Climate change is something we've got to curtail, stop. So I'd rather talk about that. I think it's exciting to be—so that's why they use it, and it's easier for a journalist to write about.

19-02:25:00

Shafer:

Well, and of the lawsuits that have been filed, do you feel like they—?

19-02:25:04

Brown: But it overgeneralizes, and says we're resisting.

19-02:25:08

Shafer: But setting aside the word—

19-02:25:10

Brown: I'd rather *persist*. I'd rather have something that I want to do rather than something I want to stop.

19-02:25:16

Shafer: When Kamala Harris got elected to the senate, you chose Xavier Becerra to be the attorney general.

19-02:25:19

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:25:22

Shafer: How did that happen? Were there other—I'm sure you were thinking of other people.

19-02:25:27

Brown: No, not really.

19-02:25:28

Shafer: No?

19-02:25:30

Brown: Well, I just looked at all the people, looked at their qualifications. Who did I know, who I didn't know. There weren't a lot of names. There were a few. But I didn't know any of them very well. But I saw Becerra went to Stanford. I was kind of impressed by that. My wife went to Stanford.

19-02:25:45

Shafer: Who first thought of him, do you remember?

19-02:25:47

Brown: I think *I* did. I really just scanned the list. His name jumped out at me. Oh, went to Stanford—went to Stanford Law School. Worked in the AG's office, in Congress won all his terms. So that, to me, looked like experience.

19-02:26:00

Shafer: The fact that he's Latino, did you like that as symbolism?

19-02:26:03

Brown: Yeah, I did.

19-02:26:06

Shafer: More so because Trump had won, do you think?

19-02:26:10

Brown: No, I mean it's California. So that's not an insignificant element.

19-02:26:17

Shafer: So, it's about 12:30pm. We don't—we want to, we're going to wrap up early today.

19-02:26:20

Brown: Yeah.

[side conversation deleted]

19-02:26:21

Shafer: So, I just wanted to pick up with this—we were talking before about the state of resistance. And you said I prefer *persist*.

19-02:26:30

Brown: Well, I was just thinking of a play on words, but I do think forward movement—*resistance* sounds like defense, but you've got to have offense. Offense meaning initiative, leadership. Now, there is a point: resistance is something. But generally in politics, you're thinking about doing something, and not—well, I don't know. It's just the way of it.

19-02:27:01

Shafer: Yeah, do you think the lawsuits, any of them, are frivolous?

19-02:27:04

Brown: No, I think the lawsuits—well, you've got to bring those lawsuits, because Trump is, in many ways, violating the law. Well, in the lawsuits California's alleging he's violating the law, and I think he is. Particularly when he wants to take away the waiver that California has to regulate greenhouse gases, without providing an adequate factual finding. He ignores the science, he ignores the facts, and he just arbitrarily says, "I'm taking away the waiver. I want to change the rules." Well, under our regulatory scheme, you can't have a rule unless you have some substantial evidence to justify it. Well, that works in reverse. You can't just on a whim take the rule out, and that's what Trump appears to be doing.

19-02:27:55

Shafer: Yeah. I want to ask you about the [California] Supreme Court. You made four appointments—a majority now. And none of them were judges. They were all law professors or lawyers, but none of them had been on the bench. Was that a deliberate thing? What is it about those four, and the fact that they weren't judges? [Goodwin Liu, Leondra Reid Kruger, Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar, and Joshua Groban]

19-02:28:18

Brown: I thought they were very intelligent. They represented a variety of views. But in the context of that variety, they were extremely skilled and knowledgeable and able. So I think that the supreme court could use that. These are difficult questions. So I thought put some really outstanding scholars on the bench, and that's what I did.



19-02:28:49

Shafer: Did you feel like their lack of judicial experience was a slight negative?

19-02:28:54

Brown: Well, it was a factor. But then they would have had the experience that they've had. And there'll be plenty of judges—judge is one form of experience.

19-02:29:06

Shafer: Yeah, you—obviously, it's a diverse group of people, and—Leondra Kruger was sort of out of left field, to a certain extent. She was from California, but was working, I think, in DC as an attorney.

19-02:29:21

Brown: For the president.

19-02:29:22

Shafer: Yeah, so how did—how did you, how did she get on your radar? Evan always joked that I'm the only person that cares about this stuff.

19-02:29:38

Brown: Yeah, you probably are. I was looking for outstanding candidates. Now, men, women, people of color, scholars, working class—whatever. Just who is extremely intelligent and an accomplished lawyer? That was my question. And she popped up. As soon as I met her, I was very impressed.

19-02:30:04

Shafer: You knew right away? You had a sense?

19-02:30:06

Brown: I knew right away.

19-02:30:08

Shafer: There were criticisms, as I'm sure you heard, that—

19-02:30:09

Brown: Very little, as a matter of fact. One story in an obscure legal publication, I think.

19-02:30:16

Shafer: [laughing] Well, the criticism I heard was that he had to go three thousand miles away to find a qualified African American for the supreme court. Did you—

19-02:30:26

Brown: Is that fair? I would say today that most people think she's an outstanding jurist. I don't think you've heard a peep of criticism. Very independent, very well reasoned, very well prepared.

19-02:30:41

Shafer: A little more conservative maybe than the other three—

19-02:30:43

Brown: A little bit. But it isn't just conservative/liberal. It's wisdom, insight, understanding all the ramifications. At the same time, understanding the legal principles at hand.

19-02:31:02

Shafer: And you waited quite a long time to appoint Joshua Groban.

19-02:31:06

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:31:07

Shafer: Was that just because he was on your staff and you needed him, or was there, there was some—?

19-02:31:09

Brown: I was looking for somebody. I kept looking. So—but there it is.

19-02:31:16

Shafer: Yeah. What did you learn from the first time you were governor? Obviously, you left, and three of the judges were recalled or not confirmed.

19-02:31:25

Brown: Well, you have to have a judge that is not going to be so wild they recall him, because then he'll take a few others with him. So that's kind of an obvious lesson. But I appointed many judges—six or seven judges the first time, and a lot of them were quite good.

19-02:31:44

Shafer: In retrospect, again, a criticism of Rose Bird was that she—I think she was the Ag. commissioner? I mean she really kind of—

19-02:31:52

Brown: No, it wasn't that. It was that she ruled against insurance companies and she ruled against the death penalty. Those are the two that—and mostly, the civil judgments that she rendered—that stirred up the money. And then the reversal of so many death penalty cases then provided the energy.

19-02:32:09

Shafer: So it was the insurance—it was the money and the outrage that came?

19-02:32:11

Brown: That's what I think. That's what some people think.

19-02:32:14

Shafer: Yeah, do you think that your view of what that court is, or should be, is different now?

19-02:32:20

Brown: Well, I see the court as a steady institution in our turbulent political life. So they had to be prepared to make important decisions. But they can't make *too*

many important decisions, such that they get dragged into the political maelstrom. So they need real insight. I use the word *wisdom*. They've got to know when to hold and when to fold—and when to boldly strike out and when to invalidate the institutional framework that is.

19-02:32:57

Shafer: Do you feel like you thought back then that there was a more activist role for the courts than you came to realize?

19-02:33:07

Brown: It's hard to recall forty years ago. I thought the court was, when I served as a law clerk, it seemed very quiet in the hallways. So I thought a little bit of new energy would be helpful. I see forty years later, that the court is a stabilizing force, and that they're more about continuity than change. Although at key moments, the changes they make are crucial to the functioning of the Democratic system.

19-02:33:39

Shafer: I'm just curious—did you talk to Rose Bird after she was recalled?

19-02:33:42

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:33:44

Shafer: What did—how was she doing? What did you talk about?

19-02:33:47

Brown: I talked to her on a number of occasions. She came by my building in Oakland.

19-02:33:53

Shafer: When you were mayor.

19-02:33:55

Brown: I saw her in Palo Alto—maybe before I was mayor, and saw her at a party in Los Angeles, so I talked to her from time to time.

19-02:34:03

Shafer: Yeah, was there any reflection about all that? Or—

19-02:34:05

Brown: Oh, that's not the kind of thing you say, "Okay, Rose. How do you feel without a job?" No, I didn't raise that point.

19-02:34:14

Shafer: Yeah, jumping around a little bit, because we've covered a lot of territory, and there are some things we haven't covered. We talked about the 2016 election. Did you consider yourself running?

19-02:34:28

Brown: Well, I always consider myself running. But it didn't seem plausible to me at that point. I can't tell—whether it was because I was governor, because of where I was in my political career, campaigning from California. Certainly, the way these

primaries—as you see how they’re going, you have to start very early. And if you’re in an important position like governor of California, then you have to neglect your duty. And once you do that, things—people get very unhappy

19-02:35:06

Shafer: You have some experience with that?

19-02:35:08

Brown: Yeah, I’ve experienced that. You can often do your job—well, it depends what was going on. We had some important things that came after 2016. Well, in 2016 we had the, we had Prop. 57—was that 2016?

19-02:35:26

Shafer: That was—yeah, that was 2016.

19-02:35:30

Brown: So that was an important—criminal justice reform. I was in the middle of some very important things.

19-02:35:35

Shafer: If you’d been younger, do you think you would have given it more serious thought?

19-02:35:39

Brown: Well, I was enjoying what I was doing. I was doing things that were very important. Climate change, prison reform, those were significant initiatives, so to run off might—I don’t know. I don’t know how much that influenced me. I think it definitely played a role. So running in ’76—first of all, the campaign was much quicker. I declared in the middle of March. You know, before we are—well, we’re in September? March is still a long way off. So that’s a different ballgame. Now they jump out so early, that for an incumbent officeholder, that’s pretty challenging, if not impossible.

19-02:36:36

Meeker: In 2016, there was an implausible challenger to the frontrunner, who became surprisingly plausible, in the person of Bernie Sanders.

19-02:36:42

Brown: Yeah.

19-02:36:44

Meeker: Who also, in some ways, campaigned out of your 1992 playbook. How closely were you watching his campaign to get the nomination?

19-02:36:54

Brown: I don’t know. Not overly. Being governor of California is very interesting. And it was more interesting this time around for me than it was the first time, because of all the initiatives that I was engaged in that I thought were important. And certainly, they were challenging intellectually and politically. So, but Bernie also was—yeah, he was attacking. But he’s attacking—he’s an independent, he’s from

Vermont. He's really attacking the whole system of incumbency. Now, when I did that in '92, I was in an office. It's different when you're the governor of the largest state, all of a sudden to turn against the entire establishment of which you're a very prominent member. So it's a little less—he was quite aggressive on the status quo. And I would be very critical of the status quo, but I don't know that I had the appetite that he had to go so hell-bent against Hillary Clinton. And he attacked a lot, and that's the only way he got ahead. So that's what people wanted. But sitting here in Sacramento, I didn't feel that I wanted to do that.

19-02:38:24

Meeker: Did his campaign give you an opportunity to reflect on your '92 campaign?

19-02:38:30

Brown: Oh—not really. But the point is, I'm trying to think now—I mean that's such ancient history that I don't give it much time at all. What I would say is you stimulate, as you bring up the question, to go after the presidential campaign would have been a persistent, repetitive, nationwide assault on Clinton. And it didn't look, to me, that that would be successful. So I would end up doing great damage to the Democratic nominee, and that didn't seem right. So it seemed like this was her time. She was highly competent, and, no, I just didn't think that was the right thing to do. And I think Bernie did not—it seemed at the beginning that he was going to not go anywhere. And part of the success was he tapped into the moment, and part of it would have to have been Hillary's weaknesses as a candidate. Neither of those were very predictable at the time. Plus, he's in a job where all you do is vote yes or no, and that seems less than being the head of a big government like California. So those were some of the reasons. Had I been not holding office, who knows what I would have done. And if Hillary had not been the candidate—

[side conversation deleted]

19-02:40:00

Shafer: Okay, we were talking about Hillary. You didn't want to go after Hillary and damage the nominee, and all that, and it was her time.

19-02:40:04

Brown: Yeah, and she'd been in that world, and then here I was over in my own universe here, as governor of California. So it just seemed not appropriate.

19-02:40:16

Shafer: Did your previous tangle with her in '92—?

19-02:40:20

Brown: Oh, no—I know what I wanted to add: my name is pretty strong in California. I respected—the Clintons were very powerful. Now, it turned out that she lost to Obama and Trump, but in the primary, she still won—and she won California, significantly. So to go run off and challenge her, and lose, and neglect my job and my Prop. 57—when you really think of it, there was many reasons not to do it.

19-02:40:55

Shafer: A lot of downside.

19-02:40:57

Brown: And she was prepared. I thought Hillary was as prepared as anybody's going to be to be president.

19-02:41:03

Holmes: Governor, just to piggyback off that, did your previous experience, particularly in the '92 campaign and the other runs for president influence your decision, as having that life experience—?

19-02:41:14

Brown: Well, after you do it three times, you're a little careful for the fourth. So you want a little more certitude than just jumping off, like you do maybe the first time.

19-02:41:25

Holmes: But also having those years of experience to reflect, or maybe see what you didn't before, like the attacks on Bill Clinton. Because you really tangled in '92. So years later, did that impact your decision of not wanting to do that again to the Democratic candidate?

19-02:41:45

Brown: Well, we've done that. But I mean there are a lot of reasons. A lot of reasons, and that was just one of them. I mean I don't want to repeat what I just said, because that would be silly. But—it's not that easy. How many governors of the West—well, that fellow [Jay] Inslee ran there. But it's, I'd have to go back over the whole thing all over again, so it doesn't make sense. What *is* your question? We fought the last time, so do we want to fight again on a rematch, or something?

19-02:42:24

Holmes: No, you've pretty much answered my question. The question was with years of experience, were you more cognizant of maybe the effect on the other candidate against Trump and what that could have done?

19-02:42:36

Brown: I think there was a variety—look, you guys act like you can parse decisions into five pieces—and first piece, second piece, third piece—et cetera. It doesn't work that way. You don't run for president—for nothing. You have to have pretty strong reasons. So I think I outlined why a successful fourth-term governor, in the middle of important work, would hesitate to challenge an icon—essentially Mrs. Clinton in the Democratic primary. And the fact that Bernie did as well was certainly completely unforeseeable at the time. And he had very little to lose, and he went out there and swung for the bleachers or for the far field there, for the fence, and he had some kind of success. But he didn't succeed, and Trump got elected. And Trump is now doing all these terrible things on treaties—nuclear treaties, Russia, and climate change. So just on many levels, I think challenging Hillary was not such a good idea.

19-02:43:49

Shafer: Do you think your three presidential runs, like what—was it a net positive? Like how do you feel like it—overall. I know you feel like maybe 1980 was a mistake?

19-02:44:02

Brown: Well, I didn't get out fast enough. Yeah, when Kennedy got in. Well, I think they were all interesting in their own right. I certainly—running for president, you learn things. You prepare, you talk to experts. I talked to military experts, budget experts, tax experts. So yeah, it's all part of my postdoctoral training. [Shafer laughs] Postdoctoral in the sense that I am a juris doctor, so everything after Yale is postdoctoral.

19-02:44:32

Shafer: So it was more of a—almost like an academic, like a—

19-02:44:35

Brown: No, it was a real world. Learning is not just the academy. The academy is a subset of the general universe of learning. And certainly campaigns is both a competition in itself, but also something you contribute to and you learn. Teach *and* learn, as a matter of fact.

19-02:44:59

Shafer: When you think about governing versus campaigning, is there—they're obviously very different, but there's overlap.

19-02:45:04

Brown: No, they're not very different. They're very similar.

19-02:45:06

Shafer: How so?

19-02:45:07

Brown: I know [Mario] Cuomo said you campaign in poetry and you govern in prose. Well, but they're all campaigning. It's campaigning all the time. You've got to be cognizant of the press—the overarching concern is the press. And even when you govern, you're aware that if you screw up, then that's a story. If that's a story, that's bad. [laughing] So then you're thinking of the next election.

[side conversation deleted]

19-02:45:33

Shafer: There were some really horrible wildfires in California, in your last couple years. First of all, just—how do you, as that's going on, what are your priorities as governor?

19-02:45:46

Brown: So look, when it comes to fires, they've been around historically, but these fires are unprecedented, particularly Paradise. But Redding, Santa Barbara, Malibu—these were quite shocking, and there's a lot of human devastation and tragedy. And so that's the most obvious. But going forward, it looks like this might be

something that happens more and more. And if that happens, that will be a real problem for California, in terms—well, we've seen the problem for PG&E, but that was just three or four fires. What happens if these fires happen every couple of years? Then you're talking \$10-\$15 billion, and that will be a problem. Then they're going to have to—who knows what, but they're going to have to get at thinning the forest, hardening the wires, doing some—well, it's not conceivable, because we never had this problem. So yeah, fires are maybe the first and most serious warning from climate change.

19-02:46:55

Shafer: I can imagine that as that's happening, you want to stay away—you don't want to bother the Cal Fire [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection] folks. You want to let them do their job, but what role is there for the governor at that point, when that's happening?

19-02:47:06

Brown: Well, normally governors show up at fires, tragedies—so you show up.

19-02:47:14

Shafer: Were there any strategic decision that they ran by you, or they—?

19-02:47:17

Brown: No.

19-02:47:17

Shafer: No, they just go do their thing.

19-02:47:18

Brown: The fire—no, there's no—not that I know of. They have the fire department; the mutual aid that we have in California, where the city, the county, and that state are linked together, depending upon the challenge of the disaster. That works. Works as planned, and governors just show up and talk a little bit. So there is a role. Perhaps creating a sense of confidence on the part of the people affected, but there's no operational role that governors have.

19-02:47:53

Shafer: Showing appreciation for what they're doing, and all that, I guess.

19-02:47:56

Brown: Well, that's for the firefighters, but you also have the people who are the victims. So it's somewhat helpful to both.

19-02:48:02

Shafer: Yeah. You know, we've talked about this before, but there are some politicians who seem to be good comforters-in-chief sort of. How do you feel about that part of your role?

19-02:48:15

Brown: Well, that's part of the role. You've got to carry on here in front of a camera, and you have to be able to display the appropriate emotion and feeling. So that, in



itself, is challenging. Some people probably don't know the difference between whether there's a camera or not, because they're always projecting something or other that comes out of their sense of attention getting.

19-02:48:43

Shafer: Was this something that you more felt you *had* to do than you wanted to do?

19-02:48:48

Brown: Yeah, it's a little hard to go to perfect strangers and talk to them as through you're—they're a close confidant or associate. Yeah, I find that—I find that challenging. And some politicians are pretty good at it. But are they good at it because that's what they feel? Or are they good at it because they're good at displaying themselves in front of people and cameras?

19-02:49:15

Shafer: Acting.

19-02:49:17

Brown: Yeah. And you've got to be a good actor. No question. No question about that.

19-02:49:22

Shafer: So you mentioned PG&E.

19-02:49:24

Brown: Well, I will say—there is a question. I don't know if Abraham Lincoln thought he was an actor. That's too long ago to figure that one out, but you could be so authentic that it would be incredibly powerful. But to the extent you can't be 100 percent authentic, you need to be able to at least act as close to authentic as you possibly can.

19-02:49:45

Shafer: [laughing] That seems like an oxymoron. [laughter] Acting authentic.

19-02:49:51

Brown: Well, you've got to give them what they want.

19-02:49:56

Shafer: Obviously PG&E was a big—I don't want to say victim, because they are also in some ways the perpetrators of the problem. But how did you think about the bankruptcy and apportioning responsibility and cost—how did you see that kind of formula?

19-02:50:16

Brown: Well, I did propose that we change the rules so that PG&E could be held accountable based on their responsibility or their negligence or their lack thereof. That would require modifying the inverse-condemnation rule, so called. We proposed that the legislature had *no* interest in it, and that was under the influence of trial lawyers, who want to sue and have the rules of recovery as favorable to the plaintiff as possible. And secondly, the insurance companies would like the utility to absorb as much of the bill—because what they don't absorb, maybe the

insurance companies do. So the insurance guys were able to get most of the Republicans; the trial lawyers got enough of the Democrats, and got them strongly enough—I don't say a majority, but enough so that there was no appetite in the legislature to do that. And they still haven't done it.

But the great problem is that while people want to punish PG&E, that if they go out of business, then the taxpayer—the consumer—will have to pick up the legacy. So who's going to pay for the wires? Who's going to pay for the power plants? Pay for the whole operation? That'll fall back on the consumer. So that's why I think a more balanced/mixed strategy is called for. And they'll probably get to that. Right now, they're using money.

19-02:51:46

Shafer:

Well, how would you describe the utility's behavior in terms of—?

19-02:51:50

Brown:

I haven't looked at it. I mean the fire people said it was the utility's wires, in one case. In another case, not. PG&E appears not to have taken safety as much—with the gas explosions in San Bruno—there's a lot there that people should look into. But I'm not here to pass judgment on that. These are all serious questions, and I don't walk around in my head with all of the answers that lawyers are spending millions and tens of millions of dollars to figure out, one way or the other.

19-02:52:29

Shafer:

Do you think that in a situation like that, with PG&E, that the governor and the legislature—like how are the roles and the responsibilities different?

19-02:52:39

Brown:

Well, the governor has the broad picture and lays out what he thinks should be done, and the legislature will react more to the interest groups. That's just the way the legislature is. It's closer to people, closer to pressure. The governor is apparently a little more removed. Although the legislature can do things and get away with it, because there are so many of them, whereas when the governor does something that becomes unpopular, he gets nailed. So on the one hand, the legislators are more vulnerable to pressure. On the other hand, they're less vulnerable to political reprisal on the part of the public when something goes sour.

19-02:53:20

Shafer:

Of course you'd have a hard time selling that with Josh Newman, but that was an exception, I guess.

19-02:53:25

Brown:

That was the exception. The fact that he was *elected* was an exception.

19-02:53:28

Shafer:

Yeah. To what extent did the experience that California had with deregulation and with Gray Davis being recalled—was that instructional for you at all?

19-02:53:37

Brown:

No.

19-02:53:39

Shafer: Not at all. Just totally different.

19-02:53:40

Brown: Well, I don't—what, the deregulation? Well, like what was the instruction?

19-02:53:46

Shafer: Well, just that like when you mess around—

19-02:53:48

Brown: Well, I'm very aware: if you get down into the low thirties or something, and some rich guy wants to buy a million signatures, you're in deep trouble. That's like obvious. So it's more obvious today than it was before Gray's recall. And there are a lot of people who were unpopular. My father was unpopular after the Chessman decision. If someone put a recall out, he might have been recalled. A lot of good people might have been recalled, through the years. So usually you get four years to recover. Pete Wilson might have been recalled, when he was at his nadir of popularity, like the tax. Maybe somebody could have knocked him off for that.

19-02:54:25

Shafer: Yeah, I'm interested in this whole concept of unintended consequences.

19-02:54:29

Brown: Okay.

19-02:54:31

Shafer: You know, and I'm just wondering—that seems to be what happened with deregulation. No one really—it was a unanimous—

19-02:54:37

Brown: Because when the herd moves across the plains, they all move together. And there's a thought, the closest term I can think of at this moment is *plausibility*. At that moment, deregulation was totally plausible. And there's not really room or appetite for incisive, insightful thinkers deviant to the herd, to the norm, to the mood, to the enthusiasm. A lot of this is mood music. When the music's playing, if you get a sound—off-note, it's not going to be received well. And it wouldn't be heard anyway. Not by the press, not by anybody. So that's the way it is. So there are times when that's, with these crime bills. When the times come, you pass them. You don't pass them, they do an initiative and they pass anyway. Politics, popular government, as de Tocqueville pointed out, has its challenges and its problems. That's why the founders wanted more elite elements in charge of things. And now we're casting our lot with what Federalist Paper No. 10 would have been appalled by.

19-02:56:04

Shafer: Do you feel that democracy is in the greatest peril that it's been in since you were in public life?

19-02:56:09

Brown:

I don't know. What is democracy? We haven't had a democracy like this before. Even in England, the prime minister in England was picked by a subset of the electorate, very small. So it's not pure one person, one vote on every issue. We have courts, and we have electoral college, and we have voting requirements. And we've had *more* requirements in the past, so we're moving toward more populism, more mass decision making. But mass decision making is hard to—well, mass decision making, by definition, is millions of people deciding something. So they're not in the same room, they're not talking to each other. So manipulation and technology is implicit in the very notion of a mass democracy. And once you say that, then a smaller subset is going to control those mechanisms, those levers of influence. Because how else is the mass going to work? They work through a political party, they work through television ads, they work through mailings, they work through news. All of which are influenced by various factors.

So, but we've had different ways—some people are even saying we should reduce the [voting] age. Eighteen is too old, you should get down to sixteen or something. People say that people who aren't citizens ought to be able to vote. Well, there's pressure. If you've got a problem, add more people into the electorate. But the more you add, the more the mass grows, and the more the challenge of communicating with the mass, or the mass making some kind of coherent decision becomes problematical.

19-02:58:05

Shafer:

And expensive.

19-02:58:07

Brown:

And expensive—well, but it's not expensive for the billionaires. It's expensive for the—well, it becomes prohibitive to anybody *but* the organized lobbies or rich people.

19-02:58:18

Marzorati:

Oh, well just on the PG&E thing, do you think that—just talking about unintended consequences, like there was a loophole basically left that didn't address fires in 2018. And then two months after the law is passed there's the King Fire. Was that purposefully done? Like how did it end up that that was not—

19-02:58:39

Brown:

What's the loophole?

19-02:58:41

Marzorati:

Basically, that the rules created in that bill didn't address fires in 2018.

19-02:58:45

Brown:

Well, because that's as far as they wanted to go.

19-02:58:48

Marzorati:

Who?

19-02:58:50

Brown: The legislature. They couldn't go any further. So I don't know—what's your—?

19-02:58:55

Marzorati: That's not answering the question.

19-02:58:56

Brown: Well, I don't know if it's a problem. It's just a fact. When I first proposed my bill, people didn't even want to look at it. It's the *last* thing they wanted. And then we got some kind of a bill, and then Governor Newsom took it a little further, put money on the table. But of course that's one of the issues. Do you hand out money to the taxpayers through the bond system, the borrowing? Or do you cut costs? Cutting costs is denying recovery. In the medical malpractice, we had proposals to fund all the malpractice recoveries. But instead, we chose to restrict malpractice recoveries, so you could only collect \$250,000 of nonacademic damage. That became quite controversial, but it happened. So that's always: do you restrict, or do you try to subsidize? And usually, you come up with some kind of a combination. And that's what we're doing with PG&E.

## Interview 20: October 2, 2019

20-00:00:00

Meeker: Today is October 2, 2019. This is Martin Meeker from UC Berkeley along with Scott Shafer from KQED interviewing Governor Jerry Brown at his ranch in Colusa County, California. This is interview session number twenty, and what we expect to be our final session.

20-00:00:18

Brown: Good!

20-00:00:19

Shafer: All right. So, Governor, just to let you know what we're doing here. So we have started writing some of the radio pieces, and some of what we're going to do here is come back to some of the things you've already talked about a little bit, just to revisit and clarify some things. And then—but we want to plow some new ground as well.

But let me just pick up on what you were just saying, because you've been in public life for—I think you've been in office, literally, for thirty-two years, when you count—if you count the eight years in Oakland. And you've cared about a lot of issues very deeply and still do. And yet, as you were just saying, we're in a situation where no one seems to be paying attention or doing what's necessary. And so I'm just wondering like does that leave you—at this point in your life, how does that make you—not how does that make you feel, I know you don't want to talk about that. But what do you make of the fact that—?

20-00:01:06

Brown: Yeah, well, I think that how you feel is a legitimate question. And I don't really engage my feelings too much, because if you think about all this stuff it could—it's not going to make you feel good. But it is part of reality that important things are neglected, or not observed, or not scrutinized at the level that things deserve. And I was thinking, as we were leading up to this conversation, two things in particular on the state scene. The electrical deregulation bill under Pete Wilson, and the pension adjustments, enriching the pensions that could be earned particularly by law enforcement and safety officials. Both of those had very large consequences, none of which was discussed. It was known in some quarters, particularly the pension issue. But the vote in the legislature was overwhelmingly positive, Republicans and Democrats, and there was no serious, or in depth, or even moderately in-depth discussion or debate.

20-00:02:38

Shafer: What does that tell you?

20-00:02:39

Brown: What it tells you is history proceeds. Or that's—*life* proceeds, activities occur—by individuals, by nations, and by states. And important matters are not, are not always in the forefront. And maybe often are not at the forefront. And I would just cite—to go from a local to a grand example, World War I. Obviously, most,

maybe all, but certainly the predominant decision makers that led up to World War I, that initiated it, did not think about the slaughter of the young men. They didn't think about the humiliation of Germany and the desire for vengeance that would then bring on Hitler. They didn't think about the collapse of the czar that would bring on the Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin and Stalin.

20-00:03:48

Shafer:

Is that a failure of imagination? What is that?

20-00:03:52

Brown:

It seems to be part of life. So yeah, the Roman Empire didn't figure out—it lasted 700 years. Yeah, if you count the republic and the empire, it's 700 years. So things go on a long time, but things end, horror happens. What are the consequences of the Iraq War? Obviously, that was very little thought through. And so history is one sequence of events at the local, the state, the federal, and the familial level. And yes, we don't have the wisdom to foresee. So to that extent, we're still in somewhat primitive circumstances, in the sense that we don't know what we're doing in terms of the longer-term consequences, in terms of very *serious* consequences. So that should engender a certain amount of humility and a certain amount of caution—and the desire to really dig more deeply into what we're doing.

But I don't see that in the state legislature, because it's institutionally not set up for this. I don't see this in Washington. I don't see this in the other capitals of the world or in the interrelationship. I always cite the buildup of nuclear weapons, of which we have thousands right now in Russia and the United States. And even climate change—there's a profound complacency about climate change. Obviously, the Chinese are building coal plants. Obviously, we have the Republican Party in virtual total denial, along with Trump. We have lots of businessmen that are charging ahead to put more molecules of heat-trapping gases—that will lead to very bad consequences. And yes, there's kids marching in the streets. There's a lot of talk. There's a lot of reports. But if you look at the political world and say is climate change—are you really gripped by that? I wouldn't say so, based on the debates to date. I would say that healthcare is far more important in the minds of the press, the political consultants, and the candidates—with a couple of exceptions.

And so I think the big takeaway here is that humankind, through the darkness of the intellect—if I could invoke a Catholic concept—is such that we really do screw up, and we ought to be on our guard. But even being on our guard, bad stuff's going to happen. And we just charge ahead. And I want to cite another example, because I think it's instructive. The financial meltdown that caused millions of people to lose their homes and millions of people to lose their jobs—the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Mr. Greenspan, was exuberant just a few months before the unwinding—the beginning of this debacle. So what that tells you is we're always on the edge, or in the song, we're on the eve of destruction, but we're not wise enough or prescient enough to see it.

And for that reason, I put a very high value on serious reflection, deep analysis, and collaboration and dialog among people of *different* views. And that's the exact opposite of where we are, which—I would, to reduce it to a simple description—flag waving. Essentially, we're in a flag-waving mood. And the Republicans wave their Republican flag, Democrats wave theirs, Russia waves its flag, America waves its—it's really like a football game. And that is not governance in the best sense of the word. It's not diplomacy. And that's something that interests me, and I try in my own way to be an antidote to that with more or less success.

20-00:08:47

Shafer: You mentioned the darkness of the intellect, I think, referring to a Catholic teaching. So that might be a good place to jump back. We wanted to follow up on something.

20-00:08:56

Brown: Well, yeah—I'm going to give you the three-part attributes of the human being.

20-00:09:02

Shafer: [laughing] Okay.

20-00:09:03

Brown: The intellect—sin darkens the intellect, weakens the will, and inclines the individual to sin. So if you take that as descriptive of humankind, you have to be very cautious and want to really dig into things before acting. Of course if you think about it too much, you might get paralyzed. But I do—I do think that that doctrine, whatever you think of the theology, does shed light on the nature of human beings. The nature of how we think, and how we desire, and how we clash.

20-00:09:44

Shafer: So, in that regard, I want to ask you—again, going back, when you were a young man and your father was governor, you were in, I think, in the seminary. And you had the—confidence, I guess, is one word, to call your father and try to dissuade him or to encourage him to stop the execution.

20-00:10:09

Brown: Yes. I was out of the seminary then, just a few months. I left the seminary in January of 1960, and that telephone call was in the spring of 1960.

20-00:10:19

Shafer: And what was it that gave you the confidence to do that?

20-00:10:23

Brown: Probably my cloistered life for the previous three and a half years, where I was very focused on the basic verities, the truths, the Catholic doctrine, the practices of asceticism, meditation, examination of conscience, right and wrong, and sin and grace—all these things. So being in that hothouse of concentrated activity and focus, the idea that you execute somebody like Caryl Chessman, it definitely seemed like the wrong thing to do.



20-00:11:20

Shafer: And with the benefit of hindsight to a certain ex[tent]—

20-00:11:23

Brown: Also, I would say I did not understand the chemistry in the California legislature, the state senate committee that considered the moratorium proposal that came out as a consequence, and, yeah, the nature of political reality. And the political reality is that vengeance—or, you might say, as people call it, justice reacting to the red light—to the red-light bandit, the rape of that woman, and the arrogance that Chessman displayed. All that made him, in the minds of people, a fitting candidate for being executed, being killed by the state in an official way. And the politicians reflected that—and that probably did reflect popular opinion, to the extent that people thought about it.

So yes, that was an overwhelming force that was part of the environment. It was not part of my environment at the Sacred Heart Novitiate, where we did not read any newspapers or have any radio or television exposure whatsoever, let alone secular books, political books, or anything of that ilk. We were dealing with the Bible, the writings of Ignatius Loyola, the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola, the biographies of various saints, the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, who said something to the effect that every time I left my monastic cell and went out among men I came back less a man. So that whole ethos was completely foreign to the state legislature in 1960. So it's almost as though I were some native from Patagonia, dropped in the middle of California, offering advice.

20-00:13:34

Shafer: And yet, your father took it.

20-00:13:36

Brown: And he did. Well, I guess I made a strong case. He probably took it because of his religious orientation, his sense of right and wrong. And yeah, he—there is the sense that an execution, long after the act for which the person is being executed—there seems to be a disproportionality there, in the minds of a lot of people, but not in the minds of close to a majority of people.

20-00:14:08

Shafer: Yeah, so I want to talk a little bit about something you touched on earlier, and that is how the best politicians are able to tap into the zeitgeist or tap into the mood, and you talked a little bit about that just a moment ago. But can you talk about it in regard to Reagan, and how—in '66, and then again later on when he ran for president, how was he able to do that do you think?

20-00:14:34

Brown: Well, he was a very good speaker. He had a charming presentation. His whole being was upbeat and positive, and he was quite put together, both because of just the way he was, the way he grew up. But also, obviously, I think from his training in Hollywood. And he was in a Democratic state, that just by the nature of things would be more indulgent of student unrest or supportive of welfare, maybe not, certainly, making a big deal about people who cheat at welfare. So Ronald

Reagan had an opportunity, as a Republican, to seize on an issue that the Democrats weren't and that my father wasn't. And he saw it, and I've heard it said by political scientists that there's a market for certain issues, and political entrepreneurs will take advantage of that market. You could say the same thing about the busing issue, when the woman [Bobbi Fiedler] who ran a campaign called Bus Stop—and she ran against a long-serving congressman James Corman. She had no trouble beating him, because 75-80 percent of the people didn't like busing. But the Democrats were locked into supporting busing, or at least keeping quiet about it. So that then left the field to a Republican to come forth and say I'm going to fight this.

And that could be busing, it could be student unrest—it could even be homelessness today. The same thing happens with, on the other side, Republicans. If they let such inequality build up, and let certain individuals collect enormous amounts of wealth and then make life difficult, or allow life to get more difficult, then you get candidates like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, saying, “Oh, we need a wealth tax. We need to break up big companies.” So that's the give and take of a democratic system, that with the two parties, and with the free entry into the two parties, people will seize on issues and will, obviously, work with them to advance their candidacy.

And that's what Reagan did—and he's not the only person that did that, and he didn't do it any way that was different. But he did have a certain eloquence, and the stars were really aligned, because it was his eloquence—the perception of government spending was negative at that point, at least in the minds of many people through the press stories and what have you. The same thing with the Watts riot that occurred. That's a specter of the National Guard with tanks and trucks rolling through Los Angeles and people getting shot. And then student unrest, free speech movement. Kids getting dragged down the steps of Sproul Hall. All of that provided an opportunity for someone to come forward and say we have to defend America—America as we know it, the older America.

And then Trump did that somewhat with Hillary—or maybe a lot. So this is just the drama, the dramaturgy of politics. And some people understand that better than others, and some not so nice. Certainly Mussolini was quite an exploiter, and so was Hitler, so you have strong men that do this. So, being in touch with the zeitgeist can be as negative—and maybe is more often negative than positive.

20-00:18:58

Shafer:

Well, and another concept you talked about earlier when we were talking with you is the eye, having the eye. Good politicians have an eye for certain things.

20-00:19:09

Brown:

Well, you've got to see things. And some people—some people size up things better than others. Some people could count votes. They always said Jess Unruh, the former speaker of the California legislature, could count votes. And counting votes means that no matter what someone says—yes, no, or a mumble, you say,

“Okay, I think he’s going to be a no.” Or, “Yeah, I think we’ll get that vote.” A lot of people can’t do—most people cannot do that. Most politicians can’t really understand how campaigns work, how public opinion is formed, and how it changes in campaigns. That’s why they pay good sums of money to rather cynical political consultants who, without sentimentality, are able to read the signs, see how things are going, see what will work in a campaign and what will not work.

So that’s all I know from—in my administration, Nancy McFadden—I was very impressed when we talked about the gas tax. She said, “I think we can get those votes,” because at that point I certainly wouldn’t have said that. I didn’t know. Because to know that, you have to be around. You have to talk to legislators, you have to hear them/see them over time. And then on the larger plain, you have to be able to see public opinion. And since different people have different views, because you know in polling, people under thirty may think one thing, people who are Jewish think something else, someone black thinks this, a white displaced auto worker thinks something else. So that total diversity and mixture of opinions and experiences adds up to a very complicated brew, and people who can work through that have a skill and an insight and an intuition. And that’s an art, but there’s a certain amount of science to it.

20-00:21:21

Shafer:

Is that intuition, et cetera, the more—not the consultants telling you, but the innate part of it, is that something you think you tapped into or were able to use in ’74 when you ran—or ’70, for that matter, when you ran and used the issue of money in politics as a—?

20-00:21:36

Brown:

Well, I don’t know how much insight *that* took. But I did read the campaign report, in fact my own, prepared by my father’s accountant. And I looked at it, and he left off a lot of information. He didn’t put the total donations next to a full name. He had a partial name, there were committees—I don’t know if there were committees then, but it would be like J. Smith, and no amount, and at the bottom there would be the total. It was not a lot of money—like \$30,000. But I said, “That’s a funny way to report.” And I went myself and looked at the law, the election code, and I saw you’re supposed to report the name and the donation. So that’s—oh, this is—then I looked further, and I saw an opinion by my father that said no, even though it says that, you don’t have to do it. I even asked my father about it, and he said, “Well, Earl Warren said, ‘Pat, that’s the way we do it in California.’” So yes, I pursued that. And nobody else had pursued that.

A fellow named Norb Schlei ran for secretary of state. He didn’t think of that, although maybe it wasn’t the same issue. But no, it just struck me in that office, reading my report before I signed it, that it seemed odd. And then from there I looked at it, and as I looked at more reports and I then started researching with the help of an election lawyer when I was secretary of state, [Daniel H.] “Dan” Lowenstein, then I saw that there was actually a Purity of Elections Law written in California and there was a demand for more detail. So you can say I had an eye

for that, curiosity, perseverance, doggedness to go follow it to the end. So, I did that in that instance.

20-00:23:33

Shafer: You, in the 1970 campaign, and even to certain extent in '74—even though your dad had been governor and you shared his name—you ran as an outsider.

20-00:23:45

Brown: Well, obviously—Reagan ran as an outsider. You don't run to make yourself feel good or your family feel good, or based on—well, you run based on the reality of where you *are*. And running in 1974, I mean there are certain realities here—and '70. So I mean unless you're just going to be a silly self-indulgent—I'm running and here's my plan, without any sensitivity to what people are thinking or what electorally will work in a campaign.

20-00:24:25

Shafer: But running as an outsider, given that you are Jerry Brown, Edmund G. Brown—

20-00:24:29

Brown: Well, so what? Are you saying I shouldn't because—okay, my father was governor, therefore I am obligated to run as an insider? That *ought*—I don't know where that *ought* comes from.

20-00:24:40

Shafer: No, it wasn't an ought. It's not an ought at all—

20-00:24:41

Brown: That's a—I call that *the tyranny of the shoulds* [Shafer laughs]. In fact, a psychiatrist, very famous, named Karen Horney, who worked with Sigmund Freud, wrote an essay in her book, *The Neurotic Personality [of Our Time]*, called "The Tyranny of the Shoulds." [laughter] And I would call that a very neurotic perspective, and I hopefully try to stay away from shoulds, unless they're grounded, and I examine the grounds for that.

20-00:25:09

Shafer: Just to be clear, it wasn't an ought or a should. I was in awe really, of your ability to pull that off.

20-00:25:14

Brown: Oh, you weren't saying it was a should, you just thought it was unexpected or improbable?

20-00:25:18

Shafer: Like—good job! How did you pull that off?

20-00:25:21

Brown: Well, no but that—I know you're trying to get me to react, and that's your journalistic pose. But I would say the fact that I was around, I could understand the value of being somewhat of an outsider. I mean I did have a pilot test. It's called the 1966 campaign. We have Reagan, we have Brown, and then we see

what happens. So unless you're *dense*—and as I said, I think most people *are* pretty dense, because they believe what should happen, based on their desires, is what *must* happen. But no, life doesn't work that way. You know, the fact that we had a Civil War and 400,000 people died—it shouldn't have been that way. We should have had a nice resolution, ended slavery, and kumbaya—gone on from there. But life doesn't work that way. That's why some people write about *the tragic sense*. That's something we—I certainly had a familiarity with in my education.

20-00:26:28

Shafer: So you ran as an outsider, succeeded, and then you were an insider. You were the governor.

20-00:26:34

Brown: Well, yeah, but Reagan succeeded too. But he kept running—he always separated himself from the government, from the bureaucracy.

20-00:26:41

Shafer: Well, and he's also running against Democrats, who I think were probably still the majority.

20-00:26:44

Brown: Right, right, but the—

20-00:26:46

Shafer: So but you—it was your party.

20-00:26:47

Brown: Yeah, but it doesn't matter—the party or the government. The fact is people in America—and I don't know, maybe it's always been this way—have reservations about politicians and about government. So if you totally embrace the politician—that *can* work in congressional districts. It sometimes works, that can be made to work. There are politicians—usually at a lower level. But in general, people are looking for—if I were to put it in a more, in a different light—the shiny new object, innovation. Or, as we were warned in the seminary, about hankering after novelty. The fact is that life—or certainly capitalist life and the market is constantly looking for new products, new stories, new fashions, and that happens to be true in candidates.

So, they get tired of you. And by the way, this is rather old, as I think I've mentioned before, but Aristides the Just, who was ostracized, kicked out of Athens, because people were just tired of hearing, "Aristides the Just." [laughing] And so I've always taken that into account and said don't get overexposed, because they get tired of you. And they *are* going to get tired of you, so why not postpone that, defer that, as long as possible? So that has been a thought of mine, and that's why you can't get too engaged. You can't be daily in the press without it turning sour.

And I have noticed that—I noticed that particularly this was illustrated—I saw a cover, and I remember it, on *Time* magazine [means *Newsweek*] of Henry Kissinger, and it had him in a Superman costume—Super K. Okay, a few years later, they called him the Lone Ranger, and the Republicans didn't want to talk to him for a while. So you go up, and you go down. So if you're in the business of trying to stay up, you try to manage your trajectory so that it lasts as long as possible.

20-00:29:13

Shafer: Avoid the fatigue factor.

20-00:29:15

Brown: Yeah.

20-00:29:15

Shafer: Yeah. You told a story about the '74 campaign when we talked to you earlier about that, and it was losing the AFL-CIO endorsement over campaign finance reform. Tell us again about what happened there?

20-00:29:31

Brown: Well, again, maybe the framework here is oh, you had a choice. No, I didn't have a choice. I was promoting the Political Reform Act, and I was a coauthor, with Common Cause and the People's Lobby. In fact, we wrote the Political Reform Act of 1974 in my office as secretary of state. So Jack Henning thought it was going to be used for oppressive purposes—and he was right. It is used for oppressive purposes, to make opponents look bad in a campaign. But overall, I thought this was the right thing to do. And so the fact that he was taking away the endorsement, I couldn't very well say, "Jack, you're right. I back off." Now, leaving aside the merits, that would be a bad story. That would be a *very* bad story. No principle. Jack Henning yelled—and Brown blinked. That's impossible. Even if I wanted to, I wouldn't have done that. So I had to pursue it. Now, a further refinement is who really knows, you see? The AFL endorsed you, then they take it away. It's a one-day story. They took it away from some of the other candidates, because some of the other candidates had endorsed the Political Reform Act. So there it was. I can't remember now, how big a deal it was, but it might not have been that significant.

20-00:31:08

Shafer: Did it, at the time, you just kind of feel like well, I've—I've set the table, and now I have to eat there? [laughing] That's a bad metaphor.

20-00:31:14

Brown: No, no, I thought—no, it's not, I mean you know. You're in the journalism business. To stand on principle is perceived as a good thing. Remember, as Machiavelli said in *The Prince*, you don't do good, you have to *appear* to do good. And it certainly appears good if you stand up against some labor leader who is trying to push you around. And I think it was good. In this case, I think the reality and the appearance coincided.

20-00:31:47

Shafer: Yeah, let's see—you talked about, you quoted your dad, and we really just want to get you to restate this, talking about—the phrase you used was about holy water, sprinkling holy water on campaign—

20-00:32:03

Brown: On campaign donations.

20-00:32:04

Shafer: Yeah, can you just say what that is, what that—?

20-00:32:06

Brown: Well, I'm trying to understand that myself. I do remember—you can't sprinkle holy water on campaign money. I think what he must have meant—I mean it's so memorable to say that, that now if I try to probe into what was in his mind... He may have meant, and this is just that all donations—not all, most donations—come from someone who wants something. It could be ideology: we want civil rights, or we want fewer taxes. We want less regulation. Or we want you to be nice to the oil companies. Or we want you to be nice, differently of course, to the environment. That would be a more high-minded view. So, the flow of money is coming from people who want outcomes, and therefore you can't make it holy. Holy water is used in the church, in the Catholic Church; you touch your fingers into the holy water and you cross yourself. And the holy water, in some way, is leading you closer to God—okay. So the campaign donations are not going to lead you closer to God. It may lead you closer to your *election*, so I think my father was probably just reflecting on the discordance between religion and ethics and the hurly-burly of politics, and he certainly had experience or acquaintance with both.

20-00:33:55

Meeker: But holy water is a purification ritual.

20-00:33:59

Brown: Well, it's called a sacramental, in the catechism. And a sacramental is different than a sacrament. But in some way it leads you to, or helps you obtain, sanctifying grace. Now, I'm not going to get into a discussion of what the hell that means, but so—that's all. I think it really is, it's a statement of saying politics is a rather secular undertaking, and there's another part of life, which is more spiritual or holier or higher or better. And so my father probably had that feeling, although he certainly embraced the political as well as—maybe much more so than the holy.

[side conversation deleted]

20-00:34:54

Brown: By the way, holy water, I guess is to purify, and you can't purify campaign donations.

20-00:34:59

Shafer: And I think you brought that up when we were, and the context—I had asked you about the criticism you had gotten from taking money, environmentalists

criticizing you for taking money from oil companies. I think that was the context. But I'm wondering too, if you haven't evolved from 1970, '74, and promoting Prop. 9, to your last time as governor. And rethinking, like maybe that wasn't—maybe there *was* a downside to that issue of more transparency and—?

20-00:35:26

Brown:

Oh, there obviously is. There's a downside to going to the primary system from the convention system—even the smoke-filled rooms. Harry Truman and Adlai Stevenson were the result of the convention system, the political leaders or bosses as they call them. Now, it's all up to the voter. But the voter cannot access the candidate, for the most part, without a lot of money—without hundreds of millions of dollars. And as we know, you can't sprinkle holy water on the money.

So we've gone from whatever frailty and corruption derives from a smoke-filled room or a convention hall, to the amassing of large sums of money, that will then be put into simplistic commercials that will attempt to trigger favorable responses or impressions on the part of people—particularly people that are not following, closely, the election. Because the swing voter, by definition, is more independent, less invested in the campaign, the issues, and political knowledge. So in many ways, the knowledgeable people, the committed people, on both the Republican and Democratic sides, are all assumed. They're not in play. What is in play are the people who are, quite frankly, not paying so much attention. And they are then affected, you might even use the word *manipulated*, by these clever, professionally produced advertisements that are very similar to what Procter & Gamble does. In fact, some of the same people work in both fields.

So but is that—so everything has—and the disclosure, does that really do something? I noticed the governor just signed the bill to require income tax returns. I—whereas [I remember] my father saying, "I'm not going to show my income tax, because people are going to find out how *poor* I am." But it could also be none of your damn business. And how much *do* we have to know of people? So what does that say? Look, there is no absolute good. Everything has a point—a counterpoint. And I remember my law professor at Yale, in second semester contracts, [Friedrich] "Fritz" Kessler, with a very thick German accent said, "Every rule has a counter-rule." And I think that's very important. Every thrust forward has a downside or consequences that you hadn't thought of. Just like World War I, they played the bands—I think they played bands in both Germany and England, but there was nothing to celebrate about. But *they* didn't know that, and *they* were the smartest people in the world at that time, and also some of the most Christian and moral. But it didn't do them any good. So this is why they say *walk humbly*. And the Christians or the Catholics consider fear of the lord a virtue. That's like: don't get cocky. Don't think you've got it all figured out, because you don't. The world is too complex.

20-00:39:04

Shafer:

I want to quote—and I'm not sure where this quote came from. You may know, Guy, but this is a quote from [Robert M.] "Bob" Stern. The quote is, "When Jerry



Brown is out of power, he's the best reformer ever. When he's in power, he's not as good a reformer." What do you think he doesn't understand about—?

20-00:39:24

Brown: He doesn't understand that, just like he didn't understand when he was working for me as secretary of state, that a Xerox of a party membership affidavit was as good as an actual original copy. And he thought no, the law said that if you are going to attend the Republican State Convention, you have to have an affidavit of your membership, and that excludes someone mailing in a Xerox. And I would say both his comments follow a certain punctilious perspective on how life should be led.

20-00:40:03

Shafer: So too pure or too—what?

20-00:40:05

Brown: No, I don't think purity, I think it's a—

20-00:40:09

Shafer: Naïve—

20-00:40:10

Brown: It's a misunderstanding of what is—of what is going on and what is at stake.

20-00:40:18

Meeker: Governor, I'd like to bring it back to questions around revenue and taxation. I was really fascinated to learn, going back to 1977, which was the year right before Prop. 13 was passed, that the inflation-adjusted revenues for the State of California were about \$133 billion. Originally—

20-00:40:44

Brown: No way. No, no. Not in 1977.

20-00:40:46

Meeker: Inflation adjusted, so the—

20-00:40:49

Brown: Oh, you're talking about going backwards to put a value on it now.

20-00:40:50

Meeker: The revenues for the State of California in 1977 were about \$37 billion. Adjusted for inflation, close to \$133 billion. In 2010, the revenues were \$379.7 billion.

20-00:41:11

Brown: Okay. I don't know how you could say it's \$370 billion. Well, then the whole wealth of California must—I don't, now how could it be more than what it was?

20-00:41:27

Meeker: These are not GDP. These are revenues earned.

20-00:41:30

Brown: But there wasn't—that wasn't the revenue. Are you talking about—when?

20-00:41:34

Meeker: In 2010.

20-00:41:37

Brown: You're saying the revenue really was three hundred—?

20-00:41:39

Meeker: Close to \$380 billion, and this includes taxation [ed. note: this figure is inclusive of both state and local revenue, including income taxes, social insurance taxes, ad valorem taxes, fees, and types of revenue. The revenues earned by the State of California in 2009-2010 fiscal year were \$97.7 billion]

20-00:41:46

Brown: Okay, I don't understand that, but ask your question. But I do not understand how that could work. Because inflation—but we are where we are. And so whatever the amount is, that's real. And if you go backwards and you say \$30 billion then is \$200 billion now, I understand that. But \$200 billion today is \$200 billion today. I don't understand how you can say—no, it's really \$400 billion. That makes no sense to me.

20-00:42:17

Meeker: Well, I mean the website says \$380 billion for revenues.

20-00:42:21

Brown: Well, it may say that, then there must be a factor here that I need to be educated on, because I don't—but anyway, let's see if I can answer your question anyway. Yeah.

20-00:42:28

Meeker: So the point that struck me was that even accounting for inflation and population increase, the revenues generated by the State of California, we're talking taxes and fees, is between 150 and 200 percent greater.

20-00:42:45

Brown: Yeah, I don't know. But what's your point? Let's get to it—let's get to the point, because it's probably valid irrespective of all that.

20-00:42:51

Meeker: Right. Well, there are a couple of points. First of all, I would be curious about your thoughts for what do we attribute these increases in state revenues to: where's the money coming from? But also, what's inspiring the ability to raise more taxes and fees in California?

20-00:43:15

Brown: First of all, the taxes were not raised in terms of changes. They were a little bit. Deukmejian raised the gas tax. There were actually cuts—I cut the budget several times. But, you're pointing to the fact that we are damn lucky in California and in America. We have a lot of growth, and the growth generates a lot of money—and the government gets that. Now, you'd have to look at what is the amount of money—what is the percentage of people's private income going to the

government, and has that really grown? Are people paying more taxes relative to how much they have? And that's probably different for people in different income levels.

But the fact is, we are growing. And we're growing through the whole magic of the economy—the trade, the technology, the banking, the lending, the Federal Reserve, the land, the agriculture, the movies, the cars. All that is creating the almost \$3 trillion, as we now measure it, in California. It was a fraction of that thirty or forty or fifty years ago. So yeah, it's a big celebration. I think C. Wright Mills talked about *crackpot realism* and grand celebration—everything's great! Well, everything *ain't* great, because we're destroying the climate, the species—we've lost three billion birds in America. We're on the verge of nuclear apocalypse. We're about to get artificial intelligence and drones and robots and synthetic creation of life. And who knows what horrors are being generated? But in the meantime, there's a lot more money.

People though are feeling poor because they can't afford to buy a house. Let's take automobiles, which I read a report just last night. Only 18 percent of the people in America, according to their income, can afford to buy a car. But now that the car companies have figured out that by lending people money, they'll actually make more money—as a matter of fact, they make considerably more on the loan than they do on the sale. For example, in the article I read, someone buys a car that costs \$24,000. But they have to borrow \$36,000, and they take out a seven-year loan. And so now, one third of the loans are for seven years or longer, whereas a decade ago it was like 10 percent.

So how do we get all this? By creating a lot of money through thin air in some ways. And does it all come crashing down? I assume there's a problem here. I don't know whether it comes in the next five years. But I don't understand how we can borrow a trillion dollars, send people to college, borrow a trillion dollars to get people to buy cars, and then knowing that if we don't, then what happens to the car industry if only 18 percent of them can buy cars? Then we're not going to buy cars. Then they're going to be out of work, and we're going to be in a big mess economically. So we are locked into borrowing, quantitative easing, all manner of gimmickry to get people to buy what they don't need with money they don't have. And that's the way I formulate the modern pathology that is the dark underside of the affluence and all that money you're talking about.

Now, if you asked—and I think it must be implied—if we have all this money, how come we still have all this need? We have people who can't afford to buy a house, we have homeless people, we have people who are mentally ill on the streets. We have kids who can't afford college. We have people who can't afford childcare—and on, and on, and on. Well, part of the result of all this money is we get inflation and costs can rise. The same thing with homes. You make mortgages easier and easier, so we can bid up the price of homes. If you all of a sudden, "Oh, you can't have a home unless you put down 50 percent." All of a sudden, the price of homes would drop dramatically. But we're locked into a different thing.

So anyway, there are many factors. And of course in the public sector, instead of having 2½ to 3 percent go to prisons, we have 9 percent—and during the Schwarzenegger regime it got up to 11 percent. Also, we didn't have, before 1966 when my father was governor, there was no such thing as Medi-Cal. Medicaid didn't exist. So now that's a gigantic—well, that's \$20 billion. If you add the federal spending, it's closer to \$90 [billion] or \$100 billion. So for example, the homemaker chores, which is now called in-home supportive services that pay people to take care of elderly or infirm or disabled people. Most of them are relatives. That, I was alarmed at in 1975, because the budget for the in-home supportive services went from \$60 million to \$120 million. I actually had a press conference that someone could dig up. We've got to hold the cost down. Well, the cost today is \$13 *billion*—and now we're going to have a program on childcare that will be similar to that.

So we used to have the man worked, most of the women stayed at home. Now the women have to work, so we've got to have childcare. And also, how are we going to take care of the parents? So we've got to have nursing homes. The government is taking over a lot of roles that were in the private sector. When my grandfather died, Edmund Brown, in San Francisco—as I get the story—his four children would loan him money. A hundred dollars, \$80 a month, each of the children. Because you didn't have Social Security. They didn't have insurance. And that's the way it was, so families had to take care of people. Now, we expect the government to make sure you have a house, if you can't afford it. That you have healthcare if you don't have it. Your child can be taken care of from day one, all the way through. Even in high school, you have to have after-school programs, and on and on and on. So, this is the tension that the destructive creative dynamism of capitalism disrupts a lot of the older structures, and the family and neighborhood benevolent associations, and all the rest. So therefore we have to react, and that's where we are.

You know, I was just driving up to Dunsmuir this last weekend, and as you go through Dunsmuir, there's a lot of empty storefronts. Then on the way back we stopped at Red Bluff, and we stopped at Willows. A lot of empty storefronts. Because there are supermarkets, there's Amazon, there's—so there's always the creative destruction. And so that, as part of that destruction, is the creation of more government services or more private services financed by various lending mechanisms. Now, for example, far fewer people went to college. Now, we want more people to go to college, but they can't afford to go to college. And if professors want to get paid, and all the other employees at the university—so now we have students take out loans. And now we have candidates say, "We're going to *forgive* those loans." But how are they going to pay for that? Well, we're going to tax the rich. And there's, I think, a logic for that. And we're going to see how much of a logic resonates with the people in this coming election. But it's *never* the same. The 1966 world or the 1964 Goldwater-Johnson, and now 2020—they're totally different—different dynamics.

And you're saying there's a lot of money in the state government. There *is* a lot of money, but the need has escalated. And if I may just give you my topology of need. It starts with desires. Which by the way, according to the Buddhists, are endless. So first you have a desire, then we transmogrify the desire into a need. And then if the need is around for a while, we make it into a right. I desire, I need—now I have a *right*. Once you have a right, you have to have a law to enforce the right. And once you have a law to enforce the right, then you get a lawsuit. So it's desire, need, right, law—lawsuit. That is the paradigm of how the thing works.

20-00:52:55

Shafer: That puts lawyers at the very top, I think. [laughter]

20-00:52:57

Brown: Well, I'm a lawyer, so I understand that.

20-00:52:58

Meeker: And I'd also like you to put that schematic into a political context, and that is think about how Republicans versus Democrats in 2019-2020 are responding to that. I mean it seems Republicans have a tendency to say that's just a desire. You can take care of that on your own. Whereas Democrats seem to—

20-00:53:23

Brown: No, the Democrats want more money for people, and lower-income people, and college, and childcare, and environmental programs—and all the rest of it. Republicans though, they want more money for the corporations. And they were saying the corporations are really, I won't say poor, but they're really stressed out, because the tax rate in America is higher than it is in many other countries. And therefore, we have to lower the tax rate so the corporations can either feel better—they don't call it *feel better*, but they call it: can invest and do what they do. And then they do that, some trillion dollars over ten years. And then they buy their stock back, and they give dividends.

But did the corporations really need that? Well, they always argue—well, they're doing it in Europe, lower tax rate—Ireland, various people and various countries, so we do it. So the Republicans are always trying to make life easier. Republicans don't like unions, because they'll drive up the cost of workers. They don't like minimum wages for the most part—they change every now and then—because that costs. The god of current Republican ideology is the market. The market is god, and god knows how to do things. So, the market is adversely affected by minimum wage, unions, environmental regulations, health and safety regulations. And therefore, the Republicans wished to roll those back or keep them at a minimum. And the Democrats are seeing the good—the good of a clean environment, the good of people being able to take care of their families, so they argue something different. So that's the way it is.

20-00:55:12

Meeker: But there's endless need. If there's endless need, both sides are stuck within this system.

20-00:55:18

Brown: Right.

20-00:55:19

Meeker: Do you think it's necessary from—?

20-00:55:20

Brown: Well, that's why systems come to an unhappy ending. [laughing]

20-00:55:25

Meeker: Do you think there's a need for both of these sides to reconsider the endless desires, and therefore endless needs and the endless rights?

20-00:55:31

Brown: Well, I always, I'm very drawn—I'm not saying I follow it at all, but I definitely notice and reflect on the notion of the Buddhist vow: desires are endless; I vow to cut them down. I don't see how you could run for office with that platform, by telling people—those are desires.

Now, complicating all this is the stratification. So we've got the 1 percent, the 10 percent, the 20 percent that are doing a lot better than the bottom twenty or the bottom thirty. And everything is going to be liable to: come on, you guys have too much. Take that, and let us have some. So that—and those ideas, that the chairman or the president of a company now makes three hundred times, or more, more than the average worker in that company. And just thirty or forty years ago, it was like twenty to one, or twenty-five to one—something. How did it get so different? And it gets so different in the same way that the Congress voted the tax cut. There's a need. Corporations *need* to pay lower taxes. The rich people, unlike the poor people, need a lot of incentive. The poor people don't need as much incentive because they need to work, so they have to work. And they should be damn happy they have a job—and maybe you give them a little minimum wage. But the rich people—you can't be a banker if you're not paying them \$7 million/\$8 million, stock options, \$20 million. He doesn't have the motivation, and your company will collapse, because no good people will work there.

And that kind of percolates down to the university, to police departments, the fire departments—and everybody else. And that's why I was always pushing back against that, with very modest results.

20-00:57:32

Shafer: Well, and in that regard, bringing it back down the street level, if you will, when you were mayor you mentioned that being mayor was really grounded and real. What did you mean by that? How so?

20-00:57:46

Brown:

Well, there weren't many restaurants in downtown Oakland. Unlike being governor, where I don't circulate through Sacramento very much, I would walk or drive through many of the streets of Oakland—certainly the downtown, because I lived downtown. And when you see the rather undeveloped, and I would say depressing state of things, in 1993-'94 in Oakland. It did not look like Paris. It did not look like New York City. I mean I can remember being in New York City at twelve o'clock at night, in Greenwich Village. The streets are crowded, there's a vitality. I look at the streets in Oakland, and no, that's not—so how do we get things going there?

Well, I promoted—let's have ten thousand people downtown. Now, I did not have a planning operation. We didn't have committees. I didn't consult anybody. I said this is an obvious—let's get some vitality. So then condos started coming down, and that was exciting. I tried to get Trader Joe's to come. In fact, I drove the guy around. I said, "Look, this is a great spot. What about here?" "Uh, no." "What about over here?" I drove him, we got out of the car, "No, we're not coming." But I got Whole Foods to come. And there was a problem. In fact, they wanted to put some kind of foundation into the side of the hill, and there was a guy who lived next door, and they had to use part of that property, and he wouldn't give it to them. So I actually called the guy up and had a cup of coffee with him and said, "Come on. Whole Foods—we need it here. Will you please give your permission?" And he did. And now Whole Foods is one of the best-producing stores, or at least it was, in Oakland.

So that's concrete. That's different than the Local Control Funding Formula. Okay, did that work? Did it not work? That's not a school. The Oakland Military Institute is a school. I can go there, I can see kids, go to the graduation, talk to people. So one is of a human dimension, where you can actually see. And if you go to Oakland today, there's restaurants, there's thousands of condominiums that were never there before. And now, of course, people are saying oh, it's gentrification. We have hundreds, thousands of people sleeping in tents. So now we have another problem. But at the time, it was a very concrete thing, to see a dilapidated old—it was a, there was a shopping center there—well, they had the Fox Theater. The Fox Theater was dark for thirty years, had homeless people camping out and cooking inside the Fox Theater. Well, we got it open. We had to get the money—dozens and dozens of different sources. I think it was \$80 million, but it's open. And we got an art academy [Oakland School for the Arts] in that building. So that's real.

We also had an uptown, in Oakland, there was kind of an old store with a number of little stores in it, kind of an enclosed—not a mall, but a larger set of stores, kind of pathetic, really kind of sad. That was all torn down, and Forest City built several hundred units of housing. Well, to go from one to the other, you can see it. It happened while I was living in Oakland. That's much different than the Political Reform Act. What did that do? Did that make politicians more honest? What happened, and how do you see that? And that's true of the sixteen thousand

laws that I signed as governor. What is it? How do you see them? Now, because I signed all these laws, I can go to the fortieth anniversary of the Energy Commission. The fortieth anniversary of the California Conservation Corps. The fortieth anniversary of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. I probably could go to the anniversary of the Fair Political Practices Commission, but they didn't do that.

So, all that is to say the city experience is more immediate than the more general experience of governing a state of forty million people from the Oregon border to the Mexican border. There's a lot less—unless you build a dam or something, or high-speed rail. And that's why even on this ranch, that's abandoned for fifty years—and all of a sudden we're sitting in a building. It has an aesthetic to it, and we can look out at the mountains. So that's something. That's to go from nothing to something, and that's pretty much what I felt. Oakland wasn't nothing—Oakland was a vibrant place with a lot of things. But the downtown was revitalized, and the estuary and many other things changed. So that's the difference. It's a more physical, direct immediacy, that you don't get in Sacramento, where it's the Capitol, it's the local bars, it's the lobbyists, it's the legislature, it's the staff—it's talk, talk, talk about all the emotions of all these bills, and everybody wants this and wants that. But what is it that they're getting, after all? Well, I won't get into all the things you get. I mean there's a hell of a lot of stuff from sixteen thousand bills, and hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars of spending. By now, it's trillions.

20-01:03:38

Shafer:

But you're saying it's more real, more grounded being mayor?

20-01:03:41

Brown:

Well, they're both real. Sacramento is real. You know, if you walk down to the Capitol, it's a real place. But you're talking about bills. And if you're talking about—now, I can say that when I gave commutations to lifers, and some of them came back and I met them, that's real. And when you tell somebody okay, you had a life sentence, and now you're able to go home—they cry on the phone. That's real. So there are experiences that are real. But that's more of an everyday experience as a mayor, as opposed to a governor. Now, you don't have as much impact or authority as mayor. But on the other hand, the impact of the governor is more longer ranging, more distant from one's experience and perception.

20-01:04:36

Shafer:

How would you say being mayor affected the way you were governor the second time?

20-01:04:41

Brown:

Well, I did get a different view of people. I remember being interviewed by the local Sierra Club representative, and two things struck me. One, he had a toothbrush in his vest pocket, and I kept looking at that toothbrush. And I wondered if this guy slept at the office or in his car or something. [laughter] I never asked him. And then he kept talking to me about urban issues, like rent



control. And I said, “Well, let’s talk about the environment.” So I realized that advocates come in many shapes.

I also saw the protests against an urban warfare program that was supposed to go to San Francisco, and I said, “No, bring it over to Oakland.” It was just going to be for three days, and it would inject some money into the economy. And San Francisco didn’t want to do it, because they were afraid that the flowers at Crissy Field would get stepped on or something. And I thought well, Oakland’s a little more rugged. We’re more blue collar. We can take that. And so there were people who came down to the city council and they protested: we’re militarizing Oakland! But of course, there is urban warfare, and you have to train for it. Some of the people who came to the city council meeting: I remember one guy had a white beard and he looked rather old. And obviously he was younger during the Vietnam protests, but this was not the Vietnam War. This was a three-day maneuver that will take place somewhere, and as long as you’re going to have armies and danger in the world, you’re going to have urban fighting, and therefore you have to have urban defense and preparation.

So what did that tell me? That people who have a cause, that at an abstract level sounds plausible, when you actually look at the circumstances in which the cause is being announced, there’s a disproportion. And it doesn’t hold the water that I might have thought, in the more abstract airy realms of Sacramento, where people are announcing their positioning with grandiose thoughts. But then what does that mean—*practically*? And I do take a more skeptical—not, I wouldn’t say skeptical. But I’m willing to look—or as Ross Perot would say—I’ll lift up the hood and see what’s underneath, whether that’s coming from an oil company, the Sierra Club, or the speaker of the assembly.

20-01:07:23

Shafer:

So do you think being mayor in some ways opened your eyes to things?

20-01:07:26

Brown:

Yeah, what opened my eyes was, and I think I mentioned this before, when I was asked by Mother Teresa, when I worked with her in Calcutta, “Please go back and tell the supervisors in San Francisco to approve an AIDS home that the Sisters of Charity wish to open up.”

20-01:07:52

Shafer:

A hospice, I think.

20-01:07:52

Brown:

A hospice, at no cost to the city. So I went to the city council meeting, and I remember waiting with me—I was sitting on the bench, and this lady with, literally, a big grocery bag, was sitting next to me. And I thought, well, that’s a little odd. But anyway, some people came up, and they said, “We’re afraid that people with AIDS,” and this was an AIDS hospice, “that maybe the sewers will back up and we’ll catch it.” That’s what they said. And so this very dignified chairman of the Board of Supervisors said, “Well, we’ll take this under

advisement,” and they deferred it for a week. And when I saw that the supervisors of San Francisco couldn’t decide, in five minutes, that an AIDS hospice by the Sisters of Charity was a good thing and did not need a week’s delay—it didn’t need five minutes—then I realized this is a very strange environment.

At the same time, there was somebody who wanted to have an upstairs yoga or, I think, maybe an exercise studio. And there was a long wrangling about, out in the neighborhood: should they give them a conditional use permit for this exercise room? They were going to have a little business. I thought, boy, they sure spend a lot of time on the small stuff. So I could not believe it. I’d never heard of that. I’d run for president. I talked about the MX missile. We’ve talked about the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act. And now we’re talking about: will this make too much noise in the neighborhood, if they’re breathing too hard or doing pushups or what the hell they were going to do? I don’t know. [laughing] And the same thing as—can they have an AIDS—they can’t even have an AIDS hospice.

So that gave me the idea. I’ll be very clear about it. That people can advocate stupid ideas with a straight face, and that politicians can listen with a straight face to the stupid ideas, and actually take them under consideration for more than five minutes. And that then really did open my eyes. Be on the alert for this kind of nonsense.

20-01:10:11

Shafer: So just if, I wonder—last question on this stuff. Can you distill that down into a lesson that you learned being mayor, that you brought with you?

20-01:10:20

Brown: Well, that’s, that’s a little overly—misplaced concreteness, if I could use that term. I could boil it down to say that people who advocate good, do not necessarily have a good that they’re asking you to embrace.

20-01:10:41

Shafer: For example.

20-01:10:42

Brown: Well, for example, let us deliberate on whether we should have an AIDS hospice or not. Let’s pass it over to next week, and make everybody come back again. I call that a bad, because it was evidently something good.

But also, in the spending of money. Everybody—uh, not everybody—Sacramento has hundreds, if not thousands of lobbyists. They are paid. They are paid because they are doing something. The only something to do in Sacramento is to get more money for your clients, get more regulations or fewer: depending upon who your client is. It is never finished, because God help the lobbyist if everything was done. They would lose their jobs. So there has to be this endless demand for more stuff. And the more stuff is more rules, more laws, and more money.

That being the case, you need to slow that process down, and you need to combat it. Because a good becomes a bad when there's too much. If we start investing all this money in good programs, and then you know darn well in a year or two or more you're going to have a recession, and you're going to cut all those people off—which we did. I mean we cut back on childcare. We cut back on aid to the university. We do all that. And it's inevitable—and it's going to happen again. So therefore, I believe that we should move in a more deliberative fashion. And others would say no, you've got to keep going. But the *keep going* would require a tax structure that is more akin to Norway or the Scandinavian countries.

If you really want to do what's on the agenda today in Sacramento, you need to have substantially higher taxes, and it can't be derived just from the rich—because they're able to move. They're able to move their businesses. And you'd have to tax the middle class in a way that I don't think they *want*. And you can prove me right or wrong by just putting it on the ballot. And if that's true, then you're really operating on false pretenses, when you initiate programs that will be defunded to some degree at the next recession. So that's why I wanted a surplus. That's why I want to move more cautiously. But others see it differently, and I think there's a lot of short-term thinking. In fact, I talked about earlier: the idea that only 18 percent of the people can afford a car. Well, maybe if you have to borrow: a two-year loan, maybe that'll get you up to 35 [percent] or 40 percent. But that still doesn't help the auto industry. So we are indebted to unsustainable practices. And step by step, we need to so structure our collective existence that it's sustainable, and it currently is not sustainable.

20-01:13:52

Meeker: Homelessness in California has of late become a national issue. Prop. 57 was discussed in a recent article in *Forbes* a couple of weeks ago.

20-01:14:07

Brown: Which prop—Prop. 57 on early parole?

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Meeker: Yeah, right. And the claim was made that early parole has contributed to the current homeless epidemic in the state of California. Do you have any thoughts on that?

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Brown: I have not seen any empirical data to suggest that. But remember, prior to my becoming governor, the number of inmates let out of state prison each month was ten thousand. Ten thousand people—120,000 a year. So that would seem to me to generate a lot of—it's going to generate homelessness. Now, that's more like three thousand. And Prop. 57 did give the chance for earlier release. So if that article is suggesting that earlier release is bad, then they must think longer incarceration is good. But for most of California history, we did not have that longer incarceration. That is a function of the last thirty years, when the population in prison went up 500 percent, with no relationship whatsoever to the crime rate. So I would have to say that homelessness reflects many factors: drug

addiction, opiate epidemic, high price of housing, the lack of adequate facilities for the mentally disturbed—and other factors that are occurring. Certainly, income inequality is one of them, and it reaches a saturation point. But the factors have been building up for decades.

20-01:16:06

Meeker: To that end, do you think that homelessness, the word itself, is maybe not the best word to use, because it's more a symptom rather than a cause? Should we just focus instead on the causes?

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Brown: Well, I think if somebody has a tent in front of your house, I'd want to focus on that. So how do you solve a problem in a more permanent way? You've got to understand all the factors at play. With the current buildup of tent cities all over the country, that is not a positive sign, and it's not going to go on forever. Somebody *is* going to come along and say okay, we're going to clean this up.

20-01:16:49

Meeker: But how?

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Brown: Well, you're going to have to put people in some kind of shelters, and you're going to have to put them there in some way with the authority of the law.

20-01:16:59

Meeker: So involuntarily.

20-01:17:01

Brown: Well, that's where we—that was called mental hospitals at one time. It's also called prisons. It is the law, that if you are under the influence, it is a ninety-day misdemeanor. Nobody in our big cities are prosecuted for that. Also, to take a hypodermic needle and inject yourself with heroin is against the law. And I've seen that happen on Sixth St., right south of Market, and I think that's unacceptable. Now, people say well, what do we do about it? Well, what we're doing now is not the answer.

20-01:17:37

Meeker: Yeah, I mean it's legally unacceptable and morally unacceptable, but politically it's acceptable.

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Brown: Well, it's acceptable to the current regimes, but that doesn't mean other people aren't going to come along and say I have ideas to fix it. And it's not that easy to give everyone shelter. Even if you make large dormitories, you'd have to make them work, and that's going to take some kind of policing. It's also going to take psychological counseling. It's also going to take vocational counseling—it'll take a lot of stuff. But we did have mental hospitals with twenty or thirty thousand people in them when we had a population that was much smaller. So today, we have less than two thousand people locked up involuntarily, and where are they? On the streets and in the jails. So that is a problem. We have a constitutional case

that says that the least restrictive alternative is the best. But that has to be understood—least restrictive according to the circumstances. And if somebody's going to pitch their tent, and defecate, and hit people over the head, or inject themselves with drugs, or leave needles on the street, I would say that that's a circumstance where you need more restriction than what we currently have.

20-01:19:02

Meeker: Well, you were a mayor of a moderate-size city.

20-01:19:05

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

20-01:19:07

Meeker: You understand both the problem, but also the reluctance to address that problem in the city.

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Brown: Well, no—we addressed it and we did not allow camps—there'd be for a while, then the city closed them down and people moved on. And there wasn't the numbers. There was nowhere near the numbers that you have today. So another factor is the disappearance of low income or even what you might call slum housing. Maybe I use that word too loosely. But there was the single-room occupancy—there were places that people, for relatively modest sums, could stay in. And they weren't in accordance with the building code, they were—whatever. But today we have a building code that is very expensive. And it makes some kind of sense, but many people can't afford shelter under those circumstances. So now you have to have the government pay for that. To pay for that, you have to have more money. But we have all these other claims on government, where people want more money. So we're in kind of a box, that what we have now encountered is something we collectively don't want to deal with, because it's going to take more money and more authoritative moves by the state.

20-01:20:31

Meeker: In our last interview we actually didn't talk much about the Obama Administration when you were governor.

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Brown: Yeah.

20-01:20:38

Meeker: What was your main interaction? In other words, did you have a point person in the administration who you would engage with on higher-level issues as needed?

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Brown: Yeah, but it was pretty staff oriented.

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Meeker: So it was your staff engaging with their staff?

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Brown: Yeah, we—I engaged, went to the White House on the tunnels project. We couldn't get the federal government to move. They were very, *very* slow. They delayed for years, and they were not candid or straightforward about what they were doing. So it was only when we went to the White House, and the Obama Administration—somebody appointed some new people to run their Fish & Wildlife, that we were able make a lot of progress.

20-01:21:25

Meeker: What did you think of him when he was coming up? He was certainly an outsider candidate for a variety of reasons. You know, when he was running against Hillary Clinton in the primaries, what did you think of him as a politician, as well as perhaps somebody of substance who could be transformative?

20-01:21:44

Brown: Well, he was certainly more effective than Hillary, because he beat her. And to come from relatively obscure origins as a state senator, and then a US senator, and then a candidate for president—and before that a speaker at the Democratic Convention—that certainly implies real talent, and he had that. And on substance, I'd say he was well within the democratic tradition of the last fifty years.

20-01:22:22

Meeker: [laughing] What does that mean?

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Brown: Well, within that tradition—Johnson, rather not Johnson, but I guess—Carter, Clinton, Obama. There's a certain continuity there. I'd say there's more continuity than change. Although we got the Affordable Care Act, and that is a singular program that probably wouldn't have gotten there without Obama.

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Meeker: Are you talking about in terms of moderate versus progressive or—?

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Brown: I don't know what those terms—I mean those terms, you have to apply them in a specific context. I would say that the established order of the tax system, the private sector economy, the arms race, foreign policy. There's a lot of continuity. So far we've not seen someone jump in and start elbowing their way to something very different. I mean if anything, Trump has been a more unpredictable—and a person who is willing to do things that haven't been on the script. But as it's turned out, that hasn't been particularly positive.

20-01:23:43

Shafer: I wonder if I could ask just a quick question, since we're talking about elections. Is there anything you've learned throughout your long career that you think the 2020 candidates should know?

20-01:23:55

Brown: I don't get this business about lessons and learning. That doesn't really strike me as very interesting—

20-01:24:03

Shafer: What would be helpful?

20-01:24:05

Brown: —or useful. I would say that the more you learn and incorporate that into your way of being and showing up, the more effective you can be.

20-01:24:18

Shafer: Then being thirty-eight years old and mayor of South Bend, Indiana—not enough experience?

20-01:24:23

Brown: Well, I'm not going to pick candidates, because I'm going to do—yeah, no, I'm not ready to say that yet. I was a candidate. I was thirty-eight. I won five primaries, so that was something, in 1976. Yeah, what you always want is that *lesson*. People always want to know—what did you learn? What are your three priorities for your last year in office? And I was just thinking about this the other day. I tend to just do things. What's—what's up?

We've got the Fort Ross Dialogue on Sunday, so I've been working on that. I have the California-China Climate Institute at UC Berkeley. Okay, I'll work on that. We had a meeting in Aspen with a number of interesting people, particularly in high tech. So I go there, listen, take notes, come back. So I mean it's just—kind of you get up in the morning, see what's available, and do things. Sometimes I go out and weed whack, cut down the weeds to reduce the fire danger. So it's not that I don't think and I don't plan—I certainly planned to be governor and took the appropriate steps to get there. But I look around at what's needed and wanted, and then try to provide it if I can. So that's what you've got to—if you're running, what's needed? And of course, what's needed—and then how do you position yourself in a way that people will vote for you?

20-01:26:04

Shafer: Yeah, well—and those are very different things sometimes, what's needed and what people want to hear.

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Brown: Well, hopefully they're similar. At least people feel they need something. And they need more equality, or they need more climate action. Those are needs, and people may get votes for articulating that in an effective way.

20-01:26:26

Meeker: I think this is on the same strain. In an earlier interview session you said, "Because absent the news, the government can't function, because people don't know what to think. They're not going to sit there and delve into documents, et cetera." Right?

20-01:26:40

Brown: Right.

20-01:26:43

Meeker: It sounds to me like you're saying you don't think the media is doing an adequate job educating the electorate.

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Brown: Well, look: the media's job is to make money and survive. It's a business. And up until very recently, businesses have only one objective, and that is to return an enhanced value for shareholders. Now, you could be in the news business, or you could be in the shoe business. It's all business, and they all have their own rules as well—and certainly there are journalism standards. But you know, the same thing, it's public opinion—the role of opinion and leadership. Even Goebbels, when he was engaging in propaganda, had to know how it was coming over and what's the feedback. So he'd have to get reports on how his messages were going, and he would tailor them accordingly.

Well, in democratic societies—yeah, you've got to know what people are thinking. And that's what drives the story. I mean Al Franken left the Senate. If there were no such thing as newspapers, he'd still be in the Senate, I assume. So the stories have a life of their own, and they affect politicians. And politicians are trying to do what they do, but a lot of what they do is conditioned by how it's all reported and how they perceive issues. What's hot? What's hot is not nuclear danger. Now, I would say nuclear danger is real, but most people don't even know about it. So what's real is one of these—well, these stories that come out. You know, whatever is hot that you read about: homeless, Me Too, police shootings, Russia investigation, Russian interference, Trump—all that stuff. I mean whatever it is that they're writing about, that's what we talk about. Now, they only write about things they think you want to hear. So it is a somewhat incestuous process. But it is what it is, and we don't create it. Nobody creates; there is some latitude on the part of the *New York Times* editor, but only some. Because if the *Washington Post* is writing something, the *New York Times* has got to write it. So we're all kind of chasing the news here. And I just hope to hell it's all going to work out.

20-01:29:24

Meeker: Well, short of expecting citizens to delve into the topics and documents and coming up with their own research-based opinions—

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Brown: Well, you can't—that's not possible.

20-01:29:34

Meeker: Right. So what is possible? How do we arrive at a better-educated electorate?

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Brown: What's possible is—it's possible we avoid nuclear annihilation and total climate disruption and the elimination of millions of jobs through AI without an adequate substitute.



20-01:29:50

Meeker: But how?

20-01:29:51

Brown: Well, by working it out as best we can. There's no magic—there's not a, there's not a formula. It's not like add two to two and you get four, and add four and four and you get eight. It's just the flow of activity, and whether you get—so you have Trump and his program. And you have the impeachment, and you have the Democratic candidates, and they're all vying, and it's not clear how it's all going to turn out.

20-01:30:23

Meeker: Do you think a better-educated electorate would improve these situations and help us—?

20-01:30:28

Brown: I don't know about that. I know Jefferson talked about that, but that's when people were farmers, and they could read books. [laughter] Today that's not the case. Look, the country started on another basis. We had an electoral—we had property owners, male property owners. That was a very small slice of American humanity. That's the way it worked. And now we've come all—and we also had slaves, and we also were taking the land of the Indians. And then later, we took half of Mexico. And women were not voting then. So now we've come to a mass electorate, with mass propaganda and mass communication, and there it is. Well, we'll see. We'll see in the next ten or twenty years how it all turns out. [laughter] I hope it turns out okay! I hope for the best, but fear the worst.

20-01:31:24

Shafer: You said, when we first came up here—I don't even think we were recording, and you were just—we were just chatting. And you said that nobody comes to you for political advice.

20-01:31:33

Brown: Yeah, that's maybe a little—occasionally people might talk to me. But I notice a gap between what I know, and the number of people who are asking me questions about what I know.

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Shafer: Why is that, do you think?

20-01:31:49

Brown: Because I think people follow certain grooves. And if you're a politician, you hire people, and those people work very hard to make you think that they're the ones to be relied on. And they even buttress their case with polls. And I remember Richard Maullin displaying stacks of those old reams of those readouts, and he was telling me about this poll data and this data and that. And it was—boy, it's not about what I think or feel. How can I fight that data? And I was thinking that this consulting business really disables you from your own judgment, because your own judgment is not based on this data. And the data is the province of polltakers—and I'm not a polltaker. At least I'm kind of a polltaker, but I'm not a

professional. So, people have their consultants, their advisors, and they think they're the ones to tell them. Now, if you have a lot of money, like Meg Whitman, you hire a consultant. And then you hire another consultant to consult about *that* consultant. And then you have a little more uncertainty, so you hire even *more* consultants. And you think through the endless quest for more consultancy you may solve the problem. Well, obviously, that didn't work.

20-01:33:23

Shafer: For her.

20-01:33:24

Brown: For her. But yeah, another thing I find interesting is that this happens in business too. People hire people without asking the former employer—oh, how did he or she do? And that's happened. That's happened with me about people.

20-01:33:43

Shafer: Have you ever thought about being a political consultant, and getting paid for that?

20-01:33:45

Brown: No, I don't need, I don't need—I'm not interested. No, I'm—there are horses and there are jockeys. And I'm a horse, although I like to be a jockey at the same time. [Shafer laughs]

20-01:34:02

Shafer: We are both curious about, and this is going to seem—I don't know how it's going to seem, but why did you decide to do these interviews?

20-01:34:10

Brown: I decided to do the interview because my father did it, and when I want to find out things, particularly in his earlier life, that interested me. So I'm interested in history. I'm interested in the history of the Mountain House. I'm sorry that when I was younger, and all of my Colusa relatives were alive, I didn't get a chance to talk to them. So now I'm talking to the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren—and even the great-great grandchildren. And that inclines one to think it would be good. I wish that August Schuckman had a diary about what he did here and what he planted, and what animals he had, and what the weather was like. I wish we had that journal—and maybe we're going to create it for those who come after.

20-01:35:06

Shafer: You know, I was struck by—when you were governor the first time, you didn't want to live in either the mansion that your dad lived in or in the one that Reagan had built out in the avenues—out in the Forties in Sacramento.

20-01:35:19

Brown: No, no—he built it *way* out, in Carmichael.

20-01:35:21

Shafer: Oh, Carmichael—right.

20-01:35:23

**Brown:** He lived in the Forties. That was a rented house, by the Kitchen Cabinet of Reagan. It was not available.

20-01:35:28

**Shafer:** So you didn't want to live in either of those houses.

20-01:35:30

**Brown:** Well, but first of all, I didn't have a family. My father had kids, and he moved, and he left the house in San Francisco. In fact, he gave the house to my sister. So it was a little inappropriate. Also, the new one, I guess the old one, it just seemed like a big—I don't know why. I don't know if that was even in play at that—I don't know whether we—I thought of that. And the other one, it seemed too grand for a bachelor governor, and too expensive and totally inconvenient. One of the things I do know, and I appreciated when I went back to live in the mansion this time, it's literally five minutes to work. That's real, and having to go twenty or twenty-five minutes in today's traffic, you leave at five thirty, it's like thirty minutes to Carmichael or maybe longer. So that's why I didn't want to live in that place.

20-01:36:24

**Shafer:** But I guess what I was going to say is ultimately you decided to renovate the old mansion.

20-01:36:28

**Brown:** Yes.

20-01:36:30

**Shafer:** Move in there, and now you're up here where you built this house where your grandparents lived—great-grandfather. Is there a throughline there, with those things?

20-01:36:41

**Brown:** Well, I like to build things. I can tell you when I sit here, and I see this house that wasn't here—this was dirt. We are sitting on what used to be dirt four years ago—only dirt, although it was right next to the barn that's in the pictures of August Schuckman that you see in books. Yeah, I like to build things. I'm building more things.

20-01:37:03

**Shafer:** More things even—

20-01:37:04

**Brown:** Well, we're restoring the barn. And I talk to people, I meet people. I met people at the state fair, and some lady said, "You know, I'm Shelley." And the barn down there, which we call the bar barn, that was white and it had graffiti all over it. And the biggest name of all was Shelley, and that's why we call it the Shelley Barn. [laughter] And so I met Shelley. She was sitting in the stands, and she was there with her kids. So I was there—and I meet a lot of people in Colusa County, certainly more than a dozen who said, "Oh, I used to play at the Mountain

House,” and, “I was out there.” So this, and by the way, in the map I have here from 1874, of Colusa County, it has the Mountain House—by name. So, you know, I like that fact. And is that—what was, how did that start? What was your question?

20-01:37:58

Shafer: Well, with the—renovating the mansion, living there.

20-01:38:02

Brown: I like doing things. That’s making something happen. So that’s not an idea. That’s a physical alteration of the landscape, so that has its own immediacy.

20-01:38:13

Shafer: I guess I was wondering also, does it signify a reconnection in some way, with your roots, that you didn’t feel when you were younger?

20-01:38:21

Brown: Well, that is also true. But I’ve been thinking about this when I first visited Gary Snyder on the ridge in Nevada County, out there on Montezuma Ridge, where he still lives. And that was kind of the flight from the sixties. And so he was creating a life out there restoring—it was Gold Rush, Columbia, which is right near where he lives in Nevada County. That had emptied out. There were far more people there in 1850 than there are today, in that little spot. And then I remember being in Nevada City, and there was something called the reinhabitory theater. And that was a play that—I can’t even remember what they did. I can’t at all remember, but it was called the reinhabitory theater, and from that the term *reinhabitation*. So reinhabitation is what I think Gary Snyder was doing. Because this was a place for miners, a place for timber cutters, and now he was going out there and creating a new life out there, create a Zen—a zendo, and Zen practice people show up there next to the place where he lives. So this is a form of reinhabitation. This is Mountain House III, not Mountain House I or II. So it *is* different, and it is a place of hospitality. It is along the road, and where it leads will be a matter of creation in the years to come.

20-01:40:04

Shafer: And soon a pool as well.

20-01:40:05

Brown: Yeah.

20-01:40:07

Meeker: A couple of follow-up questions. In an earlier interview, you said the laws are being made increasingly at every level by staff, and the staff are trained professionals, who alone know what they’re talking about. You know, and this reminds me a little bit of Trump’s concern about the deep state, when he came into office.

20-01:40:29

Brown: Right.

20-01:40:31

Meeker: Is this something that the electorate should be concerned about? Or is this just an inevitable outcome of complexity?

20-01:40:38

Brown: Yes. It's an inevitable outcome of complexity, yeah, it's where we're going. I mean August Schuckman could come out here and take a covered wagon from St. Joe, Missouri and show up in Placerville, called Hangtown, in 1852. And make his way to Colusa County, buy a different property, finally get this ranch, have an inn called the Mountain House, a stagecoach stop. They had a blacksmith shop here. They did things much different than today. Now it's experts. Experts—what about the heating system here? The solar collectors, the photovoltaic cells, and the lithium-ion batteries, and the inverter, and the controller, and then the connectivity of all those things. I don't know how to do that. So yeah, we're in the midst of complexity. And even though we're in a very scientific age, our understandings are rather primitive relative to the complexity in which we are immersed.

20-01:41:54

Meeker: Do you feel like we might be heading to an era in which the government moves ahead, impervious to the winds of political change?

20-01:42:03

Brown: Well, the government moving ahead *is* the winds of political change. But I would just make a reference, since I assume scholars are going to read this, to Jacques Ellul, who wrote a book called *Propaganda: [The Formation of Men's Attitudes]* and another one called *Technology, or The Technological Phenomenon*. [note: *The Technological Society*] But in the book *Propaganda*, Jacques Ellul, I think, says, "In a mass society with technology, there will always be propaganda." And propaganda is made by somebody: professionals. So, and he said propaganda can actually be accurate. It's not that it's false necessarily. But it's general ideas and statements, that are disseminated on a mass basis, and that are consumed without being able to probably judge its inherent validity.

I assume August Schuckman, when he shod a horse, could tell whether the horseshoe was properly made in his blacksmith's shop. And whether he did the shoeing or somebody else, he could probably tell how that was. We're in a totally different ballgame. Most of what's going on, we have only the dimmest awareness of what's at stake, whether it's our water system, our electrical system—in some ways, even our schooling system. So we're in a brave new world of ever-increasing technology, driven by what they call artificial intelligence with extreme power. It's quite adventurous, and we will experience something that nobody else has ever experienced in human history.

20-01:43:56

Meeker: I think, with the exception of a brief period in the 1990s, you've been a lifelong Democrat?

20-01:44:01

Brown: Yeah.

20-01:44:03

Meeker: Do you think political parties are collections of ideas and ideologies? Or are they tribes?

20-01:44:10

Brown: They're tribes. I mean in America, we've never had the ideology—in Europe you had the Socialist Party, you had the Green Party, the Conservative Party. Our parties are big tents, and they have people in them. We had Southern segregationists and civil rights activists in 1948, and we had, yeah, we had—that was one of the big fights at the Democratic Convention. So they are the big umbrella, and that's worked to shape the debate. So parties, political scientists think, shape the debate, make it more digestible/more manageable. Although other people say, "Well, we really like the multi-party system, because you get different points of view." But that can also get chaotic. So there's pluses and minuses to the two-party system versus a multi-party system.

20-01:45:07

Meeker: Sometimes you hear, when somebody changes their party affiliation, they'll say, "I didn't leave the party. The party left *me*." Have you ever felt like that about the Democratic Party?

20-01:45:17

Brown: Well, I became an independent briefly in Oakland. But no, this is the ballgame. You've got two parties. Yeah, I'm sure people in the South, when the Civil Rights Act was passed, said, "Well, the party's left me," because they were not in sympathy with civil rights. So other people, I'm sure African Americans, and you see the shootings, and the reaction of politicians and sheriffs that say, "Well, the party's leaving me." But in general, people stick with it, because this is a vehicle to shape and simplify the debate.

20-01:45:57

Meeker: So there, well, there's a leading candidate for president who identifies as a socialist—[Bernie Sanders].

20-01:46:04

Brown: Right.

20-01:46:05

Meeker: Within the Democratic Party. I'm curious about what your thoughts are about the prominence of that individual, and what it might say for the future of the party?

20-01:46:14

Brown: Well, it says—is that if you want to run for president, you've got to be a Democrat. So he can call himself a socialist, but in fact, according to the law he's a Democrat. So that's the way it is, unless you want to be Ross Perot or Ralph Nader, which doesn't seem to prove very effective in our two-party system. So people will give each other names. You can have a conservative Democrat, you

can have a liberal Republican. Socialist Democrat is just saying, “Hey, we want a more progressive agenda.” So I think it’s not that much different than more left-leaning Democrats.

20-01:46:54

Meeker: So you think if Sanders was the ultimate nominee, it wouldn’t profoundly transform the party or its constituency?

20-01:47:03

Brown: I don’t know. The fact that he is identified as a socialist? I think—well, if he were elected, he’d still run into the same Congress, same arms lobby, the same pharmaceutical industry, the same labor unions, same building trades, the same service unions, and the same environmentalists. So you have this conglomeration, this configuration of forces and ideas which is America. And you can call yourself whatever you want, but that’s what he would find when he shows up on day one in Washington.

20-01:47:41

Meeker: Well, let me just very quickly ask you—[laughter]

20-01:47:44

Brown: You asked all those academic questions.

20-01:47:45

Meeker: [laughing] Right, right. Well, you know, you have a reputation on Berkeley’s campus, as it turns out.

20-01:47:52

Brown: Yeah. Do I?

20-01:47:53

Meeker: And it’s not always the best reputation. [laughing]

20-01:47:55

Brown: Well, among some of the older professors.

20-01:47:57

Meeker: But now you are a visiting professor on campus. Tell me about how that came to be, and what you hope to achieve with this new role.

20-01:48:05

Brown: Well, it came to be in Beijing, when I signed an MOU at Tsinghua University, and that led to the California-China Climate Institute. And that is an effort to further collaboration with China and California to do something more aggressive, more imaginative, in the field of climate action. And I started that original idea early on as governor. I thought we can keep making rules tougher, like on diesel trucks or zero-emission vehicles, or appliance regulations or building regulations. And if California is isolated, even if there are other states, a few states that follow us, that will then, through business competition, put a lot of pressure on what we’re doing. But if the largest market in the world, namely China, is on the same

path—then that would be quite helpful. Because the auto makers are not going to go along with relaxing rules for America, if in the biggest and fastest-growing market, they have to meet the rules of California, and even beyond.

So my point is to do things that will make more prevalent the rules that California is adopting. So I want to expand the reach—not of California, but the ideas that California is following on renewable energy, zero-emission cars, et cetera. And we want to work with China. They have a cap-and-trade program where the price of carbon is \$4. The price of carbon in California, at this point, is around \$17. A low-carbon fuel standard has a price on carbon of well over a hundred dollars, so I'm certainly going to be pushing for China to up their price of carbon, because that will force the curtailment of coal at the rate we need to do it. Because we're not getting there fast enough. That's why—being a professor, that's just—the institute is there. It's housed at the law school and the College of Natural Resources, and we're going to be using or collaborating with Berkeley scientists and Berkeley policy makers, and working with the university to convene people from China, from other places, to advance these goals that are being opposed by many people in Washington.

20-01:51:09

Meeker: Will the Mountain House IV be a—?

20-01:51:11

Brown: Four—III.

20-01:51:12

Meeker: Four—but will the Mountain House IV, two hundred years from now, be a beautiful green building or a lean-to shack? [laughing]

20-01:51:21

Brown: Well, you know, it could be just all burnt, if we go up not two degrees centigrade but four, there may be so many forest fires around here we may have to—it may not even be livable. So I definitely think if we're going to be around we need—if this place is to survive, we've got to deal with climate change.

20-01:51:45

Shafer: Governor Brown, I just want to say thank you very much.

20-01:51:47

Brown: Okay.

20-01:51:47

Shafer: For all the time you spent and welcoming us up here. It's been really interesting and fun, and I hope you learned something, because I know we did.

20-01:51:52

Brown: Well, I hope people consult this, because they're not consulting me. [laughter]

20-01:51:57

Shafer: Okay.



20-01:51:58

Meeker: Thank you, Governor.

20-01:51:59

Shafer: Thank you, very much.

[End of Interview]